

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

VOTE*

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Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Start: 11:11 a.m.

Recess: 11:25 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Pierina Ana Sanchez, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu

Alexa Avilés

Eric Dinowitz

Oswald Feliz

Crystal Hudson

Lincoln Restler

Other Council Members Attending: Brewer and Bottcher

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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

(NONE)

2 SERGEANT WONG: Sound check for the Committee on
3 Housing and Buildings. Today's date is March 26,
4 2025, being recorded by Danny Huang in the Committee
5 Room.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, good morning, and
7 welcome to the New York City Council Vote for the
8 Committee on Housing and Buildings.

9 At this time please silence all electronic
10 devices and do not approach the dais.

11 Chair, you may begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

13 Thank you, good morning, I am Council Member
14 Pierina Ana Sanchez, Chair of the Committee on
15 Housing and Buildings.

16 Today we are voting on Proposed Introduction
17 Number 391-A, sponsored by Council Member Keith
18 Powers, in relation to studying sidewalk shed designs
19 and improving the aesthetics of existing sidewalk
20 sheds; Proposed Introduction Number 393-A, sponsored
21 by Council Member Powers, in relation to penalties
22 for sidewalk sheds in the public right-of-way;
23 Proposed Introduction Number 394-A, sponsored by
24 Council Member Powers, in relation to exterior wall
25 inspection requirements; Proposed Introduction Number

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2 660-A, sponsored by Council Member Erik Bottcher, in
3 relation to the required lighting under sidewalk
4 sheds; and Proposed Introduction Number 661-A,
5 sponsored by Council Member Bottcher, in relation to
6 penalties for failing to complete façade repairs in a
7 timely manner.

8 I want to give everyone listening a bit of
9 historical context on how we got here today.

10 The current system for façade inspections in New
11 York City, or FISP, was created after the tragic
12 death of Grace Gold in 1979. Grace was a student at
13 Barnard College and was fatally struck by a piece
14 masonry that fell from the seventh floor of a
15 Manhattan building. The incident, and tireless
16 advocacy from her sister, Lori Gold, prompted the
17 passage of Local Law 10 of 1980, which created
18 cyclical inspections of facades taller than six
19 stories, and later, Local Law 11 of 1998 solidified
20 the current facade inspection and safety program.

21 Lori is with us here today. I understand she made
22 the trip all the way from Washington D.C. to see
23 these bills passed. So, Lori, your work to keep your
24 sister's memory alive is incredibly inspiring, and I
25 want to offer you my gratitude as chair of this

committee for your advocacy and your presence. Thank you so much.

Facade inspections are crucial to keep New Yorkers safe, yet the current system allows for the unchecked proliferation of sidewalk sheds, with New York City currently home to approximately 378 miles worth of sidewalk sheds.

Together, these bills are another step toward ensuring that sidewalk sheds remain in place for only the necessary amount of time by encouraging building owners to complete repairs in a timely manner while also moving us towards safe, aesthetically pleasing, and cost effective sidewalk shed alternatives.

Today we will also be voting on Proposed Resolution Number 119-A, sponsored by Council Member Crystal Hudson, calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.1621/S.4098, in relation to prohibiting property owners from filing eviction proceedings for tenants who reside in buildings with substantial pending housing maintenance code violations; Proposed Resolution Number 246-A, sponsored by Council Member Sandy Nurse, calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign,

2 legislation requiring unlawful eviction cases to be
3 heard within five days; and Proposed Resolution
4 Number 524-A, sponsored by Council Member Kevin
5 Riley, calling on the New York State Legislature to
6 pass, and the Governor to sign, S.126, in relation to
7 legal representation in certain mortgage foreclosure
8 actions.

9 These three resolutions call upon our state
10 partners to continue creating vital protections for
11 homeowners and tenants alike. I cannot see who is in
12 the room at this very moment, so I'm going to leave
13 it to the Committee Clerk to call the roll.

14 But I also want to shout out Former Deputy Mayor,
15 Meera Joshi, whose tireless advocacy also allowed us
16 to move forward on these sidewalk shed bills.

17 I will now invite Council Member Powers to speak
18 on his bills, followed by Council Member Bottcher.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you, Chair Sanchez,
20 and thank you for the opportunity to speak about my
21 package of bills to reform scaffolding in our city.

22 I think if you ask any New Yorker or anyone
23 that's visited this city, the hunter green, that
24 scaffolding that litters our streets and takes up our
25 space and our skylines, I think everyone is welcome

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2 to finally see less of it. I think everyone was very
3 happy to see less of it.

4 It has been the business for usual, in this city
5 for miles and miles of sidewalk sheds that cover our
6 city. There are stretches of places in Manhattan
7 where for miles, the entire neighborhood is covered
8 in scaffolding.

9 With this legislation, I'm proud to say the City
10 Council is finally taking steps to modernize the
11 City's approach to sidewalk sheds. As we know,
12 they're important to keeping New Yorkers safe as
13 buildings undergo construction and facade
14 inspections, but more often than not, work slows,
15 repairs drag on, and the scaffolding is left for
16 months, or even years, and sometimes decades on end
17 with no work in sight.

18 We have over 1,000 sidewalk sheds in the city
19 right now that have been up for over three years,
20 each one becoming a permanent blight on our urban
21 landscape. And here in Manhattan, which carries a
22 lion's share of the burden, 45% of the 8,516 sidewalk
23 shed permits are right here in Manhattan.

24 I want to just highlight a few pieces of this
25 that I think are really, really important:

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2 • Number one is that a key provision of this bill is

3 to make sure that when they go up, we actually

4 have a process to know the work's being done and

5 that they finally come down. And we're asking

6 folks to actually tell us what work is being done,

7 so we don't have scaffolding languishing up for

8 years with no sight of actually any work.
- 9 • We're also going to talk about changing the one-

10 size-fits-all approach to every single building in

11 this city. The original approach was to do a five-

12 year, *no matter what the building is, no matter*

13 *when it was built, no matter what material was*

14 *made of, approach to this.* We're actually offering

15 relief to that today.
- 16 • We're allowing for up to twelve years, and

17 starting at six years for buildings now in the

18 city, at the discretion of the Department of

19 Buildings, to come up with new criteria to

20 actually say that a new building and a very old

21 building might be treated quite differently.
- 22 • Importantly to the actual lived experience for so

23 many New Yorkers, we're going change the design

24 and partner with Council Member Bottcher to add

25 some new lighting, and bright lighting, underneath

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2 it— so they're no longer dark alleyways, to raise
3 the height of them so they're no longer, you know,
4 claustrophobic when you're walking inside of them.

5 • Some good news— the hunter green is no longer the
6 official color of New York City. We're going allow
7 for a lot of new colors to be used, including the
8 actual color of the building and many others that
9 will make our landscape look a lot nicer.

10 • For our small businesses, this is a new
11 opportunity for New Yorkers to actually see your
12 business and not to be buried under scaffolding
13 for sometimes a decade, totally at the whim of the
14 building owner.

15 • For public safety, especially in our public
16 housing complexes, where there's far too much of
17 it, we're actually going to change our rules so
18 there's going to be less overall, but specifically
19 in our public housing to have less needed. So it's
20 actually where you actually need it, where the
21 work is being done, rather than making the entire
22 campus filled with it— Where I live in Stuyvesant
23 Town right now, we have scaffolding all over the
24 neighborhood because of the really burdensome
25 rules that exist today.

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2 • For people that walk down the street, they're
3 actually going to start to see sunlight and the
4 skyline and be able to enjoy their city once
5 again. But if it is up, they're going have a safe
6 block to walk down to make sure that they can see,
7 that it's safe, and that we can actually have a
8 street that is welcoming to all of use- For people
9 who enjoy this city, they should be able to
10 witness it with their own eyes rather than being
11 buried underneath it.

12 • For property owners and people that own property
13 here throughout our districts, we're actually
14 going to get relief for them and the cost and the
15 endless need to do the inspection cycles every
16 five years- And for new buildings that go up,
17 imagine having to do a five year cycle after you
18 just built a building, we're going change those
19 rules too.

20 So I am deeply appreciative of the staff here
21 from the Buildings Committee and the City Council who
22 worked with us endlessly to negotiate these bills. I
23 want to thank Haley, Ben, and Emma from my team who,
24 as I said earlier, probably never want to hear the
25 word scaffolding ever again after a two-year+ long

1 crusade to try to get it down; I want to thank
2 Council Member Bottcher, and Borough President
3 Levine, and all our colleagues who stepped up to get
4 the scaffolding down.
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6 And I want to thank, as we mentioned earlier,
7 critical to all this is still safety, making sure
8 that New Yorkers are safe when they walk down the
9 street. And, you know, just a few decades ago, the
10 tragedy that began this, it was something that
11 reminded New Yorkers of our need for safety. So, I
12 just want to welcome Grace Gold's sister here, Lori
13 Gold— stand up quickly— who worked with us...

14 (APPLAUSE) on these bills, because we wanted to make
15 sure that we honored her sister's memory throughout
16 all of this, to keep New York safe, and to make New
17 Yorkers feel safe, while also understanding that we
18 have to continue to modernize our laws and make New
19 York City a beautiful place. Thank you for being with
20 us and for your work.

21 I encourage all my colleagues to vote aye. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council Member
24 Powers, and congratulations. It has been a very, very
25 long, long way to get here on these bills, but your

1 leadership has been steadfast. And I am very proud to
2 support you in this journey to get these passed.

3 Council Member Bottcher?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Thank you so much, Chair
5 Sanchez.

6 I really want to congratulate Council Member
7 Keith Powers on this huge accomplishment and thank
8 him for his leadership on this issue. (APPLAUSE) He
9 pulled us together from day one and really helped
10 lead the charge on this issue.

11 To my mind, there are a few issues that all New
12 Yorkers can agree on, very few issues, people of both
13 political parties, one is people who don't pick up
14 after their dogs- I think that's like a universal
15 hatred New Yorkers have. The other is the fact that
16 300+ miles of sidewalks are covered by scaffolding,
17 and, for some, they're up years and years and years.
18 New Yorkers have just been told, like, that's the way
19 it is, "This is how it is." And never mind the fact
20 that when you travel around the world, you don't see
21 it like this, "This is New York, and this is how
22 we're going to do it."

23 My colleagues and I haven't been okay with that.
24 So we've been looking at this, what could be changed
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2 to maintain safety, but also improve the quality of
3 life in our neighborhoods, make it better for small
4 businesses who are hurt by these, make it better for
5 neighborhoods who are made less safe by these. And
6 we're passing bills today that'll do just that.

7 One of my bills will establish time limits for
8 property owners to do the work. No more leaving your
9 shed up forever with no consequence. There will be a
10 time limit to pull the permits, a time limit to do
11 the work. If you need more time, you'll just have to
12 get permission. And there are sometimes when there
13 are circumstances where they'll need more time,
14 you'll just have to get a waiver, but no more leaving
15 it up forever without consequence.

16 The other bill I have will change the lighting
17 requirements underneath the sheds— You may have heard
18 that gay men hate overhead lighting. That is true.
19 I'm one of those. The only overhead lighting that I
20 actually like is in sidewalk sheds. That's the only
21 time I like it to be bright overhead. Otherwise, it's
22 lamps only. (LAUGHTER) My bill will increase the
23 lighting requirements under the sidewalk sheds,
24 increase the lumens per watt, and require the LED
25 strips, not these old light bulbs that you see. We're

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2 also going to have, it requires some shielding to
3 direct... make sure it points down and not into
4 people's windows. Simple stuff that will go a long
5 way. Thank you, everyone, who is part of this.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Council
7 Member Bottcher, I learn something new every day.
8 Thank you so much.

9 I will now ask the Clerk to call the roll.

10 Oh, actually, I'm so sorry, are there any other
11 colleagues who have any questions or comments?

12 (NO RESPONSE)

13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Seeing none, I will ask the
14 Clerk to call the roll.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Good morning, William Martin,
16 Committee Clerk; roll call vote, Committee Housing
17 and Buildings, all items are coupled.

18 Chair Sanchez?

19 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yaya and I vote aye on all,
20 congratulations.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

22 Council Member Feliz?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye on all,
24 congratulations, colleagues.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Great work.

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, Council Member.

3 Council Member Abreu?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

6 Council Member Restler?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Aye, and congrats.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member Dinowitz?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: A little lighting may
10 not be to Erik's liking; I vote aye on all.

11 (LAUGHTER)

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member Avilés?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, colleagues, for
14 all of your work. This is really important. I vote
15 aye on all.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member Hudson?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye, and congrats.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: With a vote of 7 in the
19 affirmative, 0 on the negative, and no abstentions
20 all items have been adopted by the Committee. Madam
21 Chair, that is a full committee.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Great, thank you so much,
23 Clerk, and thank you to my colleagues.

24 This hearing is adjourned.
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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 April 3, 2025