

## **Please recall this as you vote today on the Filtration Plant**

May 9, 1999

Dear Council Member:

On behalf of the Queens Civic Congress, a coalition of more than ninety civic, community, cooperative and tenant association, I write to urge your support in opposing the siting of a filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park. The QCC has many concerns, including policy, cost, the use of, and the impact on, parkland and the specific proposal.

The QCC, in testimony against water rate increases, highlighted the policy failure of the City of New York in opting to build an expensive filtration system in place of strengthening efforts to protect the watershed. This failure to act applies particularly in the Croton system and the opportunity exists to refocus energies and resources to the aggressive watershed protection initiative. This should result in a Filtration Avoidance Determination for the Croton system similar to the 1997 Catskill-Delaware plan already in place. Avoidance makes sense. The Croton system, supplying 10% of NYC's water, meets all health-related Federal and State drinking water standards. The Federal court's order to filter Croton water reflected a forecast of how the city would not protect that system. This issue is not filtration. It is protection of water.

If the proposal proceeds, water rate increases will spiral unabated for homeowners, cooperators, and landlords (and their tenants). Water rates impact business costs as well. The DEP does not dispute this. It makes no sense to embark on costly construction and capital borrowing when lower cost, effective and feasible filtration avoidance measures exist.

The threat to parkland actually involves some 40 acres. The proposed site for a water filtration plant for the Croton System may only occupy 11 acres of Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. However, some 30 additional acres will be sacrificed for roads and staging. This proposal, which would involve construction on parkland for some seven years – at minimum – certainly has the look of the alienation of precious park land that state law forbids. Converting public parkland for industrial use sets a dangerous precedent, unacceptable for any park in the city.

Further, it appears incredulous that the Department of Environmental Protection, in pursuing a site, appears preoccupied with parkland. As explained above, parkland makes little sense and raises policy and logistical and, perhaps, legal issues. The DEP rejected industrial zoned sites in Westchester County that requested the water filtration plant.

Our counterparts in the Bronx reported the three community boards bordering Van Cortlandt Park and the Bronx Borough Board, voted unanimously against the site in the residential Norwood section, which includes the Mosholu Golf Course. Public Officials also on record for a sane and practical water policy include Borough President Fernando Ferrer, Member of Congress Eliot Engel, State Senators Guy Velella and Eric Schneiderman, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, and Council Member June Eisland.

The QCC requests that each of our borough's city council members vote against the siting of a filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park in meetings of the zoning subcommittee, land use committee and the full Council. Make this a first step toward an overall cost-effective and sound water protection strategy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Sean M. Walsh*

Sean M. Walsh

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