

Fieldston residents continue to battle over landmarking

By Joshua Payne

Another round in the fight over the Fieldston Historic District played out before the City Planning Commission last week as the proposal wends its way through the designation process, with supporters and opponents now sending out letters to press their cases.

Among those arguing against the proposal were Ellen and Bill Rodman and Gary Miller, members of the Fieldston Homeowners Association that formed specifically to oppose the district.

Arthur Goldstein, a partner in the law firm of Davidoff, Malito and Hutcher LLP, which the FHOA hired to lobby against the district, also spoke.

City Councilman Oliver Koppell, a Fieldston resident and ardent proponent of the historic district, argued in favor of the designation, as did Joyce Pilsner and others.

The commission has until March 20 to vote on their report, but spokeswoman Jennifer Torres said it will most likely decide by March 8.

Amanda Burden, chairwoman of the Department of City Planning, told both sides a vote simply indicates whether the proposal is consistent with zoning regulations for the area and does not reflect the

merits of the proposal.

In recent weeks the battle has visited the mailboxes of Fieldston residents as the FHOA and Mr. Koppell argued their sides to homeowners.

In his letter to Fieldston residents, dated Feb. 23, the day after the commission hearing, Mr. Koppell wrote, "There has been an enormous amount of misinformation and numerous distortions circulated by opponents to this designation."

He went on to explain that permits will not be required for temporary structures, such as a Sukkah, or recreational equipment like swing sets, in a historic district. Both examples had been mentioned during recent public discussions about the historic district proposal.

In FHOA's Feb. 19 letter, the association argues for "self-governance of future development through an active architectural review committee," as is practiced in Forest Hills Gardens in Queens.

Rather than voluntarily coming under the thumb of the city Landmarks Preservation Commission, FHOA wants to revive the architectural review process by the Fieldston Property Owners Association.

After City Planning makes its decision the district plan will go before the City Council, which has the power to reject the plan or make changes to it.