

BY THOMAS COGAN

The February meeting of the Dutch Kills Civic Association, in the cafeteria of St. Patrick's School, 28th Street and 40th Avenue, was the occasion of its Valentine's Day party. Food, mainly in the form of three sandwiches, each a good yard and a half long, was placed on serving tables, as was drink, while nearby a meeting, expected to be brief, was conducted. But the meeting eventually ran to considerable length, attendees having decided that a description of a proposed apartment house and a lecture on crime by the 114th Police Precinct commanding officer were engaging enough to delay the pleasure of eating.

The proposed apartment house is currently a two-story building, termed "nondescript", at 38th Avenue and Crescent Street. Describing it thus was Eric Palatnik, a lawyer who made the presentation before the DKCA audience in the company of Joseph Vance, an architect from Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Palatnik said he and Vance were seeking a building variance, because the corner on which the building stands is zoned for industry, not residences. The plan is to build on a two-story base, adding four stories. The completed building would stand 66 feet high and contain 30 apartments, each having one or two bedrooms. Palatnik said the building could not be classified as luxury or "pricey" (though there would be no studio apartments, which the attorney described under his breath as "the worst form of housing ever"). He said he expected the residents to be fairly young, not many years along in their careers and glad to be moving into an area that is appreciating in desirability, as he believes Dutch Kills is. There is to be a basement garage for 14 cars and room on the first floor for a commercial establishment of moderate size—less than a supermarket,

Construction, Crime Turn Party Into Biz Meeting

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more like a clothing store or a restaurant.

Vance showed association members his rendering of the proposed building and drew an enthusiastic response. The design would be something of a throwback, having a pointed roof and bringing to mind some circa 1900 buildings—"Not just a square brick thing like so many apartment houses," Palatnik said. One person asked how high the ceiling would be in the first floor commercial space; Palatnik said perhaps 14 feet. The questioner said another builder had put up a place near Queensborough Plaza with about eight feet of ceiling room for a retailer and then wondered why no businesses were interested. But there were anxious inquiries about the garage and the number of cars the new building might bring into the neighborhood. Palatnik repeated his anticipation that most residents would be young and in possession of one car, if that. Many in the audience remained skeptical, and fearful that what they already see as a parking glut on the streets would



only get worse. Someone else asked Palatnik if this building would really turn out to contain condominiums. The attorney said no, the size of the apartments simply wouldn't be large enough for anyone seeking a condo. The building renovators were also in attendance to promote their good intentions. Ralph Ciao and Dimitrios Spanos are from Liberty Architectural Products Co., located not far away at 37-14 61st St., in Woodside. Liberty advertises itself as "New York's only complete exterior envelope contractor", specializing in windows, restoration and sidewalk bridging.

Deputy Inspector Brian McCarthy can, like most other precinct commanders in the city, point to a falling crime rate within his assigned territory: a 4.5 percent decline in all of 2005 and a 12 percent drop in the first few weeks of 2006. He presented a brief outline of how he handles not only the problem of crime but also the threat of it. He listed five types of crime he finds especially bad because they always lead to worse criminal-

ty: 1) possession of burglary tools; 2) criminal trespass; 3) possession of knives; 4) possession of illegal drugs, and 5) warrants evasion. He said there had been 20 burglary tools arrests thus far this year, 28 for criminal trespass and 37 for possession of knives. He was especially emphatic about the last offense. "Nothing good comes from knives," he said. Many types of knives, like switchblades or gravity knives, are illegal to begin with, and those who carry knives are either malicious or foolish. Knives can also double as burglary tools, he said.

He then covered two specific matters. Club DNA, at 34th Avenue and 28th Street, has been under great pressure from him, which should not surprise anyone who knows McCarthy. When he assumed command of the 114th Precinct in October, he noted that he had much experience with night clubs and the problems they can present when he worked in Manhattan and intended to hold clubs responsible for much of their patrons' errant behavior. For Club DNA, that has meant 51 arrests within a four-block radius thus far this year, and other such establishments can expect similar crackdowns. The owners, seeing that their place is synonymous with disruption and arrests, have appealed to him to let up a little, but he has told them he'll go easy only when the community stops complaining about them. Club owners in Astoria are concerned about their business, McCarthy said, so he expects them to respond to his insistence that they reform.

The other matter is the problem of graffiti and, related to it, the fortunes of a star performer, Oliver Siandre, a Manhattan resident who has liberally distributed his tag of "Kiko" throughout Astoria

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