

Archivists Demand That City Take Back Giuliani's Papers

By DAVID M. HERZHENHORN

A group of archivists and historians yesterday angrily denounced the transfer of Rudolph W. Giuliani's mayoral papers out of city custody and said that they intended to hold Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg responsible for retrieving the documents, which are being stored at a warehouse in Queens.

The group also held out the possibility of a lawsuit or other legal action should Mr. Bloomberg and his corporation counsel, Michael A. Cardozo, fail to address their concerns.

Standing on the steps of City Hall, the group, led by the historian Mike Wallace, demanded that the papers be returned to the Municipal Archives. The papers are being held by the Rudolph W. Giuliani Center for Urban Affairs, a private nonprofit group controlled by Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Wallace, a co-author of "Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898," made an impassioned speech outside City Hall in which he suggested that Mr. Giuliani's real purpose in setting up the nonprofit group was to gain control of the historical record of his administration. "This is a city of laws, not individuals," Mr. Wallace said. "We must not be put in the position of being asked to trust any private individual with custody of the public's records. They are the raw material of our collective history."

He said Mr. Giuliani "should do the right thing: return the papers immediately, arrange funding for the archives, and then if he wishes, make copies for his center so it can provide a second avenue of public access, even put them up on the Internet."

"Then scholars, archivists and citizens alike," he continued, "will praise his openness and hail his generosity."

The historians and archivists were joined by Norman Siegel, a civil rights lawyer, who hinted at possible legal action "if there is no meeting with the mayor and this controversy cannot be resolved amicably."

Mr. Cardozo, the corporation coun-

sel, said his office was working with the Giuliani Center on a plan for cataloging the papers. "I believe the plan will satisfy all appropriate concerns," Mr. Cardozo said. "And I see no reason to cancel the contract or take the papers back."

On Tuesday, Mr. Giuliani said that private archivists would index the papers without influence from him, his aides or his supporters. He also said that city officials would determine which papers, if any, were private. The contract transferring custody of the papers seemed to give Mr. Giuliani that authority. Mr. Giuliani expressed willingness to revise the contract to make this clear. Mr. Cardozo said that he, as the city's chief lawyer, would determine which

A debate over who should manage historical records.

papers were public or private.

But this seemed unlikely to mollify the critics, who said their primary concern was the chain of custody of the documents. "I think we see a rather uncomplicated principle involved here," said Richard Wandel, of the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York. "If this is a democracy as we believe it is, if this is a place of open government, then records must always be available to all the citizens at all times."

Tom Connors, of the Society of American Archivists, said: "Mr. Giuliani's action has ramifications beyond Manhattan and the five boroughs. There seems to be a movement among certain parties in positions of power in various American locales to create barriers to the American citizens' right to know what their governments, national state and local are doing. Archivists find this trend alarming."