

Bloomy Says New Taxes Are in Da Bag

Get ready, New York, for a whole slew of new fees and taxes

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Tax hikes are in da bag.

Facing alarming budget deficits, Mayor Michael Bloomberg has come up with some unusual ways to save money and cut costs: Steeper fees for red-carpet events. Higher parking meter rates. Cheaper reflective traffic signs instead of lighted versions.

And a nickel fee for every chintzy plastic bag you get at the supermarket. Officials say it would keep tons of plastic bags from clogging up landfills -- and raise about \$16 million for the city coffers.

But that doesn't mean New Yorkers will like it.

"Bloomberg is a piece of work," Clemelda Gipson, 39, told the *Daily News* outside a D'Agostino grocery store in Chelsea. "Food is expensive and now we have to pay for the bags, too? They should try to come up with ideas and solutions and not just more taxes."

The billionaire mayor, who has staked his campaign for a third consecutive term next year on his promise to save the city from financial ruin, delivered a budget update this week that predicts gaps of \$303 million this fiscal year and \$3.7 billion next year.

He's already warning of tax hikes while slashing spending, eliminating jobs and tossing out two pieces of property tax relief for homeowners. The revised plan also contains a hefty book outlining ways the city plans to raise an extra \$123 million to help bridge the gaps.

The actions, Bloomberg said Thursday, are "not pretty, but if we take them now it will forestall, I hope, more serious cuts later on."

"We're trying to get out ahead and not hope that things will get better," he added.

Big movie premieres and star-studded, flashy red-carpet events need permission for all of the hassle they cause such as taking over the sidewalk, laying down the carpet, blocking off a media area, hooking up a power generator and pitching a tent outside.

Depending on the size of the venue, the city charges up to \$5,000. The highest fee, for an event where thousands of people are expected on the street, would now be \$24,000. The cost for a small event, at a venue with a capacity of up to 600, is \$1,750 and would rise to \$2,750.

The city estimates these changes will generate an extra \$99,000 a year.

City Hall also plans to charge more for oversize truck permits, up from \$25 to \$35, generating an extra \$276,000 per year. Street parking will be more expensive in parts of Manhattan south of 60th Street, where most meters charge \$1 per hour and will go up to \$2.

And all fines overseen by the city's environmental control board, including quality of life violations such as failing to pick up dog waste, will be more aggressively processed, generating a projected extra \$1.7 million per year.

While the mayor is canceling the next class of more than 1,100 police academy cadets to save money, the New York Police Department is hiring more traffic agents to expand an initiative cracking down on drivers who obstruct intersections during red lights, called blocking the box.

The extra staff and focus on those violations is expected to generate \$60 million more in revenue per year.

The administration is considering a 5-cent tax on plastic shopping bags, charged to customers at the register, as a way to raise money and reduce the use of the environmentally unfriendly bags. The proposal is projected to raise \$16 million per year.

When Bloomberg, founder of the **Bloomberg LP** financial information company, directed his city agencies to come up with ways to raise money, they were also ordered to slim expenses at the same time. Among those measures is a proposal to replace lighted traffic signs with reflective versions, cutting operational and maintenance costs in the long term.

And the **Department of Education** aims to save \$5 million per year by reducing custodial services in schools and scrapping a planned global positioning system for its yellow bus fleet.

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