by Mark Berkey-Gerard
Thursday, October 27, 2005 12:00 AM -

*Every two weeks the New York City Council meets for its Stated Meeting to introduce and pass legislation. Gotham Gazette covers these meetings and posts a summary of the bills passed.*

**QUOTE OF THE DAY:**
"There is no real estate in the free world that is more developable than the West Side of Manhattan. To dedicate $1.3 billion of tax money in this city to this project is outrageous." â€“ City Councilmember Lewis Fidler on a measure to invest in the Hudson Yards development project.

**MEETING SUMMARY:**
The New York City Council approved $1.3 billion in spending over the next 40 years to help develop the West Side of Manhattan.

The measure was part of an agreement reached between Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the City Council earlier this year . Under the rezoning of the area, the council was able ensure that 28 percent of the new housing built will be affordable, a significant increase from previous proposals. In exchange, the council agreed to pay for a greater percentage of the plan upfront, using financing known as "payment in lieu of taxes" or PILOTs.

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. The PILOT payments for the West Side will go to pay for parks and transportation improvements associated with the extension of the number 7-subway line.

Speaker Gifford Miller said that the plan would save New York taxpayers $1 billion over the next four decades.

But several council members objected to the measure, arguing that plans to build the West Side Stadium for the Olympic bid forced the council into a rushed decision. Now, they want to revisit the idea of using public subsidies to encourage development in the area.

"There is no real estate in the free world that is more developable than the West Side of Manhattan," said Councilmember Lewis Fidler, who called on private developers to pay for needed improvements. "To dedicate $1.3 billion of tax money in this city to this project is outrageous."

"This is very substantial investment of taxpayer dollars without a convincing case of the necessity of it," said Councilmember David Yassky.

Proponents of the financing plan said that the council had already made a deal with the mayor and could not break it now.

City Councilmember Christine Quinn, who represents the area, said that the investment will pay off for the entire city.

"We are not taking money out of the budget," said Quinn, "but creating a scenario where more money comes into our budget that can be used for the many projects we care deeply about, like schools, health clinics, and roads."

The council approved the measure by a vote of 45 to 4. Charles Barron, Lew Fidler, Letitia James, and David Yassky voted "no."

**PAY RAISES FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS**

The council also quietly approved $31,896 pay increases for public administrators, five court appointed officials who handle estates if the deceased person has no will or others to claim a share of the inheritance.

Public administrators currently make $91,134 and under the measure ( Intro 719 ) their pay would increase to $123,030.

Public administrators, who are appointed by the Surrogate's Court judge in each borough, have

also been involved in recent scandals in the judicial system .

Councilmember David Weprin said that the public administrators haven't received a raise in "more than seven years" while their workloads have increased.

But Councilmember David Yassky suggested that before they get raises the duties and positions should be overhauled.

The measure passed by a vote of 46 to 3. David Yassky, Charles Barron, and Allan Jennings voted against the pay increases.

**SENIOR CITIZEN HOUSING**

The City Council passed two measures to expand the number of more low-income senior citizens and the disabled who can take advantage of rent increase exemptions and tax breaks.

Intro 722 applies to homeowners and Intro 726 applies to renters.

"These particular programs help people who are disabled and senior citizens to stay in their homes," said Speaker Miller.

The bills passed unanimously.

**BENEFITS FOR DECEASED TRANSIT WORKERS**

The council also passed a bill ( Intro 730 ) to extend health insurance coverage for the surviving spouse, domestic partner, and children of certain transit workers who are killed on the job.

Police and firefighters routinely get such benefits, but this legislation allows the city to extend

them to other municipal workers as well.

The bill was inspired by the death of Nick Antico, a 35 year-old Department of Transportation worker, who was working road repair in Staten Island when a speeding driver hit him, and then fled the scene.  Antico left behind a wife and 8-year-old daughter.

The worker benefit bills passed unanimously.

The next Stated Meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2005.

Â