

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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February 13, 2017
Start: 1:05 p.m.
Recess: 1:49 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
14th Fl.

B E F O R E: JAMES VACCA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
David G. Greenfield
Barry S. Grodenchik
Joseph C. Borelli

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

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can I can I start?

4 Okay. Good afternoon. My name is James Vacca, and
5 I'm the Chair of the Committee on Technology. We are
6 here to—we are here today to consider Proposed Intro
7 1240-A, a bill sponsored by Council Member Danny
8 Dromm that would enhance the language access of two
9 types of important digital notifications issues by
10 New York City, in one of the most diverse cities in
11 the country, and it is important that everyone living
12 in New York City have an opportunity to access the
13 many services our local government provides. Two of
14 those services are city issued electronic
15 communications through wireless emergency alerts and
16 Notify NYC notifications. Last fall we were able to
17 use this technology to great effect. That morning
18 the city issued a massive WEA that provided the name
19 of the Chelsea bombing suspect. This test-text like
20 message was sent to every cell phone using a cell
21 phone tower in New York City. The suspect was in
22 police custody three hours late. Police Commissioner
23 James O'Neill describes these types of alert system
24 as the future. We agree. Messaging services are not
25 just useful for criminal threats, but also informing

2 residents of life threatening weather events like
3 tornadoes and hurricanes, missing persons and other
4 major disruptions. Because these messages can relay
5 information that require immediate action. It is our
6 imperative view that every resident of New York City
7 have the opportunity to access them. Presently, some
8 Notify New York City messages provide limited
9 language translations, but this is not enough.
10 Messages delivered through Notify NYC both and WEA,
11 both of which New York City Emergency Management
12 originate should have automatic translation features
13 to more effectively reach people with limited English
14 proficiency.

15 Proposed Intro 1240-A provides that
16 opportunity that it be issued in two most commonly
17 spoke language in New York which is English and
18 Spanish. Further, the bill would require that Notify
19 NYC subscribers have the option to receive all of
20 their alerts in one of the City's seven most commonly
21 spoken languages unless a real time translation of
22 the general English notification is unavailable. I
23 want to introduce my colleagues that have joined me
24 here today. To my left is Councilwoman Palma. To my
25 immediate right is Barry Grodenchik, and I want to

2 introduce the sponsor of the bill, Council Member
3 Danny Dromm before we call the clerk for the roll.
4 Oh, and Council Member David Greenfield to my left.
5 Sorry.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you, Chair
7 Vacca for the opportunity to speak. In times of
8 emergency disseminating information as broadly as
9 possible is critical to the safety of all New York
10 City's diverse communities. Obtaining accurate
11 information and following official instructions are
12 vital steps to weathering emergency situations.
13 Unfortunately, non-English speakers are vulnerable to
14 situations where they receive incomplete or incorrect
15 information. In some cases our immigrant neighbors
16 may receive no relevant information at all. Given
17 how critical this information can be with saving life
18 and property, this situation needs to change now
19 before the next emergency. Proposed Intro 1240-A
20 tremendously expands emergency outreach efforts by
21 requiring that alerts and notices be given in
22 multiple-multiple languages. This legislation
23 accomplishes two important goals. First, city
24 emergency alerts issued through commercial cellular
25 services will need to be in at least the two most

2 commonly spoke languages in the area covered by the
3 alert as much as practical. Secondly, the city's
4 multi-media notification system, which aggregates
5 information from other sources will need to offer
6 each notification in no fewer than the city's seven
7 most commonly spoken languages. I want to thank
8 Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Vacca, and all the
9 members of the committee for recognizing the
10 importance of ensuring our city's emergency response
11 that includes our immigrant communities. Thank you
12 very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, Mr. Dromm,
14 and we will now have the clerk call the roll.

15 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
16 roll call vote Committee on Technology, Introduction
17 1240-A. Chair Vacca.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I vote aye.

19 CLERK: Palma.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: I vote aye, and
21 congratulations to Council Member Dromm.

22 CLERK: Greenfield.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [off mic] Aye.

24 CLERK: Grodenchik.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Aye.

2 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
4 the item has been adopted by the committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, and we do
6 have one other member who's voting on another
7 committee so I'll leave the roll open for 20 minutes
8 until 1:30 for the other member to vote. [background
9 comments] This meeting is adjourned. Thank you.
10 [gavel]

11 CLERK: Continuation of roll call, the
12 Committee on Technology, Introduction 1240-A.
13 Council Member Borelli.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I vote aye.

15 CLERK: Final vote now in the Committee
16 on Technology the item has been adopted by a vote of
17 5 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no
18 abstentions.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: The meeting is
20 adjourned. [gavel]

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1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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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 15, 2017