



Queens Civic Congress

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QUEENS CIVICS' BUDGET COMMENTS TO CITY COUNCIL

In testimony presented today (Friday, May 4, 2007) to the Queens City Council Delegation, 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:

Chairman Comrie and the Members of the Queens City Council Delegation:

Thank you for affording the Queens Civic Congress the opportunity to comment on the City's Budget and an opportunity to present the Queens Civic Congress Foundation's request to conduct zoning and landmark studies on behalf of member civic organizations and communities in the borough. As an umbrella group of 100 civic organizations, our membership represents almost every community in the borough.

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. Specifically, we seek this amount for the Queens Civic Congress Foundation to provide consulting services and materials such as maps, photography, photocopying for civics seeking rezoning and landmark districting. There remains a need to review neighborhood zoning and landmarking needs at a pace greater than what the City Planning Department can and will undertake; at present city hall appears more interest in moving development projects and appears to lost the fervor it showed going into November 2005 to move and consider needed downzonings. The Foundation and the congress will fill this unfortunate void with the Council's support. The foundation works directly with civic associations in the borough to present preservation and re-zoning proposals to city agencies.

This year, the Queens Civic Congress thanks Speaker Christine Quinn and Finance Chairman David Weprin and the Council for their efforts to remove important core programs

from the annual budget dance. With less need to hop on the dance floor, the Queens Civic Congress recommends making 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.

The Queens Civic Congress welcomes the attention of the Mayor and Speaker Quinn to attacking the structural deficit and addressing the impact of property taxes on homeowners and tenants. The surplus allows time to seriously study our platform reforms to maximize revenues and strategically address the City's structural deficit. We recommend “pay-as-you-go capital” and capital debt reduction (pay-down) as more cost-effective in addressing the structural deficit. The City can also realize at least \$2 billion - conservative numbers today - through QCC's real estate and personal income tax reforms that 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. Homeowners need \$100 a month, not \$400 per year. The Congress also urges equalization efforts that 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.

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Queens Civic Congress Members

Association of Old Forest Hills ♦ Auburndale Improvement Association ♦ Bayside Civic Database ♦ Bayside Clear-Spring Council ♦ Bayside Hills Civic Association ♦ Bayswater Civic Association ♦ Bay Terrace Community Alliance, Inc. ♦ 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 ♦ Cornucopia Society ♦ 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, Inc. ♦ 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 and Civic 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