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2019 Environmental Candidate Questionnaire for New York City Public Advocate Candidates

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

My commitment to the environment has been a central to my time in the City Council. From the beginning of my tenure when I was the prime sponsor of legislation that required energy efficient lighting in the public areas of NYC residential buildings to this week when I sponsored legislation to protect our water from offshore drilling, my commitment to the environment is central to public career. I am especially proud of the work I have done in my district which was most effected by Superstorm Sandy and helping our beaches recover, remain clean and open, and make sure all of New York can enjoy our city's coastline. Specifically, my most recent piece of legislation in the City Council Intro. 786, which is known as the "Save Our Waters Act" which would ban offshore drilling for oil and gas in NYC's waters. We cannot allow short-sighted thinking to destroy our waters and beaches. When I first came to the NYC Council in 2009-2010, I was the prime sponsor of Intro 0277-2010, which was signed in to law by then Mayor Bloomberg which required new updated energy efficient lighting in buildings public areas. Before this legislation the Housing Maintenance Code (HMC) contained outdated requirements that hallways, stairs, and laundry rooms remain lighted at all times and that the lighting in those spaces be of a minimum number of watts, which is a measure of energy consumption, rather than using a standard of illumination. This bill changes the standard used in the HMC from watts to foot-candles, and establishes a minimum level of illumination required in public halls and stairways, and allowed for the use of natural light to illuminate public areas, mitigating the need to burn more energy. Lastly, and most importantly, this bill

required the use of energy efficient technologies and changed the requirements that mandated fluorescent and other inefficient forms of lighting. When the city was dragging its feet on handling rockaway beach erosion from Sandy, I fought for more “jettys,” “rock groynes” and other the protective measures to keep the entire community safe.

ISSUES

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity with respect to, the following issues:

(To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2018 NYC Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.)

2. Energy and Infrastructure

I believe our city should be supporting all kinds of “green energy” start-up companies, and remove road blocks and red tape that prevent these companies from growing and participating in our contracting process. In particular, we need to, promote research and innovation in the renewable energy sector by supporting green energy startups, the expansion of EDC programs such as the Urban Future Lab, and actively piloting these technologies in city owned spaces. We also need to ready our city for plan emerging green technology such as battery storage and microgrids.

3. Resilience

We need to reform the ULURP Environmental Review process to include considerations of sea level rise, risk of storm surge, and other climate change impacts when reviewing a proposed development. Having represented communities most effected by Superstorm Sandy, I know firsthand the problems faced by communities facing rising seas levels and storm surges. Our ULURP process needs to be community focused and account for this, and all developers must present plans for how they plan to account for and plan for future storm surges. The plan needs to be in place before there is a weather event not afterwards. As such we need to develop and protect strong natural barriers along the coast with restored wetlands and salt marshes, oyster reefs, dunes, and other living shoreline approaches to resiliency. This will help guarantee protection for the coast and for the communities that live along the coast.

4. Solid Waste

I was a sponsor of legislation that helped the city divert significant amounts of organic waste. Organic waste made up about one-third of the city’s solid waste, and therefore could not meet its 75% waste diversion PlaNYC goal without a large-scale diversion of organic waste. Furthermore, decomposition of organic waste in landfills created harmful greenhouse gas (“GHG”).



Therefore, in the council, I sponsored a bill that would have forced commercial establishments to engage in at least one of the following three alternatives methods of handling their organic waste: (1) arrange for separate collection of organic waste by a private carter for purposes of composting, anaerobic digestion, or other such method of processing organic waste as the Department of Sanitation (“the Department”) approves; (2) transport their organic waste to a facility that engages in one of the types of organic waste processing listed above; or (3) engage in on-site, in vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, or other approved method of processing organic waste for reuse on site. Such entities would also be required to provide separate bins for organic waste, post instruction about the proper separation of organic waste, and post a sign in their establishment that provides information about how the establishment handles its organic waste.

As a result, diversion of organic waste for composting, anaerobic digestion, or other approved processing method, would have eliminated a potent source of GHG, helping the City to achieve a 30% greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2030. In addition, it would provide immediate benefits to the city and surrounding communities in the form of organic fertilizer or clean, renewable energy.

5. Clean Air

I support efforts to improve our air quality, especially in low income areas of the city. I believe HPD needs to review and improve on the annual inspection of homes for indoor asthma triggers such as mold or pest infestations. Our children depend on the most up to date testing, and remediation of indoor pollutants. We need reduce emissions from truck traffic by piloting alternative policies for residential deliveries, including off-peak hour incentives and a transition to electrification of the city’s vehicle fleet and additional rapid charging infrastructure so that we can begin to move towards zero emissions.

Lastly, and most importantly because this affects all of our children, in 2018 I was a sponsor of Intro 0455 while required our city to move away from Diesel School buses and to transition to natural gas or electric school buses. Our children should not be subjected to harmful diesel school buses any more. As public advocate, I will push for this to become law.

6. Clean Water

I support maintaining and improving our clean water supply. In addition to what I noted earlier regarding offshore drilling our drinking water must be clean and safe We need to make sure that the City’s “Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plans” meet federal health standards for safe contact with water, and prioritize CSO mitigation and capture instead of diversion to another waterway. We also need to expand “New York City’s Green Infrastructure” program with a grant program to catalyze installation on private property and encourage more collaboration between city agencies to increase the adoption of green infrastructure in projects beyond DEP.

Lastly ,and also most importantly we need to urge DEP to study restructuring water rates to develop revenue neutral recommendations that equitably generate needed funds, and promote both



water conservation and widespread use of green infrastructure. The water rate burden falls disproportionately on outer borough homeowners and we need to ensure that they are not paying more than their share of the city's water bill.

7. Sustainable Food Systems

I have long supported the expansion of both community and commercial urban agriculture in New York City with a comprehensive plan. This plan should examine amendments to the zoning code that clearly define permissible urban agriculture practices in each zoning district, and preserving these areas are crucial to making sure we have a sustainable food supply and protected open space. Low Income families also must have access to healthy, local, and affordable produce. That's why I have funded GROWN NYC in my district this year. I support expansion of critical food access programs such as SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC Youthmarkets, and Health Bucks and they should be redeemable at farmers markets across the city. This way low-income New Yorkers can do more with their assistance.

8. Mobility

As a councilmember, I pushed for the creation of the Rockaway ferry and have long supported fixing the MTA, and expanding mass transit. We need to fix our subways, expand the use of clear reliable buses, increase bike use, scooters and other forms of electronic transportation. I would like to see expanded mass transit in the so-called "transit deserts" (like the communities I represent in the council) and focus on them rapid transit technology, such as: transit signal priority, dedicated bus lanes, next generation fare payment, and all-door boarding. To accommodate the new focus on electronic transportation we need to expand rapid charging stations in and around the 5 boroughs.

9. Parks, Waterfronts and Natural Areas

I would like to see a fully funded parks budget, with particular focus on construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland. We need to increase the efficiency of the NYC Parks Department's Capital Division with transparent decision making on individual projects, standardized project management tools, and increased accountability for making projects on-time and on-budget. We need to ensure that there is baseline funding for core maintenance functions such as landscaping, repairs, waste collection, and facilities cleaning and to prioritize conservation & restoration of natural areas across the city by supporting a long-term management plan that includes strategies to adapt to climate change & combat invasive species and illegal dumping. I have long supported and represented in the council waterfront parks that are a vital component of resiliency, and continued expansion of public access to the waterfront on both public and private property. Lastly our children need parks. Therefore, I will continue to fight to protect parkland and joint-operated playgrounds across the city from alienation.