

NEW YORK POST

America's oldest continuously published daily newspaper

BIDding Biederman Farewell

City Hall yesterday got what it wanted from the Grand Central Partnership: the resignations of its president, Daniel Biederman, and its interim chairman, Norman Sturner.

Congratulations, Mr. Mayor — for nothing.

Of all the fights City Hall has picked during Mayor Giuliani's tenure — and we have supported the mayor through most of them — this is the most indefensible. Biederman has made an inestimable contribution to New York City. He devised the formula that reclaimed Bryant Park from the drug dealers who had commandeered it and has done wonders for the area around Grand Central Station as well.

Biederman also came up with the idea of creating Business Improvement Districts, which allow local businesses to take charge of essential services in troubled areas through a real-estate assessment collected by the city. The BIDs provided the first solid evidence that the city of New York could, in fact, be turned around — and their example emboldened the Giuliani reform government.

Biederman and Giuliani are on the same page ideologically and as a matter of urban philosophy. So what gives?

The Giuliani administration has never fully explained why it chose not to renew the Partnership's contract when it expired June 30. At the time, the mayor charged that the three BIDs under Biederman's control — Grand Central, Bryant Park and Herald Square — were "acting like governments

unto themselves" and turning into private "fiefdoms."

Some officials, apparently, didn't like Biederman's admittedly aggressive style. Some, apparently, were jealous of the success and concentration of power that have led some in the press to dub him "the mayor of Midtown."

The fact remains, however, that BIDs like the Grand Central Partnership are private institutions that function in cooperation — not competition — with the city. Apparently, however, even private groups are not immune from political interference.

At an emergency board meeting yesterday, officials were determined to put the best face on recent developments. Rather than criticize the administration, outgoing chairman Sturner stressed the need to go forward and reach a new contract within two weeks — a sentiment echoed by the City Hall representative who attended the meeting.

We hope that good feeling prevails. Still, it's clear that — whatever its future — City Hall has gained a measure of control over the Partnership. The mayor's choice, developer Bernard Mendik, has been named acting interim chairman. Lowell Tooley, the organization's vice president of operations, is the interim president. And, at Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington's request, treasurer George Twill will remain on.

Norman Sturner has one piece of advice for the mayor: "I hope he doesn't kill the message because he didn't like the messenger." He's right — and we hope City Hall is listening.