

Merchants Want Their Money's Worth Out of Beat Cops

By Craig McGuire

Merchants voiced their dissatisfaction with community policing when high-ranking representatives from the New York City Police Department joined the Joint Council of Kings County Board of Trade at its monthly dinner meeting.

Originally, the group was expecting Police Commissioner William Bratton at the meeting at Chef Wong's Restaurant, 2172 86th Street, but unforeseen circumstances forced him to decline the invitation.

In his stead came NYPD Chief of Patrol Louis

Anemone to discuss the promise of the return of the walking beat cops to the many neighborhood main streets.

Joint Council Chairman Lou Powsner stated that this is the fourth year since real estate surcharges were legislated to restore beat cops back on the street.

Powsner, who has run a store on Mermaid Avenue for many years, added that while the merchants have paid the surcharges for four years, the past Dinkins administration failed to patrol the neighborhood's business avenues.

Anemone, ironically, began his law enforcement career walking a beat on Mermaid Avenue in 1967 as a rookie in the 60th Precinct. In 1970 he was reassigned to Manhattan.

"There is an understanding in the department of the importance of foot patrol," said Anemone, "to reduce crime, as well as the perception of crime."

According to Anemone, many of the roughly 2,000 police officers that will graduate the police academy in September will be assigned to community policing details.

Merchants voiced the opinion that community policing would have helped avoid several problems that currently exist.

"Merchants along 86th Street are going through a tough time economically," said Anthony Neglia, president of the 86th Street Bensonhurst Community Merchants Association. "If we had patrolling on foot years ago, we would not have many of these problems."

Specifically, Neglia referred to the nighttime "no parking" signs posted along 86th Street at the request of the community to reduce the problems caused by youths congregating along the strip.

"These signs are pure harassment to many of the merchants that operate at night," said Neglia, "and the problems could have been better addressed by police officers walking the beat."

Graffiti is another problem Neglia feels can be reduced by increased police presence.

"While we received a \$125,000 grant from Congresswoman [Susan] Molinari to clean it up," said Neglia, "if we don't get enough foot patrols, they are going to come right back."

"We want a better qual-

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NYPD Chief of Patrol Louis Anemone discusses community policing.

Photos by Craig McGuire