

NYIEC NEWSLETTER

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**THE NEW YORK INTERAGENCY
ENGINEERING COUNCIL**



4th Quarter, 2008

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Khalid Bajwa

We wish Khalid Bajwa of the New York City Transit Authority the best of luck on his retirement. Khalid's work is greatly appreciated as a NYIEC delegate representing the New York City Transit Authority and the many things he did including helping out with the annual conference and even arranging a site visit to one of the Transit Authority Projects. John Barkaus will be taking over for Khalid as delegate; an alternate will be announced later.

The Wisdom of the Masses

Annual Luncheon

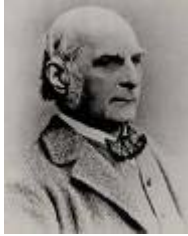
Keynote Speaker - Robert LiMandri, Commissioner NYC
Department of Buildings
November 6th

The annual luncheon will once again be held at the prestigious Union League at 38 East 37th Street. Robert LiMandri, Commissioner will be our keynote speaker. As commissioner he is responsible for setting local construction standards, enforcing the Building Code and Zoning Resolution, and regulating New York City's construction industry. To further the safe and lawful use of New York City's 975,000 buildings and properties, LiMandri has worked to build a stronger infrastructure, bringing in new management and reorganizing the Agency to empower borough leadership and hold management more accountable. LiMandri has also pushed to increase the overall efficiency and quality of the Agency's processes by streamlining and reworking operational procedures at nearly every level. By setting consistent expectations and standardizing methods of measurement, LiMandri's efforts have improved the quality of services and increased productivity not before seen in the Agency's history across the five boroughs. LiMandri is implementing the Department's 2006 - 2009 Strategic Plan to continue to increase transparency and accountability at all levels of the Agency.

This event is available exclusively to member agencies. Up to eight staff member from each agency may attend at no charge

postscript

Elliot Sander, during his keynote speech at last year's annual luncheon promised that a blue ribbon panel will issue white papers on the MTA Capital Program. White papers on bonding,



The Wisdom of the Masses

The last newsletter had an article about the Monti Hall theory, this week we touch on another game show, Who Wants to be a Millionaire. On this show the contestant is asked questions with four possible choices, only one of them being correct. If the contestant has a difficult time with a question he gets a choice of "life lines" to help him or her with determine the correct answer. One life line is to ask the studio audience the question and the results of the poll are displayed. The contestant usually agrees with the audience. Is this the right move? Well most of the time...yes. Surprisingly the audience is correct over 90% of the time. There is an interesting history behind the discovery of this phenomenon. In the early 20th century Sir Frances Galton set out to prove that the masses cannot be trusted to make important decisions, instead, these decision should be made by nobility. So to prove the fallibility of the masses to make a wise decision he set up an experiment in the form of a contest at a local fair. The goal was to guess (or what we now call estimate) the weight of an oxen. Eight hundred fairgoers submitted their estimate of the weight of the animal. Aha, not one of the fair goers got it right! Was Sir Frances Galton's

project delivery, manpower, materials and logistics, contracts, technology, and project management are contained in the MTA Blue Ribbon Panel for Construction Excellence report. Its available on line at www.nyiec.org

Quarterly Meeting

Presentation

Larry Ford, Chief Civil Engineer at Empire State Development gave an interesting presentation on the Queens West development, highlighting the unique engineering and construction aspects of the project. The area was one a blighted industrial site that included a fairly new but unused printing plant, an operating bottling plant, gantries once used for loading cargo from ships onto freight trains, and a land from a long defunct major refinery, one of the first in United States. Being a brown-field, environmental remediation was a challenge. Larry talked about some of the interesting and innovative approaches employed. Also of interest was the unique partnering approach of using private developers to build the residential towers with public sector to handle the streets, utilities, and parks.

Technical conference

First off, a project delivery theme was tentatively set for the annual technical conference pending feedback delegates receive from their representative agencies. If you have any feedback get in touch with your delegate before the theme is finalized on October 15th.

Subcommittees

Through a unanimous vote of all members present at the meeting, the standing committees were changed From:

Finance
Design and Code Compliance
Environmental
Seminars
Contract Management
Facility Management
Energy Conservation
Education and Research

To:

Engineering /Energy – DASNY, CUNY, NYCDCAS,
Materials – NYCSCA, NYCDOT, NYSDOT, PANYNJ
Construction – NYCDDC, NYCSCA, NYCEDC, GSA
Environment and Code Compliance -

Officers

The following Officers were re-elected for two year terms

Joseph Macaluso - Chairman
Frank Lombardi - Co-Chairman
Randolph Hunt - Treasurer
Catherine Nigro - Secretary

Prevailing Wages

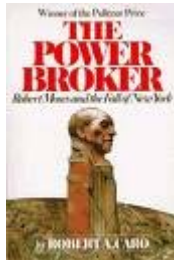
What does the term prevailing wages mean, and how does it

theory proven correct?
No... It turns out that when Sir Frances did the cumulative distribution function of the normal distribution the mean / average or median the results was dead on correct.

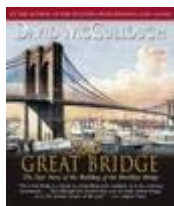
Courtesy of Nova Science



The Skyscraper and the City



Power Broker



The Great Bridge

affect NYC agencies?

The concept of Prevailing wages came to being with the passage of the Federal Davis-Bacon Act of 1931. The legislation acts to set the wage required to pay workers to the union wage rate whether the shop is an open shop or a union shop on Federal government projects or uses funds are provided by the Federal government. The idea was to encourage qualified workers, make sure that the workers were provided a fair wage, and to help Union shops and non-union shops to compete on an equal footing. Thus, the term "prevailing" is a little misleading. It's not necessarily the prevailing wage rate in the area but the prevailing more accurately the prevailing union rate. At first the act only applied to the base wage rates, but later it was ammended to include to supplemental (fringe benefit) rates as well. Over the course of time, 41 states enacted their own versions of the Davis-Bacon act relating to state funded projects. In New York its Labor Law 220.

Conveniently for state and city construction cost estimators it also provides a basis for determining the wage rates for change order estimates, as it provides the minimum and, except for unusual circumstances, the maximum amount to include for labor rates. The prevailing wage rates for counties throughought the state are easy enough to find, simply check the Department of Labor website at www.labor.state.ny.us, then click on the Worker Protection tab to get to the Prevailing Wage section. If you are only interested in the prevailing wage rates for New York City, visit NYC Comptroller's web site at www.comptroller.nyc.gov then click on "Prevailing Wage Rates"

In February of this year New York State added some new amendments to the prevailing wage laws. The major change, the definition "public works" has been expanded to include jobs that are performed by a third party under a lease permit or other agreement where prevailing wages would have been required if the agency had directly entered into the contract or where the public entity is the end user. This includes work done by private developers where a public agency might be a tenant, including schools. There have been a number of other changes including more stringent regulations on how workers are notified that the project is a prevailing wage project and the wages that workers are entitled to receive. This includes the placement of the wage rates in a prominent location and printing it on weather resistant material. This is just a rough outline of the change, for the complete details of the legislation contact appropriate legal council.

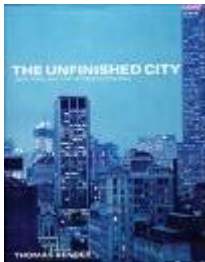
Interesting Reads

Some reading material worth considering for your daily commute...

The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York, Gail Fenske"After nearly a



Men of Steel



The Unfinished City

century, the Woolworth Building has finally found a worthy chronicler. In this book Gail Fenske describes the remarkable mix of architectural skill, business savvy and unbounded ambition that led to the creation of one of the largest and most conspicuous monuments of American 20th century culture. The story of businessman Frank Woolworth, his architect, Cass Gilbert, and the thousands of other individuals who came together to create this astonishing 'cathedral of commerce' is an absorbing and highly revealing tale, and Fenske tells it very well."-Robert Brueggemann, author of *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Robert Brueggemann, author of *Sprawl: A Compact History*)

The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York, Robert A. Caro

"The most absorbing, detailed, instructive, provocative book ever published about the making and raping of modern New York City and environs and the man who did it, about the hidden plumbing of New York City and State politics over the last half-century, about the force of personality and the nature of political power in a democracy. A monumental work, a political biography and political history of the first magnitude." --Eliot Fremont-Smith, New York

The Great Bridge: The Epic Story of the Building of the Brooklyn Bridge, David McCullough

In the 19th century, the Brooklyn Bridge was viewed as the greatest engineering feat of mankind. The Roeblings--father and son--toiled for decades, fighting competitors, corrupt politicians, and the laws of nature to fabricate a bridge which, after 100 years, still provides one of the major avenues of access to one of the world's busiest cities--as compared to many bridges built at the same time which collapsed within decades or even years. It is refreshing to read such a magnificent story of real architecture and engineering in an era where these words refer to tiny bits and bytes that inspire awe only in their abstract consequences, and not in their tangible physical magnificence. - review from Amazon.com

Men of Steel: The Story of the Family That Built the World Trade Center, Karl Koch III (Author), Richard Firstman (Contributor)

In the tradition of David McCullough's *The Great Bridge*, *Men of Steel* is a compelling insider's look at the construction of the Twin Towers and the three generations of men who built them. Written by Karl Koch III, whose grandfather and father founded the Karl Koch Erecting Company in the 1920s, and award-winning author Richard Firstman, this remarkable book is an incredibly detailed first-hand account of how one family turned 20,000 tons of steel and more than 6 million square feet of floor into the world's two tallest buildings. - review from Amazon.com

The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea; Rethinking American History in a Global Age Thomas Bender

Bender examines the political and cultural story of New York City from its creation as a Dutch trading post in the 16th century to its present status as a world-class metropolis. In Bender's account, the city seems "unfinished" when compared with such classic urban models as Paris or Vienna, but its comparative lack of physical and institutional completeness is also its strength: New York is famously a home of skyscrapers but "nonetheless prizes small brick and brownstone houses"; it

is known for its midtown grid but also its grid-confounding "greensward" of Central Park. It is a center of money-making and reform. "There is not and there is not to be a final truth about itself," Bender observes. Not necessarily following the path of the European models, New York was unwilling to pursue any single line of development, whether in its physical shape or its social organization. As an icon of modernity, New York necessarily must always be changing, "re-inventing itself," and therefore incomplete. Unlike recent fuller histories such as Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace's *Gotham*, Bender's is a thematic history of the city that argues powerfully for the importance of the American urban ideal. The writing is dense but also inspired. Recommended for urban studies collections in academic libraries. – review from the *Library Journal*

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NYIEC or member agencies