

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

December 12, 2018
Start: 1:02 p.m.
Recess: 2:21 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: BARRY S. GRODENCHIK
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

JOSEPH C. BORELLI
JUSTIN L. BRANNAN
ANDREW COHEN
COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES
MARK GJONAJ
ANDY L. KING
PETER A. KOO
FRANCISCO P. MOYA
ERIC A. ULRICH
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2

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

Emily Chase

Assistant Commissioner for Public Programs at the
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

Matt Drury

Director of Government Relations at the New York
City Department of Parks and Recreation

Adena Long

Deputy Commissioner for Urban Park Service and
Public Programs at the New York City Department
Of Parks and Recreation

Emily Walker

Director of Outreach and Programs at New Yorkers
For Parks

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We are about to start the December hearing for the Parks Committee. If you would like to testify please see the Sergeant at Arms and fill out one of these slips. So far, we have three people from the Parks Department and Emily Walker from New Yorkers for Parks and... which make for a very quick hearing. I am told that we are ready to go, thank you Sergeant at Arms so... good afternoon everybody. My name is Barry Grodenchik, I have the honor of serving as the Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation for this term of the New York City Council and today's hearing which are joined up by my colleague Peter Koo representing the great Village of Flushing where I grew up although not quite in his district. We're going to examine the overall state of the Parks Department's recreation centers when it comes to maintenance, programmatic offerings and accessibility. The Parks Department has operated recreation centers since the turn of the 20th century so almost 120 years now. They are a hallmark of the progressive history of this city and its efforts to provide opportunities, recreational opportunities especially for all of its residents.

1
2 Today the Parks Department operates 36 of these
3 centers throughout the five boroughs. Recreation
4 centers offer services ranging from indoor pools and
5 weight rooms to basketball courts, dance studios,
6 boxing rings, art studios, game rooms, after school
7 programs and the odd library here and there and as a
8 native New Yorker I can attest to the positive
9 influence that recreation centers have in our city. I
10 spent a lot of winters at night at the Pomonok center
11 which was a NYCHA center but literally attached at
12 the hip to a New York City park, Pomonok Playground.
13 The city has long realized the value of promoting
14 physical activity to encourage healthy living among
15 all groups of New Yorkers. The Shape Up New York City
16 program for instance offers a multitude of fitness
17 programs at numerous recreation centers, parks and
18 other facilities that's why the city should take
19 every reasonable step it can to encourage more
20 participation in physical activity and other types of
21 recreation. recreation centers are one of the major
22 vehicles at the city's disposal for fulfilling that
23 goal and unlike many other amenities offered by the
24 park systems... park system. Recreation centers are
25 open year-round during inclement weather or the

1
2 winter months they offer consistent opportunities for
3 social interaction and recreation to many New Yorkers
4 who otherwise could be isolated. It is therefore
5 crucial that the city do all it can to promote its
6 recreation centers and ensure that they are well
7 staffed and maintained so that more New Yorkers can
8 make use of them. In 2016, the Council passed Local
9 Law 18 to address concerns about high fees and
10 declining attendance and membership rates. It created
11 discounted membership tiers and fees for use under
12 18, seniors, disabled persons and veterans; these
13 changes, changes resulted in an almost immediate
14 uptick in attendance. This was a stark contrast from
15 the 2011 plan that essentially doubled the admission
16 fees at recreation centers in order to help close a
17 2.4-billion-dollar budget gap. The adopted plan
18 consisted of adults paying 150 dollars, double from
19 the 75 dollars that they had been paying for centers
20 with pools and 100 dollars, up from 50 for centers
21 without pools and seniors paying 25 up from ten,
22 children 18 and under have continued to receive free
23 admission. These increased fees resulted in a drop in
24 total attendance of about 65,000 visits from the
25 fiscal year 2011 to fiscal year 2012. By 2013,

1
2 recreation center membership had started to rebound
3 and by... from 2014 to 2016 membership has increased
4 steadily, however the most recent numbers indicate
5 that membership and attendance numbers fell from
6 fiscal year 2016 to this current fiscal year. For
7 example, attendance fell from 3.6 million in 2016 to
8 about 3.4 million in 2017 down to 3.2 million in
9 2018, while membership fell from 162,000 in 2016 to
10 161,000 in 2017 down to 154,000 in this year. I want
11 to explore why there seems to have been a reversal of
12 a recent trend, what that implies for the rest of our
13 recreation centers and whether the decline is due to
14 structural issues that we have to keep our eyes on.
15 Additionally, I want to use this hearing as a step to
16 be ensuring that our recreation centers have the
17 resources, they need to maintain their levels of
18 service and are able to grow in the long time... long
19 term. So many New Yorkers rely on parks and
20 recreation services... centers for services and
21 programs that they offer so we have to do everything
22 that we can to maintain a dynamic recreational
23 environment for current and future generations of New
24 Yorkers. I look forward to examining this issue in
25 greater depth today and I would at this time welcome

1
2 the administration to offer their testimony. We have
3 from New York City Department of Parks and
4 Recreation, Deputy Commissioner Adena Long; Matt
5 Drury, I don't remember his title but he's very
6 active and Emily Chase as well from Parks and I'm
7 going to ask now my Counsel, Mr. Sartori to swear you
8 in.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK SARTORI: Do you affirm
10 to tell the, truth, the whole truth and nothing but
11 the truth in your testimony before this committee
12 today?

13 EMILY CHASE: We do.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK SARTORI: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Do you two do as
16 well?

17 MATT DRURY: We do.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You do, okay..

19 [cross-talk]

20 ADENA LONG: We do.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, okay.
22 Oh, please if you would bring your testimony.

23 EMILY CHASE: Good morning Chair
24 Grodenchik and members of the Parks and Recreation
25 Committee. I am Emily Chase, Assistant Commissioner

1
2 for Public Programs at the New York City Department
3 of Parks and Recreation. I'm joined by Adena Long,
4 our Deputy Commissioner for Urban Park Service and
5 Public Programs and Matt Drury, Director of
6 Government Relations. Thank you for inviting us to
7 testify today regarding the Parks Department's
8 recreation centers. We think it would be helpful to
9 first provide some broader context about the
10 recreational and programming aspects of our agency's
11 mission. The recreation unit at NYC Parks falls under
12 the umbrella of the Public Programs Division, which
13 is also comprised of aquatics, media education,
14 puppetry, and education and wildlife including the
15 Urban Park Rangers. Recreation's mission is to enable
16 all New Yorkers to lead physically active and
17 intellectually stimulating lives through sports,
18 fitness, outdoor adventure, technology, education and
19 the arts. The division's full-time head count is
20 approximately 500 staff, including managerial and
21 programming staff as well as those that provide
22 technical support and general maintenance. Citywide,
23 we have 36 recreation centers which are overseen by
24 Recreation. This includes our newest building, the
25 Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex, which is an 135,000

1 square foot indoor track facility that hosted over
2 175,000 athletes at 86 competitions in 2018. The
3 remaining 35 centers are older facilities, the oldest
4 having been built in 1900. Being that, that the
5 average age of our centers is 66 years, our centers
6 offer a diverse range in both form and function; 21
7 have gyms, 12 have indoor pools and 12 feature
8 outdoor pools. Our recreation centers far exceed
9 neighboring commercial fitness facilities in terms of
10 character, culture and community. They boast pools,
11 gyms, multipurpose rooms, fitness rooms, media labs,
12 indoor tracks, cardio rooms and classrooms, providing
13 an inclusive atmosphere not often found at a typical
14 fitness center. At NYC Parks, we seek to provide
15 lifelong holistic enrichment, nurturing New Yorkers
16 of all ages and abilities. We offer a wide variety of
17 programming, from instructional sports to competitive
18 leagues, yoga to swimming, rooftop stargazing to
19 painting, pickle ball to double Dutch, chair aerobics
20 to Zumba, concerts to lectures, roller skating to
21 advanced adobe design software certification training
22 and many more opportunities for engagement.
23 Additionally, we provide youth of NYC an opportunity
24 to learn, grow, and develop skills and interests
25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 through programs like swim teams, after school,
3 summer camp, and adaptive recreation for people with
4 disabilities. Creating these types of life changing,
5 soul enriching opportunities is our focus, and it is
6 what we do best. We further expand our ability to
7 make these opportunities available to all by working
8 with partner organizations to provide specialty
9 programming for New Yorkers, collaborating with
10 groups such as the Art Students League of New York,
11 the Public Theater, the Jazz Foundation of America,
12 America, Jeter's Leaders, the New York Red Bulls,
13 Madison Square Garden and the New York Jets. As
14 previously mentioned, we also offer opportunities for
15 New Yorkers to enrich their interest and skills in
16 media and technology, which is so important in this
17 modern society and economy. The media education unit
18 of public programs provides high quality digital
19 resources and creative learning opportunities in 33
20 media labs within recreation centers, including
21 certification programs for Microsoft office, video
22 edit, editing and storytelling, photography, and
23 STEAM aligned classes offering 3D imaging and
24 robotics. Within the walls of our recreation centers
25 so far this calendar year, we have offered over 3,250

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 individual programs, totaling over 500,000 hours of
3 programming, to approximately 150,000 recreation
4 center members. In addition to programs, our
5 recreation center members have access to over 1,350
6 pieces of fitness equipment that provide exercise and
7 wellness opportunities in countless combinations. But
8 at NYC Parks, we don't let brick and mortar limit our
9 ability to provide programming, and we have a
10 plethora of offerings for all audiences throughout
11 the city well beyond the confines of our recreation
12 centers. Our mobile recreation programs, including
13 the Play Mobile and Fitness Mobile, allow us the
14 ability to visit various community events from April
15 through October and bring these recreational
16 opportunities directly to New Yorkers, reaching over
17 25,000 people each season. One of our most popular
18 mobile movie programs is the Movies Under the Stars
19 program. This annual summer movie series, hosted in
20 partnership with the Mayor's Office of Media and
21 Entertainment, grants us the opportunity to bring
22 unique and colorful programming to over 50,000 New
23 Yorkers, right in their local neighborhood park. By
24 partnering with private organizations, we have been
25 able to offer New Yorkers the chance to take part in

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 our Arts, Culture and Fun program series throughout
3 the five boroughs, including tango classes in
4 Washington Square Park, jazz concerts in Harlem and
5 taikoza drumming performances in Queens. We also
6 offer outdoor programming in our parks that is
7 specifically tailored to youth, through our Kids in
8 Motion and Summer Sports Experience programs. Kids in
9 Motion engages children in active, outdoor play at
10 101 sites citywide, and had over 473,000 visits this
11 calendar year. Similarly, similarly, the Summer
12 Sports Experience program teaches sports skills;
13 capturing an audience of young athletic enthusiasts
14 who are interested in further developing their
15 skills; that program saw over 34,00 visits this year.
16 Another successful program for children, the
17 Puppeteers program, has a home stage in the Swedish
18 Cottage in Central Park and offers free, mobile
19 puppet performances and puppet making workshops
20 citywide. Though youth programming is a priority for
21 NYC Parks, we know that recreational opportunities
22 are just as important for adults and seniors. Our
23 signature fitness and wellness program that targets
24 adults and seniors is the Shape Up NYC program.
25 Leveraging financial support from Empire BlueCross

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 BlueShield and private donors, Shape Up NYC provides
3 free fitness programming in our parks, recreation
4 centers and beyond, in locations all throughout the
5 city. Since the program began in 2003, it has
6 received over one million visits, which is an
7 incredible success. This program also features a
8 train the trainer component; where members of the
9 public have the ability to become trained fitness
10 instructors. As part of a larger, agency wide effort
11 to better activate our outdoor pools, this past
12 summer, NYC Parks successfully implemented a new
13 pilot initiative known as Cool Pools. Colorful
14 design, art, furniture, and programming were used to
15 reimagine and renovate five pilot outdoor pools
16 citywide. By investing time and resources in these
17 aging sites, we transformed traditional pool spaces
18 into fun, vibrant, and energized spaces offering more
19 than just swimming. Various aquatics and Shape Up NYC
20 classes, wildlife and arts education, mobile movies
21 and other pop up programs were all part of the menu
22 of activities available at these sites and we look
23 forward to continuing to reactivate and reenergize
24 our pools in the years to come. As you can hear, our
25 recreation unit prides itself on offering a wide

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 variety of programming to people of all ages,
3 abilities and interests. For that to be possible, we
4 need to sustain our recreation facilities, ensuring
5 that they are in the best condition possible.
6 Therefore, the agency monitors this with specific,
7 regular processes and benchmarks. To continually
8 monitor the state of our recreation centers, Parks
9 utilizes the agency's asset management park system to
10 store and analyze maintenance and operational
11 information about routine upkeep, upkeep and repairs.
12 Our recreation centers are also inspected twice a
13 year for safety, cleanliness, and structural
14 condition via the recreation evaluation and center
15 assessment program, administered by the agency's
16 Operations and Management Planning division. In
17 addition to dedicated maintenance staff, our
18 playground associates can both facilitate programming
19 as well as perform light maintenance. Many Council
20 Members are familiar with the great services provided
21 by our playground associates, as we have been able to
22 hire up to an additional 140 seasonal employees,
23 thanks to discretionary Council Member funding. To
24 help improve the physical condition of our centers,
25 we routinely focus on quick wins, small but impactful

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 improvements implemented to improve the quality of
3 our recreation centers and to enhance the experience
4 of our members. Projects have included targeted
5 facility improvements, improvements to a specific
6 room in a center, or new equipment purchases. This
7 approach allows agency leadership to prioritize our
8 needs and inform decisions making towards future
9 investments. Beyond the everyday maintenance
10 conducted by our staff, many of our recreation
11 centers have received millions of dollars in capital
12 investment during the current administration to
13 address structural and mechanical deficiencies,
14 upgrade fire alarms, and bring buildings up to a
15 state of good repair. In order to properly assess all
16 of our building's needs, a capital team of engineers
17 and technical staff is performing a thorough
18 assessment of each center one by one capturing and
19 reporting their findings through a mobile application
20 created specifically for this purpose. Hamilton Fish
21 in Manhattan, our oldest recreation center, is the
22 first one to be assessed. Though the needs of many of
23 these centers are significant, we are putting the
24 tools in place to properly prioritize and plan for
25 the future, so they can remain robust and vital

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 amenities for the communities they serve. Though
3 there is much more work needed to be done, the agency
4 has consistently invested in its recreation centers.
5 In fiscal year 2015, Parks received 39.5 million
6 dollars in mayoral funding to address priority
7 recreation center reconstruction and renovations.
8 Utilizing these funds, seven capital projects are now
9 underway at six facilities, including two large
10 scale, over 20 million, renovations to Brownsville
11 and Hansborough Recreation Centers. As recently as
12 the last fiscal year, FY '18, Parks received an
13 additional 78 million to address priority concerns
14 within the recreation centers, of which 34 million
15 has been committed to facility projects citywide,
16 including 7.1 million to upgrade or reconstruct
17 safety measures, such as fire alarm systems. These
18 investments to our facilities are important to ensure
19 safe and welcoming facilities for our members. NYC
20 Parks Recreation Centers are membership-based
21 facilities. Anyone can become a member by submitting
22 a complete membership registration form, the
23 appropriate membership payment, and a government
24 issued ID at any one of our 36 recreation centers
25 citywide. Annual membership fees for adults ages 25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 through 61 is 150 dollars for access to centers with
3 indoor pools or 100, 100 dollars for access to
4 centers without pools. Annual memberships for seniors
5 ages 62 and up, veterans, people with disabilities,
6 and young adults are discounted and only cost 25
7 dollars and annual memberships for youth under age 18
8 are free. Additionally, New Yorkers ages 25 to 61 can
9 receive a 10 percent discount for all adult
10 memberships if they have an IDNYC card. The latest,
11 latest Mayor's Management Report noted a drop in both
12 attendance and memberships for our recreation
13 centers. We believe there are a few contributing
14 factors for those changes. Firstly, attendance
15 tracking includes all visitors to our facilities,
16 including those who are simply seeking access to
17 bathrooms or other amenities, without a membership.
18 The agency has now begun enforcing our membership
19 policy, which allows for only members to make use of
20 the facility, more strictly at our recreation
21 centers, for the safety of all of our patrons.
22 Implementing this policy helped make our centers more
23 secure and enjoyable for our members, by helping us
24 to better control access and allowing us to more
25 accurately record usage in our facilities, but it

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 clearly had an effect on attendance figures relative
3 to past years. Second, as we strive towards upgrading
4 our buildings and services, we are phasing out the
5 use of our near 20-year-old membership tracking
6 system, RecWare. While it has been useful for much of
7 its time, its limitations that have led to
8 discrepancies... it has limitations that have led to
9 discrepancies in attendance counts in recent years.
10 We are working to identify a new software vendor
11 through the city's procurement process and look
12 forward to being, being able to implement new
13 membership software in the near future. This new
14 system will have much more flexibility and
15 functionality with regard to data capture, storage
16 and analysis and will be fully integrated with the
17 Parks website. Additionally, many of our recreation
18 centers gain access to the internet through the
19 city's wireless network, NYCWiN. We do occasionally
20 encounter connectivity outages and gaps, which can
21 impact our ability to process memberships or track
22 member and visitor data. We are currently assessing
23 our connectivity needs at each site and tailoring
24 specific data solutions where possible in each site.
25 Lastly, success sometimes breeds new challenges.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 While everyone can appreciate the upgrades to our
3 recreation facilities being delivered through Quick
4 Wins and major capital projects, these projects are
5 disruptive and inevitably lead to restricted access
6 or closures for a given amount of time. We always
7 seek to redirect members and, and programming to
8 alternative sites when a planned closure takes place,
9 but at times, we cannot predict service disruptions.
10 For example, emergency repair work to Roy Wilkins
11 Pool in 2017 required several months to address, but
12 given the sudden nature of the work required, the
13 center unfortunately lost one of its main attractions
14 and center attendance suffered as a result. Though
15 they do result in a short-term loss in attendance,
16 these closures for repairs are obviously necessary
17 and helpful in the long term, to keep these
18 facilities in working order. In closing, we would
19 like to reiterate the positive impact that, not only
20 our recreation centers, but our entire recreation
21 unit has made across the five boroughs. We strive to
22 bring free and low cost, accessible programming to
23 all New Yorkers. While these photos have given you a
24 taste of some of our offerings, you each have a
25 standing offer to join us at any of our recreation

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 centers or outdoor programs. Thank you for this
3 opportunity to share our work with you as we serve
4 New Yorkers focusing on fun, health and happiness. We
5 appreciate your continued advocacy and support. We
6 will now be happy to answer any questions you might
7 have.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
9 much for your testimony, do any of my colleagues have
10 any questions before I get into this? Uh-oh I
11 shouldn't have asked, Mr. Koo go ahead. No, you go
12 first because I'm going to be here till the end, but
13 I know people have other places to go at times.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Mr. Chair...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Even though...
17 even though we all agree there's nothing more
18 exciting... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...than a Parks
21 and Recreation hearing so... I just want to put that
22 out there.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, yeah.
24 First, I want to thank Department of Parks for
25 extending the swimming pool, the Flushing Corona Park

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 for another six months for those groups, I just
3 received confirmation from the Department and forgive
4 me I don't know why... what was the reason that you
5 want to move that out in, in the first... in the
6 beginning?

7 MATT DRURY: Sure, so I... so we can
8 briefly address that. So, at the Flushing, Meadows
9 Corona Park aquatic center was previously operated..
10 previous to 2014 was operated by a concession era,
11 essentially as a concession, in 2014 the agency
12 reclaimed operations... central operations so as such
13 there were... are some preexisting fee for service
14 programs that run counter to the, the agencies
15 general mission of offering sort of free programming,
16 a lot of the programs and their wonderful
17 organizations that offer them but the notion that
18 they're fee for service and the fees are actually
19 quiet considerable in many... in many instances its
20 rather duplicative of swim instruction, swim team
21 program, a lot of those sort of offerings that are
22 already offered by the agency directly at the aquatic
23 center so as such in the long term we don't believe
24 that fee for service, you know programs of that
25 nature have... are... we don't believe that that's really

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 the best place for them to take place. Having said
3 that, we understand that, you know we want them to be
4 able to find, you know alternate locations and things
5 like that which is why we were proud to... happy to
6 offer the extension for six months so that we can
7 work out longer term solutions.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, after six months
9 can you duplicate the services these groups provide?

10 MATT DRURY: We believe so, absolutely..
11 [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

13 MATT DRURY: ...you know I... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And you... and you
15 will provide it for free?

16 MATT DRURY: Yes, absolutely. So, our
17 swim team programming, our, our swim instruction
18 programming are, are, are free, you know like we
19 understand these organizations may want to have
20 continuing conversations, we're, we're open to that
21 obviously but in the long term, you know that, that
22 status quo though we were happy to kind of, you know
23 indulge it for some period of time in the long term
24 is, is untenable.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, yeah. So,
3 another thing I want to ask you about, ping pong,
4 right, ping pong is a very inexpensive like program
5 and, and it's not only very popular in Asian
6 countries its actually very popular in, in Europe.. in
7 European countries... in European countries so I want
8 to know like how many facilities that you guys have,
9 have ping pong tables or do they.. or do they.. very
10 few or a lot of them have it?

11 EMILY CHASE: We love table tennis..

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

13 EMILY CHASE: We offer table tennis or
14 ping pong at many of our facilities including Sunset
15 Park, Chelsea recreation center, it's a very, very
16 popular activity.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah because the
18 reason I ask that because... the reason is a lot of
19 people in my community which is like Flushing area
20 they all come to ask me, you know they want to find a
21 facilities to play ping pong especially for senior
22 citizens and, and I mean some of the senior centers
23 they provide one table to two tables but we want to
24 find a good facility that they have like five tables
25 or... that a lot of people can play and enjoy together

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 so I think that is a very inexpensive capital
3 improvement, it like cost almost nothing just buy a
4 table, a few hundred dollars and they will bring
5 their own paddles and balls and, and don't under...
6 don't underestimate the, the game of ping pong, it's
7 really good, it has been proved to cut down Alzheimer
8 disease and will cut down... not, not eliminate but
9 decrease, right, yeah because your coordination all
10 the time, yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think you have
12 unanimous consent among the members here for ping
13 pong. I, I would ask maybe on behalf of Councilman
14 Koo, I know he has the Al Oerter Center in his
15 district so that's the closest that I know of in
16 Flushing... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: The one near Home
18 Depot, right?

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, so maybe
20 we can look at ping pong there...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah...

22 MATT DRURY: Yep...

23 EMILY CHASE: We do offer... we do offer
24 ping pong or table tennis at Al Oerter and we also
25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 work to have tournaments cross boroughs, so we can...

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

5 EMILY CHASE: ...look at perhaps involving
6 the community at Al Oerter in a tournament where they
7 can compete against another borough.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, the last
9 thing... [cross-talk]

10 EMILY CHASE: We appreciate the
11 suggestion... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: ...I want to ask is
13 just like providing Wi-Fi hotspots in parks is really
14 important, now do we... do we have like hotspots in
15 parks that you can identify and tell people hey, you
16 know I mean its hard to provide Wi-Fi for the whole
17 parks so... but certain parts... certain parts of the...
18 you provide a bench and then just say this is a
19 hotspot bench so people who need to use Wi-Fi can sit
20 down there and, and do whatever they want to do.

21 MATT DRURY: Yeah... no, I... internet
22 connectivity is becoming like a, a very valuable
23 amenity that people, you know sort of seek and so I...
24 and there certainly is Wi-Fi available at many of our
25 park properties and, and I'd have to... we'll have to

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 get more information about how the signage works or
3 when, what that's... when that's available but, but
4 yeah, we, we agree, you know the flip side of course
5 is that sometimes people try to get away from
6 electronic devices and our, our less interested but
7 obviously natural areas... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah but sometimes...
9 [cross-talk]

10 MATT DRURY: ...things of that nature but
11 where appropriate, yeah, I think that's something we,
12 we, we are always looking to, to address.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, I think
14 your department is one of the greatest among all the...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I agree... [cross-
17 talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: ...agencies.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Don't, don't be
20 too nice to them, I mean... and ask probing... [cross-
21 talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: It's like you, you...
23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...questions...
25 [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: ...provide a good service, right and a day in the park is much cheaper than a day in the hospital.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's for sure...

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Right, thank you Mr. Chair... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you... thank you Council Member Koo as always. I got a couple of questions here... more than a couple. You gave us the total budget... or can, can you give me the total budget for this part of the Department of Parks and Recreation?

EMILY CHASE: Our budget is approximately 30 million for staffing and 2.7 million for OTPS that includes recreation, media education and aquatics.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Does that include nights of movies and all that, does that in... encapsulates everything, no, maybe, yes?

MATT DRURY: That's, that's sort of baseline agency funding, that wouldn't... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

MATT DRURY: ...include the significant discretionary funding that's, that's provided through the... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, those movies... [cross-talk]

MATT DRURY: ...generosity... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...those movie nights you're talking about are funded by people like us?

MATT DRURY: Many are funded through the agencies so some... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-talk]

MATT DRURY: ...of that is included but its, its... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's what I thought... [cross-talk]

MATT DRURY: Yes, we're at... added value we're able to have... to expand and, and you know... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 MATT DRURY: ...sort of augment those,
3 those investments as well thanks to the support of
4 the council.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay and I know
6 in the past there were layoffs or maybe people
7 weren't hired back due to budget cuts, have we gotten
8 back to where we were prior to the difficulties that
9 we had?

10 MATT DRURY: Head count in general has
11 essentially regained... is, is now essentially at par
12 with its, its previous peaks, I think following in
13 the early 2000's there were... yeah, there were some
14 significant dips in cuts, but the agency generally
15 speaking at large has, has regained those, those,
16 those positions back.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. And you
18 had member... mentioned in your testimony that one of
19 the reasons that attendance is down is because
20 there's a stricter enforcement policy now so that we
21 obviously... our rec centers are enclosed places and we
22 want to make sure that the public can recreate safely
23 so you've been... you have been using a stricter
24 enforcement policy in terms of if, if you're not a
25 member you're not coming in are there any other

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 reasons that, that you have identified that there is
3 a decline and if... and is there one set of people;
4 younger people, older people, you know people with a
5 disability, veterans or any discernable patterns
6 there?

7 EMILY CHASE: Well membership and
8 attendance has declined, we do currently have 150,000
9 members and we had over three million visits to our
10 centers in FY '18, a couple of notable things that we
11 think are contributing factors in terms of attendance
12 and membership as I said we are phasing out the use
13 of our nearly 20 year old membership tracking system,
14 RecWare, it has its limitations, its led to
15 discrepancies of attendance counts in recent years so
16 we're working to identify a new software vendor
17 through the city's procurement process and look
18 forward to be able... being able to implement new
19 membership software in the near future and, and we
20 are hopeful that this new system will have much more
21 flexibility and functionality which will allow us to
22 better track the members and attendees.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Can you give us
24 a little... just a little bit about how that software
25 was... I mean its 20 years old so, I mean I'm almost 59

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 now you got me worried so maybe things don't work so
3 well as they get older, but can you give us a limit...
4 an idea of the limitations? I assume that this
5 software has been augmented from time to time over 20
6 years, but I guess now it's just reached the end of
7 its usefulness.

8 EMILY CHASE: Yeah and there are certain
9 features that are a bit cumbersome so for instance we
10 had identified a button that was essentially allowing
11 us to track visitors that entered the facility for a
12 large event. So, say you have a, a huge track and
13 field meet or a basketball tournament and you have
14 large numbers of people flowing into the facility,
15 you could hit a multiple of ten rather than hitting
16 one and that function... functionality was not clear so
17 we had to adjust that in, in. When, when we
18 identified that some of our staffers used that
19 incorrectly we had to make an adjustment, its, its...
20 the, the system in short is cumbersome and difficult
21 to use.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Time to move on,
23 is that what you're saying? Would you say... you know
24 one the things that I learned I've learned as Parks
25 Chair of almost a year now is that parks are much

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 stronger as a sum of many, many different pieces and
3 we could go on and on and there are probably dozens
4 and dozens of different things that people come to a
5 park for whether it's, you know a big park like
6 Central Park or Cunningham Park in Alley Pond in my
7 district or the Corner playground, you know that dots
8 most of New York City so it's fair to say that
9 recreation centers are kind of like for some people
10 what a bocce court would be or a tennis court because
11 even though they offer a wide variety of services,
12 some people that visit rec centers may not go to
13 another park facility, do you find that to be true?

14 EMILY CHASE: Yes, these are most
15 certainly community hubs, people come to socialize,
16 to relax, to take a break, to get out of their homes,
17 we welcome passive recreation especially for our
18 seniors in our recreation centers, these are... these
19 are home, homes away from home for a lot of New
20 Yorkers.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I would... I... yes,
22 the, the, the ones I've seen... I was especially
23 intrigued of the one at Thomas Jefferson Park which
24 is just busy, and it had bumper pool which I haven't
25 seen since I was about eight years old, so it's been

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 a while. We have noted in, in my question list a
3 number of centers that are currently closed for
4 maintenance or construction issues including Herbert
5 Von King Center in Brooklyn, the Saint John's
6 Recreation Center in Brooklyn as well, the Tony
7 Dapolito Center in Manhattan and the Sorrentino
8 Center in Queens as well as you kind of mentioned in
9 your testimony Roy Wilkins Park, can we talk about
10 the status updates on, on when we might expect to see
11 these open again?

12 EMILY CHASE: Absolutely, first of all we
13 look to avoid all types of closures for our
14 recreation centers when repair is needed in order to
15 cause the least amount of disruption to our members
16 so our member access to our centers is of the utmost
17 importance and, and just to make the distinction not
18 all of the ones you mentioned are fully closed, I
19 can... I can go through that now; Von King Center in
20 Brooklyn is closed doing... due to an ongoing capital
21 project to renovations to a multipurpose performance
22 space and we're... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: The whole
24 center... [cross-talk]

25 EMILY CHASE: ...our... [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...is closed?

EMILY CHASE: The whole center is...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-talk]

EMILY CHASE: ...closed and our parks capital division is anticipating completion in winter or spring of 2019. At Saint John's Recreation Center in Brooklyn, the facility is closed doing... due to an ongoing capital project, the HVAC and we are anticipating completion in winter of 2019. Tony Dapolito is... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Does that mean this coming winter or next... [cross-talk]

EMILY CHASE: Yes, yeah... in a... in just a couple months we hope... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Okay, I just wanted to make sure we're on the same page.

EMILY CHASE: Absolutely. Tony Dapolito Recreation Center in Manhattan is open, it was just closed very briefly... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 EMILY CHASE: ...due to emergency boiler
3 work.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're making
5 progress, good.

6 EMILY CHASE: And Sorrentino Recreation
7 Center in Queens, it's not completely closed at all
8 but because of ongoing capital work certain portions
9 of the facility have been closed at various times.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And the Roy
11 Wilkins is it just the pool at Roy, it's the one that
12 I'm really familiar with, they have a great pool
13 there, they have a small weight lifting area, they
14 have a large gymnasium... [cross-talk]

15 EMILY CHASE: So, this facility... [cross-
16 talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and other
18 stuff... [cross-talk]

19 EMILY CHASE: ...is open and... however it's
20 been undergoing capital improvements since March of
21 2018 and their experiencing a number of upgrades; a
22 new roof over the gym being one of them and so some
23 programming spaces and areas of the building are...
24 need to be closed to complete that work.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, it's an old building I know it, it was a military facility before it was the park.

EMILY CHASE: And just to add we do update the website when there are specific closures to spaces within the facility or if the entire facility requires closure, so we lean on our website to get information out to our constituents.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to go back to membership a little. We noted earlier in, in my opening statement a decline after the, the fee increase in 2011, are you seeing other reasons, are you... have you... you know its... these, these centers are obviously extremely important to the city, over three million visitors which is an awful lot of people and, and 150,000 regulars so the, the question that I have are we seeing competition from, you know private services or is there anything that we could be doing to enhance the experience, I know there's always more that we could be doing but I'm just wondering if there's anything that people have been telling you that you haven't told me yet?

ADENA LONG: Thank you, I appreciate that... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you
3 Commissioner... [cross-talk]

4 ADENA LONG: So, we can appreciate the,
5 the concept that we have competition with other
6 commercial entities however, we see our rec centers
7 as being much more than a, a fitness entity that you
8 might spend ten dollars a month on because of all of
9 the programs that we've mentioned previously; the
10 after school, summer camp, the Kids in Motion
11 programming, senior programming, adaptive
12 programming, our pools, our gyms... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You... and you
14 even have competition from other city agencies; we
15 have Beacon programs, right, so... I mean there's
16 other... there are social service agencies that are
17 funded by the city...

18 ADENA LONG: Honestly, we see them more
19 as supplemental than competition, we are not
20 necessarily competing for the same funds and
21 certainly there's enough demand in the city... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Certainly...
24 [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

ADENA LONG: ...for all of us to be helping in that regard.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, well if it was up to me every school would be open pretty much from six a.m. to midnight but that's another story for another hearing. Does the Department of Parks and Recreation have a single budget line for these centers or are they spread out over a number of lines or how does that work?

EMILY CHASE: All revenue collected from all the recreation centers for recreation goes into one budget code and revenue source.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And I'm assuming that we're subsidizing these centers that the fees are not getting anywhere close to... its, its fine, I mean we have plenty of money fortunately right now enough but, you know it's what we do, and we want people to enjoy so... you want to say something Matt?

MATT DRURY: No... yeah, just, just confirming that, you know we think the, the current fee structure is, is... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Reasonable... [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

MATT DRURY: ...extremely reasonable and, and provides, you know great access, you know these, these are, you know annual fees, obviously 150 for centers with a pool, 100, you know for those without for an annual fee we believe and that's for adults not to mention all the various, you know discounts and other programs that folks have described so we believe it's really wonderful.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I just want to announce that the Bronx has joined us, we've been joined by Councilman Andrew Cohen and Council Member as well Mark Gjonaj, do you gentlemen have any questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: The Bronx has always been here.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You have, well I didn't want to know.

[off mic dialogue]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'll be happy to give it to you right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'll just pipe in that, you know I have a rec center in the Williamsbridge Oval and Sarah is the Director, I don't know Sara's last name but I have to say she is

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 incredibly committed and really I think does... you
3 know she has limited resources but she really
4 stretches them and, and really makes the programming
5 there attractive and she's a... you know I mean really
6 I think really the heart of that particular rec
7 center so I just want to... as long as we're on the
8 record here I want to give her a shout out because I
9 think she does tremendous work.

10 EMILY CHASE: Thank you... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you... [cross-
12 talk]

13 EMILY CHASE: ...that's Sara Bishow.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, it's
16 always good to hear good things about our Parks Mr.
17 Gjonaj, I'll come back to you. Thank you. Are there
18 any other... if you had your druthers would there be
19 other discounted memberships, is there anything we're
20 missing that we should think about in the future,
21 future budget years?

22 MATT DRURY: Actually, we think the
23 current fee structure represents a, a fair and, and
24 appropriate cross section.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I wanted
3 to get in... and I'll come back to my questions but I...
4 in your testimony on page three you mentioned that
5 anybody can become a member by submitting a completed
6 membership form and payment and a government issued
7 ID, what happens for people that don't have a
8 government issued ID, I know we have the New York
9 City ID program now but not everybody wants to take
10 advantage of that and I'm just wondering if we've had
11 to turn away people from that and whether it's
12 something we should be looking at?

13 MATT DRURY: Yeah, we'd have to get back
14 to you in terms of how often that, that, you know
15 comes up but because... especially because we do accept
16 IDNYC, you know I believe the... you know the, the, the
17 intent here is obviously just a, you know proof of
18 residency, right, so... you know to the degree that...
19 and we're always happy to partner with organizations
20 to get word... more word out about IDNYC but that as,
21 as... you know and other folks obviously... you know if
22 it's a driver's license or other forms like that's
23 fine as well but... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
25 talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 MATT DRURY: ...but we have not seen that
3 as a tremendous hurdle or, or burden.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I, I, I
5 haven't either, but I just wanted to ask that
6 question. And can... I don't know if you did it but can
7 you tell me the number of events that take place in
8 the New York City, are all the events... now I, I
9 understand there are different kinds of events,
10 there's puppet shows, right and there's movies,
11 there's the philharmonic which can draw, you know 50
12 or 100,000 people depending... about 7,000 people in,
13 in my park, Cunningham Park but I'm just wondering if
14 you can tell me how many different events there are
15 in New York City parks a year and I know it's a
16 staggering number...

17 MATT DRURY: The exact amount...

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want the exact
19 amount Mr. Borelli will not be satisfied otherwise,
20 you can get back to me, I'd love to know the answer
21 because it... you know as parks chair... Commissioner
22 Silva calls himself the Commissioner of fun so I
23 guess that makes me the Chairman of fun so... not as
24 much fun as zoning and franchises Mr. Moya but almost
25 as much but it's something that I'm curious about

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 because we always would like to increase your budget
3 and I'm going to make a major push for that in the
4 coming 2020 fiscal year budget but that would be
5 helpful to see, you know and I... and it's also good
6 for us just to know so we have an idea of exactly
7 what's going on, we have kind of a handle on the
8 number of visitors to New York City parks, which is
9 currently pegged at 130 million a year although I
10 would argue it's probably more based on the numbers
11 just from Central Park being 40 million and our
12 beaches being, you know upwards of 20 million so I
13 would be curious to, to get not... if not today then
14 in, in the coming days or weeks a breakdown on
15 exactly how many events there are. I... you know I know
16 every day there are events... everything that you do I
17 would be very curious to see that and maybe a lot
18 more than we think, and I think parks... if that's the
19 case then parks should be getting credit for that.
20 So, Commissioner if you want to take a, a small stab
21 at it...

22 ADENA LONG: Well I, I want to... you're
23 right we do a lot of events and recreation in and of
24 itself does many events not only self-generated
25 events, but we also partner with, with many of the

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 council members on providing events for their
3 districts and, and in their communities. Above and
4 beyond that and, and we will get back to you on, on
5 real numbers but I thought it important to make this
6 distinction is that we have park administrators and
7 we have park groups and we have permeated events that
8 occur in our parks so it's really sort of coming from
9 many different sources.. [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Right, that's
11 why.. [cross-talk]

12 ADENA LONG: ...at a... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I didn't... I
14 wouldn't really expect you to have an answer today
15 but I think it would be a good thing for us to know
16 simply because we should know what's going on and,
17 and that's part of my responsibility but I, I think
18 it also helps us to make a case for how important
19 our parks are and I think certainly everybody here
20 recognizes that and, and most New Yorkers if not all
21 New Yorkers understand how important our parks are
22 there. As I often say, our parklands in... by
23 themselves are larger than the borough of the Bronx
24 which is pretty impressive because, you know the
25 Bronx is over 42 square miles so that's something to

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 chew on but if... its, it's not just the number of
3 people but I'd, I really would like to know exactly
4 how many events are occurring each... from, from small
5 things, you know little puppet shows to, to the
6 philharmonic which may be the biggest events that
7 happen in parks every year but... and we also, you know
8 there's all kinds of stuff that goes on, you know I'm
9 not talking about baseball games and all that but
10 stuff done under the egress of the... of the Parks
11 Department working with other agencies or community
12 groups and like that.

13 ADENA LONG: Certainly, we understand,
14 and we'll work to get those numbers... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
16 talk]

17 ADENA LONG: ...to you... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...I appreciate
19 that very much. Mr. Gjonaj... we've been joined by Eric
20 Ulrich of Queens, we're... do you have any questions
21 Mr. Ulrich?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I just got here...

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I... okay, I'll
24 let you decompress a little, I... okay. You mentioned
25 before that recreation centers are kind of hubs for,

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 for communities, do... does the Department of Parks and
3 Recreation leverage, leverage its centers for social
4 services and benefits, outreach especially for of
5 course the people that use the center who may be in
6 other forms of need... other forms of social assistance
7 such as case work or... etcetera?

8 MATT DRURY: Yes, I think in, in some... in
9 some targeted efforts certainly for example voter
10 registration forms per, per local law are made
11 available out of recreation centers as they are at
12 other sort of more traditional service agency hubs
13 throughout the city, also I believe, you know in the
14 midst of the NYC... I... the IDNYC launch, you know are,
15 are at some of our centers served as hubs for, for
16 sign ups and things of that nature so our... again as
17 they are gathering community points, you know our
18 centers have been utilized in that way and in many
19 forms and fashion though, though they're... our
20 primary... our primary mission of course is to sort of
21 recreation, social and physical recreation benefits
22 that, that occur there.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.
24 Disability, disability access, people with
25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 disabilities, are our centers all handicap
3 accessible?

4 EMILY CHASE: Programming inclusion and
5 access to our buildings for people with disabilities
6 is something that the agency takes very seriously,
7 our capital projects and citywide services divisions
8 have scheduled and completed the important work to
9 make our recreation centers more ADA compliant in
10 areas that needed minor ADA upgrades to the interior
11 based on previous inspections. All of our recreation
12 centers currently have accessible entrances and
13 pathways leading to them and we're really, really
14 proud of our ongoing adaptive sports programming for
15 children, teens and adults with disabilities due to
16 our interior and exterior ADA accommodations,
17 accommodations which allow us to offer these programs
18 and to offer a consistent level of service to those
19 with disabilities. We also have Christopher Noel, the
20 agency's accessibility coordinator who's been
21 instrumental in the agency's work in this area, he
22 works very closely with our capital team to design
23 with accessibility at the forefront of their mind and
24 we believe we would rate high on a scale of one to
25 ten in regard to providing overall disability access.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Thank you
3 for that. How often do you inspect the centers for
4 cleanliness and, and to make sure that everything is
5 in proper working order and is there a reporting
6 mechanism... how does... how does it... when you have a
7 problem when something is broken how does it get
8 fixed?

9 ADENA LONG: So, as an agency we take
10 great deal and, and pride in the work that goes into
11 keeping our centers clean, safe and functional and
12 making them enjoyable spaces for our, our customers
13 to play, learn and train. The centers are inspected
14 at least twice for each tour of duty so if we have
15 two shifts that are working in a center they're being
16 inspected at least twice beyond that mentioned in our
17 testimony is the... what we refer to as the RECAP
18 program which is a version of the Parks Department
19 TIP program which you're probably more familiar with,
20 RECAP inspects each of our 36 rec centers twice a
21 year, there are 12 features that are rated... that
22 we're rated upon and so we receive the... those ratings
23 in terms of inspection. They look at both structural,
24 cleanliness and other so that also helps inform
25 decision making as it relates to any sort of

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 aesthetic improvements we have to make as well as any
3 physical improvements in capital projects.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: If something
5 breaks do you have in... generally in house or... I know
6 we have Dr. Playground, I've seen Dr. Playground
7 around I'm just wondering if you have Dr. Rec Center?

8 ADENA LONG: So, we have varying levels
9 of maintenance and operation staff that are assigned
10 to our centers so certain levels of cleanliness in
11 terms of keeping it clean can... is done in house but
12 we work hand in hand with our maintenance and
13 operations trades division and citywide services
14 trades divisions to address larger repairs and other
15 issues.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Mr. Gjonaj
17 did you have a question?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you
19 Chairman. One of the six rec centers in the Bronx,
20 Owen Dolen Recreational Center which is a true hub
21 and offers so much to Bronxites, a portion of that
22 facility is being used by personnel for Parks
23 Department, confined space, limited space. I brought
24 this up in the past having Parks Department occupy a
25 portion of a recreational center is counterproductive

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 especially when the demand and the limited space that
3 we currently have indoors, I wonder if this is
4 throughout the other rec centers and my real concern
5 here is that the staff keeps equipment there which
6 could actually be hazardous to the wellbeing of the
7 rec center and those that participate there;
8 flammable items, machinery filled with gas, storage
9 of other liquids that could be very dangerous...

10 ADENA LONG: Thank you Council Member, so
11 with regards to Owen Dolen I'm aware of the situation
12 which you speak, there, there is one wing that is
13 used for maintenance and operations district
14 operations, I can have a conversation with borough
15 Commissioner Rodriguez Rosa regarding an alternative
16 space for that staff but in terms of your... the second
17 part of your question, our recreation centers are as
18 disparate as they are alike in, in terms of function,
19 while we do have some multi million dollar, 135
20 square foot centers many of our facilities are field
21 houses that have been repurposed and in some cases
22 even comfort stations that have been repurposed so
23 sharing of space between recreation and maintenance
24 and operations is, is quite frankly not that unusual

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 but with regards to the equipment we can certainly
3 address that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, that
5 would be space that can be utilized for the
6 betterment of the rec center and offer more programs
7 and services, there's a demand for it, it's obvious
8 and I know that it may not be easy to relocate park
9 staff and finding an ideal location for them but
10 certainly not at a rec center especially one that..
11 this rec center since you're familiar with it is so
12 small and every square foot makes a difference on
13 programming.

14 ADENA LONG: We appreciate your concern
15 and interest and again I'll speak with the borough
16 Commissioner and see how we might be able to address
17 this situation.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And for the
19 record I'm very fond of my borough Commissioner, I
20 love her.

21 ADENA LONG: We'll be sure to let her
22 know that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're all fond
25 of Iris so.. we've been joined by Council Member Costa

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 Constantinides if you have any questions Council
3 Member just let me know. When you have a rec center
4 that might not meet cleanliness standards is there a
5 process for it, do you shut it down, what do you do,
6 its... you know obviously people in close quarters we
7 want to make sure these places are clean, is there...
8 and I don't know if you've had this issue but I'm
9 just curious... you know we have a lot of people,
10 millions... three million people a year moving in and
11 out and we have, you know swimming pools and people
12 sweating and... you know all that good stuff.

13 ADENA LONG: We take the cleanliness of
14 our facilities very, very seriously, it is really one
15 of things that you expect as a client of a public
16 facility to be in a safe, clean environment so
17 generally we just take corrective action. If for some
18 reason we don't have appropriate staff assigned to
19 the center, then we will reassign staff or request
20 staff from the district to come and assist us but its
21 generally taken care of right away.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. The PEP
23 officers, do... are they ever assigned or are they on
24 a... on a tour of the district or you know how does
25 that work with... in making sure that we have safety?

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 ADENA LONG: So, we have a... approximately
3 a dozen PEP officers and three PEP sergeants that are
4 assigned to recreation centers citywide, in addition
5 to that we have approximately 47 park security
6 service officers that are assigned to centers and
7 during the winter we have a... we fluctuate an
8 additional 50 or so odd staff come... surge into our
9 centers because it's a little bit too cold for them
10 to be on foot post out in the... in the parks so there
11 is park security coverage at our facilities. I should
12 note that the park security officers are not shielded
13 so they're unable to write summonses or to affect
14 arrests, but they do serve a wonderful and a very
15 important role in being the eyes and the ears and
16 serving... doing customer service and so on.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And do you track
18 crimes or the number of violations that occur, I know
19 its not a big issue but I'm just curious?

20 ADENA LONG: So, we do track incidents
21 that occur in our rec centers and we have a, a
22 reported 432 incidents in the last year that were
23 reported in or around the recreation center, often
24 times we'll include incidents that occurred in a park
25 if the rec center is actually located within a park.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 The complaint types include locker break in, thefts,
3 assaults, graffiti and vandalism.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Can you
5 tell me what the, the average opening hours of a
6 center are?

7 EMILY CHASE: We have a range of open... of
8 opening hours at our centers, some open as early as
9 six or 6:30 a.m. and some close as late as ten p.m.
10 and we have a handful that are open on Sundays, about
11 ten I believe, most are open every.. you know six days
12 a week.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Are there
14 any new centers being constructed or contemplated?

15 ADENA LONG: So, we are currently in
16 conceptual design phase for the Tilden recreation
17 center also known as the Shirley Chisholm recreation
18 center in East Flatbush, Brooklyn.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is that a new
20 center or...

21 ADENA LONG: It will be a new center..
22 [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: A whole new
24 building... [cross-talk]

25 ADENA LONG: Yes... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Not a bathroom..

3 ADENA LONG: Full scale upwards of...
4 upwards of 30,000 square feet.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, that's
6 pretty big, that's pretty... [cross-talk]

7 ADENA LONG: Yes... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...large. Yes Mr.
9 Constantinides you had a question? Okay.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah,
11 thank you Chair Grodenchik, I appreciate it and good
12 to see you all. So, I have a question about rec
13 centers, what are the breakout per borough?

14 ADENA LONG: There are six in the Bronx,
15 eight in Brooklyn, four on Staten Island, 13 in
16 Manhattan and eight in Queens.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Eight in
18 Queens, how many in western Queens?

19 ADENA LONG: I'm not as familiar with
20 Queens but I can name the centers.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay,
22 well the community... I guess the question that I have
23 is... [cross-talk]

24

25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: What's the...
3 what's the answer because you probably know the...
4 [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah...
6 [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...the answer.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Its zero...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
11 talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: So, I
13 mean I think that there has been a call for a
14 community center or rec center in western Queens,
15 what is the park's capacity to add new rec centers or
16 have outlook for opportunities to add one as we have
17 things going on in our communities.

18 MATT DRURY: Yeah, expanding the park's
19 portfolio acquisitions of any type are always
20 something that the agency looks carefully at working
21 with the Mayor's Office and OMB, as you can
22 understand it's, it's certainly something as, you
23 know massive as a new recreation center can, can be a
24 real challenge but it's something we're constantly
25 taking a look for those opportunities.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: And how do you fund... how would you... you know is it in, you know in partnership with something... a, a nonprofit in the community, do you do it just sort of standalone, how... what is the... sort of the best model if we were to sort of like build one up from scratch?

MATT DRURY: Traditionally acquisitions and, and the construction has, has been funded, you know centrally and mayoral, but I believe the city remains open to, to a... to a variety of different...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Well I mean the capital... [cross-talk]

MATT DRURY: ...you know partnerships...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: ...like that but once you're actually running like what's the best way to actually sort of have staffing and, and that... those... things of that nature?

MATT DRURY: Yeah, again I think traditionally, you know baseline, you know agency funding is, is, is traditionally the best... you know the model that we've seen in place.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I know
3 that, you know we, you know have a lot of really
4 great things happening in our parks in western
5 Queens, very excited about the anchor park program,
6 very excited that we've been able to either fund or
7 see the renovation of half the parks and playgrounds
8 in our... in, in my district but the... and we're looking
9 to finish that loop before I'm done but we are
10 looking for a rec... a rec space and it's something
11 that the community really needs and we... I luckily
12 would hope to have the opportunity to sit down with,
13 with you and, and talk about opportunities to sort of
14 make that happen.

15 MATT DRURY: Yeah, we'd welcome that
16 conversation, absolutely.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES:
18 Wonderful, thank you, thank you Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is that going to
20 come off the 30 million dollars that we're spending
21 in Astoria Park?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: No, I'm
23 going to ask for more.

24

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, as long as I, I just wanted to be clear on that. Mr. Gjonaj you had another question?

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah, speaking about fairness and equity. How many pools do we have in New York City?

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Public pools you mean.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Public pools, yes.

MATT DRURY: Indoor and outdoor... approximately 66, that's a combination of both indoor and outdoor.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How many... do you know the breakdown by borough?

MATT DRURY: Unfortunately, I don't, we'll have to get that to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Do you know how many are... there are in the 13th council district, a very important of the Bronx?

MATT DRURY: One of our favorites...
[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: He has his own beach though just, just for the record.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

MATT DRURY: Orchard... obviously Orchard Beach is a jewel, you know a jewel in the crown of the New York City beach system of course but as, as to... as to pools by council district we, we'll have to get that to you as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, I'll answer that, zero.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I have one pool but its... your car is larger than it, its very small.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Council Member it's not always about you, sometimes... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, it is... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...it's about me... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...it's about my constituents its not about me, its never about me.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I would really... perhaps this is a good opportunity Chairman to start calling for a hearing in the future when it comes to outdoor, indoor pools that are not afforded to all city residents and we're fortunate to have the beach and... Orchard Beach in particular and the shoreline but certainly nothing is more comforting than a pool

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 in a controlled environment especially for the
3 younger swimmers and the parents that we have and the
4 families and there's plenty of space in the third..
5 you don't have to acquire anything, we have 2,700
6 acres of Pelham Bay Park, maybe you heard about it
7 that we can find a little corner to actually put a
8 pool in I think would go a long way to serve and
9 improve the quality of life that Bronxites should
10 enjoy, enjoy and be entitled to.

11 MATT DRURY: We're, we're always open to
12 the conversation about the creation of new amenities,
13 obviously a lot of complications come into factors
14 making sure that our, our parks have a diversity of
15 use but, but your point well taken, and you know
16 obviously it's something we'd be happy to sit down
17 and talk about.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Chairman will you
19 make this a priority for us?

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Three o'clock,
21 we'll have it done, it is.. it is an important
22 priority, it should be, we, we sometimes forget that
23 we do live in one of the largest port cities in the
24 world, New York Harbor, a great natural harbor, we
25 have tremendous public beaches, the Rockaways, the

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 world famous Coney Island, Orchard Beach, which my
3 mother used in the 30's and the 40's as well as the
4 South Shore of Staten Island which is pretty much one
5 long beach, we don't have one in Manhattan yet
6 although there were suggestions made in the media I
7 think earlier this year but it is important I think
8 and its, it's extremely important that our young
9 people especially learn how to swim so from that idea
10 alone I think that Councilman Gjonaj has raised a
11 very valid point and speaking of water, I had the
12 opportunity to tour Baruch Playground earlier this
13 year which is on the lower east side in Council
14 Member Carlina Rivera's district and I noticed the
15 bathhouse there and I don't know whether bathhouses
16 come under the recreation division's... I don't know
17 what the right... Suzanne, I can't pronounce that word,
18 under your ages because as you probably know this
19 building has been closed to the public for 40 years
20 and it has a green roof because there are trees
21 growing out of it now so it's a naturally occurring
22 green roof and I'm just wondering if there are any
23 plans whether it needs to be demolished and started
24 over, its probably a very old building but it

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 obviously could be a tremendous amenity to the people
3 who live there many of whom live in public housing?

4 MATT DRURY: Yes, absolutely, we're... you
5 know the, the... it's a... the, the history of the
6 structure as you mentioned and the structural
7 conditions, you know the fact that there is
8 literally... you know trees and, and other natural
9 area... natural elements sort of literally growing out
10 of the... out of the building now so our... I believe
11 there... I don't know that there's been a recent
12 structural assessment, but we have... I... in the process
13 of releasing a, an... a request for expression of
14 interest in terms of reactivating the space and I
15 believe that's been... that's been released and so I...
16 I'll have to check on the status of that process
17 whether we've received any, any responses so I'm, I'm
18 not a structural engineer but I, I believe the
19 anecdotal understanding is, is demolition may
20 certainly be necessary.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I mean,
22 and I assume that it is monitored, monitored so it
23 doesn't collapse, we unfortunately have had some
24 building collapses in the city, it's a very old
25 structure, I don't know how old, but I just wanted to

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 put that out there because it's a park's facility. I
3 know there's a lot of money earmarked for that park
4 which is probably one of the less desirable
5 recreation spaces in the city of New York currently
6 I'm sure it will be much better when its redone, but
7 I just wanted to bring that forward because we are
8 talking about recreation centers.

9 MATT DRURY: Certainly, and it's
10 something that's very much on our... on our radar.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Mr. Gjonaj
12 and Mr. Costa, nope...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: You said 63 or 66
14 pools, indoor, outdoor?

15 MATT DRURY: I believe it's 66, a
16 combination of indoor and outdoor.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: We have 51
18 Council Members, so you have a Council Member here
19 that does not have them which means there are Council
20 Members which enjoy the privileges of having several
21 pools. Chairman I'm requesting on record that we have
22 a hearing on fairness and fair share and equity
23 citywide, no pool, I think the residents and the
24 children of the 13th council district should learn
25 how to swim in a controlled environment.. [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well we do have Orchard Beach, we could pen off a piece of that and we could do swimming lessons... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: A floating pool... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and have a floating pool... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...I'm okay with that also...

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Or not floating pool but we could... you know use an area that would be, you know sectioned off and... because some people, not me but some people would argue that you probably have more parkland than any other Council Member in the city of New York so... more than my thousand plus acres in one park.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: More parkland that needs to be maintained year-round and... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well I'm looking forward... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...I'm happy to have the funding or we can divert some of the parkland to your district... [cross-talk]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well I'm looking forward to you being a strong ally as we look to increase Parks budget to have more maintenance and other things that we need. I think I am done asking questions and I want to thank you for your forthrightness and for being here today and as I always do at this point I would ask that you stick around, I don't think this hearing is going much longer because Emily Walker who is the only person signed up unless Lynn Kelly is going to join her or she's going to solo today or...

EMILY WALKER: Yes... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay...

EMILY WALKER: Is that okay?

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay, which... ever... up to... you know, we're always happy to have Miss Walker who's a great advocate for Parks. Thank you all.

[off mic dialogue]

EMILY WALKER: Hello...

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Miss Walker...

[cross-talk]

EMILY WALKER: Yes...

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
3 being... [cross-talk]

4 EMILY WALKER: Thank you... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...here.

6 EMILY WALKER: Thank you Chair

7 Grodenchik. Good afternoon, my name is Emily Walker
8 and I am the Director of Outreach and Programs at New
9 Yorkers for Parks. I would like to thank the City
10 Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for
11 inviting us to speak on the importance of our city's
12 recreation centers today. The city's 36 recreation
13 centers are a critical resource for New Yorkers,
14 particularly in low income neighborhoods where
15 obesity and asthma rates are high, and residents have
16 limited options for recreation and fitness. In
17 addition to the bricks and mortar facilities managed
18 by NYC Parks, recreation programming run through the
19 agency provides a wealth of opportunities for New
20 Yorkers of all ages and abilities to improve health
21 outcomes and build community. Although the agency may
22 no longer highlight recreation in its name, we
23 believe this component of the agency's mandate is an
24 incredibly important service provided to New Yorkers
25 and is one worth investing in. More and more public

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 health experts are acknowledging the key role that
3 our parks play in improving public health outcomes.
4 This idea has even caught on in the form of park
5 prescriptions from health care professionals to
6 encourage patients to engage in healthy outdoor
7 recreation as a means for treating physical and
8 mental health issues. In a city where we experience
9 inclement weather throughout the year, the indoor
10 recreation centers offered by our Parks Department
11 will play a critical role long term in improving
12 public health outcomes throughout New York City. In
13 2013, we testified before this committee to share our
14 concerns that the new membership pricing structure
15 would be... would preclude many of New York's lower
16 income residents from being able to take advantage of
17 our public recreation centers. The agency's response
18 at that time, to implement lower cost membership
19 levels for young adults and seniors, was a meaningful
20 way to address some of the inequities raised by the
21 increased membership rate. Additional reduced rate
22 memberships for New Yorkers with disabilities and
23 veterans have also been a positive change in reaching
24 more New Yorkers, as is the discount offered to IDNYC
25 holders. We do still have concerns that the current

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 membership rate for adults may be cost prohibitive
3 for many low-income New Yorkers however and may have
4 the unintended effect of contributing to a drop in
5 overall attendance in membership at our public
6 recreation centers. For the nearly two million New
7 Yorkers living below the poverty line, the ability to
8 pay 150 dollar or 150 dollar up front fee for a year
9 membership, or even 75 or 50 dollars for a half year
10 membership may be completely out of reach. We also
11 want to note that the requirement to prove residency
12 may be prohibitive for those in transitional housing
13 or those experiencing homelessness. A look back at
14 recent Mayor's Management Reports from the past four
15 fiscal years shows a downward trend in membership and
16 attendance at rec centers. From the recent high point
17 in FY '16, there has been a steady decline in both
18 membership and attendance and the MMR from FY '16 in
19 particular states that the increase in both
20 membership and rec center attendance for that year
21 could be attributed to the opening of the state of
22 art Ocean Breeze facility in Staten Island. We are
23 concerned that the momentum from that year may have
24 been lost and is an indicator that the city needs to
25 take a more comprehensive look at the factors that

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 impact New Yorker's ability and willingness to become
3 members and regular users of this critical open space
4 amenity. Again, recent MMRs also point out that drops
5 in attendance and membership can be in part
6 attributed to temporary closures of recreation
7 centers undergoing major capital renovations and that
8 was highlighted by the agency today in their
9 testimony. With rec centers relatively, few and far
10 between in this city of eight and a half million New
11 Yorkers, that is an understandable outcome. We
12 believe capital renovations for our rec centers, over
13 half of which were built prior to 1950, are essential
14 to the long-term usability of these spaces and we
15 encourage the city to proactively take on these
16 renovations as funding allows. We do caution,
17 however, that this work be done in a thoughtful,
18 thoughtful and pragmatic way. We'd like to use the
19 neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn as a quick
20 example of why. The... in our recently published
21 Brownsville open space index report, we found that
22 the neighborhood residents disproportionately in that
23 community suffer from poor health outcomes and that
24 young residents in particular are in need of safe
25 spaces to engage in healthy recreation and activity.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 We view our parks and rec centers as key to
3 improvi9ng such outcomes, but in Brownsville two of
4 these critical recreation resources are about to be
5 temporarily unavailable for a period of time as both
6 the Brownsville Recreation Center and Betsy Head Park
7 are slated for major capital renovations. Temporarily
8 losing these two critical park amenities will mean
9 that the residents and youth of Brownsville will have
10 even fewer opportunities for free, safe or low or no
11 cost programming that is vitally needed and we
12 believe it's when these assets are not available that
13 their public benefit is most magnified. Finally, we
14 want to note that in order for our recreation centers
15 to be a realistic option for active recreation, they
16 must be kept clean and in a good state of repair. The
17 FY '19 MMR found that 83 percent of city recreation
18 centers rated acceptable for overall condition and
19 while this was a slight increase over the FY '18
20 findings, it still falls short of the city's stated
21 goal of 85 percent of centers being rated acceptable.
22 NY4P believes that our public parks and recreation
23 centers must be clean and well maintained to convey
24 maximum public benefit and we encourage the
25 administration and the council to ensure that

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 critical maintenance and operations resources are
3 being allocated in the expense budget for parks to
4 ensure that our centers are being kept to the highest
5 standard of condition possible. The ability for New
6 Yorkers to take advantage of our public recreation
7 centers and programming is an equity issue that we
8 believe warrant... that we believe warrants closer
9 attention and we hope today's hearing is one way to
10 help address that issue. Thank you very much for the
11 opportunity to speak and I welcome any questions you
12 may have.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I thank you for
14 your testimony and as always its, its good to see the
15 team from New Yorkers for Parks. I have been to Betsy
16 Head which is one of the best playgrounds in the city
17 of New York... [cross-talk]

18 EMILY WALKER: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and I know that
20 it is also an anchor park... [cross-talk]

21 EMILY WALKER: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and will be
23 receiving along with four other parks and including
24 Astoria Park, which I was thinking of earlier but I,
25 I, I don't know that the whole park is going to close

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 because I think that this.. the section of Betsy Head
3 which is going to receive upgrades is on the other
4 side away from the absolutely stunning playground
5 that is there but... [cross-talk]

6 EMILY WALKER: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ...and if you
8 haven't been to see it just... you know I don't know
9 how often you, you get out to Central Brooklyn but
10 its spectacular, it's just really one of my favorite
11 playgrounds in the city, I haven't seen them all but
12 the work that was done there and Commissioner Mara
13 (?) was like a, a kid in the candy shop showing me
14 it, it's just spectacular, it even has a sandbox
15 which is not usual for a New York City park these
16 days so really just spectacular. I don't have
17 anything else for you, I don't know if any of the
18 other members... Mr. Costa... we have been joined by
19 Justin Brannan of Southern Brooklyn and also Jimmy
20 Van Bramer who had another big hearing today to join
21 us as well and I appreciate your testimony here and
22 we will certainly put that into the record... [cross-
23 talk]

24 EMILY WALKER: Thank you Council Member.
25

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And this is the
3 last call. Alright, in that case I want to thank you
4 all for being here today. We will be having hearings
5 of course coming up in January and February before we
6 get to the preliminary hearing on the Mayor's budget,
7 right now I am expecting to hold with Councilman
8 Costa Constantinides and the Committee on
9 Environmental Protection, the hearing Resiliency in
10 Lower Manhattan parks, there has been a plan put
11 forward by the administration for a 1.45 billion
12 dollars in resiliencies to be woven into our park
13 system and we understand in many cases our parks are
14 on the front lines as we try to co-exist with mother
15 nature but we have not received.. I think that we
16 would all agree that an expenditure of that magnitude
17 warrants a full hearing before this committee, it
18 would certainly effect east Riverpark, John V.
19 Lindsay Park and I think other parks in the community
20 and so we're going to hear that and I'm also hoping
21 to hold a February hearing with the Women's Committee
22 on the lack of statues for women, honoring women in
23 New York City parks, there are only five. My math
24 tells me that New York City is almost 400 years old
25 so we're doing about one statue for a woman every 78

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

2 years or so, I think we can certainly do better, we
3 have announced that there will be a statue for the
4 late, great Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm outside
5 Prospect Park in Brooklyn but I know that we can do
6 better, we'll be looking at that I hope in the month
7 of February and with that I want to take this
8 opportunity on behalf of myself, all the staff
9 members here, our Counsel Kris Sartori, Patrick
10 Mulvihill, my counsel Steve Behar, Monika, who's name
11 I will get sooner or later, her last name, our new
12 budget person, my budget person Daniella Eras, Steve
13 Behar my Counsel and my other colleagues that are
14 still here to wish everybody a, a very, very Merry
15 Christmas and a happy Kwanzaa, I hope you had a good
16 Hanukkah and a happy new year and lets hope that 2019
17 is the best year ever for our New York City Parks and
18 with that I close this hearing at 2:21.

19 [gavel]

20

21

22

23

24

25

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

December 31, 2018