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FROM COUNCIL MEMBER

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Winter 2010 News Bulletin

Rosie Begins Second Term in Office and Renews Priority Legislation: On January 1, 2010, Rosie began her second term as City Councilwoman for the Second District. She plans to continue her focus on housing issues, education, quality of life, and community preservation, as well as expand her work on women's issues. Prior to the first meeting of the new term, on January 6, Rosie submitted for re-introduction a number of pieces of important legislation from last term. These bills include laws that would: ban the display of exotic animals, establish the right to counsel for seniors, decriminalize unpermitted first amendment assemblies, and require mold abatement in dwellings with asthmatic tenants. Rosie will also reintroduce several resolutions relating to the fiscal crisis at NYCHA, and others calling on the federal government to establish a cabinet-level Department of Peace and to fund research on microbicides. Rosie looks forward to the introduction, support and passage of these and other bills in the new term.

Rosie Appointed Chairwoman of the Newly Elevated Committee on Public Housing: Rosie is proud to announce her Chairwomanship of the Public Housing Committee of the New York City Council. Previously a Subcommittee within the Committee on Housing and Buildings, Public Housing has been elevated to a full committee. This change provides a strong platform for Rosie and Committee members to advocate on behalf of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and residents in public housing. Rosie looks forward to working independently as a Committee and collaboratively within the Council to address NYCHA fiscal concerns, quality of life and repair issues, and tenancy matters.

Rosie Submits Amendments to the Department of Education's 2010-2014 Capital Plan: Working with the Community Education Councils (CEC) and individual schools, Rosie submitted to DOE a listing of new or prioritized projects for physical improvements to schools in her district. These requests include new bathrooms, electrical upgrades and science labs for schools in both District 1 and 2. Without input from local elected officials and local education advocates, DOE Capital Plan is often too remote from the actual needs and priorities of those using the facilities. Rosie is hopeful that local priorities are given more credence by the DOE in this plan.

Rosie Joins Colleagues in Condemnation of NYCHA Section 8 Voucher Cancellation: A few days before Christmas, NYCHA notified approximately 3,000 households, who had been awarded vouchers but who did not yet have housing approved for eligibility, that their vouchers had been cancelled. NYCHA had apparently given out more Section 8 vouchers than the agency had funding to support. The vast majority of these 3,000 households were formerly homeless, survivors of domestic violence, or facing

other emergencies. To date these families have been left without housing assistance, and some have already received eviction notices. Rosie and her colleagues consider this situation unsatisfactory and insist that a solution be found to immediately reinstate assistance for all the households that NYCHA reneged on. The NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) could intervene to provide assistance to the vast majority of these households, but approximately 600 families would still be left in the lurch. Stimulus funding, HUD support or HPD vouchers, are all funding possibilities that should be explored. Rosie believes that the City government has a moral responsibility to find emergency funding so that every family that was originally told they had a voucher gets immediate housing support.

Rosie's Subcommittee Holds Hearing on the NYCHA Pet Policy: On Dec. 17th, the Public Housing Subcommittee, chaired by Rosie, conducted a hearing on NYCHA's Pet Policy. Pet owners living in NYCHA and animal advocates, who understand the how important the companionship of a pet can be, were outraged when NYCHA last year suddenly banned certain breeds and dogs of over 25 pounds. Tenant and animal advocates testified that NYCHA residents did not receive sufficient notice with regard to changes in the policy causing tenants to have to choose between giving up their dogs or their tenancy. Many housing advocates believe that Annual Plan amendments such as pet ownership policies are indeed "significant", but have not been placed before the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) for review nor given a public hearing, as mandated by federal law. Although NYCHA subsequently placed a moratorium on the dog ban, Rosie urged NYCHA to continue to work with animal advocacy groups to develop a more thoughtful plan which does not penalize responsible dog owners and urged the Authority to hold others who permitted uncontrolled or dangerous behavior of dogs to be held accountable. Furthermore, Rosie asked that NYCHA explicitly define "significant" modifications in its Annual Plan Process and called upon the Authority to strengthen its transparency efforts by including all plans and amendments online.

Rosie Is Pleased to Have Sponsored the Co-naming of Dr. Saul J. Farber Way: On Dec. 21 the City Council passed and on Dec. 28, the Mayor signed the bill naming the northwest corner of 30th St. and First Avenue, after Dr. Farber, a recognized leader in medical education. Dr. Farber was a prominent figure in at Bellevue Hospital Center and New York University School of Medicine for more than 50 years. A celebration of the co-naming and sign installation is being planned for the warmer months.

Rosie Meets with Community Residents and the Parks Department on Dry Dock Park Renovations: In Fiscal Year 2010, Rosie allocated about \$800,000 to provide minor upgrades in Dry Dock Park, located at East 10th Street between Szold Place and Avenue D. On January 12th, Rosie convened a meeting with residents who live in close proximity to Dry Dock Park and representatives from Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to discuss the community's concerns with the park and ideas about how to spend the modest amount of funding. This was the third meeting held with the community and DPR regarding the park and much progress was made. Resident's agreed to use the funding to upgrade the playground, the sitting area and the basketball court. They also addressed the need for better lighting and enforcement of disturbing night time noise, especially during the summer months. Most residents also agreed that installing locking gates on the basketball court, as well as around the tree sitting area near Village East Towers, would be welcomed to mitigate late-night noise. Due to the limited funding, not all improvements can be made, but DPR promised to develop and present to Community Board #3 in the spring a preliminary plan that uses the funds wisely to address the major concerns. Rosie looks forward to working with the Community Board, residents, and DPR for the improvement of this park, and with the 9th Precinct to address noise concerns.

Rosie Supports Progressive Values in Several City Council Votes: Last month, the New York City Council has grappled with three separate groundbreaking or controversial issues:

Green Building Legislation: Green building legislation, a package of four measures passed by the Council on Dec 9, will put New York City on the forefront of energy conservation for existing buildings. Because buildings account for 80% of New York City's carbon emissions, this legislation is vitally important. The proposed green buildings plan would reduce both carbon emissions by an estimated 5% and save New Yorkers nearly \$700 million in energy costs. Rosie was a co-sponsor of these items and was thrilled to vote for them.

Broadway Triangle Rezoning: On Monday Dec 7, the Council's Land Use Committee approved an urban renewal and zoning plan for Brooklyn's Broadway Triangle neighborhood by a vote of 12 in favor, 6 opposed and one abstention. Rosie was a strong "no" vote on this plan for the community in which she grew up and which included her junior high school. Local leaders were split on this plan, and many advocates felt it ignored important segments of the community and would not produce sufficient low income housing. Rosie agreed that the process was significantly flawed and needed to be restarted. The committee vote sends back the measure to City Planning for modifications before final approval at the Council later in the month.

Kingsbridge Armory: On Monday Dec 14, the Council voted against a plan for the conversion of the Kingsbridge Armory into a shopping mall, because it did not include provision for living wages for the workers. Local elected officials, advocates and unions fought hard for a community benefits agreement that would require the retail employees to be paid at least \$10 per hour if they receive health benefits and \$11.50 if they did not. Because after long negotiations, no satisfactory compromise was reached with the developers, Rosie joined the majority of her colleagues in voting "no".

Rosie Advocates for Traffic Safety Near Saint George and Cooper Union Schools: Rosie is happy to announce that after requests from her office on behalf of the St George School on East 6th Street and T. Shevchenko Place (between 2nd Ave and the Bowery), the Department of Transportation (DOT) has agreed to install a number of traffic signs and markings aimed at increasing pedestrian safety in the area. Currently, the intersection of Copper Square and 7th Street is a busy crossing for Cooper Union Students and St George students alike, yet there are no pedestrian crosswalks. DOT has committed to installing school crosswalks on the north and south sides of this intersection, and refurbishing roadway markings at nearby intersections. In addition, DOT has promised to install crosswalks, school-crossing messages and school safety signs along the route that school children take from St George to after-school programs in the neighborhood. Previous requests from Rosie's office have yielded other school safety measures in the area, but parents and administration at St George felt there were still pressing traffic safety concerns. Rosie asked DOT's School Safety Division to re-inspect during the school session, and the above-mentioned safety improvements resulted.

New School Reveals More Detailed Plans for New Building at 65 5th Ave: Rosie facilitated a follow-up meeting with President Kerrey of the New School University and his development team to get an update on their design plans for the proposed new building which will replace the one now enclosed in scaffolding. Although not yet finally approved by the School's Board of Trustees, Kerrey presented a

design that he felt was very likely to reflect the final plans. It will be 16 stories high, with the lower 7 stories for academic use. Floors 8 -16 will house a 612 bed dormitory and there will be retail use on the corner of 14th St. and 5th Ave. The building will have an 850 seat auditorium, built partially below grade, which will also be available for public events. The building will be built “as of right” according to allowed zoning. The New School will present these plans in full and answer any question at a CB 2 meeting in planned for February. The School anticipates that exterior demolition of the current building will begin in March 2010 and foundation work for the new building in August 2010.

Rosie Briefed on NYCHA Plans for City and State Developments: Prior to public notification, Rosie was briefed by NYCHA about a plan to federalize 21 developments (including one building in Rosie’s district – 344 E. 28th St.) which do not currently receive HUD operating funds. Federalization would bring approximately \$100 million each year of additional funds to NYCHA for these developments and provide for their ongoing stability. The developments, with more than 20,000 units, were built by New York City and State, but are owned and maintained by NYCHA as public housing without any operating subsidy at all. NYCHA is therefore forced to spread the operating and capital dollars it receives from HUD over more units than it is compensated for.

Under the terms of the Obama Administration’s Stimulus Program, public housing units can be federalized if they are renovated and brought up to construction standards with a combination of federal stimulus money, private and bond financing. NYCHA is currently packaging a complicated financial transaction to accomplish this for its 21 developments. If completed by the Stimulus Program deadline of March 17, 2010, the arrangement will provide that all the apartments are treated exactly like regular public housing and that the residents have all of the same rights. They will, however, be owned by a separate entity controlled by NYCHA. Rosie believes that this plan for federalizing the City and State developments will preserve and maintain public housing for generations to come and this is a one-time chance to renovate previously under-funded NYCHA units. She will continue to work with tenants, advocates, and elected officials to ensure that the plan is accomplished as promised and that all residents are informed about the process. A NYCHA public hearing on this matter is scheduled for December 17th at 5:30pm at 311 West 34th Street. Please contact Jessica Nepomiachi in Rosie’s District Office for more information.

Rosie Launches New and Improved Website: Rosie has revamped her City Council Website to provide easier access to information about her activities, votes and budget priorities. Available at <http://council.nyc.gov/d2/html/members/home.shtml>, Rosie’s page offers a map of the district, listings of current news and events, and a contact form to request help from Rosie’s office. The site also provides information on Rosie’s capital and member item funding, and has success stories of Rosie’s office helping constituents (“Rosie Resolves Problems”). In the upcoming weeks we will also add copies of Rosie’s testimony and letters on important local and citywide policy issues, such as affordable housing, land use, and parks. Rosie is proud of her contribution to the City Council’s ongoing efforts to improve its transparency and technology.

Rosie Supports the Redevelopment of Seward Park Urban Renewal Area: Frustrated after more than 40 years of stalemate, Rosie rallied with advocates and former site tenants on Delancey and Suffolk Streets on November 15th. Rosie strongly supports the efforts of Community Board #3 to bring all parties together to build consensus around a community plan for the balanced development of this multi-block city owned site. In the mid-1960’s thousands of units of low-income housing were vacated and destroyed and only a small portion of those units have been replaced. Rosie believes that this very large site

can accommodate a great many units of affordable housing, including both low and moderate income, with room still for market rate units, commercial space, community facilities and open space. Rosie is hopeful that CB#3's efforts, along with the good will of local elected officials and City agencies including HPD, CPC and EDC, will break the long endured log-jam at Seward Park.

Rosie's Subcommittee Holds Hearing on the NYCHA Annual Plan Process: On December 7th, the Council Subcommittee on Public Housing, chaired by Rosie, conducted a hearing on NYCHA's Annual Plan Process and Criteria for Amendments. To explore the concerns that NYCHA does not follow legal process, Rosie called on NYCHA to thoroughly describe its policies and procedures. By federal law NYCHA must prepare two documents, a 5-Year Plan detailing budget and fiscal issues and secondly an Annual Plan detailing changes to operating rules and procedures. Both plans are subject to public hearings to solicit comment. "Significant" amendments must be made in consultation with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) and require another public hearing. Many advocates believe that plan amendments such as demolition proposals, pet ownership and admissions and eligibility policies are indeed "significant", but have not been placed before the RAB for review nor given a public hearing. Rosie urged NYCHA to explicitly define "significant" modification and called upon the Authority to strengthen its transparency efforts by including all plans and amendments online.