

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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December 8, 2009
Start: 10:30 am
Recess: 10:45 am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
HELEN D. FOSTER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth Crowley
Alan J. Gerson
Letitia James

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

Sheila Feinberg
New Yorkers for Parks

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2 CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Good morning.
3 This is Council Member--this is Council Member.
4 Good morning. This is the Parks and Recreation
5 committee meeting. I'm Council Member Helen Diane
6 Foster. We've been joined by Council Member Tish
7 James from Brooklyn. We're going to hear on
8 proposed Intro 1083-A, our first witness is Sheila
9 Feinberg for New Yorkers for Parks.

10 SHEILA FEINBERG: Good morning.
11 Thank you for holding this hearing. New Yorkers
12 for Parks is the independent organization
13 dedicated to ensuring that all New Yorkers have
14 access to a world class system. Transparency and
15 community involvement--

16 We applaud this proposed
17 legislation for working to expand the levels of
18 accountability and transparency in the management
19 of our public parks. As evidenced by recent
20 issues throughout the city, more transparency is
21 needed in the governance of our parks. Intro
22 1083-A attempts to increase local accountability
23 by mandating that at least one individual who
24 resides or whose place of business is within each
25 Council district in which a park is located or

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2 abut, must be a voting member of the Board of
3 Directors of the respective park conservancy.

4 We support this principle and feel
5 that community involvement and representation is
6 essential towards improving the efficiency, equity
7 and efficacy of public/private partnerships in
8 parks. As always we have some recommendations.

9 We have several recommendations
10 regarding the most recent version of the
11 legislation. This bill would only affect
12 conservancies that have written agreements with
13 the city and that are responsible for hiring the
14 majority of the full time staff operating the
15 park. Few groups fall within both of these
16 categories.

17 According to the 2007 Citizens
18 Budget Commission Report, commissioned by New
19 Yorkers for Parks, Making the Most of our Parks,
20 only 10 of the 40 plus conservancies in the city
21 have written contracts and fewer than this hire
22 the majority of their full time staff. We believe
23 there could be value in increasing the number of
24 conservancies that are held accountable to this
25 legislation and this should be explored further.

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2 Finally, we commend the inclusion
3 of joint consultation between Council Members and
4 the Parks Department to determine the local
5 representative of the conservancy. However, we
6 recommend that the community board also be
7 included in the process. In addition, we would
8 like clarification on how rotating of local
9 representatives would take place when more than
10 two Council districts represent the park. Many
11 large parks with conservancies about multiple
12 Council districts that have widely varying
13 demographics and it is important to ensure that
14 all groups are fairly represented.

15 In conclusion, while some
16 public/private partnerships make it a priority to
17 include community members, broader legislation is
18 needed. Community involvement is too often seen
19 as an afterthought or even a barrier in many Parks
20 operations. This bill allows for members of the
21 local community to take an active role in the
22 oversight of their public park. Local leadership
23 and participation in the decision making process
24 is vital towards increasing transparency,
25 stewardship and community ownership in our public

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parks.

We support Intro 1083-A to improve transparency in the public process of park operations throughout nyc.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you very much.

MS. FEINBERG: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: We will now pause until we get a quorum so we can vote. Thank you.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you. We have resumed the Parks Committee meeting. Quorum is present. We will be voting on proposed Intro 1083-A. You may call the vote, please.

COUNSEL: William Martin, committee clerk. Roll call on the Committee on Parks and Recreation. Council Member Foster.

CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yes.

COUNSEL: James.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

COUNSEL: Crowley.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes.

COUNSEL: By a vote of three in the

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2 affirmative, zero in the negative, no abstention,
3 item is adopted. Council Members please sign the
4 committee report.

5 COUNSEL: Council Member Gerson.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: I vote aye.

7 COUNSEL: Final vote on the
8 Committee of Parks and Recreation is now four in
9 the affirmative, zero in the negative, no
10 abstentions. Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Amber Gibson, 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 Amber Gibson

Date _____