



# Queens Civic Congress

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**Testimony to the City Council**  
**Parks and Recreation Committee and Committee on Public Safety:**  
**“Crime Prevention and Safety Issues in City Parks”**

by  
Barbara Larkin, Vice President, Queens Civic Congress and  
President, Belle Harbor Property Owners Association

Thank you Chairpersons Foster and Vallone, and members of these Committees for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Queens Civic Congress concerning Crime Prevention and Safety Issues in City Parks. I am Barbara Larkin; I serve not only as a Vice President of the Queens Civic Congress but also as President of the BHPOA. The QCC, an umbrella organization of more than 100 neighborhood-based civic organizations representing property owners and tenants who reside in Queens. The 1300 households in Belle Harbor, a coastal community in the Rockaways and the residents of our neighboring communities, all share an interest in ensuring safety and security in our parks

The Queens Civic Congress and our parks partners, Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces, maintain a strong concern about parks safety; and our concern goes beyond instances of crimes and vandalism. Certainly, secure and safe parks mean more than the definitions involved; it means parks used and frequented by residents and in many cases tourists and other visitors. Most criminal activities in our parks occur out of our view. Frequent use of active and passive park spaces deters criminal activities and vandalism. Some of our natural areas including spaces adjacent to landscaped and developed park areas remain particularly vulnerable to vandalism. The limited number of unarmed Park Enforcement personnel assigned to Queens – remember they hold peace officer status – need to be bolstered and the Parks and Police Commissioner must also hold Queens Police precincts responsible for safety and security as our parks are as much a part of our communities as are our homes and the places where we shop, work and worship.

In November, I testified before the Parks Committee on one major program where safety remains paramount: This concerns the beachgoers – whether they live near or visit our City beaches. Hundreds of thousands of visitors flock daily to the Rockaway peninsula during the summer months to enjoy ocean along Rockaway’s seven mile shoreline. These beach-goers who come from all five boroughs, Long Island and even other states and nations, expect to enjoy a safe swimming experience.

-over, please -

At that time, I raised the specter of red flags that forbid the use of certain beaches by Rockaway residents and visiting beachgoers where they ought find well-trained lifeguards. In their place, Parks personnel not trained as lifeguards drive along the shoreline reminding people to STAY OUT OF THE WATER – or to drag all belongings to a “covered” beach – all because no lifeguard covers that section of the beach. I then also raised the issue of the less than stellar Parks Department recruiting practices to alleviate the annual lifeguard shortage. Since that [testimony](#) remains part of the record for November 13, I urge you to review our recommendations concerning the proper training, testing (including ocean testing for ocean deployments), recruitment, hiring and deployment of lifeguards. {See [http://queensciviccongress.org/Media/files/2007/2007-11-13\\_Lifeguards.pdf](http://queensciviccongress.org/Media/files/2007/2007-11-13_Lifeguards.pdf)}

This lifeguard shortage results from unfair training and testing procedures and outdated personnel practices and staffing models. It remains imperative that responsibility reign once again from Memorial Day through Labor Day; this mean qualified lifeguards fully deployed at each and every beach in New York City.

In conclusion, the Queens Civic Congress urges the Committees and the Council to make safety and security in our parks a priority; this involves more than the application of resources, it requires a positive change in policies in the deployment and staffing to secure our parks and natural spaces.

Thank you.

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