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Budget Concerns On The Docket At Board 9 Meet

Quality Of Life Issues Also Highlighted

story and photo by **Ralph Mancini**



Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak was at last week's Community Board 9 meeting to protest current water rates imposed by the Department of Environmental Protection.

A proposed water rate increase, city budget issues and local quality-of-life concerns were among the hot topics at the Tuesday, Jan. 13 Community Board 9 meeting held at the Punjabi Palace in Richmond Hill.

Water rates

President of the Queens Civic Congress Corey Bearak joined forces with Suzannah Glidden and Fay Muir of the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition to protest the addition of a water filtration plant in the Bronx's Van Cortlandt Park and its effect on water rates.

Bearak campaigned for more oversight over the Department of Environmental Protection in order to pressure the city agency to come up with a less expensive project.

"We're paying a bigger percentage of [the undertaking] out of our income if we pay for this out of our water tax. The DEP is a cash cow—you use less water, and you still pay a high amount," said the attorney.

Annual water rates, according to Bearak, have risen 10 to 20 times since 1988.

He also urged the DEP to stop making the water system pay for street cleaning and called to put an end to the usage of regressive water and sewer taxes for unrelated projects.

Glidden touched upon the environmental impacts of plants currently under construction in the Bronx and the Croton area of Westchester County by mentioning how the development of shopping malls near the Croton Reservoir would bring in more cars, triggering oil runoff that travels into the water.

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Board 6 Tackles Water Rates, Street Fairs And Local Politics

Potpourri Of Problems At First Meet Of '09

by **Sam Goldman**

Community Board 6's first meeting of the new year, held Jan. 14 at the Kew Gardens Community Center, brought a plan to lower water rates.....

Water rates

Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak joined Suzannah Glidden and Fay Muir of the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition (CWCWC) to tell Board 6 about the threat to the city's tap water and its effect on water rates.

According to the trio, city drinking water—widely considered among the world's best—is threatened by development in Westchester and Rockland counties, where two of the city's three reservoirs are found (the third one is located underground in Queens).

"Wetlands protect the streams and they very much protect water quality," said Glidden; natural systems help keep soil together, disperse rainwater and absorb pollutants. However, development in the upstate counties—which Glidden claimed was done with the city's approval—has taken many of these natural filtration systems away.

Instead of preserving these natural filtration systems and allowing them to run their course, they argued, the city Department of Environmental Protection has constructed a filtration plant at Van Cortland Park in the Bronx which was supposed to cost \$600 million but instead costs over \$3 billion.

The added construction costs, in addition to various state and city costs, show up in the form of higher water rates, which Muir called "unsustainable and unacceptable."

The CWCWC asked Board 6 to pass a resolution in favor of the group's plan to lower water rates, provide environmental protection for the upstate reservoir and purchase land in the two upstate countries to preserve the city's water.

Board 6 decided, at Hennessy's recommendation, to delay the vote on the resolution until the February meeting to give members more opportunity to study the CWCWC's presentation.

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Board 6 by Sam Goldman

Saving our water supply

Reisman, who also serves on Board 6's Environmental Committee, unveiled a resolution to the board with regard to the presentation made at its January meeting by representatives of the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, a group seeking both the preservation of the city's tap water supply and a halt to rapidly rising water rates.

The coalition offered over 16 different points of emphasis, but Reisman stated that the committee had whittled them down to a few. The resolution called for increased funding to preserve the safety of water, a senior citizen exemption for water tax increases, the maintenance of sewer systems, the end to oil and gas drilling near reservoirs and that the Water Board not set rates until the city adopts its annual budget.

The board endorsed the resolution, with one dissenting vote and two abstentions.