

Police and Public Safety Committee Report of January 26, 2009

This is an information report.

The Police and Public Safety Committee met on Thursday, January 8, 2009 at 7:00 PM at the Community Board office to address the possible postponement or elimination of the January 2009 Police Academy class and the January 2009 Fire Academy class.

In attendance, from the committee were: Michael Casale, Judith Collins, Anna DeMetz, Michael Festa, George Fontas, Habib Joudeh, Mary Nolan, and Chair, Susan Pulaski. Also in attendance were Barbara Albanese representing Councilman Gentile; Susan Tirota, representing Assemblywoman Hyer-Spencer; Joe Trischetta and Marco Venezia, Community Affairs Police Officers, representing the 68th Precinct; Michael O'Brien and Julia Glaubach from the FDNY; and Deputy Chief Mitchell Berkowitz from the EMS.

We started the meeting with some good news. In light of the many problems we have reported on in the past years, it was good news to hear, as was reported in our local newspapers on the day of our meeting, that the 68th Precinct was homicide-free for the entire year of 2008. The 68th Precinct shared this distinction with only two other precincts in the City, namely the 6th Precinct in Manhattan's West Village and the 111th Precinct in Queens covering Bayside, Douglaston and Little Neck. This fact had also been reported in the January 1st issue of *The New York Times*. The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported Inspector Rodriguez as saying "The credit goes to the cops in the precinct. They pay attention, they listen, and they are aware of what goes on in our neighborhood." Then he went on to thank Community Board 10 and the 68th Precinct Community Council for their hard work and contributions to a safer neighborhood. "I would especially like to thank the community, the people of Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights, they are the precinct's eyes and ears," he said. In the *Home Reporter* he also gave credit to the Domestic Violence Unit that played a major role in preventing murders.

News 12 contacted the Community Board to get the community's reaction to the news. They interviewed me and also community residents at a local diner concerning our "safe neighborhood" status. The story aired that evening on their evening news program.

We asked the police officers who attended our meeting for any comments. They said that our precinct is diligent, that officers are moved constantly to where they need to be and that they stay on top of low-level crime before it escalates to a violent level.

So, in light of this great news, we had to address the information that had reached our office concerning the police and fire academy classes in January that were either being postponed or eliminated as a result of the Mayor's new budget cuts. The quality-of-life in our neighborhood requires sufficient number of police and firefighters. If the police manpower is stretched too thin the police won't be able to maintain its record of lower crime rates in the future.

What we found out was that the Police Academy did not cancel or postpone their class, but reduced the size from 1000 to 250. The police officers said that the present manpower in our precinct would remain the same.

It was noted by the committee that in an interview with our president-elect Obama that aired the afternoon of January 8th on CNN, it was stated the no cuts would be made to any police departments in the country. If needed, he stated that the Federal government would help communities that were in need.

The NY Fire Department representative stated that the January 2009 class had been postponed, the first postponement since 9/11. The classes are held as needed, but they usually hold a class every six months (2 a year) continuously; it takes six months to graduate. The size is determined by need with class size ranging from 60 to 300, depending on attrition. 300 is typical. What will help in this present situation of the class postponement? Five firehouses will close each night from 6PM-9AM. Their staff will be moved to other locations. If needed, firefighters would fill in with overtime duty. There is no fat in the Fire Department and this present cut is 2%. The cuts will be in the civilian personnel and not with the firefighters. The fire department personal asked when 86th Street so it would be fixed so it would be easier to drive on it. We informed him that the work was put on hold until after the holidays when it would be resumed. So the street is not ready for resurfacing at this time.

The EMS officer present stated that their paramedics' class had been postponed indefinitely. Their budget cut is 5%. Their class is usually 60-80 people with the class number resulting from a combination of promotion, attrition and budget.

The committee asked for an update on our last meeting's findings concerning the SLA application for Peggy O'Neill's located at 8123 Fifth Avenue. The Board members voted at the November meeting to renew the liquor license for a period of only one year instead of the usual two year due to the infractions and complaints attached to this establishment. The Board received a letter from the SLA saying that our views were noted and incorporated into the files for Peggy O'Neill's. However, they renewed the license for the usual two years with a stipulation letter sent to them warning them that "current disciplinary charges pending against them could result in the revocation or cancellation of their license." So, a conditional license" was issued.

We asked the police officers who were present if any summons or violations to the establishment had been received recently. There were 3 from the last two weeks in December through January 7th, namely: an assault for a slashing, a summons for underage drinking and a summons for serving after hours. These notices have been forwarded on to the Board office. Since we met, Josephine has received them.

The committee members were interested in how John Imbriale, the owner of Peggy O'Neill's, was following through on his promise made at the November meeting by taking more interest, control and responsibility in maintaining a lawful establishment.

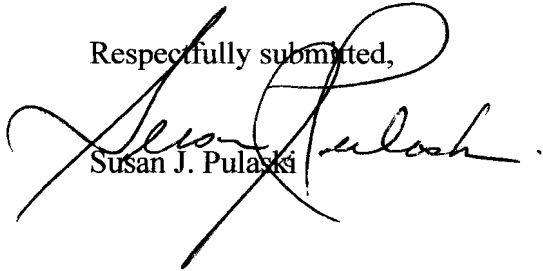
Has he beefed up his security system? Did he put in a security cameras? These questions will be taken up with him at a future date.

The committee members asked if the new SLA application form that was being created at the end of 2008-beginning 2009 had been received by the Board office. I checked with Josephine and she hasn't received it yet. The new one is supposed to be more responsive to a community board's input, i.e. issuing new permits with conditions.

An inquiry was made as to what ever happened to the group of establishment owners that were to meet on a regular basis. So far, they have met only twice, the first time at the Baord office following our committee meeting and the second time at the Precinct. We asked the police officers if they had continued to meet at the precinct and the answer was in the negative. The committee suggested that we follow up with Josephine to ask if they could be called again to see if they were meeting and if they weren't, could we offer them use of the Board office. Josephine said that the group wanted to follow-through on their own and that they have many locations to choose from for their meetings, so there would be no need to meet at the Board office.

The Community Board office will now be located in the midst of our most "troublesome" neighborhood establishments, namely Fannings, Bullshots, and Peggy O'Neills. Since the word "change" is our present buzz word, I ask you, might our presence there make these places change and become more law abiding? Let's be hopeful.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan J. Pulaski