

## On the brief side...

### Vallone Panel Conducts Oversight Of NYPD

At a hearing last Friday at City Hall, the Public Safety Committee, headed by City Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. and the Civil Rights Committee explored how the NYPD polices and disciplines its officers.

In the wake of the Sean Bell shooting in Jamaica last year, in which some 50 shots were fired, killing Bell, the City Council has made extensive efforts to ease public concern over police accountability, Vallone (D-Astoria) explained. A Queens grand jury is still looking into the Bell incident.

At the hearing, officials of the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau, the Commission to Combat Police Corruption and the Civilian Complaint Review Board testified regarding their agencies' respective duties, both internal and external, to oversee the performance of police officers and the disciplines imposed where necessary.

The council also heard testimony from a range of experts prominent in police monitoring.

### Hire More Family Court Judges Gotbaum Urges

Describing the city's Family Court system as in crisis, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum last week called for the hiring of more judges in that system "to protect battered children entering the court system from further abuse".

Expanding the number of Family Court judges will ease judges' caseloads and enable them to give more time and attention to sensitive and complex cases, Gotbaum said. It would also reduce scheduling conflicts and the need for adjournments, which delay getting services to children and families in the child welfare system, she added.

"In the wake of recent tragedies, much of the focus has been on the work of caseworkers and their supervisors," Gotbaum said. "But the fragile lives of some of our most vulnerable children also depend a great deal on what goes on in our Family Courts, and what we're seeing is a Family Court system in crisis."

### 311=EITC Tax Refund

More New Yorkers are getting more free tax help and information this year than ever before through the city's 311 help line. That translates into more people receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit from the federal government, according to Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathon Mintz.

EITC returns as much as \$6,000 to qualifying New Yorkers making less than \$38,000 a year, Mintz said, helping working families. In January, the Bloomberg administration launched the city's fifth annual EITC campaign to make low income wage earners aware of the tax benefit. In that one month, a record 15,800 persons called 311 for information on how to get the benefit. That was two and a-half more calls than the same time last year, Mintz said.

For information on the EITC, to see if you qualify, or to locate the closest free tax assistance site, call 311, 212-NEW YORK or go online to [www.nyc.gov.eitc](http://www.nyc.gov.eitc).

### Launch New School For Int'l Studies

City Councilmember John Liu (D-Flushing) and local school officials joined yesterday at a ceremony launching the East-West School for International Studies at its temporary location at I.S. 237, the Rachel Carlson Middle School, at 46-21 Colden St., Flushing.

The school was established in 2006 as a small comprehensive school (grades 6 to 12) that will provide opportunities for students to explore the world at large, serve the community, and focus on learning Asian languages, technology and culture, Liu said.

The ceremony featured the East-West Lion Dance Troupe and the newly formed East-West Coldenetts, who sang their own original work, "East West's The Best". They were accompanied by a pianist and a percussion duet. All are seventh graders.

### Lauds Bill Banning Internet Solicitations

Legislation to strengthen the ban against using the Internet to solicit minors for sexual solicitations has passed the Assembly, Assemblymember Audrey Pheffer announced.

Pheffer (D-Rockaway) explained that current law bans communications that depict nudity from being used to solicit underage children, but in a current court case the question has arisen whether the use of language for solicitation purposes is also prohibited under the law.

"Predators will stop at nothing to lure children into sexually abhorrent acts," Pheffer said. "An offender soliciting sex can do as much damage to a child through sexually explicit words as with images. The offenders should be prosecuted severely in either case."

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