

NEWS RELEASE

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RNPC MARKS SECOND ANNIVERSARY AFTER YEARS OF EXPLOSIVE GROWTH

With Seven Local Civics, Coalition Now Represents Over a Thousand Residents

OCTOBER 24, 2011: Two years ago, a handful of people facing issues in their own neighborhoods banded together under the Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition banner in an effort to advocate for the rural character and quality of life that defines Riverhead and its hamlets. With individual members from every hamlet in town and seven local civic groups as members, the RNPC now represents over 1,000 residents.

The latest groups to join the RNPC are the Olde Vine and Willow Ponds civic associations. Willow Ponds on the Sound Civic Association formed in September and signed up with the RNPC within its first few weeks in existence. "Several of us had been following the RNPC in the news and were impressed with what they were doing," noted Willow Ponds civic president Richard Arenella. "It seemed a natural fit for us to join up with a group with which we share so many common goals. It was a unanimous decision and we're excited about working together to preserve our community."

To date, the RNPC has spent much of its time raising awareness about the core issues it was founded upon, improving public access to information, increasing public participation in government, and fighting alongside residents throughout the town to protect their respective neighborhoods. According to RNPC President, Dominique Mendez, "Business as usual in Riverhead seems to mean a handful of powerful people with inside connections getting what they want, despite of the impact on anyone else and regardless of the rules we're all supposed to play by. We believe that needs to stop and we're going to continue to draw attention to this issue and to do our best to work with government to improve the situation." The group's leaders and coalition partners speak out regularly at Town Hall meetings and the RNPC cites increasing media coverage on many of the issues it takes up as evidence of its success in drawing more attention to situations it sees as potential problems.

After the group lobbied for months for the Town to require public hearings for commercial site plans, the Town Board took up the issue, drafted legislation and held two public hearings. A vote is expected soon. One of the RNPC's strength's has come from teaming with

environmental groups on issues of mutual interest. The Group for the East End and its professional staff worked very closely with the RNPC to bring this public hearing issue to this point. The Group has also been working with the RNPC on a host of other open government issues and has been taking a very active role in the struggle to Save Wading River from overdevelopment, especially in regards to the environmental factors.

The campaign to Save Wading River from commercial overdevelopment, sparked by four projects submitted to the town within a few months late last year, has been the RNPC's largest single initiative to date and has produced some tangible results so far. The County is considering the purchase of the 17.8-acre parcel next to the CVS and a corridor study and comprehensive plan update has just begun. "I've been doing this a long time and I have been pleasantly surprised at the number of people who are supporting the Save Wading River effort through their contributions and through their participation in initiatives like the postcard drives," commented Wading River Civic President Sid Bail, who also serves on the RNPC board. "And as a former teacher, I'm happy to be part of an organization that goes out of its way to educate its members."

In order to empower its member civic groups, the RNPC disseminates information about meetings, projects and issues on a regular basis. This keeps the civics more abreast of what's going on and they, in turn, can and do send some of this information out to their memberships. The RNPC also serves as a bridge between separate civic groups and even between residents and their local civic groups; bringing to the civics' attention neighborhood issues that affect residents in their towns who may not be civic members.

The Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition Inc. was founded in September of 2009 and incorporated in October of 2010. It will hold its second informal anniversary gathering in October and its first all-member meeting this upcoming December. It has a five-member board that is comprised of representatives from three-hamlet civics and its two cofounders, Dominique Mendez and Phil Barbato, who also serve as President and Vice President, respectively. The RNPC can be reached by emailing RiverheadNPC@optonline.net or by mailing RNPC, Box 984, Wading River, NY 11792. The RNPC also has a Facebook page and a site for the Save Wading River campaign, www.savewadingriver.com, which accepts PayPal donations to the organization.

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