

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

----- X

May 4, 2016
Start: 1:39 p.m.
Recess: 2:12 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: ANTONIO REYNOSO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Andy L. King
Vanessa L. Gibson
Costa G. Constantinides
Steven Matteo

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

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

3

[sound check, pause, background comments,
pause] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay, so thank you
to everyone for your patience, and to all my
colleagues for being here. This is an important day
an important vote. We want to make sure that every
opinion is heard, and that every council member is
present, and we have one more colleague that will be
joining us in a few. I've been joined by my
colleagues from the committee, Council Member Matteo,
Council Member Gibson, and Council Member Costa
Constantinides, and also members or the sponsors of
the sent--Introduction 209 that we will be voting on
today. Council Member Margaret Chin and Council
Member Brad Lander. I'd actually like to call on the
two co-sponsors of the bill to make statements
regarding this bill, and then we'll open it up to a
vote. So Council Member Brad Lander from Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very
much Chair Reynoso for this opportunity and also for
your support of the bill and for the close work that
you and your staff have done with Council Member Chin
and I, and this wonderful coalition of community,
environmental and climate justice groups on Intro

1
2 209-A, the bring-your-own bag bill. We're thrilled
3 to be here to be voting--to be voting on it in
4 committee today. We all know plastic bags are a
5 problem. We see them in our trees, our streets.
6 They clog up our storm drains and our recycling
7 equipment. They become part of giant island of
8 plastic sludge in the ocean where they harm wild
9 life. Every year New Yorkers discard nine billion
10 single-use plastic bags totaling nearly 100,000 tons
11 of solid waste. They never decompose. They simply
12 break into smaller pieces, and it's worth remembering
13 that they're made from petroleum and non-renewable
14 fossil fuel. About 12 million barrels of oil a year
15 is used in making the plastic bags that are used in
16 the United States. So the question is what to do
17 about them, and the beauty and the challenge of this
18 problem is that we can solve it together through very
19 simple actions that we can all take. All we have to
20 do is simply bring our own bags when we go shopping.
21 It's not that hard. Every single New Yorker
22 remembers to do things like this every day. We bring
23 our Metro Card to ride the train. We bring our keys
24 when we leave the house. We bring lunches in a bag
25 from home. When people go shopping many already

1
2 bring a card to a car. We bring laptops, toolkits,
3 briefcase, purses, or prayer shawls. We can remember
4 to bring reusable bags. I have 20 in this one. You
5 can easily do a whole week's shopping in the bags.
6 As Margaret and I have shown many times, you can
7 carry one very small one in your purse or your
8 briefcase. It's easy to do, and overwhelming
9 evidence from cities and countries around the world
10 shows that a simple five cent fee on single-use
11 carryout bags will help get us all to do it. Bag
12 fees have been implemented successfully in cities and
13 countries all around the world. Washington, DC's fee
14 has led 80% of residents across lines of race,
15 income, neighborhood to begin bringing their own
16 bags, and reduce bag waste by over 60%. San Jose
17 reduced plastic bag litter by 89% in the storm drain
18 systems and 59% in city streets. In San Jose the
19 average number of bags that a folk--a person brought
20 to a supermarket or grocery store decreased for a
21 three-bag average to a .3 bag average because people
22 started bringing their own bags. And bag fees are
23 also in place in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles,
24 Austin, Minneapolis, and in countries as diverse as
25 Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, France, Israel and

1 South Africa. The answer is not just to switch from
2 plastic to paper bags by banning plastic bags. That
3 could actually lead to more solid waste since most
4 paper bags don't get recycle and they weigh more than
5 plastic bags as well. Now, it's no secret that this
6 bill has many opponents, and--and we'll hear from
7 some of them today, and how could it not? It works by
8 irritating us in the remembering to bring reusable
9 bags. So I understand why people find it irritating,
10 and many people just don't believe that we will
11 overwhelmingly change our behavior with just this
12 simple fee even though all the evidence says it will.
13 So we understand the opposition, and I really want to
14 appreciate that this body has been able to debate and
15 disagree about this bill in a respectful and
16 appropriate manner. There's nothing wrong with
17 disagreement or with a close vote. In fact, that's
18 what we're supposed to do, and it makes me proud to
19 be a member of this council. But I do want to
20 correct a few myths that have been floating around,
21 many of which have been spread by the plastic bag
22 industry, which has spent tens of thousands of
23 dollars for the obvious reason that they make money
24 selling those nine billion bags. First, bag fees
25

1 don't harm low-income families or seniors. The
2 evidence from around the country is clear when bag
3 fees go into effect more than 80% of people again
4 from every community across lines of race, age,
5 gender, class, neighborhood start bringing reusable
6 bags. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor.
7 No one wants to pay that nickel, and everyone is able
8 to remember to bring reusable bags instead. In DC,
9 people started to get used to it pretty quickly. In
10 DC more than 80% of people said they don't mind or
11 actively support the law. Fewer than 20% say they
12 are bothered by the law, and again that's consistent
13 across neighborhood and race. Myth 2, plastic bags
14 cannot be economically recycled. We did an extensive
15 fact finding effort with Novolex, the largest
16 supplier of plastic bags in the United States, and
17 one of the main sources of funding for opposition to
18 this bill, and they actually own a plant in Wisconsin
19 that has recycling technology. But the fact is this:
20 Novolex has made very clear to us that they don't
21 have any interest in opening up a plant here to wash,
22 shred, pelletize and recycle bags. Why? Because
23 it's not economically feasible. It is sadly much
24 cheaper to make new plastic from petroleum than it is
25

1 to wash, shred, pelletize and recycle plastic bags.
2 That's why Sim's Recycling, which has tons and tons,
3 tens of thousands of tons of plastic waste every
4 year, has been looking for years to find someone who
5 will take and recycle their plastic waste, and they
6 cannot find it. And I know some people think that
7 the plastic bags they bring back to the pharmacy or
8 the supermarket and put in the bins get recycled.
9 But you know where those plastic bags go? They go to
10 landfills because it's not economically feasible to
11 recycle them. One other thing you'll hear is that
12 recycle--reusable bags have been linked to disease.
13 For this, I'll simply say that all the research that
14 has purported to show this has been funded by the
15 plastics industry in Consumer Reports, that gold
16 standard for independent information for consumers
17 has declared it false. I'll add, yesterday a new--
18 just yesterday a new sort of whisper campaign started
19 because all of these fees are structured. This fee
20 is structured like all of them that stores must
21 charge at least five cents. We don't put a ceiling
22 or a price ceiling on it any more than we do on a
23 loaf of bread or a gallon of milk, but I have to say
24 this is just plain silly. Stores are legally allowed
25

1 to charge for bags now just like any other product.
2 They don't charge more than their competitors because
3 customers would go to different stores. And those few
4 stores that are in the business of price gouging
5 their customers have far easier ways to do so by
6 adding prices to the items that are on the shelves
7 like the milk and the bread and the eggs. Bill all
8 over the country and the world are structured just
9 like this one, and we have literally not one example
10 that we've heard of a place where people start
11 charging above the minimum required charges. It's
12 just a--a scare tactic. The sponsors of this bill
13 are very committed and--and Council Member Chin has
14 been the most dogged in doing this of anyone. We are
15 working hard to give away reusable bags, and we're
16 going to do it. The bill--the law actually requires
17 the City to engage in a large scale public-private
18 giveaway focusing on low-income communities and
19 senior to make sure all New Yorkers have the reusable
20 bags they need to avoid paying the fee, and the city
21 will also engage in extensive outreach in multiple
22 languages including in ethnic and community media to
23 let people know about the charge. We'll make sure
24 that people have the reusable bags that they need,
25

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

10

1 and we'll keep a close eye on how it's working.
2
3 There's an annual waste stream report to check and
4 make sure that we're getting the reductions we want,
5 and after two years a survey on people's attitudes
6 and practices, and if those studies show a need for a
7 change, then we'll come back here and make the
8 changes that are necessary to strengthen it. It's
9 not yet time to take a victory laugh. This vote will
10 probably be the closet vote in the City Council this
11 term, but enormous work has gone into this. So I do
12 want to say a few brief thank you. First of all,
13 Council Member Chin and her staff have been
14 incredible co-sponsors and partners in getting us
15 here and to her--and her whole team. New York's
16 environment is lucky to have you. To our Chair
17 Reynoso and his staff, the Council and committee
18 staff especially Colin Howell have been extraordinary
19 here. My staff over the years, Michael Freedman-
20 Schnapp and Ben Smith, now gone, but also Annie
21 Levers, John Schaffer, and Rachel Goodman. To the
22 Speaker and her office who have supported us and made
23 it possible. Sanitation Commissioner Garcia has been
24 a great ally as well as other members of the de
25 Blasio Administration. And we have some great

1
2 retailers who have been partners, too. Businesses
3 like Sahadis, and also some of the trade associations
4 like the Food Industry Alliance and the New York
5 Metropolitan Retail Alliance who have helped us work
6 to make this work for our retailers. And finally, a
7 tremendous coalition of advocates too big to name
8 them all, but the New York League of Conservation
9 Voters and Yatan Lu, Natural Resources Defense
10 Council, climate justice groups, public housing
11 resident leaders. An amazing coalition of young
12 people and students from Hewitt School and the
13 Cafeteria of Culture, Citizens Committee for New York
14 City and, of course, Jenny Romer, the foremost
15 national expert on plastic bag laws. Now has been
16 tremendous, not in the way that's entirely serious.
17 We've given this so much research and attention to
18 try to make it work right, and we've been lucky to
19 have the best expert to do it. So, to our colleagues
20 who support the bill, to Council Member
21 Constantinides and to Council Member King we give
22 deep thanks. To those who oppose the bill, I want to
23 thank you for a respectful debate, and I will simply
24 say that I have been offering this bet to council
25 members and I'll put it on the record. We go stand

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

12

1
2 at the--six months after this bill goes into effect,
3 we'll go stand at the checkouts at a supermarket, and
4 we'll see whether more or fewer than half the folks
5 have started bringing reusable bags. And if fewer
6 than half have started bringing reusable bags at your
7 local supermarket, I'll--we'll--I'll buy you dinner
8 and some reusable bags to go along with it.

9 [laughter] You know, what I think is exciting is
10 that even though this is contentious today, what it's
11 going to mean for New York is that together we're
12 going to achieve something really significant, a
13 reduction of tens of thousands of tons of solid
14 waste, a reduction of billions of single-use plastic
15 bags every year. So, Mr. Chair, I apologize for the
16 lengthy statement but I really appreciate the
17 opportunity to you and to all of my colleagues.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Absolutely. Thank
19 you, Council Member Brad Lander and because one of
20 our colleagues has to go to vote in another
21 committee, Council Member Andy King, we're going to
22 open it up to the Clerk for a vote.

23 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
24 roll call vote Committee on Sanitation and Solid

25

1 Waste Management. Introduction 209-A, Council Member
2 King.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Permission to
5 explain my vote.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yeah, absolutely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'm going to be
8 quick, but Council Member Chin and Council Member
9 Lander, I want to thank you for a spirited
10 conversation when it comes to how do we protect our
11 environment. I will say over the last year the
12 conversation I've had with neighbors, friends and
13 colleagues was one that was enlightened, bizarre at
14 times and informative. I know we've got a lot of
15 work that we've got to get done in the City Council
16 and when we start talking about plastic bags, I
17 sometimes jump back when I'[m looking at people who
18 needed some place to live, who need employment
19 opportunities of placing what our real values are. I
20 just know at the end of the day that this piece of
21 legislation wherever it goes that it across--across
22 New York City that it's fairly distributed. That
23 means what? Someone who is going to a Gristedes on
24 86th and York is given the same treatment as someone
25 who is on 149th Street and Third Avenue. That no

1
2 dist--that at no borough in the--that there's--no
3 communities are being treated any differently. I--I
4 would hate to see a bill get passed, and then in some
5 areas the law has a greater impact than, you know,
6 some communities that's because of income. So, I
7 want us to be mindful where--wherever this bill goes
8 that all communities participate and the business
9 people participate fairly, and that if we're giving
10 bags out, I know I saw something about two times a
11 year, if we need to give out more bags, then let's
12 give out more bags. But let people understand, and
13 explain this fairly. The--one of the things that
14 bothers me in the world of politics the pros and the
15 cons that people get paid to have a conversation.
16 There's a good and a bad to everything. But how do
17 we set the values of what's really important in our
18 society? If we're saying that this is important,
19 then we need to have real conversations to our
20 community that we represent and understand what we're
21 doing, and we don't get--trip--trip ourselves up in
22 sound bites or mis-education. So, with that all
23 being said, I stood out with my--to my communities in
24 front of grocery stores, train stations. We got
25 their opinion and find out what they wanted to do.

1
2 They thought five cents was not much to ask for, but
3 we've got to understand five cents could mean a lot
4 to some communities. We've got to understand that if
5 five cents is going to be five cents, no one can't up
6 the ante and say because the paperwork said I can
7 charge 12 cents, I'm charging 12 cents. So I'm
8 saying to us let's be real mindful, and if anybody
9 violates or exploits any community that we come back
10 and have a conversation about this bill, and make
11 sure we do right by New Yorkers as well as the
12 businesses in New York. So that all being said, me
13 and my community I am voting aye today and
14 congratulations.

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you, Council
16 Member Andy King. [laughs] And I know have a--
17 another council member that is also supposed to be at
18 another committee hearing, but-- All right, obviously
19 there's a conflict, and we're going to need to
20 resolve it. Good job. [laughter] Good job, City
21 Council. Now, I'm going to call on the other co-
22 sponsor Council Member Margaret Chin from Manhattan.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.
24 I'm going to be brief since Council Member Lander
25 explained everything in the bill. But I just want to

1
2 take this opportunity to thank you, Chair, for really
3 working with us, working with Council Member Lander
4 and I to push this legislation forward, and I know
5 Andy--Council Member King just left, but I really
6 wanted to thank you. And we had so many
7 conversations over the years, and, I'm glad that he
8 is supportive. The bill--the goal of the bill is
9 very simple. We need to reduce the nine billion
10 plastic bags that are in the city landfills clogging
11 up storm drains, hanging on our trees, polluting our
12 cities, and the solution is so equally so simple. We
13 just need to encourage New Yorkers to bring their own
14 reusable bags. Little tiny bags they can pull out to
15 become a big bag, and they don't have to pay. Just--
16 they don't have to pay a cent. Just bring your own
17 bag, and these bags are so tiny enough you could put
18 it in your pocket. I mean guys who don't have a
19 pocketbook you put it in your pocket or hanging on
20 your belt chain. You could do a lot for the
21 environment just to do that, and the member version
22 to lower fee is because we have, you know, talked to
23 a lot of colleagues in the Council in the community
24 to really make a more powerful and more receptive to--
25 --to lower the price to five cents. But we know that

1
2 it will still help us reduce the plastic bags, and I
3 really also wanted to thank our Speaker for
4 supporting. We have the majority of the City Council
5 supporting us, and the Mayor. I think he also
6 supports us, and we have a really strong diverse
7 coalition that Council Member Lander talked about,
8 and that has continued to grow. So this little small
9 charge on this bill that five cents is going to have
10 a huge impact on our environment. So I am so glad
11 that we finally got to this point, and I am looking
12 forward to going out to every single community that
13 wants to be out there with them [coughing] in the
14 Bronx, Staten Island to give out reusable bags.
15 Council Member you could design your own bag.
16 [laughs]

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you for that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you, Council
20 Member Chin. I want my bags with Council Member
21 Matteos' face on it. [laughter]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: [off mic] As long
23 as they have price on there. (sic)

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So, I agree. I
25 agree. Those are actually--both are very expensive.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
2 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

18

3 So we might not want them. So, I'd actually like to
4 now call on the clerk to vote.

5 CLERK: Continuation of roll call
6 Committee on Sanitation. Chair Reynoso.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: I'd like to pass so
8 that my colleagues to vote first.

9 CLERK: Oh, okay. Council Member Gibson.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Mr. Chair,
11 permission to explain my vote.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Absolutely.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
14 much. So I, too, will attempt to be brief. Good
15 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It's really a great
16 honor and pleasure to be here, and I really want to
17 thank the sponsors of Intro 209, Council Members Brad
18 Lander and Margaret Chin. This bill has had so much
19 conversation I'm blue in the face. We have talked
20 about this bill for almost two years now, and as a
21 member of this committee, I really want the public to
22 understand that this is a bill that does not have a
23 lot of--just not ramifications, but this bill did not
24 pass lightly. There were a lot of conversations, a
25 lot of contentious conversations, and certainly my
remarks and my vote is just the fact that I represent

1
2 a borough in the--in community in the Bronx, and I've
3 looked at this bill. I've gotten lots of concerns
4 both supportive and against. I've talked to
5 independent supermarket owners. I've talked to many
6 of my tenant leaders, and I think the reality is
7 that we should never assume that certain communities
8 cannot conform to change because they're low-income,
9 because they're on a fixed income, because they're
10 seniors we should not assume that they are not able
11 to sustain a change. What I think is something that
12 we really need to keep in mind is that many families
13 and many New Yorkers every day live a struggle, and
14 they struggle to survive. They live paycheck to
15 paycheck, and they have a lot of challenges that they
16 face each and every day. And as a member of a
17 community that has faced a lot of those challenges,
18 it's really hard to understand that this bill will
19 have more benefits than it will be a burden. And I
20 simply do not want to be a part of a conversation
21 that places a further burden on an already burdened
22 system of many of my families. Council Member King
23 talked about a lot of the work we're doing around the
24 Fight for 15, unemployment and, you know, the fact
25 that a lot of families live in poverty each and every

1
2 day, and I don't take that lightly. Those are the
3 faces of the district I represent, and I've talked to
4 many of them, and I do believe that the intentions
5 and really the concept of this bill is good. I do
6 think we need to do something. We care about the
7 environment. We care about waste. This bill really
8 stimulated a long conversation that was long overdue,
9 and I agreed with that. I also agree that it is
10 necessary to change bad behavior, and we do that
11 through a series of things. As a former state
12 elected official, we put taxes on tobacco and alcohol
13 because we recognize that people were dying from
14 alcoholism and--and liver and lung cancer. And so, I
15 recognize something has to be done, but what I think
16 and what I hope that this bill will ultimately do is
17 in the study I really am hoping that it will identify
18 several things. It will recognize that no matter
19 neighborhood you come from, we can adapt to change.
20 It will also stimulate a conversation around
21 education for people to be aware of some of the
22 hazardous and harmful products that we currently use.
23 And thirdly, it will be for me a--a recognition that
24 some of the already overburdened communities can
25 sustain something such as this. A lot of the

1 criticism that I got from my district in this bill
2 was the fact they don't feel comfortable giving money
3 to their business owners knowing that it's going back
4 to them, and not going into an environmental program.
5 So we face truck traffic and pollution and air
6 quality, and all these other air quality issues in
7 the Bronx. And so many residents have said well, why
8 can't we use some of that money to focus on
9 environmental programs so we can deal with the issues
10 we face in the South Bronx. So I'm hoping that
11 through this study we can try to identify some
12 alternatives, and I also want to be clear that I
13 don't want Intro 209 to set a precedent. I don't
14 want us to say as a City Council and as an
15 administration that if we identify another product
16 that's not plastic bags, it is deemed hazardous and
17 dangerous to the environment, that our only solution
18 is a tax, whether you call it a fee, a surcharge, it
19 is a tax, and tax is a tax is a tax. That is the
20 bottom line, and in this climate, I think we need to
21 have a lot more conversation about this bill and
22 other bills. I'm concerned about the--the language
23 of not less than five cents per bag. I do recognize
24 that while I want equity in my community, what do I
25

1
2 face now? I face supermarkets that charge higher
3 rates for their foods and products because they're in
4 low-income communities of color. That's what happens
5 right now, and so to give my constituents the
6 reassurance that this bill is not going to target
7 them because of the neighborhood that they live in, I
8 can't assure of that and I--I make no guarantees.
9 And so, I sit here as someone who has thought and
10 prayed a lot about the ramifications of this bill,
11 and really at the end of the day, the--the side of
12 the argument that I really want to be on. And so it--
13 -it's no easy task to make these types of decisions
14 on behalf of thousands of residents. Many of my
15 residents came to me in opposition, but I did have a
16 lot that came to me in support, but at the end of the
17 day as a legislator you have to make a decision and
18 stick with it. And so, that is exactly what I'm
19 going to do, and I really want to thank Brad and
20 Margaret because they have talked to me quite a bit
21 about this bill, and really let me understand a lot
22 more. As elected officials, sometimes we need to do
23 more listening than talking, and I have been doing
24 that because I really want to understand the
25 ramifications of this bill. And so with of that

1
2 being said, which is a lot, I--I do think it's
3 important for me to not vote on this bill, and to
4 really look at it a little bit further until
5 tomorrow. And so I will be abstaining on this bill
6 of Intro 209. Thank you very much.

7 CLERK: Constantinides.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Aye.

9 CLERK: Matteo.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Costa, that was
11 quick. [laughter]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINDIES: [off mic]
13 Not if you were on. (sic)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Mr. Chair, can I
15 be excused to explain my vote?

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Absolutely.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you. I
18 think everyone knows where I fall on this issue.
19 I've been very clear since day one the decision that
20 I'm going to vote no. It's been pretty easy for me
21 except that there's an amendment for my picture on
22 the bag. I--I do want to--I do want to start by
23 responding to some of my colleague's assertions in
24 the bill, but I want to start off by Brad's point
25 that this Council we have proven and as the

1
2 Republican leader I think for me more so than anyone
3 else who has probably voted no on more pieces of
4 legislation than anyone else in this Council, that we
5 can agree to disagree. We can have substantive
6 debate, and so I do appreciate that. You know, Brad
7 and I were--were just going over issues right before
8 the hearing, you know, right up to the point where
9 I'm going to vote. And so I do appreciate the debate
10 with--with not only Brad, with--with all of my
11 colleagues on this even though everyone knows where--
12 where I'm going to wind up. So I'm just going to
13 respond to a few of your assertions, say a few of my
14 own opinions and then I'm going to vote no. You
15 know, I've said time and time again over the last
16 year that this fee, you know, is really a tax on all
17 of our constituents. It's a tax that will take money
18 of my constituents' and everyone else's constituents'
19 pockets. And adding insult to injury my opinion it--
20 to put a fee to send it to the private businesses is
21 a precedent that we should not be setting. It's a
22 tax that in reality it will cost New Yorkers hundreds
23 of millions of dollars a year, and--and that's just
24 the reality. From--from my constituents for
25 constituents on the South Shore of Staten Island,

1
2 another reality of this bill is that it's going to
3 make people go to New Jersey, and--and people have
4 said well, there's tolls. And people go to--Staten
5 Islanders go to Jersey now to save money on gas, to
6 save money on lunch, on clothes, on--on shopping
7 already, you know, with deposit fees. It's just
8 another reason for Staten Islanders not to shop
9 locally, and to head over to Jersey and spend the day
10 there, and spend their hard earned money in a
11 different state, and that's the reality. That's the
12 reality of the people in my district and the people
13 in the South Shore. It's a hop, skip and a jump over
14 the Goethals, Bayonne or Outerbridge and they do that
15 and they take their families there and they spend the
16 whole day there. That's something that I would
17 rather have Staten Islanders stay on the island and
18 in the city. As I mentioned before, I think it dose
19 set a dangerous precedent. I know my colleague
20 Vanessa Gibson is concerned about a precedent. I--
21 it--it does set a dangerous precedent, and it's
22 solely enriches private businesses with no direct
23 public benefit from these funds. It doesn't go to
24 education. It doesn't go to recycling. It doesn't
25 go to litter initiatives. It goes to private

1
2 businesses. That doesn't sit well with me. Not I
3 would be for, you know, a normal tax because I would
4 vote no on a normal tax anyway, but let's just be
5 clear, no fees, no taxes. Enough. You know, my
6 constituents and, you know, I'm not going to vote on
7 legislation that continues to nickel and dime my
8 constituents. You know, the notion of plastic bags
9 end up on trees. Yeah, they do, but that's human
10 behavior. What are we going to do next? We're'
11 going--we're going to look to put--add another ten
12 cents in the coffee cup because our constituents
13 continue to throw it in the street. You know, people
14 litter and--and they don't get on plastic bags just
15 because they exist. They get on plastic bags because
16 people throw them in the streets, and throw them in
17 the wind, and it gets there. So, you know, part of
18 the--I don't think it's going to change behavior--I--
19 I don't believe that this bill is going to change
20 that. Will there be less plastic bags? Yes, but
21 there's still going to be bags all over the place, on
22 the street, and my clean-up teams are just going to
23 start to go out and clean 300 locations that we do
24 every year. The language in the bill that says not
25 less than five cents. I--I hear you Brad about a

1
2 scare tactic, but I'm a Republican. If you want
3 three-five cents, let's just say five cents. It--it
4 shouldn't be open to anything that--interpretation
5 where a business owner can charge 15 cents, 50 cents
6 a dollar. If--if you want to say five cents, it
7 should be five cents. I disagree with your
8 assessment that bags can't be recycled, and I know
9 we've had discussions on this throughout the last
10 year and a half. I have had discussions with Sims
11 and--and--and those folks. I believe that this city
12 should be putting in the capital investment to
13 recycle the bags. I think they can be recycled. So
14 my--from my conversations I--I have a different
15 assessment than what you do on recycling. And at the
16 very least, then we should just have at least a
17 definitive study on recycling and--or a definitive
18 discussion on just banning plastic bags or exploring
19 alternatives to plastics, single stream recycling.
20 I'm willing to sit at the table. I've been willing
21 to sit at the table to come up with other options.
22 You know, I've worked in my district on eWaste to
23 reduce illegal dumping. I want to be at the table.
24 I, you know, I want to put all these initiatives up
25 front. I just don't believe that adding a fee, which

1
2 I still believe is a tax, reaches the goal--your
3 intended goal. So I think all these options should
4 be on the table, and--and, you now, I've said this is
5 what I believe is bad policy. I think it's bad for
6 the city and for my constituents and, you know, I've
7 said this over the last few years, if it smells like
8 a tax, it looks like a tax, it acts like a tax, it's
9 a tax. And government should be looking at ways to
10 make our constituents' lives easier, not adding more
11 regulations and more fees to--to their--to their
12 backs and making life a little less--a little less
13 easier each day than a little bit more difficult. So
14 for all those reasons, I'm going to vote no, and send
15 it back to the chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you.

17 CLERK: Chair Reynoso.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you guys for--
19 -for voting, and I will--I will tell you who it will
20 be easier for are the families in the South Bronx,
21 North--North Brooklyn and Southeast Queens who
22 currently carry the burden of 75% are handling 75% of
23 the city's trash. As the Chair of the Committee of
24 Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, I have made
25 sustainability and environmental justice my main

1
2 priorities. So I want to stress why this issue
3 particularly affects low-income communities of color.
4 As you already heard from my colleagues, plastic bags
5 account for 91,000 tons of waste into landfills every
6 year in New York City. [coughs] One sanitation
7 truck holds about 12 tons of waste meaning plastic
8 bags account for more than 7,500 truck trips every
9 single year. These trucks travel primarily in three
10 low-income communities of color where the majority of
11 waste is processed in New York City roads, and those
12 again are North Brooklyn, the South Bronx and
13 Southeast Queens. These trucks bring not just fumes,
14 high levels of asthma and other respiratory problems,
15 noise pollution and dangerous streets to these
16 communities. Reducing plastic bag waste is just one
17 part of the city's larger goal setting zero waste
18 landfills by 2030. Reaching this goal would make a
19 huge difference in quality of life in the
20 environmental justice community. I want to stress
21 again that this bill is not about charging people for
22 bags. It's about encouraging people to use reusable
23 bags rather than plastic ones. The 34th District and
24 these communities of colors--of color are ready and
25 excited to continue to fight for environmental

1
2 justice. Communities of color are not incapable of
3 change. Actually, they historically have been the
4 catalyst to environment reform in the city of New
5 York, and will continue to do so. I want to thank
6 all my colleagues again for all their hard work on
7 this legislation, the Speaker for coming out in
8 support, and this bill again is an important step
9 towards sustainability and environmental justice for
10 our communities, which is--is the--how I started the
11 conversation, but how I want to end by time here in
12 the City Council is to make a difference
13 environmentally in the City of New York and this
14 legislation is helping do that, and I am going to
15 vote aye on this piece of legislation.

16 CLERK: By a vote of 3 in the
17 affirmative, 1 in the negative and 1 abstention, the
18 item has been adopted.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: And we are
20 adjourned. [gavel]

21

22

23

24

25

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 May 22, 2016