

SPEAKING POINTS FOR QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT HELEN MARSHALL

CITY COUNCIL AGING COMMITTEE HEARING ON SENIOR CENTER RFP

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4TH, 2008 AT 1:00 P.M. CITY HALL.

GOOD AFTERNOON **SPEAKER QUINN, CHAIRWOMAN ARROYO, AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL AGING COMMITTEE. (MEMBERS INCLUDE: BREWER, FOSTER, GENTILE, GONZALEZ, STEWART, VACCA, EUGENE.)** THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING ON THE RECENTLY RELEASED SENIOR CENTER RFP.

- THIS IS THE THIRD TIME IN LESS THAN ONE YEAR THAT I COME BEFORE YOU TO TESTIFY AGAINST A RFP RELEASED BY DFTA.
- THIS IS THE LAST OF THREE STEPS LAUNCHED BY DFTA TO TOTALLY DISMANTLE THE ENTIRE SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM IN NEW YORK CITY
- IN THE NEW RFP DFTA INDICATES THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM SPACE THAT NECESSITATE THE USE OF CLASSROOMS. AND IT CLEARLY STATES THAT “NO FUNDING WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR LEASE ESCALATIONS, EXPENSES FOR BUILDING RENOVATIONS OR MAJOR, LONG TERM EQUIPMENT PURCHASES....”.
- THE BURDEN WILL HAVE TO BE BORNE BY THE LOCAL SENIOR CITIZEN ORGANIZATION WHICH IS AWARDED THE CONTRACT.

- DURING THESE VERY DIFFICULT FISCAL TIMES IT IS IRRESPONSIBLE FOR DFTA TO SHIFT THIS BURDEN TO NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS.
- THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ACKNOWLEDGED, THAT DUE TO THIS MODERNIZATION PROCESS, APPROXIMATELY 85 SENIOR CENTERS CITYWIDE COULD BE FORCED TO CLOSE. YET THEY PERSIST?
- THE NOVEMBER PLAN INCLUDES THE ELIMINATION OF SOCIAL ADULT DAY CARE PROGRAMS, ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION AND MANY OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES, FUNDED THROUGH CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVES, BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. AND THEY INTEND TO SEIZE CONTROL OVER THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S DISCRETIONARY ALLOCATIONS, TOTALING \$7.5 MILLION, TO FUND THIS MODERNIZATION PLAN.
- HOW WILL ALL OUR SENIORS ACCESS THE SERVICES THEY SO DESPERATELY NEED?
- BY THE YEAR 2030, ONE-FIFTH OF NYC'S POPULATION WILL BE SIXTY YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER – WITH SENIORS OUTNUMBERING SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.
- THESE DEMOGRAPHICS UNDOUBTABLY CALL FOR “CHANGE, EXPANSION, RENOVATION ...”

- HOWEVER, THE SYSTEM IS NOT BROKEN. LIKE ALL CITY SERVICES, CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT SHOULD BE THE GOAL. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SYSTEM IS NOT THE ANSWER.
- IT IS TOTALLY RECKLESS AND IRRESPONSIBLE FOR DFTA TO PROCEED WITH THIS RFP WHILE CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND MEALS-ON-WHEELS PROGRAMS ARE IN SUCH TURMOIL.
- CASE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES NOW HAVE LISTS OF SENIORS WAITING TO BE ASSESSED FOR CRITICAL SERVICES SUCH AS HOMECARE AND MEALS-ON-WHEELS.
- AND THE MEALS-ON-WHEELS CONTRACTORS ARE BEING NICKEL AND DIMED TO DEATH AS THEY TRY TO NEGOTIATE THE NEW CONTRACTS WITH DFTA.
- NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT THE REGIONS FOR THE NEW MEALS-ON-WHEELS CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY CONFIGURED TO MAKE IT LOGISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO DELIVER HOT MEALS ON A DAILY BASIS. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE INTENT IS TO CONTRACT WITH A CATERER TO DELIVER FROZEN MEALS ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK.
- AS YOU KNOW, EVERY MEALS-ON-WHEELS CLIENT WILL RECEIVE THE SAME MEAL. AND EVEN IF THEY ARE “LUCKY” ENOUGH TO GET A HOT MEAL EVERY DAY IT WILL BE THE FLASH-FROZEN MEAL REHEATED!

- SO, I ASK YOU – WHERE IS THE CHOICE THAT DFTA KEEPS TALKING ABOUT? WHAT HAPPENS TO THE HUMAN LIFELINE THAT SO MANY OF OUR SENIORS RELY ON?
- IN THE SENIOR CENTER RFP, DFTA MANDATES THAT SERVICES BE DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP, YET NO ACCOMMODATIONS WERE MADE TO DELIVER MEALS THAT WOULD APPEAL TO A MULTI-ETHNIC POPULATION.
- THEREFORE, I JOIN SPEAKER QUINN AND THE CITY COUNCIL IN SEEKING A DELAY OF THE MODERNIZATION PLAN. WE ARE ALL WILLING TO WORK WITH THE ADMINISTRATION IN PROVIDING THE BEST SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR OUR CITY’S OLDER RESIDENTS.
- BUT IT NEEDS TO BE DONE THROUGH A RATIONAL, LOGICAL PROCESS. NOT IN A RUSH TO MEET A TIME RESTRICTED DEADLINE THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PROVISION OF SENIOR SERVICES.