

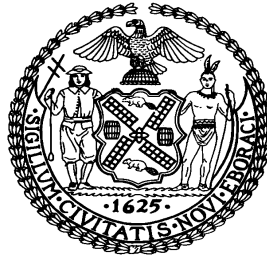
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THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Hon. Antonio Reynoso, Chair

September 24, 2020

Oversight: Sidewalk and Street Cleanliness in NYC

I. INTRODUCTION

On September 24, 2020 the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (the “Committee”), chaired by Council Member Antonio Reynoso, will hold a hearing on sidewalk and street cleanliness in NYC. The Committee expects to receive testimony from representatives of the New York City Department of Sanitation (“DSNY”), environmental advocates and interested members of the public.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Budget

The New York City (City) budget for fiscal year 2021 included drastic service reductions. The Department of Sanitation’s budget included cuts of approximately \$24.5 million that directly reduce services that keep streets and sidewalks clean (chart below). A portion of this \$24.5 million was one-time funding that was not restored.¹ These cuts included reductions to litter basket pickup and litter removal services. Additionally, people are leaving out more residential trash which is filling up trucks more quickly, making it less likely that litter is picked up in a timely manner along the route.²

Cleaning/Collection Program Service Reductions (<i>Dollars in Thousands</i>)	FY21
Basket Service in Rat Mitigation Zones	\$718
Brooklyn North Cleaning	1,200
Fourth Day of Collection Service in Rat Mitigation Zones	1,523
Weekday, Sunday and Holiday Service, Enforcement	9,450
Highway Ramp Cleaning	864
Syringe Collection	265
Lot Cleaning	1,900
Additional Basket Service	8,600
TOTAL	\$24,520

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City officials announced on September 15, 2020 that some sanitation services that were reduced in the budget would be restored by reallocating funding. This restoration should bring back some litter basket pick-up and cleaning services, but will still ultimately result in a reduction of services from the prior fiscal year. Further, it is not yet clear where these restorations will be

¹The Council of the City of New York “Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management on the Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget for the Department of Sanitation” (May 14 2020) <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2020/05/DSNY.pdf>

²Bauman, Ali “Trash Piling Up Over NYC After Sanitation Department’s Budget Slashed By Over \$100 Million” (July 29, 2020) <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/07/29/trash-collection-nyc-sanitation-department-budget-cuts/#:~:text=In%20June%2C%20the%20city%20cut,Garcia%20told%20CBS2's%20Ali%20Bauman.>

³The Council of the City of New York “Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management on the Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget for the Department of Sanitation” (May 14 2020) <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2020/05/DSNY.pdf>

made. Litter basket cleanup will be reduced by 39% from fiscal year 2020, instead of the 63% reduction that the FY 2021 budget represented.⁴

B. Alternate Side Parking

Alternate side parking (ASP) regulations mandate that cars are moved from each side of the street to allow for street cleaning. With the exception of one week in May to clean the streets, ASP has been suspended in the city for most of the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning on March 18, 2020.⁵ Later, alternate side parking resumed on August 3rd, but with some changes. Residential streets are only being cleaned once per week. If a street is normally cleaned twice per week, it will only be cleaned on the later of the two days on the street sign. The amended ASP regulations are in place until September 19th, however, the City intended to assess cleanliness conditions throughout the summer to decide whether to extend or modify the new rules post-Labor Day.⁶

Due to ASP reductions, cars have remained parked on streets for longer periods of time and the street sweepers have not been able to clean. This may be a contributing factor to the increase in litter being reported throughout the City.

C. Complaints

311 complaints regarding litter and street cleanliness rose with the reduction of litter basket pickup, which included the elimination of corner trash basket pick up on Sundays and fewer sanitation trucks operating pick up operations on weekends and holidays.⁷ According to the Daily

⁴ Honan, Katie “New York City to Restore Some Garbage-Collection Services” (Sept 15 2020) <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-to-restore-some-garbage-collection-services-11600212787>

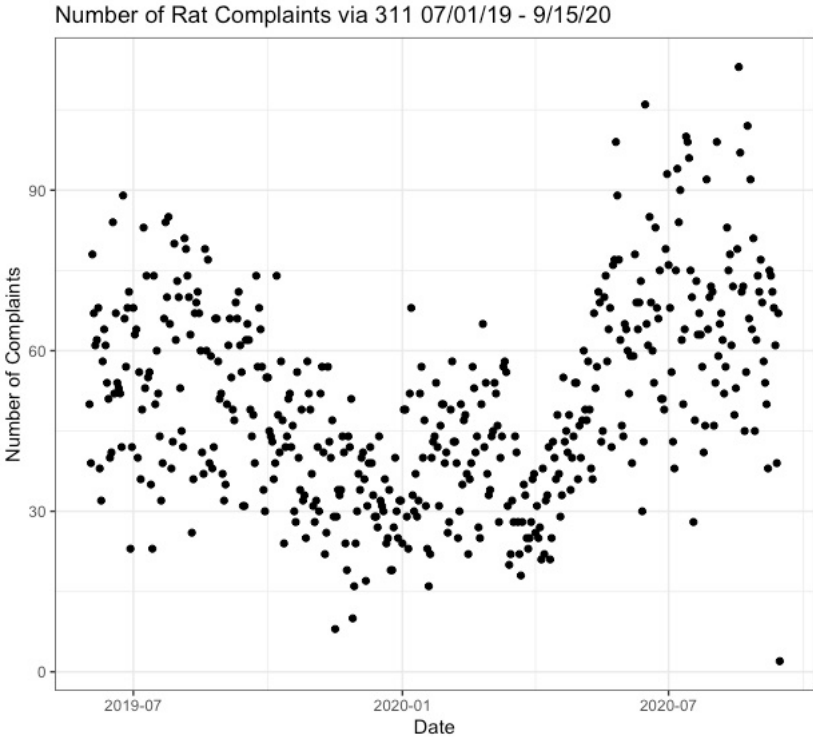
⁵ Sanders, Anna “NYC alternate-side parking suspended through April 28 for coronavirus” (April 13, 2020) <https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-alternate-side-parking-nyc-suspended-20200413-57bqabfh15fhtkepzx3j37jx74-story.html>

⁶ NYC 311 “Alternate Side Parking and Street Cleaning” <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01011>
⁷ Clodagh McGowan, “Nothing But Garbage’: Slashed DSNY Budget Leads to Trash Piling Up on Street Corners” NY1 (August 10, 2020), <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/08/10/-nothing-but-garbage---slashed-dsny-budget-leads-to-trash-piling-up-on-street-corners#>; Brittany Kriegszeit and Shan Shahrigan, “New Yorkers get

News, from July 1 to August 17, 2020, citywide 311 complaints related to overflowing bins increased from the same period in 2019 from 281 in 2019 to 1,189 in 2020, a quadrupling of complaints. Overall garbage complaints doubled during this period, rising to 2,626 in 2020.⁸ These complaints likely include those that are serviced by the Parks Department and the Department of Sanitation.

In addition to increased complaints regarding litter and street cleanliness, there has also been an increase in the number of 311 complaints related to rats and other rodents (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

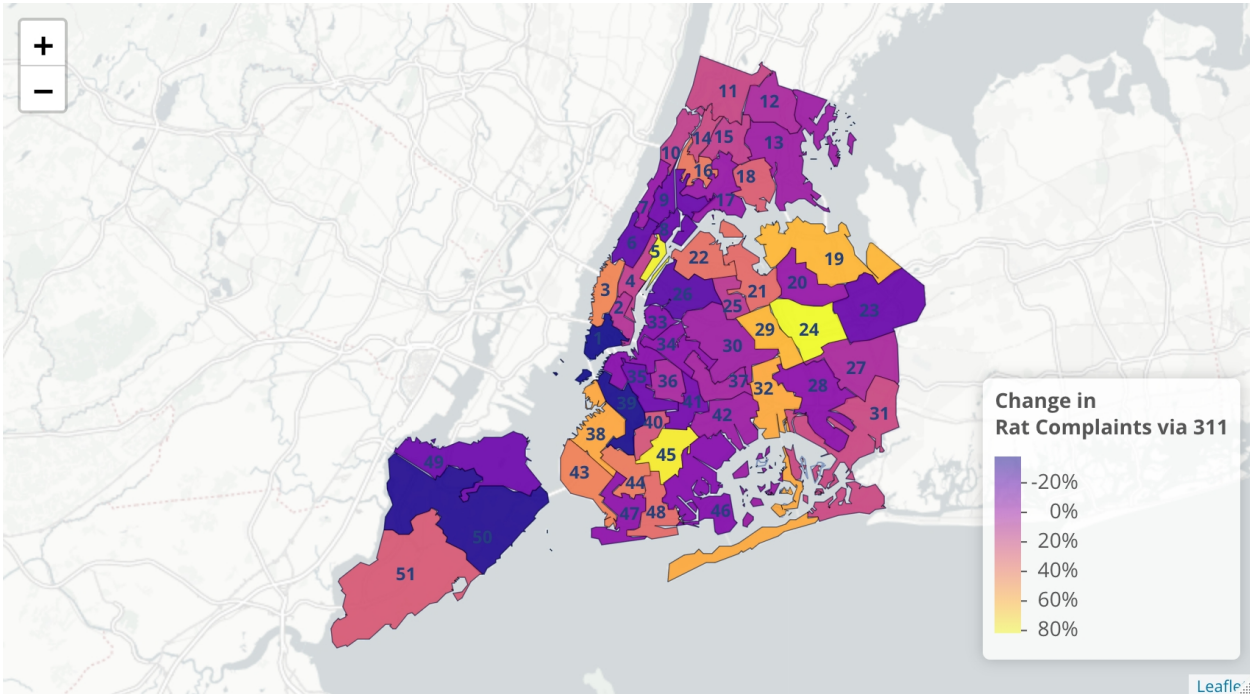
Figure 1: Number or Rat Complaints between July 2019 and September 2020



their hands dirty to get piled up trash off NYC streets," New York Daily News (August 30, 2020), <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-dirty-streets-new-york-city-20200830-qbiocufkrjbdck6spzawo7bpu-story.html>

⁸ Brittany Kriegszeit and Shan Shahrigan, "New Yorkers get their hands dirty to get piled up trash off NYC streets," New York Daily News (August 30, 2020), <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-dirty-streets-new-york-city-20200830-qbiocufkrjbdck6spzawo7bpu-story.html>

Figure 2: Percent Change in Rat Complaints from Summer 2019 to Summer 2020



Then-DSNY Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, who announced her resignation on September 8, 2020, stated the budget cuts and resulting reduction in collection service by the department meant that the City is "much more dependent on the partnership we have with residents and businesses to help keep this city clean."⁹ Residents in some neighborhoods have taken on increasing voluntary litter cleanup operations. In neighborhoods around Brooklyn, including Fort Green, Bushwick, and Bay Ridge, volunteer cleanup groups have formed and organize clean up days to help address overflowing garbage cans and littered sidewalks, streets and parks.¹⁰ In

⁹ Courtney Gross, "Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia Is Resigning, Explores Run for Mayor" NY1 (September 8, 2020), <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/09/08/city-sanitation-chief-kathryn-garcia-resigns>

¹⁰ Miranda Levingston, "Neighbors Are Tackling the Trash Amidst COVID-19 Budget Cuts" BK Reader (August 31, 2020), <https://www.bkreader.com/2020/08/31/neighborhoods-tackling-litter/>

August 2020, over 70 residents in the Upper West Side of Manhattan signed up to each adopt a keep one block clean.¹¹

The 125th St. Business Improvement District in Harlem has convened weekly trash cleanups since the beginning of August.¹² Residents have stated that the state of cleanliness on the streets is not due to lack of neighborly efforts, but the City not doing its part.¹³ Some also note that for a city still facing a global pandemic, having filthy streets and garbage piling up is not helping.¹⁴ This assessment was echoed by then-DSNY Commissioner Garcia, who articulated reduced sanitation service due to budget cuts as a main reason for her departure, and that “at a time when protecting public health is of the essence, cutting basic sanitation services is unconscionable.”¹⁵

III. CONCLUSION

At this hearing, the Committee would like to hear from the Department of Sanitation how the FY2021 budget cuts have impacted their ability to keep New York City streets clean. The Committee is also looking forward to understanding any changes that DSNY is planning to make to work within their current budget to keep the City clean, including seeking clarity on how the newly-allocated funding will impact service equitably throughout the City. Further, the Committee would like to hear from residents and businesses about the impact that the budget-related service cuts have had on their quality of life and business.

¹¹ Carol Tannenhauser, "Volunteers 'Adopt' UWS Blocks To Clean; 70 Have Already Stepped Up" West Side Rag (August 28, 2020), <https://www.westsiderag.com/2020/08/28/volunteers-adopt-uws-blocks-to-clean-70-have-already-stepped-up>

¹² Brittany Kriegszeit and Shan Shahrigan, "New Yorkers get their hands dirty to get piled up trash off NYC streets," New York Daily News (August 30, 2020), <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-dirty-streets-new-york-city-20200830-qbiocufkrjbnck6spzawo7bpu-story.html>

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Courtney Gross, "Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia Is Resigning, Explores Run for Mayor" NY1 (September 8, 2020), <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/09/08/city-sanitation-chief-kathryn-garcia-resigns>

