

**Testimony of Ellyn Canfield, Executive Director,
Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM)**

**New York City Council Committee on
Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing
250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor
10:00 AM**

Hearing on Intro 1657-2019 (“in relation to prohibiting street vending on certain streets in Dyker Heights in Brooklyn beginning Thanksgiving Day until New Year’s Day”)

October 3, 2019

Good morning, Chairman Espinal, Council Member Brannan and other members of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing. My name is Ellyn Canfield and I am the Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management. I am joined by Captain Robert Conwell who is the Commanding Officer of the 68th Precinct in Brooklyn, which covers Dyker Heights.

I am here today to testify on behalf of Intro 1657-2019, which would prohibit street vending on certain streets in Dyker Heights in Brooklyn beginning on Thanksgiving Day until New Year’s Day. I’ll start by explaining the mission and operations of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM) and our involvement with activities in this neighborhood.

CECM provides oversight and interagency coordination for events and activities taking place in streets, plazas, and other public spaces throughout the City. This includes coordination and oversight of procedures and operations in relation to event permitting and operations. CECM also encompasses the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) which issues permits for street festivals, block parties, farmers markets, commercial and promotional events, and other activities on streets, sidewalks and pedestrian plazas.

In addition to coordination and permitting, we play a primary role in communication with residents, community boards and other community based organizations, with the intent of ensuring that public events are safe, properly permitted, and in the best interest of all.

The display of holiday decorations in Dyker Heights is a local tradition that over the years has become a highly popular attraction for New York City residents as well as local and international tourists. Many homeowners put these decorations up the week after Thanksgiving and remain up until New Year’s Day. The prime viewing area of the lights is on 83rd and 84th Streets from 11th and 13th Avenues in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. The “Lights”, as they are commonly referred to, are now advertised by tour operators and receive a significant amount of media attention. Viewing the lights has become a prominent public event throughout the holiday season, with thousands of residents touring the neighborhood at peak times.

As the crowds have grown, residents and community members have raised a number of valid concerns stemming from traffic and pedestrian congestion. Primary among these concerns is an

increased presence of mobile food vendors, which further exacerbate crowding and have resulted in the following conditions:

1. Crosswalks, driveways, and fire hydrants being blocked by the trucks themselves and by the queues and crowds they create;
2. Residents have observed ambulances being delayed in reaching homes and are concerned that fire trucks and other emergency vehicles may be delayed;
3. Residents being blocked from entering their homes;
4. Mobile food vendors idling for hours, emitting bothersome and dangerous exhaust fumes;
5. Vending taking place in already prohibited areas, including private driveways and front lawns; and
6. Pileup of trash and food waste.

In 2017, Community Board 10 and the Dyker Heights Civic Association pursued conversations with CECM to explore if a SAPO permit could be granted for this community activity, giving the Community Board and the Dyker Heights Civic Association greater purview in managing activities. However, SAPO rules are not designed to address activities on private property.

In 2018, Community Board 10 and Council Member Brannan's office hosted a series of meetings for which CECM's support was requested to coordinate relevant city agencies to address non-SAPO permit mechanisms for addressing concerns. The meetings focused on vending, public safety, and traffic control.

In coordination with the Council Member and local Community Board, CECM organized a task force consisting of the following agencies that provide permitting and enforcement of vending activity: NYPD, Department of Sanitation, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Consumer Affairs.

The objective of the task force was to examine concerns raised by the community and to issue violations to vendors where appropriate. A full inspection was completed on Saturday, December 22, 2018, resulting in violations being issued to a number of mobile food vendors by relevant agencies. However, significant vending activity continued to take place, and the stated concerns persisted.

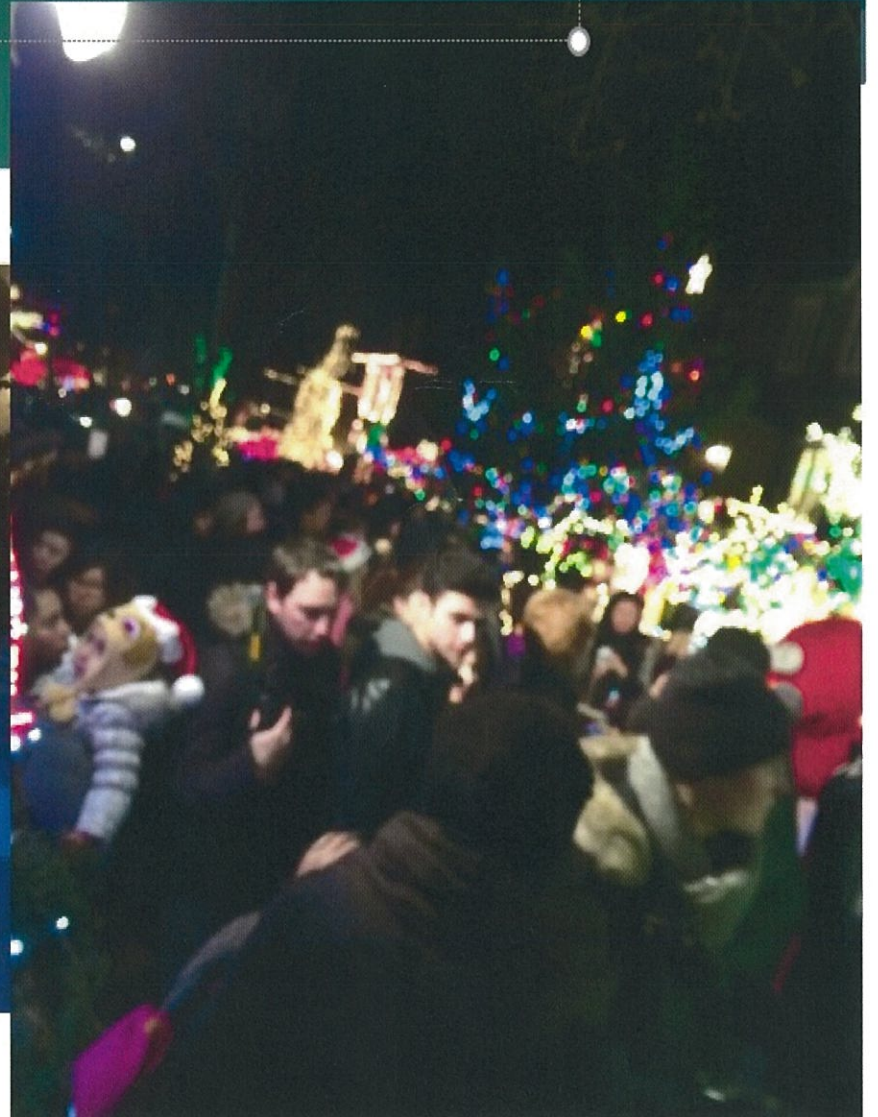
In conclusion, CECM supports the goals of Intro 1657-2019 and believes that it will aid in alleviating some of the safety and quality of life issues raised by community members and observed by CECM in our several years of involvement with the Dyker Heights Lights.

CECM looks forward to continuing our working partnership with Council Member Brannan, Community Board 10, the Dyker Heights Civic Association, and our partner agencies to ensure that the Dyker Heights Lights can be a safe and enjoyable activity for all.

I am happy to take your questions. Thank you.



STREET CONGESTION EXAMPLES











Community Board Ten

8119 5th Avenue • Brooklyn, NY 11209
(718) 745-6827 • Fax (718) 836-2447
Email: bk10@cb.nyc.gov
www1.nyc.gov/site/brooklyn10/index.page

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Testimony in Support of Intro 1657 Josephine Beckmann, District Manager Community Board 10 October 3, 2019

My name is Josephine Beckmann and I am the District Manager of Community Board Ten. I want to first thank the committee for holding this hearing on Intro. No. 1657. I am happy to be here to testify in support and am grateful to Council Member Justin Brannan for his hard work on this Intro and all his efforts to improve street safety conditions during the Dyker Heights Christmas Light Display season – locally known as “Dyker Lights”.

Dyker Lights is an organic street event that draws thousands of tourists and local residents to about a fifteen-block radius in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. Its tree lined streets with narrow sidewalks are easily filled to the curb with families and tourists who come to gaze at magnificent Christmas light displays affixed to residential homes. This begins the day after Thanksgiving and continues through January 2nd. It has been a local tradition for decades. In the last few years it has grown to overwhelm this local residential neighborhood. These residents have sought help from government with crowd control and safety.

This tourism boom is the result of growing social media publicity, news media, charter tour buses that begin advertising in September, NYCgo, Manhattan hotels and nearby state tours have created a must-see buzz. In recent years, food vendor trucks and general vendors transformed this once local light display into the feel of a commercialized street festival – which it is not.

Last year, frustrated residents and community leaders reached out to our local City Council Member Justin Brannan to secure additional city resources to aid in pedestrian and vehicular safety and crowd control. He was able to advocate for additional police resources for traffic control. In addition, a charter bus diversion plan to nearby 86th Street to unload passengers required police officers to direct traffic and work to keep pedestrians and tourists safe.

Community Board Ten

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Feedback from the 2018/19 season included calls for increased traffic control and pleas to address problems caused by vendors who continue to commercialize this unpermitted event. The vendors idle in front of homes for 12 hours per day for the 40 day duration spewing fumes into neighboring homes making noise on weekdays and weekends. The ice cream trucks with generators created choke points forcing pedestrians into the street, I have photos that show blocked intersections, illegally parked ice cream trucks and one resident submitted video of the Fire Department walking to a call because the fire truck could not get through the intersection.

It is our hope that the ban of vendors from the prime viewing area which entails the very concentrated area of 81st Street to 86th Street and 10th Avenue to 13th Avenue will improve pedestrian safety, reduce noise and fumes impacting local homes and remove the street festival feel to this organic local event.

Thank you.

October 3, 2019

Testimony by Fran Vella-Marrone
President of the Dyker Heights Civic Association
Before the NYC Council Committee on Consumer Affairs and
Business Licensing

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for holding this hearing regarding Int. No. 1657. I also want to thank Councilman Justin Brannan for sponsoring Int. No. 1657.

The Dyker Heights community has a long tradition of celebrating the Christmas season with outstanding Christmas displays that have become world renowned. So much so, that during the time between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, the neighborhood has earned the moniker "Dyker Lights".

As magnificent and magical as this time can be, it has also become a congested and sometimes dangerous environment for the residents as well as those who come to take in the displays. Each year the displays draw thousands of people including those arriving via tour buses. We need to remember that this area is a residential community and not an amusement park. As the popularity of the displays have grown, so have the problems.

The Dyker Heights Civic Association has worked closely with Community Board Ten to try address the issues facing the event such as traffic congestion, sanitation and overall safety. We have tried with the assistance of the NYPD and local elected officials to balance the concerns of the residents with the safety of the visitors.

It must be understood that this is an organic event occurring as result of homeowners expressing their faith and joy for the season that has turned into a full blown NYC event marketed throughout the city, the nation and around the world. It is not being marketed by the community itself but rather outside entities. However, because NYC does not recognize "Dyker Lights" as an actual event under the permitting process, it has been more and more difficult to manage and has caused a strain on the community.

By eliminating vendors in the affected area beginning on Thanksgiving Day until New Year's Day, Int. No. 1657 will have a great impact on improving conditions. Vending has an overwhelming negative impact by creating choke points on sidewalks and streets as well as litter, air and noise pollution. The presence of vendors produces a commercial-like atmosphere that does not belong in a residential community. Creating a vendor free zone will alleviate many of the problems plaguing the event. It will give the NYPD the opportunity to focus on a traffic plan that will keep attendees moving along as they simply view the displays. It will also help keep the area clean.

On behalf of the members of the Dyker Heights Civic Association and the Dyker Heights Community, I ask that the committee positively consider Int. No. 1657 and that the full Council vote to make it law. I would also impress upon you the expediency that is desired in order that this measure be in effect for the upcoming season. It is our hope that the Dyker Heights Christmas displays will be safe and enjoyable for all.

Again, thank you for your consideration.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1657 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELLYN CANFIELD

Address: _____

I represent: Mayor's office of citywide event

Address: Coordination and Management (CECM)

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Captain Robert Conwell

Address: NYPD

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Managing Attorney Michael Clarke

Address: NYPD

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1657 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lon Willis, Chair BK CB10

Address: _____

I represent: BROOKLYN CB10

Address: 81 19 5th Ave.

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1657 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Josephine Beckmann

Address: 8119 5 Avenue CB10

I represent: Community Board Ten

Address: 8119 5 Ave CB10

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1657 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barbara Vellucci

Address: 1065-77 St. B'klyn, NY

I represent: Fran Vella Marrone Dyker Heights

Address: Civic Assoc.