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General Display • Schools & Instruction • Legal Services • Legal Notices • Classifieds • Organizations

News
News of the week
Editorial
Editor's "Razzle Dazzle" Column
Letters to the Editor
Professionals' Column
Civil Service Exam Stories
News Archive
Services
Advertiser Index
Who We Are
Contact Info
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Mayor: Can Cut 3,000 Jobs Using Attrition, Not Layoffs

Auto Mechanics Union Hits Plan
By MARK TOOR



MAYOR BLOOMBERG: Looking to trim payroll.

The 3,000 municipal jobs the Bloomberg administration envisions abolishing through its four-year program to consolidate city administrative operations would be emptied by attrition rather than layoffs, according to a spokesman for Mayor Bloomberg.

"We do believe the 3,000 number is an accurate estimate of the shrinking in total headcount over four years," the spokesman, Marc LaVorgna, said in an interview July 27. "One hundred percent of this will be through attrition. The plan doesn't call for any layoffs."

'Watch What Happens'

Mr. LaVorgna was responding to a statement from Local 246 of the Service Employees International Union, which represents Auto Mechanics and other workers who maintain the city's fleet of 26,000 vehicles. The statement questioned whether outsourcing vehicle maintenance would really save money.

"Watch what happens when the city starts outsourcing our jobs to private contractors who know nothing about maintaining such a large fleet," the local's president, Joseph A. Colangelo, said. "We have the most skilled tradesmen in the industry, with much more experience than outside workers doing the same jobs. Our knowledge will help save the city more money than sending our fleet out into the unknown."

The statement said the consolidation proposal offers no statistical proof that outsourcing would save money, and does not take into account the difficulty in overseeing work in private repair shops. Mr. Colangelo said his members have come up with other ways to save the city money. In 2005, he said, the union worked with the Department of Correction to lower costs and increase productivity on vehicle maintenance. As a result, he said, the department jettisoned its plans for outsourcing.

Ripe for Streamlining?

Mr. LaVorgna responded that the city has 126 locations where it handles vehicle maintenance, each with its own parts inventory and many of which do their own purchasing. "It's clearly inefficient," he said.

He noted that while much of the city's fleet is made up of specialty vehicles— such as fire trucks, ambulances and sanitation trucks—many are standard cars and need no special training to maintain. Given competition between private repair shops, he said, the city believes it can get the same results by outsourcing some maintenance at a cost that is cheaper than having it done by city employees.

The plan, announced July 19 by Mr. Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor Stephen Goldsmith and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, also calls for consolidating some information-technology and human-resources functions as well as collection of taxes and fines. Some of those services would be given over to private companies. The city, which has 8,000 empty desks, is also letting some leases expire and consolidating office space.



JOSEPH A. COLANGELO: Outsourcing a money-loser.

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\$500-Million Savings Projected

Mayor Bloomberg said at the announcement that the plan would save \$500 million over the four years of its implementation. Mr. LaVorgna said that figure was conservative.

District Council 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts has also criticized the consolidation plan. In a statement shortly after it was announced, she said that if the city really wanted to save money, it would reduce private contractors and consultants who are doing work that city employees could do more cheaply.



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