

## Voice in the community

# Board 1 knows its problems —it meets in middle of them

By A. STANLEY ALLISON

The addresses 111 Water St. and 111 Canal St., Stapleton, face each other in a kind of deliberate antagonism. One houses a methadone maintenance clinic and the other the headquarters of Community Board 1.

The years spent selecting potential sites to which to relocate the clinic, inevitably followed by unwilling and unyielding communities and institutions, in a way have come to represent an ultimate challenge to the board, its powers of persuasion and its effectiveness in general.

So it was no accident that the board announced with pride that its new quarters would be in the red, fortress-like building at 111 Canal St., just steps away from the infamous storefront clinic.

The confidence displayed by the board in settling into the middle of one of the most troubled North Shore communities is one of the things that make it the most respected board on Staten Island.

To a great degree, the confidence and respect that Board 1 enjoys was not cultivated the same way an individual might seek and gain the same qualities.

The board had no part in choosing the intricacies of plotting a mixture of stabilization and growth where deteriora-

tion is a dominant factor.

It was either stem the tide or go under; not really a choice at all.

Instinctively, member Allen Cappelli said, the board "has the vision of what the North Shore can be. The North Shore is changing, and how these changes take place depends on the vision of the people on the board."

The common objective of "revitalizing the North Shore," however, has not spared the board a complex variety of issues to resolve.

Often the issues are presented with a clear-cut community sentiment, which might demonstrate to the board just how simple the issue is to resolve.

In some of those cases, the community's viewpoint is "a crucial part of the

decision-making process," Thomas LaManna, board chairman, said.

"But we also recognize that in certain cases the minority viewpoint of an issue has to be considered and in some cases, based on all the factors involved, we may come to a conclusion that is not with the majority position," LaManna added.

He cited the delivery of essential services to the mentally retarded, elderly, poor, youngsters without families and homes and the drug-addicted.

"While these services tend to be unpopular when they're placed in communities that are balanced, even though there may be opposition, our responsibility," LaManna said, "is to consider the overall effect of either providing or not providing the service."

It was inevitable that community boards in general would grow — in power and experience — as they became more involved in the issues that surrounded them, but Board 1 has matured in ways different from its counterparts.

A sense of balance in the board's decisions evolved to compensate for an imbalanced North Shore; a collective instinct to get the most out of a situation developed among board members, and a

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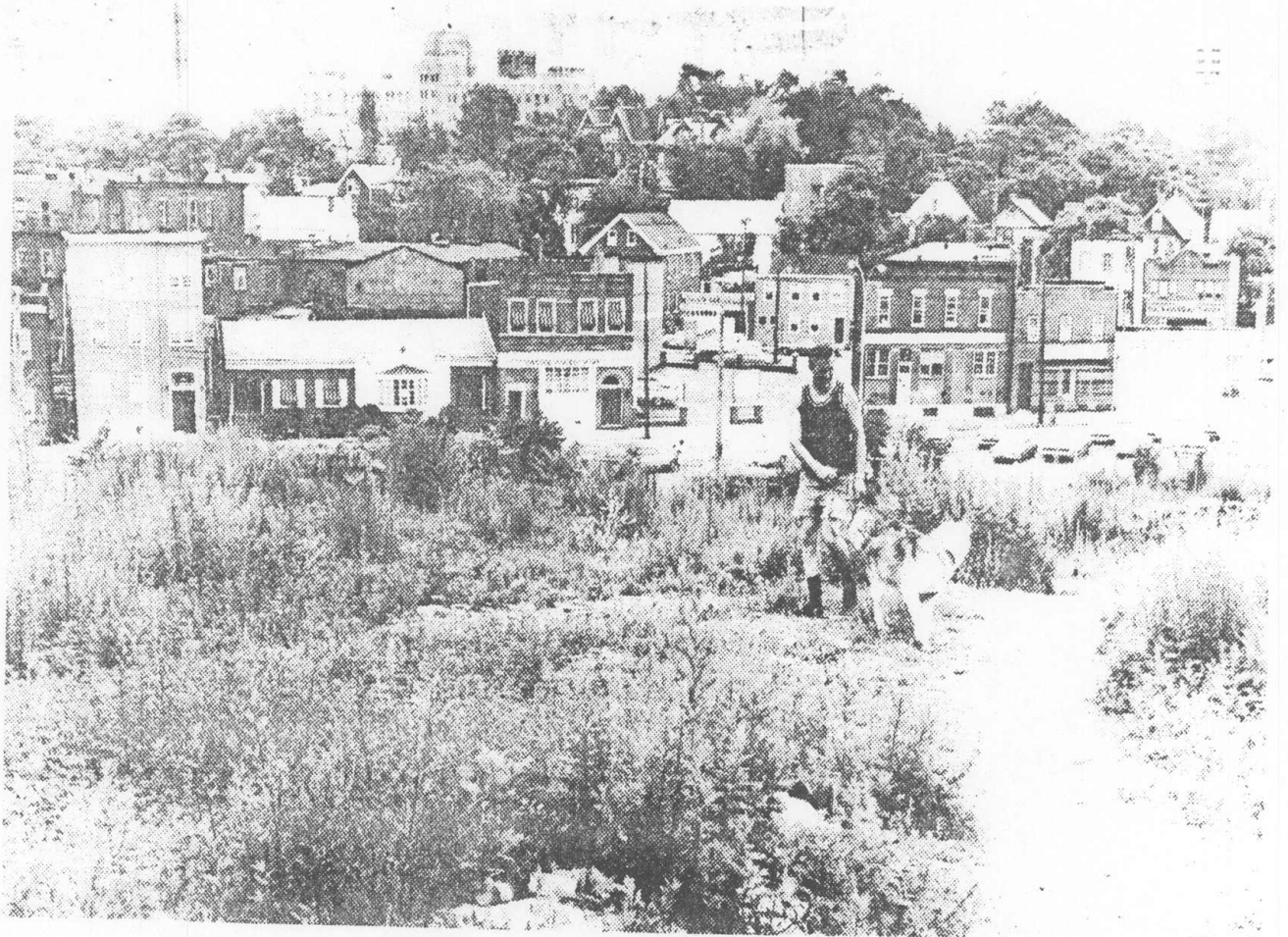
**Community Board 1**

Thomas LaManna.....Chairman

Norman Berger..Service Manager

Office: 111 Canal St.  
Stapleton

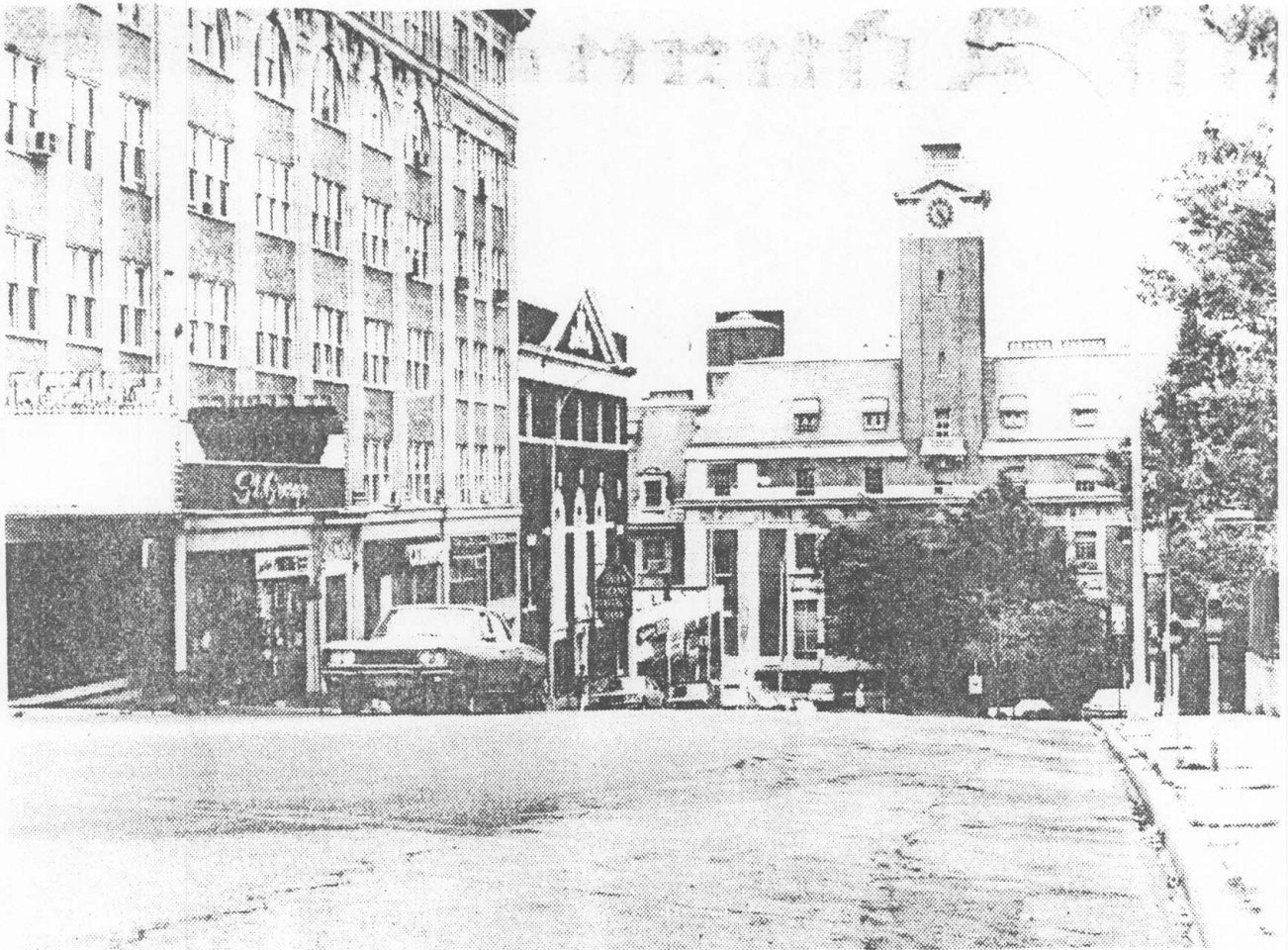
Phone: 981-6900



**The former Piels Bros. Brewery site, once an eyesore in Stapleton, is now an expansive lot where a senior citizen development is planned.**

S.I. Advance Photo by Barry Schwartz

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The seat of Staten Island's government, Borough Hall, is located in the Island business district — St. George, part of Community Board 1.

S.I. Advance Photo by Barry Schwartz

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confident manner came from facing more difficult issues than less difficult ones.

"A combination of factors on the North Shore make this a perfect place for a board to work in," said board member Vincent Montalbano. "More issues of broader substance come before Board 1."

Almost to a member, however, is a feeling that the board goes largely unappreciated by the general community.

"We really don't have enough exposure," said board member Dan Icolari. "People still don't know that we exist, never mind what our mandates are."

Harold Greene, a vice chairman, said: "The public by and large has no awareness of what the community board is and what it's supposed to do. I doubt if people really know the intent of the City Charter is to have the board act as a government with the force of law almost."

As a result of the public's lack of awareness, "we don't get the input we'd like from our own communities," board member Joseph Gatto said.

He added that civic associations,

which most closely represent the North Shore communities, "aren't vocal until some sort of crisis arises in their particular neighborhood. That's when they come out in force."

A number of board members said that Board 1 has a "true mix" and a "good cross-section" of members represented on the board, while others said that the board is lacking in this respect.

in their movement. Even if it isn't a matter germane to their employment, they still might be hesitant to vote...it might upset the hierarchy."

LaManna believes that there aren't enough blue-collar workers and an "over abundance" of lawyers on the board.

Robert Domina agrees that there are not enough blue collars on the board, but adds: "By virtue of the appointments, it

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"There's not a lot of representation of minorities and poor on the board that I would like to see," Capelli said. "There are some members on the board from economically disadvantaged communities, but I would like to see more minority representation."

"On the surface," board member Robert Littrell said, "it seems the board might be a bit top heavy with members who are civil service employees and seem to be somewhat restricted

becomes a very political, almost patronage job. That's how I got appointed, by knowing someone in politics."

However they might have appeared on the board's roster, many of the 50 members take a great deal of pride in having won its biggest battles — the decision to oppose the Tenhill-Faymor development in Stapleton, which brought the board, along with civic groups, into a federal courthouse; the proposed move of the welfare office in St. George



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to Port Richmond, and others.

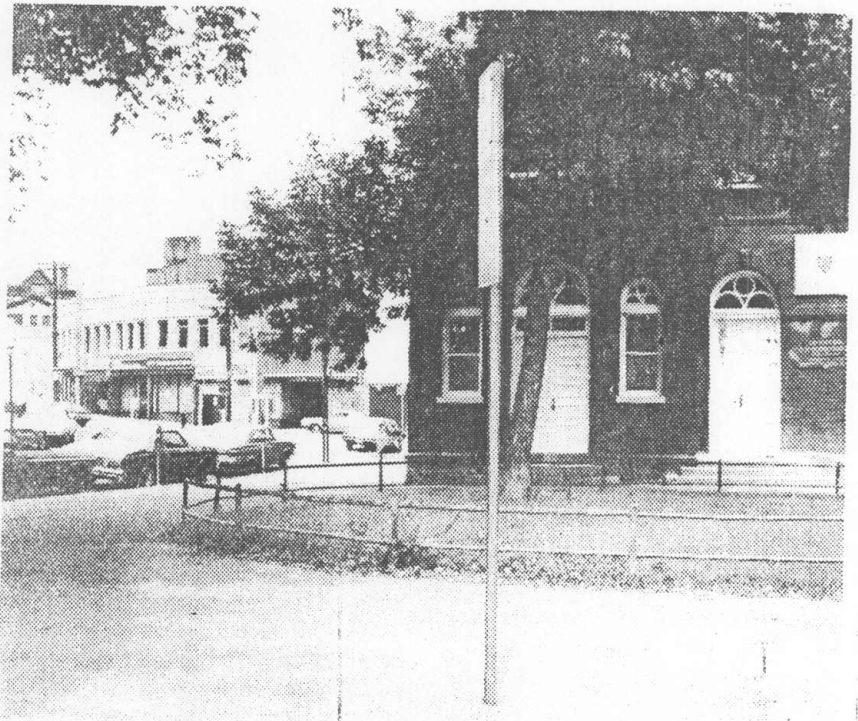
One issue, which might be a sore point because it has yet to be resolved is that regarding the methadone clinic.

"We know that no neighborhood on the North Shore wants a methadone clinic, but we also know that most of the people in need of methadone maintenance services live in our area. Therefore, we're committed to supporting methadone services in our district knowing full well we'll be severely criticized for attempting to locate a clinic in our district," Lamanna said.

Norman Berger, the board's district service manager, explained that with the methadone clinic, "it's not just Stapleton that is the issue. The issue is providing services to people who are residents in the Board 1 area."

Berger is, like many board members, confident that the clinic will eventually be relocated.

"I don't think it's so far in the future," he said. He added, however, "The longer it bounces from one agency or elected official to another, the longer it remains in Stapleton, and everyone has agreed that that is the worst possible location."



Community Board 1's headquarters, right, is located just steps away from one of Stapleton's ills — the methadone maintenance building, the shingled storefront in the row of stores in the background.

S.I. Advance Photo by Irving Silverstein