

QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS, INC.

The Queens Civic Congressional  
PO. Box 238, Flushing, NY 11363

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Corey Bearak, President

[www.queensciviccongress.org](http://www.queensciviccongress.org)

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*The next Queens Civic Congress Meeting:*

**Monday, April 20 at 7:30 p.m.**

**A Town Hall Meeting**

with

**NYC Buildings Commissioner**

**Robert LiMandri**

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

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## President's Message

Dear Members,

Earlier this month, I participated in a City Hall Press Conference to oppose the 14% Water Rate Hikes proposed to take affect this summer. Queens Civic Congress will again testify against the rate hikes at the Queens hearing on April 27. At the press conference I noted that Queens Civic Congress and the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition have been presenting to Queens Community Board and will present to the Queens Borough Board on April 20, 2009; we also are beginning outreach to community and borough boards in the rest of the city. Councilmen David Weprin and Jim Gennaro have organized a petition drive opposing the water rates hikes (see page 6 inside). Please urge your elected officials to testify. As always share your testimony with Queens Civic Congress so we can post it on our website with our testimonies and statements.

A special thank you for Patricia Dolan and Paul Graziano for their great job pulling together our March Land Use Forum covering Zoning and Landmarking. Thank you to the speakers and panelists. If you missed it, you may want to carefully read Sey Schwartz's "centerfold" notes (slightly edited to fit the Congressional) for the provocative statements and many insights shared that evening; thank you Sey.

Going Green in Queens 2009 surpassed our expectations. See the brief by Fred Kress below.

Please continue to follow our website for our statements, comments and events.

Sincerely,

*Corey*

Corey B. Bearak (718-343-6779; [Bearak@aol.com](mailto:Bearak@aol.com))

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## Going Green In Queens 2009

*by Fred Kress, President, Queens Coalition for Parks & Green Spaces (Queens Civic Congress' Parks Partner)*

Going Green In Queens 2009 was a great success as we had over 500 attendees. Our tablers had a lot of positive exposure as many people stayed around the table area instead of going to the many workshops.

Many people made some new contacts and many tablers have been invited to local civic and greening meetings. We collected 37 cell phones to be recycled, 2 ink cartridges, and a yet to be determined amount of eyeglasses collected (over 40). The state comptroller's office found money for 18 of the people whom his staff did a name search for. So, some of the early results are looking good. IF you have or know of any success stories, please let me know. I hope everyone is happy with the event and the benefits derived from it. Many of the tablers have said they want to return next year.

So, THANKS for all your work. Everyone did their part and it showed!

# *Queens Civic Congress*

*Presents*



## *Legislative Forum 2009:*

### *"The Race for City Hall"*

**Sunday May 17, 2009, 9:30 a.m.**

***Samuel Field Y, 58-20 Little Neck Parkway***

*Invited:*

***The Mayor & Those (All) Who Would Be Our Mayor***

Sponsored by:

***New York Post and Community Newspaper Group (CNG)***

***Queens Civic Congress***

***Northeast Queens Jewish Community Council***

***Parker Jewish Institute for Health Care & Rehabilitation***

***The Samuel Field Y***

***UJA-Federation of New York***

***Queens Hadassah***

***Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty***

***Jewish Community Relations Council of New York***

[In Formation]

Moderator: New York Post City Hall Bureau Chief David Seifman

\*\*\*\*A light FREE breakfast courtesy of Parker Jewish Institute will be served\*\*\*\*

***Admission FREE***

***Advance Reservations Recommended***

***RSVP (718) 225-6750 x247 or email [Bearak@aol.com](mailto:Bearak@aol.com)***

## Notes from Queens Civic Congress Land Use Forum 2009

Thank you to Queens Civic Congress Secretary Sey Schwartz who shared his notes of our March 30 Land Use Forum organized by Executive Vice President and Land Use and Planning Chair Patricia Dolan and Historical Preservation & Landmarking Chair Paul Graziano.

1. **Keynote Speaker City Council Zoning Committee Chair Tony Avella** distributed a legislative summary of all proposed legislation. The transfer of air rights does not currently require approval. Avella says developer have an ability to trump the permit process. The City Council does not want to pass some of his proposed laws because of the members affinity with the developers. He complained that Real Estate interests controls the current City agenda. Any efforts at reform always come up against a dead end. He cannot get the simplest reform proposal introduced before the Council. Avella asks for our help to raise the issue in our communities and the Council.

He says what our legislators tell us may not reflect how they actually vote. Examples: The new R1-2A re-zoning. It comes out of the re-zoning of North Flushing. It should have come out of the original (R2A) proposal. And now, thanks to City Planning's John Young, we have the realistic possibility of a Row House zone. He finds the Bloomberg administration is totally dedicated to the interests of the developers. It should not be this difficult for the City to be responding to our needs.

He is re-introducing legislation that once City Planning certifies an area for downzoning, the City should stop any construction that does not conform, instead of the developers beating the clock. He further proposes a moratorium on building permits to those *notorious* developers who prove incapable, or not disposed to conform to all code requirements. Avella has also introduced a bill to allow the City Council to review and approve all appeals, and another calling for landmark preservation reform.

He stated that there's a need to take the political equation out of the process so there could be important progress in addressing these needs. Mayor Bloomberg is very pro developers. He noted that if the Council Speaker does not approve of a legislative proposal, it is either smothered for inaction, or encourages a member's effort to introduce a weakened version for approval that would render the legislation ineffective. You cannot beat the real estate industry that fills the coffers of our politicians. Queens is lucky because our civic organizations and the QCC fight for their downzoning, and keep the City's feet to the fire. This cannot be said for the other boroughs.

Responses to Questions: The 30-day rule, a new concept currently proposed by Buildings Commissioner LiMandri is unconstitutional. LiMandri still intends to go ahead with it, having just postponed the proposal due to intense opposition. If it violates the law, it should be stopped. Shame on Bloomberg. The favorable changes being considered with respect to the law on Community Facilities would never have happened without our pushing and protest. They do not want to do it. We proved it can be done in stages, but City Planning and the Mayor's office will not do it.

## 2. PANEL DISCUSSION

**John Young, Queens City Planning:** The R1-2A zoning category came out of the rezoning efforts for North Flushing. The North Flushing project included Auburndale, Bayside, Broadway Flushing, and some of Bowne Park. Nearly 7,000 lots were involved. Overall, the goal and continuum of City Planning's work is to strengthen and stabilize our communities, and at the same time to be vibrant and dynamic as a City. In all the rezoned communities, the changes were done to preserve the predominant patterns of existing housing stock. To include affordable housing is part of the matrix. More than 2,000 Queens blocks have so far been rezoned. The Rockaways, for example, involved an entire 6-mile stretch. Often, stake-holders in these communities are responsible for the opposition. Waldheim's 220 blocks experienced a lot of resistance, and so they had to take a fine-grain approach. Dutch Kills 40 blocks were planned to maintain the character of the community. North Corona involved a contextual zoning tool that had started in The Bronx.

Where the department can, it makes the tools available to it, fit. Two citywide changes were adopted for front yard restrictions to limit paving over front yards, and at least one yard has to be 20 feet. Queens City Planning has leveraged QCC efforts with City policy. The challenge now: To provide some changes, such as R1-2A, to take away the “right” to float higher.

**Mel Siegel, Broadway Flushing:** His community is currently in the process of downzoning, and will include the use of R1-2A. They are very happy with it because it will limit the size of new construction. If enforced, it will limit the new McMansions with front and side yard requirements and an absolute height limit. He would have preferred a 21-ft. limit, not the current proposal. On the whole, they are happy to receive the new zoning. They have been pursuing landmark status as a last resort to thwart the developers and stop the tear-downs. Their application has just been denied by the Landmark Preservation Commission.

**Chuck Apelian, Zoning Chair of Community Board 7:** A few hundred homes have been rezoned in their area. There has been “some humanity” in the process. It boils down to consensus building. He offered his compliments to John Young who in the process had to deal with fights, lawsuits, misinformation and sensitivities. There are two differing mindsets: those who intend to stay, and those who plan to leave. In the long view, landmarking is shown to increase home values. R1 homes are not being built any longer and their values will therefore increase. Since Community Boards can only vote their recommendations, it is important to go down to City Planning and City Council hearings. The key is to achieve consensus, and not to scare people, but to go out into the community and inform its residents.

**Simeon Bankoff, Historic Districts Council:** Landmarking was not being achieved until 15 years ago. Some of it has now been accomplished in Jackson Heights, Douglaston, Sunnyside and just one street in Ridgewood after decades of effort. Ridgewood is now underway in achieving landmarking for a larger part of its community. City Planning is remarkably responsive in Queens. Staten Island has the least number of blocks that have been downzoned, 522; Bronx 700; Queens with 100 square miles has a few thousand. A remarkable feat. The Landmark Commission has claimed to survey a lot of Queens’ 21,000 buildings. As a pattern, as soon as the process starts, there is frenzied building. It takes a long time to achieve landmarking status. The agency is currently looking for small districts to do quickly. It deals with smaller areas compared to City Planning, and it’s not right. They are currently not even looking at proposals for more than 300 buildings. It is important to have the support of a community’s City Council Member, as well as civic and Community Board support. If Landmarks should say “No”, what do you do? Ask them often and loudly to rethink. It needs political pressure. Simple community activism will not do. At a certain point, should there not be any progress, you may have to reconsider what is being asked for, and perhaps bargain with reductions and phase ins. Civics and Community Boards should be doing their own surveys and checking on potential historic buildings.

**Paul Kerzner, Ridgewood Property Owners:** After two years work, 2,983 buildings had been designated in 18 different segments as the State and Federal government agencies had wanted. The community waited years and carefully watched Landmarks at work. They always worked with Landmarks’ staff and provided them with information. In year 2000 Landmarks had selected one block. City Council “people” had assured them that there was money in the budget for landmarking. About two years ago, they were receiving nibbles or signs of interest from the agency. Landmarks wanted assurances that they would not be hitting a buzz saw. The community rounded up a lot of support letters and developed swelling support from the community, so that Landmarks saw the grass roots message and couldn’t say no. That began a “honeymoon” with the agency. It is expected that 9,282 buildings in the community will be designated, and every block will eventually be tree lined. It is important to get City Council members to contact Landmarks and back up the campaign, as well as the support of local institutions. It is a constant process in which there is no room for confrontation, it doesn’t work. Nor does public humiliation or negative publicity. The work must be behind the scenes and graciously done. For the community, it is now like a giant glacier moving in the right direction.

## Join Queens Civic Congress in opposing the 14% water rate hike

The NYC Water Board holds hearings at the following locations (We will testify in Queens on April 27.):

<u>Borough</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date/Time</u>
Queens	Department of Environmental Protection 59-17 Junction Blvd., Lecture Room, 6 <sup>th</sup> Floor Flushing, NY 11373	Monday, April 27 10:00 a.m.
Staten Island	College of Staten Island Center for the Arts, Recital Hall 2800 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, NY 10314	Monday, April 27 7:00 p.m.
Bronx	Bronx Library Center 310 East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10458	Tuesday April 28, 2:00 p.m.
Brooklyn	Brooklyn College, Student Center - Alumni Lounge (opposite Whitehead Hall) East 27 <sup>th</sup> St. & Campus Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11211	Wednesday, April 29 6:00 p.m.
Manhattan	St. John's University – Manhattan Auditorium, 101 Murray Street, New York, NY 10007	Thursday, April 30 5:30 p.m.

Council Members David Weprin (Finance Committee Chair) and James Gennaro (Environmental Protection Committee Chair) circulate this petition opposing the water rate hike which they will submit as well. You can mail or fax the form below to Councilman Weprin or sign it on line:

*The New York City Water Board announced on April 3, 2009 that it would be seeking to increase water rates by another 14%. If enacted, this would be the third consecutive year of double digit rate increases. We're already paying 25% more for a shower than we did in 2006.*

*Forcing the Board's current fiscal challenges on already burdened taxpayers is just not acceptable. Any rate increase would place an additional hardship on us the homeowners, seniors living on fixed incomes, cooperatives and small businesses.*

*It is expected that this year alone \$124 million in Rental Payments will be made to the City General Fund. These payments and the rate increase that are associated with the payments are nothing more than a back-door property tax.*

*As residents of the City of New York protest any rate increase and call for an end to the rental payments.*

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**Signature**

**Print Name**

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**Street Address**

**Zip**

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**Email Address (optional)**

**MAIL TO:**

Councilman David I. Weprin  
250 Broadway, Room 1875  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FAX TO:**

212-608-6382

**SIGN PETITION ONLINE AT:**

<http://council.nyc.gov/d23/html/members/home.shtml>

## 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 2009 Meeting Schedule\*\*\*\*\*

*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 at PS 114 – the Belle Harbor School, Cronston Avenue and Beach 134 Street in The Rockaways [NOTE: The Belle Harbor Property Owners Association meets at 7:15 p.m. and the QCC Parks Forum follows at 8:30 p.m. ]

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

### **Queens Civic Congress Regular Meeting: City Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan**

## ***PARKS 2009***

New Yorkers for Parks, Queens Civic Congress and Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces plan *Parks2009* voter forums in every Queens City Council District. We have commitments already in district 19, 20, 21 23, 24 and 25 Watch [www.QueensCivicCongress.org](http://www.QueensCivicCongress.org) for dates, additional forums and the Parks2009 Voters Guide. Civics and Parks coalition members interested in hosting or co-sponsoring a forum should contact Corey Bearak @ (718) 343-6779 or email [Bearak@aol.com](mailto:Bearak@aol.com).

Parks2009 kicks off May 19 at 10 a.m. - 12:00 noon with a program that features (invited) candidates for citywide offices as part of the Seventh Annual Parks Advocacy Day at NYU Law School's Greenberg Lounge, Vanderbilt Hall at 40 Washington Square South. The campaign's goals include: Secure Long-Term Funding for Parks, Expand Planning, Management, and Oversight of Parks Across the City, and Protect Parkland from Alienation. For more information, please contact Juliana Roberts Dubovsky at [jroberts@ny4p.org](mailto:jroberts@ny4p.org)

## 2009 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 / Paul Graziano  
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 & Kathy Masi  
Zoning & Code Enforcement / Joseph Amoroso & Harbachan Singh

## 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. ♦ Bay Terrace Cooperative Section 1 ♦ 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 ♦ Newtown Historical Society ♦ 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