



The Next Queens Civic Congress Meeting:

Monday, October 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Agenda:

- 1) City Councilman Leroy Comrie**
- 2) Installation of Civic Congress Officers**
- 3) Installation of Civic Foundation Officers**
- 4) Presentation on Water Rates by Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition**
- 5) Presentation on Tree Protection**

Union Plaza Nursing Home, 33-23 Union Street [five blocks north of Northern Blvd.]

Articles Inside This Congressional:

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Page 4: No to Real Estate Tax Hikes; Yes to Reform

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President's Message

Congratulations to the newly re-elected officers. We are fortunate to have a great team working together to lead and build our broad based coalition. Queens Civic Congress continues to fight for our neighborhoods and advocate our needs. Thank you to all the officers who are involved in planning and coordinating the programs this year. Please look to page 5 took at this year's program agenda; view updates on line.

On page four (and on line), view our letter opposing any hike in real property taxes. Do you not agree that City Hall must look at and implement our reform proposals to bring equity and fairness to property taxing before they seek to raise the rate? Please use that letter as a model to write the Mayor and our elected officials.

There is progress on zonings in Dutch Kills, The Rockaways, Waldheim and Laurelton. We'll discuss that and more on October 6. We need to keep up the pressure. Please check in with Executive Vice President Pat Dolan to make sure the Congress has the latest information on your community's zoning efforts.

Please also make sure your elected officials, especially the Mayor and City Council Members, know where we stand on term limits. On September 15, Queens Civic Congress member organizations unanimously approved a position that no term limits changes can take place other than by public referendum. There exists much "chatter" that an extension of term limits may be considered by the Council next Spring, just before the municipal primary season begins.

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, AND POLITICS

New Yorkers for Parks will launch its Parks 2009 Campaign: Improving New York City One Park at a Time for all New Yorkers, on Monday, October 6, 2008. To learn more about the event and to RSVP, please call (212) 838-9410.

PICK UP FREE DAFFODIL BULBS

Fred Kress and our parks partners at the Queens Coalition New Yorkers for Parks and Green Spaces advise you can pick up your bulbs available through through the Daffodil Project that is distributing over 300,000 free daffodil bulbs to New Yorkers (Thank you New Yorkers for Parks). If you reserved bulbs, pickup is at the Overlook, 80-30 Park Lane, Kew Gardens, on Sunday, October 5th, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m. Eight QCP & GS volunteers will be there to get you your bulbs in a fast and orderly fashion. It is recommended and greatly appreciate it if you make your pickups as early as possible. (Best time would be before 12:00 noon.

Sincerely,

Corey

Corey B. Bearak (718-343-6779; Bearak@aol.com)



Queens Civic Congress Position on *Term Limits*

Approved by the Membership Monday, September 15, 2008

1. Queens Civic Congress – representing the civic movement in the borough of Queens – calls on ALL public officials and those who aspire to public office to commit to the use of referendum to attempt any change in the City Charter enacted in that matter, and state that position publicly.
2. The public voted two separate times, first to enact term limits and second to reject its repeal. Consistent with this position, any change in term limits, from revocation to extending or reducing the number of terms must only be enacted by the same process of voter referendum that enacted the two-term limits on municipal office holder.
3. Queens Civic Congress takes no position on the substance of term limits; some in the civic movement support term limits; some oppose it; others support it for some offices but not all. Queens Civic Congress says “let the voters decide.”
4. Simply put, Queens Civic Congress opposes any plan to change the term limit law as currently exists except through a public referendum.
5. If City Hall and the City Council seek to repeal or modify terms limits, anything other than a voter referendum smacks of illegitimacy.

Notice to all QCC members: Please communicate the position to your local elected officials and urge your members to each do the same. Thank you.

A weekend day, March, 2009, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

2nd Annual Going Green In Queens sponsored by by Queens Civic Congress, Queens Coalition for Parks & Green Spaces Partnership for Parks and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. For more details, check www.queensciviccongress.org

Also on line at www.QueensCivicCongress.org/Media:

Council shouldn't decide term limits: Queens Civic ♦ QCC PRES. SPEAKS AT KISSENA PARK CIVIC ♦ WALDHEIM REZONING ♦ QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS FOCUSES ON TERM LIMITS ♦ Reform, not raise NYC Property Taxes.

Queens Civic Congress Opposes Real Estate Tax Gouge Proposes Sound Solution advocated in CIVIC2030

*Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak fired off this letter to the Mayor opposing the 7% hike in our property taxes. Enough already. Posted on line at:
http://queensciviccongress.org/Media/files/2008/2008-09-29_Real_Property_Tax_Reform.pdf*

September 29, 2008

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Mayor:

On behalf of Queens Civic Congress, I write to oppose any real property tax gouge and propose a sound and practical alternative. Your administration can make a real difference by reforming the real property tax system to re-introduce equity and fairness into the system as proposed by Queens Civic Congress. Hiking property taxes across the board – makes no sense.

Queens Civic Congress – in testimonies, statements, other advocacy and, most recently, our “REAL Property Tax Reform” forum – advocates an improvement that bring equity, fairness and transparency to the City's antiquated, inequitable and unfair real estate tax regime AND nets the City some five billion dollars – yes, \$5,000,000,000, without gouging middle and working class homeowners, businesses and tenants. CIVIC2030 includes this and other Queens Civic Congress reforms.

Queens Civic Congress advocates most of the net revenues, not for the city the embark on a spending spree, but to help it strategically reform its tax system, address long-term borrowing issues and re-structure its out of whack budget. Clearly, this sound reform also covers the need to address core services for our needy.

It remains clear from much can be done to raise revenue and at the same time give the middle and working class (homeowners and tenants) a break. City assessment practices that unfairly benefit the wealthiest New Yorkers and luxury homes and apartments require change. Queens Civic Congress will continues its conversation with the City Assessors (and Appraisers) Local 1757 and concerned state and city electeds to reform a system that so unfairly treats those who struggle to get by each day. For more details, click here. Instead of taxing New Yorkers, many of them struggling in tough economic times, implement the Queens Civic Congress REAL Property Tax Reform.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Corey Bearak
Corey B. Bearak
President

View the Queens Civic Congress plan at:

http://queensciviccongress.org/Media/files/2007/2007-03-02_City_Council_Finance_Hearing_R-E_Assess.pdf

COALITION FIGHTING ESCALATING NYC WATER & SEWER RATES

Queens Civic Congress (QCC) and the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Inc. (CWCWC) with over 50 NYC, Westchester and Putnam counties environmental, citizen activist, housing and religious member groups have united to outreach to other concerned groups and NYC Community Boards in an alliance to halt the unsustainable, escalating NYC water and sewer rates. The CWCWC presentation at the October 6 QCC meeting will cover many of the reforms sought, including

- Either secure immediate federal and state aid to fund the mandated capital improvements;
- Or the NYC capital budget must fund the capital costs for water supply and treatment facilities;
- Cease the practice of setting rates before the City adopts its budget by passing legislation <http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A04824> sponsored by Assembly Member Mark Weprin that has already passed the Assembly and is pending in the Senate. The Independent Budget Office's May 2008 brief identifies costs that can be reduced or are wrongly charged against the water rates: higher fringe benefits accounting (\$19 million), debt service savings (\$17 million) from delays to non-essential projects and holding code 499 (\$94 million);
- Eliminate annual rental payments by the City to its Water Board, currently \$178 million and expected to increase further, to the City and return the current payment of \$147 million;
- Discontinue using water taxes for projects unrelated to water and sewer needs that instead should be funded from the regular budget (\$15 million a year).
- The Croton project funds projects outside the scope of water supply and sewer systems that should be funded by City capital: These parks projects should be funded by tax levy and not the regressive water and sewer tax;
- Investigate NYCDEP's quadruple increase of the Croton filtration plant cost estimates
- Replace NYCDEP's misguided choice of obsolete Dissolved Air Flotation technology for the Croton Watershed filtration plant with modern Membrane filtration - today's technology of choice - for less cost, less energy consumption and smaller footprint;
- Force NYCDEP to remedy the ongoing waste of over a million gallons a day of groundwater at the Croton filtration plant site;
- Invest in more land purchases and conservation easements in the Croton Watershed for the most cost-effective way to protect the source water of the Bronx and Manhattan water supplies. The more the water is allowed to degrade by pollution from over-development, the greater the cost of remediation;
- Scrutinize the complete list of neglected and necessary infrastructure repair costs including the Delaware leak;
- Improve NYCDEP's obligation to keep existing storm and combined sanitary-storm systems in a state of good repair to prevent recurrences of summer 2007 backups into Queens' homes and apartments;
- Support efforts to ease impacts of high water rates on senior homeowners and tenants by passing legislation <http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A07961> which would provide a tax levy subsidy to households 65 or older and with incomes below current Senior Citizens Homeowner Exemption eligibility limit;
- Improve water and sewer billing policies.

By continuing to build our coalition and with growing public awareness and concern, we foresee our issues being considered and acted upon. Water, our most precious resource without which we cannot survive, must be protected. In addition, our ability to afford clean and safe water is a #1 priority.

Queens Civic Congress Calendar

All meetings, excluding Legislative Reception, unless otherwise noted take place at:
Union Plaza Nursing Home, 33-23 Union Street [five blocks north of Northern Boulevard]

Meetings of the Executive Committee are open to all QCC members and take place at 8:00 p.m. (unless otherwise noted) If you wish to add an agenda item, please call Corey Bearak (343-6779) or email Bearak@aol.com at least 24 hours in advance.

******Updated 2008-2009 Meeting Schedule******

Monday, October 6, 2008, 7:30 p.m.

(Queens Civic Congress Regular Meeting details front page)

Monday, November 17, 2008, 7:30 p.m.

(Queens Civic Congress Regular Meeting and Education: Mayoral Control – Extend it, Change it, End it [tentative])

Saturday, December 6, 2008, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

(Legislative Reception, at The Douglaston Club, 600 West Drive, Douglaston, NY 11363)

Monday, February 2, 2009

(Open Executive Committee meeting)

Monday, March 16, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

(Regular Meeting and Economic Development Forum)

Monday, April 20, 2009

(Zoning to enhance our neighborhoods and Landmarking to preserve historic structures and districts before we lose them)

Sunday, May 17, 9:30 a.m. (Legislative Forum 2009: The Race for Mayor)

Tuesday, May 19, 2009, 8:30 p.m.

(Queens Civic Congress Regular Meeting and Parks Forum co-sponsored by Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces and the Belle Harbor Property Owners Association @ PS 114 – the Belle Harbor School, Cronston Avenue and Beach 134 Street in The Rockaways)

Monday, June 15, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

(Queens Civic Congress Regular Meeting: Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan)

Additional *special issue* meetings and workshops will be announced as they get added to the schedule

Additional Topics to be covered at Upcoming meetings and Special Forums (dates to be added to the calendar)

Real Estate Tax Assessments in Queens: Are they accurate?

Community Facility Notification

Accessing Government Services

Department of Building and Code Enforcement Update

Nominating Committee Report Accepted; Officers Elected & to be Installed

The QCC Officer Nominating Committee was elected in June. The Committee recommended continuing the existing team of QCC officers in its September report. Nominations were closed without any “candidates” from the floor.

As a result the Secretary cast one ballot for the slate and the installation takes place Monday, October 6. City Councilman Leroy Comrie, Deputy Majority Leader of that body, will install QCC's officer and the officers of our Foundation. See lists of Congress and Foundation officers below.

Queens Civic Congress Officers

President:	Corey B. Bearak (North Bellerose Civic Association)
Executive Vice President:	Patricia Dolan (Kew Gardens Hills Civic Association)
Treasurer:	James Trent (Creedmoor Civic Association)
Secretary:	Seymour Schwartz (Briarwood Community Association)
	Tyler Cassell (North Flushing)
	Richard Hellenbrecht (Bellerose-Commonwealth)
	Paul Kerzner (Ridgewood Homeowners and Property Owners)
	David Kulick (Flushing on the Hill)
Vice Presidents:	Audrey Lucas (Southeast Queens Concerned Neighbors)
	Nagassar Ramgarib (Queens Village Civic Association)
	Edwin Westley (Jackson Heights Beautification Group)
	Dorothy Woo (Holly Civic Association)
	Harbachan Singh (Holliswood Civic Association)
	Barbara Larkin (Belle Harbor Property Owners Association)
	Kathy Masi (Glendale Civic Association of Queens)
	<i>President Emeritus</i> Sean M. Walsh (Douglaston Civic Association)
Founders:	Albert Greenblatt, Esq.
	Robert I. Harris (West Cunningham Park Civic Association)

Queens Civic Congress Foundation Officers

President:	Paul Kerzner
Executive Vice President:	Corey B. Bearak
Treasurer:	James Trent
Secretary:	Robert Bishop
Trustees:	Patricia Dolan, Richard Hellenbrecht, Jerry Iannece, Claire Schulman

The Queens Civic Congress Foundation meets Monday, October 6, at 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. immediately preceding the Queens Civic Congress meeting and program at 7:30 p.m. in the Union Plaza Nursing Home.

2008 Committee Chairs

Audit / Phil Ragusa, CPA
By Laws / Albert Greenblatt
Aviation & Noise / Richard Hellenbrecht
City Infrastructure & Capital Program / Dorothy Woo
Community & Civic Outreach / Robert Harris & Audrey Lucas
Community Facilities / Tyler Cassell
Congress Platform / Seymour Schwartz
Co-ops & Condos / Marc Haken
Creedmoor Task Force / Bernard Aquilino
Economic Development / Chris Collett
Education / Edwin Westley
Health & Human Services / Kevin Forrestal
Historical Preservation & Landmarking / Kathy Masi
Legislation / Paul Kerzner
Newsletter / David Kulick
Nominations/ Helene Zaro
Parks & Cultural Affairs / Barbara Larkin & Kim Ohanian
Planning & Land Use / Patricia Dolan
Public Safety / Nagassar Ramgarib
Tenants & Affordable Housing / Florence Fisher
Transportation / Jim Trent
Zoning & Code Enforcement / Joseph Amoroso & Harbachan Singh
[above list will be updated at/ or after the October meeting]

Queens Civic Congress Membership

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 ♦ Civic Association of Utopia Estates ♦ C.O.M.E.T. (Communities of Maspeth-Elmhurst Together) ♦ Concerned Citizens of Laurelton ♦ Cornucopia Society ♦ Creedmoor Civic Association ♦ Deerfield Area Association ♦ Doug-Bay Manor Civic Association ♦ Douglas Manor Association ♦ Douglaston Civic Association ♦ Dutch Kills Civic Association of Long Island City ♦ East Elmhurst Corona Civic Association ♦ 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 11423 Block Association ♦ Hollis Hills Civic Association ♦ Holliswood Civic Association ♦ Hollis Park Gardens Association ♦ Holly Civic Association ♦ Hyde Park Gardens Cooperative ♦ Jackson Heights Beautification Group ♦ Jamaica Estates Association ♦ Jamaica Hill Community Association ♦ Juniper Park Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Civic Association ♦ Kew Gardens Hills Homeowners Association ♦ Kew Gardens Improvement Association ♦ Kissena Park Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Bay Civic Association ♦ Little Neck Pines ♦ Long Island City Alliance ♦ Malba Civic Association ♦ Meadowlark Gardens Owners ♦ 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 Neighborhood Association ♦ Oakland Terrace/ Gardens Community Council ♦ Off Broadway Homeowners Association ♦ Our Neighborhood Improvement Association ♦ Our Neighbors Civic Association of Ozone Park, Inc. ♦ 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 Park Homeowners/Residents ♦ Rocky Hill Civic Association ♦ Rosedale Civic Association ♦ Royal Ranch Association. ♦ Southeast Queens Concerned Neighbors ♦ South Ozone Park West Association Civic ♦ 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 Mutual Veterans Housing, Inc. ♦ Waldheim Neighborhood Association ♦ Wayanda Civic Association ♦ West Cunningham Park Civic Association ♦ Westmoreland Association ♦ Woodside Community Council