

Unions Protest Mayor Exporting Vehicle-Parts Work

Unions Blast Plans To Farm Out Stockroom Work on City Vehicles

Question Claim No Workers Will Be Displaced And Cite Security Issues

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By DAVID SIMS |

The Bloomberg administration is planning to outsource its vehicle-parts-stockroom operations in agencies like the Police Department, Fire Department, Department of Sanitation, Parks Department and Department of Transportation, but insists that the move will not affect any current employees, a claim union leaders are disputing.

Engineers represented by Service Employees International Union Local 246 and Stock Workers represented by Teamsters Local 237 are among the employees who will be redeployed under an April 11 Request for Proposals that seeks to expand a privatization effort already underway in the NYPD.

Maintenance ‘Modernization’

The plans are part of Deputy Mayor Stephen Goldsmith’s proposals to save money through “modernization” of passenger-vehicle maintenance. The first RFP, issued in December, applied to the NYPD vehicle-parts stockrooms. According to Local 237 President Gregory Floyd, the existing workforce was transferred to other positions and locations within the agency.

Unions protested and asked the city to invoke Local Law 35, which would prompt a cost analysis of how the city was saving money by outsourcing and whether public jobs would be affected. But the Bloomberg administration said that because no workers were being displaced, the law did not apply.

The April 11 RFP sought contracts for the vehicle-parts-stockroom operations of eight agencies, including the FDNY, DSNY, DOT and Parks. Local 246 President Joseph Colangelo said in a phone interview that his union was outraged at the city’s denial that workers would be displaced.

“At the very end [of the RFP], there is a section that says specifically, ‘DCAS has determined that the contract to be awarded through this RFP...will not directly result in the displacement of any New York City employee,’” he said. “How do you say that with a straight face? You’ve got to be kidding me.”

‘Trying to Avoid Scrutiny’

He charged that the city was making that claim “so there won’t be any scrutiny,” adding, “If you say nobody’s getting displaced, that clears the path for avoiding a full Council hearing or any kind of pushback from unions.”

Mayoral spokesman Marc LaVorgna responded in a statement, “The city has not proposed to contract out fleet repair services...No city employees would be displaced as a result of a contract awarded through either RFP.”

He continued, “The ‘Maximizing Efficiency in NYC Government’ report emphasized the need to find greater efficiency in the NYC fleet operations. The Mayor’s Office of Operations, DCAS, and the agencies with sizeable vehicle fleets are collaborating to find these opportunities. The report addressed vehicle-parts-inventory management, a recommendation that led to the RFP recently released by DCAS.”

Closer examination of the RFP revealed holes in the city’s claim, Mr. Colangelo asserted, pointing to the fact that private companies would be granted motor shops rent-free, with no electric or heating bills.

‘How Does That Save Money’?

“You’re going to give somebody a business, but it’s not going to make any money, so we’ll give you the place for free, turn the lights on, turn the heat on, pay for your employees,” he said. “But yet we’re not going to disclose how the city’s going to save any money because we’re avoiding Local Law 35. How can you, anybody, sit down and look at that on face value and say nobody’s getting displaced?”

He said the unions had copies of the question-and-answer session the city held with private companies about the RFP in which representatives stated, “vendors will pay no rent.”

Mr. Colangelo also pointed out that even if current employees did not lose their jobs, once they retired they would likely not be replaced. “Eventually you’re going to lose positions, through attrition,” he said.

Mr. Floyd concurred in a phone interview, saying, “When you redeploy our people, we’re losing jobs because you’re not hiring people to replace them.” Unions have charged that this is how the city works around Local Law 35.

Raises Terrorist Concern

“The other aspect is, from a safety standpoint, where we represent members in fleet services, we’re concerned with the safety of the citizens in New York City,” Mr. Floyd added. “We will lose control over who is working on emergency first-responder vehicles, and it could open the door for terrorists to infiltrate, and there could be a major catastrophe.”

He called on the Bloomberg administration to produce its numbers. “One would think that whenever you’re going to outsource any services, you have done a study that will illustrate how much money you will save for the taxpayers,” he said. “In the absence of having a study done, we’re flying by night and there’s no way to measure how much this will cost New York City.”

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