HELICOPTER HELL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

tourists' demand.

The coalition blames the helicopter operators for aggressively marketing their service abroad.

"These people land in New York with these coupons for helicopter tours," said Bill Saffran. "If they didn't have the coupons, chances are they might be taking a carriage ride or a boat ride."

Interviewed at the East 34th Street Heliport last Sunday, Luc Geens, 49 — who bought his ticket in Belgium — said this was his third 'copter tour of New York City. This one, he said, was "for his daughter," who was accompanying him. Asked if people would condone such a racket over Brussels, he answered, "I don't think so. It's so close to where people live."

"Residents in Australia wouldn't put up with the noise," either, said Jacinta McDonald, 25, from Sydney, who, nonetheless, called the experience "fantastic."

When asked if such flights would be tolerated in Tokyo, Yuichi Koba, 23, just sucked his breath and shook his head. Another issue is noise and pollution complaints from residents and institutions near the East Side's two heliports. NYU Medical Center's Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine and NYU Hospital are right next to the 34th Street Heliport.

"They've got these giant Sikorsky's," said Martin Begun, associate dean and vice president of NYU Medical Center. "The noise is particularly bothersome for sick patients. There were fumes getting into our operating rooms. We've spent a fortune on [air] filters."

Erin McGrath, a spokesperson for the Animal Medical Center, near the East 60th Street commuter heliport, said employees have complained of asthma and nausea from helicopter fumes. The center has hired an engineer to investigate.

The consensus among East Siders seems to be that the heliports are not wanted.

"The position of Community Board 6 is find a more appropriate location," said Bill Oddo, CB 6 transportation committee chair, regarding the 34th Street Heliport. If the city's court appeal fails, it can close down the heliport — as both Oddo and Messinger — a mayoral hopeful — have suggested doing, if necessary. National Helicopter is currently operating without a permit on a month-to-month basis.

Regarding the 60th Street Heliport, Barry Schneider, co-chair of CB 8's transportation committee, said, "In the past, Community Board 8 has taken the position that this heliport should go away."

The future will likely see more tourist helicopter operations shifted to the downtown heliport and the West Side. On Feb. 7, EDC issued a request for proposals for redevelopment of Pier 76, at West 36th Street, as a heliport. Although there would be some relief in shifting the burden to the West Side, a recent feasibility study for a West Side heliport projected the number of sightseeing passengers would grow by over 250 percent by 2016. That means more — not less — whirring in the skies.

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MANHATTAN Spirit

UPPER WEST SIDE

Movement to Banish Choppers Gains Steam

After a wave of new complaints about noisy tourist helicopters thundering through the skies, a community board committee voted to banish the vehicles once and for all from the Upper West Side on Tuesday.

The vote, by Community Board 7's transportation committee, signifies West Siders' continued frustration with the whirlybirds even after a deal brokered by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger attempted to resolve the problem last fall.

Under the agreement with tourist helicopter companies and the Federal Aviation Administration, pilots stopped flying diagonally over mid-Manhattan, crossing straight over between 86th and 110th streets instead.

But now, residents to the north are up in arms.

"People are screaming about late night flights every 15 minutes," said Andrew Albert, co-chair of Board 7's transportation committee. "They can't stay in their apartments in peace."

Community Board 7 will vote on the resolution next month, and other boards are expected to take similar action, Albert said.

Representatives from Messinger and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani attended the Tuesday meeting. Spokespersons for the officials did not return calls.

Two weeks ago, residents from across the city met in a West 77th Street apartment to form the New York City Helicopter Noise Coalition, which also seeks to ban the copters. And the city is currently appealing a January court decision which limited its right to restrict flights out of the heliport on East 34th Street.

— *Michael Rothfeld*

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GREG SARGENT

CHOPPERS CHASTISED

Chopperphobia has spread to the Upper West Side.

At Community Board 7's meeting on Feb. 5, Upper West Side residents, echoing their East Side counterparts, complained that they were being tortured by the chop-chop-chop of tourist helicopters.

"It is intolerable. It is unbearable. It raises blood pressure. It causes insomnia," Upper West Side resident Joan Bonagura told the board. "In Peru, where they are holding hostages, the Government is torturing the terrorists by flying helicopters around the building."

The problem first arose last September, when a task force of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, responding to complaints about noise in the West 60's and 70's, struck a deal with helicopter operators to get them to cross Manhattan at 86th Street. The idea was to route choppers across Central Park, where just about no one lives.

But now, 86th Street resident Lorraine Heilweil told the board, a noise zone has been created above West 86th Street. "It's an endless, mind-numbing disturbance, and we're going crazy," Ms. Heilweil told the board.

"I can't think. I can't read. I can't write," said Ms. Bonagura. "Helicopter noise stifles creativity."

The complaints echo those heard in December by the East Side's Community Board 8, where residents of the East 60's griped that helicopters flying up the East River were straying over their rooftops. It's a problem the Borough President's office has been trying to solve for well over a year, and every new route seems to hold the promise of torment for someone, somewhere. Ms. Messinger's office is hosting a meeting of community representatives on Feb. 18 to discuss the issue.

Mark Keating and Mark Albright contributed to this report.

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EASTSIDE RESIDENT February 19 - February 25, 1997

Chopper Wars

Increasingly Strident Foes Demand An End To All Helicopter Flights

by Leo Jakobson

Residents fed up with scores or even hundreds of noisy helicopters buzzing their homes from early in the morning to late at night are beginning to take an increasingly militant stance toward the helicopter tourism industry.

Despite the fact that it was held at 10 a.m. on a work day, some 75 or so people showed up at the Feb. 18 meeting of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's Helicopter Task Force, many of them demanding that tourist flights over the city be eliminated outright and other non-essential flights be severely curtailed.

Joy Held, one of a dozen members of the newly formed Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, demanded those restrictions as well as the closing of the 34th Street and 60th Street heliports, both of which are on city-owned land.

"If the mayor thinks taking up two subway seats is a quality of life violation, he should try living in an apartment with 300 to 400 flights a day clattering past," said Held, to much applause.

The Helicopter Noise Coalition's somewhat strident and currently unlikely desire arises out of mounting frustrations with attempts to minimize the impact of these flights, which can come by hi-rise apartments on popular routes by every few minutes, opponents say.

To begin with, attempts by the city Economic Development Corporation to regulate the flight plans and numbers of flights, and eliminate the most noisy type of helicopters altogether, collapsed a few weeks ago when a federal court ruled that only the Federal Aviation Administration could impose flight restrictions of any kind on helicopters.

While the city is appealing that decision, many frustrated New Yorkers jumped at comments made by Messinger and Councilman Andrew Eristoff that the city could, and should, close the heliports if they lost the case on appeal. While the elected officials may have had an eye towards arm-twisting the relatively small number of helicopter operators into more voluntary restrictions like the current ones that —theoretically— keep the helicopters over the East and Hudson rivers except for a straight east-to-west crossing north of 86th Street.

These restrictions, championed by Messinger, have not proven to be the popular solutions it was hoped they would be. For one thing, many residents of Manhattan and Brooklyn claim the pilots routinely ignore them, flying too low and over the city.

For another, they have congested the crossing points. "We have to distribute the pain equitably," said Al Cadalzo, a 72nd Street resident whose personal solitude has been restored by the agreement. "My problem has been alleviated on other people's shoulders, and that is not fair."

Like a number of other residents, Cadalzo advocated spreading out the crossing points until helicopters can be banned altogether. Even if the city did decide to pursue that course, such an action would probably take years of litigation warned Messinger's representative.

Lorraine Heilweil, a West 86th Street resident, was among those pleading for a redistribution of the flight paths for helicopters crossing east-west over Manhattan. And each time the crossing point has changed, residents of the new community (or street) have complained that they are being hit with another area's problem.

Nor were tempers improved when FAA representatives noted that the agency would not consider imposing restrictions on flight plans similar to the EDC regulations struck down in court while legal action over those regulations was pending. Officials also threw cold water on opponents by noting that regulations currently allow helicopters to fly at any altitude below 1,500 feet.

The helicopter operators, for their part, say they are willing to do what they can to mitigate the disturbance their business creates.

"When we see pilots doing the wrong things, we take action," said Bob Chaves, the vice-president of flight operations for National Helicopter. "I have terminated pilots for [deviating from our designated] tourist routes. I issue instructions that they must not deviate from tourist routes and must fly at a minimum of 1,500 feet."

Pointing to the voluntary agreement to move helicopters off Second Avenue and over the river, Eastern Regional Helicopter Council spokesman Matt Zuccaro said helicopter operators "are doing the best we can," at the task force meeting.

"We are trying to mitigate the impact," he added, "but what I'm hearing is you just want us to go away. It appears, to be honest, that we are at an impasse. Should we try to mitigate if your ultimate goal is to shut us down. I'm looking for feedback, where are we heading?"

Also East Side Resident

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PRESS & COBBLE HILL NEWS THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1997

Page 1

Helicopter Noise Protested

By Raanan Geberer

Activists from Brooklyn, Manhattan and elsewhere gathered at Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's office Tuesday on the subject of helicopter noise.

There, they found, in the words of Brooklyn Heights resident Edward Ellien, that "nobody is responsible for enforcement of FAA [Federal Airways Agency] regulations."

The meeting was called by the New York Helicopter Noise Coalition, which has a small but active Brooklyn contingent, mainly from the Heights. Some local members include Ellien himself, Irwin Susskind, Judith Sokoloff, Len Gelstein and Ruth Jandorek, among others.

Also attending the meeting were Judy Stanton, executive director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, and Jeff Smith, a local activist known for his opposition to community leaders.

According to Ms. Jandorek, a Montague Terrace resident, helicopter flights became a serious problem in the Heights last summer.

"One is the immediate noise from the tour guides, commercial flights, newscasters' flights, and movies," she said. "I've heard helicopters as early as 5:30 a.m., and as late as 11:30 at night."

Unfortunately, most of the noisy helicopters are flying low. And, when the helicopters are below 1,100 feet, they are no longer required to be under radar control.

"When they're flying under 1,100 feet, the FAA disavows responsibility," Gelstein said.

There's a double-edged sword, though. The helicopters can't go much higher, either.

"One of the FAA representatives told us that it may be dangerous for helicopters to fly higher than 1,400 feet, because then they're in dangerous air space with jets and other aircraft," said Ms. Stanton.

Representatives of two helicopter tour companies, Island and Liberty, attended the meeting. In the past, they have advised people to copy down the numbers of helicopters that were making too much noise.

The problem with that suggestion is that most helicopters fly by very fast.

"They go so fast that they're gone in two seconds, and then they set off your car alarm and you have to deal with that," said one Heights resident.

Heights residents have accused the tour operators of deliberately flying over the Heights so that tourists can get a good view of the Manhattan skyline, as well as the Promenade. In the past, representatives of the tour companies have denied this. But those attending the meeting didn't buy that contention.

"A man from the Helicopter Council [a trade association] said that they've changed 25 years of flying

Please turn to page 2

Page 2

Helicopter

Continued from page 1

habits to accommodate neighbors complaints, that you can't satisfy anyone," said Ms. Stanton. The representative complained that it sounded like some in the audience were trying to ban helicopters altogether, a suggestion that met with some cheers.

The most frightening thing that emerged from the meeting was the fact that no one seemed to know for sure who was in charge of enforcing regulations about helicopter noise and safety.

"When one of the reps from the FAA was confronted directly about what they were doing," said Ellien, "the silence from him was deafening."

Still, not everyone left the meeting with an entirely negative view.

"The best part of the meeting," said Susskind, "was that now there's a citywide coalition, from Long Island City, Brooklyn Heights, Tribeca, Upper Manhattan."

In the past, some said, when residents of one neighborhood complained, the tour companies and helicopter commuter firms merely shifted their routes over another area.

The rules for helicopter conduct were established jointly between the FAA and the Eastern Regional Helicopter Association. The coalition was formed earlier this month.

Ms. Messinger was represented by a staff member, Judy McClain.

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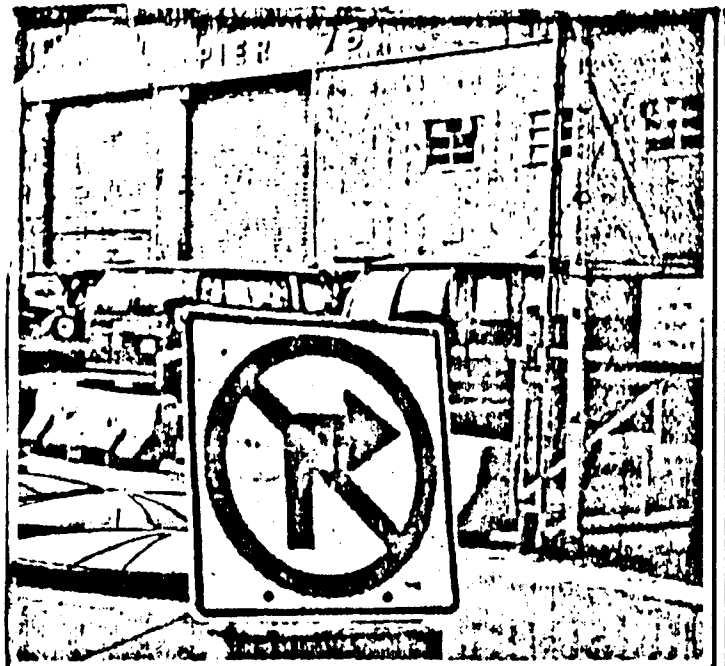
FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 5, 1997



If a city proposal is approved, the Manhattan auto tow pound at Pier 76 could be a heliport by the year 2000.

Neighbors Skeptical of Pier 76 Heliport Plan

BY AL AMATEAU

City plans for a heliport on Pier 76, with capacity of up to 20 take-offs and landings per hour, are giving Chelsea and Clinton neighbors and community leaders a headache.

The proposed heliport, which could include an 83,000-square-foot restaurant, would replace the Manhattan auto tow pound now located on Pier 76 opposite the Jacob Javits Convention Center. The plan antici-

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HELIPORT

Continued from Page 1

pates the eventual closing of the present heliport on the Hudson River at 30th Street.

Three take-off/landing pads would be located on the end of Pier 76, with a ramp and helicopter hangar space. The property encompasses 264,515 square feet, including 21,525 square feet on the shore, some of which would designated for public access.

The heliport would be part of an intermodal transportation center including New York Waterways ferries and water taxi service on the adjacent Piers 78 and 79, with access to a bus loading area that would cut across a pedestrian and bike path to be built along the Hudson in conjunction with a new Route 9A.

"Everything would run parallel to the waterfront park – buses, cabs and helicopters," complained Jo Ann Macy, chair of Community Board 4 (CB4), where the city's Request for Proposals from heliport operators and real estate developers was discussed last week.

The proposal comes in the wake of renewed protests about noise and safety issues associated with helicopter sightseeing flights. Manhattan and Brooklyn residents early this month organized the Helicopter Noise Coalition to ban tourist helicopter flights over residential areas.

"Maybe it's time to think about just saying 'no' to sightseeing helicopters," said Ross Graham, a member of CB 4 who also sits on the board of directors of Hudson River Park Conservancy (HRPC), the state and city agency charged with building a riverfront park between Chambers and 59th streets.

New York City is one of only a few major cities in the world where helicopter sightseeing is allowed; Hong Kong and Tokyo are the other major ones, said Graham.

Helicopter operators agreed last autumn to cross Manhattan only north of 86th Street and to fly north and south over the rivers instead of over residential areas. Operators also agreed to raise flight altitude from 1,400 to 1,500 feet. Indeed, many flights are cleared for no lower than 1,800 feet, according to the Federal Aviation Administration's Eastern Region Air Traffic Division. Residents, however, contend that pilots do not always obey those

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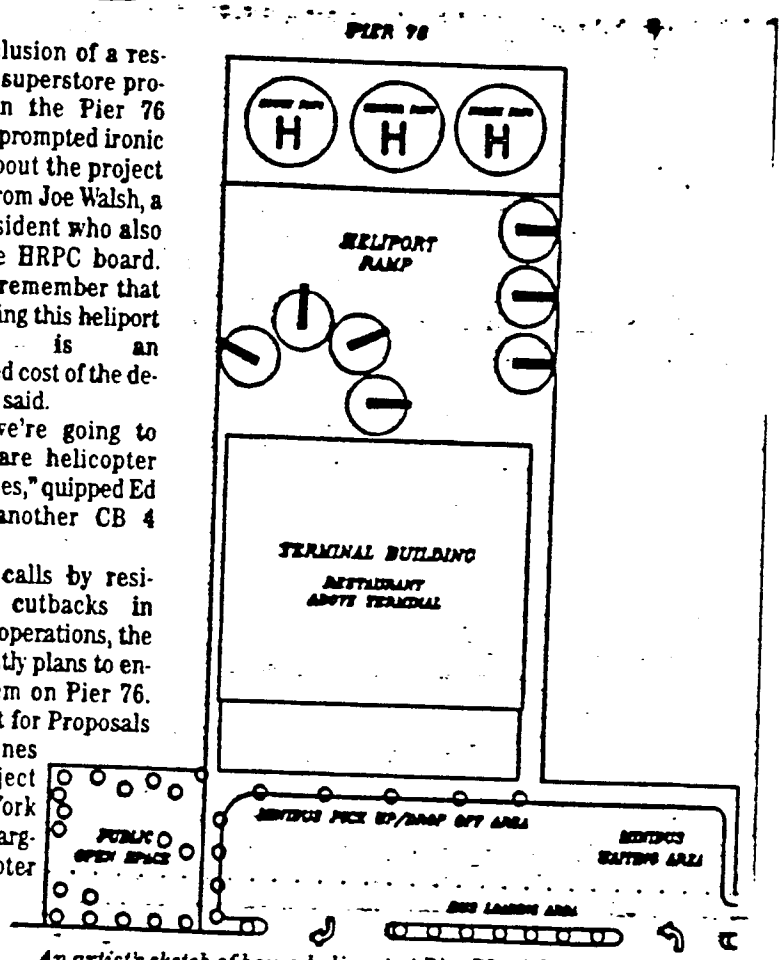
rules.

The inclusion of a restaurant of superstore proportions in the Pier 76 guidelines prompted ironic remarks about the project last week from Joe Walsh, a Clinton resident who also sits on the HRPC board. "You must remember that soundproofing this heliport restaurant is an unsubsidized cost of the developer," he said.

"What we're going to have now are helicopter dinner cruises," quipped Ed Kirkland, another CB 4 member.

Despite calls by residents for cutbacks in sightseeing operations, the city apparently plans to encourage them on Pier 76. The Request for Proposals and guidelines for the project says New York City is "the largest helicopter demand center in the world," and sets a goal of enhancing aviation and "creating a tourist destination" at Pier 76.



An artist's sketch of how a heliport at Pier 76 might be configured.

Guidelines for the project call for a 167,574-square-foot terminal building with two levels on the inboard end of the pier, with the restaurant on the second level. The guidelines also call for the project to include public access and to be compatible with the proposed riverfront park

The Pier 76 heliport has been planned to become the main sightseeing venue when it is slated to replace the West 30th Street heliport in 2001. Take-offs and landings on the West Side rose from 28,074 in 1990 to 46,772 in 1995, of which 60 percent were sightseeing flights.

The East 34th Street heliport handled 53,973 take-offs and landings in 1995, of which 80 percent were sightseeing flights. The city last year tried to restrict the number of flights and routes and to eliminate weekend tourist flights. A federal judge in January, however, overturned most of the rules and allowed a tourist flight schedule between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. The city is appealing.

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My Two Cents Worth

by Ian Alterman

Mary Prescott sat quietly on her 10th floor terrace, listening to the unmistakable clip-clip-clip of helicopter rotors approach for the seventh time in less than half an hour. "That's seven," she said to herself. Mary had had it up to here with the pesky flying machines, and had tried everything - including calls and written complaints to city agencies and elected officials to end this unnerving intrusion into her life. She had all but given up trying to finish her novel, since it was impossible to concentrate long enough to finish a sentence.

It had not been difficult to purchase the tripod-mounted launcher; her next door neighbor had a catalogue of all sorts of paramilitary equipment. And she had studied the instructions well, though she probably could have figured it out instinctively from watching all the action movies she had been renting to shut out the helicopter noise.

As the ninth copter came by, she uncovered the launcher, going through a final mental checklist for its use. "Number 10 is mine," she said as she loaded the grenade. She had, of course, considered that there would be people on the copter. "Who's gonna miss a couple of tourists from Ames, Iowa? Besides, they should have thought more carefully about paying exorbitant prices for a few minutes in the air, just to annoy people like me. Do I go to Iowa and buzz their houses hundreds of times a day?"

Mary primed the launcher; less than three minutes to go. As the previous copter flew down the West Side, she saw number ten coming straight toward her. She sited the copter carefully, keeping her finger just over the launch trigger. Five-four-three-two... Mary pushed her finger down, launching the grenade. She heard a soft "whoosh," followed by what seemed like moments of silence. Yet only a few seconds actually passed before the copter exploded spectacularly, sending a rain of metal and human debris over the river. Her expression was stern, "Bloody tourists," she said, not even realizing the gruesome pun.

As farfetched as the above scenario may seem, there are those - and there are many - who share the fantasy. The profusion of tourist helicopter flights over Manhattan, and parts of Brooklyn and Queens - and the noise nuisance and inherent danger they represent have become Public Enemy #1 to thousands of New Yorkers who are calling for a complete cessation of these flights, forever. Nothing could be more timely.

At the most recent meeting of the Transportation Committee of Community Board 7, this issue provoked long and lively discussion. The meeting was attended not only by a rep from the Borough Prez's office (which had been at the forefront of this issue for some time), but by two reps from the Mayor's office, as well as reps from the recently formed Helicopter Noise Committee (HNC), and other concerned residents.

There are four good reasons for immediately shutting down these flights.

1. Helicopters are dangerous. Community activist Alan Flacks reminded everyone of two copter accidents in the past couple of years, one involving a traffic copter, in which, amazingly, neither occupant was seriously injured, and the other, involving a tourist copter in which a young boy was killed. (An HNC spokesperson claims to have found evidence of two other deadly crashes which were carefully "covered up" by the media and others). Flacks also reminded everyone of the deadly accident which closed the heliport on the roof of the old PanAm (now Met Life) Building, in which half a dozen people were killed when a Sikorsky copter crashed and rained debris over a five block area. (One of the two companies offering tourist flights uses a Sikorsky copter). Flacks also pointed out that copters do not glide: if one crashes, it will plummet straight down into the heart of the city, killing not only its passengers, but possibly dozens of others. Given over 300 flights per day, seven days per week, the law of averages is not on our side any more. (Flacks did point out that curtailing tourist flights would have no effect on other copters - emergency, news, traffic, police. However, it is obvious that doing so would go a long way to reducing noise).

2. They are a serious and debilitating nuisance. The constant buzzing of helicopter rotors can induce all forms of stress. Vietnam vets can attest to the reality of this syndrome, which can lead to emotional and nervous disorders, psychological stress and breakdowns, and physical manifestations including involuntary tics and spasms, and digestive problems. And this does not include the equally consequential basic annoyance of hearing these infernal machines all day long.

3. There is no incentive to keep them. According to Borough Prez's rep, the city derives less than a million dollars per year from the copter operators. And this figure was not disputed by the Mayor's reps. With an annual city budget of over $30 billion, the loss of this amount would not even be felt. Nor would tourism be affected by curtailing the flights: tourists are not going to stop coming to the city simply because they can no longer pay exorbitant prices for a few minutes in the air. Thus, these flights - and the nuisances they create for thousands of people - continue for what amounts to pocket change.

4. There is action that can be taken immediately. The city recently lost a lawsuit against the copter operators, in which the city demanced certain compromises, including altered flight pads and less flights. Although the city is appealing, the F.A.A. claims that only it can decide what happens in the airspace above the city. (Excu-u-se me? I can buy this argument where fixed-wing aircraft are concerned. But do you mean to tell me that the city does not otherwise have sovereign right over its own airspace? Maybe our friends in Montana who see black choppers everywhere are not so crazy after all).

Despite this, the city can take action. It owns two of the city's three heliports, and has the absolute right to close them without notice. It should do so immediately, effectively ending half of the flights. It should then use every resource at its disposal - federal and state as well as city - to shut down the third heliport, and end these dangerous, annoying and unnecessary flights once and for all.

The HNC - whose constituency includes residents and elected officials in Chelsea, the Village, Clinton, Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Midtown, and the Upper East and West Sides - has threatened to make this an election issue, and well it should. In this regard, CB7 will be the first Community Board to consider a formal resolution on the issue, which it will do at its March 4 meeting. I will be urging my fellow Board members to pass the resolution unanimously, thus sending a message to and empowering other Community Boards to do the same. If every Community Board in Manhattan sends unanimous resolutions to the City Council and the Mayor, they will no longer be able to ignore the severity of this issue and the dangers and nuisances associated with it.

Failing this, I can tell you where to get a catalogue of paramilitary equipment... ▲

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The Chopper-Blocker

Joy Held Is a Formidable Foe for Helicopters

By ANTHONY RAMIREZ

IN an apartment on a side street near the East River, a small dark-haired woman named Joy Held is getting, as she puts it, "very, very angry." Last September, she started flinching as the basso profundo rumble of helicopters flying over her East 65th Street apartment building grew louder, like a giant malevolent neighbor aiming stereo speakers at her walls.

Mrs. Held, 54, works at home, and the din was making her irritable, robbing her of sleep and, she insisted, raising her blood pressure. On clear sunny days, more and more helicopters, many filled with tourists, seem to take over the skies. "It's not even transportation," Mrs. Held said last week. "It's entertainment. The tourists are here to see the natives."

In the last year or so, many neighborhood groups have sprung up to protest helicopter noise but have not got very far. And recently, after the city lost an important lawsuit, these groups seemed on the verge of fighting among themselves. But last month, Mrs. Held organized a citywide group, the Helicopter Noise Coalition, that has attracted members from Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. Other activists and city officials say Mrs. Held is the reason.

Marnie Mueller, 54, a novelist and anti-helicopter activist from the Upper West Side, said she had been lobbying city officials for almost a year but recognized immediately that Mrs. Held was more of a powerhouse. "When I saw Joy, I saw myself, 10 times over," she said.

Mrs. Held, a freelance grant proposal writer, recognized that numbers equaled power. "The helicopter operators have been trying to divide and conquer this city and play neighborhood against neighborhood," she said.

The coalition has already proved adept at guerrilla tactics. It persuaded the 242-room Peninsula Hotel in midtown, popular with Japanese tourists, to stop recommending helicopter tours as a way to see the city.

In the early 1980's, Mrs. Held joined other neighbors in a zoning fight that eventually led to a limit on the height of buildings on most Upper East Side streets. And in the late 1980's, she goaded two reluctant parties — her landlord and the city — to work together to get rid of the growing number of rats on her block. She proudly recalls providing flashlights so flustered city inspectors could see that the rats were not just in her apartment walls but were thriving throughout the maze of buildings on her block. Still, she says, "This is the biggest thing I've ever undertaken."

The coalition wants all sightseeing flights banned and remaining flights — including those by radio and television stations — cut to the bare minimum, ideally just for police and medical missions. It would also like to close the two of the city's four heliports in residential neighborhoods, at 34th Street and the East River and East 60th Street, as well as impose stricter regulations on helicopter companies.

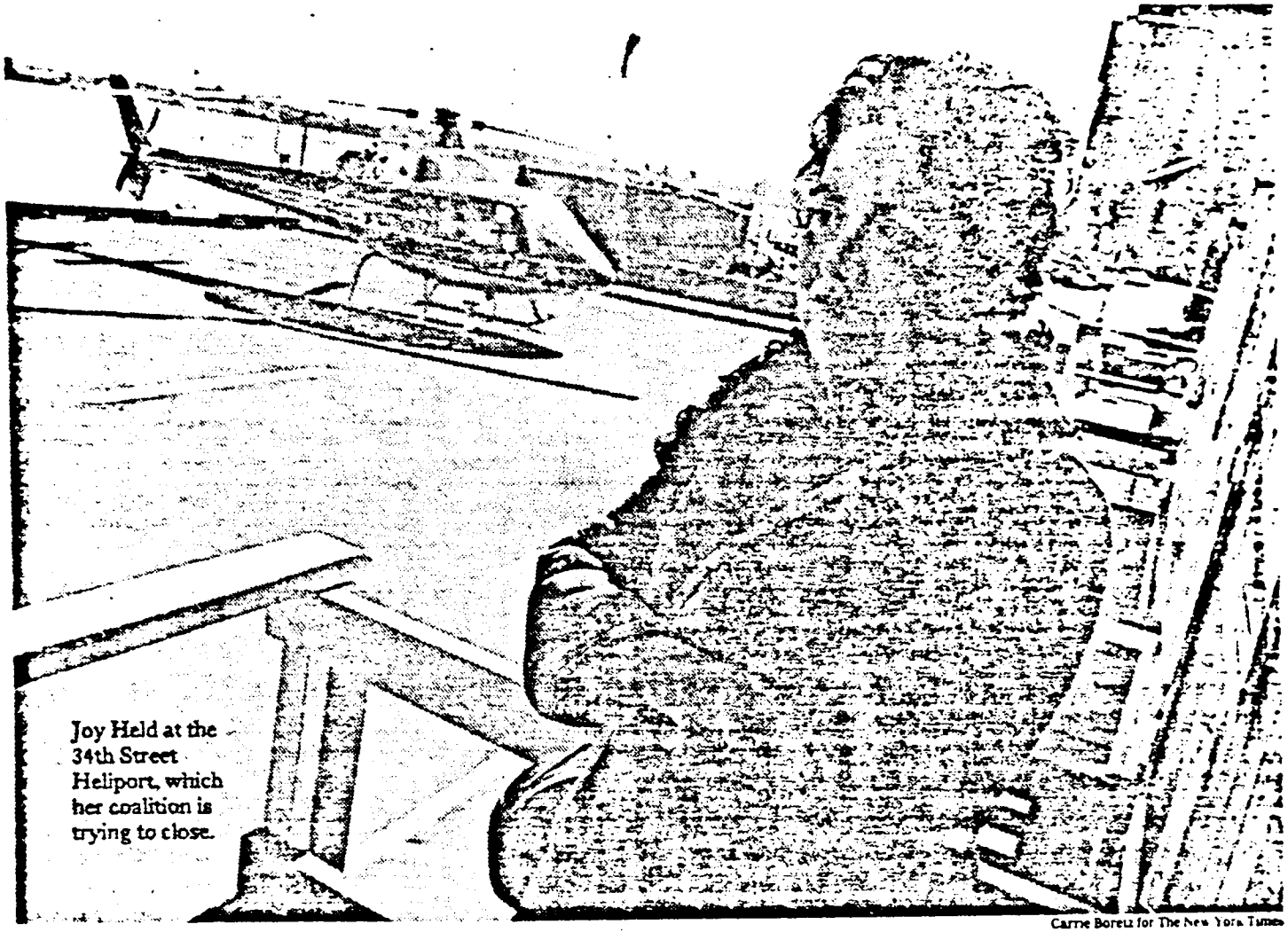
More than half of the 70,000 helicopter flights over the city each year are sightseeing tours conducted by two operators, according to city officials. National Helicopter maintains up to five helicopters at the East 34th Street Heliport, the nation's busiest. In a prepared statement, National called the coalition's proposed sightseeing-flight ban "unconstitutional." Liberty Helicopter, which operates three helicopters at the West 30th Street Heliport, declined comment.

There are no Federal noise standards for helicopters and even the industry has only rough estimates. National and Liberty use helicopters in the 4,000-pound class: Bell 206's for National and Eurocopter AS350's for Liberty. The chief acoustics engineer for Bell Helicopter Textron, the world's largest helicopter maker, Charles R. Cox, estimates that such a helicopter will generate about 78 decibels of noise at an altitude of 1,000 feet — or the sound of a ringing alarm clock held at arm's length.

In recent months, helicopter activists say, the noise issue has become more urgent for several reasons, especially since takeoffs and landings increased more than 23 percent from 1991 to 1995.

Last September, a voluntary agreement among helicopter operators and the Federal Aviation Administration intended to minimize noise instead seemed to spread it to other neighborhoods. Activists had said that sightseeing helicopters taking off from the East and West Sides flew as far west as Fifth Avenue and crossed Central Park at many points. But the new agreement, while limiting Central Park crossings to a single point at 86th Street, also seems to concentrate traffic along the rivers, disturbing, among others, Mrs. Held and her neighbors on 65th Street and York Avenue, near the East River.

In January, the city lost an important legal fight to restrict flights out of the East 34th Street Heliport, which it owns. A Federal District judge in Manhattan ruled that National Helicopter did not have to comply with restrictions passed by the City Council, including a sharp reduction in the number of National's flights, because only the Federal Government could impose such limits. The



Joy Held at the 34th Street Heliport, which her coalition is trying to close.

Carrie Boretz for The New York Times

ADVOCACY

Battling the Bureaucracy: Go to the Top, Armed with Records

Joy Held learned valuable lessons from her campaigns to limit the height of buildings on the East Side and rid her block of rats.

Join with others who share your concerns. In the effort that led to an eight-story limit on residential buildings along certain side streets, Ms. Held first joined with neighbors, then with established local groups like Friends of the Upper East Side.

Speak directly to the person in charge. In 1988, Ms. Held said, she wasted weeks filing complaints to the city's official complaint line. She then called the Bureau of Pest Control and demanded to speak to "somebody in charge." She was put through to Jake Corley, the deputy director.

Keep good records. Ms. Held presented Mr. Corley with lists of every telephone call she had made to the city, every complaint letter she had sent and their disposition. "Records show that you're not making it up," she said.

Invest time and energy. On the zoning campaign she spent two hours a day for six months preparing testimony and circulating petitions. She invested five hours a day for more than six months on the rat issue.

Stay positive, despite setbacks. Relax as much as you can. Ms. Held meditates, does yoga and exercises on a treadmill. But, she says, "my real release is street fairs."

city is appealing.

Last month, the city began seeking proposals for operators at a new heliport scheduled to be built as early as next year on the Hudson River at West 35th Street. It is intended to replace the outmoded West 30th Street heliport, and activists fear that the new heliport, which at 90,000 square feet will be triple the size of the 30th Street site, will add substantially to helicopter traffic.

A co-chairman of Community Board 6's transportation committee, William Oddo, said the goals of Mrs. Held's coalition, especially a ban on all sightseeing flights, might seem impossible in an election year. "But in New York," he said, "you have to ask for the world and then maybe, just maybe, you'll get something reasonable."

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HELICOPTER HELL

To the Editor:

Your recent article "Helicopter Hell" (Feb. 13) aptly describes the conditions for New York City residents living with helicopter noise and air pollution. Existing noise and air quality standards are not being enforced and no government agency is currently mandated to oversee this burgeoning industry.

The Helicopter Noise Coalition is also concerned with safety. Given the volume of helicopter traffic, the 15 helicopter crashes that have occurred in New York City since 1983, and the potential for human error and mechanical failure, it is only a matter of time before a devastating crash occurs in one of our densely populated neighborhoods. Helicopter noise and fumes also pose health risks: stress, heart disease, high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, depression. Furthermore, Coast Guard officials have told us that these unregulated helicopters pose considerable national security risks to our residents. New Yorkers are also concerned with real estate values on these sightseeing routes and insurance liability. Because of these concerns, HNC advocates the establishment of new FAA regulations to create a no-fly zone over New York City.

We are contacting the major hotels, asking them to refrain from recommending sightseeing tour flights — so far, the Peninsula Hotel has agreed. We urge individuals and groups to join in our fight to protect our homes, parks and offices from this devastating deterioration of our quality of life in New York City.

Joy Held
Executive Director,
Helicopter Noise Coalition

VOL. 27, NO. 15 • MARCH 6, 1997

OUR TOWN

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New York Times

March 7, 1997

page B1

Battling to Fly Above the Rest

In the TV News Wars, the Rivalry Is Fiercer Than Ever

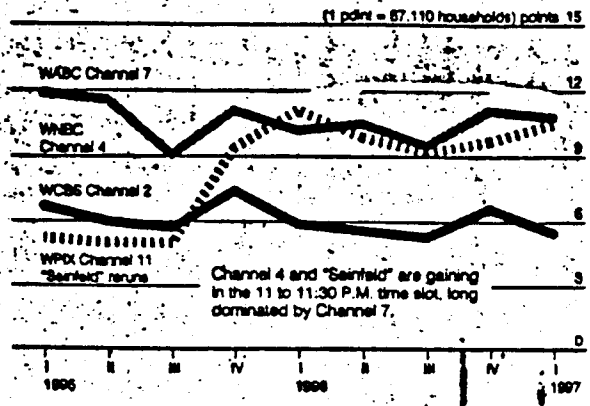
The News at Night

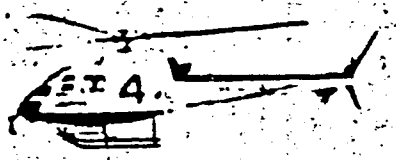
Anchors on the 11 P.M. local news programs.

CHANNEL 4, WNBC Sue Simmons and Chuck Scarborough

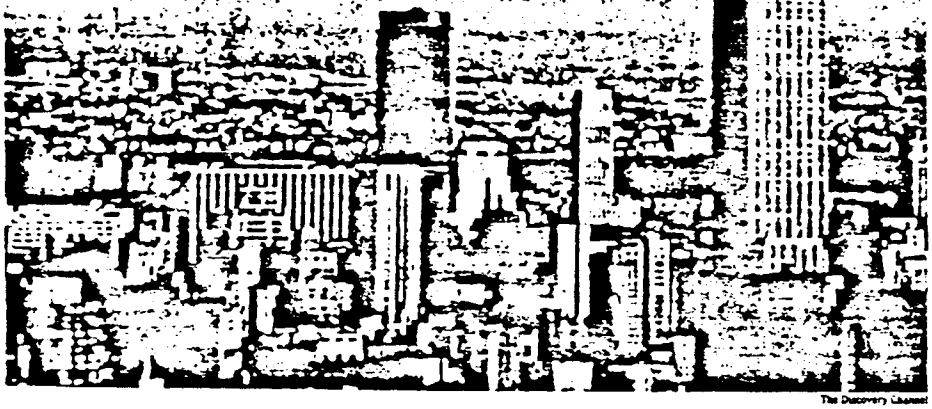
CHANNEL 7, WABC Bill Beutel and Diana Williams

CHANNEL 2, WCBS Dana Tyler





CHOPPER 4 Since WNBC's helicopter first went up in 1994, it has become a symbol of the quest for newscast supremacy in New York City.



The Discovery Channel

By LAWRIE MIFFLIN

Poised in a New Jersey parking lot, ready for duty 24 hours a day, is the mythic superhero of New York City television news, a blue-and-white figure that can leap tall buildings in a single bound, and that swoops toward any emergency and brings cold-eyed reality, if not truth and justice, into every living room.

Its name: Chopper 4. Emblazoned on both sides with NBC's peacock logo and a giant 4, the helicopter has gyroscopically stabilized cameras that let it transmit unwobbly pictures as it glides over news big and small, from the smoldering wreckage of Trans World Airlines Flight 800 last summer to the billowing smoke from One Lincoln Center after Lionel Hampton's halogen lamp set the tower on fire a few weeks back.

Channel 4's helicopter has been copied by its archrival, Channel 7 (which has two), and is just one element in the station's news coverage. But since Chopper 4 first went up in 1994, it has become an oft-cited symbol of the sometimes zany but intensely serious quest for supremacy among the news divisions of New York's six major commercial television stations.

The television news market in New York — the biggest and most lucrative in the nation — has had a year of turmoil, marked by mass dismissals at one station, the re-emergence of two dismissed anchors at a rival station, and a titanic battle for Nielsen ratings between the two leaders. At a time when fewer people are watching broadcast television news, because of cable channels and other diversions, the competition for viewers and the advertising dollars they attract is fiercer than ever.

Having poured money into upgrading equipment and hiring new talent, Channel 4, WNBC, is now challenging the longtime overall leader, Channel 7, WABC, for the news ratings championship. Channel 4 wins at 11 P.M., and Channel 7 still wins the 6 P.M. and 5 P.M. periods, but in the early-evening time slots, Channel 4 is a whisker away, the closest it has been since November 1986.

"You've got a championship fight going on here between WNBC and WABC, two network flagship stations really slugging it out," Dennis Swanson, the president and general manager of Channel 4, said after giving a staff party Monday night to celebrate the station's strong February sweeps performance. "The two of us are throwing heavy punches, and nobody else is close."

Further away than ever in the three

Continued on Page B3

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NY Times March 7, 1997 page B3

TV News Wars: Rivalry Is Fiercer Than Ever

New York Times

March 7, 1997

page B3

Continued From Page B1

main news time periods is Channel 2, WCBS, where management abruptly dismissed seven well-known newscasters last October.

In the February sweeps — one of four months in the year when Nielsen ratings are used to set future advertising rates — Channel 2's 6 P.M. news finished last among major stations, behind not only the news on Channels 4 and 7, but also "Full House," "Married With Children" and "Home Improvement" on Channels 11, 9 and 5 respectively.

And at 11 P.M., when news advertising rates are highest, Channel 2 News finishes behind "Seinfeld" reruns and does battle with the Jenny Jones talk show for fifth place.

The three smaller New York stations have no early evening news but compete with newscasts at 10 P.M., where Channel 5, WNYW, the Fox station, is the longtime leader, well ahead of Channel 11, WPIX, a WB affiliate, and Channel 9, WWOR, a UPN affiliate.

The six stations all compete for high advertising stakes. News generates as much as half of a station's profit, and the top New York station's profits now exceed $100 million a year.

Such cash generators are vital to each station's parent network, and the network's owners. That means NBC's Channel 4 is earning top dollar for General Electric, ABC's Channel 7 is performing solidly for Disney, and CBS's Channel 2 is a major disappointment to Westinghouse.

Prestige is also at stake. The people watching the local news in New York's metropolitan region include the networks' own top executives and leaders on Wall Street and Madison Avenue.

"There's a lot of pressure on a corporation's flagship station," one station executive said, on condition that his name not be used. "What does Wall Street think of the G.E. empire? They form that opinion from what they see on Channel 4. Where does an advertiser want to see his ads? He may decide based on what he sees at night."

Financial standings are closely guarded, but analysts say that Channel 4 and Channel 7 together collected more than half a billion dollars in 1996. Channel 2, meanwhile, took in less than $100 million, and had at best $30 million to $35 million in profit, far less than a major New York station should.

Several advertising buyers said that 30-second commercials on Channels 4 and 7 during the early evening newscasts range in price from $2,500 to $3,500, but Channel 2's prices are now as low as $400 to $500.

"One would think Channel 2 should finish in the top three, and sixth place is definitely not top three," said John S. Reidy, a media analyst for Smith Barney. "This is obviously a concern to everyone, from Mr. Jordan to Mr. Lund and on down," he added, referring to Michael H. Jordan, president of Westinghouse, and Peter A. Lund, president of CBS.

Jerry Nachman, the former WCBS news director, who left in August after four years of trying to reverse its slide, said: "This is not a two-year-old problem. They've had 15 or 20 years of errata at that station."

Last October, the station's general manager, Bud Carey, took drastic action. He dismissed seven familiar faces: Michele Marsh and John Johnson, the co-anchors of his 6 P.M. and 11 P.M. news; the main sports anchor, Bernie Smilovitz, the consumer troubleshooter Roseanne Colletti, and the veteran reporters Tony Guida, Reggie Harris and Magee Hickey.

Jose R. Lopez/The New York Times

Dana Tyler, standing, who became Channel 2's primary anchor after seven members of the station's news operation were dismissed in October, planning a newscast with Jacqueline Barnathon, a producer.

He said a clean sweep was necessary for the station to rebuild itself.

"At Channel 2 over last 10, 15 years, we looked too often for quick fixes, hiring this anchor, hired that weatherman, from the competition," Mr. Carey said. "That doesn't work in New York, where you've got so much competition from stations with strong histories in the market."

But Mr. Nachman attributes Channel 2's problems to the CBS network's poor prime-time ratings in recent years, as well as afternoon lead-in problems.

"There have been years of certain habits in New York," Mr. Nachman said last week from his home in Hollywood, where he now writes scripts for television shows. "On ABC, you go from 'Regis and Kathie Lee' to 'General Hospital' to 'Oprah' to the 6 o'clock news. Then there's 'Wheel of Fortune' and 'Jeopardy,' and 'N.Y.P.D. Blue' and Barbara Walters and Diane Sawyer and Ted Koppel.

"I can do a version of that recitation for NBC, too. But I can't do it for CBS."

Tied to CBS's sagging fortunes in both prime-time entertainment and in news was the cost-cutting obsession of the network's owner until late 1995, Laurence A. Tisch. It meant fewer news crews and a reluctance to pay overtime to cover late-breaking stories.

Channel 2 has also been criticized by other news organizations for its news judgment. Last year, for example, many critics said the station was weak in its coverage of two big stories, the blizzard in January and the crash of T.W.A. Flight 800 in July.

The blizzard struck on a Sunday and paralyzed the metropolitan area the next day. Channel 4 pre-empted its regular programs from 5 A.M. until 7 P.M. that Monday, losing tens of thousands of dollars from scheduled commercials that never ran. The station's general manager then, Bill Bolster, took the four-wheel-drive vehicle of his sales director, Frank Comerford, and the two men crisscrossed New York City retrieving videotapes from crews.

On Channel 2, Monday's blizzard coverage lasted only until 10 A.M., and staff members recall Mr. Nachman and his assistant, Bill Carey, who is now the news director, scoffing as they watched Channel 4.

"I remember some of us saying, 'Hey, guys, this is a big story,'" a reporter at Channel 2 at the time said, speaking on the condition that his name not be used. "And I remember Jerry saying: 'It's repetitious. They're saying the same things over and over. Who the hell could be watching this?'"

"You talk about demoralizing — that was demoralizing," the reporter added.

Channel 4's ratings made it more demoralizing. They were by far the highest in the market all day — triple Channel 2's ratings.

> In the battle for ratings, do the basics well and add 'the gizmos.'

Mr. Nachman conceded an error of judgment, saying, "I still wonder why people trapped in their homes by snow would want to watch endless hours of TV news telling them it's snowing out."

Of the T.W.A. crash, he said that Channel 2 broke off coverage 40 minutes before the other stations, at 1:30 A.M. instead of 2:10 A.M. But even that shortfall — while Chopper 4's aerial pictures were nationally praised — contributed to the notion that Channel 2 was less serious about news.

That is one reason for the "October massacre," Bud Carey, the general manager, said: to send a message. He promoted Dana Tyler to be the station's primary anchor and brought back Warner Wolf as sports anchor. Since then, he has been hiring young newcomers like Gerry Grant, an anchor who started this week.

Over at Channel 4, Mr. Swanson — who became the station's general manager when Mr. Bolster moved to the CNBC cable operation last July — has focused on keeping Channel 4 out front in the personality competition as well as the helicopter wars, immediately hiring Ms. Marsh and Mr. Johnson after they were dismissed by Channel 2. WNBC has also capitalized on its network's success, with a widely seen advertising campaign linking Channel 4's personalities with NBC stars like Tom Brokaw.

Thomas P. Kane, the president and general manager of Channel 7, said it is imperative to make a station distinctive. "Take it as a given that you'll do the basics well — good reporting, good writing, good anchors," he said. "After that, you've got to have the gizmos. You've got to have a helicopter. You've got to have skycams."

"It's visuals," he added. "This is not radio."

What worries some reporters and producers, though, is whether video pyrotechnics and sensational stories are overshadowing basic reporting.

"It's extremely competitive in this town, and being able to claim that you're first to a story is a very big thing," said one veteran newsman, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "But too often what they're competing for is who can be first to a fire. It's meaningless garbage."

Mr. Nachman said solid reporting and investigations should matter most, citing those of one of his former reporters, Channel 2's Marcia Kramer, who won prizes for exposés about the Board of Education last year.

But often solid reporting does not help with the ratings; nor is there, many critics have noted, a great deal of it on local newscasts. Rarely is there anything in the content of the programs to distinguish one from another.

"Most of the time I was there," Mr. Nachman said, "one station was promoting a helicopter and the other was promoting two helicopters. It may be that the solution to commercial success doesn't have to do exclusively with journalism, or even mostly."

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MANHATTAN Spirit

Board Votes to Ban Choppers

Community Board 7 unanimously voted to ban noisy tourist helicopters over the Upper West Side at its full board meeting last week.

The 35-0 vote came in response to continued complaints from Upper West Siders about the cacophonous copters, despite an agreement under which they were mandated to fly only across Manhattan north of 86th Street.

"It was a mighty moment," said Marnie Mueller, a West 75th Street resident who, with residents from other neighborhoods, helped form the New York Helicopter Noise Coalition. "We're having an enormous impact on this issue."

Under an agreement brokered by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the helicopter companies last year, the tourist choppers were no longer allowed to fly diagonally south over Manhattan.

But once they began to fly north of 86th Street, the residents there began to complain. Messinger spokeswoman Lisa Daglian said they were still working with Board 7, the FAA and the helicopter companies to solve the problem.

Mueller said her group would be asking other community boards to pass similar resolutions, beginning with Community Board 4 this week. — *Michael Rothfeld*

HNC p 248

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MARCH 13-19, 1997

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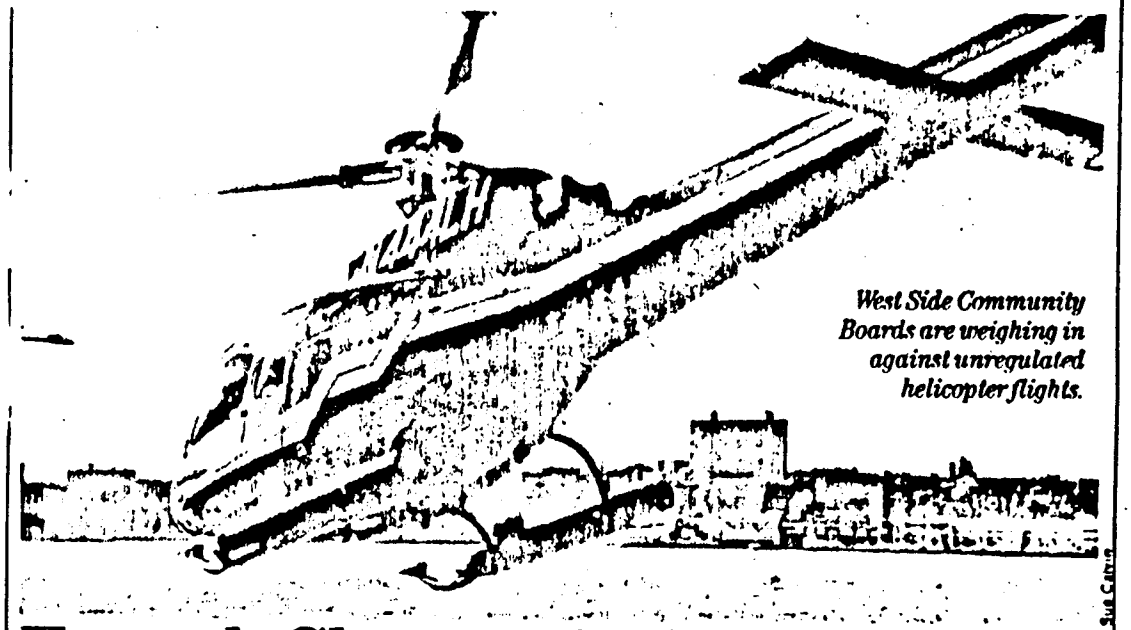
THE WESTSIDER

SINCE 1972



West Side Community Boards are weighing in against unregulated helicopter flights.

Sue Catrin

Enough Chopper Noise, Says CB7

BY AL AMATEAU AND JILL GROSSMAN

As far as West Side residents are concerned, sightseeing helicopters can fly their coops for good.

At a full meeting of Community Board 7 (CB7), whose district encompasses the West Side between 59th and 110th Streets, the board unanimously passed a resolution to ban sightseeing helicopters from Manhattan. The board plans to forward the decision to the other community boards for consideration.

Last month, members of the waterfront committee of Community Board 4, encompassing the West Side between 14th and 59th streets, were leery about the city's Request for Proposals to develop a new heliport on 90,000 square feet of Pier 76 at 35th Street to replace the current smaller, state-run heliport on the Hudson at 30th Street.

Despite a voluntary agreement made by helicopter opera-

See CHOPPERS, Page 7

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Cont.

The Westsider March 13 - 19, 1997

Page 7 Continued

CHOPPERS

Continued from Page 1

tors last September to fly north and south over the rivers and to cross Manhattan Island only at 86th Street – avoiding populated areas elsewhere – Manhattan residents are saying chopper flights still menace their peace and safety.

"People are taking tranquilizers," said Joy A. Held, of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City. "They're ready to jump. They're voters and taxpayers who want to stop living where they have to hear the blare and roar of 400 over-flights a day."

The Helicopter Noise Coalition, organized on Feb. 1 by civic groups from Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, opposes new heliports, demands a ban on sightseeing flights, calls for restricting chopper use in general to emergencies and seeks the closing of heliports on the East River at 34th and 60th streets. The city group is affiliated with a national Helicopter Noise Coalition, said Held.

Regs Don't Fly

In January, a federal court rejected the city's request for a special permit to regulate the schedules, size and flight paths of helicopters out of the city-owned 34th Street heliport on the East River. The city has appealed the decision, contending it has jurisdiction over the operation of its own heliports.

Operators have agreed to fly only between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends, and to raise flight altitudes from 1,400 to 1,500 feet. Indeed, many flights are cleared for no lower than 1,800 feet, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Eastern Region Air Traffic Division. Residents, however, contend that pilots do not always obey those rules.

"We think it's a strong resolution to fight helicopter noise," Lisa Daglian, spokesperson for Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, said of CB7's recommended ban.

CB7's resolution, however, is advisory only. The final power to regulate flight plans rests with the FAA. If the city wins their appeal in federal court, they may win the right to regulate flights at the East 34th Street Heliport, but the suit does not specify other sites.

Messinger's office coordinated a task force last year to include representatives from the FAA and the helicopter industry in discussions on chopper concerns.

The task force will meet next at Messinger's office on Apr. 24, and plans to work with local members of Congress on federal legislation to help regulate helicopter use.

Cong. Carolyn Maloney contacted the FAA earlier this month requesting that the regulations which the city attempted to pass be reinstated. She has not yet received a response, she said.

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BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PRESS & COBBLE HILL NEWS

MARCH 13, 1997 PAGE 3

FAA to Investigate Just Which Copters Are Causing All the Noise in Brooklyn

By Raanan Geberer

The noisy helicopter problem that is vexing Brooklyn Heights may be largely caused not only by TV network helicopters or by tour copters, but by corporate- or privately owned craft that are flying below 1,100 feet.

(Letter, page 6.)

That was one idea that was thrown out as a possibility at Tuesday's meeting between the Helicopter Noise Coalition, led by Cadman Plaza resident Irwin Susskind; the three major TV networks; helicopter tour companies; Congressman Ed Towns, City Councilman Ken Fisher, and a representative of the Federal Aviation Administration.

At the end of the meeting, that FAA representative, Tom Bok, said he would take two weeks to investigate, seeing exactly who is leaving and who's landing at each of Manhattan's several heliports.

"At the meeting, no one denied that the problem exists," said Susskind. "We were taken quite seriously by Towns and Fisher."

Some of those present did say they would try to be more sensitive to neighborhood concerns.

For example, according to John Talmage, chief of staff for Fisher, the representatives of the TV networks said they would be more sensitive when they position helicopters for "beauty shots" of the New York skyline or the Brooklyn Bridge.

In the past, such helicopters have hovered around the vicinity of the Promenade for long periods at a time.

The two major helicopter tour companies, Liberty and National, also were represented. National revealed that some 15-20 percent of its flights were cargo flights or flights carrying passengers from the airports to Manhattan, not tourist outings.

On the non-tour flights, said Talmage, "we will see if we can negotiate with them [National] to follow the Belt Parkway or another, more southern route."

One problem with helicopters is that craft that fly lower than 1,100 feet are no longer under radar control from air traffic controllers. Conversely, the FAA discourages the whirlybirds from flying above 1,400 feet, where they may intrude into air space normally used by jets.

Another issue that came up at the meeting, which took place at the offices of the Fulton Mall Improvement Association, was that of a possible helicopter repair facility at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Local Development Corp.

Richard Drucker, Navy Yard vice president, said that a firm is interested in building such a facility at the yard's waterfront portion, near the dry docks. However, this proposal needs to go through a lengthy government review process, since the Yard is publicly owned.

One source who is familiar with the issue said the helicopters going to the facility wouldn't be flying over the Heights. Currently, the nearest repair facility is located on Long Island.

Last month, the Helicopter Noise Coalition, which also includes Manhattan members, held a similar meeting with a representative of Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger.

Brooklyn people attending yesterday's encounter included Susskind and his wife Sheila; Congressman Towns and his chief of staff Karen Johnson; Fisher and Talmage; Edward Ellien, Judy Sokoloff, Joe Rauen, and Brooklyn Heights Association executive director Judy Stanton.

HTWC p 251

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PRESS & COBBLE HILL NEWS

PAGE 6, MARCH 13, 1997

LETTERS

Helicopters: Real Problem

To the Editor:

We were disappointed in your editorial "Helicopters — Not the Real Noise Problem" [Feb. 27]. You obviously have not been subjected to the conversation stopping, window rattling, bone-jarring experience of a low-flying helicopter over the Heights. Yes, most of these last only a few seconds — unless you experience hovering traffic reporters or photographers on a "shoot" of the Manhattan skyline which can last up to an hour. And, the noise probably affects more people than you imagine.

There is the question of safety beside the quality of life issue. We have seen many helicopter flights only a few hundred feet over our building. There would be no chance of finding a safe landing spot in case of an engine failure. We are both fixed-wing pilots. We must abide by a Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR 91.119) which states in part that an aircraft may not be operated "below an altitude of 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle" over a congested area of a city. We assume helicopter pilots must abide by the same safety rules.

We agree that other quality of life issues such as street noises, the honk of horns and car alarms are important too and should be dealt with. It would be in the best interest of our neighborhood for you to support a cessation of helicopter noise and frighteningly close flights.

Dick and Elizabeth Zoch
Hicks Street

HWC P 252

BROOKLYN PAPER PUBLICATIONS

March 14-20, 1997

More copters Heights-bound

By Richard Allyn
Brooklyn Paper Publications

While Heights residents continue to battle against excessive helicopter noise, developers are laying plans for a helicopter repair facility at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Community activists met with elected officials and representatives from private helicopter companies, major TV networks, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in a recent summit to discuss increasing levels of chopper noise in the Heights.

"No one questioned that there is a lot of noise in the area because of copters flying over our homes," said Irwin Susskind, head of the Heights Helicopter Noise Coalition. "We were taken seriously."

Pilots for television new stations, who fly their helicopters over the Heights to capture "beauty shots" of the East River or Brooklyn Bridge, said they understood the residents' concerns. At Monday's meeting at the Fulton Mall Improvement Association, officials from channels 2, 4 and 7 said they would be "more sensitive," according to Susskind.

"They're going to try to take turns on an informal basis in flying over the area," noted Councilman Ken Fisher. "There was a genuine willingness on their part to mitigate the impact of flying over the area."

Operators of helicopter tour companies expressed surprise that their choppers were part of the problem, contending that their pilots maintain a strict path down the East River.

"They were told in no uncertain terms that this was not the case," Fisher said. "They promised to discuss it with their pilots."

Fisher added that the biggest offenders may be freelance copter pilots, who usually fly on an irregular schedule, making them harder to regulate.

"We asked the FAA to think about how to get the word out to be better neighbors," Fisher said. Part of this may involve changing current regulations, which do not require pilots flying below 1,400 feet to maintain radio contact with the FAA. Some community members suggested increasing this to 1,500 feet, to encourage pilots to fly farther from local residences.

Meanwhile, plans for a helicopter repair station along the Navy Yard's waterfront are in the works, according to Fisher. Currently, chopper owners have to fly to Islip, LI, for the nearest maintenance facility.

Fisher, who supports the proposal, said that the facility would not be a heliport for tour groups or charters.

"If it is possible to attract some of this business, which is now going to Long Island and New Jersey, then it is a good idea," Fisher said.

Susskind, who fears such a facility would attract more helicopter traffic to the Heights, was not as positive about the idea. "Considering the problems we have now, that would be a disaster," he said.

HNC p253

Congresswoman Maloney Requests FAA Assistance To Regulate 34th Street Heliport

In view of the problem of the intrusion of helicopter noise mentioned in a thought-provoking article by Ian Alterman in our last issue, The Beat has learned that Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney is taking swift action to remedy the situation.

Congresswoman Maloney has contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for assistance in obtaining federal action to regulate the operation of the 34th Street Heliport. The Heliport has plagued residents of the East Side of Manhattan with helicopter noise and quality of life problems for several years.

An Environmental Impact Statement issued in 1993 determined that residents of New York's East Side are heavily burdened by the helicopter noise. The EIS concluded further that the heliport generates significant noise levels during both peak and average hours of operation, and that single events give rise to intrusive noise levels.

The City of New York attempted to regulate helicopter traffic at the 34th Street Heliport by limiting the number of flights, eliminating weekend travel, reducing the hours of operation and controlling the route that helicopters can travel. However, a federal court has ruled that the City of New York cannot impose certain limitations on the heliport's use. In particular, the Court's decision permanently prohibits the City from enforcing restrictions that require a 47% reduction in operations, the complete elimination of weekend flights, the designation of sightseeing routes, the exclusion of Sikorsky S-58T helicopters engaging in sightseeing operations, and markings to identify craft operation out of the heliport.

Since the federal court has ruled that aviation safety and efficiency requirements can only be regulated by the Federal government, Maloney has contacted the FA, requesting them to take swift action to control the traffic.

"Although the City's requirements were reasonable, legitimate and effective, the Court's ruling precludes the City from enforcing them, claiming that only the Federal government can impose these requirements," says Maloney. "That is why I am urging the FAA to take whatever steps may be necessary to implement these types of restrictions in order to control the unhealthy and unbearable noise and air traffic in the City," she said.

HVC D 254

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

MARCH 17, 1997

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

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THE CHOPPER WARS

Chop, chop, chop... New York City's skies are being assaulted by a plague of shiny, metal, 4,000-pound locusts—we're talking, of course, about helicopters. Whirlybirds. Choppers. Autogyros. Eggbeaters. One hundred and forty thousand times a year, helicopters take off and land in Manhattan, raining high-decibel misery down on any who happen to be unlucky enough to live or work in their path. That's a 23 percent increase in chopper flights since 1991. Half of those helicopters are packed with tourists intent on seeing New York City from high above like some miniature toy. In the interest in maintaining the city's livability, all helicopter sightseeing flights should have their wings clipped immediately.

Toward that end, an East Side resident named Joy Held—she fought tall buildings and rats in the 1980's—has formed the Helicopter Noise Coalition. The coalition wants all sightseeing flights banned as well as flights by news helicopters. Ending sightseeing flights is crucial, but, despite the gaudy self-promotion of WNBC-TV's Chopper 4, there are times—such as the crash last summer of Trans World Airlines Flight 800—when airborne TV news crews perform a public service.

But about the sightseeing flights, Ms. Held hits the nail on the head: "It's not even transportation," she said. "It's entertainment. The tourists are here to see the natives." And the natives are restless: An acoustics engineer for Bell Helicopter Textron told *The New York Times* that Bell 206 helicopters make about 78 decibels of noise at 1,000 feet—equivalent to a ringing alarm clock on your night table.

Ms. Held's coalition has had its first victory: The Peninsula Hotel on Fifth Avenue has stopped suggesting helicopter tours to guests. The Giuliani administration is also on Ms. Held's side: Last year, the city brought a lawsuit seeking to reduce flights by 50 percent out of the city-owned heliport at East 34th Street, which happens to be the nation's busiest. Its 150 takeoffs and landings per day are a thunderous interruption to its neighbors, which include the New York University Medical Center. But in January, Judge Sonia Sotomayor of Federal District Court in Manhattan ruled that only the Federal Government can restrict helicopter flights. The city is appealing her ridiculous decision.

Meanwhile, the only people benefiting are two sightseeing companies, National Helicopter and Liberty Helicopter Tours, and business is growing. A 90,000-square-foot heliport is planned for West 35th Street. The city's elected officials should throw their support behind Ms. Held. True, the city must accommodate the daily tension between Manhattan as a tourist spectacle and Manhattan as a livable town—but so far, we haven't heard any tourists say they came here for the helicopters.

OVER HNC p255

Vol. 27 No. 17 March 20, 1997

OUR TOWN

NEWS CLIPS

EAST SIDE POLS SEEK CHOPPER REGS

In a joint letter to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, Assemb. Steven Sanders, State Sen. Roy Goodman and Councilmembers Andrew Eristoff and A. Gifford Miller, requested the FAA's assistance in regulating the 34th Street Heliport. The letter follows a federal court ruling granting exclusive oversight of the port to the FAA — power the city had sought for itself.

HNC p 256

Sunday, March 23, 1997

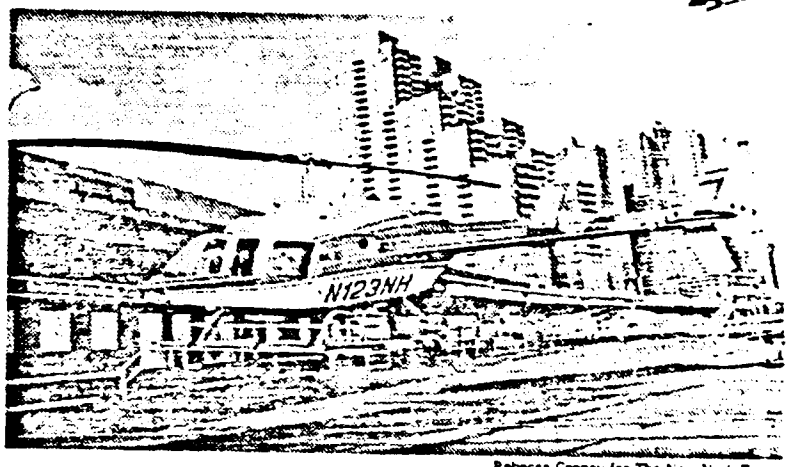
The New York Times

The City

Section 13 CY 9

RED HOOK

Noise Greets Plan to Fix Helicopters



Rebecca Cooney for The New York Times

The war against helicopter noise has spread to a new front in Brooklyn.

In another time, an effort to build a helicopter repair and storage operation in the Brooklyn Navy Yard may have quietly rolled through the convoluted City Planning Commission approval process.

The operation and its new jobs, supporters might have argued, would help transform the rusting testament to American naval power into a Brooklyn job-machine.

The argument may still be true, but a new coalition of seasoned helicopter-opponents from Manhattan and a group of Brooklyn novices is vowing to halt the project.

The coalition, the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, says it represents residents of 17 Manhattan and Brooklyn neighborhoods tired of excessive noise from tour, news and private helicopters.

While the group's call for a complete ban on all non-emergency helicopter flights in New York City is likely to go unheeded, its opposition to Supersonic Aviation's proposed repair and storage facility could complicate matters or even prove fatal.

"We feel it's a complete slap in the face," said Joy Held, executive director of the coalition. "It's already bedlam and they want to bring in more helicopters. Any increase in helicopter traffic is totally unacceptable."

A public hearing on helicopter noise will be held by the Brooklyn Borough Board on April 15, but the fate of the proposed facility lies in the hands of the City Planning Commission, which will review plans over the next few months.

With the Brooklyn Navy Yard already zoned for industrial use there is no need for a zoning change, but Supersonic must receive a special permit from the commission to begin operating the facility.

Supporters argue that the repair facility will generate few new flights and will bring jobs to the area. According to the proposal, helipads will be built on a 300-by-100-foot section of a half-collapsed pier in the Navy Yard.

Twelve pads will be available for overnight storage and Supersonic predicts that six to eight helicopters would be serviced a day. If approved, the facility would be the first of its kind in New York City. The nearest repair and storage centers are in Long Island and New Jersey.

"We're hopeful that it will happen," said Marc Rosenbaum, senior vice president of the nonprofit Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation. "This is not a heliport. This would be six to eight helicopters taking off and landing a day."

Mr. Rosenbaum said that the approach and exit of the facility would be over the East River and a noise test showed the Navy Yard's industrial noise levels would not be exceeded.

Cheskel Schwimmer, president of Supersonic Aviation, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

DAVID ROHDE

HNC p257

RESIDENT

Mayday, Mayday

Opponents Want Ban on Copters; City Wants to Study the Issue

by Peter Duffy

They are causing nervous breakdowns. They are forcing residents to leave the city. They are hampering work schedules. They are closing businesses. What are they?

You got it — helicopters.

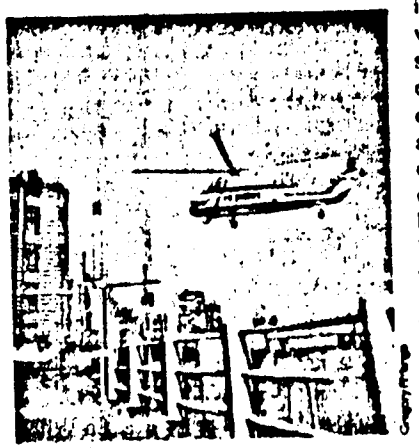
More and more city residents, from a wide variety of neighborhoods, are banding together to search for a way — any way — to end helicopter flights over the city, which they claim cause everything from frazzled and battered nerves to someone deciding they'd rather live in California. They're mad as hell and not about to take it any more.

"The city doesn't realize the depth of feeling of people who are affected by these tours," said Patricia Namm Saffran, a helicopter opponent. "They don't realize that young professionals, young entrepreneurs, the lifeblood of the city really, are starting to move away and sell their condos and homes. It's really going to be a brain drain if [this continues]."

Formed in February, the Helicopter Noise Coalition, led by East 65th Street resident Joy Held, has already amassed a membership that includes individuals and community groups from three boroughs — Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. The group has lobbied legislators, helicopter companies and practically anybody who will listen to its plight. Now, the group is considering legal action.

"I was on the phone this morning with two lawyers," Held said on Tuesday.

In addition to the many flights that begin and end outside of the city, helicopter flights originate out of four heliports in Manhattan — from locations at East 34th Street, East 60th Street, Wall Street and West 30th Street. The flights are largely unregulated, though a non-legally binding agreement — brokered last year by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, the Federal Aviation Administration and two sightseeing helicopter companies — altered some of their routes. (And pushed the problem into other neighborhoods, Held contends.)



Look. Up in the sky. It's ...

There are many kinds of helicopter services — including sightseeing, corporate, commuter, media and emergency (police, Coast Guard, etc.) flights — and a wide variety of governmental entities are involved in their operation. For example, the city owns two of the heliports — at East 34th and East 60th streets: The state owns West 30th Street, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey owns Wall Street.

Despite the degree of its involvement, the city does not have a comprehensive policy regarding helicopters and helicopter flights.

The city Economic Development Corporation, though, says it is developing a policy, which should take from six to eight months to complete. It is in the process of hiring a consultant who will do the kind of research — on the economic benefits of helicopters, on the noise levels associated with the flights and other information — that would be needed to formulate the policy.

But just how much can the city — can anyone — do to end the flights?

"We have to be sensitive about the legality [of any restrictions]," Joe Rose, director of the Department of City Planning, told a gathering of residents concerned about the helicopter issue on March 31. "We can't control who flies over the airspace in New York."

When the Giuliani administration attempted to placed restrictions on helicopter flights at the East 34th Street heliport, the helicopter companies promptly sued the city. A federal district court judge ruled in January that only the FAA can impose flight restrictions, striking down a number of city rules, including a 47-percent reduction in flights, an end to all weekend sightseeing flights, and requirements that 'copters be marked for easy identification from the ground.

The ruling is currently under appeal.

"[We need] legally sustainable regulations," said Rose. "If we don't do it right, we will have nothing."

Such a measured approach doesn't please many of the helicopter opponents. They want the city to immediately close the 34th Street and 60th Street heliports and, further, end all helicopter flights in the city, except for emergencies.

They say that because the city is contemplating opening a heliport at Pier 76, between 34th and 35th streets on the West Side; and a helicopter repair station at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, it has one thing in mind: "expansion of this industry," said Held.

One area where many public officials and helicopter opponents seem to agree, however, is on the elimination of sightseeing helicopters.

"I would be happy with a complete ban on tourist flights," said Councilman Andrew Eristoff, who favors pushing corporate flights further downtown toward Wall Street.

Said Jo Ann Macy, chair of Community Board 4, of the sightseeing flights: "New York City is not a theme park." ■

Also in Greenwich Res. Apr. 11-17, 1997 Page 9

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARDS

GREG SARGENT

HIGH-FLOWN RHETORIC OVER LOW-ALTITUDE NOISE

Board 7's members have a simple, succinct response to the tourist choppers that have created a high-decibel hell on the Upper West Side: Shoot 'em down!

Any attentive listener at the board's meeting on March 4 might have noticed that Upper West Side residents are upset about the growing number of tourist helicopters that offer visitors a chance to view Manhattan from a safe distance: the clouds. Choppers take off and land in the borough 140,000 times a year, a 23 percent increase in flights since 1991. The whirlybirds fly up and down the Hudson and East rivers and overland at 86th Street.

At the meeting, besieged residents begged the board to pass a resolution banning all tourist flights. One reason: A chopper at 1,000 feet makes as much noise as the alarm clock that rudely awakens you every morning, according to acoustics engineers.

"The threats to safety and national security are intolerable," Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, told the board.

"The resolution [will] rescue a community from the scourge, the menace, from corporate contempt and avarice," added West 86th Street resident Joan Bonagura, referring to the two private companies that run the flights.

"There is no escape," said local resident Lorraine Heilweil.

The resolution passed. But there are signs that residents may take matters into their own hands.

In *West Side Beat*, a local newspaper, a writer penned a somewhat startling revenge fantasy. In it, a resident, fed up with bureaucratic stalling, orders a tripod-mounted launcher from a paramilitary equipment catalogue. "Mary pushed her finger down, launching the grenade. She heard a soft 'whoosh' ... [A] few seconds passed before the copter exploded spectacularly, sending a rain of metal and human debris over the river."

"If every community board in Manhattan sends unanimous resolutions to the City Council and the Mayor, they will no longer be able to ignore [us]," the piece concluded. "Failing this, I can tell you where to get a catalogue of paramilitary equipment ..."

The Observer, of course, does not condone violence or the use of unfamiliar weaponry without the supervision of an experienced paramilitary technician.

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EASTSIDE RESIDENT
VOL. 9 NO. 28 FREE
Serving The Upper East Side
MARCH 26 - APRIL 1, '97

Helicopters, Helicopters

A helicopter policy forum will be held Mon. March 31, at 7 p.m. at New York University Medical Center, 550 First Ave. Speakers will include Joe Rose, chair of the city Planning Commission, and Charles Millard, president of New York City Economic Development Corporation. Come one, come all.

HWC p260

Brooklyn Heights Paper
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COPTERS!

Heights heli-fight heats up

By Richard Allyn
Brooklyn Paper Publications

As heavy helicopter traffic over Brooklyn Heights persists and plans for a copter repair facility on the Brooklyn Navy Yard develop, community activists are girding to do battle with the choppers.

"I'm concerned we're becoming the helicopter capital of the world here, and our neighborhoods are going to be lost," said Edward Ellien, a Remsen Street resident and a member of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City.

Speaking at a Community Board 2 Transportation Committee meeting on Tuesday evening, Ellien and many other community members voiced anger and frustration over the unabating level of helicopter traffic and noise in their neighborhoods. Henry Street resident Irwin Susskind, who dreads opening the windows of his 24th-floor apartment because of the noise, said that he and his wife endure "a continuous stream of copters every day, from 9 am to 9 pm."

"Five minutes of silence is unheard of," said Monique Denoncin, a resident of Vinegar Hill, located between the Navy Yard and the Manhattan Bridge. "But at least now I know I'm not alone, that other people are suffering from this, too."

In a recent meeting with local officials, helicopter tour companies, local networks, and FAA officials, community activists shared their concerns and "were taken seriously," Susskind said.

However, at the same meeting, the proposal for a helicopter repair and storage facility on the Navy Yard was mentioned. Helicopter opponents fear this project will signal more air traffic and more noise.

"This is an incredible affront," said Susskind. "It's ridiculous if they think we won't hear any noise from it."

Richard Drucker, vice-president of planning and development for the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, contended that the facility, run by Supersonic Aviation, will not affect the surrounding communities.

"The copters would be coming in directly off the river and into the Navy Yard," he said. "They wouldn't be going over land at all. This site on the Navy Yard is just about as far away from residents as you can be."

Councilman Ken Fisher also supports the project, citing the jobs which will be created and recaptured business activity which is now lost to New Jersey and Long Island.

The company would also establish approach paths, or routes along which the copters would take off or land. "They will be able to control the approach, to minimize the impact on the Brownstone neighborhoods," Fisher said.

Fisher added that the project also shouldn't impact significantly on neighborhoods closer to the Navy Yard, such as Vinegar Hill. Community activists emphasized the need to develop a united front with other affected neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Manhattan. "Now is the time to act," said Ellien. He noted that in the past, the FAA and the helicopter industry have dealt complaints in one neighborhood simply by shifting the traffic to other areas.

"That's why it is so important that all affected New York City residents in all neighborhoods and boroughs make our concerns heard by our representatives with one voice," Ellien said.

There will be a borough board meeting on copter noise on Tuesday, April 15 at 6 pm at Borough Hall.

Earlier this month, Community Board 7 in Manhattan passed a resolution which demanded the ban of all sightseeing helicopters over any part of its district. CB 2's Traffic Committee is considering proposing a similar resolution.

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Brooklyn Heights Paper

BROOKLYN PAPER PUBLICATIONS

Is there a lawyer in the house?

3

Heightsters join Manhattanites in helicopter protest

By Richard Allyn
Brooklyn Paper Publications

In their ongoing efforts to battle what they deem "intolerable levels" of helicopter traffic and the accompanying noise in their neighborhood, Brooklyn Heights residents are resorting to legal action.

Targeting the city, state, and all helicopter charter companies, the Noise Coalition of New York City plans to file a suit in state Supreme Court at the end of the month, according to Heights resident and Coalition member Edward Ellien.

The suit will be based upon a nuisance claim which charges that residents and businesses alike have been detrimentally affected by chopper noise, said Jack Lester, the attorney hired to represent the coalition.

"We are asking the court to issue an injunction against the pervasive, obnoxious and unabated nuisance of the helicopter noise," Lester added.

The city's lack of action on the helicopter issue prompted the legal action, according to coalition members. Recently, Mayor Giuliani announced he would close down the 60th Street heliport, displacing the National Helicopter Company and relocating Johnson Controls, another copter company, to the 34th Street heliport.

The mayor has indicated he's taking certain steps to alleviate the helicopter problem," Ellien said. "But nothing has happened on these fronts — so now we're taking action."

"We don't feel comfortable at this point in the game that when the dust settles with the city's initiatives, that the number of copters will be reduced or limited significantly," Ellien added.

The coalition, which has members from throughout New York City, believes their legal suit will give them an edge in dealing with both politicians and the helicopter companies themselves.

"This will be the first time the community has weighed in, in a meaningful way, in the court process," Lester said. "For the first time, members of the community will be at the table."

"We are concerned that we are not going to be involved in the solution, whatever form that may take," noted Ellien, a Remsen Street resident. "We think this lawsuit will give us more leverage, so that we are heard and taken seriously."

Heights residents have charged that low-flying copters not only increase noise and vibration levels, but that the long-term impact on the area's quality of life could drive residents away and decrease property values. Plans to site a helicopter repair facility on the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which are also under consideration, also have residents concerned.

Lester, working with the coalition, is currently gathering support for the case, including affidavits from residents and businesses affected by copter traffic, and an environmental study on helicopters conducted by New York University.

Meanwhile, Rep. Ed Towns, whose district includes Brooklyn Heights, is preparing to introduce legislation to control helicopter traffic.

"We believe the copter traffic has grown to intolerable levels, causing great emotional and physical stress for Brooklyn Heights residents," said Karen Johnson, Towns' chief-of-staff.

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Town & Village

TOWN & VILLAGE ■ THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 1997

Maloney asks FAA to regulate copters

Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney has contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for assistance in obtaining federal action to regulate the operation of the 34th Street Heliport. The heliport has plagued residents of the East Side of Manhattan with helicopter noise and quality-of-life problems for several years.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued in 1993 determined that residents of New York's East Side are heavily burdened by the helicopter noise. The EIS concluded further that the heliport generates significant noise levels during both peak and average hours of operation, and that single events give rise to intrusive noise levels.

The city attempted to regulate helicopter traffic at the 34th Street Heliport by limiting the number of flights, eliminating weekend travel, reducing the hours of operation and controlling the route that helicopter can travel. However, a federal court has ruled that the city can not impose certain limitations on the heliport's use.

In particular, the court's decision permanently prohibits the city from enforcing restrictions that require a 47 percent reduction in operations, the complete elimination of weekend flight, the designation of sightseeing routes, the exclusive of large helicopters from engaging in sightseeing operations, and markings to identify craft operation out of the heliport.

Since the federal court has ruled that aviation safety and efficiency requirements can only be regulated by federal government, Maloney has contacted the FAA requesting them to take swift action to control the traffic.

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Town & Village

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264

Residents put heat on pols over heliports

By Paul Defede

The East Side has turned into a "war zone," claims one longtime resident, and the city can't do anything about it.

It's not safety she's referring to -- crime statistics continue to plummet. She's railing against the hundreds of unregulated helicopter flights taking off from and landing at the 34th Street heliport each day.

About 141,000 flights begin or end each year at the handful of heliports in the city, a 23-percent increase since 1991, according to the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City (HNC). More than one-third of those flights originate or terminate at the 34th Street heliport, which has been the target of more and more complaints from neighbors about its noise and pollution.

"It's unbearable," said HNC's Eileen Baum, who's logged the constant buzz of helicopters in the air since 1988. "It's every two to three minutes, from eight in the morning to eight in the night. It's just horrible. They fly low and slow and noisily."

Members of HNC and other residents, angry over a recent federal court ruling that prevents the city from regulating sight-seeing and other flights from its own heliports, urged politicians at a forum on Monday to put pressure on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to restrict air traffic.

The city is currently appealing the decision by Federal District Judge Sonia Sotomayor, and elected officials plan to meet with the FAA late this week to discuss reducing flights.

"It is clear that the FAA is going to have to start paying attention to this issue in the future, said City Planning CommissionChairman Joseph Rose, who co-hosted the forum at NYU Medical Center. "A complete absence of regulations is not acceptable."

One resident at the forum likened sharp rise in helicopter traffic to the "invasion of the body snatchers." Another complained that the unregulated sight-seeing and corporate flights are turning New York City into a theme park.

"It's absurd that city can't regulate flights in and out of a city-owned heliport," said City Councilman Andrew Eristoff, another of the forum's sponsors.

Earlier this year, the city cut National Helicopter flights by half -- and limited others to patterns over the East River -- at the 34th Street heliport. National Helicopter sued to have the restrictions lifted, and Sotomayor ruled in the private company's favor, deeming that only the FAA can regulate air space.

"The FAA's power trumps the city's ability to impose restrictions," said New York City Economic Development Corporation President Charles Millard, also a forum co-host.

The city has appealed Sotomayor's decision, but has to comply with the ruling for now. Eristoff remains confident that "the city will triumph with the appeal."

Residents at the forum pointed out that in other states it is illegal to fly over state parks and questioned why the FAA allows unrestricted flights over residential sections of Manhattan.

Two heliports in New York are owned by the city, one by the Port Authority and the other by the state. Tours constitute the majority of air traffic but media, corporate, charter and commuter flights also add to the busy air traffic.

A city master plan for its heliports at 34th and 60th streets is being prepared by the Economic Development Corporation, according to Eristoff, and should be completed in several months.

OUR TOWN

1997

NEWS CLIPS

'COPTER CONFERENCE

About 100 residents opposed to tourist helicopter flights braved the snow and sleet for a Monday evening conference hosted by Councilmember Andrew Eristoff and featuring speakers Economic Development Corporation chairman Charles Millard and City Planning Commission chair Joseph Rose. Millard and Rose spoke about creating a citywide "master plan" for controlling helicopters. But the audience shifted uneasily when plans were discussed to build a mega-heliport at Pier 76 on West 35th Street.

HNC P265

City's Moves to Curb Chopper Noise

Plan Too Little, Too Late, Critics Say

BY AL AMATEAU

City officials got caught in the turbulence from irate members of the Helicopter Noise Coalition at a public forum called to announce the city's development of a master plan for helicopter policy.

But chopper-hating residents were not appeased. Coalition executive director Joy Held reiterated her group's demand that the city ban helicopters, except for emergency flights, from "New York City land and waterways."

The March 31 forum, conducted by East Side Councilmember Andrew Eristoff, included a panel comprised of City Planning Commissioner Joe Rose and Economic Development Corp. President Charles Millard

"I think helicopters are incompatible with Manhattan residential neighborhoods," said Eristoff.

While most of the audience focused their resentment on the two city-owned heliports at 34th and 60th streets on the East River, residents of Brooklyn and Manhattan's West Side also weighed in against burgeoning sightseeing flights that disturb their peace.

"New York City is not a theme park," declared Jo Ann Macy, chair of Community Board 4 (CB4) calling for curtailment of tourist flights.

CB4's West Side district between 14th and 59th streets includes the 30th Street heliport on a state-owned pier in the Hudson River where 60 percent of the 46,772 take-offs and landings in 1995 were for sightseeing. The district also includes Pier 76, the municipal auto tow pound where the city proposes a large heliport terminal with three landing pads and a restaurant of over 80,000 square feet.

A request for proposals from heliport operators was issued in February for Pier 76, with a target opening date of 2001, but Millard indicated at the forum that the city would defer action on the project until more hearings are held and a helicopter policy master plan is developed.

Noting that regulation of helicopter flights is mainly the responsibility of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Rose and Millard recalled that a Federal Court last year overturned

See CHOPPER, Page 17

CHOPPER

(Continued from page 13)

most of a set of city regulations restricting flights from the 34th Street heliport, where 80 percent of traffic is tourist related. The court allowed flight between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends. The city is appealing.

Millard also insisted that helicopter flights that carry business executives to Manhattan serve an important economic function and should not be banned.

Macy and others at the forum said that helicopter flights over the city increased dramatically beginning in October 1995. But Eileen Baum, a resident of Central Park West at 95th Street, said she has been tracking helicopters since 1988. "They come up the East River, and cross over to the Reservoir in Central Park," she said, "The sky is covered with helicopters. Spending a day in Central Park is like spending a day at JFK Airport."

Helicopter operators agreed last autumn, after a meeting called by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, to cross Manhattan only north of 86th Street and to fly north and south over the rivers instead of the land. Operators also agreed to raise flight altitude from 1,400 to 1,500 feet. Residents, however, contend that pilots do not always obey those rules. Moreover, the FAA does not clear flights lower than 1,800 feet.

Orin Tatcher, a resident of West 89th Street at Riverside Drive, told the forum that he first noticed helicopters in October 1996 when he saw several hovering in the sky over his West Side apartment. He derided statements that controlling helicopter flight is difficult because of conflicting government jurisdiction. "When a helicopter crashes on a New York City residential neighborhood, the city will find the will to do something," he said.

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THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

APRIL 7, 1997

FLYING DEAF

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for your enlightened editorial ["The Chopper Wars," March 17] urging the banning of sightseeing helicopters from New York City.

We would like to make some points of clarification. While you say that the Mayor is on the side of the city's Helicopter Noise Coalition, that remains to be seen. (1) Tourist helicopter flights have increased under the Giuliani administration. (2) It is entirely within the Mayor's purview to close the 34th Street heliport that has tortured residents for over a decade. (3) The Mayor is pursuing plans to build a mammoth heliport at Pier 76 on the Hudson, designed to increase tourist flights 250 percent over the next 20 years. (4) All our efforts to meet with the Mayor or his deputies have been rebuffed, while Ray Harding, a known National Helicopter lobbyist, has the Mayor's ear. (5) We call for Mayor Giuliani to abandon plans for a helicopter repair facility at the Brooklyn Naval Yard.

JOY A. HELD
Executive director,
Helicopter Noise Coalition,
of New York City
Manhattan

THE ENEMY WITHIN

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your editorial concerning the assault of helicopters on New York City. I have been trying to make my voice heard above their din to alert city officials to limit their use. I first became very much aware of helicopters when Columbus Avenue was being torn up, and I was told, by the local precinct, that engineers were using them at low altitudes to oversee the project. But when Columbus Avenue was paved and open, the helicopters droned on. Tourists were being whisked over Central Park, the Dakota building, my neighborhood on the West Side and out to the Hudson River.

Choppers escalate the noise level so dramatically that they tip the already considerable din of the city from tolerable to intolerable. They tip the noise level that most New Yorkers have learned to ignore into a state of bombardment that makes the city sound like it is under siege. We should object. If the 90,000-square-foot heliport is allowed to be built on West 35th Street, and news stations or anyone else are allowed to hurl choppers into the air with abandon, the enemy will not be tourists, helicopter companies or others, but our city government and ourselves for letting it happen.

DOROTHY KELLETT
Manhattan

HNC
P267

RESIDENT
Serving The Upper East Side
VOL. 9 NO. 31 FREE
APRIL 16 - APRIL 22, '97

NEWS

Anti-Helicopter Group Gets Cash

An Upper West Side resident has donated $10,000 to the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City to help in the group's fight to ban all helicopter traffic over the city.

The money was pledged by Robert W. Wilson.

"He gave the money to us because he's incensed at what helicopters are doing to New York City," said Joy Held, the group's director.

The coalition will use the money to pay for the production of its promotional materials — it has released 62- and 92-page packets documenting the helicopter problem — staff support and, if needed, legal fees. The Helicopter Noise Coalition is now in the process of incorporating itself as a not-for-profit agency.

Held said the group's membership is growing rapidly, with new interest focused on Staten Island, where a number of residents have complained about helicopter noise.

The group is trying to convince community boards to condemn sightseeing helicopter flights. Community Board 7 has done so, and three additional boards, including CB 8, will vote on measures in upcoming meetings.

CB 7, in its resolution, called helicopter flights "intolerable" and that they result "in great emotional and physical stress."

Also in
Queens Resident
April 16 - 22, 1997
page 8

HNC p268

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Maloney: Restrict Helicopters

To the editor:

The furor surrounding the city's unbearable helicopter air and noise pollution and safety concerns has gotten so loud, it's almost drowning out the whirling of the helicopter blades themselves. Be assured, we hear you. That's why Rep. Jerrold Nadler and I held a meeting recently with FAA officials and community members to give the community an opportunity to air their grievances.

We called on the FAA to act as quickly as possible to issue strong regulations limiting helicopter flights over New York City. As a first step, I believe that New York City should change its zoning laws to restrict the location of heliports within city limits.

The FAA has taken strong action in other places. At least three restricted fly zones currently exist in the United States -- Hawaii, the Los Angeles Airport and the Grand Canyon. Well I say, New York is a national treasure and deserves to be treated like one. The FAA should take the strongest possible action to restrict helicopter flights over our city.

Together we will control this noise pollution, stop the safety hazards and make our neighborhoods peaceful again.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney
East Side

The Westsider

April 17-23, 1997

Maloney On Chopper Noise

To the Editor:

The furor surrounding the City's unbearable helicopter air and noise pollution and safety concerns has gotten so loud, it's almost drowning out the whirling of the helicopter blades themselves.

Be assured, we hear you. That's why Cong. Jerrold Nadler and I held a meeting last week with FAA officials and community members to give the community and opportunity to air their grievances.

We called on the FAA to act as quickly as possible to issue strong regulations limiting helicopter flights over New York City. As a first step, I believe that New York City should change its zoning laws to restrict the location of heliports within the city limits. In fact, if I were still a member of the city Council, I'd be studying the legislation right now so I could change those zoning laws.

The FAA has taken strong action in other places. At least three restricted fly zones currently exist in the United States – Hawaii, the Los Angeles Airport and the Grand Canyon. I say New York is a national treasure and deserves to be treated like one. The FAA should take the strongest possible action to restrict helicopter flights over our city.

Cong. Carolyn B. Maloney

HNC p269

THE WESTSIDER

APRIL 17-23, 1997

EDITORIAL

Target FAA Over Helicopter Noise

Helicopters, most West Siders would agree, can be a nuisance. But they are more than that; their concomitant noise and exhaust are recognized hazards.

The Helicopter Noise Coalition, an activist group seeking an end to all helicopter traffic on the island of Manhattan, has its heart in the right place. But, we ask, how would such a ban be carried out?

Because aircraft are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the city has little power to limit their flights. City regulations to do that were struck down by a federal court last year.

Such a ban would have to come from the FAA. While the FAA has a precedent for creating "limited-flight" zones, none of the existing zones in the country are comparable to New York City. Most flights here, granted, are non-essential sightseeing flights. But the sightseeing helicopters share the skies with business traffic and shuttle services that some might call vital.

In the midst of all this, it has emerged that of the four heliports on the island of Manhattan, two are on city-owned properties. Of the other two, one is on state land and one on land owned by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Couldn't their leases be cancelled?

That's not a solution. Kicking heliports off government-owned land won't get rid of them, it would only force them to seek private quarters, no doubt at higher rents – and higher fares. Helicopter traffic may be limited, but only because helicopters will have become toys for the rich.

Clearly, this is not a problem that can be solved at the city level alone. If the court says the city has no power to ban flights, then the FAA has to do it. That's where activists should be concentrating their efforts.

HWC P270

Brooklyn Heights Paper

Vol. 20, No. 16 • April 18-24, 1997

Page 1

Golden joins Heightsters in attack on helicopter noise

By Richard Allyn
Brooklyn Paper Publications

While Brownstone Brooklynites have endured unwanted vehicular traffic on their streets for years, their neighborhoods are now prey to another invasion: helicopters hovering overhead.

"It's only fair," Borough President Golden said sarcastically at a borough board meeting on Tuesday. "We get the truck traffic on these little streets — so why shouldn't we get the air traffic, too?"

Community activists, representatives for local officials, and members of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City attended the meeting at Borough Hall, which took place only hours after a corporate helicopter crashed into the East River, killing one passenger.

On Wednesday after the crash, Mayor Giuliani said he will work to decrease the number of helicopter flights permitted in the city, citing the need to reduce noise levels produced by the choppers.

Activists charge that tourist, commuter and courier helicopter traffic has increased to unbearably noisy levels over parts of Brownstone Brooklyn in the past year, and fear that plans for a chopper repair facility on the Brooklyn Navy Yard will bring even more copter traffic into the borough.

Forum participants, including Golden, believed this trend signals a problem spiralling out of control.

"Eventually we'll have helicopters flying all over the place and totally unregulated," Golden predicted. "We are heading for chaos — they'll eventually be all over our neighborhoods."

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) operations supervisor Tom Bok fielded questions from Golden and the audience, who demanded to know how the FAA monitors the roughly 300 helicopters which take off and land in New York City each day.

The FAA is not required to oversee all copters, however — specifically, those which fly below an altitude of 1,500 feet, Bok said.

"Most of the traffic, we see on our radar screens, but there are some operations we don't see," Bok admitted, referring to the pilots who fly lower to the ground.

"We don't talk to them, we don't know they are there, and we don't monitor them," he added.

The low-flying copters are believed to be the ones most responsible for the noise problems in Brooklyn Heights.

Golden also wanted to know whether the FAA conducts inspections of the crafts for noise control. While the copters are not recertified for noise levels after their initial certification, Bok said, the crafts are maintained periodically. These tune-ups help to ensure that noise levels produced by the choppers are kept in check, he added.

Media copters who hover over the Brooklyn Bridge attempting to capture "beauty shots" of the skyline have increasingly become repeat offenders in the community's battle against the copters, activists charged.

"These traffic copters are perched overhead for all kinds of time," Golden agreed. "Maybe they should pool together and and use just one craft, instead of having 15 copters all over the place."

For the past year, the FAA has been working with Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's office on a task force to address community concerns over heavy helicopter traffic. Brooklyn Heights' Rep. Ed Towns has proposed the formation of a similar task force in Brooklyn.

Through Messinger's task force, the FAA has already agreed to adjust some tour routes pilots use in Manhattan, and the altitude requirements in some areas have been increased.

Last week, the traffic and transportation committee of Community Board 2 considered a ban on copters over its district, a move recently approved by Manhattan's Community Board 7.

The full board, however, was hamstrung by the fact that not enough of the 50 board members came to the meeting. A quorum of 26 members is necessary to make any vote of the board binding.

Still, the community and local officials vow to continue the fight against the copter traffic.

"I can assure you, this is far from over," Golden said.

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Brooklyn Heights COURIER
Downtown/Metrotech
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Apr. 21 - May 4, 1997

Helicopter Hell In the Heights

Edward Ellien, founder of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, describes the disruption of 30 to 40 helicopters an hour passing over Brooklyn Heights. Photo by Matt Sweeney

Low-Flying Chopper Traffic Rattles Harried Brooklyn Heights Residents

By Matthew Sweeney

Residents of Brooklyn Heights are tired of constant helicopter flights that they say rattle the windows, shake the floors, and for one resident, make it necessary to turn on the vacuum cleaner just to read a book.

A group -- the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City -- has banded together residents to try and stop the helicopter flights over the neighborhood. Led by Edward Ellien, they recently pleaded their case before Community Board 2, and asked for the board's support.

No Control Over Chopper Paths

Helicopter traffic is within an area that is largely unregulated. "Class B" air space runs from 42nd Street in Manhattan to Delancey Street, cutting a swath of air traffic that is monitored by the air control tower at LaGuardia Airport. North and south of the class B zone, however, there is no contact with LaGuardia, said Ellien. Helicopters travel in this unmonitored space.

Furthermore, Ellien made a round of phone calls to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other bureaucratic agencies, none of which monitor helicopter traffic.

"Nobody effectively regulates these flights," said Ellien, who noted that there is no minimum flight altitude for helicopters.

Passing the Buck

Helicopter traffic has been a problem in several neighborhoods in Manhattan and seems to have come to Brooklyn only recently. With heliports at West 6th Street, West 34th Street, Wall Street, West 30th Street, and East 60th Street -- and with plans to build a larger heliport on West 36th as well as a helicopter repair facility at the Navy Yard -- there are more choppers up there than ever before.

The many chartered, commercial, tourist, and news helicopters have sprung city residents from bed in years past. Complaints, however, have resulted in temporary ap-

Continued on page 25

Helicopter Traffic Rattles Heights Residents

Continued from cover

peasement as helicopter paths shifted to other neighborhoods until residents once again got together and made their own noise back.

The copters used to go across 92nd Street, then, after complaints, they moved to 72nd Street, then back north above 86th Street. Traveling north to south, the helicopters used to fly over 2nd Avenue and now they fly over the rivers.

Residents who have joined in support of the Helicopter Noise Coalition speak for putting an to end the buck-passing.

Noise Pollution

Irwin Suskind, a resident of a Henry Street high-rise, said the noise situation is like the movie "Apocalypse Now."

"The sky is full of them," he said. At its worst, he noted, there can be 30 to 40 helicopters within a single hour.

One of his neighbors puts the vacuum cleaner on when she wants to read.

"It's almost like having a constant jackhammer outside your building," said Suskind. "The noise and the vibration is really incredibly stressful -- it's really painful."

"We are asking you to support the people of this city, and pass a resolution to take action against them," said Ellien.

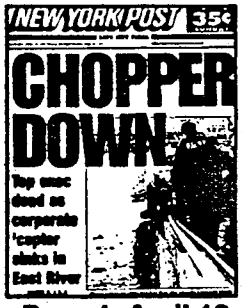
The community board referred the issue to its transportation committee

NEW YORK POST
LATE CITY FINAL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 1997 /

POST LETTERS **OUR E-MAIL ADDRESS:** editor@nypostonline.com

COPTER CURBS: TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE?

WHEN elderly drivers plow through parks and sidewalks with "out of control" cars, there is rarely a call to ban such cars and drivers from the city. When huge semi trucks corner over people with their deadly rear tires there is not even a proper investigation. But why does the occasional, statistically insignificant helicopter death in this city always result in heliport questioning and closing?



Page 1, April 16

I voted for the mayor, but I am ashamed how he and neighborhood groups have twisted this recent helicopter tragedy to their benefit. By reducing copter flights 40 percent, he buys votes from mostly affluent Manhattanites. By reducing copter flights, he increases pedestrian deaths as cabs race further out to catch copters.

In New York City, collisions between pedestrians and motor vehicles result in about 240 deaths each year. An additional 20 bicyclists die each year. One pedestrian died from an helicopter accident in 1977. That's it. If the mayor truly wants to reduce deaths he will choose to slow the traffic in this city. If he chooses to stop the deadly speeding trucks and cars, I believe the voters of the city will applaud and reelect him in huge numbers.

I often enjoy aperitifs and hors d'oeuvres in a friend's apartment overlooking the 60th Street heliport. Next time I'm visiting, we will say a toast to the reduced traffic — oops — reduced helicopter traffic. You see, we will watch the trucks that bring in those gourmet nibbles leave over the Queensboro Bridge, trucks like the one that killed Jill Solomon on April 2 or the one that crushed Christopher Manantea on March 31st.

PETER HOFF, Manhattan (via e-mail)

WE applaud your attention to the hazards helicopters pose for New York City residents ("The chopper menace," Editorial, April 17). But we find Mayor Giuliani to be part of the problem, not the solution.

The mayor continues to explore options for increased helicopter traffic (the proposed mega-heliport at Pier 76), as citizens clamor for relief. He refuses to close the East 34th and East 60th Street heliports, which violate air and noise code standards and operate without required special permits. He continues to place Fortune 500 CEOs' easy access to New York City above the pain and suffering helicopters inflict, using sightseeing helicopter revenues to subsidize heliports for CEO convenience.

The federal case (National Helicopter Corp. v. New York City et al.) did not deny the city jurisdiction but only the way the city fashioned the proposed controls. And even should the city win the case upon appeal, the proposed restrictions would be woefully inadequate. New Yorkers require immediate relief — if only the mayor cared.

JOY A. HELD, Executive Director,
Helicopter Noise Coalition of NYC
Manhattan

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RESIDENT

APRIL 23 - APRIL 29, '97 Serving The Upper East Side VOL. 9 NO. 32 FREE

Flying into Controversy

The Helicopter Wars Heat Up:

An East River Tragedy Brings the Contentious Issue into the Limelight

by Peter Duffy

Eighteen hundred feet above the East River, Eric Mansell maneuvers his Eurocopter-AS350 just to the east of the massive Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village complex.

"You can see Stuy Town down there," he says over the roar of the helicopter's engine. "We got a lot of complaints from there. Now, we try to stay as far away as we can."

A pilot for Liberty Helicopters, one of two sightseeing helicopter companies operating in Manhattan, Mansell is taking a group of tourists on one of the company's four tours, which range in price from $49 to $155 (per person). Like many of the company's customers, the tourists are European — two are from Britain, two from Germany. They haven't the foggiest idea that they are playing a role in one of the city's most contentious issues.

(story continued on page 6)

Doormen Unsettled After Union Deal p. 7

It Ain't Rocket Science p. 19

The Upper East Side's Largest Weekly Newspaper

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The Resident "Flying into Controversy" cont. Page 6
April 23 – April 29, 1997

Come On Feel the Noise

The Battle over Choppers Moves into High Gear; Tourist Pilots Say They Want a Solution

(Continued from cover page)

After Mansell lands the helicopter at the West 30th Street heliport, one of the British tourists is asked what he thinks of the 12-minute tour.

"Brilliant," he replies, his face flushed with enthusiasm. "Well worth it."

This is not a sentiment shared by Joy Held, who, as executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, a vociferously anti-helicopter group, is fast becoming the chief attack dog in the public relations war against the helicopter industry.

"Helicopter overflights are incompatible with civilized life," she told Community Board 7. "The noise is intolerable, the fumes are intolerable, the health risks are intolerable, the threats to safety and national security are intolerable, the lack of regulation is intolerable, the helicopters are intolerable."

But Mansell and many other helicopter representatives argue that they are working hard to placate city residents while at the same time stay in business.

"This is our livelihood," he said. "The last thing we want to do is alienate the people of the city. We want to do anything to prevent that from happening — within reason."

The helicopter controversy has been brewing for months. The Helicopter Noise Coalition was formed in February and has sought out every possible outlet for its message — it wants a complete ban, except for emergencies, on all helicopter flights in the city. The group's members argue that the noise caused by helicopters makes living in the city unbearable.

The issue was thrust into the limelight with the April 15 crash of a BK-117 helicopter into the East River soon after its liftoff from the 60th Street Heliport. The accident killed a corporate executive and injured the three other passengers.

Politicians and helicopter opponents mobilized quickly, arguing that the accident proved that helicopters are unsafe and that the 60th Street Heliport is too close to residential areas for comfort.

"Many of us in the community have always felt that it's not a good place for a heliport," said Councilman Gifford Miller. "This tragic accident serves as a reminder of the dangers inherent in air traffic in the area. If there was engine failure over 86th Street, there isn't a safe place to put down."

Borough President Ruth Messinger called for the closing of the 34th Street Heliport, one of four in Manhattan; Rep. Carolyn Maloney suggested a ban on all sightseeing helicopters; and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was forced to take a position on the issue.

At a town hall meeting on the Upper West Side on April 16, Giuliani came face to face with a member of the Helicopter Noise Coalition (with whom he has repeatedly refused to meet). Alice LeBlanc asked him to close the two city-owned heliports (at East 60th and East 34th streets); to lobby Gov. George Pataki to close the state-owned West 30th Street Heliport; and to withdraw support for any new helicopter facilities.

The mayor bristled. He called LeBlanc's manner disrespectful — she noted that the mayor regularly meets with Liberal Party boss and helicopter lobbyist Ray Harding — and said he wouldn't meet with the group. He added that he supported a reduction of tourist flights (including an elimination of tourist flights from the 34th Street Heliport), but would not consider closing the heliports because of their economic value to the city. "I am doing everything I can to reduce helicopter traffic in the city," he said.

During a press conference the following day, the mayor mentioned how the city Economic Development Corporation was working on a helicopter "master plan," which would set forth a comprehensive helicopter policy for the city. The plan is expected to take at least six months to complete.

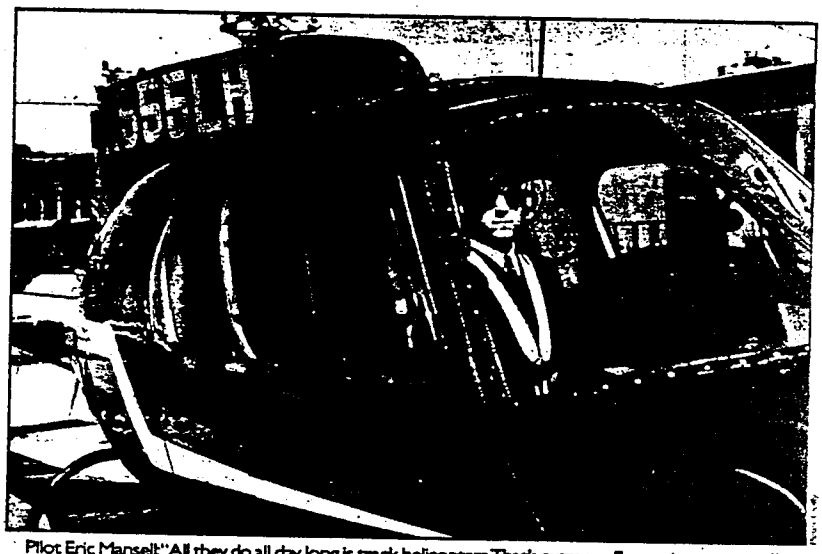
None of the mayor's comments satisfied helicopter opponents.

Held says the 34th Street Heliport is operating on a month to month lease and that the mayor could close it with only a month's notice.

"Rudy is the helicopter mayor," she said.

What's the Law?

For many, the helicopter issue comes down to regulations and, for the most part, there aren't any. The Federal Aviation Administration requires that flights in class B airspace (most of Manhattan north of the Williamsburg Bridge) conform to minimum pilot licensing rules, operating requirements and equipment standards. Any flight that wants to enter class B airspace must ask permission from air traffic control at either LaGuardia or JFK airports. Flights over the East and Hudson rivers do not require radio contact.



Pilot Eric Mansell: "All they do all day long is track helicopters. That's extreme. Extremists are scary."

Once in class B airspace, air traffic control will attempt to keep helicopters to one of 30 routes established in the city's airspace, the FAA said.

That's basically it.

Both Liberty and National, the other sightseeing helicopter company, have agreed to fly above 1,500 feet in an effort to reduce noise. In addition, both companies consented to voluntarily change their routes — to lessen noise problems — after a meeting last year with Messinger's Helicopter Task Force. (Helicopter opponents say the agreement simply pushed the noise problems into other neighborhoods.)

The FAA says it isn't in the business of regulating the number of flights. "Our job is safety," said Arlene Salac, an FAA spokeswoman. "Our job is to keep the helicopters safe."

Salac says that any attempt to redirect the flow of helicopter traffic over Manhattan could have far-reaching consequences.

"If you move anything in this airspace, if you look at making any changes," she said, "you have to look at the impact on the airports — you have three major airports within 25 miles. The airspace all comes together, so if you moved a route, it could potentially impact JFK and Newark and LaGuardia. It could be like a domino effect. We have to look at the big picture."

When the city attempted to place restrictions on tourist flights at the 34th Street Heliport, a federal court ruled that the city had overstepped its bounds. The decision said that the FAA alone is entitled to establish such restrictions. The city is currently appealing the ruling.

And any attempt to establish FAA restrictions would likely mean years of struggle — with considerable time needed for public comment and review. The establishment of a "no-fly zone" over the city, as the Helicopter Noise Coalition hopes, would take an act of Congress, and that isn't expected to happen any time soon, especially with the anti-regulatory mood in Washington.

Maloney questioned why no-fly zones exist over the Grand Canyon, Hawaii and the Los Angeles Airport, but not New York, which she said has the most congested airspace of any city in the country. Of federal legislation to restrict helicopters, she said, "We're going to work on it. Someone's got to be responsible."

The Helicopter Noise Coalition may not wait around for any federal legislation, though. The group has been busy consulting with lawyers and says it is ready to launch a lawsuit to stop helicopter flights.

Who's to Blame?

There are many different kinds of helicopter flights — including sightseeing, corporate, commuter, media and emergency (police, Coast Guard, etc.). The FAA says sightseeing flights comprise 50 percent of helicopter traffic (Liberty Helicopters says the number is closer to 10 percent), and politicians and helicopter opponents are all crying for their elimination. After all, they say, what useful purpose do they serve?

Community Boards 8, 7 and 2 have each called for some form of ban on tourist flights, and nearly every politician representing areas affected by helicopter noise has called for a sightseeing ban — or at least "severe restrictions" on flights, in the words of Miller.

The tourist helicopter companies strongly object to being singled out. They say that they alone among helicopter companies have sought a solution — agreeing to the route changes brokered by Messinger, for example. They fly on fixed routes, they say — unlike media helicopters, who fly wherever news is happening.

"We are not flying over anybody's residence," said Jim Fanjoy, director of operations for Liberty Helicopters.

National Helicopter, which flies out of East 34th Street, refused to comment for this article, though it did provide the *Resident* with a number of press releases and fact sheets. The company says complaints from East Siders "could be due to the dozens of corporate helicopters which use the 60th Street Heliport and the five helicopters operated by the news media which have not been asked to fly the [agreed upon] routes."

Dick Dutson, chairman of the Eastern Region Helicopter Council, a helicopter advocacy group, said there are a small number of helicopter operators who may disregard the concerns of city residents. But they do not represent the way most helicopter companies feel about the issue.

"We would very much like to keep an open forum and try to alleviate all problems," he said. "There seems to be a core group of individuals whose agenda seems to be to eliminate all helicopter traffic. That to us does not sound like a viable solution."

For its part, Liberty Helicopters asks the public to consider the issue with a degree of circumspection.

"There are people that are out there that are targeting us," said Mansell. "All they do all day long is track helicopters. That's extreme. Extremists are scary. And governments are listening to special interest groups."

He added: "It's like Camp David now — with Israel on one side and the Arabs on the other ... We want to reach a happy end."

But helicopter opponents are not eager for a compromise.

"Even if they do stick to the routes, for the people living under the route and near the route, there is still a problem," said Held. "There is no place to put them where they won't bother people. There is nothing they can do." ■

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After a fatal helicopter crash on the East Side, foes are increasing pressure to ban choppers over Manhattan. Sue Calvin

Crash Ups the Ante In Helicopter Fight

BY MARGO NASH

The East River helicopter crash that killed one man and injured three others on April 15 upped the ante in a fight by a coalition of community residents and elected officials to ban tourist helicopter flights over residential areas in Manhattan.

The crash also bolstered the arguments of opponents of a proposed heliport on the West Side at Pier 76.

"Tuesday's crash underlines my concerns," Borough President Ruth Messinger said in a letter to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. "If the crash had happened over land instead of over water, what was a terrible tragedy would have been an even greater disaster. I am concerned that the huge volume of helicopter activity over several boroughs in the city, especially in Manhattan, may pose a threat to the safety and well being of the city's residents."

In February Messinger convened a Helicopter Task Force which has been meeting with

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HELICOPTER

Continued from Page 1

the Federal Aviation Administration, city agencies, representatives of the sightseeing helicopter industry and community organizations to deal with the safety issues raised by the increasing number of sightseeing flights here. The task force was able to limit the hours of over-land sightseeing flights during certain hours and wants to eliminate all over-land flights.

The crash on April 15 of the six-seat BK-117 helicopter, owned by Colgate Palmolive, occurred just 15 feet from shore moments after take-off, leaving the helicopter upside down 35 feet below the surface and propelling the tail rotor into the heliport terminal. The chief technical officer of Colgate Palmolive was killed, and two others critically injured. It was the sixth time a helicopter had crashed into the East River in 12 years.

In February the city proposed building a heliport with a capacity of up to 20 take-offs and landings per hour on Pier 76 opposite the Jacob Javits Convention Center. Opponents of the plan said that recent crash proved their point. "An accident like that underscores the perils of helicopter flights over such heavily populated residential urban areas," said Marnie Mueller, a founder of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, "We continue to call for a ban of all helicopter flights with the exception of emergency medical and other essential government services," Muller added.

Joy Held, executive director of the coalition, said that the proposed heliport would be a disaster for New York. "It will make helicopter traffic nonstop in our city compounding the noise, air pollution and threats to safety. They are already intolerable."

Joy Held, executive director of the coalition, said that the proposed heliport would be a disaster for New York.

There are 141,000 take-offs and landings per year from Manhattan's four heliports, and most are sightseeing flights. Building the new heliport at Pier 76 would increase sight seeing traffic by 250 percent, Held said, "so that in 20 years they will going by our apartments every 45 seconds."

The city is deferring action on the Pier 76 heliport pending completion of a master plan for helicopter operations.

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OUR TOWN

VOL 27, NO 22, APRIL 24, 1997

NEWS CLIPS

MESSINGER: CLOSE 34TH ST. HELIPORT

Following last week's fatal crash of a corporate helicopter at the East 60th Street heliport, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger called on Mayor Rudy Giuliani to close down the East 34th Street heliport — at least until a court appeal regarding the city's attempt to impose special restrictions on the heliport is resolved.

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