

## **Protest to reinstate Fort Totten front gate security**

Queens Civic Congress supported a rally, organized by the [Bay Terrace Community Alliance](#) and Friends of Fort Totten Parks, on Saturday, March 7, 2009 to protest the termination of gate security at Fort Totten. Concerned individuals attended from all parts of Queens to express their outrage at City Hall's plans..

Warren Schreiber, President of the Bay Terrace Community Alliance (BTCA), told the crowd that the "Fire Department had betrayed the community by breaching their agreement to provide gate security." A portion of Fort Totten was gifted to FDNY through a federal conveyance. FDNY had been providing protection services since 1999.

Also on hand to lend their support were Member of Congress Anthony Weiner, State Senators Frank Padavan and Toby Stavisky, and City Council Members James Gennaro and Peter F. Vallone Jr. Our elected officials all spoke about the importance of Fort Totten and the need to ensure a safe, secure environment for visitors and workers. Community leaders vowed to continue fighting until gate security is restored.

Below is the *TimesLedger* news story (Queens Civic Congress will post additional reports as they become available; noted that proper spelling of QCC Parks co-chair is Kim Ohanian):

[http://www.yournabe.com/articles/2009/03/11/bayside/bayside\\_times/news/bayside\\_times\\_newstwsqqbk03112009.txt](http://www.yournabe.com/articles/2009/03/11/bayside/bayside_times/news/bayside_times_newstwsqqbk03112009.txt)

### **Bayside activists protest lack of security at Fort Totten**

By Christina Santucci and Stephen Stirling  
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Dozens of residents and community leaders descended on the security gates at Fort Totten Saturday morning to protest the recent termination of private security services in the historic park — a move they say could lead to a spike in crime in the area.

For the past two years, the FDNY has spent \$650,000 annually to provide a 24-hour security detail for the fort. Due to budget cuts across the city, however, the FDNY recently announced it would not hire a private security firm to guard the area and instead turned over control of the fort to the 109th Precinct March 1. The 109th, which is based in Flushing, covers the adjacent Bay Terrace neighborhood.

The decision has not sat well with a number of residents and civic groups in the area, however, who contend the FDNY gave little notice of the decision and could unintentionally create a hotbed for crime that could spill into the surrounding communities.

“Shame on the FDNY,” said Kim O’Hanion, Parks Committee chairwoman of Community Board 7. “What they’re doing here is totally unacceptable.”

Though several of the buildings at Fort Totten are occupied by law enforcement agencies, some buildings have been long abandoned and fallen into disrepair.

Warren Schreiber, president of the Bay Terrace Community Alliance, said without security these abandoned buildings could become havens for vandals and vagrants who could commit serious crimes or start fires in the structures.

About half a dozen guards from PD Security in Bellerose lost their jobs at Fort Totten. Mandouh Elzab of Richmond Hill, who had been working at Fort Totten for about six years said that two to three weeks ago, at about 2 a.m. a man came to the guard station needing medical attention.

“He was in very bad condition. I called the ambulance and stayed with him. If nobody is here, who is going to help this guy?” Elzab asked.

Protesters also said they were miffed by the last-minute warning the FDNY gave before making the decision to halt security at the fort.

“They should have come to us, the parties that are interested and affected, and let us know and have a say,” Schreiber said. “There have to be ways to solve this situation. But they gave us no warning.”

Community Affairs Detective Kevin O’Donnell of the 109th Precinct recently told TimesLedger Newspapers that the precinct would patrol the area, but not provide a constant security detail.

“If [the FDNY] drops security, it would just become part of the regular patrol of that area,” he said. “We don’t do security, we patrol neighborhoods.”

The fort, bounded by the Long Island Sound and Cross Island Parkway, is also home to an Army National Guard unit, an NYPD K-9 unit, an emergency services unit, an EMS academy and the auxiliary Coast Guard.

Schreiber, who has been leading the fight against the cutbacks, said it is unbelievable there are so many law enforcement agencies present at the fort, yet no one manning the front gate on a regular basis.

“We feel they betrayed the community,” Schreiber said. “They made an agreement to provide security here. All we’re asking for is the status quo. We’re not asking for them to reinvent the wheel.”