

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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November 12, 2014
Start: 10:12 a.m.
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway- Committee Rm, 14th Fl.

B E F O R E:

DONOVAN J. RICHARDS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES
ERIC A. ULRICH
RORY I. LANCMAN
STEPHEN T. LEVIN

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: Alrighty we will now call this hearing to order, this vote to order. I just want to acknowledge my colleagues are here; Council Member Rory Lancman from Queens and Council Member Costa Constantinides, also my good people the, the council to this committee Ms. Samara Swanson [sp?] and also our Policy Analyst Mr. Bill Murray. We're about to make history. Good morning. I am Council Member Donovan Richards, Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee and today the committee will hear and vote on Intro number 378, a local law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to reducing greenhouse gases by 80 percent by 2050. The United States emits 22 percent of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. Within the United States fossil fuel combustion accounts for 94 percent of CO2 emissions since 1990 total United States greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 16.3 percent according to the Environmental Protection Agency. There's a scientific consensus that the global greenhouse gasses in the associated current... on climate change are primarily due to fossil fuel use. However I

1 want to note for the record that just last night,
2 our President, President Barak Obama, announced a
3 climate change agreement with China's, Chinese
4 President Xi Jinping that would cut both country's
5 greenhouse gas emissions by close to a third over
6 the next two decades. Under the agreement the
7 United States would cut its carbon emissions
8 between 26 to 28 percent from levels established in
9 2005 by 2025. China intends to peak its emissions
10 around 2030, decrease them after that, and increase
11 the non-fossil fuel share of all its energy to
12 around 20 percent by 2030. New York City set an
13 ambitious goal for addressing climate change. Local
14 Law 22 of 2008, the New York City Climate
15 Protection Act, required New York City to reduce
16 its greenhouse gas emissions due to city operations
17 by three percent per year over ten years and
18 require the city overall to reduce its greenhouse
19 gas emissions by one percent per year over the next
20 30 years. However just six years later based upon
21 information developed from the 5th assessment of
22 the intergovernmental panel on climate change this
23 mandate must be strengthened. According to United
24 Nations an, only an aggressive push over the next
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15 years will be sufficient to bring greenhouse gas emissions under control. And if greater efforts to cut emissions are not implemented soon further generations that are seeking to limit or reverse climate change will have to depend on technologies that currently do not exist in order to permanently remove greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere.

Unfortunately until now international efforts and treaties to address climate change have fallen short. Due in large part to New York City initiatives guided by the mandate of Local Law 22 New York City has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 19 percent since 2005 and is almost two-thirds of the way towards achieving a 30 percent reduction by 2030. Cleaner generation of electricity and steam were responsible for a majority of emission reductions. And New Yorkers are using electricity and heating fuel more efficiently in buildings. Despite New York City's local progress global greenhouse gas emissions continue to accelerate at a rapid rate. The United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change set a goal to limit the rise in temperature over the next hundred years to two degree Celsius in order to

1 prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with
2 the climate system. Global emissions would have to
3 be cut by at least 50 percent below 1990 levels by
4 midcentury if we are going to achieve this goal. To
5 that end the European union and certain states
6 including California and New York have set targets
7 to cut their emissions 80 percent by 2050 from 19..
8 if New York City adopts and when we adopt Intro
9 number 378 it will become the largest city in the
10 world to commit to reducing its greenhouse gas
11 emissions by 80 percent by 2050. And it will set a
12 path for investment in renewable energy sources and
13 a transition away from the use of fossil fuels. It
14 is clear that at the local level we also have to be
15 bold if we want to improve our chances for a
16 sustainable future. I recommend a yes vote on this
17 legislation. And I just want to thank Council
18 Member Costa Constantinides for his leadership on
19 this issue as a representative of the Rockaways in
20 particular after seeing the devastation of
21 Hurricane Sandy and what it did to my particular
22 community I understand that this bill is more than
23 just a bill. What we are doing is charting a path
24 for our children and for the future of communities
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2 that if we did not reduce our emissions would not
3 exist in 2050 if we didn't get serious. So now we
4 will hear from the sponsor of this bill, my good
5 friend, Council Member Costa Constantinides. Thank
6 you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank
8 you Mr. Chair. And I'll begin with saying as it
9 comes to bold leadership and true leadership there
10 is no greater chair of an Environmental Protection
11 Committee than yourself so...

12 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: I'm not running
13 for office.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: But
15 definitely appreciate your strong work as, and of
16 course our, our, just want to thank our Speaker
17 Melissa Mark-Viverito who has been bold as well.
18 When climate, we came there was an opportunity to
19 take incremental steps and we did not do that, we
20 were bold. And we had to be bold because we know
21 what's at stake here. But actualizing and charting
22 that course that you talked about and we cannot
23 stay back from that, step back from that obligation
24 that we do have. There's no greater threat to
25 global civilization and climate change. As the IPCC

1 recently released report makes clear there's
2 indisputable link between humanity's carbon
3 emissions and receding ice sheets, extreme sea
4 rise, and overall warmer climates worldwide. Never
5 before in human history have we seen such high
6 levels of carbon in the atmosphere or such a
7 sustained shift in our global temperatures.
8 According to the national oceanic and aspheric
9 administration data almost no one alive today under
10 the age of 30 had ever experienced a month below
11 average temperature. That is sort of sobering. If
12 we don't act now they'll be condemned to a future
13 of blistering summers, mass extinctions, and seas
14 that threaten to engulf low lying areas around the
15 globe. New York City has already made tremendous
16 strides towards a greener and more sustainable
17 future. But if we wish to remain in the forefront
18 of the final... climate change much more is needed.
19 Like all of you and my chair we are overjoyed at
20 this morning's news that our government and China
21 have reached a groundbreaking deal on carbon
22 reduction that will see a 26 to 28 percent
23 reduction here by 2025. As America's largest city
24 and as the world's city we need to set, to continue
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1 to set that trend. So it's incumbent upon us to
2 step up and continue to lead. That's why I'm so
3 proud to be the sponsor of Intro 378 today which
4 would update the New York City's climate protection
5 act to require an 80 percent citywide reduction in
6 carbon emissions by 2050. By writing a bold
7 standard into the administrative code we'll be the
8 largest city in the world to commit to this crucial
9 goal. I want to thank my colleagues on the
10 committee. And as I said before our chair and all
11 of our, all of my colleagues for co-sponsoring this
12 bill. And also, I'm, definitely want to thank the
13 administration who has moved on this and made it
14 part of their bill to last initiative so having the
15 mayor's support and seeing it actualized in that
16 way is, is greatly inciting. I stand with my
17 colleagues and I thank Chair Richards again and
18 urge that my colleagues vote yes. Thank you.

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20 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: Alright... [cross-
21 talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Very
23 sorry Mr. Chair. Also want to quickly thank my
24 staff who thank, worked very hard on this; my Chief
25 of Staff Nick Rolleston, my Legislative Director

1 Nick Wazowski and of course the staff of the
2 committee.
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4 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: Alrighty [sic].

5 So with that being said we will now call I guess
6 roll call for the vote. Alrighty so with that being
7 said. I vote aye, aye. And now we will, we'll hear
8 from Council Member Costa Constantinides, I hope he
9 votes aye.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Aye.

11 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: Council Member
12 Lancman.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: [off mic] Aye.

14 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: You have to use
15 the... I was messing with you by the way. It's just
16 really early.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Aye.

18 CHAIRPERSON RICHARDS: Alrighty with
19 that being said we will hold the vote open for
20 around half an hour. And with that being said I
21 believe we're on the roll to reducing carbon
22 emissions in New York City. Congratulations to
23 Council Member Costa Constantinides on this major
24 victory for New York City. Look forward to moving
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2 forward. Hearing will be held open once again for a
3 half an hour, thank you.

4 UNKNOWN MALE: Council Member Levin.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye.

6 UNKNOWN MALE: Vote stands at four in
7 the affirmative. [pause] Ulrich.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I vote aye.

9 UNKNOWN MALE: Final vote in the
10 Committee on Environmental Protection; five in the
11 affirmative, zero in the negative, no abstentions.

12 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 14, 2014