

Methodist plan is panned

BY MEGAN RIESZ

New York Methodist Hospital must alter its controversial plans for an expansion that some Park Slope residents say would wreck their tree-lined streets with traffic, smog, and out-of-place architecture, the city demanded this week.

The Board of Standards and Appeals told the hospital to tweak its proposal to be closer to what current zoning allows after Slopers in attendance at a Tuesday hearing argued that the hospital's rationale for why it needs such a big facility has not passed muster.

"We are not opposed to the expansion of Methodist Hospital. What we are opposed to is this level of expansion," said Stuart Klein, lawyer for the opposition group Preserve Park Slope. "While they have used the word 'needs' again and again, they have not described those needs."

The city called on the hospital to clarify why the outpatient facility cannot reduce the heights of each floor and required that Methodist come up with more de-

Continued on page 7



Brew-klyn

Other Half brewery co-owner Samuel Richardson will pour Imperial Pale Ales when New York City Beer Week, the annual celebration of all things sudsy, crosses the East River for one of its signature events this year, with the "NYC Brewer's Choice" night taking place at the Wythe Hotel on Feb. 26.

Photo by Stefano Giovannini

RIDGE NO-SPA ZONE

CB10 wants to shutter parlors without permits

BY WILL BREDDERMAN

Local leaders are wielding a new weapon in their fight against illicit massage parlors.

Eighteen Bay Ridge and Dyker spas are violating city zoning laws — and neighborhood leaders want the city to padlock them.

City law mandates that spas, like gyms, obtain a special permit for a "physical culture estab-

lishment" — which is defined as "business where customers go to exercise or to care for their bodies." The measure was adopted in the high-crime era of the 1970s to crack down on prostitution, a problem that has increased in Bay Ridge in the past two years. Originally, the law provided for different permits for "adult" and "non-

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Bus back at Ave. L

BY WILL BREDDERMAN

Sometimes "L" can stand for "winner."

The B44 Select Bus Service will begin stopping at the corner of Nostrand Avenue and Avenue L in spring of this year, Midwood and Flatbush pols announced on Feb. 10.

The Metropolitan Trans-

portation Authority's decision to leave Avenue L — previously served by the limited buses the select service replaced — off the new trans-Nostrand line was a major point of criticism from residents when the B44 launched late last year.

"Every morning there

Continued on page 7



OFF RAIL: An old car before it was removed on Sunday.

Robert Diamond

Hook streetcars carted off

BY NICHELLE HENRY

A train buff's longtime dream of restoring streetcars to Red Hook went even further off the rails this past weekend when three of his beloved carriages went missing.

The owner of the lot behind Fairway Market that was home to the three rust-

ing streetcars for the past decade had them put on flatbed trailers and hauled away to a train museum in Connecticut on Sunday. The removal put a wrench in the plans of the rail buff behind the scheme to bring back the neighborhood's on-street transit network. Worse still, the dreamer says he is the

rightful owner of the cars and the donation amounted to grand theft locomotive.

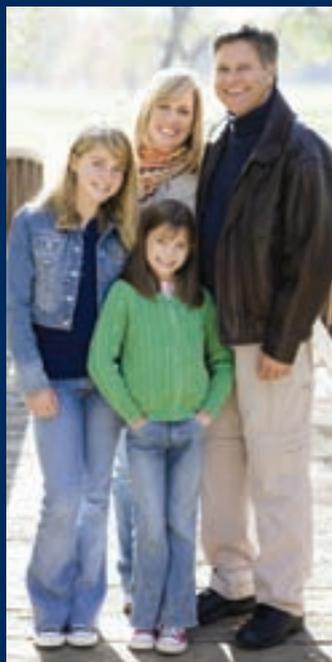
"I was in a state of complete shock," said Bob Diamond, president of the Historic Railways Association. "We were trying to fix them up since after Hurricane Sandy."

Continued on page 9

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RATTLED IN THE RIDGE

Locals say R train gives off bad vibes

BY WILL BREDDERMAN

Ridgites along Fourth Avenue say the subway is leaving them shaken.

Leaders at Saint Anselm's Catholic Church and School on Fourth Avenue between 82nd and 83rd streets — directly above the R line — say the vibrations of passing trains has grown louder and more jarring in the past few months.

"We've always known that the train was there, but the vibration now is 10 times," said Monsignor John Moloney. "In the school now you actually feel like the train is going to come into the room, it's that strong."

The increased rumbling from the line coincided with the appearance of cracks in the exterior brickwork and limestone trim of both the school and the church — something unseen since they were built 88 and 62 years ago, respectively. Last week, a chunk of limestone actually broke off the school and tumbled four stories to the sidewalk. Thankfully, no children were injured in that incident, but Moloney worries what might happen as more pieces come loose.

"If it'd hit, it would have killed somebody," Moloney said. "Why is the limestone falling off now?"

Workers from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority visited the school and placed instruments in the basement to measure the vibrations — but the agency claims it found only slightly elevated levels, not enough to damage a building. The MTA said that the noise is a result of 30-year-old rails, and promised it would fix the problem soon.

"We are working over-nights to replace and repair rail which should mitigate the vibrations. This should be completed shortly," said an agency spokesman.



FEELING CROSS: (Above) Monsignor John Moloney says vibrations from the R train are causing the walls to crack outside to Saint Anselm's School (right), and is also shaking chunks loose from the building (below).

Photos by Steve Solomonson

Local leaders applauded the news that repairs are underway, but noted that dozens of people have called in to complain.

"These are longtime Bay Ridge residents who have never experienced vibrations to this degree. When you have 30 complaints, that means there is a problem," said Josephine Beckmann, district manager for Community Board 10.

Residents say the quaking is becoming unbearable — both for themselves and



for their buildings.

"The vibrations are so bad, it feels like I'm on the Cyclone," said Pam Pazarrecki, who has lived along the thoroughfare for 48 years. "These are buildings that are what, 100 years old? They can't take this!"

Crown Heights getting a case of the vapors

New store selling electronic cigarettes, nicotine oil



MOOD CRITIC: Our scribe Matthew Perlman takes a toke in the name of journalism. Photo by Jason Speakman

Catching vapors

MoVape's vapor tubes come in more flavors than an ice cream stand at an artisanal dairy convention. To get a sense of how the gas-producing juices stack up, we assigned intrepid smoking-technology reporter Matthew Perlman to conduct a taste test. Now, before you go calling the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, you should know that the samples are all nicotine-free, so this comparison is strictly about how these augmented fog-machine capsules felt wafting across Perlman's palette — which the store insists is perfectly safe.

Kona Velvet Milkshake

At first the vapor feels like a thin burst of steam without any flavor, but when exhaling a distinctive taste lingers. Unfortunately, it is more like a stale cup of coffee than a milkshake.

Apple Cider

The flavor is no perfect mimic of the wintry beverage, but rather a faint suggestion of the drink's aftertaste. It lacks the sweetness and full-feeling a cup of cider conveys, especially when hot. But apple juice, sure, I could see it.

Sucker Punch

This fruity "juice" hits with a rush of flavor at first, like a stick of Juicy Fruit gum. But then it mellows to something more like a watered-down Kool-Aid.

Smoked Custard

If you can get past the idea of a piece of custard steeped in cigarette haze, this is actually pretty tasty. The smoky undertones in this dessert-flavored "juice" hit home by replicating the sensation "vaping" is supposed to stand in for. It is a little on the sweet side and feels decadent. The flavor is more fully present than in the other varieties, and sticks around for minutes after you exhale.

Mother's Milk

Again, a foul name in the context of something smokeable, but this is actually one of the store's most popular flavors. It tastes vaguely of semi-sweet chocolate, but not like biting into a candy bar. It is more subtle than that. The flavor is thin, but still apparent. Smooth.

— *Matthew Perlman*



THEY'VE GOT THE JUICE: The stuff that makes the vapor is flavored, liquid nicotine called "juice." Here, MoVape's selection is packaged in vials. Photo by Jason Speakman

BY MATTHEW PERLMAN

Where there is no smoke, there are vaporizers.

A new haven for electronic cigarette smokers and enthusiasts of vaporizers, a device once reserved for odorless marijuana toking that has now become popular for nicotine hobbyists, opened on Feb. 7 in Crown Heights. Dedicated addicts of the tobacco-derived chemical turned out in droves for the opening.

"Finally we have a nice vape shop here in New York," said Dmitriy Katev, who traveled all the way from Staten Island for the occasion.

MoVape, located on Bedford Avenue between Saint Marks Avenue and Prospect Place, sells middle- to high-end vaporizing gear, focusing on enthusiasts rather than casual users. The merchandise is more elaborate and expensive than the electronic cigarettes sold in many convenience stores.

"They're beautifully made and professionally machined," said Adam Schwartz, the store manager. "We attract only the most zealot types of users."

The kits range in price from \$30 to \$500. Each vaporizing machine has three basic parts: a battery pack, an atomizer, and a mouth piece. The atomizer has a small tank that the user fills with a liquid nicotine solution, called the "juice." The machine heats up the liquid, turning it to vapor.

The devices come in all shapes and sizes. Some resemble traditional cigarettes; others look more like shiny chrome engine parts. And "vapers" often experiment with different equipment, tweaking the components and customizing machines to find the right combination of temperature and air flow. They call the process "finding your vape."

"It's very much a hobby for people now," said MoVape's owner Sathish Modugu. "There's a definitely a camaraderie around it."

The store sells about 100 different varieties of liquid-nicotine solutions that come in flavors including Camel (the cigarette brand, not the animal), mint, and apple cider. The only kind missing is Fruity Pebbles.

The primary ingredient in the process is propylene glycol, a chemi-



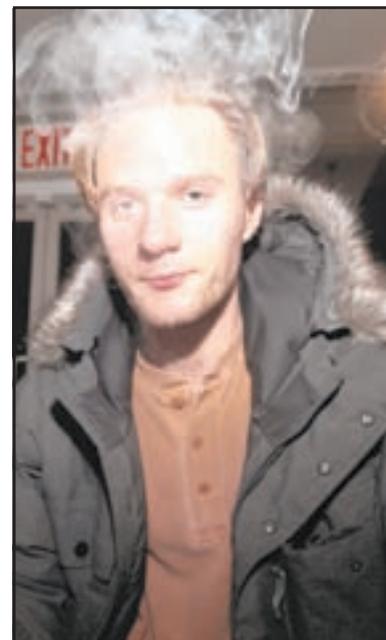
UP IN SMOKE: (Above) Dmitriy Katev of Staten Island puffs on his pipe-shaped vaporizer while Jeff Moody contemplates his next breath. (Right) Oleg Zalman made the trip from Sea Gate to bask in the smoke-free environment at MoVape's opening. Photo by Jason Speakman

cal used in some fog machines. There has not been a definitive study on the long-term effects of vaporizing nicotine, and opponents have rung alarm bells about the e-cigarette industry so far escaping most forms of government regulation. This means the liquid used to fill the smokeless stogies is not inspected by the Food and Drug Administration and the boxes do not have to list the ingredients that deliver the addictive punch.

"Clearly, there needs to be regulations, but not unreasonable regulations," said Modugu, who is a medical doctor and runs a pain management practice in Westchester County.

Modugu is a smoker turned vaper and pitches the technology as a way to quit cigarettes. Users often step down the nicotine content of the liquid refills over time and eventually switch to a solution that is nicotine-free, he claimed.

"I enjoy the act of smoking," said Oleg Zalman, who came from Sea Gate to purchase his first vaporizing machine — an Innokin iTaste MVP for \$65. "If there's a safer way to do it, why not?"



Recent city legislation banned the smoking of electronic cigarettes in most public places. But customers at MoVape are free to sample products and use their personal devices in the store because the business is primarily a nicotine dispensary and falls under the same rules that allow smoking cigars at cigar lounges.

The owner hopes to start serving coffee in the next month and has also applied for a liquor license.

Downtown's wish finally granite

Bluestones to get the boot after years of tripping up Borough Hall guests

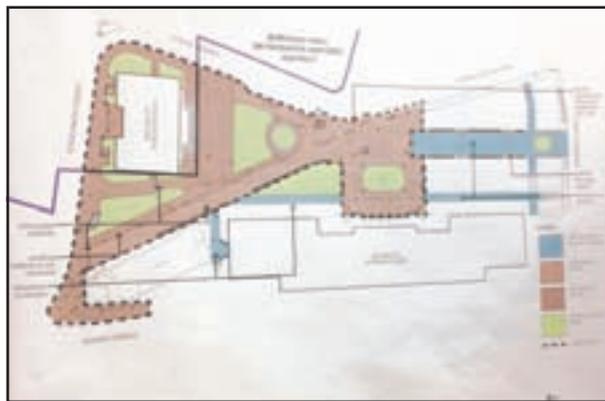
BY MATTHEW PERLMAN

It could be the end of the bluestone era around Borough Hall.

The Parks Department wants to give Downtown's Columbus Park an \$11-million granite makeover to replace the broken bluestone tiles that have been tripping up Brooklynites for years. Officials are pleased as punch about the plan. That is one way of putting it, anyway.

"We're tickled pink by this project," said Kevin Jeffrey, the parks department's Brooklyn commissioner, at a Community Board 2 committee meeting on Monday night. "It's a long-awaited solution."

The parks department is pitching the overhaul, with the mayor's office expected to foot the bill. The plan has the plaza's classic but crumbling two-inch-thick bluestone slabs be-



HIKE PIAZZA: The Parks Department wants to revamp the pedestrian walk in Columbus Park, replacing the storied bluestones that surround Borough Hall with solid granite. CNG / Matthew Perlman

ing replaced with thicker, three-inch gray granite tiles, buttressed by a six-inch layer of reinforced concrete underneath. Most of the surface would be a textured, light-gray pattern called "jet mist," with some edge work done in a slightly darker pattern called "char-

coal black."

People have long complained about the state of the park, which is bounded by Joralemon, Court, Johnson, and Adams streets and Cadman Plaza West.

"It's dangerous. No ifs, ands, or buts about it," said Anthony Walker from Co-

ney Island, cautiously making his way through the plaza. "All you have to do is trip, and you'll be crying for days."

The broken stone slabs caused a 71-year-old woman to fall and break her hip back in 2010, but even then former Borough President Marty Markowitz and other officials could not scare up the cash to get it fixed.

"Renovation of the plaza has been an issue for at least five years," said the community board's district manager Robert Perris.

The current plan focuses on the Borough Hall side of the park and leaves the existing stones in place on the stretch approaching Johnson Street, past the Christopher Columbus Monument.

Parks officials expect the new sidewalks to hold up under the weight of trucks and other vehicles that drive in to set up the



BAD BREAKUP: These battered bluestones might soon go the way of the dodo. Photo by Elizabeth Graham

farmers market and other plaza events. They point to revamps in Manhattan's City Hall and Washington Square parks that used similar materials as proof that the stuff is tough enough.

There is not yet a time

table for the resurfacing. The full community board is expected to vote to issue a letter of support for the project on Feb. 12, after press time.

After that, the job needs approval from the city.

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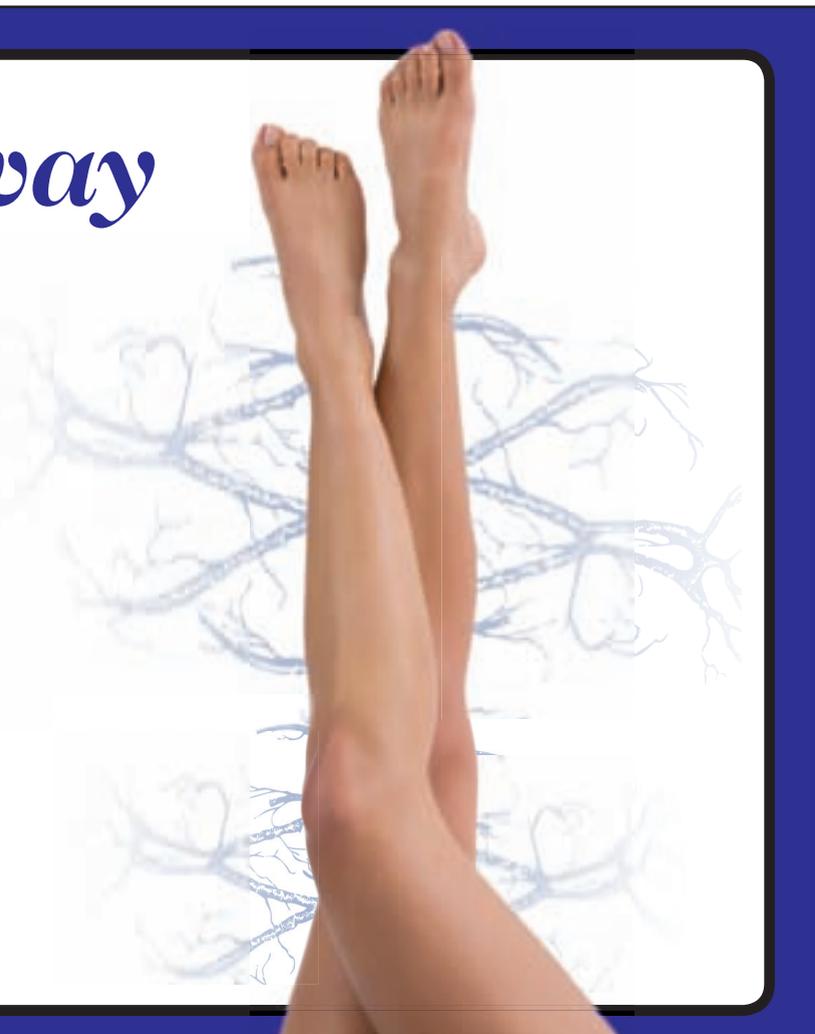
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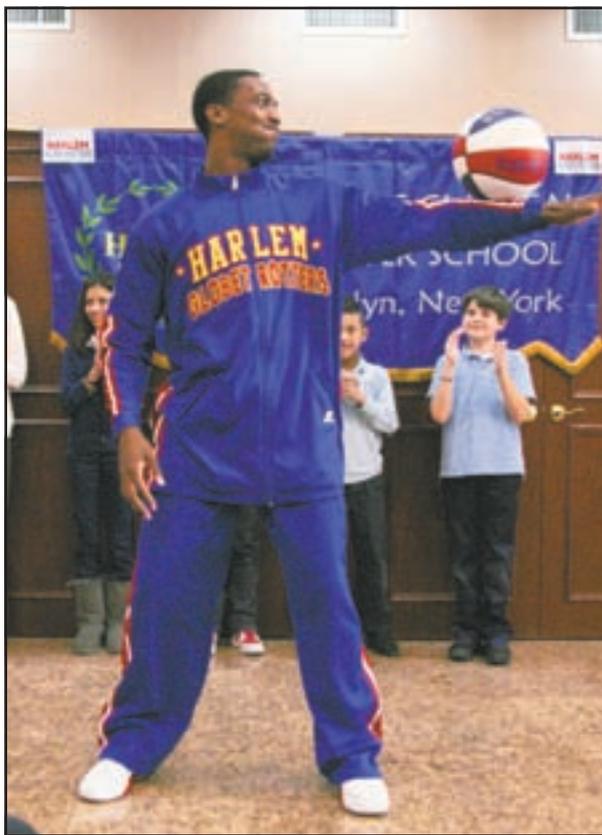
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CHECK HIM OUT: (Above) William "Bull" Bullard gets fancy with a basketball when he and fellow Globetrotter Jon "Hawk" Thomas performed tricks for Park Slope students on Tuesday. (Center) Fifth-grade teacher Jolynn Johnson spins basketballs on both hands with the assistance of the twosome. (Right) Pupil Akayla Mack looks up in awe at the Globetrotters as he gets to join them in a huddle.

Photos by Jason Speakman



Globetrotters amaze Slope students

BY MEGAN RIESZ

Turns out kids actually can actually get excited for a lecture — if tricks are involved.

A couple of Harlem Globetrotters gave an anti-bullying pep talk interjected with basketball theatrics at a Park Slope charter school on Wednesday. The lecture was a hit, if the screaming students are any gauge.

"We believe that bully-

ing is a huge issue in our society," said Jon "Hawk" Thomas, who has been a Globetrotter for two years. "Our main focus is making kids realize that bullying is not okay."

Thomas and his fellow performer, William "Bill" Bullard, led hundreds of pumped-up pupils at the Hellenic Classical Charter School — who greeted them as if they were kings —

through the ABCs of bullying, including A for action, B for bravery, and C for compassion. The twosome urged the kids to be nice to their fellow students and tell their teachers if their friends are ever bullied.

"Make sure you alert someone to the situation that is going on," Bullard said. "That right there is how you take action."

Bullard and Thomas also

spun basketballs on their fingers and looped them through their long legs, eliciting "oohs" and "ahhs" from the young audience.

One young girl said she loved the act and even learned how to stand up to rascals.

"It gave me an opportunity to learn about bullying so I know what to do next time," said fourth grader Mikayla Campbell.

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Methodist

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tailed renderings, a better explanation of what the top floors of the facility would do, and a plan for managing traffic outside the neighboring John Jay Educational Campus, all before an April 8 hearing.

Methodist says it needs every last iota of the proposed Center for Community Health because the hospital lacks testing space in its current emergency department and needs room to accommodate increasing demand for outpatient procedures.

"Every square inch has been utilized in this building that we are proposing," hospital head Lauren Yedvab said.

The city questioned why Methodist cannot shave a few floors off of the center and add them to a parking garage on Fifth Street near Seventh Avenue, but hospital representatives said such a plan would prevent doctors from easily consulting one another. Expansion opponents countered that Methodist's current plan is simply a less-expensive alternative to the garage proposal.

"It is cheaper and easier for them to build a variance

than it is to build on this parking lot," said Bennett Kleinberg, president of Preserve Park Slope.

Methodist will go ahead with a taller and thinner complex that would be allowed under current zoning if it does not get a variance from the city.

But reps are sure they can convince municipal bean-counters to okay the project.

"We are confident that we will be able to provide the requested information and answer all questions to the board's satisfaction at the continued hearing in April," hospital spokeswoman Lyn Hill said.

Bus

Continued from page 1

are people waiting for over 20-minutes at the Avenue L stop for the local, and we watch four or five mostly empty select buses pass by, one after the next," said Jack Bojman, who used to catch the limited bus at Avenue L. "When the local finally arrives, it is usually too packed

for anyone to get on."

But Bojman and his fellow commuters will not be left out in the cold much longer.

"It is clear that residents of the communities we represent had lost critical stops along the B44 line, including at Nostrand and Avenue L, which has increased commute times for many," Councilman Jumaane Williams (D-East Flatbush)

announced Monday, along with Councilman Chaim Deutsch (D-Sheepshead Bay), Assemblywoman Rhoda Jacobs (D-Flatbush), and Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein (D-East Flatbush). "We were able to relay those concerns to the MTA and successfully lobby for this change."

The B44 will also be adding a stop at Nostrand and Gates avenue.

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Pussy Riot, Madonna among celebs at Barclays Center for the human-rights hootenanny

BY MEGAN RIESZ

They fought for their rights — and partied.

The Amnesty International Human Rights Concert packed the Barclays Center with do-gooder pop stars and the fans who love them on Wednesday night. Lauryn Hill, Blondie, and the Flaming Lips were just a few of the big names who rocked out. One performer who attended art school in New York opined that the show's organizers could not have picked a better spot.

"I think Brooklyn has always been a little rebellious to the neighborhood across the river," said Isaac Slade, lead singer of the Denver rock band The Fray, which performed a handful of earnest hits, including "How to Save a Life."

Another vocalist echoed the sentiment, arguing that the borough should serve as a model for the rest of the country.

"This is a hub of forward thinking," said Dan Reynolds, frontman of the dance-pop band Imagine Dragons. "I have met more people in this area with open minds than maybe anywhere else in the U.S."

Serial boundary-pusher Madonna was also in the house and took a moment ahead of the concert to introduce two recently freed former members of the protest-punk band Pussy Riot, whose visit to Brooklyn an Orthodox Russian priest from Bensonhurst famously called "satanic." Nadia Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina filmed an anti-Vladimir-Putin music video in a Russian Orthodox Church in 2012



HUMAN FIGHTS: (Clockwise from above) Debbie Harry and Blondie took the stage at Amnesty International's Feb. 5 concert. Maria Alekhina, left, and Nadya Tolokonnikova want Brooklyn to boo the Winter Olympics. Madonna brought out members of Pussy Riot, recalling when the Russian government fined her \$1 million after a show for "promoting homosexuality." Associated Press



and spent two years in a Moldovan prison on hooliganism charges for their trouble.

"I do not take freedom for granted, and neither should you," said Madonna, to thunderous applause. "The two women of Pussy Riot do not share this freedom with me, so we must commend them for their courageousness."

In a press conference before the show, the freed agitators took advantage of their newfound celebrity

to urge Americans to boycott and protest the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia arguing that Putin's animosity towards gay people only got more toxic while they were locked up.

"What our government has been doing lately is expressing hate toward the LGBT community," Tolokonnikova said. "We want Americans to keep their eyes open and not buy what Putin is selling them."

Back in Russia, the

still-anonymous remainder of the pair's anarchist collective disowned them for breaking its code of remaining nameless and only performing "illegal, unexpected performances."

"Protection of rights is incompatible with radical political statements and provocative works of art," the anti-capitalist feminist separatists wrote in a statement, as translated by Google.

Nor in Prospect Heights was everyone was happy

to see the rabble-rousing duo.

Amid the throng of concert-goers with human rights and the Cold War Kids on their minds, two pro-meathead protesters stood outside the Barclays Center, one brandishing a sign reading "Women Oppress Men in America, Lesbians Take Our Girls Away."

"Why should I support Pussy Riot? What have they done for me?" asked heterosexual male activist Ro-

man Shusterman of Coney Island. "What about Penis Riot?"

Despite, or perhaps to spite the counter-protest, the benefit show went off with righteous gusto.

During an interlude in the main event, actress Susan Sarandon delivered a speech calling for the abolition of the death penalty, then gave a special shout-out to the Barclays revelers.

"You are a good crowd — this could be a basketball game!" she said.



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Massage

Continued from page 1

adult” physical culture establishment, with the aim of phasing out the adult permits as a way to eliminate those establishments.

An “adult physical culture establishment” was any business offering “massages, body rubs, alcohol rubs, baths or other similar treatment, by members of the opposite sex.”

“Zoning has proved to be the most effective tool in closing down houses of prostitution masquerading as massage parlors,” the City Planning Commission announced when it passed the new regulation in 1979.

The city long ago stopped issuing permits for adult physical culture establishments, but the law still requires all non-adult physical culture establishments such as spas and gyms to have the special permit, and Bay Ridge leaders want the city to use that as a way to crack down on sketchy massage parlors.

“The zoning resolution is quite clear. All physical culture establishments are required to obtain a permit, and that includes massage parlors,” said CB10 District Manager Josephine Beckmann. “Not



IN THE SPA-TLIGHT: Linda Day Spa is allegedly one of 18 spas operating in violation of zoning law in Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights.

Photo by Elizabeth Graham

doing so, we take that very seriously.”

A source provided this paper with a list of 18 suspect spas in Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights — two on 11th Avenue, one on Fort Hamilton Parkway, one on Eighth Avenue, one on 13th Avenue, three on Third Avenue, six on Fifth Avenue, one on Fourth Avenue, one on 91st Street, and one on 73rd Street.

CB10 sent a letter to the Department of Buildings late last year demanding it take action against any of the spas that don't have the necessary permits.

The agency said it was

still investigating the locations, but a quick search of the Buildings Department's online database shows that none of the massage parlors has obtained a permit for a physical culture establishment.

Ex-District Attorney Charles Hynes shuttered 12 spas in Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights last year on charges of prostitution and massaging without a license, following this paper's exclusive story on neighborhood complaints of dim windows, male-only clientele, and scantily-clad girls at several of the same locations.

Trolley

Continued from page 1

Diamond has stored the relics for more than a decade in the lot owned by the O'Connell Organization, a developer, he said. But the company apparently felt enough of a sense of ownership over the old buggies to feel comfortable handing them over to the Branford Electric Railway Association, which runs the Shore Line Trolley Museum in East Haven, Conn.

“Rather than let these historic trolleys continue to sit stagnant, building up rust and rot in Red Hook, the O'Connell Organization has passed them to BERA, which has the ability to rebuild them or at the very least can facilitate a transfer to someone that will,” said company head

Greg O'Connell in a statement.

Diamond has been dedicated to bringing trolley-dodging back to Red Hook for more than two decades. His dream is to re-establish a rail connection between Red Hook and Borough Hall.

In 1999, Diamond laid a few hundred feet of track and briefly enjoyed city backing for expanding the project, but pols cut off funding by the early 2000s.

In 2011, the Department of Transportation delivered another blow when it said that bringing back the old streetcars would be too expensive.

The rail warrior insists that the size of the project is justified by the neighborhood's need to connect to the rest of the borough.

“Red Hook is such a cut-off area,” said Diamond. “Residents should have de-

cent transportation.”

In addition to the three streetcars that were taken away Diamond says his group owns a fourth, fully restored car that is in storage at a Beard Street pier warehouse, which is also controlled by the O'Connell group. Diamond wants the remaining carriage relocated before the company has it disappeared, too.

“It should be moved at O'Connell's cost to another location of our choice,” he said.

The train advocate is undeterred by the latest development and is pushing ahead with a feasibility study for a streetcar system with the Gowanus Canal Development Corporation. He expects the study to be completed by April.

“Hopefully with this whole situation we can turn lemons to lemonade,” said Diamond.



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