



CIGAR BOX BULLETIN

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.
1 West Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830

www.greenwichrma.org
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President **JACK WEIR** opened the meeting, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by **TAD LARRABEE**, and songs led by **JERRY SCHWENDEMAN**, accompanied by **JIM SANTORA** at the piano. The assembled throng rattled the rafters with "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Bye, Bye Blackbird" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street."

JACK thanked the hard-working volunteers who make the meeting possible: CBB Editor **TIM BROOKS**, scribe **CHARLIE SHAPIRO**, formatter **MARK GEIMER**, projectionists **LEN CARUSI** and **TONY COCCHI**, volunteer advocate **HAL DOSHAN**, greeter **JOHN KAVANAGH**, mentor **TAD LARRABEE**, refreshments, **JOHN KNIGHT**, audio-video team **ED PARKER, MARK GEIMER, PETER DODGE, HORST TEBBE, BARRY RICHELSON** and **STEVE MARINO**, and set-up, **BOB BISHOP, JIM BUTLER**, and **JOHN CRAINE**.

Special Celebration: Membership Chair **PETER STERN** stepped to the mic to announce that two weeks ago, Ros Curtis celebrated his 100th birthday. Ros joined the RMA on May 12, 1993, at the age of 69 and remained an active member for 28 years, until May 1, 2021.

PETER continued, “In my RMA tenure Ros was an active golfer and a volunteer hours recorder when it was still on paper with a pen. According to his son Mark, along with brothers Ros and Paul plus grandchildren, the family celebrated Ros’s 100th birthday two weeks ago. The picture is from that party, with Ros and Ros III. Mark shared an anecdote with me that I want to share with you. Twenty years ago, when Ros turned 80, he said he’d ‘had enough,’ and started counting backwards so he now swears he’s only 60!

“Thank you to **DON ROTZIEN** (Ros was his sponsor) who brought it to my attention. Also, to the Mews staff starting with Noelle Gmitter who answered my phone call and ‘ran it up the flagpole,’ making things happen. Further Tom Megna, Executive Director, Linda Radice, Michelle Leville, and Lisa Marsili; hopefully I got them all. Mark Curtis has already expressed thanks to RMA for thinking of Ros.”

PETER turned the proceedings over to Melody Men **JERRY SCHWENDEMAN**, **TOM HEALY**, and **JOE MANCINELLI** who, accompanied by **JIM SANTORA** on piano, rendered a “Happy Birthday” serenade as Ros watched via Zoom.



Melody Men Serenade Ros



Ros celebrates

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The number of RMA Members as of March 6 is 245. **JACK** acknowledged **PETER STERN** and the Membership Committee for their outstanding work,

and added that the goal of 250 members was within reach.

The RMA Board met this morning, and although sharply divided, voted to increase RMA dues for 2024-2025 to \$125. Considering this decision, the Board seeks everyone's cooperation getting your dues submitted in a timely manner. The Board will continue to look to new and perhaps less cumbersome means of facilitating a member's payment. The Board also has agreed to increase certain fees for RMA activities, notably Cigar Box meeting charge from \$2 to \$3, and institute a charge for our picnic (probably \$15).

JEFF JUNKER, RMA treasurer, has been tasked with creating a budget within that framework, and will report further in the weeks to come.

Also, a reminder that the St. Patrick Day parade is on March 27, with members gathering at 1:30 pm at a place to be determined (the parade starts at 2 pm). The Nominating Committee will submit a slate of candidates on March 20 and there will be an annual meeting on April 3.

OTHER REPORTS

Corresponding Secretary ARNOLD GORDON recommended the "spring awakening" on Saturday, March 9, in the wetlands in Pomerance Park. It's an engaging outdoor fun opportunity for you and your grandchildren, called the Vernal Pool Walk. The park is located at 101 Orchard St., Greenwich. Meet at 10:00 am at the Pomerance Park parking lot for an up-close and personal tour of some of the creatures who make the vernal pools their home, such as salamanders, frogs and egg masses. For more information go to <https://www.greenwichct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2343>

ARNOLD then quoted from a book called *Disorder in the American Courts*, published by court reporters who captured verbatim exchanges during various trials.

ATTORNEY: "Can you describe the individual?"

WITNESS: "He was about medium height and had a beard."

ATTORNEY: "Was this a male or a female?"

WITNESS: "Unless the Circus was in town, I'm going with male."

ATTORNEY: "Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?"

WITNESS: "All of them. The live ones put up too much of a fight."

ATTORNEY: "Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?"

WITNESS: "No."

ATTORNEY: "Did you check for blood pressure?"

WITNESS: "No."

ATTORNEY: "Did you check for breathing?"

WITNESS: "No."

ATTORNEY: "So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?"

WITNESS: "No."

ATTORNEY: "How can you be so sure, Doctor?"

WITNESS: "Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar."

ATTORNEY: "I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?"

WITNESS: "Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law."

ARNOLD then introduced **TOM HEALY**, jokester for the day.

Treasurer JEFF JUNKER explained why dues went up. He particularly emphasized the renting the meeting room was \$500 per meeting. Also, as we all know the costs of goods and services has gone up as well.

Membership Chair PETER STERN reported attendance as 108 in person, plus nine on Zoom, for a total of 117. (Count by **ANDRE MAZUREK**).

PETER then moved on to the induction of our newest member, Gerry Brown, who was sponsored by **JIM SANTORA** and seconded by **JOHN KAVANAGH**.

JIM introduced Gerry. "Today, it is my pleasure to nominate Gerry Brown for membership in the RMA. Gerry was born and raised in Northern Ireland. He received a degree in Civil Engineering in 1978 from Dublin Institute of Technology and went on to Trinity College where he became qualified as a

structural engineer. Emigrating to the US in 1989, Gerry took a job as a structural engineer working on the construction of Yale New Haven Children's



Hospital. After four years, Gerry transitioned into the management of engineering design and construction when he went to work for the State of Connecticut Dept. of Public Works. Among the projects he completed was the rehabilitation of the Southern Connecticut State University's residential and athletic facilities for hosting the 1995 Special Olympics. He then worked for

Hewlett Packard designing their new manufacturing plant in Dublin. Gerry's career took him outside the US in various countries in Eastern and Western Europe as well as Asia. Gerry very affable, easy to get to know, and shares a passion for golf. Gerry also enjoys walking, reading and of course traveling."

Gerry was unanimously voted in by membership and made brief acceptance comments, thanking his sponsors, **JIM** and **JOHN**. He received the standard RMA lapel pin, decal, official badge, and the all-important parking pass.

Next came birthdays (with **JIM SANTORA** back at the piano)

Peter	Berg	76*
Pete	Junius	85
Jim	Buckley	76
David	Weisbrod	77
Mike	Ryan	86
Bob	Stark	76
John	Heyd	87

*A "Leap Year Baby"

Guests today were Rob Goldie, guest of **BRIAN MAHONEY** and **JOHN MURPHY**, and Phil Schweitzer, guest of **FRANK SCARPA** and **JOHN**

KAVANAGH. Returnees were **PETER BERG** from Delray Beach, FL, and **WAYNE DE VRIES** from New Zealand, Australia, and a stint at Greenwich Hospital.

Human Interest Story. **PETER BERG** then related a tale about Chinese fortune cookies. “When I was 22 years old, I went to dinner with friends at a Chinese restaurant in the city. For dessert we took turns opening fortune cookies. As each fortune was read, someone would call out “In Bed.” For example:

“People have great respect for you. In Bed!”

“You will find great adventure. In Bed!”

“You are creative and thought highly of. In Bed!”

“Your ability to find the silly in the serious will take you far. In Bed!”

“If you wait too long for the perfect moment, the perfect will pass you by. In Bed!”

“When it got to me, I broke open my fortune cookie and it read, ‘You will die on your 25th birthday.’ This time no one responded. A friend said, ‘That’s an awful fortune,’ it says you’re going to die in three years. ‘No,’ I exclaimed. ‘I was born on February 29, which is Leap Day. As I get a birthday every four years, this fortune says I will live for 100 years, and then I will die.’ ‘In Bed!’, they all exclaimed.”

SPECIAL EVENTS

1. **ROMEO Lunch.** **DON ROTZIEN** announced that the next ROMEO lunch is scheduled for 1:00 on Thursday, March 7, at Sally’s Apizza on Summer Street in Stamford. There are currently 14 people signed up.
2. **Volunteer Driving Opportunities.** **HORST TEBBE** said Call-A-Ride transports anyone over 60 years of age, for any reason. Suffice to say that the experience of volunteer driving leads one to meet a variety of interesting people from varied backgrounds, from all walks of life, and people you might not encounter in your daily life.
3. **NY Botanical Gardens Trip.** **TROY JOHNSON** asked members to please take a look at the attached flyer regarding our upcoming special event on Friday, April 12 - a trip to the New York Botanical Garden to see the

annual Orchid Show. We hope this will be of interest to you and it will certainly be of special interest to our spouses! Please note the timing on the flyer. We must hear from you by March 13 at the latest, AND we must also have your check by this date. Contact **TROY** at troyajohnson@hotmail.com or (203) 705-9476 with any questions.

[[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD FLYER](#)]

4. **Aqueduct Racetrack Trip.** **TOM HEALY** said that on June 27 there will be a trip to Aqueduct. Contact **TOM** for further details. retiredtjh@gmail.com.
5. **Lion's Club Annual Pancake Breakfast.** **BOB FRISHMAN** reminded us that the Lions Club will host a pancake breakfast on March 16. There are activities for children, such as face painting, and in general it is fun event.

Speakers. **PETER BERG** announced that today's speakers will be Sam Romeo and Tony Johnson of Greenwich Communities, on "*How Greenwich Communities Can Save Greenwich from Over-Development.*" Per **SPIKE LIPSCHUTZ**, next week's speaker, on March 13, will be **MIKE ABRAHAMS**, RMA member and bridge design engineer, on "Major Bridges in North America —Design and Construction Challenges."

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Walkers, from **TAD LARRABEE.** The walkers met on a cold, but clear day last Thursday. We carpooled from Riverside Commons to Kosciusko Park in south Stamford. The southern part of Stamford just below I-95 has developed over the past few years into a massive number of large apartment buildings and small pocket parks for thousands of residents. I made the mistake of thinking that we would be protected from the gusty winds by the buildings, but I was mistaken; the buildings did shield us much of the time, but occasionally they funneled the wind into a powerful, cold blast. So, yes, we had a good walk, but with occasional discomfort. We ended by circling around the old Woodland Cemetery before returning to Kosciusko Park. Despite the cold, it was a good walk to an area we had not visited in a long while.

I learned through Tuesday's *Greenwich Time* that Darien has opened to the public its recently acquired Grand Island property of roughly 100 acres that the town purchased for \$85 million. They plan to limit access by mid-April only to weekends, so as soon as we have a nice spring Thursday for a walk, we will visit this jewel on Long Island Sound. I hope you can join us. Let me know if you want to be on our walker's email list.

Tennis, by **JEROME COLEMAN**. Last Friday, eight tennis players gathered at the Old Greenwich Tennis Academy to play two doubles tennis matches. In the opening round, the winning doubles team on Court 1 was **RALPH NEWITTER** and **MARK PRUNER**; on Court 2 the winning doubles team was **LAWRENCE MERL** and **JOHN REESE**. In the finales round, the winning doubles team on Court 1 was **MARK** and **JOHN** and on Court 2 the winning team was **ANDY HOLMES** and **JEROME COLEMAN**. Next week's captain will be **RANDY MOTLAND**.

Bridge, by **RON MURRAY**. There were seven players. Their scores were **ALEX KOSSEIM**, 5430, **ANDRE MAZUREK**, 3990, and **ED MASTOLONI**, 3650. Two points of interest. First, a small slam (six hearts) was bid and made at both tables - by **ALEX** and **ANDRE** at table 1 and by **ED** at table 2. Second, special recognition should be given to **ALEX** for his play the past two weeks. Not only did he make two slams last week and one this week, but his score also this week of 5430, outstanding. Congratulations!

We play Wednesday afternoon at the cafe on the ground floor of the Greenwich Library. Lunch is available. We invite all members and guests, whether newcomers or experienced players, to join our group. If you're a little nervous because you're a new player or an experienced player who hasn't played for a while, not to worry - we have excellent players who will be happy to deal with any questions you may have.

Hearts, by **BOB SHULLMAN**. Eight members got together at the Greenwich Library and played hearts for about three hours. At table 1, three games were played. **JACK SWEGER** won two games, while **JOHN KNIGHT** won one and shot the moon once. **BOB SHULLMAN** also shot the moon once. At table 2, four games were played. **MIKE AMBROSINO**, **JIM DEAN** and **JOE DOWLING**

each won a game while **MIKE** and **TOM HEALY** tied a game. There were four moonshots: **TOM** had two while **JIM** and **JOE** each had one.

TODAY'S SPEAKER

PETER BERG (moderator) introduced Sam Romeo and Tony Johnson of Greenwich Communities, formerly called The Greenwich Housing Authority. Sam Romeo is the chairman of Greenwich Communities. He has occupied leadership positions on the Greenwich RTM and RTC for over 20 years, served as ombudsman for the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services, and as a member of the board of directors for Greenwich Emergency Medical Services. He has owned and operated his own business—Command Packaging Supply Products—for the past 30 years. Mr. Romeo is a lifelong resident of Greenwich.

Tony Johnson, CEO of Greenwich Communities, is a real estate professional with experience in managing and developing public and affordable housing, and commercial and residential real estate. He is experienced in all aspects of real estate including HUD regulations, accounting/finance, feasibility studies, strategic planning, deal negotiation, construction, bond issuance/financing, tax credit financing, and mixed finance development and strategy implementation. He is a graduate of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Pace University, and Loyola University Chicago.



Johnson and Romeo with Berg (center)



Johnson and Romeo with Cos Cob project

Affordable Housing is one of the most controversial issues in Greenwich (and everywhere else!). NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) has become BANANA (Build

Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anybody). Residents are told to fear loss of “local control” due to 8-30g “mandates.” Sam and Tony are confronting many objections and obstacles.

PETER began the session by posing the following ten questions drawn from the RMA membership.

1. Why is more affordable housing in Greenwich good for employers (including the Town), good for property taxpayers, and good for all residents?
2. Will more affordable housing in Greenwich increase, or decrease, our worsening rush hour traffic congestion, frustrating downtown parking shortages, and unhealthy air pollution?
3. Greenwich has about 1,380 units of affordable housing, and it needs another 1,140 units to achieve the State’s 8-30g threshold. How can Greenwich get to 10% in five years? Where ideally would it go? What is Ferris Landing all about?
4. Can Greenwich’s infrastructure handle more residents? Isn’t “density” a four-letter word in Greenwich?
5. Why does Greenwich need more affordable housing? Don’t Stamford and Port Chester have enough?
6. Why can’t poor people pull themselves up by their bootstraps, like we did? Why does the government need to subsidize them?
7. Many residents oppose affordable housing proposals. What are the real reasons? Are they prejudiced against poor people?
8. Is there an alternative to affordable housing?
9. In many towns throughout Connecticut a component of low income housing is to convert old homes, usually in the central part of town, into low income apartments; that is to completely gut these homes to accommodate two-to-three apartments, while refinishing the exterior of the homes including porches and landscaping. To what extent is this currently a part of Greenwich’s low-income housing program? What is the outlook for this type of program going forward?
10. There seems to be some confusion about whether the affordable units in an 8-30 development count toward the 10% threshold needed for Greenwich to regain local control over zoning in town. Do those 8-30 affordable units count

when the developer has accepted financing from the Greenwich Affordable Housing Trust?

The answers to these questions were followed by a lively question & answer session. The full presentation can be viewed by going to the RMA website at <https://greenwichrma.org>, and clicking on "Speakers." Note: The views expressed in RMA presentations are those of the speakers. They are not intended to represent the views of the RMA or its members.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

TO CBB CONTRIBUTORS: Scribe for the next meeting will be →**JIM DEAN**. Please send a copy of any remarks you want included in the CBB to him, *via email please!*

ALL MEMBERS: Do not forget to report all your inside and outside volunteer hours at www.greenwichrma.org/log.

ALL MEMBERS: The CBB team works every week to write and publish an informative and concise bulletin for our members' enjoyment. We can always use new members to join the Scribe Tribe. Please contact **TIM BROOKS** at tbroo@aol.com if you can support this effort.

ALL MEMBERS are reminded that in addition to streaming on the Internet, RMA speakers are normally shown on the local public access TV channels, Verizon FIOS channel 24 and Optimum (Cablevision) channel 79.

Pictures by **ANDY HOLMES**.

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc. · 1 West Putnam Avenue · Greenwich, CT 06830 · USA. Visit our website at <https://greenwichrma.org>

RMA 2024 CALENDAR

Weekly Repetitive Activities*			
Day	Time	Activity	Contact

Mondays	9:30 am	QiGong and Tai Chi Workout	Register in advance with Will Morrison – wdmorrison@gmail.com
Mondays	11:00 am	Pickleball	Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Michael LaGamma– mdlagamma@optonline.net
Tuesdays	9:30 am	RMA Golf, the Griff Golf Course, Greenwich	Mike Ryan – ryantomac@netscape.net
Tuesdays	10 am-12 pm	Platform (paddle) tennis at Loughlin Field, Cos Cob	James Dean - Jhdeanco@gmail.com
Wednesdays	9:45 to 10:30 am	RMA Weekly Meeting	Horst Tebbe – onehorst@optimum.net or Len Carusi at lencarusi@gmail.com
Wednesdays	1:00 pm	Hearts	Bob Shullman – bob.shullman@gmail.com
Wednesdays	1:00 pm	Bridge	Andre Mazurek - Mazurek.a.j@gmail.com
Thursdays	9:00 am	RMA Walking	Tad Larrabee - tadlarra@optonline.net
Thursdays	10:00 am	Pickleball	Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Michael LaGamma – mdlagamma@optonline.net
Friday	Contact Holmes	Indoor Tennis	Andy Holmes - Andyholmes56@gmail.com

*Day & time of some events may vary; check with contact