

New City Council Bills -- Conserving Energy, Limiting Noise

by Dan Rivoli

Thursday, August 24, 2006 12:00 AM

At each of the City Council's stated meetings, council members introduce bills, most of which will never become laws (for the process by which bills become laws, [click here](#)). As a regular feature, Gotham Gazette discusses some of the legislation proposed at each meeting.

The New York City Council introduced 15 bills at its [most recent meeting](#) on August 16, 2006, many of which focused on energy conservation or noise.

ENERGY

Due in part to the controversy over the Astoria blackout earlier in July, three bills have been introduced to strengthen the city's attempts to conserve energy.

Councilmember [James Gennaro](#) from Queens introduced two bills that would require the mayor's office to be more proactive on energy conservation.

[Intro 410](#) would require the mayor to create a contingency plan to respond to high levels of energy uses. Modeled on the city's drought contingency plan, the bill would require the mayor to design a graduated response to various levels of energy usage.

[Intro 411](#) would make the mayor responsible for creating an energy policy that the public is aware of. Under this bill, mayoral programs would encourage energy conservation and alternative modes of transportation. As an example, Gennaro's office suggested encouraging buildings that use a lot of power to install solar panels to create their own energy, rather than relying on power plants alone.

Councilmember [Miguel Martinez](#), representing Washington Heights and Inwood, wants to encourage buildings to use more efficient cooling systems. Many buildings use relatively small coolers, instead of larger "chillers", which cool water and circulate it throughout the building, even though chillers are one and a half times as efficient as the smaller devices. The reason is that chillers require "personal supervision," meaning a full-time employee must be physically present at all times.

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Martinez argues that this standard is outdated. [Intro 418](#) would subject all new chillers to general supervision only, making their supervision no more expensive than the smaller, less efficient system.

NOISE

Councilmember [Alan Gerson](#) of lower Manhattan has introduced several bills to supplement the city's [noise code](#) .

[Intro 414](#) would require that agencies that issue permits for construction work on nights and weekends to submit a noise mitigation plan to the local community board and city council member.

[Intro 415](#) would set caps on the levels of noise that construction work can make within one hundred feet of a school or court on days they are in session, or within one hundred feet of a hospital, even if a noise mitigation plan is in place. Intros [412](#) and [413](#) would cap the allowable levels of noise from circulation devices and portable generators, respectively.

[Intro 416](#) would prohibit motorcycles with straight pipes from parking on the street. Motorcycles with straight pipes, which are illegal, do not have mufflers. The police department, and the departments of consumer affairs, environmental protection and transportation would have the power to enforce the ban.

"These are quality of life issues that we didn't feel were specifically enough addressed in the noise code," said Paul Pastor, Gerson's legislative director. "Unless you spell things out very often they don't get enforced."

He said that Gerson plans to introduce another bill further restricting noise from patio and courtyard restaurants in the council's next session on September 13.

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