



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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In the News – New York State

The One House Budgets Are Coming!!

Senate & Assembly Released Revenue Projections

15 Session Days Remain Before the Start of the New Fiscal Year

March - April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

 Indicates Session Day

 Indicates Start of Fiscal Year

New York’s 2017-2018 budget dance continues, with the road leading to the start of the fiscal year on April 1st. Both the Senate and the Assembly this week released the respective revenue projections for 2017-2018. Meanwhile the respective legislative staffs are busily crafting the one-house budget proposals which will outline each house’s funding priorities.

Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan and Majority Coalition Leader Jeff Klein released a revenue forecast report by the Senate Finance Committee that estimates \$503 million in additional revenues above Governor Andrew Cuomo’s figures. The Senate report projects All Funds revenues of \$345 million more than the Executive’s estimate in Fiscal Year 2018, and \$158 million more for the remainder of state Fiscal Year 2017. The difference in the estimates is attributed primarily to personal income tax estimates.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie’s Ways and Means staff estimates \$355 million above the Executive’s estimate for SFY 2016-17. The committee staff forecast is \$1.029 billion higher than the Executive’s forecast for SFY 2017-18. Similar to the Senate, the largest difference between the committee staff estimates and the Executive’s estimates is in personal income taxes.

With these figures in hand, the Assembly and Senate Program & Counsel staffs and fiscal committees are developing the legislative budget resolution. The Assembly and Senate are expected to adopt these resolutions by March 15th, setting the stage for the legislative budget conference committees.

In the News – New York City

De Blasio Administration Announces Plan to “Turn the Tide” on Homelessness with Borough-Based Approach

Mayor Bill de Blasio this week released a 114-page plan to develop a borough-based approach to the City’s homeless crisis. The plan includes replacing cluster sites with traditional shelters near the communities, jobs, school, houses of worship and support systems.

Under *Turning the Tide on Homelessness, Neighborhood by Neighborhood*, the City will eliminate the use of 360 cluster sites and commercial hotel facilities and replace them with approximately 90 new shelter facilities and 30 expanded existing sites.

The City estimates opening about 20 new shelters annually over the next five years, which will require a combination of building new locations and renovating existing buildings. At the same time, prevention and rehousing initiatives will reduce the current number of homeless New Yorkers in shelter by 2,500 people over five years.



Mayor de Blasio announces *Turn the Tide on Homelessness* Program

According to Mayor de Blasio, the plan acknowledges that in the past, the City has not always sufficiently brought communities to the table as partners in addressing homelessness. For example, homeless shelters would often be opened in the middle of the night with little or no notice provided to surrounding communities.

Under the new plan, the administration pledges to continue its commitment to providing at least 30 days’ notice to the surrounding community prior to opening a new shelter. The City will maintain community engagement throughout the process and create a community advisory board after the site opens. In addition, the administration will notify communities simultaneously when renting rooms at commercial hotels during this transition period while new shelter capacity comes online.

Public Advocate James Takes Legal Action to Protect New Yorkers with Disabilities

Public Advocate Letitia James this week submitted a legal brief arguing that New York City has failed to maintain pedestrian pathways and provide access to City sidewalks for New Yorkers with disabilities.

The brief contends that an earlier settlement to address the poor condition of “curb cuts” throughout the City has been largely ineffective. Public Advocate James’ brief urges a court appointed Special Master to reject the settlement between New York City and United Spinal Association, formerly Eastern Paralyzed Veterans of America.



Public Advocate James assesses street access for the disabled.

“Every New Yorker should be able to move around the City with ease,” said Public Advocate Letitia James. “We cannot settle for insufficient access for New Yorkers with disabilities. This settlement would ultimately do more harm than good, and we must go back to the drawing board and find better solutions for our neighbors with disabilities.”

In 1994, United Spinal Association sued New York City for violating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with regards to sidewalk and pedestrian pathway accessibility. The lawsuit was settled in 2002. Public Advocate James asserts that in the ensuing 15 years the City has failed to make any meaningful strides towards accessibility. In order to preclude a lawsuit that seeks to remedy the failure of the City to ensure accessible pathways, the City is trying to use a new settlement with United Spinal Association as a shield from liability.

The Public Advocate’s Office has received numerous complaints from constituents about the poor conditions and inaccessibility of sidewalks. Such conditions have left many to feel confined to their homes or unable to move around the City because they do not feel safe.

A recent survey from the City’s Department of Transportation found that 79 percent of the curbs in the City are either missing ramps, have defective ramps, or are non-compliant with ADA regulations. Another survey by Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer’s office found that over 90 percent of 1,357 surveyed curb cuts along Broadway in Manhattan pose severe hazards for people with mobility or vision disabilities. A third recent survey from Kessler McGuinness, a national ADA architectural firm, found that nearly one quarter of locations in Lower Manhattan lack pedestrian ramps completely.

“In 2015, staff and volunteers from my office and disability advocates found fewer than 10 percent of the 1,357 of Broadway’s curb cuts were actually there, clear of obstructions, and compliant with disabled-accessibility laws,” said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. “The Americans With Disabilities Act is a promise that every government and public institution needs to live up to, and that includes our city. I thank the Public Advocate for taking this issue on.”

Public Advocate James joins a coalition of organizations opposing the settlement, including the American Council of the Blind, American Council of the Blind of New York, Bronx Independent Living Services, Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled, Center for Independence of the Disabled New York, Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York, Harlem Independent Living Center, and United for Equal Access.

Bills Passed by the Council

Introduction 267-A, sponsored by Council Member Rosie Mendez by request of the Manhattan Borough President, would require the Department of Transportation to include designated parking spaces in municipal parking facilities as part of the carshare pilot program.

Introduction 820-A, sponsored by the Public Advocate Letitia James, would require the Department of Sanitation to consult with the New York City Housing Authority on implementing a pilot incentives program to increase recycling rates in public housing. If the department concludes that such a program is feasible and would increase recycling rates, it must implement such a program by 2020. After two years, the department will be required to report on the pilot's effectiveness and on whether it should be made permanent.

Introduction 873-A, sponsored by Council Member Mark Levine, would direct the Department of Transportation (DOT) to conduct a two-year carsharing pilot program, during which a limited number of on-street parking spaces would be reserved for carshare vehicles. DOT would be required to report to the Council on the results of the pilot, including its impact on the driving and car-ownership habits of drivers. Participating carshare companies would have to cooperate with DOT by sharing requested data.

Introduction 1161-A, sponsored by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to report to the Council, either as part of the Mayor's Management Report or as a standalone report, data on immunization rates of New Yorkers for the Human Papillomavirus, often referred to as HPV. Data would be disaggregated by age group, series initiation, series completion, and age of the recipient.

Introduction 1162-A, sponsored by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to report to the Council, either as part of the Mayor's Management Report or as a standalone report, data on the use of contraceptive methods by city residents. Data would be collected annually for adults, and no less than biennially for high school students, and would be disaggregated by age group, education, race or ethnicity, and community district.

Introduction 1172-A, sponsored by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley, would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to report to the Council on maternal mortality. This annual report would include maternal mortality numbers and rates, disaggregated by race and borough. It would also include recommendations on steps that could be taken by the Department and others to reduce maternal mortality.

Introduction 1280-B, sponsored by Council Member Chaim Deutsch, would require the NYPD to make automobile collision reports available online to certain interested parties. Collision reports would be made available to persons named on the report that have provided their driver's license number, date of birth, license plate number, and license plate state of issuance to the NYPD for preparation of the report. Reports would be accessible through a single web portal located on the NYPD website.

Briefs

New York State Colon Cancer Screenings Increase by 100,000

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) announced this week that the number of New Yorkers getting screened for colon cancer has increased by more than 100,000 from 2014 to 2015. This positive development comes as the Department kicks off Colon Cancer Awareness Month.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the country. The reduction of colorectal cancer as a public health problem is a high priority for New York State. DOH has made the "80% by 2018" commitment, a nationwide initiative led by the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable to have 80 percent of residents screened by the year 2018.

According to the report, 70.5 percent of New Yorkers between the ages of 50 and 75 who are recommended for screening reported they were screened in 2015, compared to 68.1 percent in 2014. Approximately 4.1 million people were up to date with screening in 2015.

To achieve the goal of screening 80 percent of the eligible population, approximately 500,000 more people in New York State need to be screened.

DFS Fines Oxford \$1 Million for Improper Practices

New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) fined Oxford Health Plans (NY) Inc. and Oxford Health Insurance, Inc. \$1 million for improper payments to an unlicensed producer and for failing to respond to consumer grievances within required timeframes in violation of New York State Insurance Law.

A market conduct examination by DFS found that between 2009 and 2013, Oxford Health Plans (NY) improperly paid compensation to an unlicensed producer. Producers must be licensed as an agent or broker in New York State, under the Insurance Law. The DFS examination also found that Oxford Health Insurance failed to acknowledge insureds' grievances within 15 business days and failed to send initial adverse determination notices as well as adverse appeal determination letters to insureds as mandated by New York Insurance Law.

DFS's market conduct examination found that in almost one-third of the cases sampled, the company failed to acknowledge consumer grievances within the required 15-day time frame; it also did not resolve grievance cases regarding referrals or benefit coverage within 30 days; and, in 44% of additional cases sampled, the company failed to issue initial adverse determination letters or adverse determination letters following an appeal within the 30 days mandated by law.

Under the consent order, Oxford has agreed to take all steps necessary to comply with New York State Insurance Law and Regulations moving forward, and to correct all violations.

NYS Offers \$800,000 for Resiliency and Water Quality Improvement Projects on Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve

New York State has \$800,000 in funding available through the South Shore Estuary Reserve Local Assistance Grants Program to improve water quality, facilitate habitat restoration and community resilience, and enhance public use and enjoyment of the Reserve.

Municipalities within the Reserve may apply for up to \$50,000 in funding and grants will not require local matching funds. Projects should follow guidelines included in the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve comprehensive management [plan](#) and the Request for Applications is available on the Department of State [website](#). All interested municipalities must submit completed applications by May 3, 2017.

NY Breaks Ground on Jacob K. Javits Convention Center Expansion

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week presided over the groundbreaking ceremony of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center expansion in Manhattan's West Side. Following work that began on the building's foundation in December 2016, this groundbreaking signifies the start of construction on the first phase of the \$1.5 billion expansion project. Workers will begin to raise steel beams for the transformer building, which will provide power to the new Javits Center expansion. This early start will enable LendLease Turner, the construction consortium that was awarded the design-build contract last month.

The expanded Javits Center is expected to generate \$393 million in new annual economic activity, reduce area traffic congestion and increase the efficiency of operations to allow for new and expanded events. The project is also expected to create 3,100 construction jobs, and an additional 4,000 full-time and 2,000 part-time jobs once the expansion is completed in 2021.

Frederick Schaffer Appointed Chair of Campaign Finance Board

Mayor Bill de Blasio this week appointed Frederick Schaffer as the chair of the Campaign Finance Board (CFB). Frederick Schaffer most recently served as the General Counsel and Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs at The City University of New York, a position that he held for 16 years. This appointment was made in consultation with the City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

Schaffer also served as General Counsel to the CUNY Construction Fund, a public authority that finances capital construction at the University. In addition, Schaffer was President of the CUNY Economic Development Corporation, an affiliated not-for profit corporation that oversees economic development projects at the University. Prior to holding this position, Frederick Schaffer served for five years as an Assistant US Attorney in the Southern District of New York. He also worked in New York City Government for six years as a Chief Litigating Corporation Counsel and as Counsel to Mayor Ed Koch.

He graduated with his Bachelor of the Arts degree from Harvard College in 1968 and received his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1973.

NYC Increases Capacity of NYC Well

The City of New York will be expanding the capacity of NYC Well, the free and confidential service that connects New Yorkers to mental health, crisis counseling and substance misuse services. Since its inception in the fall of 2016, NYC Well has seen a significant increase in usage, from an average of 326 contacts a day in August 2016 to an average of 753 contacts a day last week.

In response to the great demand, the program has expanded its current capacity to handle 200,000 calls, texts and chats a year to 290,000 calls, text and chats a year. NYC Well will continue to be free and confidential, available 24/7 and accessible in more than 200 languages. New Yorkers can access NYC Well by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL, texting **WELL** to **65173**, or online chat by going to nyc.gov/nycwell.

Comptroller DiNapoli: NYC Office Jobs and Space Growing Amid Record Economic Expansion

The number of office workers in New York City reached a record of 1.5 million in 2016 with office space reaching 550 million square feet amid the largest employment expansion in the city's history, according to a report released this week by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

Since the end of the Great Recession in 2009, the city has added more than 620,000 jobs. During that time, those employed in office settings have grown by 15 percent, or 202,000 jobs. Together, the business services sector (which includes accountants, lawyers and administrative employees) and the technology, advertising, media and information (TAMI) sector accounted for 87 percent of the growth in office jobs. Office jobs now account for 1.5 million, or approximately one-third, of the city's 4.3 million jobs.

In 2016, office space in the city reached 550 million square feet. The city's three main business districts (Midtown, Midtown South, and Downtown Manhattan) together contain 450 million square feet of office space, three times more than in Chicago (which is ranked second nationally) and twice as much as in London (which is ranked second internationally).

The demand for office space has lowered the vacancy rate in Manhattan from 12.8 percent at the end of the recession (2009) to 9.7 percent in 2015. The vacancy rate edged up to 10.1 percent in 2016 as new space came on the market at a faster rate than it could be leased. Rental rates have risen steadily since the recession, increasing by almost one-quarter (to \$71.70 per square foot). This has raised the value of existing buildings and spurred new construction and renovations.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, March 6th

Assembly Hearing, Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 10 a.m.
The “Zero-Emissions Credit” Established by the Public Service Commission.

New York City

Monday, March 6th

Committee on Finance, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Finance.

Committee on Consumer Affairs, Committee Room – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Consumer Affairs.

Committee on Veterans, Committee Room – City Hall, 12 Noon.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Veterans.

Committees on Youth Services and Finance, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Youth Services.

Tuesday March 7th

Committee on Contracts, Committee Room – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Contracts.

Committee on Courts and Legal Services, Committee Room – City Hall, 12 Noon.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Courts and Legal Services.

Wednesday March 8th

Committee on Cultural Affairs and Subcommittee on Libraries, Council Chambers, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

Committee on Education, Committee Room – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Education.

Committees on Economic Development and Small Business, Committee Room, 1:30 p.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Economic Development and Small Business.

Thursday March 9th

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, 250 Broadway—Committee Room 16th FL 9:30 a.m.

Committee on Fire and Criminal Justice Services, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Fire and Criminal Justice Services.

Subcommittee on Landmarks, 250 Broadway—Committee Room 16th FL 11 a.m.

Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.
Preliminary Budget Hearing-Oversight and Investigations.

Subcommittee on Planning Dispositions and Concessions, 250 Broadway, 16th FL 1 p.m.

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