



THE VOICE OF WESTERLEIGH

Newsletter of the Westerleigh Improvement Society, Inc.

PO Box 140-043, Staten Island, NY 10314

www.wisonline.org

JUNE 2015

Serving the Westerleigh community for 122 years

Vol. 51 No. 3

Circulation: 850



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we move into the summer season residents of our community are planning vacations and many outdoor activities. It seems like winter is merely a distant, unpleasant memory. Westerleigh is exploding with new plantings and is enhanced by so many well-tended properties.

The Society's Annual Meeting was a memorable one with guest speaker NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer. Many questions were answered and speedy follow-ups were promised for those questions that could not be answered. There is a full report of the meeting written by editor Lou Bergonzi in this issue.

June brings the Annual Patriotic Sunday in Westerleigh Park. For the 31st year the South Shore Band will perform at the bandstand on June 28th. The concert is dedicated to the memory of the late William Schorkopf, Society President for 30 years. Details are listed in this newsletter.

During the course of the summer parts of Westerleigh Park will be closed for construction to help alleviate erosion and to better control water inside the park. The Parks Department has indicated that the project will last into 2016.

As always, if you feel there is an issue that the Society can assist you with, please contact us.

DID YOU KNOW? The Westerleigh Improvement Society has over 700 members giving our community a strong voice with local politicians and city government. We will be running a membership drive this summer with the distribution of a Special Edition newsletter. Talk to your neighbors, suggest they join. Help us grow to be even more representative of our community.

BECOME A MEMBER - ATTEND A MEETING - PRESERVE WESTERLEIGH

WESTERLEIGH

IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

William Schorkopf Memorial Patriotic Sunday

Westerleigh Park

Sunday, June 28 2-4 PM



Featuring
The South Shore Band

Bring Folding Chairs
Refreshments Will Be Served

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### UPCOMING MEETINGS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

Immanuel Union Church

693 Jewett Avenue  
at the corner of Maine Ave.

~ Everyone Welcome ~

# NYC COMPTROLLER SCOTT STRINGER ADDRESSES WIS ANNUAL MEETING BY LOU BERGONZI

Scott Stringer praised the work of the Westerleigh Improvement Society when the New York City Comptroller addressed the annual meeting of the society May 13, 2015 at the Immanuel Union Church on Jewett Avenue.

Stringer, who was elected as the city's top fiscal watchdog in November 2013, called the WIS "one of the premier civic associations in New York City" in his talk, during which he also saluted President Michael Morrell for his "outstanding leadership."



Time and time again, the comptroller stressed that his job mandate was a simple one. "This is the people's office," he said, and as such must audit agencies, protect retirement funds and look after the fiscal security of the city's 8 million residents, all the while keeping his office independent of the political environment that at times strangles the city's ability to serve its constituents.

While decrying the failures of the Build It Back program, which he said caused residents devastated by Hurricane Sandy to suffer even more at the hands of unscrupulous contractors – a situation

he said will never be repeated – he saved his sharpest attacks for two concerns which he said have drained the city's fiscal resources for far too long: lawsuits filed against the city and Wall Street money managers.

"The comptroller has a responsibility to save the city money set aside for the people," Stringer said. Using a new system he called "Claimset" – which examines each case to determine if there are any trends to the city's liability. If one is found, it is corrected, hopefully allowing the city to drastically reduce the \$732 million it paid to settle lawsuits last year.

For example, he said, the city paid out more than \$2 million to settle lawsuits involving tree branches falling on citizens. By applying Claimset, he found that figure rose because the city reduced its tree-pruning budget by \$1 million, resulting in a loss to taxpayers of \$1 million.

Claimset, he is convinced, can be applied to every agency to cut down on the amount of money paid out each year, and that includes the NYPD. Stringer says the NYPD is now using Claimset, the first time that has happened, and stressed his office is working closely with Police Commissioner William Bratton to reduce the department's payouts even more.

Even more financially



*NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer and WIS President Mike Morrell.*

damaging to the city, Stringer said, is the city's reliance on Wall Street money managers to invest the city's \$160 billion in retirement funds. It's a situation, he said, that causes him to "lose sleep at night."

Instead of focusing on the gross profits these funds generate we should be looking at the fact these managers are charging the city upwards of 90% in fees. Of the \$2.1 billion the city made last year on these pension funds, managers extracted \$2.05 billion in fees, leaving the city with a net gain of only \$500 million. That, he said, is going to change. "Managing pension money," is his most serious responsibility, he said.

Stringer also pledged his agency will look into the extravagant and often wasteful spending by the Department of Education. "We must take care of the next generation of kids," a mandate he pointed out that hits close to home for him, as the father of two children under the age of 5.

The 55-year-old former Manhattan borough president also promised to alleviate one of

*continued on next page*

## WESTERLEIGH WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE

For four years, the Westerleigh Women's Roundtable has met monthly in different locations under the leadership of Westerleigh Improvement Society Director Sharon Heule. The group gathers for lunch, sociability and conversation.

The group is an offshoot of the Westerleigh Improvement Society and meets on the last Friday of each month year round, enjoying lunch at a different Staten Island restaurant. On May 29, the fourth

anniversary celebration was held in the Fountain Room at the Hilton Garden Inn. It should be noted a fountain was part of the Westerleigh scene during the Prohibition Movement. It was located near the intersection of Clinton B. Fisk Avenue and The Boulevard and was in the shape of an inverted whiskey glass to protest alcoholic consumption at the time.

Anyone interested in further information about the group may contact the Society at wis\_si@yahoo.com. ∞



*The Boulevard in Prohibition Park.*

## THIS AND THAT IN WESTERLEIGH

- The DOT advises the Society that **resurfacing of Westerleigh streets will begin after the summer**. A tentative schedule will be printed in our September issue.
- Construction on the **capital project in Westerleigh Park will begin this summer** as well. Activities will be curtailed due to partial or complete closure of areas of the park. More information in the September newsletter.
- A reminder that **street tree pruning is underway** in Westerleigh through a contract issued by NYC Parks. The work is slated to continue through August.
- **The Jewett Avenue sewer project continues through the summer** with much of the work centered in the Forest Avenue/Barrett Avenue area. The contractor anticipates permanent resurfacing of Jewett Avenue in the fall.



*Mike Morrell throws out the first pitch at the Westerleigh Guys & Gals Opening Day in Northerleigh Park on April 18, 2015.*

*Scott Stringer, continued*

Staten Island's greatest complaints: the poor quality of express bus service. Acknowledging our borough has it "the worst" among the city's bus riders, he vowed "that is going to change" during his term in office.

Stringer finished by taking ques-

tions – and complaints – from members of the audience. He instructed staffers to take down the names and numbers of those with a particular problem and promised his office would follow up with a call to each individual as to the status of his or her situation.

In the end, he said, it is impera-

tive that we create our own NYC economy if this city is going to prosper. "We need to provide a different economic landscape for the 21st Century," he said. "Don't give up," he told the audience in conclusion. "We ARE going to change the culture of life for ourselves and our young people." ∞

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Lou Bergonzi



### WIS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

#### ANNUAL DUES:

Resident Membership \$10 \_\_\_\_ Associate Membership \$20 \_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # (OPTIONAL): \_\_\_\_\_

IF RENEWING: MEMBERSHIP # \_\_\_\_\_

(the number on the upper left of mailing label)

Please mail this form with your check made payable to the Westerleigh Improvement Society, P.O. Box 140-043, Staten Island, NY 10314