

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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January 28, 2021  
Start: 9:10 a.m.  
Recess: 9:23 a.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 1

B E F O R E: Daniel Dromm  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Daniel Dromm  
Adrienne E. Adams  
Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Diana Ayala  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Darma V. Diaz  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Mark Gjonaj  
Barry S. Grodenchik  
Karen Koslowitz  
Farah N. Louis  
Steven Matteo  
Francis P. Moya  
Keith Powers  
Helen K. Rosenthal  
Jimmy Van Bramer

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

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: PC recording is on.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Thank you.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS HOPE: Cloud recording

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is on.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Thank you.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS PEREZ: Backup is

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rolling.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Thank you.

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And Sergeant Bradley, if you'd be able to start with

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your opening statement.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS BRADLEY: Good morning

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and welcome to today's New York City Council vote of

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the Committee on Finance. At this time will all

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panelists turn their videos on. Thank you for your

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cooperation. You may begin, Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much

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and good morning. My name is Council Member Daniel

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Dromm and I'm chair of the Finance Committee. Um,

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I'd like to welcome everyone who's here, ah, Council

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Member Koslowitz, Van Bramer, Gibson, Cornegy,

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Rosenthal, Grodenchik, Adams, Ampry-Samuel, Ayala,

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Moya, Powers, Louis, D. Diaz, Matteo, and, ah,

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Council Member and Majority Leader Cumbo is here as

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well. Today the committee will be voting on one

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2 item, proposed Intro 2166-B. The bill, sponsored by  
3 Council Member Adams by request of the mayor, relates  
4 to the city's tax lien sale. The tax lien sale is  
5 the city's primary tool to ensure the timely payment  
6 of property taxes, water and sewer charges, and  
7 certain other municipal charges. Before the lien  
8 sale program was introduced the number of tax-  
9 delinquent properties averaged 4.4% over the three  
10 years that preceded the program. In contrast, in  
11 fiscal 2020 approximately 98% of all property owners  
12 paid their property taxes in full and on time. This  
13 is significant because currently every percentage  
14 point of delinquency equates to approximately 300  
15 million dollars in lost revenue for the city, revenue  
16 which is used to provide vital services to all New  
17 Yorkers. But while the council recognizes that it's  
18 important to hold all property owners accountable, we  
19 must also strike a balance to ensure that the tax  
20 lien sale does not compound the financial distress  
21 experienced by many homeowners, especially now during  
22 these difficult economic times brought on by COVID-  
23 19. For the past several months the council has met  
24 with property owners, the administration, and  
25 community-based organizations to discussed the

1 proposed issues surrounding the tax lien sale  
2 process. Proposed Intro number 2166-B and the  
3 additional terms of agreement between the council and  
4 the mayor take major steps towards providing deeper  
5 protections and resources to homeowners by, among  
6 other thing, 1) creating a COVID-19 exemption for  
7 calendar year 2021 for property owners who are  
8 experiencing a COVID-related financial hardship; 2)  
9 increasing the property tax debt eligibility  
10 threshold for Class 1 and co-ops and condos to \$5000,  
11 and the water debt threshold for two- and three-  
12 family homes to \$3000; 3) increasing the income  
13 eligibility threshold for the Department of Finance's  
14 low-income payment and tax deferral plans to \$86,400;  
15 4) establishing a lower property tax late payment  
16 interest rate for properties with an assessed value  
17 between \$250,000 and \$450,000; 5) mandating  
18 additional outreach sessions to be conducted by the  
19 administration during the tax lien sale notice  
20 period; 6) establishing a temporary task force to  
21 ensure that the city's enforcement of delinquent  
22 municipal charges is fair, effective, and efficient,  
23 and to study the feasibility of transferring  
24 properties with liens to community land trusts, land  
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1 banks, mutual housing associations, or other similar  
2 entities; and 7) providing 1 million dollars in  
3 discretionary funding for CBOs to do lien sale-  
4 related outreach. As we continue to make steady  
5 progress in reforming the tax lien sale program, the  
6 council members, the council remains committed to  
7 working with property owners and community-based  
8 partners and advocates for deeper reforms in order to  
9 blunt the negative impacts it has had on our  
10 communities. I'll now turn it over to Council Member  
11 Adams for her remarks, and congratulations, Council  
12 Member Adams, you've done a tremendous amount of work  
13 on this and this is a very good piece of legislation.  
14 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so very  
17 much, Chair Deutsch. Thank you for allowing me to  
18 deliver remarks about legislation that is an  
19 important step forward in how we handle the  
20 collection of unpaid property taxes, [inaudible] what  
21 is imperative correct the injustices caused by the  
22 previous lien sale program and the Guiliani-esque  
23 work that has been [inaudible] get us here. We  
24 [inaudible] water, repair, and other municipal debt  
25 collection processes to a much more equitable place

1 in this bill. We have reduced the length of  
2 authorization to just one year and we've added 1  
3 million dollars in outreach contracts for community-  
4 based organizations. [inaudible] fiscal year 2021  
5 and continuing through fiscal year 2022 we secured  
6 substantial wins since the first iteration of our  
7 bill in December and created a robust framework to  
8 enhance this vital reform. These are major steps  
9 that will protect vulnerable low-income households in  
10 the 2021 lien sale and pave the way for substantial  
11 rethinking and replacement of the lien sale in the  
12 future. I want to thank the Speaker for his  
13 indulgence to make sure that we get this legislation  
14 right for communities like mine, the most affected to  
15 lose their homes to the lien sale and foreclosure,  
16 and I certainly would be remiss if I didn't  
17 acknowledge the hard work of the advocates that  
18 helped us get to this point and the Attorney General  
19 James for her insight. I also want to thank our  
20 finance staff, Rebecca Chasen, Ray Majuski, Amera  
21 Adev, and of course our [inaudible] Council Member  
22 Gibson calls her so eloquently Latonya McKinney. I'd  
23 also like to thank our administration partners, Paul  
24 Ocho, and I'd like to thank my director of  
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2 legislative affairs, Stacy Yearwood, for all of your  
3 long nights, your hard work, and your dedication to  
4 this mission. We've come a long way, and I ask for  
5 the support of my colleagues on Intro 2166-B. Thank  
6 you very much, Mr. Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Are there  
8 any questions on the bill on today's agenda? OK, if  
9 not I'm going to ask Billy Martin, committee clerk,  
10 to call the roll.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Good morning,  
12 William Martin, committee clerk, roll call vote,  
13 Committee on Finance [inaudible]. All items are  
14 coupled, one item, Introduction 2166-B, Chair Dromm.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Koslowitz.  
17 Council Member Koslowitz.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you. Van  
20 Bramer.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: No.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Gibson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Permission to  
24 explain? Mr. Chair?



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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, of course. I'm  
3 sorry.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [inaudible] thank  
5 you Chair Dromm, and good morning colleagues. Um, I  
6 want to speak up in support of this legislation. I  
7 know the tremendous amount of work that our  
8 colleagues, Council Member Adams, has done and I also  
9 know we've received a lot of input from our attorney  
10 general, Leticia James, as well as a lot of advocacy  
11 groups that had reached out to us when this bill was  
12 first put on the agenda last year. Um, I'm  
13 especially pleased that there is discretionary money,  
14 ah, that will be allocated to many of our community  
15 organizations on the ground who have the ability to  
16 provide a significant amount of outreach to many of  
17 our property owners. I think in light of a global  
18 pandemic we have to be mindful of the reality of what  
19 we're facing, but we also have to provide the support  
20 that many of our property owners need, particularly  
21 those hardest hit by the pandemic that lost revenue  
22 and lost income and many of whom are owners of color.  
23 We always talk about communities hardest hit by  
24 COVID-19 and I think we have to recognize that in  
25 this, ah, day we have to provide the support needed

1 on the ground, so I really want to thank the  
2 advocates that have reached out to our office since  
3 then to try to make this bill better and enhance it  
4 and really provide the critical support for all of  
5 our property owners across the City of New York. So  
6 thank you again, Chair Adams, great work to all the  
7 advocates. Thank you, a great step forward today,  
8 and I vote aye on today's agenda. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cornegy.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Permission to  
12 explain as well?

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of course.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Ah, thank you so  
15 much, Chair. Ah, thank you to the bill's sponsor,  
16 Adrienne Adams. I watched from the sidelines as she  
17 grinded this out, ah, on behalf of communities like  
18 mine and like hers that are most disproportionately  
19 impacted by everything from lien sales to third-party  
20 transfers to [inaudible] so I know for a fact that  
21 she was incredibly thoughtful. I want to the  
22 advocates who she listened to, by the way, so this is  
23 what it looks like when we work with the advocates  
24 and we work together as a council, as a co-equal  
25 branch of the administration to get something done,

2 we get it done. I want to the finance team who spent  
3 countless hours I am sure trying to get this bill.  
4 There's no such thing as a perfect bill, but this  
5 comes pretty damn close. Um, so I vote aye.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you.

7 Cumbo.

8 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: OK, hold on.

9 (child speaking) I vote aye. (Majority Leader Cumbo  
10 speaking) I vote aye.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's Prince

12 [laughs].

13 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Rosenthal.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You know, with  
15 congratulations to and great admiration of Council  
16 Member Adams, I proudly vote aye and will not repeat  
17 the very apt, um, description of why this is so  
18 important. But Council Members and Gibson and  
19 Cornegy nailed it. Um, so really, really impressive  
20 work. I vote aye, again.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you.

22 Grodenchik.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Ah, I vote  
24 aye and I want to congratulate my, ah, my colleague  
25 and my dear friend, Adrienne Adams. I know that this

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2 has not been easy. Ah, it's very, very difficult  
3 issue for, ah, many parts of New York City, ah,  
4 especially my community, in Wards 12 and 13, which  
5 have, um, some of highest foreclosure rates in the  
6 State of New York and, um, we are working, ah,  
7 desperately to try to keep people in their houses in  
8 this, ah, pandemic and I want to thank, ah,  
9 Councilwoman Adams for all her hard work, and I vote  
10 aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Adams.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I thank my  
13 colleagues for your support and your gracious  
14 remarks. I do vote aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Ampry-Samuel.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Recognizing  
17 Council Member Adams for all your hard work, um, I  
18 vote aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Ayala.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I want to  
21 congratulate Council Member Adams for all of her  
22 work. Thank you so much. We all appreciate you, ah,  
23 Adrienne, um, and I vote aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Moya.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Congratulations to  
3 Council Member Adams, ah, who worked tremendously  
4 hard. Ah, I know how hard she worked. I would call  
5 on [inaudible] asking a lot of questions. So I want  
6 to thank you so much for all that you've done and,  
7 ah, I'll be voting aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Powers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I vote aye.  
10 Thanks.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Louis.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Congratulations,  
13 Council Member Adams, and congratulations also, and I  
14 want to thank the countless advocates who helped push  
15 the administration in the right direction to make  
16 these changes.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Darma Diaz.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: I guess I meant  
19 to be muted. I vote aye and as a former advocate  
20 thank you, because this allows me to find out the why  
21 the 37 Councilmatic District continues to be the top  
22 at the list. Again, I vote aye and, and thank you  
23 for the extra push.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you.  
25 Matteo.

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MINORITY LEADER MATTEO: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Council Member Cumbo, did you want to edit your vote? I see your hand is raised.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: No, no, that's Prince raising his hand.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: OK, no problem. Hold on, I'm waving back, hello. All right. By a vote of 15 in the affirmative, 1 in the negative, and no abstentions, Intro 2166-B has been adopted by the committee. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: OK, I want to thank you very much and, ah, with that this meeting is adjourned at 9:23 in the morning. Thank you, everybody.

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 28, 2021