

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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June 27, 2013  
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway  
Committee Rm, 14<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E:  
Letitia James  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Maria del Carmen Arroyo  
James F. Gennaro  
Robert Jackson  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

John Doherty  
Commissioner  
Department of Sanitation

Ron Gonen  
Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Recycling and Sustainability

Harry Nespoli  
President  
Sanitation Workers Union

John Delgiorno  
Representing the Local

Christina Datz-Romero  
Executive Director  
Lower East Side Ecology Center

Robin Barton  
Solid Waste Advisory Board

Eric Goldstein  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Rebecca Lurie  
Consortium for Worker Education

Tanya Blay  
Master Composter

Katie Ferguson  
Executive Director  
Brooklyn Food Coalition

Kendal Christianson  
Consultant to Insinkerator

Greg Todd

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

Daniel Bowman Simon  
Urban Planner and Community Gardener  
Compost Community Garden

Wendy Sheer

Vandra Thorburn  
President  
Vokashi

Ann Aust

Lisa Maylor  
District 3 Green Schools

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2 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good morning  
3 everyone. I apologize for being late but as you  
4 know we were here rather late until 3:30 voting on  
5 the budget. So again, I apologize. Good  
6 afternoon and welcome to the hearing of the New  
7 York City Council's Committee on Sanitation and  
8 Solid Waste Management. I am Letitia James, Chair  
9 of the Committee.

10 Today we will be discussing two  
11 different topics. The first is oversight of  
12 private snow removal contracts. The second  
13 concerns Intro number 1107 and that's a bill  
14 sponsored by Council member Debbie Rose who will  
15 be joining us shortly that would put into law a  
16 pilot program for the collection and composting of  
17 source separated residential organic waste.

18 Beginning with the private snow  
19 contracts. In the wake of the Blizzard of  
20 December 2010, the general consensus emerged that  
21 the city's inadequate response to the blizzard  
22 related in part to the failure of private snow  
23 removal contractors to show up when the city fell  
24 behind the storm. In response both the  
25 Administration and the Council recommended

1  
2 strengthening the city's private snow removal  
3 contracts to ensure that private contracts show up  
4 when we need them. Then Deputy Mayor Steven  
5 Goldsmith emphasized this point in his testimony  
6 before his committee on January 10, 2011. And  
7 this need for firm commitments from private  
8 contractors was further emphasized in the  
9 preliminary review of the city's response to the  
10 December 2010's blizzard issued by the Mayor's  
11 offices of Operations and City Wide Emergency  
12 Communications. In response I sponsored the  
13 Council required DASNED to issue an annual snow  
14 response and preparedness report specified among  
15 other things, all private entities that act on  
16 behalf of the city for snow event preparation  
17 response and the inventory of privately owned snow  
18 management equipment and resources used by the  
19 city.

20 In January 2012, DASNED entered  
21 into a contract with several different snow  
22 removal contractors to remove snow from tertiary  
23 streets. Those contracts are up for renewal in  
24 January of 2014. Critics of these contracts,  
25 including the Sanitation Workers Union, opposed

1  
2 these contracts on the grounds that they supplant  
3 city employees and exceed the scope of the  
4 Administration and Council's recommendations. We  
5 will be hearing from both the Department of  
6 Sanitation and from Harry Nespoli, the President  
7 of the Sanitation Workers Union on this topic.

8 In addition, we are here today to  
9 discuss Intro 1107 sponsored by Council member  
10 Debbie Rose related to a pilot for composting  
11 residential food waste. Composting organic waste  
12 remains the holy grail of solid waste  
13 sustainability. Organics represents more than 30%  
14 of our waste stream. Aiming meaningful diversion  
15 of that materials would go a long way towards  
16 bolstering a lagging recycling diversion rate. To  
17 be sure there are many laudable efforts to compost  
18 organic waste locally. Groups such as Grown NYC  
19 deserve great credit for moving composting forward  
20 in New York.

21 This year for example, Grow NYC  
22 announced that it had collected one million pounds  
23 of residential food waste since the inception of  
24 the green market food scraps collection program.  
25 And today all that composting is occurring

1  
2 locally. How we advance from a community level to  
3 a citywide program is of course the million-dollar  
4 question. Over the last few months DSNY has taken  
5 meaningful steps forward dedicating department  
6 resources to pilot residential food waste  
7 collection. DSNY stands to expand their pilot  
8 over the course of the next year. Intro 1107  
9 would codify this pilot and establish this set of  
10 requirements to ensure that the pilot continues  
11 well into the next Administration covers all five  
12 boroughs and includes a robust reporting  
13 requirement on the success and failure of the  
14 program.

15 With nothing further, let us begin  
16 with testimony from the Administration on private  
17 snow removal contracts. Good morning,  
18 Commissioner. Good morning. And I apologize for  
19 being late and you may begin.

20 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Thank you.  
21 I don't blame you. Staying up that late. You  
22 were very busy. Okay, good morning, Chair James  
23 and members of the Committee on Sanitation and  
24 Solid Waste Management. I am John Doherty,  
25 Commissioner for the Department of Sanitation. I

1  
2 am here to testify on the Departments private  
3 contracting in connection with our winter storm on  
4 operations management. With me today, to my right  
5 is first Deputy Commissioner Buddy Sullivan and my  
6 left is Ron Gonen, Deputy Commissioner for  
7 Recycling and Sustainability.

8 I will make a brief opening  
9 statement after which I would be happy to answer  
10 any of your questions. In response to the snow  
11 events, the Department follows a long established  
12 operating guidelines and protocol for managing  
13 over 17,000 roadway lane miles. Priority must be  
14 given to these primary highways and streets so  
15 that emergency vehicles and other vehicles  
16 delivering essential goods into the city such as  
17 food and medicines are able to travel safely.  
18 Following the Blizzard of 2010, an extensive  
19 review by the Administration and City Council on  
20 the Department was undertaken to determine how to  
21 respond to the removal of snow during extreme  
22 winter storms and what measures we could adapt to  
23 enhance our operation and management of snow  
24 events.

25 In November 2011 and December 2012,



1 we published and distributed copies of the  
2 Department's borough based snow plan. These plans  
3 serve as a step-by-step guide on how the  
4 Department fights a snowstorm and are provided to  
5 all Council members borough presidents and  
6 committee boards. As part of this comprehensive  
7 review the Administration developed a 15-point  
8 plan to enhance our ability to address large  
9 snowstorms. One of the point sin the is to  
10 expeditiously utilize private contractors for  
11 assistance to ensure that the city is able to use  
12 private contractors promptly and to position them  
13 before a large storm begins the city determined it  
14 would need to compensate vendors to be on standby  
15 for the city.  
16

17 Additionally, this step of our  
18 contract structure has been successfully  
19 implemented by their Port Authority as the same  
20 type of contractors at the Port Authority of New  
21 York and New Jersey. The Department issued two  
22 procurements to obtain contractor's assistance for  
23 large storms. One was for plowing tertiary  
24 streets and one for plowing and hauling and  
25 towing. These contracts did not result in a loss

1  
2 of jobs or reduction in the work force. For the  
3 2012, 2013 winter season that covered last  
4 November to this past April, the Department had  
5 entered into contracts with five separate  
6 contractors who worked to provide 103 piece of  
7 equipment for piling all tertiary streets in the  
8 37 community districts that have tertiary streets.  
9 The contractors are paid on a flat fee plus a snow  
10 event lump sum and a standby fee to compensate the  
11 contractors for committing their equipment  
12 exclusively for the Department during the winter  
13 season. These contracts must be activated by the  
14 Department with an option when six inches of snow  
15 or more has been forecasted for the city by the  
16 National Weather Services.

17                   Additionally, during the February  
18 storm that dumped ten inches in this city, the  
19 Department had contracted 17 contractors with a  
20 131 pieces of equipment required for piling and  
21 hauling operations and towing. The contractors  
22 are paid an hourly rate each piece of equipment  
23 and the operator's equipment must be available on  
24 standby to supplement the Department's snow  
25 clearance and removal operations and for towing

1 private vehicles interfering with plowing  
2 operations during and after heavy snowfalls as  
3 needed. Contractors are also paid a standby fee  
4 per piece of equipment reserved for Department  
5 needs. The contract can be similarly activated by  
6 the Department if there is a forecast of six  
7 inches or more of snow. Under this contract, the  
8 equipment is specifically assigned to one of the  
9 seven-department city wide zones. The Department  
10 deployed certain equipment under this contract in  
11 advance of the February '13 snowstorm.  
12

13 Prior to these two procurements the  
14 Department needed to declare a procurement  
15 emergency to obtain contractor's assistance for  
16 major snow events. Since procurement,  
17 declarations have also occurred after a major  
18 snowstorm hit the city.

19 Lastly, during the 2012, 2013  
20 winter storm the city had 24 inches of snow and  
21 overall the department spent 38 million for snow  
22 plowing, road deicing operations and overtime to  
23 handle the season snowstorms.

24 I am going to turn it over now.  
25 That's my testimony. I am going to turn it over

1  
2 to Ron Gonen for his testimony on the compost if  
3 that works for you. Okay. Ron.

4           RON GONEN: Thank you. Good  
5 morning, Chair James and members of the Committee  
6 on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am  
7 Ron Gonen, Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability  
8 and Recycling for the Department of Sanitation.  
9 Thank you for holding this hearing on Intro number  
10 1107, authorizing the creation of a pilot program  
11 to collect organic material from residences. The  
12 department also appreciates the opportunity this  
13 morning to share with you some of the early  
14 findings to date in our new pilot organics  
15 collection program.

16           Before I begin, the department  
17 would like to publicly thank Speaker Quinn,  
18 Council member Brewer, Council member Jackson,  
19 Council member James, Council member Rose, Council  
20 member Oddo and all of the participating residents  
21 and school staff and organics programs. I will  
22 make a brief opening statement after which I would  
23 be happy to answer your questions.

24           Organic material, which is  
25 comprised of food scraps, soiled paper and leaf

1  
2 and yard waste comprises more than 30% of the  
3 department managed daily refuse collected by the  
4 department. Recognizing that we currently pay  
5 over 85 million dollars annually for nearly all of  
6 this material to be exported to out of state  
7 landfills for disposal and that landfills are one  
8 of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the  
9 department began to taking steps to divert organic  
10 material from the waste stream going to landfills.  
11 We began with supporting the green market drop off  
12 programs where residents can drop off their  
13 organic waste for collection. And now exists in  
14 all five boroughs.

15 In September of 2012, the  
16 department partnered with the Department of  
17 Education to establish a school food waste  
18 collection program that began in select schools in  
19 Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island. We hope to  
20 have all of the city schools participating by the  
21 end of 2014, 2015 school year.

22 The Department is also conducting a  
23 pilot program in high-rise residential buildings.  
24 The first two buildings to participate in the  
25 program are the Helena high rise building in

1  
2 Midtown and Morningside Gardens, a large apartment  
3 complex in Morningside Heights. In the coming  
4 year, we will continue to expand the high-rise  
5 residential pilot program in all five boroughs.  
6 Most recently, the department initiated an  
7 organics collection pilot program for single-  
8 family homes.

9                   The first neighborhood is the  
10 Westerly neighborhood on Staten Island. The  
11 program will expand to neighborhoods in all five  
12 boroughs this fall. In the Westerly neighborhood  
13 there are presently 3,215 households participating  
14 on a voluntary basis. Since the inception of the  
15 pilot through June 22<sup>nd</sup>. We have collected more  
16 than 52 tons of organic material for participating  
17 households. During the pilot program for both  
18 schools and residential properties, organic  
19 material that the city would have paid to export  
20 to landfills will instead be converted into either  
21 compost and organic fertilizer that is donated to  
22 local parks and gardens are sold to local  
23 landscapers or converted into natural gas via the  
24 anaerobic digesters at the Newtown Creek  
25 wastewater treatment facility operated by the

1 city's Department of Environmental Protection.

2  
3 As part of Mayor Bloomberg's  
4 ambitious and comprehensive sustainability  
5 strategy under PlanNYC. We aim to double the  
6 amount of the department-managed waste that is  
7 diverted from landfills to 30% by 2017. Our goal  
8 is to promote and support a system of sustainable  
9 solid waste management that minimizes waste and  
10 maximizes recycling. At the forefront of the  
11 department's plan to reduce the amount of  
12 materials sent to landfills is to increase the  
13 amount and types of material that can be accepted  
14 in our recycling program and to provide the  
15 infrastructure and outreach to encourage residents  
16 to participate in our expanding recycling program  
17 in order to achieve these goals.

18 Organic material that is  
19 contemplated by this legislation should be  
20 separated and diverted in the waste stream.  
21 Additionally, we expect the proper and  
22 environmentally sound collection of food waste to  
23 help New York City reduce odor and vermin issues.  
24 Currently we place our food waste with our refuse  
25 in black bags that sit on the curb waiting for

1  
2 department collection. This can attract vermin  
3 which can easily smell and access the food waste.  
4 With the proper and environmentally sound  
5 collection of organic material, organics are  
6 placed in special organics containers that are  
7 sealed tight with a lid. Which means that vermin  
8 cannot smell the food waste nor access it.  
9 Separating organic material is a valuable  
10 environmental and economic opportunity for New  
11 York.

12 In addition, a bill recently  
13 introduced in the Council would ban polystyrene  
14 foam from food service establishments. While  
15 polystyrene foam is problematic due to the damage  
16 it causes to the expensive recycling equipment  
17 when it gets into the recycling stream. It is an  
18 even greater hindrance to the growth of an  
19 environmentally sound organics program.  
20 Polystyrene is difficult to remove at best and is  
21 considered a dangerous contaminant in compost  
22 since it never biodegrades. Fundamentally, a  
23 robust and successful organics collection program  
24 cannot exist with a significant presence of  
25 polystyrene foam in the waste stream.



1  
2 In addition to letters from  
3 numerous community organizations supporting the  
4 ban, cities with successful organics programs like  
5 San Francisco, Seattle and Portland have sent  
6 letters detailing the importance of their own  
7 polystyrene foam bans to the organics programs.  
8 Banning foam in New York City will ensure a  
9 successful organics program and the creation of a  
10 valuable compost product.

11 Diverting organic materials from  
12 the department managed waste stream will reduce  
13 our overall organic waste disposal costs. At our  
14 current average landfill disposal rates, the  
15 department pays over 85 million dollars annually  
16 to export organic material to landfills.  
17 Diverting a significant amount of organic material  
18 would save the city tens of millions of dollars  
19 annually in disposal fees generate a valuable  
20 organic fertilizer for parks and gardens and  
21 generate local renewable energy via anaerobic  
22 digesters.

23 The proposed legislation under  
24 consideration today is an important first step  
25 that will allow the department to study the

1  
2 feasibility of organics collection with an  
3 emphasis on participation rates and tonnage  
4 diversion and thus allow the department to  
5 establish the most cost efficient waste collection  
6 system of the city of New York.

7 In closing, the department wishes  
8 to thank the committee, bringing the subject of  
9 organics collection to the forefront of today's  
10 public discussion and debate. And also for  
11 providing me this opportunity today to help  
12 illustrate the positive benefits and respond to  
13 any misconceptions on this important initiative.  
14 We look forward to working with you to accomplish  
15 the mutually agreed goals of the important  
16 legislation. I am now happy to answer your  
17 questions.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.  
19 First let me begin with questioning the  
20 Commissioner in regards to the snow contracts.  
21 Commissioner, in what ways has the department used  
22 private contracts for plowing of tertiary streets  
23 that is different before the blizzard as opposed  
24 to currently?

25 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Since the

1  
2 minute passed, the tertiary streets are last  
3 streets to get cleared of snow. Primary,  
4 secondary and then into the tertiary so they were  
5 on the end of the plow and salting rounds which  
6 did create problems for people living on those  
7 streets. We realized that by having the  
8 contractors here to do the tertiary streets there  
9 onsite when it starts snowing and they continue to  
10 plow those streets all through the snowstorms. So  
11 they are there ahead of time and the tertiary  
12 streets are getting done as fast as the primary  
13 streets. So it is a big improvement in the snow  
14 clearing operation.

15 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And before the  
16 blizzard of 2010, did the DOT and/or the Parks  
17 Department responsible for tertiary streets and in  
18 what role did these other agencies play in terms  
19 of plowing of streets?

20 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: The  
21 department is responsible for plowing of all  
22 streets. Historically, the Department of  
23 Transportation has provided 76 plows each year on  
24 a city wide basis and we normally assign them to  
25 the secondary roads. They are big trucks, big

1  
2 plows, and dump trucks. The tertiary streets in  
3 most cases, you need a small plow or a pick up  
4 truck or a small little haul so that we have some  
5 in our fleet.

6 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So the critics  
7 of these contracts, they opposed these contracts  
8 on the grounds that they supplant the city  
9 employees and exceeds the scope of the  
10 Administration as well as the City Council. What  
11 is your response to that?

12 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Well, we  
13 still have the same amount of people. Actually  
14 when you look over a couple of years, a head count  
15 for sanitation workers are slightly increased.  
16 The last two years, we have been at about 6,100  
17 sanitation workers, our budgeted number. We  
18 haven't reduced that and we went to '14. We are  
19 going to go up about 60, almost 62,000 sanitation  
20 workers. Again, a slight increase in '14's budget  
21 on that. So we haven't seen any reductions on  
22 sanitation workers.

23 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the cost of  
24 these snow contracts? What's the cost?

25 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: The cost of

1  
2 the snow contracts for '13, for last year of  
3 course is just over 1 million dollars for the  
4 standby fee and the one storm that we used them  
5 on. In '14, it's going to a little higher. It  
6 will be about 2.18 million.

7 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: What explains  
8 the cost? What's the reason for the cost  
9 increase?

10 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Increase.  
11 Well, first of all, one of the contractors as you  
12 probably know, we had a default. They never  
13 showed up. It did hurt us a little bit during the  
14 snowstorm for them not showing up. So we had to  
15 get replacement contractors for them and they were  
16 on the contract list. They had bid and their bids  
17 were not the lowest bid so we went ahead and went  
18 a little bit higher on our price.

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what are  
20 the consequences of that company defaulting?

21 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: We indexed  
22 them and we are going after them for liquidated  
23 damages.

24 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: For the full  
25 cost of the contract?

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2                   COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: We will be  
3 updating the attorneys to see what we can get. We  
4 want to get the most we can out of them. I think  
5 the comping in the real world is going to be  
6 tough. I think they just folded up and went away.  
7 But we intend to go after them and we have indexed  
8 them so they can never do city business again with  
9 us or any other agency. And we will continue to  
10 pursue them with the liquidated damages.

11                   CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And do you  
12 envision the role of contractors expanding,  
13 increasing, or staying the same?

14                   COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Staying the  
15 same. I think this mix of the tertiary streets  
16 with the private contractors and our own  
17 sanitation workers I think works out very good for  
18 the public for the snow operation. When you think  
19 about the heavy storm we had in 2010. 24 inches I  
20 believe it was or more in some places. It was  
21 very difficult when you have to get into those  
22 tertiary streets. It takes a long time to dig out  
23 12, 24 inches of snow but when you have somebody  
24 in there continuing to plow all the time, you keep  
25 them open and the snow doesn't build up so you can

1  
2 provide good service to that community and good  
3 service if they need emergency vehicles.

4 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So,  
5 Commissioner, I am sort of confused. That standby  
6 contracts, standby fee that they are paid whether  
7 it rains or not. Yes?

8 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And once they  
10 perform, assuming that there is snow. Do they get  
11 an additional fee?

12 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And that all  
14 depends upon the amount of snow.

15 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: It depends  
16 on when we call them in. In 2011 we didn't call  
17 them in so all they got was the standby fee. Last  
18 year we called them in.

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And is there a  
20 cap on how much we would pay them in the event of  
21 a storm or?

22 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Well, it  
23 would depend. No. When they come in for a storm,  
24 there is a set fee. They get a set fee. The only  
25 time that we change if we had a worst storm and we

1  
2 call them in more often. If we had more storms  
3 over 6 inches or major storms we would call them  
4 more.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And how much  
6 money in the budget is set aside in the event  
7 that, or how much money has been set aside in the  
8 budget for these contractors in total?

9 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: It's not set  
10 aside specifically. We know what we may have to  
11 pay. We don't know for sure but we have the snow  
12 budget, I believe the '14 budget is about 58  
13 million. Last year it was 60 million. So it's a  
14 snow budget and all our expenses for these  
15 contractors as well as our own expenses and other  
16 city agencies' expenses for snow operations are  
17 funded out of that budget.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Is there any  
19 language in any of these contracts that prohibits  
20 the supplanting of city employees?

21 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: I don't  
22 believe there is.

23 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Is there, are  
24 you opposed to incorporating any language that  
25 would prohibit the supplanting of any city



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employees?

COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: I think we have legislation in place now that you mentioned early on that addresses that.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. And what is the recourse if in fact there is supplanting of city employees?

COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Well, I don't see that happening because we would have to abide by the legislation.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. And you're confident that we are abiding by the-

COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yes, I am.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. Let me turn now to composting and so Mr. Gonen, I heard you I think Brian Lehrer, was that you?

RON GONEN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: About two weeks ago?

RON GONEN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: You are good.

RON GONEN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And you are also on New York 1?

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RON GONEN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: It's not that I'm stalking you. It's just coincidental. So can you tell me a little bit how we are doing on this pilot program? Has there been a report? An analysis? Are there any objective findings on the pilot program?

RON GONEN: We are happy with the program so far. We have been measuring participation rates, tonnage, as well as contamination and so far we feel like we are on target in terms of where we expected and hope to be.

COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: I think one of the things I would add to that with the schools that we have on that Ron brought on both in Manhattan and Brooklyn, when we went to the food waste there were about city wide, about 15 or 16% diversion with the paper melt, with the plastic. They went up to almost 36% so the numbers better than doubled once we got the food waste in it. So the schools are a very good program because the concentration of material and you know, we have to give a lot of credit to the Department of

1  
2 Education. Their staff and Ron worked with them  
3 very closely and his staff to gain their  
4 cooperation and educate them and provide them with  
5 the containers. This container out front happens  
6 to be for the residential. We have a similar type  
7 container for the bigger stuff such as the schools  
8 that is much larger and takes a lot more material.  
9 64 gallons versus 13 gallons so.

10 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So Mr. Gonen,  
11 could you just sort of demonstrate one of the, I  
12 should say, not criticisms from some of the  
13 callers that called into Brian Lehrer was that  
14 this waste would attract vermin? And so.

15 [off mic]

16 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes, sure.

17 [off mic]

18 RON GONEN: The focus of the  
19 organics program is to help us divert waste from  
20 landfills and help save on our exports  
21 expenditures. That being said, one of the  
22 additional benefits to an effective organics  
23 program is we think that it can help reduce the  
24 vermin issues in New York City. The reason we  
25 expect that to happen is today we dispose of our

1  
2 food waste along with the rest of our refuse in  
3 black bags. We put those black bags out on the  
4 curb. It waits for a few hours until collection  
5 comes by. That's very easy for rats, number one  
6 to smell, number two to access. When you run an  
7 effective organics program that food waste that  
8 was traditionally in a black bag is now going into  
9 a specially designed food waste container that's  
10 hermetically sealed. It has a lid on it and it  
11 has a latch. And so you have taken food waste  
12 that used to be easy for rats to smell and access  
13 and you have now put it into a container that one,  
14 they can't smell food waste and number two, they  
15 can't access it so.

16 One of the additional benefits that  
17 we expect from this program is that it could  
18 potentially reduce the vermin issues.

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And would that  
20 container be lined with some sort of a plastic bag  
21 or?

22 RON GONEN: Yes. So, the residents  
23 who receive the program.

24 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes.

25 RON GONEN: They receive this

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container and inside the container is a smaller container.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And in that container and there is another container.

RON GONEN: So the container comes with these biodegradable plastic liners for this container. These are also available at all of the stores in the neighborhoods where we deploy our service but as an incentive when we launched the program we were able to provide one month supply of these compostable liners so. Most residents take this container and they put it on their kitchen countertop. They put their food waste in this container usually it's lined with the compostable liner and when it's full they take it outside and they put it into their larger bin. There are some residents who just take their food waste directly and put it into this bin.

So this is an added convenience that a lot of the residents like to have and use but all of the food waste goes in here. You can line it with a compostable plastic liner. You can use paper bags as well. Or you can just put the food waste in. So there is a number of different

1  
2 ways to dispose of the food waste in here. You  
3 close it up. Lock it. When sanitation comes by  
4 they open it up and dump it into the truck.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And correct me  
6 if I am wrong. Another way that one can deal with  
7 the vermin issue is to freeze your food waste.  
8 Correct?

9 RON GONEN: Well, a lot of the  
10 people that use the greenmarket program will take  
11 their food waste during the week, put it in a bag.

12 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

13 RON GONEN: And each day put it  
14 into the freezer where it freezes. Rats obviously  
15 don't get access to it and then they take it to  
16 the greenmarket on Saturday or Sunday. One of the  
17 reasons why we are very excited about the  
18 prospects of participation in the curbside program  
19 is the greenmarket program has been very  
20 successful so far. It has high participation  
21 rates. If you think about the fact that people  
22 need to save this material every night, put it  
23 their freezer and then schlep it to the  
24 greenmarket on a Saturday or Sunday. There are  
25 over 20,000 New Yorkers that have participated in

1  
2 that program. That means that if we can come to  
3 directly to people's homes we can expect  
4 participation to be even greater.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And can you  
6 talk a little bit about energy and how some of our  
7 food waste could be converted into energy?

8 RON GONEN: Absolutely. There is a  
9 process called anaerobic digestion. And anaerobic  
10 digestion is a process by which food waste is  
11 converted into energy, either natural gas or into  
12 electricity. And there is a number of cities  
13 around the world currently using anaerobic  
14 digesters to convert their food waste into  
15 electricity. So if you think about the process  
16 today. We take food waste and we spent a lot of  
17 money to have it exported to either landfills in  
18 Pennsylvania, Ohio and South Carolina. The  
19 technology exists today for us to convert that  
20 food waste locally into energy.

21 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And I'm sorry  
22 for interrupting you. And what is the cost of  
23 exporting our trash to these landfills in these  
24 states along the southern border?

25 RON GONEN: We pay an average of

1  
2 \$6 a ton. If you multiply that by the amount of  
3 food waste that we are sending to those landfills,  
4 it's approximately \$85 million a year. So the  
5 hope is that five years from now or ten years from  
6 now, what we were spending, \$85 million a year on  
7 exporting to landfills and emits methane into the  
8 atmosphere which is a harmful greenhouse gas, is  
9 being converted locally into either natural gas or  
10 clean electricity. That technology exists today.  
11 We have anaerobic digesters at the wastewater  
12 treatment facility at Newtown Creek. The school  
13 food waste that's being collected in Brooklyn  
14 today that used to be exported to landfills is  
15 today being converted into natural gas.

16 CHAIREPERSON JAMES: And so if  
17 individuals on Staten Island or throughout the  
18 city of New York wanted to increase pick up  
19 because obviously they are concerned about vermin.  
20 Would that be a possibility if in fact they are  
21 producing more food waste in their particular  
22 community?

23 RON GONEN: The collection schedule  
24 as of right now for the pilot is that you are  
25 being collected on the same day as recycling so



1  
2 one day a week. Part of this pilot program is to  
3 evaluate the container size. So one of the things  
4 that we learned in the first phase of the pilot  
5 program is that a lot of people are requesting a  
6 larger container. That's very positive feedback.  
7 People have more food waste than they expected.  
8 So part of the initiative behind this pilot  
9 program is to study size of the container,  
10 frequent, contamination rates and at the end of  
11 two years the department will make an analysis  
12 about what we need to do in regards to the size of  
13 the container, frequency and anything else  
14 relevant to the program.

15 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what role  
16 can community gardens and local people who compost  
17 play in this program, in this pilot program?

18 RON GONEN: There are a number of  
19 things that they can do. They can first and  
20 foremost; a lot of New Yorkers don't know that  
21 there has been a lot of composting going on in New  
22 York City for a long time. At DSNY we help manage  
23 a series of community compost facilities around  
24 the cities. So making people aware that that  
25 already exists. There are a number of people that

1  
2 are already composting in their backyards. If  
3 they have single-family homes or brownstones. So  
4 making people aware that they are actually doing  
5 it and no vermin issues and it's very easy to do  
6 is the first thing that I think people can do to  
7 help spread the word that this is a positive thing  
8 for the city.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And education,  
10 what role will that play? How will we educate New  
11 Yorkers with regards to the benefits of this pilot  
12 program?

13 RON GONEN: There are few ways that  
14 we can educate New Yorkers. I think first and  
15 foremost, recycling is an obvious environmental  
16 benefit and I think everyone is aware of that.  
17 One thing that I don't think New Yorkers are aware  
18 of is that recycling is also a major economic  
19 benefit for the city in two ways. One is it helps  
20 us save money by not sending material to  
21 landfills. But number two, it creates local jobs.  
22 Vissy paper in Staten Island that recycles our  
23 paper. Local jobs in Staten Island. When Sims  
24 opens up their facility in Brooklyn that's local  
25 jobs. We manage compost facilities here in New

1  
2 York City. Tha'ts local jobs. So it's important  
3 that we get the message out that this is also a  
4 major economic driver as well as an opportunity to  
5 create local renewable energy or fertilizer.

6 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what  
7 training will school staff receive for the  
8 program?

9 RON GONEN: We built a partnership  
10 with DOE and I would like to echo the  
11 Commissioner's comments that we have been very  
12 pleased with our partnership with DOE and the  
13 amount of focus that they have had regarding this  
14 program. We have put together a training program  
15 where we help train DOE and then they train their  
16 staff to go out to each of the schools and make  
17 sure that there is proper training. In addition,  
18 we have a great partnership with Grow NYC and they  
19 have been very active in the schools, helping to  
20 train staff and students.

21 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We have been  
22 joined by Council member Arroyo from the Bronx.  
23 Good morning. And will city employees be used to  
24 conduct the pilot?

25 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: They are

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used to.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. And how do new schools get selected for the program or could you provide me a list of the schools that currently are part of the program and how will new schools be selected?

RON GONEN: We will provide you the list.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. Thank you. And as the composting program expands to the host city, how will all the compost generated by the city's organics be used?

RON GONEN: The compost that's generated by the city is either donated to local parks and gardens. And it's a very rich fertilizer or it's sold to local landscapers.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. And how would the program work with multi-family buildings?

RON GONEN: With multi-family buildings every apartment receives one of the small containers that I showed you for your kitchen countertop. I could take it out again and show it to you but I would get complicated again with the

1  
2 microphone. Every home or every apartment gets  
3 one of the kitchen counter top containers. They  
4 put their food waste in that kitchen counter top  
5 container and then on each floor or every other  
6 floor there is a larger version of one of these  
7 containers. So twice a day, once a day, a few  
8 times a week, whatever their preference is they  
9 just dispose of their food waste in that container  
10 on their floor or every other floor and then the  
11 maintenance staff collects that material. This  
12 program has been going on at the Helena for the  
13 past few months. Good tourist organization is  
14 here to testify here and I think it's gone  
15 extremely well so far.

16 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what  
17 criteria will the department use to select areas  
18 in which to expand the composting program?

19 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Well, we  
20 want to expand it I think to the one and two  
21 family house lived in city areas first and get in  
22 there right. I think that's the areas that we are  
23 going to probably have the most success in. When  
24 you start to get into the large buildings. The  
25 newer ones of course do have the ability to have a

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2 refuse rooms on the floors or areas that are  
3 convenient. And somebody older structures in the  
4 city, it is very difficult to have even trying to  
5 get them to recycle well or have a location for  
6 the recycling bins to be in. So I think it's  
7 going to be a little more work in those areas  
8 where the food waste and the recyclables will all  
9 go down to the basement and get sorted down there  
10 and a lot will depend on the maintenance doing  
11 their job. And one of the things that Ron's put  
12 into the program and part of our legislation that  
13 he's working on is to have every building have a  
14 coordinator there. Someone we can get by email or  
15 talk to them about their operation and what may be  
16 wrong, how can we help them so there is going to  
17 be a lot of work in that area.

18                   One of the other things I would  
19 like to say, a program like this, I mean in the  
20 city and the department often gets criticized.  
21 New York City is not recycling as much as they  
22 should when they look at our diversion rate. But  
23 a program like this and all recycling, 85% of this  
24 program and when we talk about success or failure.  
25 85% of my line is driven what will the people do?

1 We pick them up. We can teach them everything.  
2 We can provide the cards, we can keep reminding  
3 them but they have to do it. When they don't do  
4 it, we don't have the success. And to be  
5 successful the public has to be involved and we  
6 all have to work hard to educate them and to get  
7 that word out there.

8  
9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Just so you  
10 know, throughout the most recently in the city, is  
11 we had a very contentious discussion with regards  
12 to borough equity. To what extent will borough  
13 equity play in this selection of neighborhoods in  
14 effort to expand this program?

15 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: We are going  
16 to be expanding in every neighborhood. In the  
17 spring, we will be in in every borough.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: I think  
20 actually in the Fall I think we will be in every  
21 borough.

22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Excellent.

23 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yes. Some  
24 presence in every borough. Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. And so

1  
2 let me end with my last point and Commissioner, I  
3 am sure you have heard several weeks ago we had a  
4 hearing on recycling and public housing. And I  
5 was not a happy camper. I am sure that was  
6 reported back to you. I was very disappointed in  
7 regards to recycling efforts at public housing.  
8 And so I try to remind you about the  
9 recommendation for a pilot program in public  
10 housing, to offer economic incentives to residents  
11 to recycle.

12 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: We are still  
13 working on with the Housing Authority about that  
14 and when I talk about facilities that don't have  
15 the proper infrastructure in the building. I mean  
16 that the Housing Authority is really on the top of  
17 that list because they were designed for all  
18 refuse incinerators in their building. They had  
19 to be shut down, you know. So they have a tough  
20 time getting the waste down. They have the chute  
21 for the waste only but anything beyond that is  
22 difficult for them. They don't have storage room.  
23 They have a difficult point but we will continue  
24 to work with them on programs like that. I know  
25 Ron is still working on it.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. Thank  
3 you gentlemen. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Oh. Council  
6 member Arroyo. Any questions? No. Thank you  
7 gentlemen. So our, thank you. I would like to  
8 call at this point in time, Harry Nespoli, the  
9 President of Sanitation Workers. Thank you. You  
10 too. Whenever you are ready.

11 HARRY NESPOLI: First of all, I  
12 would like to thank Letitia James for this  
13 opportunity before the Committee for the panel.  
14 Just to talk about. You have my testimony there.  
15 I am not going to get into the testimony so I will  
16 make it; I know you guys were here late last  
17 night. And I just want to; I want to start off by  
18 going back to the storm. The Christmas storm.  
19 The Commissioner stated that the manpower was at  
20 the norm. I think if he checks his records the  
21 manpower for the Department of Sanitation was at  
22 the lowest ever. It was at 5,700 prior to a major  
23 storm to hit New York City. This union notified  
24 in August the Mayor and Mr. Goldsmith that we were  
25 coming into a winter. It's funny that we are

1  
2 talking about snow today with 90 degrees out there  
3 but next time you look out the window you might  
4 see six feet because I don't think anybody can  
5 predict the weather. It just seemed a little  
6 funny to me a month prior to me seeing this  
7 Administration talking about man power that was  
8 tornadoes that hit in Queens. Something that I  
9 never heard of. So I asked for a meeting and I  
10 got the meeting and I explained to them that, I am  
11 in the union a long time and I have never seen the  
12 man power to protect the people in New York City  
13 at the low point. I know what it means when  
14 police officers can't get through, emergency  
15 services can't get through during snow. And this  
16 union always, they never close down New York City  
17 at any time. And we had some pretty big storms.  
18 Equal to the Christmas storm. I was told well, I  
19 was told, one, that you are 100% right. We  
20 realize that you don't have the manpower but you  
21 are going to have to do more with less. I said  
22 that I will turn around and do the best I can with  
23 what I have. This union always performed for the  
24 people of New York City. We got hit with a major  
25 storm that crippled the Eastern Coast. With 5,700

1  
2 men on a Christmas holiday and the fact that  
3 nobody called the snow emergency to turn around to  
4 keep the buses off the streets and to keep the  
5 people off the streets with their cars that were  
6 blocking our trucks.

7           There was no way that we could keep  
8 up with that storm, which brings me to the main  
9 reason why I am here today because their answer is  
10 privates. And pay them in advance. This is the  
11 taxpayers' money. For two year, they have been  
12 paying people not to respond and the first year,  
13 this year that they had to call and the people  
14 that are supposed to protect the people of New  
15 York City that are based in Virginia, based out of  
16 New York. They don't show up. Who do you think  
17 did the tertiary streets this year for the  
18 snowstorms? For the privates that did not show  
19 up. The city workers of New York City did the  
20 tertiary streets. What we have been doing for a  
21 hundred years. That company that didn't show up I  
22 didn't know I found out today, went out of  
23 business. You are not going to get that money  
24 back. That money is not coming back to New York  
25 City. For two years, they didn't get called in

1  
2 and when they had to show up, they didn't show up.  
3 Some of the people did show up. They showed up  
4 without permits, licenses that had to be sent  
5 away. Some of the privates took three hours to  
6 get to the location that they were assigned to.  
7 Who do you think covered their areas? The city  
8 sanitation men. Thank God the City Council after  
9 the storm fought to bring up our head count to  
10 where it should be. Because that's why this last  
11 storm wasn't a disaster. They fought after seeing  
12 the Christmas storm to get us back to where we  
13 are. We can handle anything out there with the  
14 right amount of manpower and the right amount of  
15 equipment.

16                   The standby money is a gimmick. If  
17 it doesn't snow they get paid. City workers, you  
18 don't work, you don't get paid. That's it. What  
19 you have to do here is to go back to what we have  
20 been doing for a hundred years since the records  
21 were kept. City sanitation workers realize if  
22 there is major storm that is going to cripple the  
23 city, yes, we will take whatever help there is  
24 that they want to bring in to keep the city  
25 streets open in New York. But to turn around and

1  
2 to pay people in advance. It's ridiculous. So  
3 now your next answer is, how do you protect the  
4 public? They way we have protected the public  
5 before. As soon as that storm turns into  
6 something that can be dangerous for the people,  
7 they have contracts that have been in place before  
8 the standby money. They call in those contracts  
9 then. And we work to make sure. Like I say and  
10 Ms. James knows because she is the head of the  
11 Sanitation Committee. When a major storm hits  
12 this city, I take my contract book and I put it  
13 over here. Just to make sure that the public gets  
14 the right to get the service they need to serve at  
15 that time. As soon as that storm is under control  
16 in New York City, yes, I pick that contract book  
17 back up. Now I know that the public is safe and  
18 they are not going to abuse my men.

19 Every borough that had the tertiary  
20 streets had a problem. Every single borough.  
21 Some did show up. Some showed up without the  
22 proper equipment that was in the contract. They  
23 couldn't use them. So we did the tertiary streets  
24 because we are back where our numbers should be.  
25 Thanks to the City Council after the Christmas

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2 storm. I think it's a waste of money. I think  
3 it's a waste of taxpayers' money. I think that  
4 the Sanitation Department, the manpower and the  
5 men and women have proven during Sandy what we  
6 accomplished with that 6,100 number that gives us  
7 the right to cover the mileage, the mileage that  
8 we are responsible for in New York City. Starts  
9 in New York, goes to California and back. That's  
10 the mileage that we are responsible for. All we  
11 are asking for is our manpower. Save on that  
12 money that is being wasted for people not showing  
13 up and work. We don't need it. We have done it  
14 for a hundred years and I hope that these standby  
15 contracts are gone and we go back to the old way,  
16 the way we kept this city open and clean for the  
17 tax payers of this.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And Mr.

19 Nespoli, do you have any comments with regard to  
20 the organics collection program?

21 HARRY NESPOLI: Well, it seems that  
22 when the department needs help they call the union  
23 because we were part of it. We sat down and with  
24 the pilot program were set up with our shop  
25 stewards in the district and along with the

1  
2 homeowners. And as far as I know the pilot  
3 program is working perfectly. We are picking it  
4 up. We are working with the public, the community  
5 boards and everything is working very well for the  
6 people. I don't know the results of the tonnage  
7 or actually what it is but from my workforce, they  
8 have no problem doing it, helping the public and  
9 also whatever it is to save the city money rather  
10 than transport it out of the city because I know  
11 to get rid of the garbage in New York City costs a  
12 lot of money.

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: The private  
14 contractors, their contracts are renewable in 2014  
15 I believe in January. Do you anticipate that this  
16 contract will be renewed prior to a new  
17 Administration?

18 HARRY NESPOLI: I think that  
19 somebody is going to try to turn around and do  
20 that prior to a new Administration. And I think  
21 it's not being fair to everybody. It's not being  
22 fair to the sanitation workers and it's certainly  
23 not being fair to the taxpayers because none of  
24 the contractors. If you have a contract for 100%  
25 of man power and machinery and 50% shows up, this

1  
2 50% of the money being wasted. And they don't  
3 have the real input that the city workers do. The  
4 city workers live on those streets. They work  
5 with the people there. 80% of the sanitation  
6 workers, 80% live in New York. So they know what  
7 it was. Just Sandy alone shows you what they did.  
8 They live in those areas there. They had to go  
9 out there and they had to help everybody else out  
10 and then go home after 12 hour shift after waiting  
11 on a gas line for two hours and take care of their  
12 own house. But yet they kept on going. I don't  
13 think there is a community that I attended that I  
14 saw whether it be Seagate, Staten Island in Queens  
15 that didn't talk about what the sanitation workers  
16 did during that time.

17 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: You heard the  
18 Commissioner. He indicated that in fact there is  
19 language currently in law that says that you can't  
20 supplant city employees. What is your response to  
21 that comment?

22 HARRY NESPOLI: Nothing. Well,  
23 John can answer but not being up on it, I can  
24 honestly say that nothing says you can't cut the  
25 workforce either by attrition, which puts the same



1  
2 damage into the public as far as protecting the  
3 public.

4 JOHN DELGIORNO: I am John  
5 Delgiorno with Pitter, Bishop, Delgiorno, Gibbon  
6 representing the local. It's a very good point.  
7 Cost benefit analysis City Council took the  
8 control and really understood that this  
9 Administration has been outsourcing every type of  
10 service that you can think of starting from a 1.6  
11 billion dollars when he first became Mayor to now  
12 about 10 billion. This is a perfect place to do a  
13 cost benefit analysis to see what the net effect  
14 was and basing, it's not eliminating jobs, its  
15 just not filling jobs. And I think clearly that's  
16 where Harry Nespoli was talking about. This  
17 workforce has never never shied away from  
18 productivity. We went from a three man to a two-  
19 man truck. Anytime there has been a storm, the  
20 tornado in Queens, Sandy, Irene, West Nile, it's  
21 been this workforce that has done the job and it  
22 seems like the last three and a half years, four  
23 years, this Administration doesn't want to work  
24 with the union to come together to roll out  
25 projects. We actually find out just as they are

1  
2 about to roll it out. And this is a perfect  
3 contract to take the responsibility to do a cost  
4 benefit analysis and not allow renewal because you  
5 will see there is no reason to. And he didn't  
6 answer your question and we asked him more than  
7 once, how much is set aside for these contracts?  
8 He did not answer your question about the total  
9 budget. He told you total budget is 58 million.  
10 That's 58 million with everything. He didn't tell  
11 you about these contracts. How much has been set  
12 aside. There is a total dollar amount.

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And do you  
14 think we need these contractors for plowing  
15 tertiary streets? Are you confident that  
16 sanitation workers are in a position to plow  
17 tertiary streets with the equipment that they  
18 currently have?

19 JOHN DELGIORNO: The interesting,  
20 your City Council forced the department to do a  
21 borough report and a report to you that lists how  
22 much man power and how much equipment by district.  
23 It's ironic since the blizzard, equipment's been  
24 purchased. You can look in the city record. They  
25 have been buying equipment non-stop now, the

1  
2 holsters, the rollers, and the small plows. Thank  
3 you. The workforce is now at 6,100. So today it  
4 is going to be 6,200 next year. That's great  
5 news. That's the manpower that you need. That's  
6 what we agreed to. That's the manpower that can  
7 fight a storm like this. At the end of the day,  
8 the tertiary streets are handled by this  
9 workforce. They haven't used the privates. And  
10 clearly one last thing. Manhattan, no streets are  
11 tertiary streets. Isn't that interesting but the  
12 outer boroughs are. So in Manhattan, his  
13 workforce is doing the entire borough. Why can we  
14 do Manhattan's, well supposedly to the department  
15 there is no tertiary streets in Manhattan? Only  
16 the outer boroughs. There are tertiary streets in  
17 Manhattan. There are neighborhoods that have  
18 small cul-de-sacs and streets including where his  
19 union hall is. But that is not considered  
20 tertiary. But his workforce does that work. Yes,  
21 this workforce can do it and they don't need  
22 outside contractors. We need the haulers and the  
23 people to take snow out when you have a four-inch  
24 blizzards, which is what's been done in the past.  
25 And we also talk to you about towing. We used to

1  
2 have our own tow trucks. The city gave them away.  
3 Everything is under the DOT so you are at their  
4 mercy to have their tow trucks. So yes, you might  
5 need the outside tow companies but in this case,  
6 many of those tow companies didn't even show up in  
7 the outer boroughs in this last storm when they  
8 called them in.

9 HARRY NESPOLI: The whole thing  
10 goes back to the way they were doing it prior to  
11 this Christmas storm. This city has been praised  
12 on moving snow. Like all cities that come in  
13 here, they think they are amazed by the sanitation  
14 workers, how they can maneuver around with the  
15 vehicles that are out there, the trucks are out  
16 there. Look, if you shut down Manhattan, right?  
17 You are shutting down a lot of money. I wasn't  
18 the President at the time, I was Vice President.  
19 I was called out now to the Commissioner's office  
20 at the time and I went down with the President.  
21 And they said, can we keep this New York open  
22 because City Hall is saying they might have to  
23 shut down the city? And if they shut down the  
24 city, the bridges and everything, that means money  
25 stops. And we said, give us two days, two more

1  
2 days. And we went out there and we worked with  
3 our men and we told them what we had to do. And  
4 we kept it open. They never shut down.  
5 Washington shut down in a snow flurry and  
6 everybody just took over there. They said they  
7 called me up. Washington people called me up,  
8 myself at the union hall and asked me, let me ask  
9 you something, did you in a major storm, do you  
10 stop plowing and stop moving and stop pushing the  
11 snow if it gets too much out there? I said,  
12 that's what a snowplow is for. You don't shut  
13 down a snowplow. You work. Our members are told  
14 that when it snows, all bets are off. You are  
15 here to open up the streets. If you go back to  
16 the way it was, the city can save a lot of money.  
17 They, like John said, the City Council recognizes  
18 after a snowstorm and brought our head count back  
19 up. This year they called in the privates. The  
20 first time since the snowstorm. They did not show  
21 up. We did it.

22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you Mr.  
23 Nespoli and thank you Mr. Delgiorno. Oh, Mr.  
24 Nespoli, how are we doing with hiring more women?  
25 Better?

1  
2 HARRY NESPOLI: Oh, it's, a whole  
3 bunch of them. I just have to get used to it.

4 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Better? Okay.  
5 Thank you, sir. [off mic] Our next panel will  
6 consist of Helen Durst from the Durst  
7 Organization, Eric Goldstein, Christine Romero,  
8 and Robin Barton. Again, Robin Barton, Christine  
9 Romero, Eric Goldstein, and Helen Durst for the  
10 panel. And all you women out there, okay. Girl  
11 power. So I just urge everyone a little patience.  
12 We have got a lot of witnesses here this evening  
13 and we will try to get through this in a timely  
14 fashion. So you may choose amongst you and you  
15 may begin.

16 FEMALE VOICE: Good morning,  
17 Chairperson James and members of the City Council.  
18 I will be brief on my full testimony. We run the  
19 Helena building at 57<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. It has 600 units.  
20 We launched the first composting program in that  
21 residential tower with the Department of  
22 Sanitation. There was a lot of planning and  
23 training that went into making this voluntary  
24 program happen. And having room for recyclables  
25 on each tenant floor was critical to the

1  
2 implementation and success of the residential  
3 composting. A key component was resident  
4 enthusiasm. The tenants have been stewards of  
5 this project and we anticipate continued success  
6 of the program. My family also runs an organic  
7 farm that has a substantial composting facility on  
8 it which also handles much of the material that is  
9 coming or some of the material that is coming out  
10 of the city currently including Hunts Point and  
11 some of the materials coming out of the  
12 greenmarket now. I am a huge proponent of this  
13 plan and I am very encouraged by the Department of  
14 Sanitation's initiative on this as well as the  
15 City Council Sanitation Solid Waste Committee.  
16 Thank you for hearing me out today.

17 CHRISTINA DATZ-ROMERO: [off mic]

18 Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to  
19 testify. My name is Christina Datz-Romero and I  
20 am the co-founder and Executive Director of the  
21 Lower East Side Ecology Center. And I just want  
22 to give you a little bit of background about our  
23 organization. We are basically a community-based  
24 organization that started 26 years ago. In 1990  
25 we started composting. In 1994 we were the

1  
2 pioneers in creating a drop off in a public space,  
3 which would be the Union Square greenmarket. We  
4 are still there going strong. We are there four  
5 days a week collecting materials and we currently  
6 serve about 1,500 households and collect or  
7 process about four tons of materials a week or 200  
8 tons a year. All of that would not be possible  
9 without the support from the Department of Parks  
10 and Recreation who give us city owned space to use  
11 and the Chairperson here, Letitia James, has seen  
12 our facility. And of course greenmarket is  
13 letting us set up there for free at the Union  
14 Square greenmarket.

15                   So I am very, obviously very  
16 excited about composting. It has been my passion  
17 for a long time and I am also very excited about  
18 composting being in the news lately. And really  
19 want to go back to Local Law 19, which we actually  
20 implemented in 1989, which called for organic  
21 waste diversion and really outlined a vision for  
22 composting 21 years ago. Since then in terms of  
23 the city we have created really a very successful  
24 yard waste-composting program, which has served 37  
25 out of the 59 community districts. And so that



1  
2 program has collected at its height 19,000 tons of  
3 yard waste and at a cost of about 3 million  
4 dollars. Unfortunately this program has been  
5 suspended since 2003 due to budget constraints.

6 Also Local Law 40 in 2006 made it  
7 actually mandatory for people who live in these  
8 community districts to participate in this  
9 program. And quite frankly, it strikes me as a  
10 little bit a step backwards now to introduce a  
11 voluntary program, a pilot program in 2013 that  
12 will be city wide but will not have the reach of a  
13 program like that has pre-existed and I really  
14 feel that we should reinstate and find the money  
15 to do yard waste collection and because it's a  
16 proven program. We know what it costs. We know  
17 what it delivers.

18 We also need to create pilot  
19 programs for food waste. I am all for that and  
20 there is a pilot running right now and Ron Gonen  
21 has outlined the parameters of it. There are 41  
22 schools set up and participating and also some  
23 apartment house buildings. But what I think we  
24 should do before we roll out a bigger pilot  
25 program is to really analyze what it costs right

1  
2 now to run a program like this. You know, what  
3 are really the metrics, what is the participation  
4 rates, what does it cost per ton to collect these  
5 materials?

6 Another concern that I have is  
7 really the capacity for people for the city to  
8 handle these materials. As we know, again going  
9 back to the swamp. That was a siting task force  
10 that instituted to find locations to handle our  
11 organic waste and our needs for something like  
12 that. Unfortunately the siting task force never  
13 came up with viable places to do composting. So  
14 we are really lacking the infrastructure. And  
15 bringing our materials to an anaerobic digester is  
16 a great thing but this anaerobic site, digester we  
17 all know that our wastewater sewage plants are  
18 overloaded. That they barely handle what we put  
19 in there now in terms of the things that is  
20 handled through our combined sewer system. And so  
21 we really need to create capacity before we  
22 collect.

23 I think it is that what is urgently  
24 needed and it's really a planning process. A  
25 facility is not going to be built in a year or

1  
2 two. It's a process. It has to go through ULAP.  
3 It's a way to engage your stakeholders. It's a  
4 long process and we should have done it a long  
5 time ago and hopefully we find the political ball  
6 to do it now.

7           On the other side or the flip side  
8 is that there are many local community based  
9 organizations that have thought it up over the  
10 years to handle organic waste. Some of them are  
11 very small in community gardens. Others on a  
12 larger footprint so to speak. There is  
13 significant capacity in Brooklyn. In Manhattan  
14 that would be our project and I really feel we  
15 should nurture these community based programs now  
16 so that they can flourish because they play a  
17 significant role in really making a composting a  
18 household name and also really creating the  
19 education and the awareness that we need to take  
20 this next step.

21           So, and I also feel that these  
22 community based programs will deliver on diverse  
23 programs because as we all know this city is a  
24 diverse city that single households and, you know  
25 housing stock is just very diverse and we need to

1  
2 find different approaches for different  
3 neighborhoods to really make a program that's  
4 meaningful.

5 So overall I guess my big message  
6 is, let's do the hard work of really creating the  
7 infrastructure, let's nurture what's here now  
8 that's effective and let's go forward with  
9 composting. Thank you.

10 ROBIN BARTON: Thank you. Thank  
11 you for the opportunity for me to speak at this  
12 Committee. My name is Robin Barton and I am  
13 testifying on behalf of Manhattan's Solid Waste  
14 Advisory Board of which I am serving as Secretary.  
15 The point I hope to make today is that although  
16 the development of the organics collection program  
17 under review today is very important and exciting,  
18 it should be seen as part of a larger picture that  
19 must also include meaningful development of  
20 community based composting. The Manhattan SWAB  
21 encourages the growth of community based  
22 composting through a grant program partnered with  
23 Citizens Committee of New York City. Together we  
24 have awarded funding to 66 community composters of  
25 which approximately a third are schools, a third

1  
2 community gardens and a third, neighborhood groups  
3 or other. Community based composting recycled  
4 organic material as locally as possible mostly at  
5 neighborhood level and the compost is used in lieu  
6 of chemical and petroleum based fertilizers for  
7 food and flower gardens, urban farms, local park,  
8 street plantings and bio swales for improved storm  
9 water management. There are over 200 community  
10 compost sites in New York City. The sites include  
11 not only many community gardens but also larger  
12 sites affiliated with urban farms like Brooklyn  
13 Grange and Red Hook Community Farm, non-profit  
14 groups with strong recycling programs like the  
15 Lower East Side Ecology Center and Build it Green,  
16 conservation groups like New York Restoration  
17 Project, Battery Park Conservancy and Gowanus  
18 Canal Conservancy and universities such as Saint  
19 John's and Columbia University dorms. Many of  
20 these sites can manage two tons or more of food  
21 waste at a time and several compost over 200 tons  
22 of organic per year that would otherwise wind up  
23 in landfills at taxpayer expense. The importance  
24 of these programs is two fold. First, they  
25 maximize sustainability because the organics

1  
2 diverted from the waste stream stay within or  
3 close to the community that generated the  
4 material. And the finished compost is used to  
5 green the very communities, which has proven to  
6 enhance neighborhood values. Second, they  
7 maximize citizen participation and the benefits  
8 that brings. All programs directly and indirectly  
9 offer citizens a path to contributing their  
10 organics to local greening projects that matter to  
11 them. Some offer those same individuals an  
12 opportunity to use the compost for their own  
13 greening projects and many offer individuals the  
14 chance to participate in the composting operation  
15 with shovels and pitchforks and sifters. This  
16 gives them an opportunity to actively engage in  
17 recycling in a way not possible with materials  
18 like glass, metal, plastic. And by all accounts  
19 strengthens the connection to our broader goals  
20 for solid waste management including a keener  
21 appreciation for separating out the contaminants  
22 which is the key detriment to the success of any  
23 compost facility. Thus the municipal residential  
24 collection should not compete with but instead  
25 should compliment community composting. To ensure

1  
2 that happens I respectfully request an amendment  
3 to the draft bill calling for the report due in  
4 2015 to also reflect a plan for implementing  
5 community composting city wide. If the bill  
6 cannot be amended then I respectfully request that  
7 the committee schedule a hearing to focus on  
8 community composting and its challenges. Thank  
9 you.

10 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: My name is Eric  
11 Goldstein with the Natural Resources Defense  
12 Council. First, hats off to Christine in the  
13 Lower East Side Ecology Center, the real pioneers  
14 in composting here in New York City and to the  
15 Durst Organization which is becoming the pioneer  
16 in high rise recycling in New York City and to the  
17 community composters and Grow NYC who have been  
18 successfully operating composting programs in the  
19 greenmarkets and community gardens for many years.  
20 It's on all of their shoulders that this latest  
21 initiative is growing. NRDC strongly supports the  
22 proposed legislation. We believe it makes sense  
23 for three reasons. First, curbside collection of  
24 organics is good for our environment. And by  
25 facilitating the collection of food wastes and

1  
2 yard wastes for composting or anaerobic digestion,  
3 the legislation will help cut emissions of  
4 methane, which as you know is an extremely potent  
5 global warming gas. Second, curbsides organics  
6 collection will produce successful end products.  
7 Compost and land stabilizers, which improve, soil  
8 health and increase drought resistance and reduce  
9 the need for fertilizers on land. And biogas,  
10 which can be utilized as energy in a variety of  
11 municipal residential and agricultural settings.  
12 And third, over time organics collection at the  
13 curbside in New York City can cut our costs for  
14 waste handling. And this is so because based on  
15 that national experience. The per ton costs for  
16 delivering such waste to compost operations or to  
17 other organic treatment facilities are lower than  
18 the costs of shipping such materials to out of  
19 state landfills. Successful curbside organics  
20 programs have also allowed other jurisdictions to  
21 make cost effective adjustments to other waste  
22 collection services down the line.

23 In addition, the proposed  
24 legislation is consistent with the direction that  
25 the Mayor and the Sanitation Commissioner have



1  
2 been moving in and passage of this legislation  
3 would ensure the continuation of this visionary  
4 program after its creators including Deputy  
5 Commissioner of Sanitation, Ron Gonen and other  
6 supporters leave office. And we hope that doesn't  
7 happen soon. We hope Ron stays for a long time.  
8 The beauty of this legislation is that it sets  
9 forth a clear path for expanded implementation of  
10 curbside organics collection or providing the  
11 Sanitation with adequate lead time to test out key  
12 program elements to adjust and refine them as  
13 needed and to resolve whatever challenges surface  
14 to ensure smooth implementation before the program  
15 and goes city wide. Already curbside organics  
16 collections are taking place successfully in over  
17 150 communities across North America. Seattle,  
18 San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, Boulder,  
19 Cambridge and Princeton as well as Toronto and  
20 Ottawa are some examples. And similar to the  
21 approach contemplated by the proposed legislation  
22 that's before you today, the programs in cities  
23 like Seattle and San Francisco also began as  
24 voluntary operations. This allowed city officials  
25 there to address any implementation challenges

1  
2 before curbside collections were phased in  
3 citywide in those municipalities. We share  
4 Christina's interest in capacity issues and we are  
5 encouraged that DSNY is now seeking as you know  
6 opportunities for additional bids and additional  
7 take out partners so that we can have sufficient  
8 composting capacity and anaerobic digestion  
9 capacity within the New York region.

10 We look forward to further hearings  
11 on that issue. We also endorse the proposed  
12 legislation mentioned by Deputy Commissioner Gonen  
13 banning polystyrenes foam in food establishments.  
14 We hope that's taken up by this committee shortly.  
15 We have only one question on this topic and that  
16 is how the new legislation relates to the current  
17 legal requirements to reinstitute seasonal  
18 curbside collections of yard waste in all  
19 districts generating a sufficient amount of  
20 materials. And we hope that the Sanitation  
21 Department clarifies that their compliance with  
22 that provision of law and funding for that program  
23 in the near future. And with the full cooperation  
24 and the encouragement from the City Council, the  
25 Sanitation Department is now in the midst of an

1  
2 exciting if not revolutionary change in the way  
3 it's thinking about waste handling for the 21<sup>st</sup>  
4 Century. The change is now underway or under  
5 development could transform our waste program  
6 making it more cost effective, more sustainable  
7 and more equitable for all New Yorkers. We  
8 believe the proposed legislation will take the  
9 city further down this path and we are pleased to  
10 give the bill our wholehearted endorsement. Thank  
11 you for your attention.

12 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. Let  
13 me begin as follows. First, Ms. Barton, let me  
14 just inform you that we plan on having a hearing  
15 in regards to community composting and its  
16 challenges. We don't have a date yet but  
17 obviously we will forward that information to you  
18 whenever a date is scheduled for that hearing.  
19 And thank you for your testimony. Mr. Goldstein,  
20 you heard some of the observations or criticism by  
21 Ms. Datz-Romero in regards to the lack of capacity  
22 infrastructure particularly since the swamp has  
23 not be completely completed. And she indicated  
24 that we do not have any sites in the pipeline to  
25 create the infrastructure. You touched on it

1  
2 briefly on your testimony. Could you just talk a  
3 little bit about the lack of infrastructure and/or  
4 capacity?

5 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Sure. The  
6 capacity issue is a concern long term for the  
7 demonstration projects going on now; there is  
8 adequate capacity on Staten Island at the Staten  
9 Island Composting Facility to handle the Staten  
10 Island pilot project at the private residences.  
11 There is also capacity at Rikers Island, which has  
12 had a long standing composting operation. There  
13 is from what we understand capacity within the  
14 existing wastewater treatment system for  
15 additional anaerobic digestion and I believe that  
16 that's going forward at one existing city waste  
17 water treatment plant right now. The real  
18 challenge is long term as this program expands  
19 successfully as we all hope will be the case where  
20 the existing, where capacity will be for  
21 composting or anaerobic digestion. This taskforce  
22 has not been successful in identifying in city  
23 sites. The new RFPs that the sanitation  
24 department is advancing would look throughout the  
25 region for capacity either for additional

1  
2 composting facilities or additional anaerobic  
3 digestion.

4                   This is a field that has been  
5 advancing significantly if not dramatically over  
6 the past five years. We are confident with the  
7 one or two year lead time for planning that this  
8 legislation provides for the city that two years  
9 from now the city will have secured sufficient  
10 capacity for composting either in city or more  
11 likely outside but close by in the region for  
12 composting and for anaerobic digestion facilities.  
13 These are the kinds of things we are throughout  
14 the region, say in the Catskills or elsewhere  
15 there are existing farms or other land, the  
16 density problems that the city faces, siting  
17 issues here are not present and we feel  
18 comfortable that with sufficient lead time and  
19 initiative taken by the sanitation department will  
20 be able to identify additional sites for  
21 composting and anaerobic digestion in the region.  
22 Although probably not in the city but  
23 significantly still a lot cheaper than shipping  
24 this to landfills in South Carolina or other  
25 distant states.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Ms. Datz-

3

Romero, do you have any response to Eric's

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comments and do you feel that the city is doing,

5

how effective has the city been in working with

6

these community based program and nurturing your

7

ability to create, to work with the Administration

8

with regards to collection of organic waste?

9

CHRISTINA DATZ-ROMERO: Yes, I

10

would say that in full disclosure we have a

11

working relationship with the Department of

12

Sanitation. Our organization has a contract to do

13

outreach and education about composting in

14

Manhattan through the New York City Compost

15

Project. And I feel that sanitation has certainly

16

come around and is open to working with community-

17

based groups. Do we ever get enough funding to

18

everything we want to do? Of course not. But I

19

think that Sanitation realizes that are an ally

20

and not somebody that they should ignore or it

21

would be productive to ignore. So I think the

22

relationship has certainly been better.

23

I feel that and again, I don't

24

want to come across as saying that we should not

25

do pilots. I just question really the timing of

1  
2 it and also how prepared we are and we really  
3 since Local Law 19 had 21 years to plan for  
4 composting and nothing got done. And I would like  
5 to share the optimism of Eric in terms of maybe  
6 doing in two years what we haven't done in two  
7 decades but I am also trying to be a pragmatist  
8 here and so yes, of course I would love to see  
9 composting going forward. I would love to see us  
10 being at the point where San Francisco is right  
11 now of doing curbside program, a meaningful  
12 program for every single resident in the city but  
13 I also think that we still have a lot of homework  
14 to do before we roll something like that out.

15 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We have also  
16 been joined by Council member Jackson from  
17 Manhattan. Good morning and thank you. Ms.  
18 Barton, do you share that sentiment?

19 ROBIN BARTON: I do. Up to a  
20 point. I also don't know all the behind the  
21 scenes of why maybe now is the appropriate time to  
22 restart it. And with the proper education and  
23 coordination and by the time it gets up and  
24 running to all work together and stressing just  
25 how we all need to work together and the education

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is so important.

CHAIREPERSON JAMES: Thank you.

Ms. Durst, you have had over 15 years or 16 years experience in regards to having successfully composting programs in your cafeterias and in your commercial property. Have you ever experienced any problems with vermin?

HELEN DURST: No problems with vermin. We have to keep in mind that it's the same amount of waste. We are not creating any more material as it relates to organic waste. So there is no increase in the amount of smells or anything or having to deal with the material and getting it in and out of the building. And we have been extremely happy with it.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And do you currently have a training for your employees?

HELEN DURST: We do. We work with the, we have a hauling, we work with the employees in the kitchen cafeterias to make sure they understand what is part of contaminants and non-contaminants, so what can go into the organic waste stream and then also with the residents we spent a fair amount of time making sure that



1  
2 individuals were aware of what is happening. I  
3 should also mention I am the Chair of the Lower  
4 East Side Ecology Center and I am also on the  
5 Solid Waste Advisory Board and I know Lower East  
6 Side Ecology Center does quite a bit in the  
7 education component when they are dropping off the  
8 materials so making sure that the signage is  
9 accurate is extremely important.

10 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And is there  
11 an educational component in terms of your tenants  
12 as well?

13 HELEN DURST: So we make sure that  
14 we do trainings with our tenants. We also make  
15 sure that there's clear signage everywhere as well  
16 as we give signage to the tenants for their own  
17 residential kitchens.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the end  
19 result? Do you provide it to the Ecology Center?

20 HELEN DURST: No. I am sorry. I  
21 am mixing the different things I am doing. I am  
22 just on the Chair of the Lower East Side Ecology  
23 Center and they have been the forerunner in  
24 educating individuals about what they need to do  
25 and I think their experience in people being

1  
2 engaged in the process is the greatest success  
3 that we can have in making sure that we don't get  
4 contaminants in the organic waste stream.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the end  
6 result, the food waste, where does it go  
7 eventually?

8 HELEN DURST: Department of  
9 Sanitation for our residential buildings,  
10 Department of Sanitation deals with it so that's  
11 where Eric Goldstein had mentioned the other  
12 facilities and then for our own material, we have  
13 the organic farm upstate in the Harlem Valley  
14 which we then are composting using the material  
15 there and ultimately creating tomatoes.

16 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Excellent.  
17 Thank you. Thank you panel.

18 [thank yous]

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: The next panel  
20 will consist of Ms. Christianson. I believe the  
21 first name is Kendal. Tanya Blaye. Rebecca  
22 Lurie. I apologize if I mispronounced your name.  
23 From the Consortium for Worker Education and Cody  
24 Ferguson. Katie Ferguson, sorry.

25 REBECCA LURIE: I will begin.

1  
2 Rebecca Lurie with the Consortium for Worker  
3 Education. Thank you for having us. Okay, thank  
4 you. I will be brief because not only do I work  
5 for the Consortium for Worker Education, I am also  
6 a member of the Park Slope Permaculture Guild and  
7 the Chair of, I am sorry. [off mic]. Yes. And  
8 Board Chair for the Brooklyn Society for Ethical  
9 Culture. So from those different perspectives I  
10 want to just share this. I think it's a great  
11 advance. This is referring to the composting plan  
12 for the city. It's a great advance and we need to  
13 notice that there is already a lot that's been  
14 going on on the ground as referenced by previous  
15 speakers. My largest concern is that when we make  
16 these changes in our society that we pay attention  
17 to the jobs. And we make sure that there are jobs  
18 not just more voluntary opportunities, which are  
19 fine. It's great when people can roll up their  
20 sleeves and dig in the dirt. But some of us will  
21 be working. If we rely on the volunteer force to  
22 do it, that could be a mistake in terms of really  
23 making a structural change. And as our colleagues  
24 spoke from the Sanitation Workers if we rely on  
25 privates that might be okay for some jobs but we

1  
2 want them to be good jobs. Private or public  
3 sector jobs. And if it's only 100 more jobs that  
4 are being added to the sanitation workers and I  
5 think what my colleagues said out in the hall,  
6 that's just bringing them back to the size that  
7 they were, then we are not paying attention to the  
8 changes that might happen.

9           As we recycle more and take more  
10 out of the waste stream we are putting more into  
11 other places. And I want to make sure that those  
12 are jobs that we pay attention to whether it's  
13 again, digging in the dirt for composting or if  
14 it's working at a anaerobic plants, let's make  
15 sure that those jobs happen and are available for  
16 city residents.

17           TANYA BLAY: Good morning,  
18 Chairwoman James and committee members. My name  
19 is Tanya Blay and I am an ardent supporter of  
20 composting in New York City. I am a certified  
21 master composter and volunteer with and support  
22 the following community based composting  
23 operations. The North Brooklyn Composting Project  
24 in McCarren Park, Earth Matter on Governor's  
25 Island, The Added Value Community Farm in Red

1  
2 Hook. Composting Gowanus at the Gowanus Canal  
3 Conservancy, the former Western Queens Compost  
4 Initiative, which became Big Compost at Build it  
5 Green, and various other small composting  
6 initiatives. I am also a regular of observer of  
7 Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board meetings and  
8 at the meetings of the Newtown Creek monitoring  
9 committee. My professional background is in  
10 financial risk management. Thank you for allowing  
11 me to testify before you today.

12 I am in fact very pleased to see  
13 composting come to New York City on a larger scale  
14 and I commend Mayor Bloomberg for finally taking  
15 some of the necessary steps in this direction. I  
16 have no doubt that the collection of compostable  
17 waste from households and schools can be  
18 successfully implemented in the city. New Yorkers  
19 are intelligent, resourceful and adaptable and  
20 might soon in larger numbers discover that the  
21 source separation of their waste at the origin  
22 brings with it more benefits than trouble.

23 However, I have strong doubts that the city is  
24 adequately dealing with this compostable waste  
25 once it is picked up. Whereas it does concern me

1  
2 when I read about compost fires at the Staten  
3 Island Fresh Kills compost site and the compost  
4 fire at the site on April 9 and 10 of this year  
5 took 200 firefighters to contain, compost fires  
6 are dangerous, costly. I am sure that the  
7 expertise for handling compost is woefully  
8 lacking. So whereas this does concern me I am  
9 even more concerned when I hear that food waste is  
10 being introduced into the Newtown Creek Wastewater  
11 Facility. I particularly deplore that the city  
12 agencies are not fully and adequately informing  
13 the public about the circumstances of the lauded  
14 biogas and energy production from said compostable  
15 waste. Whereas the city proclaims to be running a  
16 composting pilot program, the bio digestion of  
17 food waste in the wastewater treatment facility  
18 results in energy and sludge. The latter of which  
19 is subsequently landfilled. Hence, this part of  
20 the composting pilot program should more  
21 adequately be called a waste to energy to landfill  
22 program. From among the other aspects of this  
23 operation that are perceived as troubling. I  
24 would just like to address to hear capacity and  
25 cost. By utilizing some of the capacity of a

1  
2 wastewater treatment facility for food waste  
3 disposal of this capacity is presumably not  
4 available during weather events thereby  
5 potentially exacerbating CSO, combined sewer  
6 overflow events and further diminishing water  
7 quality.

8           As regards costs, one of the  
9 rationales of the composting program is to save  
10 the city money by diminishing the amount of waste  
11 that goes to landfills. Operating a wastewater  
12 treatment facility is a costly endeavor. The  
13 Newtown Creek facility is just about to complete  
14 an upgrade that costs 5 billion dollars. Shipping  
15 sludge to landfills certainly also costs money.  
16 The questions that arise are whether the value of  
17 the energy produced offsets the cost of treating  
18 food waste in this manner or whether this aspect  
19 of the composting pilot just comes down to the  
20 Department of Environmental Protection footing the  
21 bill for cost savings at the Department of  
22 Sanitation.

23           I would like to ask the Committee  
24 to obtain detailed project plans or any other  
25 planning documents from the city agencies involved

1  
2 in the composting pilot program and to exercise  
3 due diligence when examining these project please.  
4 Furthermore I would like to ask the Committee to  
5 request the city agencies to work even more  
6 closely with community composting operations that  
7 have proven to be a reliable and competent  
8 partners for the processing of compostable waste  
9 in the city. Thank you.

10 KATIE FERGUSON: Good morning. I  
11 would like to thank the Committee for this  
12 opportunity to testify and Chairwoman James. My  
13 name is Katie Ferguson and I am the Executive  
14 Director of the Brooklyn Food Coalition, a  
15 grassroots organization that's dedicated to the  
16 vision of a just and sustainable food system in  
17 Brooklyn. In addition I am also a master  
18 composter, Tanya and I were in the same cohort  
19 class. In addition to a zero waste advocate,  
20 educator and supporter in South Brooklyn. Today  
21 as the Committee reviews the pilot project for the  
22 city's collection of residential organics which  
23 includes food waste. We applaud this as a very  
24 important step forward towards a more sustainable  
25 food system and we express our gratitude to those



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who have done-

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Excuse me.

Sargent at Arms, could we just close the door or ask whoever is in the hallway if they could just lower their voices. Thank you.

KATIE FERGUSON: Shall I continue?

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes.

KATIE FERGUSON: Today as the Committee reviews the pilot project for the city's collection of residential organics which includes food waste, we applaud this as a very important step forward towards a more sustainable food system and we express our gratitude to those who have done all the hard work getting us there. We can all agree that food waste is a very valuable resource and our systems are more sustainable if that resource is recovered rather than sent to the landfill. But the process still involves some of the unsustainable elements that led us here. Large number of trucks, expensive transportation on public streets and highways, and more trucks and heavy equipment at the other end, all consuming non-renewable resources with harm to the environment.

1  
2 Obviously, the design of our city  
3 and the heat scale of food waste will force us to  
4 accept some degree of unsustainability to bring us  
5 closer to sustainability but there are fair  
6 questions to ask and alternatives to consider.  
7 One alternative is community composting.  
8 Decentralized community composting which is  
9 especially important for creating a just food  
10 system. This type of composting closes the loop  
11 in a number of ways. Minimal transportation to  
12 the composting site which provides support for  
13 local food growing, remediation and beautification  
14 of parks, gardens and other greening projects  
15 locally as well as fostering a kind of civic  
16 engagement that builds the connection to food and  
17 waste reduction in all efforts. Reduce, reuse and  
18 recycle. Community composting increases  
19 environmental awareness and education that builds  
20 the support for programs like a municipal  
21 residential pick up and a Grow NYC market  
22 programs. Community composting is especially  
23 valuable for improving the health, social and  
24 economic impacts in underserved communities. I  
25 will give you two examples from underserved

1  
2 Brooklyn neighborhoods. East New York Farms and  
3 Red Hook Community Garden. Many of you here are  
4 very familiar with those really great projects.  
5 Each is a key source of fresh produce for their  
6 communities. Each has a community-composting  
7 program that allows residents to recycle their  
8 food waste. Each uses the finished compost to  
9 help grow the fresh produce for the community. So  
10 in communities where fresh produce can be ensured  
11 supply, the farms put the vegetables on the dinner  
12 table and the food scraps find their way back to  
13 the farm for compost that helps grown\ more  
14 vegetables for the dinner table all within a few  
15 blocks.

16 In 2012, the Red Hook Community  
17 Farm reported having composted over 225 tons of  
18 organics that may otherwise have winded up in the  
19 landfill. Despite challenges faced by all of the  
20 city community composters, this phenomenon is  
21 reflected through hundreds of the city's community  
22 gardens. Obviously community composting cannot  
23 manage all of the city organics but it is an  
24 essential component of a just and sustainable food  
25 system because it can close the loop of

1  
2 sustainability more effectively with the least  
3 amount of damage to the environment while at the  
4 same time fulfilling in underserved communities.  
5 Thus we respectfully request that the committee  
6 anticipate the environmental cost from the choices  
7 from managing our food waste and insist that  
8 community composting be developed in a meaningful  
9 and serious way as a permanent part of the picture  
10 for solid waste management. Thank you for your  
11 time and consideration.

12 KENDAL CHRISTIANSON: Chairwoman  
13 James and Council member Jackson and the staff. I  
14 would offer a slightly different perspective for  
15 your consideration. I just had the privilege of  
16 speaking before this committee many times over the  
17 last couple of decades in my capacity as founding  
18 Assistant Director of the city's recycling program  
19 in '89 and as the Chair of the citywide recycling  
20 advisory board which went out of existence more  
21 than four to five years ago. So my name is Kendal  
22 Christianson. I also serve as a consultant to  
23 Insinkerator, which you know is the world's  
24 leading manufacturer of food waste disposers. And  
25 I want to offer that perspective to the committee

1  
2 and remind the Council of its long history on this  
3 issue dating back to as Eric said, the adoption of  
4 Local Law 19 in 1989. I also have my former  
5 colleague Lisa Maylor in the room for being on the  
6 city's first curbside organics collection program  
7 in 1990, right? Is Lisa still in the room? Park  
8 Slope Intensive Recycling Center. And then in  
9 1992 the city adopted its first modern day  
10 comprehensive solid waste management plan which  
11 had a very aggressive organics reduction goal.  
12 And following that the Commissioner of Sanitation  
13 wrote to the Commissioner of DEP asking for help  
14 and saying essentially we got this very aggressive  
15 goal and we don't have the tools. So I need your  
16 help in getting three things. Legalizing food  
17 waste disposers citywide and providing mandates  
18 and new incentives for installation and use.

19 A few years after that the Council  
20 adopted Local Law 74 of '95 I think it was that  
21 compelled DEP to do such a study which they took  
22 two years to do. Issued this report in 1997 after  
23 which the Council adopted Local Law 71 of '97 that  
24 fully legalized household food waste disposers  
25 citywide but stopped short of providing any

1  
2 mandates or incentives for their use. Since that  
3 time disposers have slowly taken off in the city  
4 as part of the waste management system. City  
5 housing authority began installing them on a pilot  
6 basis for pest prevention purposes and now  
7 installed several thousand a year when they redo  
8 kitchens throughout the city. The last six  
9 residential buildings in Battery Park City which  
10 are super green were required to have disposers as  
11 part of their onsite waste management systems  
12 including black water treatment systems and I  
13 could go on and on. But my overall suggestion to  
14 the committee and challenge to take the proposed  
15 legislation as a starting point but think more  
16 broadly about all the things that might be studied  
17 in the next two years that might help the next  
18 Council and Administration figure out what's the  
19 best set of tools are. Not just one but multiple  
20 as you heard this morning from a variety of  
21 speakers. And provide it with the best possible  
22 information rather than simply focus on truck  
23 based collection for residences and schools.

24 The other thing I would add to for  
25 the committee's consideration is that I am now in

1  
2 the midst of overseeing a demonstration projects  
3 involving food waste disposers in four soon to be  
4 five major U.S. cities. We are wrapping up a  
5 yearlong program with the city of Philadelphia,  
6 and launching pilot demonstration projects in  
7 Tacoma, Chicago and Milwaukee. With those cities,  
8 both their waste water utilities and their  
9 sanitation departments testing the efficacy of  
10 household disposers as the principle means of  
11 handling food scraps on the premise that food, if  
12 you think about it, is mostly water. 70,80,90%  
13 water. It can be treated as a resource by modern  
14 wastewater treatment plants including those in New  
15 York. To Tanya's point about the city's  
16 unfortunate landfilling of bio solids, I would  
17 point out that until two years ago effectively  
18 100% of the city's sludge was converted to  
19 fertilizer products beneficially used. It's only  
20 been the last couple of years that landfills have  
21 underbid composters for that material and have  
22 allowed the city to save a few bucks by directing  
23 it that way and hopefully the city will get back  
24 on track with its new round of contracts to make  
25 bio solids again an environmental product and get

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back onto agricultural land where it belongs.

So I would applaud the Administration's effort in getting us to this point. It's been a long 20-year history for those us who have been involved for that period. It's an exciting and very dynamic period nationally with lots of things being tested in various cities both in the U.S. and I spent a lot of time in Canada as well. I spent a full day with the entire City Council down there of Calgary a couple of months ago. It's been debated what to do about organics in Calgary. In sync there has been a part of this discussion with the city for the last 20 years and looks forward to working with this committee and this Council and Administration over the next couple of years in figuring out the right course of action is, what the right set of tools are. Thank you very much.

[off mic]

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Next panel is Vandra Thorburn, Daniel Simon, Wendy Sheer and Greg Todd.

GREG TODD: Seeds of virtue here. Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to



1  
2 thank Council member James for this opportunity to  
3 present my views on this important matter. It's a  
4 great privilege to be able address the Council on  
5 something as dear to my heart as composting. I as  
6 well as many of my fellow composters were indeed  
7 very excited to read in the local press on Monday  
8 June 17<sup>th</sup> the city was about to launch a citywide  
9 mandatory composting program. But as well know  
10 the devil is in the details and to me the  
11 composting program as outlined in the proposed  
12 laws seems surprisingly limited in its scope. It  
13 will cover initially only 30 schools out of 1,500  
14 schools operated by the Department of Education.  
15 For residents the proposed program will cover only  
16 sizable apartment buildings within the vicinity of  
17 these 30 schools. Unaddressed at all is where the  
18 waste will be converted into compost. In fact, we  
19 believe that most of the waste will end up in the  
20 Newtown Creek bio digesters where no compost will  
21 be generated at all, only methane gas and sewage  
22 sludge or bio solids as it is now politely re-  
23 termed. At present these bio solids once they are  
24 de-watered end up in landfills. We have  
25 collectively watched with gnashing teeth as other

1 cities, notably San Francisco, Seattle, Portland,  
2 Oregon, Toronto and other cities have launched  
3 aggressive mandatory composting programs. We were  
4 saddened to see our own city remove metal, glass  
5 and yard waste from the recycling programs some of  
6 which was subsequently returned. To watch our  
7 diversion rates from the landfill dip below 15%  
8 while other cities continued to raise their  
9 diversion rates with talk of 50,60, even 70%  
10 diversion rates being reported in some West Coast  
11 cities. This lackluster performance on the part  
12 of our sanitation department is all the more  
13 astonishing when it's compared with the stellar  
14 performance of other city agencies most notably  
15 Transportation, Health, Education, Police and Taxi  
16 and Limousine Commissions. None of the innovative  
17 programs launched by these other agencies have  
18 been without cost and pushback from residents and  
19 not all have succeeded but many have been very  
20 successful and attracted nation wide and even  
21 world wide attention.  
22

23 Sanitation stands almost alone in  
24 its lack of significant progress. Yes, the food  
25 waste collection programs at the Farmer's Markets

1  
2 are nice and the work of Grow NYC and New York  
3 City Composting Project, Lower East Side Ecology  
4 Center, Added Value, Earth Matters, and BIG have  
5 all added to their rates of composting. But in  
6 total, the city's diversion rates have decreased  
7 and the aforementioned composting programs deserve  
8 barely a footnote in the sanitation's budget.

9           On a more personal note about nine  
10 months ago I was granted an interview with Ron  
11 Gonen to present my proposal for a community based  
12 bike carting and composting business. I arrived  
13 full of high hopes and expectations only to find  
14 out that my interview was not with Ron who  
15 apparently had more pressing matters to attend to  
16 but rather with an intern. After about ten  
17 minutes of discussion I was advised by the intern  
18 that Ron would be made aware of my proposal. Of  
19 course I never heard anything further on the  
20 matter. According to my detailed business plan  
21 which I have copies here available for your  
22 perusal. The city would have diverted some 40  
23 tons daily of compostable material from its waste  
24 stream at little or no additional cost if  
25 implemented citywide. The program would have

1  
2 created some 200 new jobs in lower income  
3 neighborhoods with compost readily available by to  
4 community gardens and area residents, decrease the  
5 number of truck trips in the city, decreased air  
6 pollution and traffic congestion. All that would  
7 have been required with a pilot study and tweaking  
8 of some city and state regulations. It is in  
9 light of this history that a small group of like-  
10 minded composters met last Monday night under the  
11 auspices of Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board.  
12 Under the general sharing of what we felt would be  
13 the sanitation department's weak performance those  
14 present agreed to meet again on July 22<sup>nd</sup> to form a  
15 group tentatively to be called Waste Alternatives.  
16 This group would act as Transportation  
17 Alternatives has done so admirably in the area of  
18 transportation as both an advocacy and watchdog  
19 group for matters related to waste. The purpose  
20 of the meeting would be to refine and our mission  
21 to an agreed upon name. If you are too are  
22 concerned about the city's sub par performance on  
23 recycling, composting and waste diversion please  
24 join us on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. We, unlike the sanitation  
25 department will welcome your input. Please

1  
2 contact me after the hearing for more information.  
3 Again, allow me to thank Council member James for  
4 this opportunity to express my thoughts on this  
5 hearing and I look forward to your questions.  
6 Thank you.

7 [off mic]

8 GREG TODD: No.

9 DANIEL BOWMAN SIMON: Thank you so  
10 very much Council member James and committee  
11 staff, Jared Hover and Daniel Avery for holding  
12 this oversight hearing today and thanks to Sargent  
13 at Arms as well. These hearings would not be  
14 possible without the Sargent at Arms. My name is  
15 Daniel Bowman Simon. I am the Urban Planner and  
16 Community Gardener at Compost Community Garden,  
17 Lower East Side. I am here speaking just for  
18 myself. I know that this is not a budget hearing.  
19 However, I am both bothered and inspired by a  
20 particular line in the FY '14 budget. Clocking in  
21 at 33,873,750 dollars, page 3026, line 106, and  
22 Department of Sanitation and Motor Vehicle fuel.  
23 I am bothered because 33,873,750 dollars is a  
24 mouthful to say and it's a lot of scarce tax payer  
25 money to spend on gasoline which combusts,

1  
2 pollutes and doesn't add value for the city except  
3 that the gas is what gets our waste out of sight  
4 and out of mind.

5           According to the front page of the  
6 New York Times article on Mayor Bloomberg's food  
7 waste plan a few weeks ago, the Administration  
8 plans to announce shortly that it is hiring a  
9 composting plant to handle 100,000 tons of food  
10 scraps a year. I am not sure how the scraps are  
11 supposed to make it to the composting plant or  
12 where that composting plant might be but even if  
13 the food waste is eventually loaded onto rail  
14 barges an unnecessarily high amount of fuel will  
15 be used to get the organic waste to the starting  
16 point of the rail barges.

17           So I am inspired by this 33.873.750  
18 dollars spent on motor vehicle fuel because it  
19 represents a huge financial capacity to employ  
20 neighborhood based composting in order to reduce  
21 out motor vehicle fuel demands. I am talking  
22 about beyond just hybrid garbage trucks and  
23 gasified food to fuel conversion. And we can  
24 simultaneously buffer against future spike in gas  
25 costs if we don't meet as much gas. And there is

1  
2 precedence for municipal efficiency investments in  
3 our small town on the Hudson as Council member  
4 Gennaro likes to call us. As you will find on the  
5 city's website, New York City is committing 10% of  
6 the city's annual energy budget to fund energy  
7 saving investments in city operations including  
8 its buildings, streetlights and wastewater  
9 treatment plants. I don't see any investments  
10 there in improving neighborhood based composting  
11 but imagine the potential. Working with that 10%  
12 number, it would 33 million divided by 10 or 3.8  
13 million dollars. If the city invested 3.8 million  
14 in neighborhood based composting next year it  
15 would be revolutionary. Innovation would thrive.  
16 A large fleet of smaller vehicles and bike  
17 trailers and electric golf carts could be bought  
18 online. Locally based processing capacity would  
19 skyrocket. Before long the city would be able to  
20 decrease the number of truck trips, reduce  
21 pollution, noise, road and rate damage and of  
22 course those famous garbage truck traffic jams.  
23 Additionally other truck costs including capital  
24 and maintenance would be reduced. With more  
25 funding for neighborhood based composting,

1  
2 community gardens and school gardens would have  
3 abundant sources of compost, making us less  
4 reliant on inputting compost and soil back into  
5 the city.

6 In my research, nobody has ever  
7 quantified how much compost and soil we import  
8 into this city. How much it costs and how much  
9 fuel it burns up to get here so it seems to send  
10 stuff out to bring it back in, seems incredibly  
11 inefficient. There are tremendous educational  
12 opportunities to involve New York City school kids  
13 in the composting process at their schools instead  
14 of just including their schools as a pick up site.  
15 There are plenty of small business models in here  
16 including some that already exists. In a city  
17 that desperately needs more jobs. And yet in  
18 spite of Mr. Gonen's wonderful testimony about  
19 local processing, nothing in Intro 1107's pilot  
20 program assures that priority will be given to  
21 organic processing within New York City limits.  
22 Since we just heard from the Sanitation Union  
23 President I want to close by thanking the  
24 sanitation workers for all the hard work that they  
25 do dealing with our trash. It's really God's work



1  
2 and I want to make sure that the union always  
3 views composting favorably. A robust and  
4 neighborhood based composting program will take  
5 more man and woman power, not less. Reduction in  
6 truck trips will result in less truck work for  
7 sanitation workers so there should be a training  
8 program to allow sanitation workers to transition  
9 to composting jobs on a voluntary basis. And  
10 sanitation workers should always be offered those  
11 jobs first. Thank you very much.

12 [off mic]

13 WENDY SHEER: Hello there. I am  
14 Wendy Sheer. I represent myself but I also have a  
15 long history of activism in environmental and food  
16 waste issues. And so I am rally glad that this  
17 hearing is taking place and it's really amazing.  
18 Also I am very excited by Ron's proposal as a  
19 whole. I am amazed to see that happen. I am just  
20 kind of disappointed that he is not here to hear  
21 us lowly people. But so, when I first heard about  
22 this residential citywide composting I was  
23 wondering, this is great but the real goal should  
24 be like the real food wasters in the city which  
25 would be reflected by commercial composting.

1  
2 Considering that the really high concentration of  
3 grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, juice bars,  
4 commercial kitchens, this is really long overdue.  
5 And that is happening on a limited basis, on a  
6 voluntary basis by some businesses, some  
7 restaurants, etc. But it's at a very small level  
8 and entirely voluntarily and really it's barely  
9 scratched the surface. The few bins that I see  
10 outside of certain stores here and there. For  
11 instance there is one particular juice bar that's  
12 kind of new to West Village. I can see it  
13 basically 20-25 large trash bags full of almost  
14 entirely fruit and vegetable pulp. Every single  
15 day and you just multiply that by this entire  
16 city. And it's really really huge. Everything we  
17 are talking about residential is really dwarfed by  
18 this elephant in the room. So while residential  
19 collection is certainly essential for us to be  
20 disposing of solid waste responsibly we have to be  
21 working towards the real huge issue which is  
22 citywide commercial composting. We have to be  
23 making it affordable and convenient for businesses  
24 to do this while we are thinking about this. So  
25 let's keep that in mind whenever we are trying to

1  
2 build capacity but we need to think about these  
3 huge industries in everything that we do. And  
4 also as a footnote for site ideas I think we  
5 should consider the existing brownfields and  
6 superfund sites for composting facilities.

7 VANDRA THORNBORN: Thank you very  
8 much. So am very pleased to be here and actually  
9 to have followed all these great speakers all of  
10 whom you know are describing this state of  
11 composting. This is almost like the hearing that  
12 you're supposed to say that, well we are having  
13 it. So my name is Vandra Thornborn and I am the  
14 founder and President of Vokashi Kitchen Waste  
15 Solution, a unique composting service in New York  
16 City helping households manage their food scraps.  
17 We use the Japanese method of Vokashi and provide  
18 the clients with the necessary buckets of bran to  
19 begin fermentation. Today we process more than 40  
20 tons of fermented food waste in community and  
21 private gardens and habited green spaces using  
22 nutrient rich compost and matted soils. And by  
23 the way, that's primarily me. Actually it's me  
24 and the day labor I hire. And I only want to just  
25 tell you that that's my grey hairs but anyway this

1  
2 is the third time in two years that I been before  
3 the Sanitation Committee and I am basically  
4 repeating my saying two requests. Firstly, where  
5 are Sanitation's proposals to encourage community  
6 based composting and today I am adding another  
7 word, services. I just believe that we need to  
8 open up the whole compost world to small  
9 entrepreneurial business models. We need the  
10 rules and regulations to encourage such services  
11 like the ones that Greg has proposed that Daniel  
12 has referred to. There are composting services  
13 that are beginning all over the country. And we  
14 need to think of opening up this market to small  
15 entrepreneurial composting services.

16 And the second request of course is  
17 to put Vokashi on the educational list of  
18 composting activities. There are hundreds of  
19 people now in New York City who are fermenting  
20 their food waste. It needs to be in the  
21 educational manuals. It's not just about  
22 vermiculture but adding vokashi. So I have been  
23 testing the residential compost service model for  
24 a couple of years. As I say composting service  
25 model is happening. I take note the fermented

1  
2 food waste to DEC sites to sites that are  
3 permitted by DEC. So the idea of the compost  
4 service is terrific. It's practical. It could  
5 flourish with reasonable political and  
6 administrative support.

7           The plan before the committee is a  
8 beginning. However I believe now is the time to  
9 expand and support dedicated residential  
10 composting collection services. There are dozens  
11 of composting sites currently underway that are  
12 permanently being built on volunteer labor. You  
13 want to know about sites, there are the sites.  
14 Those sites are the frameworks for growing an  
15 urban composting industry, providing the much-  
16 needed local community based green jobs. These  
17 sites need our waste dollars. Thank you for the  
18 reference to the 33 million but we have also heard  
19 about the 84 million dollars that those waste  
20 dollars can be redirected to invest in  
21 neighborhood sites. Not in the big box iteration.  
22 With all due respect to the NRDC, we don't need  
23 big business up in Westchester. We want the small  
24 composting sites that are in our neighborhoods for  
25 and to use actually the 02 composting facility

1  
2 which I like. So we need reasonable RFPs from the  
3 sanitation to support innovative financing and  
4 implementation of such plans.

5           And the other thing that I wanted  
6 to say is that we need, those RFPs have got to  
7 come in with some reasonable time line. The RFP  
8 that came out at the beginning of the year that  
9 was a six-week turn around. That RFP was designed  
10 for the big boy players. It's the Request for  
11 Proposals. So finally, on my request for Vokashi.  
12 So in addition to those very nice boxes, the lid  
13 whatever those containers. Those are good.  
14 Right. The rats can't get in there but actually  
15 the most interesting thing I want to say about my  
16 using fermented food waste is that I provide my  
17 subscribers with one or two 5 gallon buckets and I  
18 pick up once a month. So people can actually  
19 store, manage, all of their organic waste in a  
20 bucket that's underneath their sink and they only  
21 need to bring it out once a month. Most  
22 households are only using for one or two people,  
23 you are only using one bucket a month. So my  
24 thing is that sanitation is about to provide all  
25 those bio bags. Well you could provide our magic

1  
2 bran to everybody so that they could ferment their  
3 food waste and god forbid pick up the organic  
4 waste once a month. Hello. Imagine that. Talk  
5 about a revolution. So any rate, I think that I  
6 sort of said what I want to say which is great,  
7 let's have the community come and bring the  
8 composters. I am with Greg in supporting and want  
9 to see all of the community based composters come  
10 together, use this moment to really build our  
11 political muscle, because this is politics, our  
12 political muscle to come back and say, we built  
13 some wonderful composting sites. Those sites,  
14 they need reinforcements and they need our  
15 capital.

16 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. I  
17 want to thank this panel. I want to make a  
18 commitment to all of you before we call our last  
19 panel. We plan on having a hearing and the way  
20 that I want to approach it is, community  
21 composting and services from the perspective of  
22 job creation, economic development and  
23 environmental sustainability. That's something  
24 that I asked the staff to start looking into so  
25 that we can schedule so that all of us can come

1  
2 back together to talk about these issues and I  
3 again, want to thank each and every one of you.

4 Our last panel is Oliver Lamb, Anna  
5 Aust, as well as Lisa Maylor. And if I did not  
6 call your name please join this last panel as we  
7 come to a conclusion of this hearing.

8 And we were joined earlier by  
9 Council member Gennaro from Queens.

10 FEMALE VOICE: Hello. Thank you  
11 for this opportunity to testimony. Thank you. We  
12 Warsoff Wild are a farming collective in process  
13 of securing licensing with the Department of  
14 Sanitation. As representatives of Warsoff Wilds  
15 we are here today to testify at the hearing of  
16 this bill to express our support and interest in  
17 the amendment of the administrative code of the  
18 city of New York in relation to the collection of  
19 compostable waste. The bill proposing to  
20 reletter section 16308 with the added subdivision  
21 proposing a voluntary residential organic  
22 collection pilot program for the diversion of  
23 compostable waste from department managed solid  
24 waste.

25 MALE VOICE: Furthermore as the



1  
2 committee begins selecting locations for the  
3 purposes of introducing this new system of waste  
4 management, we request that the lot at the address  
5 of 48 Warsoff be considered for incorporation with  
6 the proposed pilot program. We seek to act in  
7 accordance with the waste management methods  
8 stipulated by this bill and we ask for the  
9 consideration of our collection, Warsoff Wilds, as  
10 entrusted participants in the composting pilot  
11 program.

12 FEMALE VOICE: Barring limitations,  
13 we hope to establish a small local scale anaerobic  
14 compost center as our garden's priority with the  
15 focus on educating and preparing the community  
16 through workshops and hands on experience for  
17 eventual larger scale implementations. We hope to  
18 mitigate the department's pick up process by  
19 consolidating immediate residential waste at our  
20 center through an internal voluntary pick up  
21 system, decreasing the necessity for multiple pick  
22 up locations in the area. The waste being  
23 recycled on site and fed directly back toward new  
24 growth of fresh produce or even energy means our  
25 compost center by relieving the department of

1  
2 waster responsibility will in turn manifest  
3 tangible benefit for the public and support of  
4 health and communal unity.

5           MALE VOICE: As residents of the  
6 immediate Bed Stuy neighborhoods surrounding 40  
7 Warsoff for the past five years we have  
8 established relationships with multiple housing  
9 units, local businesses and organizations. We are  
10 eager to utilize these open discourses to acquire  
11 support and participation in the proposed  
12 composting project further developing and  
13 strengthening those relationships. It is our  
14 belief that grassroots communications are really  
15 the only way to get this kind of thing going  
16 anywhere. We are in the process of allocating  
17 funds through grants, donations and the  
18 fundraisers to support our efforts. We have a  
19 core foundation of at least ten members who are  
20 very experienced and reputable, committed to the  
21 success of our proposed operation and we have been  
22 seeking endorsements from local organization. It  
23 is our belief that community farming and gardening  
24 centers will be the most thorough and integrated  
25 means of incorporating compost waste. Many of you

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have already said.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: 48 Warsoff. Is that a city owned lot?

MALE VOICE: Yes. It is.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: It is. [off mic] Love you but- and what agency?

MALE VOICE: I believe the Department of Sanitation.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: It's a DOS site?

MALE VOICE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay. We will submit this to Department of Sanitation for consideration as we identify expansion of the pilot program.

MALE VOICE: Thank you very much.

CHAIREPERSON JAMES: Thank you.

FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Next?

ANN AUST: Hi. My name is Ann Aust. AUST. I represent myself but I am here kind of on a lark because I got an email from the- thank you Ms. James and everyone else for having all of speak. The what is it called, the

1  
2 permaculture, there is a meetup, a permaculture  
3 meetup and I am a member so I get all these  
4 emails.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Is the  
6 permaculture meetup, is it similar to like a Tech  
7 meetup?

8 ANN AUST: A Tech meetup? I don't  
9 know Tech. [off mic] Yes. It's one of those  
10 monthly meeting type of things and they have all  
11 kinds of activities and whatever.

12 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And do you meet  
13 all throughout out the city of New York or?

14 ANN AUST: Monthly. It's in  
15 Manhattan. It's just Manhattan. But they have  
16 activities all over. Like there was a big garden  
17 in Brooklyn and other different things in  
18 different places.

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Can we have a  
20 meetup in Brooklyn?

21 [off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay, thank you  
23 Greg.

24 ANN AUST: Yes. I am fairly new in  
25 the organization so sort of marginally involved

1  
2 but and so I happen to see the email. I thought I  
3 am not working right now so I will check out this  
4 hearing and I am totally unprepared so I have no  
5 speech or anything written down.

6 [off mic]

7 ANN AUST: Exactly. So at first I  
8 voted for this proposal not knowing much about it  
9 and it sounded good on the surface and I like the  
10 concept but I think that like Greg is here, like  
11 Greg was saying the devil is in the details. And  
12 I think that and a lot of other people were saying  
13 that I think that there needs to be more thought  
14 and more whatever to go into this before we just  
15 go ahead and have proposition go through. There  
16 is just so much that has to be considered like  
17 where is all the composting going to go. And I  
18 think ultimately I like what some people said  
19 about it being decentralized and community based.  
20 I think that's the most important thing. I mean  
21 like I said I think the city is on the right  
22 track. It is long overdue because you know I have  
23 always been hoping that something like this would  
24 take place because a lot of people just don't  
25 bother. I live in a high rise and I live all the

1 way over on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street over by the Hudson River  
2 and there is a lot of apathy and it would be nice  
3 if more people could get involved. And I think  
4 one of the most important things is just to get  
5 people fired up. I mean how do you make, whether  
6 it's decentralized or not, how do you make it  
7 attractive and convenient for people to change  
8 their consciousness about doing all this because  
9 so many people don't care. I mean, we have  
10 recycling in our building and people throw greasy  
11 pizza boxes in with the paper or they throw  
12 clothing and all kinds of stuff that doesn't  
13 belong in the bins. So people have to do their  
14 part and they don't but I really do think in the  
15 upshot that we do have to keep it decentralized,  
16 try to keep things community based and keep things  
17 as local as possible instead of like shipping  
18 everything to make it one location. But it sounds  
19 like a start but I think that there's more thought  
20 that needs to go into it.

21  
22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We could  
23 provide you with some written materials if you  
24 wanted to distribute to your neighbors perhaps in  
25 terms of just educating them of composting and

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recycling. Okay? Thank you ma'am. Next?

LISA MAYLOR: Good morning. My name is Lisa Maylor. As Kendal mentioned before from 1986 to 1981 I did work for the Department of Sanitation in their recycling program and helped to start many of the recycling programs in place today. I oversaw the apartment house recycling program, the Intensive Recycling program in Park Slope where we piloted food waste collection back in 1990 and various other legislative initiatives but I am here today representing the District 3 Green Schools Group. A group of public school parents in Community School District 3 of the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Council member Brewer's district who volunteer to make schools more environmentally sustainable. From February to June 2012, eight District 3 public schools held in four buildings totaling more than 3,600 K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students, segregated paper boats, compostable sugar cane trays and all food waste. The food waste was collected for free from IESI, a private hauler and was taken to a commercial composting facility in Delaware. And I had the opportunity last Spring to testify at a hearing

1  
2 that you held here on community based composting  
3 when we had just started a pilot and so at that  
4 time I only had anecdotal information and I didn't  
5 have any data to share. So now I do have some  
6 data to share. A key focus of our pilot last year  
7 was to collect data so that we could do an  
8 analysis to see whether it was something that  
9 could work and should be expanded citywide. And  
10 we were able to document an 85% reduction in  
11 cafeteria garbage by volume on average for all  
12 schools in the pilot. What we found was when we  
13 started the program in the four buildings in the  
14 pilot, there were a total of 54 garbage bags being  
15 produced every day in all four of the buildings in  
16 our pilot program and within days of starting the  
17 food waste collection program that reduced down to  
18 eight bags of garbage across the pilot. And one  
19 of the schools in our pilot just in one cafeteria  
20 went from 12 bags of garbage to one garbage bag in  
21 the cafeteria because most of 85% was food waste  
22 and tray waste which is now compostable in our  
23 schools. So that was significant reduction right  
24 off the bat. We continued to do an analysis by  
25 weight over the course of the pilot and we weighed



1  
2 every waste stream in the cafeteria one week of  
3 every month during the pilot and averaged it  
4 throughout all eight schools and what we found and  
5 you have attached the testimony there some pie  
6 charts and bar charts that show our data and what  
7 we found was that 76% of the cafeteria waste  
8 stream was organics. And for us again, that  
9 includes trays, the compostable trays and the food  
10 waste. 11% was recyclable metal, glass and  
11 plastic and that was before the recent expansion  
12 of the plastics recycling. So now that number  
13 would increase tremendously because so much more  
14 plastics is now being diverted into the blue  
15 bucket. And 13% at the time was non-recyclable,  
16 non-compostable garbage. Based on the success of  
17 our pilot on the Upper West Side, the Department  
18 of Sanitation when we presented our results to  
19 them last June agreed to take over the collection  
20 and the composting of the material from our eight  
21 pilot schools in the Fall of 2012 which they did  
22 and expanded the program to include more than 40  
23 additional schools both in Manhattan and in  
24 Brooklyn, I know in your district. And that's the  
25 program that's taking place today. We, the

1  
2 District 3 Green Schools group, support the  
3 expansion of the school food waste composting  
4 pilot proposed in Intro number 1107 with some  
5 caution. There needs to be a comprehensive plan  
6 for doing outreach and education into school staff  
7 and students regarding the composting program in  
8 advance of starting the collection program. Clear  
9 signage needs to be produced and displayed in the  
10 cafeterias when the program is started. Adequate  
11 staff or volunteers must be on hand at composting,  
12 recycling and trash receptacle for at least the  
13 first two weeks of the implementation to ask the  
14 students questions and to ensure the program is  
15 implemented smoothly. And then must check in  
16 again periodically throughout the school year  
17 particularly after long holidays or school breaks.  
18 And again at the beginning of every school year.

19 In order to improve the quality of  
20 the material that arrives at the composting  
21 facility, educational efforts should focus on  
22 reducing the amount of contamination that goes  
23 into the food waste collection bin. Contaminants  
24 are largely plastics. It sounds obvious to us but  
25 it must be stressed to the students who are

1  
2 usually in a rush to get their food, to eat their  
3 food, to socialize, discard their lunch in just  
4 twenty minutes time. And so we need to stress to  
5 them that the food must be unwrapped before  
6 placing it in the food waste bins. Much of the  
7 contamination that we have found in our pilot food  
8 waste collection bins is plastic food packaging.  
9 Plastic utensils used to scrape food from the  
10 trays into the compost bin also often fall into  
11 the bin to contaminate the compost.

12           The Departments of Sanitation and  
13 Education must also collaborate to design school  
14 lunch that generates less packaging waste.  
15 Reducing the waste at the source will result in  
16 fewer problems at the compost facility and I must  
17 tell you when we look into the food waste bins so  
18 much of what's in there are these plastic cups of  
19 fruit. Instead of having fresh fruit they now  
20 have gone backwards and they now offer fruit cups  
21 and so if the kids don't eat them they throw the  
22 whole thing into the compost bin and the plastic  
23 is contaminated. So it's great if we teach them,  
24 okay dump out the canned fruit and then recycle  
25 the plastic which is better than contaminating it

1  
2 but it would still be better not to generate that  
3 plastic waste to begin with and give them apples  
4 and bananas and peaches.

5 The feasibility of using  
6 compostable cutlery should also be explored. I am  
7 sorry, one second. I am just missing my last  
8 paragraph.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We are joined  
10 by Council member Mike Nelson from Brooklyn. Good  
11 afternoon.

12 LISA MAYLOR: I am sorry I am  
13 almost done. The PTAs at the eight District 3  
14 2012 pilot schools paid for the compostable sugar  
15 cane trays to replace the standard DOE issues  
16 Styrofoam trays in our schools. In the spring of  
17 2013 the DOE received a grant for compostable  
18 trays for all pilot schools for just spring of  
19 2013. The provision of compostable sugar cane  
20 trays to all public schools participating in the  
21 food waste-composting program in perpetuity would  
22 eliminate the possibility of Styrofoam trays  
23 contaminating the compost and will also  
24 significantly reduce the amount of garbage  
25 generated by each school.

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2                   Lastly, provisions should be made  
3 to provide ongoing feedback to pilot schools and  
4 to receive feedback from pilot schools. DOE and  
5 DSNY should consider creating a place on their  
6 websites where participating schools can go to get  
7 updates on how the program is going and to post  
8 questions or comments. Thank you.

9                   CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.  
10 Thank you for the stats. It's very interesting  
11 and I do know that just like the Upper West Side  
12 there were schools in Park Slope that obviously  
13 had been in the forefront and were very visionary  
14 in terms of composting and reducing food waste but  
15 I am just concerned obviously as we talk about  
16 equity in the city of New York that there are some  
17 PTAs throughout the city of New York who  
18 unfortunately can not afford to purchase those  
19 compostable sugar cane trays and that continues to  
20 concern to me perhaps going forward in the next  
21 budget the City Council could provide some  
22 resources so that they too can purchase those  
23 trays. In addition to that the utensils, the  
24 cutlery, recyclable cutlery is also an issue. And  
25 as an aside students obviously need more than 20

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minutes to eat and discard but that's another issue.

LISA MAYLOR: Because that actually contributes to why there is so much food waste. I spent a lot of time.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I suspect that you share this building with other schools?

LISA MAYLOR: Yes. We have three schools.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I thought so.

LISA MAYLOR: I would ask the students, why did you throw that out? Did you not like it? And often they would say I did not have time to eat it.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right. I hear that a lot and so hopefully the next Administration will understand that smaller schools work and that three and four schools in one building lead to so many problems.

LISA MAYLOR: That's right.

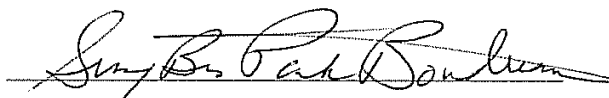
CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Lack of exercise, lack of, anyway, that's another hearing. But I thank you all for coming and thank you for the stats. I really appreciate it again, we plan

1  
2 on having a hearing in regards to community  
3 composting. I just want to acknowledge and  
4 introduce and thank Jared Hover to my immediate  
5 right who is the Counsel to this Committee and of  
6 course Daniel Avery to my far right who is a  
7 Senior Policy Analyst. Please introduce  
8 yourselves to these fine gentlemen. They  
9 basically make this Committee run and they make me  
10 look really good. Thank you all and have a good  
11 afternoon.  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Sung Bin Park 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 handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sung Bin Park", written over a horizontal line.

Date \_\_April 13, 2013