

OT pay sinks Yonkers

BY **ABBY LUBY**
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

WITH CITY CONTRACT negotiations pending, charges are flying that Yonkers cops and firefighters have depleted the city's coffers by racking up overtime and putting in for excessive sick leave.

Two scathing audits released this week cited excessive police overtime and unsubstantiated sick leave by firefighters.

State Controller Thomas DiNapoli's report condemned city officials for allowing cops to self-monitor their own overtime.

DiNapoli warned Yonkers this year that \$35.2 million doled out in 2008 for overtime made cops and firefighters among the city's highest paid employees.

Between 2006 and 2008, auditors found that \$2 million went to police overtime alone.

Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone lashed out against the draft report, calling it "biased, flawed and capricious."

Police & firefighters abuse system: audit

"I attacked the controller for the unprofessional way [the audit] was done. He made up information — he used dollar amounts we can't find anywhere."

Yonkers cops work 234 days — or 1,872 hours — yearly. The audit recommends hiring more cops to rein in soaring overtime costs. Police union President Keith Olson said he agreed with DiNapoli's recommendation.

"We need 134 more officers to drastically reduce the overtime. We had 755 cops and that was reduced to 605 by attrition. With less patrol cars on the street there are more shootings and stabbings."

But Amicone responded that "it would cost us \$19 million to hire 134 new police. Then we would have to build new precincts and buy

new patrol cars. It's a ridiculous recommendation."

On top of the controller's draft audit, Yonkers Inspector General Dan Schorr found excessive sick leave in the Yonkers Fire Department. Amicone pledged "to take disciplinary action against the firefighters abusing the sick leave policy."

"If you look at these guys they are in great shape, so I don't understand why they are taking 10 sick days a year. That's a lot."

Amicone said firefighters who needlessly take sick days could lose their vacation time or be suspended.

"It's a witch hunt," said Barry McGoey, president of the Yonkers firefighters' union. "The city is in dire financial straits and he is blaming the working guys."

Negotiations with the police and fire departments for new contracts are pending.

"All these issues are going to come into play when we sit down and negotiate these contracts," said Amicone.

AT A GLANCE

MELROSE — City and Phipps House officials cut the ribbon yesterday on the new Courtlandt Corners affordable housing development.

Developed under Mayor Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan, the two residential buildings along both sides of E. 161st St. from Melrose to Courtlandt Ave. total 323 units of housing, retail space with a parking garage and landscaped courtyard. The first tenants are expected to move in January.

City Department of Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Rafael



Cestero (photo) and NYC Housing Development Corporation Executive Vice President Mathew Wambua joined Phipps Houses President and CEO Adam Weinstein for the ceremony.

RIVERDALE — Local shoppers can hop on the The Holiday Shopping Shuttle through Kingsbridge and Riverdale this Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. for stops at local shops featuring activities and special holiday shopping bargains.

The Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Development Corp. is teaming up with Exec-You-Van and several local businesses to offer the free bus, which will make stops along Broadway from Mosholu Ave. to 231st St., along 231st St. from Broadway to Riverdale Ave. and along Riverdale, Johnson and Mosholu Aves.

NORWOOD — Some 150 lucky families will receive free Thanksgiving meals tomorrow through the inaugural Gardiner Foundation Turkey Giveaway.

The families were selected based on signup sheets and a short paragraph explaining why they deserved the meal, which includes a large frozen turkey, stuffing, potatoes and vegetables.

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The ex-Power House Building in Mill Pond Park will become future home of the Bronx Children's Museum. Photo by Howard Simmons/Daily News

Parents to pitch ideas for Bx. kids' museum

BY **ROB SGOBBO**
DAILY NEWS WRITER

AFTER YEARS of waiting, a children's museum is coming to the Bronx.

And before it's built, its director wants parents' input.

Plans to build the Bronx Children's Museum have been underway for more than five years since the idea was first pitched by ex-Borough President Adolfo Carrion. But it wasn't until its board appointed executive direc-

CLEM RICHARDSON: Diaspora student mixes art & activism

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tor Carla Precht that the museum's expected 2013 opening is becoming more of a reality.

"It's all very exciting," said Precht, who was appointed last January. "We're really seeing things take shape."

The museum, slated to occupy a building in Mill Pond Park, will be "a place for families" with young kids to engage in hands-on exhibits about Bronx history and culture.

"We want a strong focus to be on parents playing with their children, and we hope to reach out to families so they can have a say in what will be in the museum," Precht said.

Parents will have the opportu-

nity at a community forum tomorrow from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at BronxWorks' Community Room, 1130 Grand Concourse.

"This place should reflect the needs and wants of the community," Precht said. "It should be a place people want to come to all the time."

Precht already has brought on Sharon Klotz, a designer who worked with the Brooklyn Children's Museum, to begin planning "themed" exhibits that center on math, science, technology, and health and environmental issues.

The museum also plans partnerships with local schools, and community groups like The

Point CDC in Hunts Point and BronxWorks in Mount Hope.

"I'm very excited a place like this is coming to the Bronx," said Mott Haven resident Jessica Santos, who has a 2-year-old daughter. "We need safe and educational places that are fun for our kids."

"We must work hard to give our Bronx children what the children of the other boroughs currently enjoy," said Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., whose office provided \$3 million for the project. "I ask Bronxites to come out this Saturday to share their ideas."

For more information, call (347) 834-7378.