

Retailers rush to West Village top residential brokerages

CRAIN'S

Dot-com deadbeats: Small firm bills are collecting dust
Page 3



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mayor should give BIDs break

New fees on districts a needless burden

Crain's is right to oppose new fees on business improvement districts (Editorial, Feb. 12).

When BIDs were first emerging in New York City years ago, I was skeptical about them. I was concerned that they would be vehicles for taking care of well-heeled areas, thereby making it politically easier for the city to cut back on the services it provides. Fortunately, I do not believe this has been the effect of the growth of BIDs.

BIDs have proven themselves to be valuable additions to the city, improving the quality of life in the communities in which they operate. They improve the security and sanitation of their areas. They enhance their neighborhoods with beautification programs.

The mayor's proposal to assess fees on the BIDs would be a needless burden. The city benefits greatly—including financially—from the work BIDs do. That more than compensates the city for the minimal cost of collecting assessments and monitoring them.

Crain's did not mention the mayor's opposition to letting the BIDs increase their assessments. It is appropriate for BIDs to get assessment increases. However, it is important that the increases reflect the ability to pay of the businesses and property owners involved.

RICHARD N. GOTTFRIED
*Member
The Assembly State of New York
Albany*

Hospitals seek cure in core relationships

A number of hospitals and hospital systems are turning to their natural clients and strategic allies,

the physicians on their medical staffs, to design innovative responses to challenges they face in an ever-changing health care environment ("Hospitals take scalpel to outpatient centers," Feb. 26).

More hospitals and physicians are exploring new ways to restructure their core relationships. Inevitably in such a process, hospitals and physicians find that they have a great deal of complementarities in mission, assets and needs.

Together, they can not only forestall the closing of outpatient centers, but also promote their expansion into other underserved areas.

MICHAEL KALMAN
*Director
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Checks and balances for city schools

My experience in government and in life tells me that monopolies are bad, whether corporate, nonprofit or public, and that people without choices are abused. An accountable monopoly, such as a public school system run by an appointee of the mayor, is better than an unaccountable monopoly, such as the current school board, but it is a monopoly nonetheless (Alair Townsend's column, Feb. 19).

One of the key reasons that the mayor has not been put in charge is that the New York City school board is one of the few remaining sources of power and patronage for the borough presidents, who in turn have influence over state legislators. The best way out is to offer the BPs more power by giving them, and the City Council, their own schools to control.

In this scenario, the city would be served by three school systems,

one run by an appointee of the mayor, one run by an appointee of the City Council, and one run by an appointee of the borough presidents.

The existing schools would be divided among the three school systems based on their existing test scores and physical condition, to give each school system an equal starting point. The three school systems would also get equal student funding, with allowances for disabled and disadvantaged children.

LARRY LITTLEFIELD
Brooklyn

Real competitor's past performance

James Brady's column ("McGuire: man of the net," Feb. 5) brought to mind a note of nostalgia I would like to share.

One of the adjectives that was constantly used to describe the late Al McGuire was competitive. However, you had to be a spectator at the Brooklyn College/St. John's track meet on May 4, 1949, to appreciate what a superb competitor Al McGuire was.

Brooklyn College held a substantial lead in the dual meet with St. John's when the call for the mile run was announced. St. John's had only one miler available. McGuire volunteered to run the mile. Al was a fair quarter-miler but had never run a mile in competition.

To everyone's astonishment, Al defeated both Brooklyn College's and St. John's best milers.

To top off this day, McGuire led the St. John's mile relay team to a victory over Brooklyn College. Those were the only two events St. John's won. It was a remarkable feat for someone who had just completed a tough basketball season.

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