

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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February 04, 2016  
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HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E:  
ANTONIO REYNOSO  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
ANDY L. KING  
COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES  
STEVEN MATTEO  
VANESSA L. GIBSON

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

Kathryn Garcia  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Sanitation

Michael Dardia  
Co-Director of Research  
Citizens Budget Commission

Bridget Flaherty  
Organizing Director  
Alliance for a Greater New York

Ya-Ting Liu  
Director  
New York League of Conservation Voters

Eric Goldstein  
Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Ken Diamondstone  
Chair  
Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

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2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Good morning.

4 Welcome everyone. This is a oversight hearing  
5 regarding Local Law 77 which established a  
6 residential curbside organics pilot program. The  
7 city council passed Local Law 77 in 2013 which  
8 required DSNY to create and evaluate a curbside  
9 organics collection pilot program serving at least  
10 10... 100,000 New York City households and 400  
11 schools. According to the department it has  
12 exceeded these benchmarks. As of June 2015 the  
13 pilot program served more than 137,000 low density  
14 residencies in parts of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten  
15 Island, and Queens as well as 150 high rise  
16 buildings in Manhattan. And we'd also provided  
17 organics collection service to 700 schools. DSNY  
18 has so far collected approximately 16,000 tons of  
19 organic material. And given the success of this  
20 pilot program DSNY has said that it will continue  
21 its ongoing expansion by adding additional  
22 neighborhoods with the goal of serving more than  
23 one million New Yorkers by the end of this year. It  
24 is also plan to offer all city's residents,  
25 curbside collection of organics or convenient

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2 neighborhood drop-off sites by the end of 2018.

3 Initial participation rates have been very high.

4 According to a report issued by the department

5 approximately 70 percent of residents in areas

6 where the pilot program is offered have reported

7 that they participate in the program. In addition,

8 areas that participate in the pilot program have

9 higher diversion rates suggesting that organic

10 selection has benefits apart from the diversion of

11 this material. Still a number of challenges remain.

12 A primary issue for schools has been contain...

13 contamination rates, primarily foam trace as well

14 as plastic material. DSNY has tried to address this

15 by mandating the use of compostable trays beginning

16 this school year. Plastic material is also an issue

17 for residential curbside collection primarily from

18 the use of plastic rather than compostable bags as

19 liners. Storage of organic material in high-rise

20 buildings is also an ongoing issue. Perhaps the

21 biggest long term issue is finding additional

22 processing capacity in and around New York City to

23 handle the organic material. We look forward to

24 hearing from DSNY and other witnesses about the

25 success of Local Law 77 and how it can be improved

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2 going forward. Now I'd like to call on a panel that  
3 will be speaking here. Welcome. It's nice to see  
4 you guys here again. We have Bridget Anderson.  
5 Hello Bridget. How are you? And The Kathryn Garcia  
6 Commissioner of the Department of Sanitation. Okay.  
7 And I just want to acknowledge the fact that my  
8 colleague Steven Matteo from Staten Island is here.  
9 Doing good? Doing good Matteo? I'm glad. Let me  
10 just...

11 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Good morning Chair  
12 Reynoso and members of the committee, Steven, and  
13 Sanitation Solid Waste Management. I am Kathryn  
14 Garcia, Commissioner for the New York City  
15 Department of Sanitation. With me today is Bridget  
16 Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for recycling and  
17 sustainability for the department. And before I  
18 begin my testimony on the organics program I just  
19 actually wanted to thank the members of the council  
20 who worked with us through snow. Your input was  
21 invaluable to the department. And you know we  
22 continue to want to cooperate as we move forward  
23 because there's still quite a bit of winter left.  
24 So we thank you for the opportunity to testify on  
25 the department's organics collection pilot program

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2 authorized by local law 77 of 2013 which is on  
3 track to become the largest municipal curbside  
4 organics program in the nation by the end of this  
5 year. Before I begin I would like to take this  
6 opportunity to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair  
7 Reynoso, committee members, all of the elected  
8 officials who welcomed the pilot in their  
9 districts, the Department of Education and school  
10 staff, and all the New Yorkers residents, community  
11 boards, the SWAB civic organizations, our non-  
12 profit partners, the processing venders, and our  
13 sister agencies for participating and engaging in  
14 organics recycling, providing their continuing  
15 feedback, and helping us lead the way to achieve  
16 our zero waste goals. I'll summarize for you our  
17 findings and conclusions of the pilot including the  
18 challenges we have had and our many successes along  
19 the way after which I'll be happy to answer your  
20 questions. In accordance with the mayor's 1NYC  
21 sustainability plan the Department is committed to  
22 a long term goal of achieving zero waste to  
23 landfills by 2030. 1NYC lays out several strategies  
24 to reduce the amount of waste generated, reuse and  
25 recycle as much as possible, and change the way New

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2 Yorkers think about waste, not as a byproduct to be  
3 disposed but as a resource that can be used to  
4 create new products, generate energy, create jobs,  
5 and spur economic development. After traditional  
6 recyclables organic waste is the next largest  
7 portion of the waste stream comprising nearly one  
8 third of everything residents discard at the curb  
9 equal to approximately 1.1 million tons per year.  
10 Because of this the development of a robust New  
11 York City organics program is at the center of our  
12 long-term waste management strategy. The positive  
13 benefits of source separating and collecting  
14 organic waste are numerous. Compost made from New  
15 York City source separator organics has proven  
16 beneficial uses and is in demand both locally and  
17 regionally. Additionally, organic material can be  
18 converted through anaerobic digestion into methane  
19 rich biogas as an alternative to natural gas that  
20 could heat homes, generate electricity and fuel  
21 vehicles. Pursuant to local law 77 of 2013 the  
22 department embarked on a two-year pilot program to  
23 collect source separated organics from residents in  
24 certain pilot areas participating on a voluntary  
25 basis. Although the pilot program ended in mid-2015

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2 the voluntary organic collection program continues  
3 today. When the department launched the pilot in  
4 2013 there were 35 hundred households participating  
5 in the program. Today we are now providing curbside  
6 organics collection serviced 200,000 households  
7 servicing approximately 650,000 residents. That's  
8 not inclusive of what we do with high rises or  
9 schools. We are also funded... we are also funded in  
10 the fiscal '17 preliminary budget to expand the  
11 program to surpass 600,000 households, well over a  
12 million residents which after rollout would become  
13 the largest organics collection program in the  
14 country. When first developing the organics  
15 collection pilot for New York City the department  
16 looked to other municipalities that if implemented  
17 success will curbside residential organics  
18 collection programs including Portland, San  
19 Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, and others. While the  
20 size, density, and housing stocks of these cities  
21 greatly differ from New York City they offer  
22 general models that could be used as a starting  
23 point for New York City pilot program. We chose the  
24 pilot areas in neighborhoods that have a relatively  
25 low population density with housing primarily



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2 comprised of one and two family homes and small  
3 apartment houses. Because these low density areas  
4 were more similar to the structure of cities having  
5 in play successful residential organics collections  
6 programs. The department focused on several factors  
7 in developing the organic selection pilot program  
8 that included establishing regular collection  
9 service, servicing... surveying, and assessing the  
10 behavior of participating residents and developing  
11 basic processing infrastructure that allows the  
12 program to grow. We also had to consider  
13 operational factors including available manpower  
14 and equipment resources. To ease potential  
15 operational issues, we establish the boundaries of  
16 each pilot area, coterminous with existing  
17 department collection sections. When the pilot  
18 program began in 2013 we provided organic  
19 collection service one day per week on the same day  
20 as the pilot's regular recycling day. When we  
21 expanded the program later in 2013 and again in  
22 2014 approximately half of the pilot areas received  
23 organic collection service twice per week on  
24 regular trash collection days while the remaining  
25 pilot areas continue to be serviced once per week

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2 on their recycling collection day. This allowed us  
3 to compare the once per week service schedule twice  
4 per week service schedule to determine the effect  
5 on participation levels. What we found is that all  
6 of the pilot areas that received twice per week  
7 pickup strip service showed greater participation  
8 and higher program satisfaction compared to the  
9 pilot areas that received once per week collection.  
10 But tonnage is still high in our once per week  
11 collection areas. The department also offered  
12 organics collection service to high rise  
13 residential buildings with ten or more units in the  
14 pilot neighborhood and in Manhattan. Beginning with  
15 two high rise apartment buildings at the onset of  
16 our program today we now have over 400 multiunit  
17 buildings in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and  
18 Staten Island representing about 23,000 households  
19 serving approximately 47,000 residents  
20 participating in the organics collection. High-rise  
21 buildings pose specific challenges for this program  
22 due to the space and infrastructure required to  
23 successfully source separate and collect organic  
24 material. For this reason, we have building  
25 managers and owners enrolled to participate so that

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2 we can ensure that they are properly trained to  
3 manage the material inside their buildings. This  
4 building by building approach has been necessary  
5 because organic separation in high rise buildings  
6 requires a stronger commitment by building  
7 management and staff to properly maintain the  
8 organics bins and educating the building's  
9 residents on how to participate. Working with  
10 department staff with the assistance of Grow NYC  
11 the building management creates a plan for managing  
12 organics that typically mirrors the recycling  
13 collection systems in their buildings. A survey of  
14 participating buildings reports that brown bins  
15 furnished by the department are placed in common  
16 areas such as basements or storage rooms on ground  
17 floors where residents can deliver their food  
18 waste. And a small percentage of buildings reported  
19 having a collection container on each floor. To  
20 collect the organic material, the department  
21 utilizes two fleet strategies including dedicated  
22 rear loader trucks solely to collect organic waste  
23 and dual bin trucks to collect refuse inorganic  
24 waste to draw comparisons on the effectiveness and  
25 esuriency of collection. We've expanded the use of

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2 dual bin trucks so we can further test the  
3 effectiveness of dual collections in the whole  
4 community district. Since the 2012/2013 school year  
5 sanitation has partnered with the Department of  
6 Education to roll out organics collection service  
7 to schools. Today we service more than 40 percent  
8 of New York City's public schools across all five  
9 boroughs. In addition to 28 charter schools who are  
10 located in department of education buildings and 69  
11 private schools, agencies, and institutions. While  
12 New York City schools contribute a small part of  
13 the total quantity of waste the department manages.  
14 They play a big role in sustainability education  
15 acting as testing grounds for institutional reform.  
16 There is a clear connection for students who learn  
17 zero waste principals in school and practice them  
18 at home. Kids educate parents and as they grow  
19 contribute to the culture change needed to achieve  
20 our zero waste goals. Sanitation and the Department  
21 of Education have collaborated to educate students,  
22 teachers, and staff, and set up clearly marked  
23 waste sorting stations for students to properly  
24 source separate recyclables and organic waste. The  
25 department also provides organic collections to

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2 schools five nights per week. During the pilot some  
3 schools have struggled to coordinate organic waste  
4 management operations between custodial staff,  
5 students, teachers, and administrators and in  
6 training and motivating staff. However, none of  
7 these obstacles are unique or insurmountable and  
8 sanitation will continue to work with the  
9 Department of Education to institute systemic  
10 change. Since the inception of the pilot program  
11 through December 2015 the department has collected  
12 over 25,000 tons of organic material from  
13 participate... participating households, schools, and  
14 agencies. This includes nearly 11,000 tons from the  
15 school program and over 14,000 tons from  
16 residential buildings. During the same period the  
17 department has collected another 12 hundred and 30  
18 tons from green market drop-off sites serviced by  
19 the department and almost 72 hundred tons of  
20 Christmas trees, 214... 899 trees in total through  
21 our annual January collection program. Our  
22 collection data indicates that participation has  
23 grown over time as the service area has expanded  
24 and more people grow accustomed to the program. We  
25 know that households in the pilot areas set out

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2 increasing quantities of organic waste as the pilot  
3 progressed with the amount collected being lower in  
4 the winter months when yard waste is less

5 prevalent. Additionally, all of the pilot areas  
6 have shown year over year increases in the amount  
7 of material collected. Among the pilot areas those  
8 neighborhoods in more suburban areas in Queens and  
9 Staten Island yield more organic material than in

10 denser pilot areas. This is especially true on a  
11 seasonal basis where less dense areas typically  
12 generate greater amounts of yard waste. Based on  
13 our surveys the results of the pilot have been  
14 positive. We have determined that a majority of  
15 residents in each pilot area participate to some  
16 degree in the program with highest participation in  
17 Brooklyn districts six and seven. While the

18 participation rates vary from one pilot area to the  
19 next considering this is a voluntary program we  
20 believe all are substantial and improving. Our  
21 survey responses also show that keeping organic  
22 waste out of landfills and creating something  
23 useful and valuable with that material is an  
24 important and in convincing reason for residents to  
25 participate. Overall the public interest in

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2 participation in residential pilot areas are  
3 important indicators in encouraging signals to the  
4 department that New Yorkers are willing to adopt  
5 this practice and over time a city wide curbside  
6 organics program would be well received by the  
7 public. As the mayor announced in his recent  
8 preliminary budget summary the department intends  
9 to triple the number of households to receive  
10 organics collection service by the end of the year.  
11 For the residential program we will continue to  
12 pursue a voluntary approach building on and  
13 reinforcing the significant education and outreach  
14 we have provided over the past two and a half  
15 years. In the schools the department will continue  
16 to work with our partners at the Department of  
17 Education to make recycling the standard practice  
18 in every school. Expansions in areas are being  
19 carefully evaluated and planned to ensure a  
20 successful rollout that takes into account three  
21 critical operational elements. For any organics  
22 program to be viable first we must ensure that  
23 there is sufficient quantity of material and that  
24 the material contains the least amount of  
25 contamination. As we know New Yorkers do not

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2 uniformly use bins or containers to manage their  
3 refuse and recycling but instead use plastic bags.

4 The task of keeping the brown bin clean is new to  
5 many and considered a barrier to participation for

6 some residents. The Department will continue to

7 work on solutions to minimize and remove

8 contaminates including the promotion of compostable

9 bags in place of traditional plastic bags that many

10 residents have been using to carry their food

11 scraps to the brown bin. We will also increase

12 education and training opportunities for residents

13 to learn the best practices for organics recycling.

14 Second, we must ensure sustainable collection

15 mechanisms through equipment allocation and

16 procurement. As the department expands into

17 additional neighborhoods we will need to review,

18 evaluate, and reconfigure where necessary

19 collection routes to ensure efficiency and

20 effectiveness. Also critical in this effort is an

21 evaluation of available equipment resources. As I

22 mentioned earlier the department has been testing

23 both the use of rear loaders and dual bin trucks

24 for organic collection. And as we advance the

25 program I would like to expand the use of dual bin



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2 trucks in areas where the split truck can still  
3 accommodate regular garbage. Third, processing  
4 capacity that can handle the composition and  
5 quantity of the incoming loads materials critical.  
6 The passage of local law 77 prompted the department  
7 to address the front end participation of residents  
8 while relying on existing processing capacity in  
9 the region. However, to build a long term system to  
10 process the city's organic material, an  
11 understanding of what the material will look like  
12 in terms of both quantity and composition is  
13 required. As the program continues and residents  
14 grow more accustomed to separating their organics  
15 to prevent contamination we will be better able to  
16 forecast tonnage and the composition of the  
17 material we expect to collect. This will spur the  
18 development of processing systems that are capable  
19 of managing the expected material in a way that is  
20 cost effective and environmental... environmentally  
21 preferable. Organic waste diversion offers the  
22 greatest opportunity for New York City to reduce  
23 the amount of waste sent to landfills. We are  
24 encouraged by the enthusiasm and valuable feedback  
25 from residents which has helped us better

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2 understand the benefits and challenges of our  
3 program to date. We know we have more work to do to  
4 encourage all residents to fully participate and  
5 promote the valuable environmental and economic  
6 benefits from separating organics. With the initial  
7 learning curve now behind us I'm very pleased that  
8 the department's ability to make organics recycling  
9 work in New York City is off to a strong start and  
10 now serves as a solid base for expansion in the  
11 coming years. In closing I want to thank Chair  
12 Reynoso and the Sanitation Committee for holding  
13 this hearing and providing me this opportunity  
14 today to update you on the department's program.  
15 The department looks forward to working with you to  
16 accomplish the goals of this important pilot  
17 program and on other meaning legislative  
18 initiatives to further reduce the city's carbon  
19 footprint. I am now happy to answer any questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you  
21 Commissioner. I wanted to ask a couple of questions  
22 regarding truck traffic.

23 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: While I'm enthused  
25 and... and extremely excited about this organics

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2 expansion to organics I'm extremely concerned that  
3 where we're taking this garbage tends to be the  
4 same places we've been taking garbage traditionally  
5 in the city which is North Brooklyn, Southeast  
6 Queens, and South Bronx. Can you just go through  
7 where exactly the trucks take this material?

8 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So at this point  
9 we are still reliant on the transfer station system  
10 to move organic waste. It is still classified by  
11 the state as petrussable [phonetic]. So it means  
12 that it is still going to places in North Brooklyn  
13 as well as northern Queens, as well as Community  
14 Board 12 in Queens. And then of course on Staten  
15 Island it goes to our compost facility.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So while we're  
17 moving through these new programs that are going to  
18 be great and trying to get us to zero waste by 2030  
19 is there a... an equity plan in... in any of this or is  
20 it just about getting to zero. And... kind of holding  
21 the capacity issue of where we're sending it to as  
22 a second priority to accomplishing those goals.

23 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So I mean it is  
24 definitely a balance. Because where we are having  
25 people bid for the tonnage and... but we're cognizant

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2 of the areas of the city. There are not hard and  
3 fast rules about that at this point in time. Our...  
4 one of our challenges has been getting enough  
5 material to a transfer station on a daily basis  
6 rather than too much. But as we think about truck  
7 traffic which is something we're very cognizant of  
8 one of the reasons to look at the dual bin is so  
9 that we don't put another truck on the road to do  
10 collection, is that we're collecting the refuse and  
11 organics at the same time. That will work in some  
12 communities. That will not work in other  
13 communities. But we're trying to make sure that as  
14 we take a piece of what is the traditional refuse  
15 and move it into another stream that we are  
16 thinking about how we are routing our refuse trucks  
17 and our organics trucks to make sure that we're  
18 efficient.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So what are we  
20 looking at in regards to... to capacity? Moving  
21 forward three times as much is what we're looking  
22 at or twice... two... yeah three times as much, the  
23 mayor wants to expand it, and it means that we're  
24 going to have to put these... the... the... the organics  
25 somewhere. Is there a plan right now to make sure

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2 it doesn't go to these overburdened communities as  
3 is?

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So we had put out  
5 a bid. And as I said before where the transfer  
6 stations are they haven't moved yet. So...

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: What about outside  
8 of the city?

9 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Well they all  
10 transfer in the city primarily. There isn't... there  
11 isn't a transfer station that... that to my knowledge  
12 has... there's one transfer station that bid from New  
13 Jersey. So we are evaluating those bids in part  
14 because we need them to deal with the issue of  
15 plastic bags which are viewed as contaminates by  
16 processors and so they need to be able to pull  
17 those bags out. And so we are evaluating those bids  
18 now and hope to award... I had hoped to award in  
19 January. We're going through to see if we can get  
20 that awarded very very shortly.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So there is a...  
22 there is supposed to be local law 42 called for a  
23 compost facility citing taskforce.

24 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.  
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: What is... what is  
3 the current status of that taskforce?

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: I believe it met  
5 for a very long time and was never able to identify  
6 a site but I would very much welcome working with  
7 the council on trying to identify in city sites for  
8 composting facilities.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So... and I want to  
10 allow for my colleagues to ask questions as well. I  
11 just want to... I just do have to say that so long as  
12 we continue to move this garbage through the same  
13 communities that we traditionally do there's no...  
14 there's no true focus in Department of Sanitation  
15 for equity at this point. It's been two years.  
16 We've seen very little movement in the reduction of  
17 truck traffic outside of the... the... the actual  
18 completion of waste transfer stations, the city  
19 owned waste transfer stations. And now we're  
20 talking about expanding capacity or... for residents  
21 of the city of New York to put their trash into...  
22 to... add another stream to the cycle with no plan  
23 for equity. And while I was originally very  
24 enthused and supportive of the organics program  
25 it's something that I'm starting to think twice

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2 about because of the fact that there is no plan to..  
3 for equity and environmental justice in many of  
4 these communities. It's about continuing the burden  
5 on... on mostly poor black and brown communities when  
6 it comes to where the trsh is going. And I just  
7 really want for the citing taskforce to take off  
8 and also that the Department of Sanitation really  
9 starts thinking about where they're going to put  
10 this trash and that it not be the same place that's  
11 it's been taking all the other... the rest of the  
12 trash I mean both private and public. Mostly  
13 public. Do you have any questions... Sorry I'm going  
14 to put... turn it over to Council Member Steven  
15 Matteo.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you Chair  
17 Reynoso. Excuse me. Commissioner I just want to  
18 thank you... and Borough Chief Monseno [phonetic] for  
19 constant communication during the snow and... we... we  
20 handled I thought things on Staten Island very well  
21 and when there were some hiccups we handled it very  
22 quickly. So I want to thank you and... and all the  
23 men and women of Sanitation Department, especially  
24 on Staten Island... just a great job. So I want to  
25 talk a little bit about the... the pilot program in...

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2 in Staten Island. Right now we're... we're still in  
3 Northshore neighborhoods only. I believe what's...  
4 what's the plan for any expansion?

5 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So we are... we are  
6 currently identifying our next districts to move  
7 forward. One of the things is that we are currently  
8 a little bit permit constrained at the compost  
9 facility and we need to do some work on efficiency  
10 of routes on Staten Island on the refuse side in  
11 order to accommodate the organics program. So I  
12 would anticipate further rollout on Staten Island  
13 in the late winter of this year or spring of next  
14 year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And expanding  
16 south?

17 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Expanding south.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: District three?

19 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Likely District  
20 three.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Likely District  
22 three. I... [cross-talk]

23 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...yeah but  
24 district...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I got you there.



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2 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...but district two  
3 is... district two is right behind. Like you know  
4 the... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: So the compost  
6 facility where in Staten Island we're just taking  
7 material... organics just from Staten Island?

8 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Yeah it just goes  
9 to the compost facility on Staten Island.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay so I just  
11 want to talk about you know what... what my  
12 constituents... some of the problems and... and... and...  
13 and just talk about what... what I think. So there is  
14 one separate truck that comes around right? And  
15 it's for the organics... for the brown... pick... the  
16 pickup of the brown containers, it's one truck?

17 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Right if you're in  
18 a district where we're using rear... rear loaders.  
19 So... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Oh.

21 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...there's one  
22 additional truck yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. And how do  
24 you feel that the participation rate is in pilot  
25

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2 programs in West... neighborhoods a little further  
3 north?

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: You know I think  
5 that they are... they're going well. They're not  
6 quite as high as... except during leaf season and  
7 spring season when we get a lot... lot more material  
8 on Staten Island. But they... they are participating.  
9 They're actually... they're... they're doing it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay I... you know  
11 I... I get a sense that more Staten Islanders are  
12 participating.

13 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I still see... and  
15 you brought up the point that I was going to make  
16 that I think most especially during the warmer  
17 spring and summer months they're using it... for yard  
18 waste more than they would be for food scraps and...  
19 and others. You know and... and when I looked down  
20 the blocks of the pilot program I... you know I see a  
21 few containers out...

22 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: ...from... from  
24 those who are doing regularly. I still think we're  
25 not catching a lot of people. Would... would these

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2 combustible... compostable plastic bags help for  
3 people to get... put more organics in instead of what  
4 they feel they just don't want to take part in the  
5 food scrap part of this?

6 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Well I mean the  
7 way that I think that we're at the department  
8 viewing this is that you know yard waste is the  
9 beginning and you know that's how we get people  
10 engaged in the program and then they'd expand from  
11 there. Many people don't want to have to clean out  
12 their brown bins. And so you know we thought at the  
13 beginning of the pilot that people would just dump  
14 their food waste into the brown bins without a  
15 liner... Like just straight in. [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I don't think  
17 that's happening.

18 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: And that's not  
19 happening.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Yeah.

21 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: You know that is  
22 something we did not anticipate is that people  
23 really didn't like that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: But compostable  
25 bags...

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2 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Compostable bags  
3 you know work. You take them out and they... and they  
4 go into the brown bin and things stay very clean.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: So is that  
6 something that we think we... is... is beneficial to  
7 this or...

8 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: I think it makes  
9 it so that people will adopt it more.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I... I agree with  
11 that.

12 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: It's not... it's  
13 harder... it's harder on... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I don't... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...the processors.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: ...think that  
18 they're going to put it... and... and again my  
19 constituents are just having a hard time putting it  
20 in that... that bag and then trying to clean it out...  
21 the bin. So they're just using it for yard waste.

22 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Right so we... we  
23 think that this is an option for people have the...  
24 we call it the yuck factor around it. And if you're  
25

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2 using one it's very very neat. It doesn't get  
3 funky.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: But it's on... the  
5 onus is on them to go buy or purchase them right?

6 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Right just as you  
7 know your regular garbage bag. It's on you to...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Yeah, okay.

9 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...to purchase them.  
10 We do provide coupons when we roll out the program  
11 to a new district. So all of your constituents  
12 should have received coupons on the beginning. But  
13 at this point in time that was just the first for  
14 people to start the program.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay so you said  
16 it's the one truck. Is... is... is that the best way of  
17 using in terms of cost, adding one truck or is it...  
18 you just don't have the room to divide it with the  
19 recycling pickup?

20 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So it's a... we... so  
21 on Staten Island which is different than say in  
22 Brooklyn 6 where we actually use a metal glass  
23 plastic truck and a paper truck separately. You, I  
24 believe, are in a... in a district where we use split  
25 body for recyclables. It depends on the route and

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2 how heavy each side is because they have to match.

3 So in certain districts where the refuse route can

4 fit into the large side it makes sense to use a... a

5 split body truck. So the organics goes on the small

6 side and you put the refuse on the large side.

7 There are areas where that's not going to work,

8 where the refuse route would have to be

9 significantly shortened in order to fit it on that...

10 that... that big side. So it is actually a lot of

11 different factors that we look at almost route by

12 route. [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: So you're just

14 basically... [cross-talk] going by your chiefs out in

15 the field and your supervisors saying here we could

16 probably use a full truck and another neighborhood

17 probably split?

18 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: And I mean we're

21 buying 119 split body trucks because there are a

22 lot of areas that can use a split body truck.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. And just...

24 you talked about the schools... I believe PS 30 is

25 participating. What are the... some of the problems

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2 that you... you mentioned that you didn't... you didn't  
3 think were problems that you can't overcome but  
4 what... what are...

5 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: You know there  
6 are... there are...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Because I... I  
8 know PS30 tells me that the kids are doing... they're  
9 really into... you know they're...

10 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Really into it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: ...really into it.  
12 They have a good partnership. So what are the  
13 problems that you're foreseeing that sanitation  
14 needs to overcome to...

15 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: And... and we are  
16 making progress. I mean one... the first thing that  
17 we had challenges with was contamination. You know  
18 having like the potato chip bag end up in the  
19 organics. We had a lot of issues with plastic  
20 silverware and foam trays. The Department of  
21 Education very proactively worked to change their  
22 trays to compostable trays. They're now looking at  
23 doing compostable silverware. And we have samples  
24 of that that we are giving to processors to make  
25 sure that they can actually compost them. And then

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2 it's a question of we give a lot of service to  
3 schools making sure that the right thing is out on  
4 the right day still seems to be sometimes tricky  
5 for different schools. But they have made a very  
6 big commitment to the program and have a new  
7 director of sustainability that I think is going to  
8 be a great partner with us moving forward.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay and I agree  
10 with you on the... on the garbage pickup and putting  
11 them on the sidewalks and sidewalks are then dirty  
12 and you know confusion on which days and what goes  
13 in what pile and so I think we together  
14 collectively have to just make sure that we are  
15 having the proper communication throughout the  
16 schools, especially in my district. And for me  
17 listen I... I... I believe in the ultimate goal  
18 obviously. I do have issues whether the cost that  
19 we... that it... it provides to this and if we're  
20 really making that dent and you know there was a... a  
21 city... citizens budget commission that says if you  
22 expand you're looking at 177 to 251 million dollars  
23 annually with 88,000 new truck shifts. Is... is... did  
24 you see that report? And you know can you comment  
25 on... on their projection?



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2 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Certainly... I mean  
3 you know we always appreciate the perspective of  
4 the CBC. We think it's definitely a useful  
5 analytical group. But some of their assumptions are  
6 I will just add another truck to every refuse route  
7 is... which is not our intention. One I have neither  
8 the vehicles, the people, or the space even if I  
9 wanted to do that. So our intention is not to go in  
10 that direction to really focus on getting  
11 efficiencies out of the rest of the stream so that  
12 it doesn't become a hugely more expensive program.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. You know  
14 and I... I... I want to work with you. I mean we're  
15 working very well together and trying to get  
16 recycling up on Staten Island still. You know it's  
17 a heavy lift unfortunately. We... we want our numbers  
18 to be higher. It's the same for the com... the... the  
19 organics and my concern is that we're... we're not  
20 getting enough participation to make it cost  
21 effective so I... I think we... as you look to expand  
22 and you look to look at our pilot programs that are  
23 existing that we work together and figure out how  
24 we make it cost effective and... and get more

25

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2 participation from my constituents. So with that  
3 I'll send it back to the chair.

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you  
6 Council Member. I wanted to ask about the CBC  
7 report. There also made a comment or a suggestion  
8 to start working on in-sink garbage grinders and  
9 possibly making them... mandating that new buildings  
10 have them installed. What is... what is your opinion  
11 on that and are they effective tools?

12 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So I mean I... I  
13 think that really this has to be carefully thought  
14 out because it is moving a solid waste to a liquid  
15 waste and that does not necessarily come without  
16 cost. And so I really would defer to the Department  
17 of Environmental Protection to give you their  
18 thoughts on what it is in terms of what the impact  
19 might be to sewers and adding additional grease  
20 into sewers. And then they have a lot of federal  
21 requirements that are quite complicated at their  
22 waste water treatment plants that they would need  
23 to address. So my feeling is really that I don't  
24 want to... I don't want to just move this cost from  
25 the solid waste to the liquid waste side. But we

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2 continue to talk to DEP about what they're  
3 comfortable with.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: And... and we'll  
5 have those conversations when we get the  
6 opportunity with DEP as well. I did want to ask...  
7 currently the program is voluntary.

8 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Is there any idea  
10 that once it gets to... to I guess citywide that we  
11 consider it to be mandatory?

12 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So I have not  
13 gotten to the point where I'm at all thinking about  
14 going mandatory because I really... I really need  
15 people to give us clean material. And when you make  
16 things mandatory it... it tends to be more  
17 contaminated. We don't want to see that. You know  
18 there might come a time when the program was so  
19 robust that we would make it mandatory but we're  
20 not anywhere near that.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright I have no...  
22 no further questions. Thank you so much for all  
23 your time.

24 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Thank you.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Then next panel is  
3 the aforementioned CBC Michael Dardia, Bridget  
4 Flaherty from ALIGN, Eric Goldstein Natural  
5 Resources Defense Council, and Ya-Ting Liu from the  
6 New York League of Conservation Voters. Make sure  
7 anyone else needs to... is looking to testify to  
8 please submit a slip at the Sergeant at Arms in the  
9 back... towards the back. Thank you. Thank you guys.  
10 We're going to have you guys start from my left I  
11 guess. Go all the way down. Thank you. And I love  
12 the title of the report. Can we have our cake and  
13 compost it too. Good job.

14 MICHAEL DARDIA: It's a tradition at CBC  
15 to try and be clever in titling the reports. And  
16 sometimes it's more challenging than others. But  
17 I'm glad you appreciated it. So thank you for the  
18 opportunity to testify today. My name is Michael  
19 Dardia. I'm co-director of research with the  
20 Citizens Budget Commission. And the mission of CBC  
21 is to advance constructive change in the fiscal  
22 health and efficient provision of public services  
23 in New York state and New York City. In 2012 CBC  
24 began a series of reports examining the cost of New  
25 York City trash collection and disposal. These

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2 reports found the city's garbage system is  
3 exceptionally expensive costing tax payers 1.7  
4 billion annually. Current practices are also  
5 environmentally damaging. Most non-recyclable trash  
6 collected by the Department of Sanitation is sent  
7 to distant landfills with some trash travelling as  
8 far as South Carolina and Kentucky. CBC just  
9 released this week a report on the cost and  
10 challenges of the city's residential organics  
11 curbside pilot program. And the report finds that  
12 the focus on organic waste is merited by the size  
13 of the waste stream which is more than a million  
14 tons annually as the commissioner noted and the  
15 environmental benefits of reducing greenhouse  
16 gasses through use of alternative disposable  
17 strategies such as composting rather than transport  
18 to distant landfills. However, before any further  
19 expansions to the residential curbside program the  
20 city needs to address two main challenges, the cost  
21 of additional sanitation collection truck runs and  
22 the lack of nearby processing capacity for the  
23 organic material. Right now the cost of the  
24 residential pilot program is small. About 19  
25 million dollars over the past two years. But if the

2 curbside program were expanded citywide the cost  
3 would balloon. Most districts do not have  
4 sufficient unused truck capacity to substitute an  
5 organic waste collection for one weekly refuse  
6 collection or to use the dual bin trucks. We  
7 calculated that the full cost would be in the range  
8 of 177 to 251 million per year mostly to pay for  
9 additional truck runs. At this rate the cost would  
10 approach as much as the city currently spends to  
11 dispose of all trash. Under optimistic scenarios at  
12 least 88,000 new truck shifts would be needed per  
13 year. Additionally, collections of organic material  
14 would quickly exceed capacity to process it. CBC  
15 did a survey of composting facilities within 150  
16 miles and found available capacity of 176,000 tons  
17 or just ten percent of New York City residential  
18 and commercial organic waste. There are however  
19 numerous facilities in the works in the region but  
20 most are being constructed to serve other  
21 municipalities and their customers. Until the city  
22 can address the high cost of residential garbage  
23 collection and secure adequate organics processing  
24 capacity it should devise a more limited organic  
25 waste strategy. Sanitation Department and the

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2 Department of Environmental Protection should  
3 collaborate on approaches that could achieve  
4 meaningful environmental benefits without adding  
5 new costs. So the two possibilities are to expand  
6 curbside collections only where and when additional  
7 collection routes are not required. If  
8 participation levels are high enough sanitation  
9 could expand the curbside organics collection while  
10 avoiding additional collection routes. This could  
11 be achieved by either replacing a weekly refuse  
12 pickup with an organics pickup or collecting refuse  
13 and organic simultaneously with dual bin trucks.  
14 Achieving such efficiencies would require city  
15 council approval and a significant boost to the  
16 participation rates currently seen in the pilot  
17 program. Currently only one of the 59 sanitation  
18 districts would qualify. But if the higher  
19 diversion rates seen for recycling as many as 10  
20 could. Operational efficiencies or partnerships for  
21 the private sector might also allow for cost  
22 effective program expansion in additional  
23 neighborhoods. Second option is... as was mentioned  
24 earlier is consider expanding the use of in sink  
25 disposers in neighborhoods with adequate waste

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2 water treatment plant infrastructure and capacity  
3 to reduce garbage collection. Expanded use of in  
4 sink disposers in four districts that appear to  
5 meet these criteria could divert as many as 17,000  
6 tons of organic waste per year. DEP and the  
7 sanitation should collaborate to investigate how  
8 the potential disposers can be utilized without  
9 burdening the sewer and waste water infrastructure  
10 or incurring additional capital cost. This... cost  
11 for the purchase, installation, and operation of  
12 the devices between city building owners and  
13 residents would... also need to be resolved as part  
14 of that policy. So to conclude as New York City  
15 seeks environmental benefits through wider  
16 diversion of organic waste municipal leaders should  
17 understand that unless residential trash collection  
18 costs are reduced new program costs will greatly  
19 overwhelm any potential savings from landfill  
20 reeducation. A significant expansion of organics  
21 collection may also outpace regional processing  
22 infrastructure at least in the near term. A  
23 targeted approach including single in sink food  
24 waste disposers where viable could be a way to  
25 preserve municipal resources and ensure organics



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2 programs are sustainable for the long run. So I  
3 want to thank you for the opportunity to testify.  
4 And I've provided the members of the committee with  
5 the copies of the report. So thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you. So  
7 we're just going to go ahead with questions right  
8 away. So we're just going to go ahead with  
9 questions right away and allow for every panel  
10 member to speak. The... the program costs that you  
11 just heard the Commissioner say that... that 88... you  
12 have 88,000 new routes or new truck shifts and from  
13 what I heard from her she expects... where there's  
14 going to be opportunities where they don't expand  
15 routes, they're just... be on the same route for  
16 example. So is your number... you said 88 being...  
17 88,000 the way you said it not only truck shifts  
18 this is something... [cross-talk]

19 MICHAEL DARDIA: Yeah that's...

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: ...optimistic  
21 scenario.

22 MICHAEL DARDIA: Right so... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Is that a  
24 conservative number is what you're saying? Or...

25

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2           MICHAEL DARDIA: Yeah so... what... we did  
3 the analysis at two different assumptions of  
4 diversion rates. So right now as was mentioned in  
5 the... in the commissioner's testimony you basically  
6 have two kinds of districts in the pilot; the one's  
7 that get one organic collection a week and they  
8 have diversion rates about 14 15 percent, and then  
9 you have the ones with two collections a week and  
10 they have diversion rates of 21 to 23 percent. So...  
11 and for... for other recyclables the citywide  
12 diversion rate is close to 45 percent. So we did an  
13 analysis at 20 percent at 45 percent to see how  
14 much volume you create. So for each district we  
15 looked at how full the trucks are now and if you  
16 took either 20 or 45 percent of the organics would  
17 they allow you to either drop a collection a week  
18 for a full truck or swap out a full truck for dual  
19 bin that would take some garbage and... and some  
20 organic refuse and some organic waste. So if a  
21 current... at the 20 percent ratio only one district  
22 would meet those criteria. And that would therefore  
23 mean 114,000 additional truck runs. If you did it  
24 at the ten districts that would qualify at the 45  
25 percent diversion rate that would be the 88,000

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2 additional truck runs. So... so the... the trick here  
3 is try and figure out... now I'm sure there are other  
4 efficiencies when we provided... when we spoke with  
5 sanitation staff and provided sanitation with a  
6 draft report some time ago for comments they did  
7 refer to some efficiencies but didn't specify what  
8 they were so obviously these are the kind of issues  
9 the commissioner mentioned about reworking truck  
10 routes, collection frequencies, etcetera. It's come  
11 out with the most efficient way to do it. So we  
12 just assumed given the way that the system is  
13 structured now and the union contracts and... and  
14 mandated collection frequency this is what you'd  
15 get.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: You talked about  
17 the 176,000 tons within 150-mile radius. Where were  
18 most of these... the... the capacity... available  
19 capacity actually located?

20 MICHAEL DARDIA: Well so... have to go to  
21 our appendix which is full of information on that.  
22 We have most of our... our... in upstate New York or in  
23 other states. But within 150 miles there's a...  
24 there's a large facility in Connecticut that  
25 already exists and will be picking up additional

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2 capacity. There are a number of facilities that  
3 have permits or are in the permitting process to  
4 expand. So if you look on page seven, figure four  
5 we sort of list where the existing capacity is  
6 regionally within New York City. Right now there's  
7 essentially nothing in the city. But there's quite  
8 a bit of growth that'll be occurring within a five-  
9 year window if everything that's being proposed or  
10 permitted comes online. But the biggest single  
11 destination for this would be in Connecticut. And  
12 that facility alone would be potentially enough to  
13 cover our waste. Unfortunately, we also have the  
14 issue that Connecticut's instituted commercial  
15 mandate in terms of organic waste diversion. But  
16 it's not clear how much waste that will also  
17 produce that will need to be accommodated by that  
18 facility.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yeah we're looking  
20 at the report here. Talking about the available  
21 capacity.

22 MICHAEL DARDIA: So it's... [cross-talk]  
23 Farms in Connecticut. Currently has 54,000 tons  
24 available. And there's... there's quite a bit of  
25 expansion plan for that side alone. So it sort of

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2 depends on the facility... on the type of... of  
3 composting whether it's the turn or aerated... versus  
4 some of the digesters that are available. So we  
5 looked within a... within a radius that would  
6 minimize how much traffic would be leaving the city  
7 but obviously in any case there's still... you're  
8 still generating. Unless you're going through the...  
9 the... the waste water treatment plants you're still  
10 generating waste you're just changing where you...  
11 where you send it.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Right but you... you  
13 said 176,000 tons and in the report it seems like  
14 the available capacity in the Newtown Creek  
15 location alone is 156,000.

16 MICHAEL DARDIA: Some of which is being  
17 used currently. And the Newtown Creek... that... I mean  
18 the Newtown Creek is the best available facility  
19 that exists here. It's a pilot. And they're still  
20 trying to... as we understand it trying to work on  
21 how the technology and facility would work to  
22 accommodate that. But that... that could accommodate  
23 some. That would give you the ability to... to keep  
24 truck traffic outside the city down. You still need  
25 to move things within the city.

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright thank you.

3 I think Council Matteo had a question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you. And  
5 thank you for your testimony. I just... my one  
6 general question is you know hearing the  
7 commissioner's testimony about not adding routes  
8 or... or looking at routes on how we... we can merge  
9 them do you think that if that's done on a large  
10 scale that that reduces the amount and then  
11 basically makes it a much more cost effective  
12 measure of expanding this program?

13 MICHAEL DARDIA: Well so the efficiency  
14 that... that we did discuss with them would be the  
15 sorts of things we were talking about as changing  
16 some of the routes to get to that 10 district. It'd  
17 have to be... you have to get much better rates of  
18 participation and more dramatically change the  
19 routes. I mean the issue is some of the... some of  
20 the districts get three collections a week. And if  
21 it's politically acceptable to drop to two that  
22 would open up more districts. But it's... it's hard  
23 to see how you get to not any additional impact.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Right.

25

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2 MICHAEL DARDIA: But again I... I have to  
3 defer to the commissioner. And I don't know what  
4 their detailed plans are or what scenarios they're  
5 looking at.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And... understood  
7 and... and lessen... and as I said before participation  
8 is... is still a problem.

9 MICHAEL DARDIA: Mm-hmm.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: You know we have  
11 one-week collection in some boroughs and it's a  
12 problem. So we would have our work cut out for us.  
13 No question. I appreciate your testimony.

14 MICHAEL DARDIA: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Alright thank you.  
16 Thank you for your testimony.

17 BRIDGET FLAHERTY: Thank you Chairman  
18 Reynoso and committee members for the opportunity  
19 to testify before you today. I'm Bridget Flaherty.  
20 I'm the organizing director at ALIGN... the Alliance  
21 for a Greater New York. I'm an... also the director  
22 for the Transform, Don't Trash NYC campaign. ALIGN  
23 works to create an equitable economy that protects  
24 workers, communities, and the environment. The  
25 Transform, Don't Trash NYC campaign is a labor

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2 community coalition made up of 20 organizations  
3 with a steering committee of ALIGN, the Natural  
4 Resources Defense Council, New York City  
5 Environmental Justice Alliance, New York Lawyers  
6 for the Public Interest, and Teamsters Joint  
7 Council 16 and Local 813. Our coalition advocates  
8 for a reformed commercial waste system that  
9 significantly increases commercial recycling rates,  
10 pushes for equitable citing of waste infrastructure  
11 with environmental justice values, reduces  
12 environmental impact through significantly reducing  
13 vehicle miles travelled and greener vehicles, and  
14 improving working conditions for private sanitation  
15 workers. We applaud the council and the Department  
16 of Sanitations leadership and the city's curbside  
17 organics waste pilot program and expanding  
18 recycling at NYCHA. Knowing the positive impact of  
19 these programs we encourage officials to boost  
20 these programs by including more commercial waste.  
21 There are a few initiatives that will have such a  
22 significant short term and long term benefit for  
23 New York's environment and economy and help fulfill  
24 DSNY's ambitious and ready goal of sending zero  
25 waste to landfills by 2030. New York City can



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2 follow the lead of other major cities like San  
3 Francisco and Toronto that have expanded its  
4 organics waste collection beyond large restaurants,  
5 stadiums, and residential pilot programs. Doing so  
6 will not only lead towards environmentally  
7 healthier communities but advance the  
8 infrastructure for a workforce of good green jobs  
9 for generations to come. Whether it's spurring  
10 investment in the latest technology for anaerobic  
11 digestion, state of the art material recovery  
12 facilities, or redefining the transportation  
13 systems of how we move our waste, expanding  
14 residential and commercial organics collection will  
15 be a win for New York. Diverting organics to  
16 facilities for composting not only reduces waste in  
17 landfills, it would redirect approximately 100  
18 million a year to taxpayer money to DSNY programs  
19 that could instead further improve our communities  
20 and cite environmental racism instead of shipping  
21 organic waste far outside of New York City. Should  
22 the city require all commercial organics to be  
23 collected separately and sent to composting or  
24 anaerobic digestion facilities it could remove more  
25 than 10,000 tons a day from being hauled to

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2 landfills. Additionally, thoughtful and efficient  
3 citing of infrastructure to handle organics would  
4 prove to be an economic and environmental win.

5 Technological advancements in trucks, anaerobic  
6 digesters in processing facilities can create jobs  
7 and make good neighbors. This is feasible however  
8 only if proposals are decided as part of a robust  
9 community engagement plan that won't overburden any  
10 particular neighborhoods with facilities truck  
11 traffic. Efficient routes... including organics we  
12 believe can best be achieved through a zone system  
13 much like ones approved in Las Angeles and Seattle.

14 Our communities can flourish in the coming years if  
15 we address how we handle the approximately 100,000  
16 tons of food waste we generate each year diverting  
17 organic waste away from landfills to produce  
18 instead clean energy, valuable soil, and with  
19 cutting edge technology, increased private  
20 investments in those technologies must be part of  
21 the equation. We applaud the city's current efforts  
22 and urge the council to expand the residential  
23 organics program to include all commercial  
24 businesses. A comprehensive organics pickup system  
25 expands employment opportunities, addresses

2 generations of environmental justice issues, and  
3 incentivizes private investment in new clean  
4 technologies. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you Bridget.  
6 So I guess I wanted to ask you... I know in here  
7 there's one sentence that says this is feasible  
8 however only if proposals are decided as part of a  
9 robust community engagement plan that won't  
10 overburden any particular neighborhoods with  
11 facilities... with facilities and truck traffic. And  
12 in... in this one case that hasn't happened right.  
13 And most of this garbage is going to the Newtown  
14 Creek. So being that you advocate for you know  
15 environmental justice as well as looking for a way  
16 to... to handle the city's trash in a responsible way  
17 I'm conflicted. And I don't know how you would feel  
18 so I just wanted to kind of get your take on how  
19 you see this moving forward if they're going to  
20 continue to bring trash to the same districts that  
21 are... that are overburdened now. And that there's no  
22 real answer for it given that we have very little  
23 capacity within 150-mile radius from the... in the  
24 city and the citing taskforce has yet to be able to  
25 find a viable site outside of the city of New York.

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2 So just looking in the short term future is just  
3 more garbage into these neighborhoods.

4 BRIDGET FLAHERTY: Yeah I mean I think...  
5 So we... it sort of... it is sort of rather a conundrum  
6 right now if there isn't a plan to figure out where  
7 to put this outside of the sort of three  
8 neighborhoods that we know are traditionally  
9 overburdened. I think it's more important for us to  
10 sort of try to leave no stone unturned and think  
11 about how do we look at other facilities that could  
12 handle this outside of those three communities and  
13 look at facilities that are at least within sort of  
14 75 to 100 miles outside of New York City that may  
15 be able to handle and... without any sort of real  
16 plan in place that we have right now to actually  
17 build new infrastructure.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: So would you be  
19 supportive... or would the organization be supportive  
20 of... of you know a moratorium until they can find a  
21 site outside of these neighborhoods?

22 BRIDGET FLAHERTY: I think we would need  
23 to... have... think about that a little bit more before  
24 I can give an answer.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay because what  
3 you're saying is that we do have to do... every tone...  
4 every stone unturned. The problem there is that you  
5 know no offense to the DSNY it... doing what's easier  
6 is much... is... is usually the path taken right? Not...  
7 not necessarily doing what's difficult which is  
8 actually trying to find you know environmental  
9 justice for these communities that have been  
10 burdened for so long. So as... as the organization... I  
11 would love to have a conversation with your  
12 organization about what this looks like. I know  
13 we've had conversations about it and we're... we're  
14 very excited about it. But I'm getting to a point  
15 where I have to balance you know the... the greater  
16 good versus these few communities that are being  
17 burdened at the moment. But thank you for your  
18 testimony. I appreciate it.

19 BRIDGET FLAHERTY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. Ya-Ting Liu.

21 YA-TING LIU: Okay good morning. Good  
22 morning Chairman Reynoso and members of the  
23 committee. My name is Ya-Ting Liu. I'm the New York  
24 City Program Director at the New York League of  
25 Conservation Voters who are a statewide

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2 environmental group with over 25,000 members in New

3 York City. And thank you for the opportunity this

4 morning to submit comments regarding our city's

5 residential organics collection pilot. So the

6 league has been very supportive of the city's

7 organics collection pilot but we are concerned with

8 the most immediate problem that we see in terms of

9 the success of this which is an adequate capacity

10 for processing food waste within a 50-mile radius

11 of the city. And we urge city council and

12 administration to prioritize the development of

13 processing capacity in or around the city before

14 expanding residential collection. So we have two

15 recommendations for the council to consider this

16 morning. One is that we must maximize the use of

17 anaerobic digestion capacity at DEP's waste water

18 treatment plants. Everybody has already talked on

19 Newtown Creek as the sort of model of this kind of

20 innovation. But the problem is that the city has

21 not yet announced any explicit plans for anaerobic

22 digestion retrofits at other waste water treatment

23 plants nor set aside any sort of funding in its

24 ten-year capital plan to do so even though

25 prioritizing anaerobic digestion capacity at our

city's waste water treatment plants would accomplish the waste reduction, the carbon reduction, and the renewable energy goals. So we urge the administration to articulate a plan for expanding AD capacity at the rest of the waste water treatment plants. And the second idea is something that CBC has already mentioned in their report, something that the league supports, which is in sink garbage grinders in all new residential construction. We feel that right now I... we understand that the in sink garbage grinders are allowed in residential... new residential developments and I... we think that it would be a valuable policy to explore and a mandate approach which Philadelphia has recently done for all new residential construction. And we think that in sink garbage grinders would be a way to get at some of the collection and participation in... separation challenges especially in the... in the dense multi-family you know residential areas. So we look forward to working with the council and the administration on getting to that zero waste goal which we feel is really important goal to achieve. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: And then the  
3 budget hearings that are going... that are about to  
4 start. I'll make sure to ask about the money for  
5 any capital... any capital I guess you have here  
6 retrofits is what you have. But even the  
7 development of new facilities to handle this waste  
8 and where... where they expected to be. So I would  
9 definitely do that. And I... and I think I have an...  
10 for the garbage grinders in at the moment. And  
11 we'll begin conversations with DEP and DSNY to see  
12 if they... they make sense in new buildings. But we  
13 don't want to burden another department and DEP and  
14 what's happening with our sewers at the moment. So  
15 we have to think about it all and see what... what  
16 makes sense.

17 YA-TING LIU: Yeah totally agreed. And I  
18 think the... you know the Commissioner mentioned  
19 earlier that DEP are... you know they... they're under  
20 a lot of stringent sort of federal regulations and...  
21 and... and we totally understand that. But let's...  
22 let's hear it out and let's... let's see the data.

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Okay. Alright will  
24 do. Thank you for your testimony as well.



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2 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good morning Chairman  
3 Reynoso, Council Member King...

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Make it good, make  
5 it good.

6 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you for your  
7 leadership. My name is Eric Goldstein and I'm with  
8 the Natural Resources Defense Council. As you know  
9 we're a national environmental group that's long  
10 been active on New York City environmental and  
11 solid waste issues. We're pleased to be here today  
12 to testify about the implementation of Local Law  
13 77, the statute when it was passed in two... 2013 was  
14 one of the most important laws enacted that year by  
15 the city council and we were pleased to support it.  
16 As you also know food waste and yard waste amounts  
17 to more than 30 percent of the residential waste  
18 stream and when we send this to landfills to be  
19 buried it is a major contributor to methane which  
20 is a very potent global warming gas. So there are  
21 important reasons why this composting program is  
22 moving forward and we want to see that continue.  
23 We're pleased by the progress the sanitation  
24 department has made over the past two years in  
25 implementing this statute. From the very first day

2 she took office Sanitation Commissioner Garcia  
3 stated she saw her department as a vehicle for  
4 advancing sustainability and that she wanted to  
5 quote take this agency to the forefront of the  
6 nation in terms of composting. That's a worthy goal  
7 and we hope it will continue to be achieved. We  
8 have three suggestions for where things should head  
9 from here. The first relates to where we should  
10 send the organics we collect so that they are  
11 treated sustainably and in a way that maximizes  
12 their environmental benefits. In short we believe  
13 it's premature to decide on a single method or  
14 offtake partner for the city collected organics.  
15 Instead we believe the department should continue  
16 to pursue a variety of alternatives composting  
17 facilities throughout the New York region the city  
18 has already identified some capacity within 100-  
19 mile radius and we need to send the right signals  
20 that if more capacity is developed New York City  
21 will be able to supply the food scraps and yard  
22 waste that would serve as feedstock for these  
23 facilities. Of course the Staten Island composting  
24 facility is great but should continue to be  
25 reserved for Staten Island's organics. Second

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2 anaerobic digestion facilities located throughout  
3 the New York region. Again the city should continue  
4 sending signals to persons interested in  
5 constructing such facilities as is the case for  
6 the commercial waste stream that they can count on  
7 New York City for a reliable and predictable source  
8 of organic feedstock. Third, anaerobic digestion  
9 facilities at the city sewage treatment plants. As  
10 you know Newtown Creek is serving as the organic  
11 test. We look forward to seeing the results of that  
12 pilot before further work precedes in determining  
13 that... that a large portion of our waste should be  
14 sent to the city sewage treatment plants. We need  
15 DEP to assure the public and the council that it  
16 can perform its primary function of handling sewage  
17 before taking on this new role. And another  
18 important caveat... even if the pilot demonstration  
19 project at the sewage treatment plant at Newtown  
20 Creek demonstrates that they can handle food waste  
21 in their anaerobic digesters this route can only be  
22 called sustainable and should only be advanced if  
23 the digestate from that anaerobic digestion  
24 process which is the stuff leftover after the  
25 energy is produced if that digestate is used in

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2 a sustainable manner, as a soil amendment or  
3 whatever and not sent to landfills as is now the  
4 case. A last but not least the city should continue  
5 to explore how it can have its community composting  
6 facilities play a role in dealing with city  
7 organics. While community composting will never be  
8 able to handle the bulk of the city's organics  
9 they're certainly among the most environmentally  
10 beneficial routes for disposal and they serve of  
11 course as a very important public education  
12 function. Two final points. Taking the long term  
13 view of organics, we believe New York City's  
14 curbside collection program should be available  
15 citywide and we look forward to working with the  
16 department and the council to make that a reality  
17 on... at least on a voluntary basis. Ultimately to  
18 address the issue of added costs associated with  
19 curbside organics collection the city will have to  
20 work cooperatively with the sanitation union and  
21 the public to adjust collection routes. The long  
22 term goal is to adjust route schedules so that  
23 curbside organics are collected separately, a  
24 single stream of recyclables are collected  
25 together, and the remainder of the trash is

2 collected in a third sort. It's possible as other  
3 cities have already demonstrated to provide  
4 curbside collection of organics, curbside  
5 collection of recyclables, and do all this without  
6 having to add a large number of additional  
7 sanitation trucks and additional truck routes.  
8 Working towards that objective by adjusting routes  
9 and collection frequencies is essential to keep  
10 costs under control. Finally, a word about the pace  
11 of implementation of the city's organics collection  
12 pilot and future expansions. The city has to ensure  
13 that the pace is not too fast so that the program  
14 doesn't speed ahead of public awareness, doesn't  
15 speed ahead of solving contamination program like  
16 plastic utensils in the school organics, and speed  
17 ahead of securing sustainable offtake partners in  
18 the city and the region. At the same time, we also  
19 need to recognize a sense of urgency here and  
20 ensure that the pace is not too slow. Right now we  
21 believe the department has moved carefully and  
22 deliberately. This is a complex program. It's only  
23 two years old. It needs to be nurtured and a  
24 justice... adjusted as we learn more information from  
25 the pilots. This is a program we want to succeed.

2 It should not be subject to sink or swim analysis  
3 at this early stage of implementation. And a final  
4 note about the CBC report which certainly reflects  
5 a lot of hard work, NRDC disagrees with two of the  
6 study's major conclusions. First, we don't believe  
7 that implementation requires huge number of extra  
8 trips. Implementation of a composting curbside  
9 collection program as is suggested in the report.  
10 Indeed, as we've indicated many other cities have  
11 addressed this problem of separate collection of  
12 organics and separate collection of recyclables by  
13 adjusting the frequency and the types of  
14 collection... materials collected on each routes.  
15 After all it's the same amount of trash we're  
16 putting out. We got a logistical problem to figure  
17 out how if you're going to put out 30 percent of  
18 your trash in organics and 30 or 40 percent of your  
19 trash in recyclables and you've got a third of your  
20 remainder you adjust the number trucks and... and  
21 what materials they collect accordingly. It's not  
22 easy to do that. Other cities have done that. We  
23 need to work with the unions, work with the public  
24 to make that transition. It'll take a number of  
25 years but the time to start thinking about it is

2 right now. Finally, we don't believe that in sink  
3 disposers are the solution to this issue, at least  
4 not now. City, state, and federal environmental  
5 officials have long raised questions about this  
6 approach. One concern of theirs is that adding  
7 nutrients into our local waterways works directly  
8 counter to clean water act objectives. A second is  
9 whether conversion would interfere with the  
10 operation of our antiquated sewage and combined  
11 sewer system and infrastructure. All of those  
12 questions would need to be answered before we were  
13 to mandate residents or even new construction be  
14 required to install these... these devices. The jury  
15 is still out on in sink disposers and the city's  
16 current law which allows but does not require them  
17 to be installed in new construction is the right  
18 step for right now. We thank you for your attention  
19 and again we appreciate your focus on this issue  
20 because finding a way to deal sustainably with  
21 organics, the food waste and yard waste that makes  
22 up the largest single portion of our waste stream  
23 is an essential task of city government. Thank you  
24 again.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you Eric. I  
3 appreciate it. I do want to... currently there is a...  
4 you can choose on whether or not have... to... to... on  
5 whether or not you want to have the disposers... the  
6 sink... in sink dispose... disposers, I'm sorry,  
7 disposals. I... I don't believe that DEP would have  
8 allowed for something like that to happen. They did  
9 not think that they can take it on at the moment.

10 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: They believe... that's  
11 correct. And we support that. We believe that at  
12 this point the relatively small number of disposers  
13 is not... at least we haven't seen any data,  
14 suggesting that that is causing a problem. However,  
15 the question becomes if one were to mandate... if the  
16 council were to mandate that would that adversely  
17 impact either our surrounding waterways in the  
18 nutrient loading which we're spending billions of  
19 dollars to try to curb nutrient discharges into our  
20 waterways, they kill our waterways. And that's why  
21 you see problems in Flushing Bay and Jamaica Bay  
22 and the Long Island... and so we've had a 35 40-year  
23 program under the clean water act that the city has  
24 participated in to reduce the amount of nutrients  
25 we're sending into our waterways. So first we need



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2 to assure ourselves that in sink disposers would  
3 not contribute in any way to that problem and make  
4 matters worse. And then secondly in some ways  
5 perhaps more importantly we all know about  
6 infrastructure problems we have in this city. We  
7 all know we've got an ancient sewage system; we've  
8 got combined sewers. And before putting a lot of  
9 food waste into that system we would need further  
10 assurances that that won't cause problems there. So  
11 the current system which allows but does not  
12 require the installation of these disposals seems  
13 to us to strike the right balance at least for now  
14 and before preceding to mandate anything we ought  
15 to hear from federal and state and city  
16 environmental officials about what they think.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: We... we want to  
18 rush to... to having that done right? We need a  
19 hearing at least to... to hear on that. Council  
20 Member Andy King has joined us and I believe has  
21 some questions. And I... and I'd also... would like to  
22 note if the commissioner after this if you'd come  
23 back and if you have any follow-up that you would  
24 like to say before we finish because this is our  
25 last panel if that... if that's something you would

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2 consider. Alright. So... Council Member Andy King.

3 And we've also been joined by Council Member

4 Vanessa Gibson both from the Bronx.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yeah so thank you  
6 Chairman. I'll keep it simple. I appreciate the  
7 testimony that I heard. Excuse me for my tardiness.  
8 You know how it works we're always three places at  
9 one time, if we could clone ourselves we would do  
10 so. But I do want to know... I know the Commissioner  
11 from when I heard testimony you know she gave her  
12 raving report of how satisfied she seen the  
13 progress within this. But I understand from your  
14 testimony that you had some concerns budgetary  
15 whether or not this is feasible to try to even  
16 implement this program and move forward with this  
17 program. Can you just a matter of... just tell me  
18 what it is that you have a problem... and what  
19 suggestions that you offer. Because if you are our  
20 panel of experts how do we help the Department of  
21 Sanitation and our commissioner deliver on this  
22 promise of making sure organics get recycled  
23 respectfully.

24 MICHAEL DARDIA: Sure. And good morning.  
25 So I think the tone of the report and hopefully the

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2 testimony is... is definitely not saying that the  
3 department shouldn't precede just saying that it  
4 should precede slowly and carefully because a three  
5 year time horizon for citywide coverage would seem  
6 to not be enough time to come up with sufficient  
7 operational efficiencies, productivity changes to  
8 accommodate both the cost function which is what we  
9 focused on but also the processing capacity and as  
10 the chairman mentioned you know the... exactly where  
11 all those trucks are going. Because Mr. Goldstein  
12 said the... it's the same amount. Unless you're going  
13 through the waste water treatment system it's the  
14 same amount of garbage, it's just been sorted  
15 differently and you need to change the system if  
16 you want it to go to different places and have a  
17 place for it to land once it... once it leaves the  
18 city. So that's where our cost estimates... We... we  
19 first looked to where is there capacity now for it  
20 to go and where will there be capacity within say a  
21 five-year horizon. And then secondly how would you  
22 actually change things to accommodate the third  
23 source of... of garbage collection. And with the  
24 information we had it looked like one to ten  
25 districts could do it... and four districts could do

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2 it through the in sink disposers. We looked at the..  
3 the waste water treatment plants to see how much  
4 volume that would produce... how much bio-solid  
5 etcetera would that produce. We're... and we're  
6 mindful... we... we've spoken with staff of sanitation  
7 and DEP and in particular met with the commissioner  
8 and a bunch of the deputies at DEP about this in  
9 sink disposer question. And there's definitely  
10 issues with doing that. We are not suggesting..  
11 would not suggest mandatory but there might be  
12 places where the system could handle it easily and  
13 anything you can get out of the trucks and... and  
14 processed that way would be an improvement.

15 [background comments]

16 MICHAEL DARDIA: Yeah sure.

17 [background comments]

18 MICHAEL DARDIA: Exactly.

19 [background comments]

20 MICHAEL DARDIA: Sure. Well so the..  
21 it's... I mean it's a difficult puzzle that the  
22 department is faced with and it seems that the  
23 three major parties are going to be the council,  
24 the union, and the... and the department in trying to  
25 figure out how much flexibility they can have.

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2 Because as you know every time something changes  
3 somebody's not happy. And... and if you drop a  
4 collection I mean some years ago when I was with  
5 the budget office just the subject of dropping a  
6 collection a week, even if there was sufficient  
7 capacity in the trucks is a... is a very contentious  
8 issue. And some people may still be upset even if  
9 it's not being dropped completely but just being  
10 switched from trash collection to organic  
11 collection.

12 [background comments]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So my last  
14 question to you is you mentioned about you thought  
15 the rollout was a little too fast. Three years  
16 might not be enough. What would be the ideal  
17 timeframe for you that you think that all this can  
18 get done?

19 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: I would imagine... The...  
20 the tricky thing is how long does it take to get to  
21 a resolution with the... the unions in a way that the  
22 council finds acceptable in terms of the route  
23 changes. You're going to have to change routes and  
24 collection frequencies when you can't just do a  
25 dual bin truck it seems.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Alright  
3 thank you. I appreciate your time in answering the  
4 questions. My question was to his testimony. I... I  
5 appreciate what you're offering but I do have  
6 another question but I'll wait when the  
7 commissioner comes back up. But I thank you all for  
8 testifying and looking forward to your adding to...  
9 to the solutions. Because we all can come in throw  
10 rocks but just at the end of the day how do we  
11 propose solutions so that we can all do this  
12 together. So thank you again. Thank you. Thank you  
13 Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you guys.  
15 Thank you guys. We actually have one more person.  
16 Ken Diamondstone, welcome from Brooklyn. You're...  
17 you're all alone on your panel. Yes.

18 KEN DIAMONDSTONE: The Brooklyn Solid  
19 Waste Advisory Board joins with those who support  
20 Local Law 17. We are intensely aware that food  
21 waste delivered to landfills creates a major source  
22 of methane released into the atmosphere causing  
23 global warming. We support utilizing multiple  
24 methodologies for diverting food waste from  
25 landfills while supporting the expansion of

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2 curbside collection. We are concerned though that  
3 to date much of the curbside material... to the  
4 Greenpoint Williamsburg Newtown Creek Waste Water  
5 Treatment Plant currently situated in a heavily  
6 impacted area which is already dealing with 40  
7 percent of New York City's waste. New York City  
8 must ensure environmental equity as it proceeds  
9 with this and other programs. ...the optimism to a  
10 new project being undertaken by the American  
11 Organic... by American Organic Energy, a subsidiary  
12 of Long Island Compact... Compost, pardon me, to  
13 build an anaerobic digester with the capacity to  
14 process 500 tons a day of food waste which will be  
15 collected from generators in Nassau-Suffolk. If  
16 such a project could be developed and replicated  
17 for New York City's crude waste four or five times  
18 New York City's capacity and infrastructure deficit  
19 could be greatly reduced. And now here's a... a  
20 promotion. To learn more about this project, the  
21 Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board will host the  
22 developers of this project at our next meeting on  
23 March the 7<sup>th</sup>. To attend the event please RSVP to  
24 the following email ken diamond AOL dot com. The  
25 Brooklyn SWAB urges the department to additionally

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2 address existing resources for food waste and other

3 organic collections. Community gardens provide one...

4 one such resource and their use should be

5 encouraged and expanded. Additionally, there is a

6 nasant [phonetic] community of small food waste

7 carters serving both households and small

8 merchants. Regulations need to be developed for

9 this potential job creating activity and should be

10 encouraged. We would therefore strongly oppose any

11 effort either now or in the future to make this

12 program of the curbside collection mandatory. And

13 while the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board is

14 not a current advocate for food waste disposers as

15 another means of diverting food waste from

16 landfills it is very useful to note the recent

17 example of Philadelphia which now requires food

18 waste disposers to be installed in all new

19 construction. Lastly New York City's use of water

20 has declined considerably by as much as 20 percent

21 in the last 15 years. Due to many efforts of DEP

22 that has left many of the waste water treatment

23 plants in New York City with considerable excess

24 capacity. In order to achieve environmental equity

25 these facilities should be rapidly evaluated not at



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2 some distant time for their potential to  
3 accommodate New York City food waste. Thank you  
4 very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you again.  
6 Can I ask you a quick question? You said you were  
7 opposed to the in sink disposer... the disposal.

8 KEN DIAMONDSON: No no no. I said we're  
9 not either a current advocate for... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Oh okay.

11 KEN DIAMONDSON: ...or against.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Oh okay.

13 KEN DIAMONDSON: But it seems very  
14 interesting to us.

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Oh okay.

16 KEN DIAMONDSON: We have... I think that  
17 there is enough evidence that food waste disposers  
18 have been accepted since the late 90s in New York  
19 City by DEP...

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Mm-hmm.

21 KEN DIAMONDSON: ...as... as a... as a method  
22 for processing food waste without disturbing the...  
23 the water around New York. And that virtually all  
24 new condominiums in New York City, large scale  
25 condos, include food waste disposals.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yeah.

3 KEN DIAMONSON: And so this should be  
4 evaluated as soon as possible and if it's viable it  
5 certainly is another very important means for  
6 disposing food waste. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you Ken.  
8 Thank you. And I think this is the first time ever  
9 but we're going to call the commissioner back up to  
10 see... we have a couple of questions. But... and also  
11 any initial responses to a lot of the testimony. I  
12 do want to... my question is sim... is just the... the  
13 capacity and whether or not the city is involved  
14 with any capital funding, is there an RFP out,  
15 speaking to building capacity elsewhere or anywhere  
16 and what role we have, and where... where we are.

17 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So just my overall  
18 impression of the... the different people as I've... I  
19 think I'm most appreciated that I'm not to go too  
20 fast or too slow. This is a very complicated  
21 project with a lot of different challenges and  
22 logistics and different things end up on the  
23 critical path at different moments. And so we are  
24 moving aggressively but you know we are not trying  
25 to either overwhelm the processing or get ahead of

2 our negotiations with the unions, or get ahead of  
3 our procurement of additional dual bin trucks. All  
4 of those could end up that we go slower than I  
5 would have liked but we are... we are making sure  
6 that we touch base on all those different sort of  
7 logistical challenges. So we're trying to not go  
8 too fast or too slow. In terms of capacity you know  
9 obviously we do have capital funding dedicated to  
10 the Staten Island compost facility that we own to  
11 make sure that they can continue to expand and be  
12 able to take all of Staten Island's food waste.  
13 They're actually seeing very high percentages of  
14 yard waste still. There is no other site within the  
15 city that we currently could invest in. We do  
16 provide support for many of our community compost  
17 partners but they are just not ever going to be big  
18 enough to support a full curbside program. And then  
19 one of the things that I thought is useful in terms  
20 of the not too fast and not too slow one of the  
21 things we're not trying to do is do curbside at  
22 every high density area unless they are going to  
23 actively participate because the last thing we want  
24 to do is run empty trucks. And so we want to make  
25 sure we have buy in from those either building

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2 owners or maintenance, or porters, or whoever is  
3 there. And it's part of the reason why the goal was  
4 curbside or drop off sites. And our drop off  
5 participation is now 200,000 people annually. So I  
6 mean I think that that people are very willing to  
7 do drop off at many locations... so the more we make  
8 that also available as an option... So we're... we're  
9 not trying to do a one size fits all. And we're not  
10 trying to do a processing one size fits all. We're  
11 really trying to keep our options open as we move  
12 forward.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Sorry Commissioner  
14 I got here a little late but thank you for coming  
15 back up. First I just want to say thank you. My  
16 street was clean. ... Row was clean. [cross-talk]

17 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Very hard. It was  
18 very...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: You know four  
20 feet... four feet is four feet of snow. It's going to  
21 take a minute to clean it off no matter where you  
22 are. So I... I want to thank you for all the efforts  
23 that you did to help... you know help New York get  
24 around regardless of what actually experience,  
25 that's just a nature of living in New York in the

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2 winter when the snow falls you know. So thank you.

3 But to today's conversation I just want to learn a  
4 little bit more as I heard earlier that you are  
5 satisfied at the pace of how things have been  
6 progressing since you've... we've rolled this out.

7 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'd like to know  
9 where are we... I know he's Brooklyn, I'm the Bronx,  
10 we're the Bronx and I want to talk a little bit  
11 about the Bronx. I know you talked about  
12 participants, 200,000 participants, making sure you  
13 don't have any empty trucks, no one size fit all  
14 approach. So I know reading some... through some of  
15 your testimony that the school system that you've  
16 gone... working with DOE...

17 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Mm-hmm.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...regards to  
19 educating children about this so... But how are we  
20 targeting what communities, because I'm not sure  
21 what communities... I think last time you mentioned  
22 you was rolling out... that my community I think  
23 might have been participants in this program. But  
24 I'd like to know what areas in the Bronx are  
25 participating and if there are more communities

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2 that we might want to target for participation how  
3 do we start the campaign to educate them? Primary...  
4 well you know where you can... where you can assess  
5 the participation where you have more private homes  
6 then when you have buildings because most likely  
7 it'd be up to the super to try to you know dissect  
8 and assimilate all this stuff together as opposed  
9 to when you're in residential neighborhoods where  
10 there's different homes... where the homeowners can  
11 chime in and be a better neighbor to the  
12 environment. So how does that... how does that work?

13 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So... so in the  
14 Bronx we're... we're in Riverdale, we're in Bronx 8  
15 and we're in Bronx 10 right at the moment. And in  
16 Bronx 10 we're using dual bin trucks so the refuse  
17 and the... and the organics are picked up in... in the  
18 same truck. You are correct that we do... we have  
19 focused on the lower density areas of the Bronx  
20 because one of the things that we have found is in...  
21 if you have someone who's actually doing the right  
22 thing and sort of separating their organics and the  
23 super isn't bought into the program it never gets  
24 to me. It ends up back in a black bag and doesn't  
25 actually end up in our program. And so that's why

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2 we're really focused on all the big buildings,  
3 making sure we have buy in from the superintendents  
4 and those building owners. But we are actively  
5 pursuing adding additional high-rise routes. I mean  
6 there are 23,000 households in high rise buildings  
7 who are participating at the curb side who have...  
8 who have joined the program. And so we think that  
9 that is the best approach. As we end up going  
10 through what will be negotiations with our unions  
11 in certain cases on routes and we lock down exactly  
12 what communities will go next we have in every case  
13 gone to the local council member as well as the  
14 community boards and many many of the local civics  
15 because we know that it's a full court press. And  
16 we follow-up. I mean the... the education doesn't  
17 just happen once. We will often then particularly  
18 in the summer months use our interns to go back and  
19 go into those communities. And one of the trickiest  
20 things that we actually have not found a solution  
21 for is residential over commercial that has no  
22 storage space because they tend to leave their  
23 organics bin out on commercial streets and they get  
24 used by... as litter baskets by pedestrians. And in  
25 some cases we've had to take away that curbside

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2 program for them because it just was becoming  
3 unmanageable. We don't actually have a solution for  
4 that particular issue yet but we're... we really want  
5 to work with the council to make sure that we're  
6 expanding this effectively but not too  
7 aggressively, not too... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So if I'm  
9 understanding you correctly residential  
10 neighborhoods that connect with commercial  
11 corridors you're finding that the curbside that's  
12 picked up on the commercial corridors people bring  
13 their trash out there and that organics just fall  
14 apart trying to do it that way.

15 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Yeah I mean like  
16 so... But you know it... we are... we intend to try and  
17 be in as many residential neighborhoods as possible  
18 and make sure that we are... where we can get some  
19 buy in from the building management that we're  
20 serving high rise buildings as well.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Before I  
22 move on to... well my next question would be... is  
23 there a way through... with the schools or... are... are...  
24 is... the organics are going to landfills or... or  
25 however they're being processed... is any of this



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2 stuff being used for scientific reasons, is there  
3 any way to use it?

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: So... so I... there...  
5 there are very... my understanding is that the very  
6 large volumes end up coming to us. But many schools  
7 often will in some cases if they have a dedicated  
8 science teacher will actually do their own programs  
9 if they're running their own gardens with their  
10 children. But it's very varied by school. It tends  
11 to not be top down. But they have a new  
12 sustainability director at DOE and we've been  
13 working very closely with her. And it's a place  
14 where we continue to want to expand. We think that  
15 getting ahold of them young will help us long term.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Well I don't  
17 know Mr. Chair... I don't know if there's a way with  
18 our homeowners, giving them some type of incentive  
19 to participate in the organics program... Is... is  
20 there any out... out there yet now or... or maybe...  
21 [cross-talk]

22 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: I have not had to  
23 pay anyone yet...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: No no...

25 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: ...to participate.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I... I just wanted  
3 to figure out how do we target the homeowner. I  
4 know I speak... I'll speak for my district which is  
5 adjacent... is in between 10 and 9... 10 and 11  
6 actually and I think that's a way for us to reduce  
7 some of our... if we can get the... have that option to  
8 do but it... I guess... start with an educational  
9 campaign and get with schools and our student and  
10 figure out how our homeowners you know buy in. I  
11 think a lot of them would probably would buy in if  
12 we're able to present it to them. Because a lot of  
13 them don't even know that this organic program  
14 exists. So how do we make some communities aware of  
15 it that they might want to participate? And I'm  
16 willing to help you out in any way that I possibly  
17 can.

18 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: And I appreciate  
19 that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you for your  
21 time.

22 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Yeah we don't have  
24 an incentive and I'm more of a sticks guy then...  
25 then a... then a carrot guy. But I think the bags

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2 could definitely be a way... maybe if we figure out a  
3 way to get them affordable or free bags that are  
4 compostable I think that would definitely help. So  
5 I just want to put that into... into the suggestion  
6 box.

7 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: ...there. I think  
9 we're... and I just want to thank you for coming back  
10 up. I've never done that before but I'm glad that  
11 you're of course as a commissioner you're one of  
12 the... the few commissioners that stayed throughout  
13 the entire committee hearings. And that's un...  
14 unheard of. So I... I'm... I'm happy that I even had  
15 the opportunity to call you back up. So thank you  
16 for that. And I do want to just echo the sentiments  
17 of many of my colleagues that you heard today  
18 regarding you know the... the way DSNY fought the  
19 snow. This city was up and running on Monday. And  
20 in the worst storm we've had over 100 years. And  
21 I'll say ever that point one thing you know I want  
22 to... I'll love to contest that the way... the way the...  
23 do. But I think for the most... it... we were up and  
24 running on Monday and Tuesday for sure. So thank  
25 you for... for everything you've done and I look

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2 forward to having a hearing on that and.. and

3 singing our praises then.

4 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNOSO: Thank you. We are

6 done.

7 [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 February 18, 2016