

Electeds Praise Activists At Civic Congress Meeting



Assemblywoman Barbara Clark installs new Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak at a recent ceremony.



Queens Civic Congress President Emeritus Sean Walsh, keynote speaker Assembly member Cathy Nolan, and treasurer Jim Trent appear to be having a good time.

By Gene Sweeney

New officers were installed at the October meeting of the Queens Civic Congress in the Kew Gardens Community Center. Corey Bearak was named as the new president, while Sean Walsh stepped down and became president emeritus. The swearing in of new officers was performed by Assemblywoman Barbara Clark.

After performing the ceremony, Clark told the new officers, "[The organization] is gaining more relevance every day," and that, "it is incredibly important, what you do. I know that the organization is in good hands."

Also in attendance to deliver congratulations were State Senator Frank Padavan and Councilman David Weprin.

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan delivered the keynote address, in which she focused on the difficulty of being in civics sometimes.

"It's not easy to be active, it's harder than ever," she said, praising Civic Congress members for their "dedication to a larger thing" and the time they spent away from family.

Nolan also tried to encourage members of the Civic Congress, who represent over 100 civic and community organizations from just about every corner of the borough, to get new people involved and to be as active as possible to prevent government officials from becoming "a clique."

Stressing the need for feedback from the public, she stated, "You have to question us, the elected officials. It's important to try to come up with a joint solution."

After the keynote speech, there were reports on some standing issues and a question-and-answer session. However, the main topics of discussion pertained to area rezoning and Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan, both of which Bearak and Nolan sounded less than enthusiastic about.

Bearak related his famous "mango analogy" to congestion pricing: "Just because something is sweet on the outside doesn't mean there isn't something bad on the inside," he said, referring to a mango's pit.

He went on to say, "If you want people to use mass transit, you have to give them a transit system that takes them where they want to go. North-South travel in Queens leaves a lot to be desired."

He also said getting his daughter to school could take over an hour and three buses relying on public transportation versus a 10-minute car ride.

Nolan's views on congestion pricing were similarly lackluster, although her concerns were different.

"I'm afraid Long Island City will become a massive parking lot," she said.

"[Congestion pricing] won't lower the number of cars, it'll just move them to another part of the city - to my neighborhood."

Despite their comments on those two issues, the overall mood at the meeting was optimistic.

"Corey has the smarts to take you to another level," Nolan said of Bearak. "It is important to have a borough-wide voice - we have more in common than we realize."