

Eric L. Sawyer

Background Info: My name is Eric Sawyer I'd like to continue to represent you on the FIPPOA Board. My love of Fire Island Pines began almost 30 years ago, when I first came to Fire Island with a teammate (Dwight Devlin) from a College Wrestling Team in 1975. Dwight lived in Sayville and dug clams in the Bay to make money to pay for college – he was familiar with the Pines and knew I was struggling with coming out. When I visited Dwight that summer he asked me to help him dig clams - brought me to the Meat Market to buy sandwiches for lunch – and lead me to the beach in front of Atlantic Walk to eat lunch and take my first (ever) swim in the Atlantic Ocean.

During lunch a couple of guys started making out on the Beach in front of us. I asked Dwight “what’s going on, what is this place?” He said, “it’s a gay beach – they called it homo heaven in my High School and this is where you belong. So get over yourself, it’s OK to be gay, especially in places like this.” Thus, a straight guy from Sayville pushed me out of the closet and my love of Fire Island Pines began.

I was a renter in the Pines for more than ten years and after four-year break weekendng in the Hudson River Valley, I purchased 142 Ocean (A.K.A. the “TV House”) near Beach Hill in 2003. After renovating the TV House, I have now moved on to another renovation project at 576 Coast Guard Walk, directly across the Coast Guard Walk from Whyte Hall. I have spent a majority of the last three years at the beach, including spending much of the last two winters in FIP.

Education and Professional History: I have a BA in Psychology and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration. Prior to being forced to apply for long-term disability by my former employer in December of 1991, I worked for 14 years in Human Resources for such organizations as the City of Boulder, Colorado, American Standard, Citibank and Towers Perrin, a Human Resources Consulting firm.

Harlem Real Estate Pioneer: For the last almost 30 years I have been promoting the renewal of Harlem and have owned, lived in and renovated over ten buildings in Central Harlem. The skills I acquired in these efforts enabled me to help develop and finance the AIDS Housing and Healthcare Facilities that Housing Works has built in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Community Involvement: Some of you may know that I am one of the Founding Members of ACT UP, a Co-Founder (and subsidiary Board Member) of Housing Works, Inc. (the largest AIDS Housing and Healthcare Provider in the US), and one the Founding Members of Health Gap, an activist group that has helped bring public attention to the Global AIDS Crisis and make AIDS drugs available in the developing world. I am also a long-term survivor of AIDS, living with symptoms of HIV disease since 1981.

As an International AIDS Human Rights Activist, I have helped to organize and have spoken at National and International AIDS and Human Rights Conferences all over the world. I have been a frequent media spokesperson on AIDS issues in print and on radio and television news programs in numerous countries. I recently was a Co-Producer of an AIDS Documentary - **A Closer Walk**, narrated by Glen Close and Will Smith, which has now appeared on PBS, the BBC, Channel Plus in France and on National broadcasts in Switzerland, Germany, China, India, South Africa, Uganda, (an a number of other countries, including in Iran.)

As an AIDS Community Public Policy spokespersons I have meet regularly with representatives of NYC, NYS, United States and foreign governments, with UN Agencies and non-governmental organizations on AIDS issues. I have testified at Congressional Hearings and have been asked to participate on numerous United Nations Committees and Expert Consultations. I have just completed a six month contract working at UNAIDS to facilitate the participation of Civil Society’s in the 2008 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

FIPPOA Contributions: Anyone familiar with my contributions to AIDS groups and issues know I am a work horse that is happy to volunteer my heart and soul to issues I care about. My time on the Board has been spent attempting to work with the Town of Brookhaven to improve the condition of the Board Walks in the Pines.

While they are still in bad shape, we have made some progress in getting Brookhaven to begin rebuilding the walks with a new five stringer structurally improved construction. I also care deeply about the health of the residents of the Pines and would like to continue to work on issues related to the Pines Care Center, care and support for our Senior Residents, infrastructure issues like the boardwalks and beach preservation. I have numerous organizational and professional skills that I would be happy to continue volunteer to FIPPOA activities.