NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2001

Help on the way

Rudy meets with civilian victims' kin

By RALPH R. ORTEGA and FRANK LOMBARDI
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Mayor Giuliani spent nearly three hours last night clearing the air with relatives of civilians who perished in the Sept. 11 attack, and pledged more attention to their needs.

According to participants in the unusually long private session at City Hall, Giuliani agreed to name a liaison between him and representatives of relatives of the more than 2,500 civilians killed in the World Trade Center attack.

Two weeks ago, the mayor had rejected a liaison as unnecessary.

Members of the group that met with Giuliani — including some who had been critical of him — were delighted by what they termed a wonderful meeting.

Jennie Farrell, one of the founders of Give Your Voice, a civilian relatives' group, said, "He listened to our concern and was very sympathetic and empathetic."

According to Farrell — whose brother, James, died in the attack — and others at the meeting, Giuliani promised to name a family committee soon.

The committee's function will be to improve and expedite communications between city officials and relatives anxious about recovering the remains and possessions of their loved ones. The mayor also agreed to let a delegation representing more than a dozen civilian victims' groups examine the process for recovering the bodies and remains of victims at Ground Zero. Farrell said many civilian families are concerned that some remains may end up at the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, where debris removed from Ground Zero is being taken.

The mayor made no comment after the meeting.

More help on the way

Earlier, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) promised that services and financial help would be available to victims' families before Christmas.

And Giuliani announced that the city would open a new office to assist Trade Center disaster victims' families.

After a meeting with some victims' relatives at her Manhattan office, Clinton said several hundred caseworkers from private charities would be assigned to work with the families for up to two years.

She said families could begin filing claims with a new congressional victims' compensation fund before Dec. 25.

Some relatives of civilians killed in the attack have complained that they have gotten less financial help — and less help navigating a thicket of bureaucracy to get that help — than relatives of firefighters, police and other uniformed workers who perished Sept. 11.

Giuliani acknowledged that some people "fall through the cracks" and don't know how to find available assistance.

The new Family Assistance Office opens tomorrow at the Human Resources Administration at 180 Water St., between Pearl and John Sts. in lower Manhattan. It will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

The city also will keep its family center at Pier 94. Giuliani said the new office will focus primarily on helping those who have yet to find financial help and other benefits.

CITY_21MC100_011834045

NYC-WTC_000415740