



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

A Publication of Pitta Bishop Del Giorno & Giblin LLC
January 29, 2010 Edition



In the News – New York State

Cameras in the Committee Meetings

Senate Delivers on Pledge to Bolster Efforts to Open the Legislative Process

Video cameras are progressively becoming the norm in the Senate Committee meetings, thanks to the Upper House's initiative to open the legislative process.

Civil Service & Pensions Committee Chair Diane Savino (D Staten Island) noted the Senate's initiative at the Committee's first webcast meeting on Tuesday afternoon. The initiative gives New Yorkers a new means of accountability in terms of committee activity and provides an additional forum for legislators to bring issues to light.

For example at Tuesday's meeting, Republican Senator Charles Fuschillo (R Nassau) queried Senator Savino as to whether her bill which requires 60 day notice of any public employee suspension or demotion applies to layoffs as well. It does and this bill – which was introduced in 2009 – could have significant implications to the State as Governor David Paterson considers state employee layoffs as one means of addressing the State fiscal quandary.

Similarly, the public was able to watch Senator John Flanagan (R Suffolk) and Education Committee Chair Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D Westchester) wade through the complexity of New York's school contingency budget statute to ascertain exactly what services would be provided (e.g. school meals to children and faculty) and would not be provided (e.g. meal to community service organizations).

Coupled with the new video is the release of the Senate's *OpenLegislation* (<http://www.nysenate.gov/legislation>) which invites visitors to browse, search, and share legislative information from the New York State Senate. The search engine allows a search by keyword (such as "housing"), last name of the bill's sponsor (e.g.: "Jones"), committee name, or bill number preceded by an "s" for Senate or "a" for Assembly (e.g.: s100, a250). In addition, floor calendars, active lists, committee meetings (including attendance and voting records) and session transcripts can be browsed and searched.

Although currently undergoing Beta testing (the site contains a disclaimer noting that information may not be accurate), *OpenLegislation* has the potential to rival the State's Legislative Retrieval Service (LRS) in terms of information provided and timeliness. A search of legislation introduced today yielded both the bill and memo. *OpenLegislation's* access to committee attendance, voting records, and session transcripts surpasses what is currently available on LRS. The key to its usefulness will be in the timeliness of the information. *OpenLegislation* also contains a link to the "official Legislative Research Service website," (<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>), which provides searchable "real time" database to bills, resolutions, and the Laws of New York State.

Mama Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Librarians

Governor David Paterson and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg sent a very clear message to New York's college seniors working toward graduation -- public sector job prospects will be better for tax auditors than librarians.

The New York State and New York City 2010-2011 Executive budgets included cuts to libraries and cultural education and while beefing up efforts to ensure tax compliance.

Governor Paterson estimates that adding 330 auditors to the State Department of Taxation and Finance compliance staff would generate \$221 million in additional annual revenue. Similarly, Mayor Bloomberg's Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) includes a "targeted program to increase Audit Revenue" in which the City Department of Finance will hire 29 additional auditors across various tax return types. It is estimated to achieve net returns of \$13.1 million annually.

Meanwhile, Governor Paterson's Executive Budget provides \$84.5 million in funding for Library Aid - this represents a decrease of \$2.4 million from the Final 2009-10 enacted budget. State funding for local library construction will be maintained at \$14 million for 2010-11. In addition, he recommends a \$6.5 million reduction to grants provided by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). NYSCA awards over 2,300 competitive grants to not-for-profit arts and cultural organizations annually, including theatres, museums, and musical performance organizations. The reduction is in addition to the recurring impact of a \$1 million reduction to the program included in the 2009-10 Deficit Reduction Plan.

Similarly, more than one-third of Mayor Bloomberg's 834 PEG layoffs (299) would be library employees. Cultural institutions would lose 186 workers. The Mayor's PEG programs recommends a 4% PEG in FY2010 and a 8% reduction in outyears for the New York Research Library, New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library, and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

In the News – New York City

This is Only the Beginning

As anticipated, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's 2011 preliminary budget plan has set the stage for contentious budget negotiations, calling for almost 900 city employee layoffs, spending cuts, and labor concessions. The Mayor's plan seeks to close a \$4.9 billion deficit and lowering spending by \$1.6 billion.

Almost immediately, municipal labor organizations, local civic groups, and education interests decried the plan which included a reduction in agreed-upon teacher raises, no across-the-board raises for municipal workers, cuts to cultural education, and a reduction in services. The Mayor proposed reducing the City's 300,000-person work force by more than 4,200 jobs, 834 through layoffs and 3,352 through attrition.

"We must find other ways," said Harry Nespoli, chairman of the Municipal Labor Committee. "The high-quality service levels now being provided by the workforce will not be maintained if you are asking for greater dedication and more work, while also seeking a reduction in benefits."

Following release of the budget, Council Speaker Christine Quinn promised that "Today's budgetary proposals will be fully examined and debated." She indicated that Council budget hearings are scheduled to begin the week of March 8th.

Councilmember Domenic M. Recchia Jr., Chair of the Council's Finance Committee, assured New Yorkers that "this is only the beginning of the budget process."

"We're going to review the mayor's budget proposals extensively once the Council's hearings begin in March and see what alternative cuts the City can make in order to protect our welfare and minimize job loss," he explained. "The most important thing for us to do right now to impress upon Albany how important it is to avoid the types of devastating cuts they've proposed for New York City."

Earlier this week, Mayor Bloomberg was in Albany testifying before the Senate and Assembly fiscal committees. He asserts that Governor David Paterson's proposed 2010-11 budget would cut \$1.5 billion in funding to the City, forcing layoffs of 3,150 police officers, 1,050 firefighters, and 8,500 teachers.

In anticipation of the Mayor's budget, borough leaders are readying their responses and have reached out to their constituents for input. For example, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall will be holding a public hearing on Tuesday, February 9th on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2011 Preliminary Expense and Capital Budgets.

Examples of the new City agency gap closing actions include:

	FY 2010 Savings	FY 2011 Savings
Libraries: Reduce Subsidies to Library Systems	\$12.9 million	\$22.1 million
Parks: Close Four Pools and Shorten Outdoor Pool Season by Two Weeks	\$1.4 million	

	FY 2010 Savings	FY 2011 Savings
Police: Attrition of 892 Uniformed Officers	\$55.4 million	
Police: Reduction in Overtime Spending via Improved OT Management Strategies	\$25.0 million	\$50.0 million
Fire: Eliminate Staffing of Four Additional Engine Companies	\$5.6 million	
Eliminate Fifth Firefighter on 60 Engine Companies	\$7.9 million	
DOT: Increase Commercial Parking Rates from \$2 to \$2.50 Per Hour in Midtown Manhattan	\$4.1 million	
Finance: Hire 29 Additional Tax Auditors to Increase Audit Revenue	\$6.2 million	\$13.1 million
ACS: Eliminate 32 Units in Protective Services Increasing Caseload Average to 10.6 from 9.5	\$5.9 million	
Health: Eliminate Nurse Coverage for Elementary Schools with Less than 300 Students	\$3.1 million	
Correction: Reduction of 291 Uniformed Positions through Increased Staffing Efficiencies	\$8.1 million	\$26.9 million
Juvenile: Reduce Utilization of Detention Capacity	\$5.0 million	

NYC Leaders Call Upon FDNY to Assess Impact of Hospital Closure on EMS Capabilities

New York City Comptroller John C. Liu, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Thomas Duane, and Assemblymembers Richard Gottfried and Deborah Glick today called on the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) to evaluate the impact the of the proposed closure and restructuring of St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center (St. Vincent's).

In a letter to FDNY Commissioner Salvatore Cassano, the leaders cited recent emergency room closures in Manhattan, as well as FDNY's data regarding increased EMS response times as cause for concern that the St. Vincent's restructuring will dramatically limit access to emergency services.

"... if this closure is implemented, a total of 16 New York City emergency rooms will have been shuttered since 2002. Two of these recent closures were in Manhattan and, one of them, Cabrini Medical Center, served some of the very same communities as St. Vincent's Hospital," City Comptroller Liu wrote. "Demand for EMS services is rising throughout Manhattan, placing a greater strain on existing capacity and performance. According to the Fire Department's data, the number of Manhattan ambulance runs has spiked from 305,064 in 2004 to 328,060 in 2009. In addition, average EMS response times to all incidents in the Borough of Manhattan have increased by more than 16 percent since 2004."

The letter also cited the impact on emergency rooms and ambulance turnaround times in Queens as a result of the recent closures of Mary Immaculate and St. John's hospitals, as cause for concern.

"The recent closures of Mary Immaculate and St. John's hospitals in Queens caused emergency room registrations and the number of patients waiting to be admitted from the Emergency Department to soar at surrounding hospitals," the leaders continued. "In fact, New York City EMS reported increases in ambulance transports to the remaining hospitals ranging from 13 to 51 percent in the month following the closure.

"Given the possibility of cuts to EMS in the FY 2011 budget, we urge FDNY-EMS to immediately evaluate the impact of the proposed closure of St. Vincent's emergency room on FDNY-EMS operations and publicly release these findings. Residents and visitors to Manhattan have a right to know how the restructuring of the hospital will affect their access to emergency medical care," they concluded.

In Brief

Poll Gives Ultimate Fighting the Thumbs Down

Sixty-eight percent of New Yorkers polled oppose Governor David Paterson's proposal to legalize mixed martial arts - "ultimate fighting," according to Marist poll released today. Twenty-two percent of those polled support the legislation and 3 percent are unsure. In terms of demographics, 82 percent of women are opposed, compared with 55 percent of men. Opposition is greater in cities (74 percent) than the suburbs (66 percent).

Governor Makes Judicial Appointments

Governor David A. Paterson this week announced the appointment of Justice John C. Egan to the Appellate Division, Third Judicial Department and the nomination of Mark R. Dwyer to the Court of Claims.

Justice John C. Egan, Jr. was elected a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court, Third Judicial District, in 2005. He previously served as an Albany City Court Judge from 1997 to 2005. The Governor's designation to the Third Department is not subject to Senate confirmation.

Mr. Mark R. Dwyer has worked in the New York County District Attorney's Office since 1977. He has served as Chief of the Appeals Bureau from 1985 to the present and as Counsel to the District Attorney from 1999 to the present. This nomination is subject to Senate confirmation.

NYC OTB Alerts State Labor Department of Impending Layoffs

New York City Off Track Betting Corp. alerted the state Department of Labor that it intends to layoff 1,320 workers. By law, WARN notices are required of private employers 90 days before a mass lay-off. New York City Off Track Betting Corp is attempting to emerge from bankruptcy under a plan for reorganization, which could avoid closing the doors.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, February 1st

Economic Development Budget Hearing

Senate Finance & Assembly Ways & Means Committees
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Tax/Revenue Initiative Budget Hearing

Senate Finance & Assembly Ways & Means Committees
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 1 p.m.

Tuesday, February 2nd

Education Budget Hearing

Senate Finance & Assembly Ways & Means Committees
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, February 3rd

Thoroughbred Racing in New York as it Compares to Other States

Senate Committees on Investigation and Government Operations

Elmont Memorial Library, 700 Hempstead Turnpike, Elmont, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Thursday, February 4th

No-Fault Fraud in New York State

Senate Committee on Insurance

Van Buren Hearing Room A, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 10 a.m.

New York City

Tuesday, January 26th

Consumer Affairs, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

T2010-0097 In relation to disclosure of tenant screening reports

Wednesday, February 3rd

State City Council Meeting, Council Chambers, City Hall, 1:30 p.m.

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This Week in New York is a publication of Pitta Bishop Del Giorno & Giblin LLC, 120 Broadway, 28th Floor, New York, New York 10271.