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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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November 12, 2019
Start: 10:18 a.m.
Recess: 10:28 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm, 16th
Fl.

B E F O R E: Mark Levine,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Inez D. Barron
Andrew Cohen
Mathieu Eugene
Robert F. Holden
Keith Powers

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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Dr. William Sweet

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [GAVEL] Good morning
3 everybody and welcome to this meeting of the City
4 Council's Committee on Health. For those of you
5 watching on T.V., you might not be able to see we
6 have a capacity crowd in here because of the weighty
7 packet of legislation that we will be considering
8 today.

9 I'm Mark Levine; Chair of the Committee and we
10 are going to be voting on five pieces of legislation
11 targeting three major policy priorities for our city
12 including our fight against diabetes, the move
13 towards more dignified burials on Hart Island and
14 finally two pieces of legislation regarding animals.

15 I want to acknowledge my fellow members of the
16 Health Committee who are with us including: Council
17 Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Council Member Keith
18 Powers, Council Member Andy Cohen, and Council Member
19 Inez Barron.

20 Unbeknownst to most New Yorkers, for the past 150
21 years, our city has buried its poor and marginalized
22 in mass graves on Hart Island. In the Long Island
23 sound between the Bronx and Queens.

24 In a twist, that can only be called Dickensian;
25 Hart Island is under the jurisdiction of the

2 Department of Corrections with burials done by
3 inmates from Rikers.

4 This has converted Hart into a secure facility
5 which is off limits to the public and offers
6 extremely limited access even for families with loved
7 ones buried there.

8 The City Council has been engaged in a years long
9 battle to fix this, by turning Hart into an open,
10 green dignified cemetery.

11 Today, we are voting on legislation which would
12 amount to a small but important step forward towards
13 this goal. Intro. 1580 by Council Member Debbie Rose
14 would require that the city conduct a public hearing
15 on the future of burial policies on the island.

16 At Intro. 1559 by Council Member Ayala would
17 establish an office to provide support to those
18 family members who need burial assistance.

19 Two weeks after we passed a landmark passage of
20 bills protecting the welfare of farm animals, wild
21 animals and working animals, today we are voting to
22 help protect our beloved pets with Intro. 1496
23 sponsored by Council Member Brannon which safeguards
24 pets when a tenant is evicted.

2 We're also voting on Intro. 1598 by Council
3 Member Holden to ensure proper disposal of deceased
4 animals.

5 Lastly, we will vote on Intro. 1361. Legislation
6 I am proud to sponsor which requires the Department
7 of Health and Mental Hygiene to report on the
8 occurrence of diabetes and diabetes related illness
9 and to develop a plan to reduce these health
10 problems.

11 The simple fact is, as a city, we are losing the
12 fight against obesity and type 2 diabetes. According
13 to DOHMH, more than half of adult New Yorkers are
14 overweight and/or obese.

15 While almost half of elementary school children
16 and children enrolled in Head Start are currently at
17 an unhealthy weight. An estimated 987,000 New
18 Yorkers have diabetes without many having knowledge
19 of their condition.

20 Diabetes disproportionately affects high poverty
21 communities and as of 2013, diabetes was almost 70
22 percent more common in high poverty neighborhoods
23 than in middle income and upper income neighborhoods.
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2 African American, Hispanic and Asian New Yorkers were
3 twice as likely as White New Yorkers to have
4 diabetes.

5 While New York City has made major strides in
6 reversing this trend by improving access to healthy
7 food and making public spaces more amenable to
8 physical activity, we need to do much more to reverse
9 these trends.

10 Our bill would require DOHMH to compile a
11 comprehensive report by December 1, 2021 and submit
12 recommendations and a plan to reduce the occurrence
13 of diabetes related health problems and to implement
14 the Departments recommendations.

15 I want to again thank my fellow committee members
16 and the sponsors of the bills and all the advocates
17 for their work and passion regarding these various
18 pieces of legislation. I want to acknowledge we have
19 also been joined by fellow Health Committee Member,
20 Council Member Dr. Matthew Eugene and I would like to
21 ask our Committee Clerk, Billy Martin, to begin the
22 roll call.

23 COUNCIL CLERK: William Martin; Committee Clerk,
24 roll call vote Committee on Health all items are
25 coupled. Chair Levine?

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I vote aye on all.

3 COUNCIL CLERK: Eugene?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: I vote aye on all I want
5 to commend the sponsors of the bills and also the
6 Chairman for your leadership and in addition very
7 important issues that share an effect on so many
8 people in New York City. Especially diabetes, we
9 know this is a very devastating disease and people are
10 suffering from this disease. You know, the
11 consequences of this disease on people is very
12 devastating. And we know that effects our eyes, you
13 know, all of the system in the body.

14 I think it makes sense and it is our moral
15 responsibility to do everything that we can do to
16 raise awareness and to see if we can decrease the
17 incidents and the morbidity in this area.

18 Again, Mr. Chair, thank you very much for your
19 leadership and recognition to all the sponsors.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Dr. Eugene and I
22 think I heard an aye on all, correct?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Absolutely, aye on all.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Wonderful. Sorry, please
25 continue Bill.

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2 COUNCIL CLERK: Barron?

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye on all.

4 COUNCIL CLERK: Cohen?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Permission to explain my
6 vote.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: By all means.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you. I am going to
9 vote aye on all, but I am particularly pleased to be
10 voting aye on 1559 A and 1580. The private burial
11 industry in New York is really I think very, very
12 predatory. People do need to be aware of other
13 options. I think this is long overdue and I'm going
14 to sign on to both of these bills and I'm pleased to
15 vote aye.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Excellent, thank you Council
17 Member.

18 COUNCIL CLERK: Ampry-Samuel?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Echoing the same
20 comments as Dr. Eugene related to diabetes as well as
21 Council Member Cohen related the burial process in
22 New York City, I am proud to vote aye on all.

23 COUNCIL CLERK: Powers?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Aye on all.

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2 COUNCIL CLERK: With a vote of six in the
3 affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions,
4 all items have been adopted by the Committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: We are going to hold the
6 vote open for a few minutes. I think we have a
7 chance to get a unanimous vote on this. So, thank
8 you to all my colleagues for your support today.

9 COUNCIL CLERK: Continuation roll call Committee
10 on Health, Council Member Holden?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Aye on all.

12 COUNCIL CLERK: Final vote, all items have been
13 adopted by the Committee. Seven in the affirmative,
14 zero in the negative and no abstentions.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: This concludes our hearing.
16 Thank you. [GAVEL]

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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 1, 2018