

Offered by Councilor Kenzie Bok, Breadon, Worrell, Arroyo, Lara, Fernades-Anderson, Murphy, Mejia, Baker Louijeune, Flaherty and Flynn



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING A CITY-LEVEL CONSERVATION CORPS FOR BOSTON

WHEREAS: Mayor Wu has made accelerating and achieving the City of Boston’s climate goals a major objective of her Administration, which will require significant new mechanisms of implementation in order to be successful; *and*

WHEREAS: The Civilian Conservation Corps, one of the most successful programs under President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, created 3 million jobs, planted over 2 billion trees, and completed many other conservation-focused projects; *and*

WHEREAS: In 2019, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey introduced the “Green New Deal” resolution in Congress, including a federal green jobs program, which the Boston City Council supported through a resolution introduced by Councilors Matt O’Malley and Michelle Wu, and which then-Councilor Wu built upon in her “Order for a Hearing Regarding Implementing a Boston Green New Deal and Just Recovery”; *and*

WHEREAS: In March 2020, climate and policy experts published “A Green Stimulus to Rebuild Our Economy” in response to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a Clean Water Corps and a Civilian Conservation Corps; *and*

WHEREAS: Other cities including Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Austin have or are implementing city-level Conservation Corps; *and*

WHEREAS: Over 2020 and 2021, Councilors Bok and Wu held several hearings and working sessions on a city-level Conservation Corps, highlighting the Boston nonprofits and community development corporations that have successful programs for training youth and adults in urban forestry, urban wilds maintenance, and green stormwater infrastructure, along with national organizations focused on career pipelines for green jobs; *and*

WHEREAS: In June of 2021, as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Councilor Bok led the inclusion of \$4 million in the City budget, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, for a pilot green jobs program here in Boston; *and*

WHEREAS: In September 2021, Councilor Bok and Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space, visited the Philadelphia PowerCorps program, and in October 2021, the City announced an interdepartmental partnership between the Environment Department, the Office of Workforce Development (OWD), the Department of Youth Engagement and Employment (YEE), Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF), the Office of Returning Citizens (OCR), and others to launch a pilot green jobs program on the PowerCorps model, and hire an Executive Director of the program; *and*

- WHEREAS:* A Conservation Corps workforce could partner with city workers and trade unions to accelerate progress on the goals set out in the “Climate Action Plan” including improved stormwater management through green infrastructure, retrofitting existing buildings to net zero building standards, increasing solar, maintaining and planting trees, preparing our waterfront communities for storms and sea-level rise, and expanding the curbside composting pilot to a city-wide program; *and*
- WHEREAS:* The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious economic impacts on the City of Boston, yet despite these economic challenges the City still has a favorable bond rating, and investing in capital projects is one of the most substantial “countercyclical” things that we can do through the local budgeting process; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston is not yet on track to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, but in the “2019 Boston Climate Action Plan Update”, the city took a significant step by setting a goal to “develop a carbon emissions performance standard to decarbonize existing large buildings”, which would significantly reduce emissions through building retrofits, resulting in a BERDO 2.0 ordinance passed in September 2021; *and*
- WHEREAS:* In order to conduct the necessary deep energy retrofits and electrification of an estimated of buildings in Boston to comply with BERDO 2.0 and anticipated Net Zero Carbon zoning, Boston will need a specialized workforce, so a Conservation Corps program that recruits and trains residents would help to ensure equity in this emerging industry, and could provide pathways to City of Boston and good union jobs for a more diverse set of residents, consistent with the goals of the Boston Residents Job Policy; *and*
- WHEREAS:* The City of Boston should lead by example, by retrofitting more existing municipal buildings and utilizing a Conservation Corps for aspects of these capital projects; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Other cities, including New York City and Philadelphia have robust plans to establish green stormwater infrastructure systems city-wide, which they expect to save billions of dollars as compared to grey infrastructure stormwater systems; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Installation of green stormwater infrastructure city-wide would require additional workforce capacity, which could be provided through a Conservation Corps, along with significant capital investment; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston has committed to creating an Urban Forest Plan to protect and expand Boston’s tree canopy, and a Conservation Corps could expand the city’s capacity to plant and care for our urban forest, rather than relying on outside contractors; *and*
- WHEREAS:* A Conservation Corps could allow Boston to complete more capital projects that are environmentally focused, including retrofits of municipal buildings, expanding and caring for green space and our urban forest, and installation of green stormwater infrastructure, as well as employ and train Boston residents, and allow Boston to meet its sustainability goals; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*
- ORDERED:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss progress towards a city-level Conservation Corps program in Boston, and that representatives from the Environment Department, OWD, YEE, BCYF, OCR, the Green Jobs Community Advisory Board, relevant union representatives, the Boston Clean Energy Coalition, environmental advocates, and the public be invited to testify.