

What's Next For Queens Lawmakers?

By CRAIG McGUIRE

From one Queens councilman's crusade against excessive water rates in Jamaica, to another's campaign targeting panhandlers, municipal Queens lawmakers will have their hands full this summer.

With the passage of the New York City budget for fiscal year 1994-95 on June 22, councilmembers throughout all five boroughs are turning their attention towards their districts.

And some may even be able to squeeze out a bit of vacation time.

Currently tying up the last loose budget ends at City Hall, Council Speaker Peter Vallone is preparing to focus his attention on the youth and elderly in his district.

"Councilman Vallone plans to oversee the funding he secured for various youth and senior centers," said Vallone spokesperson Bernice Spitzer.

The "Safe Area for Seniors" program, operated by officers from the 114th Precinct, is one of these programs.

On designated dates and times, elderly residents will be afforded an increased sense of security by police officers who will be stationed along a stretch of Broadway, outside of various stores, offices and banks.

"The Councilman also plans to ensure the safety of Astoria Park, a centerpiece for all members of the community," said Spitzer.

Some may recall the dangerous condition that developed last summer when sandblasting on the Triborough Bridge introduced lead paint chips into that park's environment.

"I plan to relax a little and take a few long weekends," said Councilman Archie Spigner, who represents the 27th Council District. "But first, I plan to make a concentrated effort at resolving the issue of the Jamaica Water Company."

While the rest of the estimated eight million New Yorkers receive their water from upstate reservoirs, 95,000 customers

who reside south of the Grand Central Parkway receive their water from the Jamaica Water Company. And they are paying a higher rate for that privilege.

"The most realistic way of solving this problem is to get the needed subsidies from the New York City Water Board. Since they collect the city water rates, and sewer charges, and have consistently shown a surplus, they should provide the subsidies," said Spigner. "I plan to work closely with our state legislators to get this legislation



Council Member Karen Koslowitz

passed."

Many lawmakers in Queens will be using the time to conduct studies.

"On July 29, I will be releasing a report on the effectiveness of [NYPD] community policing," said Councilman Sheldon Leffler, who represents the 23rd Council District.

"It's one thing for the mayor to make policy statements at the top, it's another to see the effective implementation of those policies."

Leffler also plans to use some of the expertise that propelled him to the position of chairman of the Council's Public Safety Committee to draft an assortment of legis-

lation including panhandling, tree pruning and a measure that would prevent the booting of cars in shopping centers.

"I find I get the most done when I am not constantly going from place to place," noted Leffler. "I plan to get some substantive work done this summer."

According to Councilmember Helen Marshall, who represents the 21st Council District, the budget has interfered with a lot of things she wanted to get accomplished: "Graffiti removal is high on my agenda,



Council Member John Sabini

which we could not do in the winter time anyway," she said, adding, "The late passage of the budget knocked the city's accounting out of whack, but funding for the materials for several cleanup projects is already in place."

Another important issue she is currently working on, said the councilwoman, deals with immigrant children who are not graduating high school.

According to the northern Queens lawmaker, many of these youngsters lack a Green Card, or even a Social Security number, both essential documents for obtaining employment.

"Even though many of them only speak English, they are going to have a difficult time finding a job, and many will be forced to work off the books," explained Marshall. "We have to help them get the proper credentials."

"And who knows, maybe I can squeeze out a few weeks of vacation," said Marshall.

Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz, of the 29th Council District, plans to hit the streets of her district.

"The summer months give me a chance to get out more," said Koslowitz, "and I plan to meet as many of the people as I can."

While not out meeting her constituents, Koslowitz plans to focus on the condition of the parks in her central Queens district.

"As you know, some, but not all, of the funding was restored to the Parks Department," said Koslowitz. "But there is still no excuse for an unclean park."

While some Queens legislators are planning to begin new projects, others look towards the completion of old ones.

"I will be continuing the work on capital projects in my district that I have been doing for the past few months," explained Councilman John Sabini, of the 25th Council District.

"The funding is already in place for several projects ranging from parks, roadwork resurfacing, and library improvements," explained Sabini. "Now we have to move it along out of the design stage."

Sabini also plans to work on legislation targeting consumer telephone fraud, both on pay phones and cellular phones.

"I think many of us have had enough of those mysterious telephone companies out there," said Sabini.

If you are interested in what your representative is doing for you this summer, whether he be a city councilman or a United States Congressman, they invite you to give them a call.