

## FIGHTING GRAFFITI IN OUR COMMUNITY



Koslowitz being interviewed by Channel 2's Scott Rapoport on Neighborhood Graffiti Vandalism.

Vivid graffiti was sprayed on parts of walls, ramps and pavement at the Forest Hills Long Island Rail Road Station. Graffiti is a quality of life killer and disturbing to our residents. When I saw all the graffiti drawn around the LIRR station in Forest Hills, I contacted the Metropolitan Transit Authority – Long Island Railroad (LIRR) and demanded an immediate cleanup. I am pleased to report that the LIRR cleaned up and painted over the graffiti. I urge all my constituents to be vigilant and report graffiti seen in our neighborhood. Defacement of property and possession of a graffiti instrument are both misdemeanor crimes punishable with a fine or up to a year in prison.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL • 250 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NY 10007



**NEWS** **SPRING 2016**  
**COUNCIL MEMBER**  
**KAREN KOSLOWITZ**

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## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EVENT



In March, I hosted my 5th Annual Women's History Month Celebration. Students from our district's elementary schools participated in a poster contest and winners were presented with citations. This year's honorees, Congresswoman Grace Meng, P.S. 101 Principal Monique Paniagua, local business owner Rahita Raval, and community activist Sylvia Hack, represent women who are making important contributions to better the lives of residents of our community. We were also privileged to have Public Advocate Letitia James address the standing-room-only audience about the role and necessity of women in government and public service.

# NEWS COUNCIL MEMBER

SPRING 2016

# KAREN KOSLOWITZ

29th District, Queens • 118-35 Queens Blvd, 17th Floor • Forest Hills, NY 11375 • Phone: (718) 544-8800



## Dear Neighbor,

As we approach the summer and the end of New York City's budgetary cycle, my priorities for the residents of the 29th Council District continue to be support for our working families, assisting our senior citizens, educating our young people and working to improve our quality of life. As Chair of the Queens Delegation in the New York City Council, I have strived to unite my colleagues in support of those organizations and individuals who work to make our borough and city a safer, cleaner, more economically viable and enjoyable place to live.

This newsletter will highlight some of the work I have accomplished on your behalf in City Hall as well as some interesting and exciting community events. The Council has had many accomplishments this year, but there is still much more work to be done. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity you have given me to serve as your representative in the New York City Council, and look forward to continuing to work with you and advocate for you in City Hall.

As always, my staff and I stand ready to assist you. I welcome your comments, questions, and opinions. My office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Additionally, Queens-based attorney Barry Goldstein works with my constituents to give guidance on legal matters, particularly landlord and tenant issues. You can make an appointment to see him in my office on Monday evenings from 6:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. Please contact my office to arrange scheduling.

I look forward to greeting you at many of our community's events in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

**Karen E. Koslowitz**  
Council Member  
29th District, Queens

## REPORT FROM CITY HALL

I am proud to note that after many months of negotiations and community input, the City Council has voted to approve modified versions of the Mayor's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) and Zoning for Quality and Affordability (ZQA) plans. These plans should result in the building and/or preserving of over 200,000 affordable housing units during the next 10 years. They are significant and important steps towards making New York City more affordable and more livable. Please know that the original MIH and ZQA proposals were substantially revised taking into account the concerns of constituents, community boards, civic and advocacy groups and labor organizations over the past several months.

This has been a very busy and productive legislative season, and I was pleased to have sponsored bills that make our schoolchildren safer, and that mandate stricter penalties for drivers leaving the scene



of an accident, both of which have been signed into law. I have also sponsored legislation increasing the penalties for working on a building without a permit or violating a stop work order and creating a water tank inspection report database. I was responsible for introducing a resolution requesting that our state legislature pass, and the Governor sign into law, a statute that would increase penalties for accidents that occur when texting while driving if they result in injury or death. This represents just some of the work I have been involved with at City Hall, and I encourage you to contact my

## I AM PLEASED TO HAVE SPONSORED THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATION THAT HAS NOW BECOME LAW:

### MANDATORY INCLUSIONARY HOUSING (MIH)

Under MIH, developers will now have to include affordable housing whenever a rezoning is requested. This is one of the strongest affordable housing plans in the nation. Builders will now be presented with various options providing different levels of affordable housing that need to be included in their construction proposal.

The New York City Council modified the original MIH plan taking into account significant community concerns. Our changes were centered on providing greater affordability while retaining the program's flexibility, tightening regulations to emphasize production of equitable on-site affordable housing, and improving transparency to ensure that the program fulfills its goals.

### ZONING FOR QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY (ZQA)

ZQA is an expansive revision to the city's zoning code that shrinks parking requirements tied to affordable and senior housing, allows taller residential buildings in certain areas, lowers the minimum size of studio apartments while also enabling affordable senior housing residences to be built taller than nearby homes. The New York City Council's important modifications to the original ZQA plan centered on ensuring robust public review, maximizing affordable senior housing developments, and protecting the character of our neighborhoods.

I am proud to note that I fought and prevailed against a provision in the original proposal which eliminated parking requirements for certain market-rate developments. I know how congested our local streets are and how hard it is to find parking,

and I held firm on this issue and successfully demanded that the Council and Mayor's team carve out several specific areas from the no-parking requirement including large sections of our own 29th District where parking has always been vital.

I also fought back against height increases for market rate buildings, and the Council limited increases to five feet, and only in higher density zoning districts. A developer can only get this height increase only by providing high ceilings in a ground floor commercial or community facility space.

### LOCAL LAW 2 - ENSURING THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN

In school year 2012-2013, close to 20 percent of the kindergarten to 12th grade student population in New York City attended nonpublic schools. Many of these schools rely on locked doors, occasional patrolling by faculty members and intercom systems to provide school security. While some nonpublic schools hire security guards, the majority lack the funding to pay for live security personnel. The law, designed for schools with 300 or more students, is intended to address this significant gap in nonpublic school security by reimbursing these educational facilities for security guards.



Koslowitz at the Bnos Malka Academy of Queens.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 - I AM PLEASED TO HAVE SPONSORED THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATION THAT HAS NOW BECOME LAW:**



**Council Member Koslowitz and NYPD Deputy Inspector, Captain Judith Harrison.**

#### **LOCAL LAW 4 - PROVIDING STIFFER PENALTIES FOR HIT-AND-RUN DRIVERS**

Drivers leaving the scene of a motor vehicle incident, also referred to as “hit-and-runs,” pose a significant danger to the city’s pedestrians, cyclists, and fellow motorists. Despite efforts to reduce traffic fatalities, hit-and-run collisions continue to kill and injure New Yorkers. Under New York State law, any driver who knows or should know that they have caused property damage or physical injury with their vehicle is required to remain on the scene in order to provide the property’s owner or the injured party with their insurance and personal contact information. This law raises the civil penalties involved for leaving the scene of an accident without reporting. Additionally, as the burden of proof required in an administrative proceeding, in order to impose a civil penalty, is a lesser standard than is required in a criminal matter, it is easier to impose penalties under this law than to successfully bring charges under state law.

## **PROPOSED LEGISLATION THAT I HAVE SPONSORED:**

### **PREVENTING ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES**

The city is currently experiencing a construction boom. According to the New York Building Congress, in 2014, construction spending reached \$26.1 billion, a 31 percent increase from 2013. Between 2012 and 2013, the most recent year for which data is available, construction employment also increased by 4.2 percent. Unfortunately, the increase in construction has coincided with an even greater increase in construction accidents and non-permitted construction work.

#### **INTRO. 939**

This bill would increase the penalty for performing construction work on a one or two family dwelling without a proper permit to a fine equal to eight times the cost of the permit that should have been obtained. The new minimum fine is to be \$1,000. In a multi-unit dwelling, the fine will be increased to 28 times the cost of the permit. The new minimum fine is to be \$10,000.

#### **INTRO. 940**

A “stop work order” is issued when a contractor is performing work without a work permit; or having obtained a proper permit, has been deemed to be operating in an unsafe manner. This bill would increase the penalty for working when a “stop work order” is in effect to \$20,000.

### **CREATION OF A WATER TANK INSPECTION REPORT DATABASE**

#### **INTRO. 657**

Water tanks help deliver drinking water to millions of New York City residents. In buildings with more than six floors, pumps push water to rooftop tanks where the water is stored until needed. When a faucet is opened, water exits the tank and gravity carries the water to

the floors below to be used. There are between 10,000 and 15,000 functioning water tanks throughout New York City. Building owners are currently required to conduct annual water tank inspections and, through a provision of the Health Code, submit the inspection reports to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). This new bill would codify in the Administrative Code the submission requirement that currently exists in the Health Code, and provide greater health protection for NYC residents. It would require DOHMH to forward inspection results it receives to the Department of Buildings, which would be required to create an online water tank inspection database. This would enable more centralization of data and ensure a more robust and efficient review of information protecting and ensuring the health and well being of our citizens.

### **PROTECTING PEDESTRIANS AND MOTORISTS**

#### **RESO. 668**

The extreme popularity of handheld devices has had unintended and dangerous consequences. Utilization of mobile communication devices while driving is linked to a significant increase in distracted driving, resulting in injury and loss of life. This Resolution calls upon the state legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation that would make killing someone while driving and using a phone or handheld device a felony and seriously injuring someone while driving and using a phone or handheld device a misdemeanor. Currently, utilizing a cell phone while driving is punishable by a summons ranging from \$50 to \$200. Under this proposal, such dangerous actions would be criminalized, possibly providing jail time to the offender.

## **HONORED BY THE QUEENS COMMUNITY HOUSE**

The Queens Community House recently hosted its annual Spring Event, and I was proud to be honored by such a wonderful and caring organization. The Queens Community House (QCH), established in 1975, serves residents of all ages, races and ethnicities. They offer a comprehensive network of services at 25 sites across the borough, helping thousands of Queens residents to thrive in school, to succeed in educating themselves, to stabilize their housing situations, and to make the most of their senior years.



## IN THE DISTRICT



### BLOOD DRIVE

On March 30, I co-sponsored a New York Blood Center blood drive with Plaza College. We had a wonderful turnout, collecting 61 pints of donated blood and 12 Bone Marrow Registry donors. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the event a huge success.

### ENGAGING RESIDENTS DIRECTLY ON COMMUNITY ISSUES



In an effort to let residents know how they can engage with city government, I was pleased to accept an invitation to be the featured speaker at a recent Forest Hills Asian Association meeting (FHAA). The FHAA was created by a group of local residents, led by Edwin Wong, as a means of getting the growing Asian population in Forest Hills more involved in community activities. I was truly delighted to welcome the FHAA to our community, and I noted that the best thing anyone can do to become more involved in neighborhood issues is to attend community events, whether it's civic groups, your local community board or police precinct community council. That's how I got involved; you really get a good grasp of what's going on in the community and can have direct input into improving your quality of life.

### WELCOMING NEW PRINCIPAL AT P.S. 139



I was pleased to welcome Natalie Perez, the new Principal at P.S. 139. As an experienced and caring educator and administrator, Ms. Perez brings her leadership and commitment to excellence and achievement to The Rego Park School. She is truly a valuable partner in the education of our children and we wish her every success.

# NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



After months of work by dedicated community volunteers, our second year of Participatory Budget voting was held from March 23 - April 3. Constituents were invited to cast their votes for projects ranging from various upgrades to our school infrastructure, creating a safer intersection for pedestrians, and new bus tracking technology. My sincere thanks to everyone involved in each part of the process – we couldn't have done it without you. And the winning projects are:

#### A Safer Intersection at 71st and Austin Street \$400,000

Installing a single curb extension at the Northeast corner of 71st Avenue and Austin Street

#### Proper Pupil Potties \$350,000

The complete renovation of select bathrooms at three public schools which are a persistent problem (P.S. 101, P.S. 144, and P.S. 174)

#### Outdoor Reading Space at Forest Hills Library \$275,000

Utilizing outdoor space for a reading area and renovating the meeting room in the library.

## PROUD TO BE RECOGNIZED

Recently, I received the Queens Borough Leadership Award from the Jewish Institute of Queens (JIQ). "This award is in tribute to Council Member Karen Koslowitz's outstanding efforts in building up the quality of life in our community," declared Rabbi Zalman Zvulonov, Executive Director. The Mission of JIQ is to provide the highest quality Judaic and general education to a diverse community. JIQ's aim is to cultivate students to reach personal excellence, and to be responsible members of American society.



## KOSLOWITZ ON YOUR SIDE



### GETTING YOUR MONEY BACK

Together with NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli's Office, I co-hosted an event at the Selfhelp Austin Street Senior Center in Forest Hills designed to increase awareness about unclaimed funds. According to the Comptroller's Office, New York is sitting on a pot of \$14 billion in unclaimed funds from dormant bank accounts, business transactions and property sales. I urge my constituents not to miss out on this important opportunity to see if there are any monies in that pot that may be legally yours. Please visit the Comptroller's website at <https://ouf.osc.state.ny.us/ouf/> or if you do not have internet access, please contact my office and we will assist you.