

KEW GARDENS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED

Founded 1914



"A Community is what its citizens make it"



105 82nd ROAD, KEW GARDENS, NY 11415

APRIL/MAY 2016

All Kew Gardens Homeowners

are invited to attend the

102nd Annual Meeting

of the

Kew Gardens Civic Association

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016

AT THE

KEW GARDENS COMMUNITY CENTER

80-02 Kew Gardens Road - Suite 202

(COME EARLY AND SIGN IN WITH I.D.)

7:00 RECEPTION: Wine and cheese, dessert and coffee

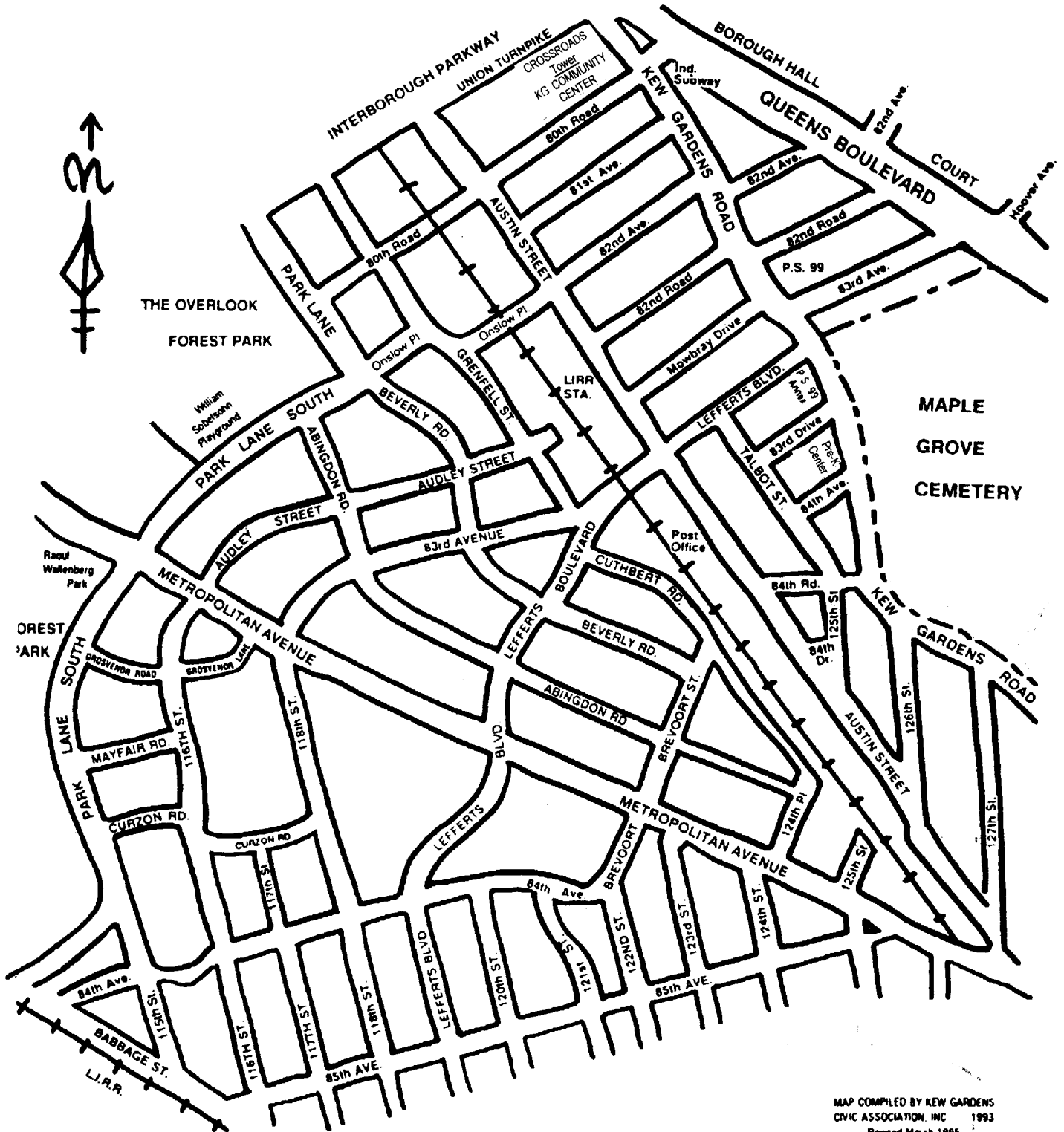
8:05 MEETING BEGINS

- Ptesident's Greeting
- Committee Reports + 102nd Police Precinct Briefing
- **ALFRED BRAND**, *Chairman of the Board, KGCA*
- **"Kew Gardens: From the Glaciers to today"**
- Election of Officers (brief)
- OPEN DISCUSSION

COME EARLY - JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORS - PARTICIPATE

A FIRST-TIME PROMO: JOIN KGCA BY JUNE 30 AND GET YOUR FIRST YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP FREE!

Kew Gardens



MAP COMPILED BY KEW GARDENS CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC 1993
Revised March 1995

Kew Gardens Civic Association, Inc.

105 82ND ROAD

KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1422

website: www.kewgardenscivic.org

email: mhberger@aol.com

April 2016

Fellow Homeowner,

In my President's letter for our last *Newsletter* a year ago I said that the Kew Gardens Civic Association must continue to be vigilant and on guard against any actions proposed by public and/or private parties that do not benefit us. I mentioned, as a prime example, Mayor deBlasio's proposals to increase affordable housing through, among other things, increased density and eliminating many off-street parking requirements. By the end of last year the Mayor's proposals were overwhelmingly rejected by the majority of the City's community boards, borough planning councils and borough presidents.

Unfortunately, those votes are merely advisory so the mayor came back with a revised plan that was speedily passed by the City Council. There are not a lot of details about the plan but from our viewpoint very little changed. The plan continues to provide for higher buildings, greater density and a willingness to waive off-street parking requirements. A presentation of the plan as proposed last year was prepared by Sylvia Hack, President of the Kew Gardens Improvement Association, and included in last year's *Newsletter*. Almost everything in that discussion applies to this new plan, at least as far as any details have been released. It is disheartening to see how little has changed.

The decision to waive requirements for off-street parking in certain neighborhoods is particularly galling since two new apartments totaling 76 units are approved for 116th Street between Metropolitan and 84th Avenues. Neither apartment house is required to provide off-street parking due to a provision in the Zoning Resolution waiving such requirements based on the size of the lot, NOT the size of the proposed building. Thanks to correspondence initiated by Shimon Wolf, a longtime member of KGCA and former Board member, KGCA was scheduled to meet with the Queens office of the Department of City Planning in April to discuss what can be done about this provision. We hope to have more information at the Annual Meeting.

When we meet with City agencies or private developers it is important that they know we speak for the community. I urge you to join the Association if you are not already a member. To encourage that, we are offering – for the first time -- a free one year membership to all new members who *enroll by June 30*. We think that when you see what KGCA does year round, you will want to continue as a member. Please be sure to include your email address so we can keep you informed and update you quickly on some of the issues I have mentioned in this letter, or are discussed elsewhere in the *Newsletter*, as well as those that constantly crop up.

I hope to see you all at the Annual Meeting on May 5th. Our guest speaker, KGCA's former President Al Brand, will describe how the last glacier, from 14,000 years ago, formed the hilly surface and topography that make Kew Gardens what it is. He will use slides of historic maps as well as current photographs. Come see what the glacier has done.

Sincerely,

Dominick Pistone, *President*

Kew Gardens Civic Association, Inc.

105 82ND ROAD, KEW GARDENS, NY 11415-1422

www.kewgardenscivic.org

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Diana Shaman, Rosemary Sherman, Adam Whiteman

VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NEED NOT REPRESENT THOSE OF THE KEW GARDENS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

New Member Incentive: *Free Membership*

To celebrate its 102nd year since being founded in 1914, and to induce more Kew Gardens homeowners to “take the plunge” and join KGCA, the Board of Governors offers a **FREE First Year's membership** to all Kew Gardens homeowners *who are not currently members and whose applications are received (or postmarked) by Thursday, June 30, 2016*. The Board is confident that once you become a member, you are likely to remain a lifelong member. So complete the coupon on the last page and mail it to (or drop it off at) KGCA, 105 82nd Road, Kew Gardens, NY 11415 *before June 30*. Or you can bring it with you to our Annual Meeting, Thursday, May 5, at the Kew Gardens Community Center, 80-02 Kew Gardens Road, 2d floor. [Note: *This offer is not available to current or past members.*]

Positive Q10 Bus News

by Adam Whiteman

I have always thought that one of the benefits of living in Kew Gardens has been our access to public transportation . . . except when they – the buses – make so much noise that you are woken up in the middle of the night. During the last year the noise from the Q10 buses rumbling through Austin Street and screeching upon acceleration increased considerably.

With the help of Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz, I attended a meeting with MTA bus officials to try to resolve this problem. They determined that the cause of the high pitched screeching was a loose belt in the engine. John Higgins, Chief Maintenance Officer of the NYC Transit Authority's Bus Division, and his staff were particularly helpful in addressing the problem and instituting procedures to eliminate it.

Until this year the Q10 bus fleet plying the route from Union Turnpike and Queens Boulevard to JFK consisted mostly of noisy diesel buses. Beginning this month, new Q10 buses should be rolling through Kew Gardens. These Excelsior New Flyer XD60 clean diesel-powered buses will replace the older diesel buses currently operating on the route. The Q10 fleet will have the latest emissions technology, meeting all the latest EPA standards, and they also are more fuel-efficient than their predecessors.

[*Editor's Note:* Over many months, Mr. Whiteman regularly e-mailed the numbers of the sinning buses to the TA Bus Division, which then responsibly took them out of service till they were repaired. And so, a productive relationship was developed.]

Our Austin Street Post Office

Five years ago, when our cherished Austin Street Post Office was threatened with closing or being moved, the community rose up, signed petitions, solicited then Congressman Anthony Weiner's forceful support, and overcame the closing threat. A 5-year lease, which expires this June, was signed with the new owners, Tulip Management LLC, 105-02 Metropolitan Avenue, Forest Hills.

Knowing the financial and political pressures under which the Post Office has been operating, and aware that the Fresh Meadows Post Office was saved with help from Congresswoman Grace Meng, on March 29th we asked her office to ascertain the status of the Austin Street lease. On April 6th, we were emailed a copy of the USPS April 4th letter to Ms. Meng stating that “. . . Facilities officials at USPS . . . plan to renew the lease for the Kew Gardens Station.” KGCA immediately emailed the news to all its members with email addresses, many of whom expressed relief at having this concern removed. KGCA appreciates the efforts and cooperation of Rep. Meng and her willing staff both here and in DC, in responding so quickly.

We're Working on Electronics Trash

As described in the last *Newsletter*, when the State Legislature passed a law several years ago to keep our water supply clean of poisonous electronics waste, it provided that electronics waste in New York State was to be totally under State control, rather than under any municipal control. Starting in 2015, the electronics manufacturing industry was to collect and recycle all electronics products, from cell phones and computers to TV sets, and everything in between.

In practice, apartment houses with more than ten units are to assemble the electronic trash, which is to be picked up by industry-hired contractors. All other residents – *including occupants of private homes* – must deliver their electronic trash to a BestBuy, Staples (no TV sets), Goodwill or a periodically designated collection center. We can be fined \$100 for placing electronics at the curb for disposal. See DSNY@nyc.gov for more info regarding this issue.

When KGCA learned, over a year ago, that DSNY would be forbidden to pick up these waste products, we launched a campaign with our State legislators to have Albany modify the law and arrange for such trash pickups at private homes. In the Assembly, KG Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz introduced such a corrective bill, which was also introduced in the Senate. The Senate passed the bill last June; the Assembly has delayed passage. Our last report indicates that the Assembly may be working on a re-write of the entire electronics trash law and is hesitating to make the piecemeal correction (initiated by KGCA) and approved by the Senate.

The next Safe Disposal Sanitation Department event is Saturday, April 30, in Cunningham Park.

Repaving Kew Gardens Streets

Kew Gardens development started over a century ago, in 1910, and from the looks of it, some of our streets must appear to be that old! Certainly, the havoc caused by the infrastructure changes over the last several years has made many of them resemble an obstacle course. The City seems to be done with the water main replacement project. Verizon appears close to finishing its work. National Grid is still tearing up some problem locations. ConEdison, Time Warner and Verizon (who may not string overhead street wires in most of Kew Gardens thanks to the agreement and a homeowners assessment negotiated in 1915 by KGCA). are still making repairs. The good news is that, at the end of last year, 20 streets in Kew Gardens, comprising most of our community, were added to the list of streets designated to be repaved by DOT – we assume – in the not too distant future.

“That Japanese House”

Over the years, many KG residents have wondered and inquired about “that Japanese house” at 84-62 Beverly Road, at the corner of Brevoort Street. Distinctly designed, in a community of custom made homes, it has long been empty and become very much run down, to the point of being cemented in.

After a long period of apparent abandonment, it was sold at the end of last year. An application for obviously extensive renovation was filed with the Department of Buildings, and, for several months nothing was happening. But, at the very end of March – and as this is written, on April Fool's Day – workers have appeared and the renovation started on what we hope will become an admirable house restoration to Kew Gardens.

Weather, Traffic and Other Alerts

KGCA receives web notices from the City whenever a weather or traffic alert or warning is issued. Members who are on email, in turn, are frequently notified whenever its impact seems relevant to our KG community. Such notices were particularly helpful to our email members during (and before) this winter's 27" snow storm, the construction closing of Jackie Robinson Parkway, disruptions caused by the frequent TV and movie filming in Kew Gardens and other such unusual happenings.

What a Good Idea

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli announced last month that five Fortune 500 companies – Coca-Cola Enterprises, Raytheon, Waste Management, Union Pacific and Centerpoint Energy – have agreed to the New York State Common Retirement Fund's request that they publicly report all direct and indirect corporate political spending.

A particularly good idea in this Presidential Election year!!

Our 102nd Precinct

The 102nd Police Precinct, which covers Kew Gardens, Richmond Hill, Ozone Park and Woodhaven, is located at 87-24 118th Street, Richmond Hill 11418, just below Jamaica Avenue. Its main telephone number is (718) 805-3200. Deputy Inspector Deodat Urprasad is the Commanding Officer, and the Community Affairs officers – with whom we have the most contact – are P. O. Jose Severino and P.O. Edwin Martinez, both at (718) 805-3215. Emergency calls and “crime-in-progress” calls, of course, should be made to 911; quality-of-life complaints calls should be made to 311.

The 102nd Precinct Community Council, currently headed by Lachman Budhai, consisting of interested and concerned members of the public, provides a monthly forum at which any resident of the Precinct may freely comment, listen, and air his/her problems or complaints to the top brass of the Precinct and their staff. Council meetings are currently held the third Tuesday of the month at 7 pm at the Richmond Hill Library, 119-14 Hillside Avenue, a location that may change should the library undergo renovation.

Kew Gardens homeowners are encouraged to attend Council meetings both to express their thoughts and to familiarize themselves with some of the issues our police deal with in the other sectors of the Precinct. An increased attendance by Kew Gardens residents would also enhance their rapport and relationship with our most important security force and quality-of-life enforcers.

KGCA, KGIA, KGCRA, KGCC

KGCA is the Kew Gardens Civic Association, Inc., founded in 1914, four years after the development of Kew Gardens, by and for the homeowners of Kew Gardens. It is the publisher of this *Newsletter* and host of the websites www.kewgardenscivic.org and www.oldkewgardens.com. See page 16 for contacts.

KGIA is the Kew Gardens Improvement Association, Inc., founded in 1970 by apartment house residents wishing to ensure that trees and landscaping would be preserved and expanded as Lefferts Boulevard was then being repaved. Sylvia Hack, an original founder, continues today as President (as well as a member of Community Board 9). Although its membership is concentrated among apartment house residents, it welcomes all Kew Gardens merchants and homeowners as well. To contact Sylvia Hack, KGIA’s President, call 718-849-6997 or email slh98@nyc.rr.com.

KGCRA, the Kew Gardens Council for Recreation and the Arts, Inc., was founded and incorporated in 1975 as a §501(c)3 tax exempt organization by the then presidents of KGCA, KGIA and the P.S. 99 Parents Association. Its early financial stability was helped by a generous \$20,000 grant from the Samuel J. Lefrak Foundation, with which KGCA had developed a relationship. Over the years, KGCRA operated a Friday evening youth center at P.S. 99, an acclaimed series of concerts (*Chamber Music 99*) and movies at P.S.99, and a host of other events either sponsored by it or directly operated by it. Barry Lewis’ highly acclaimed book, *KEW GARDENS: Urban Village in the Big City* was published by the Council; the DOT mural over the LIRR on 80th Road was also a Council project. Founders and long-time staff would welcome “new blood” to take part in pursuing its diverse interests. Contact: mhberger@aol.com or slh98@nyc.rr.com

KGCC, the Kew Gardens Community Center, was achieved by KGCA and KGIA a dozen years ago when they prevailed on the NYC Board of Estimate to require it as a condition for granting the rezoning sought by the developer. The space for KGCC was granted, with utilities and appropriate equipment, at no charge, for the life of the building. The Queens Borough President then designated Queens Community House as the responsible operator of the Center, which is today financed primarily by funding from the NYC Office of the Aging and the Queens Borough President. The Director of the Center, on the 2d floor of 80-02 Kew Gardens Road, is Ms. Rachel Epstein, (718) 268-5960 or repstein@qchnyc.org.

KGLX, according to *google*, is the acronym for Commonwealth Edison Company, the largest electric utility in Illinois, *and has nothing to do with Kew Gardens!!!*

“User’s Guide” for New Homeowners

Besides the invaluable and priceless information we like to think KGCA offers via its *Newsletter* and websites, KGCA is preparing an 11-page User’s Guide for new Kew Gardens homeowners. It will be available via email as an attachment and can easily be printed out for presentation to new neighbors to familiarize them with some of the services and resources available. They should (and maybe you could) find it helpful.

New Apartments for 116th Street

When the DOB granted approval for a 9-story apartment house to be built at 82-76 116th Street, opposite Dunkin' Donuts, without on-site parking, KGCA filed a formal Challenge to the application. The builder was relying on certain waivers to parking requirements stated in the Zoning Resolution based on the size of the building lot (under 10,000 square feet). Because of the impossible, congested area on 116th Street and surrounding the site, *KGCA argued that such waivers should be interpreted as discretionary and optional and the additional parking congestion created was contrary to the broader principles set forth in the Zoning Resolution.*

The Challenge was denied by the Queens office of the DOB. KGCA exercised its right and filed an Appeal to the DOB's Deputy Commissioner. He concurred with the Queens decision and emphasized that the language of the Zoning Resolution made the waivers mandatory rather than discretionary.

Then, more recently, another application – relying on the same waivers – for an 8-story building containing 46 units, again with no on-site parking, was approved for 83-67 116th Street.

KGCA is in the process of hopefully effecting a strategy which might forestall such abuses of common sense in the future.

Meetings: CB 9, KGCA, meetings, meetings . . .

In addition to trying to attend the monthly Precinct Council meetings, “civic activists”, residents who think they could – or might – contribute to our community's welfare and well-being, should consider attending some of the monthly meetings of Community Board 9. Its up-to-50 members, all volunteers – coming from Woodhaven, Ozone Park, Richmond Hill and Kew Gardens – are recommended by our City Council Member for appointment by the Borough President. The Community Board's role, although mostly advisory, is nevertheless important and influential. The issues that come before it are seemingly unlimited: changes in land use, BSA variances, performance by City agencies, liquor licenses, traffic bumps, traffic control changes, street fairs, citizen complaints (voiced at each meeting's Public Forum), and countless others.

CB 9's office is in Room 310A at Borough Hall. The Board's Chair is Raj Rampershad and its permanent, salaried staff is headed by District Manager Lisa Gomes, Community Associate Irina Barayeva, and two additional staffers. **They are there to receive and process all complaints regarding anything under City control: trees, parks, transit, sidewalks, sanitation, buildings, you name it.**

The District Manager meets regularly, face-to-face with operating managers of other local City agencies concerned with City services to our community. The Board's telephone number is **(718) 286-2686** and its email address is communitybd9@nyc.rr.com. Copying any complaint to KGCA would be helpful in keeping us in the loop.

The full Community Board meets monthly at 7:45 pm on the second Tuesday of the month, rotating the meeting places among its various neighborhoods. Call the Board office for the next location.

KGCA's Board of Governors meets monthly, usually in mid-month, at 8 pm at the Kew Gardens Community Center. All members are invited to sit in at the meetings; if you do plan to attend a meeting, please call Murray Berger at (718) 263-7180 or Dominick Pistone at (718) 847-1789 in advance.

And if you still have an open evening (after also covering a Parent Association meeting at your child's school), the Queens Civic Congress, to which KGCA belongs, also has monthly Board meetings of interest to Kew Gardens. The QCC is a confederation of about 100 Queens civic associations concerned with issues that can affect the borough overall: airplane noise, transportation, zoning, etc. Getting involved with QCC is also important when we relish support for issues we favor, such as the revision of Albany legislation regarding the pickup of electronics trash, or E-Trash.

On your open nights you may watch *So You Think You Can Dance!*, *The Voice*, *NCIS*, C-SPAN or whatever, – or even see a movie! But *do* consider some community activism; that's what has kept Kew Gardens alive and well.

DO NOT MISS THE ANNUAL MEETING, THURSDAY, MAY 5, AT KGCC

From Garage to Beautiful Parking Lot

When the multistory Municipal Parking Garage behind Borough Hall was shut down suddenly in September 2014 because it had been declared an immediate hazard, staff of Borough Hall, visitors to the courts and City agencies, jurors – and commuting subway parkers – all lost the 500 or so spaces still functioning in the building. (Its parking capacity had already been reduced because of safety considerations.)

Borough President Melinda Katz took the lead in addressing the Mayor and initiating a series of meetings held in her office with representatives of all the affected government agencies. Invited to participate in all the meetings, from the first, in September 2014 to (so far) March 2016, have been Sylvia Hack (President of the Kew Gardens Improvement Association) and Murray Berger (Executive Chairman of KGCA).

The very serious disruptions and inconveniences, the impact on Kew Gardens streets by drivers desperate for parking, the traffic gridlock – all were discussed with the DOT specialists who kept trying different solutions and traffic or parking patterns to ameliorate the problems.

Sensitive to environmental concerns, the concrete building was demolished and the material ground up on the premises, (to be later used as part of the new pavement and infrastructure.) Dust spreading into the community was effectively kept to a minimum.

The design by WXY for the new, open, street-level lot, to park 300 vehicles and meet City Planning standards, calls for extensive greenery, trees, Muni meters and vehicle charging stations. Even the suggestion for wi-fi was brought up.

With WXY's design in its final stages of refinement and approval, to be followed by the City's bidding and purchasing procedures, and eventual construction, the parking lot is scheduled for completion in June 2017.

The Friends of Maple Grove Cemetery

by Andrea Crawford, Vice President

Maple Grove Cemetery, which celebrates 140 years of operation this year, continues on its fascinating journey as not only a place for mourning and loss, but also as a center of peace, reflection and community engagement. Over the past ten years this Victorian cemetery has morphed into a true community asset. Starting with the completion of the beautiful Center at Maple Grove in 2007, Maple Grove Cemetery has become a celebration of all that Kew Gardens, and in fact Queens, has to offer.

What began as a celebratory concert has been transformed into a concert series that celebrates the many musical artists buried here. Recent events include a celebration of Women's History with the screening of a movie about girl empowerment, a murder mystery dinner incorporating the lives of those at rest in the Cemetery and an ongoing Civil War reenactment that encapsulates the courage and commitment of African-American soldiers.

The Friends of Maple Grove are involved with an ongoing archiving of the history literally buried within its 65 acres. Each new discovery leads the Friends of Maple Grove in a new direction of how to celebrate those in the Cemetery's care.

However, first and foremost, Maple Grove Cemetery is a place of repose and meditation. Walk inside its gates and listen. The sounds of honking horns on Lefferts Boulevard are quieted amongst the mature trees that fill the grounds. This non-denominational Cemetery is open to the public and all are encouraged to not only visit Maple Grove, but to be brave, step out of what one believes a cemetery is or should be, and experience a major cultural institution right in our back yard.

Books on Kew Gardens

Book lovers and those looking for a good book on Kew Gardens to give as a gift should think of Carl Ballenas' collection of about 120 photographs with descriptive captions, published as a book in 2014 by Arcadia Publishing as part of its *Images of America* series. Also available at the Homestead Gourmet Shoppe on Lefferts Boulevard, the book may still be acquired from KGCA by members for \$15 a copy (while they last).

Barry Lewis' acclaimed book, *KEW GARDENS: Urban Village in the Big City*, published over a decade ago by Kew Gardens' non-profit Kew Gardens Council for Recreation and the Arts, Inc., sold out its two printings and apparently has apparently become a collectors' item. If you managed to get a copy, treasure it!

SHOPPING THE INTERNET IS FINE, BUT ALSO REMEMBER OUR KEW GARDENS MERCHANTS

P.S. 99, The Kew Gardens School

by Paulette Foglio, Principal

The Arts are Alive at P.S. 99Q. Students are participating in a wide range of art programs. They are Studio-in-a-School; an enrichment program with an artist-in-residence; the Cultural After School Adventures program (CASA), sponsored by Councilwoman Koslowitz, where the school partners with the Queens Museum of Art; instrumental music; and a performing arts program with a culminating event. Students will be performing Aladdin throughout the week of June 13th, with an evening performance on Thursday, June 16th at 6:30 pm. **All are invited to attend the evening performance.**

I am proud to announce that two of our grade 4 students, Katherine and Marleen, were winners of Councilwoman Koslowitz's *Women's History* Poster Contest. In addition, three of our students are semi-finalists in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The P.S. 99 school community believes that the school should be a bully-free zone where children feel safe. Our Peace Committee focused on having all grade K-6 students illustrate peaceful messages. In addition, students created a tree to symbolize peace where each leaf contained a message of peace or a quote from a famous peacemaker. The tree will be exhibited in our Art Gallery.

Our Student Council has been busy. They participated in the Queens Borough Hall Flag Raising Ceremony on United Nations Day. In addition, they will be finishing their time capsule project this June, in which school artifacts such as photos, interviews and artwork will be placed inside and the time capsule will be buried.

During our annual Hop-a-thon, our grade K-2 students raised \$2,502 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). These funds will enable three children to attend an MDA summer camp in Spring Valley, New York. Students will end the year by welcoming two authors to the school. They are Geoff Rodkey, a well-known children's author of the popular series, *The Tapper Twins* and Dr. Janet Rose, author of *The Magic*, a story about the power of imagination

Showtime at Austin's Ale House

by Diana Shaman

Austin's Ale House, situated on Austin Street just off Lefferts Boulevard in the heart of Kew Gardens, is serving the community much more than food and drinks. It has become a cultural center, with art shows and musical events, and a photography show is in the planning stages. More recently, the owners have taken the lead in beautifying the Long Island Rail Road station by landscaping a neglected patch of land alongside the west bound platform with new grass and trees.

What the restaurant is doing is "good for business and good for the neighborhood," said John Kohout, the manager, who began working at Austin's in 1995, and became the manager in 2001. He lives around the corner on Talbot Street. "The artists bring in their friends, and the artworks beautify the place; the railroad property upgrade enhances the outdoor dining area," he added.

The restaurant, which with outside seating on a rear patio can accommodate almost 200 diners, is owned by three partners, John Ryan, Mark Eoccia, and Tony Truzzolino. The idea for displaying art began when a local art teacher, Liana Shemper, came by and asked if she could display some of her students' work. The idea grew from there, with outside artists from all over Queens now showing their work as well.

Recently, members of the local Potter's Wheel exhibited pottery products. Musical shows organized by Aaron Adler's group, the *Kew Gardens Musicians*, feature singers and instrumentalists and add another cultural dimension.

Austin's Ale House hosts each art show for 6 to 8 weeks year-round. On opening nights participants and their guests are treated to complimentary wine and aperitifs.

Help in putting shows together has also come from the Kew Gardens Improvement Association. "Over the years we've had some terrific group shows highlighting the talents of Queens artists, and John has always welcomed them," said Carol Lacks, one of its officers.

It's Got to Be Done

This year's Audit Committee consists of Bjorn Matz, Chair, and Diana Shaman. The Nominating Committee is Renee Levine, Chair, and Dick Eden. They will report at the Annual Meeting on May 5th.

What P.S. 99 Means to Kew Gardens

Parents of school children can help themselves and our Kew Gardens community by joining the P.S. 99's Parents Association, attending its monthly meetings and actively participating. If you have the time and inclination, see if you can be of service to the school. P.S. 99 is in so many ways a small-town school where parents' expertise and talents are both welcomed and appreciated.

KGCA hopes you will become an active parent at whatever public school your child attends: P.S. 99 (*The Kew Gardens School*), Russell Sage or Hillcrest. And we especially want our Kew Gardens children to succeed scholastically and creatively, so we may later brag "they grew up in Kew Gardens, attended P.S. 99 and made friends for life", as so many have before them.

Kew Gardens' NEW DOE UNIVERSAL PRE-K

After years of seeking a DOE Pre-K school in Kew Gardens, we were finally rewarded last September with the opening of the NYC Department of Education's District 28 Pre-K Center at 83-30 Kew Gardens Road. Ms. Doreen Duff is the Center's Director of Early Childhood Education, which we are accustomed to call "The Principal." Ms. Dawn O'Rourke is the Site Coordinator and second in command.

The school, designed for pre-kindergarten students by the School Construction Authority, is located at street level and encompasses four classrooms and 72 seats, 18 per class. Each class has one teacher and one paraprofessional. The remaining staff includes the School Nurse, an NYPD School Safety Agent, a School Food Helper and the Custodian.

The school has its own warming kitchen and serves freshly-delivered SchoolFood* at mealtimes. In the fitness room the children participate daily in Gross Motor** play.

Known in DOE parlance as Q608, the Pre-K Center's normal hours are 8:20am to 2:40pm. Its telephone number is (718) 558-6300.

The school is not connected to P.S. 99 nor to P.S. 99's *Leah Weinberg Early Childhood Center*.

* The DOE SchoolFood program is committed to providing healthy food choices among its students and maintaining high nutritional standards by offering delicious and attractive menu options.

**Gross Motor Skills generally entail walking, running, jumping, climbing, balance, strength. Further helpful information may be found at <http://www.kamloopschildrenstherapy.org/gross-motor-preschool-milestones>.

The Kew Gardens Musicians

Last month, on the evening of March 16th, the *Kew Gardens Musicians* entertained the audience at Austin's Ale House with its 85th concert. The first concert took place on November 7, 2003, at the then Bliss Café. At that time both poetry and music were featured. Eventually, the show evolved into strictly music. A high percentage of the musicians lived in Kew Gardens and still do. Aaron Adler, the producer of the show, has never auditioned anybody, and yet he is surrounded by good music.

All types of music are performed, from rock to jazz to classical. Many of the musicians are composers as well, which makes for a diverse program. Among them are pianists, a toy orchestra player, a harmonica virtuoso and an oud musician, adding to that diversity. Originally appearing in several venues, their events have settled in at Austin's Ale House for the past nine years. The management seems happy as the performers generally play to a packed house. In the summer, the venue has sometimes been moved to the Kew Gardens Cinemas Park on Austin Street, where Harvey Elgart, the movie owner, has been very accommodating.

Some of the star performers over the years have been Erin Lee Kelly, Melissa Jillian Corona, Larry Block and Victor, Alexa Dexa, Dan Lovitt, Alan Backer, Chris and Mary Lefkarites, Pepe Santana Gould and Ralph Kotkov, Stacey Mandeville, Peter Hack, Dr. Raul Ulloa, Jiahi Yi He, Frank Persico and Jimmy Bennett. Outstanding contributions have been made by sound men and guitarists Javier Reyes and Juan Cornejo.

The fruition of the *Kew Gardens Musicians* has been a dream come true for Aaron Adler. He always wanted to have fine music for an appreciative audience, with no cover and no minimum. Now his next objective is to reach 100 concerts. No wonder Mr. Adler has often been dubbed "the Sol Hurok of Kew Gardens"!

**June 30 is the deadline for submitting your Free First Year KGCA membership
... a one-time promotion ... Complete the coupon on page 16 now!**

Culture in Kew Gardens

by Carol Lacks and Rosemary Sherman, KGIA and KGCRA

The Kew Gardens Council for Recreation and the Arts, Inc. (KGCRA) was founded in 1975 as a 501(c) 3 tax exempt corporation to meet the need for an organization that could be used to promote and bring art, culture and recreation activities to the neighborhood through a collaborative effort. This year KGCRA will coordinate and/or bring to you some familiar events and introduce some new and creative ones.

Barrel Planting Day: planting flowers in the barrels on Lefferts Boulevard (over the LIRR) 10am to noon, on a Saturday near the end of April. Volunteers needed: contact Sylvia Hack at slh98@nyc.rr.com.

Kids Art-in-the-Park: Kids of all ages are invited to Kew Gardens' 7th Annual Kids Art-in-the-Park event at Cinemas Park on Austin Street, Sunday, June 19, for a fun-filled day of mural painting, arts and crafts, and creative activities. The main attraction of this very popular event is a large-scale group mural, open to kids throughout the day, to paint whatever they envision! Kids can also create individual masterpieces at the open arts + crafts workshop table, get their faces painted, enjoy story time, and participate in a variety of artistic activities!

Community Arts Day: The entire neighborhood will be turned into an art experience at the 4th Annual Kew Gardens Community Arts Day. Expect an open welcoming and very professional art show with a small town feel! Enjoy more than twenty talented Queens artists who will be selling their paintings, pottery, jewelry, photography and illustrations on Lefferts Boulevard; watch the awesome Sidewalk Chalk artists (children, too!) who will transform NYC concrete into intricate, wild works of art through vibrant colorful designs; learn how culture influences art from demonstrations by multicultural artists; and practice these art forms and other projects at the *Art Zone*. Mark your calendars for **Sunday, September 25th, 11am-5pm!**

"Seasons of Kew Gardens": A new community mural, sponsored by the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), located on 80th Road. Artist Carla E. Reyes will create a 72-foot mural with the help of community artists and volunteers, on both sides of 80th Road over the LIRR, portraying species of beautiful trees native to Kew Gardens and highlighting the lush, ever-changing nature scene, against the classic urban backdrop. A living work of art!

HomeFull: a new, unique, and exciting poetry and art project, funded by the Queens Council on the Arts. Five Queens poets will be commissioned to write a poem about HOME and 25 Queens artists will react to one of the poems by creating a piece of artwork in any medium. The Opening Reception for *HomeFull* which will include a poetry reading and music, is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 28th, 6pm-8:30pm** at Austin's Ale House (82-72 Austin Street). *HomeFull* will be on view from September 21-October 31.

Trees Need Water

Over one hundred years ago, when the streets of Kew Gardens were laid out by the Kew Gardens Corporation, they were planted with young shade trees. Primarily they were pin oaks, sycamores, elms, and maples. Today, many have died of old age or disease and are being replaced by the City, with the request that homeowners keep them watered as they take root.

Meanwhile, many of the aging trees remaining have become hazardous to pedestrians and to homeowners as they weaken and drop dead branches, with and without wind or warning. It will take many years before we again have arching trees blotting out the hot summer sun. But these new trees, *if we maintain them*, will grow and keep Kew Gardens the oasis and haven that it is.

With our homeowners' help to keep the trees watered during hot dry spells, they will thrive and grow for you and the community to enjoy! As we emerge from the subway on a hot summer day, our Kew Gardens trees are a welcomed sight.

One recommendation is that you water your tree(s) once a week for at least 15 minutes or with at least a gallon of water. Of course during extended hot dry spells the tree may need further watering. This is especially important during the first years of the tree's life. Newly planted trees also usually have a tag explaining how to care for them and water them.

STAY INFORMED! BE SURE TO GIVE US YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS NOW

Memories of Dagmar and Her Kew Gardens

by *Diana Shaman*

Among the enduring memories I have of Dagmar P. Cermak, a long-time resident of Kew Gardens who passed away in February after a short illness, is that of dinner parties she gave on the second-story porch of her home on Grenfell Street, where we sat around the table enjoying a canopy of trees and the view of the world below while sipping Margaritas.

She was, of course, much more than a gracious hostess. She was the epitome of the kind of neighbor we crave to have in our community, a cacophony of cheery hellos if you met on the street, an ardent gardener and beautifier of her home, a zealous foe of blight to the extent of picking up papers and cans people threw on the LIRR property that bordered her house, or along the street in front of it.

For many years, she was a Board member of the Kew Gardens Civic Association, coming down to our monthly evening meetings even when advancing age limited her ability to easily walk uphill back to her home. She wanted to help make our neighbourhood a better one. At our Annual Meetings Dagmar was always there to pitch in with the preparations, helping to cut up the fruits and cheeses and preparing the platters.

She was a passionate global traveler; nothing was too far, or too remote. Her constant travel companion was her close friend Zdenka Rosenberg (who did not want to comment for this article because she is still grieving over Dagmar's loss).

Other good friends, Lilly and Zdenek Capek, who live on 81st Avenue, filled in some of Dagmar's history. Like Dagmar, the Capeks come from Czechoslovakia and met her through a mutual friend. Dagmar was in England studying economics when the Communists invaded Czechoslovakia in 1948. Her parents, who were well-to-do landowners, advised her not to return even though it meant not seeing them for many years and surviving by doing odd jobs, including housekeeping in England. Eventually, she emigrated to the United States and became a passionate admirer of her new country, where she worked as a systems and procedures analyst for Chemical Bank until she retired.

"She plastered all these stickers on her car," Mr. Capek recalled, "*I Love America, and God Bless America, and others.*"

Bob and Melinda Nobbs, her Grenfell Street neighbors, have a similar story. "One of our favorite memories was on the Fourth of July a few years ago hearing Dagmar and her best friend, Zdenka, with some friends on her outside porch singing *God Bless America* in loud and proud tones," Mr. Nobbs wrote in a note on her. "Realizing how much difficulty she had to push through to come here to the U.S. and become a citizen and hearing those voices brought tears to our eyes."

Dagmar and another friend, Gretchen Yoffa, were roommates in Manhattan and purchased the house on Grenfell Street together, attracted to the neighborhood by the Capeks who had purchased their own home in 1957. After Gretchen died, Dagmar went on living there alone.

Roman Bachli, who used to live across the street on Grenfell Street, has many favorite stories about Dagmar. "In 1973, shortly after we moved from Brooklyn Heights to Grenfell Street . . . there was an attractive blonde lady in the small steep garden between the house and the sidewalk tending luscious tomatoes," he wrote in a recollection of Dagmar. "We said good morning, I complimented her on the tomatoes and a conversation started that continued for the next 44 years."

Another story, from 1997: Mr. Bachli and his good friend Frederick Hueppe, had been invited to East Hampton for Thanksgiving, when Mr. Bachli had to have his appendix removed. The East Hampton trip was off. "Dagmar heard this sorry tale," Mr. Bachli recalled. "'We'll bring Thanksgiving dinner tomorrow,'" she said. "On Thanksgiving Day, around 2 pm, the doorbell rang, it was a beaming Dagmar and a beaming Gretchen, both carrying huge baskets containing a complete Thanksgiving dinner with absolutely everything . . . and a couple of bottles of wine. Then they went back home to prepare for their own guests."

Dagmar was always there for everyone, and for herself she had her good friend, Ms. Rosenberg, who shared travels and happy days, and took care of her devotedly during her final illness.

"Dagmar always reminded us of Martina Navratilova, the tennis star, in her fortitude and determination to be the best she could be," said her Grenfell Street neighbor, Mr. Nobbs. "We still can't walk the hill of Grenfell Street without looking up at her porch and expecting her to call down a cheery greeting to us."

