

Woodland Civic Association, Inc.



December 2020

Hi Everyone!

This has been a very different year! Although we have reduced our in-person activities a lot, members of the Woodland Civic Association have still been involved in protecting our quality of life and our property values. This newsletter will be more detailed since we are unable to have an in-person meeting.

Republic Airport:

We have continued to question the development of five land parcels at Republic, which would be the largest project ever done at the airport. The proposed development disregards the Airport Layout Plan, which designates several of the parcels to be used in a way that generates property tax revenue for the Town of Babylon, so tax dollars will be lost. This huge project has also not had a complete environmental impact study as required in the layout plan. In September we wrote to the NYS Department of Transportation to request that the proper environmental studies be done, and that the community have a chance to comment before any construction begins. The proposed usage has major implications for traffic and noise as well.

We are questioning the use of "pen and ink" changes to the Airport Layout Plan, which should be used only for minor changes that do not require community input.

We have written a letter to the NYS Department of Transportation expressing our concern regarding "safety improvements" to runway 1/19. These changes will move the runway 400 feet to the north, closer to the Airport Plaza shopping area. It will also cause the runway to be closed for a year for these improvements, which puts all airport traffic onto runway 14/32 – the one that goes over our homes.

We have had a meeting with Senator John Brooks in regard to the composition of the Republic Airport Commission. There are not enough members, the members have exceeded their terms, and some may not live in the required areas. This committee was formed to be a liaison between the NYS Department of Transportation and the community. We have to be sure they are adequately representing our concerns.

We have attended all Republic Airport Commission meetings, which have been held virtually. If you hear noise from planes, please call 631-752-7707, #4. If we don't call, they claim there is no noise issue.

Route 110 Bus Rapid Transit:

This BRT has been under study since 2010 and we have been involved at every phase. There were two webinar meetings on December 7th, which several of our members attended. The proposal is to run two overlapping bus lines on Route 110 from the Amityville train station up to the Huntington train station and possibly further.

Although buses currently run this route, the new proposal would focus on prioritizing the buses over the cars on 110 to make the trip faster. New buses with enhanced features would run every 7 ½ minutes during rush hour in overlapping areas, getting priority at traffic lights and a separate traffic lane on the shoulder where

room exists. This has implications for east/west traffic as cars crossing 110 will have to wait at longer red lights as buses going north/south pass through the signals.

There is also the question on the location of new bus stations, parking, and how that will impact homeowners in those areas. One of the lines will begin at the Farmingdale train station, which means that there will be buses running approximately every 15 minutes on Secatogue Avenue towards Conklin St. We will be watching and commenting to make sure they do not propose running buses down Melville Road as well.

Potential Plume under Republic Airport:

In light of the Newsday report on the Bethpage plume at the Grumman facilities, we have been concerned about potential toxicity at Republic Airport. Fairchild was manufacturing at the same time and possibly in the same manner as Grumman. We had just begun to discuss this with the Town of Babylon as Covid closures began. TOB provided us with two cartons of environmental studies done in the 1990s that indicated a pollution problem, but there were no later studies provided to us, and social distancing has limited our ability to follow up. This is an ongoing issue that we will be concentrating on as soon as we have more access to records.

Industrial Development Agency:

The IDA was formed to encourage businesses to stay on Long Island and provide jobs through huge tax incentives. In principle this is a good idea, but methods and success rates have come under question. There is a very specific set of regulations that the IDA is supposed to be working under.

New York State or TOB does not track if tax breaks actually help to provide jobs. Competing IDAs on Long Island have caused developers to "shop" the deals in different towns. Frequently, when the tax break period is about to expire, the company re-negotiates or threatens to move off of LI. There is then no return of tax revenue to the town.

Some of these tax breaks can last 40 or 50 years. The slack in tax revenue is born by the homeowners in the area, which makes our property taxes go up. That can cause people to leave Long Island altogether because homeownership is too expensive.

These tax breaks are supposed to be "Industrial", providing long term jobs, but developers are getting them now for apartment construction. The jobs go away after the construction is finished, but the developer pays a very reduced share of property taxes. The children that live in the apartments go to schools that the existing homeowners pay for through our property taxes. The garbage gets picked up, the police and fire departments are called, the wastewater gets treated, and the existing homeowners, like us, pay for it, not the tenants or developers.

We are working with other civic associations to bring attention to this subject and to make sure the IDAs stick to the regulations they were formed under.

Suffolk County Hazard Mitigation Plan:

In September, our civic association was invited to comment on a Suffolk County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose is to evaluate the different types of hazards we could face, such as hurricanes, flooding, epidemics, wildfires, etc. It was a very comprehensive report which evaluated the likelihood of an event as well as the severity and population that would be affected.

The report was so large that we only commented on possibly restricting development of homes and businesses in flood areas. There were maps showing low lying areas that extend right across Long Island.

Gun Noise from the State Park Police range:

There is considerable noise at various times from the range behind the State Park Police headquarters. It can be heard miles away and is not the type of sound you want in your neighborhood. While everyone wants the police to be trained, the location of this range is problematic, especially due to its proximity to an elementary school. We have been in touch with a legislative aide from Senator Brooks' office and he has contacted the Regional Director of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. They will be following up with an engineering team that is looking into sound mitigating measures.

Collaboration:

Our association has joined forces with seven other local civic groups to give more weight to our questions and more attention to our issues by the Town of Babylon and New York State. Although Woodland Civic addresses many issues independently, we have been assisted many times by neighboring civic associations, and we help them as well.

We hope you can see how hard we work to protect our community, and we would love for more people to be involved. It is very important to have a show of strength and for our community to send emails and write letters when we are working on an issue that will impact us. We would also like to hear from you about any other issues you would like addressed. We need the support of our neighbors. Please join us by becoming members of the Woodland Civic Association, or keeping your membership active. Also, please share this flyer with neighbors that might not currently be on our email list.

Our annual membership drive is on, and it only costs \$5 per year to support us. Thanks!

Our email address is woodlandcivicasoc@gmail.com, and our website is www.woodlandcivicasoc.com. On our website you can view some of the documentation mentioned in this newsletter.

Membership is open to all Suffolk County, East Farmingdale homeowners that live in the Half Hollow Hills school district.

2020 Membership Dues, Woodland Civic Association, Inc.

Name_____

Address_____

Phone_____

Email_____

Please pay the annual \$5 per homeowner (one membership per address) membership dues by mailing a check payable to Woodland Civic Association, Inc. c/o Ann Manovsky, Treasurer, 20 Adams Street North, Farmingdale, NY 11735.