

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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November 14, 2025
Start: 10:41 a.m.
Recess: 11:04 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Lynn C. Schulman, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Justin L. Brannan
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Simcha Felder
Oswald Feliz
James F. Gennaro
Mercedes Narcisse

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Robert F. Holden
Christopher Marte
Erik D. Bottcher

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Okay. This is a pre-
3 recorded mic check for the Committee on Health.
4 Today's date is November 14th. This is being recorded
5 by Mike Kane in Hearing Room 1.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to today's New York City Council meeting for
8 the Committee on Health.

9 At this time... folks, quiet please, quiet
10 please. At this time, please silence all cell phones
11 and electronic devices to minimize disruptions.

12 At any time throughout today's
13 proceeding, do not approach the dais.

14 We thank you for your kind cooperation.

15 Chair, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [GAVEL] Good
17 morning. Pursuant to Council Rule 7.110, the
18 Committee on Health is holding a meeting today. It's
19 not a hearing. It's a meeting to consider
20 Introduction 967 sponsored by Council Member Holden.

21 I want to thank my Staff and Committee
22 Staff for their hard work preparing for this meeting
23 and for my Colleagues for being here today. We are
24 joined by Council Member Holden, Council Member
25 Brannan, Council Member De La Rosa, Council Member

Gennaro, Council Member Narcisse, Council Member Felder online, Council Member Marte, Council Member Feliz.

Before I give the floor to Council Member Holden, who as the first name sponsor has the privilege of being the first heard today, I want to remind everyone in attendance, no testimony will be accepted or heard at this meeting because the rule invoked by the bill sponsor calls for a meeting of the Committee to be held and this is not a public hearing. Council Member Holden and any Council Member who wishes to speak after him will have two minutes to make their statement.

Council Member Holden, the floor is yours.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mahatma Gandhi quoted, the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated, and that compassion should extend to all living beings, especially the most helpless. The greatness of a city is also measured by that. The greatness of a City Council should also be measured by that, and the greatness of a Council Member should be measured by that. Living beings should be treated

with respect and not tortured. Nobody's asking, this is servile work, by the way. This is work that they don't agree to. These horses don't, obviously, and you can't feel their pain. They're working in horrendous conditions. The streets of Manhattan are the worst in the entire world. The Central Park Conservancy has come out against this because it's a safety matter. Two horses broke away. Are we waiting for somebody to get killed? That's what we're waiting for. If somebody was killed, by the way, this Council would have acted already. Believe that. And that's the problem we have here. Look at the crowds. We're into other rooms. Look at the crowds outside. And this Committee chose not to have a hearing on this bill for four years. That's a disgrace. There's discrimination going on here, and we know it. And it's disgusting. I originally had a bill that would replace a horse with an electric carriage. Looks like this. It looks like a carriage, obviously, without the horse. It's electric. It's slow, but it's charming. And a corporation was going to donate these electric carriages. The union didn't want that. Why? They're protecting what? They're protecting the drivers? No. Who are they protecting? They're

protecting New Yorkers. This is not going to break away and run wild, get spooked. Horses are prey animals. That means when they are threatened, they have a defense of the only thing they could do is run. And what happens when they run with a carriage and people behind them? Tragedy. So I tried my best in this Council. I've introduced two bills on this. The first one I modified because some Council Members didn't like the idea of they call cars, this is not a car, in the park. But how we measure ourselves as a society is, again, how we treat animals. The voiceless. The helpless. And this is not something that I'm inventing, by the way, because how many cities around the United States have banned horse carriages in their cities? Chicago; Philadelphia; Canada; New Jersey; Salt Lake City; Montreal; Toronto; Key West, Florida; Palm Beach, Florida; Panama City Beach, Florida; Asheville, North Carolina; Biloxi, Mississippi; and then we go around the world, Amsterdam; Brussels; Barcelona; Beijing; Delhi. Again, it goes on. Melbourne; San Juan, I mean, I'm not going to read it all because it would take too long to eat up my two minutes.

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2 So Madam Chair, I move that the Committee
3 schedule a public hearing on Intro. 967 so the public
4 can testify and we can gather full input like we have
5 here, because nobody could speak today, before any
6 vote is taken. That's pursuant to Rule 7.110. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I will now open the
9 floor.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Madam Chair, my
11 motion is on the floor.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Council
13 Member.

14 I now open the floor to any Council
15 Member who would like to speak.

16 Council Member Gennaro.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Point of order.
18 The motion takes precedent.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: You're not a Member
20 of the Committee, Council Member, so we can't
21 entertain you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Madam Chair, I'm
23 going to file an injunction of discrimination.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's against the
3 rules, and I'm going to file an injunction. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Council Member
6 Gennaro.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Yeah. All I'm
8 looking to do is speak, and I don't know why Council
9 Member Holden would be afraid of... I think the only
10 thing he may be afraid of is that he issued a
11 statement that unfortunately didn't have any facts
12 other than those that the cities that have banned
13 horse carriages. How about this for a fact? The
14 industry has been in existence for 150 years, and not
15 one conviction of animal cruelty, and it's not like
16 the advocates are not out there every single day and
17 in the stables looking for any possible thing that
18 could lead to some sort of allegation of animal
19 cruelty, and that is a fact. What we really have here
20 is a religious belief that a horse shouldn't pull a
21 carriage, that they're tortured, which is stupid to
22 say, that they work under horrendous conditions, that
23 there is discrimination going on. I don't even know
24 who that's directed at. I wrote a bill in 2010. I've
25 been dealing with this industry since I came on as a

transportation policy analyst and environmental analyst in 1990 - where's the clock - in 1990, and this was under the Transportation Committee at that time, so that goes back to 1990, 35 years. I've been involved with this industry in an oversight capacity both as a staff member and as a member, and I wrote the bill that restricted the hours that they could work, that would set temperature limits high and low, that would mandate box stalls, that would give them five weeks' vacation, that would give them lifetime retirement on a farm for their full natural life. All kinds of reforms that we have put in place with the industry, and this is, I think, and to wipe out an industry and say, not only are you going to be out of business, but it's now (TIMER CHIME) up to you.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Please wrap up.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: So it's now up to the owners to home the horses someplace else. It costs 10,000 dollars a year to maintain a horse. Who's supposed to pay for that? So this is an ill-conceived and silly bill, which I would be happy to vote no on.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Council Member.

Now, Council Member De La Rosa would like to make remarks.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. I actually wasn't going to speak, but I've been so moved by Council Member Holden's comments that I must speak as the Chair of Labor for the City Council. We are talking about human beings who have jobs, who have to provide for their families, and since we're quoting Mahatma Gandhi, I wish this energy was present when we talk about undocumented people in the City of New York, homeless people in the City of New York, those people who are not able to fend for themselves and in this moment are voiceless because there's Members on this Committee that have been silent. When we've seen people pull up into New York City and remove people from our communities, and so I am proud to be the Labor Chair in this Council, and organized labor has stood and actually dripped blood for people, for civil and human rights across this nation, and we owe them the respect to today, respect how they earn a living wage for their families. I see children in the audience. Those children deserve a future, too. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

Council Member Narcisse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Chair. As we discuss the future of the horse carriages in the city, it is important to acknowledge that this issue is not one-sided. There are legitimate concerns about animal welfare that deserve our attention. I'm an animal lover, yeah, but we must also recognize the workers whose livelihood are tied in this industry. Many of these drivers are immigrants, long-time New Yorkers, who have invested heavily in their medallions. That is just like when we were talking about the taxi drivers. They're often taking one substantial loans with the expectation of a steady, reliable work. Any policy we consider must take into account the real financial consequences for these families and ensure that we do not ignore or dismiss the human cost attached to those medallions. We need a thoughtful approach that addresses the safety, the welfare, without destabilizing the lives of the working people. As an immigrant myself, I hear the quote. Like I said, I'm an animal lover as well. This needs to be addressed, one way or the other. I want to strike a balance with this process. This is New Yorkers. We are all New Yorkers. I feel like the

transition that was supposed to take place as my Colleagues mentioned four years ago. My whole thing is, if we are truly New Yorkers, we have to approach this with respect for each other and most importantly, the livelihood of those folks that invested in the City of New York. Thank you, my Colleague.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. Anybody else that's a Committee Member want to make remarks?

Yes, Council Member Brannan.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair. As someone who got his start in politics as an animal rights activist, I've always said that those who do not understand the passion of animal welfare activists often assume some sort of ulterior motivation. The average person simply can't believe that some of us just really, truly care about the welfare of animals, nothing more and nothing less. Sadly, in the last few months, the issue of the Central Park horse carriages has been completely poisoned and hijacked by bad actors and desperate people who frankly do not care about animals at all, they just care about getting paid and it's making everybody look bad. Hypocrisy in the animal rights

movement only fuels public skepticism and makes it harder for activists to be taken seriously, to gain widespread support and to make meaningful progress.

As the only Member, I think, of the City Council who has meat is murder tattooed on his neck, you can't tell me I don't care about animals. I have always believed that my problem with the horses has been getting the horses to and from the stables, I have no issue with the horses in Central Park, I do believe that there's a compromise to be found, that compromise is not to be found in Rider's Law. Talk about the sponsor of the bill, I haven't spoken to him in four years, this is not how you do business in the City Council, it's about relationships. Bob and I have never had a single conversation about this bill, I'm on leadership in the Council, I care about animal welfare, not one conversation did he come to me and say, hey, how can we move this bill forward, what do you think of it, how do we progress it, how do we work it out, not one conversation. To bring us here on a Friday for a shotgun vote is just not how you do business in the City Council. So with all that in mind, including the fact that the Mayor suddenly woke up a month ago and started caring about the horses,

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2 never cared about it before, I can only imagine why
3 he suddenly cares about the horses, I'm sure that'll
4 all come out in the wash, but with all of that in
5 mind, I'll be voting no today.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Council
7 Member Brannan.

8 Anybody else on the Committee?

9 No? Okay. Council Member Marte.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you, Chair
11 Lynn, and thank you Council Member Holden for
12 introducing this bill and being a tireless advocate
13 for the voiceless. There's very few times where I
14 actually congratulate our Mayor. I have a long track
15 record of rallying in the steps of City Hall,
16 sometimes even suing the Mayor. But what the Mayor
17 has put forward, I believe, is a win-win solution.
18 When we talk about protecting the workers, currently
19 on average, workers make less than 40,000 dollars a
20 year. What the City is offering in total can be more
21 than 70,000 a year. This is a plan that not only
22 takes into account the amount of work you put in, but
23 also the additional benefits that you can get as a
24 City worker that everyone here cherishes because we
25 know the value of working for the City and being

protected by the City. Look, we're in 2025. If it was an individual, if it was a human pushing a horse carriage, we will call that inhumane. If it was any other living animal, whether it's dogs or cats, pushing the carriage, we will call that inhumane. Why do we have to put horses at a different level? And that's why I've been supportive of this bill. That's why I think we should end this inhumane practice. But as many of my Colleagues said, we do have an offer, a compromise in the table to make sure that the workers who have been working tirelessly and many of them loving these animals are protected for the future while also making sure that we can move forward as a city and evolve our economy to make sure that we have electric vehicles that are safe, that people will love, and that we become an icon in Central Park in New York City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Council Member.

Council Member Bottcher.

COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: This fight has been going on for decades, decades and decades and decades, and it has caused tremendous pain and continues to cause tremendous pain. There is a path

forward to be found here. There is a path forward that protects the jobs of everyone involved and that gets the horses out of Midtown traffic. I refuse to believe that we have to choose between the two. And we can build a system, find a solution here. The status quo is not acceptable. This industry has continued to shrink over time, and it will continue to shrink. That's just a reality. But there's a way, I have to believe there's a way forward where the workers can benefit, the horses can come out of Midtown traffic, and we could change the status quo. It's going to take everyone coming to the table with a real determination to find a solution and kicking the can down the road and just sticking with the status quo is not going to do it. So, I really challenge all my Colleagues (TIMER CHIME) to show that leadership and to bring everyone together and to come up with a path forward, but the status quo is not acceptable.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. Thank you.

So, I'm going to give Council Member Holden one minute rebuttal because his name was mentioned.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.

3 Since my name was mentioned by Council Member
4 Brannan, he had promised when he ran for office to
5 support the horse carriage ban and he reneged and I
6 kept asking him in the first four years of this term,
7 in the first year or so, I asked him, are you signing
8 on, are you signing on, are you, yep, I'll do it next
9 week, I'll do it next week, I'll do it next week. So
10 he reneged and he claims to be an animal rights
11 person, but so why wouldn't he sign on? Because he
12 knew there was a problem, he promised people he would
13 sign on and he didn't. Well, that's consistent with
14 many, many politicians, but not me, I said I would
15 support this, I support it. I've been fighting now
16 more than four years for this and yet it gets blocked
17 because of discrimination. It gets blocked because of
18 people who are actually in lockstep with special
19 interests, not the interest of New Yorkers, not the
20 interest of animals, not the interest of the City of
21 New York. And we held up a chart that, again, workers
22 would make more, a lot more than making now. Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. Council

25 Member, thank you.

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All right, now pursuant to Council Rule
7.110, I will call Intro. 9.67 to vote.

Clerk, please call the roll.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:

Greetings. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call
vote, Committee on Health. Introduction 9.67.

Council Member Brannan.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: No.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Gennaro.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: No.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Feliz.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: No.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: De La

Rosa.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: No.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Menin.

Narcisse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Abstain.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Zhuang.

Felder. Council Member Felder.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Can you hear me?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes, sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. I know maybe
this is because of my lack of the experience. Are we

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2 voting on having a hearing or are we voting on the
3 issue itself?

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: One
5 moment, Council Member.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Council Member
7 Felder, we're voting on whether to send the bill out
8 to the body.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And the bill would
10 ban the horse carriages?

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: In other words,
13 the hearing, so we're not voting on a hearing, is
14 that correct?

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: That is correct.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. So, if we're
17 voting on a ban, I vote no.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: That's not what
19 we're voting on, Council Member. We're voting on
20 whether to send this particular bill to the floor.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm sorry. The
22 sponsor, Member Holden, started the meeting with what
23 I thought he talked about, having a hearing, but now
24 the Chair is explaining that that's not what we're
25 voting on. Is that correct?

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2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yeah. What is your
3 vote, Council Member?

4 Council Member, do you want to vote to
5 vote to push the bill forward or no? We have to move
6 forward.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes. I want to
8 push the bill forward.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
10 you, Council Member.

11 Marmorato. Ariola.

12 Point of clarification. Legislation in
13 this Committee needs to garner six affirmative votes
14 by Committee Members for adoption.

15 With a vote of one in the affirmative,
16 four in the negative, and one abstention, the item is
17 defeated.

18 Chair Schulman.

19 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Abstain.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: My
21 apologies.

22 Current vote is one in the affirmative,
23 four in the negative, and two abstentions. Item
24 remains defeated by Committee.

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2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you all. I am
3 now adjourning this meeting. [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 December 4, 2025