



# East Village Association NEWS

March 2011

## One election down, one to go: Vote Monday for EVA

It's that time of year again for the election of East Village Association officers. And that also means it's time for the EVA membership to step up and exercise their voting rights one more time and vote for the EVA officers for this year.

We have one new candidate running for treasurer. **KK Goh** has written a profile on his background and is eager to make a contribution to the organization.

We are very fortunate to have the remainder of the officers repledge their time, energy and talents to EVA. With the influx of some new blood from KK and the experience and continuity of the existing board I think we are posed for a great year!

Please join us at the March EVA general meeting and bring your support for our candidates for this next year. The meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the Happy Village, at Wolcott and Thomas streets. I want to make sure that everyone gets the chance to vote for the officers of their choice. Please join us.

The East Village is where I live, play, and work. I have lived in my 4-flat at 1040 N. Winchester now for 8 years! A few years ago, working with the city landmarks staff I put a rooftop deck on my building with a hot tub, barbecue fire pit and workout area. In the summer, when I'm having friends over for dinner and drinks on the deck, I feel like I'm on vacation.

As a real estate developer and Realtor, I've responsibly worked on several major projects in the last two years within EVA boundaries, with more in the West Town area.

Looking back at the last year, I'm proud of what we have accomplished as a board and organization. We really have a superstar board of very smart, talented and dedicated people.

Our vice president, **Neal McKnight**, is a very intelligent attorney. His background has been a huge resource for us as he has

### President's Message

Greg  
Nagel



helped us sort through various legal matters and taken care of some of the nonprofit legal work for the association. Neal demonstrated his integrity by recusing himself as Planning, Preservation & Development chairperson on the Bleeding Heart Bakery/Roots issue, as that project is pretty much in his backyard. I felt we worked great together as a team. I really respect him.

Our treasurer, **Nicole Semple**, did a wonderful job for us. Nicole selectively weighed in on issues, but when she did, her viewpoint was always well thought out. She was willing to re-run as treasurer if we could not find any other candidates, as she is truly committed to East Village. We should all thank her for her contribution this past year. I certainly do.

Our secretary, **Dana Palmer**, is a total rock star as far as I'm concerned. Dana did tons of work on behalf of the organization including her membership work, and creating detailed takeaways and minutes for each meeting. This really helped us stay on task as a board. Further, Dana is about the nicest person you could ever meet and was a calming, consensus-building presence on the board.

**Tom Tomek** also made a huge contribution on the board in 2010. Tom contributed to the barbecue, applied his graphic design talents on the new signs and the barbecue, and was always an enthusiastic and positive influence. Tom often seemed to take a role that helped differing viewpoints on the board find consensus. Tom has taken on multiple roles for us including reporting on CAPS and on LaSalle for EVA.

*Continued on next page*

The East Village Association's educational and civic role is exercised during our monthly general meetings, where we learn and talk about what's going on in our neighborhood. This forum is invaluable for understanding the important and sometimes controversial issues the community faces. EVA is committed to ensuring that our meetings are a place where these discussions can occur in an honest and respectful manner.

# Kok Keng Goh slated for EVA treasurer election



*The East Village Association board has slated Kok Keng Goh as a candidate for treasurer in the March 7 election. Here is his introduction to EVA members. Nominations also will be taken from the floor at 7 p.m. in the Happy Village, 1059 N. Wolcott.*

*The other slated candidates --Greg Nagel, Neal McKnight and Dana Palmer -- will stand for re-election in their current positions of president, vice president and secretary. Biographies can be found at [eastvillagechicago.org](http://eastvillagechicago.org).*

I graduated from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and moved to Chicago in 2007 to work for ZS Associates, a management consulting company. I assisted clients, primarily pharmaceuticals, with optimizing their sales and marketing functions such as incentive compensation, realigning geographical coverages, promotion and call plans, and market research. I left ZS in 2010 after obtaining U.S. residency to pursue a career in real estate investing. Most of my work is currently on the South Side, where I partner with a nonprofit organization and invest in rehabbing properties for lower-income families.

I grew up in Singapore, a city-state island known for its ethnic enclaves and diverse population. Chicago draws great similarities for me, and East Village in particular provides the same charm with its mix of inhabitants and blend of old and new architecture. I would like to see our neighborhood continue developing and I hope to contribute towards that cause as treasurer.

## President's Message

*From page 1*

**Scott Rappe** as Planning, Preservation & Development chairperson is a neighborhood treasure. Scott's contribution to EVA over the years is almost immeasurable. It's no secret that Scott and I do not always agree on issues, but I always respect his viewpoint and more importantly him as a person. I was especially impressed with Scott's effort to accommodate Galleria Liquors as he worked with Aaron Bilton and Neal to create a very creative approach to allow for development, yet protect the organization at the same time. Scott's architectural knowledge, history of EVA and positive style was a huge benefit to EVA.

**Steve Rynkiewicz** as Newsletter/Website chairperson did an incredible job for us for yet another year. Steve launched our Facebook page and really took our website to another level in 2010. Without Steve's effort, EVA would not have anywhere near the cachet or impact that it currently enjoys. Further, Steve is incredibly intelligent, and has a wealth of knowledge about the East Village and government.

**Aaron Bilton**, former EVA president, has been a great mentor for me in my role. Further, it was his leadership that helped allow for the merger of the East Village Neighbors and the East Village Association. Further, Aaron is another laser-sharp attorney and has helped on numerous technical issues especially on the liquor moratoriums.

And as far as myself, I think I did one thing very well: I assembled a sensational team. We have dramatically improved the civility of the organization with the elevation of Respect which was also a major priority.

Looking back at the last year some of the highlights include:

- Remerging of EVN into EVA.
- The Respect By-law amendment debate.
- The Trees on Augusta initiative.
- A new 1st Ward alderman and the effort to maintain continuity.
- New EVA signs, board meeting location change, and a new mailbox location.
- Galleria Liquors' request to lift a liquor moratorium.
- The Polish Triangle placemaking project.
- The summer barbecue.
- LaSalle II school.
- Chicago Bowl.
- The Christmas party at Jerzy Kenar's gallery.
- Bleeding Heart Bakery & Roots.

If I'm elected president in 2011 my goals in my final terms as president would be:

- Promote the schools in the East Village with emphasis on Wells and LaSalle.
- Promote the adoption of Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center by the community.
- Garner greater participation of the community by increased use of social media and the new business section of the general meetings.
- Promote responsible development.
- Build the cachet of the East Village through landmark signage, East Village signage, social media, proactively seeking the right type of development, and the Augusta tree project.

It has been a lot of work, but I can honestly say that I've enjoyed the challenge and opportunity to serve as president and appreciate all the support I've received.



# Wells springs into new era

*By Ernesto Matias, Principal, Wells Community Academy*

William H. Wells High School opened in 1935. Originally it was an elementary school in 1859 and a middle school from 1883 till 1934. (William Harvey Wells was Chicago's school superintendent from 1856 until 1864.) The school at 936 N. Ashland has long been a neighborhood school serving mostly poor and working-class families.



Side students at Wells.

The student body in 2000 was 78% Hispanic and 16% African American. That shifted to roughly 50% Hispanic and 50% African American after the district closed a low-performing high school in 2005, dramatically increasing the number of West

Gang rivalries between students from different neighborhoods led to an upsurge of violence and disciplinary incidents at the school after 2005, eroding relationships between teachers and students and significantly disrupting an already tenuous academic environment.

Meanwhile, the neighborhood around Wells was gentrifying. New residents tended to be young couples without older children, while others were increasingly reluctant to send their children to a school with a growing reputation for violence and poor academic performance. New charter schools attracted many of the most

academically motivated students and families in the neighborhood.

From 2000 to 2010, Wells' enrollment dropped significantly, further reducing the school's financial resources and its ability to combat mounting challenges. An absence of stable leadership exacerbated problems; Wells had four principals between 2004 and 2008, and staff mistrust and cynicism were rampant. By 2008, Wells had lost the faith of its teachers, its parents, its students and the broader community.

Since August 2008, when I accepted the position as principal, Wells has seen a dramatic change in reputation. Wells Community Academy High School is poised for transformation after several years of tumultuous demographic shifts, professional crises, and academic collapse. We still have problems, but seem to resolve our issues quickly.

We have been able to change the direction of the school by improving structures and protocols, recruiting talented administrators and staff members, and believing our students can learn no exception. The following improvements have been made during our last three years:

- We were able to get the marquee working.
- Swimming pool renovations will begin in May with an opening on January 2012.
- Four new 50-inch televisions were installed to provide consistent school information to students, staff and community members.
- Permission was given to pursue converting the west side of the school property into a multidimensional park.

Our most important changes have come from improving the culture of the school. We have done this by distributing leadership responsibilities, improving instruction, giving everyone on staff a voice, and increasing parent involvement through Gear-Up/Local School Council, Bilingual Committee and No Child Left Behind parent organizations.

In addition, we have welcomed parents, community volunteers, and university and community organization partnerships. Students feel a sense of faith, trust and hope in our staff.

Most importantly, we continue to improve student learning by improving our leadership structures, developing internal instructional coaches and providing students with common assessments to check their learning.

We would like to extend a formal invitation to any and all community members to come and see Wells. Come feel the excitement and family atmosphere. You are always welcomed with open arms.

*Matias will speak at the April 4 EVA membership meeting.*

EAST VILLAGE ASSOCIATION NEWS  
March 2011



# Another slice at Pizza Hut site

*Minutes of Feb. 15 board meeting submitted by Stephen Rynkiewicz*

Neal McKnight called the board to order at 6:42 p.m. at Leona's Restaurant, 1936 W. Augusta. Attending: Rich Anselmo, Kok Keng Goh, Scott Rappe, Stephen Rynkiewicz, Tom Tomek.

## **Pizza Hut property**

The former Pizza Hut building at 1601 W. Division is in receivership with Wintrust bank, said Bob Brownson of Oxford Development Partners. With Louis Schriber III of Shorewood Development Group, Brownson outlined a plan that would anchor a PNC Bank branch there in a new four-story apartment building.

Two drive-through lanes behind the building were a sticking point. "The drive-through is a deal-breaker," Schriber said. However, McKnight noted that the board last year rejected a similar proposal.

The Division Street entrance could clog traffic at the busy six-corner intersection, McKnight said. And civic groups have joined in EVA's longstanding support of transit-oriented development to complement the Blue Line subway station and Polish Triangle park.

That position is harder to maintain in the face of a real estate recession. "For at least four or five years it will be hard to do anything on this site other than what we have elaborated," Brownson said.

Board members would discuss the proposal further, McKnight said.

Planning co-chair Scott Rappe suggested envisioning some alternate interim uses for the property that would serve the interests of the community, while waiting out the current economic downturn. These might include park land, a community garden, or a place for farmer's markets and local craft fairs.

There was no presentation on the proposal for Buon Gusto deli at 845 N. Ashland.

## **March 7 election**

The board slated Kok Keng Goh to run as treasurer, replacing Nicole Semple. Greg Nagel, McKnight and Dana Palmer will stand for re-election as president, vice president and secretary. Nominations also will be taken from the floor at 7 p.m. at Happy Village.

## **Roots/Bleeding Heart**



## **Louis Schriber III of Shorewood Development Group and Bob Brownson of Oxford Development Partners**

Nagel joined the meeting. Rappe said 1st Ward chief of staff Raymond Valadez confirmed that Bleeding Heart Bakery Cafe would require a zoning change at 1916 W. Chicago Ave. Zoning was not addressed at the Jan. 3 EVA vote consenting to a rooftop cafe, and a zoning change could outlast the special use.

Board members met with Moreno on Jan. 12 to discuss issues in the Roots pizza/Bleeding Heart bakery plan, yet a month later Valadez could confirm only that Moreno is in discussion with developers Scott Weiner and Greg Mohr. Combined with the March EVA election, the delay could push a vote into April.

## **Tree census**

EVA will seek teenage and adult volunteers to canvass of trees throughout East Village on April 30. McKnight said the Arbor Day weekend census will help city forestry staff find ideal locations and varieties for new parkway plantings.

## **East Village signs**

The city landmarks commission will place signs to identify the East Village Landmark District. Rappe will investigate city plans and make a recommendation on replacement of the blue metal signs placed by EVA.

## **Guest speakers**

March 7: Aaron Bilton and Greg Nagel on property taxes; officer election; Rob Levitt of Butcher & Larder (1026 N. Milwaukee Ave.). Jessica Solares of Bucktown Music (1890 N. Milwaukee Ave.)

April 4: Wells High school Principal Ernesto Matias. 7 p.m. at Happy Village, 1059 N. Wolcott.

## **Bylaws**

Stephen Rynkiewicz will circulate a proposal to limit member votes to East Village residents and property owners.

The meeting adjourned about 9 p.m. Next board meeting 6:30 p.m. March 14 at Leona's.



# Status report: Wells High, LaSalle School, snowplows

*Minutes for February 7, 2011 membership meeting submitted by Dana Palmer*

Commenced at 7:06 p.m. EVA president Greg Nagel spoke briefly about current topics:

- Schools: EVA is interested in having a greater involvement with the neighborhood schools and have invited the Wells High School principal to be the guest speaker at the membership meeting in April.

- Voting for bylaw change: The EVA board is currently working on a solution to eliminate or lessen any abuse to the bylaws regarding voting and membership.

- Elections: Elections for the board will be held at the membership meeting in March. An e-mail blast has gone out asking for interested parties. So far, Neal McKnight has agreed to run for vice president, Dana Palmer for secretary, K.K. Goh for treasurer and Greg Nagel for president.

- Business Minute: Scott Rappe will ask Nicole Semple to invite Ron Leavitt, owner of The Butcher & Larder, to come to the March membership meeting to do the business minute. Rich Anselmo will ask a new hair salon in the neighborhood to come for the business minute in April.

## Guest speaker

Rhonda Locke from Ald. Proco Joe Moreno's office was present. Ald. Moreno and streets Supt. Manny Gonzales were unable to attend due to the recent snow cleanup issues.

- Snow cleanup: According to Locke, the alderman is looking into hiring an outside firm to haul snow away due to lack of space for the snow to be placed. She also mentioned that the city does not do alleys. Property owners are responsible for shoveling snow on sidewalks in front of their property.

- Parkway: Parkways are city property. If someone wants to put a structure on the

parkway in front of their home, they would need a public right of way permit to do so. However, if the city needs to do work in that parkway, they can do so and are not responsible to damages done to the structure.

- Garbage cans: If there are disputes in regards to where they are being placed, the alderman's office can be called. If there are holes, or if cans need to be removed or replaced, call 311. Also, large items such as couches that are wanting to be discarded can be put in the alley with trash.

- Rats: The city will bait on private property if the property owner will allow it. Holes in garbage cans can be a reason why there is more rat presence, so having them replaced is beneficial.

- New Business: Locke mentioned that the Commercial Club Park is having a big Earth Day celebration. She also mentioned an interest of some neighbors in the EVA signs and having them redesigned.

- Landmark Signs: A neighbor also brought up the fact that East Village still does not have landmark signs for its landmark district.

- Liaison with the Chamber of Commerce: A suggestion was made to have a liaison with the chamber of commerce and EVA.

- Late Liquor License Request: Shambles on Division has requested a late liquor license that would allow them to stay open and sell liquor until 4 a.m.

## Membership renewal

It has been suggested to have a one-time a year renewal of EVA membership versus a random renew process to help lessen the burden of keeping track of membership dues.

## Website



Stephen Rynkiewicz mentioned that EVA is in a beta test program for the Oh So We website. Members would be able to send email blasts to the whole group, they could post flyers and even post items or services that could be shared.

## Planning, preservation and development

Scott Rappe stated that a development agency will be coming to the next board meeting to present a proposal for the former Pizza Hut site. Buon Gusto will propose a grocery store on Ashland just north of Chicago with a license to sell wine. Scott will find out what moratorium is in place there.

## CAPS

Tom Tomek reported that there was no meeting in January and February was canceled due to snow. However, there has been an increase in reported graffiti in the area.

## LaSalle School

Tomek and Locke spoke about LaSalle School and not meeting the requirement of enrolling neighborhood residents. The commitment was to have 50% of all newly enrolled students to be within 1.5 miles of the school. Greg Nagel has agreed to put an article in the newsletter about the issue.



## You can leave your cap on. But should you?

Should you remove caps from plastic bottles before putting them in your Blue Cart? Marjorie Isaacson, our favorite recycling block captain, says Chicago policy is that either way works. But the devil is in the details.

"The city sends recyclable materials to different private recycling sorting facilities," says the city's recycling newsletter. "Some prefer that caps are removed while others prefer they stay

on — it all depends on their process for recycling plastics. Since we can't tell which facility your recyclables will go to, it is best to do whichever is easiest for you."

Why would you want to remove the caps? They melt at different temperatures, according to Recyclebank, a recycling loyalty program the city cites as an authority on this issue. When melted to form pellets for recycling,

unmelted plastic can ruin the batch. Some cities won't accept drink bottles because of the sorting issues.

That would seem like a good enough reason to remove the caps. But who are we to fight City Hall?

Leave your questions on recycling in the comments to this story at [eastvillagechicago.org](http://eastvillagechicago.org) and we'll try to get answers.

## Review me, I'm artistic

Actors to architects, journalists to tattooists — the city wants to hear this month from anyone in Chicago's creative community.

A web survey will aid the city's Cultural Affairs and Special Events department develop programs, artist spaces and "projects yet to be imagined," according to Chicago Artists Resource, a city website suggested in a similar survey from 2000.

That census drew largely from visual artists such as painters, sculptors and photographers. A review of the results led the city to mount its annual Creative Chicago Expo workshops, a loft shopping guide and other projects for artists.

This year's anonymous poll, which the Wicker Park-Bucktown business-improvement district promoted last week, looks for people who identify with a wide range of creative



endeavors in academia, creative writing and marketing as well as performance and visual arts. The survey asks about your business and workspace, and which efforts would most help support it. Take the survey at [surveymonkey.com/CreativeChicagoSurvey](http://surveymonkey.com/CreativeChicagoSurvey).

The city last year merged Cultural Affairs and Special Events into a combined department, laying off arts staff or moving jobs to a tourism board. Will a spot poll suggest new uses for dwindling resources? At least it's creative approach.





# East Village residency at issue (it's not about Rahm)

As Rahm Emanuel sorted out his Chicago residency bona fides early this year, East Village Association leaders started to weigh what makes someone part of the neighborhood. If members agree in April, EVA voters must be East Village residents or property owners.

They won't need to pull a wedding dress from their crawlspace as proof. The idea is that while anyone can support East Village, only those directly affected should cast ballots on community issues.

Residency comes up often in connection with EVA votes because it has not been a requirement. Anyone who identifies with the neighborhood may (and should) join — I signed up as an Oak Parker searching the real-estate listings. But I couldn't vote immediately, because a monthlong cooling-off period was in place to discourage single-issue voters.

Often newcomers arrive with development interests before the group. Votes for such things as zoning changes and special land uses are intended to advise the alderman on neighborhood sentiment, and their authority would be tarnished by participants still unfamiliar with the surroundings.

EVA took another look at the rules when people who had not yet been added to the member spreadsheet showed up Jan. 3 ready to vote on a Chicago Avenue rooftop cafe for Bleeding Heart

Bakery, briefly delaying an announcement of the tally.

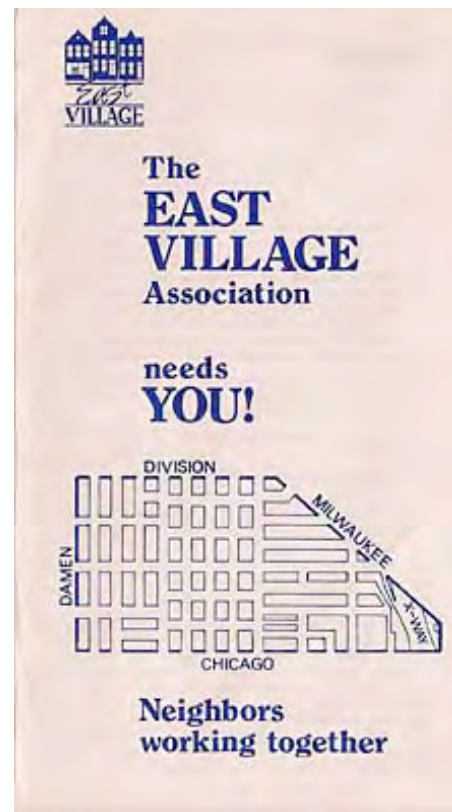
The board reviewed member Aaron Bilton's proposal on Feb. 15 and circulated amendments over the next three days. The change would limit voting privileges to residents and property owners who have been members at least three months. A span chosen both to make election rolls easier to compile and to assure that voters will have settled into their new territory.

"I don't think it unfair that we ask those who have not actually invested within our area to invest some time to become part of our community," Bilton suggested. "The people that we are looking to include will not be that put off by missing one vote if they truly want to become part of our community."

Also at issue were members with the potential of voting twice, either those who belonged to two neighborhood groups debating the same issue or those holding both family and business memberships. And since a strict reading of the bylaws would have required everyone voting Jan. 3 to have paid both 2010 and 2011 dues, the proposal gives the board discretion in dues collection dates.

The resolution rewrites East Village Association bylaws, but keeps the neighborhood bound by Division Street and Milwaukee, Chicago and Damen avenues.

EVA members will vote the proposal up or



down April 4 in the monthly meeting at Happy Village, 1059 N. Wolcott:

Be it resolved that the By-laws of the East Village Association be amended as follows: Delete preamble of Article IV; delete last two sentences of Article IV Section 2; amend first sentence of Article VI to read: "Only members in good standing over 16 years of age who reside or own property in the area defined in Article II and who have been members for a minimum of three months are eligible to vote. Add at end of section: "No person may cast more than one vote."

**Gregory T. Nagel, CPA**  
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# Taxes make appealing reason to meet Monday

Time to pay property taxes — motivation enough to learn how your neighbors have lowered their tax bills.

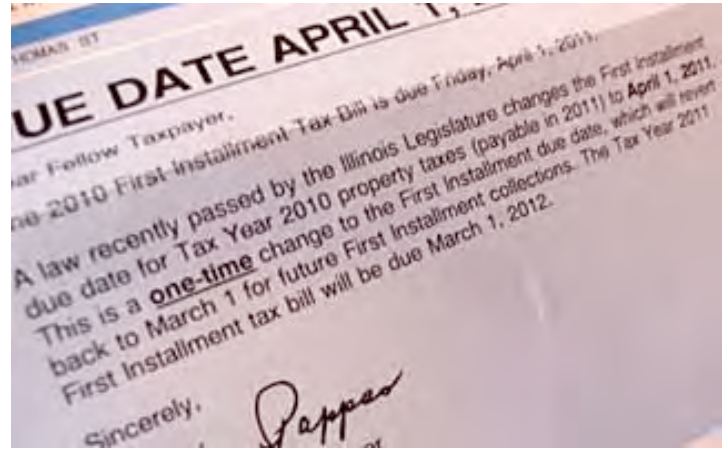
Members Greg Nagel and Aaron Bilton lend their professional expertise to a tax discussion at Monday's East Village Association member meeting. Nagel has developed apartment and condo buildings; Bilton is an assistant state's attorney.

But if you've been successful appealing your property taxes you'll want to contribute as well. Since my days as a real-estate writer I've been filing an appeal like clockwork every three years as my home is reassessed.

The first-installment tax bill is due April 1 this year and in March as usual next year. (Pay online here.)

The session will cover the basics of how Chicago handles property taxes and the routes to appeal through the Cook County Assessor and Board of Review.

Both agencies made do-it-yourself appeals easier, providing online research tools and free neighborhood filing sessions. But there are a few tricks to checking both the accuracy of county records for your property and the property values of your



neighbors.

We'll also try to make sense of the fictionally low dollar figures on assessment notices and the upward creep of the equalization factor, which the state uses to turn them into something approaching market value.

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the Happy Village, 1059 N. Wolcott. Also on the agenda is the annuyl officer election and business introductions by Rob Levitt of Butcher & Larder (1026 N. Milwaukee Ave.) and Jessica Solares of Bucktown Music (1890 N. Milwaukee Ave.)  
--Stephen Rynkiewicz



## East Village Association

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