



Queens Civic Congress

P.O. Box 238, Flushing, NY 11363 (718) 225-2807 fax: (718) 225-2818
www.queensciviccongress.org queensciviccongr@aol.com

President Sean M. Walsh **Executive Vice Presidents** Corey Bearak Patricia Dolan **Secretary** Seymour Schwartz **Treasurer** James Trent

Founders Robert Harris Albert Greenblatt **Vice Presidents** Edwin Westley David Kulick Richard Hellenbrecht Audrey Lucas Paul Kerzner Tyler Cassell Nagassar Ramgarib Dorothy Woo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2007

Contact:
Corey Bearak
(718) 343-6779

QUEENS CIVICS' BUDGET COMMENTS TO QUEENS BOROUGH BD.

In testimony presented today (Thursday, February 22, 2007) to the Queens Borough Board, the Queens Civic Congress [QCC] called for seven day libraries, an effective Buildings Department and real estate tax equity for homeowners and tenants. The statement, presented at Borough Hall by QCC Executive Vice President Corey B. Bearak (North Bellerose Civic Association), follows:

Borough President Marshall and Borough Board Members:

Thank you for affording the Queens Civic Congress the opportunity to comment on the City's Preliminary Expense and Capital Budget. As an umbrella group of 100 civic organizations, our membership represents almost every community in the borough.

This year, in honor of the diminished need for New Yorkers to participate in the "budget dance," the Queens Civic Congress seeks to focus on some structural issues and some areas of continuing concern. Before doing so, we thank Speaker Christine Quinn and Finance Chairman David Weprin and the Council for their efforts to remove important core programs from the annual dance. With less need to hop on the dance floor, the Queens Civic Congress urges the City Council and the Queens Borough Board make our branch libraries true community resources by ensuring these signature facilities open SEVEN (7) DAYS a week and eight to ten (8-10) hours per day. Zoning and building concern continue to plague our communities and the Buildings Department (DOB) requires reform; in addition to the needed legislative reform – some enacted recently and many more introduced which the Queens Civic Congress embraces, make the DOB use the revenue it collects for plan examination and code enforcement for those purposes; sooner or later there can be a lawsuit over the misappropriation of the fees paid but not applied.

In the current fiscal year, the Council directed \$10,000 to enable the Queens Civic Congress Foundation, a non-profit organization founded the the civic congress but with its distinct board, by-laws and corporate status, to assist our member organizations with their work on zoning and related land use use and code issues. Since Fiscal Year 2006, we have requested \$50,000 for this purpose to empower our civic association members to conduct zoning and

related studies throughout the borough. We seek that amount this year. There remains a need to review neighborhood zoning at a pace greater than what the City Planning Department can undertake. The foundation works directly with civic associations in the borough to present preservation and re-zoning proposals to city agencies.

The Queens Civic Congress welcomes the attention of the Mayor and Speaker Quinn to initiatives to attack the structural deficit and address the impact of property taxes on homeowners and tenants. Rather than a rainy day fund, we recommend the reforms advocated in our platform as more cost-effective in addressing the structural deficit. The Queens Civic Congress fiscal platform finds more preferable the use of “pay-as-you-go capital” and capital debt reduction (pay-down). Reducing future debt service and costs reduces the size of the future budget and saves more funds than any set aside of dollars in a special fund.

The available surplus allows time to seriously study our recommendations to maximize revenues and strategically address the City's structural deficit. This includes at least \$2 billion – conservative numbers today – through QCC's real estate and personal income tax reforms. Our tax reform proposal will help more New Yorkers who need the help – Middle, moderate and lower income homeowners and tenants with tax bills that approximate the payments made before the infamous 25 percent (that was the actual percent increase on homeowners' bills when the rate increased 18% a few years back.). These homeowners need \$100 a month, not \$400 per year.

The Congress also urges equalization efforts to extend water rates relief equally to all ratepayers - single-family homeowners, the coops, and the small businessman. Remove capital costs from the water rate calculus. The QCC supports legislation sponsored by Assembly Member Mark Weprin to delay rate-setting until after the budget's adoption.

The Queens Civic Congress stands ready to work with our elected officials as we all seek to move our City forward. Thank you.

-30-

Queens Civic Congress Members

Association of Old Forest Hills ♦ Auburndale Improvement Association ♦ Bayside Civic Database ♦ Bayside Hills Civic Association ♦ Bayswater Civic Association ♦ Bay Terrace Community Alliance ♦ Bellaire-BellVill Civic Association ♦ Belle Harbor Property Owners Association ♦ Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association ♦ Bellerose Hillside Civic Association ♦ Bell Park Manor Terrace Community Council ♦ Bowne Park Civic Association ♦ Briarwood Community Association ♦ Cambria Heights Civic Association ♦ Cherry Robinson Homeowners ♦ C.O.M.E.T. (Communities of Maspeth-Elmhurst Together) ♦ Concerned Citizens of Laurelton ♦ Creedmoor Civic Association ♦ Doug-Bay Manor Civic Association ♦ Douglas Manor Association ♦ Douglaston Civic Association ♦ Dutch Kills Civic Assn. of Long Island City ♦ East Flushing Civic Association ♦ Federated Block Associations of Laurelton ♦ Federation of Civic Associations of Southeast Queens ♦ Floral Park Community Council ♦ Flushing Heights Civic Association ♦ Flushing on the Hill Taxpayers Association ♦ Forest Hills Chamber of Commerce ♦ Forest Hills Crescents Association ♦ Forest Hills-Van Court Association ♦ Fresh Meadows Homeowners Association ♦ Georgetown Mews ♦ Glendale Civic Association of Queens ♦ Glen Oaks Village Owners ♦ Greater Astoria Historical Society ♦ Greater Whitestone Taxpayers Civic Association ♦ Harding Heights Civic Association ♦ Hillcrest Estates Civic Association ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #1 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #2 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #3 ♦ Hilltop Village Co-Op #4 ♦ Hollis Hills Civic Association ♦ Holliswood Civic Association ♦ Hollis Park Gardens Civic Association ♦ Holly Civic Association ♦ Hunters Point Community Coalition ♦ Hyde Park Gardens Cooperative ♦ Jackson Heights Beautification Group ♦ Jamaica Estates Association ♦ Jamaica Hill Community Association ♦ Juniper Park Civic Association ♦ Kew Forest Neighborhood Association ♦ Kew Gardens Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Hills Homeowners Association ♦ Kissena Park Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Bay Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Pines ♦ Malba Civic Association ♦ Meadowlark Gardens Owners ♦ Middle Village Maspeth Civic Association ♦ Middle Village Property Owners Association ♦ Mitchell Linden Civic Association ♦ Neponsit Property Owners Association ♦ Newtown Civic Association ♦ North Bellerose Civic Association ♦ North Flushing Civic Association ♦ North Hills Estates Civic Association ♦ Northwest Clearview Homeowners Association ♦ Norwood Civic Association ♦ Oakland Terrace/ Gardens Community Council ♦ Off Broadway Homeowners Association ♦ Our Neighborhood Improvement Association ♦ Parkway Village Historical Society ♦ Queensboro Hill Neighborhood Association ♦ Queens Colony Civic Association ♦ Queens Community Civic Corp. ♦ Queens Village Civic Association ♦ Ramblersville-Hawtree Civic Association ♦ Richmond Hill Historical Society ♦ Ridgewood Property Owners Association ♦ Rockaway Action Committee ♦ Rockaway Park Homeowners/Residents ♦ Rocky Hill Civic Association ♦ Rosedale Civic Association ♦ Royal Ranch Association. ♦ Southeast Queens Concerned Neighbors ♦ South Ozone Park West Civic Association ♦ Springfield/Rosedale Community Action Association ♦ Station Road Civic Assoc. of Auburndale ♦ Sunnyside Gardens/Harrison Place Homeowners ♦ Surrey Estates Civic Association ♦ Union Turnpike Merchants Association ♦ United Forties Civic Association ♦ United Neighbors Civic Association ♦ Utopia Estates Civic Association ♦ Waldheim Neighborhood Association ♦ Wayanda Civic Association ♦ West Cunningham Park Civic Association ♦ Westmoreland Association ♦ Woodside Community Council