

NYC COUNCIL

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SPEAKER'S OFFICE



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

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December 27, 2013

Hon. Michael McSweeney
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council
141 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Mr. McSweeney:

Pursuant to Section 37 of the New York City Charter, I hereby disapprove Introductory Number 859-A, which would amend paragraph (4) of subdivision (a) of section 14-150 of the New York City Administrative Code to expand the current requirement that the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") provide quarterly reports to the City Council regarding major felony crime in the City's parks.

Administrative Code Section 14-150(a)(4) currently requires the NYPD to produce a quarterly report providing the total number of major felony crime complaints for the twenty largest parks under the jurisdiction of the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. Current law also provides that the number of parks be increased over time, subject to the availability of resources and the introduction of the necessary technology. Introductory Number 859-A would delete the language contained in the law regarding NYPD resources and technology, and instead impose an arbitrary timetable for increasing the number of parks falling within the law's reporting requirement: thirty parks beginning January 1, 2014; one hundred parks beginning June 1, 2014; two hundred parks beginning January 1, 2015; three hundred parks beginning January 1, 2016; and all parks greater than one acre in size beginning January 1, 2017. In addition, beginning January 1, 2018, the reporting would include all public pools, basketball courts, recreation centers and playgrounds not located within parks greater than one acre in size. The bill also contains a new requirement that the quarterly reports be posted on the NYPD's website.

Introductory Number 859-A constitutes the continuation of a pattern, similarly reflected in another bill which I will veto today, Introductory Number 1055-A, in which the Council seeks to build into the Administrative Code reporting requirements which relieve the Council of the responsibility of actually asking for information it is interested in from City agencies, by legislating these requests permanently.

In this case, the original reporting bill concerning park crime was negotiated in good faith by our Administration in 2005, when NYPD representatives made the Council aware that the

reporting of park crime could not be reliably accomplished by extracting data from the Department's criminal complaint database. Since criminal complaints are recorded by street address, it was true in 2005 and is true today that, except for Central Park which constitutes its own precinct, crimes within parks as captured by the Department's database are generally indistinguishable from crimes outside parks, since crimes in parks are recorded according to the parks' street addresses.

Therefore, in order to comply with the Council's reporting mandate, precinct personnel conduct labor-intensive hand counts of crimes in their local parks, which are used by the NYPD's Office of Management Analysis and Planning to compile the quarterly report. In light of the Council's expressed desire for an increase in the number of parks for which crime is reported, it should be noted that, again in good faith and on a voluntary basis, the NYPD increased the number of parks for which it reported data in 2008, from twenty to thirty. It should also be noted that most of the data reported is actually composed of zeroes, since there is consistently no major felony crime occurring in many of the thirty parks subject to reporting each quarter.

The NYPD itself revisited the issue in 2011 and again earlier this year, to determine whether improvements could be made to the complaint reporting system which would allow for accurate reporting of crimes in parks. The limitations which prevented expanded reporting in the years since the original law was enacted remain. Expanding the number of parks as contemplated by Introductory Number 859-A would require the same type of manual counting that is performed presently, but for hundreds of parks. This mandate would be unreasonable and impractical, drawing valuable police resources away from actual police work, especially given the fact that the overwhelming result would be a series of zeroes.

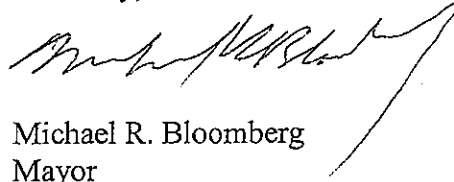
The bill also contains a new element, requiring reporting of major felony crimes in "all public pools, basketball courts, recreation centers and playgrounds not located within parks greater than one acre in size." There is no estimate provided regarding how many locations this set of entities represents, but it is reasonable to assume that there are at least hundreds of such locations, which would have to be identified and would again be subject to manual counting in order to comply.

Police Department representatives have informed the Council that the best source of information regarding parks are local precinct commanders, who are intimately familiar with the crimes and conditions of their local parks, and are in constant contact with elected officials and community members. In this particular case, the current law should remain in place rather than imposing a new and extensive burden of manual collection of data; should technological changes make it possible to extract reliable data from the criminal complaint database, the Department will comply with the additional reporting requirements sought by the Council. Beyond the specific requirements represented by Introductory Number 859-A, the Police Department has consistently advised the Council that it will respond to any reasonable request for information, and if an elected official or community member seeks information about a particular park or parks, the Department will respond to the best of its ability.

Given the cost to City agencies of complying with the types of reporting requirements represented by Introductory Number 859-A, the bill perpetuates a pattern of permanently codifying reporting requirements which should instead be addressed by local police commanders who are best situated to explain and address local concerns.

For the foregoing reasons, I hereby disapprove Introductory Number 859-A.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael R. Bloomberg", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Cc: The Honorable Christine C. Quinn