

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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October 2, 2015
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway- Committee Rm, 16th Fl.

B E F O R E:

MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ALAN N. MAISEL
ANDREW COHEN
DARLENE MEALY
FERNANDO CABRERA
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

Catherine Laporte
Deputy Commissioner
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Tupper Thomas
Leader
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Samuel Anderson
Vice Chairman
Mayor's Veterans Advisory Board

Edith Prentiss
First Vice President
Disabled in Action Legislative Affairs

Patrick Bryant
United States Army Ranger veteran

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Welcome everybody.

Thank you for braving the non-hurricane rain to join us today. I'm Mark Levine, Chair of the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation. I'm pleased that we're joined by my colleagues and fellow committee members Fernando Cabrera from the Bronx and the perpetually punctual Andy Cohen also from the Bronx. Will expect our colleagues to... joining us throughout the hearing. We're going to be focusing today on Intro number 856; a bill that I'm proud to be cosponsoring with Council Member Eric Ulrich who I believe is detained today due to planning for the hurricane in his district. He of course is the chair of the Committee on Veterans Affairs. This bill will require the Parks Department to discount membership fees at its recreation centers for veterans and for persons with disabilities. The Parks Department has operated recreation centers since the turn of the 20th century. They are a hallmark of the progressive history of this city and a symbol of our commitment to providing high quality recreational opportunities for all of our

1 residents. Today the... the Parks Department operates
2 approximately 35 of these centers throughout the
3 five boroughs. And last year these facilities
4 collectively received nearly 3.5 million visits.
5 Our city's public rec centers offer a wide array of
6 services including indoor pools, weight rooms,
7 basketball courts, dance studios, boxing rings, art
8 studios, game rooms, after school programs and even
9 libraries. They serve as important spaces for New
10 Yorkers of all ages to come together for exercise,
11 healthy living, social engagement, and more. Rec
12 centers are especially important for two classes of
13 New Yorkers; veterans and people with disabilities.
14 Groups which of course often overlap. And for each
15 facilities such as swimming pools and weight rooms
16 can offer important venues for the kind of exercise
17 regimen which is required for either rehabilitation
18 or maintenance of long term health. Rec centers
19 also give veterans and people with disabilities
20 important opportunities for social interactions
21 with their neighbors overcoming the kind of
22 isolation caused by physical or emotional
23 impediments which is all too common in these
24 populations. Veterans and people with disabilities
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1 face rates of poverty and unemployment which are
2 higher than for the population as a whole making it
3 difficult for them to pay the annual fee for
4 joining our rec centers. This has especially been
5 true since 2011 when the Parks Department nearly
6 doubled the fee to 150 dollars per year. Meanwhile
7 private health clubs or YMCAs are even farther out
8 of reach with annual fees that can total 800
9 dollars or more. The economic challenges facing
10 veterans in New York City are all too real. The
11 food bank of NYC recently reported that 70,000 vets
12 in the five boroughs or nearly 30 percent of the
13 total veteran population relied on soup kitchens
14 and food pantries last year. And for New Yorkers
15 with disabilities the poverty rate is greater than
16 30 percent, more than double the rate for the
17 general population in the five boroughs. It's for
18 all these reasons that we have proposed Intro 856
19 which would mandate at least an 80 percent discount
20 on rec center memberships for veterans and people
21 with disabilities. There's precedent for such
22 discounts. In recent years the Parks Department has
23 created low cost tiers for both seniors and young
24 adults, groups which now pay just 25 dollars per
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2 year for memberships. Veterans and people with
3 disabilities should have access to the same low
4 rate. The symbolism of providing this benefit to
5 our veterans is particularly powerful. These New
6 Yorkers chose to put on a uniform to serve our
7 nation knowing the physical danger that might
8 entail and in fact many have returned home facing
9 the challenges of physical injuries and mental and
10 emotional distress. We owe them every form of
11 support we can offer. And certainly that includes
12 access to the resources of our city's recreation
13 centers. It's important to note that while all our
14 rec centers are at least partly accessible to
15 people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices
16 there are areas within many of our centers which
17 are not yet accessible. We place great priority on
18 accelerating the pace of accessibility upgrades at
19 these and all parks facilities. And I'm proud that
20 this year the city council passed local law 73
21 which will require robust reporting by the Parks
22 Department on its progress towards achieving
23 universal accessibility. I look forward to
24 discussing today's legislation, Intro 856, with the
25 administration, my colleagues, and all the

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2 advocates who have come to testify. Thank you very
3 much. Alright. We're going to turn it over to the
4 administration and I'm going to ask our committee
5 counsel to do a... a brief affirmation if you would.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL SARTORI: Chris
7 Sartori, Committee Counsel. Do you affirm to tell
8 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
9 truth in your testimony today before this
10 committee?

11 ADENA LONG: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And Commissioner
14 Long I guess you're going to be presenting
15 testimony but maybe all four of you could introduce
16 yourselves.

17 MATT DRURY: Matt Drury, Director of
18 Government Relations for the Parks Department.

19 KLEO KING: Kleo King, General Counsel
20 and Deputy Commissioner Mayor's Office for People
21 with Disabilities.

22 CATHERINE LAPORTE: Catherine Laporte
23 deputy Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of
24 Veterans Affairs.

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2 ADENA LONG: Good morning Chairman
3 Levine and members of the Parks and Recreation
4 Committee. I'm Adena Long, the Assistant
5 Commissioner for Public Programs for the New York
6 City Department of Parks and Recreation. Joining me
7 on the panel is Matt Drury Director of Government
8 Relations. Additionally, we have with us today Kleo
9 King Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel for
10 the Mayor's Office for... for People with
11 Disabilities, and Catherine Laporte Deputy
12 Commissioner for the Mayor's Office of Veterans
13 Affairs. Thank you for inviting me today to testify
14 regarding Intro 856 which amends Chapter 1 of Title
15 18 of the administrative code of the City of New
16 York. To begin I would like to say a few words
17 about my role at NYC Parks. As the Assistant
18 Commissioner for Public Programs. I oversee
19 recreation, urban park rangers, and aquatics
20 divisions as well as the Citywide Computer Resource
21 Centers. We offer recreational and educational
22 programs for all New Yorkers. We encourage children
23 to stay active through our Kids in Motion program,
24 after school sports clinics, and swim instruction
25 among dozens of other programs. Our Urban Park

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2 Rangers offer outdoor environmental education to
3 youth through our Natural Classroom Program, custom
4 adventures, and the Ranger Conservation Corp. To
5 encourage New York City adults and seniors to
6 remain active, healthy, social, and engaged in
7 their community we offer a variety of programs
8 including Shape-Up NYC, senior splash, and adult
9 swim hours at our pools and numerous options for
10 those interested in sports, fitness, and outdoor
11 adventure. As you're aware New York City Parks
12 oversees more than 19 hundred parks, a thousand
13 playgrounds, 14 miles of public beaches, 67 pools,
14 and 48 recreation and nature centers. Since 1910
15 NYC Parks has provided the most affordable and
16 extensive network of recreational services
17 throughout New York City. Our recreation centers
18 offer such facilities as indoor pools, weight
19 rooms, basketball courts, dance studios, game
20 rooms, art studios, and libraries. Additionally,
21 Shape Up NYC offers free fitness classes every week
22 at dozens of recreation centers across the five
23 boroughs. Class offerings include aerobics, yoga,
24 Pilates, and Zumba. All of our recreation centers
25 offer a range of programs for people of all ages.

1 We work closely with other city agencies including
2 the Mayor's Office for people with disabilities and
3 the Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs to ensure
4 that the voice of the disabled and military
5 veterans communities are represented when we design
6 or redesign our facilities and that our programs
7 and policies address the needs of people with
8 disabilities and veterans across the city. As
9 discussed at a Parks Committee hearing earlier this
10 year the public program's division of NYC Parks
11 offers a variety of adaptive sports and recreation
12 activities for individuals of all ages and
13 abilities. Exposing participants to programs that
14 will help them grow socially, emotionally, and
15 physically. The ultimate goal of these programs is
16 to show individuals living with a disability how
17 participation in a sport and living a healthy
18 active lifestyle can have a profoundly positive
19 impact on their lives. Our adaptive programming
20 features a rich and diverse set of activities
21 ranging from youth and adult sports for persons
22 with disabilities such as wheelchair basketball,
23 football, softball, tennis, and power soccer.
24 Adaptive aquatics offering a complete body workout
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2 and ranging from gentle walking in water to high
3 energy exercise. The Paralympics track and field
4 open, a semi-annual event held at Icon Stadium on
5 Randal's Island where children with physical
6 disabilities come together to compete in a variety
7 of events. Seated fitness classes, accessible for
8 people in wheelchairs and those with limited
9 mobility including aerobics, dance, weight
10 training, and yoga. Visual arts programs which
11 provides artists with disabilities the opportunity
12 to develop their skills and socialize with others
13 in the program. And sign language classes where
14 registrants learn the basics of sign language;
15 colors, numbers, basic readings, and general
16 conversation starters. New York City Parks is
17 committed to providing accessible facilities at
18 Parks and Recreation Centers throughout the city
19 and improving the quality of life for people with
20 disabilities. We work to ensure our facilities can
21 be enjoyed by all New Yorkers and are fully
22 compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
23 Further several of our recreation centers feature
24 wheelchair accessible fitness equipment that can be
25 used by people with disabilities or limited

1 mobility. Lastly, each borough features a
2 recreation that serves as an adaptive hub; a fully
3 accessible recreation center that leads their
4 borough in offering programs for New Yorkers with
5 disabilities. These hubs are also a center of
6 information where patrons can go to get more
7 information on what New York City parks offer
8 citywide for members with disabilities. As for the
9 men and women who have served our... our country as
10 members of the armed forces many of whom face
11 financial and social challenges upon returning home
12 New York City Parks plans to express our gratitude
13 through a new low priced recreation center
14 membership. New York... New York City Parks honors
15 our veterans at more than 270 memorials located in
16 our parks throughout the city and host military
17 memorial patriotic and celebratory events such as
18 Memorial Day, Flag Day, Veterans Day, and other
19 special military tributes throughout our city
20 commemorating their dedication to our country.
21 Specific to the subject of Intro 856 I'm proud to
22 share that Parks has been actively exploring the
23 creation of a new membership level for people with
24 disabilities and military veterans at our... at our
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1 recreation centers. Presently New York City Parks
2 offers affordable membership rates at recreation
3 centers citywide with annual memberships as low as
4 100 dollars for adults, 20 dollars for seniors and
5 young adults, and free memberships for youth under
6 the age of 18. In coordination with the Mayor's
7 Office for People with Disabilities and the Mayor's
8 Office of Veteran Affairs along with various
9 advocacy and stakeholder groups we are currently
10 preparing to pursue a rule change through the city
11 administrative procedure act also known as CAPA to
12 institute a 25-dollar membership package for
13 military veterans and people with disabilities. We
14 hope that this will encourage even more New Yorkers
15 to enjoy low cost opportunities to stay healthy and
16 active. We look forward to our continued
17 partnership with the council on this effort. We are
18 dedicated to ensuring that military veterans can
19 enjoy affordable access to opportunities to stay
20 healthy and active members in our Parks and
21 Recreation Centers. We commend Council Members
22 Levine and Chairman Ulrich with... and their
23 colleagues for their leadership and interest in
24 this issue as we continue an important conversation
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2 with this proposed legislation. We agree that the
3 creation of a new fee category would be a great
4 addition to our current membership packages. Parks
5 is committed to bringing to fruition the council's
6 vision of making a difference in the lives of
7 veterans and members with disabilities. We look
8 forward to continued collaboration with the city
9 council and the administration on this topic and we
10 will update you as we make progress in our effort
11 to institute this rule change to ensure our parks
12 and facilities can be enjoyed as many New Yorkers
13 as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify before you this afternoon. My colleagues
15 and I will be happy to answer any questions you may
16 have.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Wonderful. Thank
18 you Commissioner. And thank you for your very
19 positive words on the bill. We really appreciate
20 that. Glad to be working together with you on this.
21 How many members are... does the rec centers
22 currently have? Did... did I miss that?

23 ADENA LONG: We're just 163,000.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: How does that
25 compare to historical levels?

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2 ADENA LONG: Mm... Over... over the years
3 it's definitely increased but I can get you the
4 exact trends.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I understand that
6 when... or I've been led to believe that when you
7 raised fees in 2011 that there was a drop in
8 membership. Is that accurate?

9 ADENA LONG: We had an initial drop in
10 some of the levels but when we created the young
11 adult we actually had an... a bounce back. We had a...
12 we had an increase.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. Actually
14 Chris Sartori just passed me the... the numbers here.
15 So it was 158,000 in FY '11. Then you raised the
16 fees it went to 111. And now perhaps because of
17 these new discount categories it's back up to
18 159,000. How many are in the discount categories?

19 ADENA LONG: We'll have to get back to
20 you... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

22 ADENA LONG: Sorry.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. But the
24 159,000 would include free memberships for young
25 people, is that right?

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2 ADENA LONG: That's correct. And I
3 believe we're actually up to 163.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. This... this
5 is... might be last year's number. How does that
6 compare to capacity? Are we as a system serving as
7 many people as we could fit in the facilities?
8 Maybe it varies widely from center to center?

9 ADENA LONG: I believe that we can
10 handle a... a lot more capacity across the board.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So the... the... the
12 beauty of... of creating a discount membership
13 category for veterans and people with disabilities
14 is they may just be... may mean that we're bring new
15 people in without having to displace anybody
16 because we have capacity. So even that discounted
17 membership would still add to the bottom line of
18 the operations of the... of facilities. Is that... does
19 that sound right?

20 ADENA LONG: That sounds reasonable,
21 yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Have you all done a
23 cost estimate then on what our bill... what the
24 fiscal impact would be?
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2 ADENA LONG: We're currently looking at
3 that.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It's feasible that
5 it could be zero then right? Or... or negligible? It
6 could even have a net... a net positive impact
7 potentially?

8 ADENA LONG: Sorry we anticipate that
9 those members that are currently members that are...
10 will now be eligible for this new level would
11 offset potentially new...

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

13 ADENA LONG: ...membership coming in.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. Got it. Got
15 it. Okay. Does the Park Department break out a
16 single budget line for all the rec centers? Can you
17 tell me how much a year that's costing us?

18 ADENA LONG: We do but I do not have
19 that information.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Well then can
21 you tell me how much the total revenue off the rec
22 centers are? We can't really multiply because it's
23 different... even though we know the number there's
24 different levels right.

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ADENA LONG: Unfortunately, I do not...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

ADENA LONG: ...have that information
again.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright.

ADENA LONG: But we can get that to you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I'll be anxious to
hear that. Do you know the total staff level at rec
centers?

ADENA LONG: We have 357 full time
recreation staff at the rec centers.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: 357 full time? So
roughly 10 percent alright. You have 35 centers,
correct?

ADENA LONG: Roughly.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Why is that an
approximation? Can't we just count?

ADENA LONG: We can but it's not
necessarily 10 per center. There are some centers
that have...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: No but... Sorry the
number of centers you said roughly 35.

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2 ADENA LONG: No I'm sorry. There are...
3 [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it.

5 ADENA LONG: ...35.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. Okay.

7 ADENA LONG: Also there will be a 36th
8 opening hopefully this Fall; Ocean Breeze Track and
9 Field Athletic... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yes.

11 ADENA LONG: ...Complex on Staten Island.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yes, we're... we're
13 really excited about that. Does the staff include
14 any JTPs which folks that don't know it's a work
15 transition program for people on public assistance?

16 ADENA LONG: That's correct. We have
17 currently 199 JTPs that are generally assigned to
18 rec centers. Of that number approximately 95 are
19 half... are Parks Enforcement Patrol JTPs.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. So were you
21 counting that into the headcount, total headcount,
22 so that's additional?

23 ADENA LONG: That's on top of the 357.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So there are pep
25 officers on site? Is that right?

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2 ADENA LONG: That's a... that's correct.
3 But it's a combination of job training participant,
4 security officers, city seasonal aids, pep
5 officers, and shielded pep officers.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. Do you
7 expect that our bill would require increase in
8 staffing?

9 ADENA LONG: I believe that we can con...
10 you know sustain our level of operation at our
11 current levels although we're always happy to
12 increase our ranks.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. I'm going to
14 pause and note that we've been joined by our
15 colleague Alan Maisel from Brooklyn. And I'm also
16 going to pass the mic to Andy Cohen who I believe
17 has some questions... Oh and Jimmy Van Bramer came
18 and went. Alright.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you Chair.
20 Thank you Commissioner for your testimony. I... you
21 said each borough has a hub that is... I guess it's
22 fully ADA compliant and there's... and there's
23 equipment there specifically for people with
24 physical disabilities. Do you know where the hub is
25 in the Bronx?

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2 ADENA LONG: Yes, it's Rest Bronx
3 Recreation Center.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Do you know where
5 that is?

6 ADENA LONG: Jesup Avenue.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: You said... you
8 said there were 35 centers system wide. Do you have
9 a borough by borough breakdown of those?

10 ADENA LONG: There are six in the Bronx,
11 eight in Brooklyn, 13 in Manhattan, five in Queens,
12 and three in Staten Island, soon to be four.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you. I'm...
14 I'm good.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Was I correct in
16 stating earlier that every center is at least
17 partly accessible though not every part of every
18 facility is necessarily accessible? Is that
19 accurate? And could you... if so could you explain
20 that a little bit?

21 ADENA LONG: I think that's... that's a
22 good characterization. Many of our facilities... the
23 average age of the New York City rec centers are 65
24 years old. So in... in any cases that we've done new
25 improvements or built new we have built to... to ADA

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2 compliance. And where we can make retrofits and
3 modifications we have.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right but for
5 example you could have a first floor that was
6 accessible but you could have stairs to the second
7 floor right?

8 ADENA LONG: That is correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. Can you say
10 anything about the... the timeline for ongoing
11 modernization for accessibility? Are you getting
12 through a certain number of centers per year? Is
13 there a five-year plan on that? What... what's the...
14 what's the future look like?

15 ADENA LONG: The best I can tell you on
16 that is that as capital funding is made available
17 to make improvements to any of our facilities ADA
18 compliance is you know... along with bringing
19 buildings up to code is generally our first
20 priority. We don't have a timeline. It very... is
21 very much funding dependent.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well the good news
23 is thanks to Local Law 73 we're going to be able to
24 monitor this very closely. I think the... the law
25 also requires that you give us at least what's

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2 planned for the coming year. I could be remembering
3 that incorrectly. So when does that actually take
4 effect? You know when do we get the first plan?

5 ADENA LONG: First report is due the
6 end... December 2016.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. So that
8 report would then include the planned upgrades for
9 the coming calendar year? Is that right?

10 ADENA LONG: That's correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright well if you
12 can... maybe give us any sneak peaks since that's
13 still over a year away of... of any plans for example
14 for the calendar year of 2016 for upgrades? I think
15 that would be... we would appreciate knowing that. If
16 you... if you don't happen to know now if you could
17 get back to us on that.

18 FEMALE: Well I... I can tell you this. We
19 have approximately 48 million that have been
20 allocated to recreation center improvements across
21 the board since... that's in the budget currently.
22 We're... we've got about 38 million of that is for
23 capital projects that will be doing refurbishments
24 that will bring centers up to code including ADA
25 compliance. Three of those projects are imminent.

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2 We have the funding in... is in place and we have
3 project managers that have recently been hired.
4 Those projects are at St. Mary's in the Bronx,
5 Brownsville in Brooklyn, and Hansborough in
6 Manhattan.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: When you read out
8 the borough by borough numbers I couldn't help
9 notice that proportion to population there was a
10 wide variation. It seems like Queens at the moment...
11 sorry Jimmy Van Bramer left to hear this part, but
12 doesn't seem to be getting its fair share. Are
13 there long term plans to equalize that by opening
14 new centers in underserved parts of the city?

15 ADENA LONG: I think in general that's
16 you know what we'd like to see happen. Again it's...
17 it's so funding dependent. Currently what... what
18 funding we do have in place is to do renovations or
19 improvements to preexisting facilities. But again
20 you know we're happy to continue to have a
21 conversation about how we can increase the amount
22 of amenities.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But the one that
24 you built on Staten Island was that in last... the
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2 last ten-year capital plan? How did that get
3 funded?

4 ADENA LONG: It was a PlaNYC project.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Ah, got it. Okay.
6 That makes sense. What are the hours of the rec
7 centers?

8 ADENA LONG: They vary but they can be
9 as early as 6:00 a.m. and as late as 10:00 p.m. And
10 it depends on the... the volume, the use, and the
11 population that's using the facility.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Seven days a week?

13 ADENA LONG: Again they vary. All are at
14 least six and many are seven.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Have the
16 hours been a... a ping pong ball in the annual budget
17 dance the way hours for libraries are where they
18 threaten to cut a day and then the council fights
19 to restore it back and forth?

20 ADENA LONG: That hasn't happened as far
21 as I...

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

23 ADENA LONG: ...know.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So they've been...
25 been relatively insulated from that it sounds like.

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2 ADENA LONG: They have. Although we have
3 recently increased the number... the days of the week
4 for many centers. So we've increased, not cut back.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That's good to
6 hear, okay. Are the centers inspected regularly for
7 cleanliness the way that any park would be?

8 ADENA LONG: They are inspected on a
9 daily basis by center staff and... and any
10 cleanliness issues are dealt with the day of. The
11 rec centers are also part of the OMP Parks
12 Inspection Program. So they do receive bi-annual
13 inspections that are random.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Remind me what OMP
15 stands for.

16 ADENA LONG: Operations Management and
17 Planning.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. This is the
19 new data driven method of managing the department
20 is that right?

21 ADENA LONG: It's... it's... the... the
22 project itself is not that new. Parks inspection
23 program's been around for probably at least a
24 decade. But this is specific to facilities.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Got it. So twice a
3 year there's random... And can you say anything about
4 the... the average scores that they're getting?

5 ADENA LONG: I don't have the scores in
6 front of me but I do know that we fair quite well.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And is... I believe...
8 is the rating... is it a one to ten or is just a...
9 just a satisfactory/unsatisfactory?

10 ADENA LONG: It really does depend
11 because there's... we're rated on different features.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

13 FEMALE: So it's... it's not as... it's a
14 little bit quantitative and qualitative. Happy to
15 send you a... a sample of what that would look like.
16 And it's publically available on our website.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Aha, how
18 convenient. Alright. I'm going to pass back to
19 Council Member Cohen who has an additional
20 question.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Is... is there any
22 way that we... Do we have any way of in terms of
23 who's using... from the disability community who's
24 using the rec centers? Do we have any data on that
25 at all? Is there any way...

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2 ADENA LONG: That's not information that
3 we ask or pull.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Do you think that
5 information might be useful...

6 ADENA LONG: We do offer the adaptive
7 programming across the city so anecdotally we know
8 that you know we... we are serving that population
9 but we don't keep numbers and statistics with
10 regards to the number of people.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Do you collect
13 demographic data at all about... even if it's just
14 random samples, age range, racial ethnic data,
15 gender, any of that?

16 ADENA LONG: Only by age.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: You do by age
18 because you must give an age to sign up.

19 ADENA LONG: That's correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. But... but
21 have... haven't there been studies in other parks
22 properties to gage diversity of various backgrounds
23 among users?

24 ADENA LONG: I'm not familiar with any
25 that... that would actually call out ethnicity.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I... I... I've
3 certainly heard reports of the ethnic mix of user-
4 ship of outdoor pools for example, and beaches for
5 example but perhaps those are not generated by the
6 department.

7 ADENA LONG: It's possible that it can
8 be an outside group that's doing surveys visual or
9 otherwise.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Well... well
11 maybe Council Member Cohen and I will work on a
12 plan to generate a little bit more data on who's
13 using our facilities. I assume when someone comes
14 and wants to sign up for a discount at senior
15 membership they're asked to show a government
16 issued I.D. that shows proof of age, correct?

17 ADENA LONG: That's correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So how would you
19 envision one would prove disability status under
20 this new arrangement?

21 ADENA LONG: Well we're working with my
22 colleagues to identify appropriate identification.
23 It will likely be two or three, maybe even more,
24 forms that will be acceptable. It's important that
25 we choose identification that is popular and that..

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2 that individuals are actually pursuing and also
3 ones that are easily identifiable by our staff so
4 that there are no questions as to whether or not
5 the person is eligible.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right so you say
7 several... there'll be several options you mean. So...
8 and... and you're not talking about the proof of name
9 and residency but... but either a certification by a
10 doctor or maybe one of the advocates I'm sure can
11 help us out on this front. But it doesn't sound
12 like you've identified anyone from MOPD help... help
13 us out there?

14 ADENA LONG: I think we're... we're still
15 talking about what would be the most appropriate
16 identification. But they're mostly... for the most
17 part they're either state or federally issued
18 identification associated with that population.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: If you'd like to
20 jump in I'm... I... I'm curious to... to hear you maybe
21 reflect on how we do this in other New York City
22 programs. We must have a standard protocol at this
23 point, correct?

24 KLEO KING: Depends on the city
25 programs. For example, if you're trying to apply

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2 for access-a-ride you would need to submit medical
3 documentation. Here we were trying to stay away
4 from that type of intense documentation. So for
5 example we've been discussing would your access-a-
6 ride ID be an appropriate ID because you... the...
7 you've already gone through the process and the
8 city's already determined that you are eligible as
9 a person with a disability for access-a-ride.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So for something
11 like disability rent increase exemption, AKA DRIE,
12 that might be based on SSI eligibility or would you
13 happen to know that?

14 KLEO KING: Yes, because DRIE is for a
15 person with a disability of a certain income level
16 so it would... you would have to be looking at
17 identification based on income as well as
18 identification for the disability.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So that would be
20 even more restrictive than Access-A-Ride and I
21 assume you're trying to think broadly here. And
22 would some... Ms. Commissioner how you... you would
23 define disability, those cases where someone's
24 using a wheelchair it might be pretty clear but
25 what if someone is visually impaired for example?

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2 Would they... would you envision that they would
3 qualify for this discounted membership?

4 ADENA LONG: Absolutely as long as they
5 meet the eligibility requirements that... that we are
6 going to jointly identify and they're able to
7 receive those... those levels of identification. And
8 to my knowledge visually impaired still falls
9 within the realm of disability, so yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So for example for
11 Access-A-Ride would someone who's visually impaired
12 qualify?

13 KLEO KING: Yes, they would.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And what about
15 temporary disabilities? What if I'm going to be
16 using a wheelchair for six months?

17 ADENA LONG: I don't... I don't believe
18 that qualifies and I don't believe that we've begun
19 a dialogue about that.

20 CATHERINE LAPORTE: From MOVA's
21 perspective we're... we're satisfied that our
22 conversations are going well and the identification
23 will be those that are widely available among
24 veterans.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I assume there's a
3 standard federal government issued card proving
4 veteran status right?

5 CATHERINE LAPORTE: There is and IDNYC
6 serves as a great example.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So you're... IDNY it...
8 it... it labels you as a veteran? Ah, yeah that's
9 great. Okay so that would... that would clearly solve
10 the problem. But for people who didn't have... who
11 have missed the wonderful opportunity to get
12 municipal ID they would be able to use a federal
13 form of identification?

14 CATHERINE LAPORTE: Correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Got it. Okay.
16 Alright. I would... is that a... in addition to IDNYC
17 because I thought initially it did not provide for
18 veteran I... identity?

19 CATHERINE LAPORTE: To qualify for
20 veteran status federal there's a... a... a widely
21 available identification like a DD214 and others
22 that prove that you're a veteran.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Yes, but you're...
24 and one of the things when we developed IDNYC was
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2 to add veteran status and I don't believe we did
3 that in the first iteration of this.

4 CATHERINE LAPORTE: It is there.
5 Veteran... IDNYC with a veteran identifier is
6 available.

7 MATT DRURY: As of this summer I believe
8 it's a new... it's a new addition.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I may have voted
10 for it.

11 CATHERINE LAPORTE: And... and we thank
12 the council.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Actually I think
14 you're co-sponsor. Checking my notes here. We've
15 been joined by our colleague from Brooklyn, Council
16 Member Darlene Mealy, hello fellow committee
17 member. Alright thank you all very much. Very
18 appreciative. Alright we're going to call up our
19 first panel. Okay. Alright for our first panel
20 we're going to invite the one and only Tupper
21 Thomas from New Yorkers for Parks. We're also going
22 to invite up Samuel Anderson from the New York City
23 Veteran Alliance. Do you want to kick us off
24 Tupper? Excellent.

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2 TUPPER THOMAS: Do I say it again? Yes?
3 Yes. Good afternoon. I'm Tupper Thomas, New Yorkers
4 for Parks. And of course we totally support this
5 legislation. It's... it's... it's long overdue and
6 something that we think is very very important. We
7 also really want to support our rec centers. I
8 think the rec centers in New York City serve an
9 amazing function and have been so essential for all
10 these 65 years that they've apparently... many of
11 them been around. And I think it is one of the
12 thing that gets not enough funding and not enough
13 looked at. I'm glad that you'll be getting reports
14 back because they... our facilities that on Saturdays
15 and Sundays when I have gone are packed. Equipment
16 is very hard to have. It runs out quickly. Staffing
17 and particularly special staffing that has to be
18 brought in on an hourly basis. There's so many more
19 things that these rec centers could do in those
20 communities that they are located in already. It
21 would be great to have more rec centers. They are
22 very expensive. The last very beautiful one that
23 was put into Flushing Meadow has gorgeous
24 facilities. And so Queens although they don't have
25 as many has one of the most beautiful rec centers

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2 I've ever seen. So I... I think we want to always
3 want to remember that we're Parks and Recreation
4 and that the recreation part of it has got to be
5 better funded. These... the reason the... the increase
6 happened was because the Parks Department was going
7 to be cut and they had to find places to either
8 bring in more revenue or... or to cut staff. And so
9 the bringing in of new revenue which didn't as you
10 pointed out actually work doesn't even go back to
11 the Parks Department. It goes to the general fund.
12 So it doesn't even help to fund the rec centers.
13 The rec centers are still funded through the
14 regular Parks Department budget. And so I... I would
15 very much recommend to the city council, not to
16 sound like a broken record every time I come here,
17 that you should fund more things in the Parks
18 Department. But I think that... that Parks and
19 Recreation, the recreation part of our system has
20 to be much much better funded than it is now.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Do you know what we
22 spent on building the first... that... the new rec
23 center in Flushing?

24 TUPPER THOMAS: Oh I don't know. I'm
25 sure there's somebody here who knows.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It may have been in
3 the tens of millions. I'd be curious...

4 TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah it was...

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...to know.

6 TUPPER THOMAS: ...it was multi-millions
7 of dollars. I... I remember it has a ice skating
8 rink. It has like a swimming pool. It's got... it's
9 beautiful. So they are expensive. They're really
10 expensive and very expensive to run. It isn't
11 inexpensive. You have to have staff there. One of
12 the things that's clear is that there is more
13 capacity but it's not necessarily at the times that
14 everybody wants to come.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

16 TUPPER THOMAS: And so another thing
17 that I think recreation department can do more of
18 is to better... is to assist in... the council could
19 assist in ways to help their communities know more
20 about some of the odd off times that they're
21 available. I certainly know St. Mary's Parks in the
22 Bronx has been full every time I've seen it. It's
23 the Brownsville one that I also am familiar with.
24 It's always enormously packed as you know.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: This is good but...

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2 TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah but... but it means
3 the equipment runs out. It means that everything...
4 everything has to be redone and... and so I think the
5 funding is just totally essential. Clearly
6 everybody who can be using and needs these
7 facilities should be able to get... have access to
8 them, having more people with disabilities able to
9 use them now at a lower rate is great and obviously
10 our veterans so... youth, and seniors. So I think
11 it's really important that in doing that we also
12 think about how to best fund them and how to
13 provide more tax dollars to making them work.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Do you... do you
15 have... do you know or have an estimate on how much
16 we're spending a year on these centers?

17 TUPPER THOMAS: I don't have any idea. I
18 just know this because it came up as this topic and
19 I suddenly thought, oh my gosh I know a lot about
20 rec centers and they are not as well funded as they
21 should be. And of course the Parks Department's not
22 going to say that but I think... I think that that
23 it's something we will look into so that by the
24 time it comes to the budget hearings we will be
25 prepared to give you that number.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I think that's
3 great. And if we could look at historical trends as
4 well.

5 TUPPER THOMAS: Yes, yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That would be super
7 helpful.

8 TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I think that
10 Council Member Mealy has a question.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, I think she
12 answered it already. And it's maybe just a
13 statement. The rec center in Brownsville is always
14 crowded.

15 TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But we lost so
17 many other seniors and disability individuals
18 because of that fee.

19 TUPPER THOMAS: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So I hope we can
21 really try to now advocate to get them back.

22 TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I mean we lost a
24 substantial amount of people just because of that
25 price.

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TUPPER THOMAS: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I just wanted to make that statement. And..

TUPPER THOMAS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: ..thank you for asking for more money for them.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you very much Tupper. Very informative as always. Okay Mr. Anderson.

SAMUEL ANDERSON: Good afternoon

Chairman Levine, Council Member Cohen and Council Member Mealy. My name is Samuel Anderson. I'm the Vice Chairman of the Mayor's Veterans Advisory Board and I testify you... before you today on behalf of the New York City Veterans Alliance, its membership, and the veteran community at large. When speaking of New York City Parks veteran is not a word that's often affiliated with that because most people just doesn't see where it fits or how it coincides. Why would one... why would one think that a veteran... think of a veteran when thinking about a green space or a park? It is my goal today to provide insight as to what city parks means to veterans and most certainly what they meant for me

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2 being a New York City resident all my life and
3 thereafter a veteran. New York City's a daunting
4 place and can be a bit much for... to consumer for
5 those who visit. And for those who choose to make
6 this great city home the fast pace, the symphony of
7 car honks, loud music, and rumbling tracks is
8 something that you grow accustomed to over time.
9 That period of transition for a newcomer to... from...
10 for a newcomer becoming a tried and true New Yorker
11 is important. If it's good, you'll be a proud New
12 Yorker. If it's bad, you'll despise living here and
13 continue to look for your first opportunity to
14 leave. I was born and raised in Brooklyn where I've
15 spent... born and raised in Brooklyn and raised in
16 New York where I spent all my life. I even spent my
17 entire military career in New York minus the year
18 that I spent in Afghanistan yet despite all this
19 when I came home I was a stranger to this city and
20 it felt unknown to me. Neighborhoods had changed as
21 well as the faces in many of my old hangouts. I was
22 no longer a child enjoying the rush of all things
23 but a man who had to make his own way. The lights,
24 the fast paced pedestrians, and the overcrowded
25 metro were overwhelming to me and caused me to shy

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2 away from many outings with friends and family. The
3 parks were my only escape. First in Brownsville
4 Brooklyn where I lived I would journey to Prospect
5 Park. Though there are many people who frequented
6 there I was always able to find my own space where
7 I could read my college books and materials or lay
8 back and enjoy the surrounding activities. When I
9 moved to the Bronx the first thing that I did was
10 look for a park that would serve as my escape just
11 as Prospect Park did. This new park was Wave Hill.
12 And it was everything that I needed and then some.
13 It had more green space than one could ask for and
14 most important it was quiet and it had a moderate
15 amount of visitors. I visited this park a few times
16 a week but the fee of eight dollars per adults
17 limited my reasonable visits to probably about two
18 or three times per month within reason. The very
19 day... the very day that NYCID came out with the
20 veterans identifier this past summer I went and got
21 one. Was it because I needed New York City ID or
22 something else to carry? No, it was because it
23 meant a free membership for a year to Wave Hill and
24 many of New York City's community facilities. So
25 for this it meant that rather than the two or three

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2 visits per month I could visit Wave Hill as often
3 as I like for at least a year. The parks of New
4 York City were a big part of my transition as the
5 veterans group, the VA hospital, and friends and
6 family that I came home to. In my times of stress,
7 they were my relief and I hope that they can be the
8 same to all veterans who choose to call New York
9 home. I'm happy that our council members are
10 recognizing the value that green spaces and parks
11 have in the live our nation's heroes and I think
12 that the parks as a place of... place of tranquility
13 for veterans will become a part of the larger
14 conversation about veterans in transition. For
15 those reasons the New York City Veterans Alliance
16 strongly supports making facilities at New... at New
17 York City Parks as accessible and as affordable as...
18 as possible for veterans.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: You can continue.

20 It's okay.

21 SAMUEL ANDERSON: Parks are places of
22 tranquility of... of tranquility where a veteran like
23 myself can regain piece of mind. There are also
24 places for recreational activities that allow us to
25 challenge our minds and bodies in healthy outlets

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2 whether that be swimming pools, gyms, recreation
3 centers, athletic courts, game rooms, or other
4 places that allow us to find the tranquility of
5 focus and exertion. If we say truly we want
6 veterans to come home and feel at home in New York
7 City we must make our parks as accessible as
8 possible to them. Thank you for allowing me to
9 testify and thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Mr.
11 Anderson. What service were you in?

12 SAMUEL ANDERSON: I was an army medic
13 for seven years.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And you did one
15 tour in Afghanistan... [cross-talk]

16 SAMUEL ANDERSON: One tour in
17 Afghanistan.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: My goodness. Well
19 first and foremost thank you for your service and
20 for the service you're now offering to veterans
21 here in New York City.

22 SAMUEL ANDERSON: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: You mentioned that
24 you were on a Mayoral appointed commission, is that
25 correct?

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2 SAMUEL ANDERSON: Yes, the... the Mayor's
3 Advisory Board for... Veteran Advisory Board for New
4 York.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Understood. Do you
6 know how many veterans there are approximately in
7 the city?

8 SAMUEL ANDERSON: Around about 220,000.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That's a big
10 number. Do you have a sense... even if just in
11 general terms how heavily veterans are using
12 recreation centers in the city?

13 SAMUEL ANDERSON: I don't. But if I were
14 to speak from personal experience I would say not
15 very much. Through veterans that I have met at
16 Parks... old recreation centers when I was at the
17 Brownsville... Though the veteran community in places
18 like Brownsville and Fordham where I live now are
19 large I don't believe their recreation centers are
20 heavily used by them.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: To what extent do
22 you think a discounted fee would encourage more to
23 come into the centers?

24 SAMUEL ANDERSON: I think it would be an
25 incredible encouragement as far as, like I

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2 mentioned in my testimony, as far as a healthy
3 outlet for veterans because this is the life that
4 we've lived. We work out. We go to places. We enjoy
5 green spaces. And places such as Van Cortlandt
6 Park... now I'm not a golfer myself but if golfing
7 were affordable I sure would learn.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well just... just
9 stay away from the trump golf course in the Bronx
10 please. 200 dollars for a game. Not a good
11 investment. What was your rank sir?

12 SAMUEL ANDERSON: I ETS... Sergeant E5.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright well
14 Sergeant Anderson thank you very much for all
15 you've contributed here today.

16 SAMUEL ANDERSON: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. Okay.
18 Call up... we're going to call up our next panel now
19 which will include the indomitable Edith Prentiss
20 as well as Patrick Bryant.

21 EDITH PRENTISS: Hello my name is Edith
22 Prentiss. I'm the second...

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Don't worry about
24 that.

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2 EDITH PRENTISS: I'm the second VP... I'm
3 the first... I'm sorry the first VP for DIA for
4 Legislative Affairs. I'm the President of 504 and
5 other such fun things. I think that it's really
6 important to say that I think when there was the
7 fae... fare increase I certainly have been a member
8 and if I remember correctly it was like 50 dollars,
9 40 or 50 dollars. When it went to 150 that was a
10 considerable... up particularly for those of us who
11 at that point... because we didn't have DRIE and
12 we're not eligible for EPIC. So our income to the
13 disparities of benefits that seniors get really...
14 you know I mean... and don't tell me it's... it's
15 cheaper than Blink or whatever. It doesn't matter
16 to me. I mean I can't afford it no matter what you
17 say. I think that there are many people with
18 disabilities who were members because it's a great
19 therapeutic swim. But at that cost you couldn't
20 afford it. I think it's really important that we
21 acknowledge that we are constantly being told about
22 healthier and activities and the fact that... I mean...
23 It's sort of interesting to hear that you know
24 nine... 65 years old... I mean that's only 1950. It's
25 certainly were federal regulations about

1 accessibility along the years. You know
2 accessibility and civil rights for disability did
3 not come into existence in 1990 with the ADA. There
4 were preceding discussions and laws. I think it's
5 important that we look at that. And it's a little
6 distressing when we start talking about income. It...
7 it's interesting that it's only when you talk about
8 the disability community that we start talking
9 about well do we really have money for this. You
10 know it's not your year. If we have money left
11 over. Etcetera. I think that people with
12 disabilities need to be funded at the same amount.
13 And please don't put that 30 percent in. I couldn't
14 figure out 30 percent of 150 dollars. Just 25-
15 dollars parity with youth and with seniors. And
16 it's important to know that seniors did not get hit
17 with the... with the 150. Seniors were already at 25.
18 What was added was youth. So that was important.
19 And that's pretty much for my testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. Just to
22 clarify the legislation did... does say that the fee
23 would be no... no more than 20 percent of the high...
24 [cross-talk]

25 EDITH PRENTISS: Doesn't it say 30?

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I... I... I think it says 20 percent...

EDITH PRENTISS: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...of the... But...

EDITH PRENTISS: Of the highest.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...remember we're writing legislation for the ages and... [cross-talk]

EDITH PRENTISS: Right but...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...so...

EDITH PRENTISS: ...if suddenly Parks decides or the city decides to increase that adult to 500 the amount that people with disabilities would be charged would be totally out of line with young adults and with seniors. It's really important considering the fact that no one questions that there are seniors who... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I'm sorry... [cross-talk]

EDITH PRENTISS: ...work and have...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I... I think I'm understanding.

EDITH PRENTISS: ...good jobs.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: You're saying that it should just be pegged...

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EDITH PRENTISS: Just...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I mean but of course...

EDITH PRENTISS: ...give us the same number.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...they could raise the senior rate and then...

EDITH PRENTISS: They can raise the senior rate and they'd be raising ours but they wouldn't be raising ours different.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Understood.

EDITH PRENTISS: From... and I think that's the simplicity. When you start talking about percentages... you know we haven't done those in years. And I don't think they have them in common core.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yep.

EDITH PRENTISS: You know that... that weird little box, please. I... you know...

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: As the father of a seventh grader I can assure yes they're still... they're still being taught.

EDITH PRENTISS: I would just like...

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I want... I do want
to emphasize another...

EDITH PRENTISS: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...point you made...

EDITH PRENTISS: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...which is very
important. Some people might say in an era where
planet fitness is out there for 10 dollars a month
or Blink, similar price, why do we even need these
subsidized rec centers. I'm going to answer the
question.

EDITH PRENTISS: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay you can... you
can... you can elaborate as well. But these discount
gyms make no provisions for people with
disabilities. And very few. They... they rarely offer
pools which are often...

EDITH PRENTISS: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: ...critical in
rehabilitative work. I'm not aware of them offering
weight lifting machines, nodis [sp?] machines that
are designed to accommodate people with
disabilities.

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2 EDITH PRENTISS: I will say that Victor
3 Calise has surveyed a number of them and has worked
4 well with both Blink and fitness planet. But in... I
5 agree with you. I mean like you know right on
6 Broadway at 150 whatever where it's all the windows
7 upstairs. So I doubt they have any equipment
8 downstairs. And where they're going to be in the GW
9 when it gets... finished getting you know rebuilt,
10 god help us, again that will be on an upper floor.
11 There will be elevators but the amount of
12 accessible equipment I think it's very problematic
13 for all... I mean Health and Racquet Club has like no
14 accessible equipments in general. You know so there
15 are lots of places with lots of differential
16 equipment issues.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Excellent.

18 EDITH PRENTISS: I just like to say I
19 also have testimony that was handed to you from
20 Deborah Grithe [sp?] and her main thing was similar
21 to my statement; the you know cost of our budget,
22 the issues of we're being you know pressured to
23 move into healthier existences and rec centers
24 would be very important although there are still
25 major problems with availability of access... you

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2 know availability of accessible equipment. I mean
3 for example let's just take Washington Heights. We
4 have J Hood Wright and we have Highbridge. And J
5 Hood Wright runs after school programs. So the
6 accessible entry is through the school program
7 where you're not supposed to be entering during the
8 program. There's... there are steps going into the
9 equipment area of course. I had that... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: We're going to have
11 to wrap up because I do want to give Mr. Bryant a
12 chance to speak. Mr. Bryant.

13 PATRICK BRYANT: Is it on? Yeah that's
14 what I press... I pressed. Hello, my name is Patrick
15 Bryant, US Army vet. I'm here to talk about the
16 fees. And I... I feel you know lowering the fees is
17 great because you know I... I go there for therapy.
18 And I also reached out to my insurance companies
19 also, the VA, to participate as far as monies
20 because they turnt [phonetic], they told me that if
21 I go to a place you know for services as far as
22 swimming or whatnot weights they said they would
23 pay you know the fees. I said well if it's already
24 low I said what can you contribute you know for
25 maybe other vets besides myself. And the VA said

1 well we're on board, we just have to have the
2 communication and stuff like that. I advocate for
3 different programs for disabilities also.. veterans.
4 And you know I do a lot of volunteer work. And I
5 also work with the mobile food trucks and carts
6 around the parks. And right now I'm working with a
7 new project called Move Systems which you know have
8 different companies coming in would be able to
9 generate monies towards these projects as far as
10 these parks because.. advocate with this all the
11 time. Now the.. the food carts are different from
12 the ones they.. that they have out there now. They
13 are eco-green. They have solar panels, free Wi-Fi
14 system, digital visual ads where I sit on part of
15 the cart could be New York City kiosk to you know
16 let people know the different program events and
17 other things that's going on. And you'll have more
18 contribution with people coming to these places
19 because we're already in the parks, streets, and
20 everything like that. And we interact with many
21 thousands of people if not millions daily with all
22 the food carts.. out. And then you have the free Wi-
23 Fi system that captures people for you know
24 promoted apps, links, livestream, all categories.
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2 And it interacts with the digital visual ads. So I
3 said all these monies could be projected... you know
4 it's not directly coming out of our pockets but can
5 directly go into the city's pockets for these
6 different things that we know we should be paying.
7 And I also advocate... advocate on the insurances and
8 our new carts with... has GPS, you know taxes and
9 stuff because you know we need to pay something to
10 give a little bit back. So I agree you know with
11 you guys lowering the fees. But I also agree it's
12 a... it's a... it's a double take. We have to give and
13 we have to you know take. But there's a lot of
14 opportunities through the VA system that's offered
15 but they ask for communication. And I tell them all
16 the time, they say you know where do you go for
17 your therapy and I say too Varick Street swimming
18 and stuff like that. They say what do you need from
19 us. I said sometime maybe somebody to volunteer to
20 help me sometimes as if... because I'm a little sore.
21 But you know there's a lot of opportunities there.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much
23 Mr. Bryant. Tell us where did you serve?

24 PATRICK BRYANT: I served US Army
25 Rangers; 1st 71st Ranger group. I was overseas.

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

Well thank you very much for your service. Alright
what was your rank?

PATRICK BRYANT: I'm a Staff Sergeant.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright well
Sergeant Bryant thank you for coming in today.
Alright. Okay this concludes our hearing. Thank you
all for joining us.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 6, 2015