

NEIGH MELEE

The Carriage Horse Wars Stampede Through City Hall

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By Anna Sanders 11/22 2:32pm



A horse drawn carriage waits to move outside of Central Park (Photo: Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

The following article has been updated to include a statement from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Ruby looked restless. The brown horse shifted in place, turned around, and occasionally poked her white muzzle between the red bars of her 8 by 10-foot stall on the second floor of the Clinton Park Stables. Her golf ball-sized eyes glistened and she sighed, staring out at us all the while.

The *Observer* reached in and stroked Ruby's snout between the bars, wondering if the horse had any clue of the battle raging around her.

Since the death of Charlie, a carriage horse that collapsed on 54th Street last month, the struggle for—and against—the City's horse-drawn carriage industry has grown into an all-out war, with the Horse and Carriage Association of New York now filing formal complaints against some of the industry's biggest challengers.

The association's biggest critics include the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the New Yorkers for Clean, Livable & Safe Streets (NYCLASS), which supports phasing out horse-drawn carriages. On Monday, the association filed papers against these two groups with the New York State Attorney General's Office, the Mayor's Office, the NYC Department of Investigation, and with the Inspector General of the NYC Department of Health.

"Enough is enough," said the association's president, Stephen Malone, at a press conference at Clinton Park Stables yesterday.

The complaint includes a request for a full investigation into allegations by former ASPCA



Carriage Association president Stephen Malone defends his right to mush.

veterinarian, Dr. Pamela Corey, who said she was told to issue “misleading and unscientific statements” about Charlie’s death.

Among objections against NYCLASS tactics, the complaint also asks the Attorney General to investigate what the association feels is a “glaring” conflict of interest.

“Ed Sayres is both the president and CEO of ASPCA, and the co-president of NYCLASS. In addition to subsequent use of facilities,

vehicles, resources and personnel, the ASPCA gave NYCLASS \$250,000 at the time of NYCLASS’s founding in 2008,” Mr. Malone said in a statement.

Mr. Malone explained that ASPCA’s Humane Law Enforcement Division oversees and enforces laws pertaining to the horse carriage industry, as required by its NY State Charter and by NYC Administrative Code.

“In my opinion, the ASPCA is not to be trusted,” Mr. Malone said.

At hoof, the fight is whether or not the city is putting stress on the horses who clomp down its streets. The Horse and Carriage association argues these horse would have no future without the industry, and it keeps New Yorkers employed. The animal rights groups counter that that is no excuse, and they point to Charlie for proof. The circumstances of his death and the information—or disinformation—that followed have only emboldened each side.

ASPCA spokeswoman Elizabeth Estroff explained in a statement that the society has no firsthand knowledge of any complaints filed against them and could not comment on the allegations. Ms. Estroff added that the ASPCA has voluntarily performed carriage enforcement for several decades.

“Remaining steadfast to this commitment, our carriage horse enforcement work has been carried out with objectivity and fairness and always within the bounds of applicable law,” Ms. Estroff said in the statement. In another statement on Charlie’s death and Dr. Corey’s allegations, Ms. Estroff said the ASPCA was “frankly perplexed by Dr. Pamela Corey’s recent statement.”

At a NYCLASS event yesterday afternoon, the *Observer* asked the group’s executive

director, Carly Marie Knudson, if they were aware of the complaint against ASPCA and NYCLASS.

“We have not received full disclosure on any of that information yet,” Ms. Knudson said. Though she explained that information “just came across our desk this morning,” Ms. Knudson first answered our question explaining the information NYCLASS has received was likely the “same article” the *Observer* read.

Back at the stable, after Mr. Malone announced the association’s intent to file complaints that day, Demos Demopoulos, an executive officer of Teamsters Local 553, likened the horses to the working class he represents. “That’s why they get five weeks vacation, more than I get,” he said.

“In essence, this is an attack on working people, the working people of this industry,” Mr. Demopoulos said. Teamsters Local 553 represents the drivers, workers, and small businessmen of the Horse and Carriage Association.

City Councilman James Gennaro, who represents the 24th district in Queens, also came to the stables support the association’s announcement.

“It just seems patently unfair,” Councilman Gennaro said. “If you have an institution whose mission statement is to get rid of an industry, is that really an appropriate entity to be enforcing against the carriage industry?”

Councilman Gennaro sponsored a bill, Local Law 10, requiring carriage horses to have larger stalls, five weeks of vacation per year and blankets in cold and wet weather. The bill, which passed in April 2010, also requires horses to be in the stalls from 3 a.m. to 9 a.m.

“What we wanted to do was codify what was standard practice,” said Horse and Carriage Association vice president, Eva Hughes.

But despite these restrictions, animal advocates continue to unite against the industry.

At NYCLASS’ event on Monday, more than 50 supporters lined up on the steps of City Hall, chanting “Hay, hay, we say neigh, horses off the streets today.” At the rally, NYCLASS celebrated 55,000 signatures collected on a petition calling for the City Council to pass Intro. 86A, which would eventually replace horse-drawn carriages with “horseless carriages”: **electric cars with an old-time-y vibe.**

The discourse over the issue, over the carriage horses, has always been horses versus jobs, horses versus people,” said Patrick Kwan, New York state director for The Human Society of the United States, at the rally. “But we are proving, once and for all, that it doesn’t have to be

this way.”

Ms. Knudson also announced a new goal at the rally.

“Our next goal is 75,000 signatures by New Year’s Day,” Ms. Knudson said to cheers from the crowd lining the City Hall steps behind her. “I think we got it—maybe we can go for a hundred if we’re really lucky!”

As usual, the pro-animal contingent was packing star power. Emmy-award winning actress Kathy Najimy made an appearance at the rally, where she explained she was “deeply saddened” by the carriage horses, in addition to implying all NYC tourists are, ugh, huge.



Actress Kathy Najimy spoke on the steps of City Hall at a New Yorkers for Clean, Livable & Safe Streets rally.

“Beautiful, gorgeous horses are not meant to be in busy, traffic-y streets pulling really heavy passengers and carriages,” Ms. Najimy said.

In addition to Ms. Najimy, **several politicians have also shown support for the bill**, including Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito. In addition to ultimately phasing-out horse-drawn carriages, Intro. 86A would increase working restrictions on when horses are allowed to work, as well as increase medical checks and necropsies. Intro. 86A is set to be heard in January.

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio expressed his faith in electric cars.

“I am convinced,” Mr. de Blasio said. “We see electric cars being used all over the world now. There’s no question we

can make this technology work in New York City.”

In addition to Mr. de Blasio, **Councilwoman Mark-Viverito and 14 other City Council members support Intro. 86A**. When asked about his colleagues’s support, Councilman Gennaro said most of the Council members behind Intro. 86A all voted for the bill he sponsored in 2010.

“This law, Intro. 86A, did exist back when Local Law 10 was being debated...It was my reform bill versus the car bill,” he said. “Pretty much everyone who was supporting the car bill back then ended up voting for my bill.”

Two other advocacy groups, the Coalition to Ban Horse-Drawn Carriages and In Defense of Animals, also announced Monday that they sent a letter to the president of the ASPCA, Mr. Sayres, asking for him to release carriage horse industry accident reports since January 2009.

“Unfortunately, although the ASPCA’s Humane Law Enforcement Division performs a ‘police type’ function, they are not subject to the Freedom of Information Law and are therefore not really accountable to anyone,” said the coalition’s president, Elizabeth Forel, in a statement.

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CarriageHorseLover 6 days ago

Once again the anti-carriage horse knownothings have littered the comments section here with unsubstantiated claims and outright lies. Blue Star Equiculture, the official NYC carriage horse retirement

farm is a non-profit that provides a loving last home to retiring NYC carriage horses and other farm horses. It is a Federally-recognized non-profit just like the anti-carriage horse organizations that want to force ALL the NYC carriage horses, drivers and owners into an unwarranted permanent retirement by taking their jobs away.

Barbara, Sheria, Johnnyb and Baby are just continuing to spout their usual Radical Animal Rights Activist claims.

FACT: There is no cruelty in the way the NYC carriage horses work and live.

FACT: NO carriage horse drivers or owners have received a single citation for "animal cruelty" or have been arrested in this century.

FACT: Most tail pipes on fossil fuel burning vehicles are about a foot to two feet from the street surface. The carriage horses' noses are on average about 5 to seven feet from the street surface. These horses breathe the same air that the people living and working in NYC breathe. Actually pet dogs in NYC are much more likely to live a "nose-to-tail pipe" life than the carriage horses.

FACT: The NYC carriages have water buckets and there are troughs where the horses may drink if they like.

FACT: Horses in a pasture will often stand in the sun on a hot day rather than choosing to stand in the shade. The same goes for their behavior in rain and snow. Often horses will choose to stand out in "bad" weather even when they have free access to sheds and barns. Horses are NOT people, and they do not react to adverse weather conditions the same as people do.

FACT: As far as I know, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters IS a union- a real union.

FACT: NYC has a law that regulates just how much a carriage driver may charge, just like it has a law for cab drivers. If tourists or anyone else thinks they are being overcharged there are ample agencies with which they can lodge complaints. Where is the proof to back up the accusations? Where are the copies of complaints about over charges?

FACT: In the 1860s when real horse power was in use, there were abusive owners and drivers, just as there were caring owners and drivers. It was back in the 1860s, when Mr. Henry Bergh intervened to stop ONE cart driver from beating his horse. None of today's drivers or owners beat their horses, abuse their horses or neglect their horses. Again, show me a copy of a citation or an arrest record for horse abuse from NYC within this century, not the 19th century.

FACT: The ASPCA, which has police powers to oversee the carriages, has gone on record as having the goal of banning the carriages. PETA, which is one of the anti-carriage groups, is a radical group whose members have thrown paint on grandmothers for wearing fur. Members of this group and WAAR (Another anti-carriage group) have been implicated in break-ins at research labs to "liberate" the animals there, and using harassment and intimidation against lab workers and their families. Some of these groups are actually on a "watch list" kept to monitor domestic terrorists.

FACT: Several of the animal rights groups that are against the carriage horses have an agenda that includes the eventual outlawing of animal "ownership" and an end to any human- animal interaction including raising farm animals, riding or driving horses, keeping pet dogs and cats- or any other animals as pets. If you don't believe me, just do an internet search on PETA, HSUS, WAR and other groups that have been active in the fight to ban carriages in NYC and elsewhere.

9 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Rootiekazootie 5 days ago in reply to CarriageHorseLover

stick to the subject. It doesn't matter who is saying this is wrong, if it's wrong. Horses do not belong in what are virtually garages for their "home". They don't belong working like slaves in a crowded and noisy city. It is not the 19th Century anymore, and will not be ever again. The carriage owners can become electric car owners, no need to lose their livelihood. Stop living in the past.

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



CarriageHorseLover 5 days ago in reply to Rootiekazootie

I am sticking to the subject. The article is about the NYC carriage horses and it contains several of the lies the anti-carriage horses people and the Radical Animal Rights people are continuing to spew.

Horses belong anywhere they are needed and wanted by their owners. FYI several of the buildings where the carriage horses live WERE built as STABLES, not garages, back before motor vehicles were a common sight in NYC. Many of the buildings that YOU probably think were built as garages are ACTUALLY former stables converted into car garages.

The NYC carriage horses don't "work like slaves." You had better do some reading up on "slavery" so you will become informed about that peculiar institution.

Carriage horse owners and drivers don't WANT to become electric car owners- they WANT to remain carriage horse owners and drivers. You just don't get this do you? I can tell you that I personally would NEVER pay to ride in a battery-powered FAKE antique repicar.

There is nothing "WRONG" with horses living and working in cities. They have done this for centuries. And when the world runs out of fossil fuels or the fuels become so expensive that only the 1% can afford them-- many people like you will FINALLY realize there is still a "PLACE" for the working horses in our urban environments.

Fossil fuels pollute the planet. They contribute to all sorts of respiratory problems. Engine exhaust has been proved to contain all sorts of cancer-causing agents. Batteries strong enough to power vehicles are expensive and have a large carbon footprint. I believe you are the one who needs to stop living in the 20th Century, and join us who are planning for life in the 21st Century.

2 people liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Rootiekazootie 5 days ago in reply to CarriageHorseLover

rail as you will, the carriages are on the way out.

1 person liked this. [Like](#) [Reply](#)



CarriageHorseLover 4 days ago in reply to Rootiekazootie

In YOUR dreams only, but not in reality. Carriages THEN, Carriages NOW, Carriages FOR-EV-ER!

Horse-drawn carriages, drays, delivery wagon and trash collection vehicles are proving to be safe, economical and GREEN to operate. More and more cities, towns and villages are adopting REAL horsepower despite the LIES and RANTS of the Radical Animal Rights crazies.

Intelligent people see right through the emotional and illogical arguments as well as the unfounded LIES used by the uninformed and clueless anti-carriage horse factions that infest many modern cities.

2 people liked this.

Like

Reply



KH 1 day ago in reply to CarriageHorseLover

Maybe so, but right now the "uninformed and clueless anti-carriage horse" people outnumber the so-called "intelligent people" about three to one and growing. Do you really think your beloved industry can last much longer when different polls reveal 76%-85% want it abolished? I dare you to produce one public opinion poll that favors your industry. Can't find one? Didn't think so.

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



CarriageHorseLover 6 days ago

I find it very interesting that ALL of the anti-carriage horse comments here have been "liked" by NYCLASS. This is the anti-carriage horse group co-headed by Steve Nislick, who is ALSO the CEO at Edison Properties, LLC.

Edison Properties is the real estate development firm that would like to get the horse carriages banned so it can buy up their stables and convert them to car parking garages or personal storage buildings. This is a multi-million dollar business.

Ed Sayres is both the president and CEO of the ASPCA, and the co-president of NY-CLASS. As president of the ASPCA Sayres' salary is \$500,000 a year. The carriage horse drivers have asked the NY Attorney General's office to investigate the connection between the two organizations. This includes use of facilities, vehicles, resources, and personnel. The ASPCA gave NY-CLASS \$250,000 at the time of NY-CLASS's founding in 2008.

The ASPCA is on record as being in favor of banning carriage horses from NYC, just like the newly formed NYCLASS. Both Steve Nislick and Ed Sayres are wealthy men with a common agenda to ban carriage horses and take away the livelihoods of working class New Yorkers-- the carriage horse owners and drivers.

Something smells rotten in Gotham -- AND it is NOT horse manure.

I urge the NYC press to begin to investigate this cozy little partnership between a wealthy developer, his group NYCLASS and the head of the ASPCA, which is supposed to be an animal welfare organization, not an animal RIGHTS organization.

5 people liked this.

Like

Reply



wendymerendini 6 days ago

I find it interesting that people who know NOTHING about horses are the ones shouting the loudest against horses. Do you people even know how a horse works? How they eat, how they drink, how they rest and why? Do you know what breed of horse pulls a carriage, runs a race, jumps fences, or works cattle and why?

You know nothing. Your ignorance of the horse screams off the page. You insult the horse with your every word. Horses are not humans. They do not think like humans – ever. So stop applying your human emotions to a horse. So you do not want to pull a carriage, fine - why on earth do you think that it is hard for a horse? A draft horse weights in from 1500 to 2000 pounds (riding horses' weigh 800 to 1100) you really think that pulling an object with wheels would be hard for such an animal? Really?

Do you silly, foolish, ignorant people think a horse could stand up much less pull a carriage if he was not fed or watered? Would his eyes be bright and alert, coat have shine, would his body have good condition, feet be well cared for if this horse was mistreated? You fools do not even know what you are looking at when you look at a horse.

I am so tired
of hearing from silly empty head celebrities that have more money than sense. PETA and HSUS just play
these bimbos like a
song. These bimbos give them money, take
their clothes off – what else will be next?
All for the lies that PETA/HSUS puts forth. Check it out the lies for yourselves – or are
you empty headed animal hating bimbos too?
Check out that these organizations
want to end pet ownership. Check out
that PETA kills more dogs and cats than any other organization in this country. Check out that Wayne
Pacelle has never had a
pet and never wants one... he thinks that having pets are bad.

Here are
Pacelle and Newkirk in their own words...

“If I had my personal view, perhaps that might take hold. In fact, I
don’t want to see another dog or cat born.” ----Wayne Pacelle

“To this day I don’t
feel bonded to any non-human animal.” Wayne Pacelle


“ One generation and
out. We have no problem with the extinction of domestic animals.” ---Wayne
Pacelle

Pet ownership
is an "absolutely abysmal situation brought about by human

manipulation." Ingrid Newkirk -
Founder, PETA

"Pet ownership is an absolutely abysmal situation brought on by human manipulation." Ingrid Newkirk - Founder, PETA


"...Eventually
companion animals would be phased out" Ingrid Newkirk - Founder, PETA

 CarriageHorse Lover and 3 more liked this [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Hrslady59 6 days ago in reply to wendymerendini

Folks had better wake up to the fact that these animal rights activists loons are the driving force behind this ban. They are not animal lovers as they claim, nor are they champions of animals. The true animal lovers in this story are the carriage drivers. They who spend time each and every day caring for, hanging out with, and yes making money to pay for the needs of their horses. If you enjoy your pets, be they horses, dogs, cats, or hamsters you had better get behind the NYC carriage horses and drivers because they are just first on the hit list of PETA and the PETA minded! There are a lot more true pet lovers in NYC that 55,000 or even 100,000, people that love and enjoy your animals speak up for these horses and their owners!


 CarriageHorse Lover and 4 more liked this [Like](#) [Reply](#)



Barbara Hobens Feldt 6 days ago

Enough of this cruelty. These horses must walk with their noses in exhaust from buses and cars and in incredible traffic. I have seen them working in blazing sun (no water offered), snow, and pouring rain. There are other horses that were under the "care" of the stables on West 52nd that have died - - Rest in Peace Clancy - Feb 7, 2008!

The abuse of horses in NYC propelled Henry Bergh (Friends of Animals founder, now ASPCA) to say, "My friend, you can't do that anymore." when he saw a man beating his horse. I hope to be there as this is said loud and clear on the steps of City Hall!

 NYCLASS and 3 more liked this [Like](#) [Reply](#)

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