

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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November 9, 2015  
Start: 1:37 p.m.  
Recess: 1:46 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: ERICH A. ULRICH  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Fernando Cabrera  
Andrew Cohen  
Alan N. Maisel  
Paul A. Vallone

1 COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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2 [sound check, background comments, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Good morning, good  
4 afternoon, good night. Are we ready?

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Everything was brought  
6 under this. (sic)

7 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Wonderful.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: I got it.

9 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you. Okay.

10 [gavel] Good afternoon. I am Council Member Eric  
11 Ulrich, Chair of the New York City Council Veterans  
12 Committee. Today, we are looking forward to honoring  
13 the men and women who have served our country. This  
14 week on Veterans Day there will be parades and  
15 commemorations around the city. I know that many of  
16 my colleagues and I are looking forward to marching  
17 in Wednesday's parade here in Manhattan. The  
18 Committee will take its first step today in securing  
19 a historic victory for New York City's veterans and  
20 their families. Today, we are going to pass  
21 legislation that was introduced last spring by  
22 myself, along with the prime co-sponsor of the bill  
23 Council Member Paul Vallone. We heard from veterans  
24 across the city, and various American Legion posts  
25 and VFW halls, and VBA meetings, and IAVA functions,

2 and here at 250 Broadway that the creation of a  
3 veterans agency was a top priority. We were first  
4 hand at a hearing for this bill last September, and  
5 during the 14 months since from veterans from all  
6 service areas: Vietnam veterans; Iraq and  
7 Afghanistan veterans; World War II and Korean War  
8 veterans; War veterans; war time and peace time  
9 veterans, all of whom have joined together to support  
10 this legislation.

11           With the committee's vote today and the  
12 full committee's vote tomorrow, we reaffirm our  
13 commitment to the men and women who proudly and  
14 selflessly served our nation by establishing a New  
15 York City Department of Veterans Services. This is a  
16 landmark piece of legislation that will make New York  
17 City the country's largest municipality to establish  
18 an agent--an agency specifically dedicated to serving  
19 our military veterans and their families. It will  
20 allow us to better deliver the resources necessary,  
21 and also to assist the Commissioner and her staff to  
22 carry out their mission in the most effective way  
23 possible. And it signals to those service men and  
24 women returning from active duty that New York City  
25 is a veteran friendly place. And it is a place that

2 not only welcomes members of the military and their  
3 families to live here, but that we stand with them  
4 and behind me, and that we give them our full support  
5 and any assistance they need to better their lives.  
6 Whether it is allowing their dream of a college  
7 education, helping them get access to affordable  
8 housing, finding good paying jobs or getting  
9 comprehend--access to comprehensive medical care, the  
10 Department of Veteran Services will be there for our  
11 veterans like never before.

12 I would like to thank many people, the  
13 first of which is our Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito  
14 for her steadfast support of this legislation.  
15 Without her support, we would not be here today or  
16 voting on this bill tomorrow. I would like to thank  
17 our Public Advocate Tish James for being a champion  
18 of veterans issues and for being an early supporter  
19 of this bill. I'd like to thank my colleagues in the  
20 City Council specifically the members of this  
21 committee, Paul Vallone, Fernando Cabrera, Andy Cohen  
22 and Alan Maisel for their support for this bill,  
23 their vocal support and for standing by me throughout  
24 this very long and tedious process and journey. I'd  
25 like to thank the staff here at the City Council both

2 past and present who have help shepherd this bill  
3 along from the very beginning starting with Eric  
4 Bernstein, our Committee Counsel; our new Policy  
5 Analyst Michael Kurtz; our former Policy Analyst,  
6 Redmond Haskins, who really was critical in drafting  
7 this legislation, and coming up with the language and  
8 doing a lot of the research for this legislation. He  
9 is no longer working with the Council, but was a big  
10 part of this bill. Kevin Ryan as well, and John  
11 Russell, Finance Analyst; Laura Popa, who I think I  
12 drove crazy probably more crazy than anybody else in  
13 the seven years that I've been here, but I appreciate  
14 that. And Ramon Martinez, as well as Charlie  
15 Aidinoff from the Mayor's Office. So we want to  
16 thank the work that they've done on behalf of the  
17 committee and helping this legislation's passage  
18 today.

19                   Finally, to our city's veterans and the  
20 advocates. The advocates have really been essential  
21 throughout this process, and I know that we're going  
22 to see many of the tomorrow at the rally at 11:00--at  
23 11:00 a.m. and also at the fully vote of the Council  
24 tomorrow at 1:00, but this really came from the  
25 advocates as an exam--it's a fine example of council

2 members and legislative staff here working with the  
3 advocates in the community drafting legislation,  
4 fighting for its passage, and then finally see it  
5 happen tomorrow. It truly is historic, and I would  
6 be remiss if I didn't thank several in particular,  
7 which I'll thank again tomorrow but Paul Rykoff from  
8 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. He has  
9 been the most tenacious supporter of this bill, and  
10 actually, a lot of the language for this bill came  
11 from a policy paper that they put out about two years  
12 ago. We really appreciate that. Jason Hansman who  
13 no longer works for IAVA. He works for the  
14 Administration now, but he was also a critical part  
15 of what we're about to do today. John Rowan from  
16 Vietnam Veterans of America, a terrific guy  
17 representing so many Vietnam veterans throughout the  
18 city, and a long upstanding member of the Veterans  
19 Advisory Board. Also Joe Bello, just a great guy and  
20 a great friend, someone who's been, you know, a big  
21 part of this. Kristin Rouse just--these are just a  
22 few. I'm just naming them off the top of my head. I  
23 know I'm forgetting a bunch tomorrow and maybe the  
24 rest of them. But I want to go on the record to say  
25 how much I appreciate and this committee appreciates

2 everything that they have done to advance this piece  
3 of legislation. If it was not for them, we would not  
4 be here today to pass this bill. And to all our  
5 city's veterans for everything that they've done for  
6 our city and for our country, for their advocacy on  
7 behalf of their fellow service members. Their  
8 service and their sacrifice is not forgotten. We are  
9 making history with today's vote. It is the first  
10 step. It is not the last step in our journey to help  
11 veterans. I'm urging my colleagues to vote yes to  
12 ensure that our military service members, our  
13 veterans, their family members to over 235,000 of  
14 them who live in New York City that they know, that  
15 the City Council has their back. And that once  
16 again, New York City will lead the way in supporting  
17 our veterans. Thank you. I'll ask if any of my  
18 colleagues want to make any comments before we call  
19 the vote? We'll start with Vallone to my right.  
20 Council Member Vallone.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Chair Ulrich, I  
22 think it's very important that we thank you in this  
23 matter. I think this Veterans Committee has reached  
24 new heights on this bill and what's going to happen  
25 today and tomorrow. And, creating this agency is now

2 going to be a legacy that we can all finally be proud  
3 of. I chose to be on this committee envisioning a  
4 day like today where being a prime co-sponsor has  
5 never felt as special as today. And I want to thank  
6 you for never backing down, and many of those that  
7 tried in different ways to make sure that we didn't  
8 get to this vote today we stood strong together our  
9 committee as we always do. And now, we're going to  
10 be able to tell our 200,000 veterans that they have  
11 an agency they can all their own, and that we as  
12 council members and elected officials have stood for  
13 this fight together with them to make sure they have  
14 this day. So I proudly vote yes on this.

15 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Okay. Why don't we  
16 call the roll and then you can make comments during  
17 the--during your vote. Billy Martin, the Committee  
18 Clerk.

19 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,  
20 roll call vote Committee on Veterans, Introduction  
21 314-A, Chair Ulrich.

22 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: I vote aye.

23 CLERK: Cohen.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Permission to  
25 explain my vote?



2 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Granted.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I will say that it  
4 pains me to have to say something nice about our  
5 chair, but really you deserve an enormous amount of  
6 credit in really demonstrating leadership. You  
7 worked very hard. I've seen you work very hard on  
8 this bill. You were tireless. Honestly, it's a role  
9 model to how to get something done here. So you  
10 should be very proud, and I think I vote yes. Thank  
11 you.

12 CLERK: Maisel.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: I was convinced  
14 by the previous speakers to vote yes. (laughter)

15 CLERK: Vallone.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Yes.

17 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the  
18 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
19 the item has been adopted.

20 CHAIRPERSON ULRICH: Thank you very much.

21 [gavel]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Eric,  
23 Congratulations.

24 [pause]

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1 COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 9, 2015