

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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April 8, 2019  
Start: 11:48 a.m.  
Recess: 11:56 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: MARK LEVINE  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Inez D. Barron  
Mathieu Eugene  
Keith Powers

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

2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Welcome everybody to  
4 the City Council's Committee on Health. I'm Mark  
5 Levine the Chair. I'm pleased that we are joined by  
6 two of our committee members, Council Member Keith  
7 Powers and Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel. Thank  
8 you both for joining us. We are considering today a  
9 landmark package of bills to strengthen the city's  
10 inspection and oversight of water tanks. These are  
11 not cooling towers. That's been the subject of many  
12 other hearing. These are the iconic round oak  
13 structures on the roofs of many buildings that supply  
14 our drinking water. This is drinking water which is  
15 amongst the cleanest in the world, and I want to  
16 emphasize that there are no recorded cases of health  
17 events related to contaminated water tanks. Having  
18 said that, there has been some investigative  
19 reporting by city and state, which has revealed  
20 consistent problems of contamination of these  
21 structures with vermin and pigeons and other  
22 contaminants, and we want to make sure that New  
23 Yorkers understand our city is inspecting and  
24 managing and overseeing these structures so they do  
25 not fear to drink tap water. We have a packing of

2 seven bills today that would help do that, one of  
3 which is sponsored by Speaker Johnson. That's Intro  
4 1053, which ensures that water tank inspection  
5 companies submit annual inspection reports directly  
6 to the Health Department. We have Intro 1056-B  
7 sponsored by Council Member Constantinides, which  
8 requires that the Department of Health itself conduct  
9 inspections and audits of at least 125 tanks every  
10 year. We have intro 1138-A sponsored by Council  
11 Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, which requires that DOH  
12 conduct additional reviews of documentations of water  
13 tank inspections without prior notice to building  
14 owners in those cases when harmful bacteria or other  
15 violations have been found in those tanks. We also  
16 have Intro 1150-A sponsored by Council Member Kallos-  
17 Kallos, which allows DOHMH to require that water tank  
18 inspection results are submitted electronically to  
19 the department. Intro 1167-A sponsored by Council  
20 Member Salamanca, which requires building owners to  
21 repair damage in water tank-tanks or face imposition  
22 of a civil penalty if they fail to do so. Intro 1169  
23 sponsored by Council Member Torres, which requires  
24 that visual evidence of water tanks such as photos  
25 and videos be submitted along with inspection results

2 sent to the department, and finally, Intro 1157-B,  
3 which I am pleased to be the lead sponsor, which  
4 ensures that there are minimum qualifications met by  
5 those individuals who are performing water tank  
6 inspections to ensure that they are either licensed  
7 master plumbers, work under the direct supervision of  
8 licensed master plumbers or registered design  
9 professionals, and for those who are doing water tank  
10 cleaning, painting or coating that they hold  
11 commercial pesticides applicator certification or  
12 work under the direct supervision of a person holding  
13 such certification. Wow. Okay, seven great bills,  
14 an incredibly important package. I'm really proud of  
15 the work of this committee and my colleagues and we  
16 are now going to acknowledge first that we've been  
17 joined by fellow Health Committee Member Dr. Mathieu  
18 Eugene, and now we're going to going-going to cure  
19 our Committee Counsel or Committee Clerk Billy Martin  
20 to call the roll call.

21 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,  
22 roll call vote Committee on Health. All items are  
23 coupled. Chair Levine.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, I vote aye on  
25 all.

2 CLERK: Eugene.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: I vote aye.

4 CLERK: Ampry-Samuel:

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I just want  
6 to explain my bill real quick. I am proud to be  
7 named in this package of bills and specifically proud  
8 to introduce Bill 1138-A, which requires the  
9 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to review  
10 documentation of annual inspections, and water tanks  
11 where harmful bacteria are found, and to post the  
12 results online. This will allow for more  
13 accountability and for DOHMH to put more of an effort  
14 into pushing for building owners to have inspections  
15 done on their water tanks. Last year we had an  
16 incident in Breevort Houses in my district where a  
17 homeless man was found sleeping in one of our  
18 structures on top of the building and because this is  
19 where he slept, they had to empty out that entire  
20 area, empty out the tank, and then clean the tank,  
21 and when they cleaned the tank and tried to put the  
22 water back in, all of the pipes burst, and so a  
23 consequence to this homeless man being in the  
24 particular area was the fact that the pipes were just  
25 old. And so, there are so many consequences based on

2 what happens when you are not properly maintaining  
3 some of these water tanks, and so I am happy to be a  
4 part of the Council where we are really thinking  
5 about and putting New Yorkers first, and making sure  
6 that even though we do have clean water here in New  
7 York City, but we are ensuring that we maintain our  
8 structures and we maintain the inspections and  
9 continue to do all this because you never know what  
10 will happen when we stop doing that, when we stop  
11 doing the right thing. And so, again I'm proud to  
12 introduce this legislation, and proud to be a member  
13 of the body, and thank you for your leadership on  
14 this.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council  
16 Member for this great bill, and for your great work  
17 on the Committee. Thank you very much.

18 CLERK: Powers.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I vote aye.  
20 Thanks.

21 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the  
22 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
23 all items have been adopted by the committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And just confirming  
25 Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, you do actually--

1 COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I vote aye.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Good. [laughter] We  
4 will hold the vote open for a few minutes as we may  
5 wait for our final committee members to join us, and  
6 she came to us. Okay, outstanding. Thank you all  
7 and it's a wrap.

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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 9, 2019