

February 23, 2009

Third Track Cost Sharing Agreement: Signed, Sealed & Delivered

I'm pleased to report that every village along the Mainline corridor; Bellerose, Floral Park, Garden City, New Hyde Park, Mineola and Westbury all of whom belong to CARE INC. (Citizens Against Rail Expansion) have now passed resolutions officially joining us in financing any legal and expert services that would be required to challenge the proposed construction of the Third Track.

While these villages previously agreed to this arrangement it did not become official until each had respectively passed resolutions to this effect at their public meetings. This idea of mutually collaborating to finance this effort was conceived, nurtured and brought to fruition by our village and I believe this agreement will prove to be the biggest gun in our arsenal. It was no easy task for six villages to agree on a cost sharing arrangement and its happy consummation, wrought by perseverance and steadfastness, is a triumph of partnership over partisanship.

Verizon Wireless Application

This is to inform you that the Village Board will hold a Public Hearing at 8:00 P.M. in the Court Room at Village Hall on Tuesday, March 3rd in relation to an application by Verizon Wireless to obtain a Special Use Permit to affix wireless telecommunications antennas and install related equipment on a support structure less than 50 feet in height. The structure in question is located at 85-87 Covert Avenue, which is on the west side of Covert Avenue approximately 20 feet south of Cunningham Avenue.

Restaurant Week

This past Friday I helped to usher in the first Annual Restaurant Week at Jamesons on Tulip Avenue. Up until March 1st, 11 restaurants in our village will be serving a three course prix-fixe dinner including appetizer, entrée and dessert. These dinners will be served on Friday and Saturday until 7 P.M. Meanwhile, don't forget to check out and support our other stores and shops in the vicinity. Small business is the real engine of our economy, which is why I favor at least a targeted capital gains tax for these hardworking folks who generate revenue, create jobs and serve the community.

One final note on Restaurant Week: They say that the best smell in the world is fresh bread, the best savor, salt and the best love, children. So if you bring your kids, the dining experience will be flavored with life's greatest blessings. Sonia and I look forward to seeing some of you during dinner hour.

Homeownership

Owning a home is a staple in village life although we equally value our many good citizens who are renters. Most of us have mortgages that we pay on time. So the idea of letting struggling homeowners, as the new \$275 billion package out of Washington does, renegotiate their mortgages with lenders for more favorable interest rates in order to avoid foreclosure and loss of their homes at the expense of those who were frugal, saved and responsibly made payments on time will be bitterly received by some. Under this plan average homeowners will be subsidizing those who purchased over their heads but, in truth, government via taxpayer money has been subsidizing homeownership since the end of WWII, although not with this kind of extravagance.

While I continue to argue that bailouts will fuel profligacy rather than tame it and that the current stimulus will be a small boost with a staggering price tag, it is clear that widespread mortgage foreclosures have had the single most crippling effect on the country's financial institutions. So provided we stay within the stated guidelines and don't reward the unscrupulous, I'm cautiously supporting President Obama's foreclosure plan, risky as it is, since I don't see any other way to stop or slow the downward spiraling of home prices that is sucking the oxygen out of the economy. Grasping the science of economics can, at times, be like trying to understand spiritualism or mysticism; it defies the powers of ordinary comprehension and experience.

The only thing to do when navigating uncharted waters is not to be rash and to approach our best laid plans humbly, with a dose of healthy skepticism and always ready to change course. An economic plan promising salvation must be tempered by the wise observation of the great economist Fredrich Hayek who noted that the curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design.

The "Oscar" and Floral Park: Congratulations John Caglione

This past Sunday evening, John Caglione, former resident of Floral Park was up for his second Oscar award in the category of "Best Makeup" for the movie "Dark Knight" the second installment of the new Batman movie series. Back in 1990, John won his first Oscar in the same category for a movie about another comic book hero, Dick Tracy. John and his wife Helen, who I had the pleasure of once meeting, lived on Elm Avenue for close to 10 years. John is truly a gifted artist and sculptor. Although he no longer lives in Floral Park his in-laws do and there is still a big piece of his heart here. So congratulations John and good luck on winning your second Oscar.

It would seem that Tinsel Town and Floral Park would have very little in common and, for the most part, that's true. But I vividly remember one connection our village had with a Hollywood celebrity. One day when I was about 8 years old and biking around I encountered on Aspen Street, between Floral Parkway and East Poplar, a huge crowd milling excitedly about. A patrol car was parked and a police officer stood leaning

against the car his arms folded and his eyes, along with everyone else, focused on a second story window of a large white house.

“What’s all the buzz about?” I asked quizzically. “Jayne Mansfield is up there,’ one of the older kids informed me in almost a reverential tone, “She just came to the window and waved.” “Oh” I said, shaking my head knowingly but really unknowingly. A pregnant pause and then I added tentatively, “Who is Jayne Mansfield?” “Why she’s a big movie star you little dope.”

For those too young to remember, Jayne Mansfield was a blonde bombshell in the mold of Marilyn Monroe (about a year later, just like Marilyn, she died tragically young) and was then making a big splash as one of the era’s great sex symbols. Mansfield had become the recent sister-in-law of a resident who lived on Aspen St. whose husband, Jerry Lamonica, was a good enough tenor to sing at the prestigious State Theatre in New York City. Years later I ran with her son, Tommy, who was a budding track star at Floral Park Memorial.

That summer she was visiting her in-laws and it caused quite a commotion. Ted Caragol, Judge Caragol’s son was then in his early 20s and remembers the first time she walked out of Levines stationary store in one of those revealing, eye-popping outfits precipitating mass cardiac arrest of every male in the vicinity of Tulip Avenue. Passing cars were practically riding up on the sidewalk, Ted laughingly recalled. It was amazing no one was killed. When things later settled down she could be seen, on occasion shopping at Key Food (now Associated) holding the hand of her little daughter, Mariska Hargitay, who is now a star of the hit television show, “Law and Order.”

So there I was, so many summers ago, sitting patiently on my bicycle waiting for an encore. Suddenly, the window curtain was thrust aside and there, benevolently smiling down on us, in all her feminine glory, was Jayne Mansfield. The crowd shrieked with delight and in just a few moments she vanished as quickly as she had appeared. By now I had had about enough of stardom and began to pedal away with an air of indifference. Still in the shade of my prepubescent innocence, I would much rather have seen Mickey Mantle.