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## Lhota, at Business Luncheon, Talks Up '13 Race for Mayor

By DAVID W. CHEN

In words that came as a shock to almost no one, Joseph J. Lhota, the former chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, suggested on Monday that he would probably enter the 2013 race for mayor.

"I wouldn't have left the M.T.A., a job and a position that I've loved, if I wasn't going to run for mayor of New York City," he said in a lunch speech to the New York Building Congress at the Mandarin Oriental in Midtown.

Mr. Lhota's comments were his first since stepping down from the authority on Dec. 31, after a brief but notable 14-month stint in which he was lauded for the agency's quick recovery after Hurricane Sandy. Indeed, it was the agency's handling of the storm, which one longtime watchdog described as bordering "on the edge of magic," that prompted calls by fellow Republicans and others for Mr. Lhota to run.

No formal timetable has been set as to when Mr. Lhota, a former deputy mayor to Rudolph W. Giuliani, will set up an exploratory committee, or announce his candidacy. But he has been assiduously meeting with potential donors and Republican county chairmen and public officials about the contours and contents of a citywide run, said Susan Del Percio, an adviser.

Should Mr. Lhota enter the contest, as expected, he would join an increasingly crowded field on the Republican side. Among



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those considering a run are four former Democrats: Tom Allon, a community newspaper publisher; Adolfo Carrión Jr., a former Bronx borough president; John A. Catsimatidis, the owner of the Gristedes supermarket chain; and George T. McDonald, an advocate for the homeless.

Among Democrats, candidates like Christine C. Quinn, the City Council speaker; Bill de Blasio, the public advocate; William C. Thompson Jr., a former comptroller; and John C. Liu, the current comptroller, will most likely vie for their party's nomination.

Mr. Lhota did not talk much about his mayoral ambitions during his speech, before a receptive audience of about 500 real estate

and construction executives. Instead, he spent the bulk of his time vigorously defending the agency, saying that unlike its reputation, the transportation authority was not "fat, profligate and dishonest about its finances."

Traditionally, "the M.T.A. was being treated like a piñata," especially by the news media, Mr. Lhota said. "Well, the storm changed all that."

But in a possible hint of a campaign theme, Mr. Lhota emphasized that under his leadership, the agency had a great sense of teamwork, and compared its disaster preparedness to a football team that practices constantly. He even praised unions, with whom the Giuliani administra-

tion frequently clashed.

"M.T.A. workers — union workers — deserve the lion's share of the credit because they did a heroic job," he said. "It really was a partnership between management and labor."

Mr. Lhota received a warm reception when he closed with the famous "past is prologue" quote from "The Tempest." He said wryly, "Imagine what I can do in my future with a much more complex organization."

But Richard T. Anderson, president of the New York Building Congress, got the biggest applause line, after Mr. Lhota finished his speech:

"O.K., who's got a question for Mayor Lhota?"

Joseph J. Lhota, former chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, addressed real estate and construction executives on Monday in Manhattan.