



WARDS CORNER CIVIC LEAGUE

CROSSROADS

Serving: Colony Point, Hariton Court, Merridale, Pinehurst,
Restmere, Rose Gardens, Sussex of Norfolk,
Virginia Gardens and Wexford Terrace

April, 2006

CIVIC LEAGUE MEETING

MONday

april 17, 2006

7:00 PM

**norfolk fitness and wellness
CENTER**

Agenda

Mayor and city council election forum
Paul Fraim, barbara saunders and don williams
will be our guests

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jim English jenglish@odu.edu

Recently two articles and at least one letter to the editor have appeared in the Virginia Pilot Compass. James McNally's article "Wards Corner Surviving not Thriving" (Compass, March 9th edition) focused on Wards Corner as the once "Times Square of the South" now in decline and no longer the vibrant business area it once was 20 – 30+ years ago. In a letter to the editor (Compass, March 23rd, edition) from Brad Robinson, President of the Wards Corner Business Association, he indicated rightly so that Wards Corner is no longer the "Times Square of the South" although major and comprehensive steps are being taken to improve the area. Also appearing in that edition was an article "City Council has plans to make Wards Corner a destination again" written by Mayor Paul Fraim and Councilmen Barclay Winn and Don Williams. It also correctly assesses the work that is being done by the Wards Corner Task Force and the City Council to revitalize the Greater Wards Corner area. I would like to take a few lines here and give my assessment of Wards Corner as the "Times Square of the South" designation as I have often heard and still hear from people in the 34 years that I have lived in this area.

To begin, it has been said, "What you see, is where you are at". When my wife and I moved to Norfolk in 1972 we first lived in the Colony Point Apartments on W. Little Creek Road. We have lived in the Wards Corner area since and purchased our home on Burleigh Ave. almost 30 years ago. We loved the area and still do as Norfolk was and still is a big city with a small town feel. This was and is particularly true of the Wards Corner area. However, I will have to admit that I have always been somewhat puzzled by the designation of "Times

Square of the South" for Wards Corner. This area was not the "Times Square" I knew when I made my regular visits to New York City.

Almost 60 years ago I was born in a small town in New Jersey called Windsor. It was formerly called Centerville because it was midway between Philadelphia and New York City. I have seen pictures of the area from the mid to late 1800's showing the stagecoach and later the train that would stop in front of what would later become my grandfather's grocery store dropping people off and picking others up on their way to either of those two destinations. As a teenager and college student still living in Windsor, I would take numerous trips to both "Philly" and New York City by either bus or train, although not from "Centerville", but rather Princeton to hang out in New York City or go to baseball games in both cities. The "Times Square" New York that I knew was not the "Times Square of the South" Wards Corner where I now lived. Wards Corner in the 70's and 80's, perhaps even into the mid 90's, was a vibrant small business district with lots of people shopping at the many quality and various stores in the area. Those of us who lived here then remember their names: Rices Nachmans, Smith and Weltons, the Hub, Hofheimers, Center Shops, Peoples Drug, Reginos, etc., etc., etc. They are all gone now. The "Times Square" New York that I remember was not a pretty site. Bars, prostitutes, adult bookstores, "hook you joints", drugs, litter, bad behavior, etc., etc., etc., were prevalent everywhere. They, for the most part, are all gone now thanks to Mayor Rudy Guilianni. Those of you who are from that area or visited it back then know what I mean about the New York "Times Square".

So when I came to Wards Corner in 1972 and heard it called the "Times Square of the South" I wondered why people would want to compare it to the "Times Square" of New York City. It made little sense to me then and I am still perplexed by this designation. However, as we moved from the mid 80's into the mid 90's, the face of Wards Corner began to change and unfortunately the change was not good. I saw it developing into the "Times Square" that I knew in New York. The great quality stores and shops began to disappear, replaced by a go-go joint calling itself a "Gentlemens Club"; pawn shops, check cashing businesses, rent to own stores (all of which I knew as "hook you joints" in New York) as well as other types of businesses that put negative pressure on a business district and surrounding neighborhood. The good behavior was being replaced by bad behavior. Drug dealing on the streets, prostitution, increasing crime and abundant littering was now becoming more commonplace in the "Times Square of the South". Yes Wards Corner was becoming the Times Square that I knew from the 60's and 70's growing up and visiting New York City.

I did not like what I saw. How this happened and how we as residents of the area let it happen is the subject of another debate at another time. The fact is, it was staring me in the face and what was I going to do about it? What did it for me was an attempt by a prostitute to "hook" me one night in the 400 block of West Little Creek Road in 1990 as I drove home. Enough was enough, and thanks to Jack Blair, then Civic League President who asked me to deliver newsletters around the same time, I got involved. Since I did not want Wards Corner to have the Times Square designation that I once knew in New York, but wanted it to return to the great Wards Corner area I knew in the 70's and 80's, I decided to take a more active role in working to prevent the area's decline. Many people from the Greater Wards Corner area have worked hard over the past 6+ years with City Council to try and turn the area around through a variety of revitalization efforts. To date, we are beginning to see the fruits of our labor. The area is starting to revitalize and we all should participate in that effort. Wards Corner will one day become a vibrant area and destination point in the region as suggested by members of City Council. We must remember, however, that the decline did not happen over night and the revitalization of Wards Corner will not happen over night. I recommend that we drop thoughts of trying to bring it back to the designation of "Times Square of the South". Hopefully my "what I see is where I am at" thoughts about the Times Square New York designation will one day not be a comparison I ever make to the former "Times Square of the South" designation of Wards Corner. It shouldn't be!

Thanks, Jim English

KEEP NORFOLK BEAUTIFUL DAY

As part of the Great American Clean-up, seven civic league members plus two adults and two boys from Scout Troop 180 spent time on Saturday morning, March 25 at the corner of Ruthven and W. Little Creek Roads. They picked up 18 bags of trash!! Our thanks to Pat Yaros, Jim Pressler, Jim Barton, David Pelley, Betty and Ray Duron and Diane Dubay from the Civic League, and to John Matroni, Bill Beales, Ceilleon Beales, and Mitchell Brown from the scout troop. Also, thanks to Ray Duron for coordinating the effort!

WCCL Board of Directors

President	Jim English	423-7154
1 st Vice Pres.	Jennifer Demmin	423-1911
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Newsletter ideas/comments-Barbara Ross
(Bookworms@WHRO.Net or 489-1024)

WCCL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

The Infrastructure Committee was formed in 2001 to assist the Wards Corner Partnership and Wards Corner Task Force in identifying and encouraging the correction of problems in a wide variety of issues related to streets, water, sewer, power, traffic, transportation, and other hardware matters. The Wards Corner Partnership includes some twenty three civic leagues of which our Wards Corner Civic league is one. The area of interest is roughly bounded from Hampton Boulevard to Tidewater Drive and from the river to Bayview Boulevard. The Task Force includes representatives of the City Administration and of the Partnership in generating action to correct identified problems.

At first, the committee thought we were in charge of filling potholes. (We do work that problem, too). One of the first large issues was the advancement of the priority for repair of curbs and sewer boxes on the East side of Granby Street from Little Creek Road to Taussig Boulevard. A letter with photographs identified specific hazards with need for near term correction.

Installation of Handicap Accessible crossings was monitored after the committee was briefed by a city engineer on the planned work.

A long campaign for the installation of a stop light at Ruthven Road and Little Creek Road was successful thanks to the support of 250 local residents who attended a city sponsored hearing.

Leftovers of damage from Hurricane Isabel after the initial clean up were identified for correction.

The one way street at Colonial Avenue from Burleigh to West Little Creek Road was an outgrowth of committee consideration of traffic problems there.

We have not been successful in getting a bus shelter installed on Taussig Boulevard by Farm Fresh. Utilities being covered by the slab foundation have complicated the matter along with possible bus line rerouting. Anticipated need for transportation to the Ames Building converted to a city facility is also a factor.

While on transportation, the possibility of a NET type transport to serve Titus Town Recreation Center, the Norfolk Fitness and Wellness Center (along with the Senior Center there), DePaul Hospital, Wards Corner, and Southern Shopping Center is being examined.

An active campaign is being waged to properly mark crosswalks and turning lanes at Wards Corner in the interest of Safety. As it is, there are four Wards Corners essentially isolated by traffic. Correction is promised. Now that weather will allow work, we should see that promise fulfilled.

Les Demmin

HELP NEEDED

Can you donate a few hours each month to help deliver our newsletters to homes in your area? Our second vice-president, Linda Spear, brings them to your home the first week-end of the month for you to distribute that week-end or shortly after to your assigned homes. Areas where there is no currently assigned person are the 100-300 blocks of Burleigh Avenue, and the 100-400 blocks of Maycox Avenue. Jim English also e-mails a copy to league members. Call Linda at 402-8583 if you can help.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Beginning Balance			\$1273.74
+ funds received	\$40.00		
-funds disbursed	\$93.57		
Ending Balance			<u>\$1220.17</u>

GARDENING IDEAS

If you're looking for colorful ideas for your garden, consider planting red, white and blue in commemoration of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown. Jamestown will be 400 years old in 2007, and the state is promoting these colorful gardens throughout Virginia. You can get more information from these two websites: www.ext.vt.edu/americasgarden or www.ext.vt.edu/offices (Virginia Cooperative Extension office).

Important Phone Numbers

Police Emergency	911
Police Non-Emergency	441-5610
Pace Officer	664-6921
Police Red Sector	664-6914
Code Enforcement	664-6532
Environmental Health	683-2712
Sewer Backup	823-1000
Waste Management (Call here for large pickups)	441-5813
Norfolk Cares Call Center (Don't know what office to call on the problem?)	664-6510

APRIL IS POTHOLE MONTH. REPORT YOUR LOCAL POTHOLE TO 441-2952 or www.norfolk.gov/PublicWorks/report_pothole.asp

NEIGHBORHOOD YARD SALE

May 6 is chosen to be our yearly membership yard sale date! Civic league members who want to participate in having their own yard sale may contact Barbara Thierry, 423-1906. Please give her \$5.00 before April 25, and complete a Norfolk City Form for your permit. The Yard Sale will be advertised in the newspaper and a list of participating members will be available at each sale site informing shoppers where the good deals are. Your civic league is not making a profit...it all goes to you! It's another way to encourage everybody to get out and to meet your neighbors! **SAVE THE DATE!** Clean your attics and garages! Forms will be available at the April 17 civic league meeting, also!

WCCL MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues are \$5.00. Our dues' year runs from January 1 through December 31. If you are a continuing member and you have not renewed your membership for 2006, please submit your payment at a meeting or mail to the Treasurer, Ray Duron, at 530 Sterling Street, 23505. If you haven't joined yet, please consider doing so now.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

E-mail _____

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR SECRETARY'S MINUTES

If you missed March's meeting, you didn't hear the discussion by Senator Nick Rerras, and Delegates Paula Miller and Kenneth Alexander. They reported on many topics from the General Assembly including aid for our transportation needs (tolls, increased taxes, private agency contracting), real estate assessment bills for homeowner tax relief, eminent domain, tax relief for the elderly and disabled, vicious dog offenses, education, and law enforcement. Our PACE representative, Officer Curtis Jackson, was also introduced. He can be reached by e-mail at cjackson0140@cox.net or phone at 831-3484.