

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 19, 2017
Start: 1:14 p.m.
Recess: 1:34

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

B E F O R E: MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Darlene Mealy
Fernando Cabrera
James G. Van Bramer
Andrew Cohen
Alan N. Maisel
Mark Treyger

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

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well, Good afternoon
4 everybody. Welcome to the Committee hearing for the
5 Committee on Parks and Recreation. We're going to be
6 voting on two bills today: Intro 407-A and Intro
7 1411-A. I'll say a word on each, but first we're
8 going to be voting on a bill whose lead sponsor is
9 the great Jimmy Vacca, Deputy Majority Leader. What-
10 it had James—James Vacca. What's the—what's your
11 middle name Council Member. James Michael Vacca,
12 Deputy Majority Leader, which addresses one of the
13 issues, if not the single issue, which we have most
14 been consumed by in this committee, which is the
15 capital process, which is far too long, far too
16 expensive, and also far too opaque, and Council Member
17 Vacca rightly has focused his bill on the need for
18 Council Members to understand when there are delays
19 in capital projects in our district because being
20 able to give accurate information to our constituents
21 is of vital importance, and his bill would require
22 notice within 30 days of any material delays in
23 capital projects, and—and I am strongly in support of
24 the bill, and I believe all of my colleagues are as
25 well. We're also hearing Intro 1411-A, whose lead

2 sponsor it Council Member Joe Borelli, who could not
3 be here today. We understand traffic from the Island
4 is very bad. Those of us who are from Manhattan and
5 other dense parts of the city are surprised to learn
6 that there are streets in New York City that don't
7 have sidewalks, and that in many cases there are
8 parks that are not lined with sidewalks. And so when
9 young people are trying to get from a car that might
10 be parked a block away, to their baseball game in
11 that park, they have to walk in the middle of the
12 street. It's a big problem in Staten Island and some
13 other parks within Queens, and—so Council Member
14 Borelli has a very common sense bill that would
15 require any time the Parks Department is doing major
16 capital work on a ball field or athletic field that
17 they have to install a sidewalk with an entrance.
18 How this wasn't already in place as a rule decades
19 ago I don't know, but we are pleased that Council
20 Member Borelli has introduced this bill. So, I'm
21 going to pause and see if our Deputy Majority Leader
22 James Michael Vacca would like to say a word or two
23 on Intro 407-A.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you, than
25 you, Mr. Chair and as the Chair stated, we here in

2 the Council fund many capital projects because we
3 want to make our neighborhoods better, but too often
4 there are massive cost overruns, and especially when
5 it comes to parks projects, and it can feel like
6 we're allocating funds into a bottomless pit. The
7 reality is that our money is finite, and we can get
8 discouraged from allocating funds to projects we know
9 the community needs, and I speak to you as someone
10 whose district has the largest park in the city,
11 Pelham Bay Park, and I funded so many projects in my
12 district in the 12 years I've served here. The Parks
13 Department has a structured capital project process,
14 and it usually takes years from the time we allocate
15 our money until the time the project is completed.
16 This project-process necessarily involves time to
17 gather all the funds, design the project, select the
18 contractor and then finally start construction.
19 Unfortunately, this process often involves
20 contractors' change orders, which can endlessly hold
21 up construction. Delays in projects often create
22 confusion in the community and are not transparent.
23 We need accountability when it comes to the public's
24 money, and my bill would increase transparency by
25 requiring the Department of Parks to proactively

2 notify Council Members when there are changes greater
3 than 10% to projects that cost over \$500,000. When
4 we are notified, we'll be able to more effectively
5 exercise our oversight role, work to make the capital
6 process work more efficiently, and keep our
7 communities informed about ongoing projects. I want
8 to thank the committee for considering legislation
9 and I also want to thank Parks for all the great work
10 that they do in our communities. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Member—
12 thank you Council Member and Deputy Majority Leader,
13 and we're going to ask the committee clerk Billy
14 Martin to call the roll for the vote.

15 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
16 roll call vote Committee on Parks and Recreation.
17 The items are coupled. Chair Levine.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I vote aye on all.

19 CLERK: Mealy.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I vote aye on all,
21 and I salute my colleague for this great legislation
22 because we do really need to know exactly when this
23 project was slowed up because it's not fair to the
24 next council member either that they would know when
25 their term is up they still had that money in there,

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2 and then the next council member they would reap the
3 benefits, but not only is this great for the
4 community, I thank you for this legislation. I vote
5 aye on all.

6 CLERK: Cabrera.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

8 CLERK: Maisel.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yes.

10 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
11 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
12 both items have been adopted by the committee. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, and I'd
15 like to ask the clerk if we can keep the roll open
16 for—

17 COUNCIL MEMBER: [off mic] We want to
18 thank our colleague. (sic)

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: What's that?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [off mic] I'm the
21 only woman in here. (sic)

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, so you're here
23 until—[pause] Okay, let—let's [background comments]
24 Since you're here. [pause]

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2 CLERK: Continuation of roll call the
3 Committee on Parks and Recreation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [off mic] I'm not
5 speaking-(sic)

6 CLERK: [interposing] Council Member
7 Cohen.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I vote aye

9 CLERK: The vote now stands at 5 in the
10 affirmative. [pause]

11 CLERK: Continuation of roll call the
12 Committee on Parks and Recreation. Council Member
13 Van Bramer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

15 CLERK: Council Member Treyger.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER:

17 CLERK: Aye. [pause]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: This concludes our
19 hearing. 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 July 31, 2017