

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc.

April 2013

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc. cordially invites you to attend its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 24, 2013 at 8:00 PM in the Greenville School Cafeteria, Glendale Road, Scarsdale, NY. We will begin our 66th year of service to the Edgemont Community.

On the agenda for the April 24th meeting are the President's Report; the Treasurer's Annual Report; the election of Officers and Directors of the Council for 2013-2014; the presentation of the Silver Bowl award for service to our community; and a Guest Speaker.

GUEST SPEAKER

This year's guest speaker will be Peter Swiderski, the mayor of Hastings-on-Hudson, one of Greenburgh's six incorporated villages. His topic: "What it's like to govern a village in the Town of Greenburgh."

In Hastings, legislative and policy-making powers are vested in the Mayor and Board of Trustees. The Mayor is the official head of the village and presides at meetings of the Trustees. The Mayor may vote on any matter before the Board, and is obliged to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie. The term of office is two years. In the five years from 2006-2011 (before implementation of the tax-levy cap), Hastings-on-Hudson's taxes increased by a rate of 27.7%. Mr. Swiderski was a village trustee and later the mayor during this period. In 2006-2011, the tax rate in unincorporated Greenburgh (which includes Edgemont) increased 47%.

THE SILVER BOWL AWARD

This year the ECC will bestow its Silver Bowl Award for distinguished community service on longtime resident Maggi Landau. Maggi worked selflessly for Edgemont as a single mother; she was very active in the PTSA and served as its president. She was a 2-term member of the Board of Ed, and served as president. She was the Board's representative on the Citizens Advisory panel that addressed ways to improve communication, and as School Board president, used her experience on that panel to reinvigorate the school newsletter and led the effort to make school district communications much more open and transparent. Please turn to page 4 for a full overview of Maggie's service.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It's been a challenging year for Edgemont. In November 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit. ECC Director Aubrey Graf-Daniels formed an ad hoc relief agency to get food to housebound Edgemonters. ECC Director Bob Bernstein continuously updated the ECC's Facebook page—the only source of Edgemont news regarding power restoration—even though he was without power for more than a week. Edgemonters helping each other is what the ECC is all about.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't the only source of challenges for Edgemont. The Town of Greenburgh continues to waste money and ignore the taxpayers' interest at every turn:

* Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner continues to allow the WestHELP facility at Westchester Community College to remain empty—foregoing more than \$1 million a year in revenue for the Town.

* Despite years of repeated calls for a town-wide revaluation from the ECC, and Mr. Feiner's promise in May 2012 that the Town would proceed with revaluation, the Town only got around to putting together an RFP in February 2013. That RFP calls for proposals to be submitted by October 2013. What that means is that it will take until at least 2015 before Edgemont's tax base is properly valued, assuming the Town actually follows through, which is questionable. Why is that a problem? Our tax base is eroding, and tax certioraris and grievances combine to deadly effect with the millions of dollars our school district must fund in tax cert payments annually. Every year the Town delays costs the Edgemont school district's taxpayers \$1 million-plus. On the other hand, revaluation will likely result in Edgemont contributing an even greater percentage in town taxes, compared with the rest of the town, than the nearly 25% we currently pay.

* The Town's 2013 budget is just like the 2012 edition: a fantasia of unexplained revenues and costly, redundant services. The cost to taxpayers: hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

Costing Edgemont taxpayers lots of money isn't the only problem area with the Town:

* The zoning battle continues over S&R Development's attempt to build new multifamily housing on Dromore Road—an area not zoned for such use. In February 2013, ECC member Michelle McNally (*Continued on page 2*)

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc.

Founded in 1947 to determine community opinion on civic matters and coordinate community action thereon and to plan and promote the general welfare of the community embraced within Union Free School District # 6.

Officers:

President: Geoff Loftus
 First Vice President: Marc Ackerman
 Second Vice President: Monica Sganga
 Treasurer: Gregory Adams
 Recording Secretary: Bob Bernstein
 Corresponding Secretary: Aubrey Graf-Daniels

Directors:

Marc Ackerman	Todd Garvelink
Gregory Adams	Hilary Greenberg
Jeanmarie Airo	Matthew Jaffe
Robert Bernstein	Jonathan Kelly
John Blakley, Sr.	Karen Kelly
Alec Clarke	Geoff Loftus
John Coleman	Monica Sganga
Jonathan Faust	Andrea Weiss

SBNC Representatives:

Cary McGee Sara Blotner
 Helene Orce (Alternate)

The eight member Associations of the Edgemont Community Council, Inc. are:

The Central Park Avenue Civic Association
 The Cotswold Association, Inc.
 The Edgemont Association
 Fort Hill Association
 Greenridge Association
 Longview Association
 Northern Greenville Association
 Southern Greenville Association

Newsletter Editors:

Robert Bernstein Geoff Loftus
 Michelle McNally

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc. Newsletter is published annually by the Board of Directors and is distributed without charge throughout the Edgemont Community.

A Message from Our President *(Continued from first page)*

discovered the existence of Restrictive Covenants on the Dromore properties. These covenants run with the land and preclude any and all construction of multifamily housing on Dromore Road. These covenants date back to 1912 and supersede all zoning laws. As the owner of the Greenburgh Nature Center, the Town is in a position to enforce the covenants. (More on these topics in my President's Report on page 3.)

The ECC is the umbrella organization for all the Edgemont civic associations and is the only group representing the entire Edgemont community. As it begins its 66th year of service, I ask that you support ECC by sending in your membership dues—there is a membership slip on the back page of this mailer. In addition to supporting the annual newsletter and other activities, your dues support the School Board Nominating Committee, which is funded solely by ECC. I also encourage you to become involved, either with your civic association or with ECC. The greater your awareness and participation, the more we can make a difference for Edgemont.

I look forward to seeing you on the 24th.

— **Geoff Loftus** (geoff.ecc@gmail.com)

Election of Officers and Directors

Officers

President	Geoff Loftus
First Vice President	Monica Sganga
Second Vice President	Peter Mellis
Treasurer	Gregory Adams
Recording Secretary	Alec Clarke
Corresponding Secretary	Aubrey Graf-Daniels

Directors: 3-Year Term Ending June 30, 2016

Roz Chantz, Ed Krauss, Howard Hirsch, Regina Hopkins, Malhar Nanavaty

Directors: 2-Year Term Ending June 30, 2015

Gregory Adams, Geoff Loftus, Mrinal Jhangiani

School Board Nominating Committee

1-Year Term Ending June 30, 2014

Elizabeth Sherman Graif, Howard Hirsch (Alternate: TBA)

May 21, 2013—School District Budget Vote and Election

Just a reminder from your Board of Directors about Voter registration. All citizens of the United States who are registered voters are eligible to cast a ballot in the School District budget vote and election on **Tuesday May 21, 2013**. The voting place is the Gymnasium at Edgemont Junior/Senior High School on White Oak Lane. The polls will be open from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Registration information can be obtained from the School District at its business office at Edgemont Junior/Senior School on White Oak Lane during normal school hours. All high school students who will be eighteen years of age by May 21st are urged to register to vote as soon as possible so that they may be allowed to participate in the election.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Edgemont Community Council served the 8500 residents of the Edgemont School District and the Greenville Fire District extraordinarily well this past year.

Many thanks to Marc Ackerman, our First Vice President; Monica Sganga, who ably chaired the School Board Nominating Committee in addition to being the ECC's Second Vice President; Gregory Adams, who keeps track of the money and pays the bills as Treasurer; Bob Bernstein, our Recording Secretary; and Aubrey Graf-Daniels, our Corresponding Secretary.

This year, the ECC launched the new Edgemont, NY website: www.edgemontnewyork.com. Monica Sganga was our content editor, Aubrey Graf-Daniels shot the amazing photographs, and yours truly designed and built the site. The Edgemont, NY website promotes our community as a wonderful place to live. There's a description of our community and our schools, related links to Westchester County, Town of Greenburgh, and news-media websites. Not to mention a list of favorites – everything from skin care to chicken wings (the Candlelight Inn, of course!).

As mentioned in my Message on the front page, the last year also saw Edgemonters rallying to each other's aid in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. Aubrey Graf-Daniels organized a group of volunteers to make sure meals got to a number of Edgemont shut-ins. Thanks to everyone who participated in this – you're too numerous to mention even though your generosity certainly deserves our thanks. Bob Bernstein seemed to keep in touch with everyone all over Edgemont and filed stories on Facebook about power outages as well as ConEd and the Town's responses to the crisis. The ECC's Facebook page was the only place people could get this information. And Bob did this while having no power (No heat! No hot water!) for more than a week.

I wish I could tell you that all of the Edgemont stories had those kind of feel-good payoffs to them. But Edgemont is just a small part of the Town of Greenburgh, and, as usual, the Town seems indifferent to Edgemont. "Indifferent" might be too mild a word: maybe a better word is "hostile."

Given that Edgemont represents only about 8% of the vote in Greenburgh (but accounts for almost 25% of the tax revenues!), is it any wonder that:

** Greenburgh taxes have gone up 47% between 2006 and

2011 (the last years before the state-mandated tax-levy cap) compared with the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson's 27.7% in the same time frame. And Hastings's taxes include the funding its fire department budget;

Greenburgh does not fund any fire-protection services.

** The 2012 and 2013 Town budgets include millions of dollars of borrowing from the Town's reserve fund to keep the tax increases below the state cap. What will happen if the Town needs that money for an emergency? Aren't emergencies what the reserve fund was created for?

** In the 2013 budget, the Town insists on spending money on two separate recreation departments, each with its own set of commissioners earning six-figure salaries, separate day camps, separate programs, separate staffs, and even separate facilities. The Town continues to spend money on its own police SWAT team, one that duplicates the protection available from Westchester County. And the Town has its own after-school program for children, even though every single school district in the Town already has its own after-school program. (Eliminating all of these redundancies, as the ECC has suggested for years, could result in millions of dollars in savings for all Greenburgh taxpayers, but the Town doesn't seem to care.)

** The Town lost its appeal of the Fortress Bible case. The Fortress Bible Church sued the Town of Greenburgh in U.S. District Court – and the court found in favor of the church. And the Court fined the Town for destroying evidence and failing in its discovery obligations – specifically singling out Supervisor Paul Feiner. Despite the court's overwhelmingly negative tone toward the Town, Greenburgh appealed the decision (running up more legal costs). The result? The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit found unanimously in favor of Fortress Bible Church and quoted extensively from the lower court's decision. Damages for the church are likely to be in excess of \$7 million. Given that Edgemont contributes almost 25% of all tax revenues, that means the bill to Edgemont for Supervisor Feiner's misbehavior in this case will cost more than \$1.75 million. That's a lot of money for our community to spend and get absolutely nothing in return. When the Court of Appeals decision was handed down, the ECC called for the resignations of Paul Feiner and Town Councilwoman Diana Juettner. We were ignored, of course.

(Continued on page 4)

SILVER BOWL AWARD FOR SERVICE TO MAGGI LANDAU

The Edgemont Community Council is happy to present this year's Silver Bowl Award for distinguished community service to longtime Edgemont resident Maggi Landau.

Maggi served on the Edgemont Board of Education for two terms (6 years) and was president of the Board. She also served as president and director of the PTSA. At the PTSA, Maggi created Parent2Parent evenings to address the concerns of in-coming 7th grade parents and Y Day (Yearbook Day) and the Community Spirit BBQ. She also was part of the team that rebranded the Spring Fete and moved it to a venue outside of school. PTSA revenues and memberships increased significantly during Maggi's tenure.

As if that weren't enough, Maggi also served on the Edgemont Professional Development Committee working with Edgemont administrators and faculty in grades K-12 to develop programs and opportunities for faculty to meet specific professional goals. She was a parent representative on the Jr/Sr High School Hiring Committee, the Curriculum Review Committee, and the Senior Options Committee; worked on the Blue Book Committee; wrote a monthly column for the Goldsheet; and was a Seely Place grade parent and served on various elementary-school committees.

Edgemont isn't the only community to benefit from Maggi's service: She is currently the Artistic Director for Roots Music at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in Katonah, NY and the Music Curator for Madison Square Park in NYC.

Other charitable activities include: Past President and Board Member of Citymeals on Wheels in NYC, former Board Member of the Cancer Support Team in Mamaroneck, NY and former volunteer for Tay-Bandz.

Maggi and her late husband Bobby Minter moved to Edgemont in 1992. Their children Sarah Minter Furber (2000) and Casey Minter (2006) are alumni of Edgemont High School. She has earned the respect and gratitude of the entire Edgemont community.

President's Report (Continued from page 3)

** The Town has forfeited more than \$1 million in annual revenue from the WestHELP facility. The Town, led by Supervisor Feiner, is in breach of its lease with the County for this facility, and has allowed it to fall apart, making it uninhabitable and racking up millions of dollars in repair bills. It is against New York State law for elected officials to waste a municipal asset, but that has not stopped Mr. Feiner from allowing WestHELP to deteriorate. Why?

He seems to be placating the Mayfair Knollwood area, which attempted to incorporate as a village more than 20 years ago but was blocked from doing so by Mr. Feiner's predecessor, Anthony Veteran. Mayfair Knollwood sued, the NAACP intervened, and a Federal court found that Mayfair Knollwood was attempting to incorporate so it could impose racially exclusive zoning. The court decided against the community. Now it appears that Mr. Feiner and Mayfair Knollwood are trying to get around that decision by destroying the facility. In the meantime, taxpayers are losing revenues.

** The Town foreclosed on the Frank's Nursery property for failure to pay more than \$1 million in taxes. Westchester County law compels the sale of such a property to recoup as much money as possible for the benefit of other taxpayers. Did the Town sell the Frank's

Nursery property? In a word: No. The Town attempted to lease the property, which is illegal, and then held a voter referendum – at taxpayers' expense – to force the lease to happen. The referendum “passed”, but the potential lessee never signed the lease. And despite talk of purchasing the property, appears to have been unable to come up with the money. In the meantime, a second bidder appeared, offered significantly more money.

Has the Town sold the property to the second bidder? In a word: No. And while the Town refuses to sell the property, Greenburgh has to pay taxes to the local school district, etc., where the nursery is located – meaning that the Town's taxpayers are now on the hook for those taxes. ** So . . . taxpayers are taking a hit in the millions of dollars for:

- Increases in taxes,
- Losses from poor budgeting,
- Damages from Fortress Bible, and
- Losses from WestHELP and Frank's Nursery.

As if treating taxpayers like a pinata stuffed with money weren't enough, the Town's handling of zoning issues is incompetent at best. S&R Development (“S&R”) purchased a 2.3 acre property on (continued on page 5)

REPRESENTATIVES TO THE SCHOOL BOARD NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accordance with the current School Board Nominating Committee By-Laws, Sections A.4(a&d), Designation of Members of the Committee: The second announcement must include the dates and places of the meetings at which elections will be held and the names of all candidates previously submitted who will be considered for election. If an organization does not comply with the foregoing requirements, its designees shall not serve as a member of the Committee. In accordance with a 2010 change to Council’s by-laws, unless Council’s Board of Directors acts to fill a position, only the individuals named below from their sending organizations will be eligible for election and subsequent seating on the Committee.

Central Park Avenue (Meeting: TBA)
 1 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Edgemont (Meeting: 6/17/2013, Location: TBA)
 1 Year Hooman Yaghoobzadeh
 1 Year
 Alternates Jennifer Frain

Fort Hill (Meeting: TBA)
 2 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Greenridge (Meeting: TBA)
 1 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Longview (Meeting: 6/2/2013, Greenville)
 2 Year Anthony Sarro
 1 Year Peter Mellis

Alternate
Northern Greenville (Meeting: TBA)
 2 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Southern Greenville (Meeting: TBA)
 1 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Cotswold (Meeting: TBA)
 2 Year / 1 Year / Alternate: TBA

Student Representative (Appointed from the High School)

Edgemont Community Council (Meeting: 4/24/2013, Greenville)
 1-Year Term Ending June 30, 2014
 Elizabeth Sherman Graif, Howard Hirsch (Alternate: TBA)

President's Report *(Continued from page 4)*

Dromore Road adjacent to the Greenburgh Nature Center and abutting the Edgemont Jr/Sr High School playing fields. S&R is attempting to build a 45-unit multifamily building on property that is zoned for 3 to 4 single-family residences. In addition, Dromore Road is a private road that has not been improved to Town road standards, and S&R has said that it will not improve the road.

It turns out that there are Restrictive Covenants dating back to the original purchase covering the Dromore Road properties. These covenants are enforceable and, if enforced by their owners, will prevent any multifamily buildings from going up on Dromore Road. Disclosure of restrictive covenants is required when filing an application with the Planning Board. The covenants were disclosed in its 2007 application, which was never reviewed because the case was in court, and then S&R revised its development proposal. S&R failed to disclose the existence of these covenants when it filed its 2012 application. The Town, as the property owner of the Greenburgh Nature Center, is in a position to enforce the covenants. The ECC has asked the Town to do this, and the Town is reviewing the matter, but it has not indicated when it will make a decision.

What can Edgemont do about all of the taxpayer hits and ineffective Town government, which has not improved even with changes to the Town Board? In February 2012, the ECC Board felt that Edgemont would likely benefit from becoming a village. We urged the community to take

action. A citizens' group is preparing a petition for incorporation, and when they are ready to launch a signing drive, the ECC will host Open Forums to discuss the pros and cons of incorporating as the Village of Edgemont.

We urge you to visit the ECC’s website, www.edgemontcommunitycouncil.org where we post minutes from our monthly meetings – we meet the first Monday of every month throughout the school year. Also please visit our Facebook page for Edgemont news alerts (www.facebook.com/EdgemontCommunityCouncil).

— **Geoff Loftus** (geoff.ecc@gmail.com)

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE ECC BYLAWS

An amendment to the ECC bylaws has been proposed by the Board of Directors. This amendment will allow the Board to conduct business telephonically and/or digitally as long as quorum requirements are met.

Amendment to Article V - Directors - Section 3

Where references are made to the Directors communicating by mail or in writing, they may use telephones, e-mail, and other forms of digital correspondence instead of traditional mail. Any votes taken using these methods will need to meet the quorum requirement of this Section.

ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 24, 2013
GREENVILLE
CAFETERIA
8:00 PM

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc.
PO Box 1161
Scarsdale, NY 10583-9161

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc.

P.O. Box 1161

Scarsdale, NY 10583-9161

I am interested in furthering the activities of the Edgemont Community Council and would like to become a member. Enclosed are my family's dues for the year July 1, 2013—June 30, 2014.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

eMail Address: _____

___ Membership \$30

Your comments please: