

Neighbors refuse MSG's request for a never-ending permit

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Madison Square Garden's bid for a new, never-ending **operating permit** should be denied—unless it is shortened to just three years and its owners make a serious plan to move, a community board said yesterday.

Yesterday's vote by Community Board 5 dealt a symbolic blow to MSG's quest to stay put atop Penn Station. While the City Council will ultimately decide whether to grant the Garden's request, the board's detailed, 14-page **resolution** could shape the debate before the arena's permit expires on July 24.

The board said MSG owner James Dolan should meet with elected officials, railroad companies and other property owners to try to find a new site for the Garden near its current location. MSG would need to present regular updates on its search, including a full progress report within two years, the resolution said.

The board's recommendation is stricter than it was in 2013, when the Garden's permit was most recently up for renewal. At the time, Community Board 5 **endorsed** the 10-year extension that was ultimately granted by the City Council, provided that MSG make a plan to move—a stipulation that the arena largely flouted in the ensuing years.

"The Garden's ownership squandered its last permit extension of 10 years. which was granted expressly so a new location could be found,"

Pamela Wolff, president of the neighborhood group **Save Chelsea**, said during the board meeting. "This act of contempt for the city's patience and generosity must not be repeated."

Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine will be the next person to weigh in on the permit as part of the city's land-use review **process**. In an interview today, he did not take a formal stance, but said his office will have "A lot to weigh, including the impact on the surrounding neighborhood, impact on transit, [and] prospects for a possible move."

Levine's office will have 30 days to review MSG's application starting later this month.

In a statement today, an MSG Entertainment representative said "the special permit process is not about whether Madison Square Garden should move, and we have no plans to do so."

Indeed, an MSG executive raised eyebrows during Community Board 5's initial hearing on the permit request in February, when he said that **granting the permit would not preclude an eventual move**—across Seventh Avenue into the heart of Vornado's troubled Penn Station development area, for example.

The company later clarified it has no intention to move—unless it were given the estimated \$8.5 billion in public funding that the state has estimated a new arena would cost.

A confluence of issues has thrust MSG into the center of the city's policy debate. Besides its new permit and the stalled redevelopment of the Penn Station area, lawmakers are scrutinizing **Dolan's use of facial-recognition technology** to bar his perceived enemies, and they are **considering repealing** the Garden's \$42 million-a-year **tax break**.