



sanitation

Edward Grayson Commissioner

Testimony of Edward Grayson, Commissioner New York City Department of Sanitation

Hearing on the Department of Sanitation FY 2022 Executive Budget

New York City Council Committees on Finance and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

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Good afternoon Chair Dromm, Chair Reynoso, and members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. With me this afternoon are First Deputy Commissioner Salvatore Ceraulo and Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs.

At the Department of Sanitation, our mission is to keep New York City healthy, safe and clean by collecting, recycling and disposing of waste, cleaning streets and vacant lots, and clearing snow and ice. The men and women of this Department provide critical services to all New Yorkers, services that help make our city a thriving, vibrant place to live. The last fourteen months presented challenges to this City unlike any others encountered before, and I couldn't be prouder of how our Department employees rose to the occasion to continue meeting the needs of over 8.5 million city residents. Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 did not stop refuse and recycling from being generated or the snow from falling. Department employees were out there collecting material from every household and plowing snow and salting roads during the winter in order to keep New York City's wheels turning.

We are encouraged by the City's improved fiscal outlook, and we are active partners in the New York City's Recovery for All. Our agency's proposed budget stands in a vastly different place today than it did when I testified before the Council in March. I am pleased that the Mayor has announced several service restorations and new programs to help us advance our mission, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Council, other elected officials and community leaders, our sister agencies in government, and the residents of our great city improve the quality of life in neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

FY 2022 Expense Budget Highlights

The Department's FY 2022 Executive Budget includes \$1.83 billion in expense funds that will allow us to deliver services across the city. These funds include:

- \$832 million for the Bureau of Cleaning and Collection for household refuse, recycling and organics collection, litter basket collection, street cleaning and other core operational functions;
- \$538 million for solid waste management operations, including waste export contracts, the operation of City-owned transfer stations and the closure of Fresh Kills landfill;
- \$136 million for support services, including buildings maintenance, engineering and fleet services;
- \$89 million for the snow budget to support snow removal planning and operations;
- \$70 million for the recycling and zero waste programs, including recycling processing costs, education, outreach and the operation of non-curbside waste diversion programs;
- \$21 million for enforcement of street cleaning and recycling laws; and
- \$141 million for administration, centralized purchasing, information technology, and other programs.

The FY 2022 Executive Budget also includes restored and some new funding items and readjustments in the expense budget. These include:

- \$33.1 million for restored and expanded zero waste programs;
- \$12.4 million for service restorations and new programs to keep New York City clean;
- \$4.0 million for the implementation of our commercial waste zone program; and
- \$4.0 million to restore proposed cuts associated with Sunday security at our facilities.

In addition, the budget also includes \$33.0 million in additional funds for waste export and recycling processing in FY 2022 to account for changes in contractual obligations and increases in material collected.

DSNY also has authorization to proceed with hiring a substantial number of new Sanitation Workers to replace the reduction in headcount over the past year due to attrition and the hiring freeze. This will enable us to provide necessary staffing for the increased level of service for our new and restored programs. We expect the first hiring class to begin this July, and we are currently planning to hire 700 new uniformed employees.

FY 2022 Capital Budget Highlights

The Department's proposed ten-year capital plan for FY 2022 to 2031 is \$3.4 billion and includes:

- \$1.9 billion for capital equipment purchase, including collection trucks, mechanical brooms, salt spreaders and support equipment;
- \$1.2 billion for garage rehabilitation and new garage construction;
- \$156 million for maintenance and construction of solid waste management facilities; and
- \$50 million for information technology and communications systems, including hardware.

In the four-year plan, the Department is funded to advance several major facility improvement projects including:

- Continuing construction of the new Brooklyn District 3 Garage;
- Continuing construction of a new Staten Island Districts 1 and 3 Garage;
- Designing and constructing a new Queens District 1 Garage;
- Entirely reconstructing the Bronx Districts 9, 10 and 11 garage complex;

- Rehabilitating the Queens Districts 11 and 13 Garage, the Queens Districts 8, 10 and 12 Garage complex, the Brooklyn District 6 Garage, and the Bronx District 6 Garage; and
- Fully renovating a newly-acquired site for the Manhattan 11 District garage.

Cleaning Initiatives

With New York City getting back on its feet, New Yorkers deserve to put their feet on clean streets. I am thrilled to have joined Mayor de Blasio in March to announce the roll-out of three initiatives aimed at cleaning up the streets amid the COVID 19 pandemic.

First, the Department has restored baseline funding for litter basket collections, adding more than 100 dedicated litter basket trucks weekly and restoring Sunday and holiday litter basket collection. Specifically, the budget includes \$4.5 million for weekday basket service and \$4.6 million for Sunday and holiday service. With these restorations, litter basket collection service has increased by 61 percent compared to last July. As the weather gets warmer and more people spend their time outdoors as the City reopens, this additional service will contribute to cleaner streets and improved quality of life in our communities.

The Department of Sanitation has also created an all-new Precision Cleaning Initiative, with borough-based teams to conduct targeted cleanings of litter conditions, illegal dumping, and overflowing litter baskets. These conditions are eyesores that affect New Yorkers' quality of life and threaten NYC's recovery. Teams will be dispatched based on DSNY field observations, 311 complaints and referrals from other City agencies and community groups. The budget includes \$2.9 million in FY 2022 to fund this initiative.

We have also restored our dedicated syringe litter staff within our Environmental Police Unit to conduct proactive patrols in areas with highest concentrations of syringe litter. These six dedicated officers are specially trained to properly handle syringes and other potentially hazardous waste.

Additionally, the Department has introduced a Community Clean-Up Van to support neighborhood cleanups across the city. The Department provides support for residents and community-based groups who volunteer to do litter pick-up in their neighborhoods. The Department lends tools, trash bags, masks, brooms and dustpans to volunteers and can now deliver these tools directly to the volunteers through the new community clean-up van. We encourage all New Yorkers to chip in and help us keep New York City clean.

Last year's Sanitation budget cuts hit many communities hard during the pandemic. I'm confident that these initiatives will go a long way toward improving the cleanliness of our neighborhoods and improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

Zero Waste

Just a few weeks ago, I testified before the Sanitation Committee and reaffirmed the Department's commitment to working to achieve our zero waste goals. On Earth Day, I joined Mayor de Blasio to announce several new and restored zero waste initiatives to help jumpstart our renewed commitment to those goals.

New York City will restart its residential curbside composting program, which was temporarily suspended last year due to the fiscal crisis. This new iteration of the program will be available to allow buildings and residents to sign up to receive free weekly curbside composting service.

Enrollment will open in August through an online form and via 311, and collection service will kick off in October and expand as more residents opt into this program.

In addition to the re-launch of curbside composting, we will significantly expand our food scrap drop-off program, from 128 community-based sites today to more than 200 this fall. We are committed to expanding access to these sites, including having at least one site in each community district. Growth of this program will be achieved via a restoration of GrowNYC's Greenmarket Composting program funding and an expansion of NYC Compost Project funding to support community-based drop-offs, composting and education. In addition, it will include a first-of-its-kind pilot of "smart bins," in which New Yorkers use an app to access public food scrap drop-off bins, thus preventing cross-contamination and misuse.

Since the drop-off sites reopened last September, many food scrap drop-offs broke participation records, and together they have diverted 1.5 million pounds of food scraps for composting. Doubling the current number of the food scrap drop off sites will significantly divert more food scraps from the trash. New Yorkers can find their closest site at nyc.gov/dropfoodscraps. Potential partners can also learn more about hosting a drop off site and helping to spread the word about this important program.

School Curbside Composting service will also return in the 2021-2022 school year, and nearly 1,000 schools that had service prior to COVID-19 will resume curbside composting. The Department will also reinstate Fall leaf and yard waste collections later this year. Together, these programs represent an investment of \$30.5 million in new funds for composting and organic waste diversion in FY 2022.

Relatedly, next month the Sanitation Foundation will host its 2021 Food Waste Fair. The Fair, which is held every other year, is an interactive experience connecting food, beverage and hospitality professionals with the resources and education they need to reach zero food waste in their businesses. Panels and hands-on workshops this year will be virtual. To learn more about the Food Waste Fair, visit: foodwastefair.nyc.

Beyond composting, the Department will also restore or expand other Zero Waste programs. Our SAFE Disposal Events, which collect Solvents, Automotive, Flammables, and Electronics products as well as other household hazardous waste items, will restart this fall and will expand from 10 events to nearly 60 events per year, one for each community district. DSNY will also reopen our Special Waste Drop-off sites beginning in July. At these five sites, one in each borough, residents can drop off harmful materials that do not belong in household trash.

DSNY will begin offering Reuse Swap Events across the city to keep usable items out of landfills and help them find good homes. At these events, one person's unwanted household goods can become another's treasure. The Executive Budget includes an additional \$2.6 million in FY 2022 to support these special waste and reuse initiatives.

Commercial Waste

The commercial waste sector also plays an important role in achieving our zero waste goals. Commercial Waste Zones will create a safe and efficient collection system for commercial waste that provides high quality, low cost service to New York City businesses while advancing the City's zero waste and sustainability goals. The new system is expected to nearly double the commercial diversion rate for recyclables and organic waste.

Following a delay due to the pandemic, the Department began the competitive procurement process by issuing Part 1 of a Request for Proposals (RFP) in November 2020. Part 1 of the RFP requested information from potential awardees to determine their ability to perform in accordance with specific business, character, financial and licensing requirements. Submissions for Part 1 were received by February 19 and are being reviewed.

This spring the Department is also promulgating several rules to implement the program, including rules governing customer service, operations, health and safety, recycling and organics collection and other administrative requirements. In the next few months, the Department will also issue Part 2 of the RFP to select the zone awardees. We expect the transition period to the new zone system to begin in 2022 and last up to two years.

The FY 2022 Executive Budget provides \$4.0 million in funding to support the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones. This includes funding for 28 new civilian staff in the coming year, as well as OTPS funds for implementation support, communications, outreach, and IT systems. We look forward to working with the City Council and all stakeholders as we advance this important program to bring much-needed reform to the City's commercial waste sector.

Conclusion

Keeping all of our neighborhoods healthy, safe and clean is critical for New York City's rebirth, and we are excited to be a part of citywide efforts to ensure a Recovery for All of Us.

In closing, I wish to thank Chair Dromm, Chair Reynoso, and all of the members of these two committees for your continuing support of our essential workers, programs and services. You are critical advocates as we work to keep New York City healthy, safe, and clean, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our communities. We are grateful for your commitment.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify this afternoon, and my staff and I are now happy to answer your questions.