



# BELLCOURT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

**PRESIDENT**  
Roseann Henry

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Paul DiBenedetto

**SECRETARY**  
Dolores Stimitz

**TREASURER**  
Barbara Delfyett Hester

**ZONING COMMITTEE**  
Manuel Mergal  
Paul DiBenedetto

**MEMBERSHIP  
COMMITTEE**  
Irulan Budabin  
Kathleen Davidson

**BYLAWS COMMITTEE**  
Donna Delfyett White  
David White

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**  
Alexandra Tarasko

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**BELLCOURT.ORG**

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## **New Bellcourt Civic Association Elects First Slate of Officers**

At the organizational meeting of the new Bellcourt Civic Association, held on May 13, 2021, the initial slate of officers was elected to begin official operations. The group, which has been meeting informally for several years, will conduct business as a nonprofit civic association representing the Bellcourt section of Bayside, Queens.

“We’ve been talking about the best ways to protect Bellcourt for a long time,” said Roseann Henry, who was elected president of the new civic association. “People are attracted to this neighborhood for its architectural charm, walkability, and strong sense of community, and we are committed to preserving all of those. The overbuilding that threatens our neighborhood needs to be brought under control, and our local zoning laws enforced, to prevent Bellcourt from losing the appeal that makes it a such a wonderful place to live and raise families.”

Also at the organizational meeting, Paul DiBenedetto was elected vice president, Dolores Stimitz secretary, and Barbara Delfyett Hester treasurer. All are long-time homeowners in the area, with the Delfyett family going back seven generations here. The meeting also established committees that will monitor zoning and legal issues, recruit additional members, and finalize the organization’s bylaws.

The Bellcourt neighborhood was developed at the dawn of the twentieth century after the Bell family (for whom Bell Boulevard is named) sold the last of its farmland to the Rickert-Finlay Company, which also developed other northeastern Queens neighborhoods, including Broadway Flushing and Douglas Manor. Bellcourt, which extends from what is now Bell Blvd to 204<sup>th</sup> Street and from 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, became home to a charming mix of Dutch colonial, center-hall colonial, Tudor, ranch, and other classic homes. The Rickert-Finlay deed restrictions established lot sizes and building parameters to keep the neighborhood forever protected against overdevelopment.

Bellcourt remained a popular neighborhood for families throughout the twentieth century, but as the homes aged they became vulnerable to tear-downs instead of renovation, often replaced with homes out of keeping with the local character. In 2005, local residents succeeded in establishing a new R2A zoning category for Bellcourt to stop the overbuilding that threatened the charm of the development. The single-family R2A designation limits the height, footprint, and overall living space of residences in Bellcourt.

“Unfortunately, some bad actors have gotten away with violating R2A,” said Henry. “There are buildings that are clearly too tall, have more than one living unit, or are too large overall for Bellcourt. Once they are built, it’s impossible to get them modified or removed. With the formation of this civic association, we will be able to keep local eyes on any pending renovations and new construction and stop violations before they get past the point of no return.”

The new civic association has a web site at [bellcourt.org](http://bellcourt.org) where residents within the boundaries of the neighborhood can join a mailing list for updates, access historical news clippings about the Bellcourt development, and report homes that appear to be at risk for inappropriate or unlawful renovation. The first general meeting of the association is set for July 8 at 7:30 pm. Subscribers to the mailing list will be notified of all upcoming events and meetings.

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