



The Boerum Hill Bulletin

The Boerum Hill Association is a volunteer organization of residents of Boerum Hill. We seek to preserve and enhance the unique qualities of our neighborhood through advocacy, education and community building. Visit us on the web at www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

November 2008

Volume 4, Issue 1

Members of the Board:

- Sue Wolfe, President
- Joel Potischman, Vice President
- James Forrester, Secretary
- Rose Weber, Treasurer *
- Doug Barnes
- Ben Barrett
- Genevieve Christy
- Christian Haag
- Trudy Katzer
- Howard Kolins
- Leslie Lewis
- Jean Manon
- Hannah Mason
- Dwight Smith
- Anders Thomsen
- Boaz Weinstein
- Chuck Wells
- Sarah Wikency

(*non-board member)

Board meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month from September through June at 7:00pm in the Mugavero Center.

The BHA membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Members in good standing as of June 1 may vote in the

House of Detention Update By Howard Kolins

There are rumors about the HOD reopening in the very near future. However, no firm information is coming from the Department of Corrections or the Borough President's office.

With the City's current fiscal crises looming, many Boerum Hillers think that the estimated \$440 million for the expansion could be better used for schools or other infrastructure.

In late June, a press conference was held to bring attention to the ill conceived expansion plan.

Local City Council member, David Yassky, Comptroller William Thompson, Jr., State Senators Marty Connor and Velmanette Montgomery and State Assembly member, Joan Millman joined with the Stakeholders' Group and the newly formed STOP BHOD group in calling for a halt to the expansion plan and further suggesting that the building be sold for development. As Joan Millman said, "Sell the cells!"

The Stakeholders' Group includes 53 Boerum Place Condominiums, Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association, Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corp, Boerum Hill Association, Cobble Hill Association and the State Street Houses Association.



forces at the Atlantic Antic to inform the public and take signatures of those opposed to the re-opening.

The city has hired an architect to design the new building, a process that will take 18 months or more to complete. Rumors abound that the old building could re-open as soon as December even though the window replacement which was scheduled to be done during the renovation was never completed.

The spokesperson for the STOP BHOD group was former Giuliani deputy mayor, Randy Mastro. Mr. Mastro's law firm, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, vowed to a legal fight to prevent the building from re-opening.

Expect to hear more about this battle in the local papers and for more information as well as continuing updates go to www.brooklynjail.org and www.STOPBHOD.org.

All parties agreed that the city needed to make more effort to solicit community input about the site and that a jail was not the best use of precious space in a flourishing residential area. They pointed out the lack of studies to ascertain the effect the jail would have in such a vital economic area - let alone double its size without conducting appropriate, and legally mandated, studies. In addition, many elected officials lamented the misuse of the reported \$440 million dollars needed to fund the expansion plan.

In October, STOP BHOD and the Stakeholder's Group joined

President's Message by Sue Wolfe

Dear Neighbors,

In our previous BHA Newsletter I wrote to you about the formation of Friends of Douglass/Greene Park, Inc. Our mission is to work with the surrounding communities and organizations to revitalize Thomas Greene Park and to support ecological, recreational, educational and economic uses that increase the park's attractiveness as a destination while respecting the character of the surrounding areas. We have made progress since then:

- We received awards for the park renovation totaling \$900,000 from Borough President Markowitz and Councilmen David Yassky and Bill deBlasio - It's a start!
- We held a "Sunset Swim" event for the opening of the DD Pool in June.
- We held a "Listening Session" facilitated by the Parks Dept. last month - to hear what the neighborhood kids

and adults want in this park.

- We organized a "Skate Day" event in the park on Sunday, October 19th.
- We increased our proactive board to 13 very active members!

To keep the momentum going, we will be writing grants to bring event more exciting events to the park. If you have interest in this revitalized park - please contact us! Please check out our website:

www.friendsofdouglassgreenepark.org

Sue Wolfe

Happy Holidays from the Times Square Post Office by Howard Kolins

Boerum Hill resident, Wanda Fleck, continues to be our liaison with the Times Plaza Post Office. Numerous complaints deal almost unanimously with long lines and slow service. Wanda recently met with the new manager, Ms. Pasley, who said, "Customer satisfaction is my No. 1 priority."

During the upcoming holiday season there will be staff members in the lobby, helping customers and speeding things up. Stamps can be ordered through the website: www.usps.com. Mail early.

If a clerk is slow, chats at a window while customers wait, disappears for a long period, or delivers poor service, please note the clerk's ID (which s/he are required to wear) as well as the date and time of the problem. Send an e-mail to Wanda, wflecknaf@aol.com, who will follow up. Please report any other post office-related problems so they can be taken up promptly. If you receive exceptionally good service --let her know as well! Ms. Pasley will be happy to hear it.

Support Your Police Department by Leslie Lewis

We all know that crime is down over the levels we experienced a decade ago. Did you know the NYPD force at one time was 42,000 officers, but that now the NYPD force is approximately 34,000? The NYPD continues to seek ways to increase their efficiency. How can you help.

The NYPD has a training program in place called the Block Watcher Program. Each police Precinct can train neighborhood people to become Block Watchers who are given numbered ID cards. When calling 911 the Block Watcher gives the operator their Block Watcher number which identifies the Precinct they live in. This 911 call is instantly legitimized because it is initiated by this trained person.

This program aids the NYPD in creating a more efficient deployment of police officers. Once, about 50% of all 911 calls were unfounded. (Unfounded means that no crime is evident when the police arrive). Police response to unfounded calls often took manpower away from locations where police were actually needed.

Call the 84th Precinct Community Affairs office, 718-875-6850, to sign up for a training program to become a Block Watcher. It takes very little of your time. When you look out your window and see and report a crime in progress, you can make a big difference.

Board Member Leslie Lewis is the Criminal Justice Liaison in the Brooklyn Borough President's Office. He invites you to meet your local Police officials at the 84th Precinct Community Council meeting. The Community Council meets the third Tuesday of every month, September through May, in different locations. Look for flyers in the neighborhood or posted on www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org and www.boerumhill@yahoo.com

**Boerum Hill Association
Annual Pot Luck Holiday Party
December 6th at 6:00 PM
BELARUSAN CHURCH
At the corner of
Atlantic Ave. and Bond St.**

Bring a ready to serve dish; no heating required

Add to the amazing buffet of appetizers, salads, main dishes (pre-carved meats and vegetarian), desserts and beverages.

RSVP to Howard Kolins, hkolins@aol.com or 718-625-4073

Everyone is Invited!

The MTA Offers 166 Smith Street For Sale by Dwight Smith

The hideously blank MTA bunker on Smith Street has been put up for sale. Residents on Wyckoff Street and other Boerum Hillers would like to see tangible improvements to this blank corner on our vibrant thoroughfare.

The **Wyckoff St. Community Action Committee** (the "WCAC") recently submitted petitions with over 200 signatures opposing any vertical growth at the property. The WCAC strongly opposes any development height that is higher than the building's current height which conforms to the traditional three story buildings that are typical of the properties along Smith Street. The WCAC is committed to preserving the street's low-rise, village-like density.

Further, the WCAC opposes any national fast food chain as a tenant at the property. These businesses produce foot traffic, odors and signage that are undesirable.

The WCAC requests that the MTA put in place a site disposition process that requires an external aesthetics review of

the development project. Such process would require a review of the development's drawings by the Boerum Hill Association prior to closing, including but not limited to site configuration, materials to be used and the placement of windows, doors and terraces.

The WCAC requests that the MTA provide the Boerum Hill Association with the name, contact information and proposal of the purchaser/developer when the MTA and the purchaser enter into a Contract of Sale for the Property.

Unfortunately, to date the MTA has only said it will follow the proper procedures regarding the sale of the building. All residents of Boerum Hill have a continuing interest in this corner and all of Smith Street.

Boerum Hill History by Erik Fortmeyer Fighting Fred Figge and His Pork Store

Diagonally opposite the New St. Clair Restaurant today, you will see the pink granite clad corner of the 1950s era House of Detention. Back in 1920 when the original St. Clair opened, you would have seen large lettering spelling out "Wholesale & Retail Provision Dealer Fred Figge, Atlantic Av. & Smith St." The building ran 75 feet on Atlantic Avenue and 80 feet on Smith Street.

public store with the three floors above on Atlantic Avenue rented as apartments. The top three Smith Street side stories would contain the five smokehouses that would be the scourge of the neighborhood air and sewers for years. Within a few years of opening in 1875, a fatal case of trichinosis and the accumulated neighborhood bad will from the stink of rendering pork fat caused the Figges to move their smokehouses to points further east.

The business, however, was very profitable for Fred and his brother Charles. Their success may have worn on the neighbors, though, as several stories made the papers that reflected poorly on the two. They later went into Long Island real estate development, but the pork packing and store would continue operations until about 1930 when the building became a restaurant. The block would be demolished in 1950 for the current jail. But for ten long years, a version of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* thrived in the heart of Boerum Hill.

J.H. Eden was a successful pork dealer in the Lower East Side of Manhattan who had taken a young German named Frederick Figge under his wing by 1860. Their business thrived and they decided to open a large new packing facility in Brooklyn after the Civil War, as Manhattan was too densely populated by then. A site was chosen on the northwest corner of Atlantic and Smith where several ramshackle buildings were marked for demolition, including an old saloon known as Captain Joe Murphy's "Old Canteen".

Electric lights and steam elevators combined with cast iron beams were creating new design possibilities in the 1870s. This new packing house building would be seven stories in total, but three of them would be underground! The hogs came from a New Jersey slaughterhouse, but the carcasses were to be dressed in the icehouse refrigerated lowest floor. The floor above would be the sales and shipping rooms and the next for general administrative use. The ground floor would be the

84th Police Community Council Meeting
Tuesday, November 18th in Dumbo
Power House Books, 37 Main Street
(between Front and Water Streets)
Meet your Police Captain

A special thank you to State Assemblywoman Joan Millman for her support and guidance, and to the State of New York for the financial support that made this newsletter possible.

Visit us on the Web

www.boerumhillbrooklyn.org

Constantly updated with news,

stories and blog posts on

Boerum Hill, Atlantic Yards,

And the House of Detention.

See our calendar of

neighborhood events

and submit your own

Important Contact Numbers

84th Police Precinct,
Community Affairs: 718-875-6850

City Council Member,
David Yassky 718-875-5200

State Senator, Velmanette
Montgomery, 718-643-6140

Assemblywoman, Joan Millman,
718-246-4889

Congressman Ed Towns,
718-855-8018



Boerum Hill Association

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Improving Pacific Street Parks by Howard Kolins

Boerum Hill is very short on precious green and recreational spaces. Board Member Chuck Wells who lives near PS 38, met on November 12th with PTA President Candace Forbes, Principal Yolanda Ramirez, Monica Padilla (Enrichment Coordinator), Vincent Wright, the interim head of school maintenance staff, and Mary Alice Lee and Julieth Rivera of the Trust for Public Land, to create a plan to support the school yard while continuing to offer after-hours access to the neighborhood.

It won't be easy. The school yard is heavily used on evenings and weekends by families from across Boerum Hill (and beyond), but PS 38 does not receive any additional funds for extra maintenance or repairs necessary to keep the playground open after-hours. And even though PS 38 recognizes the community's need for a local playground, the school's first priority is to keep its playground clean and safe for its students. The Trust for Public Land may be able to help secure additional funding, but more community support is going to be necessary to keep PS 38 playground a popular place to play.

If you're a motivated Boerum Hiller who wants to help forge closer ties between the community, PTA and the school, please contact Chuck at brooklynchuck@gmail.com.



**JOIN US TODAY!!!
BECOME A MEMBER FOR 2009**

**Complete the Membership form,
Get involved in Boerum Hill living.**