

# Editorial

## Libraries Open Later, Sales Tax Eliminated

We join with Queens Borough Public Library Director Thomas Galante in rejoicing that the just-passed New York City budget for Fiscal Year 2008 includes funding to expand library hours to at least six days per week in all library branches. The newest branch library, at 37-44 21st St. in Long Island City, began Saturday hours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 7, as did the Cambria Heights branch, and other branches will open on Saturday as quickly as staffing can be put in place. The budget also includes funding for more new books and other library materials.

The importance to a community of a well-stocked library open six days a week—if not seven—cannot be underestimated. In Queens, especially, branch libraries have offered generations of schoolchildren a place to study and do research. The library's Summer Reading Program encourages younger children to discover and develop a love of books and by encouraging older children to read during the summer months enables them to do better in school during the coming academic year. The library's Adult Learner Program (ALP) provides services for adults, some of whom are native English speakers but whose reading and writing skills are limited, to understand, read, write and speak English. Parents with children from pre-kindergarten through third grade attend classes together in the ALP Family Literacy Program to improve their English language skills. The New Americans Program offers assistance, resources and learning opportunities for new immigrants who find themselves

adapting to life in an urban area of the United States. Both the Adult Learner and New Americans Programs are celebrating their 30th year in existence, and the entire library system is reveling in its 100th year of incorporation.

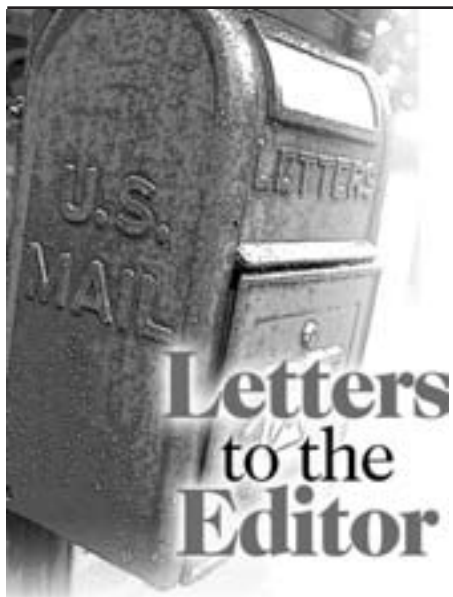
Generations of native-born and new Queens residents have educated themselves with library cards. "Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Speaker Christine Quinn and the City Council have made the best possible investment in education, job readiness and quality of life by restoring six-day a week library service in the FY 2008 budget. "People in Queens will be reaping the benefits for years to come. We can't thank them enough for their foresight and hard work," Galante declared. We agree.

The good news goes on. Governor Eliot Spitzer has signed into law legislation sponsored by state Senator Frank Padavan that eliminates the New York City portion of the sales tax on all clothing and footwear purchases in the city of New York, regardless of cost. Before this legislation was enacted, the sales tax exemption applied only to articles of clothing and footwear priced at \$110 or less. While the 4 percent state sales tax on clothing and footwear and the 3/8 percent Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District surcharge remain intact, eliminating the New York City portion of the sales tax on clothing and footwear will save taxpayers an estimated \$110 million in 2008, increasing annually to an estimated \$122 million in 2011.

To our way of thinking, there exists no metropolitan populace more deserving of a break on the price of clothes and shoes than the denizens of New York City. The owners and proprietors of the stores where this merchandise is sold deserve a break, too, and thanks to Padavan's legislation, they are going to get one. Eliminating the city sales tax on every article of clothing and pair of shoes sold in New York City means shoppers will do their buying locally. Instead of traveling outside the five boroughs, they will stay within the city limits to replenish their wardrobes.

Clothing purveyors will not be the only merchandisers with more money in their cash registers. Thoughtful shoppers who take the time to make sure they're getting the best buy for their money will stop to take a break at nearby restaurants, delicatessens and fast-food places. Saving money on clothing purchases means consumers will have more disposable income to spend on other, taxable items. The city, state and even the federal government will benefit as well, and so, too, will the owners and employees of the stores where those taxable items are sold. Mass transit will carry more riders visiting stores in the city. Shoppers who drive will, in many cases, pay for parking.

Expanded library hours and elimination of the city sales tax on clothes and shoes are two enormous, long-term benefits for the people of Queens. Both will be a boon to present and future generations alike.



### Live And Let Live

To The Editor:

I'd like to comment about the attempt to grant landmark status to Sunnyside Gardens.

Whatever happened to the old adage, "A man's home is a man's castle" or the original concept of freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as expressed by this nation's founders? The existing homeowners in Sunnyside never legally agreed to preserve its historic character. I don't see how this whole concept of compulsory historic preservation ever came about. If historic preservation is worthwhile, it should be voluntary.

Non-profit organizations, government or private/public partnerships wishing to pre-

serve local historic character should seek to enter into voluntary agreements with willing homeowners. They could always provide financial inducements or directly purchase and preserve homes themselves. Local governments could even offer real estate tax abatements to willing participants.

Nobody is compelled to live in any neighborhood. If its character changes, anyone not liking it is free to move elsewhere. If I think my neighbor's house is very gaudy looking, I don't run to City Hall in [an] attempt to regulate aesthetic standards. Whatever happened to live and let live?

Steven Kalka  
East Rockaway, N.Y.

### Move Traffic, Don't Tax City

To The Editor:

Congestion pricing is a poor idea, if the purpose is to reduce pollution. If we can get traffic to move now, congestion pricing would be a huge, wasteful, expensive boondoggle.

I have a better idea: enforce the current laws. Do that and traffic will move very well.

1) Don't block the box. If enough traffic cops were at the critical 'boxes', as during Giuliani's days, cars and city buses, the worst offenders, would not block intersections as they do so badly today. One estimate states that some 60 percent of traffic congestion is caused by blocking the box.

2) Limit double parking by trucks. On the north-south avenues, restrict double parking

by trucks to the right side, the side used by buses. At present, drivers have to run the gauntlet of trucks double parked on both sides, in the span of just one block, first on the right, then on the left, and back again on the right, or a bus is on the right, unable to get into the bus stop because a privileged car [or truck] is blocking the bus stop. Lexington Avenue is ridiculous. Sometimes there is only one driving lane on this important street.

3) Eliminate privileged parking on cross streets. As a senior citizen over 65, I use the subway most of the time, but when I have to drive in the city occasionally, going crosstown, I see signs which state "No parking 8 a.m.- 6 p.m.". That is a joke. I have yet to see an empty space between 11th and 2nd Avenue, except at a hydrant. Who fills these spaces? None of the cars parked have parking tickets. If trucks could park in spaces that should be empty, crosstown traffic would be a breeze. At present, trucks double park. Then a bus or another truck cannot pass on the narrow street, and cars are backed up, to of course a "Don't block the box", compounding everything. An estimated 30,000 cars enjoy privileged parking. In effect, they park anywhere 24/7 with impunity. Do we need 30,000 exceptions?

4) No exceptions, or else no law. Will everybody pay the \$8 for cars and \$17 for trucks? Of course not. Politicians [and] critical city employees will be exempt. State and federal employees? News reporters? The TV news trucks? All will be on "official" busi-

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