



# THE VOICE OF WESTERLEIGH

Newsletter of the Westerleigh Improvement Society, Inc.

PO Box 140-043, Staten Island, NY 10314

[www.wisonline.org](http://www.wisonline.org)

## NOVEMBER 2015

Serving the Westerleigh community for 122 years

Vol. 51 No. 5

Circulation: 850

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The seasons change and we here in Westerleigh are preparing for the upcoming holidays and much colder weather. As I write this children are getting ready for Halloween and putting finishing touches on their costumes.

Work continues non-stop on the capital projects in our community. Recently the installation of rain gardens to control erosion in Westerleigh Park was begun. The project involves the closure of sections of the park and hopefully will be completed next year.

Most distressing these past few weeks was the progress of a variance application for a down zoned lot on Woolley Avenue. It appears the Board of Standards and Appeals will grant the variance despite the opposition of the community and the rezoning efforts of the Society. More on this topic in this issue.

On a lighter note the Society's upcoming Holiday Party is set for Dec. 5 at the Immanuel Union Church. Last year's affair was extremely festive and it's a great way to begin the holiday season with neighbors. Full details are in the enclosed flyer.

Please feel free to contact the Society with any issue you feel we can be of help.

### ALERT!

### LOCK CAR DOORS

Westerleigh has experienced some minor, but disturbing, thefts. According to victims, in the hours before daybreak the robbers try

car doors and when open, take money and items left inside. To our knowledge nothing of great value has been stolen, and no damage done to cars, but please remember to lock your cars every night and remove your valuables.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meeting begins at 8 pm.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Immanuel Union Church

693 Jewett Avenue  
at the corner of Maine Ave.

~ Everyone Welcome ~



### WIS HOLIDAY PARTY

DECEMBER 5, 2015

7-11 PM

Hot Buffet, Entertainment, Open Bar

(See our insert for details)



TOO MANY LEAVES,  
YARD AND FOOD  
WASTE?

RECYCLING STICKERS

are available from Councilman  
Steven Matteo's office.

CALL: (718) 980-1017

## WESTERLEIGH SEWER PROJECT UPDATE

For long-suffering residents on or near Jewett Avenue between College and Forest Avenues, there is good news to report: With just a few locations along the Jewett Avenue storm sewer that remain to be completed, the roads affected by the project are to be prepped for restoration. That means that before long the chambers being constructed on Forest

Avenue will be complete and traffic flow will return to normal. The short section on Willard Avenue adjacent to Westerleigh Park has been completed.

Responding to the Westerleigh Improvement Society's efforts to resolve issues brought up by residents in the past few weeks, the contractor, the community construction liaison and representatives of Community Board 1 met at the beginning of October

to iron out some concerns with the final stages of work. Unneeded construction equipment was removed and improvement in the temporary road surfaces was promised in the near future.

It is hoped that new curbs will be installed soon and the resurfacing of Jewett Avenue will begin. All catch basins are functional and will be used to eliminate flooding in the project area. ☺

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## 165 WOOLLEY AVENUE VARIANCE

In 2008 the Westerleigh Improvement Society was successful in rezoning much of our community to the R2 designation that permits only one-family homes on a minimum of 3,800 square feet of property. It took three years of effort and the support of Council Members Michael McMahan and James Oddo. The goal was to maintain the Westerleigh's character and avoid tear-downs and higher density development on small lots. Since the rezoning in 2008 much new construction has taken place within the new zoning requirements.

Over a year ago a builder applied for a permit to build a one-family home at 165 Woolley Avenue, originally the rear yard of the home at 234 Garrison Avenue. The Buildings Department denied the application since it failed to meet the minimum lot size for the R2. The builder decided to apply for a variance (exemption) from the zoning resolution to the Board of Standards and Appeals, the agency that can overrule zoning rules and allow such construction.

The Society opposed this variance application with the support of Borough President Oddo and Councilman Steven Matteo. Community Board 1 also voted to oppose the variance and the mat-

ter proceeded to a hearing at the Board of Standards and Appeals in Manhattan.

The hearing was held on September 1 with a continuance on October 27. Society President Michael Morrell and David Carr, Matteo's chief of staff, both testified in opposition. Despite overwhelming community opposition the variance was granted.

What is most disconcerting is the fact that such approvals can be used as evidence in other, similar variance applications. Despite this decision, the Society will continue to do its best to protect Westerleigh's zoning and character in the future." ☺

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## STREET RESURFACING

In the last few newsletters we have mentioned the scheduled resurfacing of streets approved by the DOT. We've learned that due to priority work elsewhere on

Staten Island our streets have been rescheduled for Spring 2016. This year, Mayor de Blasio has agreed to increase funding for street milling and repaving citywide, but especially on Staten Island. Much of the new work was concentrated on main thoroughfares and

involved night work. The Society, through Councilman Steven Matteo's office, has secured much badly needed road work in Westerleigh. We are hopeful that our community will be early on the list for resurfacings in 2016. ☺

# VISION ZERO

BY LOU BERGONZI



Beginning October 1st in an effort to cut down on traffic fatalities citywide, Mayor Bill de Blasio instituted his “Vi-

sion Zero” policy in January 2014. This version of the international road traffic safety project is a multi-faceted action, designed to combat crashes and increase safety for drivers, passengers and pedestrians alike.

But some directives now in place – while admirable in their intent – have drastically increased the time it takes to get from place to place along our borough’s famously car-clogged streets, and has led to increased gripping among motorists throughout our community.

The state Legislature has given the city the power over the placement of speed and red-light cameras, the ability to reduce the citywide speed limit to 25 mph, and to increase the penalties associated with dangerous driver behavior.

All of this has given way to complaints that the flow of traffic in our

borough has slowed to the point of doubling or even tripling the time it takes to run even the simplest of errands. And if you’re driving near schools during arrival or dismissal time – which always resembled a maze, even in good times – well, it may be wise to bring a book to read while you wait ... and wait ... to get by.

For residents of our community who travel along a 2.3 mile stretch of Clove Road, between Howard Avenue and Richmond Terrace, which has been downsized to a single lane to accommodate new bike paths, the complaints have drawn the attention of almost all our elected officials, including Borough President James Oddo. Oddo admitted that finding the proper balance between traffic flow, safety and the rights of bikers can be pretty tricky. For example, the stretch between Broadway and Forest, which reduces four lanes of travel to two, has drawn the ire not only of drivers, but of State Senator Diane Savino, who called the changes “unrealistic.”

According to Tom Cocola, the borough’s Department of Transportation commissioner, any time the DOT makes a change there is an initial reaction from the community, whether it is people ques-

tioning, complaining or simply confused. But, he said, after the first waves of complaints, people seem to have accepted the new changes, and for the most part, are obeying them.

“It isn’t a bad thing to try to save people’s lives,” he said. “But it’s always a challenge to balance what is good for the community with the element of frustration among residents.”

He points out that in 2014 there were 11 fatal accidents on Staten Island, which he said was the lowest in 25 years. So far this year, he said, there are already 18, which while still below average, show the need for improved safety. Hence, the establishment of the Vision Zero policies. Drastic or not, they appear here to stay.

Perhaps Cocola summed it up best by quoting his predecessor, Thomas Curitore, about what people want with regard to speed limits. Curitore, he said, used to say “People want to go 50 miles an hour on Hylan Boulevard, and want everyone to go 5 miles an hour on their street.

“What winds up happening is that they go 5 miles an hour on Hylan Boulevard, then race 50 miles an hour on their own street. ∞



## WESTERLEIGH PARK UPDATE

The drainage system installation, which will prevent future park erosion, continues. Left, a construction sign behind chain link fencing on Willard Avenue. Right, construction of swale, part of the erosion control. ∞



