

Board 1 Says 'No' To Con Ed Land Sale

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

While Mayor Michael Bloomberg hopes with his PlaNYC to achieve the cleanest air of any big city in America by 2030, Community Board 1 is struggling with the present.

Having learned that Con Edison intends to sell a portion of its property on 20th Avenue to a third party who will then lease it to Federal Express for use as a distribution center, the board has sent a letter of opposition to the Public Service Commission (PSC).

"It is our understanding that approximately 200 trucks per day will be using the local streets," stated the letter, approved at the January board meeting. "We already have hundreds of trucks."

Board Chairperson Vinicio Donato said the board was first informed of the negotiations at its district cabinet meeting on January 10. "My understanding is the deal is not complete," said Donato.

The land is zoned M1-3, but the board is seeking support for a "first-class recreational facility for our children and seniors to enjoy" instead. The board envisions a park with benches, athletic fields and hundreds of trees that would help the pollution problem. "Please support our appeal that Con Edison be a responsible neighbor," the letter said. "We have had our blackouts

and pollution problems, isn't it time to create a greener environment?"

"The mayor talks about pollution in Manhattan, however, little consideration is being given to our community which is suffering from the fumes of constant traffic flow and energy producing polluters," the letter stated, asking PSC that Con Edison not be permitted to lease or sell the property.

In addition to the industrial site occupied by Con Edison, the board said, Astoria Energy, Riker's Island

Prison, with more than 13,000 detainees, daily visitors, and some 7,000 employees mostly driving to and from the prison, La Guardia Airport traffic, two bridges, the Grand Central Parkway, and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway all add to local congestion.

City Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. has also sent a letter to the PSC saying the Upper Ditmars area is residential, consisting of mostly one- and two-family homes, and is already burdened

with an overwhelming amount of truck traffic coming from the industrial area on the northern waterfront near Con Edison.

Vallone said a Federal Express distribution center would only exacerbate this situation. "I urge that you only allow Con Ed to use its property in a way that would be compatible with the needs of the community," he said.

The national average for children's asthma hospitalization is 3.1 per 1,000 children. But in Queens, the rate is greater, at just under 6 per 1,000, according to data analyzed by the New York City Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene from the New York state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the federal Centers for Disease Control.

In addition, people living within the 500- to 1,500-foot range of a heavily trafficked road are at a much greater risk than someone living farther away. The soot and fumes from cars, trucks and buses are linked to asthma, lung and heart disease and cancer.

"We've taken enough abuse from Con Edison," said Donato. "I think it's time they pay us back."

News Of The Neighborhoods

COMPILED BY LIZ GOFF

Cell Phone Towers Unplugged

Parishioners at St. Mel's Church in Flushing last week celebrated a towering victory when crews arrived to unplug 23 antenna towers from the roof of the parish elementary school.

The removal of the towers marks the end of a two-year battle waged by parents of students at St. Mel's School, along with church and school officials who signed a contract in 2000 to lease roof space for the towers to T-Mobile and Sprint Nextel.

Church officials said at the time that they planned to use revenues from the lease to support church and school projects. Church and school

officials reached out to the mobile communication firms in 2006, after parents voiced concern over possible student exposure to radio waves emitted by the towers. Negotiations continued until December 2007, when Sprint Nextel agreed to remove the towers, said City Councilmember Tony Avella.

Avella said the firm sent a crew to the school at 154-24 26th Ave. on December 27 to unplug the system. T-Mobile officials pulled the plug on their towers days later. Crews from both companies are currently working to remove the towers and other equipment from the rooftop.

The Bayside lawmaker said offi-

cialists at the Diocese of Brooklyn had turned up the heat on the cell phone companies in recent weeks, in an effort to persuade them to unplug the towers.

Kudos For Queens Heroes

Fire marshals are still trying to determine the cause of a blaze at a Richmond Hill apartment building where a Queens cop and a local handyman braved a wall of fire to rescue a family trapped in their apartment on January 15.

Fire officials said James Kelley, 22, was visiting his mother at her job at a local pizza parlor at about 3:10 p.m. when he heard people screaming for help. Kelly ran to the street where he spotted two girls screaming for help from a second floor window at a neighboring building.

"He tried to enter the burning building but was turned back by the heat and flames," said an FDNY spokesperson. "So he ran to a nearby laundromat where he grabbed a fire extinguisher. He emptied the fire extinguisher on the blaze and tried, again, to get inside the building to help the two girls."

That's when Police Officer Joe Amato arrived at the scene. The two men entered the smoke filled building and made it to the second floor, where Amato knocked down the door to the apartment. "Officer Amato told Kelley to just grab anyone he could," police officials said. Kelley grabbed a toddler and her older sister he found inside the apartment, while Amato led their 34-year-old mother and two other siblings out of the building.

BED BUGS BITING???



Department of Housing Preservation and Development

City Councilmember Peter F. Vallone Jr. • Astoria Civic Association

718.545.5353

Host a seminar about the spread of bedbugs in NYC

The evening will be dedicated to helping New York City residents learn about bedbugs, including how to recognize them, prevent infestation and eliminate them from the home.

Tuesday • February 5, 2008 from 8 p.m.-9 p.m.



21-01 24th Avenue
Astoria, NY 11102