

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

----- X

October 7, 2021  
Start: 12:03 p.m.  
Recess: 12:16 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Paul Vallone  
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Keith Powers  
Mark Gjonaj  
Peter Koo  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Brad Lander  
Inez Barron  
Farah N. Louis

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

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Good afternoon,  
3 everyone. Welcome to the Economic Development  
4 Committee at the New York City Council. Today is  
5 Thursday, October 7th, 2021. My name is Paul  
6 Vallone. I have the privilege of chairing this  
7 committee. The purpose of today's hearing is to vote  
8 on a critical piece of legislation pertaining to  
9 urban agriculture in our city. Proposed Intro 1663-  
10 A, sponsored by Council member Ben Kallos, would  
11 establish an Office of Urban Agriculture to be housed  
12 within the Office of Long Term Planning and  
13 Sustainability, as well as an Urban Agricultural  
14 Advisory Board comprised of various stakeholders  
15 focused on urban agriculture from the worlds of  
16 police, agrobusiness, land uses, advocacy, and the  
17 restaurant industry. The purpose of the Office of  
18 Urban Agriculture would be to promote urban  
19 agriculture and establish a program to support and  
20 research for advancing urban agricultural legislation  
21 and policy. The Urban Agriculture Advisory Board  
22 would advise city agencies on various issues relating  
23 to urban agriculture in the city and submit regular  
24 recommendations to the Mayor and the Speaker of the  
25 City Council. This bill, when paired with proposed

2 introduction 1058-A, which the Land Use Committee is  
3 voting on this morning, creates a robust framework  
4 for the city's urban agricultural enthusiasts and  
5 businesses and gives them a permanent voice in city  
6 government. Before I turn the floor over to the  
7 bill's sponsor, I'd like to thank the Economic  
8 Development Committee staff, legislative counsel Alex  
9 Polanov, policy analyst William Hungok [sp?], and  
10 finance analyst Aliyah Ali, as well as senior policy  
11 analyst Nadia Johnson for all of their hard work  
12 negotiating this bill. I will now turn the floor  
13 over to Council member Kallos to make some remarks on  
14 proposed Intro 1663-A. Council member Kallos?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I will yield to  
16 Council member Mark Gjonaj and the committee clerk.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: All right. Council  
18 member Gjonaj?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I vote aye.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Oh. The clerk can  
21 call the role, then.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Oh. Well, then I'm  
23 going to make my statement, if I may.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yes. Please.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I want to thank the  
3 Economic Development Chair Vallone for his leadership  
4 on this and other food issues throughout our city.  
5 As we live through a pandemic, we are seeing our food  
6 systems stretched to the brink and I will yield to  
7 the committee clerk once again.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Can we have the  
9 clerk call the role now and then we'll give Council  
10 member Kallos a couple of minutes after the role  
11 call? Oh, just for Council member Gjonaj? Okay.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Opening role call for  
13 Council member Gjonaj. Proposed Introduction 1663-  
14 A.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, sir.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay. Council  
18 member Kallos, you may continue.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: The pandemic has  
20 shown us that our food network is not necessarily  
21 sustainable. It's been vulnerable. We've seen the  
22 price of groceries here in New York City going up and  
23 a sustainable city means a city that has its own  
24 agriculture. Urban agriculture is growing here in  
25 our city. In my district, we have funded works with

2 Grow NYC to fund programming at almost every single  
3 school in the neighborhood. We have also created  
4 partnerships with NYCHA. Back in 2017, Council  
5 member Rafael Espinal, who originally introduced this  
6 bill with then borough President and still borough  
7 President for Brooklyn, Eric Adams, each set aside a  
8 million dollars for urban agriculture working with  
9 the EDC in Brooklyn. In the first term, Council  
10 member Espinal was able to force the city to launch  
11 an urban agriculture website to support urban  
12 agriculture. This is now going to actually set up an  
13 actual fully fledged Office of Urban Agriculture that  
14 will continue to maintain this website. It will work  
15 with our city's vast network of community gardens,  
16 farming at public housing, commercial farming, the  
17 Office of Food Policy, school gardens, and our  
18 organics collection services. It will also play a  
19 role in reporting and there's going to be an advisory  
20 board where we will be having young people. And I'll  
21 say I have the opportunity to meet with Dewitt  
22 Clinton-- and I'm not talking about when the kids  
23 from Dewitt Clinton would come to Bronx Science to  
24 beat us up. We were actually on the same block. I  
25 got to meet with some of the newer students recently

2 and they have an urban agriculture program there  
3 where they actually eat the food that they grow in  
4 these vertical risers and I was incredibly,  
5 incredibly impressed with the program and the types  
6 of jobs that we have and that we're growing right  
7 here in the city. So, I want to thank everyone for  
8 their support. I am happy to carry this legislation  
9 on behalf of borough President Eric Adams and Council  
10 member Espinal and I will thank the Chair for the  
11 hearing and everyone for their indulgence.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council  
13 member Kallos. And what a victor for our students  
14 and the fact that you have already implemented in  
15 every school in your district is truly a testament to  
16 your passion on the subject. I'd like at this time  
17 to have the clerk to call the role so we can have a  
18 vote on Intro 1663-A.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. William  
20 Martin, committee clerk. Role call vote. Committee  
21 on Economic Development. Chair Vallone?

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I vote aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Lander?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Aye.

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council member Lander  
3 votes aye. Barron?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I vote  
5 aye.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cornegy?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Permission to  
8 explain my vote?

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Permission granted.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, while I  
11 really am enjoying what we're putting forward today,  
12 there are organizations that I want to make sure are  
13 included in the pipeline like Campaign Against Hunger  
14 who has urban agricultural farms that they are  
15 literally using to help fight and combat food  
16 insecurity. So I just wanted to put on the record  
17 that this is a great bill. I want to thank Council  
18 member Kallos, former Council member Espinal. I want  
19 to thank the Chair for thinking that this is  
20 important enough to make sure that we bring it before  
21 the body. But I just wanted to make sure that we  
22 understand that there are already agricultural  
23 entities that exist that work very hard to get fresh  
24 food and vegetables into the hands and the mouths of  
25 marginalized communities and that we do not overlook



2 their contributions prior to the bill and that we  
3 include them in the bill going forward. Thank you.  
4 I vote aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Louis?

6 [background comments]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of six in the  
9 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no  
10 abstentions, the item has been adopted by the  
11 committee.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: If we could, I just  
13 found out that Council member Keith Powers is just a  
14 few minutes away. If we could keep it open for him  
15 to put his vote one, that would be great. Thank you.  
16 Thank you, everyone.

17 [gavel]

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call.

19 Committee on Economic Development proposed

20 Introduction 1663-A. Council member Powers?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I vote aye. Thank  
22 you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. The  
24 vote is now currently seven in the affirmative, zero  
25 in the negative, and no abstentions.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you,  
3 everyone. This closes our EDC committee hearing for  
4 the day.

5 [gavel]

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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 27, 2021