

March 13, 2001

To the editor:

There is a disturbing presence in Battery Park City, upsetting the harmony of the residents, potentially harmful to our children, indeed, some might say as threatening to our community as packs of roaming wolves. Could this be our canine companions run amok? Not likely.

It's not that "best friend" of old, but a wave of intolerance and fear-mongering. Highly inflammatory and polarizing anonymous flyers are being spread, cries are made that our kids are in danger, all in the name of stopping – not a toxic waste dump or a nuclear power plant – but a proposed dog run.

Let's take a step back and ask, why all the emotion, the expressions of hate and fear? Can't we debate how the nearly one thousand dogs in BPC should best live with the many thousands of people here without labeling dog owners a "selfish minority" and "an elitist group of self-serving individuals" intent on creating "a clear and present risk" to the children of BPC – simply because we support the BPCA's desire to build a new dog run?

Anonymous fear-mongering – with warnings that "dogs have teeth" and that "some young child will eventually be the victim of a dog gone crazy" unless the good people of BPC "stop this dog run campaign" – has no place in this debate.

Prompted by the fact that the existing temporary dog runs are finally reaching the end of their existence as the last undeveloped sites are being replaced by actual buildings, the Battery Park City Authority has been casting about for permanent homes for its dog runs. Given the geography of BPC, a permanent dog run is almost certain to be located in a place that someone will consider his or her "back yard" (as in "not in my").

Although the anonymous dog run critics raise health issues and the specter of mad dogs biting our children in nearby playgrounds, these are not the real concerns. After all, the Tribeca dog run is adjacent to the PS 234 playground and one of the temporary BPC dog runs was located for years next to the play area in Rector Park. The real fear is by a few of the Gateway neighbors of the proposed run that it will be noisy and therefore disruptive of their lives at home.

The site chosen by BPCA for analysis is on Pumphouse Plaza north of Gateway Plaza, which also has a large dog population. This run would replace the temporary run that is currently across the street from three residential buildings, one of which is just as close to the temporary run as the nearest Gateway building would be to the proposed Pumphouse run. Having received but one noise complaint about the temporary run in its entire history, the BPCA is confident that proximity to a residential building is not a negative for a dog run. Moreover, the proposed new dog run will be designed with noise barriers, unlike the temporary runs. Although dogs can bark like banshees when they come face-

to-face on-leash in an apartment lobby, off-leash dogs bark far less. No one can promise that a dog run will be silent, but anyone who visits an existing dog run can see that they are not noisy either – certainly not in comparison to the ambient Manhattan noise. My own apartment overlooks the proposed site. Although I would not be as close as some other apartments, if the dog run were noisy, I would definitely hear it, along with the other outside noise.

I am one of those people who moved to New York years ago aware that millions of people live here. It does not surprise me to see or hear some of them (or their dogs) when I look out my window. If I were bothered by rubbing shoulders with others, I would have chosen to live elsewhere.

Instead of fearing the worst, we should focus on the positive. When you enter a neighborhood where you see dogs, you know you are in a residential neighborhood, one that likely has families and others who have decided that this is where they are going to put down roots. When you enter a neighborhood without dogs, you know you are either in a commercial, non-residential district or in a community of transitory residents. Which kind of community do you want BPC to be?

Jeff Galloway
Gateway Plaza resident since 1982