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New York City Council Stated Meeting Report

Every two weeks the New York City Council meets for its Stated Meeting to introduce and pass legislation. As a regular feature, Searchlight covers these meetings and posts a summary of the bills passed.

STATED MEETING - October 15, 2003

Quote of the Day:

"It seems as if the city has turned the corner fiscally." - Council Speaker Gifford Miller responding to news that there is an unexpected \$110 million surplus in the city's 2003 budget.

Meeting Summary:

On October 15, the New York City Council passed a bill ([Intro 569-A](#)) giving the city the power to place advertising on newsstands, to require that the stands meet uniform standards, and to build bus shelters and public pay toilets.

"This is will totally revamp and revolutionize the way New York City administers street furniture," said Speaker Gifford Miler. "It will provide the city with a new aesthetic framework for our streets and sidewalks and will also raise substantial revenues through the sale of advertising space."

The city hopes advertising will generate \$400 million over the next 20 years.

Newsstand owners and some advertisers opposed the plan, arguing that it would take away space on the outside of the stands and make it more difficult to attract business.

by Gotham Gazette Staff

Wednesday, October 15, 2003 12:00 AM

"For many distressed operators, who are already under tremendous pressure from half-priced subscriptions, street hawkers, and internet cigarette distributors, this will be the last straw," said Steve Stollman, a former newsstand operator.

The City Council members said compromises were made in the legislation to address some newsstand owner concerns. For example, it ensures that current stands cannot be closed or moved for at least six years. The bill passed by a vote of 45 to 3 (3 members were absent). Council members Allan Jennings, Hiram Monserrate, and Charles Barron voted "no." Barron said some of the advertising revenue should be shared with newsstand owners and said the plan favored the "fat cats over the little cats."

The council also unanimously approved legislation ([Intro 262-A](#)) mandating air conditioning on all buses and vehicles used to transport children with disabilities to school. Corona Councilmember Hiram Monserrate, who was upset that his 7-year-old son with autism was forced to ride a bus on 100-degree days, authored the bill.

"No child should be subjected to heat and illness to get to school, especially those with limited ability to communicate their needs," said Monserrate.

The council also passed several budget modifications, including one that transferred a surplus of \$110 million from fiscal year 2003 into a new account. The unexpected money resulted because tax revenue was higher than expected.

Speaker Gifford Miller said that the additional revenue along with other positive financial reports signaled that New York City's economy is rebounding.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently ordered on all city agencies, except the Department of Education, to cut funding three percent. Miller said he wanted to use the additional revenue to limit budget cuts and said he hopes to reduce property taxes for senior citizens on fixed incomes.

"It is time to move away from budget cuts that will further curtail vital services," said Speaker

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Miller.

The next Stated Meeting is scheduled for October 30.

For an archive of past meetings and council votes, visit Gotham Gazette's [Searchlight](#) .