

The Sixth Borough Dispatch

Philadelphian in New York City

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Table of Contents

NYC Highlights

Train Problems

COGE

Summer Programs to Prevent Gun Violence

Budget

Balanced Budget

Policy and Issue Tracking

Affordable Housing

Grocery Stores

Down the Pothole! Additional Insights



Pains for Trains

Long Island Rail Road on Strike

The Long Island Rail Road labor union [went on strike](#). The strike lasted for three days and was settled with a new contract (which raised wages but kept fares and the tax burden unchanged).

Due to the impact of the strike, the 3,500 union members did not report to work, resulting in the suspension of all trains used by 300,000 commuters. In place of the trains, the MTA provided shuttle buses. However, as a result, many commuters were forced to endure commutes lasting several hours.

Because the cost of living in New York City is rising, increasing taxes and train fares would place a heavy burden on commuters. Therefore, when the MTA approved the contract, it was required that the new agreement would not affect fares or taxes. While the details of this countermeasure are currently unknown, the MTA likely found the funds to raise wages by revising its budget.

In the past, a Long Island Rail Road strike even influenced the outcome of a gubernatorial election. In 1994, Governor Cuomo approved the union's demands to end a strike, but this backfired and caused him to lose to his opponent. Governor Hochul has stated that the union's demands are too high. However, Long Island commuters detest service suspensions, and since this is a crucial region in the gubernatorial election, failing to handle the union issue carefully could negatively impact Hochul's reelection.

Amtrak is on Fire... Literally

An Amtrak maintenance vehicle [caught fire](#) in the Hudson River Tunnel early in the morning, suspending operations for NJ Transit, Amtrak, and the Long Island Rail Road. The fire caused extensive damage. The MTA Chairman and Governor Hochul have criticized Amtrak. Due to the impact of various fires, trains at Penn Station were suspended repeatedly throughout several weeks. Governor Hochul stated that Amtrak must find a way to repair the tunnel without negatively impacting commuters.

It Rhymes with DOGE

Mayor Mamdani has embarked on [policies reminiscent of the Trump administration](#). COGE is the Commission on Government Efficiency. The purpose of COGE is to streamline outdated bureaucratic procedures, ensure sufficient means to promote growth, and improve budget processes. Mayor Mamdani stated that bureaucratic procedures have become an issue in public services such as housing, public transit, and childcare.

Fun Instead of Guns

Historically, gun violence crimes have shown a tendency to [increase during the summer](#). One reason cited for this is that summer vacation begins, increasing the number of children who are not under school supervision. To prevent violence, Mayor Mamdani plans to launch a program called "Summer in NYC."

A newly launched website allows parents and children to search for free or affordable programs. Examples of these programs include photography classes, painting, sports, and mental health support. Additionally, information regarding summer school lunches is included.

Budget

The Balancing Act

Mayor Mamdani has finally [announced the budget](#). Ultimately, they were able to construct a balanced budget. To achieve a balanced budget, the following policies were necessary:

1. **Thorough Spending Reviews:** Implemented sweeping spending reforms, such as revising pension payment periods, reviewing the overtime budget, and eliminating budget allocations for vacant positions.
2. **Securing More Assistance from Albany:** It is argued that every year, the tax revenue New York City residents pay to the State is greater than the assistance they receive back from the State. This policy aims to bring the assistance received from the State closer to a proportion matching the amount of taxes paid to the State.

Within the budget, an additional \$4 billion was allocated to measures for securing affordable housing.



Down the Pothole!

Find additional information below in Section 1

Policy Tracking

City-Owned Grocery Stores

Background

According to Mamdani's policy publications, almost 90% of New Yorkers say groceries are costing a larger amount of their income.

Campaign Promises

Mamdani has pledged to make a network of city-owned grocery stores that will keep prices low and not make a profit. The store operators will not have to pay rent or property taxes, and will also buy and sell at wholesale prices, and centralize warehousing and distribution, which should lead to savings being passed to customers.

Previous Policy Changes

In April, Mamdani announced the first of five city-run grocery stores to be built in La Marqueta, East Harlem.

May Policy Changes

Announcement

Mayor Mamdani [announced an outline](#) for a second city-run (public) grocery store. This grocery store is planned to be established in the Bronx, and it is expected to be the first one to open.

Affordable Housing

Background

For various reasons, including New York City encouraging private developers to construct new buildings with "luxury" apartments geared toward the wealthy, there is a shortage of affordable housing. For this reason and increasing rent prices, many residents cannot afford rent.

Campaign Promises

Under Mamdani's plan, 200,000 units of "affordable housing" are scheduled to be built over a ten-year period. The plan calls for all of these units to be designated as "rent-stabilized apartments." Additionally, Mamdani has stated he will freeze the rent for rent-stabilized units in NYC.

Previous Policy Changes

In February, Mamdani launched the "Timball Terrace" project, providing 341 residential units.

In March, Mamdani announced the "Neighborhood Builders Fast Track," a program to accelerate the construction of affordable housing on city-managed land.

In April, the NYC Rent Guidelines Board met to discuss a possible price hike for New Yorkers without confirming anything.

May Policy Changes

Rent Freeze Possible

In May, the Rent Guidelines Board [approved a preliminary proposal](#) setting rent increases for one- and two-year leases at 0–2% and 0–4%, respectively. Because 0% is included in the approved increase ranges, the possibility of a rent freeze has emerged.

While this is good news for tenants, it has become an unsettling debate for landlords. They argue that many buildings in NY are aging and maintenance costs are rising, so if their income decreases relatively, it may instead become impossible to perform repairs.

Faster Affordable Housing Construction

Mayor Mamdani plans to [streamline paperwork](#) in May to make it easier to build affordable housing.

While New York City received 7 million applications for 10,000 affordable housing units, complicated application procedures have left apartments sitting vacant with no residents for several months.

Mayor Mamdani announced various reforms. The content of these reforms includes shortening the timeline for projects requiring zoning changes by about two years, reducing the review period for converting office buildings into apartments by about five months, and cutting the time from construction completion to move-in from 210 days to 100 days. Furthermore, the housing lottery system will be modified to simplify income verification and housing inspection procedures at the time of move-in.



Down the Pothole!

Find additional information below in Section 2

DOWN THE POTHOLE!

Additional Insights to Learn About American Government

1

How was spending actually saved?

A [large amount of savings](#) comes from delayed payments into the NYC municipal pension funds. After the 2008 economic crisis, NYC implemented this policy where they would pay into municipal pensions. It lasts 20 years from 2012. Mamdani is reducing the amount that NYC pays into this policy per year and expanding the timeline until 2037. This will save \$1.6 billion in the upcoming fiscal year. This means that taxpayers in the 2030s will need to keep paying for this. However, this policy will not increase the amount the city ultimately needs to pay for pensions or keep anyone from receiving their pensions. That being said, it is unclear how this is characterized as “savings,” since the same amount of money will ultimately be paid.

Additionally, Mamdani created the rest of this money by attempting to reduce unnecessary overtime costs. The overtime costs are largely related to the NYPD. They often go over budget due to unforeseen emergencies. However, it is currently unclear if the NYPD actually abides by Mamdani’s new overtime policies.

What do you mean that the assistance NYC gets from the state is less than NYC pays to the state?

This is a fairly common occurrence in the US. Cities generate large amounts of revenue in taxes that often go to the state and are redistributed throughout the state. This usually means that other municipalities get more state funding than they earned for the state through taxes, and cities usually earn more money than they receive from the state in funding. Mamdani argues this increased funding from the state is just improving the proportion of funds the city sends to the state in comparison to the funds the city receives from the state.

2

What is a housing lottery?

When you apply for affordable housing in NYC, you are applying to be part of a lottery. If you get lucky and are selected, you get affordable housing.

How does the house inspection system impact the lottery system?

The house inspection system requires units to be inspected and approved before someone can move into the unit. It becomes an issue when it increases the time it takes for someone to actually occupy a unit, leaving many units unused. By reducing the time it takes to complete the inspections, it means that more units will be available for the lottery system, and the income verification will also allow more people to apply and be approved to participate in this system.