



THE VOICE OF WESTERLEIGH

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERLEIGH IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY
P.O. Box 140-043 Staten Island, NY 10314 www.wisonline.org

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NASCAR Track Deserves a Red Flag

After nearly 12 months of teasing us with promises, International Speedway Corp. appears ready to unveil the latest details for the 80,000-seat NASCAR stadium and giant retail center it proposes to build in Bloomfield, near the Goethals Bridge.

But unless there's a last-minute surprise, most residents of Westerleigh – like the majority of their borough neighbors – are probably not going to change their minds about having Staten Island become the latest stop on ISC's fast track to fame and fortune.

Simply put, most of us don't think it's a good idea. That also happens to be the opinion of the two City Councilmen who represent Westerleigh. Both Michael McMahon and James Oddo have gone on record as stating that unless ISC can show us the new track won't add to our daily traffic nightmare, they don't intend to give it their OK. And without their approval, the entire plan may never get to the starting line.

While it's tempting to think that having a couple of races on the Island each year will provide an economic boost to local businesses, the bottom line is that there are more cons than all the pros who would be driving those high-powered vehicles.

The traffic that 80,000 fans will bring is tops on the list, no matter how many ferries ISC plans to hire to transport spectators to the

stadium on race days. Hundreds of buses will cram our already-snarled roads, especially those near the proposed track, such as Richmond Terrace and Morningstar Road. And anyone who thinks the Staten Island and West Shore expressways won't be even more clogged than they are on normal work days probably walks to work.

Those who believe ISC will put a lot of money in the pockets of borough merchants, or ease our already heavy property tax burden, might want to think again. The reality is, ISC itself has said such a "Staten Island First" policy is "premature." Meaning, don't count your cash – or your tax rebate – just yet.

Then again, what about the noise generated by all those revved-up engines, not to mention the pollution those gas-guzzling, high-performance engines are sure to spew into the air? And can we afford all that money the city will have to spend on overtime for police and emergency services? Those promises of jobs for Island residents in the planned shopping center are nice, but the bulk of them will be in the low-paying, minimum wage category.

As one prominent citizen put it, "It's not that I'm anti-NASCAR. It's just that I haven't heard any persuasive arguments for it."

The Westerleigh Improvement Society couldn't agree more. The truth is, the International Speedway Corp. has more to gain than Staten Islanders. So unless we're guaranteed otherwise, we all should just say NO to NASCAR.

Maine Avenue Sewer Project Completed

Westerleigh residents were given another reason to celebrate this past holiday season when the long-delayed Westerleigh/Maine Avenue Sewer Project was completed shortly before Thanksgiving.

The Westerleigh Improvement Society has been monitoring the progress of the project over the course of two years. The original contractor was replaced this past fall after many long delays. The second contractor, DeFazio Contracting, rapidly completed the final stages of the construction. With the help of Assemblyman John Lavelle and Councilman Michael McMahon residents of the area have finally been able to put the work behind them.

If residents have any remaining problems resulting from the construction, they can contact the Society or Assemblyman Lavelle's office at (718) 442-9932 and give the details of their complaint. There are some items that must be completed in the spring, including landscaping. These have already been made known to the contractor



707 Jewett Avenue

Another community jewel appears destined to become just another memory. The Westerleigh Improvement Society recently was informed that the owner of the property at 707 Jewett Avenue, located near Maine Avenue, intends to demolish all structures and construct six one-family homes on the site. The destruction of this magnificent home would be a tremendous loss to Westerleigh. It would destroy the 19th-century streetscape of Jewett

Avenue and jeopardize the other original structures in the area.

Last year the Society, through the office of Councilman Michael McMahon, petitioned the Landmarks Preservation Commission to have the home at 707 designated an individual landmark. Much documentation, including a petition signed by 900 Westerleigh residents supporting landmark designation, was sent to the Commission.

Unfortunately, the Commission felt that the home did not merit an individual designation. It was suggested that it could be part of a small historic district along Jewett Avenue.

Since additional research and a general consensus of other owners would be required for this to take place, there is not adequate time to accomplish this before demolition takes place.

The Society regrets that despite hundreds of thousands of dollars in restoration work since 2001, the home could not have been sold "as is" to another owner.



Westerleigh Rezoning Update

For almost a year the Westerleigh Improvement Society has prepared an application to rezone almost all of Westerleigh to an R2 classification, which would permit the construction of only one-family homes. Much thought was given to the area to be rezoned and its current housing. The Historic Preservation Committee, under Mark Anderson, has met countless times to craft the application for the Department of City Planning and has garnered the support of both City Council members (Michael McMahon and

James Oddo) that represent Westerleigh. In addition, the Borough President's office has endorsed the proposal as an appropriate way to maintain the character of the community.

The Society is currently meeting with representatives of City Planning to present the final draft of the application to the City Planning Commission.



AARP Defensive Driving Courses Offered at Immanuel Church

A series of courses in defensive driving will be offered during 2006 through the AARP (55 Alive Driver Safety Program) at the Immanuel Union Church. The instructor is Laney Dahl. Please contact her at (718) 442-1753 for additional information or to enroll in a class.

The dates are January 28, March 4, April 22, June 3, July 15, August 19, September 30 and November 18. The dates are all Saturdays. Classes start at 9 A.M. A \$10 fee is required for materials



Reminder

On-going call for the continuing project of the Westerleigh AD HOC Committee's collection of recipes and their oral history background to our neighborhood. Please send your favorite family recipe, its history, and picture (if you like) of those having fun using and/or remembering it to the Society mailbox P.O. Box 140-043, Staten Island, NY 10314. For further information or questions please call Sharon Heule @ (718) 979-3434

George Wambold, Longtime Director

The Society was informed of the passing of former Director George Wambold, Jr. on November 25, 2005. George was long involved in numerous aspects of the Society, especially as Membership Chairman. During almost 40 years as a member of the Society he gave much time and expertise to the community.

A memorial service was held at Immanuel Union Church on December 22. Our deepest condolences are extended to his wife Natalie and his family



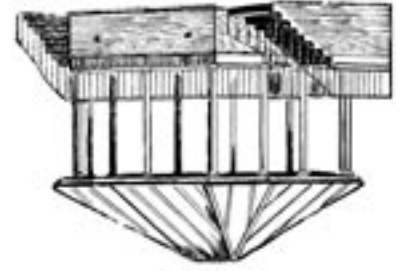
Holiday Reception 2005

The Society extends its thanks to the following members who contributed their time and expertise toward making the 2005 Holiday Reception an outstanding success: Charles Curiazza, Connie and Sam Colucci, Richard Cirbus, Evelyn Otten MacDonald, Michael Morrell and the chair of the event, Daniel Rieu



President Morrell presents a plaque to Dan Rieu for his many years as Editor Emeritus of the Voice of Westerleigh

Serving the Community for 113 years



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Host, Dan Rieu doing his dance routine.



Guests line up to enjoy the fine selection of donated desserts.

The Society wishes to thank those members who have already paid their dues for 2006. Membership cards have been mailed.

All others should have received your applications in a separate mailing. Your quick response to our annual membership drive will be greatly appreciated.



Winner of the best "decorated tree" went to Table #2



Line dancers enjoying the music of Jerry "G" the Music Man.



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