

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
ANTONIO REYNOSO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Andy L. King
Vanessa L. Gibson
Costa G. Constantinides
Steven Matteo
Helen K. Rosenthal
Brad S. Lander

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

Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Kathryn Garcia
Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation

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Deputy Commissioner
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2 [background comment]

3 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Good morning
4 everyone, good morning; I hope you're doing well. My
5 name is Antonio Reynoso and I'm the Chair of the
6 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management;
7 please allow me to welcome you all to this hearing of
8 this Committee titled Oversight, the City's
9 Residential Compost Program under Local Law 77 of
10 2013. I'm joined today by my fellow committee
11 members, Council Member Andy King, Council Member
12 Matteo, who are currently present, and visiting and
13 supporting, Council Member Helen Rosenthal as well.
14 Thank you guys for being here.

15 About 30 percent of the City's waste
16 stream consists of organic waste, such as food
17 scraps; this material is heavy, messy, expensive to
18 transport and dispose of, and almost entirely
19 compostable under the right circumstances, and for
20 many years the only real composting efforts have come
21 from the heroic efforts of community composters who
22 created their own systems and processes, and frankly,
23 pushing the envelope on how to manage food waste in a
24 big city.

25

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2 To facilitate these efforts, DSNY
3 sponsored a master composting program run out of the
4 Botanical Gardens and at the Lower East Side Ecology
5 Center. This program has played a vital role in
6 training master composters who have worked with
7 schools, community gardens and others to spread the
8 word about composting. More recently, the City has
9 added new programs to expand and educate the public
10 about composting. For example, the Office of
11 Recycling Outreach and Education, a program under
12 GrowNYC, has established a truly impressive
13 composting drop-off program at the City's
14 Greenmarket, establishing among other things, that
15 there was a powerful demand among New Yorkers for
16 access to composting their food waste and that large-
17 scale composting in New York City is possible and
18 practical.

19 Last year, the Council passed Local Law
20 77, which brought upon and codified amazing work
21 around being carried by DSNY to pilot a residential
22 curbside composting program. This bill will ensure
23 that the program lasts at least two years, requiring
24 DSNY to roll out curbside composting to an increasing
25 number of neighborhoods around the City, with a goal

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2 of reaching at least 100,000 households, establish
3 school recycling at least 300 schools around the
4 City, and provide an opportunity to larger buildings
5 to receive composting services. The bill also
6 requires DSNY to do outreach and education around
7 composting and to conduct a study to help ensure that
8 community composting continues to be a robust part of
9 the overall composting efforts in New York City.

10 Local Law 77 was signed into law October 2nd, 2013,
11 so DSNY has about half-a-year to operate under it,
12 and so it seems a good moment to take a look at how
13 the residential program is working, how far its reach
14 has expanded, where we will go next, and otherwise
15 conduct an oversight on the critical program that has
16 the potential to revolutionize solid waste management
17 in the City.

18 This also affords us the opportunity to
19 hear from the representatives of the new de Blasio
20 Administration about the commitment to this program
21 and their vision for its future. So I look forward
22 to hearing from the Administration today, but also
23 from others in the composting world who have played
24 pivotal roles in getting us to where we are and who
25 will continue to drive composting efforts in New York

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2 City. So with that said, I wanna turn it over to
3 you; for the first panel I want to call up our
4 Borough President of Manhattan, who is, oh, already
5 sitting in her seat; thank you so much for being
6 here, to allow our Borough President to speak first,
7 so please.

8 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much, Chair
9 Reynoso and thank you to all the members. While I
10 was on the City Council I was a co-sponsor of Local
11 Law 77 and so I have great respect for the fact that
12 you're doing this oversight hearing today; we all
13 believe in a more sustainable city. So I have some
14 experience.

15 In February 2012, I had the privilege to
16 work with parents from eight District 3 public
17 schools on the Upper West Side to pilot the food
18 waste composting program and the concept was simple
19 -- instead of throwing away organic waste, such as
20 unfinished food, into the same trashcans as plastic
21 wrappers and Styrofoam trays, why not collect what
22 can be posted into a separate waste receptacle. At
23 the same time, Styrofoam trays were replaced with the
24 biodegradable counterparts made from sugarcane fiber.
25 The pilot was a success, a resounding success -- 450

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2 pounds of food waste was diverted from landfills per
3 day and in just four months more than 2,000 Styrofoam
4 trays were eliminated from the waste stream; this
5 translated to an overall garbage volume reduction of
6 85 percent across the eight schools between February
7 and June 2012. In fact program was so successful
8 that the Department of Education expanded the program
9 into 20 schools the following school year and
10 subsequently replicated the same model in schools
11 throughout the City and I'm sure the fabulous
12 Department of Sanitation, particularly regarding
13 their deputy commissioner who works on these issues,
14 will talk more about that.

15 The honorees were the moms, Emily Fano,
16 Pamela French, Lisa Maller, Jennifer Prescott, Laura
17 Sametz, and more importantly, the cafeteria staff and
18 the school custodians, and we had a celebration for
19 all of them, thanking them, 'cause that really was
20 how the program worked; it would be no pilot program
21 without them. They arranged for composting bins to
22 be placed inside the schools, to sort through binfuls
23 of food scraps every day to take out anything that
24 would contaminate the compost, and they worked
25

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2 tirelessly to ensure that Sanitation picked up the
3 school's compost waste five times a week.

4 I strongly believe that for any school
5 and residential composting program to be successful
6 and sustainable there must be behind-the-scenes
7 heroes dedicated to their respective schools and
8 buildings. So this pilot ream, thank you very much,
9 and to all the folks at DSNY, I thank you very much;
10 it's an example that shows the absolute necessity of
11 community engagement to make composting work.

12 So I'm thrilled that the City is on track
13 to expand organic waste collection to over 400
14 schools by over 2015, as prescribed by Local Law 77.
15 However, I am concerned with the tradeoff that had
16 been made between daily food waste collection and
17 metal, glass; plastic recycling collection. I
18 understand that in order to reduce the cost of
19 collection the Sanitation Department has reduced
20 metal, glass; plastic collection from three times a
21 week to just once a week; this is true for at least
22 the schools that participated in the 2012 pilot. At
23 the same time, with the expansion of acceptable
24 plastics that can now be recycled, non-organic
25 recyclable materials have drastically increased.

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2 Since storing these materials for a week can cause
3 vermin problems in schools, despite the heroic
4 efforts of custodians, this reduction in service has
5 made storing recyclables difficult for schools that
6 are successful recyclers, thus providing a
7 disincentive to recycle. I am sure that wasn't the
8 intent, so I know Sanitation will reexamine the
9 collection strategy and consider reinstating twice
10 weekly metal, glass; plastic reductions.

11 Local Law 77 of 2013 also established a
12 residential composting program, a pilot for
13 collecting organic waste in selective, multi-family,
14 residential buildings located along the pickup routes
15 of schools participating in the composting program.
16 In Manhattan, two residential complexes joined the
17 pilot as early participants and both sites are
18 showing signs of success. In addition to offering
19 regular organic waste pickups, Sanitation contributes
20 much to this success by providing composting bins at
21 no cost to households within participating buildings.

22 And I wanna thank Iggy Terranova; we love
23 Iggy, he's at the Sanitation Department, and he has
24 lent me this; I would never take it, of course; it'll
25 be returned to the Department, and there is in here

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2 example of liners, and so I just wanna say, this is
3 how easy it is to compost and I wanna thank Iggy for
4 this.

5 The residential program's first
6 participant is The Helena; it's a 597-unit apartment
7 building on 57th Street and it has diverted about
8 1,000 pounds of organic waste per week, or preventing
9 26 tons of compostable waste from getting to
10 landfills each year, according to the Durst
11 Organization, which is the owner of The Helena.

12 Another early participant is Morningside
13 Gardens, a six-building, 980-unit cooperative complex
14 on the Upper West Side. The complex has achieved a
15 60 percent voluntary participation rate among
16 residents, with more anticipated to join after
17 another round of outreach. Early numbers for the
18 first six months of the pilot shows a 35 percent rate
19 of organic waste diversion, according to GrowNYC,
20 which is helpful in all of these efforts. This means
21 that the total weight of trash generated by residents
22 saw a 35 percent decrease after taking out
23 compostable waste. This is the result of just under
24 600 units participating; imagine how much more
25 organic waste would be diverted from landfills if 300

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2 more units join, and by extension, if additional
3 multi-family residential complexes opt into the
4 program.

5 Composting, as you know, not only diverts
6 organic waste from being sent to landfills, it also
7 encourages participants' mindfulness of recycling in
8 general. As a result of participating in the
9 residential composting program, Morningside Gardens
10 has seen an increase in recycling of metal and glass
11 and plastic, about a ton more per week of recycling
12 has been done since the start of the program.

13 I would go one step further and urge the
14 Sanitation Department to think about the significant
15 impact we can have by working out a way to bring
16 public housing into the pilot program; in small
17 measures this has been done. For over 20 years
18 Morningside Gardens, as I mentioned above, has worked
19 with Grant Houses, a neighboring complex, to make it
20 the only NYCHA development in the City that collects
21 recyclables. This is thanks to the ongoing
22 collaboration between the co-chair of Morningside
23 Heights Board of Directors, Joan Levine and Sarah
24 Martin, who's the president of Grant Houses Residents
25 Association. More recently, as co-chairs, they're

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2 trying to introduce food and yard waste composting at
3 Grant Houses. The residential composting program has
4 the potential to one day include all of the families
5 in public housing, but this won't happen without
6 resident engagement and I'm sure that DSNY will put a
7 lot of weight on providing support for resident
8 engagement in NYCHA.

9 The final example I wanna pilot [sic] is
10 the pilot program between Sanitation and the
11 Department of Health, it's a great illustration of
12 what innovative interagency collaboration can achieve
13 and we take a lot of pride in this project. In
14 January of this year, the Health Department partnered
15 with Sanitation to pilot a one-block composting
16 program among residents living on West 83rd Street as
17 an effort to reduce rats. The way you get people to
18 compost is you talk about rats. By encouraging
19 residents to dispose organic waste in DSNY-issued
20 compost bins, [tapping] the Health Department hopes
21 to reduce the amount of food scraps in regular trash
22 bags, cutting off a key food source for rodents.
23 Though still too early to gauge the program's
24 success, the pilot has since expanded into two more
25 sites on the Lower East Side and in Washington

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2 Heights, showing that there is interest from agencies
3 and from the community.

4 So, in order to maintain the success of
5 the City's composting program, we urge Sanitation to
6 do the following: (1) I must underscore the important
7 role that education plays in the success of both
8 District 3 school pilot program and of the
9 residential composting program, all enacted under
10 Local Law 77. In working with school staff and
11 parents, partnering with community groups, such as
12 the Lower East Side Ecology Center, which you
13 mentioned earlier, and the Upper West Side Recycling
14 and speaking with residents, the common theme
15 emphasized by all of these stakeholders is a need for
16 comprehensive and easy to understand information to
17 guide participants through the initial learning curve
18 of adapting to a new way of waste management. I
19 commend the Sanitation Department for posting a
20 variety of educational materials on their website;
21 however, only the Compost Made Easy Resource Guide is
22 bilingual in English and Spanish and I think we would
23 all agree to make the education materials on
24 composting available in the six languages under
25 NYC's, our City's Language Access Plan would be a

2 good idea. (2) as I stated earlier, numerous schools
3 had the frequency of their metal, glass; plastic
4 recycling pickups decrease in order to accommodate
5 the additional daily pickups of organic waste. I see
6 the expansion of the composting program as an
7 opportunity to restore these schools' metal, glass;
8 plastic collections to their previous level and I
9 encourage the Sanitation Department to begin
10 dedicating trucks to only collecting organic waste
11 without reducing their capacity to collect other
12 recyclables, as the number of locations in need of
13 organic waste pickup will have increased enough with
14 the expansion of the residential composting program
15 to warrant their own collection routes. (3) I look
16 forward to this June, when the Sanitation Department
17 will report on its first findings on the total amount
18 of organic waste diverted during the previous six-
19 month period from household and from schools that
20 participated in such pilot programs during the
21 entirety of the six-month period. Pursuant to my
22 Open Data Law, the Sanitation Department should make
23 publicly available any data collected in relation to
24 this law, and as the program continues to expand it
25 is important to know who is participating, the

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2 percentage of organic waste diverted, as well as
3 their total tonnage, the cost of organic waste
4 collection, and where and how the collected organic
5 waste are either being composted or processed in
6 another manner; all of this can be easily accessible
7 from the website.

8 Finally, I urge the Sanitation Department
9 to continue to explore local siting options to
10 increase our city's capacity to process organic
11 waste. The City can only realize the full benefits
12 of expanding if there is sufficient local
13 infrastructure to accommodate current and future
14 processing needs. The environmental benefit of
15 diversion is diminished if a large portion of organic
16 waste continues to be hauled Upstate or out of state
17 for processing. Furthermore, in anticipation of
18 added organic waste from commercial entities, when
19 Local Law 146 of 2013, known as The Commercial
20 Organics Law, comes into effect in July 2015, it is
21 imperative for the City to start establishing a
22 pipeline of future food waste and/or other organic
23 waste processing sites now; not an easy task, I am
24 aware. So I am requesting the City Council to pass a
25 resolution to form a siting task force among the

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2 City's five solid waste advisory boards so that
3 appropriate organic waste processing sites may be
4 identified by January 2015. The SWAB is an ideal and
5 capable body to establish a task force for the
6 identification of organic waste processing sites,
7 since it has much of the information required for
8 determining suitable locations. SWAB also possesses
9 the expertise to propose suggestions on overall
10 improvements in the residential composting program
11 and will be able to take some of the heat from the
12 Department of Sanitation coming up with sites.

13 Thank you very much and I really
14 appreciate this opportunity, and congratulations on
15 the hearing.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you so much;
17 I just wanna say thank you for your leadership on
18 this and for coming back to speak on the successes of
19 the program; I think we're all excited about
20 composting, so to hear... to see its progress and the
21 fact that you wanna take it a little further I think
22 is extremely well put out; well thought out. I also
23 wanna say that Council Member Rosenthal's building is
24 not in the program yet and I'm extremely concerned
25 about that, [laughter] so the Upper West Side is

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2 leading in this and I can't wait till it gets out to
3 the outer boroughs, so looking forward to hearing
4 from the Administration. Any other questions or
5 concerns or comments? [crosstalk]

6 GALE BREWER: No; the only thing I would
7 say is, where you have a school that's doing
8 composting and doing it effectively, I think the fact
9 that we had a celebration to thank the cafeteria
10 staff, gave them proclamations; same to the custodial
11 staff, gave them proclamations; in our case, to the
12 amazing parents, and that might be true also in your
13 school; it's not easy to do, so the fact of the
14 matter is that people were celebrated who often don't
15 get celebrated would be something to think about, if
16 you have a school in your district.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: And you spoke to
18 the recycling, hoping that we can do that more often;
19 if we don't... we have the capacity, let's say, but we
20 don't have the recycling material coming in fast
21 enough or it... [interpose]

22 GALE BREWER: The schools probably will
23 have it; in particular, the other schools will have
24 it. [crosstalk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. Do you think
3 the schools have that capacity? Well hopefully DSNY
4 can speak to that when they get up here as well.

5 GALE BREWER: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Think that Council
7 Member Rosenthal has something to say as well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Sure. Yeah.
9 I just wanna echo Council Member Reynoso's words of
10 gratitude to you, Borough President Brewer; you were,
11 as everyone here knows, you were an amazing leader on
12 this issue over the past few years; I see Lisa Maller
13 here, who's one of the parents who spearheaded the
14 project, but it was really your bringing together of
15 the variety of stakeholders, and as you said, most
16 importantly the custodians and the staff, the kitchen
17 staff that I think sealed the deal to make it such a
18 success. And I know, because I was there; the
19 parents -- I'm not sure people really expected this,
20 but actually the Commissioner of Sanitation, John
21 Doherty, showed up at that celebration and no one
22 expected him, but he asked to speak...

23 GALE BREWER: Right.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: and he was so
25 moved by that movement; he then... by the organization;

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2 the hard work that was done, and the outcomes that
3 you achieved, that he himself at that point said,
4 well we're gonna expand this pilot. So it really...
5 you've been a leader, this program is a leader and I
6 recommend, Chair Reynoso, that... you know and I'd be
7 happy to help and I'm sure Borough President Brewer
8 would be happy to help as well, put together a task
9 force of people who can think about how to really
10 make this happen; it took a lot of hard sweat equity.

11 [interpose]

12 GALE BREWER: I mean I agree, I think
13 that each borough has a SWAB and we should work with
14 the SWABs to compliment whatever you're doing,
15 because there are a lot of citizens on there with
16 expertise; some of whom are in the room, alright.

17 [interpose, background comment] I have to return
18 this to Iggy now. Thank you very much. [crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: I'm pretty sure
20 they'll let you keep it, if you want. [crosstalk]

21 GALE BREWER: No, I'm not allowed to keep
22 it; he told me. [laugh] Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright, you're
24 welcome. And I'm gonna take you on maybe like a
25

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2 recognition tour of all the great schools and the
3 work that's being done... [interpose]

4 GALE BREWER: I'd love it.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: making sure we do
6 that and hopefully you can join us when we get to
7 that also [sic]. Thank you. [crosstalk]

8 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you so much.
10 Now I'd like to ask our great Commissioner, Kathryn
11 Garcia, and our Deputy Commissioner of Recycling, Ron
12 Gonen, to please come up, our next panel from the
13 Administration; thank you very much for being here,
14 it's a pleasure; this is our first hearing I think
15 that you're...

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: This is my first
17 hearing.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright, I'm
19 excited about it and grateful for the work that
20 you've done in this short time and we bumped into
21 each other at a facility when we were looking at ways
22 to process organics, and it really shows that
23 already, of course, boots on the ground, getting to
24 work, so extremely grateful for the work that you're
25 already doing. So please, when you can.

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So good morning Chair
3 Reynoso and members of the Committee on Sanitation
4 and Solid Waste Management. I am Kathryn Garcia,
5 Commissioner for the New York City Department of
6 Sanitation. With me today is Ron Gonen, Deputy
7 Commissioner for Sustainability and Recycling for the
8 Department. And I really do also wanna echo your
9 thanks to the great leadership that we've had from
10 the Borough President over the years, we're really
11 building on what she started.

12 Thank you for this opportunity to testify
13 on the status of the Department's pilot organics
14 collection program, authorized by Local Law 77 of
15 2013. Our organics pilot is an important step in
16 studying the feasibility of organics collection in
17 the City, and I am pleased to share with you the
18 status of our program to date. Before I begin, the
19 Department would also like to thank Speaker Mark-
20 Viverito, Chair Reynoso, the Department of Education,
21 the participating residents and school staff for all
22 of their continuing support of our organics program.
23 I will make a brief opening statement, after which I
24 am happy to answer questions. And I just wanna say
25 that I receive a lot of mail, and the best mail that

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2 I have received recently is from children who are
3 asking when will "they" be part of the organics
4 pilot, 'cause many of them are participating in their
5 school and wanna know when it will come to their
6 house.

7 The Department is committed to a long-
8 term goal of diverting 75 percent of solid waste from
9 landfills by 2030, in addition to the short-term goal
10 of doubling the City's recycling rate to 30 percent
11 over the next five years. Organic waste, including
12 food scraps, soiled paper and leaf and yard trimming,
13 comprise roughly 37 percent of the refuse collected
14 by the Department, represents the largest portion of
15 New York City's waste stream. Our ambitious goals
16 cannot be achieved without a robust organic waste
17 diversion program.

18 I would like to acknowledge that many New
19 Yorkers have been composting organic waste on their
20 own initiative for many years. There are many
21 residents across the City that live in single-family
22 homes and have compost bins in their backyards. The
23 Department also funds successful organics drop-off
24 programs at Greenmarkets and other locations
25 throughout the City. We also fund and manage the New

2 York City Compost Project, which provides compost
3 education and outreach to tens of thousands of New
4 York City residents annually and provided technical
5 assistance to over 200 community composting sites
6 that are utilized by local communities. The public
7 interest and the success of these smaller, community-
8 based programs were important signal to the
9 Department that a citywide curbside organics program
10 would be well received by the public and over time
11 could help us achieve our landfill diversion goals.

12 Before I describe to you the Department's
13 progress in implementing our curbside organics pilot
14 program, allow me a brief moment to touch on the
15 economics of diverting organics from landfills. In
16 2013, the City spent millions of dollars exporting
17 organic waste to landfills, about \$83 million. Our
18 goal is to divert that organic waste away from
19 disposal facilities and send this material to either
20 compost facilities where it can be converted into
21 compost and sold, or to anaerobic digesters where it
22 can be converted into renewable energy.

23 On year ago, in spring 2013, the
24 Department launched a voluntary pilot household
25 organic waste collection service -- providing free

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2 organic collection bins and educational materials --
3 to 3,500 Staten Island households in Westerleigh.

4 The results of the pilot program in this community
5 were encouraging, thus underscoring our perception of
6 New Yorkers' willingness to adopt this practice.

7 When Local Law 77 was signed nearly six months later
8 in September 2013, the Department was already putting
9 into motion the expansion of the voluntary
10 residential pilot program to portions of Throgs Neck,
11 Country Club, Silver Beach, and Edgewater Park
12 communities in the Bronx, portions of the Windsor
13 Terrace and Greenwood Heights communities in
14 Brooklyn, and the Mariner's Harbor and Graniteville
15 communities on Staten Island. By November 2013, the
16 Department was already providing organics collection
17 to over 30,000 households serving approximately
18 70,000 city residents.

19 To further meet the thresholds under
20 Local Law 77, the Department is in the process -- and
21 actually today is the first day of collection in Bay
22 Ridge -- of a phased roll-out of pilot areas to reach
23 100,000 households serving 240,000 city residents in
24 single-family homes and small residential buildings
25 in four boroughs -- equivalent to the entire

2 population of Orlando, Florida or Madison, Wisconsin.

3 By mid-June, additional pilot areas in portions of
4 Glendale, Maspeth and Middle Village in Queens, and
5 portions of Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Park Slope, and
6 Gowanus in Brooklyn, will be included in the
7 residential pilot program. We will also implement a
8 final small roll-out in the fall of 2014.

9 The Department provides outreach and
10 education to pilot areas, including meetings with
11 elected officials, community boards and local civic
12 and nonprofit organizations. Participating homes
13 receive a mailer a couple of weeks before the program
14 starts, together with a door hanger reminder. About
15 one week before collection begins, the Department
16 delivers to each participating building a brown
17 curbside organics bin and educational information,
18 and as you saw, the smaller kitchen container for
19 collecting the kitchen scraps generated by each
20 household. Members of the Department's outreach team
21 offer hands-on assistance to building managers, and
22 our website contains helpful information for
23 participating households as well.

24 Starting in the 2012-2013 school year,
25 the Department partnered with the Department of

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2 Education to implement organics collection service to
3 schools. In accordance with Local Law 77, the
4 Department expanded the pilot program during the
5 2013-2014 school year to a combined total of more
6 than 350 schools on Staten Island, the west side of
7 Manhattan and a portion of Brooklyn -- and we
8 actually have a map here of all the locations of
9 schools participating in the organics programs. We
10 are also serving a small number of private and
11 religious schools. The Department is working to
12 maximize diversion at participating schools by
13 collecting organic material and mixed paper in a dual
14 bin truck five days a week, with refuse and metal,
15 glass and plastic collected on the neighborhood
16 schedule.

17 The school pilot has fostered a
18 successful and growing partnership between the
19 Department and the Department of Education. Some
20 initial waste audits show that the diversion rate
21 more than doubling in many of the participating
22 schools. By providing staff training and placing
23 clearly marked waste sorting stations for recycling,
24 organics and "landfill" in the cafeteria, the
25 Department and the Department of Education have

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2 provided the infrastructure to maximize diversion in
3 school cafeterias and kitchens. After the first year
4 of service, the participating schools increased their
5 diversion percentage by over 100 percent, from 15 to
6 36 percent. In addition, with outreach assistance of
7 GrowNYC's Recycling Champions program, children are
8 learning the importance of this practice and taking
9 these lessons home with them. By the end of 2014 we
10 will exceed 400 participating schools and be running
11 the service in portions of all five boroughs, and it
12 really is critical to have the participation of the
13 principals and the custodians, they are really at the
14 front lines of this program.

15 The Department is also conducting the
16 pilot in high-rise residential buildings with ten or
17 more units. Building managers and owners can enroll
18 to participate and the Department adds them as
19 capacity on existing truck routes allows. The
20 Department, with the assistance of GrowNYC, has been
21 working with building managers to get the larger
22 buildings set up properly in order to facilitate
23 their participation and to provide education and
24 hands-on outreach wherever necessary. As the Borough
25 President mentioned, the first two high-rise

2 buildings to participate were The Helena apartment
3 building in midtown and the Morningside Gardens
4 complex in Morningside Heights. Nearly one year
5 later we now have 43 multi-family buildings currently
6 enrolled in the high-rise residential pilot program
7 in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In addition, the
8 Department has over 100 other residential buildings
9 going through the enrollment and outreach process,
10 and we will continue to add these buildings as truck
11 capacity allows, with some high-rise buildings
12 serviced by our school collection trucks and other by
13 our residential collection trucks.

14 In addition, 17 City agency and
15 institutional sites participate in the Department's
16 organics pilot program, including Gracie Mansion in
17 Manhattan and two Department of Homeless Service
18 shelters in Brooklyn. The Department of Citywide
19 Administrative Services is in the process of
20 implementing the program in a number of its
21 buildings. As truck route capacity allows, the
22 Department plans to continue to add additional
23 institutional sites.

24 Since the inception of the pilot program
25 through April 15th of this year, we have already

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2 collected more than 3,000 tons of organic material
3 from participating households, schools and agencies.
4 During this same period, the Department has collected
5 another 500 tons from Greenmarket drop-off sites
6 serviced by the Department, and almost 3,500 tons of
7 Christmas trees through our annual January collection
8 program.

9 I would like to highlight for you some of
10 the positive benefits of the proper and
11 environmentally sound collection of food waste. We
12 believe separating organic material, in addition to
13 fully recycling our designated recyclables, creates
14 valuable environmental and economic opportunities for
15 New York. Organic material that the City would be
16 paying to have exported for disposal outside the City
17 is instead being taken to local and regional
18 composting facilities, thus creating local and
19 regional green jobs. Material processed locally into
20 compost organic fertilizer is distributed to local
21 parks and gardens and sold to local landscapers. In
22 addition to composting, we are also investigating
23 opportunities for a portion of the organic material
24 we collect to be converted into renewable energy
25 through anaerobic digestion.

2 Although the organics collection pilot is
3 voluntary, we're making it as easy as possible for
4 residents and schools to participate by providing
5 them with sufficient collection frequency and the
6 tools free of cost, we believe there is still more
7 work to be done to encourage residents to fully
8 participate and to promote the positive changes of
9 diverting organic material from traditional disposal
10 sites as to benefit our communities, the environment
11 and the City's long-term sustainability goals.

12 In accordance with the Department's
13 sustainability strategy, it is our goal to promote
14 and support a system of sustainable solid waste
15 management that minimizes waste and maximizes
16 recycling. At the center of the Department's plan is
17 to increase the amount and type of material that can
18 be accepted into our recycling programs and to
19 provide the infrastructure and outreach to encourage
20 residents to fully participate. I believe the
21 Department and this Committee can collaborate
22 together to change the way New Yorkers look at waste
23 overall. One of our primary goals should be to
24 encourage the public to move away from viewing waste
25 as a product or item requiring disposal; instead view

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2 it as a valuable commodity or resource that can
3 generate revenue, reduce our disposal costs, create
4 local jobs and generate clean renewable energy. We
5 hope that the environmental benefits of diverting
6 waste from landfills are already clear.

7 In closing, I'd like to thank Chair
8 Reynoso and the Sanitation Committee for bringing the
9 subject of organic composting to the forefront today
10 for public discussion and debate, and also for
11 providing me with this opportunity today to update
12 you on the Department's program, illustrate the
13 positive benefits of organics processing, and respond
14 to any questions on this important initiative. The
15 Department looks forward to working with you to
16 accomplish the goals of this important pilot program
17 and on other meaningful legislative initiatives to
18 further reduce the City's carbon footprint.

19 I would now be happy to answer any
20 questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you very
22 much, Commissioner. So my first question -- What are
23 the participation rates for each neighborhood that's
24 included in the pilot; to the degree that
25 participations rates differ between neighborhoods,

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2 what factors are leading to those differences, and
3 what is the Department doing to improve participation
4 rates in poor-performing neighborhoods or just in
5 general?

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: So many of our
7 neighborhoods have only been participating for a few
8 months, at this point in time, we have very varied
9 participation, not only between neighborhoods, but
10 actually across the seasons, and so we've had weeks
11 where we had lows of 62 tons collected to highs of
12 188 tons. We continue to do outreach and education,
13 and one of the things that as we expand the pilot
14 into these new neighborhoods is to look at whether
15 collection twice a week versus once a week will make
16 a difference, so we're going to be doing both of
17 those two different, side by side tasks.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: And what are the
19 costs associated with the pilot date and does the
20 additional cost of the trucks, if any, relate to
21 savings associated with not having to transport
22 organics to other landfills or to landfills?

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: At this point in time
24 the organics program is costing about \$8.3 million,
25 what we're funded for for this year and for next

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2 year. It is in addition to what our current costs
3 for collection. Obviously, as we think about the
4 future and about where we may end up being in five
5 years as we look to a citywide, we would need to
6 rebalance our truck routes as we divert organics from
7 the refuse to the organics collection, but at this
8 point we are running them on overtime.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So you don't... so
10 cost savings, are they gonna be more... maybe in the
11 long-term we'll see them, but right now, because of
12 the... the... [interpose]

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: We would anticipate
14 that, particularly as we're ramping up collections,
15 we will see more costs on the collection side, but we
16 are hopeful that in the long run, based on where the
17 market and the region has been for disposal of
18 organics, has been lower than disposal at landfills.
19 So we are anticipating that we should see some
20 savings in the long run.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: I wanna just give
22 an opportunity for my colleague, Council Member King,
23 to ask a few questions as well. Council Member King.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good morning again,
25 Commissioner, and welcome...

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I have to say, this
4 is one of the few times that I've heard testimony
5 that I felt really comfortable about and I didn't...
6 you know, wasn't antagonistic; don't have to come
7 back and try to throw you underneath the bus; it's
8 good to hear, good professionalism... [interpose]

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Hopefully we'll never
10 have to do that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: [laugh] So this is
12 really nice and one day I really hope to have it in
13 my district; as a homeowner, I know it's frustrating
14 to come out after the raccoons have had a, you know...
15 [interpose]

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: the last supper and
18 they have just made a mess of the community, so I'm
19 looking forward to partnering up to figure out how do
20 we bring this into the residential areas that are in
21 my district also. But I do wanna know, for those
22 communities who have been involved, what has been the
23 feedback from the participants; is it favorable or
24 are they having challenges; what problems... what have
25 you heard so far?

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So we will be doing a
3 more statistically valid survey as we roll out to
4 larger communities, so what we've heard as we've
5 talked to people in the communities is they want it
6 more often, they wanted the ability to use clear
7 bags, they are finding that they're seeing less
8 rodents, and then the other thing is there were some
9 folks who had said there were issues with odors; we
10 did some additional education and resolved those
11 challenges.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uhm-hm.

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: So we have been, I think
14 warmly embraced across the communities that we are
15 working in, but we are also -- it's a voluntary
16 program, so we're getting the folks who really wanna
17 participate in it, at this point in time.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you. I heard
19 you mention in regards early on about students in the
20 schools excited about what they are learning; I think
21 that's a great organizing tool too, because once the
22 kids, our children learn it, they go home and they
23 beat up their parents...

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: so they make sure
3 that they do it right also, so [interpose]

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: that's great. How
6 do students who wanna participate more; how can they
7 actively engage in this process, and I know we'll...
8 just... just... how can they engage more; is there a
9 plan? [interpose]

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: So for schools that are
11 not yet part of the organics program, we have a very
12 extensive recycling education pieces available that
13 actually fit into the core curriculum, so we've tried
14 to make sure that we're supporting what the school is
15 already doing, so there's opportunities there to
16 participate via our educational programs, and
17 obviously we encourage them to be doing recycling of
18 their paper and their metal, glass and plastic, which
19 is currently picked up at all schools.

20 [background comment]

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: I just wanna follow
22 up with that question. Are we looking at a system
23 where if there is a school that's in the program,
24 that the neighborhood community is the community that
25 would move second in the pilot, or move... that will

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2 follow it up; because if the kids are learning and
3 they can encourage their parents and their parents
4 are in that district, that we have a system that
5 allows for it to transition from the school to the
6 homes closest around the schools that are being
7 piloted, even though I know that the rate in which
8 we're moving with the schools is much faster than the
9 rate that we're moving with the residential portion
10 at this point?

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: I mean we do definitely
12 view the schools and also the New York City Compost
13 program as the leaders into neighborhoods, to give
14 people an opportunity to be bringing their food waste
15 to community gardens or botanical gardens, but we
16 have not identified any additional neighborhoods yet
17 that we will be moving into with curbside. I don't
18 know if you have anything to add.

19 RON GONEN: Again, we started deploying
20 the school organics program... [interpose]

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Can you just state
22 [background comment] your name and title every time,
23 so we... [interpose]

24 RON GONEN: Yeah. Yeah. Ron Gonen,
25 Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and Sustainability.

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2 We started deploying the school organics program
3 before we started planning for the curbside organics
4 program, so it doesn't match up exactly 'cause there
5 are already areas getting the school organics program
6 before we even started planning the curbside organics
7 program, but to your point, it's something that we
8 recognize as a major opportunity to blend those
9 programs together, and so as we plan going forward,
10 as much as possible, we try and blend those two
11 programs together.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Back to
13 school again...

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I know your office
16 offers some assistance to the schools that are
17 participating, and even some of the residential
18 buildings who participating...

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: what concerns or
21 complaints that you might have... or difficulties that
22 people in the school are saying that they're
23 encountering trying to do this?

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: We really have not heard
25 about a lot of difficulty putting it in place; it

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2 tends to be that we have to do re-education when
3 there are changes in staff, but primarily we've been
4 able to have a lot of success when we've had the
5 commitment of the custodians and the principals. And
6 then because the apartment building program is
7 actually where you contact us to join, we have people
8 who are very committed to making sure that they're
9 doing it in a way that is successful.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. And that
11 was... thank you; that kinda leads into my next
12 question, because I wanted to know if communities did
13 wanna participate, as they're learning more about it,
14 what would they do to join this program?

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: So are you talking ... we
16 are doing individual apartment buildings, which can
17 contact the Department, and that is very dependent on
18 what the truck route availability is, so if there
19 already is a school route where we can easily add an
20 apartment building to that route, we will do it; in
21 terms of looking at communities as a whole, as we get
22 more information on the pilot's success, which I'm
23 gonna be optimistic and say that I anticipate it
24 being successful; we will look at what criteria we
25 need from the communities that have not yet gotten

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2 curbside and how we might be able to bring it to your
3 area of Queens.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. I'm in the
5 Bronx... [interpose]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: Oh I'm sorry.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: and... that's okay...
8 so right now, if someone wants to participate but
9 they're not on the truck route, they may not be able
10 to participate at this moment, 'cause... [interpose]

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: They won't get picked up
12 from Sanitation, but we can certainly provide them
13 with areas that are near their home where they can
14 drop it off.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Alright,
16 thank you. And one final question -- this winter we
17 had a horrible, snowy winter, ice and how did that
18 affect the program and what concerns on... and what
19 have you prepared for if this is to happen again next
20 winter?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: So the organics
22 collection was impacted in the same way that
23 recycling and regular refuse was impacted from the
24 amount of snow that we had, so it's very similar to
25 what people experienced whether they were in a pilot

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2 or not in a pilot district. I think that we are
3 looking constantly about how we can be more effective
4 on snow and then on catching up on our collections.
5 So really, the fact that we had so many storms back
6 to back did challenge the Department on making sure
7 we were getting to all of our collections.
8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And... and...
9 [crosstalk]
10 KATHRYN GARCIA: You may ask another...
11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: this is the final,
12 final final question -- so with that being said, did
13 you feel... when we were able to pick up, did you find
14 that there was lass... I mean less... [crosstalk]
15 KATHRYN GARCIA: Our... our lowest...
16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: trash that was on
17 that day?
18 KATHRYN GARCIA: our lowest tonnage was
19 in February.
20 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Say again.
21 KATHRYN GARCIA: So our lowest week...
22 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uh-huh.
23 KATHRYN GARCIA: was in February during
24 one of the snowstorms.
25 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay.

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So that was... that may
3 have impacted it; to be quite honest with you, I
4 don't think we have enough data with enough
5 variables, such as what the weather was or what the
6 holiday situation was, because obviously whether or
7 not the schools are in session or not in session
8 impacts our tonnage.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Well I thank
10 you and thank you Mr. Chair, appreciate it.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you Council
12 Member King. And is calling 311 the way that people
13 would know whether or not they can have it or they
14 can participate?

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes, they can certainly
16 call 311 to find out whether or not it will be in
17 their area, but we have done mailers to every
18 building in each of the districts that we are
19 expanding into.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. So where is
21 the compost going; I think that's a big question, and
22 is it viable, long-term or are we gonna have to seek
23 more markets or are we doing enough in the City, or
24 do we have enough use for it in the City to continue
25 to expand on this program?

2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So there are several
3 ways that we're moving compost -- on Staten Island
4 the Department of Sanitation actually operates its
5 own compost facility at the Fresh Kills Landfill; we
6 are also using... we have some capacity through
7 transfer stations for organic... we know that there
8 are, within the region, some regional facilities that
9 are either close to opening or open, like in
10 Connecticut and in the Hudson Valley, so we actually
11 are beginning to see the market expand with the
12 expansion both of the residential and I believe the
13 market's anticipating the expansion on the commercial
14 side as well. We also had a lot of interest from
15 companies who are thinking about whether or not it
16 makes financial sense for them to invest in digester
17 capacity.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Speaking of the
19 commercial and residential; how would the capacity
20 for the residential program work with the need for a
21 capacity... or a potential capacity for a commercial
22 composting program under Local Law 146 of 2013?

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: I think that they
24 compliment each other. It will make it so that we
25 can get to scale more quickly than if we were doing

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2 one or the other, and it will allow people to make
3 investment decisions to develop facilities to accept
4 the material.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. So I'm gonna
6 ask just a couple more questions to allow for a lot
7 of folks here that are actually doing local
8 neighborhood work...

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm-hm.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: how do you see the
11 neighborhoods and the work that some of these gardens
12 and other, just smaller... the smaller compost movement
13 is what I call it, which I wanna encourage, as best
14 as possible; how do you see them -- hopefully as a
15 partnership, but how do you see their capacity
16 expanding or being encouraged by the Department of
17 Sanitation?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: I think that within the
19 Department we feel like it is a critical piece of an
20 overall program; they are at the forefront, they are
21 doing an enormous education, they also are creating
22 our first composters in many communities; [background
23 comment] we think that's very, very important as we
24 try and expand this. The curbside program will take
25 us to scale and that's the difference between the

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2 drop-off program and the community garden program is
3 that curbside will be at a different tonnage number.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Right. So, do you
5 see any obstacles right now that they are facing,
6 that the neighborhood folks are facing in being able
7 to do the collection of organics?

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: I have not heard
9 anything but expansion and growth around the
10 neighborhood program about what's happening at the
11 Farmers Market. We try and be conservative, but
12 we've seen increasing tonnage of people being willing
13 to come and bring a week's worth of food waste to the
14 Farmers Market, so we are very encouraged across the
15 entire spectrum.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright, so GrowNYC
17 is huge for you guys as well?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: GrowNYC is a very
19 important partner for us.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright. Well I
21 really wanna thank you for your time here today; I do
22 wanna say that there's gonna be a lot of great
23 feedback or questions and concerns or just praise to
24 the work that's being done here and I just hope that
25 eventually we can come back to answering a lot of

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2 those questions and making sure that we're doing
3 this... that we're expanding capacity and doing this to
4 the best of our ability; I do think organics is
5 extremely important for what we wanna do in taking
6 sanitation into the future, and I'm grateful that
7 you're a part of that and you're encouraging it. So
8 once again, Commissioner, thank you so much for
9 taking the time out to speak to us today.

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes; thank you for
11 having me and really, I look forward to working with
12 the Council in figuring out ways we can partner on
13 moving the program forward.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yes and I'm gonna
15 see if we can find a more contentious hearing to
16 bring you to so that [laughter] the King, Mr. King
17 won't have to work out of the ordinary here. [laugh]
18 But thank you again.

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So now I'd like to
21 call up Eric Goldstein, Taryn [sic] Blay [sp?] and
22 Christine Datz, and I apologize for how I read the
23 names; terrible with handwriting. [background
24 comments] And if you guys can just say your name and
25

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2 where you're from so that we can get clarity on your
3 names, make sure they're okay.

4 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Eric Goldstein, Natural
5 Resources Defense Council.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Actually, you can
7 start speaking... you took the lead... [interpose]

8 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: congratulations,
10 you're our first speaker... [crosstalk]

11 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: and then we'll move
13 from there. Absolutely, thank you.

14 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you so much,
15 Chairman Reynoso and Council Member King; my name is
16 Eric Goldstein with the Natural Resources Defense
17 Council. Thank you for convening this hearing, you
18 are really two for two in the selection of topics for
19 your hearing, you've got two home runs in a row; this
20 is a very important issue and we really appreciate
21 your getting to it so quickly in the new term.

22 When NRDC testified in support of the
23 bill that ultimately became Local Law 77 at several
24 hearings before this Committee last year, we stated
25 that we thought that was the most important

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2 environmental bill of the year and we stand by that

3 conclusion. Food waste and yard waste account for

4 more than 26 percent of the residential waste load,

5 according to the City's waste characterization study;

6 currently the overwhelming bulk of these wastes are

7 sent to distant landfills or incinerators where they

8 emit large volume of global warming gases and other

9 air pollutants. The current landfilling and

10 incineration of the City's waste is also expensive;

11 according to Sanitation Department, over \$100 million

12 a year is spent exporting these wastes to out-of-

13 state landfills and incinerators, and as you've heard

14 from the Commissioner, the City can and will over the

15 long term save money, as well as reduce carbon

16 emissions and other air contaminants and produce

17 useful compost and biogas if we are able to collect

18 organics and dispose of them in more environmentally

19 friendly ways. Today more than 170 communities

20 around the country are already collecting residential

21 food waste for composting or anaerobic digestion and

22 San Francisco, Portland and Seattle are leading the

23 way; this alternative is reducing their landfill

24 costs, reducing pollution and it's securing support

25 from local residents.

2 From everything we've heard from the
3 Sanitation Department representatives and from our
4 discussions with property owners and our observations
5 of waste handling at city schools, we believe the
6 City's pilot projects are producing positive results.
7 Of course, New York City residents have also been
8 participating in successful greenmarket recycling
9 programs and composting programs run by GrowNYC and
10 they and the community recyclers and composters have
11 played an important role. It's also important to
12 keep in mind that cities like Portland, Seattle and
13 San Francisco have given their pilot programs years
14 to develop and build momentum. We're convinced that
15 this will happen in New York City too; clearly New
16 York's program, which is still in its earliest
17 stages, should be given time to develop. In short,
18 we're pleased by the efforts the Sanitation
19 Department thus far has made and we're appreciative
20 that Kathryn Garcia, our new Commissioner, and Deputy
21 Commissioner Ron Gonen have placed such an emphasis
22 on this program.

23 We have two specific recommendations for
24 future action by the Committee. First we recommend
25 the Committee consider legislation that would extend

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2 the school composting program to every school in New
3 York City. There is already enough evidence to
4 suggest that this program make sense, both from a
5 waste disposal standpoint and by providing important
6 educational benefits to city schoolchildren. We urge
7 this Committee to advance legislation in 2014 and
8 believe that such a bill making universal composting
9 at all city schools would enjoy strong public
10 support.

11 Second, we urge this Committee to take
12 action with respect to advancing community
13 composting. By collecting food waste in our
14 communities and allowing local residents to utilize
15 this organic material in local gardens and in
16 community composting facilities we're taking
17 important steps to advance environmental
18 sustainability. Logistical hurdles imposed by the
19 City's Business Integrity Commission have hampered
20 progress in this area so far. We're all awaiting new
21 big leadership so see if they will work cooperatively
22 with us and with the community composters and with
23 you to advance things and expedite further community
24 composting. If they don't, however, it'll be time
25 for this Committee to take action and advance the

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2 Community Composting Law of 2015 or maybe even 2014.

3 We are well on the way to becoming a leading city on

4 organic waste collection, thanks in part to Local Law

5 77 and to the good work of the Sanitation Department

6 and with you as our new leaders here in the City

7 Council, we think that a new era is opening up on

8 composting, on recycling and on well-informed solid

9 waste management; we couldn't be more excited; we

10 look forward to working with you and helping in any

11 way we can.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you so much

13 for your testimony. I just wanna ask you a question,

14 if I could. You speak to logistical hurdles imposed

15 by the City's Business Integrity Commission that have

16 hampered progress in this area; I'm extremely... I

17 really wanna get information regarding anything

18 that's hampering or slowing us down or making it

19 tougher, because I wanna make sure that the

20 Commissioner hears -- you heard her specifically

21 speak to not... hearing mostly encouraging things about

22 the program, which is great, but not necessarily

23 hearing what obstacles or hurdles folks that are

24 trying to do this work locally are having. So if you

25 could give us some examples or what the situations

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2 are so we could be... so we can get it to her; would be
3 very helpful.

4 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Again, this... my comments
5 there apply to community composting, not the two
6 elements of Local Law 77, which as you know deal with
7 the residential pilot and the school system pilot,
8 but with respect to community composting, I'm sure
9 today you'll hear shortly from community composters
10 firsthand. Our understanding of the situation is
11 there are a variety of requirements that have been
12 put into effect by BIC, for good reasons, to regulate
13 an industry, the private carting industry that in
14 previous decades had been somewhat out of control,
15 [background comment] however, these permitting
16 requirements, among others, impose an obstacle to
17 having local residents be able to collect local food
18 waste from local stores and bring them, or local
19 restaurants, and bring them to local composting
20 facilities, so the most basic kind of bartering and
21 in-service, even voluntary service, the kinds of
22 programs that could provide local jobs to high school
23 students after school and can keep the compost as
24 usable material right in the community, those kinds
25 of easy to arrange, informal agreements are hampered

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2 by some of the bureaucracy that the BIC has imposed
3 upon commercial carters. So obviously the
4 regulations that have been put in place for the
5 commercial carting industry, all of them don't
6 necessarily make sense if you're objective is
7 facilitating participation by local residents and
8 community composting facilities. We think that with
9 new leadership under the de Blasio administration, if
10 we can sit down with new big leadership and discuss
11 with the community composters and with the Sanitation
12 Department and with your participation what these
13 problems are, they should be able to be worked out;
14 if not, then I guess legislation would be something
15 that we hope you seriously consider.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yeah and absolutely
17 just wanna let you know that anything we can do to
18 encourage this program to grow, and I know that the
19 hearing, we spoke to Local Law 77, but this is... it's
20 like all about composting today, and that's very
21 important that we let the people in the audience know
22 as well, please speak up to any issues you're having,
23 because we wanna get as comprehensive an
24 understanding of how it's working; what's not working
25 so we can make progress, but also, I think Christine

2 is gonna allude to it moving forward is that we do
3 wanna make it easier to allow for our local community
4 work to be done, but still have a level of regulation
5 that doesn't spiral or get us to a point where maybe
6 in 10 years we're gonna have another hearing about
7 the regulations we should be imposing because we
8 didn't set them right now. But it's a balance and I
9 think we need BIC to be here eventually, when someone
10 does get appointed, to speak to a lot of these
11 issues. So thank you so much for your testimony; I
12 really appreciate you being here as well.

13 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Uhm...

15 TANYA BLAY: Good morning, Chairman
16 Reynoso and committee members. I thank the Committee
17 for providing the opportunity to testify in relation
18 to the City's residential compost program. My name
19 is Tanya Blay and I have in the past testified before
20 the Sanitation Committee on three occasions -- last
21 year at the hearing on the collection of compostable
22 waste, in 2012 at the hearing on community-based
23 composting efforts in New York City and two months
24 ago on ideas for the next four years in solid waste
25 management.

2 I am a certified master composter and
3 volunteer with and support a number of community-
4 based composting operations; among those are the
5 North Brooklyn Compost Project in McCarren Park and a
6 small compost operation at the South Side Community
7 Garden in Williamsburg. I am also a regular observer
8 at the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board Meetings
9 and at the meetings of the Newtown Creek Monitoring
10 Committee; my professional background is in financial
11 risk management.

12 Former Mayor Bloomberg has to be
13 commended for his efforts in starting up the
14 residential organics collection pilot program;
15 however, unfortunately he has left it up to the
16 current City government and administration to figure
17 out the details as to how to adequately deal with the
18 organic material collected. In order for the
19 Committee to make informed decisions as to how to get
20 closer to a comprehensive organics waste management
21 plan for New York City, I would like to make two
22 specific suggestions, and the first has to do with
23 the SWMP, which I hear is intended to be implemented
24 to be implemented fully in the future [background
25 comment] and has to do with the siting task force;

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2 the Solid Waste Management Plan had established a
3 compost facility siting task force that was required
4 to submit a report by July 1st, 2008; the report has
5 never been produced; according to the DSNY's 2013
6 annual report, the bureau participated in the
7 composting and alternative waste management
8 technology task force established through the SWMP.
9 My suggestion is, set a new date when the report
10 ought to be submitted, make it transparent who serves
11 on this task force and establish a community advisory
12 committee for this task force that can advise, among
13 other things, as to the siting of decentralized small
14 and medium scale composting and anaerobic digestion
15 facilities.

16 I would like to give an example of what
17 such a small and medium scale composting facility
18 could be in the community. There is a vacant lot
19 which is owned by the Department of Sanitation; it's
20 located in Bedford-Stuyvesant on Warsoff, I think
21 it's Place, Warsoff Place; it is slated to become a
22 bus parking depot and that is a very unfortunate
23 development in a sense, because it could potentially
24 become a very successful composting facility in the
25 neighborhood, so the land use issue there is

2 something that the Committee could potentially look
3 into.

4 And my second suggestion has to do with a
5 food-based pilot at the Newtown Creek Waste Water
6 Treatment Facility and potentially at other waste
7 water treatment plants. Just because these
8 facilities are an already established element in the
9 infrastructure of our city, it does not mean that
10 they provide all the infrastructure that is needed to
11 deal with organic waste. Waste water treatment
12 plants provide an important service in handling
13 biosolids and in keeping our waterways reasonably
14 clean. These achievements cannot be put at peril
15 just because no other suitable composting facilities
16 have been found, see number one, siting task force.
17 My suggestion in this regard is, consult with high-
18 ranking executives at both DSNY and DEP to obtain
19 detailed project plans and clarify what capacities
20 for food waste handling there are at the waste water
21 treatment plants and at what projected costs to the
22 City in the future should the pilot programs become
23 permanent practice. You already asked about costs
24 and in this regards, it appears to be very important
25 to realize that services that are currently provided

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2 for free might not in the future remain free to the
3 City. The other aspect of this is that in addition
4 to the environmental justice component there is also
5 an economic justice component; it has already been
6 mentioned today that there is a potential for job
7 creation, green color jobs in the City; the Committee
8 should potentially also look into that. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you Tanya for
10 your leadership in North Brooklyn, by the way; I just
11 wanna say that there's a bias there on how much I
12 appreciate the work that you do. I do wanna say, if
13 I heard you correct... first I want your testimony;
14 you've got a lot of stuff in there that was very
15 good, so I hope we can get a copy of it; [background
16 comment] I also wanna say, did you speak to possibly
17 free services moving to not being free anymore and
18 what that service was that you're considering
19 [background comment] or that you're proposing or
20 you're... [interpose]

21 TANYA BLAY: So this has to do
22 specifically with the way the food-based pilot works
23 at the waster water treatment plant at Newtown Creek.
24 You might be aware, or the Committee might be aware
25 that the food waste that is being collected needs to

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2 be processed into a slurry that is then introduced
3 into the biodigesters; as far as I am aware, that
4 service is currently provided by Waste Management, a
5 Fortune 5 company, for free to the City. I would
6 suspect that this is not going to stay that way in
7 the future, and you had already mentioned or asked
8 questions about cost in the future of the programs,
9 and I would recommend to look into that very closely
10 at what costs. And in terms of economic justice that
11 has to do with all of this, I would also recommend to
12 see where does the money go eventually; does it stay
13 locally, local jobs or does it... you know, does it
14 become property of the Fortune 5 company?

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yes. Okay. Thank
16 you, thank you for your testimony. I think Council
17 Member King has some questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes. Thank you
19 again for that valuable information; I praise you all
20 for your participation and gettin' out there and
21 makin' this work. But I just wanted to follow up,
22 'cause I... I was listening what you're tellin' when
23 you started talkin' about the financial
24 responsibilities that might transition into free
25 services to possibly pushing it off, the cost to the

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2 consumer; just because you all have been
3 participating at this volunteer stage, what kind of
4 impact do you think this could have if we were to say
5 we are not longer covering this cost and Joe Schmo
6 [sp?] who lives at 3232 Markenburg [sp?] Lane has to
7 all of a sudden pick up the tab; what do you think?

8 TANYA BLAY: I'm not sure I understand
9 correctly.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well the question
11 I'm asking; do you think that participation would go
12 up, because you're bringing attention to something
13 that I don't think... no one's actually had the
14 conversation because everything is volunteer, but
15 everything does cost money, from the manpower to the
16 supplies and all this, [background comment] and even
17 though everything is free right now, but you all are
18 participating and there's a number of communities
19 that are not participating in [background comment]
20 this right now. [background comment] But at the
21 point that they start participating; then we change;
22 what kind of impact do you think it will have on
23 participation?

24 TANYA BLAY: Right. I think this is a
25 very important question that goes in a slightly

2 different direction; I believe that community
3 composters have... their work is very important in the
4 past and have not asked for remuneration, in a sense,
5 which on the other hand has hampered development of
6 local composting, just because it was limited to
7 volunteer work and I believe Commissioner Garcia is
8 correct that the curbside collection is there to
9 scale this up and from a citywide view I believe it's
10 necessary to scale organics collection up. On the
11 other hand, what I heard today, also from
12 Commissioner Garcia and from Ron Gonen, is that
13 community composters have played or are still
14 currently playing an important role in terms of
15 education, along with teachers at schools and
16 custodial staff at schools, we all play an important
17 role in educating students and the general public as
18 to how to source-separate their organics and how to
19 do the collection on the ground practically. Now
20 this, of course, is remunerated in that sense and I
21 believe that, well there should be a discussion
22 probably as to how... and how far is the Department of
23 Sanitation relying on community composters to do this
24 type of work and are we getting enough support from
25 the Department of Sanitation to do this type of work?

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2 I believe this is a conversation to be had, which is
3 already starting at the bureau... office for waste
4 prevention and recycling.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Thank you.
6 Thank you.

7 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Council Member King,
8 could I just add a word on that question of the
9 costs, which is obviously an important one to all of
10 us as city residents and taxpayers? There are two
11 costs associated with the collection and disposal of
12 any solid waste, whether it's organics or any other
13 portable waste stream -- there's the cost of
14 collecting it and there's the cost of disposing it at
15 its ultimate resting place. We know for certain that
16 the costs of the disposing of organics, food waste
17 and yard waste, compostables, that the costs of
18 disposing of organics, food waste and yard waste,
19 compostables, that those costs are lower for the City
20 and for municipalities around the country than the
21 costs of dumping them at a landfill. So the tipping
22 fee, the amount the City is charged per ton at a
23 landfill ranges; let's say it's \$90 per ton, the
24 costs to take compostables, separated food waste and
25 yard waste, to a community composting facility varies

2 around the country, but let's say that might be half
3 that amount, maybe \$40-\$60 per ton, it'll vary a lot
4 and those aren't necessarily the New York rates, but
5 we do know based on the experience in other cities
6 that the costs of leaving food waste at a composting
7 facility or anaerobic digesting facility is less than
8 the cost of leaving it in a landfill, and that makes
9 sense because you're producing useful material
10 through composting and you're just taking up space at
11 a landfill. The costs of collecting the food waste
12 and making sure that they are comparable to the cost
13 of collecting trash, because a ton is a ton, so if
14 you find ways to equalize and rationalize the
15 collection system, ultimately there's no reason why
16 the costs for collecting a ton of food waste should
17 be any higher than collecting a ton of trash,
18 particularly since the food waste facilities that
19 you'll be bringing those wastes to are likely closer
20 than the distant landfills we're now exporting our
21 trash to. But as the Commissioner testified, that
22 may require some readjustment and rebalancing of the
23 collection routes and collection schedules; that's
24 gonna be a challenge, but keeping the long-term
25 picture in mind, there's not reason why over the next

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2 five years New York City shouldn't have a composting
3 program that expands to scale and that saves
4 taxpayers money for every ton of food waste and yard
5 waste that we send to a composting facility, compared
6 to every ton of food waste and yard waste that we
7 export to an out-of-state landfill.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you. And one
9 final... would you happen... I don't know; would you
10 happen to know the number of compost stations in the
11 City of New York or in each borough?

12 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Well right... there have
13 been composting facilities in a variety of places;
14 many of them were shut down in the first round of the
15 City's experimenting with composting; there were some
16 localized odor problems. As the Commissioner I think
17 has testified, right now there's a small composting
18 facility at the former Fresh Kills Landfill, there's
19 a composting facility on Rikers Island, and then
20 there are community composting, much smaller, but
21 significant throughout the City. The question now,
22 as the City scales up, and that's the other piece of
23 legislation dealing with commercial food waste
24 collections, we've gotta be able to develop
25 composting facilities throughout the region in order

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2 to really take composting to the next level. It's
3 unclear, at least to us at the Natural Resources
4 Defense Council whether that means all of these
5 composting facilities need to be sited right here in
6 New York City, where we all know the difficulties of
7 siting, or whether they could be sited on properties
8 in say 75 or 100 miles within the locale of the City.
9 If you're trying to site a composting facility or an
10 anaerobic digestion facility in the region, closer to
11 the City now than our far away landfills, but still
12 not in the City; that will certainly have some
13 significant potential to deal with the problem of
14 site, which is always a challenge in New York City.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you.

16 [background comment]

17 TANYA BLAY: Could I just briefly add to
18 that, that in addition to the larger scale facilities
19 on Fresh Kills and in Soundview, for example, there
20 are a number of medium... as Eric had mentioned, a
21 number of medium size facilities that are part of the
22 LORP program, the Local Organics Recovery Program,
23 and I believe that Christine can speak to that much
24 more, because her site is part of that program.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yes. And I just
3 wanna let the folks know here, that most of the cites
4 in the United States that do this well, or that do
5 recycling well in general do charge for that service
6 to occur and in the City of New York, through your
7 taxes, we provide this service; in other locations
8 they are charging individual residences to get this
9 done and they... of course, the conversion rates
10 benefit because of it, this composting work gets done
11 better because of it, so I just want us to be mindful
12 when we look at... when we think about these cities
13 that are pioneers, are doing great work, that you
14 know we are at a disadvantage because we don't charge
15 for it, and I think it's something that we should
16 highlight that the City is doing a great job,
17 considering how the money and how we get to operate
18 these items, so just to be mindful of that. And just
19 wanna let Eric know that you are not interviewing for
20 the big commissioner position in this hearing, so
21 please, the information you give us, you can... you
22 don't need to be as detailed and as thorough moving
23 forward, okay, Eric? Slow down. [laughter]

24 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: You're welcome.

3 And now I'd like to ask Christine from the Lower East
4 Side Ecology Center to please... Oh, and I just wanna
5 acknowledge we have been joined by Council Member
6 Constantinides. Thank you for being here, brother.

7 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Well good
8 morning; my name is Christina Datz-Romero and I am
9 very pleased to testify for the second time about
10 Local Law 77; I am testifying on behalf of the Lower
11 East Side Ecology Center, which is a community-based
12 recycling outfit that has actually pioneered
13 composting here in the City since 1990. Currently we
14 are celebrating our 20th year anniversary of
15 collecting food waste at the Union Square Greenmarket
16 and our program reaches about 1,500 households and we
17 collect and process 200 tons of organic waste per
18 hour by employing three full-time staff, creating
19 green collar jobs. The program is sustained by
20 selling the products that we generate, mostly
21 compost, of course, potting soil and also worms at
22 the Union Square Greenmarket and by generous
23 donations from our constituency. We developed an in-
24 vessel composting system in East River Park in 1998,
25 which is still functioning and that we have actually

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2 expanded last year with the help from funding from
3 the Department of Sanitation to increase the
4 materials that we can collect and process locally.

5 Community-based composting -- I would
6 just like to like say something about it -- really
7 means at the very nature of the definition that
8 community-based should really be on-site; as we both
9 were at a recent press conference about announcing
10 small-scale composting grants, there is a tremendous
11 amount of infrastructure actually here in the City
12 and interest with community gardens and housing
13 developments and what have you; people really
14 organizing to recycle their organics on-site and
15 using it to make the community greener and that's, in
16 essence, what I would define as community-based
17 composting.

18 There's also another level of community-
19 based composting that's more like in the scale of
20 what the Lower East Side Ecology Center has
21 developed; we are lucky that over the past decade
22 more programs like that that have a little bit of a
23 larger scale have sprouted up; we have a facility on
24 Governors Island that's run by Earth Matter that has
25 substantial capacity to handle organic waste; we have

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2 Build It Green under the Queensboro Bridge that is
3 also very much in the game of collecting food waste
4 and processing it, and we need more facilities like
5 that that are sort of a medium-scale but still
6 community-based; we have Gowanus, Canal Conservancy,
7 of course, as sort of the site currently already
8 taking on a lot of these materials and really looking
9 into growth of that program, because there was a lot
10 of funding being raised through the participatory
11 budget process to really get this off the ground. So
12 there are sort of interests percolating in all the
13 five boroughs I would say for community-based
14 composting and we need to really support it. And I
15 wanna put a shameless plug in for our organization,
16 which has been around for a long time; community-
17 based composters also face real challenges, our
18 organization has been in East River Park since 1998
19 and we have had to move our facility around for five
20 different times; we're currently in a location that
21 affords us half-an-acre of space in a public park;
22 unfortunately, we cannot really fully utilize that
23 space because we have real infrastructure problems.
24 Since 2011 we have tried to raise the capital money
25 to address these problems; currently we have requests

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2 in with the Manhattan Borough President's office,
3 with our local council people and also with the
4 Speaker's office to really scrape together \$1.3
5 million that we know it will cost to create a better
6 infrastructure for our program to run; it's anything
7 from having permanent access to water and electricity
8 to creating a truly sustainable project by dealing
9 with the waster water that's created through our
10 process and actually cleaning it on-site and creating
11 an artificial wetland, and I would really encourage
12 the City Council to put their money where their mouth
13 is and support this project this year, because it is
14 an urgent... it's urgent and it will allow us to be a
15 better facility and be also... and really live up to
16 our educational possibilities that we would certainly
17 like to offer.

18 Next I wanna talk a little bit about the
19 food waste pilot program; I think it's a great
20 program; would, of course, support more access to
21 composting in all five boroughs and the Local Law 77
22 certainly stipulates how to roll out this program;
23 unfortunately, it's totally silent about how to
24 create the infrastructure to actually make this a
25 cost-effective program. We need to create

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2 infrastructure to make it all work and a pilot should
3 not be about quantity, it should be about quality.

4 We need to get also more details and detailed reports

5 for sanitation; the Commissioner has promised us

6 these programs, she rightfully said that the program

7 is only a year old, but we need to really have

8 documentation about participation, diversion,

9 contamination, tonnage collected, and costs of

10 collecting and processing these materials. We know

11 for example from the metal, glass and plastic

12 curbside program that materials collected are

13 contaminated; one of the biggest culprits is plastic

14 bags that people use to bring the materials to their

15 recycling areas in the buildings. Do we see similar

16 problems with a curbside collection program for

17 organics? The other question I have is; where are

18 the collected materials being processed and how much

19 does that cost? The City currently has a compost

20 facility at Fresh Kills where both yard and food

21 waste can be processed and also has used the Newtown

22 Creek Sewage Treatment Plant to process some of the

23 collected organics. However, by putting organics

24 into a sewage treatment plant, we produce sludge,

25 which is used as landfill cover; not the highest end

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2 use of organic materials and really sort of ironic,
3 because we're collecting all of this to divert things
4 out of the landfill.

5 I'm also concerned equally problematic is
6 really the long-haul transport of organics to be
7 composted in existing compost facilities outside of
8 the City. Commissioner Garcia alluded to that by
9 basically saying that regional composting facilities
10 are being utilized right now; again, we are defeating
11 the purpose of this program by being more sustainable
12 and I just think rolling out a program to collect
13 more and more, while I understand the desire and it's
14 of course great; we also need to really make headway
15 on really creating the infrastructure, because quite
16 frankly, at the end of the day I'm really concerned
17 that what happened in 1990 where we have a pilot
18 program collecting organic waste in Park Slope and
19 Sadared [sp?] City was cancelled because it was too
20 expensive, and this could very well happen also with
21 this current pilot because at the end of the day we
22 need to be cognizant of the budget implications that
23 come with that.

24 Lastly, I wanna talk about yard waste.
25 Yard waste has been a program that existed in 37 of

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2 the 59 community districts in New York City, serving

3 all of Queens, Staten Island, sections of the Bronx

4 and Brooklyn. At the height of this program, 19,000

5 tons of yard waste were collected at a cost of \$3

6 million; unfortunately, this program has been

7 cancelled and Local Law 77 intends to keep it

8 suspended until 2016; even so, we have two permitted

9 compost facilities, which is Fresh Kills and

10 Soundview that could handle these materials locally.

11 I would urge the Committee to consider to reinstate

12 yard waste collection immediately to the scope that

13 it was offered before it got cancelled or suspended I

14 should say.

15 Lastly, I wanna talk about the compost

16 facility siting task force... [interpose]

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So hopefully...

18 'cause, I'm sorry; there's a lot of other speakers, I

19 just wanna make sure we get all the points...

20 [interpose]

21 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: and we're

23 definitely gonna have a copy... [interpose]

24 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Yes.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: of your testimony
3 to present to the Commissioner as well.

4 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Yeah. Just
5 lastly, the compost facility that our Manhattan
6 Borough President spoke about already, I would just
7 really urge the Committee to reconvene that and
8 especially vis-à-vis the sort of... the problem we had
9 with getting Spring Creek Composting Facility
10 permanent; I would urge a transparent, inclusive
11 process for this task force to really identify
12 compost facilities for yard waste, both in Queens and
13 Brooklyn. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you. Thank
15 you. And I just wanna just... two things there, with
16 the reporting that you think is extremely important
17 that we get regarding the composting, the law states
18 that by 2015, so after two years we need to start
19 getting those numbers in, so because it's only been...
20 it's a year in... [interpose]

21 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: you know, of course
23 I think Eric also spoke to the patience that we need
24 to have in making sure that we do this right and I
25 think that in two years we're supposed to get a

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2 document that speaks to the numbers that you want, or
3 that we all want, [background comment] so I'm excited
4 about that, and I'll make sure we have our numbers
5 and I'll make sure it's a priority for the
6 Commissioner. I also wanna speak to the yard waste;
7 I was just told that it was kind of the compromise
8 that we had to make in regards to the pilot program,
9 whether we're picking up yard waste or the organics
10 and that compromise wasn't perfect, but they are
11 encouraging the inclusion of the yard waste into the
12 compose as well to try to compensate for not being
13 able to make that pickup happen. I do think that
14 when we do have this committee that we put together,
15 this task force; to be perfectly honest, I'm not sure
16 if the task force has been created; who's in it, so
17 when I do get to that point, I am a child of reform
18 and transparency in a way that you wouldn't imagine
19 and we're gonna see if we can push forward a process
20 to make sure it has the players we feel comfortable
21 are gonna be to get... see this vision through and help
22 us get there. So I really wanna thank you for... for
23 all of you guys for being here; I'm extremely
24 grateful and I think it's... it's encouraging to see
25 the work that we're currently doing in communities

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2 and we have a couple of questions from several of our
3 council members; I wanna ask Council Member
4 Constantinides to go ahead.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Good
6 afternoon. I first wanna thank Chair Reynoso for
7 your great leadership on this issue and of this
8 Committee. Eric, it's great to see you, as always.

9 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: And I
11 just wanna quickly... wanted to say that and also wanna
12 just quickly comment on your proposals here that you
13 have laid out. And I was at PS 17 in my district
14 this morning and you know seeing a composting program
15 implemented in all the City schools I think would be
16 a great thing once this pilot program is through and
17 we see the great work that it's going to do, because
18 you know, the kids are really... it gives them an
19 opportunity learn about the world around them and how
20 we can help preserve it and you know, they were out
21 there planting this morning and they were gettin'
22 dirty and learning about the earth and learning about
23 the world around them and you know, this is a great
24 opportunity to do that and teach them how to be
25 greener and more sustainable and those are

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2 opportunities we shouldn't miss; you know, while
3 we're teaching them reading, writing; arithmetic, we
4 should also teach them about the world and how they
5 can play their role to make it a better place and to
6 make it sustainable and more green, so I'm
7 wholeheartedly onboard with the proposal that you've
8 put forth and just also wanted to say how great it
9 was to always see you here at the City Council and
10 NRDC and the good work that you do and everyone on
11 the panel for your great testimony.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you, Council
13 Member. Council Member Brad Lander.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Chair
15 Reynoso and... [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: I just wanna... I
17 just wanna say, the testimony they said to a program
18 in Park Slope that is no longer present... [interpose]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Well that's a
20 very old program, but [interpose, background comment]
21 the good news is that [background comment] the
22 composting pilot is rolling out on my block next
23 month; I'm pleased that the first Brooklyn
24 neighborhood was Windsor Terrace, which is in my
25 district, but isn't... you know, doesn't cover my

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2 house, so I'm very pleased, and you can imagine how
3 the residents of Park Slope felt learning that
4 Windsor Terrace was gonna be the first [background
5 comment] Brooklyn neighborhood in the pilot program
6 and they... I heard a lot from them. So I'm very
7 pleased that Windsor Terrace, Park Slope and Gowanus
8 will be covered in the composting pilot, I'm a strong
9 supporter; as was mentioned, in my neighborhood in
10 the very first year of participatory budgeting
11 residents, the second highest vote-getting project
12 was a community composting facility on a sanitation
13 salt lot along the banks of the Gowanus Canal. You
14 know, my constituents are certainly people who have
15 seen the value of reducing waste both for the
16 environment and for the budget of the City for a long
17 period of time, so I appreciate your doing an early
18 hearing on this, and I am eager to see it rolled out,
19 you know in all residential neighborhoods, I have
20 quite a few schools that engage in composting; a lot
21 of the schools in my district paid the extra amount
22 from the PTAs to replace the Styrofoam trays with the
23 bagasse sugarcane based trays, only to discover that
24 even the sugarcane based trays are still winding up
25 in the dump and so some of them have moved forward

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2 toward more robust composting and are pushing to get
3 themselves into the pilot program. So I really wanna
4 mostly appreciate the work that has been done by the
5 advocates and by the community-based nonprofit
6 organizations to show the way forward over a long
7 period of time and push the City's commitment to an
8 infrastructure forward and it is great that the
9 Department of Sanitation is now catching up and sees
10 this as essential from a solid waste and environment
11 point of view, but also from a financial point of
12 view as a way that the City is going to save money,
13 and also that the Department sees... and I'm sorry I
14 wasn't here for their testimony... is part of the
15 broader strategy of diversion, you know, part of why
16 as you know I'm pushing the plastic bag charge, just
17 because that's another piece of waste that can be
18 recycled or really reduced or reused meaningfully,
19 but if we keep moving forward, now that rigid
20 plastics recycling is online, keep pushing on other
21 recyclables, move forward to organics and get rid of
22 plastic bags and Styrofoam, as we did, we can achieve
23 some really ambitious goals. And I guess just... I
24 wanna think a little bit long term with you guys and
25 ask you this, you know this is a little more like

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2 thinking, dreaming, envisioning and not what's
3 happening this week or next month, excuse me. So I
4 know the Commissioner spoke about, and you've spoken
5 about as well, the challenge of uptake and getting
6 people to participate, and I've seen this a little in
7 Windsor Terrace and I'll see it a little more in Park
8 Slope; at Windsor Terrace they have once a week
9 composting, continue to have once a week recycling
10 and twice a week trash collection and so people that
11 are enthusiastic about composting have an opportunity
12 to compost, but it's still easier, because you have
13 twice trash pickups, to throw your, you know, throw
14 your organics in the trash and have them picked up.
15 One good step, and I guess I wanna ask you about this
16 and whether you've thought about it; one good step as
17 the pilot's expanding, it's my understand in Park
18 Slope, or at least in some places in the City,
19 there'll hopefully be twice weekly composting pickup,
20 so at least you won't have trash more often than you
21 have compost and would have... you know, wouldn't be a
22 disincentive to put out your compost. So do you have
23 thoughts on this and whether that'll hopefully
24 function to get more people to step up and start
25 participating in the program?

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2 TANYA BLAY: If I may; got a few
3 suggestions here. I'm from Germany and in Germany
4 it's federally mandated to have organics collections.
5 In the summer months collection is conducted twice
6 weekly, as far as I know, in most municipalities; in
7 the winter it's scaled down to once weekly, so it is
8 maybe dependent on the weather. Another thing is
9 that I have seen at another hearing Ron Gonen testify
10 and present the bins in which the organics are
11 collected. To my personal opinion, they appear
12 rather small; the German bins are at least double the
13 size. It might be worthwhile looking into providing
14 households with larger bins also in order...

15 [interpose]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I understand that
17 currently they will give you two, so if... [interpose]

18 TANYA BLAY: They will give you two?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: the one is too
20 small you can get a second one. [laughter] They
21 don't stack, but they are very cute when they're side
22 by side.

23 TANYA BLAY: They are very cute, yes.
24 Well this could be a data [sic] point also to be
25

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2 collected by DSNY; are the containers large enough or
3 not?

4 [background comments]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Oh, it sounds
6 like one of the things they're looking at with the
7 pilot is sizing, so that's good, maybe there'll be...
8 and these are obviously just... you know, that's why
9 it's a pilot; we're trying to figure out what will
10 work.

11 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Yeah. Well I
12 would also say that creating incentives and having
13 more pickup of recycling versus trash also sends
14 really the message, enforcing hey, what we really
15 wanna do is collect your recyclables, so separate it
16 and make it worthwhile and you know actually, really
17 substituting that and having less regular trash
18 collected is a step in the right direction and I was
19 really heartened also by Commission Garcia saying
20 that she has a goal of 75 percent diversion, so that
21 also points in that direction.

22 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: I'll try to be brief,
23 because I know the Commissioner is clocking me. In
24 other cities... [interpose]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: The Chair, the
3 Chair, not the Commissioner. [laughter, background
4 comments] No.

5 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: In other cities like San
6 Francisco, Seattle and Portland, these programs were
7 phased in over time and we really do need to be
8 patient for a number of years and be consistent and
9 thorough in our educational processes and it's great
10 to hear the Commissioner and this Council making
11 composting and organics collection a priority;
12 ultimately we are going to have to figure out how to
13 rebalance, to use the Commissioner's language, our
14 collections; most other cities -- NRDC did a survey -
15 - most other cities have once a week collection of
16 the traditional trash; some have more frequent
17 recycling and composting collections, and when you
18 think about it, if you can get rid of your compost,
19 the putrescible food waste, you can find the way to
20 rebalance and still provide an important public
21 service; that's the way we're gonna have to head, but
22 we wanna head there with an appropriate pace so that
23 the public is supportive and comes along with us.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So I just... I...
25 that's good to hear that and I wholeheartedly agree

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2 on sort of both sides; I'm glad for the coming month
3 or two while we're rolling out the pilot that, you
4 know, we will be maintaining the twice weekly trash
5 pickups, because I think otherwise we... there might
6 well be a lot of backlash -- composting is new, it
7 sounds like something that, you know, they only wanna
8 do in Park Slope and not something they wanna do all
9 around the City, and we need robust public support
10 for this program, people to understand, you know,
11 both the environmental and the financial reasons, so
12 I think you're right, that we need to do it
13 thoughtfully, but I also thin the long-term goal is
14 the right one and that over time if we're offering
15 people organics composting on a sufficient schedule
16 that it's not stinking up your house and recycling
17 paper, rigid plastics; all the other components of
18 that, you know that hopefully there will come a time
19 when what is currently traditional trash you just
20 have a lot less of in your house and a lot less need
21 to put it out twice a week and maybe in the long
22 term, as we build up this program, if we get that
23 rebalancing, will be able to do it in a way that
24 achieves that. So thank you to the panelists, thank
25 you to the Chair; thank you to the Department, even

2 though I missed that panel and I look forward to
3 getting my bins and starting my composting, last
4 month, I will have to put my backyard compost out of
5 retire... you know, out of commission, but I look very
6 forward to doing it, so thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you
8 Councilman. I just wanna say, Council Member Lander,
9 that Dan Avery lives in Windsor Terrace and he will
10 also be getting the pilot program and he's challenged
11 you to [laughter] see who can do the best in tonnage
12 over a year. [background comment] We're gonna have
13 our scale around. But I really appreciate your time
14 here and for your support to this program and I do
15 wanna say, the expansion of it is extremely
16 important; I think that another thing that we get
17 confused with is definitely neighborhoods and which
18 ones would participate and wouldn't participate with
19 very little education you would see how... we can see
20 how active communities that might... that you might not
21 traditionally see of interest participate actually
22 participate. So as Chair and from a community right
23 now that I don't think is part of the program, I'm
24 gonna be making a big push to allow us to be part of
25 that program as well.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Two things there;
3 first, I actually appreciate the correction; I
4 certainly don't mean to... you know, that the
5 neighborhood has a brand or an image, but I think,
6 you know having you chair this committee and showing
7 the importance... look, I think people in your
8 community understand the connections between where
9 solid waste is processed and environmental justice
10 issues and what the impacts are and our overall need
11 to reduce and so your leadership on this and other
12 environmental issues is much appreciated, and I'd be
13 remiss, even though he's not here, in addition to
14 welcoming and thanking the new Commissioner Garcia,
15 saying thank you to Deputy Commissioner Gonen, who
16 has really been a leader in the City on pushing us
17 forward on organics.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you guys.
19 I'd like to call up Dr. Samantha MacBride and Becky
20 Horowitz, and this is... is that the final?
21 [background comment] This is the final panel, so you
22 guys have... we saved the best for last; got a lot of
23 work to do here. [laughter] [background comments]
24 Okay, we could do that. Can we get them now so we
25 can put 'em up? [background comments] Get... he'll

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2 take you right now. [background comment]

3 Absolutely. So we're gonna add several members that
4 are gonna testify and we'll get their names in a few,
5 but if we can start with Dr. Samantha McBride and
6 Miss Becky Horowitz. [background comment] Click... I
7 think you gotta click it on, sorry.

8 SAMANTHA MACBRIDE: Chairman Reynoso and
9 Council Members, thank you for allowing me to speak
10 here today. My name is Samantha MacBride; I'm an
11 Assistant Professor of Public Affairs at Baruch
12 College and I'm currently conducting field research
13 on the organics pilot, specifically in multi-unit
14 buildings, because they are the majority of our
15 housing and the greatest challenge to organics
16 recycling.

17 In my research I'm also comparing New
18 York City to cities that are not really the same cast
19 of characters that we always hear about -- Portland,
20 San Francisco and Seattle -- but are more comparable
21 to New York City in terms of size, housing stock and
22 density, and these are actually outside the U.S., so
23 I'm actively researching organics programs in multi-
24 unit buildings in Seoul, Korea; Milan, Italy and
25 Toronto, Canada.

2 And I'd like to echo all of the very
3 positive things that have been said about composting
4 in general and the organics pilot specifically; there
5 is simply no way that we can get to systemic
6 sustainability with regard to waste in the city
7 without addressing organics in all of our housing,
8 and in that degree I'd like to bring up some issues
9 of environmental and economic justice.

10 As you may know, there is a longstanding
11 connection between income and diversion rate in this
12 city. The highest-income neighborhoods recycle at
13 the highest diversion rates and vice versa and this
14 has held true despite years of different types of
15 educational outreach approaches and I have provided
16 you a graph of that as backup to show it.

17 Research in our city has shown that this
18 is not a matter of differences in willingness to
19 recycle or environmental awareness, but in terms of
20 structural factors. Lower-income neighborhoods have
21 lower maintenance staff levels and lack of proper
22 infrastructure, such as bins and signage within their
23 buildings, and until we address these very, very
24 important structural features, it is my view that
25 we're not going to be able to roll out the organics

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2 curbside program to all of the neighborhoods in New
3 York City; it's incredibly important that we look at
4 these factors and look at them in a different way
5 than we have in the past and in this regard I would
6 recommend that the Department issue a Request for
7 Information and/or a Request for Expression of
8 Interest from nonprofit organizations and possibly
9 private organizations throughout the City to look at
10 incentives that can be afforded to lower-income
11 communities.

12 The other point I'll make, and I'll be
13 brief, is that no large U.S. city or foreign city,
14 for that matter, has succeeded at organics diversion
15 without a variable fee pricing in place, or pay as
16 you throw. In such cases you pay for garbage
17 collection, but not recycling and compost collection,
18 and that's simply how they put, they are extremely
19 proven, they make huge difference in diversion and
20 despite claims to the contrary, such a program can
21 work in New York City's dense, multi-unit environment
22 if it is tied to an official City garbage bag fee and
23 a rebate incentive program incorporated into the
24 property tax system that rewards higher diversion.
25 We need political will to make this happen; the

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2 Bloomberg Administration solicited detailed proposals
3 in this regard that were workable, but the Bloomberg
4 Administration rejected them because of pressure from
5 the real estate industry.

6 So I'll just close there and I remain at
7 your service to help make sustainable waste
8 management truly equitable in all the neighborhoods
9 of our city. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Quick question.
11 You spoke to these neighborhoods, with the lower-
12 income neighborhoods having less diversion rates; did
13 this take into account the pilot that's already been
14 formed?

15 SAMANTHA MACBRIDE: No, the data that
16 I've shown you goes back to the mid-90s and is
17 talking about diversion rate for traditional
18 recycling, but from my perspective, there's no reason
19 to think that unless we try and do something new and
20 different that those same patterns are not gonna
21 repeat themselves, and this is partly based on the
22 work I'm doing in the rather elite buildings, multi-
23 unit buildings that are doing the pilot program;
24 [background comment] it takes a lot more work for the
25 custodial staff in these settings and if you have a

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2 building where you have one custodian that is maybe
3 assigned to several buildings like you do in lower-
4 income neighborhoods, it's gonna be a real barrier
5 and we need to step up and address that.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. Thank you.

7 And I wanna just speak to the infrastructure that was
8 spoken about to earlier and making sure that the
9 Department of Sanitation hears that loud and clear
10 and that seems to be an obstacle [background comment]
11 and it's gonna be a bigger problem in the near future
12 and that if we don't invest now, it might make it
13 more difficult and maybe that this investment be made
14 in areas that are traditionally... [background comment]
15 have lower diversion rates and maybe that can be
16 helpful. But thank you, thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 BECKY HOROWITZ: Yes, thank you for
19 allowing me to speak here today; my name is Becky
20 Horowitz; I'm a native New Yorker and member of the
21 Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board. I'm currently
22 conducting a master's thesis at the University of
23 Wisconsin, Madison and also working with
24 Dr. MacBride; my project's on organics recycling in
25 multi-unit apartment buildings, and today I'm

2 reporting on a recent fact-finding trip to South
3 Korea, which is a city comparable in population, size
4 and density to New York City. Seoul's recycling
5 program is a really impressive case of urban waste
6 management, because the city has achieved really high
7 diversion rates and compliance its residents;
8 notably, 90 percent of food waste in Seoul is
9 recycled for compost, fodder and anaerobic digestion.

10 In 1995 Seoul made the transition from a
11 tax-funded waste management system, such as what we
12 currently have here in New York City, to a pay as you
13 throw system and curbside collection of food waste
14 using a volume-based fee system began in 2012.

15 Before collection, food waste is stored in a variety
16 of containers; that includes plastic bags that also
17 have a volume-based fee, bins that contain stickers
18 or RFID chips on them that record the container's
19 weight upon collection, and also, they have building
20 scale dehydrating receptacles with RFID technology
21 that also record the weight of the waste based on
22 each person's apartment building.

23 The monetary incentive of Seoul's pay as
24 you throw system has effectively encouraged residents
25 to reduce their volume of organic waste between 20-50

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2 percent in varying districts; the decrease in waste
3 actually has led to savings in disposal costs and
4 decreased carbon dioxide emissions, and avails of
5 other innovative programs, like waste reduction
6 competitions among buildings, maybe like Windsor
7 Terrace and Park Slope, and they offer restaurant and
8 cafeteria coupons... I'm sorry, they offer free coupons
9 or coins to restaurant and cafeteria goers as an
10 incentive to not take too much food and reduce
11 leftovers. In terms of compliance, Seoul banned
12 garbage shoots, actually, in 1995 when they
13 implemented their pay as you throw system and that
14 greatly reduced the ability to apartment dwellers to
15 anonymously dispose their recycling along with their
16 non-recyclables. Neighbors, security guards, closed-
17 circuit television all keep an eye on residents so
18 they can kind of help identify people who transgress
19 and because citizens wanna avoid fines, that's
20 additional motivation for them to comply with the
21 rules.

22 So like in Seoul, there are creative ways
23 for organic recycling to work on a large scale in New
24 York City and you know, incentive programs, new
25

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2 collection and storage technologies and end market
3 development is crucial to our system's success.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you for your
5 testimony; I would like to just state that... you said
6 incentive programs, and you put that nicely, but it
7 seems like it's a lot more aggressive in Seoul than
8 it is here and especially in New York, when you talk
9 about fees or any increases or any charges, you now,
10 this room will be twice... it would be packed to
11 capacity and we wouldn't be enjoying this hearing as
12 much as we are right now. But I do wanna say that I
13 take note to the fact that there's other ways to
14 encourage folks to do this and my goal is to be
15 patient with this program and see how successful it
16 is in the next couple of years, in an effort to not
17 have to mandate or put into law things that would
18 make this a much pleasant experience for the greater
19 good, to say the least. So I thank you for your
20 testimony; this is great information and I don't know
21 if you have anything else you wanted to add, but.

22 BECKY HOROWITZ: Well I think some of the
23 fees kind of got transferred, so they pay it for
24 about 30 percent, at least, of the collection
25 processing costs, so I think residents were

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2 previously paying more in terms of taxes for their
3 waste and now this comes out of their pocket, so
4 that's more of an incentive for them to decrease
5 their waste.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you. Great
7 information. Thank you so much. I don't have your
8 names, so I'm just gonna point at you guys.

9 [background comments]

10 MARISSA PROVENZA: Good morning, Chair
11 Reynoso; my name's Marissa Provenza and this is
12 Oliver Lamb, we are both speaking today on behalf of
13 the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board and its new
14 compost committee. We appreciate the opportunity to
15 speak at this hearing and thank the Sanitation
16 Committee for inviting community participation.

17 The mission of the compost committee is
18 to provide information and support to government
19 officials, Brooklyn residents and businesses in order
20 to advance and advocate for community-based
21 composting. We applaud the work that the Manhattan
22 SWAB has done in the last years to encourage
23 community composting initiatives. Our desire is to
24 compliment that work and encourage deeper outreach
25 into the community. We would like to support the

2 advancement of sustainable green collar jobs and
3 business opportunities in the recycling and waste
4 management industry.

5 We initially joined the compost committee
6 to collaborate on an implementation strategy for a
7 project called Warsoff Wilds, a proposition to create
8 a community garden and compost center on Brooklyn
9 block 1718 at the corner of Nostrand and Flushing.
10 The lot is Sanitation-owned and is zoned for a
11 sanitation garage which will not be implemented for
12 some time. We are currently exploring a
13 collaborative, long-term design that incorporates
14 mid-scale composting operations and the possibility
15 of a rooftop garden into the garage layout. We come
16 to you today to express how working on this project
17 surrounding this vacant lot has been our inspiration
18 and acts a catalyst, revealing the political and
19 public context and movement which we would like to
20 support with you now.

21 We have been introduced to several of the
22 preexisting models for mid-scale compost facilities
23 registered under the Department of Sanitation's Local
24 Organic Waste Recovery Program, such as Earth
25 Matters, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, Build It Green,

2 the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and added value
3 of Red Hook Community Farm, as well as the composting
4 roundtable's policy papers that suggest ways to
5 strengthen and organize community-based composting
6 marcessing [sic] fleet. We would like to thank them
7 and applaud them for their impressive and valuable
8 work; their site showcased this comprehensive
9 movement to integrate organic waste management with
10 other elements of green infrastructure throughout the
11 City, establishing a network of sustainable systems
12 that are self-supporting. The Close a Loop campaign
13 highlights the essential element of the
14 sustainability movement which is the actions of the
15 local public. These actions are integral to larger
16 initiatives to make New York City environmentally
17 enduring, more socially equitable and economically
18 advantageous, as it will take a combination of
19 central and local activity to create real long-term
20 solutions. We believe that the current political
21 momentum to towards municipal and local
22 interdependence is paving the way for an integrated,
23 multi-departmental approach to developing a New York
24 City sustainability program that engages social
25 justice issues. We believe this approach must be

2 centered on creating more green community spaces that
3 incorporate composting, urban agriculture and
4 education into a self-supporting, three-tiered
5 system. Looking at several key pieces of recently
6 passed legislature open up the conversation for a
7 closed loop system, Local Law 77, in preparation for
8 the eminent citywide transition to mandate organic
9 waste source separation aims to gradually increase
10 the composting pilot program throughout the City.
11 This law also stipulates the need for public
12 education about the source separation of organic
13 waste. Local Law 46 stipulates that Sanitation
14 Commissioner has the authority to direct the
15 commercial carters to haul their waste to regional,
16 in-vessel composting facilities. We believe that
17 establishing mid-scale composting facilities that
18 function alongside urban agricultural initiatives
19 will help facilitate public education regarding
20 source separating. By directing some of the
21 developmental strategy of the compost pilot program
22 towards the creation of localized composting sites,
23 we believe the Department of Sanitation will better
24 be able to implement organic waste recovery for the
25 long term by engaging residents directly. These

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2 sites can work in tandem with other public health and
3 workforce development initiatives outlined by the
4 Department of Long Term Planning and Sustainability
5 and the federal government. Congress has recently
6 amended the Farm Bill to transfer some of the funding
7 from food stamps to urban agriculture in recognition
8 of the greater accessibility to healthy food that
9 results from localizing food-growing activity.

10 Similarly, PlaNYC suggests that the utilization of
11 vacant spaces for urban agriculture initiative will
12 help New Yorkers better access nutritious food and
13 better engage their neighborhoods. While there are
14 many urban agricultural efforts already established
15 in New York City, there are not enough to cover the
16 spectrum. Many New York City residents have not yet
17 been introduced to the concept of composting and
18 still do not have access to affordable fresh produce.

19 The hands-on educational approach of community
20 composting will introduce, train and prepare the
21 public for the eminent shift to source separating
22 organics while simultaneously increasing access to
23 healthy food and inspiring healthy living. Based on
24 our findings investigating these active facilities,
25 we have begun to develop a proposal with a three-part

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2 structure -- a compost center, urban agriculture with
3 a showcase of sustainable practices and an education
4 initiative. The compost operations help to resolve
5 the citywide organic waste recovery, taking the
6 results of organic waste processing and immediately
7 and directly feeding them into urban agriculture,
8 efficiently resolving the inaccessibility to healthy
9 food on the local level. A comprehensive and
10 progressive educational program would reveal this
11 methodology firsthand, creating a catalyst for more
12 public involvement with a hands-on approach. We
13 believe this three-tiered system is integral to the
14 success of this legislature result being the needs of
15 the local communities as well as acting in accordance
16 with government law, bridging the gap and
17 accomplishing mutual goals simultaneously.

18 OLIVER LAMB: On April 25th, the Brooklyn
19 Solid Waste Advisory Board hosted a symposium,
20 beginning of a series of discussions and workshops.
21 This symposium series is inspired by the public
22 outreach of the City Council -- thank you guys -- and
23 similarly hopes to explore methods to divert organic
24 waste from landfills among the various stakeholders
25 of the organic waste recovery world. The first

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2 discussion has already helped highlight common
3 concerns and has pinpointed some key priorities. (1)
4 the creation of green collar jobs. By utilizing
5 preexisting volunteer programs as a model framework
6 for more expansive, community-based composting
7 system; (2) a greater need for education relating to
8 composting inorganic waste recovery for the general
9 public, particularly among youth (this has been
10 mentioned earlier at this hearing), a reassessment of
11 the Business Integrity Commission's requirements, the
12 incorporation of vacant or under-utilized land space
13 into the City's organic waste recovery strategy. We
14 are currently researching and developing amore
15 thorough investigation that identifies particular
16 solutions to the aforementioned issues, one which
17 examines the City's operating costs related to
18 organic waste management. We hope to compare that
19 data to the projected economic and social benefits of
20 mid-scale composting and we would request that the
21 Sanitation Committee similarly develop and the
22 development of mid-scale composting facilities
23 throughout the communities in New York City. We
24 foresee a green network developing when clusters of
25 community gardens work with larger composting

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2 facilities that act as a central force ideally within
3 each neighborhood. This composting center could act
4 as a powerhouse for information dissemination between
5 central and local initiatives, supplementing,
6 increasing and strengthening efforts and

7 communication between various stakeholders. This
8 network would allow the City to utilize the
9 preexisting infrastructure to reinforce this

10 interdependent, three-tiered system that unites
11 education, urban agriculture and organic waste
12 recovery and ultimately generating more green color
13 jobs. To better aid this mission of the composing
14 committee, we would like to ask the following

15 questions: Does the Department of Sanitation
16 currently have enough capacity, including trucks and
17 physical space to process the organics that they've
18 set out in the pilot program? Does the Department of
19 Sanitation encounter any problems related to the
20 program? Have any residential buildings within nine
21 of our units [sic] along the organics waste route
22 volunteered to participate and if so, how many? Has
23 the Department of Sanitation had to reject any to
24 participate or collecting from a building because of
25 lack of capacity? When the Department of Sanitation

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2 submits their report, we would like to request that
3 the same information be made available to the Borough
4 President and the SWAB. And finally, does the
5 Department of Sanitation anticipate the development
6 of new composting facilities? Thank you for your
7 time; we look forward to seeing some of these ideas
8 become implemented and we are really deeply
9 encouraged that the City is beginning to regard
10 organic waste as a resource and we applaud all the
11 legislative actions you guys have taken and we hope
12 that we can serve in any way that we can to help the
13 City gather and organize the public to help implement
14 these pilot programs and any programs you guys
15 establish in the future. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you guys. I
17 just wanna speak to... I just have one question, maybe
18 more. The creation of green color jobs, we were
19 talking about jobs, but it seems like most of the
20 work we're doing is volunteer, [background comment]
21 so how do we see that model... where are we finding
22 jobs in the composting world; is it when this pilot
23 finally comes to fruition in a real way that there's
24 gonna be a lot of opportunities to create jobs or are
25 there opportunities even now that we could start

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2 taking on or look at where jobs can possibly be
3 created?

4 OLIVER LAMB: Well I think... you know
5 we've started to develop starting a budget analysis
6 of how effective these mid-scale composting
7 facilities could be if they were designed to their
8 outmost ideal output; I think it's very possible to
9 foresee that a lot of the volunteer work currently
10 being done could be paid for if some of these
11 composting facilities were made more regional and
12 that's something that multiple groups are trying to
13 analyze to make sure that financial math is correct,
14 but I think it's very possible that that is true.

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So again, thank you
16 guys for your testimony; I do wanna say that... I wanna
17 acknowledge the Council Member Gibson from the Bronx
18 is here, and do wanna say that the Commissioner cares
19 a lot about composting; my first meeting with her we
20 spent a lot of time on this and she really thinks
21 that this is the future, the wave of the future,
22 she's thinking creatively, not only what we might see
23 here in front of us but there are other things that
24 she's taking into consideration that I think are
25 gonna be extremely valuable to all of us in the

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2 future and this infrastructure thing is something I'm
3 definitely gonna look into and speak to the
4 Commissioner about and again, thank you guys for
5 coming, speaking on a issue that I think is gonna be
6 the beginning of a great move in sanitation and
7 finally looking at this organic waste collection in a
8 real way and that we spoke to it not being part of a
9 waste stream but actually being something that's
10 gonna produce value to us as a city of New York. So
11 I think with that our meeting is adjourned and thank
12 you for coming again.

13 [applause]

14 OLIVER LAMB: Thank.

15 MARISSA PROVENZA: Thank you.

16 [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 12, 2014