

# Crime, Environment, Zoning Noted By Dutch Kills Civic

BY THOMAS COGAN

The May meeting of the Dutch Kills Civic Association began as Brian Beard, new president of the Long Island City Alliance, introduced himself and said he'd like to become better acquainted with the DKCA. It proceeded to a 114th Police Precinct report by Commanding Officer Deputy Inspector Paul Vorbeck and inevitably got around to disputes about residential and industrial zoning. Apropos of the latter, May is the month when an environmental impact statement (EIS) on Dutch Kills is due from the Department of City Planning, but as of the night of the meeting, DKCA President Jerry Walsh could only say that he'd been given a promise of sorts that the EIS would be available some time after the middle of the month.

Deputy Inspector Vorbeck noted that his report for the past month showed a general increase in the crime rate—but only by a quarter of 1 percent. Felony assault is down by more than one-fifth and grand larceny declined by 5 percent; and while commercial burglaries have become cause for worry (as they have in other precincts, such as the 108th) their occurrence must have been stemmed markedly by a recent inquiry into the activities of two individuals brought in for questioning. An investigation connected them to more than 30 recent local burglaries, and they were arrested. Another person, picked up at Northern Boulevard and 29th Street, at the edge of Queens Plaza North, was accused of breaking into several parked automobiles in order to steal GPS units. He, like those other two, is currently in Riker's Island. The commander said that another person was picked up in the wake of a report that a commercial van, which had been making cash collections from several local businesses, had been broken into. The detained person was carrying \$18,000, and the connection between that and the violated van was promptly made. Vorbeck called his precinct Manhattan-like, with many businesses operating into the early morning hours. Under the circumstances, some of them become crime victims and some harbor criminals or allow criminal behavior to occur. Nightclubs can be problematical. He cited recent difficulties with a place called Liquid, which is now closed, and Club 1 on 34th Avenue between 25th and 26th Streets. When he entertained questions from the audience he heard a familiar complaint: that livery cars are taking up parking spaces beside parking meters, forcing drivers of private vehicles into double-parking situations that leave them wide open for ticketing that currently costs \$115 for each violation. The commander promised a crackdown on the limo drivers. He also promised he would be at as many of the DKCA's monthly meetings as it is possible to attend.

Beard said he lives north of Dutch Kills in Astoria, which is full of towering con-

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cepts—30-story apartment projects, for instance, promoted aggressively by developers claiming they are preparing the way for the million or so people who will be adding to New York's population by 2030—a growth trend he, for one, doesn't believe is going to happen. He was at the meeting to see what he'd heard was happening in the neighborhood to the south. Walsh told him and the rest of the meeting that the DKCA fights for the residents of Dutch Kills and that the commercial interests must look after themselves. Attorney Eric Palatnik formed the Dutch Kills Coalition to promote the industrialists' interests. At the April DKCA meeting he said that not only were the commercial interests being diminished by the zoning plan advanced by residential interests, but



also that those of residents also faced serious diminution. Ostensibly the new zoning would give residents the power to develop their properties in a way denied to them for more than 45 years—but, he said, those with detached houses would find that with refurbishment or replacement of their houses they would be subject to side yard requirements of four feet on either side that would reduce house width by eight feet, or typically from 25 feet to 17. Despite being accused of distorting the facts and misleading people, Palatnik repeated his jeremiad for two consecutive weeks, in the ad that ran in the *Gazette's* April 16 and April 23 editions. At the May meeting, Walsh called the ad a "scare tactic". Palatnik insisted he was not being adversarial. He also expressed disappoint-

ment, if not surprise, that his consultation in late March with John Young, Queens commissioner for the Department of City Planning, had not led to any of the feedback he said Young had promised to convey. Government, he concluded, is not working with us, and that is something DKCA should keep in mind if it believes it can put its trust in City Planning. Walsh said he could only wait hopefully for the environmental impact statement. He said that next month's meeting, the last before the summer vacation, was supposed to include a year-end party—but when the time comes, wine, cheese and sandwiches might have to give way to another evening of reports about zoning and hotel construction, by then perhaps enhanced with an EIS.

Walsh had some good financial news for the organization. DKCA had been granted \$4,000 from City Councilmember Eric Gioia's office, to be spent on maintenance of Dutch Kills Park at 36th Avenue and Crescent Street. Another grant of \$1,000 came in from Assemblymember Catherine Nolan's office. On Saturday, May 17 from 10 am to 2 p.m., the DKCA will conduct its annual cleanup of Dutch Kills Park.

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## Queens' Homeless Population Declines In '07

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

It's a case of good news and bad news.

The homeless population, especially in Queens, is down, according to this year's homeless street count. But the economy is down as well and that could impact next year's count.

There were 1,089 fewer people living in New York's streets, parks and subways during this year's Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) count, conducted by the city Department of Homeless Services (DHS) in January.

All told, 3,306 unsheltered individuals were counted this year, a drop of 12 percent from the 3,755 homeless counted last year, said Jay Bainbridge, DHS assistant commissioner for policy and planning.

That was 25 percent fewer than the 4,395 individuals counted in 2005, Bainbridge told the Queens Borough Cabinet at the cabinet's May meeting in Borough Hall.

There also was a decline of 30 percent in homeless counted in subways this year, representing a drop from 1,624 in 2007 to 1,141 in 2008.

"Queens, in particular, has had the

highest [percentage] drop since 2005," said Bainbridge.

The borough numbers show a decrease of 60 percent in homeless counted, declining from an estimated 335 individuals in 2005 to 135 in 2008. Queens also showed the greatest percentage decline from 2007 to 2008, dropping 27 percent from the 186 individuals counted in '07.

HOPE counts only single adults, but DHS's daily homeless census for New York City includes both single adults and families. It currently totals more than 34,000 individuals. Though the average monthly census for families with children in shelters decreased 5 percent from 8,128 in October 2007, to 7,756 in February 2008, it rose again to 8,780 families on May 6, according to the DHS Web site.

At the same time, during the first quarter of 2008, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the loss of 232,000 jobs, with 80,000 in March alone. New York City will lose 90,000 jobs this year, according to the mayor's Office of Management and Budget.

Moreover, unemployment in the U.S. rose three-tenths of a percent to 5.1 per-

cent in March, the highest since September 2005 after Hurricane Katrina. Unemployment went up across the board, except among teenagers.

In another presentation, the city Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) said it will begin its Green Cart program this year. The program establishes 1,000 permits for green carts to sell fresh produce in designated areas of the city.

The mobile green carts can sell only raw fruits and vegetables. No frozen or processed produce is allowed, and for safety reasons green cart operators cannot sell cut, sliced, peeled or processed fruits or vegetables.

This year, 50 permits are available in the borough, with 50 more to become available in 2009. In Queens, green carts will be allowed to operate within the boundaries of the 100th, 101st, 103rd and 113th police precincts.

Both a license and a permit are needed to operate a green cart. For more information, call 311 and ask for "Green Carts" or go to [nyc.gov/greencarts](http://nyc.gov/greencarts).