

Grannies and Gramps to City: Show Us the Senior Center Money



Scores of rowdy seniors arrived at City Hall yesterday to raise hell over the possible shuttering of 146 senior centers.

Facing a \$195 million deficit, the New York City Housing Authority, which provides low-income housing and services to 406,000 residents across the city, recently announced that it may close its senior centers. Also in jeopardy are NYCHA's 136 community centers and 10 Naturally Occurring Retirement Community social support programs, as well as many youth programs that operate inside housing projects.



Although NYCHA attributes the budget gap to President Bush's consistent under-funding of public housing, it has turned to the city for help. NYCHA chairman Tino Hernandez told the City Council last month that his agency would have to raise rents and shut down much of its programming if it did not get an injection of funding. In response, Council Members James Vacca (D-Bronx) and Rosie Mendez (D-Manhattan) are asking the city to fork over \$70 million and are calling for additional city help to trim NYCHA costs. The agency could begin closing programs as early as July 1st.

"The city has to take the burden off NYCHA's back," agreed Victor Bach, senior housing policy analyst for the Community Service Society of New York, speaking to the sweating crowd of seniors on the steps of City Hall.

Councilman Vacca spoke about the necessity of preserving the cheap, hot meals, educational programs, and health workshops at senior centers, which keep New York's elderly healthy and vibrant into their golden years. "If NYCHA moves ahead with wiping out senior centers, our city will basically be saying, 'Seniors be damned,' abandoning them when they need services most," he said.

The grey-haired citizens on the steps of city hall got right to the point, chanting: "Show us the money!"

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