

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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December 15, 2020

Start: 4:03 PM

Recess: 4:11 PM

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 5)

B E F O R E: ROBERT E. CORNEGY, JR. Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Fernando Cabrera
Margaret S. Chin
Mark Gjonaj
Barry S. Grodenchik
Farah N. Louis
Bill Perkins
Carlina Rivera
Helen K. Rosenthal
Ritchie J. Torres

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

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon. At this
3 time we'll start this. Please start the recordings.
4 P.C. recording has started.

5 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: The cloud is rolling.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Back-up is rolling.

7 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you and good
8 afternoon and welcome to today's remote New York
9 City Council vote of the Committee on Housing and
10 Buildings. At this time would all Council members
11 and Council staff please turn on their video. To
12 minimize disruption please place electronic devices
13 on vibrate or silent mode. Thank you Chair Cornegy.
14 We are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you. (gavel) Good
16 afternoon and thank you for coming. I'm Council
17 Member Robert Cornegy Chair of the Council's
18 Committee on Housing and Buildings. We're here to
19 vote on two bills that extend looming deadlines for
20 requirements related to gas piping inspections and
21 carbon monoxide detector installations. A pair of
22 gas explosions in New York City injured nearly a 100
23 people and too ten lives in 2014 and 2015 shadowing
24 the peace of mind of mind of many more East Harlem,
25 East Village and city residents. In the wake of

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2 these tragedies, tragic explosions in 2016 the city
3 passed a collection of gas safety legislation aimed
4 at upgrading safety measures by city agencies,
5 utility companies and building owners. Local Laws
6 152, 159 of 2016 represented an effort to ensure
7 that the tragic events of March 12th 2014 and March
8 26, 2015 would never be repeated in another city
9 neighborhood. That's the origin of Local Law 1152 or
10 2016. After passage the Department of Buildings
11 crafted rules that set up the inspection regime. The
12 rules included DOB occupancy, Group R-3 from the
13 inspection regimes. The rules hold that the first
14 set of inspections in community districts 1, 3, and
15 10 should be conducted by December 31, 2020. The
16 rules also set out a possible \$10,000 civil penalty
17 for failure to file the inspection certificate
18 before the application deadline. The pandemic up-
19 ended that time table. Guidance from public health
20 authorities, Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio
21 meant having a licensed master plumber conduct the
22 gas pipe inspections simply could not happen for a
23 part of the year, and individuals concerned with
24 keeping their household contacts small meant that
25 either without emergency orders and a state of

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2 emergency conducting the inspections could run
3 counter to that goal and put vulnerable people at
4 risk. The pandemic also meant altogether less
5 public bandwidth for messages like upcoming gas pipe
6 inspections deadlines and more focus on the serious
7 crisis occurring around us. Introduction 2151-B
8 recognizes that context and proposes changing the
9 current compliance deadline by six months, from the
10 current law's December 31, 2020 deadline to a
11 proposed June 30, 2021 deadline. It also requires a
12 more thought going effort by the DOB on outreach and
13 notice to impact the communities. Intro 2151-B also
14 directs the Department of Buildings to pursue more
15 targeted outreach, engage community based
16 organizations and take on board feedback from the
17 public. Intro 2151-B is set for a final vote by the
18 City Council on December 17th. Going forward, City
19 policy has to include consideration of important
20 safety goals Local Laws 151 through 159 set out. At
21 the same time as recognizing the reality of the
22 pandemic and the challenges Buildings encounter in
23 complying with the law, the ultimate goal must be
24 public safety, not collecting penalties and not
25 eroding the equity building owners have built by

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2 imposing unreasonable got you fines. Colleges in co-
3 authoring or co-sponsoring this legislation have
4 seen the merit in the approach and include co-author
5 Council Member Dromm and co-sponsors Council Members
6 Kallos, Gjonaj, Brannan, Chin and Public Advocate
7 Williams, several of whom were also (ringing phone)
8 co-sponsors of Local Law 152. The pandemic has
9 required us to be flexible and look again at the
10 context of multiple deadlines set out in law. Intro
11 2151-B is in the spirit of taking a reasonable look
12 and reassessing how we can pursue safety while
13 recognizing the reality the pandemic has imposed on
14 all of us. Proposed Intro No. 2171-A, which I
15 sponsored, would extend the deadline by which carbon
16 monoxide detectors are required to be installed
17 under Local Law 191 from January 2021 to July 2021.
18 I'm joined today by Council Members in no particular
19 order Louis, Rivera, Gjonaj, Rosenthal, Perkins, and
20 Cabrera. We'll now hear remarks from our Finance
21 Chair and sponsor of the bill Council Member Danny
22 Dromm.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much
24 Chair Cornegy. Intro 2151-B will give much needed
25 reprieve to the tens of thousands of buildings in

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2 Community Districts 1, 3 and 10 that like all of us
3 are still reeling from this pandemic. Without this
4 bill there will be less scrambling to comply with
5 Local Law 152 of 2016 with its looming December 31,
6 2020 deadline. The goals of Local Law 152 are
7 laudable to ensure the gas lines in buildings
8 throughout the city are sound. However, the initial
9 deadline set well before anyone could foresee this
10 pandemic it is not practical at this point. As
11 responsible policy makers we are simply interested
12 in ensuring compliance with any legislation that is
13 passed and enacted. When circumstances change and
14 call for reassessment, we have to respond, and that
15 is what we are doing here. Intro 2151-B does not
16 only extend the gas line inspection and
17 certification deadline to June 30th. Fortunately,
18 Chair Cornegy insisted on including text that
19 required the Department of Buildings to conduct
20 thorough outreach to the public. I hope that these
21 provisions... Sorry. I just... Oh, no, allow one
22 moment, one moment. I'm sorry. I've lost the power
23 in my, in my phone so I'm going to have to stop
24 here, but I thank you Chair Cornegy for moving this
25 legislation forward, and I'm sure that folks will

2 appreciate the fact that we are moving this
3 deadline. So, thank you again for your attention to
4 this bill and for your support.

5 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Well, thank you Council
6 Member Dromm for your thoughtful consideration. As
7 the Chair of Finance people need to know that you
8 still have a heart, and don't drive everything
9 through the lens and scope of finance. Thank you,
10 Council Member Dromm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I'll ask now the
13 Committee Clerk to call the roll.

14 CLERK: Good afternoon. William Martin,
15 Committee Clerk, Roll call vote Committee on Housing
16 and Buildings. Introduction 2151-B and Introduction
17 2171-A. Both items are coupled. Chair Cornegy.

18 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I proudly vote aye on
19 all.

20 CLERK: Cabrera.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

22 CLERK: Rosenthal.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I vote aye.

24 CLERK: Grodenchik.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Aye.

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CLERK: Perkins.

COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Aye on all.

CLERK: Gjonaj.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Aye.

CLERK: Rivera.

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Aye.

CLERK: Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I vote aye.

CLERK: By a vote of 8 in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions, both items have been adopted by the Committee. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Before we close this hearing, I would like to make a public statement that Council Member Barry Grodenchik on behalf of the great members of Queens that he represents he was here from the beginning just for the record. I just didn't see him. Sorry, Queens.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: We are often overlooked, Mr. Chairman especially out here in Eastern Queens, but I can assure you that we, we are always paying attention.

CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I don't know why I opened the door for that, but thank you so much for attending the hearing and it has now commenced.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Mr.

3 Chair.

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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 December 23, 2020