



Belle Terre Times

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE INCORPORATED VILLAGE

Vol. VII- Issue 2

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SEPTEMBER 2021

HELLO & GOOD BYE

BELLE TERRE'S NEW TRUSTEES



Richard Harris was elected as a new member of the Belle Terre Village Board. No newcomer to our village, Richard served for 4 years as our Village Prosecuting Attorney. With over 20 years experience working as a municipal attorney, Richard is presently the Deputy Village Attorney for Port Jefferson, where among other things, he deals with issues concerning code enforcement, rentals, public safety, planning and land use. Prior to working locally, Rich served as Senior Assistant Town Attorney for Southampton, as investigative counsel for the NYC School Construction Authority's Office of the Inspector General investigating fraud, waste, abuse and ethics violations, and as an Assistant County Attorney in Westchester County where he regulated organized crime in the solid waste industry.

Rich and his wife Leza (also an attorney) grew up in Smithtown and moved to Belle Terre 7 years ago with their two sons and their Maltese Shih-Tzu 'Einstein'.

Rich will serve as Buildings Commissioner and has previously served on the Belle Terre Traffic Committee, the Marina Committee and was part of the group of volunteers who built the kayak rack at Knapp Beach.



James von Oiste Jr. was raised in Belle Terre where his father and mother settled in 1966. Jim's father served as our Village attorney for 38 years. Jim and his wife moved back to Belle Terre 10 years ago to start their family after living in Miami and working in yacht brokerage and commercial real estate. Following in his father's footsteps, Jim has been an active member of our community. He and his wife Hana have organized and run the children's Halloween and Christmas parties for the past 5 years. He has been a member of the Belle Terre Village Ethics Board as well as the all important Village Planning Board. For the past year he has been the Deputy Beach Commissioner working very closely with Sheila Knapp. Prior to her passing, Sheila expressed her hope that Jim would take her place as Trustee on the Village Board and continue caring for the beach and beach programs that she loved so much. Following Sheila's wishes, Jim was appointed to the Board to fill Sheila's unexpired term in office and will serve as Beach Commissioner.

REMEMBERING SHEILA KNAPP



On June 24th, Deputy Mayor Sheila Knapp died after a long illness. To many of us, Sheila represented the “heart” of our community. She was our friend, confidant and mental repository for the history of every house and family that ever lived here.

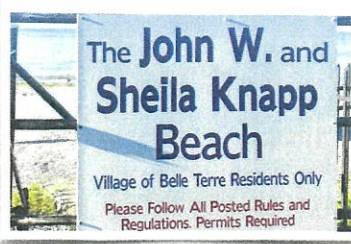
Sheila’s family moved to Belle Terre in 1936 from Garden City and Sheila spent her whole life here. Sheila had a successful career managing the United Airlines cargo department at Newark Airport for 38 years.

John W. Knapp, Sheila’s father, was appointed as our first beach commissioner after purchasing waterfront property (today’s Knapp Beach) for the Village’s use from real estate developer Norman Winston.

In 1977 Sheila was appointed Beach Commissioner, proudly following in her father’s footsteps, and held that position for 44 years. She became a Village Trustee in 1997, serving for 24 years, and became Deputy Mayor in 2004, serving for 17 years.

Sheila spent uncountable hours caring for the beach, the cabañas, the lifeguards, the picnic tables and grills, the ropes, the anchors, the seawall, the parking lot, the gazebo, and a thousand other beach related things. But she also cared deeply for what she defined as Belle Terre, its “forested vibe” as a refuge from the suburbanization that has plagued so much of the nearby communities. For Sheila, Belle Terre was always the idyllic bird sanctuary with wooded acres surrounding semi-hidden homes, all encircled by pristine rocky beaches and dotted with colorful cabañas.

In acknowledgement of her many years of service and her love for her job, a rededication was held naming our beach “The John W. and Sheila Knapp Beach.”



As we remember Sheila, it is very fitting that we remember Belle Terre as she knew it in her earliest days and expressed in her own words:

“My first job in Belle Terre was learning to swim. Rumor has it that I could do that before I could walk. The beach was fun. There were schools of porpoises that swam by on the horizon and blowfish that we caught with our hands, scratched their white bellies, then watched them puff up. Mr. Toal, the school principal, managed the beach. He was dressed in white and wore a white pith helmet. Every day he opened the beach at 9 a.m. He would lower the striped awnings on everyone’s cabañas and raise them up again at day’s end. He was a very strict manager. If you were caught roughhousing or throwing stones, you were suspended from the beach for three days. The cabañas were basically primary colors: white, yellow, red, green, and blue, and your color and position on the beach were determined by a committee. Two yellows could not be next to each other. You could bring a guest to the beach, provided the person came in your parents’ car and paid fifty cents a day. You could have the same person only three times a summer.

Until my early teens I belonged to the Junior Roadside Committee. Every Saturday morning we all met at a designated section on Cliff Road and pulled down the grape vines and cleaned up the roadside. That night our community would reward us with a dance, usually a square dance, at the Village Hall where ginger ale and ice cream were served. In those early years history was important to our residents. Mae Meurer would pay any child one dollar for reciting the Gettysburg Address. We soon learned that with a change of clothes and a slight inflection in our voice we could earn three dollars.

Another part of life growing up here was to learn which skeleton key fit which house. Master keys were easy to buy, and we loved bragging to our friends how easy it was to get into their house. At sixteen I went to my first Horse Show Ball, a black-tie formal affair at the Old Field Club which celebrated the end of the North Shore Horse Show. There were roughly thirty kids in our group, and we all did things together. On summer nights we would meet at the “big house” at the end of Camp Woodbine. There, we’d run down the hill to the

harbor and jump into the whaleboat to ride to the Schooner. It was a real schooner that had been hoisted up from the bottom of the harbor, set up on West Broadway, and converted into an eating place. Below deck there were three wooden tables with benches on each side. The ceilings were low and the lighting dim. It was an adventure just to get in there. If you could eat three banana splits, they gave you the fourth one free. Some of the guys could do it. I couldn't. It's easy to



understand why I would ride my bike from my house at the entrance of Belle Terre all the way to Camp Woodbine, only to come back to a spot just below where I lived. It was just to be with the gang.

In those days everybody knew everybody else. You could walk down Cliff Road and hope a car would come by and give you a ride, but many times I walked to the beach without a car in sight.

My love for this village started at an early age. I've seen many changes, but it will always be a wonderful place to live."

CONTINUING BEACH IMPROVEMENTS

Last summer the village completed construction of the new restroom/shower pavilion. The building includes two handicap accessible restrooms, two enclosed shower stalls, and housing for our telecommunication, CCTV and mechanical systems.

This summer we have added a new "Lifeguard Shack" by purchasing a steel cargo container. The container is divided into a finished, air conditioned office space and a 10' by 10' storage area. This self contained unit sits on blocks which makes it portable should the need arise.



The unit has been roofed and clad to match the look of the pavilion.

Our plan for next year is to replace the old camp storage building with a similar cargo container designed to protect all of the camp's materials

and supplies. That container unit will also be clad to match the architecture of the new buildings.

Finishing the beach upgrades will include reroofing the camp shelter and the gazebo for a totally cohesive appearance.





Incorporated Village of Belle Terre

**1 Cliff Road
Belle Terre, NY 11777**

Mayor	Bob Sandak	631 474-8686	CONSTABLE'S OFFICE	Dave Wolosin, Chief	631 928-5785
Deputy Mayor	Jacquelyn Gernaey	631 928-0020			
Trustee	Richard Harris	631 928-0020	Beach Commissioner	James Von Oiste	631 473-0200
Trustee	Richard Musto	631 928-0020	Building Commissioner	Richard Harris	631 928-0020
Trustee	James Von Oiste	631 928-0020	Parks Commissioner	Richard Musto	631 928-0020
Clerk-Treasurer	Joanne Raso	631 928-0020	Road Commissioner	Mike Solo	631 928-0020
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer	Louise Smit	631 928-0020	Youth Program Commissioner	Francoise Schachner	631 928-0020
Village Attorney	Eileen A. Powers	631 727-8250	Historian	John Hiz	631 928-0020
Village Justice	Eric Cherches	631 473-5105	Building Inspector	Christopher Harding	631 928-0020
Court Clerk	Louise Smit	631 473-5105	Assessor	Frank Aragona	631 928-0020
Planning Board	Tony Gitto	631 928-0020			
Zoning Board of Appeals	Dave McAnaney	631 928-0020			

BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETINGS: Work Session, 1st Tuesday of each month

Regular Public Meeting, 3rd Tuesday of each month

VILLAGE CLERK: 631 928-0020 • FAX 631 928-7971

BELLE TERRE VILLAGE TAXES & FEES PAYABLE AT: www.belleterre.us

VILLAGE WEBSITE: www.belleterre.us

VILLAGE E-MAIL: btvillageoffice@gmail.com

JUSTICE COURT CLERK: Call 631 473-5105 - leave message

BELLE TERRE COURT FINES PAYABLE AT: www.belleterre.us

NOTARY PUBLIC: Call Office - 631 928-0020

REFUSE: PICK-UP: Tuesdays & Fridays