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The Fresh Meadows Times

## Queens Civic Congress opposes repealing term limits

The Civic Scene

By Bob Harris

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At the Sept. 15 Queens Civic Congress meeting, civic representatives voted that all public officials and those who run for public office must use a referendum to attempt any change in the term limits law.

Their argument was that the public voted first to enact term limits and then rejected any repeal. Any attempt to repeal or modify term limits other than with a voter referendum smacks of illegitimacy.

This action has taken on relevancy with the recent statement by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to repeal the law and run for a third term as mayor. Changing the law would have had greater appeal to the term-limited majority of the City Council months ago, but now many have committed to run for higher offices.

A prolonged battle over the law is not in the city's best interests, with the economic downturn and bankruptcy of brokerage houses and banks here. People losing jobs and the possible closing of offices mean lower city tax revenue. City officials should boost the city economy, provide necessary services to support businesses and industry and not fight about a law voters accepted twice.

In his President's Message, QCC President Corey Bearak reported that the Juniper Park Civic Association forced a notorious developer, who destroyed Flushing's landmarked RKO Keith Theatre, to tear down the top floor of a house at 57-39 Mazeau St. in Maspeth, built illegally in 2006 in an R4-1 zoned area. The city Department of Buildings made him remove the illegal floor and a section on the side of the house that encroached on a next door lot.

This column has been saying for years that illegal construction must be declared that by the DOB and corrected. In Maspeth, it took community time and effort, the zoning was maintained and what has happened is now public.

Bearak told of the QCC's desire to have the city protect neighborhoods being consumed by developers. He complained that it has taken too long to rezone areas such as Dutch Kills, the Rockaways, Waldheim and Laurelton.

Even with rezoning, some communities are unhappy that not enough has been done. Queens' middle-class quality of life needs protective zoning and DOB protection in enforcing zoning rules by stopping and correcting illegal activities and publicizing punishments.

QCC Executive Vice President Patricia Dolan was quoted in The New York Times as being unhappy that Queens' residential neighborhoods are caught up in a building boom, the major accomplishment of which seems to be the tearing down of old homes and replacing them with behemoths which pave over open space, walling the property in. She wants these neighborhoods, with old shade trees, to be protected.

What was not said was that with soil paving, there is no way for water to be absorbed into the ground, so it flows over and into places which can flood and do damage.

The QCC will revise its platform, CIVIC2030. This document lists Queens civics' desires and wants. A new 2009 document will be adopted no later than the June 2009 meeting.

The QCC opposes real estate tax increases. It wants the tax system to be reformed. Long-term borrowing costs are too high and assessments benefit the rich. Not mentioned are tax abatements, given to businesses to stay and build in the city when they would not leave and speculators who build gigantic developments and projects using borrowed money.

Developers then sell the developments for big profits. The middle-class homeowner — whose house is for living in and who will not realize a profit until the house is sold — should not have to face a tax hike during these times.