

Joy wants QC 'green fund' law amended

By Rio N. Araja

QUEZON City Mayor **Joy Belmonte** is urging the 37-member city council to amend the city's Environment Protection and Waste Management Code following a Commission on Audit recommendation that the P316-million green fund is a public fund that must be subjected to audit.

In Sangguniang Panglungsod Ordinance 2350 enacted in 2014, the city council envisioned the green fund as a mechanism through which retailers could carry out environmental projects by charging P2 from consumers for every plastic bag used.

By charging for plastic bags, the council then hoped to encourage consumers to give up using plastic in favor of using eco-bags instead.

COA maintained the green fund must be turned over to the treasury office and be subject to audit.

Belmonte, who was presiding officer of the city council as vice mayor in the last nine years, certified the amendment to the ordinance as urgent and instructed current Vice Mayor **Gian Carlo Sotto** to ensure that it incorporates all COA's recommendations.

She suggested that the council establish an environmental trust fund for the green fund, which when collected from retailers "could be used for the environmental projects in consultation with stakeholders within the parameters and standards set by law in accordance with the city's environmental development plan."

On July 1, Belmonte issued an executive order to create an internal audit system to ensure that all public funds are used properly and duly accounted for.