

BY THOMAS COGAN

As it resumed its schedule after the summer, the Dutch Kills Civic Association welcomed Melissa Katz of the Pratt Center for Community Development as a speaker.

Katz presented the group meeting in St. Patrick's School on 28th Street with a description of residential and commercial development that is designed to leave communities as improved places, rather than neighborhoods that have been largely cleared out and replaced with higher-priced housing and furnishings. Her six-point program would turn development into a benefit, not a burden, and would, in her words, "give back to communities".

She was, however, speaking in Dutch Kills, a community that is at present experiencing a certain level of development. The loud discussion that followed Katz's complete-with-slides presentation made it plain that there is a gap between the ideal development of which she spoke and the development that really occurs.

Katz said she is making her presentation to groups all over the city and asking for responses, which she prompts by handing out a short questionnaire. The presentation is about a study made by the Pratt Center in conjunction with both the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School and Jobs with Justice, which describes itself as a national campaign for workers' rights. She said that while New York remains a great city, she believes it is being taken away from a solid citizenry that should be able to afford it but is being constantly priced out. While the price of everything, including housing, health care and energy, is going up, income for a good part of the working and middle classes is falling,

'Losing City We Love' Planner Tells Dutch Kills Civic Assn.

she observed. She added that the current generation believes the next one will be forced to move out of a New York that has become unaffordable. "We're losing the city we love," Katz said. Her slideshow featured activists and groups endeavoring to retain it.

The mayor has announced grand plans for the city's next quarter-century. Katz said that plan or any such plan must have a half-dozen features that she delineated. The first of these is maintenance—of parks, financial structure, stores, education and childcare, to name just a few social necessities. The second is involvement—communities must be aware of, and ready to respond to, plans the city has for them. A third feature is government effectiveness. Developers need city government for permits and tax breaks, among other things, so citizens must see to it that the city is an effective force for control and regulation. Next is job creation and training, along with affordable housing. The last is environmental soundness, which might well begin with more sensible placement of waste transfer stations and power plants. She showed some current projects that appear to be on a good track, such as the one on the northwest waterfront of Brooklyn, where a portion of the housing is deemed affordable, that is, within the means of working and middle-class residents, and where 50 acres of waterfront park area will be open to the public. The plans

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for a new neighborhood built around and in the massive old Kingsbridge Armory in The Bronx include stores and schools and a pay scale for laborers of at least \$10 per hour. She even praised the highly contentious Columbia University project in Upper Manhattan because of the so-called 197-A plan that would purportedly provide jobs, park space and retention of local businesses.

When her presentation was over, one man in the audience called it "hogwash". He said he had heard high-minded plans for Dutch Kills too, plans that called for restriction of high-rise residential and commercial structures. But as matters stand now, he continued, he's seeing hotels being built all over a neighborhood that, it is generally agreed, cannot support a steady flow of transient hotel traffic. George Stamatiades, neighborhood activist, reviewed the situation by saying that the zoning plan was supposed to encourage the building of housing in Dutch Kills, which had been static for decades. It was, however, supposed to be low-density housing, not high-rise, on the side streets. The Department of City Planning reduced the floor-area ratio (FAR) for commercial interests from 5.0 to 2.0 in much of the community to prevent construction of commercial buildings that would hover over residences. This seems to have discouraged commercial development. When the effective date of the new zoning became known, hotel

builders could and did put up their buildings in advance of it. The neighborhood has been treated to the paradox of a developer, apparently community-related, who could not build a six-story apartment house on Crescent Street because the impending zoning prohibited it, while hotels more than twice that height are being built by those intent on defying such zoning. Stamatiades said that the new zoning will bring such building to an end, but Steve Morena, a local resident, concluded in contrast that the series of City Planning meetings from 2005 to 2007 "came to naught". Others heatedly accused local politicians of abandoning them.

Katz, for her part, welcomed the controversy because it showed she had encountered an area of concern. Also, she did get back a few questionnaires, she said. But when, after the excited exchanges had subsided, she asked for a further exposition of the community's concerns, a voice replied, "We're all too worn out now."

DKCA has been granted \$6,000 for sundry expenses in the coming year through the office of state Senator George Onorato. At the meeting, Jerry Walsh, DKCA president, said the money had not yet arrived. Meeting expenses, holiday banners, the association newsletter and advertising for the annual street fair are some of the expenses covered by the grant. The street fair for 2007 had been staged the previous Saturday, September 8, on 36th Avenue. Walsh said its most successful hours were mainly after 4 p.m. He and Stamatiades recalled the spectacular June 15 opening of the new library on 38th Avenue and 21st Street. Stamatiades, a Queens Library trustee, read a letter of gratitude to the DKCA for its grant to the library of \$2,500. That grant is to be matched by the Calder Foundation, Walsh said.

Calendar of Events

Sep. 27, New York Hospital Queens, Blood Mobile no appointment required, for venue locations and more information, or to pledge to donate blood or organize a blood drive, call Barbara Foote at 718.670.7987, Tai Chi class, every Monday and Wednesday, call 718.670.1695; Yoga class, \$5 per class, every Wednesday, \$90 for 10 classes, call the Cardiac Health Center at 718.670.1695; Prostate Cancer Support Group, second Wednesday of every Month, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345; Female Cancer Support Group, second Monday of every Month, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Sep. 29, Queens Community House/Forest Hills S.C., Lectures:Nerves & Posture, call for information on other activities, 108-25 62nd Dr.; 718.699.1010.

Sep. 29, NYC Hispanic Heart Healthy Day, Queens Center Mall, 90-15 Queens Blvd., Elmhurst; 1.800.640.5881.

Sep. 29, Queens Borough Public Library Central Library Free Health Fair, 89-11 Merrick Blvd., Jamaica; 718.990.0704.

Sep. 30, ANIBIC building dedication, refreshments, 61-07 230th St., Oakland Gardens, RSVP by Sep. 20, 718.423.9550, ext. 2160.

Historical

Sep. 29, Bayside Historical Society, drama program, ages 10+, \$400, 10, two-hour classes concluding with performance; 718.352.1548.

Through Sep., Greater Ridgewood Historical Society, sculpture/painting exhibit "De Boerderij", \$2, Onderdonk House, 1820 Flushing Ave., Ridgewood. 718.456.1776.

Items of Community Interest

Sep. 29, Oct. 6, "Discover Queens" walking tours, \$20 p.p.; 718.482.6030, LIC.

Sep. 27, Queens Economic Development Corporation "Discover Queens Restaurant Week", prix fixe \$20.07 p.p.; 718.263.0546 or the Flushing BID at 718.888.1805.

Sep. 26, Federation of Italian American Organization of Queens

Italian language classes, 12-week course \$100 plus workbook, 29-21 21st Ave., Astoria; 718.204.2444.

Sep. 26, SBDC @ York college, Live Your Vision, \$10 cash only pay at door; **Sep. 28**, Veteran's Small Business Resource Day: New Discount Loan Programs, free, space limited, pre-register, Faculty Dining Room #2D01, 94-20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd., Jamaica; 718.262.2880.

Sep. 29 (rain date Sep. 30), Sunnyside United Neighborhood Network large-scale, anti-graffiti cleanup, 48th Street and Skillman Avenue; 646.298.8669.

Sep. 29, NYC Department of Sanitation Electronics Recycling, St. John's University, Alumni Hall Parking Lot (corner of Utopia Parkway & Union Turnpike, cars enter at Gate 3 on Utopia Parkway & 80th Road). Only computers, laptops, monitors, printers, scanners (desktop only) keyboards, mice, TVs, VCRs & DVD players accepted. Only NYC residents may drop off material (no businesses allowed), limit five pieces per vehicle. The first 100 people to drop off electronics will receive a \$5 Best Buy gift card.

To Nov. 18, Sunnyside Greenmarket, Lou Lodati Playground, Skillman Avenue, 42nd/43rd Streets; 718.533.8773.

•1st, 3rd, 5th Saturday, Queens Best Toastmasters club, public speaking/communication, free; Elmhurst Hospital Center, Conference Room A-1-15, 79-01 Broadway; 718.457.8390.

Library Highlights

There are many free events available at the Queens libraries for adults, teens and kids. For more information go to www.queenslibrary.org or call your local branch library; **Sep. 29**, breast cancer screenings, to schedule a mammogram call 800-ACS-2345 for location information 718.790.0778; **Sep. 29**, State Fair with Assemblymember Catherine Nolan, Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island City branch, 37-44 21st St.; 718.784-31394, 718.456.9492. **Oct. 13**, college fair and workshops; **to Oct. 15**,

Hispanic Heritage Month, food, dance, music, Central Library as well as other library branches; 718.990.0891; call 718.990.0871, for other events time and place, call 718.790.0778.

Parks & Recreation

Alley Pond Environmental Center

APEC has many fun and interesting programs for tots to pre-teens to adults: **Sep. 29**, National Estuaries Day Festival, Jamaica Bay Bird Walk; **Oct. 11**, APEC 2007 Green Gala, \$150 sponsor ticket; **Oct. 21**, APEC's Annual Membership Meeting; **Nov. 3**, APEC Square Dance, \$12 n.m.; Fall/Winter Children's Programs: Animal Care Club, Animal Care Trainee, APEC Safari Fledglings, Audrey Wood Fan Club, Autumn Still Life, Batty for Bats, Butterflies, Field Biology High School Internship, Junior Nature Kids, Let's Talk Turkey, Little Chefs, Little Chefs-Halloween Delights, Mad Scientist, Nature Club, Nature's Snoozers, Pumpkin Patch Match, Snowy Evergreen Banners, Sunny Bunnies, Teeny Tiny Trick O'Treaters, Toddler Time, Toddler Time-Weekends, Wee Sprouts, Winter Wildlife, fees vary, 228-06 Northern Blvd., Douglaston; call for information, 718.229.4000.

Forest Park

Sep. 29, Movies Under The Stars: "Happy Feet", free; Seufert Bandshell; **Sep. 30**, Prolific Ponds, Strack Pond "Forever Wild" protected, call for time and place, 311.

Queens Botanical Garden

Sep. 26, NYC Teacher "Wormshop", \$10; **Sep. 29-30**, Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Visitor & Administration Center, performances, tours, workshops (subject to change); **to Sep. 29**, Children's Garden; **Oct. 6, 7**, Visitor & Administration Center open hours & tour; **Oct. 17**, Composting in the City & Indoor Worm Composting; **Oct. 28**, Pumpkin Patch; **to Nov. 9**, Farmers' Market, fees vary, 43-50 Main St., Flushing; 718.886.3800.