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Bill Pushes Recovery Effort

By Curtis L. Taylor
STAFF WRITER

A bill to create a powerful local commission to oversee the rebuilding of lower Manhattan is expected to move swiftly through the City Council when it is introduced tomorrow at an emergency meeting.

"Clearly, the message [to terrorists] is we are not going to roll over," said council member Victor Robles (D-Brooklyn), who supports the proposed legislation. "You need to have some mechanism put in place . . . to set the tone and the direction of how we are going to rebuild and move forward."

The ambitious proposal, co-authored by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Council Speaker Peter Vallone, would establish a seven-member panel with "broad and sweeping powers" to coordinate city government resources to accelerate the difficult and emotional rebuilding process, city officials said.

Robles said that he was confident his colleagues would "overwhelmingly vote for the recovery plan" after reviewing the proposal and satisfying policy-related questions that might arise.

"This is an emotional time for people and we all want to do something," Robles said. "We are united."

But several other elected officials, privately, have accused Vallone, who is seeking the Democratic mayoral nomination, of trying to use the proposal to generate publicity for himself days before Tuesday's primary. Vallone has denied the allegation.

"It is essential that this be a cooperative effort between the mayor and council to form a commission that will most effectively deal with the crisis in our city," said Vallone, who is running against Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, Public Advocate Mark Green and city Comptroller Alan Hevesi.

Eric Lane, a Hofstra law professor and former ex-

ecutive director and counsel to the 1989 Charter Revision Commission, has said that there's nothing illegal about city officials setting up the commission.

Council members said they have not yet seen details of the proposal, which was undergoing revisions. Deputy Majority Leader Archie Spigner (D-St. Albans) said he would like the council to be able to vote on the commission's appointees, which would be made by the mayor.

The city proposal comes as state and federal officials have promised to deliver potentially billions in aid to help New York recover from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that toppled the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

The federal government will pay for cleanup costs for the collapsed buildings and state lawmakers have proposed various bills to help victims, including free college tuition in the state and city university systems.

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