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Giuliani Presses for Time, And 2 Candidates Agree

By DAN BARRY

Having decided that New York City needs him beyond what the term-limits law allows, Rudolph W. Giuliani summoned the three mayoral candidates this week and laid out Plan A and Plan B. If they did not agree to let him stay in office an extra three months, he would seek re-election on the Conservative Party ballot.

Yesterday, less than 24 hours after those private meetings, Michael R. Bloomberg, the Republican candidate, and Mark Green, one of the two Democratic candidates, announced that they would support the proposal to extend Mr. Giuliani's term by three months. But Fernando Ferrer, who will face Mr. Green in a Democratic runoff in two weeks, said that he could not — although he went out of his way to say that the mayor's "leadership and experience during this crisis have been exemplary."

The mayor's either-or proposal knocked the city's political world off its axis yesterday, as candidates, legislators and the governor struggled to appease a man whose leadership in the wake of the Sept. 11 disaster has won him international acclaim — but who, by law, must step down at year's end. It was also carefully orchestrated; during his meetings with the candidates, for example, he volunteered that he would be having dinner that night with Michael Long, the Conservative Party chairman, to work out the logistics for Plan B.

Despite Mr. Ferrer's rejection of the proposal, it became increasingly clear yesterday — a day in which several principals were observing the Jewish high holy day of Yom Kippur — that Mr. Giuliani's unusual term-extension proposal was gaining momentum. While it would require new legislation by the Legislature, and is distasteful to some, it is not fraught with the significant problems of Plan B: a last-minute legislative repeal of term limits, which were imposed and then seconded by the city's voters in the last decade.

It was not clear last night whether Mr. Giuliani was demanding unanimous support from the three candidates for his term-extension proposal, and whether Mr. Ferrer's rejection of that proposal would prompt the mayor to seek a full third term. Earlier in the day, though, he said that his reasons for wanting to extend his term "should be self-evident."

A few minutes later he expanded on those reasons, saying that the transition between mayoral administrations under normal circumstances is already too short. "So a lengthy, sensible, thoughtful, careful transition — if that's what we can work out — will cure a problem that exists anyway, a problem that's made more severe by the situation that we're in," he said. "It will give people in the city who have fears about what's going to happen, and how it's going to happen, a certain sense of confidence."

And, he added, "It's for a definable period of time so you ultimately have change taking place."

The day's events may have brought awkward resolution to one of the unsettled aspects of the World Trade Center disaster: what would become of Rudy Giuliani?

Aides to political leaders in Albany, along with advisers to mayoral candidates, emphasized that Mr. Giuliani has served admirably since the terrorist attack that destroyed the twin towers and killed thousands of people. He has reassured residents, comforted the grieving and given voice to a city's determination to rebuild Lower Manhattan.

But at the same time that he was being metaphorically carried on a city's grateful shoulders, they say, Mr. Giuliani was also creating uncertainty about the future of city government — even though he was, technically, a lame duck.

Day after day he dodged questions about his political plans, while his aides loudly whispered of big plans in the works. He urged people to frequent New York's restaurants and theaters, but only halfheartedly encouraged people to vote in Tuesday's primary. When asked whether the mayoral candidates have been helpful in the city's moment of crisis, he said that "some have and some have not" — a comment carrying the implication that he might reveal who had not been faithful to the cause.

On Wednesday, the day after a primary in which an estimated 15 percent of Republican voters wrote in Mr. Giuliani's name, the mayor finally acknowledged that, at the very least, he wanted to stay on for another three months. He explained that he felt an obligation to "maintain the unity that exists in the city."

But that obligation apparently did not include entertaining the possibility of assuming a position in which he would be in charge of the cleanup. "Oh, no, I don't want a job," he told reporters on Wednesday, when asked whether he would accept a job overseeing the resurrection of Lower Manhattan.

A popular mayor wants to finish the job that he started. Who will say no?

Last night, Mr. Ferrer proposed that Mr. Giuliani serve as the chairman of a "new recovery authority"; an adviser to Mr. Green said that the mayor had rejected a similar proposal to be a cabinet-level "czar" in charge of cleanup and rebuilding.

For some, Mr. Giuliani's proposal that his term be extended seemed at best, unnecessary, and at worst, to reflect his need to dominate circumstances.

"I'm hard pressed to understand what we would gain," said Bill Eimicke, the director of the Picker Center for Executive Education at Columbia University. "If the people

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who are running for mayor aren't able to govern, that's a problem in and of itself. So what: he's going to get us through the next three months and they're going to get more competent?"

But a senior aide to Mr. Giuliani described the proposal as selfless, and in the best interests of the city. It keeps intact hundreds of city employees who are immersed in the cleanup, and who otherwise would leave government when Mr. Giuliani leaves, the aide said. "The theory is, let's get to April 1; let's get as much as possible done so the next guy isn't burdened with it," the aide said.

To that end, Mr. Giuliani had his series of one-on-one meetings on Wednesday night.

First came those held at the emergency operations center in Manhattan, from which the mayor and his administration are supervising the cleanup of Lower Manhattan.

He met with Mr. Bloomberg — who agreed "immediately," the mayor later said — and then with Mr. Green, just before the two candidates were to begin Yom Kippur observance at sundown.

Later, he met with Mr. Ferrer. Roberto Ramirez, the Democratic chairman for Bronx County, accompanied Mr. Ferrer to the command center, aides say, but did not join the meeting with the mayor. Mr. Ferrer said last night that he had met with the mayor for more than an hour.

The aide to Mr. Giuliani summed up these meetings this way: "I think Bloomberg asked reasonable questions; Mark also had some questions that need to be resolved. And Freddy? I don't know where the heck he stands."

Among the questions outstanding are whether three months would be tacked on to the end of the next mayor's term, which mayor will have influence in choosing the next speaker of the City Council and which mayor would meet City Charter requirements that certain budget-related matters be addressed in January.

Mr. Green was with his family last night and could not be reached for comment. Mr. Ferrer, appearing on NY1 News last night, said: "The mayor is the mayor, and there can only be one mayor. There can't be a mayor and a half."

After the mayor's meetings with the candidates on Wednesday, Mr. Giuliani had dinner with Mr. Long, the Conservative Party chairman, at a restaurant in Manhattan. In the past the two men have been at odds; Mr. Long strongly opposed Mr. Giuliani's truncated bid for the Senate on the grounds that the mayor was too moderate, especially on abortion issues. But the attack on the World Trade Center melted away such differences, said Mr. Long, who earlier this week offered the Conservative line to Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Long said that he and Mr. Giuliani talked about the disaster at length before turning to the matter at hand. He said that the mayor expressed his wish to remain in office an additional three months, but if that did not work, "He made it very clear to me that he would seek another term as mayor."



Ting-Li Wang/The New York Times

Rudolph W. Giuliani wants three more months or a full third term.

"On that note," Mr. Long added, "I told him that the Conservative Party, our mayoral candidate Terry Gray, and the leaders of the party were willing to nominate him for another term of office — because of the crisis."

Mr. Long said that Mr. Gray — who met with the mayor yesterday — would drop out of the mayor's race and run instead for a judgeship in Queens, making the ballot available to Mr. Giuliani.

From there, he added, "The rest is history."

"I wanted to know was he serious about running for another term, and he is. And I think he wanted to know if we were serious about having him run on the Conservative line, and we are," Mr. Long said. "The mayor wasn't ambiguous at all. We shook hands on those two points."

Deputy Mayor Joseph L. Lhota confirmed yesterday that the mayor had met with Mr. Long, and that if his proposals were not endorsed by the three mayoral candidates, "He would stand for re-election on the Conservative Party line."

The city's term-limits law precludes Mr. Giuliani from serving a third term, but a senior aide expressed confidence that special legislation through the State Legislature could overturn that law. The aide said that Mr. Giuliani's two Republican colleagues, Gov. George E. Pataki and Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno, already supported the measure.

As for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, a Democrat who opposes term limits, the aide said, "He's a smart man."

One aide to Mr. Bruno said that the mayor was merely bluffing to run for re-election so as to assure the three-month extension that he desires. "Shelly will never pass a bill," the aide to Mr. Bruno said.

The proposal — or threat — seems to have won over a reluctant Mr. Green. Continued uncertainty about Mr. Giuliani's plan may persuade many middle-class white voters, who have consistently supported the mayor, to stay home on the day of the runoff, thereby draining the support that Mr. Green needs to defeat Mr. Ferrer.

"We're not wimps," the aide said. "We're acknowledging that he has a very large gun in his hand. He's got you."

It is a singular moment in the city's politics, Mr. Eimicke said. "If you criticize him, you run the risk of people saying, 'Give the guy a break.' If you say negative things about him, *you* must be bad. There must be something wrong with *you*.

"No one wants to say that he hasn't done a great job, but let's move on."

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