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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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July 22, 2015
Start: 01:12 p.m.
Recess: 01:40 p.m.

Fl.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway- Committee Rm, 16th

B E F O R E:

MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ALAN N. MAISEL
ANDREW COHEN
DARLENE MEALY
FERNANDO CABRERA
JAMES G. VAN BRAER
MARK TREYGER

1 [gavel]

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Good afternoon

3 everybody. We're going to get this underway. I'm
4 Mark Levine, Chair of the Committee on Parks and
5 Recreation. Pleased that I'm joined by three of my
6 very prompt and punctual colleagues including Mark
7 Treyger from Brooklyn, Andy Cohen from the Bronx,
8 Alan Maisel also from Brooklyn. Today we have three
9 matters that we'll be taking up. First up is a vote
10 on proposed introduction number 558A which would
11 require the Parks Department to issue a report to
12 the mayor and city council that would provide an
13 annual accounting of what facilities under its
14 jurisdiction were assessed for compliance with the
15 Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. The ADA
16 standards for accessible design. The report would
17 detail whether each assessment was done during the
18 course of regular construction work or as the
19 result of a complaint as well as what work was done
20 and what work will be done to bring such facilities
21 into compliance during the calendar year when the
22 report is issued. It would also include a updated
23 list of Parks Department Facilities that are
24 specifically designed for use by disabled persons.
25 If our park system is truly going to be for all New

1
2 Yorkers then that surely must include those New
3 Yorkers with Disabilities. But sadly today far too
4 many components of our Park System are simply not
5 accessible to wheelchair users and those with other
6 disabilities. Nowhere is this more glaring than in
7 the city's 657 comfort stations and bathrooms. A...
8 20 percent of which are fully accessible today. How
9 quickly are we making progress towards the critical
10 goal of 100 percent accessibility in our Parks
11 facilities? Until now the council and the public
12 have had no way to answer that question. Intro 558A
13 is... is designed to change that. By giving us for
14 the first time regular reports on accessibility
15 assessments and retrofitting plans. An I urge my
16 colleagues to support it. Did you hear that
17 Councilman Cohen?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I did.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Good. Alright.

20 Second...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Are you lobbying?

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I'll follow the
23 report, I promise. Second is Introduction 235
24 sponsored by Council Member Van Bramer which would
25 amend the city map by permanently renaming two

1
2 separate streets in Queens that are both currently
3 name court square. And these streets will then be
4 more clearly renamed one to be court square east
5 and one to be court square west. This renaming
6 would ease potential confusion for emergency
7 personnel when they respond to incidents in the
8 area. Finally we'll vote on our twice a year
9 preconsidered bill to ceremonially co-name 51
10 thoroughfares and public places throughout the
11 city. Among the most notable New Yorkers we're
12 recognizing today with this honor is Detective
13 Brian Moore, a police officer who was tragically
14 killed in the line of duty this past May. A co-
15 naming in his honor is a small reminder of the debt
16 of gratitude city residents owe to this young man
17 and all of our uniform services personnel who risk
18 their lives in service to their fellow New Yorkers.
19 I'd also like to highlight three co-namings in this
20 bill that will take place in my district. The first
21 is for a prominent member of our community, Robert
22 Lowery. We're going to be renaming Riverside Drive
23 between 158th, 155th, and 158th Robert Lowery Way
24 named after the first African American Commissioner
25 in the fire department of the City of New York who

1 was appointed by Mayor John Lindsey in 1965. He was
2 well known for his dedication to improving race
3 relations within the department and beyond. And I'm
4 pleased that his daughter Trudy is here with us
5 today who worked very very hard to make this a
6 reality. It was not an easy process. Second we'll
7 be rename... renaming... co-naming, excuse me, 140th
8 and Amsterdam Dorothy Skinner Way in honor of a
9 local Harlem Community Leader who spent her life
10 devoted to making Harlem safer, stable,
11 economically sound, and politically stronger. And
12 finally in my district we'll be creating
13 firefighter John Sullivan Way, a co-naming of
14 Amsterdam and 162nd Street in honor of this hard
15 working member of the FDNY who passed away due to
16 an illness related to his heroic work at the world
17 trade center after the attacks of September 11th,
18 2001. I'm pleased to include these co-namings
19 within a robust package of honorable New Yorkers
20 and New York institutions. And as I mentioned
21 before I'll be voting to support these bills and
22 urge all my fellow committee members to do the
23 same. At this point I would like to invite any
24 council members who have any comments to please
25

1
2 speak on any of the items before us today if there
3 are any.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: If I can just for
5 one second... I just want to thank you for your
6 leadership on the ADA compliance with Parks. I... I
7 did notice... I don't know when it was... it... maybe not
8 at our last meeting but at some meeting you did
9 make inquiry with the commissioner and I... I think
10 that this is a... a good step in the right direction.
11 So I just want to say thank you for that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you Chair
13 Levine. I want to echo those remarks that not only
14 are we talking about major issues of the day with
15 regards to our parks but we're actually acting. And
16 under your leadership we have addressed issues of
17 equity. We're addressing issues now of... of access.
18 You and I have had great conversations about even
19 language as well. And I think you have been really
20 a great leader on this Chair Levine. Really
21 appreciate that. I just want to just comment on
22 three street re-namings in my district which your
23 staff has been very helpful with as well. I want to
24 thank them. Whoop Housner [phonetic]... I think my
25 colleagues from Brooklyn might have heard the name

1
2 as well was... I mean he... I... that is synonymous with
3 community activism even into his 90s of going to
4 every single community meeting... veteran, small
5 business owner, community activist. He was so
6 instrumental in making sure Southern Brooklyn was
7 always represented and given the respect that it's
8 due. And so this is a very worth... the least... small
9 token of our appreciation. Father Connie Mobley
10 Boulevard in Coney Island will be renamed in... in
11 honor of... of a gentleman who is a spiritual leader
12 in... in our community. And to this day his impact is
13 still being felt in a positive way. And Seth
14 Kushner way named after a... a young man who he just
15 lost a battle with... with cancer who is... and very
16 talented artist photographer that worked very
17 closely with staff and kids from Abraham Lincoln
18 High school. And he was nationally known for... for
19 his work. And his impact and... and his legacy will
20 always be felt. So I want to thank the chair and
21 this staff for being very helpful to get all these
22 street re-namings done. And I just wanted to say
23 thank you chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Council
25 Member Treyger. And I also want to thank some staff

1 who worked very very hard to make these bills
2 possible. There is so much work behind the scenes
3 on every one of these street co-namings and of
4 course any piece of legislation such as our
5 disability access reporting bill. So I do want to
6 acknowledge Chris Satori, Patrick Movahil, and of
7 course my wonderful legislative director Amy
8 Slattery. And I'd also like to invite members of
9 the public to speak. I'm going to call up two who
10 have submitted requests to speak; Trudy Irwin as
11 well as LeRoy McCarthy. Alright come on up. You're
12 both... if you could both please have a seat at the
13 front table. And Sergeant if you could put a three
14 minute clock on and.. Okay. And Trudy we'll cue you
15 first if you could just give us your name for the
16 record and.. and then.. If you could press the button
17 for your microphone just so we can get... And maybe
18 pull... [cross-talk] pull the mic a little closer to
19 yourself. Okay. Great.

21 GERTRUDE IRWIN: Good? Okay. So for the
22 record Gertrude Irwin, I'm the daughter of Robert
23 Lowery and and my dad joined the fire department in
24 1941 and it just turns out that it's also in your
25 councilmatic district on 161st Street. And from

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2 serving as a fire... a fireman he moved on to be a
3 fire marshal and then a fire lieutenant fire
4 marshal, a deputy commissioner, and then the fire
5 commissioner that he was appointed by John Lindsey
6 in 1965. So he had quite a... and I should also add
7 that he was a motorman before and he joined the
8 fire department in 1941. So for a year or so before
9 he took... he took a lots of civil service exams. He
10 was a motorman for a year before becoming... And his
11 two brothers... one was a policeman and the other
12 brother was a fireman and they encouraged him to
13 become a fireman. So anyhow he had a long career in
14 the fire department. And I think that... that we've
15 been in the neighborhood... we moved into River
16 Terrace in 1964. My father lived in the building
17 until his passing in 2001. He... his ashes are right
18 across the street in Trinity Cemetery. The... the
19 community was very much a part of his life. He
20 served on the board of River Terrace. President for
21 two terms, six years. And he was very committed to
22 that area and... and he was very committed to New
23 York City. And I feel that as we about to celebrate
24 the 14th anniversary of his passing July 24th on
25 Friday that this is a wonderful way to honor him.

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2 And I really am so thankful to Council Member
3 Levine and his staff Ms. Lowery and uptown
4 downtown... everyone has been so helpful as well as
5 community board 12. They could not... Rabi Kolinsky,
6 the chair of the Transportation Committee. Everyone
7 really supported this. And the fire department has
8 been truly wonderful and... and being behind it and
9 helping us to make it happen. So at this point we
10 are looking forward to the day when the sign will
11 be unveiled and when we could really celebrate his
12 life. We had planned a big celebration on October
13 11th, 2001 but as we know what happened then... the
14 celebration was to be at the fire museum.
15 Everything was canceled so as my sister and my
16 daughter and the rest of the family say this is
17 long overdue. And I thank you all for making it
18 happen.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much
20 Ms. Erwin. I'm pleased that we're joined by a
21 prominent activist for the preservation of hip hop
22 culture and heritage in history. Mr. McCarthy,
23 please.

24 LEROY MCCARTHY: Hello. Thank you for
25 allowing me to speak. Previously there was a

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2 petition and a unanimous decision by Community
3 Board 5 in the Bronx brought forward initiated by
4 Mr. Jacob Morris to have Hip Hop Boulevard brought
5 forward before the committee. However it would not
6 allow to. And in investigating it had not been
7 determined why. Hip hop is New York City, founded
8 in New York City and it's worldwide. It has
9 contributed greatly to New York City but the art
10 and culture of hip hop I believe has been treated
11 aloof by the powers that be of New York City. It
12 has generated income and brought tourists to New
13 York City. But hip hop is something that is not
14 recognized in a proper manner in my opinion. Run
15 DMC JMJ way in... in Queens is the only street named
16 for a hip hop act and that was in 2009. The very
17 least you know these are markers is something that
18 can attract out-of-towners, in-towners to these
19 areas in which our hip hop has contributed to an...
20 it's an attraction. Hip Hop Boulevard on Sedgwick
21 is something that perhaps can move forward. Council
22 Member Gibson is the district representative for
23 there and hopefully she will move it forward. And
24 it could be voted on as soon as possible to
25 proceed. Let me share with you that August 11th,

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2 1973 is when Kool Herc and his sister Cindy had a
3 party in the Bronx and that started the hip hop
4 movement. With that movement 40 plus years ago the
5 hip hop movement has you know take on different
6 forms and... and... and... and different interpretations..
7 different languages. But it all started in the
8 Bronx. It all started in New York City. And let me
9 share with you also that this year New York City
10 Mayor's Office, Borough President in Brooklyn,
11 Queens, and Manhattan... they are going to honor
12 August 11th as hip hop celebration day. And this
13 also going to take place in Philadelphia, Newark,
14 Inglewood, New Jersey, Oakland, and the city
15 council of New York City I hope will celebrate hip
16 hop along with these other cities because hip hop
17 was founded here. And once again... and moving
18 forward New York City, Hip Hop Boulevard is
19 something that should come to fruition and perhaps
20 one marker for hip hop in each borough of New York
21 City because each borough has contributed greatly
22 to hip hop from Brooklyn to Staten Island; Wu-Tang,
23 Biggie Smalls, Beastie Boys, Big Pun, all these
24 people should be recognized. The Occupy Wall Street
25 Movement, Black Lives Matter, there are no leaders.

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2 A part of it is because people speak up for
3 themselves now days. Hip hop contributes to that.
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Mr.
6 McCarthy. And now I'd like to ask our clerk Billy
7 Martin to please call the roll for the vote.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: William Martin,
9 Committee Clerk. Roll call vote; Committee on Parks
10 and Recreation. Chair Levine.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I vote aye on all.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cohen.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Well in light of
14 the good package of bills I'm going to vote aye on
15 all.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Maisel.
17 Treyger.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: By a vote of
20 four in... Council Member Van Bramer.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: By a vote of
22 five in the affirmative, zero in the negative, and
23 no abstentions all items have been adopted.

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: We're... and we're going to hold the vote open for 10 minutes in case we have any late arrivals.

[pause]

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Continuation vote, Committee on Parks and Recreation. Council Member Mealy.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I vote aye on all.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Final vote on the Committee on Parks and Recreation is now six in the affirmative, zero in the negative, and no abstentions.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Now I close the meeting on Parks Committee.

[gavel]

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 July 22, 2015