

Editorial

Communities Deserve Information, Not Rumors

The Westway Motor Inn at 71-11 Astoria Blvd. has been a source of controversy almost since it was built to accommodate visitors to the 1964-65 World's Fair. In the 40-odd years of its existence it has been a short-stay motel, a temporary refuge for the victims of a sting that lured people from Central and South American countries to Queens to toil as slave labor and a longer-term shelter for homeless families, to name only a few of the varied uses that have been found for it. According to online research, the Westway is once again doing duty as a motel; a stay in one of its 121 rooms with amenities including central air conditioning and in-room movies on demand will run a traveler some \$130 a night.

Rumors that the Westway will once again be converted to a homeless shelter are circulating through the surrounding Astoria Heights, Jackson Heights and East Elmhurst communities. The United Community Civic Association, which has regarded the Westway as a thorn in its side for years is holding an emergency meeting this Thursday to which Carmine Rivetti, city Department of Homeless Services assistant commissioner for government and community relations, has been invited as guest speaker.

We hope that Rivetti will show up. So too, we hope, will residents from neighborhoods throughout Queens. (We know

from experience that 114th Police Precinct Commanding Officer Inspector Brian McCarthy will be present unless official business calls him away, and if he cannot attend, a representative will.) The Westway is indicative of a problem that besets the entire borough. We in Queens are willing to do our part to accept those less fortunate who for a number of reasons may not for the moment have homes of their own. This is part of our obligations as citizens of this metropolis and as members of the family of mankind. But Queens has some of the largest shelters for the homeless in New York City and at almost every community board meeting we attend, a request to establish another such facility seems to crop up on the agenda. More people bring about greater use of water, electricity and storm and sanitary sewers, some already weakened by the strain of overuse. Families with school age children add to the student body population of neighborhood schools, some of which are even now crowded beyond their capacity. There are limits to how many homeless people this borough can accommodate and it is time the city agencies responsible for the homeless population recognized that fact.

Of even greater moment than the question of a burgeoning homeless population is the apparent reluctance of the city agencies responsible for deciding to convert

the Westway to a homeless shelter to inform the affected communities that surround the motel of their intentions. This, too, is a matter of concern for the entire borough. Too many times community facilities such as shelters have been foisted on area residents without regard to those residents' wishes or the needs of the people for whom the facilities have been developed. While the City Charter may not require a community board vote to be taken or a general election to be held in order for a facility to be built, the people in the community to be affected ought at least to be consulted and their opinions taken into consideration. Government of the people, by the people and for the people is meant to work from the bottom up, not from the top down.

Government of, by and for the people is also meant to be conducted through accurate, timely and direct information, not rumor and surmise. The reluctance of city agencies to make any kind of public announcement as to the possible future use of the Westway Motor Inn—or any other entity in which an official interest has been expressed—can lead only to distrust, suspicion and fear. The people have a right to know about plans for their community that will affect that community for the present moment and for many years to come.

his termination, as per the recommendation of a report by the Special Commissioner of Investigation.

Principal Blake, during his tenure as the educational leader of I.S. 109, has performed exemplary work and demonstrated extraordinary leadership in turning around a notoriously under-performing school. He has earned the support of parents, students, faculty and community leaders with his emphasis on educational achievement, tough love and community service. Principal Blake is exactly the type of educator that our school system needs.

The charges laid forth in the Commissioner's report are, at best, inconclusive. We believe that the allegation of misappropriated school funding was clearly an unintentional mismanagement of funds, which the report itself acknowledges that Principal Blake neither personally profited from this error nor sought to engage in any criminal malfeasance.

With respect to the matter of the alleged corporal punishment of a student, the Commissioner's report and investigation is rooted in inconsistent and faulty conclusions. We are all adamantly opposed to the abuse of any child and as such, we believe that this is a matter that should have been reported to and investigated by the district attorney's office of Queens. Such investigations are best left in the hands of professionals who are experienced in interviewing witnesses and corroborating evidence. We need only look to the case of Brooklyn school janitor

Francis Evelyn—falsely accused and arrested of a crime only to be exonerated by the Brooklyn district attorney shortly thereafter. In the matter of Shango Blake, the Department of Education should have immediately notified and referred the case to the Queens D.A.

It is our belief that this investigation has been a matter of gross misconduct by the Special Commissioner of Investigation and that Principal Blake has been denied his constitutional right to due process. We stand firmly behind the belief that Principal Shango Blake has been unfairly targeted and should be immediately reinstated as principal of I.S.109. To delay his reinstatement would send the message that our city's educators are being held to an unfair and unjust standard which would only impede the successful progress we all, as stakeholders, want to see for our city's children.

Sincerely,
 Leroy Comrie
 Deputy Majority Leader
 Councilmember, 27th District et al.

Defer MTA Increase

A copy of the following letter was received by the Gazette.

Hon. Lee Sander
 Executive Director and CEO
 Metropolitan Transportation Authority
 347 Madison Avenue
 New York, New York 10017
 Dear Mr. Sander:

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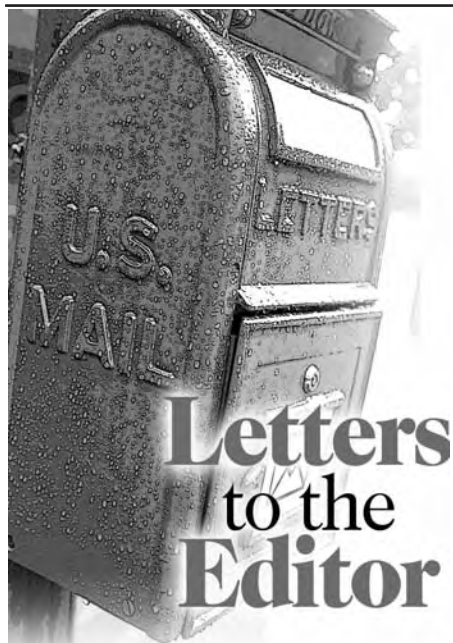
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Principal Good For Community

A copy of the following letter was received by the Gazette.

NYC Department of Education
 Office of The Chancellor
 Attn: Joel I. Klein, Chancellor
 52 Chambers Street
 New York, NY 10007
 Dear Chancellor Klein,

We, the undersigned, as duly elected representatives of the Southeast Queens community, are respectfully submitting this memo regarding a matter of grave concern to our mutual constituents. It has come to our attention that DOE has recently removed Mr. Shango Blake as principal of Intermediate School 109 and is seeking