

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND  
RECREATION

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Wednesday, March 1, 2023  
Start: 1:14 p.m.  
Recess: 2:28 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

David M. Carr  
Eric Dinowitz  
Robert F. Holden  
Rita Joseph  
Linda Lee  
Christopher Marte  
Julie Menin  
Francisco P. Moya  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Lincoln Restler  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.  
Sandra Ung  
Marjorie Velázquez

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

Iris Rodriguez-Rosa  
First Deputy Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Matt Drury  
Director of Government Relations  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Sherrise Palomino  
Director of Advocacy and Programs  
New Yorkers For Parks

Maria Garrett  
New Yorkers For Parks and  
Brooklyn Parks and Open Space Coalition  
President, Fresh Creek Civic Association

Tom Gogan  
Spokesperson  
Move the Money New York City Campaign

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to  
3 today's New York City council hearing for the  
4 committee on Parks and Recreation. If you wish to  
5 submit testimony, you may at  
6 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time, please  
7 silence all electronic devices. Chair, we are ready  
8 to begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much. Good  
10 afternoon, everyone. And welcome to our hearing  
11 today on March 1, 2023, for our Committee on Parks  
12 and Recreation, and I'd like to welcome all my  
13 colleagues who are here today. We'll begin with my  
14 opening statement followed by-- if other council  
15 members who join, whose bills are being heard today  
16 want to make an opening statement, we'll open it up  
17 to them as well.

18 Good afternoon, I'd like to welcome you all to  
19 this hearing, which we'll consider four pieces of  
20 legislation before the Committee.

21 At first glance, these bills may seem to be  
22 unrelated, but they actually connect on the crucial  
23 point of making our park system much more accessible  
24 to New Yorkers, to make sure every New Yorker has

2 access to high-quality and well-maintained  
3 greenspace.

4 A couple of these bills relate more to the  
5 recreational and environmental benefits of parks,  
6 while the others relate to the physical  
7 infrastructure within our parks. But as we know, all  
8 of these components are interconnected, and matter to  
9 our park system, which is an issue as much of public  
10 health as it is having access to areas to play, for  
11 recreation and for our mental health and well being.  
12 For example, Intro 0007, sponsored by Councilmember  
13 Ayala, would require the city to make memberships for  
14 recreation centers free for young adults between 18  
15 and 24 years old. This would help increase youth  
16 participation in rec center activities, especially  
17 since young adults would no longer be required to pay  
18 the yearly \$25 fee. Recreation centers are one of  
19 the major vehicles at the city's disposal towards  
20 promoting physical activity and other types of  
21 recreation.

22 Making our recreation centers free and accessible  
23 to our youth is also a matter of public safety, as it  
24 engages in our youth in activities in our parks that  
25 keeps them engaged. Rec centers are open all year

2 round, and during inclement weather or the winter  
3 months, they offer consistent opportunities for  
4 social interaction and recreation to many New Yorkers  
5 who could be otherwise isolated. And this especially  
6 matters for our youth. The City should take every  
7 reasonable step it can to encourage more  
8 participation in physical activity and other types of  
9 recreation, making our public spaces far more open,  
10 accessible, and free for our communities to be able  
11 to engage as a matter of public health, mental  
12 health, well being, and again public safety.

13 Intro number 213 also sponsored by Councilmember  
14 Ayala, would require the Parks Department to conduct  
15 a study on the prevalence of community gardens  
16 engaged in urban farming and agriculture and to  
17 provide recommendations to the Mayor and the Council  
18 on how to better support and increase such farming  
19 and agriculture.

20 Community gardens play a crucial role in the life  
21 of our city. They help provide needed green space  
22 among-- in areas that were once lacking, foster a  
23 greater sense of community among local residents,  
24 provide educational opportunities for our children,  
25 and produce and farm numerous kinds of food products

2 through urban agricultural practices. This is  
3 especially important in communities of color, where  
4 the fact is having access to fresh, healthy green  
5 food, having more access to agriculture that's  
6 locally grown and produced is a much more difficult  
7 issue, directly creating inequities when it comes to  
8 access to healthy food.

9 More support for urban agriculture, community  
10 gardens, and farming leads directly to better and  
11 healthier food access, which leads to better and  
12 healthier communities.

13 I'd like to see how we as a city can increase  
14 support for urban farming and community gardens and  
15 make it less burdensome on gardeners to make the best  
16 use of the gardens and farms they operate. I think  
17 we can agree that there are ways for the city to make  
18 urban farming more welcoming and less restrictive for  
19 those who seek to farm in a safe and reasonable way,  
20 directly producing far better health outcomes and  
21 access to fresh and healthy food.

22 The two remaining bills would help to improve  
23 access to public bathrooms, which is an often  
24 overlooked but very important aspect of our park  
25 services. Intro number 128 sponsored by

2 Councilmember Salamanca would require that every park  
3 bathroom have a safe, sanitary, and convenient diaper  
4 changing table. Currently, diaper changing tables  
5 are required by Local Law 34 of 2018, which mandated  
6 that new or renovated buildings containing places of  
7 public accommodation include diaper changing tables  
8 that are accessible to everyone, regardless of  
9 gender, but it did not apply to parks.

10 As any parent of young children can attest, and I  
11 can certainly do so myself bring my young children,  
12 when especially when they were once babies to the  
13 parks, having access to changing stations, when  
14 visiting a park or playground is something that is  
15 sorely lacking on a wide scale. I have personally  
16 experienced this problem, I still do with my younger  
17 son is still in diapers too, and as much as he  
18 refuses to wear them, and I know many parents around  
19 our city struggle with the same problem too. It's  
20 just a matter of fact that we need to make our parks,  
21 our public spaces much more accessible and easier for  
22 parents, especially parents of young children.

23 This bill is a straightforward solution to a  
24 problem faced by so many parents who would like to

2 spend even more quality time with their children  
3 benefiting from our parks and open spaces.

4       Lastly, Intro number 576, sponsored by  
5 Councilmember Joseph, would require the Parks  
6 Department in collaboration with any other city  
7 agency that maintains a public bathroom to inspect  
8 and issue a report on each public bathroom every six  
9 months. The report would include information about  
10 the features of each public bathroom, and the  
11 condition and functionality of those features, and  
12 would also be made available on the Open Data Portal,  
13 and a website maintained by the city.

14       This bill is so crucial because part of making  
15 our parks accessible to everyone is to make sure that  
16 our public bathrooms are well maintained and cost  
17 effective as well. The number of times I've heard  
18 from constituents who have gone to parks, as many of  
19 my colleagues have had, but to find the bathroom  
20 wasn't well-maintained, or it was locked, creates an  
21 issue that we need to address as a city. And one of  
22 the first ways to do so is to make sure that we are  
23 regularly, under Councilmember Joseph's bill,  
24 inspecting, reporting and studying data on our public  
25 bathrooms.



2 I think this bill couldn't be more timely,  
3 especially with the recent news that the Parks  
4 Department will be installing five Portland Loo's  
5 prefabricated bathrooms in five parks throughout the  
6 city as a pilot project.

7 This is a promising step towards ensuring that  
8 city goers have access to public restrooms, and a  
9 bill like Intro 576 is necessary towards giving us  
10 the information that's essential to ensure they are  
11 well maintained and readily accessible across our  
12 city.

13 From making rec centers free for young New  
14 Yorkers, to improving bathrooms for parents and all  
15 users, to expanding urban agriculture to more  
16 communities, the bills this committee will consider  
17 today highlight how we can improve various park  
18 features by helping more New Yorkers access all of  
19 the benefits of our public parks.

20 Again, the goal of this committee has been to  
21 make sure that every New Yorker, every single  
22 community has access to high quality green space.  
23 Parks is an issue of social justice and equity.

24 I look forward to examining these bills in more  
25 detail, and I'd like to welcome the administration

2 and the advocates who have come today to testify.

3 Thank you very much.

4 I'd also like to read off the names of my  
5 colleagues who are here today. Councilmember Holden,  
6 Councilmember Moya, Councilmember Dinowitz,  
7 Councilmember Marte, Councilmember Menin,  
8 Councilmember Narcisse, Councilmember Velázquez,  
9 Councilmember Carr, Councilmember Joseph, and  
10 Councilmember Salamanca.

11 And now for opening statements, we'll turn it  
12 over to Councilmember Joseph to speak about her  
13 legislation today.

14 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair. Hello,  
15 I'm Councilmember Rita Joseph of the 40th Council  
16 District. I'm thrilled today, we are hearing my  
17 bill, Intro 576, a local law to require reporting on  
18 features and conditions of public bathrooms.

19 Last year, we had the passage of Intro 258, a  
20 bill that required the parks department and DOT to  
21 publish a report on feasible locations to install  
22 public bathrooms in every zip code across the five  
23 boroughs, which marked an important first step  
24 towards-- towards ensuring all New Yorkers have  
25 access to public bathrooms.

2 The city lack of public restrooms is an issue of  
3 equity, public health, sanitation, and basic human  
4 rights. While other modern cities have taken steps  
5 to prioritize public restroom access, New York  
6 continues to lag behind.

7 I want to give a thanks to Borough President Mark  
8 Levine for his partnership on this legislation. He  
9 has been an outspoken champion on this issue for  
10 years. I'm so grateful to work with him and see the  
11 public bathrooms installed, and also my bill get  
12 passed in this committee. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,  
14 Councilmember Joseph. We've also been joined  
15 virtually by Councilmember Ung. And now I'll turn it  
16 over to Councilmember Salamanca to make an opening  
17 statement about his legislation.

18 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr. Chair,  
19 and members of Committee on Parks for allowing me to  
20 speak on bill, Intro 128. Intro 128 is a common-  
21 sense legislation. Currently thanks to legislation  
22 authored by my former colleague Rafael Esplanade in  
23 2018, New York City requires diaper changing stations  
24 to be available in all bathrooms in new or recently  
25 renovated public buildings where merchandise is sold,

2 class A gathering spaces such as a theater, bowling  
3 alley, museums, and class M spaces such as shopping  
4 malls. A year later in 2019 the state followed suit  
5 and enacted legislation that required changing  
6 stations in bathrooms and some use groups across New  
7 York state. As a father of a eight-year-old son,  
8 these laws at the time were long overdue.

9 Sorry, my Aiden was four years old at the time.  
10 He's eight now.

11 Surprisingly, though, the one place I noticed did  
12 not require diaper changing stations were in New York  
13 City Park bathrooms and comfort stations. Despite  
14 being a place where young families spend a great deal  
15 of time, the lack of changing stations left parents  
16 changing their children's diapers on park benches,  
17 park equipment, their laps, or even on the ground,  
18 all unsanitary locations.

19 When I first introduced this bill and October  
20 2019, only about 37% of almost 1500 park bathrooms  
21 has sufficient changing stations. Since then, Park  
22 has stepped up to double the number of changing  
23 stations in city bathrooms, which I commend them for.  
24 However, we need legislation that will require we  
25 reach 100% fulfillment rate in a timely manner. That

2 is why I introduced Intro 128 which will require  
3 every parks bathroom to have safe and sanitary diaper  
4 changing accommodations. Without Intro 128 parents  
5 throughout the city will face another summer of  
6 changing their children's diapers on the ground or on  
7 park benches. Thank you, Chair Krishnan for allowing  
8 me to speak on my bill.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much  
10 Councilmember Salamanca. Now I'll turn it over to our  
11 Senior Counsel of our committee, Kris Sartori, to  
12 swear in today's witnesses.

13 COUNSEL SARTORI: Thank you Chair. Kris Sartori  
14 Committee Counsel. Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
15 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
16 testimony before this committee and to respond  
17 honestly to Councilmember questions?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Yes, I  
19 do.

20 I do.

21 COUNSEL SARTORI: You may begin.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Thank  
23 you. Well, good afternoon Chair Christian members of  
24 the parks committee and other members of the City  
25 Council. I am Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, the First Deputy

2 Commissioner of New York City Parks. I am pleased to  
3 be joined here today by our Director of Government  
4 Relations, Matt Drury. I want to start by noting our  
5 appreciation for the council's continued advocacy and  
6 support for our city's parks, which leads us up to  
7 the topic of today's hearing. The four pieces of  
8 legislation being heard today. Intros 007, 128, 213,  
9 and 576. I start with Intro 007, that would require  
10 the agency to offer free Recreation Center  
11 memberships for young adults ages 18 to 24.

12 The New York City Parks is so very proud to offer  
13 membership to the young adults of 18 to 24 years old  
14 in an affordable and extensive network of 36  
15 recreation centers throughout New York City,  
16 including the indoor pools, weight rooms, basketball  
17 courts, dance studios, art studios, game rooms. Our  
18 recreation centers offer a wide range of programs for  
19 people of all ages, with a variety of free or low-  
20 cost membership options. In September 2021, as we  
21 reopened our recreation centers to open to the public  
22 following the COVID pandemic closures, we were  
23 pleased to introduce free annual membership for New  
24 Yorkers ages 18 to 24. Our city's young adults can  
25 now enjoy for no cost whatsoever incredible access to

2 the recreational opportunities, social engagement,  
3 community interaction, and the healthy lifestyles  
4 offered by our recreation centers. We are pleased to  
5 report that the response to these new free  
6 memberships have been absolutely positive, resulting  
7 in an increase in young adult memberships of nearly  
8 30% compared to the pre-COVID enrollment. Since  
9 Intro 007 would codify the successful existing policy  
10 already in place as established by the agency rules,  
11 New York City Parks supports the intent of the bill  
12 and has no concerns. And as a former Chief of  
13 Recreation, I say that this is something that the  
14 population was looking forward to and are very much  
15 engaged on.

16 So we'll now move on to Intro 128 and Intro 576,  
17 both of which involve the topic of public restrooms.  
18 Intro 128 will require the agency to install a diaper  
19 changing station in every restroom located in a city  
20 park. New Yorkers rely on access to our parks'  
21 restroom facilities for their comfort, convenience,  
22 especially families with young children. We  
23 recognize that diaper changing stations are a vital  
24 amenity for parents looking to keep the little ones  
25 happy, healthy, and clean. Which is why we have made

2 diaper changing stations available in the vast  
3 majority of our parks' restrooms.

4 In October 2019, our maintenance and operation  
5 staff inventoried our parks public restrooms, and  
6 determined, of course, that only 37% of the roughly  
7 1300 restrooms, under our care or for changing  
8 tables. This was absolutely unacceptable to us, and  
9 we began a concerted effort to rectify the situation.

10 I am pleased to confirm that as of today, more  
11 than 700 of our park restrooms offer diaper changing  
12 tables. Diaper changing stations are now a standard  
13 feature installed in any park restroom that is now  
14 being newly built or fully renovated, and we are  
15 hoping to install more of these amenities in the  
16 remaining park restrooms, where installation is  
17 feasible.

18 Good given that we already seek to install diaper  
19 changing stations in park public restrooms wherever  
20 possible and have made great strides and expanding  
21 their availability in recent years, we support the  
22 intent of Intro 128 and would welcome the opportunity  
23 to work with the sponsor to incorporate any minor  
24 technical edits.



2 Now we move on to Intro 576. This would require  
3 the agency to inspect all public restrooms located on  
4 city property or operated and maintained by a city  
5 agency and submit biannual reports on those  
6 inspections. The bill further compels the creation  
7 of a city website listing all said public restrooms  
8 along with the relevant inspection reporting data.

9 The cleanliness and safety, of course, of our  
10 park restrooms is a top priority for New York City  
11 Parks. As New Yorkers we rely on the access of these  
12 facilities for their comfort and convenience. The  
13 agency deploys thousands of dedicated employees to  
14 care for our parks, including our parks' restrooms,  
15 and these cleaning and maintenance activities are  
16 supervised by an organized and focused team of  
17 chiefs, supervisors, and managers.

18 Close to 1300 restaurants are located in parks  
19 throughout the city, by far the most widely  
20 accessible public amenity available to all New  
21 Yorkers in need of a restroom. We actively monitor  
22 and inspect the condition of our park features  
23 including park restrooms in several ways. Most  
24 notably the Parks Inspection Program, as we know it,  
25 it's called PIP. It is detailed, objective, quality-

2 assurance program led by our Operations and  
3 Management Planning Division, conducted independently  
4 from the agency's maintenance and operation staff.

5 PIP, as we know it, inspectors report on the  
6 cleanliness and safety of the park properties as  
7 experienced by the public at that moment, regardless  
8 of cleaning schedules or other pending work. City  
9 Parks and the restaurants within them receive  
10 comprehensive and independent PIP inspections two to  
11 three times a year, which is above and beyond the  
12 frequent internal assessments led by our parks  
13 supervisors, as well as the consistent presence of  
14 parks maintenance staff in our parks, who are able to  
15 identify and address conditions and concerns in real  
16 time.

17 PIP inspections results are shared with  
18 management throughout the agency to review  
19 performance and take corrective action. This data is  
20 also summarized on our agency website, and the  
21 granular data for these various efforts are made  
22 publicly available on the city's Open Data Portal.

23 We appreciate the intent of Intro 576 as New York  
24 City Parks is proud of our efforts to keep our park  
25 public restrooms in the best condition possible. It

2 should be noted that the requirements of the bill, as  
3 currently drafted, are somewhat duplicative as  
4 rigorous inspections and reporting protocols for our  
5 park features and amenities, including park restrooms  
6 have already been codified by Local Law 67 of 2022,  
7 and parks already makes granular inspections that are  
8 fully available to the public.

9 Further, the bill as currently drafted would  
10 require the agency to take on duties and  
11 responsibilities that are maybe outside of the  
12 agency's purview. To that end, we would welcome the  
13 opportunity to further discuss the broader goals of  
14 the legislation with the council.

15 Lastly, Intro 213 would require the agency to  
16 convene a study of parks community gardens in food,  
17 farming, and processing. New York City Parks Green  
18 Thumb Division is proud to be the nation's largest  
19 urban gardening program. It was created in 1978.  
20 Our Green Thumb Team sustains over 550 community  
21 gardens, 350 of which are on Parks property, and  
22 supports thousands of volunteer gardeners throughout  
23 New York City. We work closely with the garden  
24 groups that care for these spaces on a day-to-day  
25 basis, and offer a wide range of resources, training,

2 support, so they can operate the garden in the manner  
3 that best suits their needs.

4 We very much recognize the issues of food  
5 insecurity that face all too many New Yorkers, and  
6 our Green Thumb Team works very closely with the  
7 Mayor's Office of Food Policy, and the Mayor's Office  
8 of Urban Agriculture as many of our community  
9 gardeners do grow fruit and vegetables primarily for  
10 personal consumption. However, it is important to  
11 keep in mind that the majority of our gardens have an  
12 extremely small footprint, and the level of food  
13 production that takes place is relatively minimal, in  
14 the minimal scale.

15 We appreciate the intents of 213 and we already  
16 make a great deal of information about our community  
17 gardens publicly available in a variety of fashions.  
18 Much of the information referenced in Intro 213 is  
19 either already included in the existing report, such  
20 as the annual food policy report compiled by the  
21 Mayor's Office of Food Policy, or would be extremely  
22 time consuming and labor intensive to obtain from our  
23 volunteer gardens. As such, we believe the bill as  
24 drafted is somewhat duplicative and would end up  
25 diverting finite agency time and resources away from

2 the Green Thumb Division's primary objective: making  
3 these community garden spaces the best that they can  
4 be. But we would welcome the opportunity to work  
5 with the Council to discuss the broader goals in  
6 consultation with the Mayor's Office of Food Policy  
7 and the Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture.

8 I want to thank you for allowing us the  
9 opportunity to discuss these pieces of legislation  
10 with you. We'd like to thank the Council for their  
11 continued interest and advocacy regarding these  
12 topics, as we know how important parks and open  
13 spaces are to the constituents in your districts. If  
14 there are questions regarding any of the legislative  
15 bills, we will be happy to answer those at this time.  
16 And I just want to say that when it comes to  
17 community gardens, we are so interested in what they  
18 do. And we have, we have a close relationship with  
19 them through the Green Thumb Program. And I'm very  
20 proud of the-- for example, the one at Echo Key that  
21 I'm sure that some of you may be familiar with, that  
22 was almost abandoned, but a nice young group of  
23 people took it over to be able to establish it and  
24 help it grow. And I was so happy to be part of that,

2 that growth as well. So just wanted to be able to  
3 share that with you as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much First  
5 Deputy Commissioner for all your great-- for your  
6 testimony today, and all your great work for our park  
7 system throughout our city. I really value-- and  
8 grateful to work with you.

9 My-- my colleagues have some questions too. So  
10 I'll keep mine short, but on a few of the different  
11 bills that we are considering today. So my first  
12 question is about Intro number 007, Recreation Center  
13 discounts. What is the current number of recreation  
14 centers under the parks department's jurisdictions  
15 and how many are currently operational?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So we  
17 have about 36 recreation centers throughout the city  
18 that we have.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: 36?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: 36.  
21 Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how many are currently  
23 operational? Are all 36? Or...?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: No.  
25 We have some that may be closed for various reasons.

2 It could be construction going on, or-- but most of  
3 them are definitely open and available to the public.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And the pandemic forced  
5 the closure of rec centers for an extended period of  
6 time for public health reasons. What are some of the  
7 lessons that the parks department has learned from  
8 COVID in terms of how different rec centers were  
9 adapted to different uses? What are some of the  
10 takeaways that you all are implementing now, given  
11 what was faced before?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So  
13 many of the things that we learned during COVID is to  
14 be able to also quickly adapt to the changing  
15 situations that may occur. And I'm very proud to say  
16 that the recreation division and public programs  
17 aspect of it actually was exceedingly creative in the  
18 ways that they were able to still try to serve the  
19 public. Even though the recreation centers were  
20 closed, there was still some outdoor activities that  
21 were able to be had, fitness wise, and otherwise for  
22 the for the public to be able to enjoy. We did not,  
23 you know, shut down service altogether. So we were  
24 able to try to make sure that we adapted.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And-- And so before I  
3 continue, I neglected to mention that we've also been  
4 joined by Councilmember Restler and Councilmember  
5 Lee. I'm sure to get you.

6 And another question I had was: What is the  
7 usual process that the Parks Department goes through  
8 when it determines membership fees for rec centers?  
9 How have the rates been determined? Has there been  
10 consideration to giving discounts to other  
11 individuals as well?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So we  
13 have-- we realized that the young people, the ages of  
14 18 to 24, are still struggling and going to school  
15 and going to college. So the agency did realize the  
16 importance of being able to provide free programming  
17 for them to be able to come in, to exercise and be  
18 able to engage with the-- with the other public.

19 We also-- The young people, the youth are  
20 totally free. So they-- they come in, and they're  
21 able to enjoy after-school programming, recreational  
22 sports opportunities, and things of that nature. We  
23 also have, I believe, is the senior, you know, the  
24 senior rate is very minimal, as well. And I think we



2 are open to being able to look at other ways of being  
3 able to provide membership.

4 MR. DRURY: And I'll just add on a procedural,  
5 process, note that the agency, whenever we institute  
6 a new discount or a new price structure, it's  
7 actually adopted by agency rule, and in accordance  
8 with the Citywide Administrative Procedure Act. You  
9 know, so it's instituted, there's a public hearing,  
10 and it's-- and it's, you know, it's open for public  
11 comment and input for a period of time. And then  
12 it's formally adopted as an agency rule, and added to  
13 the rules of the city of New York. So it's-- it's  
14 codified in that in that regard.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I see. And moving to  
16 Intro number 128, the diaper changing stations, does  
17 DPR have any data on the number of parks bathrooms  
18 that have diaper changing stations?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Yes,  
20 we have. We have over 700 of the of the 1300 comfort  
21 stations have diaper changing stations, and we are  
22 looking to, of course, continue to-- to be able to  
23 provide more changing stations as we go along in  
24 locations that can allow for it.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Mm-hmm. And when new  
3 bathrooms are built or renovated through capital  
4 projects, does the Parks Department take it upon  
5 itself to install diaper changing station as part of  
6 the project?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA:

8 Absolutely. That's absolutely part of every design  
9 that has to do with the comfort station, whether it's  
10 a new park, or new comfort station, or renovate-- or  
11 renovating a comfort station, we definitely include  
12 that.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And we'll go back to  
14 bathrooms a bit on the other bill, but just a couple  
15 of questions on Intro 128, on community gardening and  
16 urban agriculture: What portion of the parks budget,  
17 Green Thumb or otherwise, is devoted to promoting or  
18 supporting urban agricultural programs and community  
19 gardens?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Well,  
21 there is a budget that's already appropriated for the  
22 for supporting the-- the Green Thumb Program, which  
23 the resources are used, you know, equitably  
24 throughout the-- throughout the city to be able to do  
25 that. We've provided anywhere from snowblowers to

2 other different amenities, to be able to provide for  
3 them, to be able to-- and material. We've provided  
4 some-- some soil and and lumber for them to be able  
5 to continue to enhance their gardens.

6 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Do you know roughly what  
7 percentage of the budget is towards the-- the Green  
8 Thumb Program by the way?

9 MR. DRURY: So the Green Thumb budget isn't  
10 structured in a way that that is dedicated towards  
11 specific uses that the gardens may or may not have.  
12 It's a broader sort of support network, where we have  
13 outreach coordinators, like dedicated staff,  
14 maintenance and operation staff that are dedicated,  
15 that help assist, you know, the garden groups that  
16 are managing the spaces. So the budget isn't  
17 structured in quite that manner. You know, a good  
18 majority of the gardens, do, you know, grow some  
19 fruit or vegetables for sure. But the-- And we  
20 support those efforts in a variety of-- in terms of  
21 best practices, and advisement, and supplies, as the  
22 Commissioner noted, but the budget per se isn't  
23 exactly dedicated in that regard.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay. And what can  
25 gardens do -- and we've gotten this question, since

2 this hearing was publicly noticed, too -- but what  
3 can gardens do with the food they farm? Can they  
4 sell them to the community? What are things they can  
5 do with the food that they grow?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Well,  
7 the garden is-- because it is such a-- you know, the  
8 footprint is a small footprint. It's not so-- it's  
9 only so much that they can grow. So they are able to  
10 utilize it for their members, and the garden members,  
11 and be able to do that. They are able to sell it if  
12 they wish to sell it. And they're able to even go to  
13 a farmers market if they can. It's a small-- you  
14 know, it's a small amount of produce, but they, you  
15 know, they it's-- it's very open ended as to what  
16 they can do with it. So-- And we welcome it.  
17 There's about, I would say about 80% of the garden  
18 groups try to do some sort of produce developing and  
19 the others may be more flowering, but yes. So they  
20 could sell them as produce, or go to farmers markets  
21 and sell them there too.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Yes.  
23 Absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And then moving to Intro  
25 576 on public bathrooms, just a couple questions.

2 Let's just-- Taking a step back. There's obviously  
3 been reporting recently around the Portland Loos, the  
4 pilot project that you all are trying across the five  
5 boroughs. I think you've heard a lot from you know,  
6 this committee, myself included too also about just  
7 how expensive, before this pilot parks bathrooms can  
8 be as part of the overall capital construction  
9 process for our parks.

10 So I know this is being done as a way to-- to  
11 pilot new and different techniques. Can you talk a  
12 little bit about what led to this decision to-- the  
13 decision to go with the contractor that's installing  
14 these loos? And what is-- what is the objective here  
15 of-- of experimenting with these different bathrooms?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So The  
17 Parks Department is always looking for ways to be  
18 able to provide the amenities that they so sorely may  
19 need. So we look for creative ways to be able to do  
20 that. So throughout-- The research that the capital  
21 division has done, was able to identify this  
22 particular Portland Loo, this particular restroom  
23 that could possibly retrofit, and fit in some of  
24 these locations that don't currently have bathrooms.  
25 And we will definitely be able to inspect them as we

2 inspect any of the other comfort stations to make  
3 sure that they are properly maintained to do that.  
4 The cost associated with-- with the bathrooms, and we  
5 have five locations throughout the city as pilot  
6 projects to see how they work out, and hopefully they  
7 will work out for the best.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what-- You know, one  
9 of the biggest things that came out also was just the  
10 cost associated with the installation of the  
11 bathrooms. It's still, I think, in total \$5 million,  
12 or around there. And obviously the part of the aim  
13 here is to is to reduce the cost. So where-- where  
14 is this expense coming from? Why is it still so  
15 expensive, even with this pilot, to-- when it comes  
16 to installation?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So we--  
18 - That's a good question, Councilmember. So what it  
19 is, is that, when you're putting a pilot project like  
20 this together, and you're doing something, we also  
21 want to make sure because the cost does not include--  
22 is not only just the unit itself, but it's also the  
23 utilities that have to be run to be able to do that,  
24 the-- the sewer system and the water flow to be able

2 to make sure that-- so that's where the costs  
3 associated as such to be able to do that.

4 MR. DRURY: Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't point  
5 out that the \$5 million is for five sites, you know,  
6 just to be clear. So that number, obviously, has  
7 gotten a lot of attention. But I think there's been  
8 some confusion about, but to clarify, this will  
9 provide for five new parks get-- that currently lack  
10 bathrooms, that will-- that will that will have them.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what's the timeline  
12 for their implementation? And also, if-- if users  
13 have feedback about it, for example, if the bathrooms  
14 seem too small for them, are there other features  
15 that are missing, what-- what's the timeline? What's  
16 the best way for-- for New Yorkers to submit feedback  
17 about how these bathrooms are working, given that  
18 it's a pilot project?

19 MR. DRURY: Yeah, the project is currently in  
20 design. So this is, you know, essentially, as the  
21 Commissioner noted, this is essentially a capital  
22 project. Just-- You know, it will regard you know,  
23 legitimate, significant construction, et cetera,  
24 groundwork, etc. So it isn't designed now, and then  
25 will head into procurement. So I think, you know, we

2 are still looking at, you know, a few years before  
3 these are, you know, installed and fully constructed.  
4 And then from there, there will clearly be a  
5 monitoring, you know, process where, you know, we  
6 will obviously, as, as the Commissioner noted, be  
7 inspecting and engaging with the public that are--  
8 that are using it. And I think there'll be, you  
9 know, we are considering this a pilot, so we're open  
10 to any and all creative approaches, and, you know,  
11 and see what works and what doesn't, and I think  
12 that'll be sort of an organic and dynamic process.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And so does parks have a  
14 way -- if not, I would urge you all to consider it to  
15 -- to solicit feedback about the bathrooms and how  
16 they'll be used?

17 MR. DRURY: I should mention, sorry, really  
18 quickly, that the projects like our other capital  
19 projects are going through, you know, Community Board  
20 review, like we presented-- we will-- we are  
21 presenting to the local Committee Boards and to the  
22 Public Design Commission. You're right. So it is  
23 going through sort of a robust and engaged, you know,  
24 process, and then afterwards, you know, I think the  
25 agency is consistently engaged with our local park



2 partners, and then the people that use our parks  
3 every day, and I think there'll be a robust effort to  
4 make sure we're gathering that feedback. We're  
5 keenly, obviously, focused on-- on tracking this,  
6 this-- this this pilot, so I think we're-- the agency  
7 is going to be pretty paying close attention.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, well, we'll keep a  
9 close eye on it too. And let's keep in close touch  
10 about it as well. And of course, you know, more  
11 generally too, anything we can do to to keep  
12 exploring ways to reduce the costs of installation of  
13 bathrooms in our parks, with overall parks  
14 construction, I think is a vital part of the process  
15 here. And so we would really, you know, urge you all  
16 to-- to look at ways to continue making the capital  
17 construction process, not just for parks, but for  
18 bathrooms too, much more cost efficient and on a more  
19 condensed timeline too.

20 My final question before I turn it over to  
21 colleagues is just: Is there any data that indicates  
22 how many bathrooms are ADA compliant and which ones  
23 need to be repaired to make them ADA compliant?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: We  
25 will have-- So-- So, we want to make sure that what

2 happens is that any-- Of course, any new  
3 conversation that comes online has to be ADA  
4 compliant and wherever possible, we try to see if  
5 there-- if the current bathroom is able to easily be  
6 able to be adapted to be able to make a ramp or  
7 something available. But we also have to take into  
8 consideration the stalls, you know, to make sure that  
9 they're ADA compliant.

10 So wherever possible that we have the opportunity  
11 to do that, we try to be able to make things  
12 adaptable.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much. Now  
14 I'll turn it over to our colleagues on the committee  
15 who have questions, starting with Councilmember  
16 Holden.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair. And  
18 nice to see you, Commissioner and Matt. Thank you so  
19 much for your testimony. We're all on the same team.  
20 And we all want our great parks, and I'm very proud  
21 of my parks. I do have issues though with capital,  
22 and you know that. You knew this was coming. So I  
23 have a 24 by 36, I guess a park house we call them.

24 And we're going to renovate two bathrooms, we're  
25 going to brick point the building. And originally I

2 asked the Queens Parks Commissioner docket for a  
3 price and I got six-point-whatever-four, \$6.4 million  
4 for two bathrooms. I balked. I, I just went kind of  
5 crazy. Because I said, that's ridiculous. I could  
6 build a beautiful mansion for that. And we-- You  
7 know, this is the same thing I've said over and over  
8 again. So I got him to relook at it, you know, look  
9 at it again. And he said, "Oh, we made a mistake.  
10 It's \$3.7 million," which almost was cut in half.  
11 But still, it was outrageous to me that a building.  
12 And I guess the building dates to the early part of  
13 Juniper Valley Park, which is probably 1940.

14 So I'm wondering, I mean, I asked the contractor  
15 to look at, an independent contractor. He said I  
16 could do this for \$100,000. And I know that that's  
17 ridiculous. Because I said, "Well, you probably not  
18 looking at all the things that have to be done." But  
19 he said, "This is absurd that the city of New York  
20 would pay \$3.7 million to essentially renovate two  
21 bathrooms." The men's room has two stalls, two  
22 toilet stalls, and two urinals and a sink. Right now  
23 we have stainless steel, which is horrendous in  
24 there. And it's a-- it's a mess right now. And I  
25 want to-- I put the money toward it. I just-- I'm

2 renovating-- renovating other parks, and I can't put  
3 it. The community wants a restroom and I can't do  
4 it, because the cost is just so ridiculous. And I,  
5 you know, I desperately want to know if we can go to--  
6 - you know, I know the answer. I've asked this a  
7 number, but design build might be the answer. And if  
8 Parks can really tell us what they're doing to try to  
9 get that. But also, how do we-- I mean, do we look  
10 at the cost of just demolishing the building? I  
11 mean, you could just start again and probably might--  
12 might save some money. Because I just can't imagine  
13 a building a of 24 by 36 with a men's room and a  
14 women's room, and not huge, costing that much.

15 And I could build probably legitimately three  
16 bathrooms for that if you went to private industry  
17 or-- but can you talk about design built? Can-- Is  
18 there a chance?

19 MR. DRURY: So I'm happy-- Well, firstly-- First  
20 and foremost, I just want to clarify, you know, we  
21 understand that you know that construction in New  
22 York City is exceedingly expensive. Obviously, you  
23 know, the city's processes. The administration is  
24 going through a really dedicated effort to take a  
25 look at the capital process and bringing those costs

2 down, making it more time and cost effective. I--  
3 You know, to the contractor that you-- you know, I  
4 would strongly encourage them to get involved if they  
5 can, you know, because we you know, we put these  
6 projects out to bid, and if he'll come in for  
7 \$100,000, that's music to our ears. So, right? Like  
8 these-- these costs are aren't set by the agency.  
9 This is-- You know, these estimates that we're  
10 providing are our best guess at the at the bids we've  
11 been receiving, you know, just to be clear. So, you  
12 know, if you if you can encourage that contractor to  
13 get involved in terms of doing business with the  
14 city, that sounds-- that sounds fantastic.

15 But more to the point, I'm happy to announce that  
16 design build authority has been granted by the State  
17 for the city to execute. It is-- it is a specific  
18 universe of projects that are eligible. But I can--  
19 I can highlight that we're now currently working with  
20 DDC to-- on a what you might call a bundling project  
21 for our comfort stations, where we're going to be  
22 taking a look at multiple projects advancing through  
23 the design build process, which we think will result  
24 in significant time and cost savings.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, I mean, because I  
3 have so many-- I just have so much capital to do and  
4 then I have so much to do-- like, people want  
5 pickleball courts now. That's a big thing. And I  
6 want to fund that, but I have this bathroom, that's a  
7 restroom, that's ridiculous.

8 If you could look at a cost of demolition and  
9 just rebuilding it. It's not a great building. I  
10 mean, it's just a very plain structure. But when I  
11 get an estimate of \$2.4 million for demolition, plus  
12 repairing the roof, and brick pointing essentially,  
13 of \$2.4 million it seems way, way out of line. Like  
14 I said, for \$2.4, you could probably put up a new  
15 building, rather than renovate this. This--  
16 Architecturally, it's a box.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA:  
18 Councilmember, the park is which one? The park that  
19 you're referring to, that you were interested in?

20 COUNCILMEMBER HOLDEN: Is there a parks-- Again,  
21 the design, I'm not-- I'm not looking for an Elmhurst  
22 Park spaceship that we have. It's a very-- it's  
23 interesting architecturally, but there's a lot of  
24 wasted space in there. I'm not-- I'm just looking  
25 for a functional-- You know, and it could be a little

2 more interesting looking. Because there's nothing  
3 unique about this design. I think we could get into  
4 something a little bit nicer and more friendly.

5 But we all take pride in our parks. But I have  
6 baseball fields to renovate. I have, you know, some  
7 innovative ideas, because I do come from a baseball  
8 area, and I do-- I have maintained baseball fields.  
9 I have some ideas, but I keep getting ridiculous  
10 costs. One-- one baseball field \$11 million, when  
11 St. John's University can do it for \$1.2 million. So  
12 that-- these are the things that I-- I've spoken to  
13 Parks, but I never seem to get anywhere. I never-- I  
14 can't get any satisfaction of why this is costing so  
15 much, other than maybe our contract, we don't have  
16 enough, whatever it is, we have a limited amount and  
17 we take we take too long to pay. I don't know what  
18 it is. But I think we need some creative approaches.  
19 And I'm certainly willing to work with Parks. But  
20 I'm getting to a point where it takes so long to  
21 bill, that I'll be long gone before I see this to  
22 fruition. But we need-- we kind of need answers.  
23 Like, I went through the first administration, or you  
24 know, we went through four years, and Raphael was  
25 involved, Salamanca was involved, and we're trying--

2 we were always trying to do something with renovating  
3 parks and lowering the prices. But we never seem to  
4 get anywhere. We got a little bit of relief, I  
5 think, under Commissioner Silver. But I never really  
6 saw it in-- at least in my district in any kind of  
7 blueprints. And so I think I'd like to meet more  
8 regularly with your office about-- about this. If  
9 I'm going to-- if I'm going to put more capital in, I  
10 want to have some kind of realistic timetable and  
11 realistic price. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.  
12 Sorry.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,  
14 Councilmember Holden. Now we have Councilmember  
15 Salamanca followed by Councilmember Joseph.

16 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
17 It's great seeing you, Commissioner.

18 I just very quickly have a few questions on your--  
19 - your statement here. You did mention that you are  
20 supportive of the bill 128. However, there are some  
21 minor technical edits. Can we just speak on what  
22 those edits would be?

23 MR. DRURY: Yeah, I'm happy to address. Yeah,  
24 we-- we'd love to work with you and your team  
25 regarding that the way the bill is structured, we



2 just want to make sure that there is, you know, we're  
3 obviously-- there are obviously various ways to do  
4 this. We want to make sure that the bill reflects--  
5 there is a just a practical reality that, you know,  
6 some of our comfort stations are decades old, as  
7 Councilmember Holden noted, and literally aren't  
8 configured in such a manner that can act-- that can  
9 physically host a diaper changing station.

10       Thankfully, it's a pretty small percentage of  
11 the-- of the universe, thankfully, but we do want to  
12 ask, sort of what we might call sort of  
13 administrative adjustments to the language to kind of  
14 allow for, you know, conditions of that, some degree  
15 of flexibility to make sure that we don't run afoul  
16 of the intent of the law.

17       COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: What is the cost, the  
18 general cost for installing a diaper change station  
19 in a Parks bathroom?

20       FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: I  
21 think each-- each one is approximately \$400 to be  
22 able to put a diaper changing station.

23       COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: It's not-- not too  
24 expensive.

25       FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: No.

2 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: And how many comfort  
3 stations does Parks Department have under their  
4 jurisdiction?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: We  
6 have 1300--

7 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: 1300?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: About  
9 1300 comfort stations, and we have about-- about 700  
10 of them are right now retrofitted with some diaper  
11 changing stations as it is. So that represents about  
12 70% of the locations, and we are continuing to do--  
13 to do more.

14 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. Public safety  
15 and quality of life issues seem to be an issue in  
16 some of my parks, especially-- and you-- you're  
17 familiar with this Bill Rainey Park, Starlight Park?

18 And I know that there are issues, and especially  
19 in some of these parks, most of the illegal  
20 activities that seem to occur, seem to happen around  
21 the comfort stations. And there has been-- they-- I  
22 have spoken to many parks employees that work there.  
23 And there is fear that there may be some illegal  
24 activities happening in these bathrooms.

2 Is there a fear that these comfort stations may  
3 promote some-- some type of illegal activities that  
4 occur in these comfort stations?

5 I know that there's issues with prostitution in  
6 some of my parks.

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So,  
8 Councilmember, that's a good question. And thank you  
9 so very much. And, as you may be aware, there are  
10 many times that, you know, we are confronted with  
11 locations and situations that they may occur. And as  
12 a public facility, you know, there's always  
13 situations that occur there. And we try as best as  
14 we can, to try to have presence around these comfort  
15 stations. So that way to try to minimize any kind of  
16 illegal activity that go on. We also work with, you  
17 know, the park enforcement. And we also thank you  
18 very much for being so very attentive to that, in  
19 terms of trying to have park enforcement around.

20 But we try to do the best we can to try to  
21 minimize by having as much presence as we can to  
22 clean these-- these comfort stations. And as we do  
23 that, you know, people come out of the comfort  
24 stations and...

2 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. I just have  
3 one more question, if I may, on the gardens.

4 I'm a big fan of our community gardens, and I  
5 give them funding, you know, through our parks  
6 initiatives. Something that I did in this last  
7 budget was irrigation systems. I gave two of my  
8 parks funding for-- to install-- so that they can  
9 actually have water inside their gardens.

10 Is-- Is this something that Parks Department--  
11 And so I am working with Green Thumb on getting-- on  
12 getting them installed. My understanding it is going  
13 to happen by May. Irrigation systems is something  
14 that's necessary. And something that I saw, at least  
15 in the Wishing Well Garden is, in order for them to  
16 get water, they needed to run a hose across the  
17 street from the garden so that they can get water  
18 inside. And I know that they worked with DEP and  
19 they have these-- these, I don't know what you call  
20 them, these gallons of water to try to retain water.  
21 But that really doesn't work much. Well, at least in  
22 that-- in that particular garden.

23 Is Parks Department moving-- Do you know if  
24 Parks Department in the future is moving forward on

2 installing irrigation systems for some of these  
3 gardens?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So  
5 this is something that we will work with the Green  
6 Thumb Garden Program to try to make sure, to see  
7 wherever possible, whenever there's a renovation of a  
8 garden and things like that, that is one of the  
9 features that we tried to make sure that it's  
10 included in that, as such. For example, the Garden  
11 at Echo Key up in the Bronx, we tried to make sure  
12 when it was renovated to try to make sure that we had  
13 some sort of water source to make it easier and more  
14 convenient. Many of these gardens have seniors that  
15 are the ones that are operating them. So we're-- we  
16 clearly understand the importance of it.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. Thank you.  
18 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Councilmember  
20 Salamanca. Next, we have Councilman Joseph followed  
21 by Councilmember Narcisse.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. How are you?  
23 Hope you're well. I have a quick question for you.  
24 In your statement over here, you said, "Have already  
25 been called on codified by Law 67 of 2022." You said

2 this law was a duplicate. When I looked it up myself  
3 while we were sitting here, Law 67 requires, in  
4 relation to reporting on Parks and playground  
5 inspections conducted by Department of Parks, while  
6 Intro 576 will require reporting on features and  
7 conditions of public bathrooms. I believe those are  
8 two different things. So please tell me the  
9 difference because you said they were duplicates.  
10 And when I read it again, I'm sitting right here and  
11 I was like puzzled. I pulled it up. Law 67 and 0576  
12 are two different.

13 MR. DRURY: Yeah, sure. I'm happy to speak to  
14 that, Councilmember. And, again, we--

15 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Can you put up your mic.  
16 Can you speak up? Because I can't hear you.

17 MR. DRURY: Yes, of course. Thank you.

18 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Yes, it's  
19 duplicative in the sense that the that the local law  
20 that exists compels those inspections of parks and  
21 park features, and comfort stations. The parks--  
22 You know, the-- the restaurants that are under our  
23 jurisdiction and management are one or one of those  
24 structural features. So in essence, the existing  
25 local law, I think, we believe, sort of encompasses

2 many of the points made in the-- in the legisla-- in  
3 the proposed legislation.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: So playgrounds and  
5 bathrooms, so maybe-- maybe they need to modify Law  
6 67 Because it doesn't state public bathrooms. It  
7 says playgrounds. It says playgrounds and recreation  
8 centers. I don't see bathrooms or-- in there.

9 MR. DRURY: I'll double check the way the bill--  
10 but I believe it mentions structural and related  
11 because.

12 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Do you want me to pull it  
13 up, because I can pull it up right now, and we can  
14 read it, because I just finished reading it and I  
15 didn't see that in there.

16 MR. DRURY: Okay, well, we're happy to meet with  
17 you and take a closer look. I mean, again, just to  
18 be very clear, we-- we very much appreciate you know,  
19 we are dedicated to keeping our-- our bathrooms.  
20 We're proud of our bathrooms. We are the largest  
21 source of access to these. We understand there's  
22 always going to be a clamor for more, and, you know,  
23 we are a big part of that access and looking to  
24 expand that. And we, you know, we make all that  
25 information publicly available in terms of those

2 inspections that are taking place we. So we  
3 appreciate the-- the intent of the bill and want to  
4 work closely with you on that.

5 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Absolutely.

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA:

7 Councilmember Joseph, thank you so very much for that  
8 question. And it's important. One of the things  
9 that that we look at very closely is also the  
10 amenities that are available in these comfort  
11 stations, you know, to make sure that there's, you  
12 know, bathroom tissue, that there is soap, and that  
13 these kinds of amenities are provided within these--  
14 these comfort stations as well. But thank you for  
15 bringing that to our attention, Councilmember. Thank  
16 you.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Absolutely. I know  
18 earlier, you mentioned how many-- you have 1300  
19 public bathrooms, currently have working bathrooms.  
20 How many bathrooms you have that are not working out  
21 of the 1300?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: The  
23 number fluctuates from time to time, because we do  
24 receive-- and I say constantly-- depending on the  
25 situation, and we try to remedy the situation. For



2 example, sometimes these comfort stations, because of  
3 plumbing issues, and plumbing issues can be anything  
4 that they-- there's, you know, it's clogged or  
5 something of that nature. And then we try to rectify  
6 that as soon as possible to make sure that the  
7 bathroom is available for the public. So we get on  
8 it right away to take care of it.

9 I do not have a number right now in terms of how  
10 many are actually closed but we will get back to you.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Get back to me. Okay,  
12 wonderful. Well, how long does it take to fix those  
13 issues? What are the timelines?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: It  
15 depends. It depends on the type of issue. We try to  
16 send the plumber out, for example, if it's a clogged  
17 issue that's happening, or syringes that are found in  
18 the bathroom, so we try to send the plumbers out  
19 right away. As soon as the supervisor recognizes  
20 that, we have trades that are-- that come out to take  
21 care of it.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, what is the monetary  
23 and time cost to retrofit existing bathrooms to make  
24 them more usable? Adding-- You said that already,  
25 adding the baby changing stations, suitable

2 lightnings, accessibilities like railings and  
3 wheelchair ramps?

4 MR. DRURY: So-- yeah. So the cost of sort of  
5 what you might call targeted repairs can-- can vary  
6 widely. Some if it's a-- if it's a sort of minor  
7 issue, you know, replacing a single fixture. That,  
8 you know, that can cost hundreds of dollars or  
9 something along those lines. We also engage in full-  
10 scale, you know, renovations or reconstructions of  
11 comfort stations. And as some of your colleagues  
12 have noted, you know, construction in New York City  
13 is very expensive, admittedly. And so we have seen  
14 comfort-- bids for projects to reconstruct comfort  
15 stations coming in at several million dollars.

16 So the-- depending on the work being done, it can  
17 it can range fairly widely.

18 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: How about if we were  
19 adding railings and wheelchair ramps to make it ADA  
20 compatible?

21 MR. DRURY: Yeah. During any reconstruction, we  
22 certainly make sure that accessibility is, you know,  
23 is a core feature of that. The actual cost of the  
24 individual elements, I-- we would have to double  
25 check with our capital team.

2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: So you'll be getting back  
3 to me again.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Oh,  
5 absolutely, Councilmember.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: No problem. How many  
7 public restrooms in parks are open year round? And  
8 how many are closed for certain periods of time?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: We  
10 always try to have all the comfort stations, as long  
11 as they are in repair, that they're good in good  
12 order, have them open year round, regardless of the  
13 weather and the season. There are different hours,  
14 depending on daylight hours, availability of daylight  
15 hours. So we do change the times that we may close  
16 the bathrooms if it's you know, depending on the  
17 season.

18 MR. DRURY: There are-- There's a small number  
19 of stations that also-- that are winterized. But  
20 it's a very-- it's a very small number.

21 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, so it's there's--  
22 there is a small number correct, depending on the  
23 time.

24 MR. DRURY: Correct.

2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. Um, are there any  
3 plans to increase the number of parks bathrooms that  
4 are open year round? Is that something you're  
5 looking into?

6 MR. DRURY: Sorry, say again?

7 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: The park bathrooms. Are  
8 any plans to increase the number of parks bathrooms  
9 that are open year round? You said some of them are  
10 close sometimes. Is that going to change?

11 MR. DRURY: Right. The ones that are winterized  
12 are just, from technical perspective are actually  
13 because they usually lack the heating systems. But--  
14 but if and when there's the opportunity to  
15 reconstruct and build in some of those, you know,  
16 increased utilities, you know, obviously increased  
17 access is-- is always something we strive for, for  
18 sure.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: For example, my park is  
20 Prospect Park. Sometimes we have flooding. So  
21 during-- Does the Department check how often  
22 bathrooms are shut down due to flooding storms?  
23 What's the usual timetable to get back online?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Well,  
25 if the particular comfort station is-- a flooding

2 situation that's going on, of course we-- we send our  
3 trades and the plumbers to be able to go out there,  
4 depending on the severity of the situation, if it's  
5 something that can be, you know, can be done with the  
6 plumber. If it's more severe situation, then we may  
7 need to be able to get some more equipment to be able  
8 to take care of it. So it also depends on the  
9 condition in the situation that happens.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, and I know  
11 sometimes-- I'm sorry, Chair. I know sometimes  
12 sanitation is the reason why most New Yorkers do not  
13 use parks. What is the-- parks bathrooms. What is  
14 the department doing to address this?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Can--  
16 Can you repeat the question, Councilmember?

17 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Cleanliness is usually the  
18 issue-- reason why folks do not use public restrooms.  
19 But I must shout out mine, the one on Parade Grounds  
20 in Brooklyn that-- the young lady that takes care of  
21 my bathroom in Parade Grounds. Shout out to her. My  
22 bathroom is amazing.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA:  
24 Terrific. That is-- That is so good to hear that.

2 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: She takes pride in keeping  
3 that bathroom so clean.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA:  
5 Absolutely. And that is the reason why we try to, as  
6 best we can, to try to have, when we do the  
7 inspection program, we're very cognizant of the  
8 utilization of those bathrooms.

9 It doesn't matter where the bathrooms may be, in  
10 what park that may be, but we're very conscientious  
11 about the cleanliness and the maintenance of the  
12 bathroom. So we have-- you know, we take care of the  
13 amenities. And if there's something that's happening  
14 that they noted by the-- by the park worker, they are  
15 supposed to let the supervisor know right away so we  
16 can take care of it right away.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Wonderful. So my last  
18 question is: What's the status on the report listing  
19 suitable locations for public bathrooms across the  
20 city? That was the bill I have currently.

21 MR. DRURY: Yeah. We'll have to check. My  
22 understanding is The Mayor's Office and Parks is  
23 going to work, obviously, with DOT and other  
24 entities. So I will have to check on the team

2 that's-- that's pulling that all together and give  
3 you a status update.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: And get back to me. I  
5 appreciate that. And your Portland bathrooms: Do  
6 you know where in Brooklyn you-- you're going to  
7 place them?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: I know  
9 it's-- I know the park very well. Irving square.  
10 Right now, it's Irving Square Park. That's where the  
11 pilot project will be. And I believe that that is in  
12 Community Board 4 in Bushwick.

13 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Oh, Okay.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So  
15 that's-- You know, I'm familiar with it, because I  
16 used to be the District Manager of that Community  
17 Board. So by coincidence, so--

18 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: So where is it-- where is  
19 it going to be located?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Irving  
21 Square Park in the Community Board 4 area.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. All right.  
23 Wonderful. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,  
25 Councilmember Joseph. I know I always ask a lot of

2 questions at the Education hearings. So this is vice  
3 versa. This is your chance.

4 I just had one more follow up question before  
5 turning it over to Councilmember Narcisse. Just on  
6 Councilmember Joseph's point, similarly. So do Park  
7 bathrooms generally open and close with the opening  
8 and closing hours of the park where it's located, or  
9 it's different operating hours?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: The  
11 hours are different. The hours are different.  
12 Usually some of the-- most of the parks are closed by  
13 about 9:00 or 10:00 at night, depending if it's a  
14 large-- large park, it's 1:00 in the morning. But  
15 the hours-- in the winter hours we close earlier. We  
16 close at around for 4:00. And in the-- in the  
17 winter, we close at about 7:00 or 8:00 at night. I  
18 mean, in the summer. i'm sorry. In the summer, we  
19 close it about 7:00 or 8:00 at night, because that's,  
20 you know, in terms of daylight hours.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Mm-hmm. Got it. Okay.  
22 Thank you. Councilmember Narcisse.

23 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I think most of my  
24 question that I was writing now, is already asked.  
25 But first I want to commend all my colleagues for



2 these bills that they are putting for-- I mean, in  
3 the forefront, because that will actually make our  
4 bathroom parks more accessible, and more-- I mean,  
5 friendlier and more welcoming for all New Yorkers.  
6 And thank you, Commissioner for being here and  
7 answering those questions. Thank you Chair.

8 One other thing. I have to shout out for two  
9 beautiful parks that I have. I have Canarsie park  
10 and I have Marine Park. Beautiful parks. So thank  
11 you for the work. But we still have some other  
12 things that we need to do. Additionally, we're going  
13 to have a new bathroom actually in Canarsie Park.  
14 And I say thank God for it. And thank you for my  
15 predecessor that started putting money in there, and  
16 for me to finish.

17 My-- Is the rate that is coming back now with  
18 COVID, are people using the bathroom more often now?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Yes.  
20 No, absolutely. I mean, we-- we never really-- I  
21 mean, there was just a period of time during COVID.  
22 But we have all the bathrooms open as long as  
23 they're, you know, in good condition. We definitely  
24 make sure that they're open to the public. We--

2 That's a public amenity that we're totally  
3 responsible for and committed to.

4 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. And I heard  
5 my-- the Chair ask a question how-- or I mean, what  
6 the timing for the park-- for the bathroom in the  
7 parks. From my understanding, they're not closed at  
8 the same time, like from-- For example, let me ask  
9 you the question: How often are they open? What's  
10 the hours like? Are they open seven days a week?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Yes,  
12 the bathrooms are open seven days a week. And during  
13 the winter, they're open till about 4:00. And then  
14 in the summer, they're open till about 8:00.

15 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: You know what bothers me  
16 a lot, is just when they have activity on Saturdays  
17 in the park. And there is no more Park workers. The  
18 bathrooms are closed. So how are people supposed to  
19 be-- continue using the park while there is no  
20 bathroom?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Well,  
22 if there's a program, or a specific program that's  
23 going on. For example, if there's a you know,  
24 there's a ballfield or something that's going on, and  
25 they have permits, that's something to be able to

2 make sure that the operations team knows about it,  
3 and they're aware of it to maybe keep the bathroom  
4 possibly open a little bit longer. But that is  
5 something to the discretion of the borough to be able  
6 to do that.

7 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. We talk about the  
8 bathrooms, how many bathroom we have in the parks,  
9 but I want to find out how often that you assess the  
10 equipment, besides the bathroom. How-- how often  
11 that you assess the equipment within the parks use?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So we  
13 try to get to the park that-- We have the parks  
14 inspection program, which we're very, very proud of,  
15 which is a separate division from the Operations  
16 Division, to try to maintain the integrity of the  
17 inspection. And we try to inspect the park, a  
18 particular park, anywhere from two to three times a  
19 year.

20 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Two to three times a  
21 year. Right now I have in Marine Park, we have a  
22 bridge that is accident prone to happen very soon.  
23 And I'm very concerned about how often-- If they  
24 assess this bridge, when I went to assess it from the  
25 naked eye. I'm not an engineer or anything that-- in

2 terms of bridges, but you can see that is about to  
3 collapse. So who's inspecting them?

4 MR. DRURY: Just for a little clarity, we might  
5 need to get-- in terms of the precise. Is it a  
6 pedestrian bridge? Or is it is a--

7 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: It's an over-the-water  
8 bridge that's in marine park by the marshland.

9 MR. DRURY: But in general, there's-- there  
10 certainly is structural elements like that, that are  
11 within a park.

12 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: The structure. You can  
13 obviously see the structure.

14 MR. DRURY: Those are very much included in the  
15 parks inspection program that the commissioner  
16 referenced. And if there is an amenity or a feature  
17 that's-- that you see falling into disrepair, you  
18 know, that could be obviously a lot of these things,  
19 you know, get to see real heavy use, and a lot of  
20 visitations. So that is overtime that-- that can  
21 certainly take place. But uh, I guess we'll have to  
22 check with our team and double check on if they're  
23 aware of that project. If not, we'd love to work  
24 with you and make sure we're-- everyone gets brought  
25 up to speed on that specific structure.

2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Since most of my  
3 questions were answered, I'm going to ask you the  
4 last one. For ADA compliance, I'm looking at the  
5 parks bathrooms. Some of them are very tight in use.  
6 So in your mind right now, from the data that you  
7 have, how many actually, practically are going to be,  
8 can be a ADA compliant?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So we  
10 have to look at-- We try wherever it's possible,  
11 whenever there's a renovation or reconstruction of--  
12 of a comfort station, that is definitely part of the  
13 you know, part of the-- the construction is to make  
14 sure that it's ADA compliant. If there's anything  
15 possible within the constraints of what we have of  
16 our resources, because again, we have to look at the  
17 footprint of what's available to be able to do to  
18 make it compliant, because sometimes the stalls may  
19 not allow for it at the current-- or the footprint  
20 may not allow for the-- for the turn on it.

21 So we have to look at-- We're looking at that.  
22 And that is something that is exceedingly important  
23 to us, to try to be able to accommodate wherever  
24 possible.

2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Chair, give me an  
3 extension. In terms of rats in our parks, some of  
4 the parks, I have witnessed, and I have video. So  
5 how are we doing with the rats in-- in our park? In  
6 our parks, I should say?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: So the  
8 parks department is very much involved. We have, you  
9 know, the City of New York is very much, as you may  
10 be you may be aware that in terms of the rat  
11 population in New York City, it's something that--  
12 that I know this administration is taking very, very  
13 seriously. And they have-- they have a task force  
14 that that is working on the dealing with the  
15 situations not only in the parks, but also in  
16 particular neighborhoods that the rat condition  
17 exists.

18 So we have exterminators in the Parks Department  
19 that are trained individuals that go out and do-- you  
20 know, they see the burrows in our parks, and they  
21 deal with those situations accordingly.

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I have a big problem in  
23 Canarsie Park.

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: In  
25 Canarsie Park?

2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I have witnessed them.  
3 And the children were playing. And I think is a  
4 disgrace in how we do business. I'm not saying my  
5 park is dirty or anything. But obviously there was  
6 rats running around. So if you could help with our  
7 New York City, not only Canarsie Park, where they  
8 have rats running around like this, it is not  
9 appropriate for children to be running with rats.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Thank  
11 you.

12 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: And especially in the  
13 areas that need it the most, the underserved  
14 community. We don't want to have any underserved  
15 communities anymore, when it comes to our parks, when  
16 it comes to our public, you know, services that we  
17 are having. Throughout New York City, we have to  
18 strike a balance and make sure that it's better. So  
19 children should not be running in the park with--  
20 with rats.

21 So I'm going to leave it as that. Thank you,  
22 Chair. You know, we love Park, and we appreciate  
23 you. Thank you.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: That's right. Thank you  
3 so much, Councilmember Narcisse. That, I think,  
4 concludes the questions from our Committee.

5 And so I want to thank you all so much for your  
6 testimony today. And thank you for all your work  
7 with us around the park system and making it-- making  
8 sure every New Yorker has access to green space.

9 And we've got a lot of work to do there. But I  
10 appreciate the commitment from you all to-- to make  
11 that a reality. So thank you all so much.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: Thank  
13 you. Thank you, Chair Krishnan, and thank you  
14 members of the Parks Committee of the City Council.  
15 Thank you so very much for the opportunity. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks for your testimony.  
18 And now we'll turn it over to our public testimony.  
19 We've got a few witnesses virtual, and so we'll begin  
20 with Sherrise Palomino from New Yorkers For Parks.

21 MS. PALOMINO: Good afternoon. My name is  
22 Sherrise Palomino, and I'm Director of Advocacy and  
23 Programs at New Yorkers For Parks. We are a founding  
24 member of the Playfair Coalition, which includes over  
25 400 organizations from across the five boroughs.



2 Thank you to the parks committee for the  
3 opportunity to speak about our city's need for 1% for  
4 parks.

5 I also want to thank Chair Krishnan, for his  
6 leadership on this important issue.

7 The bills before the committee supports equitable  
8 access for young people at recreational centers that  
9 provide much needed opportunities for youth  
10 development, increased critical work for community  
11 gardens that provide urban farming and so much more.

12 Community gardens play a crucial role in  
13 communities of color by providing fresh and healthy  
14 foods, especially in the South Bronx and other food  
15 deserts.

16 Supporting an increasing urban farming has  
17 significant public health impacts. We must invest in  
18 New York City Parks' Green Thumb Program and expand  
19 urban agriculture to make these programs accessible  
20 to all New Yorkers in equitable ways.

21 Increasing the New York City Parks department's  
22 budget to 1% of Parks can do this. With a well-  
23 funded parks department, our parks and recreation  
24 centers can be properly maintained. Allocating 1% of  
25 the city's operating budget to New York City parks

2 would generate cleaner and safer parks, comprehensive  
3 access to the city's 10,000 acres of natural areas  
4 and trails, protect vulnerable wetlands susceptible  
5 to changing climate, free access to programs and  
6 recreation centers for New York City children, and so  
7 much more.

8       We are overdue for transformative investment in  
9 our park system. 1% of the city budget for parks  
10 could ensure that recreation centers are fully  
11 staffed and functioning to provide the programming  
12 that young people need.

13       The New York City Parks Department does a valiant  
14 job and maintaining these aging resources, but needs  
15 more funding to do so. This is one of the many  
16 reasons why New Yorkers for parks and the Playfair  
17 coalition are calling for an increase in the parks  
18 budget to 1, A call the majority of the city council  
19 members support along with Mayor Adams. Thank you.

20       CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much  
21 Sherrise, and thank you for the great work that New  
22 Yorkers For Parks does every single day to fight  
23 tirelessly for our parks system, and a budget that  
24 truly reflects the values of our parks in New York  
25 City.

2 Next, we have virtual, Maria Garrett.

3 MS. GARRETT: Good afternoon. Thank you for  
4 having me today. I also work with a New Yorkers For  
5 Parks to make sure that we get the funding that we  
6 need for the parks. I'm also part of BPOSC. It's  
7 the Brooklyn Parks and Open Space Coalition. I also  
8 live in Canarsie. Good afternoon, Councilmember  
9 Narcisse. I also am the President of the Fresh Creek  
10 Civic Association here in Canarsie. And I also have  
11 cleanups over at the nature preserve. I do that at  
12 least once or twice in a year. I also have an  
13 interest in the urban gardens. I'm so glad that  
14 there was a bill addressed to urban gardening.  
15 That's very important, especially to the Canarsie  
16 area, because we do have Parklands and we do have one  
17 garden that we have in Canarsie over by Canarsie Park  
18 on Schenck. That garden, I helped them to formulate  
19 that-- that garden, community garden.

20 And there are other places in Canarsie that the  
21 residents have been looking at, that they're  
22 interested in opening up more gardens and also  
23 teaching the children in the school system how to do  
24 gardening and grow their own vegetables and fruits.  
25 And I think that's a very good way to encourage

2 healthy eating in our communities. And I would look  
3 forward to that program being passed, and also making  
4 sure that the parks have open-- open comfort  
5 stations, because I frequent that park often. Often  
6 I frequent Canarsie Park, because over there, I run  
7 along the path. And like the Councilmember said,  
8 Narcisse, there are rats. There is a lot of rats  
9 over there in the park, and I see them when I'm out  
10 there. So I encourage the council to go for that 1%  
11 increase because it's very important that we have our  
12 parks open, and that they're maintained so that--  
13 that the community could frequent those parks and be  
14 safe in doing so. Thank you so much for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Ms.  
16 Garrett, and thank you for your passion and  
17 dedication to our parks from-- in Brooklyn to across  
18 the city too.

19 That is our virtual testimony. And so now we're  
20 going to move to our in-person testimony where we  
21 have Thomas Gogan.

22 MR. GOGAN: Good afternoon Chair Krishnan,  
23 Councilmember Holden, and all the other  
24 councilmembers who were here during the hearing.

2 I'm Tom Gogan. One of the spokespeople with the  
3 Move the Money New York City campaign. I'm a parks  
4 user, a regular parks user, a walker not a runner at  
5 my age, a parent, a former city employee, and  
6 somebody who has been involved in community and labor  
7 organizing in and around New York for decades.

8 I'm not an expert on the parks other than as a  
9 user. I, in general, support all of the proposals  
10 before you today.

11 I would like specifically, though, to talk about  
12 the reality that our parks have actually been cut  
13 back for years. It really goes back to the days of  
14 the fiscal crisis back in 1975. I don't think we've  
15 ever really recovered from that period. There's all  
16 this discussion, you see it in the newspapers, over  
17 something like 21% of our city employees, there are  
18 vacancies throughout most of the departments of the  
19 city. I don't know what the Parks Department numbers  
20 look like. I would urge the Committee to look at  
21 that and see how many vacancies there are in terms of  
22 Parks Department employees, we certainly need a lot  
23 of capital improvements in the parks. I completely  
24 agree with the comments about rats and restrooms that  
25 have been made already today.

2 We need-- Parenthetically, I could be called the  
3 son of-- of a community garden in Boston, when I was  
4 very little. My parents gardened in one of the  
5 public parks in mass in Boston. We could use more of  
6 that. So I definitely support the community garden  
7 aspect.

8 In general, though, we certainly need far more  
9 resources for our parks. And one of the sources of  
10 those-- of those financial resources could be if we  
11 would move the money from the-- the unbelievably, I  
12 would almost call it obscene level of pentagon  
13 spending-- spending. Please, I'm urging the City  
14 Council to speak up and call on many of those  
15 resources to be redirected to our communities. And  
16 that very much includes our parks. Thank you so  
17 much.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much for your  
19 testimony. It's certainly true that our parks  
20 spending has gone down actually since the 1970s until  
21 today. Before it was over 1%. And now we're at--  
22 we're under it with about I think-- I could be wrong,  
23 but off top my head, roughly a little more than 200  
24 vacancies that we're facing in this preliminary  
25 budget in crucial positions that maintain our parks.

2 And we're-- will be focusing on those and calling  
3 more attention to it in our budget hearings coming up  
4 later this month, and in the next few months, too.

5 But thank you so much for your testimony. We  
6 appreciate it.

7 MR. GOGAN: And thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I think that-- that  
9 concludes our hearing. I just want to close by  
10 saying, again to our parks department, thank you for  
11 coming to testify today and to our Councilmembers who  
12 are introducing legislation-- or hearing legislation  
13 today. That's key to really maintaining and  
14 improving the green space in our city, and their  
15 accessibility, from our diaper changing stations, to  
16 our bathrooms, rec centers, and community gardens.

17 This is how, in addition to the investments in  
18 our park, these are the kinds of things that we need  
19 to be investing in to actually have a world-class  
20 park system that we that we truly deserve. And these  
21 are all key parts of it to make our parks more  
22 accessible. So looking forward to continuing to see  
23 these-- these pieces of legislation move forward. We  
24 were very proud to hear them today. And I want to

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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2 thank you all so much for joining and we'll now gavel  
3 out.

4 [GAVEL] This hearing is now over.

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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 03/08/2023