

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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May 3, 2013
Start: 10:26 a.m.
Recess: 10:37 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway
Committee Rm, 14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
MATHIEU EUGENE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Council Member Fernando Cabrera
Council Member Daniel Dromm
Council Member Lewis A. Fidler
Council Member Vincent J. Gentile
Council Member David G. Greenfield

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

LEONILA MONACA

Member

Military Families Speak Out

William Martin

Committee Clerk

City Council, New York City

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2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [off mic] Good
3 morning. I'm Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Chair
4 of the Council Committee on Veterans. First, I
5 want to acknowledge the Council Members who join
6 us this morning. I want to acknowledge Council
7 Member - - Council Member Cabrera and Council
8 Member Dromm, thank you very much. We are here
9 today to vote on resolution I introduced to
10 support two important pieces of legislation in the
11 State Legislature that would give veterans a
12 fairer and more equitable calculated property tax
13 exemption under New York State Law. While almost
14 all of the property tax breaks in the State allow
15 home owner to pay zero property taxes on the
16 portion of their property that qualifies for the
17 exemption, veteran in New York City have to pay a
18 tax called the School Tax Rate Under Exception.
19 The School Tax Rate is a part of that property tax
20 that is linked to our spendings on schools. This
21 means that veterans pay more in property taxes
22 when the City spends more on schools. Not only do
23 veterans face higher property tax bills because of
24 this link in school spending, they are also unable
25 to predict the value of the exception as City

1 funding for school change from year to year.
2
3 Thankfully, these problems with the Veterans
4 Property Tax Exemption have been addressed in two
5 State companion bills sponsored by Assembly Member
6 Michael Cusick and Senator Andrew Lanza, both from
7 Staten Island. The bills would amend the State
8 Property Tax Law so that the veterans exemption is
9 no longer tied to school spending. The change
10 would bring the veterans property tax exemption in
11 line with other property tax exemption in New York
12 and will give veterans a more valuable and
13 predictable tax break. Our veterans shouldn't be
14 penalized because the City needs to properly fund
15 our public school. It is my understanding that
16 the two bills in the State Legislature will be
17 moving soon so it is my hope that we will finally
18 be able to take a more meaningful step to help
19 providing tax exemption relief to our vets. I
20 want to thank Assembly Member Cusick and Senator
21 Lanza as well as the Council Members that have
22 joined me in cosponsoring this resolution. I want
23 to speak to, thank also the Speaker, Speaker
24 Quinn, and Council Member Recchia. I'm also proud
25 to say that since we introduced this resolution

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2 last week Council Member Dromm, Fidler, Gentile
3 and Richard of the Veterans Committee have signed
4 on as co sponsors. Before we vote I want to know
5 if there, if any Council Member want to make a
6 statement. My colleagues, do you have any
7 statement? No. Before we vote we have also one
8 person who would like to testify. I'm going to
9 call her. I want to call Leonila Monaca
10 [phonetic] will you please come? And thank you.

11 MS. LEONILA MONACA: Good morning.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: One more time,
13 Miss Leonila. Let me thank you for your
14 dedication and also your commitment to fight for
15 veterans. And I want to testify also and I want to
16 acknowledge that you have been always, always here
17 fighting, addressing the issues affecting the
18 veterans. Thank you. I don't know where you find
19 the courage to do that, and the patience to do
20 that. Thank you very much.

21 MS. LEONILA MONACA: Thank you,
22 sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You may start
24 at any time. Please state your name for the
25 record.

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2 MS. LEONILA MONACA: My name is,
3 sorry, my name is Leonila Monaca, I'm a member of
4 Military Families Speak Out. And I remember when
5 I was visiting the base in Germany that my son's
6 friends all were planning to get houses. And
7 think of that portion of the veterans who do get
8 houses and have the stability to have a job that
9 allows them to afford a house, this is a very,
10 very, very important thing to them. And I would
11 like, MFSO Metro thanks to - - veterans, Committee
12 Members Sanders, Fidler, Gentile, Cabrera, Dromm
13 and Greenfield. Mr. Recchia, Speaker Quinn, Mr.
14 Lanza and other Members of the New York City
15 Council and New York State Legislature for their
16 compassionate and patriotic concern. Some have
17 written laws, amendments, set up veterans courts,
18 taking a determined and responsible stance to get
19 a grip on the needs of veterans, soldiers and
20 military families. And if you don't mind I'd like
21 to, well, MFSO Metro Chapter New York City
22 supports A.518/S.3872 legislation to amend the
23 real property tax law to allow veterans to enjoy
24 the veterans property tax exemption, to provide
25 stability as they rebuild their lives after the

1 horrors of war. Housing and shelter have been
2 attested to by experts in Veterans Affairs as the
3 primary factor in turning around and stabilizing
4 the veteran population because once you know where
5 they are you can create an access of services to
6 deal with problems like jobs and assimilate
7 veterans back into civilian life. A homeless
8 expert, he wasn't in Veteran Affairs but he worked
9 for the City, once said it is hard to get a job
10 without an address and without a place to take a
11 bath. In Los Angeles there are 400 acres of
12 government property that were gifted in 1888 for
13 the express purpose of providing housing to
14 veterans where nothing has been built. New
15 Yorkers, and to the extent possible the New York
16 City Council should show that veterans were, that
17 New York works a little faster to care for its
18 veterans population. Los Angeles has about 8,0000
19 homeless veterans per night. And now, if you
20 don't mind I'd like to take 30 seconds to remember
21 those people who are not in this high category of
22 being able to deal with their housing situation.
23 The Hudson Valley VA Healthcare System and Shelter
24 provides private rooms for recuperating or at risk
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2 homeless veterans. There are several housing
3 units in the Bronx and other parts of New York
4 that provide veterans with preferential housing
5 including the Mitchell Lama [phonetic] for New
6 York State. More facilities for female veterans
7 with children need to be constructed. It is less
8 expensive and morally consistent to provide
9 housing for veterans and their families than to
10 end up filling jail cells, drug treatment
11 facilities or digging graves for those veterans
12 who choose suicide. In order to get veterans into
13 housing and shelter the present outreach program
14 will have to expand and coordinate to involve
15 community centers, one stop crisis intervention
16 teams in the five boroughs. The New York City
17 Health and Hospital Corporation and social workers
18 in ER's, the Police Department and utilizing those
19 liaison personnel appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and
20 MOVA [phonetic]. A state of emergency may have to
21 be declared to intervene in this heartbreaking
22 epidemic of homelessness and suicide which is a
23 national scandal. The wars in Iraq and
24 Afghanistan, according to surveys done by the Army
25 Times, have had less than 50 percent support among

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2 service members. The sooner the war in
3 Afghanistan ends and we implore the President,
4 government administration to bring troops home
5 now, the fewer suicide, the less homeless
6 shelters, the less domestic violence, drug
7 addiction, sorry for the typo, deaths, wounds and
8 dismemberment will occur. To us this is not just
9 morality, it is life and death. For example, we
10 have one mother whose son is on his sixth
11 deployment, another soldier who deploys this fall
12 and new think President Karzai has amassed a
13 sufficient fortune. And if groups within
14 Afghanistan want civil war they will do it whether
15 we go now or in 2014. Again, I want to thank you
16 for your courage and your initiative in this
17 resolution. We need a strong military and the
18 armed forces must change its public image. And we
19 must deliver the care that veterans, soldiers and
20 military families need for young people to want to
21 be a part of it. Respectfully submitted, thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
24 much, Miss Monaca. Again, one more time, thank
25 you for your courage and your dedication, you

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2 know, to fight for veterans and I applaud you for
3 that and I admire your courage. Thank you so
4 much, thank you. Before you go, let me ask my
5 colleagues, do you have any question? All right,
6 thank you so much. Thank you. Now, I think we
7 got a quorum, we going to vote on the resolution.
8 Will you please call the names for me?

9 MR. WILLIAM MARTIN: William
10 Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote, Committee
11 on Veterans, resolution 1735. Council Member
12 Eugene?

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Aye.

14 MR. CLARK: Fidler?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Yes.

16 MR. CLARK: Cabrera?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

18 MR. CLARK: Dromm?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Aye.

20 MR. CLARK: Greenfield?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Aye.

22 MR. CLARK: By a vote of five in
23 the affirmative, zero in the negative and no
24 abstentions, item is adopted. Members, please
25 sign the Committee Report. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. We have, okay, we going to leave the vote open. Council Member Gentile is still on his way.
[off mic]

MR. CLARK: Council Member Gentile?

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I vote aye.

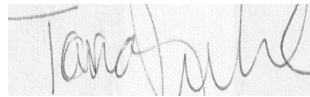
MR. CLARK: The vote now currently stands at six in the affirmative.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tara Juhl certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tara Juhl".

Date 5/23/13