

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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April 27, 2015
Start: 1:05 p.m.
Recess: 1:21 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room
14th Floor

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Andy L. King
Costa G. Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
Helen K. Koslowitz

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

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.
4 Are we ready?

5 SERGEANT-A-ARMS: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We are. Thank
7 you very much. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome
8 to this very special and momentous occasion for our
9 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
10 International Intergroup Relations. I'm proud to be
11 the chair of this committee. And today we are
12 gathered with our colleagues including Council Member
13 Steve Levin, Council Member Costa Constantinides,
14 Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Council Member Peter
15 Kook, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Council Member
16 Julissa Ferreras, and a guest appearance by Council
17 Member Jumaane Williams to vote on, and I hope pass,
18 the Cultural Plan for the City of New York. Council
19 Member Levin and I have been working on this piece of
20 legislation for about three years. And we with the
21 passage of this bill, will make history in the City
22 of New York.

23 I want to first obviously thank Council
24 Member Levin who will speak in a moment, but also all
25 of our colleagues, I believe 37 of which have joined

2 in, in co-sponsoring this important piece of
3 legislation. And, Council Member Levin and I firmly
4 believe that New York City should join many of the
5 other big cities in this nation, including Chicago
6 and Denver, and so many others in having a
7 comprehensive cultural plan to make sure that our
8 cultural sector and cultural community. Which is so
9 essential to the health, and wellbeing and vibrancy
10 of the City of New York continues. We all know the
11 arts are a major economic engine of the City of New
12 York with incredibly good jobs. But, it's also so
13 important to the soul. Something that is so easily
14 defined, or articulated in terms of numbers. And,
15 we're so excited about what this plan entails, and
16 how much work went into this process.

17 I want to thank the Commissioner of the
18 Department of Cultural Affairs, Tom Finkelpearl and
19 his staff who were incredibly helpful in working this
20 through with us, and making sure that Intro 419-A was
21 something that we could all be proud of. Making sure
22 that the Department of Cultural Affairs will study,
23 and endeavor to increase arts and education and
24 cultural activities in our public schools to-- It
25 will create a citizens advisory committee with a

2 diverse group of artists and others in the field that
3 will work together in a community engagement process
4 that is unparalleled in the City of New York with
5 respect to culture and the arts. Making sure that we
6 are achieving cultural equity, and including everyone
7 in the city in all that we want to do. Doing
8 assessments and making sure that the arts are
9 reaching into every single neighborhood, and every
10 single child has access to the arts in every
11 neighborhood across the City of New York. This is an
12 incredibly historic moment for this committee, and an
13 historic moment for the City of New York. And the
14 cultural community has been advocating for pushing
15 this along for many, many years. And it took a lot
16 of pushing, and a lot of cajoling, many, many drafts
17 back and forth. But, we have achieved something very
18 significant that I believe over the long term will
19 make our city a better place, a more culturally
20 diverse and rich place. And the greatest problem
21 that we face is access and equity when it comes to
22 the arts in a city as rich as ours. So this plan
23 when fully implemented will be an incredibly good
24 thing with feedback and all of the ways that the
25 community will be empowered. Artists and the

3 cultural community will be empowered through this
4 process. And when we engage communities, engage
5 artists we make support for the arts even that much
6 stronger, and our city that much stronger. There
7 will be data collected, analyzed and researched, and
8 there will be metrics attached with this plan. So we
9 are extremely--extremely excited about this.

10 I want to thank lots of folks before
11 handing it over to Council Levin, but--and he will
12 thank no doubt his staff. But I would be remiss if I
13 didn't thank and congratulate Rami Metal, who did so
14 much work on this, and Steve's Chief of Staff. My own
15 Chief of Staff, Matt Wallace who's here. Cody Ryder,
16 my Deputy Chief of Staff, and Lyle Frank from our
17 Human Services Division who was very helpful as well.
18 And, of course, Aminta Kilawan, our Counsel, and
19 Khloe Rivera, who in only one week on the job has now
20 passed a major piece of legislation in the City of
21 New York. So, I want to thank and recognize all of
22 those folks. And finally, before I hand it over just
23 say that Council Member Levin is not only a good
24 friend, but proved to be an amazing partner in this
25 endeavor, and I enjoyed working with Council Member
Levin and his team the entire way. It was quite a

2 ride with some bumps and hills, but we have made it.

3 And for that, I want to thank Council Member Levin,

4 and ask him to say a few words about the cultural

5 plan that we will then vote on.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very

7 much Chair Van Bramer, and I want to especially

8 acknowledge your essential role in this legislation.

9 You have shepherded this through the process. You

10 have paid such close attention, and this has been so

11 clear how important this is to you. And your care

12 and circumspect approach to this has been greatly

13 appreciated on my end. And I--I think that this is

14 not--we would not have this legislation coming out of

15 the Council if it wasn't for your leadership. and I

16 really want to thank you so much for--for all the

17 time and effort that you've dedicated to this and

18 that of your staff, committee staff Aminta and Khloe

19 and Lyle who have done an incredible job, and have

20 been so attentive--so attentive. Matt and Cody thank

21 you so much for--for your dedication to this. I

22 especially want to thank my Chief of Staff Rami

23 Metal. Rami came to me with--with this idea probably

24 about two years ago or close to two years ago at this

25 point.

2 And this was something that I knew was
3 going to be--was going to really radiate out. It was
4 going to make a lot of people take notice, and was
5 going to really send some shockwaves throughout the
6 city. And it's--it's an incredibly important piece
7 of legislation in my opinion because in New York City
8 we have--culture is the lifeblood of New York City.
9 It is the great resource that we have in our
10 communities. It speaks to our history. It speaks to
11 our present and our future. It is, you know, without
12 our cultural heritage, without the--the culture of
13 community, the culture of neighborhood, New York
14 would--would not be what it is. It would be a
15 Disnefied city, and that's not what we want. We want
16 New York to retain that distinctive character. We
17 want New York to maintain its richness. And that all
18 has to do with how our culture is supported in our
19 communities. How we--how we approach that precious
20 resource, how we support it and--and ultimately how
21 we give back to it. How we feed it. How we ensure
22 that children growing up in New York City today have
23 access to the culture of their grandparents. That is
24 so essential. So essential to our identity as a
25 city, and to our communities for many generations.

2 And so, this plan will ensure that we have a
3 blueprint, a clearly articulated blueprint that it is
4 part of this administration agenda. It's part of
5 this administration's vision, and that it--it is
6 informed by the communities at large. It is informed
7 by robust community outreach process, the Citizens
8 Advisory Committee. That it--that it has buy in from
9 all corners of New York City. And that's--and
10 that's--and I think that that's going to leave a
11 lasting impact. So again, Chair Van Bramer, thank
12 you so much for the opportunity. Thank you for
13 shepherding this legislation through. This really
14 wouldn't have happened without your leadership. So
15 thank you very much, and I encourage my colleagues to
16 vote aye.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much, Council Member Levin and your team, and again
19 we are about to vote on an historic piece of
20 legislation. Incredibly, New York City is one of the
21 few major cities in the United States of America that
22 does not have a comprehensive cultural plan. And to
23 date, there is no measure of what is considered an
24 acceptable level of resources when it comes to the
25 arts, and cultural services and how we measure the

2 success of what it is that we do. Particularly in
3 light of the challenges that we face with
4 skyrocketing rents and the challenges of affordable
5 work spaces for artists, and varied issues of access
6 and equity that we all are concerned with. So, with
7 that, I would encourage all of our colleagues to vote
8 yes on Intro 419-A, the Cultural Plan for the City of
9 New York, and ask Billy Martin to call the roll.

10 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.

11 Roll call vote Committee on Cultural Affairs. Chair
12 Van Bramer.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I proudly vote
14 aye.

15 CLERK: Crowley.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I vote aye.

17 CLERK: Ferreras.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: [off mic] Aye.

19 CLERK: Koo.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Aye.

21 CLERK: Levin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Aye.

23 CLERK: Constantinides.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Aye.

25 CLERK: Cumbo.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: You know I have to
3 take a moment to explain my vote here today. I'm so
4 excited, and I just want to take this opportunity to
5 congratulate Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer as well
6 as Council Member Steve Levin. This is such an
7 historic piece of legislation. As you said, there
8 was a lot of pulling and cajoling, and you all did a
9 wonderful job about that. And for me as a new
10 member, it was really very exciting to see you take
11 this legislation on the road. Going to any place
12 that would ask you to attend a meeting to discuss
13 this cultural plan, to hear all viewpoints. And, I
14 think that's made the legislation stronger, and I
15 know that so many people are going to be looking
16 forward to even more meetings and discussions to
17 flush out what a cultural plan would be. And I know
18 for so many throughout the five boroughs that the
19 opportunity to create a cultural plan will certainly
20 bring much of the equity. And putting all cultures
21 on a level playing field in terms of their importance
22 and relevance to New York City. So, I really applaud
23 you both. I'm very excited about this legislation.
24 And it's so nice coming in as a--as a first term
25 member to see this type of legislation already in the

2 works. So I'm very proud of you. I'm very proud to
3 have participated in this process, and I look forward
4 to what the ongoing end results will always be. So
5 thank you so very much, and I proudly vote aye.

6 CLERK: Rosenthal.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Aye.

8 CLERK: By a vote of 8 in the
9 affirmative, 0 in the negative, and no abstentions,
10 the item has been adopted.

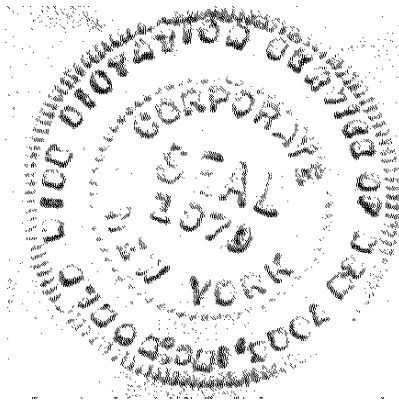
11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. So with
12 that, we have officially passed the Cultural Plan out
13 of committee, and look forward to voting tomorrow to
14 make this law with that. I want to congratulate all
15 of our colleagues, particularly Council Member Levin
16 and his team. And with that, this committee meeting
17 is adjourned.

18 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 5, 2015