

## **MAYOR'S COLUMN**

Much has been discussed of late about the recent incidents involving groups of youths in our Village.

In the interest of full disclosure and clarity I share with you the sequence of events over the last month.

It is important to note that the groups of adolescents involved have been characterized as gangs. Though they meet the dictionary definition of gang as a band or group of people they have no relation to what law enforcement officers consider a gang, or the incendiary connotation in popular culture.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> a group of approximately 30 teens from Yonkers congregated near Starbucks and a fight ultimately broke out. One young man was injured and received treatment at Lawrence Hospital. His parents were summoned, but neither he nor his parents would cooperate with police.

On February 14 the police department gave special attention to the business district and the area near the school field without adding additional staff. There were no incidents.

On February 21<sup>st</sup> approximately 30 youths from the Bronx got into a fight on Meadow Avenue near the school track. As in the incident on the 7<sup>th</sup>, one youth was injured, transported to the hospital but neither he nor his family would cooperate with the police. Five other youths were detained at the police station until parents came to take them home. We have confirmed that a van was used to transport eight of the youths from the Bronx to Bronxville

for a “night of fun.” The parent of the youth involved with procuring the van was contacted by the police. A bat was recovered in the bushes on Monday near the scene of the fight.

As a result of the incident on the 21<sup>st</sup>, on the weekend of the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, the police department added four additional officers supplementing the two already on patrol. This was achieved through a combination of shift changes and overtime. Officers focused their efforts again in the business district and school field area. The Bronxville School also increased their security that patrols the field areas.

On Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, several Bronxville students were stopped and detained relating to the consumption of alcohol. Their parents were called and based on age some may receive Alcohol Beverage Control law violations. However that same night, though relatively quiet in the Village, a car theft occurred in Tuckahoe. The vehicle was ultimately abandoned in Bronxville with a young child inside while the perpetrator fled on foot. Aiding in the search for the driver were Tuckahoe police and the Yonkers Emergency Services Unit as well as their Canine Unit. As a result, there was a great deal of police activity on the 27<sup>th</sup> in the Village in the 10:30pm to midnight time frame.

Anticipating these warmer weekend nights, police staffing will be increased accordingly. We are prepared to dedicate all required resources to curb any incidents which could impact public safety or the quality of life in our Village. Assistance just minutes away via mutual aid is also

always available from neighboring police departments in Eastchester and Tuckahoe.

That being said, what can our police do to effectively curtail these incidents?

Contrary to popular belief, there is no loitering law that applies to groups of people just standing together. To rise to a loitering violation one must be in a public place with the intent to “beg,” “gamble” or to “sell merchandise” just to name a few of the behaviors that trigger the law.

To constitute disorderly conduct, there must be a public disturbance or a violation such as jay walking or blocking a sidewalk, and must be witnessed by an officer. Even if such behavior occurs, it is only a violation punishable with a ticket and only applicable to teens 16 or older. So theoretically, a violator could put the ticket in his pocket and just walk two blocks to regroup again.

The police have found the most effective tool for any aberrant teen behavior is to detain the child and have their parents come pick them up. It often alerts the parents to their children’s behavior as well as their whereabouts on a given night.

I assure you we will continue to aggressively monitor the situation and make Bronxville inhospitable to roaming groups without infringing on anyone’s rights.