

WEST MIDWOOD NEWS

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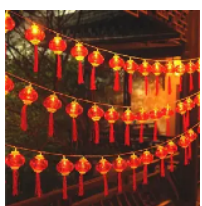
December 2024



There's a Lot to be Thankful for in West Midwood

In these darkest days of the year, in what often seems a very dark time for the world, it's important to look for the light. All the traditions in our very diverse neighborhood light holiday candles to help banish the darkness. We in West Midwood have many sparkling bits of light in our lives: our connections with neighbors, the decorations on our houses, our neighbors' advice on everything from where to get our car inspected, find a good dentist, or get the best bagel, to our annual online discussions of cats and possums, or an alert that someone left on their car lights. We try to look out for each other.

Happy Holidays, West Midwood.



City of Yes: Update on the Proposal *by Joe Enright*

As we went to press, half of Victorian Flatbush was exhaling with relief while the other half was still holding its breath. West Midwood found itself among the fortunate neighborhoods that dodged the most onerous provision of the gargantuan City of Yes rezoning proposed by the Mayor. The news arrived like a thunderbolt on November 21st when the City Council's Land Use Committee approved modifications that exempted all neighborhoods in the City zoned R1 (Prospect Park South, Ditmas Park, Midwood Park, Fiske Terrace) and R2 (West Midwood) from "Transit Oriented Development." That provision would have allowed multiple dwellings on almost 30 of West Midwood's 210 lots.

However, Ditmas Park West, South Midwood, Beverly Square West, and Caton Park were not exempted, because they are all zoned R3X. Residents there were still hopeful for a last-minute tweak of the text, much like the one that deleted all of Victorian Flatbush from an unwanted doubling of our Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Accessory Dwelling Units survived, but with these modifications: new backyard ADUs were disallowed in historic districts; they can only be one story high, covering no more than 33% of the rear yard; and only owner-occupied houses could create an ADU.

West Midwood's Kirsti Jutila played a key role in advocating the changes desired by Victorian Flatbush to

the City Council's Land Use Committee, which seemed receptive to the argument that our residential streets sit like islands in a sea of higher density multiple dwellings. The "little more housing everywhere" mantra of City of

Yes didn't make sense when "much more housing proliferating all around us" had already happened and seemed likely to continue for years, so why not preserve our historical enclave?

The full Council will vote December 5th on the modified City of Yes package, and it seems likely it will pass and be signed into law by the Mayor shortly thereafter.

Throughout this process, which began in late April when the massive citywide rezoning was first unveiled, Victorian Flatbush was fortunate to have many talented residents arguing its case and hundreds of its citizens voicing their concerns in letters and emails to our Community Board, the City Planning Commission, Council Members, and City Council staff. We even managed to generate a couple of Op-Eds. Many of us also donated funds to hire a lobbyist so as to assure that our concerns would be transmitted to all the decision makers along the way.

We didn't get everything we wanted, but in West Midwood, we got enough to stave off non-affordable, non-contextual development disguised as progress.

Concern: The Proposed Transit Oriented Development geography does not match actual commuting patterns of public transit users and does not align with the distinction between single and multi-family districts

Modifications:

- Exclude all R1 and R2 single-family districts from TOD eligibility

*NYC Council: No Apartment Buildings Here!
(We are R2)*



WMCA Board meeting with officers from the 70th Precinct in November

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West Midwood News

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Editor: Tori Rosen

Copy Editors: Eric Ost and Harriet Rhine

WMCA Board Message Winter 2024



Community Safety Update: Addressing Incidents in West Midwood

In recent months, residents of West Midwood have reported incidents involving door-kicking and fireworks. In response, the West Midwood board has taken several steps to address these concerns with the 70th Precinct.

Meetings with the 70th Precinct

August & October: We (as well as other community members) met with 70th Precinct staff in August and attended their Community Council meeting in October to raise concerns about delayed or inadequate police responses, the need for increased patrols, and related issues.

November 13th: The board hosted another meeting with 70th Precinct officers, including Sgt. Velez, who oversees our area. While the XO could not attend, valuable discussions took place.

Key Points from the November Meeting

— **Acknowledgment of Challenges:** Officers acknowledged that police responses could be improved. Understaffing and budget cuts have significantly impacted service levels, including the availability of our Neighborhood Coordination Officer (NCO). PO Zumair, is frequently reassigned to other duties.

— **Call Prioritization:** 911 prioritizes calls based on severity. For example, a firecracker incident will take lower priority compared to a robbery or stabbing. Understanding this helps set realistic expectations.

— **NCO Program Adjustments:** Due to budget constraints, the NCO program in our area has been temporarily reduced. However, Build the Block meetings will continue, and evening patrols in West Midwood have increased.

— **Direct Communication:** The board has been invited to report significant developments directly to precinct leadership.

How Residents Can Help

1. Report Incidents Immediately

— Call 911 immediately if you witness an incident, even if unsure. Dispatchers will direct you to 311 if necessary.

— Avoid delayed reporting (e.g., the next day) and ensure reports are specific and accurate.

— Overstating incidents can hurt the credibility of our community's concerns.

2. Be Specific in Descriptions

— For fireworks, describe incidents as firecrackers being thrown "at a residence" rather than "in the street."

— For door-kicking, report it as an attempted break-in to ensure it is treated with the appropriate seriousness.

— **Tip of the evening:** get a perpetrator's shoe details in the event of a crime. Kids tend to wear the same shoes for periods of time vs. taking off a hat, jacket or hoodie.

3. Notify the West Midwood Board

— After reporting, inform the board of the incident and the date/time of your report.

— Contact Eric Goldberg at goldbergeric@yahoo.com or Linda Howell at lhpt49@gmail.com.

A Collaborative Effort

By promptly and accurately reporting incidents and keeping the board informed, we can help the officers at the 70th Precinct better assist our community. Thank you for your continued vigilance and cooperation.



I love making cut-out cookies around the holidays. And as Caleb has gotten older, he has also come to enjoy both the cutting out and the decorating. Unsurprisingly, he favors transportation-themed cookie cutters and lots of sprinkles. I can only imagine Ethan will want in on the action this year!

I am sharing two cookie recipes here, both of which I use around this time of year. Though I have been known to use my mom's recipe to make cut-out cookies for Valentine's Day, Easter and even just for fun throughout the year. Melissa Clark's Sparkly Gingerbread recipe from the New York Times makes a delightfully spicy cookie that balances out the icing, and I also really like the New York Times royal icing recipe. It's unfussy and doubles easily if you're making a lot of cookies (we always do).

Allison Muller's Cut Out Cookies

½ cup sour cream
½ cup butter, softened
1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp soda
1 cup sugar
1 egg
Pinch of salt
about 3-1/2 cups flour

1. Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and egg.
2. Mix the baking soda and pinch of salt into the flour. Add flour and sour cream to dough, alternating wet and dry ingredients. Mix until just combined.
3. Scrape dough out onto a piece of plastic wrap, wrapping into a flat disk. Refrigerate for a few hours or up to a few days. This dough also freezes very well.
4. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350°F. Roll out dough and use cookie cutters to cut out desired shapes. Bake cookies for 6-8 minutes.
(Allidah note: I usually double this recipe.)



Melissa Clark's Sparkly Gingerbread

Yield: makes about 12 dozen cookies, depending on size

3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling the dough

1 tsp baking soda

¼ tsp fine sea salt

2 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp ground cardamom

½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg

¼ tsp ground cloves

¾ cup dark brown sugar

¾ cup unsalted butter at room temperature

1 large egg

½ cup light molasses

1 tsp finely grated fresh ginger

Nonstick cooking spray (optional)

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt, and spices. Using an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or

hand-held electric beaters, beat brown sugar and butter on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2-3 minutes. Add egg, molasses and fresh ginger, and mix until well combined.

2. Reduce speed to low and gradually add dry ingredients. Mix until just incorporated.

3. Divide dough in half and scrape onto two pieces of plastic wrap, wrapping each piece separately into a flat disk. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or up to 5 days. (This dough also freezes well.)

4. When ready to bake, heat the oven to 350°F. Use parchment paper or nonstick

liners to line 3 baking sheets, or lightly grease them with nonstick cooking spray.

5. On a clean, lightly floured work surface, roll one disk of dough ⅛-inch thick. Using cookie cutters, cut out all the dough. With a small metal spatula, place the gingerbread cut-outs onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 1 inch between cookies. Repeat with remaining dough. You can reroll the scraps once. Collect them, smush them together into a dish and chill

before rerolling again. (*Allidah note:* this makes a lot of cookies! You'll probably need to divide 1 disk over 2-3 cookie sheets, and then roll out the the second disk a bit later.)

6. Bake small cookies for 8-12 minutes and larger ones for 10-15 minutes, or until cookies are firm to the touch and their edges are slightly darker in color. Rotate cookie sheets halfway through for even baking.
7. Let cookies cool on baking sheets until firm enough to lift, about 5



minutes. Using a metal spatula, transfer cookies to wire rack to cool completely before decorating.

8. To decorate, thin the royal icing with water until it's a thick as heavy cream (thinner than you'd use for piping). Divide it into small bowls (or a muffin tin), and use food coloring to tint it different colors. Use a brush to paint cookies with icing, and if you'd like, use toothpicks to apply more icing to make patterns. Sprinkle with colored sugar or other decorations, if you'd like, while the icing is still wet. Put the decorated cookies on baking sheets to set (about 2 hours), then move them to tins or other airtight containers with parchment between layers.

Note: If stored in an air-tight container, these cookies will keep for up to 2 weeks.



NYTimes Royal Icing

Yield: enough for about 4 dozen cookies

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar
3 large egg whites
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cream of tartar
Pinch kosher salt
Food coloring, as needed

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine the sugar, egg whites, cream of tartar and salt. Whisk until stiff and glossy.
2. To tint the frosting, divide into small bowls or a muffin tin. Cover the ones you aren't using with plastic wrap; the frosting dries out quickly. Use a spatula to stir in desired food coloring. If you need to use a tiny amount of water to thin out the icing so it spreads more easily, you can. Just go sparingly!

Note: leftover frosting can be stored in the fridge in an airtight container. To prevent drying out, press plastic wrap to the surface before closing the lid to the container. Allow to come to room temperature before using again.

(*Allidah note:* a friend introduced me to the idea of using little plastic squeeze bottles to pipe the icing onto the cookies, and we like to do that instead. For this icing process, you want the icing a little thicker than the "heavy cream"

consistency that Melissa Clark recommends. I also like to use gel food coloring, because the colors are more vibrant. I also find the amount of liquid food coloring you need to achieve really bright colors can throw off the consistency of the icing.)



Holiday cookies baked and decorated by Meade Gelston. (Full disclosure: She is the editor's very talented sister.)

On a warm eve of Halloween night, a dozen West Midwood citizens, led by WMCA President Eric Goldberg, descended on the monthly meeting of the 70 Precinct Community Council, hosted by Flatbush old timer Ed Powell, to express their concerns. These included: cherry bombs being tossed on porches by packs of disorderly young men, causing great alarm in the midst of a regional drought; front doors kicked in while being filmed for social media postings, resulting in hundreds of dollars of damage to homeowners; widespread graffiti defacement of stanchions; long response times to 911 calls; and lack of enforcement of parking violations which in one instance on Westminster Road, blocked all traffic, including emergency vehicles, for hours.

In addition, both West Midwood and Ditmas Park West complained of Newkirk Plaza disorder and the unavailability of Neighborhood Coordination Officers. South Midwood meanwhile expressed exasperation with no response to dozens of documented incidents involving a single motorbike

operator, and a Beverly Road resident east of the Q train noted a drug bazaar had suddenly sprouted up there.

In the absence of the Precinct's Commanding

Officer, Gregory Mackie, his Executive Officer Captain Darryl Smallwood, a 19 year veteran of eight different Brooklyn commands, responded to the complaints: "I hear you. And I'm going to follow up with meetings with you and we'll see how we can improve things here." Captain Smallwood also reported that an officer would be returning to a permanent post in the Plaza, and that the Traffic Bureau would be alerted to the Westminster Road condition. Finally, West Midwood expressed gratitude to Detective Scott Nuzzi for always ensuring the Halloween Parade got full protection.

In the weeks that followed, an increase of police patrols in our area was noticed and a follow-up meeting was held with Precinct representatives and the WMCA Board, hosted by Warren & Samantha Bloom at which more information on the community's complaints was provided. As always, a group of unruly or rowdy teens, trespass, attempted thefts, mischief against property (e.g., graffiti, fireworks) should be a 911 call. Response may not be immediate but crucial

for allocating resources.

Hopefully, the crime wave will continue to wane.



Captain Smallwood at the October meeting.

Alternate Side Parking Calendar

Feast of Immaculate Conception

Monday, December 9

Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 25

New Year's Day

Wednesday, January 1

Three Kings' Day

Monday, January 6

Martin Luther King Day

Monday, January 20

Lunar New Year's Eve

Tuesday, January 28

Lunar New Year

Wednesday, January 29

Lincoln's Birthday

Tuesday, February 12

Presidents' Day

Monday, February 17



What Is West Midwood Online?

Want to ask folks in the neighborhood whether they have any recommendations for a plumber or roofer or such? Or maybe what local eateries or merchants they like? Perhaps you'd like to be in the know about issues affecting our area? Then join the West Midwood Online email discussion group, aka The Listserv.

Send an email to joe@enright.com with your street address, name, and the email address that you want to use to post and receive messages. He will add you to the group and send you the simple instructions. There are presently over 200 email subscribers representing about 125 households.

To join you must be a permanent resident of West Midwood and agree not to post messages of a religious, political, or spam nature. Insulting or crude language can also lead to revocation of the ability to post. Finally, new and existing members can also request a daily recap containing all of the activity within the previous 24 hours, rather than receive messages as they occur.

Hello All, and Happy Thanksgiving Season. After a hiatus for the last issue of West Midwood News, I am back to continue the conversation about windows. In my last installment, I gave an overview of why the typical original window type in our neighborhood is called double-hung, and how traditional operable windows can be thought about as machines—machines with tried-and-true technology that’s been with us for hundreds of years.

I also explained why the typical windows you see in the neighborhood, especially if they are original, are called One-Over-One (or 1/1 in historian’s shorthand). I’ll continue the topic here with some discussion of storm windows, energy efficiency, and some options on the market. My next column will delve into personal experience restoring and retrofitting historic wood windows, as well as types of new windows on the market.

First, storm windows. What are they? Storm windows are loosely defined as an additional window layer that can be mounted inside or outside the primary window unit, either permanently or put in place each winter. Because glass material has very poor thermal resistance, storm windows provide the benefit of creating a buffer air space that reduces opportunities for heat loss, condensation, and infiltration (better known as “drafts”).

Before double-glazing became prevalent in the second half of the 20th century, storm windows were a key part of window assemblies, although they are falling out of fashion today. Conventional wisdom has it that traditional windows can never hold up to the energy efficiency of double-glazed factory products, but this is not accurate. A well-maintained historic window with appropriate storm and weatherstripping *can hold its own* against a brand-new factory window.

In the Northeast U.S., exterior storm windows go back as early as 18th century and became common in the 19th century. These were typically a fixed painted wood sash of one or more lites, hung on hooks, and latched at the bottom to the sill on the house. These storm windows hung in plane with the outer window casing.

Our West Midwood House, and probably yours, had storms like these. Until recently, it was a ritual for homeowners to install these heavy items from a ladder each autumn, and trade them out each spring for screen sashes. Each storm window was inscribed with a number that corresponded to a location on the house, since each was sized to fit. As you can imagine, it was a big task.

Only one remained on our house when we purchased it: over the stained glass window on the stair landing. We looked into what it would take to create all new traditional wood storm windows, but one of our challenges is that with 100 years of settlement, not a single window opening is square. Fitting custom wood storm windows to each opening would be a lot of labor. Let me know if you know someone willing to do this work for a reasonable price!

It’s not surprising that a mass-market alternative became available in the postwar era: aluminum “triple-track” storm windows. “Triple track” because of their configuration, they have an outer fixed frame with three “tracks” available for sliding sashes. Two sashes are glass, and one has a screen, easily converting between summer and winter configurations without the owner having to get on a ladder or store things in their garage.

Triple-track storms perform an important energy benefit for single-glazed windows, and they are cheaper to acquire and install and much more convenient to operate than wood storm windows. But I must confess aluminum triple-track storms do not set my heart aflutter. They sit awkwardly off the house and do not blend in. But they get the job done and thankfully come in many colors today, so you have a chance of reasonably approximating the color of your window trim.

Also available today and worth considering are interior storm windows and interior window inserts. A bit of background: all the windows on the first floor of our house are still the original double-hung windows with single-pane glazing, and we have window inserts on all of them from [Indow Window](#) in Portland, Oregon. The inserts are custom-shaped acrylic panels with no divisions and a friction-fit gasketed edge that comes in three colors (white, black, and brown). You measure the interior openings yourself including the two diagonals, feed the data into Indow’s measuring algorithm, and it somehow works out the exact shape you need (again, not a single opening is rectangular!).

I store the Indow inserts in the basement during the summer; thankfully they are much lighter than wood storms would be. Interior storms and inserts allow you to retain the crisp look of a historic double-hung window on the exterior. While a bit of labor is involved to take the inserts out when you want to open the window or just clean, we have been happy with them overall. They also do a good job reducing noise transmission.

Storm Windows



Welcome Home!! *An essay by Eileen Brennan, Ph.D.*

As an Elder here in West Midwood I wish all our neighbors, most especially our new families, the 'Gift of Home'. Journeys across the States, service around the globe, always ended with the Blessing of returning and hearing "Welcome Home."

Our home was always well groomed and breathed our personalities. My dad climbed those really tall ladders to paint our house, and for years lent those ladders to other dads who were undertaking their own painting jobs. On Saturdays, my mom taught me the satisfaction of clean windows. But more, she brought me flower bulbs, helped me to till the soil, and shared the joy of gardening. Always, she staged my humble blooms as centerpieces for Sunday dinners.

College expanded my confidence in home. Between my junior and senior year, five classmates spent the summer with us. We were volunteers at "Summer in the City," creating academic and artistic experiences for children in the Westside projects. Every morning, before she went to work, my mother filled six lunch paper bags. On Sundays, we added the kitchen table to the dining room table to welcome other volunteers to dinner. If you were living with us and got a kick under the table, it meant "Don't take seconds" of what ever you were reaching for. If you got two kicks it meant "Don't take firsts."

I remember coming home from the interior of Brazil. It just felt so good. The hugs, the family, the food, everything just felt so good. Suddenly, guilt became

overwhelming. I had started walking barefoot on our living room Persian rug. My toes melted into its luscious texture; unexpectedly the recent memories of dirt floors, cement floors flooded in: how could I have genuinely cared about those I left when I chose to come home?

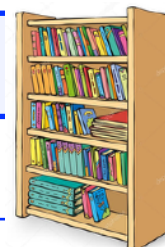
The years passed, West Midwood became home to a new generation, and blessed memories were created. Big Wheels, bikes, in-line skates were mastered, a kindness of living near the dead-end. Games were played with great energy. Our three boys lived so many hours outside our home. They travelled to school with the Moylans, and were teammates with the McCormicks and the Boyles. They hung with the Benjamins, and that is when another wonder-filled blessing expanded our home. Our boys asked if we could buy Kosher pretzel rods so that "we can share snacks with the Benjamins."

With our grandchildren, we frequently refer to their "Brooklyn Home." They love every freedom that the dead-end brings. The basketball is again heard bouncing in the driveway. The basement floor enjoys new shades of finger paints and oils. Magically a 'Marilyn' gift faithfully says to each child, "Welcome home."

Creating home is a life long journey, it takes hard work. It is an on-going, daily choice and has often come to define our quality of life here in West Midwood. Home, in reality, also includes the hunger for inclusion. Being human means there will be moments when we don't measure up. I yearn to hear one more time, "Welcome home. I have missed you."

West Midwood Bookshelf — *Joan Greenberg, librarian*

***Read any good books lately? Have a book recommendation for your neighbors?
Please send them to Joan Greenberg at joandaveyg@gmail.com.***



The White Ship by Earl Charles Spencer
Recommended by Laure Campbell-Lui

I have been reading a historical thriller called *The White Ship*. The author is Earl Charles Spencer, brother of the late Diana Spencer. The book describes the rising successes and challenges of William the Conqueror's youngest legitimate son, Henry I. It's quite the tale of sibling rivalry and political maneuvering. Spencer won accolades for this book, among others. Prior to this, I read his account of his childhood boarding school called, *A Very Private School*. That memoir was also compelling, mostly because of his attention to detail. He's a good read.



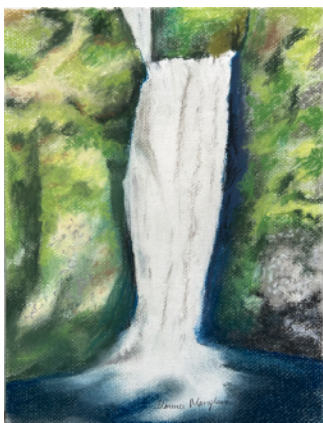
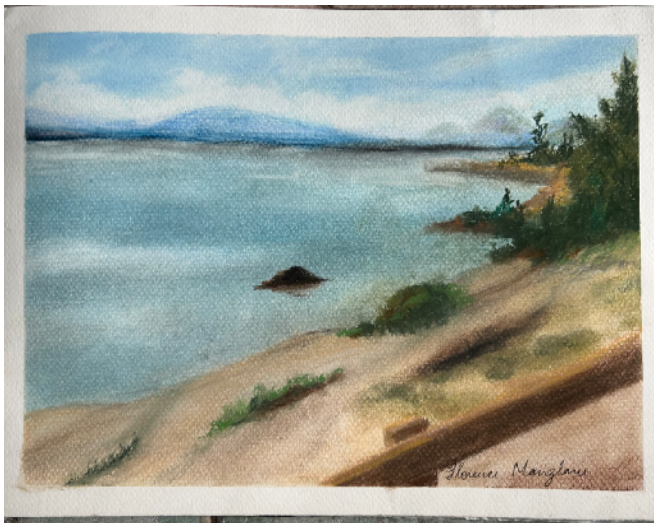
After Annie by Anna Quindlen
Recommended by Harriet Rhine

Annie, the mom of the family, has died. Annie's family members, the husband, the oldest daughter, and two younger siblings, and Annie's best friend, all try to cope and adapt. Annie's presence is still felt by all.

North Woods by Daniel Mason
Recommended by Andrea Freshman

This book will be one that neighbors will love since we all share the history of the houses we inhabit. A sweeping novel about a single house in the woods of New England, told through the lives of those who inhabit it across the centuries — "a time-spanning, genre-blurring work of storytelling magic" (*The Washington Post*) from the Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of *The Piano*.

Artist's Notebook *Florence Manglani*



Neighborhood News



'Tis the Season...

West Midwood's Tammy Tibbetts and her husband Michael Walters, perform as clowns in the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Here is Tammy with her pal Santa.

Newly Published Book by West Midwood's Darnell Newsom

West Midwood's Darnell Newsom has published her first book (a project that has been on her to-do list for a number of years). A collaboration by three co-authors, the book discusses the importance of developing parent and educator partnerships to benefit the education of young children with disabilities. The writers provide the perspectives of a parent, a special educator, and academicians on the complex journey that families and professionals face as they discover, evaluate, and collaborate when young children are noted to have different learning styles. While it is published as a textbook, it could be a meaningful read for anyone who is working to come up with an approach to best serve the learning needs of children. Feel free to get in touch with Darnell at darnell.newsom@gmail.com if you have any questions. Here's the link from the publisher: <https://bit.ly/41gmIuc> The book is also available on Amazon: <https://bit.ly/3B73EUu>



School News — P.S.217 *by Eric S. Ost*



Even if the weather (up until last week!!) felt like a bone dry, never-ending summer, school is fully in swing for the 815,000 students enrolled in NYC public schools, and the Thanksgiving Break is already right around the corner. How did that happen so fast??

One early holiday gift for all the students (and teachers!) has already arrived: Monday, December 23, which was slated to be the only school day of a 1-day school week before the vacation holidays, has been changed to a day off. The Mayor did a press conference with a Brooklyn 7th grader to announce the change, giving him and the 23,000 signatories of his online petition credit for pushing the decision over the line.

Way to go, Isaac Regnier from Bay Ridge! Mercifully, there will be 850,000 less Ferris Buellers to track down that Monday.

The other big school news in the neighborhood is a testament to civic engagement. Last year, a participatory budget request was circulated in West Midwood and to

the greater PS 217 school community to support technology improvements at the school. The laptops were nearly a decade old, and there weren't nearly enough of them for all the students at PS 217.

In September Council Member Farah Louis's office announced a \$450K grant for a new STEM Lab and technology upgrade as a result of the community support for this capital improvement. We got it!!!! Other District 45 and District 40 schools, including IS 240K Andries Hudde and Midwood High School secured critical grants to expand and upgrade educational infrastructure in their buildings, too. It's incredible news.

I'm happy to end this column in the spirit of Thanksgiving: grateful for all who voted, signed and added supportive comments on those participatory projects. The upgrades will make a huge difference for the children of our neighborhood for years to come. Thank you thank you thank you!

The Stories Your House Can Tell — 1435 Glenwood Road (Part I)

— By Joe Enright

In December 1898 the Germania Real Estate & Improvement Company bought 100 acres of woodland from the John Z. Lott Family, descendants of a Huguenot Dutchman who arrived in the mid-17th century and settled in the little village of Midwood (Midwout or “middle woods”) up near the Dutch Reformed Church, in what would become the town center of Flatbush (Vlackebos or “wooded plain”).

The huge tract that Germania bought extended from Flatbush to Coney Island Avenues along Foster Avenue and they called all of it “South Midwood” because Foster Avenue formed the southern town line of old Flatbush, and having wood in the name sounded better than bush. Indeed, the nearby train stop at Newkirk Avenue, then called Parkville, would be temporarily rebranded as “South Midwood” from 1903 to 1907. On the western end of this expanse, our area would be dubbed West South Midwood, mercifully shortened in the 1950s when the “South” was booted from our name.



Little appreciated today were the design decisions by Germania’s President, Henry Meyers, one of the four German Americans who operated the company. A Republican candidate for Mayor of Brooklyn defeated by the Democratic machine in 1891, Henry was a Williamsburg grocer before he turned to real estate and moved into a big house at 2509 Newkirk Avenue (long since demolished for a large apartment building).

Perhaps Meyers’ immersion in Flatbush social life impelled him to lay out the Flatbush Malls here not only as a bookend to the Albemarle Malls in Prospect Park South, but to outdo their scope: He extended them along Glenwood Road from Coney to Flatbush, separated only by the surface Brighton trolley line, and created other malls along East 17th Street and Avenue H. [Sadly, the malls along H and east of Bedford were lost to the automobile nazis, predecessors of today’s bicycle nazis.]



1903 Brighton Railroad, looking north from Foster.

Meyer also decided not to continue E. 15th St. (Marlborough Road) and E. 16th St. (once called Buckminster Road) into the woods south of Foster. That was bold, because since the 1875 creation of a street grid for

southern Kings County, developers were required to adhere to the lines drawn on that map. But Meyer had political clout. He realized that adhering to those map lines would have resulted in lots only 75 feet deep, leaving little room for front/back yards and sidewalks. Take a walk down the east side of Marlborough between Newkirk and Cortelyou – make sure you don’t bump into a light pole – and you’ll see what was avoided here. Instead, in September 1900 Meyer successfully petitioned the NYC Board of Public Improvements to “alter the map of the City of New York by the closing of East 15th and East 16th Streets from Foster Avenue to Avenue H and the laying out and grading of Dekoven Court, Waldorf Court, Wellington Court... and Irvington Place.”

These cul-de-sacs also served to increase visibility for the Brighton line, electrified in late 1899. The trains, one to three cars running on two tracks with headways of a half hour, were quite genteel compared to their noisy steam locomotive predecessors. It was a welcome feature of this suburban landscape, not a bug. But Henry failed to anticipate the momentous changes that would shortly ensue.

In 1900, the mighty Pennsylvania RR (think “Penn Station”) bought the Long Island RR and ramped up its freight revenue by floating rail barges from their continental terminal outside Jersey City to the rail dock at 65th Street in Bay Ridge. That meant many more freight trains rumbling across the LIRR’s 15 miles of Brooklyn tracks to destinations north and east. And with travel between Manhattan and the shore becoming faster and more convenient – in 1895 the Brighton line finally connected to cars over the Brooklyn Bridge – the trolleys ran



1906: 31 Dekoven Court(L) and Corbin Sales Schack

The Stories Your House Could Tell *Continued*

more frequently, stopping for yet more grade crossings, not to mention the accidents and fatalities.

And so, as development expanded, delays mounted. There were about two dozen grade crossings from Albemarle Road to Brighton Beach but for the Penn RR there were more than 50 on its Bay Ridge and Manhattan Beach spurs. They were the major catalyst for the State Legislature's creation of the Brooklyn Grade Crossing Commission in 1903.

There were only two ways to eliminate the crossings: go high or go low. The Brighton line, owned by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (BRT), which controlled most of the borough's rail lines, wanted to build an elevated structure through Victorian Flatbush, all the way to the sea – the cheapest solution. Imagine today's Culver line on McDonald Avenue with trains above and traffic below. Yikes! The aroused citizenry of Ditmas Park, the Beverley Squares and Prospect Park South all said: EL NO!

Fortunately, the Commission was headed by a Flatbush resident who negotiated a compromise: landowners abutting the railroad would give up two feet of their surface property (and a few more feet below ground) to allow concave retaining walls, and the depressed track bed would be expanded to insert two middle express tracks, with the catenary wires and poles removed in favor of electrified third rails.

The dig began in August 1904 on the Penn tracks, but the BRT didn't start its 15-foot-deep excavation until December 1905. By that time, most of the houses in West Midwood had been built but the ones alongside the railroad were started and finished last. A glimpse of the photos taken by the BRT to document the work of contractors would explain why: it was an absolute noisy, dirty mess until the Fall of 1907 when the bulk of the activity was concentrated in creating new station houses and the embankments south of Avenue H.

It's hard to believe, but to maintain its revenue stream for stockholders, the BRT continued to operate its rail line during the entire three-year project. While construction took place on the west side, trains would run on the east side, and vice versa. Thus, tracks were constantly being moved on the temporary surface level to accommodate construction and residents complained they were so close, they could have conversations out their windows with the riders. This general bedlam accounts for why the houses along the tracks were also the last to sell.

And where did the Brighton dig begin? On the west side of Glenwood Road, right where the Finkel Family has lived since 1979.

(Look for Part II in the March issue of West Midwood News)

Halloween 2024!



Photos by Sarah Rosen and Tori Rosen

Who You Gonna Call?

When you need help, it's important to call the right number. Here's a list of useful phone numbers with an explanation of when to call which number. It's not a bad idea to cut out this list and stick in on your refrigerator or by your phone.



911—The number to call for emergencies, such as fire, medical emergencies, accidents of any type, a crime in progress, violent behavior, or a person in trouble. Remember to stay on the line until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up. The operator will also ask you your location, so note the nearest house number and street address.

311 — Call this number for non-emergencies such as noise complaints, animal control, air quality, blocked driveway, dangerous tree situation, or to find out where to get other information. For a complete list, see www.nyc.gov/311.

988 — Call this number for mental health crises or suicide prevention. For more information about this service, here is a link: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/07/15/1111316589/988-suicide-hotline-number>

If you're unsure, call 911. The operator will either take your information or redirect you to 311. Remember to get a complaint number and write it down.

Air Quality As summer, this is a frequent concern. For up to date info on our AQI (Air Quality Index), you can go to <https://www.airnow.gov/?city=New%20York&state=NY&country=USA>

Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs):

Noah Elrowmeim

noah.elrowmeim@nypd.org, 917-679-4587

Mohammad Zubair

mohammad.zubair@nypd.org

The NCOs are usually on duty Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon to 6:30 p.m. (Sometimes they are unavailable because they have been pulled for training or special duty.) Former West Midwood president Linda Howell reports that she relies on the NCOs for quality-of-life issues, especially situations “where I do not have complete details, only secondhand reports of events. I feel comfortable giving them as much information as I can and asking them to check into the potential problem.” Examples include gatherings at the dead ends, abandoned cars, chronic parking violations, and patterns of package theft from porches. You can also contact them if you feel a 911 or 311 call was not handled correctly. Note that while they will make every effort to assist, they may also be handling other more time-critical issues.

Community Board 14 (CB14), 718-859-6357

info@cb14brooklyn.com

This office and its staff are a valuable resource that can be contacted for a myriad of situations. Call them to find out the status of a 311 complaint, why your recycling wasn't picked up, how you can get a tree planted in front of your home or a dead one removed, or what's going on with construction (or lack of it) at a specific location. They can also help you get in touch with the local representative for a specific city agency. This is by no means a complete list. If you're unsure of how to handle an issue, call them and ask. They are there to help.

Neighbors' Businesses and Services

To add, cancel, or update a listing, contact [Tori Rosen at editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com](mailto:Tori.Rosen@WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com)

Education and Lessons

Sarah Rosen Tutoring On-line sessions in English (writing composition, reading comprehension), Biology, Social Studies. All levels from high school through college. Sarah Rosen is a published writer, with advanced degrees in natural and social science, and is currently a visiting Assistant Professor at Seton Hall University. Contact sarahmayarosen@gmail.com.

Danielle Buonaiuto Private voice lessons for high-school age and adult students in classical, musical theatre, and pop styles. Master of Music from Peabody Conservatory, and 10+ years' teaching experience. danielle.buonaiuto@gmail.com.

Rob Garcia Drum lessons. I've been teaching private lessons to students of all ages for the past 25 years and have a well-equipped teaching studio at my home. More info www.robgarciamusic.com; Contact: robjgarcia@hotmail.com; 917-273-7875

Udi Hazan Private table tennis and archery lessons. Certified coach—level 1 in ping pong and level 2 in recurve bow archery. 718-859-8432.

Laura Campbell-Lui Literacy Tutor ELA help for reading strategies. Phonics/decoding help for kindergarten-grade 4. Spelling help with common rules and word root hints. Grammar help with punctuation, capitalization and conjugating. Writing help with sentence construction. New York State-certified Reading Specialist and retired Elementary School Teacher. Licensed in Reading, Common Branches and Early Childhood Education. 30 Years of teaching experience. Email Laura at literacytutor@aol.com

Julian Rhine Guitar lessons; SAT, SHSAT, and Regents tutoring. BA in music and English from Vanderbilt University. 917-981-0675; julian.m.rhine@gmail.com

Amy Rowe Tutoring and Medicare advising. Tutoring for young people and adults in math, reading, writing, other academic subjects, and test prep, including SAT, Regents, and SHSAT. Advising on Medicare coverage and enrollment. Professional experience in writing, editing, research, and education helps me make complex topics clear. amyrowe.nyc@gmail.com, 917-723-0348

Melissa Scott Ceramics Hand-made pottery and workshops/private instruction at Kettle and Kame Clay studio. Contact Melissa 718-781-6509 Kettleandkame.com

Jeannine Umrigar Collectiv3 Fashion Portfolio Lab. Individual mentorships for students to build fashion and art portfolios for college entrance and beyond. For more information see our website: www.collectiv3.nyc.

David Wechsler Flute

lessons. Many years of teaching at all levels from beginner to professional. Currently Principal Flute Queens Symphony and Music Director of The OMNI Ensemble. Long-time member of Brooklyn Philharmonic and many other groups in the NYC area, including Broadway, recordings, symphony, opera, ballet orchestras, and chamber music. 347-528-6318; davewechs@earthlink.net.

Food

John DeLamar - Bakery Do you need a cake for a special celebration? Cupcakes for a kid's party? Challah for the holidays? I have you covered for all things sweet and savory. Baked with love and backed locally, visit littlebakerbaker.com for photos and info. Reach out to hello@littlebakerbaker.com

General Help

Anthony Finkle —DPH Property Maintenance Service DPH offers professional, reliable, and friendly service at reasonable rates for any and all residential and commercial needs - no matter how large or small. Let our team of skilled professionals help you tame your to-do list, so you can spend more time enjoying your home and not just maintaining it! We are here to help you! - Free estimates are always offered. www.DPH.nyc 347-228-2625

Health and Mental Health

Laura Campbell-Lui Shaklee Distributor household cleaning products; nutritional skin care; nutritional supplement products; appointments available. 917-767-3579; lauracui@yahoo.com.

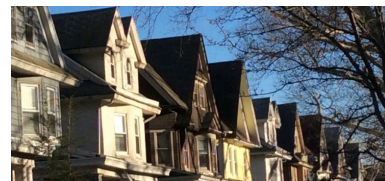
Jan Castro. De-stress with Swedish massage or Thai body work. Safe, clean, open space. I've had 3 vaccine shots. Credentials & references on request. 60–120 minute sessions, reasonable rates. Phone 314-323-9060.

Andrea Freshman, LCSW Specialty: trauma healing with emphasis on integrating the mind-body connection 718-755-1590.

Sara Hochman Nutritionist, MS, RD, CDN. Registered Dietitian specializing in chronic disease management and weight loss, nutrition therapy for all ages. Reasonable rates, in-person or televisit appointments. Sarahoch780@gmail.com

Pet Sitting

Nell Mendlinger and Lauren Sullivan, Owners, Abby on Argyle Pet Sitting & Dog Walking, LLC. Available 365 days a year for your pets. We have been in the neighborhood for 14+ years. Bonded and insured. Member of PetSitters International and an eco-friendly company. www.AbbyOnArgyle.com.



WEST MIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024 - 2025

Alvin Berk	735 Argyle Road	alvin_berk@verizon.net
Warren Bloom	1422 Glenwood Road	wjbloom@gmail.com
Laura Campbell Lui	1434 Glenwood Road	lauracui@yahoo.com
Marilyn Cuff	725 Rugby Road	artemis1947@hotmail.com
John DeLamar	765 Westminster Road	john.r.delamarjr@gmail.com
Jeffrey Ewing	776 Westminster Road	j.r.ewing@verizon.net
Jennifer Firestone	734 Rugby Road	firestonejl@gmail.com
Eric Goldberg	12 Waldorf Court	goldbergeric@yahoo.com
Linda Howell	815 E. 12th Street	lhpt49@gmail.com
Joseph Mislowack	1315 Glenwood Road	jmislowack@gmail.com
Jonathan Morrill	734 Rugby Road	morrillje@gmail.com
Dave Newman	37 Dekoven Court	davenewman@optonline.net
Melanie Oser	639 Marlborough Road	moserps321@gmail.com
Maura Rose	730 Rugby Road	mrosenyc@gmail.com
Melissa Scott	784 Rugby Road	m.scottvideo@gmail.com
Robert Seidel	667 Argyle Road	robertseidel667@gmail.com
Aggie Smith	1430 Glenwood Road	aggiesmithnp@gmail.com
Virginia Waters	715 Argyle Road	vwaters715@aol.com

