

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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August 4, 2017
Start: 10:14 a.m.
Recess: 10:19 a.m.

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

B E F O R E: RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Vincent J. Gentile
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Karen Koslowitz
Rory I. Lancman

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

2 [sound check, pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON ESPINAL: Good morning. My
4 name is Rafael Espinal, and I'm the Chair of the
5 Consumer Affairs Committee. Today, the Committee
6 will be holding a vote on Intro 1648-A, a Local Law
7 to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New
8 York Administrative Code of the City of New York in
9 relation to establishing an Office of Night Life,
10 creating the position of a Director of Night Life, or
11 as I like to call, the DON. [laughs] We couldn't get
12 the Nightmare Title, but the DON works, and a
13 Nightlife Advisory Board. For so long New York
14 City's nightlife has been an integral part of city's
15 cultural identity and experience. From the Harlem
16 Jazz Renaissance to the beginnings of Rap and the
17 Boogie Down Bronx to the days of Studio 54 and most
18 recently the rebirth of Rock & Roll in the early
19 2000s that was sparked in the Lower East Side in
20 Brooklyn. New York has been the place where artists,
21 music and culture thrive, but New York city's pulse
22 is telling us that our iconic nightlife is at risk of
23 becoming homogenized, uninteresting and uninspiring.
24 Old regulation and red tape has played a role in
25 created shuttered storefronts and continues to

2 threaten your favorite restaurant, your favor bar and
3 your favorite music venue. Most recently enforcement
4 has been particularly harsh for certain cultural
5 spaces aka the DIY venues. The City has assisted in
6 the closing of those many spaces responsible for
7 creating and showcasing a lot of our modern artists,
8 and upkeeping our city's grit. This bill will allow
9 for the city to finally recognize those spaces and
10 bring them out of the shadows, which is what has been
11 one of the major motivating factors for me to
12 introduce this bill. Nightlife is also a \$10 billion
13 industry employing thousands of New Yorkers yet for
14 so long has been kept in the bureaucratic shadows.
15 There has been little to no support for this sector
16 of our economy that is so vital to the unique culture
17 of our city. So saddled these business with onerous
18 permitting and licensing processes giving them little
19 advice on how to be in compliance or how they can be
20 better neighbors, and then when things indebtedly-
21 inevitably go wrong, we fine them and force them out
22 of business. It is time we begin to put value and
23 foster this industry. Intro 1648-A will go a long
24 way to end the ambiguous and often adversarial
25 relationship nightlife establishments and venues have

2 with the city and its communities and it will be-and
3 it will breathe life back into the perception that
4 New York City is truly a culture-culturally vibrant
5 place. And to add that this bill will ensure that
6 our residential communities and community boards will
7 be a key component of the conversation. Another goal
8 of this office and its Advisory Board is to find
9 solutions through policy and recommendations for
10 issues of concerns communities have with nightlife
11 establishments. This office will be a place where
12 communities can go if they have concerns or are
13 particularly spaced-particular spaces, and are
14 themselves looking for resources for recourse. The
15 Director of Nightlife can at once be an advocate and
16 liaison building bridges and mending strained
17 relationships. This model has worked in other cities
18 around the world like Amsterdam where the Office of
19 the Night Mayor was established three years ago.
20 Their office has been able to decrease nightlife
21 related most complaints and crime by 25 to 30%, and
22 increase the quality of their establishments. Even
23 more importantly, help build a more positive
24 relationship between the city, businesses and the
25 community. In conjunction with the office and the

2 DON, there will be the creation of an Independent
3 Advisory Board made up of 12 members, 8 appointed by
4 the Council and 4 by the Mayor. The Board will
5 consist of members of the public that are advocates
6 for the industry, the community, workers and cultural
7 spaces, tasked with communicating with the
8 Administration and communities, study nightlife
9 trends and issues and producing a report highlighting
10 policy ideas to improve our city's nightlife
11 ecosystem. The Board will ensure that nightlife
12 issues are looked at in a fair and balanced way, and
13 that a diverse group of people is bringing all
14 stakeholders' experiences and needs to the table.
15 This is just a summary of a long list of things I
16 hope this will accomplish, which will affect business
17 owners, workers, owners, tourists, all communities
18 and all New Yorkers alike. New York City is both the
19 City the Never Sleeps—New York City is both the City
20 that Never Sleeps and a city to more than eight
21 million people deserving of a good quality of life.
22 Intro 1648-A is a step in the right direction in
23 recognizing the importance of our nightlife and
24 something I'm very proud to have sponsored. I want
25 to thank everyone who put in—who put in the long

2 hours to make this a reality. The Speaker's Chief of
3 Staff Will Martinez; our lawyers in the Legislative
4 Division Rob Newman, Rachel Cordero and, of course,
5 our committee staff Valkis (sp?) and Izzy. Also, a
6 big thanks to all the advocates, business owners and
7 community members who weighed in on the topic.

8 Before I move forward, I just want to recognize my
9 colleagues from Queens. Thanks for being here today.
10 We have Karen Koslowitz and Rory Lancman. I
11 recommend an—an enthusiastic yes vote. Mr. Clerk,
12 please—please call the roll.

13 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.
14 Roll call vote on Committee on Consumer Affairs,
15 Introduction 1648-A. Chair Espinal.

16 CHAIRPERSON ESPINAL: I vote aye.

17 CLERK: Koslowitz.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: This is on
19 [off mic] and I—[on mic] I vote aye.

20 CLERK: Lancman.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: [off mic] Aye.

22 CLERK: By a vote of 3 in the affirmative,
23 0 in the negative and no abstentions, the item has
24 been adopted by the Committee. [clapping] [background
25 comments][pause] [background comments]

2 CHAIRPERSON ESPINAL: With that said,
3 this meeting has been adjourned. We hope to have
4 this bill on the Council floor on August 24th.
5 Thank. [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 August 5, 2017