

AT A GLANCE

DYKER HEIGHTS — The Regina Opera Company will perform an open-air concert tomorrow at the Feast of Santa Rosalia Bandstand, 18th Ave. and 75th St.

Featured Regina soloists Elena Jannicelli, soprano; Jami Tyzik, mezzo-soprano; Anthony Tolve, tenor, and pianists Eddie Russo and Maxine Feldman will present two hours of opera and Broadway selections starting at 8 p.m. Call (718) 259-2772.

FLATBUSH — Homeowners who are considering large-scale home improvements can learn how to evaluate, choose and hire an effective contractor at the "How to Hire a Contractor" seminar tomorrow at 6 p.m. at Neighborhood Housing Services of East Flatbush, 2806 Church Ave.

Equip yourself with knowledge of the best practices in the field. The seminar is free. To RSVP, call (718) 469-4679 or visit www.nhsofeastflatbush.org.

PROSPECT HEIGHTS — The Plaza Swing Series continues tomorrow with Paul Shapiro's Ribs and Brisket Revue at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Library Plaza, 10 Plaza St.

Celebrate a distinctly American music that thrived in the 1930s and 1940s and was known as hard-swinging jump blues. In music that is jazzy, comedic and funky, Shapiro sprinkles Yiddish flavoring on Slim Gaillard, Cab Calloway and Louie Jordan. It's free. Visit www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org.

DOWNTOWN — If you want to do better in school this year, come to a back-to-school workshop today at 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall at the Church of the Open Door, 201 Gold St.

At the free workshop, conducted by Dr. Le-Nore McBeth along with other current and former teachers, attendees can choose among five areas.

They include improving writing skills, reading for better comprehension, study skills, understanding transcripts and tracking the Regents for high schoolers. For parents, there's understanding the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Call (718) 643-1081.

Gayle DeWees

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Bronx Bureau (718) 822-1174
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brooklynnews@NYDailyNews.com

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queensnews@NYDailyNews.com

A ROUGH GO AT PARK

BY ERIN DURKIN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

THEY'RE GRUMBLING over gravel at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Gravel was spread this month on formerly blacktop paths at Pier 1 and part of the new bike and foot path along the water, annoying bikers, walkers and stroller pushers and wheelchair users.

The new path, stretching from Pier 1 at Old Fulton St. to Pier 6 at Atlantic Ave., opened Friday and also features a tidal salt marsh and fresh water gardens.

T.K. Small, 45, a Brooklyn Heights wheelchair user and disability rights lawyer, said the gravel makes it hard to get around.

"See the way I'm bouncing around?" he said as he maneu-

New gravel road grates on tires - & nerves

vered his electric wheelchair over the path. "You're just bumping along. It's slow and tedious."

"I can do it, [but] for a lot of people that use either a manual wheelchair or walker or a cane or crutches or something like that, they're going to have trouble getting there," he said.

"It's a really fabulous view; it's just spectacular. . . . I still can't figure out why [the gravel] is necessary."

It's a bumpy ride for the able-bodied too, especially those riding bikes or pushing strollers.

"I don't like it," said Doreen Hazel of Brooklyn Heights as she walked through the park with her

sister and 1-year-old grand-nephew in a carriage. "It's not easy to walk in, not easy to push a carriage on."

"I can feel it [the gravel] through my shoes," she said. "I wouldn't mind it actually being paved."

Park officials say the material, known as chipseal, will be packed into a smoother surface soon.

Spokeswoman Ellen Ryan said the material was "chosen for its durability, aesthetics and cost-effectiveness to maintain."

She said workers will "sweep" the gravel at Pier 1 and along the bike path in the coming days, leaving the surface "more densely packed, with less loose stones."

Maggie Pandl, 29, of Boerum Hill, said she thought that would do the trick, noting that the gravel at the Pier 6 playground, which has been in place since it opened in June, is no longer a nuisance.

"At first I didn't believe them, but Pier 6 is perfect now," she said. "I actually feel bad for the bikers, but if it's like what they put down at Pier 6, in two months it will be perfect."

But Small said it's an example of park planners putting looks over visitors' comfort.

"No other park in the city has this ridiculous gravel," he said. "It seems like they have a design plan in mind and don't really care that it's not really accessible. . . ."

"For what they spent on it, it doesn't seem like it's really practical."



Disability rights lawyer T.K. Small rides his electric wheelchair over bumpy gravel on Brooklyn Bridge Park Pier 1 yesterday. Photo by John Taggart

Meeks enters battle over Queens veterans center revamp

BY NICHOLAS HIRSHON
DAILY NEWS WRITER

AN INFLUENTIAL Queens congressman is set to speak to angry veterans and civic leaders at a town hall forum tonight on the contentious redevelopment of a St. Albans veterans center.

Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-Jamaica) will meet with the public at the 7 p.m. open meeting in Grace Episcopal Church at 155-24 90th Ave.

Civic leaders are pushing the federal Veterans Administration to abandon its plans for housing and a renovated veterans center — to be undertaken by developer St. Albans Village LLC, led by the Rev. Edwin Reed.

The civic leaders want only veterans facili-

ties — such as a full-service hospital, a hospice and a woman's shelter — on the 55-acre lot.

The veterans, who already have won support from several city and state elected officials, view the congressman as their best hope to deter the federal proposal.

Meeks will "listen to the community, share the information he has and take their concerns to the Veterans Administration," said his spokeswoman, Candace Sandy.

Assemblyman William Scarborough (D-Jamaica) criticized the plans as being "out of character" with surrounding homes, adding that the influx of new residents is a "formula for constant gridlock."

At a forum run by a local City Council member James Sanders on Monday night, veterans

and other activists slammed Reed, sources said.

"He doesn't care about the community," said Rene Hill, president of the Addisleigh Park Civic Association.

Reed did not return messages seeking comment yesterday.

Seeking insight on Reed's selection and his plans for St. Albans, the Daily News submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the Veterans Administration in June.

The agency responded in a letter last week that included just two form letters sent by the Veterans Administration to Reed in 2008 and 2010. The agency withheld other documents, citing legal exemptions that protect "trade secrets" and details that could "impede the effectiveness of agency activities."