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*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.*

**Quote of the Day:**

*"I don't look at this as a 'stop the stadium' issue. This is something that goes to the heart of our democracy..."* - Councilmember David Weprin who supports the West Side Stadium, but voted to block Mayor Bloomberg's financing of it.

**Meeting Summary:**

**West Side Stadium Financing**

In an effort meant to thwart Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan for the proposed West Side stadium, the New York City Council passed a measure that would prohibit the city from financing building projects using "payment in lieu of taxes" (called PILOTs) without the consent of the City Council.

Mayor Bloomberg wants to use this kind of financing to pay for the city's \$300 million share of the stadium, which will cost a total of \$1.7 billion.

PILOTs are money from developers who build properties on city-owned land but do not pay property taxes on it. Instead, they pay money into a specific fund.

Last year, over 260 PILOT programs across the city generated about \$47 million in annual revenue. The mayor wants to use a portion of this money to pay off the annual payments on \$300 million in stadium bonds over 25 years. None of the PILOT money goes through the city's usual budget, which must be approved by the City Council.

The mayor argues that this type of financing is already used for various projects around the city. For example, the city used \$1.25 million in such financing to help Broadway theaters recover after September 11, 2001.

## City Council Stated Meeting - May 11, 2005

by Gotham Gazette Staff  
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The City Council, lead by Speaker Gifford Miller who opposes the stadium and is running for mayor, argues that money from the PILOTs fund has never been used for such an expensive project.

"It is wrong for the mayor to try to devote hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money without ever having review from the public budget process," said Miller.

The bill ( [Intro 584-A](#) ) would prohibit funds from being spent without a vote of the City Council and would require the mayor to provide a monthly report of potential projects that may use PILOT financing.

A number of council members have voiced their support for the West Side stadium, but most, including council finance chair David Weprin, still voted for the measure.

"I don't look at this as a 'stop the stadium' issue," said Weprin. "This is something that goes to the heart of our democracy and the checks and balances system."

The council voted 48 to 2 for the measure; only Queens Councilmember Tony Avella and Bronx Councilmember Madeline Provenzano voted against it.

The mayor is expected to veto the measure, and the council has promised to override it. The issue will likely have to be resolved in court.

### **Williamsburg/Greenpoint Rezoning**

New apartments, retail stores, and a waterfront esplanade will be built along the Brooklyn's East River waterfront under a plan approved by the City Council.

The rezoning changes the parameters of what types of buildings can be built in a 175-block area of Williamsburg and Greenpoint, allowing developers to build taller buildings, putting residential apartments in areas once dominated by warehouses and manufacturing, and

creating new open space.

Officials hope that 10,800 new apartments will be built over the next 10 years, of which a third (approximately 3,500 apartments) would be affordable.

The plan will also:

- Create 54 acres of parkland, including a waterfront esplanade.
- Provide \$22 million in funds to keep industrial jobs in the area.
- Invest \$70 million in the Brooklyn Navy Yard so businesses that may be displaced can relocate.
- And allocate \$1 million to improvements to McCarren Park.

Council members David Yassky and Diana Reyna, who represent the neighborhoods, said that the plan provides more affordable housing than any other recent rezoning.

"When we talk jobs, when we talk about affordable housing, when we talk about open space â€" those are not privileges, those are rights," said Reyna.

Only one member â€" Charles Barron â€" voted against the plan. He argued that the city should work toward a goal of making 50 percent of new housing affordable.

### **AIDS Housing**

Last month, in an effort to improve its system of providing housing for homeless people infected with AIDS/HIV, the city passed [a law](#) requiring the city to issue quarterly reports on the services and housing it provides to people with AIDS/HIV.

Now, the City Council has passed two complimentary measures.

[Intro 535](#) gives the city 90 days to find homeless people living with AIDS permanent, medically appropriate housing. Currently, many people are moved from various temporary housing sites

for up to three years. [Intro 543](#) would create a central system to track the availability of emergency housing to ensure that people are placed more quickly.

### **Identity Theft**

According to the council, approximately 12,000 New Yorkers are victims of identity theft each year, so the legislative body passed a series of measures aimed at protecting residents.

[Intro 139-A](#) gives the Department of Consumer Affairs the power to shut down any business that is found to have been involved in cases of identity theft. [Intro 140-A](#) and [141-A](#) require city agencies and businesses located in New York City that use personal data to tell residents when information has been stolen.

### **Scaffolding Safety**

With the goal of improving safety for those who work on city scaffolding and the pedestrians who walk underneath it, the council passed a measure ( [Intro 597-A](#) ) that forbids anyone to "erect, dismantle, repair, maintain or modify" scaffolding unless they attend a 32-hour safety course.

"This is very unsexy, but important to the livelihood of our city and the people that work and erect those scaffolding that you see all around the city," said Madeline Provenzano.

### **311 Helpline Information**

Nearly 20 million New Yorkers call the city's [311 citizen help line](#) every month seeking assistance with non-emergency issues.

While many have praised the plan that consolidated 40 different phone numbers for city agencies into one easy to remember number, City Council members argue that the mayor's office has not been willing to share the results of the calls.

A new bill ( [Intro 174-A](#) ) requires the city to provide information on 311 calls by zip code, community board, City Council district, and borough. The measure is aimed at allowing officials and residents to compare how their neighborhood or borough compares with others in the city.

### **Lead in Food**

Lead in candy and other foods manufactured in Mexico have become a growing concern to health officials. One study in Orange County, California estimated that 15 percent of the children with lead poisoning contracted it through candy imported from Mexico. Prolonged exposure to lead has been associated with memory loss, behavioral problems, and kidney damage.

The City Council passed a bill (Intro 396-A) banning the sale of food and other products containing lead in New York City.

### **Staten Island Ferry Service**

In December 2004, the City Council approved legislation that would establish a minimum level of service for the Staten Island Ferry, requiring that the ferries run earlier in the morning and later into the night. Mayor Bloomberg vetoed the legislation, arguing that ferry schedules should be set by the Department of Transportation as needed, not mandated by the council.

Since then, the two sides have reached an agreement.

Under a new piece of legislation (Intro 636-A), three additional weekday ferry runs will be added. Half-hour ferry service will now be available between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., and every fifteen minutes between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. In addition, a new 1:00 a.m. boat will depart from lower Manhattan. In another year and a half, the city will expand its weekend service as well.

All of the measures - except the PILOT measure and the Williamsburg rezoning - were approved by a vote of 50 to 0. The next Stated Meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2005.