by Mark Berkey-Gerard
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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.

MEETING SUMMARY:

EMERGING BUSINESS ENTERPRISE BILL

Last year, the New York City Council created the Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Program , which requires each city agency to establish a plan to encourage minority and women-owned businesses to compete for city contracts under $1 million.

In the process of creating that program, however, some members of the City Council felt that other business owners who may not fit the specific categories still need additional assistance in competing for city contracts.

In response, the City Council passed Intro 180-A , known as the Emerging Business Enterprise bill, which creates a new category for business owners who have been "socially and economically disenfranchised."

"There is a need for legislation that addresses issues not attributed to gender and race," said Councilmember Diana Reyna, who authored the bill.

The bill sets a goal of giving six percent of all city contracts under $1 million to this new category of business owner.

Council members admitted that they are still working out the details of exactly who can qualify, but they said that ideally it would include people with disabilities or other kinds of minority groups.

The Department of Small Businesses will administer the program and review applicants on a case-by-case basis.

"We know from anecdotal evidence that there are others who do not yet have fair opportunities to compete for contracts," said Councilmember Yvette Clark.

The measure passed by a vote of 46 to 4; Republicans James Oddo, Andrew Lanza, and Dennis Gallagher and Democrat Simcha Felder voted "no."

NEW OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CENTER

The deployment center for the Office of Emergency Management's search and rescue team will soon have a new home in Brooklyn.

The current headquarters for the agency's team, which is trained to respond to catastrophic events, is located on Pier 36 in Manhattan. However, the pier is slated to become a park, and the agency has been looking for a new location that has easy access to all five boroughs.

At the suggestion of the Bloomberg administration, the council approved a new location for the Emergency Management center on Flushing Avenue in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Councilmember Diana Reyna, who represents the district where the new center will be located, had proposed other development plans for the area, but agreed to the new center if the agency considers it only a temporary location.

Under the lease agreement, the Office of Emergency Management will have to find a new location after seven years.

The measure passed by a vote of 50 to 0.

NEW STREET NAMES

The council also passed legislation to rename 58 streets across the city, many for people who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

However, the council also gave some other famous people - including former City Councilmember Herb Berman, Special Olympics coach Joann Young, and singer Al Jolson - their own street signs. Even Bob Marley now has his own avenue in Brooklyn; a portion of Church Avenue will be renamed for the reggae singer.

The next Stated Meeting is scheduled for May 24, 2006.

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