

# The Port Jefferson Ordeal.

REPORT FROM LEE SHERIDAN: editor full throttle magazine NYNE

The meeting between the biker community on Long Island and Pt. Jefferson's Mayor Margot Garant was undeniably long over due. The discrimination the town has shown against the motorcyclists is not a new development. In the past, the pressure to make the riders feel, let's say, not welcomed, was funneled through the parking issues. First we were not welcomed to park on Main St. The following year they designated a parking lot for all motorcycles, which was adjacent to the ferry and across the street from Main St. Last year, we were back on Main St., but not without some harassment.

This spring the Pt. Jefferson Business Improvement District (BID) circulated a news letter outlining the next board meeting agenda. Of course, parking was an issue once again and this time it was listed as ALL vehicles would not be allowed to park on Main St. However, the next bullet stated that All Motorcycles would not be allowed to park on Main St., A motorcycle is a vehicle, so there was no need for that statement other than to just make it a point of singling out the ever discriminated against motorcycle. These issues are no surprise to any of those who ride. It's almost as if we expect some sort of motorcycle parking issue in Pt. Jeff with every new riding season. The next item on the agenda was the mother load and was probably one of the worst forms of discrimination I have ever heard in my life time – **The Unsightly Presence of all Motorcyclists**. Of course, this was an agenda so it was filled with topics not full sentences. According to Mayor Garant, the news letter expressed the opinion of only one member of the district and was not approved by the board. She also stated that as of right now, nothing has been changed from last year as far as street parking or Village parking was concerned.

Upon my arrival at the meeting, I had decided that I would not speak or introduce myself. I wanted to absorb the meeting from an observer's point of view, so that I could write about it as a journalist and not as a one of the debaters. I took my place on an above ground ledge, which gave me a birds-eye view of the entire room. Local PD was stationed outside and a few officers were in the house. Of course, the meeting started out as us against them. The Mayor did not arrive until we were about a \_ hour into the meeting. Representation was very strong from club members to weekend warriors. Several BID members and shop owners began the meeting. While the shop owners gave us a fair debate, one BID member was completely prejudice and made no bones about letting everyone know. Minutes after this BID member took the floor, it was apparent to all that he was the one who wrote the disgusting, slanderous line in the news letter. The white haired, senior, whose name is Wallace and I won't even address him with a Mr. because he deserves the same respect that he gives motorcyclists, pointed his finger at all of us and said, **"I don't like bikers and I don't want you in this town"**. Well, needless to say the roar of voices filled the glassed in auditorium and I thought for sure that the meeting was going to end before it started. At this point I did take notice to an officer looking down and shaking his head. Either he thought the old man lost his mind, or that he had some pair of \$#@%\*. Wallace went back and forth for quite some time with one insult after the other. I am pleased to report that his opponents kept their cool and addressed whatever he threw at them with intelligent and factual answers, which only made him more arrogant. You see, Wallace comes from Old Money, and has resided in Port Jefferson for many years (possibly most or all of his life). He owns the land his shop is on and a nice size parking lot to go with it. It was said that he also owns other properties in town. Like I mentioned in one of my emails to the editor of Carolina's Full Throttle Magazine, he is a clone of Jane Wyman's character, 'Aunt Polly' in Disney's Pollyanna. Too bad for him that this is not the 1800's and people are not going to put up with being discriminated against, especially the motorcycle community.

Once Mayor Garant arrived, she dismissed Wallace and order was once again established. Not to say that Wallace didn't take cheap shots whenever he could find the chance to. The Mayor spoke and gave anybody and everybody the opportunity to elaborate on her comments as long as it was

done in an orderly fashion and with a respectful raise of the hand. She had her assistant taking notes on the motorcyclist's response to topics that she, the shop owners and BID were addressing. Now the meeting was taking on some sort of form and the agenda was getting resolved. Mayor Garant began to embrace the motorcyclists concerns and sympathized with them many times throughout the meeting in regard to the negative behavior that BID and some of the shops owners expressed.

The meeting ended with Mayor Garant proposing to get the motorcycles back into the designated parking area that we once occupied (per the motorcyclists request). I also agree with this request due to the fact that Main St. parking will now be monitored to a \_ hour per ALL vehicles. However, we are still free to park on Main St. as long as we leave enough room to accommodate 2 bikes per space. She is also going to address an illegal sign that Wallace posted in his parking lot and which states - No Motorcycle Parking - All motorcycles will be fined up to \$250 and could face up to 15 days in jail. He is quite a character, isn't he? Mayor Garant is looking to keep the historic town of Port Jefferson a friendly town that all are welcome to enjoy.

I would like to go on record as saying that I was quiet pleased with how the meeting went and the end results. I feel confident that the Mayor will see to it that the parking issues are taken care of in a manner that we can all live with. As for the shop owners – like in anything else, there is good and there is not so good. Some of them like the motorcycles and the riders to come to town and some don't. As long as they don't start posted NO BIKERS signs in their shop windows and keep from writing discriminating agendas we should all be able to move forward without hostility. As for Wallace – he is old and set in his ways. He isn't going to change his way of thinking and will have to be chalked up as one of those individuals who can't see past the end of their noses and obviously doesn't want to. Perhaps the motorcycle and its rider might never be able to totally shed the negativity from some members of society, but we can and will certainly stand up and fight for our right to coexist.