

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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April 18, 2019  
Start: 10:27 a.m.  
Recess: 10:47 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Rafael L. Espinal, Jr  
Steven T. Levin  
Carlos Menchaca  
Donovan J. Richards  
Eric A. Ulrich  
Kalman Yeger

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

2 [sound check] [background comments/pause]  
3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Alright,  
5 good morning. My name is Costa Constantinides, and I  
6 am chair of the Committee on Environmental  
7 Protection. Today, we'll hold a vote on a package of  
8 bills known collectively as the Climate Mobilization  
9 act. They're Introductions 1253-C, 1252, 1251, 1318,  
10 1317, 276, 1031 and 1032 as well as Resolution 66 and  
11 a preconsidered resolution opposing the way (sic) in  
12 this pipeline. I want to keep this brief. So, the  
13 acts' other sponsors can speak, and we can quickly  
14 proceed to a vote. This package of bills will be the  
15 single largest carbon reduction effort in any city  
16 anywhere, not just New York City that has been put  
17 forward. By our calculations, it results in the  
18 equivalent of taking more than one million cars off  
19 the road by 2030, and create measurable decreases in  
20 nitrous-nitrous-nitron oxide, sulfur oxide and  
21 particulate matter that fowl our air and contribute  
22 to higher than average asthma rates. It will be our  
23 biggest and our-it will be our biggest and dirtiest  
24 buildings on the path of meeting our 40x30 and 80x50  
25 goals. It will also lead to a creation of thousands

2 of good middle-class jobs that will pave the way for  
3 the 21<sup>st</sup> Century green economy. Finally, this  
4 package also includes Intro 1252, which enables Pace  
5 Financing to offer low-interest loans to building  
6 owners to help the cost of going green. These loans  
7 will be spread out of the useful life of the system  
8 installed so the owner often sees a net gain due to  
9 energy savings from the more efficient technology.  
10 One thing I can say with confidence is—with  
11 confidence is not true in any way is that 1253 or  
12 anything here is rushed. 1253 is the product of two  
13 plus years hard work in conjunction with the  
14 Administration, building owners, architects, building  
15 efficient experts, climate scientists, activists and  
16 builds in decades worth of work that began with the  
17 passage of Local Law 84 and 87. New York City's  
18 buildings account for around 70% of the greenhouse  
19 gas emissions, and more than half of all our built  
20 square footage in the city is in the 25,000 square  
21 feet and over. The 50,000 largest—largest buildings  
22 targeted by this bill, one percent of our floor space  
23 that's 50,000 out of 1.1 million buildings constitute  
24 30% of the overall emissions. Contrast the city's  
25 stock of 1 to 4-family units, which represents 82 of

1 the floor space, 82% of the floor space, but only 19%  
2 of emissions. That's why we had to start the  
3 conversation around these large buildings because  
4 frankly that's where the emissions are. The  
5 provision of this bill overlap with other bills like  
6 Intro 12-1317, allowing large wind turbines to be  
7 more ill-built more easily in the city, and 1318  
8 which directs the city to study a phase-out of our  
9 fossil fuel power plants. Together, they send the  
10 strongest possible signal to the energy market that  
11 New York City is ready to phase out fossil fuels, and  
12 convert to a greener grid. We do this in a way that  
13 gives New Yorkers' flexibility and a way that takes  
14 into account everyone contribution to city emissions,  
15 and what can be reasonably contributed to reduce  
16 those emissions. Finally, in opposing the Williams  
17 Pipeline, we understand that the climate emergency we  
18 face necessitates saying no to new fossil fuel  
19 infrastructure, and that new pipeline that will be  
20 operational for then next 30 or 40 years only locks  
21 us in to further impending disaster. It's on us now.  
22 We here on this committee have an opportunity to set  
23 the table what has the potential to be one of the  
24 most transformative moments for our city. When our  
25

2 grandkids look back on this time, they'll us what we  
3 did to ensure that there is a sustainable New York.  
4 Let us be sure that when they ask, we've a good  
5 answer for them. I want to thank the Committee staff  
6 and, it's a long list, but I want to thank Jeff  
7 Baker, Laura Popa, Nicole Abene, Austin, Brook. I  
8 don't think she's here, Terzah Nasser, Samara  
9 Swanston our attorney, Megan Chin, Nadia Johnson,  
10 Jonathan Seltzer, Ricky Chala, and my Legislative  
11 Counsel and good friend and Alli who's been with me  
12 the whole way, Nicholas Wazowski, Terrance Cohen as  
13 well. This has been a humungous team effort, and I  
14 want to thank everyone on staff. If I missed your  
15 name, it was not on purpose, but I know the great  
16 contribution that you've made. Thank you. I look--  
17 [applause] Oh, we do—we do this here, [laughter] and  
18 I think Council Member Espinal and Richards both have  
19 statements on their legislation.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: Well, I—I  
21 clearly just want to congratulate you, Mr. Chair on  
22 all the great work you have done to get these bills  
23 passed, but also the time you took to really listen  
24 to all parties and figure out a way where we craft  
25 legislation, and that is responsible, but also

2 responsible to the environment, and I think that's  
3 the number one goal. What are we doing as a city to  
4 lead this country and this globe to make sure that we  
5 are one of the greenest cities in this-in this globe  
6 to deal with the effects of climate change. As we  
7 heard in the report, we have 12 years to-to erase the  
8 damage we've done in the past 100 years, and I think  
9 that greening our bills is the one and only way that  
10 we're going to really start a real conversation on  
11 how to get there. I'm proud of the bills that are in  
12 this package. I am the sponsor of the bill that  
13 would require green and solar roofs on new  
14 developments in any development that undergoes a  
15 major roof construction or repair. We are joining  
16 cities like Toronto, Portland and San Francisco that  
17 already have these mandates, and this will mean  
18 cleaner air quality, better air quality, water  
19 retention, you know, lowering the temperature of our  
20 cities so our cities will be more livable. You know,  
21 numbers show that every single year we have over  
22 1,200 people who die because of respiratory  
23 illnesses. We have communities like in East New York  
24 and North Brooklyn where children are suffering with  
25 asthma, and the science shows that green roofs can

2 help improve their air quality, and improve the lives  
3 of those New Yorkers. So we are setting the bar high  
4 here, and I am proud to be part of this movement, and  
5 thank you again for your leadership, and thank you to  
6 all the staff who has really put in all the work to  
7 make this happen, and I'm glad to join my colleagues  
8 Donovan Richards and Steve Levin in this green roof  
9 packaging. We are really making history here. Thank  
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
12 Council Member Espinal. I'll turn it over now to  
13 Council Member Richards.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you, Mr.  
15 Chairman, and to all the staff and all the advocates  
16 and everybody on every side of the debate. I want to  
17 thank everyone for coming together to pass a bold,  
18 bold, bold, bold, bold piece of legislation, and  
19 package on today. For some, this is a theoretical  
20 conversation, and it-it may just sound like we're  
21 passing another package of bills here in the Council  
22 today, but for communities like mine, which are the  
23 Rockaways and Rosedale and Southeast Queens where on  
24 a day like today when we have a slight hint of rain,  
25 people's basements are underwater, this is reality



2 for us. This is life and death. This is socio and  
3 economic for us as well. I just go back to  
4 remembering those days when we had no electricity.  
5 This is why, you know, the Green Boost Bill is—is—is  
6 bigger than just putting a solar panel on a roof for  
7 those senior citizens who I remember coming into the  
8 office who lost all their medicine, to those mothers  
9 who had nothing on their backs for their newborns.  
10 This is not a theoretical conversation. We have to  
11 really get bold in addressing the way we bill with  
12 climate change, and this is why I'm going to also  
13 just speak on the resolution for a second as well  
14 regarding the pipeline, and that's why I'm proud to  
15 stand with Chair Costa to call on DEC to reject the  
16 construction of the Northeast Supply Enhancement  
17 Pipeline through New York Harbor. Once again, this  
18 is personal for me as a representative of one of the  
19 hardest hit communities during Hurricane Sandy. The  
20 impact of climate change crippled the lives of many  
21 of my constituents both financially, socially and  
22 emotionally, and today as we pass this resolution I'm  
23 reminded once again of those faces of single moms  
24 with newborns and senior citizens who are lined up at  
25 electricless—at my electricless office looking for

2 food, pampers and toiletries. Furthermore, I'm  
3 reminded of my visit to fracking farms in Pennsyl-in  
4 Pennsylvania a few years ago where I witnessed the  
5 devastation first hand of what families were dealing  
6 with when it came to their water supply. So, I don't  
7 want to pre---prolong this any more because I know  
8 we're here to vote , but when you went out and I-and  
9 I described by experience, I think I went with Food  
10 and Water Watch a few years ago, when you saw  
11 families who had no fresh water. In the United  
12 States of America I knew that this was right thing to  
13 do. So, we need to move towards 100% renewable  
14 future, and I think today we're taking some major  
15 steps to ensure we get there. So, I want to  
16 congratulate you Mr. Chairman. I also want to  
17 congratulate Samara Swanston who I know for many  
18 years has been trying to push the envelope on these  
19 issues, and I'm just happy to be here to see these  
20 things come fruition. So, with that being said, on  
21 behalf of my constituents, I happily vote aye on this  
22 package.

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Again, I  
24 want to thank my staff. I was remiss in not thanking  
25 Terrance Cohen my Communications Director who's been

2 amazing. Nicholas Rosen, my Chief of Staff, Nicky  
3 Cokinos, Justin Jermosen, Joy Chowdry, Michael  
4 Corbett. None of us have slept in a long time, but  
5 it's all worth it, and to my son Nicholas this is for  
6 you, bud. I would like to recommend a yes vote on  
7 the—on the bills.

8 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,  
9 roll call vote committee on Environmental Protection.  
10 All items are coupled. Chair Constantinides.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I vote aye.

12 CLERK: Espinal.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: I proudly vote  
14 aye.

15 CLERK: Menchaca.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Permission to  
17 explain my vote? Thank you. Thank you to the  
18 Chair. Thank you to the sponsors of the bill. This  
19 is an important moment for all of us. I want to  
20 bring the voices of Red Hook and Sunset Park who for  
21 so many years have been fighting for environmental  
22 justice. They're looking to us for leadership because  
23 we are their voice. We are their intentions on the  
24 ground. Red Hook was also inundated by water six to  
25 eight feet. That is what drove me to run for City

2 Council in the first place to represent those who  
3 have been feeling invisible and silent in this  
4 conversation impacting--the climate change world is  
5 impacting our black and brown families, our workers  
6 on the waterfront, and so this is a proud moment for  
7 my district. I also want to say, you know, on a  
8 personal level, I grew up in Texas and El Paso where  
9 we--when--since I was a kid have been thinking about  
10 water. This desert land that we're going feel the  
11 impact--we are already feeling the impacts over there.  
12 And so I'm thinking about this on a national level,  
13 and what we're doing here, and--and the Chair really  
14 spoke to this. This is the most aggressive fast  
15 forward moving piece of legislation, and it was--it  
16 was because of an inter-generational conversation  
17 that happened that moved us to make this happen even  
18 against the powers that be, and we said not to them,  
19 and we said yes to all of you the people, and so I'm  
20 just really proud to be here. We heard from  
21 testimony and some of the strongest testimony came  
22 from young people that not only--not only understand  
23 the issue, understand that this is--this is going to  
24 impact them even more and their children and their  
25 children's children. So, thank you for being here

2 today, and witnessing this moment in history, and I  
3 vote aye on all.

4 CLERK: Richards.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Happily vote  
6 aye.

7 CLERK: Yeger.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Mr. Chairman, may  
9 I be excused to explain my vote?

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you. Mr.  
12 Chairman, congratulations all due to you, sir,  
13 because this has been a long-lifelong dream since  
14 even before you were elected to this body to try to  
15 enact reasonable and permanent environmental change  
16 to the way we do things in New York City and that is  
17 true, and you've accomplished that, and you've also  
18 done so wisely by reaching out to all the people in  
19 New York who had various interests in why they had  
20 concerns about this bill such as the religious  
21 organizations that had issues with whether or not  
22 their very old houses of worship would be able to  
23 accommodated. Our hospitals who had very real  
24 concerns about whether or not they would have to make  
25 choices between engaging in life saving measures or

2 simply turning off a switch to try to knock down  
3 their numbers. So, you've worked very hard. That is  
4 true. That's not just being said by me, but that's  
5 going to be story of this when it's all written, and  
6 I congratulate you. I will vote aye on all with the  
7 exception of the unnumbered preconsidered resolution.  
8 I'm not voting aye on that. I am not voting against  
9 it. I will abstain, and I'll explain why. We have—  
10 the reason that the preconsidered resolution with no  
11 number is because it hasn't been introduced in this  
12 council yet. That is going to be introduced today on  
13 the floor of the Council. The process here in this  
14 Council, the tradition of this Council the way that  
15 it's being going since long before I got here, long  
16 before I was born probably is that we introduce a  
17 bill, we introduce a resolution, we have a hearing,  
18 subsequent thereto we deliberate. We have second  
19 hearing. We vote. Perhaps we've changed things, and  
20 then we report it to the floor of the Council  
21 whereupon there is a vote. This bill had a hearing—  
22 this resolution had a hearing 72 hours ago. It has  
23 not been introduced to the floor of the Council. It  
24 has not in my estimation had the due deliberation  
25 necessary for us to make a determination whether or

2 not this is good public policy. It may very well be.  
3 There are very real concerns. I was at the hearing  
4 on Monday about whether or not doing this pipeline  
5 makes sense. I'm not confident it does make sense. I  
6 have two concerns about it, and I don't believe  
7 necessarily that the Department of Environmental  
8 Control should issue the appropriate licenses to let  
9 this happen. However, we're not in the position in  
10 my estimation today to say to the Department of  
11 Environmental Conservation not to do it because we  
12 have not had the opportunity to do deliberate—to duly  
13 deliberate on this. So, for that reason and for that  
14 reason alone, not the merits, I abstain on the  
15 unnumbered Preconsidered Resolution, and I vote aye  
16 on the remainder. Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
18 Council Member Yeger.

19 CLERK: Levin.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Permission to  
21 explain my vote.

22 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Go ahead.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very  
24 much, Chair. I just want to thank you and committee  
25 staff and Legislative Staff Terzah Nasser, Jeff

1 Baker, Samara Swanston for a really extraordinary  
2 effort here to I believe get the most far reaching  
3 climate legislation out of a locality anywhere in the  
4 world, and—and I believe this the most impactful  
5 legislation that we'll be passing this term. It will  
6 put New York City or stick New York City's long-term  
7 claim on doing our part to reduce carbon emissions  
8 and confront the global crisis of climate change, and  
9 this is us doing our part, and we acknowledge that  
10 it's not going to be painless that there are going to  
11 be impacts. I know that you have been thoughtfully  
12 considering those impacts for the last two years or  
13 more, and going through in very close detail what—  
14 what this legislation will do, where the costs are  
15 going to be, but where the ultimate benefits will be  
16 as well, and we owe it to our children and our  
17 children's children to leave them a world that is at  
18 the very least no worse than the one that we  
19 inherited, and this is us doing our part to achieve  
20 that, and I hope that the message gets out far and  
21 wide that if New York City can do this, that—that  
22 every other jurisdiction in the United States can do  
23 it as well. So, with that, I proudly vote aye on  
24  
25



2 all, and I congratulate you on this remarkable  
3 landmark legislation. Thanks.

4 CLERK: By a vote 6-

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES:

6 [interposing] Thanks to my colleague. (sic)

7 CLERK: --by a vote--by a vote of 6 in the  
8 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
9 all items have been adopted by the committee with  
10 Preconsidered Resolution being adopted by the  
11 Committee 5 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and  
12 one abstention.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, wit  
14 that, I'll give this committee hearing closed.

15 [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 May 18, 2019