

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN GREEN ISLAND

March 14, 2013

Dear Friends,

I am going to spend pretty much this entire newsletter talking about the proposed gun range. I have heard that I have been criticized by a couple of residents for not keeping them informed about things. While I have become accustomed to criticism as a public servant, I must say I take offense to being criticized for not keeping people informed of what is going on in our Village. I have worked harder and been more transparent than any Mayor in the history of this Village. I have written more than 120 letters to our residents, made myself available on pretty much a 24/7 basis and taken the time to answer peoples questions and concerns no matter where I meet them. Sometimes the timing of my newsletter does not coincide with our monthly meetings, so the dialogue may lag, but I always try to let everyone know what is going on. But let's put all that aside and talk about the issue of the proposed indoor gun range that has been applied for on Lower Hudson Avenue.

First let me tell you, I am not a gun person. I am intimidated by them because I don't have one, have never owned one, know anything about them and can't see myself ever owning one. But just because I don't own one or have a desire to own one, doesn't mean that I should impose my feelings on anyone else. The Constitution of the United States permits people to bear arms. And if they have that right, I think we should allow them a place to learn how to use them properly and safely. Now, I didn't always feel that way. When the idea of a gun range was first brought to my attention, I was opposed to it. And then I met two men who unknowingly changed my mind. Let me explain.

Just before Christmas I had a funeral for a Green Island native who was a retired NYS Trooper. The Troopers sent two men to be an honor guard at church and escort the funeral to the cemetery. This was just after the tragedy in Newtown, CT, so our conversation in the 20 minute ride to the cemetery turned to that tragedy. I told them I thought two things had to change in this country to help prevent these kinds of tragedies from happening: #1 – We need to make it illegal for anyone other than law enforcement and military to own an assault weapon and #2 – We need to ban the violent, graphic video games that our children play and are becoming addicted to. I went on to say that I think these violent video games desensitize our children to violence and killing and make them incapable of separating fantasy and reality. To my great surprise, they both said they agree with #2, but not with #1. I was astonished. I told them I thought they would be at the front of the line to ban assault weapons because they are in the front lines when those weapons are being used. They calmly began to educate me that law abiding gun owners have never been the ones killing law enforcement or other innocents. They went on to tell me that taking away the rights of law abiding citizens will NOT stop the terrible events like Newtown; that unstable or mentally ill people will always be out there and that is where we need to turn our attention. They felt very strongly that continuing to erode the rights of law abiding citizens is the

wrong direction to take. They talked about a man in another country who took the lives of 20 innocent school children with a KNIFE. They asked if we should make knives illegal. I really started to think about a lot of things. One of the realizations I had was that when I stopped talking and started listening to these two men – I learned a lot. I then started thinking that if I stopped talking and started listening more – what more would I learn? I was amazed how much I learned when I spoke only to ask questions --- and then listened to the answers.

I went to the parties that wanted to open the gun range and asked a lot of questions – and then I listened. I learned that you can't go into a gun range and just ask to use a gun and go fire it. You must be a member of the gun range; you must take a four hour safety course (even police officers and military); you must qualify with your weapon; you must buy the ammunition from the range (this is to avoid "hot loads" that could be more powerful and dangerous); you can't bring in someone as a guest to watch you (only approved members are allowed on the range); the range is built to specifications of the NRA, which has very strict guidelines for safety; if someone is deemed by the range master to be suspicious or unstable by any means, they will be reported to the police for further investigation.

The Village Board members and Planning Board members were invited to tour the proposed facility and ask any questions. I think it would be safe to say that they all felt much more comfortable after learning how strict the regulations and building specifications were.

We held a public hearing on a proposed change to a local law which actually made the specifications for a gun range stricter than what was on the books. After the public hearing, the Village Board voted unanimously to amend the local law. Now the issue goes to the Planning Board for a vote. That presentation to the Planning Board was scheduled for Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 p.m., but I believe it will be postponed or tabled because the site plans have not been completed and given to the board, so it will have to go on the April agenda. (This is one of those times that the writing of this letter and the timing of the board meeting don't jive. I have to have this letter ready to print on the 15<sup>th</sup>, but the meeting isn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> and letter is mailed with the electric bills on the 19<sup>th</sup>.)

So, at 61 I have learned another great lesson in life: You don't learn anything if you are talking ---- only if you are listening. And that is what I did. People who say I had my mind made up on this issue from the beginning are 100% wrong. I opposed it in the beginning and became a supporter of it because of two NYS Troopers who made me look at an issue with a different set of eyes --- and to this day, they have no idea of the impact they made on me --- on many different levels.

So, I will keep you posted on how this goes and we would love to see some more people come to the meetings.

Please make sure to read the other newsletter. It has a lot of important information and **NOTHING ABOUT SNOW REMOVAL!!!!**

Sincerely,

Ellen M. McNulty-Ryan