

**PUBLIC FORUM
SEPTEMBER 8, 2005
WALDEN ELEMENARY SCHOOL**

Mayor Becky Pearson called the public forum to order at 7:00 pm.

The following were:

Present:	Mayor	Becky Pearson
	Deputy Mayor	Mary Ellen Matise
	Trustees	Mary Jean Norman
		Roy Wynkoop
		Richard Hurd
		Lauren Keator

Absent:	Trustee	Jose DeJesus
---------	---------	--------------

Also Present:	James Politi, Village Manager
	Nancy Mitchell, Village Clerk
	Jeff Holmes, Police Chief
	Thomas McCoskery, Police Sergeant
	John Howland, Recreation Coordinator

Mayor Pearson thanked everyone for coming.

There was a moment of silence for the victims of hurricane Katrina.

Mayor Pearson introduced Donna, Liz Colone, Virginia Brown, and Charles Anderson from the Dispute Resolution Center. Jaime, Valley Central High School Social Worker was also present.

Mayor Pearson indicated that the Board is looking to solve a problem, not necessarily a curfew. She is in favor of a curfew for children 16 and under from 11:59pm until 6am. A sign up sheet was passed around and if anyone was interested in being on a committee to help with the situation to indicate that on the sign up sheet.

Frank Appell, Scofield Street asked what the problem is, extent, facts, areas and who brought up the complaint.

Mayor Pearson stated that there is a problem on Valley Avenue and Capron Street. There are many children out late at night, fifteen/twenty children disturbing people. The Village has received many complaints. There used to be a problem on Main Street and the surveillance cameras moved them to different areas.

Jeff Holmes, Police Chief stated that he's been with the Village for 24 years and he started out as a part time officer on foot patrol and he was juvenile officer for 4 years.

This is nothing new to any different community around us. What they've had a problem with during the last year and a half is on Valley Avenue and on Capron Street there's been more than normal kids hanging out. In the past six months Capron Street and Valley Avenue has had some interesting neighbors move in and those people have been a draw to the children in the area. He's talking about 15 and 16 for the majority of the kids. He's also talking 18 and 20 year olds who are not children. There are about seven under 15 years old who are part of the consistent problem, out until 1 or 2 am. During the past six months Valley Avenue and Capron Street have seen quite a few people and children hanging out in the area at all hours disrupting the neighborhood. In the last two years a lot of the juveniles they've been dealing with are the same ones. They started at 10, 11 years old and now they are 17 and 18. It's really not a majority of kids in the community; it's a select few, under 25.

Ed Kurpell, 26 Linden Avenue asked, if there was a curfew would it be the whole Village or street by street.

Mayor Pearson indicated that it would be the whole village.

Karen Menendez, Pleasant Avenue stated that she knows where her kids are. Why can't you hold the parents responsible?

Diane Sawyer, 31 Alfred Place stated that parents should be held responsible. There is a problem with the kids hanging out at the Hess Station.

Bill Thompson, 7 Grandview Avenue stated that he is a certified mental health and substance abuse counselor for thirty years and you're talking about 25 kids in this Village and no one is taking into account the message you're going to send to hundreds of children, that they are second class citizens and they are not to be trusted.

June Saccardi, 154 S. Montgomery Street asked where are the parents of these kids that are walking around at 12 at night.

Anna Bodes, 120 Linden Drive stated that there is a problem on Linden Drive between 9 and 10pm.

Mayor Pearson asked the Chief what the police can pick up 16 years olds for.

Chief Holmes explained that a juvenile is someone under the age of 16. Between the age of 7 and 15 family court will take care of them. When they pick them up they may not be able to send them to family court, because the majority of the things they are talking about are violations and violations do not go to family court. Crimes and misdemeanors go to family court. You can file a PINS petition against them and that's something they have done.

Ron Palmer, 97 Orange Avenue stated that he is concerned about a curfew being in the center of town, it's village wide, and he's concerned about it being pushed farther

outwards. He asked if they fled that most of the problems are coming from rental type units. Cameras on Main Street were mentioned, he asked why not move them farther and cause problems elsewhere.

Brenda Adams, 31 Valley Avenue agrees with the comments that were said tonight. It is a small group of children and she feels this small group is holding people hostage on Valley Avenue. She believes a curfew at 11:59pm is too late. Valley Avenue has been a nightmare this summer. It has calmed down because of the police presence. We need to send a message that the village is a nice place to live and raise your family.

Lisa Bucklen, 144 High Meadows indicated that she lives just on the border of the village in the town and they have had four thefts in her neighborhood. She understands they are sending a negative message to children. She teaches children with behavioral problems. If its presented as a means to provide structure, bring safety back to the village and bring peace to people then the curfew should be implemented at a time when children should be at home, between 10 and 11pm.

Dick Master, 71 Maple Street stated that he doesn't know if the curfew will help. He's seen kids taking down signs and throwing them in someone's yard. He owns a business in Walden and he has been robbed. They should have a curfew for the adults too.

Mr. Thompson stated that he was brought up in the Bronx and was a victim of gunshot wounds and stabbings. Unfortunately this is a state of life. You can't put together a pristine village here. You have to hold the parents responsible. You need to speak to the justice system too. The police are doing a great job.

Jaime, Valley Central stated that a curfew is only part of the solution. There has to be more implemented.

Karen Wessenberg, 27 Orchard Street stated that Walden has been the most amazing place she has lived. She asked about a neighborhood watch.

Pam Gallagher, Riverview Street stated that taking one child off the street with a curfew, it would be worth it.

Michelle Thompson stated that she doesn't think a curfew would be worth it.

Greg Stey, 23 Linden Drive stated that the good kids shouldn't be punished. Is there another town that has a curfew and what happens in that town? He doesn't know where this comes from.

Mayor Pearson stated that she has gotten sample legislation from other municipalities and the attorney is also doing some research. The Village of Montgomery has a curfew, but they hardly use it.

Trustee Wynkoop stated that the Board is not saying that there will be a curfew or not going to be a curfew. They are looking into what the general consensus of the public is.

John Kantonah stated that his property adjoins the Village and just recently he was robbed. His heart goes out to the people who live on Capron and Valley. He doesn't feel its government's job to legislate moral. The community should impose family values on each other.

Katherine Babcock, 92 Ulster Avenue stated that she goes down Valley Avenue all the time and there have been changes. The police are much more involved. She feels a curfew is not going to solve the problem. You're taking our civil rights away. Focus on the twenty five kids. She is totally against a curfew.

Jackie Hughes, Valley Avenue stated that she has lived here for 25 years and she has raised two daughters and she does realize it's her responsibility to know where her children are. She doesn't know if a curfew will help. The Chief has done a good job. There are a lot of parents out there that are not raising their children.

Oscar Alleyne, Windrift Lane stated that there is concern about a curfew. Outside of the curfew what other alternative is the Village proposing or what solutions do they have.

Mayor Pearson explained that they had a meeting with a social worker, probation officer and someone from the County Youth Bureau who spoke to the Board of other programs and the Village is looking into that. We need the communities support.

Mrs. Bodes stated that she would gladly put herself on the street, but these kids get into her face.

Someone spoke regarding the kids on Main Street. Make the kids do community service.

Liz Colone, Dispute Resolution stated that they do have a program called community service. They do have police departments who do referrals directly.

Dick Masterson stated that they need more police presence.

Ms. Mongelluzzo, 32 Valley stated that they are in support of a curfew.

Frank Appell asked about how much it costs in manpower.

Mayor Pearson stated that they don't have the answer yet.

Resident from 37 E. Avenue asked what the Board has to say.

Trustee Norman stated that after listening to everyone this evening she is very impressed with what people have said. She can't say that she's made a decision on the curfew. She believes that parents are responsible for their children. She also believes that we need to get down on Main Street and Valley Avenue and talk to these kids.

Trustee Keator stated that everyone has had good ideas tonight. The Board is not making any decisions tonight. This is an open forum. Even if the Board made a decision tonight the curfew law has to be written and it has to be written as iron clad as it could possibly be to help everybody.

Deputy Mayor Matisse stated that her concern has been, she has talked to small children, 10-12 years old to find out what they think, to find out the public perception as to how they feel the Village should deal with this. She acknowledged Tony Morino who set her on the course of bringing in the Youth Bureau. She hopes we can find resources we can use before we have to criminalize these kids. She is concerned about Linden Drive.

Trustee Hurd indicated that he has found all of the comments fascinating. They are expressing the same thoughts of the Board. The Board is a legislative body and they pass laws. The test of any law is the force that backs it which would be our police force. Our police budget is 1million dollars and at night there are two officers on duty and if a police officer picks up a 14 year old juvenile he doesn't just drive them to the station, throw them in jail and get back on the street, he is required to stay with that person for hours until the parent can be found to come in and retrieve that child. The Board has to consider if this curfew is going to be a magic bullet and if it is a good or false start. He hasn't made up his mind. He's not convinced that we lack the tools necessary now to get the job done. He would prefer to focus in on the people who are causing the problems.

Trustee Wynkoop stated that he is against a curfew because it's very hard to enforce. Also, that it would prohibit 400 kids that can't run down and get a soda at the Dairy Mart. He can't see imposing a curfew on kids that aren't doing anything wrong. We are looking for someway out of this situation. There are other avenues they have to explore.

Althea Mullarkey, 21 Watkins Drive stated that she asked her 15 year old son how he felt about a curfew and he laughed and said they want to make a law to make sure I'm in bed by midnight, I'm already in bed at midnight. She is in favor of a curfew because she knows you have to start somewhere.

Tony Carlini, Gatehouse Place suggested a voluntary curfew where if a parent wants there child out past a certain time to come and get a permit from the Village.

Maggie Giza, Bradley Lane stated that we're talking about a group of 25 how long ago was it one or two and how long before its 50 or 100 children. These people are violating all of us.

Tom Mann, 101 Cliff Street, Empire for Walden Little League stated that the kids tell him that they are bored.

Tony Morino, Minority Leader, Orange County Legislature stated that Trustee Matisse contacted him asking him what the county could do. He advised her that there is a youth bureau, programs and money available. It's not just Walden's problem. You have to meet and talk to these kids and meet with the Villages of Maybrook and Montgomery. Curfew should be the last resort.

Jaime explained that one of the reasons she is here tonight is because the school district did talk to those young people. They did a search institute survey. They surveyed the kids and asked them what is it that they need. When they got the results back they held a meeting at Spruce Lodge and from that meeting they developed a smaller coalition which was called the Town of Montgomery Community Coalition. Through that meeting they partnered with Big Brothers and Big Sisters and this year they had a mentoring program with 22 kids.

Mike Lynch, 54 Albany Avenue stated that he has spoken to most of these kids and he feels there isn't enough for them to do a curfew. The whole recreation department is structured to give recreation throughout the school year. They tested mandates where kids can achieve goals in school. We don't need recreation during the school year.

Ruth Jones, Walker Street addressed the problems on Walker Street during the day.

Debbie, Windingbrook stated that some of the kids are rude. There are kids from Plattekill that hang out at the Hess Station. The parents have to start being responsible.

Resident of 1 Edmunds Lane stated that we do need a curfew.

Angie, Sherman Avenue stated everyone is right there is a problem. She knows these kids and they have good parents.

Mike Ciardullo, 83 Walnut Street stated that he's been a resident here for 30 years. He use to live in Brooklyn and an element moved into his neighborhood exactly what we have here. We have to deal with the problem. We have to find the laws to protect us. We have the laws to protect them.

Mary 43 Pine Street stated that she needs people to help her get something started with the Boys and Girls Club.

Mayor Pearson thanked everyone for coming tonight.

Trustee Keator stated that looking at her notes one of the first was no tolerance and maybe we can have a no tolerance policy.

Trustee Hurd stated that the one thing he heard was out of the 6124 residents less than ½ of 1%, less than 30 people are causing our problems. What he also heard these people are not wonderful people up until a certain hour of the night and then suddenly become a problem. It's a problem we have to deal with directly.

Deputy Mayor Matise asked Jaime if truancy was a big issue amongst this group.

Jaime stated absolutely.

Deputy Mayor Matise asked if there were people from the different neighborhoods in Walden on the coalition.

Jaime indicated yes.

Mayor Pearson thanked everybody again and adjourned the meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Mitchell
Village Clerk