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THE COUNCIL OF
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July 15, 2014

To whom it may concern:

As the Council Member who represents Greenpoint and a portion of Gowanus, two of the most industrialized sections of the City, it is welcome news that the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the New York City Industrial Department Agency (NYC IDA), and the Department of City Planning (DCP), has begun focusing on the work of creating manufacturing zones that are “greener, safer, stronger and more resilient to climate change”.

It is this type of attention to business operations and layout, especially those of our open air industries, which will result in the greatest impact on improved air and water quality and greater quality of life for the residents in the communities surrounding these manufacturing zones. Acknowledging the need to address flooding dangers within the 100 year flood plain is also crucial to greater resiliency of the 520+ miles of NYC coastline. Overall, this study and its recommendations are welcome, needed and necessary to move NYC into a clean as well as functioning City in the 21st Century.

The study, as it is currently written, stands to make NYC one of the most progressive in the nation in regards to how it regulates its heavy open air industrial businesses. This is certainly a goal that I believe that we as a City should be aspiring to and I am therefore wholeheartedly supportive of this effort. I am concerned however about some of the details of the study, specifically in regards to the ability of some of the smaller businesses operating in these areas to make all of the capital improvements that will be required of them within the proposed 5 year time frame that has been outlined.

The language used by the study’s authors states that after the 5 year time frame if all necessary modifications outlined aren’t completed (or if an extension isn’t requested) the business will be “terminated”. This seems exceptionally harsh, especially for some of our critical smaller businesses. A more practical and equitable system may include the use of yearly or bi-yearly markers where a business may address the most polluting elements of the business first and so long as steady progress is made on a continual basis there would be no need for termination due to a lapse in compliance due to financial burdens. The notion that we as a city would terminate

businesses that provide important high wage blue collar jobs and fill crucial niches in development seems reckless and needlessly punitive.

In addition, as the study is currently written, a sales tax abatement is offered as the only real option for final support. This strikes me as a mere token and not any sort of true support for these essential businesses. It can be argued that a good number of the businesses to be affected by these updated regulations are in fact large enough to be able to afford the prescribed capital improvements to their properties with minimal adverse economic impacts. Yet some of the businesses located in my district are too small to make these major modifications without suffering significant economic hardships. We then run the risk of putting them out of business which would result in the increased loss of valuable blue collar high paying jobs and further the loss of industry that the city cannot afford to be without. In light of this concern, I believe that a sliding scale approach, coupled with City and State grants would be a reasonable compromise. To force these businesses to make these upgrades without assistance not only borders on negligence but outright ignores the intrinsic value of these businesses to the sustainable functioning of the City as a whole.

The only other point I'd like to bring up is the quantity and quality of this workforce for the community I represent. According to an EWVIDCO (the East Williamsburg Valley Industrial Development Corporation) assessment, almost 40% of the industrial workforce lives within the surrounding communities and these jobs pay an average of 73% higher wages than local service industry jobs. These businesses also offer as much as 60% of their employee's benefits, compared to 30% for the service industry. These statistics are meant to underline the importance of these businesses to the health of our community. We value them and they should remain in our community while the City helps them turn these new zoning standards into a viable reality.

Thank you for your time and for taking my comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen T. Levin".

Stephen Levin
Council Member, District 33

Businesses located within District 33 Newtown Creek Industrial Zones:

Open Industrial Use Property/Business Owners

TNT Scrap
Allocco Recycling
Waste Management

Open uses which don't seem to fall into the 6 categories of the plan

Con Edison
Arc Terminals
Metro Fuel
Exxon Mobil
Mendon
Greenpoint Truck Center
Brooklyn Transmission
ESF
Central Transport
Bestway/Reliant Transpo
BP
Island Transportation

Others Along the Creek, not open uses

Multi-office commercial, small-industrial building owned by the Fultons (TNT Scrap)
NYC Housing Authority
Multi-office industrial building owned by the Box House Hotel
North Brooklyn Boat Club
Time Warner
Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility
Dept. of Sanitation
Broadway Stages facility
Storage Plus
Lot used for parking at Kingsland & Greenpoint
Long Island Carpet Cleaners
Empire Merchants
MTA-owned parking lot