

Is Mayor Headed For Bitter Defeat (Again) On Willets Pt. Plan?

Mayor Michael Bloomberg last week rhapsodized in an op-ed piece about his "All Star City", with "the eyes of every baseball fan turned toward New York City in anticipation of the 2008 All Star game" at Yankee Stadium.

But this special moment was occurring at about the same time that the mayor seemed to be heading for another major defeat comparable to previous stumbles, such as his plans for a new football stadium over the Chelsea rail yards and for congestion pricing.

The mayor's latest Waterloo seems certain to be his grandiose vision of replacing the ugly bit of real estate called the Willets Point junkyards with spanking new high-rise apartment buildings, a convention center and an assortment of new businesses.

The smoldering discontent that greeted the proposal several years ago has in recent months erupted into a major conflagration as the plan's many opponents have come together with a single voice demanding that the mayor make major changes in the plan or face certain defeat by the City Council.

In recent weeks, Councilmember Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona), who has led the opposition to the plan, has increased the intensity of his protests. Two of his main supporters, Councilmembers John Liu (D-Flushing) and Tony Avella (D-Bayside), have been joined by several colleagues whose total number guarantees the majority needed to defeat the proposal if it comes before them.

Monserrate, who represents Willets Point in the council, has repeatedly called upon the mayor to address concerns of displaced businesses, lost jobs and inadequate public housing raised by himself and various groups.

The lawmaker has also expressed concerns with the administration's efforts to win approval for a project without a formal plan and proceeding without identifying the developer.

There has been no response from City Hall.

CASH FLOWS IN: The most recent

campaign filing shows most candidates from Queens doing well as they prepare to run for new positions in 2009 when term limits will force them out of their present jobs.

In the prospective race for mayor, Congressman Anthony Weiner (D-Queens/Brooklyn) took in more than both his closest rivals, Council Speaker Christine Quinn and city Comptroller William Thompson.

Weiner, a Forest Hills resident, took in about \$1.4 million for the period, bringing his total thus far to about \$5 million in contributions and about \$1.5 million more in matching funds.

Thompson raided \$625,000 for the period, bringing his total to about \$4.8 million.

Quinn collected about \$600,000 in the six-month period ending June 30, bringing her total to about \$3 million.

Quinn's collections fell off a bit from her previous pace, attributed to the recent spate of stories about investigations relating to allocations of taxpayer funds to phantom nonprofit groups.

In the 2009 race for Queens borough president, Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr. (D-Astoria) reported raising more than \$100,000, bringing his total to date to \$800,000.

After holding several large "high dollar" fundraisers last year, Vallone expanded his supporter base for the most recent fundraising period by holding many "lower dollar" events in the period just ended. These brought in \$110,315, raising his total amount to \$799,758.

By focusing on soliciting more donors, Vallone raised more matching funds than in any of his prior filing periods, money that will be matched at six - one.

GENNARO PASSES \$400G MARK: Councilmember James Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows), who is planning to challenge Republican state Senator Frank Padavan in the November election, reports that his fundraising efforts have brought his total raised to \$406,965.

Gennaro raised \$615,497 in the period ending June 30, he said. "The fact that we

are seeing so much support for the Gennaro for New York campaign is concrete evidence that there is a real hope and desire for change in the 11th senate district and New York as a whole," Gennaro said.

Padavan, who has represented the Northeast Queens district for more than 30 years, is expected to raise a larger amount of campaign funds for his re-election campaign.

STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING: Democrats in the state senate have been in the minority for about 40 years. Now they only need a couple of net votes to become the majority party.

However, they complain, they are not getting any support from Governor David Paterson in their campaigning to overtake the GOP. Paterson, who was the senate

minority leader for many years, reportedly does not have a good relationship with his successor; Senator Malcolm Smith, of Queens. This may be the reason Paterson is not cooperating in the Democrats' effort.

Sources commenting on the frost between Paterson and Smith, who are both black, say the governor is not pleased with the way Smith has run the minority program. Smith complains that Paterson wanted to continue calling the tune after he became the lieutenant governor and was replaced by Smith.

Certainly not helping the situation are reports that Paterson has offered former Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno a top level job in his administration, which Smith complains would undercut the Democrats' campaign to win the senate majority.



Cleaning Up Down Under

Australian city comes to speak with Vallone about graffiti



Councilmember Peter F. Vallone Jr. met with Wayne Smith, a Councilor of the City of Casey, Australia, to speak about issues of vandalism and neighborhood crime. Casey, a city of roughly 250,000 residents, has been able to almost completely eliminate graffiti by modeling enforcement systems on places like New York and Phoenix.

"Graffiti is not just a New York problem or an American problem, it is a worldwide problem," Vallone said. "We must pool our ideas and our resources to help each other fight to save our neighborhoods, no matter where we are."

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