

The Loading Dock

Speakeasy to open

BY RANDALL WASZYNSKI

The Loading Dock, a venue for new and emerging performing artists, will be opening in Patchogue on March 15. An address cannot be given, though. Only GPS coordinates available on the Loading Dock's Facebook page can navigate you to the location.

The venue was first announced on their Facebook page on Dec. 13, 2017 and fliers, Post-it notes and sidewalk chalk ads have since been posted along paths in Patchogue Village.

The plan, according to the Loading Dock's executive director (who chose to remain anonymous), is to schedule events on select Thursdays. As of now, a three-event comedy series is lined up — one in March, April and May — all of which will be hosted by Joseph Vecsey, who produced and appeared in Adam Sandler's "Sandy Wexler." He also expressed interest in scheduling theatrical reading events on additional Thursdays within that time frame.

The venue's directors invited music promoters and other interested parties to the location on Feb. 28 to allow the community to see the 150-person space. "We're giving people a place to start, a place to be heard and a place to play original music," the executive director said. "So we're not stuck playing covers."

The majority of those who attended are musically driven, including performers, event organizers and Joe Rock from WBAB 102.3. And consisting of such, the group discussed how to bring more original talent to Long Island, how to create paths to success within the industry for that talent, and the challenges faced trying to reach those goals.

Rock, who is also a rock musician, said to the group that the radio station has opened airtime for homegrown music

and that it had once flourished. "Where that started to fail was when the artists weren't promoting."

The conversation dug into the conflict for radio stations like WBAB that host the overwhelming desire of the community to play tributes and covers, which means less airtime for original artists. "We started to notice that people weren't understanding marketing," said Jason Steinberg, WBAB's director of marketing and promotion. "And then we move towards some contest gig that was purely focused on marketing, purely focused on how many people you can bring in, and we got push-back on that: 'Well, we play better than them. Well, they bring in more people than you, they're going to win.'"

Steinberg noted that Long Island has an oddly large tribute-band scene compared to the other cities he has worked in, like Chicago, Boston, Miami and Hartford.

The performers among those present argued that exposure is the key to success for the original talent on Long Island and that it is the radio station's duty to create those opportunities. "Original music needs to be played so that people can hear it so that it becomes the background track of their life," said Johnny Mac, a blues, R&B, funk and reggae performer and member of the Long Island-based Johnny Mac Band. "A small percentage of people will say, 'I love that band.' But in order to get the numbers, the exposure has to be millions to get thousands of people to like an original group."

There are other avenues aside from the radio to attract such numbers, though. Rock suggested an approach similar to what he saw at Pioneer Square in Seattle, where you pay one cover charge to get access to a slew of neighboring bars,



Patchogue Village's new speakeasy, the Loading Dock, plans to open its doors March 15. Coordinates to the location are available on their Facebook page.

where a band would play in one location and, once their set was done, another band would begin their set in the neighboring bar shortly afterwards.

"They all paid attention, they all worked together, and people came down," Rock said. "They knew, 'For one price, I can go see all this different music. That band is taking a break anyway ... We already paid the money. Why not just stick our head

in over there and see what's going on?'"

The directors agreed that this was a great idea, but a long-term goal, considering the purpose of this meeting. "This is where this is all going to start," one of the directors said. "This music scene has the ability to garner national and international attention if we put our heads to it." ■

Health center

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myself. I'm guessing we'll hear ambulances coming throughout the night. We're concerned about increase in traffic on our neighborhood streets. Harris Street is a major cut-through, and so is Lincoln Road."

Residents pointed out that traffic on Harris Street would significantly increase from drivers traveling toward the health center from Route 112. They also speculated that patients traveling by bus to the health center from Route 112 would increase foot traffic on Harris Street.

The last stop is scheduled for 6:13 p.m., and the health center plans to be open on weekdays until 8 p.m. This leads residents to believe that unwanted persons will wander around the neighborhood. "We're all a bit concerned with those operating hours," Ventimiglia said.

Conversation led to the lack of dialogue regarding the installation of a traffic light at the corner of Harris Street and North Ocean Avenue, though HRH's traffic analysis concluded that there would not be a significant impact to traffic. The analysis involved the consideration of how much additional parking would be necessary to meet regulatory requirements for the estimated 240 daily patients and 60 daily staff, HRH's engineer said.

But that conclusion felt insufficient to those listening. "Two-hundred fifty, on the upper side, a day are going to go on Harris Street," said a resident who lives on Harris Street. "Two-hundred fifty cars. Verizon didn't have that many people in that building, and they would come down my block."



The Health Center of Patchogue, currently located on East Main street, has plans to move to the former Verizon building at 501 North Ocean Avenue. Earlier this week, residents gathered at the North Patchogue Fire Department to voice their concerns.

Adv/Waszynski

The Suffolk County Department of Public Works holds the jurisdiction of traffic lights on county roads, like North Ocean Avenue. The possibility of such an installation would depend on a warrant analysis that prompts that action, and the installation would be illegal if pursued anyway, said attorney Tim Shea, representing HRH. Shea also stressed that 250 people going

to the health center does not necessarily mean that each of those cars will travel down Harris Street. "The majority of people will be coming from north and south [on North Ocean Avenue]," he said.

There have been previous meetings between these residents and HRH on the matter, and HRH demonstrated that they have adjusted plans based on concerns

previously addressed: A chain-link fence will be installed along the north and east borders of the property, trees will be inserted on those edges of the property as visual and noise barriers, and the current septic system will be upgraded to an innovative wastewater management system.

But these adjustments to the plan only angered the crowd. "I don't care how many trees you put there," one resident said. "I don't care how much you fix the outside of the building. An empty Verizon building is better to me than a health center."

Foley's representative said they want to move forward as transparent as possible. Despite multiple meetings, residents said there has been a lack of transparency on behalf of officials.

"There were calls in August 2016 that started it, and we were all told when we made those calls, 'Don't worry, this is all buried. It's not going to worry you,'" resident Artie Schlett said. "Instead, you betrayed everybody and walked all over us."

"There was no transparency," Ventimiglia said. "That's why so many folks are so upset tonight. We were not given a heads-up. We were also told that HRH was a done deal. Now you said it is not."

The incorporation of a health center at the location on North Ocean Avenue is dependent upon an approval by the Town of Brookhaven planning board, a hearing which has not yet been scheduled. ■