



Letters to the Editor

nitwit governor. Nobody should venture outside with such dangerous weather conditions. Frostbite could occur in a very short time.

John Amato

Fresh Meadows

Rikers Emptied In Ozone Pk

A copy of this letter was received at the offices of the Queens Gazette.

An open letter to the all Council Members, NYS Senators, Assembly Members:

We are appealing to your sense of civic duty, your responsibility to the safety of all New Yorkers, and your obligation to the oath that you would represent all New Yorkers, regardless of race, color, religious creed, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry and age. You solemnly swore, or affirmed, that you would support the Constitution of the United States and protect the residents of the City of New York, residing in the state of New York. These are oaths and vows that are taken very seriously, and anything short of that is dereliction of duty, plain and simple.

The 60,000 plus residents that reside in Ozone Park, 11416 and 11417, feel abandoned and left out. We feel unsafe, alone, desperate, scared, are living in fear and unsure of tomorrow in a town that has been inundated with homeless men since June. It has gotten so bad that we now do routine ride-arounds because people are so scared. The community has spoken and noticed the rise in homeless men that have been plaguing our community in the last seven months. It is almost as if they are bringing Rikers Island's notorious to our communities and leaving them here without resources, without the proper help, without counseling, without housing, and without regard for human life and dignity. This is not the New York I grew up in, nor is it the New York that we had grown accustomed to in the last 25 years.

Let me make this perfectly clear: this is not a Democratic- or Republican-caused problem, it is not a white or black problem, and it is not a male or female problem. It is a societal problem that has been made worse by the emptying of Rikers Island, leaving the known criminals, known sex offenders, and known repeat offenders smack in the heart of family neighborhoods.

This is compounded by the high cost of living. If you want to know where to place blame, place it on the system that caused our taxes to skyrocket, our water bills to dramatically increase, our insurance to rise, and the cost of doing business in New York to spiral out of control. Add to it the constant summonses from the many different agencies people get, without discretion. The cost of maintaining a home and rents have doubled in the last 10-15 years. One bedrooms in Ozone Park are now more than \$1,500-1,700 a month. The

cost of living in New York has displaced the hard-working families, leaving them out in the cold.

However, the men that have infiltrated our communities are men that were in the system, who lived in the system, and now are thrown back to the streets. Some have told us they were driven by the Department of Correction bus and dropped off on the corner, left to fend for themselves.

I just recently realized that sex offenders can live wherever they want, as long as they are not on parole or probation. I was always under the misconception that if you are on the sexual offenders list you are barred from living within certain distances of schools, parks, or anywhere children would be. But I was disillusioned. And I wonder how many New Yorkers do not know this – they can live wherever they want after parole or probation. Wow, what a stab in the gut.

I wonder who is going to explain to the parents of the 11-year-old child that we have to take our fair share of men, sexual offenders and all. "Sorry, your son was exposed, but be grateful it wasn't worse." Is this the attitude New Yorkers need to get accustomed to?

We are appealing to the NYC Council to stop the madness of placing 90 shelters in residential communities, with NO community input, NO community board input, and NO input from the elected officials. What is the sense of spending millions in the budget for community boards if they are nothing more than just another useless monthly meeting to stop in and say hello? Community boards were the backbone of the communities they represented, but today the power and the advice they give falls on deaf ears.

We are at a crossroads. You can rise up and be the hero all New Yorkers are looking for, you can be standing on the right side of history, and you can be standing with your constituents representing their best interests. Or you can push an agenda that is going to hurt the quality of life and the safety of every New Yorker, and you can be the one to explain to those parents why their child was molested, raped, kidnapped, or worse. And yes, it is going to happen. The more Rikers is emptied the worse it is going to get – that is a promise. I have seen the rise of people being scared, the men lurking around at all hours of the day and night.

What was once a safe city, where people felt safe, is now Gotham of the Batman series. We need help and we need help now. We are imploring you to please stop this madness and meet on the issues at hand. These are the issues that mean the most to people, the fact that many, many do not feel the safety of their communities any more. We must address this now before it gets worse. We must have a plan of action to help the homeless and not warehouse them in these cluster buildings, making a handful of people wealthy on the backs of the less fortunate.

We are requesting a meeting with either you, and/or the committee(s) that oversee these homeless shelters and the release of sex offenders, to create new laws, so that the sex offenders are not living within the range of where children are, whether on parole or probation. We want to be proactive to help create new laws to protect the citizens and hopefully work to control how the shelters are placed in our communities, with the input of our local community boards. And even discuss then-Mayor Bloomberg's Advantage Program (2007-2011), which for a while worked. Sam Esposito

President, Ozone Park Block Association

City Harvest Distributes Over 8,000 Pounds Of Food To TSA Workers



City Harvest distributed over 400 bags of food, free of charge, to TSA workers at LaGuardia Airport who had been working without pay since the federal government shutdown began on December 22nd.

"Even though the shutdown has ended, we know that there is still an immediate need for food across our city," said Lisa Sposato, City Harvest's director of food sourcing. "Year round, almost half of working New Yorkers struggle to cover basic expenses, meaning many of our neighbors have to choose between paying their rent and buying groceries. City Harvest will continue working every day to ensure that all New Yorkers have enough food for themselves and their families."

"We are grateful to City Harvest, who distributed over 8,000 pounds of food today to TSA workers at LaGuardia who have been working without pay since December 22nd," said Carlos Rodriguez, secretary treasurer, AFGE Local 2222. "Although the government has temporarily reopened, it will take some time for things to return to normal. The food that TSA employees were able to take home today will help provide nourishment and peace of mind in this uncertain time."

In addition to distributing food to federal workers, City Harvest is welcoming federal workers to all nine of their Mobile Markets across the five boroughs, so that anyone in need can take home fresh produce, free of charge. For more information on City Harvest's response to the shutdown, visit www.cityharvest.org/shutdown.

For more information on the shutdown and on AFGE Local 2222, federal TSA workers can visit www.afgelocal2222.org/main.html

City Harvest, New York City's largest food rescue organization, distributed over 400 bags of food last week free of charge to TSA workers at LaGuardia Airport who had been working without pay since the federal government shutdown began on December 22nd. Although the government has temporarily reopened, TSA workers would not receive back pay until February 1st at the earliest. Additionally, it is unclear when federal employees of other agencies that were impacted by the shutdown will receive back pay for the two paychecks they missed since December. Many have needed to turn to food pantries and soup kitchens to help make ends meet and put food on their tables.

The January 29th distribution lasted from 9 am-6 pm and TSA workers took home fresh produce, including oranges, squash, and potatoes, as well as a variety of non-perishable items, including pasta and canned tomatoes, beef, and turkey.