

Turtle Bay News

A Publication of the Turtle Bay Association

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City Council To Hold Hearings On Parks Issues

In light of concerns raised in the process of awarding the café concession in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza – and at the urging of City Councilman Dan Garodnick – the City Council Parks Committee plans to hold hearings to look into issues with park concessions and other parks matters.

The issue came to the forefront in Turtle Bay last spring, when the Parks Department rejected a bid by the Patio Café, which had operated at the Plaza for the past three years, to continue operating at the site. The Friends of Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, the nonprofit group that supports the Plaza and

New Café Concession Opens At the Plaza (story, page 3)

its Katharine Hepburn Garden, raised questions about the bidding process and joined the Patio Café in going to court, charging the Parks Department acted in an “arbitrary and capricious” manner in making the award. In late August, the court ruled against the Friends in its suit.

Separately, during the summer more than 100 community leaders from around the city, including TBA President Bill Curtis, signed a letter calling on legislators to hold hearings and enact legislation to correct a number of issues related to city parks.

“In recent years, communities throughout New York City have experienced increasing difficulty in reaching agreement with the New York City Parks Department on a variety of issues concerning the safety and maintenance of our Parks,” the letter said. It called for “a lower threshold for triggering public review and legislative oversight; assignment of monies collected from activi-

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Stephen Sondheim to Head Anniversary Year Campaign

Stephen Sondheim, a Turtle Bay resident since the earliest days of his distinguished career as composer and lyricist, will serve as the honorary chairman of the Turtle Bay Association’s membership drive for 2007, the organization’s 50th anniversary year.

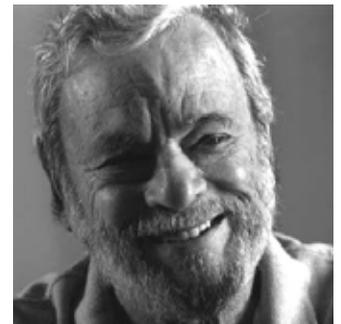
In a letter sent to prospective members in early November, Mr. Sondheim – who moved to Turtle Bay in 1960 and has been a TBA member ever since – urged neighbors to join the association. “Today, our neighborhood is facing as much change as ever in the past 50 years,” he said, “We need the TBA to be acting on our behalf.”

Soon after he moved to Turtle Bay, Mr. Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics for “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum,” which opened on Broadway in 1962 and earned him the first of his seven Tony awards. Next came “Company,” “Follies,” and “A Little Night Music” in the early 1970s, and then in the late ‘70s, “Sweeney Todd.” In 1985, Mr. Sondheim won a Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his “Sunday in the Park with George,” which opened on Broadway the year before. He has also composed scores for movies and television, winning an Academy Award for

Best Song for “Sooner or Later” in “Dick Tracy.” Over the years, several anthologies of his work have been performed, including “Side by Side by Sondheim,” “Marry Me A Little,” “You’re Gonna Love Tomorrow,” “Putting It Together” and “Moving On.”

Coincidentally, one of Mr. Sondheim’s first works, “West Side Story” – for which he wrote the lyrics to Leonard Bernstein’s music – opened in 1957, the same year the TBA was founded by a group of 49th Street neighbors who fought to keep their street from becoming a cross-town thoroughfare.

“We are honored that Mr. Sondheim has agreed to chair our membership drive for our 50th anniversary year,” says Bill Curtis, president of the TBA. “We thank him not only for this effort, but for his support over the years.”



Stephen Sondheim

Share Your 50 Years of Remembrances

With the TBA’s 50th anniversary coming up in 2007, the TBA is collecting stories and memories of the people and places of Turtle Bay over the past half-century. We’d like to hear from you and your neighbors – particularly if you have been in the area since the late ‘50s and ‘60s. Perhaps you have a particular tale that illustrates how the neighborhood has changed since the mid-50s, or maybe you will tell us of your impressions of Turtle Bay of years ago. What were your favorite shops? Restaurants? Nightclubs? What do you miss most (or not miss at all!) about the neighborhood of years gone by?

Let us hear from you by contacting the TBA office at 212-751-5465, or e-mail at tbaooffice@mindspring.com. We’ll get back to you to chat.

Neighborhood Development News

BY BRUCE A. SILBERBLATT

Ex-Box Tree Site: Back to the Drawing Board

Having seriously damaged buildings along the east side of this now stalled excavation, the developer has acquired all of them and then some. It now controls the entire southwest corner of Second Avenue and 49th Street. The former plans were scrapped; the new design calls for a 24-story building – two floors of commercial space plus 22 of apartments. This is a few floors higher than the existing apartment building at 901 Second Avenue, and appears to be in compliance with zoning requirements. The name of the builder has not been disclosed. Hopefully, it will be somebody with more experience than the original firm that undermined the neighboring structures a year ago.

Con Edison Site: Under the Radar

While the attention of the New York press focuses on the huge Atlantic Yards project in Brooklyn, the East River Development Corporation (ERDC) quietly moves toward Planning Commission approval of its enormous, equally out-of-scale project for the former Con Edison Waterside site. Community opposition has completely escaped the eyes and ears of our otherwise alert metropolitan newshawks.

Although Community Board 6 produced a detailed counterproposal, the Planning Commission has refused to consider it alongside that of ERDC. What it will review is a larger scale plan produced by CB6 that embraces nearly the entire Community Board district, including Waterside (but in far less detail). That's comparing apples to pears.

ADL Building

The last remaining tenant in the former Anti-Defamation League Building at 823 United Nations Plaza, a Chase Manhattan Bank branch, is scheduled to vacate by the end of the year. Then Macklowe Development, which bought the building from the ADL last year, will move forward with its plans for the site. Macklowe is not confirming whether, as earlier reported, a condominium is planned.

Meanwhile, the "Wall of Remembrance," a bronze bas relief on the north side of the building facing Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, has been removed by the ADL and the organization is currently working with the city to find a new location, possibly in the Turtle Bay area. The seven bronze scenes were created in the early 1980s to commemorate the suffering of European Jews during the Holocaust.

Upward Push at 303 East 51st Street

Renderings of a 41-story, 450-foot-high sheer condominium tower, part of which intrudes into the adjoining low-rise mid-block residential neighborhood, have been revealed by Kennelly Development. TBA believes it is grossly contrary to the applicable zoning requirements; additionally, the site boundaries as submitted to the Department of Buildings (DOB) include a 20-foot-wide swath of 51st street. DOB has not as yet made its decision. TBA has already conveyed its objections to DOB.

School Daze

At Second Avenue and 57th Street, the High School of Art and Design, one of New York's elite learning institutions, and its adjoining elementary school, will be replaced by a new edifice. So as to minimize inroads into the city's finances, the new complex will be built by private developers. They will be rewarded by getting the right to superimpose a condominium tower soaring 59 stories – a height in our neighborhood surpassed only by Trump World Tower. TBA, having viewed only very preliminary layouts, thinks that a tower this high far exceeds what is permitted by the city's zoning resolution.

Mark Your Calendar

- **Sunday, Dec. 10**
TBA Holiday Toy Drive and Party
CK Restaurant, 936 Second Avenue
2-5 p.m.
Bring a gift for needy children
212-751-5465
- **Last Tuesday every month**
17th Precinct Community Council
Open Meeting, 6 p.m.
Sutton Place Synagogue
225 East 51st Street
212-826-3228
(No meetings July, August,
December)
- **Second Wednesday every month**
Community Board 6
Full Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
NYU Medical Center
550 First Avenue
212-319-3750

(Editor's Note: After the last issue of Turtle Bay News went to press, the date of the October Children's Fall Festival was changed. We apologize for any inconvenience.)

TBA Contacts:

Phone: 212-751-5465

Fax: 212-751-4941

E-mail: tbaoffice@mindspring.com

Web Site: www.turtlebay-nyc.org

Check the TBA Bulletin Board:
East side of Second Avenue,
between 48th and 49th Streets,
on outside wall of the supermarket.

Turtle Bay Association

President: William E. Curtis

Vice Presidents: Millie Margiotta,
Dolores Marsh, Bruce Silberblatt

Treasurer: Francine Irwin

Secretary: Barbara Connolly

Directors: Jed Abrams,

Ethel Bendove, Bunny Blei,

Orin Buck, Meryl Brodsky,

Barbara Connolly, William E. Curtis,

Denise Hamilton, Marie-Louise Handal,

Pamela Hanlon, Olga Hoffmann,

Bill Huxley, Richard Irwin,

Millie Margiotta, Dolores Marsh,

Patricia Q. McDougald, Francine Irwin,

Michael Resnick, Carol Rinzler,

Jeannie Sakol, Helen Shapiro,

Bruce Silberblatt

Turtle Bay News

Editor: Pamela Hanlon

Contributors: Terri Heveran,

Olga Hoffmann, Bill Huxley,

Millie Margiotta, Patricia Q. McDougald,

Rita Rowan, Bruce Silberblatt

Photography: Vivian Gordon, Tom Payne



You're Right, This is **Not** Turtle Bay...

But it might just as well have been when, in late September, more than 100 Turtle Bay Association members and neighbors visited this spot – the New York Botanical Garden – for the annual TBA outing. The visit was timed to coincide with the highly acclaimed show of glass sculpture (an example is pictured here) by artist Dale Chihuly.

Lunch beforehand at Mario's in "Little Italy" in the Bronx – plus a near-perfect sunny day – added up to what TBA member Terri Heveran, a veteran of many TBA annual outings in the past, called one of the best ever. Thanks to Barbara Connolly for arranging it! And thanks to Bunny Blei for the pretty photo.

Plaza Concession Opens

The New York Milkshake Company, operating from the glass house at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, opened in late October with a lot of enthusiasm and "more than just milkshakes," says owner Scott Marcus. The café will offer a full menu of sandwiches, wraps, coffee and espresso, along with ice cream and ten varieties of shakes. The Company is applying for a liquor license and plans to serve both cocktails and wine.

Initially, the Milkshake Company will be open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Hours will be extended in the spring, and before that, as business grows.

"Next spring, we'll be setting up a large outdoor dining area," says Mr. Marcus, who adds, "I'm thrilled to be in the neighborhood!"

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ties in parks to the maintenance and operations of city parks as an addition to, not substitute for, city funding for parks; enforcement of the city's duty to require public participation in and legislative oversight for any proposal for the alienation of any park land in New York City; and public review and legislative oversight for any transfer of a park's management/operation to a private entity."

At press time, Parks Committee Chairwoman, Councilwoman Helen D. Foster of the Bronx, had not set a hearing date.

Meanwhile, the concession space at Dag Plaza remained closed during the summer. But in late October, the winning bidder for the eight-year license to operate the concession – the New York Milkshake Company – opened its doors.

Newsorthy Notes

In Good Hands. City Hall Magazine's recent list of top "rising stars" in politics and government under the age of 40 included three of Turtle Bay's own: State Assemblyman Jonathan Bing and City Councilmembers Dan Garodnick and Jessica Lappin.

Speaking of Jessica Lappin. She's having a baby. She and her husband Andy are expecting their first child in March. "We will be equally happy with a boy or girl," she says, "but we are hoping for a Democrat."

Thanks. A hearty thanks to Garrett Doyle, building superintendent at 301 East 48th Street, for his help in installing the TBA's new bulletin board. It's located on the east side of Second Avenue, between 48th and 49th Streets, on the outside wall of the supermarket. Please check it for the latest TBA announcements and information.

Hat's off to the 17th. Kudos to our local police officers for another job well done during the opening weeks of the United Nations General Assembly session. Of course there were the inevitable traffic snarls, but the alert, efficient work of our cops kept the disruptions to a minimum. Many thanks!

Gift Baskets Custom-made. With the holidays coming up, Chocolat Bla Bla Bla, 359 East 50th Street, reminds neighbors that a specialty of the shop is its custom-made gift baskets filled with sweets and small gifts. And owner Lorraine Belmont is raving about a new item in her shop this season – chocolate-covered figs from Spain.

Banners Galore. East 43rd Street between Lexington Avenue and First Avenue, often called U.N. Way, got a bright, new look for

the fall season, as the Grand Central Partnership, a group that supports revitalization of the Grand Central area, produced a series of full-color street pole banners identifying each of the 192-member country flags. The banners were installed on streetlights from Lexington to First.

Neighborhood Victory. Plans for a disco bar at Second Avenue and 46th Street have been scuttled, after a neighborhood group, concerned about noise and disruption, won a court fight to stop its opening. The application for the liquor license for the bar, the site of the former Hsin Yu Restaurant, has now been withdrawn. Meanwhile, Assemblyman Jonathan Bing, who provided strong support for the neighbors in their fight, introduced legislation to revamp the State Liquor Authority's license-granting process.

Fall Festival Brings Neighborhood Kids To Dag Plaza



Ten-year-old Haley Huxley joined her dad, Bob (left) and uncle, Bill – along with scores of neighborhood kids – for the second annual Children’s Fall Festival in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in October. Face-painting, balloon-making, magic tricks and a jumping Fun Castle were all hits, but pumpkin-painting was everyone’s favorite. The event was organized by the Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, and supported by the Haley Foundation, Turtle Bay Association and the Family School. Special thanks to the Payne family (Tom, Tristan and Jennifer – mostly Jennifer, we’re told) for their work in helping to make the day such a success.



You’d never know it by looking at their bright, smiling faces, but it was well over 100 degrees in the shade when this group gathered in early August at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza to help celebrate “Night Out Against Crime.” Left to right, standing, are Millie Margiotta and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney; seated are Patricia McDougald, Ethel Bendove, Bunny Blei and Barbara Frank. Despite the hot weather, more than 400 people turned out for the festivities, sponsored by the 17th Precinct to raise awareness of crime prevention.

TBA Board at Work

The following is a summary of issues and activities addressed at recent TBA Board meetings, as reflected in the meeting minutes. The TBA:

- is monitoring, with Community Board 6 and as part of the East Midtown Coalition for Sensible Development, plans for the Con Ed Waterside development and United Nations renovation project.
- is closely watching neighborhood construction sites for safety and other concerns.
- has joined with other neighborhood groups to demand stronger laws regarding newsrack placement on City sidewalks.
- has joined other neighborhood interests in opposing MTA’s planned utility building on East 50th Street, which has now been modified.
- continues to work to beautify the neighborhood through the TBA Tree Program and support of the Turtle Bay Tree Fund.
- has sponsored or supported neighborhood events, including the recent Children’s Fall Festival in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, and upcoming TBA Toy Drive and Party in December.
- produced a pocket guide and walking tour of Turtle Bay historical and architectural sites.

FROM TURTLE BAY TO THE WORLD

Two of the neighborhood’s best-known steakhouses – The Palm and Smith & Wollensky – are spreading Turtle Bay’s local character across the continent, as they open up new establishments from California to Mexico to Florida.

The Palm, which has been at 837 Second Avenue since 1926, recently opened its 31st Palm, this one in San Diego. And Smith & Wollensky at Third Avenue and 49th Street now has ten steakhouses in its network. Each of the new restaurants offers the same famous steak and seafood menu of the Turtle Bay originals. And at each, the owners have painstakingly replicated the look and feel of the Turtle Bay “patriarchs”: The Palms all have the traditional caricatures on the walls, and the Smith & Wollenskys sport the familiar green and white exterior that has made its Third Avenue building a neighborhood landmark.

THE PALM

Celebrating its 80th birthday this year, the original Palm was opened by two Italian immigrants from Parma, John Ganzi and Pio Bozzi. Operated as a speakeasy during Prohibition, Ganzi and Bozzi intended to call their restaurant Parma for their hometown. But, the story goes, when they applied for a liquor license after Prohibition ended, the state agent mistakenly used “Palm” on the application form and so, Palm it has remained.

The 837 Second Avenue establishment was the sole Palm until 1972, when then-U.N. Ambassador George Bush – a frequent Palm diner – persuaded the owners to open in Washington, D. C. In 1973, a New York City annex – Palm Too – was added, directly across Second Avenue from the original.

Then came Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, San Juan and Mexico City. In 1999, a third Palm opened in New York, on the West Side. The Palms



Al Serpagli, manager of the Palm, with the restaurant’s newest wall of caricatures drawn by King Feature cartoonists in celebration of the Palm’s 80th anniversary this year.

now number 31, with plans for more, including a London location. At each new site, the walls are painted with local notables and frequent diners, a custom that goes back to the 1920s.

Remarkably, through all the success and expansion, The Palm has remained in the same family. The current co-owners, Wally Ganzi and Bruce Bozzi, are grandsons of the first owners. And the fourth generation is now working at The Palm.

The Turtle Bay Palms are managed by two long-time Palm veterans. Al Serpagli started as a busboy in 1972, and now manages the original Palm; Gus Lusardi, once a waiter at Palm, is in charge at Palm Too.

“It’s true that Palm is expanding across the globe,” says Al, “but we don’t forget our roots right here in Turtle Bay. Turtle Bay has been a wonderful location for us through the years. This is truly home.”

SMITH & WOLLENSKY

A few blocks uptown, Smith & Wollensky opened in 1977 – in the same building that had been Manny Wolf’s steakhouse since 1934. In the late 1990s, Smith & Wollensky expanded to Miami Beach and now has ten restaurants across the country. Unlike the family-owned Palm, Smith & Wollensky is part of a publicly-traded group, comprising the steakhouses and five other restaurants. (A New Orleans Smith & Wollensky was badly flooded during last year’s Hurricane Katrina and there are no plans to reopen.)



Tommy Hart, manager of Smith & Wollensky since its opening.

At each Smith & Wollensky, the signature green and white exterior houses the same look of the Third Avenue restaurant – hardwood floors, polished brass and authentic Americana folk art. And like the Turtle Bay flagship, each steakhouse has an outdoor dining area, and most have an adjacent Wollensky’s Grill, with a lower-priced menu in a less formal setting.

Tommy Hart, General Manager of the New York steakhouse, has worked there since it opened. “Those of us who have been here from the start are all very proud that we helped to create a brand that means quality around the country,” he says. He’s also proud to point out that the New York establishment is the highest grossing of all its sister-steakhouses.

CEO and Founder Alan Stillman – a long-time supporter of the TBA and its efforts – plans further expansion, particularly the Wollensky’s Grill concept, but the company is “mum” on where that might be.

Meanwhile, don’t spend too much time wondering about those fellows, Smith & Wollensky. It seems the names were picked randomly from Manhattan residents in the New York telephone directory. (And we don’t even know if they lived in Turtle Bay!)

Cervantes Institute. “The Secret Life of Salvador Dali,” drawings of the famous master, most in India ink on paper. Through Jan. 20. Free. Gallery hours: 12:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Tuesday to Friday; 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sunday-Monday. 211-215 East 49th Street. Information: 212-308-7720; www.cervantes.org.

Japan Society. Guest lectures on contemporary Japanese ceramics, Thursday, Nov. 30 and Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. Tickets, \$10, \$5 seniors. Japanese New Year’s Day celebration with lion dancing, drumming and children’s activities, Sunday, Jan. 14. \$15 per family. For

tickets, call Box Office at 212-715-1258. Information: www.japansociety.org.

Trygve Lie Gallery. “Wrought-in-Iron,” exhibit of sculpture inspired by the sea – in iron, glass, steel and stone – by Norwegian artists Jan and Camilla Warholm. Nov. 30-Jan. 7. Free. Monday-Thursday, noon to 7 p.m.; Friday-Sunday, 1 p.m.-5 p.m. 317 East 52nd Street. 212-319-0370; www.trygveliegallery.com.

St. Barts Players. “It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play” by Joe Landry, Dec. 11, 12, 13, at 7:30 p.m. at Park Avenue and 50th Street. Call Box Office, 212-378-0248, for tickets (\$15);

visit www.members.aol.com/bartsweb for more information.

Turtle Bay Music School. “Holiday Party and Singing,” Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:00 p.m. Join the school’s community chorus in singing holiday favorites. Snacks and beverages beforehand. Free. 244 East 52nd Street. 212-753-8811; www.tbms.org.

Music at St. Peter’s. Classical concerts by visiting artists, each Tuesday at 8 p.m. Admission: donation at the door. (no performance Dec. 26) Jazz each Wednesday, at 1 p.m. Admission: \$5. Lexington Avenue and 54th Street. Check www.saintpeters.org for details, or call 212-935-2200.

- compiled by Rita Rowan

Closing of Medicare Help Center Protested

Turtle Bay’s elected officials are protesting the closing of the only walk-in Medicare help center in the metropolitan area. Federal funding for the center, located in Turtle Bay at 800 Second Avenue, has been eliminated and seniors are being asked to use the Internet or call 1-800-633-4227 instead. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, State Senator Liz Krueger, Assemblyman Jonathon Bing and Councilman Dan Garodnick joined in protesting the closing at a press conference in early November in front of the former center.



Bill Curtis, president of the Turtle Bay Association, accepted an award from Deputy Inspector John Wallace, commanding officer of the 17th Precinct, for the TBA’s “continuing and invaluable” support of the Precinct through the years.

More Music at the Music School

The Turtle Bay Music School plans an ambitious program of free music concerts, workshops and special events in the coming months, thanks to a recent grant from the New York State Music Fund.

The \$55,000 grant will be used for a wide variety of free events, called “Hear and Now: The Music and Musicians of our Community.” Included will be a free community chorus each Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., a special holiday event on December 13 (see Turtle Bay Happenings, above), a chamber music festival in the spring, as well as an opera performance and lecture based on the Tom Stoppard play, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.”

Jennifer Sherwood, TBMS Executive Director, says the schedule is still being finalized, and neighbors should check the

“Calendar” page of the school’s Web site, www.tbms.org, or call 212-753-8811, for latest program information.

The New York State Music Fund was set up by the New York State Attorney General’s office from settlements with major recording companies investigated for violating laws against payola. The 2006 grants, awarded to nonprofit music establishments statewide, including TBMS, were the first to be issued under the fund and must be used during the 12-month period in which they are awarded.

“This grant gives us a marvelous opportunity to provide quality music to the community, and at the same time to give accomplished musicians a new venue to perform,” says Ms. Sherwood.

Yes, I want to join the Turtle Bay Association and help support our community’s quality of life.



Annual Membership Dues

- Senior \$10
- Business \$40
- Individual \$25
- Benefactor \$100
- Family \$30
- Pacesetter \$250

Name _____

Address _____ Apt _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail _____

- I would like to become more involved in TBA activities.

Please make your check payable to Turtle Bay Association.

Mail to: Turtle Bay Association, 224 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017