

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID  
WASTE MANAGEMENT

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March 4, 2022  
Start: 10:33 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: CHAIR SANDY NURSE

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Sandy Nurse  
Kristin Richardson Jordan  
Chi Ossé  
Marjorie Velázquez  
Amanda Farías  
Nantasha Williams  
Selvena Brooks-Powers  
Gale A. Brewer  
Erik Bottcher  
Darlene Mealy  
Julie Menin  
James Gennaro

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Edward Grayson  
Bridget Anderson  
Gregory Anderson  
Stephen Harbin  
Eric Goldstein  
Justin Wood  
Lynda Nguyen  
Carlos Castell Croke  
Lonnie Portis  
Nora Tjossem  
Claire Mifflin  
Roberto Camacho  
Justin Green  
Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli  
Renee Crowley  
Sara Lind  
David Hurd  
Kate Wimsatt  
Jasmine McPherson  
Allison Allen  
Alexander Hunt  
Lisa Bloodgood  
Larry Marcus  
Irene VanSyke  
Jane Sheldon  
Debbie Lee Cohen  
Joyce Bials  
Anna Sacks  
Anna Chan  
Max Drury  
Karina Hernandez  
Jonas Schaller  
Elizabeth Ascietuno

Gillian Langdon  
Joe Sawar  
Molly Culver  
Avromy Segal  
Rachana Shah  
Sandy Renz  
Brandon Zwagerman

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3 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Get the computer started.

4 SGT. LEONARDO: Cloud is rolling.

5 SGT. PEREZ: Backup is rolling.

6 SGT. LEONARDO: Good morning, and welcome  
7 to today's remote New York City Council hearing for  
8 the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste  
9 Management. At this time, we ask that council  
10 members and council staff please turn on their video  
11 for verification purposes. To minimize disruptions,  
12 please place cell phones and electronic devices to  
13 silent or vibrate. If you have testimony you wish to  
14 submit for the record, you may do so via email at  
15 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov), once again, that's  
16 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). We thank you for your  
17 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Great. Thank you.  
19 Good morning everyone. I'm Council Member Nurse,  
20 Chair of the Sanitation Committee. Thank you for  
21 joining our first hearing of the Sanitation Committee  
22 for 2022, clean streets and expanding vital  
23 sanitation services. First, I would like to  
24 acknowledge my colleagues here. We have Council  
25 Member Kristin Richardson-Jordan, Council Member Chi

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2 Osse, Council Member Marjorie Velazquez. Thank you  
3 for being here and I'm going to turn it over to  
4 acting committee counsel Jessica Steinberg Albin to  
5 go over some procedural items.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

7 ALBIN: Thank you, Chair. I am Jessica Steinberg  
8 Albin, acting counsel to the Sanitation and Solid  
9 Waste Management Committee of the New York City  
10 Council. Before we begin, I want to remind everyone  
11 that you will be on mute until you are called to  
12 testify, when you will be unmuted by the host. I  
13 will be calling on panelist to testify. Please  
14 listen for your name to be called. I will be  
15 periodically announcing who the next panelist will  
16 be. The first panelist to give testimony will be  
17 Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the Department of  
18 Sanitation. I will call you when it your turn to  
19 speak. For the question and answer period only, we  
20 will also be joined by Deputy Commissioner Bridget  
21 Anderson, Deputy Commissioner Gregory Anderson, and  
22 Chief of Cleaning Operations Stephen Harbin; all from  
23 the Department of Sanitation. During the hearing, if  
24 council members would like to ask a question of the  
25 administration or a specific panelist, please use the

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2 Zoom raise hand function and I will call on you in  
3 order. We will limit council member questions to  
4 five minutes, which includes the time it takes to  
5 answer your questions. I will now pass it to Chair  
6 Nurse to give an opening statement. Chair.

7 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, Jessica,  
8 and I would like to (inaudible) today. Thank you  
9 everyone. Thank you for being here this morning.  
10 Greetings and thank you to committee members,  
11 advocates, the department of sanitation and  
12 Commissioner Edward Grayson for joining us today.  
13 Welcome to the first hearing of the Committee on  
14 Sanitation and Solid Waste for 2022. We'll be  
15 discussing clean streets and the need to restore and  
16 expand vital sanitation services. I want to start by  
17 specifically thanking the New York City Department of  
18 Sanitation and especially our frontline sanitation  
19 workers for all their hard work over the last two  
20 years. Keeping our city clean is an incredibly  
21 difficult job to wake up and do every single day, and  
22 it's a job we all have been doing despite the  
23 pandemic, despite the change in climate, and  
24 throughout the daily challenges we encounter. So our  
25 city thanks you very much. DSNY has tried to do the

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2 best they can to provide vital sanitation services  
3 despite the ongoing cuts to the agency's budget, but  
4 those cuts have unfortunately had a devastating  
5 impact on the cleanliness, safety and quality of life  
6 in our communities, and our city is currently facing  
7 an unprecedented sanitation crisis. According to 311  
8 data, we have seen the number of complaints from  
9 missed collections and dirty conditions generally  
10 increase over the past few years. Neighborhoods  
11 across Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx  
12 have seen an increasing number of rat sightings and  
13 complaints including the neighborhoods I represent in  
14 the 37th. Whether it's litter baskets on the street  
15 corners overflowing with trash, street drains stuffed  
16 thick with litter, (inaudible) cars, the infamous  
17 mountains backed on our sidewalks, illegal dumping,  
18 or the growing rat problem, it's clear that the  
19 quality of life for New Yorkers navigating our  
20 streets has dropped drastically, and the solution is  
21 very simple. We must acknowledge that the recovery  
22 of our city needs to require significant investments  
23 in assuring clean streets at the same quality for  
24 every single block in the city. The short-term goal  
25 of addressing the litter and rat problem must be

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2 coupled with investment, innovation, and aggressive  
3 action on meeting New York City's zero waste and  
4 environmental justice goals. In 2015, New York City  
5 adopted a goal, zero waste to landfills by 2030, and  
6 we are very much behind on meeting this very critical  
7 benchmark. New York City must focus on advancing  
8 sustainable waste management strategies and tackling  
9 climate change through increased recycling, universal  
10 organics collection, real accountability, and waste  
11 equity. Without these key elements, the city will  
12 only continue to pay for growing waste export cost in  
13 exchange for short-term savings. We will only  
14 continue to leave disadvantaged communities behind.  
15 An example is organics. Organics collection is on  
16 the chopping block again, sadly, and there are real  
17 challenges to making this work, but just because it's  
18 hard, doesn't mean it's not worth doing. When the  
19 city implemented mandatory recycling three decades  
20 ago, it seemed like an insurmountable challenge.  
21 Yet, now it's largely a part of New Yorkers day to  
22 day, and one day, the universal curbside organics  
23 collection will also be part of our day to day, and I  
24 am very much looking forward to it. Today, we will  
25 hear testimony from city residents, advocates,



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2 workers, and the Department of Sanitation on the  
3 extraordinary need for protecting and expanding vital  
4 sanitation services. We hope the testimonies here  
5 today will support the admin's administration in  
6 understanding that equitably clean streets and  
7 immediate action to put New York City back on track  
8 to zero waste goals cannot be negotiated and must be  
9 fully funded. I want to thank my team Alfred  
10 Hernandez (SP?), Mohammed Khan (SP?), and Brian  
11 Hickey (SP?) for their hard work on pulling this  
12 hearing together. I would also like to thank Jessica  
13 Albin, (inaudible) for supporting me as Chair and  
14 thank you to all the New Yorkers who are here giving  
15 testimony. So, I'm going to be short on my  
16 questions, but I'm going to turn it back over our  
17 moderator to lay out a few things.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

19 ALBIN: Thank you very much, Chair, and I just want  
20 to recognize some more council members who have  
21 joined us. We have been joined by Council Member  
22 Farias, Council Member Williams, and Council Member  
23 Brooks-Powers. Now, we will call on Commissioner  
24 Grayson of the Department of Sanitation to testify.  
25 Before we begin, I will administer the oath.

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2 Commissioner Grayson, Deputy Commissioner Bridget  
3 Anderson, Deputy Commissioner Gregory Anderson, and  
4 Chief of Cleaning Operation Stephen Harbin. I will  
5 call on each of you individually for a response.

6 Please raise your right hands. Do you affirm to tell  
7 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth  
8 before these committees and to respond honestly to  
9 council member questions. Commissioner Grayson.

10 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

12 ALBIN: Deputy Commissioner Bridget Anderson.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON: I  
14 do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

16 ALBIN: Deputy Commission Gregory Anderson.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREGORY ANDERSON: I  
18 do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

20 ALBIN: Chief of Cleaning Operations Stephen Harbin.

21 CHIEF OF CLEANING OPERATIONS STEPHEN

22 HARBIN: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

24 ALBIN: Thank you very much. Commissioner Grayson,  
25 you may begin when ready.

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2 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you.

3 Good afternoon Chair Nurse and members of the City  
4 Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste  
5 Management. I am Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the  
6 New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am  
7 joined today by Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner  
8 for Recycling and Sustainability, Gregory Anderson,  
9 Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs,  
10 and Stephen Harbin, Chief of Cleaning Operations, and  
11 we thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I  
12 want to welcome you all to the committee, including  
13 both new and returning members. The department and  
14 this committee, as well as the entire council, have a  
15 longstanding tradition of collaboration, dialogue,  
16 and advancement. I look forward to continuing that  
17 tradition with each of you. We share the same  
18 commitment to our city to improve the quality of life  
19 and support thriving neighborhoods across the five  
20 boroughs, and to building sustainable waste  
21 management systems. I look forward to working with  
22 you to advance these goals. Our department's mission  
23 is to keep New York City health, safe, and clean.  
24 I've been a member of this department for 23 years  
25 now, and my parents were as well for decades before

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2 me. I'm proud to continue our department's more than  
3 140-year legacy of service to New Yorkers. There is  
4 no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has created  
5 substantial challenges for all of us. Budget cuts  
6 and restorations, behavior change and operational  
7 challenges have all reinforced the importance, not  
8 only of investing in sanitation services, but also in  
9 working with individuals, community leaders, elected  
10 officials, and others to keep our city clean. The  
11 topic of this hearing is a broad one, and my  
12 testimony today will highlight a few area where we  
13 face both the greatest challenges and opportunities  
14 in our efforts to deliver on this critical mission.  
15 Afterwards, my team and I will be happy to answer the  
16 questions.

17 Over the department's history, our  
18 services have been funded nearly entirely by city tax  
19 levy funds. This means that our budget is often  
20 closely tied to the cyclical period of expansion and  
21 contraction in the overall city budget. However, we  
22 sit at the tail end of decisions made by  
23 manufacturers, corporate executives, retailers,  
24 marketers, and individual consumers who determine how  
25 much and what kind of waste we must manage. The

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2 governor's proposal for extended produced  
3 responsibility for package and paper products would  
4 create transformational change in this relationship  
5 requiring upstream manufacturers and retailers to  
6 take some financial responsibility for the end of  
7 life for these products. This policy would require  
8 these manufacturers to pay for the operation of  
9 curbside recycling programs statewide including here  
10 in New York City. In short, this program could bring  
11 as much as \$100 million dollars or more to New York  
12 City each year which could free up funds for  
13 investment and recycling outreach and education, new  
14 waste diversion programs and other vital sanitation  
15 services. DYNY strongly supports this resolution  
16 sponsored by Speakers Adams being considered today,  
17 and I encourage you to work with your colleagues at  
18 the state legislator to advance this important  
19 proposal. All 8.8 million New Yorkers as well as  
20 millions of visitors and commuters have a role to  
21 play in keeping our city clean. Litter and trash do  
22 no just magically appear on city streets. Each  
23 piece, bag, or pile has a person associated with it.  
24 Someone who tossed it on the ground, dumped it on the  
25 corner, or threw it out a car window. I ask all New

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2 Yorkers to do the right thing. Don't litter. Use  
3 our corner litter baskets properly. Clean up after  
4 your pet. Move your car for the alternate side  
5 parking. Sweep the sidewalk in front of your home or  
6 business, and if you see a litter condition that  
7 needs DSNY's attention, please let us know by calling  
8 311. Our core street cleaning services include  
9 mechanical street sweeping and litter basket  
10 collection. DSNY has more than 23,000 litter baskets  
11 citywide which are intended for use by pedestrians  
12 including residents, commuters, and tourists to  
13 dispose of items that they make as they make their  
14 way around the city. Litter baskets are primarily  
15 placed in commercial districts and transit halls,  
16 areas with higher concentration of pedestrian  
17 traffic. Prior to the pandemic, DSNY was funded to  
18 run 736 litter basket trucks each week. In July  
19 2020, that number was reduced to 272 per week.  
20 Today, DSNY is funded to run 588 litter basket trucks  
21 each week. That is a 116 percent increase from the  
22 service levels at the depths of the pandemic budget  
23 cut. A portion of this funding comprise of 8.6  
24 million and 136 weekly litter basket trucks in total  
25 was funded as a one-time initiative for FY22 in the

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2 adopted budget. We will continue to work with the  
3 mayor's office and city council to advocate for the  
4 renewal of these supplemental basket trucks and we  
5 will continue to have discussions with the  
6 administration and RNB regarding baseline funding  
7 levels for critical litter basket collection service.  
8 The second core component of cleaning program is the  
9 mechanical sweeping. For nearly 70 years, the city  
10 has used mechanical brooms operated by sanitation  
11 workers to clean our streets including along the curb  
12 line. Alternate side parking, ASP, is a crucial tool  
13 in ensuring these brooms are effective, allowing  
14 access to the curb during the scheduled sweeping  
15 window in residential and commercial areas alike.  
16 Mechanical brooms sweep up litter, leaves, and other  
17 small debris in and along the curb lines, but they  
18 only work if driver move their cars for the posted  
19 street cleaning and other parking regulations. Since  
20 2020, ASP frequency has been reduced to just one time  
21 per week in residential areas that previously had  
22 more frequent sweeping. While initially implemented  
23 as part of the city's social distancing programs,  
24 this change was extended through the budget cuts last  
25 year. The reduction in sweeping frequency has not

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2 only reduced the number of opportunities to clean  
3 along the curb line, but it also reduced the rate of  
4 compliance on the days when sweeping regulations  
5 remain in effect. For some drivers, the risk of a  
6 \$65 ticket once a week is simply the cost of free  
7 parking on the city street. We are working with the  
8 administration to evaluate the frequency of ASP  
9 regulations and determine the future of this program  
10 going forward. In the meantime, we urge you to talk  
11 to your constituents and help them understand the  
12 importance of moving the vehicle on ASP days. The  
13 department has also created the precision cleaning  
14 initiative with teams to conduct targeted cleanups of  
15 litter, illegal dumping, and overflowing litter  
16 baskets. These conditions are eye sores that affect  
17 New Yorker's quality of life and threaten New York  
18 City's recovery. Teams are dispatched based on DSNY  
19 field observations, 311 complaints, and referrals  
20 from other city agencies and community stakeholders.  
21 This initiative celebrates its one-year anniversary  
22 next week, and to date, the PCI crews have collected  
23 nearly 17,000 eye sore conditions and emptied 46,500  
24 additional litter baskets citywide. In the past  
25 year, the department has greatly expanded our



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2 community cleanup program, working with volunteers  
3 and community partners across the five boroughs.  
4 Department lends tools, trash bags, brooms, and dust  
5 pans to volunteers and can now deliver these tools  
6 directly to the volunteers with our community cleanup  
7 van. The department has partnered with an estimated  
8 7200 New Yorkers on 278 volunteer cleanups during  
9 fiscal year 2021. That's nearly triple the number  
10 before COVID crisis in FY19. In the first eight  
11 months of FY22, we have partnered on 146 cleanups  
12 with many more to come as we head into spring. This  
13 is another area where we'd love to partner with each  
14 one of you to help keep us, all our communities in  
15 New York City clean. On our zero waste programs, in  
16 2015, the city established a goal of sending zero  
17 waste to landfills building off the department's  
18 robust curb side recycling program and several other  
19 diversion programs. In the last eight years, DSNY  
20 has built a foundation of programs, policies, and  
21 critical technical support and community engagement  
22 approaches to move towards that goal. However, the  
23 COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted our steady progress  
24 and we are working to restore and expand programs to  
25 get back on track towards this goal. Organic waste,

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2 including food scraps and yard waste, is the most  
3 significant contributor of waste related greenhouse  
4 gas emissions, and is also the largest fraction of  
5 the New York City's waste stream, one-third in total.  
6 Over the last decade, DSNY has grown to be a national  
7 leader in providing drop off opportunities to host  
8 compost food scraps. We have expanded the program to  
9 210 sites citywide, the largest in the program's  
10 history, including at least one in every community  
11 board. In FY22, DSNY's budget includes an additional  
12 \$3.5 million dollars in funds to support the  
13 expansion of community compost and food scrap drop  
14 off sites to our current levels, and we look forward  
15 to further discussions with OMB and the mayor's  
16 office regarding the program going forward. Last  
17 October, DSNY restarted curbside composting which had  
18 been suspended in 2020 due to the fiscal crisis.  
19 This iteration of the program asked buildings and  
20 residents to sign up and express interest in  
21 receiving weekly curbside composting service.  
22 Enrollment opened in August, and we have received  
23 more than 61,000 unique signups to date, representing  
24 more than 43,000 addresses. We currently offer  
25 service to residents in seven community districts.

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2 We are working with OMB and the mayor's office to  
3 evaluate this program with a goal of increasing both  
4 equity and efficiency, and we are not planning to  
5 expand additional districts at this time. The  
6 department has also expanded non-curbside services to  
7 promote reuse and recycling of other products  
8 including (inauible)NYC, Refashion NYC, and E-Cycle  
9 NYC. Since 2014, these programs have diverted more  
10 than 400,000 tons of waste or refuse for reuse or  
11 recycling. Today, free on call apartment building  
12 pickups are provided to more than 923,000 households  
13 for electronics recycling and more than 200,000  
14 households and hundreds of commercial industrial  
15 facilities for textile reuse, and these programs  
16 continue to grow. DSNY also works to reduce the  
17 improper and dangerous disposal of hazardous products  
18 including electronics, household chemicals, and  
19 rechargeable batteries. In 2015, New York state law  
20 banned the disposal of unwanted electronics in  
21 landfills, instead requiring electronic manufacturers  
22 and retailers to establish protocols and programs to  
23 collect these products for proper recycling. While  
24 this law has its flaws, it has been successful in  
25 diverting thousands of tons of electronics from

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2 landfill. DSNY operates the free E-cycle New York  
3 City program for electronic recycling in apartment  
4 buildings with ten or more units and accepts  
5 electronics for recycling at our safe disposal event  
6 and special waste sites in each borough. We  
7 currently offer curbside electronics collection in  
8 Staten Island, but this program is not funded in  
9 future fiscal years. State law also requires certain  
10 retailers take back rechargeable batteries for  
11 recycling. Unlike more common alkaline batteries,  
12 rechargeable batteries including lithium iron  
13 batteries are dangerous products that can cause fires  
14 and pose a threat to employees of both DSNY and our  
15 recycling vendors. Last year, an improperly disposed  
16 rechargeable battery started a large fire in a paper  
17 recycling barge at our 59th Street MDS. Thanks to  
18 the quick action by DSNY and FDNY members, the  
19 facility suffered no major damage, and thankfully,  
20 there were only minor injuries involved. These  
21 events are increasing common at facilities in New  
22 York City and around the country, and it is  
23 imperative that residents properly recycle these  
24 products. In state law, which overruled the previous  
25 city law, does not allow for local enforcement by

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2 DSNY. It also excludes the growing number of  
3 rechargeable batteries in E-mobility devices  
4 including electric bikes, mopeds, and scooters. DSNY  
5 is working with the fire department and our  
6 counterparts across the state to raise awareness  
7 about the potential danger of these products, and we  
8 are hopeful that the state legislature will amend the  
9 current law to cover these products on our changing  
10 streetscapes. The Department is exploring new models  
11 for waste set up and collection, including approaches  
12 that will move waste set out from the sidewalk and  
13 into the roadway. This program called Clean Curbs  
14 seeks to test this new approach which can contain  
15 waste, reduce rodents, improve quality of life, and  
16 increase mobility in a variety of context across the  
17 city. We are currently in the solicitation process  
18 to select an MWBE vender to test the clean curbs  
19 model for residential waste on a small scale.

20 Potentially, a first in a series of pilots that will  
21 inform our future plan. In December, we unveiled a  
22 pilot network of smart bins. On staff and automated  
23 food scrap drop off bins controlled with a smart  
24 phone or RFID card. These hold promise of an  
25 expanded network of drop off sites available to

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2 residents and visitors who will be there 24/7. We  
3 are working to implement new rules effective next  
4 months that require new large residential buildings  
5 to submit waste management plans at the beginning of  
6 the planning process so that they can account for the  
7 impacts of the waste management in the building  
8 design and its operation. DSNY is also a close  
9 partner with the Department of transportation and  
10 other agencies seeking to transform our streetscapes  
11 to make them safer, healthier, and more vibrant  
12 public spaces. This winter, we were testing an  
13 expanded fleet of 30 mini plows to clear snow from  
14 bike lanes and other public space infrastructure. We  
15 are working to procure these units for ongoing use  
16 and are in discussing with OMB and the mayor's office  
17 regarding staffing needs to provide cleaning and snow  
18 clearing services in the longer term. As the city  
19 continues to change its streetscapes, we will work  
20 with our partners to adapt our services to maintain  
21 these new spaces. In conclusion, all work on these  
22 important topics is far from done. We continue to  
23 expand and hone our programs, invest in new  
24 technologies and infrastructure and work to improve  
25 the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of our

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2 operations. The department is currently planning for  
3 an update waste characterization study required by  
4 city law to be released in early 2024. This study  
5 will tell us what is in our waste stream, what we're  
6 currently capturing in our recycling and diversion  
7 programs and how the COVID-19 pandemic has  
8 fundamentally changed our waste. This study will  
9 inform the planning for our updated comprehensive  
10 solid waste management plan, required by state law to  
11 be completed in 2026. This study and plan will lay  
12 the groundwork for the future of our services,  
13 policy, and programs and we look forward to working  
14 with the council to plan for this future. I want to  
15 again welcome the new members to this council and to  
16 this committee and congratulate you on a role you  
17 will play in this vital work. On behalf of all 9700  
18 employees, I want to thank the city council for your  
19 support in our efforts to clean our streets,  
20 sidewalks and public spaces. Our frontline workers  
21 are the true heroes in this effort, working day after  
22 day in all matter of conditions, doing the tireless  
23 work of picking up litter and emptying corner baskets  
24 and collecting our trash, recycling and organics.  
25 For 140 years, our employees have worked to make New

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2 York City neighborhoods cleaner and improve the  
3 quality of life for residents and visitors. We thank  
4 you for the opportunity to testify today, and we are  
5 now happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

7 ALBIN: Thank you, Commissioner. I will now turn it  
8 over to questions from Chair Nurse. For these  
9 questions, we will additionally be joined by Deputy  
10 Commissioner Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner  
11 Gregory Anderson, and Chief of Cleaning Operations  
12 Stephen Harbin. Panelist, please stay unmuted if  
13 possible during this question and answer period.  
14 Thank you. Chair Nurse, please begin.

15 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, and I also  
16 just want to recognize Council Member Gale Brewer has  
17 joined us today. Thank you for being here. So, I'm  
18 going to keep my first round of questions short. I  
19 know council members have busy schedules, I'm going  
20 to let them get their questions in, and then I'll go  
21 on the second round for a longer time. So, my first  
22 question is regarding clean streets overall.  
23 According to the New York City public data portal,  
24 311 complaints regarding dirty conditions, missed  
25 collections, and (inaudible) sightings/complaints



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2 steadily increased from the beginning of 2020 to the  
3 beginning of 2022. Overall, these complaints  
4 increased from a citywide total of over 96,000 in  
5 2020 to over 147,000 in 2021. So, I have a couple of  
6 questions. Which districts have the largest volume  
7 of 311 complaints, and what are the top three  
8 particular issues? And then the second part of that  
9 will be, what are the data points that you've used to  
10 determine whether it is a clean street, whether the  
11 street has sanitation conditions or dirty conditions,  
12 and which districts need the most sanitation  
13 resources?

14 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Chair,  
15 thank you for your question, and yes, using the 311  
16 data is one of the many tools and it's certainly a  
17 point for us where we use it as an intake valve to  
18 know how we're doing, what we're doing, and yes,  
19 clearly, missed collection complaints have gone up.  
20 The top, you know, let's say three or four districts  
21 across New York City that have the most overall 311  
22 complaints that are on sanitation related codes, the  
23 top two of them are in Staten Island. Staten Island  
24 Community Board 3, Staten Island Community Board 1,  
25 Queens District 12, and Queens District 7 are the top

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2 four. Another district in Queens Community work  
3 rounds out the top five on overall sanitation related  
4 conditions. Some of the drivers from missed  
5 collection, it depends. It's cyclical on when people  
6 call, why people would call, and one of things, the  
7 reason why we use 311 data all the time, we're taking  
8 it in, we're trying to answer those complaints, get  
9 to the root causes, but it also goes to show much  
10 too, you know, I think that people may not realize  
11 that the number of complaints that come in is again,  
12 part of the tool in our tool box to evaluate data and  
13 services because clearly, if people don't call,  
14 doesn't mean its clean. It just means that somebody  
15 didn't make a complaint, and likewise, there are many  
16 places that, perhaps, they are more familiar with  
17 when we have a delay in collection service where they  
18 wouldn't call to register a collection complaint or  
19 people who would say, oh, my refuse has been missed.  
20 Clearly throughout some of the pandemic, we watched  
21 as 311 complaints on missed collection rose, as our  
22 availability was out. At some point in time, even as  
23 reason as prior to this thankful decrease in the  
24 overall staff availability due to the omicron  
25 variant, we had over 20 percent of the workforce out.

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2 When we have that kind of outage, we just do not have  
3 the bandwidth and we would miss our collection  
4 schedules. Therefore, if we didn't pick up your  
5 refuse or your recycling by midnight on the scheduled  
6 day, that would have enabled you to make a complaint,  
7 and clearly, some of the drivers were because of our  
8 availability during the omicron variant in  
9 particularly with missed collection. There are other  
10 reasons we can have a missed collection on any given  
11 day because the operator, you know, our crew knows  
12 that it's a recycling set out on possibly the wrong  
13 day or they think it's a recycling set out on the  
14 refuse day or vice versa. So, sometimes, locally, it  
15 is a commodity differential between the servicing  
16 crew and what the resident thought they put out, and  
17 with regard to other 311 complaints and how we would  
18 differentiate, the intake valve at 311 is one  
19 (inaudible) whether or not something is codified as a  
20 dirty condition or a sanitation condition or a litter  
21 condition or a request for enforcement, and sometimes  
22 that's because of the way the person who is making  
23 the request for service or the SR is calling it in.  
24 Whereas, in many cases, sometimes it's a request for  
25 enforcement actually where they're asking us to go

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2 send somebody to evaluate the litter in front of a  
3 curblane because all property owners are required to  
4 do the 18 inches in front of the curb line agnostic  
5 of the amount of sweeping or cleaning that we provide  
6 and in other cases, it's really to go in and  
7 evaluate, there's a dump out or illegal condition or  
8 somebody literally put improper disposal. They put a  
9 large amount of material out on the wrong day,  
10 failure to store. So, there's an entire suite and  
11 catalogue of sanitation issues and complaints that  
12 all New Yorkers have the availability to go to 311  
13 and make those complaints on, and one of the things  
14 that we're hyper focused on is go there, we have to  
15 get eyes on what the complaint is to make sure that  
16 when we come back with the resolution, we bring the  
17 right tool. We bring the right resource cause we  
18 certainly don't want to dispatch a refuse truck for  
19 what is clearly something we can reclaim as  
20 recyclable, and a lot of the things too, one of  
21 biggest complaints that we have; if you want to call  
22 it a complaint, is a request for service for a large  
23 bulk item. So, there are many times in certain areas  
24 people will be putting out; they're calling 311 and  
25 saying we're putting out a bulk item and we want to

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2 make sure that we're getting that picked up. So,  
3 that also depends on; and sometimes, it's education  
4 for the resident and for the complainant. Are they  
5 aware that what they are saying is a bulk item, may  
6 not be refuse, we may have to go back in a re-codify  
7 it because they're calling the bulk item actually a  
8 CFC removal item, such as a refrigerator or a large  
9 unit that needs another special handling or is their  
10 bulky item a large TV, they called it in as a bulky  
11 item, but it's actually a television that we have to  
12 tell them how we're going properly dispose of that  
13 television. So, sometimes, it's educational, but  
14 definitely, that is not to say that our 311 metrics  
15 aren't up, and when they go up, agnostic of the  
16 reason, that is not a good thing. There is a direct  
17 correlation to having more 311s and definitely issues  
18 that we have to address in the street. So, my answer  
19 to your question is not to infer that 311 is not a  
20 useful tool. It's a very useful tool, but there are  
21 a lot of ingredients in what we use that data for.

22 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Yeah, absolutely.  
23 So, just (inaudible) internally, what are your data  
24 points for accessing, okay, this is a community  
25 board, and this is the criteria which we evaluate in

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2 determining how many resources need to go or this is  
3 a highly district versus a district that has a  
4 substantial amount of resources. So, when it comes  
5 to just allocating staff and where you're putting  
6 attention, what internally are your data points? You  
7 know, do you have a score card, what is on the score  
8 card, how does that function?

9 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: So, we work  
10 in conjunction with not only the three-in-one data,  
11 but also the (inaudible) separation score card  
12 program. We're using that as a tool. That is a very  
13 valuable program where their independent evaluators  
14 are giving us streetscape scores per community board  
15 at a section level. Our commands are directly tied  
16 to the 59 community boards by (inaudible) and while  
17 we run contiguous with that, inside of each community  
18 board, we have cleaning sections that are assigned  
19 also. So, we have a subset of cleaning sections  
20 inside those respective community boards. We get a  
21 rating from the scorecard offers twice a month on all  
22 of those, but more importantly, internally, we are on  
23 every block. So, that's the beauty of us. We have  
24 field officers and we have sanitation workers giving  
25 us real time feedback on where the litter is, what

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2 they're seeing as far as drop offs and concerns. So,  
3 we have the 23,000 litter baskets that we host that  
4 get the systemic scheduled pickups, the dedicated  
5 pickups on, right now, currently, there are 588  
6 funded basket trucks. In addition to that service  
7 and picking up litter along their routes, there is  
8 also, the litter baskets inside every respective  
9 community board also get tipped by every refuse  
10 collection schedule. So, every refuse truck, in  
11 addition to whatever the funded basket truck is, will  
12 also be picking up the litter baskets as they pass  
13 them along the routes, and we're using the feedback  
14 from mechanical broom operators, our field officers  
15 are our first line and our best line of situational  
16 (inaudible) because in addition for them telling us  
17 where they have need and where we're seeing  
18 additional drop offs, we have district monitoring  
19 logs. We're codifying. If we don't have a resource  
20 working in that area right then and there, we're  
21 making an internal report of that and then getting a  
22 resource to that area that needs impact right away.  
23 We do a lot of staffing diversions to get areas. In  
24 addition to that, we're using the PCI resources that  
25 we got with last year's budget. They've been very,

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2 very effective. What it did, what it let us do was  
3 sequester a specific amount of bodies as our manpower  
4 is dynamic, and we work throughout all the community  
5 boards. We can now be more nimble and have a  
6 dedicated staff to go out. It's 54 crews a week that  
7 can go out and address things. It's six days a week  
8 of service where we can run nine additional cleaning  
9 functions, and they rotate around in the areas of the  
10 highest need. What are some of the areas where we  
11 have the highest need? A lot of times, we are  
12 diverting a lot of those resources to where we have  
13 high concentrations of what would be homeless  
14 encampments and/or drop off and litter conditions.  
15 We are trying to get ahead, work sometimes in tandem  
16 with the planned interaction on, you know, homeless  
17 encampments or homeless, you know, interactions to  
18 try to clean up the litter that's around that, but  
19 more importantly, not just wait there all day to  
20 clean up the rest of the litter and do litter basket  
21 services or work in conjunction with the backlog of  
22 conditions that need to be addressed. So, we're  
23 taking situational (inaudible), community complaints,  
24 we're watching social media and Twitter. Our intake  
25 process, cause we have so many to know where the



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2 touch points are. We're doing everything we can to  
3 monitor that, and then trying to allocate the  
4 resources in real time. So, we have our dedicated  
5 cleaning allocations for mechanical brooms per day,  
6 where the posted signage is, and litter baskets. We  
7 also have our PCI resources which are a little bit  
8 more rotating. They're not fixed, they're fungible,  
9 but we love that program, and we also do basically  
10 overtime diversions if we have to. So, for  
11 everything, we don't leave it out. If I don't have a  
12 resource and it's a complete eye sore, we have to get  
13 something there. It's a critical eye sore. We're  
14 going to book possibly an over time truck to go pick  
15 that condition.

16 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you. So, what  
17 I'm understanding is it's a combination of 311 data,  
18 antidotal, social media, you know, it's driven by  
19 demand. People expressing demand to you all. At  
20 some point, would you all be able to share the data  
21 points with the committee on your score card or the  
22 unit you said that does the score card?

23 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Absolutely.

24 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: That will be really  
25 helpful. Thank you. Okay, I just have a few more

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2 questions and then I'll open it up to other council  
3 members who are on, and this is really about the  
4 sanitation budget cuts. So, at a time, new board  
5 members are grappling with the sanitation issues, the  
6 mayor's preliminary budget has 47.8 million as  
7 proposed cuts on top of budget cuts from previous  
8 years. My understanding is this includes 304 cuts to  
9 305 uniformed and 188 civilian positions for a total  
10 of 493 staff. Will the staff cuts be terminations of  
11 currently employed staff, cuts to attrition, cuts to  
12 current vacancies? Do these additional cuts require  
13 uniformed sanitation workers to spend more time on  
14 longer shifts and working overtime hours? And then  
15 I'll come back for the second part of that question.

16 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you,  
17 Chair. So, the answer to totality of that 490  
18 headcount, nobody is getting laid off. It is  
19 attrition and unfunded vacancies. So, in the  
20 civilian vacancies that we had, so we will not  
21 replacing. I mean, there's still going to be some  
22 vacancies that we do replace, but a large portion of  
23 that, those are just current vacancies, so nobody has  
24 lost their head. You know, we lost the job. It's  
25 just we don't have the authority to know backfill

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2 those positions, and on the uniform side, that number  
3 is a combination of reallocation of existing staff  
4 from a role that they currently have that will be  
5 blended into attrition into FY23 and 161 of those  
6 head is because there is no planned expansion. Those  
7 were the heads that were previously earmarked for  
8 potentially expanding organics. So, if there are no  
9 organics, so those people haven't been hired yet.  
10 The 161 heads are a vacancy that is no longer there  
11 if we don't run that program cause we're not going to  
12 hire up for that, and the other 137 uniform heads are  
13 people who are being reassigned to new duties and  
14 then we will not backfill them, thus driving down the  
15 overall headcount.

16 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, and then  
17 just specifically, do any of these potential planned  
18 vacancies that were planned, but are not going to be  
19 filled; are any of those at all packed commercial  
20 (inaudible)?

21 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: No.

22 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Okay, thank you.  
23 Okay, I'm going to turn it over to the moderator,  
24 Jessica, to open it up to other council members.  
25 Thank you, Commissioner Grayson.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

3 ALBIN: Thank you, Chair. I will now call on council  
4 members in the order they have used the Zoom raise  
5 hand function. If you would like to ask a question  
6 and have not yet used the Zoom raise hand function,  
7 please raise it now. Council members, please keep  
8 your questions to five minutes. The Sergeant-at-Arms  
9 will keep a timer, and I will let you know when your  
10 time is up. You should begin once I have called on  
11 your and the Sergeant has announced that you may  
12 begin before delivering your testimony. First, we  
13 will hear from Council Member Brewer, followed by  
14 Council Member Velazquez, followed by Council Member  
15 Williams. Council Member Brewer, you may begin as  
16 soon as the Sergeant calls time.

17 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GALE BREWER: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner. Thank you, Madame Chair. I want to  
20 say, Commissioner, the wonderful staff, including Mr.  
21 Harbin came to the west side and toured a really  
22 disgustingly dirty 72nd Street and cleaned it up that  
23 night. So, what a great move, and thank you. That's  
24 in Sanitation 7 in Manhattan, so I want to thank you  
25 very much. I think I wrote a note to express my

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2 appreciation. So, I have like quick questions.  
3 Number one, I know I came a little late, so, I just  
4 want you to reiterate these organics. I'm in an  
5 organics area. The most beautiful little round bin,  
6 it got stolen. It got replaced. Emails. It feels  
7 like government is at its best in terms of  
8 communication, in terms of your composing organics  
9 program. So, I'm hoping that there's obviously  
10 millions of emails, people are concerned, so I hope  
11 we get restored, and I'm just wondering, I know you  
12 have to be careful on how you say this cause I've  
13 been around for a while, but what would be the  
14 advantage in your professional opinion to having it  
15 citywide because I think we save money? That's  
16 number one. Number two, in terms of litter baskets,  
17 we're all concerned about rats. I don't think  
18 anybody cares about the garbage. They do care about  
19 rats and they go together. So, is it a fact, and I  
20 don't know the answer, that if we have better litter  
21 baskets and not the mesh ones, that that does help  
22 with the rat problem because that does seem to be a  
23 definition of what kind of basket would be the best?  
24 I also want to say educating businesses, I don't know  
25 what kind of staff you have to do that, but it makes

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2 a big difference. You clean up and then if the  
3 business isn't educated, then they don't know, I have  
4 to say even though they think they know, blah, blah,  
5 blah, they don't, and I just also want to understand  
6 the, you talked a little bit about how to improve  
7 clean curbs, etc., and is that also to include; and I  
8 know this is a good idea, these are people telling me  
9 this, that there's a large bin in the street; I'm  
10 making this up in terms of, but then others put their  
11 garbage into, so it's not scattered across the entire  
12 length of the street. I don't know. I'm just  
13 looking for ideas that are more creative. I'm thinking  
14 you're coming with some. Finally, you know, I hate  
15 these dark stores. I'm all over the press on it.  
16 They store their e-bytes in the building in the  
17 store, and I must admit, if I live above, I would  
18 worry about battery issues. I know you talked about  
19 that. There have been fires, and I'm just want a  
20 little bit more information on the batteries in which  
21 I know nothing, and then just finally, the wonderful  
22 work you do when you do your recycling at unit where,  
23 or where ever, if we could do more of those, I don't  
24 know if it is possible. It would seem to me that  
25 more people would get rid of in a healthy

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2 environmentally correct way all of their electronics.

3 I do worry that people don't wait, and they put them  
4 out incorrectly into the landfill, which is what we  
5 don't want. So, those are just some of my questions,  
6 and you have a great staff.

7 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you,  
8 Councilwomen. I appreciate it. I appreciate your  
9 leadership. It was a pleasure working with you and  
10 your formal as well, and we certainly know your  
11 dedication and commitment to the constituents and  
12 making sure the sanitation is doing all we can in the  
13 community, so thank you. You went through a lot of  
14 things. I'm going to try to hit a couple of them and  
15 then I'm going to let my colleagues answer a couple  
16 more because they are even better at it than I am.  
17 First and foremost, my opinion on organics and what  
18 do I think. I've been pretty vocal about this  
19 myself, and as a department, we definitely believe  
20 that solving the organics waste solution and getting  
21 it diverted from landfill is the only way New York  
22 City is going to get to a zero waste goal, and we  
23 definitely support everything possible to make that  
24 be a reality, make that be a full-fledge reality. I  
25 think that one of the things about the current

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2 integration about the sign up program that we have  
3 now that was interesting was that going back to the  
4 community boards that had had the program, the 44  
5 community boards that had had access to the program  
6 prior to the pandemic, and then doing what we could  
7 to solicit wholeheartedly everybody who was already  
8 in. We went and said to everybody, if you are in,  
9 you already have the round bin, you have that muscle  
10 memory, you know how to make the right choice, please  
11 sign up. It was interesting seeing where the sign  
12 ups were, and then more importantly interested seeing  
13 what the overall amount tonage is diverted inside the  
14 sign ups. So, do I think that we, does this  
15 department and me personally, do I think that we need  
16 a mandatory organics recycling law? Absolutely  
17 because what the sign up program has actually shown  
18 us is that even the people who intended and signed up  
19 to do the right thing and said we will gladly  
20 participate all the time, they didn't. The tonage  
21 didn't show that. So, everybody said, "I want in"  
22 and then we didn't, it was very hard, even right now,  
23 looking granularly at what, at what we look at with  
24 the data, it shows that even people who want, who  
25 said, "We will always do the right thing", didn't



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2 always take advantage of that opportunity, even  
3 though it was presented, but do I think it's  
4 mandatory? Absolutely. It makes up more than a  
5 third of our waste stream when we do the next waste  
6 characterization study ...

7 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

8 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: I'm  
9 positive that it's going to be even more than that.  
10 We the rat question and litter baskets, we're always  
11 looking at the next round to what litter baskets can  
12 be. We would certainly agree that anything, any  
13 container that provides less accessibility to vermin  
14 or anything would be better. So, have our better bin  
15 program that has been recirculated around. We're  
16 always looking to have the right way. We do agree  
17 that litter baskets are the cornerstone of having  
18 opportunity, and more importantly, ones that are less  
19 accessible, though the rodent population could  
20 certainly suppress food source, so we support that  
21 and continue to work towards that. On the Clean  
22 Curbs program, we are at the beginning stages of it.  
23 We definitely think it will work in all the places  
24 that it will work, and we're actually very, very  
25 excited about the opportunity to see where the bins

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2 can go, what are going to be the tactical deployment  
3 strategies, what is going to be the service level,  
4 what is the true value metrics, meaning what does the  
5 bin hold, everything that we think it's going to hold  
6 because we certainly don't want to put a large vessel  
7 and then have capacity issues, but all of that is  
8 getting it out there, seeing what we learn, learning  
9 how we'll collect it, and then really getting to work  
10 with this committee on what's the best process cause  
11 we don't think moving ahead that it's going to be a,  
12 certainly not a one stroke of a brush for the entire  
13 city. We think it's going to be very near, and very,  
14 very tailored because each community as we know it,  
15 it's the beauty of this city, completely has a  
16 different makeup, has a different vibe, has a  
17 different flavor, has different parking and just  
18 usage. So, we want to know what that is. We want to  
19 work together cause we have Clean Curbs, it's broad  
20 stroke. It's got commercial implications, it's got  
21 bid implications, it's got partner organizations  
22 implications and more importantly, at some point, it  
23 also has residential implications. We know what that  
24 looks like cause they're going to be treated  
25 differently. They have to be with different levels

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2 of interest, different levels of involvement, and  
3 different levels in stewardship partners. So, we're  
4 excited about that. For dark stores, look, we  
5 completely understand that our job is to be there as  
6 one of the responding agencies to anything that is of  
7 light and what your constituents to be a life impact.  
8 So, we're going to continue to work on that and for  
9 batteries and recycling and some of the cool stuff  
10 that we've done with that cause it is very valuable  
11 and I want to touch on them, I'm going to actually  
12 ask Deputy Commissioner Bridget Anderson to weigh in  
13 on where we are with batteries and just the recycling  
14 efforts of and what we're trying to do, we're trying  
15 to make New Yorkers safer in that way stream.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GALE BREWER: We love  
17 Bridget.

18 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: So do we.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON:

20 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for that  
21 question, council member. We have a longstanding  
22 program to take batteries to our special waste sites,  
23 at our safe disposal events, and we do a lot, as much  
24 as we can, to cross promote to call-to-recycle  
25 program which is a mail back program for rechargeable

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2 batteries; that is required by state law. As  
3 mentioned in the testimony, there was a city law that  
4 was then superseded by a state law. We are most  
5 actively working at the state level to incorporate e-  
6 mobility batteries into that law because they are  
7 currently exempted, and so, you know, on a very local  
8 operational level, when FDNY has a fire condition or  
9 a smoldering condition caused by a battery, our  
10 environmental police unit comes in and helps to  
11 manage that matter and we have a reputable, globally  
12 recognized environmental services company who will  
13 help us properly dispose of that material, but it's a  
14 learning curve for us as well. So, it's a state  
15 legislation piece that we're really pushing on as  
16 well as operationally, trying to find the most  
17 efficient way to work with the FDNY and the  
18 sanitation environmental police to properly manage  
19 that material.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GALE BREWER: Thank you.

21 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you. I just  
22 want to recognize Council Member Bottcher who has  
23 joined us as well and a kindly reminder on the time  
24 and I'll take it back over to our monitor.

25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

3 ALBIN: Thank you. I will now call on Council Member  
4 Velazquez who will be followed by Council Member  
5 Williams. Council Member Velazquez.

6 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARJORIE VELAZQUEZ: Hi.

8 Good morning, and thank you Chair Nurse for holding  
9 today's hearing. It's very vital for my community,  
10 especially as we have our situations with trash and  
11 sanitation. So, thank you. Also thank you  
12 Commissioner Grayson for today and coming before us  
13 because it means a lot to my community. As you  
14 understand, I made it a point in my district to visit  
15 my garages in the first few days in office and I was  
16 surprised to learn the conditions of these garages  
17 that are literally falling apart, and it's just  
18 incredible the amount of work that DSNY workers are  
19 able to do and under these dangerous conditions, and  
20 I just want to know how we're going to improve the  
21 state of these critical facilities here in the Bronx?

22 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: I just want  
23 to thank you so much for your care, for the question,  
24 and I couldn't agree with you more. Our facilities  
25 definitely need help. We have requested and we're

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2 working on the overall budget and in all honestly,  
3 there are planned repairs. There's a complex where  
4 we host three different garages. There are planned  
5 repairs to do the Bronx 3A, which literally, the  
6 Bronx 3A garage literally had the roof collapse.  
7 That is why we are no longer operating out there.  
8 Because a lot of our buildings are older and a lot of  
9 them have fallen into a level of disrepair, and they  
10 have a planned construction life cycle. So, we're  
11 trying to work with that. We have definitely made  
12 those requests known. We appreciate your support  
13 when we're looking for swing space and other things,  
14 because one of the biggest challenges is, is that,  
15 you know, we don't need much, and that's not to say  
16 that we don't; we want a healthy, safe, incredible  
17 environment for these men and women who come in  
18 everyday on the front line. They need something that  
19 is a really viable work location, but are utilitarian  
20 in nature. We are not looking for anything that's  
21 super fancy. We just want it to be safe, warm, and  
22 dry, and give a place to offer a safe environment and  
23 operate that way, and we look forward to partnering  
24 with you. We know we have challenges. We have  
25 identified those challenges. We continue to work

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2 with the administration on the long term, you know,  
3 how do we make our facilities better and get them to  
4 where they need to be because these men and women  
5 definitely deserve it, and we're doing everything we  
6 can to get them there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARJORIE VELAZQUEZ: I  
8 appreciate it, and please let us know on how we can  
9 collaborate and make sure that this sees its way,  
10 especially this year. It's been decades from my  
11 understanding, and we can't have our worker living  
12 and working in those conditions. So, thank you so  
13 much. I appreciate it.

14 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

16 ALBIN: Thank you council member. We will now call  
17 on Council Member Williams followed by Majority Whip  
18 Brooks-Powers. Council Member Williams.

19 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NANTASHA WILLIAMS: Hello.  
21 Thank you to Chair Nurse for your passion in  
22 addressing sanitation issues in our city and of  
23 course, Commissioner for all of your hard work and  
24 for your team's hard work in being responsive to my  
25 office as well. I just want to follow up on a

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2 question from our Chair earlier about the 3-1-1  
3 calls. I know you mention that Staten Island overall  
4 is leading the 3-1-1 calls, but I know that community  
5 board 12, which covers my district and Speaker Adam's  
6 district in leading in the city in calls around  
7 illegal dumping and considering that, we know that  
8 illegal dumping is an issue, primarily in communities  
9 of color. We grapple with dumping cars, and so what  
10 is the prevention enforcement plan on illegal  
11 dumping, and then again, I also wanted to thank you  
12 for doing a tag and tow operation in one part of the  
13 district?

14 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Well, first  
15 off, we appreciate your thanks and we're going to  
16 continue to having those operations. They are  
17 critical to removing illegal vehicles. Sometimes  
18 it's the temporal issue; how many hours between we  
19 can legally take the car. So, having those joint  
20 ventures with NYPD to kind of streamline the process  
21 is definitely very impactful for every community  
22 board. Illegal dumping is definitely a major  
23 concern, and in all honestly, between antidotal  
24 reports, official reports, and how many we've had to  
25 clean up, cause not everybody calls it in and



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2 sometimes they're happened upon because some illegal  
3 dumpers are creative where they legally dump it into  
4 some of the less traveled streets or thoroughfares,  
5 but what we have now is we have a team of people who  
6 do undercover work. We have partnered and we are  
7 still working towards the final procurement with  
8 council members on additional enforcement cameras.  
9 This is going to be a big help for us. We know that  
10 we have locations that we are bringing to your  
11 council district and right now, it's finalizing the  
12 procurement. One of the things with that is people  
13 say, oh just look at the camera. It has to be a  
14 pretty high resolution camera because if we, we need  
15 to be able to adequately and completely legally  
16 describe the vehicle including the plate number,  
17 including all the facets, we have to catch the  
18 dumping occur. So, it can't be blurry or ambiguous  
19 in any of what's happening. Mind you, that doesn't  
20 mean that when it is blurry and ambiguous, we don't  
21 do follow up visits with our enforcement division.  
22 Our excellent sanitation police officers will go and  
23 let people know if even if we don't have the legal  
24 statute to make action happen, we now have a culprit.  
25 We now have a suspect to keep eyes on and these are

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2 the kinds of things that we'll do. The cameras will  
3 be a big help. We are also working towards  
4 increasing the number of sanitation police officers  
5 that can be assigned to that, and that's really just  
6 reallocating sanitation police officers or existing  
7 sanitation workers who then take peace officer  
8 training. Throughout the pandemic, one of the things  
9 that was going on was, it was definitely, we put our  
10 focus internally on having enough sanitation workers  
11 available to go respond to the dump outs as opposed  
12 to respond to the enforcement need. So, now that we  
13 have kind of come through and we're on a recovery  
14 path, we've been able to reinstitute our police  
15 officer training classes and we have a class in  
16 currently. So, we're hoping to increase those ranks  
17 and get more and more eyes out there on illegal  
18 dumping, but I have to agree with you, it has  
19 definitely been an absolute challenge and Chief  
20 Harbin who does the clean ups, they have been really  
21 working very, very hard.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

23 ALBIN: Thank you, council member. We will now call  
24 on Majority Whip Brooks-Powers followed by Council  
25 Member Osse. Majority Leader.

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2 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

3 MAJORITY WHIP SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS:

4 Thank you and good morning, everyone. Thank you,  
5 Chair Nurse for convening this important hearing, and  
6 thank you Commissioner Grayson and your team for your  
7 testimony. Throughout my time as councilwoman, my  
8 constituents have been dealing with several chronic  
9 sanitation issues which Commissioner Grayson, you're  
10 very aware of. You visited the district a few times  
11 with us. Illegal dumping, street litter in high  
12 traffic areas clogs catch basins, pests, missed trash  
13 collections, and inaccurate summons. The 31st  
14 district is an environmental justice community and we  
15 suffer from decades of disinvestment and quality of  
16 life services, broadly speaking. Communities like  
17 ours deserve clean streets and when trash builds up,  
18 our curbs and our natural spaces, that impacts our  
19 health, our property values, and our environment and  
20 sense of community, and we simultaneously adapt to  
21 COVID-19 and the intensifying impact of climate  
22 change, we must manage our waste better, and while I  
23 commend our sanitation workers who are truly our  
24 unsung heros, for the work that they have and  
25 continue to do around the city, we need a robust

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2 sanitation department that can keep our streets and  
3 public spaces clean. We must explore new systems and  
4 practices that allow our sanitation workers to  
5 effectively respond to the problems we face in the 21st  
6 century, and so, the few questions that I have for  
7 you, are how have the department's head count changed  
8 throughout the pandemic? Do you believe staff  
9 shortages have contributed to issues many residents  
10 have reported? Does the department of sanitation  
11 plan to return its headcount to pre-COVID levels?  
12 What has the department's experience been with the  
13 city clean up corps? Federal funding for the corps  
14 is unlikely to be permanent. Would it make sense to  
15 transition the corps into a more permanent team  
16 within the department of sanitation or another  
17 department? How does the department handle  
18 enforcement? Have warnings proven effective at  
19 deterring dumping in repeat locations? Would the  
20 department consider amending its enforcement policies  
21 to allow for more warnings before issuing tickets,  
22 and that question is particularly targeted for  
23 homeowners, and the last question is, does the  
24 Department of Sanitation have the infrastructure to

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2 operate a citywide curb side compost and program, and  
3 what obstacles does the department anticipate?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you  
5 for your questions. Thank you for your leadership  
6 and you're championing these causes. I have been out  
7 in your council district and I do appreciate  
8 everything that you bring to the table and I'm  
9 looking forward to continuing to work with you  
10 towards getting to some real solutions. A lot of  
11 topics. We're going to go through. We'll do a  
12 little crossfire. I appreciate that though.

13 Headcount, so, in essence, our headcount was higher  
14 when we were hosting for FY20 programmatically. The  
15 adopted headcount was a little bit higher than we are  
16 right now because we were also running more programs.  
17 So, our headcount is always derived on how many  
18 functions, fixed post functions we're going to run.  
19 So clearly, once we had the drop off, when we cut the  
20 organics program, we took a headcount reduction on  
21 that. Additionally, we took a headcount reduction  
22 for last year. A nominal amount of eyes, about 41  
23 overall heads when we reduced the number of sweeps  
24 that we were given. So, the ASP reduction came with  
25 about a reduction of the need of about 41 sanitation

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2 workers. All of those cuts and reductions were  
3 achieved through attrition. Nobody was laid off.  
4 So, as people retired, we just didn't replace them,  
5 and then we were into rolling into last year  
6 throughout, we were also on the citywide hiring  
7 freeze throughout the pandemic. So, we have the  
8 opportunity thankfully to hire almost 900 brand new  
9 sanitation workers over the summer, prior to this  
10 winter, so we were ready for winter season. So, our  
11 headcount is not where it was pre-pandemic, but it's  
12 not that far off from where it has been, and in all  
13 honesty, the answer to your question, which I really  
14 think we're getting at, is can I do more with more?  
15 Absolutely. We can do more with more. Sanitation is  
16 one of those areas of government where it's a direct  
17 service. So, the less people I have overall, the  
18 less nimble we are for any of the popup needs,  
19 because you bring up a very good point. You know,  
20 illegal dumping, you know, and how do we respond to  
21 that and quality of life concerns? Well, the weird  
22 thing about illegal dumping, the thing that we work  
23 together is ... (crosstalk).

24 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

25

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2 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: ... and  
3 talking to the constituents, is that illegal dumping  
4 is just not, it can't be planned for because it's not  
5 supposed to happen. Right, there, so there's like  
6 illegal dumping prevention versus illegal dumping  
7 response versus how many people we need. Clean Up  
8 Corp. Clean Up Corp is a great program. They have  
9 done so many extra, but where ever they're doing  
10 something, we know where they're working and we pick  
11 up the bags afterward. So, do I feel the Clean Up  
12 Corp is very valuable? Yes. Do I think that there's  
13 a use for something like that? I think that the new  
14 administration is clearly looking at what the future  
15 of additional cleaning resources or quality of life  
16 resources could be; whether it stays in the Clean Up  
17 Corp or another thing, that is a policy decision, but  
18 do we support anyone including volunteers or paid  
19 employees who are going to clean New York City  
20 streets and tell us where we can go pick up those  
21 bags for a better quality of life? Absolutely.  
22 Warnings. Yes, warnings, we're amenable to warnings.  
23 We really are because what we want is compliance.  
24 The big thing is compliance. The one thing to remind  
25 everybody is that the fines in New York City haven't

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2 grown exponentially despite the fact that some of the  
3 litter and the complaints and the request for  
4 violations have grown exponentially. So, we get a  
5 lot of requests for enforcement. We understand  
6 warnings. We certainly understand property owners  
7 just trying to make it through the day. We totally  
8 understand that two hours a day and the residential  
9 routing times, that they are now susceptible to let's  
10 say, a dirty sidewalk complaint. So, we definitely  
11 look to have those conversations, but are we  
12 categorically against warnings? No we're not.

13 MAJORITY WHIP SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS:

14 Thank you so much for that, and again, look forward  
15 to continued partnership with the agency.

16 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

18 ALBIN: Thank you, Majority Whip. We will now call  
19 on Council Member Osse followed by Council Member  
20 Richardson-Jordan. Council Member Osse.

21 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

22 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: I just wanted to  
23 recognize that Council Members Mealy and Menin have  
24 joined, and I'll kick it over to you, thank you,  
25 Council Member Osse.



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHI OSSE: HI. Good  
3 morning, everyone. Thank you, Chairwoman Nurse for  
4 your everlasting fight to make our streets clean here  
5 in New York City, and it's always nice to see you  
6 Commissioner Grayson. You're looking very sharp  
7 today. I do want to say, you know, I'm so thankful  
8 for our sanitation workers. You know, every single  
9 one of you for the hard work that you do. You are  
10 one of the most hard working uniformed forces in the  
11 nation. So, I do want to thank you for all the work  
12 that you do here in the city. I do want to talk  
13 about the clean curbs program. You know, it  
14 definitely seems like promising program to ensure  
15 that our streets remain clean. However, it is often  
16 communities of color, especially communities in my  
17 district, in the 36th, that are often neglected from  
18 these programs. They are often the communities that  
19 need the most waste equity reform. Re-  
20 containerization will significantly decrease the  
21 rapid rodent problem that we are experiencing here in  
22 the 36th district. Rising trash in residential areas  
23 is as essential as re-containerization in commercial  
24 areas. Bed Stuy in North Crown Heights would be a  
25 perfect community to include in the Clean Curbs pilot

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2 program. I did want to ask you, how is the  
3 Department of Sanitation ensuring that with the role  
4 out of the Clean Curbs programs that it's centering  
5 communities of color? Also, how is the agency  
6 working to ensure and evaluate that this program is  
7 implemented in an equitable way?

8 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Council  
9 member, thank you so much for the question, and we  
10 really do see a lot promise in this program. One of  
11 the things that I'm going let my Deputy Commissioner  
12 for policy who has been at this during this entire  
13 campaign, his team is building the RFP and doing this  
14 engagement particularly in the residential areas and  
15 where we're going to look to in that procurement and  
16 implementation, but one of the things I just want to  
17 put there for framing before I hand it over is one of  
18 the key cornerstones that we have really understand  
19 is mechanically how this going to work, right. We  
20 want to make sure that when we put these containers,  
21 whatever the vessel is, so we start are figuring out  
22 what's the vessel, what's going to be the collection  
23 service, what's going to be frequency, that when we  
24 do it, we're doing it correctly, and that we're not  
25 putting an undue burden in an already burdened area,

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2 right. So, what we want to make sure is we're going  
3 to try and evaluate it and we want to be open and  
4 transparent as we're evaluating what the final  
5 destinations for these bins and what our approach is  
6 going to be. So, we evaluate the input and everyone  
7 who, yourself, and all the other members of the  
8 committee and elsewhere to say look, I think it would  
9 be a great place here, and then we would like then  
10 follow up with you with further conversations about  
11 the local level landscape, things that we have to  
12 factor in including utility partnerships. Like we  
13 don't even know yet, so sometimes a bid is the  
14 answer, sometimes it's going to be a different  
15 construct. So, that's just some top line stuff, but  
16 I definitely want to give you some answers and  
17 granularity to your question. So, Deputy  
18 Commissioner Greg Anderson, please weigh in on where  
19 we are currently with procurement and what's the  
20 thought process?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREGORY ANDERSON:

22 Sure. Thank you, Commissioner and thank you council  
23 member for the question. The Clean Curbs, as  
24 Commissioner Grayson mentioned, we think shows a lot  
25 of promise. It's something that obviously the demand

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2 for in the public amongst elected officials, amongst  
3 other community stakeholders has really increased  
4 over the last few years, and we're excited to be able  
5 to test it in the real world, hopefully, in the  
6 coming months. We have a small amount of funding  
7 this current fiscal year to do a pilot. We are  
8 advancing the solicitation on that pilot right now  
9 and you know, I just want to be clear that the pilot  
10 that we're doing is very controlled, very small  
11 scale, probably one block, and we're looking to work  
12 with existing community partners for maintenance, for  
13 outreach, but going forward, we absolutely need to  
14 test this in as many different types of communities  
15 as possible. Different types of housing stock,  
16 different styles of streets and street designs,  
17 different kinds of containers, and so we absolutely  
18 want to do that equitably. We want to do this in  
19 every borough, we want to try it everywhere, and as  
20 the Commissioner mentioned earlier in response to the  
21 Chair's question, there is not going to be a one size  
22 fits all solution here. So, in some places,  
23 something might work. In other places, something  
24 else might work. In some other places, this might  
25 now work at all. We need to be realistic about that

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2 and we need to keep an open mind. We look forward to  
3 working with you and all the members of this  
4 committee to make this as successful as possible  
5 going forward.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHI OSSE: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

8 ALBIN: Thank you, council member. Now, we will hear  
9 from Council Member Richardson-Jordan, followed by  
10 Council Member Farias. Council Member Richardson-  
11 Jordan.

12 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISTIN RICHARDSON-JORDAN:

14 Hi. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Nurse for making  
15 this phase. Thank you all for being here. My  
16 question, it somewhat goes off of a question that  
17 Councilwoman Brewer asked, but there's a strong  
18 concern in my district around the cans because we  
19 have a lot of the old wire baskets, and I want to  
20 thank your office because I was able to negotiate  
21 with DSNY and get some of the new rat protected cans,  
22 so we were able to get 32 new cans, but there's still  
23 more needed, and I was wondering if there was any  
24 larger evaluation on which cans are at this point,  
25 simply obsolete, and any effort to take a large scale

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2 look at just getting rid of the old cans, replacing  
3 them in the neighborhoods where there's just a large  
4 amount of the old wire baskets?

5 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: It's a  
6 great question and yes. So, we are always literally  
7 looking at where; so, there's a couple of facets to  
8 that, but top line, absolutely, and our goal is to  
9 continue to upgrade the baskets along the way and  
10 it's a procurement issue. We also had a pause, and  
11 it's not to use the pandemic for everything, but we  
12 literally did. The core developer at our core  
13 procurement place to do baskets was literally a  
14 company that was then used throughout the entire year  
15 of the pandemic to make hand sanitizer and other'  
16 they put their operation into something that was  
17 really, really; so we wound up getting a less of an  
18 advancement on our orders in real time. So, that's  
19 why we're kind of getting out to the community a  
20 little late in the game because we had supply line  
21 issues, and like everybody else, we had supply  
22 issues, but we certainly love what we call internally  
23 here, the silver bullet can. You know, it's got the  
24 little top on it, and for us, having those cans out  
25 there, we know how much the community enjoys them.

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2 We want to put more of them out there. We do the  
3 best we can, trying to manage what is a trickling  
4 stock to try to upgrade them. One of the things with  
5 basket maintenance and basket management, this is the  
6 thing; that's why we have this Better Bin program and  
7 it sounds weird, but people do care, and as you can  
8 see from your constituency, people want to know what  
9 type of basket it is. So, we're evaluating that on  
10 how easy it is for us to service it, what is the  
11 esthetic look of it, and does it actually meet the  
12 goal? If the goal is to actually prevent food source  
13 for rodents and give people more esthetic feel and  
14 more important, for some reason, have an ergonomic  
15 design that not only encourages all operators to love  
16 the basket, but encourage people to use it as you  
17 walk by. So, it's very weird to think of a litter  
18 basket being something that is artistic and also  
19 influencing, but as we all know, it really is. So,  
20 two thing I want to talk to you about in just closing  
21 the answer is yes, we are evaluating it, yes we want  
22 to have more and more enclosed baskets out there. It  
23 is definitely in the pipeline. We do have existing  
24 stock of the green wire baskets that we will put out  
25 only because they are of value and we paid for them.

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2 So, they're here. They're in the pipeline. The city  
3 owns them. They do serve the function, but we do  
4 know that unfortunately when you're looking at  
5 garbage, it doesn't look pleasant, and clearly it's  
6 one of those optics. If you see it, you don't want  
7 to see it. It's better to not see it, so again,  
8 we're getting there, it's part of our plan, and we  
9 definitely want to continue to work with this council  
10 to talk about it. We'll be very transparent on what  
11 the Better Bin findings were, and we're also going to  
12 talk about what would be clearly, a funding need, and  
13 you can see that because the bin that doesn't have a  
14 door or latches or fancy logo is going to be less  
15 expensive than one of the fancier bins. So, the more  
16 we complicate the better bin, the more it will cost,  
17 but we'll talk about that openly, honestly, and  
18 evaluate what those needs are, and I'm not saying  
19 it's about budget, but realistically, why are we  
20 going to continue to use the green baskets that we  
21 already currently own? Cause we own them, and we're  
22 going to secretly cycle in the ones that are better.  
23 I promise.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

25 ALBIN: Thank you, council member. We will now hear



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2 from Council Member Farias, followed by Council  
3 Member Bottcher. Council Member Farias.

4 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AMANDA FARIAS: Good  
6 morning. Thank you, everyone and Chair Nurse for the  
7 hearing this morning. Hello, Commissioner Grayson,  
8 it's really good to see you again. My district,  
9 along with a lot of others in this city, and what's  
10 already been mentioned by a lot of my colleagues has  
11 similar issues around climate issues, quality of  
12 life, general welfare of the community, like trash,  
13 both local and NYCHA pick up, rodent issues, and high  
14 ticketing DOT for alternate side parking, and  
15 obviously needs a robust sanitation department  
16 engaged with the community that we are all also  
17 grateful you folks do every single day. So,  
18 primarily, I wanted to first ask about garbage  
19 collection in our NYCHA's and what the city could be  
20 doing to better create systems with the departments,  
21 and then I have some alternate side parking  
22 questions.

23 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you  
24 for the question. We have a longstanding  
25 relationship with NYCHA, and most of the NYCHA

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2 services that we provide, most of their complexes,  
3 most of them are containerized refuse which requires  
4 then the residents of each respective campus building  
5 to bring their garbage out or use the shoot if the  
6 shoot is available, but the material either down to  
7 the curb or if the shoot is open and accessible, use  
8 the shoot, and then the maintenance teams, they have  
9 to get then that refuse or recycling to where the  
10 pickup area, designated on the campus that we would  
11 interact with. So, we agree with you and in  
12 (inaudible) they had a lot of challenging with  
13 staffing availability, staffing outages, and I think  
14 that for a while there between our ability to come  
15 every day and their ability to have maintenance staff  
16 (inaudible) that chain of custody from how it gets to  
17 the respective campus building or set out location  
18 out the campus building to the ultimate set out  
19 collection point for our service. I think that  
20 clearly became a challenge and there's no doubt, and  
21 it's not about if they wouldn't say it or we're  
22 willing to say it as well, but to that end, we are  
23 committed to helping them champion recycling efforts.  
24 We have an amazing outreach team. I'm going to let  
25 my Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and

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2 Sustainability weigh in with what we do there on a  
3 routine basis, but we are there in the collection  
4 frequency, we're providing on-call pickups to many of  
5 the locations and clearly what is needed is totally a  
6 holistic look at how many people are there, what's  
7 the refuse set out, what are the challenges, and we  
8 look to continue to work with you, continue to work  
9 with all council members who are hosting the NYCHA  
10 developments. If you're having challenges, we'll be  
11 at that table to talk about what the comprehensive  
12 plan is, but it's definitely the right thing to be  
13 there, interacting and trying to give as much access  
14 and accessibility to recycling issues, including  
15 organics to NYCHA and that's definitely part of long-  
16 term goal. So, Bridget Anderson, you can weigh in on  
17 some of the other things that we do with NYCHA and  
18 some of the outreach that we typically do to get them  
19 more into line with what our over all curb side  
20 program is.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON:

22 Absolutely, thank you council member for the  
23 question, thank you Commissioner. One of the things  
24 that we have found over the years is we work  
25 simultaneously with the NYCHA sustainability group

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2 and with our operations group to make sure that we're  
3 living on planet Earth with what the operational  
4 realities are of the sites, but also looking at where  
5 NYCHA is going in terms of their planning and their  
6 vision. One of the most effective things we have  
7 done over the last several years is doing what we  
8 call a recycling reset where we physically go and  
9 train the building staff on the ground and part of  
10 the challenge there is that there is turnover in  
11 staff, so it's kind of a constant maintenance issue.  
12 So, we go back, we establish that initial  
13 relationship. We literally go and say this is how  
14 you bundle cardboard, this is how you break and  
15 bundle cardboard so that it is more clearly in  
16 separate piles and easier for us to collect, or to  
17 fill up your cardboard container more efficiently so  
18 that things aren't piled up. So, it is a develop by  
19 development approach, but we find that it actually  
20 creates those relationships and people then know they  
21 can call us. So, we give our number, we give our  
22 email, they can call us and we can trouble shoot and  
23 check in. Managing white good, you know, old  
24 refrigerators or toilets or figuring what's the  
25 better way to manage those things. They should try

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2 to engage with the private sector around waste  
3 management, and so we try to give them advice for how  
4 to do that more efficiently, related to mattress  
5 recycling, etc. So, it's really sort of development  
6 by development approach and we just, we need to do  
7 more, but we do find it as effective when we develop  
8 those relationships.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AMANDA FARIAS: Okay,  
10 thank you for that. I'm going to follow up with how  
11 we can be doing a bit more and quickly with the last  
12 15 seconds that I have, I just wanted to ask a little  
13 bit around alternate-type parking and how we tried a  
14 drop to one day during the pandemic and also through  
15 having a rise in 3-1-1 complaints about litter and  
16 clogging of street drains. Just more ...

17 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AMANDA FARIA: Do you  
19 think there needs to be a study around if one-day a  
20 week is actually working or what communities they are  
21 working in or how do we go back into more two day a  
22 week through the city if necessary?

23 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you  
24 for your question. We've clearly seen an impact in  
25 overall street cleanliness because of the reduction

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2 of mechanical brooms, but that's not on every single  
3 block face that hosted multiple-day sweeps. So, just  
4 to give everybody top line, 54 of 59 community boards  
5 in New York City host alternate side parking  
6 regulations and there was almost 40 districts of the  
7 54 that hosts that took a reduction because areas of  
8 the district, it's not widespread, not every area of  
9 every single community board has multiple time  
10 sweeps. Some places only have one and they also host  
11 areas that were getting two or three because of  
12 density and litter, and in 32 of the almost 40  
13 districts that had a reduction in ASP where the areas  
14 of the district that had multiple time, either two or  
15 three times per week, we did see a scorecard  
16 reduction overall. So, for us, we are continuing to  
17 work with the administration and because alternate  
18 side parking is the best way for us to clean the  
19 streets. However, we do recognize that there were  
20 streets that did okay, and yes, we full support, do  
21 we complete evaluation? No. We have to start  
22 somewhere, so in the end of the day, we have the  
23 signs up, we have a street cleaning program, and  
24 we're working towards what's going to be the future  
25 of that alternate side program, but we do think that

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2 it's more than fair that we should evaluate the  
3 entirety of the city to figure out where the current  
4 regulations are, are they sufficient? Do they need  
5 to be more? Do they need to be less? And more  
6 importantly, is there new technology available to  
7 help us do that job even more efficiently or more  
8 transparent with the community members.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AMANDA FARIAS: Thank you  
10 so much for your response, Commissioner.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG  
12 ALBIN: Thank you council member. We will now call  
13 on Council Member Bottcher, followed by Council  
14 Member Menin. Council Member Bottcher.

15 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER: Hello,  
17 Commissioner Grayson, how are you?

18 COMMISSIONER GRAYSON: Good morning.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER: Thank you,  
20 Commissioner. I want to thank you and your team for  
21 being so responsive the last nine weeks I've been in  
22 office. You've been doing a lot with the limited  
23 resources you have, and I really want to thank you  
24 for that. Commissioner, regarding the district that  
25 I represent, the Village Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen,

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2 in your opinion, would you describe these  
3 neighborhoods currently as acceptably clean?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Well, we  
5 can definitely do more work. Listen, I'm the  
6 sanitation commissioner. Almost nothing is  
7 acceptably clean to me. I can come out there and  
8 point litter out that people can't even see.  
9 However, I will tell you this much, we are keenly  
10 aware of what the nomenclature on the rating reports  
11 are for acceptably clean, and we also are aware that  
12 not just in your district, that in many places  
13 citywide, that is definitely subjective and arguable  
14 versus a two-time a month rating period from the  
15 mayor's office of scorecards, rating personnel, what  
16 we believe it can be, particularly at any given time,  
17 and more importantly the temporal realities of if I  
18 came down any one of your streets that we were able  
19 to get a broom down, right after the broom came down,  
20 I would tell you that it was acceptably clean. You  
21 and I both know that later in the day or after a very  
22 robust weekend of activities, and we haven't seen a  
23 mechanical broom in over 36 hours, that that could be  
24 easily argued to be the other way. So, it's about  
25 the scheduled resources, the programmatic cleaning,



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2 and then the temporal realities of places with high  
3 density, high congestion, or more importantly, high  
4 foot traffic, and some other environmental factors.  
5 It's very windy. There litter may not have started  
6 by you, but it ended by you. That kind of thing, and  
7 I'm not trying to make light of it, but I know where  
8 you're getting at, and yes, cleaning never ends.  
9 That's one of our actual mantras inside DSNY, that  
10 cleaning never ends. It's always dirty out there.  
11 So, are they acceptably clean? Depends on when  
12 you're looking at them.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER:

14 Understood. If the funding cuts that are being  
15 proposed in this preliminary budget go through, what  
16 will be practical effects of that be on the ground in  
17 my council districts and other council districts?  
18 Can you walk us through what that would look like if  
19 the corner basket service is further reduced, etc.?

20 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: 100

21 percent. So, yes, and we're continuing, you know,  
22 it's definitely true that what was released was the  
23 preliminary budget in a time where physical prudence  
24 is being asked of all agencies. We're one of many  
25 agencies. We're asked to put up a reduction. Our

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2 current headcount peg reduction does impact our  
3 ability to expand to the organic services. It also  
4 cuts some of our support staff, so the uniform  
5 headcount of people who will be on the frontline, we  
6 have to evaluate afterwards, cause there will be a  
7 cascading impact, cause what does that mean? Some of  
8 the support staff that we employ in garages that do  
9 truck maintenance and truck movement, our fleet is  
10 very dynamic because the needs per community boards  
11 change by day. We don't staff every community board  
12 to their peak need. We staff them to a mean need,  
13 and then when their peak need exceeds that, we move  
14 trucks around. So, there are various maintenance  
15 jobs that aren't frontline impacted that are now  
16 going to be delayed. So, that's why sometimes in the  
17 question, will we see an impact on the frontline on  
18 what your service delivery is? That I cannot tell  
19 you. What I can address is what we know of, and I  
20 mentioned it in testimony, is that currently, right  
21 now; and these are still, I can't say it enough,  
22 these are still ongoing conversations with the  
23 administration and where we're going next. An  
24 administration, and I do not mind saying has been  
25 firm in that they want cleaner streets, they want to

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2 have those resources. So, I'm optimistic about where  
3 those conversations lead and where we get to as we  
4 continue with budget conversations, the hearing that  
5 comes up in a couple weeks to discuss those topics,  
6 and the further discussions after that, after the  
7 entire thing has been evaluated, but right now, there  
8 is a population of the current litter basket  
9 services; and you and I have had this conversation,  
10 I've had it with a couple of your colleagues on this  
11 committee as well, pre-pandemic, we had over 700  
12 basket trucks weekly budgeted. We are now at 588,  
13 and inside that 588 is the funding for 136 trucks  
14 that was FY22, one shot. So, it was only in there  
15 for one year. So, it doesn't look like a budget cut  
16 because it never put into the obvious. So right now,  
17 there is definitely going to be without a technical  
18 cut, there is a planned reduction in service, and I  
19 think that's something that we need to talk about,  
20 and if we run less services, as we saw at the height  
21 of the pandemic when we were literally down to 270  
22 basket trucks a week give or take, less basket  
23 service, less routine service, certainly contributes  
24 an adverse impact on field operations.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER: So the  
3 baskets will get emptied less often on the corners?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

7 ALBIN: Thank you, council member. We will now heard  
8 from Council Member Menin.

9 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JULIE MENIN: Thank you so  
11 much. First of all, I want to thank Chair Nurse for  
12 holding this important oversight hearing and thank  
13 you Commissioner Grayson. So, a question that I  
14 have, Commissioner Grayson is I represent council  
15 district 5 which is one of the densest council  
16 districts in the city. How can the department change  
17 their pickup schedule to better reflect population  
18 density in neighborhoods that really have this kind  
19 of density so that trash bags are not piling up on  
20 the street?

21 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you,  
22 and I have to tell you, council member, we are  
23 constantly monitoring the metrics. We know tons per  
24 day. We know pick ups per day, and we're trying to  
25 always meet the demand, and I think that what we need

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2 to discuss is more of a temporal redistribution. So,  
3 I would be definitely interested to follow back up  
4 with you and have my team come back out and reassess  
5 with you some of the areas where you're seeing the  
6 level of service, not just on the corner baskets.  
7 That is something where we've talked about this, and  
8 will continue to have those discussions clearly if  
9 you have any influx or if you're hosting more and  
10 more, let's say buses or travelers and people are  
11 coming to the district to be a transfer station to  
12 get across town to move further on into Manhattan and  
13 possibly move further away into the outer boroughs,  
14 but then using that as a transit hub in certain  
15 blocks, we definitely need to talk about that to make  
16 sure that we're meeting the foot traffic and the  
17 generation. Some of the other things that we would  
18 love to continue to work on, and it's part of our  
19 core mission as we move forward, is not only litter  
20 prevention campaigns, but waste reduction campaigns  
21 because that's also something where I don't know we  
22 have firm handle, and now, especially it's something  
23 that we're watching continually, the change in  
24 behavior from what people have done on the pandemic.  
25 Their consumption, how their taking in, I mean,

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2 things like, you know, the Deputy Commissioner  
3 Bridget Anderson brought it before, more and more  
4 corrugated cardboard, I mean, I think that the order  
5 (Crosstalk) is going to happen continually and I  
6 think that it's going to change what looks like set  
7 out, and looks like a saturation of set out,  
8 particularly when you're putting it out the night  
9 before for the day of, that's a long temporal time to  
10 have garbage exposed. So, those are the types of  
11 things with the density that we would definitely like  
12 to work with you on, but we do, we evaluate the  
13 tonnage and the truck traffic and our ability to  
14 maintain the collection schedules and we're always  
15 trying to kind of meet up with that and I definitely  
16 want to continue to work with you and your colleagues  
17 where ever you feel that that needs to be tweaked  
18 because we have metrics that you may not know of and  
19 we certainly want to hear your ground level issues so  
20 we can try to better tailor our operation to cut them  
21 down.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JULIE MENIN: Sorry, I  
23 know, I got muted by accident. Okay, thank you so  
24 much for unmuting me. So, another question I have is  
25 about Big Belly contained garbage. What are the

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2 department's plans in terms of piloting Big Belly  
3 containerized garbage and if so, in what areas?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Well, so  
5 Big Belly is brand. They are clearly Big Belly  
6 baskets all the way around. It's also one of the  
7 vendors we expect to be looking into, you know, the  
8 solicitation on getting involved with our  
9 containerized trash options. We currently are using,  
10 you know, a variation of that can in some of our  
11 other pilots with regard to, we have this incredible,  
12 you know, the drop off composting and we're using a  
13 variation of that type of thing where you have a  
14 larger vessel that does some level of possibly  
15 compacting to get more utilization and more  
16 importantly, it has a user interactive landscape.  
17 It's more esthetically pleasing. So, right now, we  
18 are not expanding Big Bellies for corner baskets in  
19 our budget. We are focused on trying to do our  
20 Better Bin campaign and get more and more of the  
21 Silver Bullet type baskets. That doesn't mean that  
22 we're not willing to talk about getting into Big  
23 Belly. Some of the times, we look at corner baskets  
24 and the technology that surrounds them is two-fold.  
25 It's what are we really looking to do? We're looking

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2 to achieve the ability to hold it and then provide  
3 the proper service level, and more importantly,  
4 overall costs for the tax payer because Big Bellies  
5 are fantastic and when we can get sponsorship, that's  
6 good, but on the tax levy, they are a very expensive  
7 basket, so you take sometimes the valuation on, not  
8 only is it good, but it's a pretty expensive option  
9 depending on which version you take. Are you taking  
10 the one that is solar powered? Some of these things  
11 can be several thousand's dollar for a basket that  
12 holds pedestrian refuse, and then when we look at  
13 that against what we know we can service also that is  
14 more manual. So again, great conversations to have.  
15 That's what this committee is about. We can talk  
16 about that, and I would gladly and after this, we  
17 will definitely circle back to your team to let you  
18 know, and sit down with you and talk about the  
19 different types of ...

20 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

21 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: ... baskets  
22 and what are the costs associated with them and some  
23 of our real time feedback on how we interact with  
24 them and some of the lessons we've learned. I think  
25 that when we arm you with what we know and our



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2 expertise on some of these things, it's going to  
3 really, really make these conversations go that much  
4 better as we plan for where we should be, but we like  
5 Big Bellies. There's a lot to talk about in that, so  
6 I hope that that helped.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

8 ALBIN: Thank you very much, council member. We will  
9 now turn it back to Chair Nurse for additional  
10 questions before a second round for council members.  
11 Chair Nurse.

12 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, and thank  
13 you Commissioner Grayson. It's a lot to have to  
14 speak to and there are so many questions on a Friday,  
15 so thank you so much. I have several questions about  
16 Curb Side. Curb Side can be (inaudible). So, waste  
17 export costs \$470 million in the fiscal year 2023  
18 preliminary budget which is an exorbitant amount.  
19 Organic waste makes up one-third of the waste stream  
20 as you mentioned, and so therefore logic would follow  
21 that by piecing organic collections and by creating  
22 more compost processing facilities, we can reduce  
23 these costs and the associated environmental costs.  
24 The more we expand the organics program including  
25 Curb Side, public school organics, organic drop off

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2 sites and community composting, the more we can save  
3 on these export costs. So, I would love if you could  
4 just kind of describe a little bit how the cuts in  
5 organics collection have shifted towards waste export  
6 costs.

7 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Chair, I  
8 thank you for the question, and it's no doubt that,  
9 you know, New York City has an interesting challenge.  
10 It's the exocentric threat that sadly, you know, and  
11 I remember being in, all those years ago, to date  
12 myself, listening to Al Gore speak about the  
13 inconvenient truth at the 92nd Street where I got my  
14 signed, and it was fantastic, but unfortunately, some  
15 of the things, when we talk about climate change and  
16 behavior change and waste stream change, they become  
17 a really inconvenient truth because the exocentric  
18 threat is here except it is very, very hard to get  
19 the behavior change without a complete, and you've  
20 been a champion in this, you've been doing so much  
21 great work trying to get more people to understand  
22 composting, understand the personal impact, and their  
23 personal carbon footprint in the myriad of ways that  
24 they can behavior, so I know that I'm speaking to the  
25 choir on this. So, top line, how does not having a

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2 really robust organics program contribute to the cost  
3 of waste export? Clearly, if we're continuing to  
4 export garbage and that cost rises for every mile  
5 that we take it away from New York City and we'll  
6 continue to do that particularly as we, you know,  
7 while we're doing everything we can and we're very  
8 proud of the fact that most of that is done by either  
9 barge or rail and we significantly made those mile  
10 stones in the original swamp and it's been an  
11 incredible transportation plan, and there's a lot to  
12 be proud of. There's so much more work to be done  
13 because everything that isn't diverted then goes to  
14 that higher cost to tip it that's associated with  
15 refuse. So, yes. I think the non-binary line or the  
16 thing that we need to openly discuss is while there  
17 is definitely a differentiation in the amount of  
18 disposal costs, there's also the fact that while  
19 we're building the program, and while we're trying to  
20 get that behavior change, it's not an immediate  
21 reduction in the overall waste export cost. It's not  
22 an immediate reduction. For every ton less that we  
23 divert, it's clearly going to be, but there are  
24 other, between the collection operations, between the  
25 entire realities of how we're going to get there, we

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2 just need to be open and honest and say yes. To  
3 answer you question, organic diversion, as long as  
4 it's now coupled with processing centers and the  
5 entire infrastructure package that would come with  
6 that could certainly drive down what the cost would  
7 be and certainly drive down some of the environmental  
8 impacts and greenhouse gas impact; it's going to do  
9 all of that, but I think that it's completely, it's  
10 not the right tone to set to say that if we do  
11 organics tomorrow, we're going to see an immediate  
12 reduction in the waste export costs because there's  
13 also the other market factor variables inside of  
14 that. We do not host any of our own dumps. We do  
15 not, so we have to pay for every ton that we put out  
16 and sometimes the rates per ton are also associated  
17 with the tons we're giving. So clear, if any kind of  
18 good system that has a margin, at some point in time,  
19 those two things will line up again. So, what I  
20 want, which is the wrong way of saying, it's a very  
21 big question that is though, important to tackle  
22 because organic diversion will overall, in the out  
23 years, reduce our waste export costs, especially if  
24 we also then make it something where we're doing much  
25 more to host community local level events, have some

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2 level of meaningful infrastructure that takes the  
3 shipping of that away from the whole process and do  
4 more local level processing as well.

5 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, and I  
6 definitely hear you about, it's not an immediate  
7 solution, but I hear what you're saying about you  
8 don't own your (inaudible) so, you know, my  
9 understanding is that in order to justify the cost of  
10 this program, yes, we need increase participation in  
11 the program, and also we need to have places where  
12 this stuff is being processed. So, within DSNY, what  
13 is it looking like in terms of identifying potential  
14 new processing facilities or DSNY run large scale  
15 organics processing facilities as part of the overall  
16 strategy to have that stuff here and bring some of  
17 these costs down?

18  
19 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: I thank you  
20 for that, and I'm going top line that to say it's  
21 clearly going to be, so, we're at this interesting  
22 time. We mentioned in testimony the critical timing  
23 and the nature of this new waste characterization  
24 study so we can really get the latest set of data to  
25 see what's happening in that waste stream. It's  
going to be critical for future planning, and more

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2 importantly, thankfully, we all get to be around to  
3 watch the city revamp the solid waste management  
4 plan, and the original 28 cycle is amazing and a lot  
5 of great work was done that, and now we get to take  
6 the pin out, looking at what our new streams, new  
7 chances for diversion, new opportunities to make  
8 really incredible choices for true long lasting  
9 climate change, environmental justice. There's so  
10 much good that can come. So, we have plans, and we  
11 definitely need some level of, our interactions at  
12 local scale facilities and the vender network that we  
13 currently have, but for a little bit more granularity  
14 on where we think we're heading in that, I'm going to  
15 offer both my Deputy Commissioners Andersons,  
16 Anderson and Anderson Incorporated, although no  
17 relation, I'm going to start with Greg and then  
18 Bridget can pick up where the gaps are. Greg.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREGORY ANDERSON:

20 Yeah, thank you, commissioner. This is something  
21 that obviously we're always looking at in terms of  
22 opportunities to grow new facilities and as the  
23 Commissioner mentioned earlier, what the old swamp  
24 did was create a transportation plan for our waste  
25 and in large part, the transportation plan was get it

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2 out of here and do so as sustainably as possible.

3 What we'd like to do going forward and Bridget can  
4 talk about this in detail as well, is work with other  
5 agencies across the city really understand what is  
6 the opportunity for growth in terms of organics  
7 management, both in New York City, around the  
8 metropolitan region and come up with a really  
9 comprehensive strategy for how we can make those  
10 investments. Obviously, the challenge for us at  
11 sanitation is that whenever we are going to build a  
12 project, it has to go through ULURP, and ULURP; I'm  
13 just going to be frank, it can be an unbearable  
14 process as many of you know, particularly for solid  
15 waste facilities, whether it's a sanitation garage, a  
16 transfer station, a compost facility, anything like  
17 that will certainly raise substantial concerns during  
18 the ULURP process and that's just something that we  
19 have to be realistic about going forward. We'd love  
20 to work with the council to identify where those  
21 facilities could be cited in the long term so that we  
22 can try to achieve an equitable distribution, try to  
23 identify where those facilities could be in  
24 collaboration with community partners, so that there  
25 isn't that sort of upfront concern on the ULURP

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2 process, and I think all of these things are steps  
3 that we can take in the context of the solid waste  
4 management plan which is now just four short years  
5 away.

6 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Okay, thank you. My  
7 next question is related to the current organics  
8 interest form. So, right now, you have X-amount of  
9 communities that have access to it, they're using it,  
10 and then they're also receiving demands, so your  
11 people are expressing they'd love to have it, but  
12 there is no necessarily transparency on when that can  
13 happen. So, one of the questions I had is if you  
14 could explain to us, and this would really help  
15 inform the advocacy of a lot of folks, how many  
16 people per community board or a district or a  
17 geography that you all have, how many people  
18 expressing interest would justify activating a truck  
19 or activating that community board, and is it  
20 (inaudible), is it just a certain number of people  
21 for a board or whatever voucher you're using? I  
22 think that would be really helpful to understand  
23 we're out there canvassing and trying to ask people  
24 to sign up and who are trying to do that educational  
25 awareness to help better inform their advocacy



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2 efforts if they knew what that threshold would be  
3 and how they can better organize for it?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: That is a  
5 great question. To get into the exact pinpoint,  
6 cause I want to tell you this, so this, we expected  
7 to have a great problem. Prior to the pandemic, we  
8 had the access to curbside composting in 44 districts  
9 in New York City. Forty-four community boards had  
10 either a regular curbside pickup or we go into the  
11 high rise route in Manhattan and like western  
12 portions of the Bronx. So, but there it was. There  
13 was the (inaudible) program and there we were, and in  
14 all honesty, the totality of opportunity, you know,  
15 was some of the best we've ever seen. Three plus  
16 million New Yorkers had access to the program and  
17 they could be a part of it. So, it is a little bit  
18 of a shock that when we went to those same 44  
19 communities boards and said, you have the bin, we're  
20 ready to come back, sign up; we only had 61,000  
21 people sign up. So, from three million accessible  
22 clients, to less than 65,000 signups, and now we're  
23 running in seven community boards. What we did was  
24 the seven community are in, right now, they are the  
25 top sign up districts that we have. So, they had the

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2 most, just numerically, number of people express  
3 interest and that we could vet those addresses and  
4 make sure that they were the responsible property  
5 owner who wanted to be a part of the program and then  
6 we did a time distance routing methodology to make  
7 sure that we could complete the route inside the  
8 time. We would assign them a day and then we could  
9 do that. We we're doing point-to-point routing. So,  
10 one of the things about this program is it's  
11 precision routing. You're literally not going up and  
12 down blocks randomly, you're only going to the blocks  
13 that we may have to transverse a couple to get to the  
14 other block that has it out. We're only going to the  
15 addresses that have signed up for the program and are  
16 supposed to have it out on their respective  
17 collection day. To that end, I will let Bridget  
18 Anderson go into a little bit of what we use as the  
19 criteria. Again, it was just pure math, but I could  
20 tell you now, Chair, that when, even as we were  
21 looking to expand, where were we going next? We were  
22 going to have to start to take a much lower number as  
23 the benchmark thing if we wanted to get more  
24 expansion, because nobody was able to hit the  
25 percentages categorically up and down. Not that that

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2 was the only factor involved, but when we were trying  
3 to run the most effective truck, that's kind of how  
4 it played into it, but Bridget, please give some more  
5 information on this.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON:

7 Sure. Sure. So, the number of signups that we had  
8 in the 44 districts to date is between 5 and 6  
9 percent of the addresses in those districts. So,  
10 that to us is a factor of a voluntary program. It is  
11 a learning curve of people who might have  
12 participated versus people who will sign up to  
13 participate. We thought it would be fairly low  
14 barrier to entry. Just let us know you want it, and  
15 it turned out to be a barrier. We also have the  
16 ongoing challenge which was a challenge in the prior  
17 program which is that because it's a voluntary  
18 program, residents in large buildings, they can't  
19 self-select to participate unless they're building  
20 management will choose to participate, and so that's  
21 been a big factor too, is figuring out ways prior to  
22 the pandemic and now, how do you get voluntary  
23 participation by large building management companies.  
24 So, the participation, the signups have been modest.  
25 Participation, as the Commissioner mentioned, of the

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2 people who have already signed up and who are  
3 receiving service, about 50 percent of them set out  
4 the bin every week. So, we're seeing just the  
5 voluntary nature, the discretionary nature of the way  
6 people are participating in this program. All of  
7 these things to us point towards the need, as with  
8 the original recycling program to go mandatory as the  
9 indicator as the key to switch the change in  
10 participation. We've seen this with our e-waste when  
11 the electronic waste recycling act was passed at the  
12 state level, we had a voluntary program to collect  
13 and recycle e-waste in large apartment buildings, e-  
14 Cycle NYC. The moment the disposal ban was in our  
15 future, two years out, it crashed the form to sign up  
16 for the program. It's a free service. You're not  
17 even enforcing it. You're just indicating that this  
18 is going to be a universal expectation. That created  
19 a huge step change in participation, and so we have  
20 this with the original recycling program as well.  
21 So, the opt-in program is limited. Our marching  
22 orders were make it efficient. Find a way to make it  
23 more efficient, and we have a learning curve  
24 understanding who our customers are. So, we're also  
25 able to have a better sense of participation

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2 patterns. So, in addition to the number of signups  
3 in districts, we also look at the percentage of the  
4 addresses in those districts that are signing up  
5 because that allows us to think about efficiency and  
6 running. So, if you have, you know, 500 addresses  
7 here, 500 addresses there, but it's 10 percent of the  
8 addresses in this district, our trucks are going to  
9 have a more efficient clustering of addresses. If  
10 500 addresses is 2 percent of the addresses in a  
11 different district, you're going to be driving really  
12 far between those addresses to pick up the materials,  
13 so, it was less efficient. So, we also look at that  
14 percentage of households within the district which is  
15 why everyone doesn't have the same number that we're  
16 trying to hit. So, every month, we look at the  
17 signups. We look at how many addresses, how they're  
18 clustered to figure out a way to create more  
19 efficient routes, but again, this is a program where  
20 we're learning a lot, but again, it's not the end  
21 state. This is not the end state of where we need to  
22 be, but we've learned a lot from it, and we do look  
23 forward to continuing to add addresses and make more  
24 efficient routes.

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2 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you. Thank you  
3 very much. That sounds like density. People need to  
4 do advocacy and organizing in a way that promotes  
5 density. Okay, so the last couple of questions  
6 before I hand it over back to other members for  
7 questions is around community composting. What steps  
8 are being taken to ensure that community composting  
9 remains part of DSNY's organics collection strategy,  
10 and to that end, you know, what steps are being taken  
11 to extend funding and be more inclusive and open to  
12 organizations doing similar work to the compost  
13 project or already DSNY funded composting sites?

14 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Thank you,  
15 Chair. We love our compost partners. The FSDO sites  
16 that we have and our community partners truly are;  
17 many of them have a longstanding relationship with  
18 the department and as we onboard new ones and have  
19 this new expression of interest over a myriad of  
20 community boards, it's amazing and you know, you go  
21 out and you tour these sites and you see the people  
22 that really care. There's a lot of great volunteers.  
23 There's a lot of great conversation. There's a lot  
24 of great education. So, we are championing that we  
25 continue this fundings. We have a need request in to

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2 discuss that and we're going to continue to work with  
3 the administration because the local level composters  
4 are really, truly great partners and clearly  
5 something that, when we talk about accessibility.  
6 You know, the biggest challenge for everything is  
7 trying to marry that, getting that perfect synergy  
8 when you can marry good intent with opportunity. You  
9 know, and that's really the big thing, making sure  
10 that people who decide that today's the day, I'm  
11 going to become a composters. Today's the day I'm  
12 going to have behavior change, that you have some  
13 place to go do that because as we all know, all it  
14 takes is one good bing watch on Netflix and you ain't  
15 doing nothing. You know, a good idea turns into eh,  
16 tomorrow, and tomorrow never comes, right. So, at  
17 the end of the day, there's that miracle of why you  
18 need. So, this is why we will always champion,  
19 number one the behavior change of a mandate and a  
20 mantra and at law and given everybody that extra  
21 poke, but we certainly need accessibility. So, we're  
22 pushing and we've made that need known to make sure  
23 that we can maintain existing level of the community  
24 composting sites that we have into next year, but we  
25 also would like growth, and we're having those

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2 discussions and thankfully, the administration has  
3 said it a couple of times and I do believe that they  
4 meant it. This is a preliminary budget conversation,  
5 so that's why we look forward to I'm sure, talking  
6 more about some of these items in the next hearing  
7 that comes up at the end of the month, but more  
8 importantly just to have this dialogue, but as far as  
9 our local level engagements and who our best partners  
10 are, and how people can get a part of the program and  
11 what we're doing on a daily level, I'm going to ask  
12 Bridge Anderson to weigh in with some of the more  
13 granular details.

14  
15 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: I think she needs to  
16 be unmuted.

17 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Can someone  
18 unmute her?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON:  
20 Thank you. So, one of the things we like to say is  
21 there are plenty of organics materials to go around  
22 in New York City, and you know, historically in the  
23 90s, we focused on backyard composting. We said  
24 citywide, major efforts to train and get people to  
25 leave it on the lawn, compost in their backyards,  
figuring out how much did that actually reduce the



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2 waste that we had to collect? We established a  
3 master composter program that was nationally  
4 recognized. We had that suspended during COVID.  
5 We're bringing it back this spring. We're very  
6 excited to have again, a master composter program to  
7 train people on how to compost at home, in their  
8 communities, and again, there's plenty of material.  
9 One of our goals is tonnage diversion, and so we know  
10 that without a citywide program at scale. We're not  
11 going to get the level of tonnage diversion that we  
12 need, but that is not the only story. Composting  
13 isn't just about diverting waste from landfills, it's  
14 about actually creating a product that's helping our  
15 street trees, it's helping our community gardens,  
16 it's helping with urban agriculture. So, we are very  
17 eager to maintain that as part of our strategy. We  
18 say home, community, city. Every strategy is  
19 important in our process.

20 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you, and my  
21 last question, and also I really enjoyed the comment  
22 about Netflix spending versus taking the organics.  
23 It's like you know me. On the same day that the  
24 mayor announced cuts to the Curb Side Organics  
25 Program as one of the budget announcements, Sentor

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2 (inaudible) introduced a bill in the state senator  
3 that would require the city to establish a resident  
4 composting program for all buildings with residential  
5 units. Obviously, for me, it would be great if the  
6 city led on it and not be mandated from the state,  
7 but I guess, I'd love to hear you all, your opinion.  
8 Is DSNY supportive of this bill and why or why not?

9 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Well, thank  
10 you, and you know, I think that the top line value is  
11 that there are always nuances when people put in a  
12 bill that we have to be very mindful of cause we  
13 certainly don't want it to be something that is pre-  
14 emptive or hurts us from moving forward in a more  
15 robust needs programs that specifically impacts New  
16 York City communities and lose some of that stake  
17 holder engagement in legislative drafting. So, on  
18 the overall, we need a mandatory program and we are  
19 definitely supportive of everybody who wants us to  
20 get there and we look forward to continuing the  
21 conversations with US Chair, this committee, the  
22 current administration, really on what that has to  
23 look like. What is the lead-in time? What is going  
24 any furtherance of how we're going to do that, how  
25 we're going to do the education component, what is

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2 going to be involved in the program exactly? What is  
3 going to be all the material completely outlined and  
4 defined? So, we support overall, we need a program,  
5 we need a bill. We want all the help we can get, and  
6 we want to make sure that that hits all the temporal  
7 points and all of the needs points. So, yes on a  
8 bill and there are some parts of every bill that gets  
9 introduced from people who aren't directly involved  
10 at the local level that sometimes we have to keep an  
11 eye on, but overall, legislation would help.

12 Bridget, would you like to add anything more to that?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET ANDERSON:

14 No, that sounds great. I think that's good. I think  
15 whether it's local, state, a combination there of,  
16 frankly, there's a federal compost act, you know,  
17 each level will hopefully create the policy that  
18 indicates this and helps us in the right direction.

19 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you. Thank you  
20 all. I'm going to turn it over to Jessica.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

22 ALBIN: Thank you, Chair. We will now go to a second  
23 round of council member questions. Council Member  
24 Bottcher will be first, and then if any other council  
25 members who have additional questions, but have yet

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2 to use their Zoom raise hand function, please do that  
3 now. Council Member Bottcher.

4 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER:

6 Commissioner, what is the ideal number of litter  
7 basket truck routes for the citywide corner basket  
8 services? If you could pick a number in your dream  
9 scenario, what would it be? There is 588 truck  
10 routes now, 736 before the pandemic, but even then,  
11 we had chronic overflowing baskets and folks at DSNY  
12 had said back then that we could use more truck  
13 routes. What number would you pick if you could set  
14 that yourself?

15 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: I think,  
16 and t's a great question, and I think that number  
17 depending on circumstance is fluid, and the reason  
18 why I say that is because between traffic density,  
19 between infrastructure changes, it's about  
20 operational feasibility and our routing structure.  
21 The temporal distribution of when we bring that, a  
22 lot of basket service, and this is just the truth,  
23 happens on the overnight because we're more  
24 efficient, and we're not in the way and we're not  
25 creating more traffic. However, sometimes, that

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2 creates the constituent experience where they'll see  
3 an empty basket, perhaps, as long as they leave their  
4 house early enough in the morning to be on the path  
5 to work, but then when they come home, it looks like  
6 nothing has been done. So, for me, I think that I  
7 would like to see, and I mean this because there was  
8 also a ramp up. We had gotten to that 730 number and  
9 then we really, you know, everything is always  
10 temporal in over distribution. I want to see a  
11 number that high. I want to be in the 700s, and I  
12 don't mean to be ambiguous. I would take that pre-  
13 pandemic number all day long, but only then ask that  
14 we can then evaluate what that looks like in today's  
15 landscape and see what can we do. Is there is some  
16 time? Is there a temporal jump that we need to do  
17 and work with? And more importantly, continuing to  
18 partner with the council members who sometimes add  
19 additional funding. That's another, sometimes they  
20 fill up their gap in service time at a peak area  
21 where we can come back and do like a mid-day pick up  
22 because they've gone through some supplemental  
23 servicing along a heavily congested area where we  
24 can't maintain a 24-hour collection cycle. So, I  
25 think that question is very valuable. I think I

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2 would like to get us to a pre-pandemic level and then  
3 work together on finding what's the right answer, and  
4 because I think that a lot of it does come to  
5 behavior change and we had a stark drop off. We've  
6 been getting better with adopt-a-baskets, but when we  
7 have areas where we have more adopt-a-basket partners  
8 and they're taking the liner bags out and then  
9 leaving them on, I think that the service can be more  
10 impactful because we're getting three or four pick  
11 ups worth for that particular litter basket on a  
12 singular service, so I think that it's not one brush,  
13 because sometimes we have a lot more community  
14 partners helping us with the baskets or in places  
15 where the collection service is, you know, we try to  
16 run our basket service opposite the collection  
17 service on an respective day because the collection  
18 service was going to get it, and I think that a lot  
19 of times, specifically, while we saw some of the  
20 increased outage, if you had a missed collection day  
21 because we couldn't staff it over the pandemic,  
22 leading it to where we are now, it's not today, not  
23 steady, where we are, the believe that we all have in  
24 our head, if we didn't have enough people, that  
25 basket that was going to get scheduled by the refuse

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2 truck that day, didn't then have the basket truck  
3 because we put the baskets opposite the collection.  
4 So, if we missed a collection, now you have the  
5 collection in front of your house and you had the  
6 corner basket overflowing, and some of what we're  
7 talking about is all temporal and optic. Not that  
8 it's not dirty, that's none of my intent, but what's  
9 the right number? That number continues to change,  
10 but I would love to see us as a baseline back to pre-  
11 pandemic level.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHEER: Okay,  
13 sounds like getting back to pre-pandemic levels and  
14 then adding corner basket pickups would be ideal, but  
15 agree with a lot of what you said today. We've got  
16 to reduce the amount of waste that people are putting  
17 in the baskets. That's a big problem. We have to  
18 focus on that, but tell me, what will the number be  
19 after the cuts? If those cuts that are proposed for  
20 this year go through, what will the number of corner  
21 basket pickups be, of trucks routes be, it's 588;  
22 what would it be if these proposed cuts go through?

23 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: If the  
24 funding that was only instituted for FY22 is taken  
25 away, and we made no other different operational

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2 adjustments; if it was just apples to apples,  
3 currently level of funding into non-restored level of  
4 funding for FY23, we would lose 136 trucks a week  
5 which would take it from 588 to 422 which is  
6 approximately a 23 percent reduction city wide.

7 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHER: And do you  
9 think that would be a mistake to do that?

10 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: We're  
11 advocating for the (inaudible) because right now, and  
12 that's what it is, we're advocating. So, it's on our  
13 list of the needs. Every agency is asked to put up  
14 what do you think you need? We're advocating at the  
15 very minimum, to maintain the current level of basket  
16 service and we're working with the administration  
17 OMB. Again, what was in the preliminary budget  
18 document clearly didn't look like; it's a cut because  
19 it wasn't (inaudible). So, it's an interesting  
20 thing. It's nomenclature, but it's not a budget cut.  
21 It wasn't funded originally. So, it's the  
22 restoration of that funding to maintain what we have  
23 and then ongoing discussions to talk about where we  
24 were for pre-pandemic. I could tell you that I'm the  
25 Commissioner of Sanitation. I love emptying litter



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2 baskets. It's like I would do it all day long. It's  
3 the greatest thing ever; however, we have to do that  
4 right. We have to right size that operation to get  
5 maximum efficiency out of the routing, use the  
6 collection trucks that are already passing, cut down  
7 our own carbon footprint, why run a truck when we  
8 already have one in the area, and who could also do  
9 the job. Looking to that, so yes, we would lose out  
10 on basket service. I am not a fan of that. I am a  
11 fan of maintaining what I have now and possibly going  
12 to a pre-pandemic level and I'm definitely a fan of  
13 the fact you, your colleagues, the Chair, this  
14 organization, this committee wants to understand what  
15 are those baseline metrics, what's our deployment  
16 strategy, and how can we have an honest conversation  
17 about what we really need?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ERIK BOTTCHE: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner, and thank you to Chair Nurse as well.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GREGORY ANDERSON:  
21 And Commissioner, if I could just add to that. Just  
22 for the record, the FY2020 number also included one  
23 time funding for litter basket service of 8.6 million  
24 in that fiscal year, so I think what's important is  
25 that this litter basket service funding has to be

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2 renewed year over year and in the long run, it's  
3 probably best to just baseline that funding in our  
4 budget so that way, one, we're not running it on  
5 overtime, and two, this conversation doesn't  
6 necessarily need to happen every single fiscal year.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

8 ALBIN: Thank you. I would like to just recognize  
9 that we have been joined by Council Member Gennaro,  
10 and Council Member Williams, you have some additional  
11 questions?

12 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NANTASHA WILLIAMS: Thank  
14 you so much. So, as also the Chair of Disability and  
15 Human Rights Committee, I had some different types of  
16 questions. So, the previous administration conducted  
17 at least 1700 sweeps aimed at moving homeless people  
18 from locations where they had set up shelter.  
19 According to (inaudible) via the Freedom of  
20 Information Act, it is not illegal to sleep outside,  
21 but DHS cannot force homeless people to accept  
22 services; however, sending out teams of cops,  
23 sanitation workers, and outreach personnel to move  
24 people from their makeshift homes seems like we are  
25 pushing them out rather than systematically adjusting

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2 the homelessness problem. The clean up operations  
3 typically involved DHS, the police, and sanitation,  
4 parks department. Sometimes business improvement  
5 districts and other local transit agencies involved  
6 depending on the property in question. Homeless  
7 individuals are traumatized by having NYPD, the  
8 Department of Sanitation, and DHS discard their  
9 belongings and move away from one of the few places  
10 they feel safe. In early 2017, the New York Civil  
11 Liberties Unit and the advocacy group for the  
12 homeless settled a lawsuit against the city by three  
13 homeless New Yorkers who the unit said were kicked  
14 awake and whose belongings were thrown into a trash  
15 compactor by police and sanitation workers. The  
16 NYCLU and the homeless have a separate ongoing case  
17 before the city's commission on human rights alleging  
18 that the NYPD has an illegal policy telling homeless  
19 people gather, in particularly east Harlem street  
20 corners to move along. Under Mayor DiBlasio,  
21 homeless sweeps were sometimes clear in their  
22 protocol, but under the Adam's administration, it is  
23 not as clear, and so the question I have is will the  
24 Adam's administration look at lesson's learned from

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2 the previous administration to better handle and  
3 address sweeps?

4 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: Well, thank  
5 you for your question, and it's an interesting thing.  
6 It's never more humbling than witnessing these  
7 homeless interactions and in fairness, the amount of  
8 dedicated civil servants that go out, one from the  
9 DHS team who try to go out and engage or from the  
10 mental health team that are trying to go out and  
11 engage and get to the; you know, it's a weird thing  
12 being the sanitation component of the homeless sweeps  
13 because in that literal, and I hate to say it that  
14 way, for the many times that DSNY workers are first  
15 responders, when it comes to this, we're literally  
16 the last responder. All right, and because at the  
17 end of every pile that someone is complaining about  
18 or the end of every eyesore condition that someone is  
19 complaining about, is a human being, and when you go  
20 to these scenes and you take part in what is a clean  
21 up or an intervention, it is the complete epitome of  
22 the adage, one man's trash is another man's treasure.

23 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

24 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: The passers  
25 by and the residents of the impact areas, they're

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2 complaining about what looks to be garbage to them,  
3 and yet, when you get to the location, someone is  
4 standing there saying that's mine. That's my whole  
5 life, and try to navigate what is the difference and  
6 the differentiation while you're having a meaningful  
7 conversation, and again, our staff is there to wait  
8 until they are told what is garbage to be removed,  
9 and then perform their function as the last responder  
10 of a garbage pickup that is literally is having this  
11 interactive human experience unfold. To that end, we  
12 have been maintaining routine sweeps with the DHS  
13 team throughout the transition. I think that the  
14 administration's approach is to understand what those  
15 drivers are. So, what we've been doing is  
16 maintaining our relationship with DHS, being the  
17 accompanying last party to where these homeless  
18 sweeps are, and then it's an interesting thing too  
19 because we have homeless sweeps where our activity  
20 levels has completely grown year over year, and I  
21 will gladly follow up with you, particularly with  
22 your capacity with your own committee to make sure  
23 that you understand our growth and what are metrics  
24 are cause we keep them on how many interactions we've  
25 done, how many times we've cleaned up an area what's

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2 been called either a homeless condition and/or an  
3 encampment because those two things are different.  
4 An encampment would be someone's living with a  
5 makeshift structure and then a condition would just  
6 be let's say, a blanket and some stuff on the floor,  
7 but it is also very interesting that when you look at  
8 the constituent experience for the people complaining  
9 about what could be a drop off or a dump out. This  
10 also goes back to the 3-1-1 complaints because a lot  
11 of times; and this is something that maybe many New  
12 Yorkers don't realize, what they would be calling in,  
13 let's say, a decade ago, New York City Sanitation  
14 would just go up to scene and remove whatever  
15 material was unattended anywhere. Right now, when  
16 you get there and it could possibly be another local  
17 constituent or another homeless individual who is  
18 close by, when you're going to engage, what looks  
19 like a drop off ...

20 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

21 COMMISSIONER EDWARD GRAYSON: They say,  
22 oh that's someone's belongings, which gives you pause  
23 for thought and then we circulate the entire area  
24 back for homeless outreach. You know, instead of  
25 taking it, we want to make sure that we haven't

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2 crossed that line that is very, very ambiguous at  
3 times. Conversely, I do want to tell you that on a  
4 random street corner where no one claims ownership,  
5 if we get called to a dump out and it looks like  
6 garbage, we'll take it. So, it's a very weird line.  
7 I know that I said a lot there, but we're continuing  
8 to be part of the sweep process, we're continuing to  
9 wait for our orders on what that condition is, and  
10 then a lot of times, I think that there are a lot of  
11 people who don't understand that our role is not; we  
12 don't go in like storm troopers and just take stuff.  
13 We wait to find out what it is. If there's any  
14 ambiguity on ownership or stewardship of what could  
15 be someone's belongings, we give ample time for that,  
16 but if it's a purely unattended drop out or dump off,  
17 we take it as though it is garbage only sometimes to  
18 find out after the fact, cause maybe the person  
19 that's associated to that, that could have been their  
20 belongings, we had no idea. There was no one when we  
21 came out to claim ownership. So, it's very hard when  
22 you get called to scene to respond to what looks like  
23 a dump out and nobody does an owner claim on some of  
24 that material, what looks to be garbage unattended,  
25 you take it. So, we sometimes run into an ambiguous

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2 line. It's never intentional when we take someone's  
3 belongings unless, of course, they're there and it's  
4 been determined that is actually garbage or unsafe,  
5 etc. So, I know that I gave you a lot in there, but  
6 I do believe that this is an ongoing process, and we  
7 definitely look for more input and leadership coming  
8 through from the council, from the committee, from  
9 the community stakeholders, and everybody who cares  
10 about the humans associated at the end of that  
11 because that's the real thing, you know, we're only  
12 there to get what has been deemed garbage and that's  
13 clearly not how we want the people to be treated.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NANTASHA WILLIAMS: Thank  
15 you so much Commissioner, and I look forward to  
16 working with you on this issue and thank you again,  
17 Chair Nurse for allowing me to ask the question.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

19 ALBIN: I believe I saw Chief of Cleaning (crosstalk)  
20 ...

21 CHIEF OF CLEANING STEPHEN HARBIN: Yeah,  
22 my office is over the homeless clean ups. We work  
23 again, just as the Commissioner mentioned. First of  
24 all, let me introduce myself so I can break the ice  
25 with everyone. My name is Stephen Harbin. I am the



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2 fairly new Chief of Cleaning. Monday, I start my  
3 33rd year with the agency, and it's been a privilege  
4 to be involved in cleaning matters whether as a new  
5 sanitation worker cleaning condition or as a  
6 supervisor and up through the ranks monitoring  
7 personnel. I live in community board 5 which is  
8 Chair Nurse's, part of her jurisdiction and I am  
9 irritated when I see the drop offs, the dump offs,  
10 the dirty conditions. I am just as passionate about  
11 getting on my staff and holding people accountable  
12 when I see these conditions out there and they are  
13 not handled in a timely manner. So, with you,  
14 Council Member Nurse and all the other council  
15 members, the audience, I am just as passionate about  
16 the dump outs, the drop offs. I have my own views  
17 and my own observations which I'm not going to get  
18 into right now, and things that have worked and  
19 things that I have been pushing to try since I've  
20 been here. For example, increasing illegal dumping  
21 monitoring, to deter people from going to those  
22 locations since people go back to the same areas, and  
23 a number of initiatives that plan to implement, but  
24 due to the sake of time, we can have those  
25 conversations in other meetings in the future, and

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2 again, I support all of you with the EBL removers of  
3 vehicles, the towing tags and so forth and so on, and  
4 also as I said again, the office is open. I also  
5 oversee the lot cleaning unit and also again, I have  
6 jurisdiction, my office handles all of the scheduling  
7 of the homeless clean up and again, a major challenge  
8 for us on a regular basis, but we do the best we can  
9 to be as sensitive to the needs of the homeless  
10 individuals, and yes, I can vouch and say, we do not  
11 take what we are not supposed to take and within  
12 reason, we try to use good judgement in how we handle  
13 those circumstances. Thank you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NANTASHA WILLIAMS: Thank  
15 you so much, Chief. It sounds like I need to have a  
16 dual followup with you as well, and one thing I just  
17 wanted to state for the record. Figuring out places  
18 to hold the cars is also a challenge both for the  
19 NYPD and I believe, somewhat for the Department of  
20 Sanitation. So, I know that the city and the  
21 administration, a part of the issue around adjusting  
22 derelict cars is the ability to tow adequately and  
23 then to store the cars which is a significant  
24 challenge. So, I look forward to also working with  
25 the administration to identify space, increase the

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2 number of tow truck companies and vendors that could  
3 be used, to actually really to address the issue in a  
4 robust fashion.

5 CHIEF OF CLEANING STEPHEN HARBIN: Okay,  
6 council member (crosstalk) that. Thank you.

7 CHAIR SANDY NURSE: Thank you Chief  
8 Harbin, also coming in, thank you, and I just want to  
9 thank all of the panels here from DSNY who have  
10 joined today and who are answering all of these  
11 questions. It's almost three hours of answering  
12 questions, or two, so thank you so much, and thank  
13 you all of the council members of the committee who  
14 are here as well.

15 CHIEF OF CLEANING STEPHEN HARBIN: Thank  
16 you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

18 ALBIN: Thank you, Chair Nurse. We will now turn to  
19 public testimony, and thank you to the Department of  
20 Sanitation. I'd like to remind everyone that unlike  
21 our typical council hearings, we will be calling  
22 individuals one-by-one to testify. Each panelist  
23 will be given three minutes to speak. Please begin  
24 once the sergeant has started the timer. Council  
25 members who have questions for a particular panelist

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2 should use the Zoom raise hand function and I will  
3 call on you after the panelist has completed their  
4 testimony. For panelist, once your name is called, a  
5 member of our staff will unmute you, and the  
6 Sergeant-at-Arms will give you the go ahead to begin  
7 upon setting the timer. Please wait for the sergeant  
8 to announce that you may begin before delivering your  
9 testimony. First, we will hear from Eric Goldstein  
10 of NRDC, followed by Justin Wood of the New York  
11 Lawyers for Public Interest, followed by Lynda Nguyen  
12 of ALIGN. Eric Goldstein, you may begin when the  
13 sergeant calls time.

14 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

15 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good afternoon Chairman  
16 Nurse and members of the committee and  
17 congratulations to all of you on joining this  
18 important committee at this critical time, and hello  
19 as well to Commissioner Grayson and his team. I'm  
20 Eric Goldstein, New York City Environment Director  
21 with the Natural Resources Defense Council. NRDC is  
22 a national not for profit legal and scientific  
23 organization. We've been active on many things  
24 including solid waste issues in New York for decades.  
25 Our overall goal has remained the same; to transform

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2 waste handling in New York from primary reliance on  
3 landfilling and incineration to making waste  
4 prevention, recycling, composting, and equity the  
5 cornerstones of a moderate twenty-first century  
6 sustainable waste policy. We endorse your proposed  
7 resolution that would urge the state legislature to  
8 advance extended reducer responsibility legislation.  
9 We welcome your support for full and timely  
10 implementation of the commercial waste zone law and  
11 we join you in calling for restoration of funds that  
12 the administration has proposed to cut from the  
13 sanitation department's FY23 budget. The proposed  
14 cuts to the expansion of ongoing curb side food waste  
15 collection prove one thing. The time has come for a  
16 new approach to that critical issue. Food scrapes,  
17 yard waste, food soil paper are the single largest  
18 portion of the waste stream as you know, 4000 tons a  
19 day and despite the wonderful and efficient community  
20 composting programs that continue in force, the  
21 overwhelming amount of this waste is now sent to  
22 incinerators and landfills. Both of those are  
23 located in environmental justice communities. More  
24 often than not, they generate air pollution and of  
25 course, organics buried in landfills is a major

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2 source of methane. Landfills are the third largest  
3 source for methane emissions in the United States,  
4 and if we want to curb the climate crisis, we're  
5 going to have to get our food waste out of landfills  
6 and into composts. City officials have long  
7 acknowledged this problem. Mayor Bloomberg, Mayor  
8 DiBlasio, Speaker Johnson, even Mayor Adams recently  
9 said we have to do a better job. We have to do it  
10 better. Other cities have figured out a better way.  
11 Seattle, San Francisco, and Portland; they phased in  
12 successful mandatory programs. They've done it by  
13 making a commitment and sticking with it even through  
14 changes in their administrations. They passed  
15 mandatory legislation. They utilized rat and animal  
16 proof bins. They provided frequent food waste  
17 collection pickups. They adjusted collection  
18 schedules and they created long term comprehensive  
19 multilingual educational programs. Their strategies  
20 are proving economically sensible. Seattle's curb  
21 side composting collection program has been saving  
22 residents \$10 a ton versus the cost of landfilling  
23 and incineration. As Commissioner Grayson said,  
24 that's over the long term, but that's what your job  
25 is as city council members to think of the long term

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2 economic and environmental needs of the city. What  
3 New York City needs and what we believe the council  
4 can and must deliver is legislation that will phase  
5 in universal curb side mandatory compost collection  
6 for every city neighborhood ...

7 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

8 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: ... over the next five  
9 years. This can also create green jobs for city  
10 residents. The needs is obvious, the excuses are  
11 unacceptable, and with this new elected leadership in  
12 the city council and leadership from Speaker Adrienne  
13 Adams, we believe the time is now. Thank you for  
14 your attention.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

16 ALBIN: Thank you very much. I see that Council  
17 Member Gennaro has a question, so I will turn to  
18 Council Member Gennaro.

19 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES GENNARO: Okay, can  
21 you hear me? Am I coming through?

22 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES GENNARO: Okay, I  
24 wish to commend the Chair, Chair Nurse for holding  
25 this hearing. I certainly do appreciate that. I

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2 appreciate being a member of this committee. I wish  
3 to be associated with the remarks of my good friend,  
4 Eric Goldstein. I can't think of any advocate who  
5 has been on the scene as long as he, advocating for  
6 what needs to be done. I wish to be associated with  
7 his remarks. We go back to the first solid waste  
8 management plan that passed in an overnight hearing  
9 from 6:00 in the evening to 6:00 the next morning in  
10 1992, and Eric has been on the front lines for that  
11 long and longer and I wish to commend him for his  
12 testimony today, and we would we be wise heed his  
13 good words, and I just want to put that on the  
14 record. Thank you, Madame Chair and thank you, Eric.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

16 ALBIN: Thank you council member. We will now call  
17 on Justin Wood, followed by Lynda Nguyen, followed by  
18 Carlos Castell Croke of the New York League of  
19 Conservation Voters. Justin Wood, you may begin when  
20 the sergeant calls time.

21 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

22 JUSTIN WOOD: Good afternoon, everyone.  
23 Good afternoon, Chair Nurse and to all the members of  
24 the committee and the council who are here and staff  
25 from the Department of Sanitation and Commissioner



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2 Grayson. I am Justin Wood. I am the Director of  
3 Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest,  
4 and we're a founding member of the Transform, Don't  
5 Trash New York City coalition as well as the Save Our  
6 Compost coalition. To put it bluntly, we wish we  
7 didn't have to gather here today or at the very  
8 inspiring rally yesterday to have to use an initial  
9 sanitation committee hearing to discuss a round of  
10 cuts to vital sanitation services in our city. As  
11 everyone here knows, and we've heard, we know way too  
12 much about the overwhelming urgency of the climate  
13 crisis and the substantial contribution of landfill  
14 and incinerated solid waste to greenhouse gas  
15 emissions to keep going through sporadic half  
16 measured approaches to composting and recycling,  
17 ongoing confusion and disheartening amongst the  
18 public, and we know that the solid waste system  
19 continues to place unjust burdens on low income  
20 communities and communities of color that receive  
21 fewer services too often while facing the greatest  
22 harms from a truck and pollution intensive waste  
23 export system, but I will say that on the positive  
24 side, one of the bright spots in the sanitation  
25 landscape is this city council, this new council's

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2 immediate commitment to fighting for a more equitable  
3 and sustainable solid waste system. So to that end,  
4 we urge you to use your full oversight budgeting and  
5 legislative authority to that end. Here are a few  
6 priorities suggestions. Ensuring that the city  
7 follows through on the waste equity commitment in  
8 this current solid waste management plan. We would  
9 like to see this incorporating the marine transfer  
10 stations that are more efficient and more equitably  
11 located into the commercial waste system to reduce  
12 the inefficient routing and hugely disproportionate  
13 numbers of commercial waste trucks to versing  
14 communities like the South Bronx and North Brooklyn.  
15 We'd like you to plan to bring a full and equitable  
16 collection and containerization and waste reduction  
17 technology to all communities to reduce the threat of  
18 trash bags, rats, and other vermin, especially in  
19 NYCHA buildings, and we'd like to stress an addition  
20 to all the testimony we've heard today that in  
21 addition to infestations and disease vectors, on the  
22 present garbage bags also present a major physical  
23 barrier to safe sidewalk and street access for  
24 hundreds of thousands or even millions of New Yorkers  
25 with disabilities. We also urge the city council to

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2 push the city to ensure a timely and robust  
3 implementation of the commercial waste zones law,  
4 that's Local Law 199 of 2019. It's been delayed for  
5 two years now, and as the commercial sector, our  
6 businesses for the first time, are going to be  
7 required and there's going to be enforcement  
8 (crosstalk) ...

9 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expire.

10 JUSTIN WOOD: ... it's really urgent that  
11 we implement this commercial landmark reform as well.  
12 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify and  
13 for the spirited rally yesterday, Chair Nurse, and my  
14 testimony there, and I'll submit the rest in writing.  
15 Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

17 ALBIN: Thank you very much for your testimony. We  
18 will call on Lynda Nguyen of ALIGN, followed by  
19 Carlos Castell Croke, the New York League of  
20 Conservation Voters, followed by Lonnie Portis of WE  
21 ACT. Lynda Nguyen, you may begin when the sergeant  
22 calls time.

23 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

24 LYNDA NGUYEN: Thank you for the  
25 opportunity to testify today. My name is Lynda

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2 Nguyen, and I'm the Senior Research and Policy  
3 Analyst at ALIGN, the ALIGN for Greater New York.  
4 ALIGN leads the New York Transformed Truck Trash  
5 coalition, a citywide partnership as environmental  
6 justice communities, unions, and safe street  
7 advocates working to create good jobs and clean,  
8 safer communities for all New Yorkers. I want to  
9 thank Chair Nurse for your leadership on this issue  
10 and for the committee for holding this hearing as  
11 well as the steadfast collaboration with the  
12 Department of Sanitation and their staff there.  
13 Since the start of the pandemic, sanitation services  
14 have been one of the first to experience budget cuts  
15 for even total suspension despite impacting every  
16 single neighborhood across the city. We saw this  
17 during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic  
18 when critical programs like the commercial waste  
19 zone, basket service, and community composting were  
20 deprioritized and underfunded, all resulting in  
21 dirtier streets, a dramatic rise of litter and rodent  
22 complaints, and a lower quality of life for all New  
23 Yorkers. Our city is in a sanitation crisis and we  
24 cannot await any longer for action. Proposed budget  
25 cuts to the Department of Sanitation will exacerbate

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2 this crisis. While (inaudible) is hardened to see  
3 the establishment of commercial waste division in the  
4 preliminary budget, we are urging the city to  
5 implement the commercial waste as soon as possible  
6 and to restore and expand DSNY's budget to ensure  
7 vital sanitation services are able to operate at pre-  
8 pandemic levels. Doing so will allow the city to  
9 reach its zero waste goals and to improve health and  
10 safety. Our city places a unique opportunity to  
11 transform our waste management systems and investing  
12 in improvement strategies is the first step. When  
13 fully implemented, commercial waste zones will take  
14 18 million diesel truck miles off New York City  
15 streets, increase recycling and waste reduction  
16 standards, create green premiere jobs, and make our  
17 city safer and cleaner. It is critical that the city  
18 fully implements commercial waste zones as soon  
19 possible to expand and create new opportunities for  
20 minority and women owned businesses, address legacies  
21 and environmental racism, and tackle the public  
22 health and sanitation crises we are met with today.  
23 Lastly, I just want to touch on the curb side  
24 organics recycling program. This stands to be the  
25 largest opportunity for our city to invest in jobs in

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2 the waste industry. Organic waste makes up one-third  
3 of our city's waste stream and has a significant  
4 impact on climate, jobs, and revenue. Expanding  
5 organics recycling will divert a significant amount  
6 of waste away from landfills, create more good local  
7 jobs for New Yorkers, and has the potential to earn  
8 over 20 million dollars in revenue each year. The  
9 TTT coalition urges the city to implement commercial  
10 waste zones as soon as possible and restore and  
11 expand DSNY's budget to ensure viral sanitation  
12 services are operating at pre-pandemic levels. We  
13 appreciate the effort the DSNY staff to engaging all  
14 stakeholders to advance sanitation programs, and we  
15 look forward to working with the new committee to do  
16 this important work. Thank you for the opportunity  
17 to testify.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

19 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
20 call on Carlos Castell Croke, followed by Lonnie  
21 Portis, followed by Nora Tjossem of BK Rot. Carlos  
22 Castell Croke, you may begin when the sergeant calls  
23 time.

24 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Times starts now.

25

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2 CARLOS CASTELL CROKE: Good afternoon,  
3 everybody. My name is Carlos Castell Croke, and I'm  
4 the Associate for New York City Programs at the New  
5 York League of Conservation Voters. NYLC represents  
6 over 30 members in New York City and we are committed  
7 to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make  
8 our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy  
9 healthier and more resilient. I'd like to thank  
10 Chair Nurse and everyone on the committee for the  
11 opportunity to testify today. At NYLC, we firmly  
12 believe that a comprehensive and eco friendly waste  
13 management system is essential to cleanliness and  
14 health of our city. We recognize this through plans  
15 and initiatives like Zero by Thirty, Commerical Waste  
16 Zones, and the Curb Side Composting pilot.  
17 Drastically reducing our waste, creating efficient  
18 collection systems and expanding recycling programs  
19 will help to decrease climate change induing  
20 emissions, and keep trash from piling up on our  
21 sidewalks. Therefore, we were disheartened to see  
22 the composting program expansion cut in the mayor's  
23 preliminary budget. This program was implemented  
24 with the intention of expanding it to the entire  
25 city, but over the past years, it has been heavily

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2 neglected. We know from previous recycling  
3 suspensions that the city struggles to regain lost  
4 ground. People often lose good habits that they  
5 build when programs are stopped. Yet another shift  
6 in the composting program as it slowly makes its way  
7 back will only cause further confusion and regression  
8 on our climate goals. We must see the continued  
9 expansion of the program along with other common  
10 sense waste management programs that continue to  
11 reduce waste, emissions, and unhealthy norms. In  
12 addition to composting, we must adopt design  
13 guidelines for buildings and implement  
14 containerization to streamline waste collection,  
15 and prevent build up on our sidewalks and trash  
16 rooms. We also need to adopt more single use  
17 reduction measures such as Skip the Stuff and invest  
18 in public education programs to teach residents how  
19 to waste less and how to take advantage of the city's  
20 various laws and programs. We should also establish  
21 a multitude of approaches to organic waste  
22 management. Not just with our Curbside pilot, but  
23 also with public private partnerships and community  
24 composting drop off sites. We hope that when the  
25 council releases their budget response, they're be



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2 true to the commitments many made around expanding  
3 composting in the city and fund the expansion of the  
4 current program. We look forward to working with the  
5 council on this committee to push forward the  
6 policies and programs I mentioned in order to advance  
7 our waste reduction goals and climate goals and as  
8 the Chair has eloquently put it, get sanitation done.  
9 Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

11 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
12 call on Lonnie Portis, followed by Nora Tjossem,  
13 followed by Claire Mifflin, the Center for Zero Waste  
14 Design. Lonnie Portis, you may begin when the  
15 sergeant calls time.

16 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

17 LONNIE PORTIS: Thank you, Committee  
18 Chair Nurse for the opportunity to testify on the  
19 matter of clean streets and expanding vital  
20 sanitation services. We Act for Environmental  
21 Justice, an organization based in Harlem has been  
22 fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and  
23 federal levels for more than 30 years. We've used  
24 collaborative problem-solving techniques to address  
25 the programs of inappropriate garbage disposal and

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2 rapid rodent and roach infestation in northern  
3 Manhattan in order to reduce the negative health  
4 impact from garbage and pests in the community. I'm  
5 Lonnie J. Portis. I am the Environmental Policy and  
6 Advocacy Coordinator at We Act and I routinely  
7 analyze New York City policies and program for  
8 equity, climate justice, and I co-lead a group of  
9 community members, mobilized around waste and  
10 sanitation problems in northern Manhattan. Much of  
11 the food waste that goes to landfills release methane  
12 contributing to climate change, and I want to remind  
13 this committee that in 2020, then Speaker Corey  
14 Johnson released a comprehensive city council plan to  
15 combat climate change, and within that plan, he  
16 recognized that a key strategy for the city was to  
17 mandate citywide curbside organic separation and  
18 collection. We actually was disappointed to hear  
19 that the city plans to suspend the expansion of its  
20 composting program. Food attracts rats. They tear  
21 open bags and leave litter on the streets. Improved  
22 sanitation has significant impact not only on health,  
23 but on social and economic development. Northern  
24 Manhattan residents need more sanitation pick up,  
25 better receptacles for trash and compliance by owners

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2 that they keep sidewalks clean. We urge the  
3 Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management to  
4 access the city's previous pilot curb side composting  
5 program for what went right and wrong, and consider  
6 lessons from successful mandatory curb side  
7 composting programs in other jurisdictions, develop  
8 an equitable, comprehensive plan to get organics out  
9 of trash bags and pilot solutions for all types of  
10 buildings, especially under resourced buildings with  
11 insufficient labor or space, and we also want the  
12 council to address the inequities in street and  
13 sidewalk cleanliness throughout the city. Our  
14 members have consistently mentioned that the stark  
15 difference between the cleanliness of the streets and  
16 sidewalks of the upper east side and upper west side  
17 compared to northern Manhattan. As one member put  
18 it, enough is enough and totally unfair that Harlem  
19 is neglected when many other parts of Manhattan are  
20 provided sanitation services. In October 2021, for a  
21 similar oversight hearing, our members identified the  
22 dirtiest blocks in northern Manhattan that are  
23 littered with black garbage bags containing food  
24 waste, overflowing trash bins, and animal waste.  
25 This list, along with photos have been submitted in

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2 my written testimony. Thank you again, Committee  
3 Chair, Sandy Nurse, and Committee on Sanitation and  
4 Solid Waste Management for holding this hearing and  
5 allowing me to testify on such an important topic.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

7 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We would now  
8 like to call on Nora Tjossem, followed by Claire  
9 Miflin, followed by Robert Camacho. Nora Tjossem,  
10 you may begin when the sergeant calls time.

11 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

12 NORA TJOSSEM: Thank you so much, Chair  
13 Nurse and all the city council members for being here  
14 today. I have the privilege of working with BK Rot,  
15 a composting microhauler serving Bushwick, Bed Stuy,  
16 Williamsburg, Ridgewood, and North Crown Heights. It  
17 was founded in the knowledge that black and brown and  
18 immigrant communities are most often at the frontline  
19 of critical effects of the climate crisis and the  
20 least served by design. No one wants waste and  
21 emissions stockpiled in their community. What we  
22 need is to invest in dignified wages, working  
23 conditions, and infrastructure of hauling organics  
24 sustainably. This is the model that BK Rot takes,  
25 paying young workers, aged 16 to 25 from the

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2 neighborhood to haul organic waste on bicycles from  
3 local residences and businesses, processing it  
4 locally, and returning high quality compost to  
5 gardens, trees, and neighbors. When we talk about  
6 sanitation, we're talking about the values of our  
7 city. When we talk about green jobs, we're talking  
8 about investment in our workers, in our young people,  
9 and in our local economy. When we talk about  
10 composting, we're talking about the need to shift our  
11 practices away from disposability and towards  
12 regeneration. The stakes are this high when we talk  
13 about the need to invest in organics recycling. The  
14 current curb side composting program is yielding  
15 results that make it seem "symbolic" because it is  
16 optional. It excludes many disenfranchised  
17 environmental justice neighborhoods, and it's rolled  
18 out and rolled back in confusing ways, and most  
19 community composting run-on volunteers without  
20 sufficient space or funds to take it seriously as a  
21 sanitation solution, but look at what an organization  
22 like BK Rot can do. Last year alone, we diverted  
23 over 163 tons of organic waste from landfills through  
24 our food scrap drop off and our sliding pickup  
25 service while committing to fossil fuel free hauling

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2 and paid labor. Imagine what it could look like if  
3 instead of cutting back the budget for composting  
4 initiatives, the city were to step forward and commit  
5 to focusing on these local, low emission responses to  
6 hauling. Imagine if the city were to pave the way in  
7 modeling what a mandatory organics recycling policy  
8 could look like for a city of eight million, and it's  
9 not only through imagination. Look at the examples  
10 you have in your back yard. There are hundreds of  
11 food scrap drop offs and a handful of nonprofits  
12 funded through DSNY and more local composters who do  
13 not yet receive this much needed support. Our fellow  
14 micro haulers, composters and our future composters  
15 need more support, not less to take strides towards a  
16 just transition. Thank you so much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

18 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
19 call on Claire Miflin, followed by Robert Camacho,  
20 followed by Justin Green. Claire Miflin, you may  
21 begin when the sergeant calls time.

22 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

23 CLAIR MIFLIN: Thank you. I'm Clair  
24 Miflin, Executive Director of the nonprofit, Center  
25 for Zero Waste Design. I'm part of the Save Our

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2 Compost advocacy group. Thank you for this  
3 opportunity. Universal and mandatory organics  
4 collection is essential to meet climate, livability,  
5 and equity goals. The current stop and stop funding  
6 and (inaudible) successful city funded compost  
7 operations is never going to lead to success.  
8 Organics collection needs to be considered a climate  
9 resilient and livability solution. Not just a waste  
10 problem. Most importantly, the city needs to develop  
11 a comprehensive plan to reach affordable equitable  
12 and mandatory organic waste collection citywide.  
13 (Inaudible) waste to work for vibrant streetscapes,  
14 green jobs, and healthy neighborhoods plan outlining  
15 strategies which bring many benefits including  
16 reduced litter, rats, and increased social and  
17 physical resilience. The plan can only be  
18 implemented with leadership, collaboration, pilots,  
19 and evaluation. Currently, semi-pilots are far too  
20 small, more funding is required to wrap them up, and  
21 that requires leadership from the mayor to ensure the  
22 necessary collaboration of other city agencies and  
23 private stakeholders essential for their success.  
24 For example, equipment can reduce the volume of  
25 organic waste by 90 percent in 24 hours creating

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2 organic fertilizer, but installing these in buildings  
3 is unnecessarily expensive because DOB wouldn't allow  
4 them to be vented to the plumbing stack. Zoning  
5 restrictions for sharing roll off containers or for  
6 composting in many areas in the city need to be  
7 solved by city planning, and while clean cut  
8 enclosures can work for low to mid-density  
9 neighborhoods, we need other solutions for denser  
10 neighborhoods. Many of these buildings already bring  
11 up waste in well containers, transfer bags to piles  
12 on the sidewalk and then then their handloaded into  
13 trucks by DSNY. This backbreaking work could be  
14 avoided by using semi-automated trucks which directly  
15 empty the buildings containers in a fraction of the  
16 time, like in most cities elsewhere. DSNY could  
17 pilot this immediately by adding hoists for real  
18 loading containers to their trucks. Rationalizing  
19 collections schedules, for example, cutting back on  
20 three times a week garage pick up in low-density  
21 residential blocks, and increasing recycling and  
22 organics pickup citywide, especially in high density  
23 neighborhoods can further increase collection  
24 efficiencies and improved streetscapes. Lastly, the  
25 city needs to recognize and support the many benefits



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2 from composting operations citywide and expand  
3 funding for local composting of all types from  
4 (inaudible) to New York City compost project; well,  
5 support for all types and funding for some, to  
6 increase social and physical resilience allowing  
7 green spaces to act as sponges, reducing flooding,  
8 and cooling the city in the summer. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

10 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
11 call on Robert Camacho, followed by Justin Green of  
12 Big Reuse, followed by Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli of  
13 Common Ground Compost, LLC. Robert Camacho, you may  
14 begin when the sergeant calls time.

15 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

16 ROBERT CAMACHO: How are you doing? My  
17 name is Robert Camacho. I don't have those fancy  
18 readings and notes that a lot of people have. What I  
19 have is a pass history of living in Bushwick where  
20 nobody wanted to be here, where we have vacant lots,  
21 we have cars, we have abandoned cars, fires, Bushwick  
22 was burning and we needed the services now. I don't  
23 think that sanitation should be cutting anything. If  
24 the city really needs money, what they need to do is  
25 start giving tickets to those cars when the sweepers

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2 come by with out-of-state license plates, that it  
3 stayed parked and don't move at all, and make sure  
4 that we get that sweeper to pass by to make sure  
5 cause constantly I see on my block, no one moves  
6 their cars now. So, we need to give them tickets and  
7 start towing, but we can't go only that way. We got  
8 sanitation doing their best in what they have. We  
9 really need to make sure that all the services that  
10 they have are being given to communities like ours  
11 cause I hear everybody say Latinos and blacks, but  
12 guess what, I am a Latino, and we really need to  
13 bring those services back to this community that's  
14 been suffering for so long. They take the two and  
15 three family homes and they make it 25 families and  
16 now we got more garbage, and there's no one teaching  
17 these new developments that we can't live in to turn  
18 around and recycle and do all the stuff that they do,  
19 everything is thrown in the street, and so we really  
20 need to also to help the two and three family homes  
21 out because some of us that do have those homes,  
22 can't afford to continue to do the organics or to do  
23 it. Someone would teach us and train us. A lot of  
24 us old timers that been here and don't know, and now  
25 everything is changing. We want to learn to help out

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2 too, and be part of the service, but we really need  
3 sanitation. We don't need no more cuts. We already  
4 had our fair share of cuts, especially communities  
5 like ours, so we really need you guys to work hard  
6 and bring services back to this community cause all  
7 is fine and dandy, you do all these hearings, but we  
8 want you to put the pedal to the pole and I know  
9 Sandy Nurse, I know you can do it, Madame Chair. I  
10 know you can push these people to make sure they  
11 don't take away from Bushwick because we've been  
12 suffering and we still are suffering. With this  
13 COVID and this pandemic and our people dying, we  
14 really need to keep the services here. Those rats  
15 are getting bigger. They're not getting any smaller.  
16 Those rats are huge now. Before they were little  
17 mices, now they're big. So, we really need  
18 sanitation not to be cut. You talk about NYCHA  
19 buildings, really right or wrong the NYCHA buildings.  
20 They need, themselves, employees to pick up because  
21 there's no more drop sites anymore. They take it to  
22 a solid area to pick up, (inaudible) so, we really  
23 need to do that in regards to funding NYCHA, Latinos  
24 and blacks that live in Section 8 houses, we really

25

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2 need to turn around. So, please bring the money back  
3 home. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

5 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
6 call on Justin Green of Big Reuse, followed by  
7 Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli of Common Ground Compost,  
8 followed by Renee Crowley of the Lower East Side  
9 Ecology Center. Justin Green, you may begin when the  
10 sergeant calls time.

11 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

12 JUSTIN GREEN: All right. My name is  
13 Justin Green. I'm the Executive Director of Big  
14 Reuse. Big Reuse is an environmental nonprofit  
15 working to achieve zero waste by climate change and  
16 creating green jobs. I want to thank Chair Nurse for  
17 having this hearing and all of her work over the many  
18 years for equity and environmental justice in the  
19 rally yesterday. I want to thank New York City  
20 Council for ongoing visionary leadership in making  
21 New York City greener, and I want to thank the  
22 Department of Sanitation for all their work. They've  
23 been incredibly innovative over the years in funding  
24 community composting, rolling out option, rolling  
25 with all of the changes over the past years to get

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2 curbside community composting off the ground. Big  
3 reuse current collects from 72 food scraps across the  
4 city. We process those food scraps at our two  
5 community composting sites in Queens and Brooklyn,  
6 almost two million pounds a year and then we then  
7 give that compost back to the city for greener  
8 projects and parks with Green Thumb and Street Treat  
9 Care. We're part of a much larger effort that  
10 involves seven other nonprofits and dozens of  
11 community gardens across the city that are supported  
12 and funded by our sanitation's community compost  
13 project which the budget threatens that funding for,  
14 so we're asking the city council to make sure the  
15 community composting programs are fully funded in  
16 next year's budget. As we have been running these  
17 programs for a decade and we know they're essential  
18 to providing like the most sustainable and local  
19 (inaudible), but we also know that we can't scale up  
20 to compost all of the city's waste and it's essential  
21 that the city start to provide city wide mandatory  
22 composting that reaches every neighborhood, it  
23 reaches our schools and requires all businesses to  
24 compost in order to achieve the climate change, gas  
25 emission reduction that the city needs to prevent

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2 climate change. Also, currently the waste that we  
3 send out of the city goes to other communities that  
4 incinerated in Newark, it goes into landfills in poor  
5 communities in West Virginia and it's unjust. Not  
6 only are we contributing to climate change, we're  
7 polluting other communities by not handling the  
8 material in a sustainable and equitable manner. So,  
9 it is essential that we roll out the citywide  
10 curbside program as soon as possible, and towards  
11 that goal, it's important to keep the option program  
12 funded and going. It's an easy step from that option  
13 program to mandatory composting and it's a way to  
14 pilot program and get it started, and finally, we'd  
15 like see the city (Crosstalk) ...

16 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

17 JUSTIN GREEN: Ensure that parks continue  
18 to cooperate with community composters and integrate  
19 our operations into theirs. Thanks so much for your  
20 time.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

22 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
23 call on Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli of Common Ground  
24 Compost, followed by Renee Crowley of Lower East Side  
25 Ecology Center, followed by Sara Lind of Open Plans.

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2 Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli, you may begin when the  
3 sergeant calls time.

4 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

5 MEREDITH DANBERG-FICARELLI: Good  
6 afternoon. My name is Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli,  
7 and I am testifying on behalf of the NYC Microhaulers  
8 and Processors Trade Association (NYC MPTA) regarding  
9 BIC's proposed rules governing microhaulers. We are a  
10 trade association of New York City social enterprises  
11 recovering and processing food scraps and organic  
12 material locally to reduce waste destined for  
13 landfills. We support members' operations and their  
14 growth in order to protect and expand the organic  
15 waste microhauling and processing sector in NYC. Our  
16 goal is to create a more just and environmentally  
17 responsible way of handling waste that supports NYC  
18 communities and waste workers. The inclusion of  
19 Microhaulers in New York City's Commercial Waste  
20 Zones legislation has been monumental. We recognize  
21 that integrating our emerging sector's workers and  
22 methods into existing commercial waste regulations is  
23 not a simple task. We would like to thank BIC for the  
24 work that has gone into this effort thus far to make  
25 licensing more accessible to microhaulers and

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2 appreciate the lowering of licensing fees. However,  
3 the proposed rules continue to pose social and  
4 economic obstacles to our small businesses. We  
5 encourage BIC to work with us to find fitting  
6 solutions toward fairer disclosure terms, rethinking  
7 background checks, addressing costly insurance  
8 burdens and creating a new business pilot program.  
9 Microhaulers are small businesses, M/WBEs, worker-  
10 owned cooperatives, non-profits, and unincorporated  
11 grassroots efforts working directly in the  
12 communities we reside in. Not all microhaulers haul  
13 commercial waste, but many do, and others hope to.  
14 All MPTA members abide by a shared set of standards  
15 centered in equity, transparency, and responsibility  
16 that touch every element of operation, including  
17 organizational structure, collection, processing,  
18 labor, safety, environment, and community relations.  
19 These shared standards, codified in the MPTA's  
20 organizing documents, ensure our work as microhaulers  
21 and processors represent a fair, just, and  
22 responsible way of handling waste and supporting  
23 waste workers. BIC's goals of ensuring good business  
24 character, honesty, integrity, fairness, and safety,  
25 while progressing NYC's Vision Zero align with the



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2 MPTA's high standards. BIC's stated purpose is to  
3 eliminate organized crime, corruption, and  
4 criminality from NYC's commercial waste hauling  
5 industry. While we understand that this has been a  
6 necessary mission due to the history of NYC's private  
7 carting industry, the MPTA sees this as irrelevant to  
8 microhauling practices and is deeply concerned about  
9 the scope of the disclosures and criminal background  
10 checks that would apply to our members. Many MPTA  
11 member organizations prioritize hiring people with  
12 barriers to the traditional workforce, including  
13 people who have been formerly incarcerated often due  
14 to poverty and systemic racism. We are committed to  
15 actively rethinking BIC's role and request a meeting  
16 between BIC, the MPTA, and justice-minded legal  
17 support with the purpose of finding fitting  
18 alternatives to satisfy BIC's concerns and to  
19 reasonably narrow the scope of the required principal  
20 and employee disclosure forms and background checks.  
21 The original directive BIC had to root out organized  
22 crime from waste hauling is important but no longer  
23 paramount, at a time when the waste industry must  
24 shift focus towards justice and climate. Commercial  
25 haulers might still need to be checked for ties to

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2 organized crime, but microhaulers and zero waste  
3 businesses at present scale absolutely do not.

4 Lastly, a huge barrier to emerging microhaulers  
5 continues to be insurance. It is costly and does not  
6 correctly categorize what we do. Existing

7 microhaulers built their businesses independently

8 pre-licensing and regulation which allowed us to

9 expand our coverage as we expanded our services. In

10 order to make entryway into microhauling more

11 accessible we recommend that BIC continue to offer a

12 1 year pilot to support starting microhaulers as an

13 entryway toward licensing and regulation. This

14 transitional space would allow microhaulers to meet

15 some of the regulation terms while being exempted

16 from others that might not yet apply or be too

17 burdensome. BIC and the MPTA would create the pilot

18 program terms in partnership. We want to reiterate

19 our gratitude to BIC in offering this amendment and

20 for BIC's willingness to work with microhaulers in

21 creating more just environmental and social

22 conditions in commercial organic waste management.

23 Thanks to the Commercial Waste Zone system passed in

24 Local Law 199 of 2019 microhaulers have been defined

25 and included in the city's waste infrastructure. We

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2 hope to continue working with BIC to reimagine how  
3 microhauling waste in New York City can be licensed  
4 and regulated to support our shared goals of  
5 transparency, reducing truck miles, improving working  
6 conditions, reducing community burdens, and advancing  
7 environmentally sound practices. We look forward to  
8 collaborating and working together toward a more  
9 just, equitable and transparent commercial waste  
10 system. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL JESSICA STEINBERG

12 ALBIN: Thank you for your testimony. We will now  
13 call on Renee Crowley of Lower East Side Ecology  
14 Center, followed by Sara Lind of Open Plans, followed  
15 by David Herd of Grow NYC. Renee Crowley, you may  
16 begin when the sergeant calls time.

17 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

18 RENEE CROWLEY: Hi everyone. Good  
19 afternoon now, and thank you Chair Sandy Nurse for  
20 holding this hearing and for the work of the  
21 Department of Sanitation and all of the support of  
22 the zero waste programs over the many years. My name  
23 is Renee Crowley and I'm representing the Lower East  
24 Side Ecology Center.

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 May 7, 2022