

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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October 16, 2019
Start: 1:27 p.m.
Recess: 1:34 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: KEITH POWERS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Robert F. Holden
Rory I. Lancman
Mark Levine
Donovan J. Richards
Carlina Rivera

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

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

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Good afternoon
5 everyone. Thank you for being here today. I am City
6 Council Member Keith Powers, chair of the Committee
7 on Criminal Justice, and I'm joined here by my
8 colleagues Council Member Levine, Council Member
9 Richards, Council Member, Council Member Ampry-
10 Samuel, Council Member Holden, and we are Council
11 Member Ayala who may be returning to us. We're here
12 today to vote on three pieces of Legislation related
13 to community reinvestment, jail design and reporting,
14 which this committee last heard on October 2, 2019.
15 First, we'll be hearing Council Member Levin's bill,
16 which would establish a commission to make
17 recommendations on reinvestment in communities that
18 have been most impacted by mass incarceration. I
19 want to thank Council Member Levin for his bill, but
20 also his efforts and work to ensure that there are
21 critical reinvestments made as part of this plan.
22 Second, we will vote on Council Member Ayala's bill,
23 which requires the Board of Correction to report on
24 the impact on incarcerated individuals of closing
25 jails on Rikers Island, and requires the Mayor's

2 Office of Criminal Justice to report on progress in
3 closing the jails on Rikers Island. The third piece
4 of legislation is my bill, which would establish
5 guiding principles for the design or newly
6 constructed jails and amend the bill of rights for
7 incarcerated individuals. This includes for living
8 quarters and natural light, a requirement for air
9 conditioning in all facilities, and a responsibility
10 for all staff to address people in custody by their
11 names. We know just—and I'll just add to just
12 briefly on that, on that legislation, this upholds
13 the purpose of this plan. It also memorializes
14 conversations that have been had throughout this
15 process about how to build facilities that do not
16 create the same mistakes that were made at Rikers
17 Island, but also to discuss what new facilities
18 should be like in offering new opportunities to be
19 focused on rehabilitation, and so I'm really grateful
20 for the work that my staff and others have done to
21 hash out these new facilities and to put more
22 guidance in place about not just the land use
23 application but what the future looks like. We know,
24 as I said, Rikers is not just about building new
25 jails. It's about changing the way that we treat

2 people in custody providing—providing more oversight
3 to transform New York City's justice system. The
4 bills that we are voting today are part of that
5 shift, and I'll note they're not alone. We have many—
6 much more work to do, and we've done a number of
7 bills and important pieces of legislation in this
8 Council to also account, you know, also achieve that
9 goal. At this time, we will move to a vote, and I'll
10 ask the Committee Clerk to take the vote. Thanks.

11 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
12 roll call vote Committee on Criminal Justice, three
13 preconsidered intros. All items are coupled. Chair
14 Powers.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: I vote aye.

16 CLERK: Levine.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Permission to
18 very briefly explain my vote.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yeah, permission to
20 explain your vote, briefly on that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Mr.
22 Chair. This is a momentous week as our city makes
23 historic—takes historis—historic steps towards
24 decarceration, and towards a smaller and more humane
25 jail system and one of the points that many advocates

2 have made, a valid point is that it's not enough just
3 to have verbal commitments for more humane
4 commissions—conditions. We need rock solid
5 legislation to ensure that, and I'm really grateful,
6 Mr. Chair that you're putting this through so that we
7 are on the record with our plan to make this the most
8 humane jail system in the—in the country. I'm very
9 proud of that, and pleased to vote yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay, thank you.

11 CLERK: Richards.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Permission to
13 explain my vote--

14 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: --very briefly.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you to all the
17 sponsors of the bill on today—n these bills today. I
18 think this is very important what we are doing here
19 today because most people have the perception that
20 just closing Rikers Island is the end of the
21 conversation. The real work begins as we begin to
22 fully close Rikers Island, and ensuring that there is
23 certainly more transparency, and certainly more
24 programming and investment in communities of color or
25 how we actually get to a humane system period, and we

2 obviously as there's been some voices that have said,
3 you know, we don't need jails, but the way to get to
4 it is to make sure that you are addressing the
5 systematic issues that have gotten people there in
6 the first place, and that partly that has to do with
7 a lot of disinvestment or no investment historically
8 in pockets of the city such as Southeast Queens and
9 I'm sure parts of Brooklyn, and parts of the Bronx,
10 and wherever historically you see a lot of these
11 young men and women entering the system, you look at
12 the common denominator of all of these communities
13 and your communities that have historically seen very
14 little investment in education, very little
15 investment in programming and touring Rikers Island
16 just a year or two ago speaking to a lot of the young
17 men and women in that facility, the number one thing
18 they spoke about was the need for training and job
19 opportunities on the island and outside of the
20 island. So I am happy to vote yes on this package of
21 bills because this is once again not just about
22 building new facilities and putting new paint and new
23 blinds on a new facility. It's about ensuring that
24 there's real investment and a real commitment from
25 the Administration, but more importantly from the

2 Council on ensuring that we can really rehabilitate
3 many of those young people who are languishing on
4 Rikers Island who do have bright futures, and who
5 really do need the investment, and with that I vote
6 aye.

7 CLERK: Ampry-Samuel.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I vote aye
9 on all, and please add my name to the bills if I'm
10 not already, and thank you for your leadership
11 because these are some great bills.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

13 CLERK: Holden.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I vote aye.

15 CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the affirmative,
16 0 in the negative and no abstentions, all items have
17 been adopted.

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yeah, and we're
19 going to keep the vote open because we're expecting
20 another member. So, one is on the way. So, we'll
21 just keep it open.

22 CLERK: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thanks.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [laughs] Rory
3 Lancman with a yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: We're rollin'.

5 CLERK: Council Member Lancman.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Yes.

7 CLERK: The vote now stands at 6 in the
8 affirmative.

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay, thank you, and
10 thank you and I echo many of the comments made today
11 about the importance of this work today, and the vote
12 tomorrow. Thank you to everybody for your vote here
13 today, and we will see you tomorrow. Thanks. This
14 is adjourned. [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 October 21, 2019