

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 1
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID
WASTE MANAGEMENT

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March 14, 2024
Start: 1:06 p.m.
Recess: 4:51 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shaun Abreu, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Chris Banks
David M. Carr
James F. Gennaro
Julie Menin
Sandy Nurse
Vickie Paladino
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Sandra Ung
Inna Vernikov
Kalman Yeger
Susan Zhuang

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Christopher Marte
Gale A. Brewer
Carlina Rivera

A P P E A R A N C E S

Jessica Tisch, Commissioner at New York City
Department of Sanitation

Javier Lojan, First Deputy Commissioner at New
York City Department of Sanitation

Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner at New
York City Department of Sanitation

Ryan Merola, Deputy Commissioner at New York
City Department of Sanitation

Nando Rodriguez, Senior Manager of the
Environmental Program at the Brotherhood of
Sister Sol

Corey Wilkins, GrowNYC Workers Collective

Lena Frey, Grown NYC Workers (RWDSU Member)

Phyllis Yip, GrowNYC Workers Collective (RWDSU)

Arif Sunmonu, Government Affairs Lead at GrowNYC

Nathalie Huang, GrowNYC Worker's Collective
(RWDSU)

Sitra Bowman, GrowNYC Workers Collective (RWDSU)
(Zero Waste Schools/Compost)

Christine Datz Romero, LES Ecology Center

Eric Goldstein, Natural Resources Defense
Council

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

Justin Green, Executive Director at Big Reuse

Anneliese Zausner-Mannes, Big Reuse

Justin Wood, Director of Policy at New York
Lawyers for the Public Interest

Eric Arnum, Forest Hills Green Team

Kate Wimsatt, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools

Erik Menjivar, GrowNYC Workers Collective

Lacey Tauber, Brooklyn Borough President

Matthew Civello, SWABs

Marisa de Dominicis on behalf of Lina Lajqi, New
York Harbor School student

Audrey Jenkins on behalf of Mia Velez, New York
Harbor School student

Anita Chan, self

Samantha MacBride, PhD, self

Robin Nagle, self

Andrea Lieske, self

Gil Lopez, self

Joyce Bialik

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

Jane Selden

Rachana Shah

Anna Sacks

Lonnie J. Portis, WE ACT for Environmental
Justice

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sound check for the
3 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.
4 Today's date is March 14, 2024, being recorded by
5 Danny Huang in the Committee Room.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon and
7 welcome to the New York City Council hearing on
8 Sanitation and Waste Management.

9 At this time, we ask that you silence all
10 electronic devices.

11 At no time is anyone to approach the
12 dais, no time.

13 If you have any questions during the
14 hearing, please see the Sergeant-at-Arms.

15 Chair, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [GAVEL] Good afternoon
17 and welcome to the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget
18 hearing for the Committee on Sanitation and Solid
19 Waste Management. My name is Shaun Abreu, and I am
20 the Chair of the Sanitation Committee.

21 This afternoon, we will discuss the
22 Department's 1.9 billion Fiscal 2025 budget as
23 presented in the Preliminary Financial Plan and the
24 Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for DSNY for
25 Fiscal 2024 to 2028, which totals 1.8 billion.

2 I would like to begin by thanking the
3 members of the Sanitation Department for their hard
4 work over the past year. The frontline responses of
5 Sanitation workers have been on full display
6 throughout the year. The Sanitation Department's
7 members are known as New York's strongest for a
8 reason. There's no doubt about that. There's also no
9 doubt that budget cuts to the Department of
10 Sanitation have done real harm to the Department's
11 ability to fulfill its mission. If you walk around
12 Upper Manhattan, you're going to see a lot of trash,
13 litter on blocks where there are no litter baskets,
14 mountains of trash bags, which is why the city's
15 pursuing containerization of which I'm a strong
16 supporter, trash dumped in front of homes and
17 businesses, a lot more needs there in terms of
18 enforcement. It's not just the trash is where it
19 shouldn't be. We have too much trash and, in
20 particular, we have trash bags filled with organic
21 waste that should be in a composter. This is a big
22 part of our rat problem, and it's an even bigger
23 problem after we ship our trash off to landfills to
24 rot and emit harmful greenhouse gases. For another
25 two months, we have a workforce equipped to support

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2 New Yorkers to learn about composting, to collect and
3 process compostable waste, and to distribute that
4 compost to our street trees and parks. I'm talking,
5 of course, about our Community composting program,
6 which many of us have come to depend on. The
7 organizations participating in this program offer
8 good green jobs, and those workers have been our go
9 to source of information about how to compost and
10 manage our trash appropriately, and our thanks to
11 them for years of this work is to hand them a pink
12 slip. It's not right. The Sanitation Department's
13 Fiscal 2025 budget totals 1.9 billion with 9,459
14 full-time positions. The Fiscal 2025 budget as
15 presented in the Preliminary Financial Plan is 19.6
16 million less than the Fiscal 2024 budget at adoption.
17 Budget actions in the Preliminary Plan increased
18 DSNY's budget by 127.5 million in Fiscal 2024 and
19 80.7 million in Fiscal 2025 when compared to the
20 November Plan. The Department had two new needs for
21 Fiscal 2024 totaling 78 million for higher than
22 projected PS and OTPS spending across multiple
23 program areas. The Sanitation Department's Fiscal
24 2024 to 2028 Capital Commitment Plan totals 1.8
25 billion and supports 198 distinct capital projects.

2 The Committee has held oversight hearings
3 on various topics over the past year about the City's
4 rat mitigation and public health and the ongoing
5 challenges with street cleanliness in New York City,
6 bolstering the City's ability to be prepared and
7 clean our streets. The Committee would like to
8 revisit these items and others, including community
9 composting, the November Plan PEGs that were not
10 restored, particularly elimination of Community
11 composting, containerization and how the costs will
12 be determined for this program, the January PEGs, and
13 the restorations from January as well we will
14 revisit, and the Preliminary Mayor's Management
15 Report indicators. I would also like to discuss
16 decreasing headcount and the increasing reliance on
17 overtime to alleviate these decreases.

18 It is the Council's responsibility to
19 ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent.
20 and accountable to New Yorkers. Hence, as the Chair
21 of this Committee, I will continue to push for
22 accountability and accuracy and ensure that the
23 budget reflects the needs and interests of the City.
24 It is essential that the budget that we adopt this
25 year is transparent, accountable, and reflective of

2 the priorities and interests of the Council and the
3 people we represent. This hearing is a vital part of
4 this process, and I expect that DSNY will be
5 responsive to those questions and concerns of Council
6 Members. I look forward to an active engagement with
7 the Administration over the next few months to ensure
8 that Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget meets the goals the
9 Council has set out.

10 I would like to thank our Committee Staff
11 for their hard work, Financial Analyst Tanveer Singh,
12 Unit Head Aliya Ali, Committee Counsel Morganne
13 Barrett and Ricky Chawla, messed that up, and my
14 Deputy Chief-of-Staff, Jalissa Quigley. I'd also like
15 to welcome and thank Commissioner Tisch, our
16 Sanitation workers and the Department's civilian
17 staff for the work that they do. I am looking forward
18 to hearing from you, Commissioner, and the Committee
19 Counsel will now swear you in.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Good
21 afternoon. Thank you. I'm Morganne Barrett, counsel
22 to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
23 Management. Our first witnesses will be from the
24 Department of Sanitation, Commissioner Jessica Tisch,
25 First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lohan, Deputy

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2 Commissioner Joseph Antonelli, and Deputy

3 Commissioner Ryan Merola. Please raise your right

4 hands.

5 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
6 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
7 Committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member
8 questions?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I do.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOHAN: I do.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: I do.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you. You
14 may begin when ready.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good morning, Chair
16 Abreu and Members of the City Council Committee on
17 Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Jessica
18 Tisch, Commissioner of the New York City Department
19 of Sanitation. I am joined today by First Deputy
20 Commissioner Javier Lojan; Deputy Commissioner for
21 Management and Budget Joseph Antonelli; and Deputy
22 Commissioner for External Affairs Ryan Merola. It is
23 my honor to be here today to bring you the latest
24 news from the front lines of the Trash Revolution.

25

2 Just under one year ago, we set out to do
3 what other cities around the world have done over the
4 last several decades, to get the trash bags off the
5 curb and into secure rodent-resistant containers once
6 and for all. In April 2023, we changed the set-out
7 times for trash, drastically limiting the number of
8 hours the bags can sit on the streets, and heavily
9 incentivizing the use of containers. At the same
10 time, we made significant changes to our operations,
11 to get more of the trash earlier, and now, thanks to
12 New York's Strongest, much of the trash is collected
13 within four hours or less of being set out. In
14 August, we began a phased approach to the
15 containerization of all commercial trash and, just
16 two weeks ago, bin requirements came to cover all
17 200,000 businesses in the city, and our residential
18 containerization plans are well underway. Last week,
19 we released an RFP to procure European-style
20 stationary on-street containers for use by larger
21 residential buildings to be serviced by an all-new
22 automated side-loading truck. This new truck,
23 compliant with U.S. regulatory system and suitable
24 for use in New York's dense urban streetscape and
25 developed four years faster than industry experts

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2 thought possible, is quicker and cleaner than manual
3 collection of loose bags and far safer for our
4 Sanitation workers. A full half of Sanitation worker
5 line-of-duty injuries are sprains and strains related
6 to the manual collection of trash bags. The Strongest
7 deserve a solution that protects their bodies just as
8 much as every New Yorker deserves a solution that
9 cleans their streets. Uniformed Sanitation Workers
10 Association Local 831 has been a partner every step
11 of the way in the development and implementation of
12 this new strategy and equipment, and I want to thank
13 Harry Nespoli and union leadership for their
14 thoughtfulness and support. We are building
15 approximately a dozen of these trucks now for use in
16 the first fully containerized district in
17 spring/summer of 2025 right in your backyard, Mr.
18 Chair. To containerize all of Manhattan Community
19 Board 9, we will use the following framework,
20 developed through a detailed volumetric analysis:
21 Buildings with 31 or more residential units will be
22 the first in the United States to use European-style
23 stationary on-street containers serviced by the
24 automated side-loading truck. Unlike in many global
25 cities and because of our unique density, the

2 stationary on-street containers will not be shared
3 between buildings, but rather assigned to a specific
4 building for use only by residents of that building;
5 buildings with one to nine residential units will be
6 required to put their trash in individual wheelie
7 bins starting this fall, serviced by the traditional
8 rear-loading Sanitation truck, some of which will be
9 equipped with mechanical tippers and buildings with
10 10-30 residential units will be given a choice
11 between the two containerization models. The
12 requirement for lower-density buildings with one to
13 nine residential units will not be confined to this
14 first district. That requirement will cover all
15 buildings of that size citywide this fall,
16 approximately 95 percent of New York City residential
17 buildings. If a building already has bins, they may
18 continue to use them for approximately two more
19 years. However, official NYC bins will be available
20 for purchase and will be the cheapest bin of this
21 quality available. In 2026, we will require everyone
22 to transition over to the official bin, but anyone
23 will be able to purchase it well before the outset of
24 the mandate if they prefer to containerize their
25 trash only once. I can today announce that we have

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2 selected a vendor to produce and sell these bins and
3 are in the process of finalizing the contract. This
4 work is already getting results. In the portion of
5 2023 after the Trash Revolution began in earnest in
6 April, calls to 3-1-1 regarding rat sightings saw
7 their largest year-over-year decrease since 2010 and,
8 in the 10 blocks where residential containerization
9 is being piloted, that same metric declined by an
10 incredible 68 percent between when the pilot began
11 and the end of the year compared to the same period
12 in 2022. Bins work, and I am truly convinced that
13 once we containerize the trash, people will look back
14 at the old way of doing things, at keeping 44 million
15 pounds of trash on our curbs each day, and think how
16 did we live that way. We are also getting all of the
17 food and yard waste, the kind that attracts rats, out
18 of the trash entirely, implementing universal
19 curbside composting service that works for all New
20 Yorkers just as Mayor Adams committed to do. Simply
21 place your materials out on recycling day, your
22 Sanitation workers will collect it from your home,
23 and we'll ensure it's put to good use. In Fiscal Year
24 2023, DSNY diverted a record 211 million pounds of
25 compostable material from landfill, an incredible

2 increase from just over 150 million pounds the year
3 before, and that's with only one part of our ongoing
4 citywide roll-out. These kinds of programs not only
5 improve the customer experience, they are more
6 efficient than smaller programs because of economies
7 of scale. We are now collecting more compostable
8 material with fewer truck routes than in old
9 programs. The ease-of-use principle holds true for
10 our network of nearly 400 Smart Composting Bins
11 across the five boroughs where residents drop off
12 their compostable material 24/7 with an easy-to-use
13 smartphone app. These bins are serviced six days per
14 week and have proven to be very popular. By next
15 week, we will also be collecting compostable material
16 from every DOE school, giving the next generation of
17 composters familiarity with the ease and importance
18 of this program. Material collected through each of
19 these initiatives, curbside residential collection,
20 smart bins, and schools, is put to beneficial use,
21 either through composting or through anaerobic
22 digestion. The Department produces tens of millions
23 of pounds of finished compost every year at the
24 Staten Island Compost Facility where, in January,
25 Mayor Adams cut the ribbon on a major expansion that

2 brought permitted capacity to 165 million pounds of
3 compostable material a year and added new technology
4 on site, creating finished compost in weeks rather
5 than months. While the City has sufficient permitted
6 and contracted capacity to process compostable
7 material from a citywide program, we are currently
8 engaged in a procurement to distribute that capacity
9 more evenly across the region. Beneficial use and
10 waste equity are both key to our planning.

11 DSNY would also like to raise the issue
12 of commercial organics separation. Local Law 146 of
13 2013 requires certain commercial establishments to
14 separate their compostable material, but this law is
15 now substantially out of date. The Commercial Waste
16 Zone system will improve commercial diversion, but we
17 also urge the Council to consider an update to this
18 law that would allow DSNY to require source
19 separation at all commercial establishments in line
20 with our residential diversion. Reform of commercial
21 organics and the wraparound citywide residential
22 services will clean our streets and our air.

23 But cleanliness is a shared
24 responsibility, and a Department of 10,000 people
25 cannot keep the city clean without 8.8 million New

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2 Yorkers doing their part. While DSNY will never
3 enforce for its own sake, we are not afraid to do
4 what needs to be done to get the streets clean. Our
5 enforcement of general cleanliness violations,
6 improper set-out, dirty area, failure to clean 18
7 inches into the street, the kinds of things you all
8 see each day, and that your constituents are
9 concerned about, have increased significantly. At the
10 same time, as part of the Adams Administration's
11 Small Business Forward initiative, DSNY has proposed
12 to lower or eliminate some fines, particularly
13 administrative requirements for businesses to post
14 signage and is leading with warnings whenever
15 possible. That said, there are several bills before
16 this Council that will empower DSNY to provide more
17 meaningful enforcement of these most basic rules
18 around cleanliness. Intro. 97 sponsored by Council
19 Member Ung, Intro. 11 sponsored by Council Member
20 Bottcher, and Intro. 57 sponsored by Council Member
21 Ossé will allow this Department to hold the worst
22 offenders against cleanliness accountable on behalf
23 of your constituents, and we strongly support their
24 passage.

25

2 We continue to pioneer new strategies to
3 address New Yorkers' concerns faster and more
4 efficiently, our cameras to capture illegal dumpers
5 and our interagency task force with the NYPD to
6 remove abandoned vehicles, to give just two examples.
7 Since last year's budget hearing, DSNY has also
8 become the home of the New York City Office of Street
9 Vendor Enforcement. We do not enforce on Parks
10 property or certain areas like the Brooklyn Bridge,
11 but DSNY has posted or written thousands of warnings
12 focused on cleanliness, failure to remove trash,
13 grease poured down drains, and has seen substantial
14 compliance by street vendors, enforcing only when
15 compliance is not forthcoming. We are also bringing
16 safety, sustainability, and cleanliness to the
17 commercial sector through implementation of the
18 Commercial Waste Zone program described in Local Law
19 199 of 2019, announcing the contract awards in
20 January. This law was designed to reform the
21 commercial waste hauling system by establishing new
22 safety standards for workers in the commercial
23 carting industry, improving service for businesses,
24 increasing diversion rates, and reducing vehicle
25 miles traveled as well as harmful emissions from

2 waste-hauling vehicles. The first of New York City's
3 20 non-exclusive Commercial Waste Zones will come
4 online in the second half of this year in Corona,
5 Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. This program adds
6 legal safeguards to the commercial carting industry
7 that will protect workers, business owners, and our
8 environment. Making good on a promise from when this
9 program was created, businesses will pay a citywide
10 average of 32 percent less for recycling and 18
11 percent less for the collection of compostable
12 material than they do for the collection of trash.
13 Businesses will have a meaningful financial incentive
14 to separate their waste properly.

15 Of course, even as we talk about the
16 Trash Revolution and the strategic initiatives that
17 are guiding the future of this Department, we have
18 also continued to work to modernize the core DSNY
19 functions New Yorkers have come to expect, including
20 a swift, equitable response to snow. Thanks to
21 historic investments in the Department, the days of
22 primary, secondary, and tertiary streets are long
23 gone. Every street is on a route, and every route can
24 be dispatched at once. Our strong response to this
25 winter's storms involved the first deployments of our

2 new BladeRunner 2.0 tech platform, which allows the
3 Department to track every plow and every salt
4 spreader, pivoting resources in real time and
5 delivering for every part of the City, but no
6 technology, no matter how innovative, will ever be a
7 replacement for the real heroes of New York City
8 winters, the Sanitation workers. Thousands of
9 Sanitation workers worked 12-hour shifts for weeks to
10 get the job done. Incredibly, it almost seems like
11 they catch the snow before it falls.

12 This tidal wave of change occurring at
13 DSNY is coming amid an extremely challenging Fiscal
14 climate. While Mayor Adams was able to announce that
15 thanks to sound management, there will not be a need
16 for an April round of PEGs, DSNY did find savings in
17 order to meet this crisis. We were gratified and
18 relieved that litter basket funding has been
19 restored, and we continue to replace the old mesh
20 baskets, which give the rats direct access to the
21 trash, with the new litter basket of the future,
22 which is larger, easier to service, and harder to
23 misuse. This is an example of how our strategic
24 initiatives are able to continue through this
25 difficult time. Another is the ongoing roll-out of

2 the largest, easiest curbside composting program
3 ever, despite the necessary elimination of City
4 funding for Community composting, although I was glad
5 to hear that private philanthropy has stepped in to
6 keep this program running. Our core commitments to
7 cleanliness, timely collection, and snow removal are
8 unwavering.

9 The Preliminary Budget includes 1.998
10 billion in expense funds in Fiscal Year 2024 and 1.88
11 billion in Fiscal Year 2025, reflecting increases of
12 96.7 million and 20.7 million respectively from the
13 budget adopted last June. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget
14 includes 1.13 billion for personal services to
15 support a total budgeted headcount of 9,459 full-time
16 positions, including 7,832 uniformed positions and
17 1,627 civilian positions, and 756.5 million for
18 other-than-personal services, or OTPS. DSNY's Fiscal
19 Year 2025 Preliminary Budget includes 3.36 billion in
20 capital funding in the 10-year plan, 1.18 billion of
21 which is for garages and facilities, 2.1 billion for
22 equipment, 64.9 million for IT, and 49.2 million for
23 solid waste management infrastructure. The Capital
24 Budget includes funding for several major facilities
25 projects, including 487 million in funding for the

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2 construction of a new garage for Bronx Districts 9,
3 10, and 11, with demolition; 283 million in
4 additional funding for the construction of a new
5 garage for Queens District 1, which is slated to
6 begin next year; upgrades to the facility that serves
7 as the home for the Bronx District 12 Garage, which
8 has an overall budget of 55.5 million and will begin
9 construction next year; and the 20 million finishing
10 touches of the 213-million-dollar buildout for the
11 brand-new home for Staten Island District 3, which is
12 slated to be completed next Spring.

13 Despite deep fiscal challenges, 10,000
14 members of service of the New York City Department of
15 Sanitation are working hard every day to provide New
16 Yorkers with a higher level of service than ever
17 before, to tackle problems the solutions to which
18 have eluded the City for decades, and to run with the
19 opportunities Mayor Adams has given us. It is an
20 honor to lead the Strongest in these efforts. Thank
21 you for the opportunity to testify today about the
22 work underway on our streets, and my staff and I look
23 forward to answering your questions. That was the
24 abbreviated version of my testimony. You have longer
25 testimony submitted.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much,
3 Commissioner, for your testimony.

4 I would like to recognize some of my
5 colleagues who are here. Council Members Marte,
6 Zhuang, Carr, Yeger, Vernikov, and Restler, and Julie
7 Menin on Zoom as well as Council Member Gennaro.

8 I'm going to go right into it,
9 Commissioner. Do you support bringing back Community
10 composting?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The Community
12 composting program has been an incredibly successful
13 program in New York City, and the Department has been
14 very clear that we are where we are today, i.e., we
15 are rolling out for the first time ever universal
16 curbside collection service to all 3.5 million
17 residences in New York City because of the work of
18 the community composters over decades. That cut was
19 an incredibly painful cut for me to make. It was a 3-
20 million-dollar cut out of a total cut for the
21 Department of 60 million, and so that's my answer to
22 the question. It was extremely painful. Of course, I
23 would love to see the community composters out there,
24 everyone loves to see them, but it was a necessary
25 cut at the time it was made given the fiscal

2 circumstances that the Mayor and the Budget Director
3 described, and my hope is that we will see better
4 fiscal times and we will be able to support community
5 composting.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. It's
7 certainly my hope. Actually, I think I'm past hope. I
8 think I want certainty at this point. It seems like
9 there was 3 billion dollars that was not recognized
10 by the Administration and that we are in a different
11 fiscal climate, and it is my hope that OMB really
12 gives our community composters a certainty that they
13 will have these resources between now and really into
14 the permanent future because we at the Council see it
15 as this is a natural integral role for community
16 composting as part of the DSNY operations. Just for
17 the sake of if we were to get to the position where
18 there would be an agreement on community composting,
19 one question that I have is if we were to bring it
20 back, and this is speculative because we have to make
21 sure that we get that, there's going to be a gap
22 where a lot of GrowNYC workers, for instance, if it
23 is done, how fast will there be a new RFP issued for
24 the new community composters and when would those
25 decisions be made?

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: If funding is
3 restored as part of the adopted budget or whatever
4 budget, we strategically did not end the contracts
5 with the community composters, meaning when we took
6 this cut, we could have said, oh, the funding is
7 gone, contract terminated, over, and then we would
8 have had to go through this long, very painful RFP
9 process if the funding was ever restored and we would
10 have had to take back a lot of the equipment that
11 contract funded. Because we did not terminate the
12 contracts, we did not have to take back the
13 equipment, the community composters still have access
14 to and I believe use that equipment day to day, and
15 it makes bringing community composting back online
16 much easier.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So you can extend it?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, the contracts are
19 still in place. There are multiple contracts. There
20 is one contract that expires on June 30th. That does
21 not have any more renewals in it so I...

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Which is that one?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Can't renew it. It's
24 the GrowNYC contract.

25 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Right.

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And so if funding was
3 restored, we'd have to think about how to do another
4 RFP for that one in particular and chart a course for
5 how to proceed.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So that's the one,
7 GrownYC is the one I'm concerned about because their
8 contract is expiring at the end of June.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: June 30th, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: June 30th, and that
11 gap, assuming the funding is restored, which we're
12 going to fight to make sure that happens, that gap is
13 something that that really concerns me, but do you
14 have an estimate on when the RFP would be issued
15 thereafter and how fast those are, and I know that
16 RFPs are competitively bid but to what extent do you
17 know you have a decision, when would decision be made
18 on who would get selected?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So what I would say
20 is I have worked in city government for 17 years now,
21 I think, and a lot of my career has been spent with
22 the administrative processes of government, which
23 includes contracting, and what would happen is if
24 funding is restored, we would put our efforts to
25 getting an RFP out as soon as possible so that there

2 wouldn't be a long gap, but contracting does take
3 time in New York City, not because we want it to, but
4 because we follow the PPB rules so I can't give you
5 right now a specific day and time, but I can tell you
6 if funding is restored for this program, I will put
7 my energy and my efforts and my brain to having it
8 done as expeditiously as possible.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you and, if
10 funding is restored, if you can get us that timeline
11 as soon as you can, we would be very grateful for
12 that information because our GrowNYC workers, they
13 need that clarity. This is their day to day, right?
14 We need to save our green jobs, and I know that the
15 Mayor cares a lot about green jobs. I see this as a
16 natural extension of that.

17 First of all, I'd also like to recognize
18 other Colleagues that are here. I have Gale Brewer
19 here and Rivera also was here just momentarily.

20 The November Plan included PEGS, which
21 eliminate educational programs and technical at home
22 assistance related to community composting. This
23 program was a partnership between DSNY and seven
24 botanical gardens and non-profits in the Five
25 Boroughs. The combined saving from this PEG is 5.1

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2 million in FY24, 5 million in FY25, and 3.5 million
3 in FY26 and the outyears. You may have answered part
4 of this, perhaps not. Has funding for community
5 composting been completely eliminated?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: If so, what does the
8 Department have as an alternative to working with
9 these non-profits?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: If you're speaking
11 specifically about the outreach component, we do have
12 in-house outreach team of five full-time staff as
13 well as a technical assistance and training unit of
14 seven full-time staff, and we stand ready to provide
15 assistance to anyone when it comes to the largest,
16 easiest to use curbside composting program ever.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, I'll get to the
18 outreach in the November PEG..

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Which is pretty
21 significant and I believe limits your ability to
22 fulfill the great mission you've set out for this for
23 your Department so we'll get to that.

24 Has DSNY conducted a cost/benefit
25 analysis comparing the efficiency and effectiveness

2 of the curbside organics program to the community
3 composting program, taking into effect such as
4 factors such as participation rates, waste diversion
5 rates, and overall community impact.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, we haven't
7 conducted a cost/benefit analysis, but I will say
8 that the early indications from the various programs
9 that we started under the Adams' Administration are
10 very good. We have taken a layered approach to
11 composting in New York City. We have launched the
12 universal curbside composting service, which is going
13 to reach every resident in New York City this fall.
14 As I mentioned in my testimony, next week, we will
15 have rolled out composting at every public school in
16 New York City. Think about that. That is training the
17 New Yorkers of the future on composting on how to do
18 it and why we do it so that it just becomes second
19 nature to them so that when they're adults, they
20 don't have to learn about it for the first time as
21 many people are doing now, and we've also put out
22 these very popular orange smart bins, 400 in every
23 borough of this city that are available 24/7 and in
24 the Mayor's Management Report for the last Fiscal
25 Year, we saw a record diversion of organic material.

2 We saw I think it was like 211 million pounds
3 compared to 150 million pounds the year prior, and
4 that was just with three months of the Queens
5 curbside composting program included. That didn't
6 include anything from Brooklyn in that time period,
7 and it didn't include the rest of the city.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would you say that the
9 211 million would be the same number pre-pandemic
10 when or is that number just...

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, this is our
12 highest diversion number ever in the Department, and
13 it makes sense because we finally have citywide
14 programs that actually work and are thoughtful. The
15 kids at the schools, I think, is singlehandedly far
16 and away the best investment that we can make in New
17 York City's composting future. The curbside program,
18 making it easy, regular service on your recycling
19 day. If you make it easy for New Yorkers to use,
20 they'll do it. That's what we saw with the Queen's
21 program, and that's what we're rolling out citywide,
22 and then the smart bins available to people who don't
23 want to hold on to the material for a week. They can
24 deposit it anytime they want. I think we finally in

2 New York City have the right menu of options for New
3 Yorkers to make composting robust and mainstream.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And I think that menu
5 of option must include community composting. It's
6 interesting that Director Jacques calls composting
7 inefficient and, yet, he hasn't done a cost/benefit
8 analysis comparing the efficiency and effectiveness
9 of the curbside organics program to the community
10 composting program, right? So that brings me concern
11 when you, not you, but when the Director brings this
12 up so what we do know on the ground is that
13 composting is in fact very efficient.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, Chair, keep in
15 mind, this Administration has made truly historic
16 investments in composting. I don't want that to get
17 lost here. The curbside composting program that's
18 going to touch every resident in the city come this
19 fall is budgeted over 34 million a year. That's on
20 top of the school service, which is another 5 million
21 a year. That's on top of the 400 smart bins we have.
22 We're spending in New York City over 40 million
23 dollars a year on composting and, not only are we
24 spending the money, because it's one thing to spend
25 it and burn it, but we are doing the right things in

2 cost effective and efficient ways to make composting
3 go mainstream in New York City, and what I would like
4 to see working with this Council is the ability to
5 expand the diversion rules to businesses in much the
6 same way that this Committee and this Council has
7 done for residences.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm very much open to
9 exploring that. I think I brought it up at the last
10 hearing something that definitely is of interest to
11 me, but we'll have to speak to our Colleagues about
12 that.

13 When you say that compost is going to
14 touch everyone, I don't think that's true if we don't
15 have community composters talking to people about why
16 composting is important in the first place. You talk
17 about bringing composting to schools. That's amazing,
18 but the GrowNYC program at schools was cut so how are
19 we going to teach our kids and our faculty and
20 custodians and our teachers about community
21 composting? We can have all the infrastructure in the
22 world, but they will not be serviced as amazing Gale
23 Brewer said today they will not be serviced if we do
24 not have this investment education in the civic
25 engagement and on top of the fact that your outreach

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2 programs were cut quite significantly and we'll get
3 into that in a bit. What financial support, if any,
4 will be provided to botanical gardens and nonprofits
5 that have relied on funding from community composting
6 programs, and does DSNY plan to ensure the continuity
7 of their composting initiatives despite the budget
8 cuts?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As of this budget, we
10 are not budgeted to provide financial support to
11 those organizations.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I understand that
13 you're doing your job, Commissioner. That brings us
14 concern, and we hope that we get commitments very
15 soon on community composting.

16 I'm going to pause for a second and have
17 one of my Colleagues ask questions. Council Member
18 Carr, go first.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chair.
20 Commissioner, always great to see you.

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good to see you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I just want to start
23 by thanking you and your team, those who were here as
24 well as in the borough operations crew, Chief

25

2 Hancock, and everyone. They're just phenomenal
3 partners with my office and very responsive.

4 I want to talk to you about curbside
5 waste. This is a program that, as you know, was
6 started, was supposed to be a pilot on Staten Island
7 and then eventually was supposed to be rolled out
8 citywide to those parts of the city that are not
9 already served by the e-cycle program. It's a program
10 that Staten Islanders have relied upon. It helps keep
11 electronic waste out of environmentally sensitive
12 areas where they had been dumped previously, and it's
13 a program that was supposed to be in the budget last
14 Fiscal Year but, unfortunately, because of the
15 difficulties we've been having financially, it is not
16 a program that's currently available to Staten
17 Islanders as it's supposed to be, and I'm having a
18 hard time answering Staten Islanders who are trying
19 to figure out why the city can afford to stand up a
20 curbside composting program but can't afford to
21 maintain a program like curbside e-waste, which is
22 less than 0.1 percent of the Sanitation budget so, if
23 you could just tell me if we were going to be able to
24 commit to restoring this program either this Fiscal
25 Year or in the new Fiscal Year coming up.

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As I mentioned in the
3 Chair's line of questioning, the budget cuts we took
4 were deep and many of them service-impacting. It was
5 a 5 percent cut to an agency the vast majority of our
6 costs are fixed, right? We have a long-term waste-
7 export contracts, can't really go back in and change
8 them. We can't cut collection service and, so what
9 happens when you have 5 percent cuts or 60-million-
10 dollar a year cut, which is what this ended up being
11 for the Department of Sanitation, is you have to make
12 incredibly painful choices and, unfortunately, the
13 community composting and your beloved e-waste
14 program, which is more than beloved, is a very
15 important program. As you mentioned, Staten Island
16 residents don't have access to e-cycle, and so it was
17 a very important option for them. Now the answer for
18 them is (INAUDIBLE) the special waste disposal sites,
19 and those aren't the most convenient of options. I
20 know and I acknowledge that, but we were forced to
21 make incredibly painful cuts.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I understand that,
23 but given that, as the Chair referenced earlier, the
24 financial forecasts improved from the November Plan,
25 why this wasn't something that could be folded back

2 into the Sanitation Department budget, particularly
3 because it ends up costing the City more in terms of
4 having to do cleanups. I fund the community cleanup
5 program through our cleanup initiative. We're
6 constantly taking electronic waste, among other
7 things, out of parks and dark, unlit areas where
8 people think they can get away with dumping. Why they
9 can't drive to Muldoon Avenue with those folks and
10 drop them off, I don't know, but the point is that a
11 lot of folks, these items are just sitting collecting
12 dust in their homes.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, and if
14 budgetary circumstances allow and things are looking
15 different when the adopted budget is finalized, it
16 would of course be wonderful to see a restoration of
17 the e-waste program.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I appreciate the
19 answer to that, and I hope to work with you and my
20 Colleagues on the Committee to see this program
21 restored for FY25.

22 In addition to that, we have the
23 composting site down in Travis, and I raised at the
24 last hearing the issue of some nuisance mitigation
25 for some of the neighborhood residents nearby in

2 Travis as composting expands, right, I think in the
3 fall is when Staten Island composting curbside
4 supposed to start, what we could do to mitigate any
5 kind of odors or smells that neighborhood residents
6 experience on a recurring basis.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Council Member, you
8 were with us. You joined myself and the Mayor at the
9 ribbon-cutting for the expansion of the Staten Island
10 compost facility, and you saw the new technology that
11 we're using there where the piles will be covered,
12 and so we believe that is actually going to have very
13 positive benefits for odor issues that you had
14 previously brought to us.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay, I appreciate
16 that. Listen, I think that composting is very
17 important. I've said in the past because the Fresh
18 Kills landfill was an environmental disaster of
19 unmitigated proportions, and we need to do all we can
20 to prevent future Fresh Kills from being necessary
21 and remove them from our landfilling waste stream so
22 thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
24 Member.

2 Can you, Commissioner, please provide an
3 itemized list of costs related to the brown smart
4 bins?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The brown smart bins.
6 Yes, I can. We have about, oh, the brown smart bins.
7 Hold on, let me get that.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Take your time.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: All right. We have
10 purchased and delivered 100,861 brown bins at a cost
11 of 4.6 million, and those are the bins associated
12 with the rollout in Queens and Brooklyn.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And what's the cost
14 per bin? I can't divide in my mind.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The cost per bin. I
16 have the delivery. Okay, the cost per bin for the 21-
17 gallon size is \$38.50.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Perfect. How does DSNY
19 plan to address and reduce cross contamination in its
20 mass composting programs, and how do the mass
21 composting program's contamination rates compare with
22 those observed in community composting initiatives?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As part of our
24 composting and organics diversion contracts that we
25 have, we require the vendors to put in place systems

2 generally like technology systems to get rid of
3 contamination. For example, if you come with us to
4 our Staten Island facility, you'll see a piece of
5 equipment called the Tiger that helps us get rid of
6 contamination. That's why we're able to allow people
7 to deposit the compost in plastic bags, because we
8 have systems to get rid of the plastic.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you have rates by
10 any chance, or?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Do we have what?

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The rates.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The rates?

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How do the mass
15 composting programs...

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, I don't have
17 contamination rates because it's all handled on
18 intake, but we have some programs, the contamination
19 rates vary program to program so the smart bins. It's
20 like pristine organic material and the reason why
21 it's so clean is because you have to use an app to
22 open it and so you really need to want to deposit
23 just organic material as opposed to trash to use the
24 app and use that bin. In schools, we found that when
25 the schools are initially turned on, it's much more

2 contaminated than once they're running for a period
3 of several months or years. It gets less contaminated
4 as the kids develop the muscle memory. Contamination
5 rates do vary a lot program to program.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I think it would be
7 helpful to work on a way to capture those
8 contamination rates. We can perhaps work together on
9 that. I think it would be great.

10 I'm going to turn over to my Colleague,
11 Christopher Marte to ask questions.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you, Chair,
13 and thank you, DSNY, for everything you do.

14 We are excited about the City's
15 willingness to expand citywide composting. However,
16 we believe it's an all-in approach and community
17 composters are a key part to that operation, and so
18 we had a good rally led by the Chair. I saw a lot of
19 Council Members in support, and I just want to
20 address something that's super, I think, short-
21 sighted. Every single year, we do this dance, right?
22 Community composting is cut, we have all these
23 meetings, all these hearings, and then it ends up in
24 the executive budget, right? It's a dance that we're
25 all used to, that many of the advocates and

2 composters are used to, but it can have unforeseen
3 consequences. One unforeseen consequence of this
4 dance is whether OMB is going to allow certain
5 community compost to have access to capital funding
6 that was already allocated to them, whether it's
7 through ULURPs or through community agreements, and
8 now that's in jeopardy because right now in OMB's
9 version of the budget a lot of these community
10 compost aren't getting the expense funding to be able
11 to have access to that capital funding and so when we
12 really look into whether we're going to cut this or
13 re-fund this, we have to make sure those capital
14 funding that were agreed to years or decades ago
15 still hold strong, regardless of whether OMB thinks
16 composting is necessary or are not necessary, and so
17 I would love to hear your thoughts and hopefully a
18 commitment to say that because these promises were
19 made, they should keep their promises, especially if
20 we want to have a true citywide composting program
21 here in New York City.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Council Member, as I
23 was discussing in response to Chair Abreu's
24 questions, the Department took a 60-million-dollar-a-
25 year cut to lots of programs. In particular, our

2 cleanliness programs. The community composting cut
3 that you're talking about is 3 million of a 60-
4 million-dollar cut. As I said, all of the cuts were
5 painful to this Department, many of them service
6 impacting, but the Mayor was clear and the Budget
7 Director were clear that when that budget was put
8 together, we're in very difficult financial
9 circumstances and the cuts were necessary. I am not
10 an economist. I don't know what the circumstances
11 will be when the next budget is finalized, but these
12 were very difficult choices that we had to make given
13 a very difficult budgetary environment.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I believe we can
15 see that, right. It was a difficult choice at that
16 moment, but there is long-standing commitment capital
17 funding to these organizations now that are in
18 jeopardy because of this one-time cut that we all
19 know will be restored.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: If you're talking
21 specifically about the capital piece, and I apologize
22 if I missed that in your first question, my
23 understanding is that City Hall is working with the
24 Council Members and reviewing options for that
25 capital funding and that capital program, but I have

2 nothing additional to add beyond what was discussed
3 at that recent meeting.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. I had
7 another question, Commissioner. Can the Department
8 please provide the Council with a full breakdown of
9 the budget and costs related to the curbside organics
10 program as well as the location of the budget within
11 units of appropriations, budget, and object codes.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, the annual
13 steady state cost of the curbside program, as I
14 mentioned, is 34 million dollars a year, and the PS
15 funding is primarily in unit of appropriation 102,
16 which is Bureau of Cleaning and Collection, Budget
17 Code 2000, which is Bureau of Cleaning and Collection
18 Administration. The OTPS funds are spread amongst a
19 few units of appropriation and budget code
20 combinations. Unit of Appropriation 106, Executive
21 Administration Budget Code 1004, General
22 Administration OTPS.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: If you could follow up
24 with us on that, that would be great.

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure. I'm sorry. I
3 misspoke. The steady state is 33.4 million dollars,
4 not 34 million dollars

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. Council Member
6 Brewer, do you have any questions?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Two things. Just
8 to start with, the zero waste kids in the schools are
9 phenomenal. Do you honor them in any way or have some
10 program that, in addition to whatever else you do, do
11 you have some honoring of them? I've met quite a few
12 of them and they are adamant, fun and young leaders.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And I've met a number
14 of them, too. You're right. They are fabulous, and
15 I'd love to work with you on a way to formally
16 acknowledge and honor them. That sounds great.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Also, maybe you
18 said this earlier, I was at another hearing, when
19 will these gray, fabulous, Commissioner Tisch bins be
20 available?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, so you're
22 speaking about the bins for the one-to-nine-unit
23 buildings.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is that what it
25 is? Okay. Alright. I'm sorry.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm thinking about
3 the trash bins on the streets.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay, so there's a
5 few different versions of trash bins on the street.
6 There will be wheelie bins required for one-to-nine-
7 unit buildings. We are producing a standardized New
8 York City trash bin that's going to be gray and
9 fabulous as you mentioned, and that will be available
10 for sale at below-market prices well before the
11 mandate for one-to-nine-unit buildings to
12 containerize kicks in this fall. The larger four-
13 cubic-yard containers that will sit in the parking
14 lane by buildings that have 31 units or more will be
15 piloted next spring so spring of 2025 in Manhattan 9.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And we are put out
18 the RFP to purchase those European-style containers.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You'll deal with
20 the teachers who are complaining about the parking.

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Next, just so you
23 know, uncollected dollars. I ask everybody this. This
24 is not your problem, but it is the City's problem so
25 when I asked wonderful Jimmy Oddo, Buildings

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2 Commissioner, he said it's about a billion dollars at
3 DOB that's uncollected so what happens is they go to
4 OATH, right, they supposedly pay but they don't, and
5 then they go to Finance, I assume, and then Finance
6 has a collection agency, blah, blah, blah. That's the
7 scenario. But I'm just wondering, is that something
8 that you keep track of or just Finance? Because IBO
9 did a report a few years ago, it was 2.1 billion, and
10 it's just adding up.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's not your
13 fault, but it's, the City has got to do something, I
14 think.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So what Council
16 Member Oddo said, it's the Department of Finance,
17 it's not something that we track.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so he is
19 tracking it, just so you know.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'll continue to
22 try to track it, but it's something that you might
23 want to think about because it's a lot of money.

24 Vendors, maybe you talked about it, I'm
25 sorry. I know that you're doing increased support for

2 them doing the right thing, shall we say, and we want
3 them to do the right thing. Can you just give us some
4 sense of how many and what fines have been assessed
5 or some notion of what's going on?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: For that, I'm going
7 to have Ryan Merola, our Deputy Commissioner, answer.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You know how I
9 love Ryan Merola. Thank you. I love Ryan Merola.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Thank you,
11 Commissioner. Hello, Council Member. Very happy to
12 talk about vending enforcement here with the agency.
13 As you know, this was something that came to the
14 Department of Sanitation last April.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: At the time,
17 the Office of Street Vendor Enforcement was
18 transferred, we had a commitment which we realized to
19 have 40 uniform members of Sanitation Police conduct
20 citywide enforcement. Last year, in the eight months
21 that we had it, we had over 5,000 inspections and
22 over 1,000 summonses of violations issued for any
23 number of the compliance issues the Commissioner
24 mentioned in her testimony, whether it was grease
25 down the sewer, dirty conditions on the sidewalk,

2 vending alongside storefronts and doors, blocking
3 access to train stations and, yes, for unlicensed and
4 unpermitted vending. When it comes to what we have
5 done so far this year, we're up to almost 1,400
6 inspections of vending setups citywide, and we've
7 issued nearly 500 violations at this time. We are
8 doing this in every borough. We have, of course, a
9 focus, as you know, that moved off of some places
10 like the Brooklyn Bridge and allowed us capacity to
11 do other parts, and we have a number of neighborhoods
12 of Members that come to us asking for robust vendor
13 enforcement because it truly becomes a quality-of-
14 life issue on the streets there.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and do we do
16 education before or is it just violation? Do we do
17 education.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: There's a
19 split role here for the City. Sanitation has
20 compliance inspections that it does before it does
21 any enforcement. In terms of education and outreach,
22 that lives amongst the varying agencies that do
23 licensing and their partners in Small Business
24 Services.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So there is some
3 education in advance. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
5 Member.

6 I would like to recognize Council Members
7 Ung and Paladino.

8 Commissioner, I have some questions on
9 the November Plan, and my goal is to understand the
10 November Plan PEGs and how this will affect City
11 services. The November Plan included PEGs reducing
12 the outreach and communication budgets for DSNY. The
13 savings total 4.1 million in FY24 and 2.45 million in
14 FY25 and the outyears. As the Department continues to
15 initiate new pilot programs and initiatives, this
16 reduction could hinder New York's ability to learn
17 and adapt to the changing landscape of sanitation.
18 What is the overall budget for outreach and
19 communication for DSNY, and has this budget grown in
20 recent years?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Outreach and
22 communication are typically funded on a campaign-by-
23 campaign basis so, i.e., curbside composting,
24 commercial waste zones, they each have their own
25

2 outreach and communications budget associated with
3 it.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you say how much?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I'm going to get to
6 it. Funding for each of these campaigns vary based on
7 the targeted efforts required. After the PEG
8 reductions, the remaining outreach funding that we
9 have in FY24 budget is 6.4 million dollars and breaks
10 out as follows: Commercial waste zones 2.2 million;
11 Brooklyn curbside organics collection 1.75 million;
12 the composting outreach and education through the
13 community compost partners was 1 million; and then we
14 had various smaller campaigns of 1.4 million
15 including things like leaf collection, business
16 containerization mailers, but all but the commercial
17 waste zone funding for outreach has already been
18 expended for this Fiscal Year.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you think that's
20 enough resources for you to, commercial waste zones
21 is obviously a big deal? We'll have a hearing
22 probably later in the next few months, but a lot of
23 businesses, they have to come into compliance with
24 these new standards, and my concern is that education
25

2 and promotion for outreach is going to be a very
3 important.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, I agree.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And containerization
6 too, right? With the rules affecting our businesses,
7 containerization being rolled out to residences, I
8 don't know that this is enough.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I agree that outreach
10 is very important, and what I would say is I think we
11 have changed a lot of rules in the Department over
12 the past two years so everything from the time you
13 set your trash out, all residents and businesses, to
14 businesses putting it in containers, all sorts of
15 rules, and every time we change a rule that affects
16 any resident or business in the city, we send out a
17 mailer so, in the case of the business mandate to use
18 bins, we sent out a mailer to all 200,000 businesses
19 in the city, we knocked on every door, we distributed
20 flyers. We did the same thing with our composting
21 program in Brooklyn and Queens. In both boroughs, we
22 knocked on, we sent mailers to every resident and we
23 knocked on every door, every one-to-nine-unit
24 building in those boroughs so outreach is something
25 that we take incredibly seriously, but it is funded

2 on a campaign-by-campaign basis. The reason you don't
3 see an outreach budget associated with the broader
4 containerization plan yet is because the broader
5 containerization plans have not yet been reflected in
6 a budget.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is there an intent to
8 have this adopted budget to include costs associated
9 with those campaigns, because that would be in effect
10 by '25, right?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Those costs would not
12 be until FY25 and so on the containerization stuff,
13 we are working closely with OMB on all of the costs
14 associated with the program, of which outreach is a
15 very important one.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And since curbside is
17 coming to all of Manhattan by the fall. Is that
18 correct?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What's the budget cost
21 there for outreach?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So right now, we do
23 not have outreach that is funded, unless I'm
24 misspeaking, oh, sorry. I misspoke. We have 400,000
25 dollars associated with outreach for that. I stand

2 corrected. And we supplement that with our in-house
3 outreach team and, actually...

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You ou have five
5 staffers, you said?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Hold on. Actually,
7 there is more than our in-house outreach team. When
8 we turned on Queens, as an example, we had both
9 civilian and uniform members of the Department so it
10 was like a team of like at least 50 people a day who
11 were participating in the door-to-door outreach.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, I think there's
13 potential for improvement there on the 400,000 or so
14 budget here. Manhattan, we're talking very dense
15 neighborhoods, and we want our constituents to
16 participate.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, the door-to-
18 door is going to be challenging in Manhattan, just
19 because, as I mentioned in the other boroughs, we
20 really focused on the one-to-nine-unit buildings.
21 When you talk about the larger buildings in
22 Manhattan, it's not possible for our outreach team to
23 go into the building generally because of security
24 stuff. You don't have just free...

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: North of 96th Street,
3 you can knock on a lot of doors. It's my District, so
4 I do a lot of door-knocking so a lot of those
5 buildings are accessible. I think we should figure
6 out which buildings are accessible and which aren't.
7 400,000 is not even enough to fund a Council
8 campaign. To think about all of Manhattan, I think we
9 need to really look at those numbers there.

10 I would like to recognize Salamanca,
11 who's also here.

12 As for questions, Council Member Zhuang.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Chair.
14 Thank you, Commissioner, and also I want to thank
15 you, our Deputy Commissioner Ryan, has worked a lot
16 in my District.

17 In my District, we have an area, has
18 commercial and the residential, and it's a congested
19 area, or I can say it's a hotspot. Do you guys have
20 any strategy how to partner with private sanitation,
21 and is that possible that area has one sanitation
22 take care of everything because if we have to move
23 cars twice a day, like every other day, that's really
24 inconvenient for the people living in the

25

2 neighborhood. Is there any strategy, any coordination
3 between two sanitations?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As I mentioned
5 before, cleanliness is a shared responsibility.
6 Cleaning the streets and city-owned property is the
7 responsibility of the Sanitation Department and
8 various other City agencies, but cleaning the
9 sidewalks and 18 inches into the streets really is
10 the responsibility of the property owner so in the
11 case of commercial corridors, the business, or if
12 it's a mixed-use area, the business and the
13 homeowners, and so the private cleaning services are
14 generally done to supplement the responsibilities of
15 the property owners as opposed to the responsibility
16 of the Sanitation Department.

17 If you're asking specifically, though,
18 about alternate side parking. The street sweepers are
19 the very best street cleaning tool that we have in
20 our arsenal. One of the tragedies of it is that
21 people don't move their cars and they don't comply
22 with those rules as they are supposed to, and so one
23 of the things that we're looking for in our state
24 legislative agenda is this change to the State VTL
25 law that would allow us to put automated ticketing

2 systems on our street sweepers so that we could do
3 automated enforcement of alternate side parking. I
4 think once we do that, we'll see the progress that
5 the MTA, for example, has seen with similar types of
6 enforcement of bus lanes, and that will be great for
7 New York City and its cleanliness because, if our
8 street sweepers can get to those curbs consistently
9 and reliably, boy, will those curbs look better.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you. Also
11 coordination between different sanitations is because
12 the first floor is commercial, second floor, third
13 floor is residential, and then the residential
14 probably right now, they put the garbage everywhere.
15 One corner, you can see by 4 o'clock in the
16 afternoon, you're going to see 10 bags of garbage.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We have done robust
18 enforcement of early set out of trash and we will
19 continue to do that, but I also think that the key to
20 the circumstance that you're describing is
21 containerization. Every day, New Yorkers put 44
22 million pounds of trash on the streets of our city,
23 and it's disgusting. 20 million of it comes from
24 businesses. 24 million of it comes from residences.
25 Most cities around the world haven't done that or

2 allowed that in decades and, right now, New York City
3 is in a massive game of catchup. We have already, as
4 of March 1st, required that every business in this
5 city puts their trash in containers. That's 20
6 million pounds a day. We're issuing warnings now.
7 Come April 1st, we're going to be enforcing it with
8 summonses. This fall, one-to-nine-unit buildings in
9 the city will be required to put their trash in
10 wheelie bins, much like every business is now
11 required to do in the city and then, that spring of
12 2025, we're going after the higher density buildings'
13 trash and we are putting large four-cubic-yard fixed
14 on-street containers in front of those large
15 buildings of 31 units or more, so the trash is going
16 to go there. We have piloted this on 10 blocks in
17 Hamilton Heights. The streets look cleaner.
18 Compliance is unbelievable. You don't see trash bags
19 on the streets there, and the rat complaints have
20 gone down by 68 percent in that 10-block pilot area.
21 You know who wasn't surprised by that? Me.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And me.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And him. The benefits
24 of containerizing the trash for these mixed-use areas
25 that you are describing for commercial areas and

2 residential areas. It's going to be extraordinary. In
3 my opinion, it is going to be the single biggest
4 change to our streetscape in generations and it is
5 long overdue, but it is coming fast in New York City.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: I'm looking
7 forward. Thank you.

8 Also, for the hot spot area, do you guys
9 provide extra service or extra attention?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As part of the cuts
11 that we sustained, we took 60-million-dollars' worth
12 of cuts, a lot of those cuts were to our cleaning
13 programs so our Targeted Neighborhood Task Force,
14 which I think is what you're referring to, which
15 clean no man's lands that was cut, our PCI, our
16 precision cleaning, was cut. Our lot cleaning unit
17 was cut. You don't see those reductions in service
18 levels yet because we have so many Sanitation workers
19 but, as we lose Sanitation workers through attrition,
20 you will start to see the real impact of those cuts
21 if they are not restored.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: All right. Thank
23 you so much. I believe in New York City everyone
24 deserves a clean and a safe street. That's top of my
25 agenda.

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: That's the top of my
3 agenda, too, and I appreciate your questions on
4 cleanliness because it is something that we have not
5 spoken enough about, but it is my passion and my
6 obsession.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you,
8 Commissioner, and thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
10 Member.

11 One more question on community
12 composting. Within your testimony, it says the
13 Department was not required to find savings in the
14 Executive Budget, but the Department nonetheless
15 found savings. How did the Department find these
16 savings and why were they not used to bring back
17 community composting?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We haven't had the
19 Executive Budget yet.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Read this part.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, so in the
22 testimony, it says while Mayor Adams was able to
23 announce that thanks to sound management that there
24 will not be a need for an April round of PEGs, DSNY
25 did find savings.

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I can explain that.

3 Every agency was supposed to be subject to three
4 rounds of 5 percent cuts. We took the first 5 percent
5 cut. It ended up being a 60-million-dollar cut. We
6 spent most of this hearing talking about 3 million
7 dollars of that, but it was a 60-million-dollar cut.
8 We were excused from what was supposed to be the
9 second round of 5 percent cuts because the cuts that
10 we had taken in the first round were service
11 impacting, and there was nothing more that we were
12 able to do.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,

14 Commissioner.

15 Before I pass it over to my Colleagues, I
16 wanted to talk about the Get Stuff Clean programs. We
17 have an Administration that prides itself a lot on
18 being the biggest, cleanest city in the country, but
19 there were a lot of cuts to a lot of vital programs
20 that I thought put the Department in the right
21 direction from Precision Cleaning, from Get Stuff
22 Clean, from lot cleaning, you name it, the JTP
23 program, and I'm not going to go into each of these
24 programs individually, but what impact have these
25 cuts had on your Department's core cleaning mission?

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: They haven't had an
3 impact yet but, if they are not restored, they will
4 be devastating to the cleaning program, and the
5 reason that they have not had an impact yet is
6 because we have our highest headcount of Sanitation
7 workers than we've had in 25 years blessedly, and
8 because we have postponed until the fall the rollout
9 of two boroughs for organics, we have the extra
10 usually several hundred Sanitation workers a day that
11 we can put on cleaning functions. If those PEGs are
12 not restored, as those sanitation workers attrit out
13 and as we turn on the composting service in the fall,
14 in our budget we will not have the ability or the
15 flexibility to provide the cleaning services that
16 you're talking about, in particular, the Targeted
17 Neighborhood Task Force, which cleans 2,000 no man's
18 lands across every borough, every neighborhood in the
19 city. Our Supplemental Basket Service for litter
20 baskets around parks. We supplement the Parks
21 Department service. Those baskets are chronically
22 overflowing every time the weather is nice before
23 this service and our Bridge Basket Service to say
24 nothing of our Lot Cleaning unit was completely cut.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member

3 Salamanca, you have questions?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chair. How are you, Commissioner?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good, thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I want to start
8 by thanking you and your team for always being
9 accessible. This relationship that we have, I really
10 enjoy it and I want to say thank you. I'm just going
11 to jump around a little bit here. A few months ago,
12 we passed the Mobile Car Wash Bill, and I know in it
13 there were provisions where for six months Consumer
14 Affairs was going do outreach and then I guess after
15 the six months, that's when Sanitation will start
16 enforcement. Do we know if outreach has begun?

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't. I have not
18 checked in with... Ryan, have you checked in with them?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Council
20 Member, thank you. Thank you, Commissioner. Yes, DCWP
21 has been assembling materials and I do believe has
22 begun and I'll confirm for you when that started.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. It's
24 important because we spread the word throughout the
25 community and we got a lot of calls from those

2 individuals that have these car washes asking
3 questions in terms of how the implementation was
4 going to be rolled out.

5 Commissioner I also want to thank you. I
6 know in my District, we've had an issue for the last
7 couple of years on vehicles with no plates or fake
8 plates throughout the district, and you connected me
9 with a Division. Chief Thompson and his team have
10 been accessible. I really hope that they're up for an
11 increase soon because they deserve it. Now, I did see
12 that the Mayor and the Governor, I believe it was two
13 days ago, made an announcement on tackling the fake
14 plates or unlicensed vehicles and there was funding
15 allocated I believe for that. Is your agency going to
16 get any of that funding so that you can increase that
17 division that goes out and addresses the..

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Not that specific
19 funding, but I'm so happy to be talking about
20 abandoned vehicles because I think it's a part of
21 restoring dignity and order to neighborhoods. There
22 are many neighborhoods in this city where abandoned
23 vehicles sitting on the street are just chronic
24 problems, and the 3-1-1 calls when Mayor Adams took
25 office were through the roof on it and so what the

2 Mayor did was he created a task force. It's a
3 combined DSNY/NYPD task force where we've paired
4 Sanitation supervisors with NYPD cops. Why that
5 pairing in those two agencies? Because Sanitation
6 Department deals with derelict vehicles, vehicles of
7 below a certain dollar value, and NYPD deals with
8 abandoned vehicles, and when people call these
9 vehicles into 3-1-1, they don't know what derelict is
10 versus abandoned, they don't know who should go to
11 respond, and so often what was happening is they were
12 getting pointed in every which direction and so, by
13 creating this task force, whether the vehicle is
14 abandoned or derelict, we can get it off the street
15 and, since that task force started, we have gotten
16 record numbers of vehicles off of the streets and it
17 is because the Mayor and the Police Commissioner have
18 been very supportive of this partnership and this
19 task force so no, no extra funding for that, but
20 still like an unprecedented thing, which is the
21 dedication of many police officers and Sanitation
22 supervisors focused on abandoned and derelict
23 vehicles.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I can say that
25 this task force has played a major role in our

2 quality of life, at least in my District, and you've
3 given us some of our parking back, right, because
4 individuals are parking their vehicles with no plates
5 as a storage area on city streets so I really hope
6 that, during the negotiations, they can see how to
7 increase this task force and I encourage my
8 Colleagues to utilize them. It's helpful.

9 Finally, my final question is, and I'm
10 going to tell this to my Colleagues as well. I'm a
11 big supporter of funding the cameras for illegal
12 dumping. I've done it, I believe, in the last three
13 budgets. I tell my Colleagues, utilize your funding.
14 You can use your GreenNYC funding for it and, at
15 least in my District, because I have a big portion of
16 an industrial part of the Bronx, there's a lot of
17 illegal dumpings, a lot of blind spots, and we are
18 catching these individuals and they're being
19 penalized for it. Now, something that we're having a
20 difficulty is illegal dumping inside the New York
21 City parks. I have many New York City parks there,
22 and we're also seeing an increase in illegal dumping
23 on the exterior of the fences of these New York City
24 parks. Does DSNY have some type of agreement with
25 Parks to install these cameras in Parks' properties?

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, but Ryan has met
3 with the Parks Department and shared not only the
4 tech solution that we've used but also the con ops,
5 the operational plan that we have, so we have shared
6 everything about this very successful program with
7 the Parks Department, and my hope is that they will
8 decide to use the very same plan that we have very
9 successfully used to address this problem. The other
10 thing I want to say is people really love the illegal
11 dumping videos like the videos that we post...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: It's a hit.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: On social media. I
14 just want everyone to know like we catch these things
15 every day. We don't post them every day because it
16 would get like old and not as interesting and we like
17 to set them to music so there's a bit of production
18 that goes into it, but I want everyone to know that
19 those cameras are catching illegal dumping and
20 illegal dumpers every day and we issue 4,000-dollar
21 summonses, we impound the vehicles, and it is
22 something that works so I do encourage, as you
23 started, your Colleagues to just keep that program in
24 mind as well as our program to replace all of the
25 litter baskets in New York City with the new rat-

2 proof litter basket of the future. They're so much
3 better than the mesh, see-through, rat-attracting old
4 litter baskets.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I just want to
6 end with this if I can, Mr. Chair. I really recommend
7 if there's someone here from the Mayor's Office, they
8 should consider a task force with DSNY and Parks
9 Department to consider installing cameras there so
10 that we can get those individuals that are illegally
11 dumping. Many times, it's individuals that actually
12 have permits to have some barbecues in parks and
13 they're leaving their garbage around, not picking up.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I agree with you. The
15 Sanitation Department doesn't have jurisdiction on
16 Parks Property, and so we've speaking with the Parks
17 Department who also has a Parks police so we use our
18 Sanitation police but, just like the Sanitation
19 police, Parks also has police, but definitely hear
20 you and we'll continue to share our best practices
21 with the Parks Department on how we do illegal
22 dumping enforcement.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right.
24 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Of course. I would
3 also like to recognize Council Member Nurse.

4 Vicki Paladino, you have questions?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon
6 and thank you. It's a pleasure to meet you. I too am
7 extremely grateful to the Sanitation Department. I
8 always call them my guys because in Northeast...

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So does Harry
10 Nespoli.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: What's that?

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So does Harry
13 Nespoli, my guys.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: My guys, and
15 Northeast Queens, I want to thank you so very much
16 for your action. As soon as we call, I couldn't be
17 happier, but there are issues that my Colleague just
18 brought up about the illegal dumping. I'm just going
19 to basically piggyback on what Council Member
20 Salamanca just said and we have issues in my
21 District. I agree with the cameras and all of that.
22 We have a rat problem. I'm really enthusiastic about
23 the new receptacles that are going to be issued, but
24 we're always talking about composting, and I really
25 like how you put yourself forward very strongly

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2 earlier when, I'm late coming to the meeting, but you
3 said a lot of very good things and for Sanitation to
4 be cut in any way, shape, or form when we are miles
5 behind where we need to be, it is ridiculous. Now,
6 you brought up street cleaning. How will the outside
7 restaurant, the extensions of the restaurants that
8 are still being allowed to occupy our streets, and
9 you're absolutely right about the street cleaners and
10 the brooms that go out. For my District, that's
11 extremely important. Talk to me a little bit about
12 that if you could.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: About the dining
14 sheds?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yes, and how
16 that's impacting what you need to get done.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Under the old
18 program, the program that is now being replaced, so
19 old program, the street sweepers could not get up to
20 the dining sheds, and no one was responsible for
21 cleaning the area around the dining sheds, not the
22 City. The City couldn't do it, not the restaurants,
23 no one, and so they were filthy and then, before we
24 started requiring the containerization of restaurant
25 trash, they were storing all of the bags there, which

2 was terrible. A few things happened. First, in
3 August, we required all restaurants to containerize
4 their trash. I am seeing excellent, not perfect, but
5 excellent compliance among restaurants, which has
6 gotten rid of the trash bags around the dining sheds.
7 Great. And where we see lack of compliance, we're
8 enforcing a lot. The second thing that we did is in
9 the new rules that will govern the permanent outdoor
10 dining program, we have made it the responsibility of
11 the restaurant owner...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: It should be.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As it should be.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's correct.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: To clean the area
16 around the shed, much as today they need to clean the
17 sidewalk and 18 inches into the curb so it's like we
18 extended that 18 inch rule around the shed.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Do you remember
20 when we used to do that? We used to actually enforce
21 that, about the store owners being responsible, I
22 come down very hard in my District for them to be,
23 the store owners to do their job. We always believe
24 in, years ago they used to sweep, they used to hose
25 off in front of their stores, and now it doesn't seem

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2 like anybody takes any personal responsibility for
3 anything.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You know why no one
5 takes any responsibility?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Nobody takes any
7 personal responsibility.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I'll tell you why
9 they don't. It's because in the 2010s, the Council
10 slashed in half...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's correct.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The fine..

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's right.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: For failure to comply
15 with the very basic rules that we have in New York
16 City around sanitation so now we show up to a
17 business, it's filthy out front, I mean truly filthy.
18 The biggest fine we can give is a 50-dollar fine.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Seriously.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There is legislation
21 in front of this Council to fix all of that. I was
22 hopeful that that legislation was going to pass at
23 the last Stated Meeting, but it didn't get out of the
24 Committee, and I have to say the same Council Members
25 that call me every day to clean dirty conditions or

2 this business isn't complying still have not been
3 supportive of that legislation. I want to be clear. I
4 don't look at enforcement as a revenue thing.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I agree.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I look at enforcement
7 as holding businesses and residences to the very
8 basic standards we have in New York City around
9 cleanliness, and so those three pieces of
10 legislation, including Intro. 57, they have to pass
11 if we want to be able to restore dignity and order to
12 our streets in New York City.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: 100 percent, I
14 couldn't agree with you more and, actually, when I
15 speak to my store owners like on College Point
16 Boulevard or Bell Boulevard, I often say I'm going to
17 have you fined, enough is enough, you cannot keep
18 doing what you're doing and thinking it's okay, and
19 then people, they themselves, are complaining about
20 how dirty the streets are, yet no one, once again,
21 circle back to personal responsibility, and if it
22 means hitting them in the pocketbook as much as, I'm
23 a small business person, I come from that, I don't
24 like seeing people find what they must be because we
25 passed a line now where people genuinely just don't

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2 care so it's time now where the small business owner,
3 that should be enforced. They need to be fined.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
5 Member.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I loved it.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I love the passion,
8 Council Member.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: (INAUDIBLE) I look
10 forward to Intro. 57, which does exactly, Intro. 97,
11 which does exactly what you're talking about passing
12 out of this Committee.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: There you go,
14 Commissioner. I'm with you.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And I'm supportive.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You have the votes
18 you need.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Rivera,
20 please.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much
22 for the time. Those are some bad actors. I want to go
23 back to someone we know is a partner, a Colleague of
24 mine brought up earlier, Lower East Side Ecology
25 Center. I have to ask again. I know my Colleague

2 brought them up, their compost yard in East River
3 Park. I know that we can work together on ensuring
4 that they have a beautiful compost yard in the park
5 as well as permanent programming space. I think it
6 would be impossible to overstate how beloved this
7 organization is. We've spoken to the Deputy Mayor
8 about it. I want to thank you for affirming the
9 Department would not be able to roll out a citywide
10 composting program without the work of community
11 composters like Christine Datz-Romero. I want to ask
12 about their temporary facility in Canarsie since
13 Lower East Side was asked about. This is a 2-million-
14 dollar project that was cut from the budget with the
15 latest cuts but would enhance compost processing
16 capacity, which is necessary as we increase
17 collection. Is this something you would consider
18 continuing with should we have the resources?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I know that you or
20 maybe your Colleagues had meetings at City Hall with
21 the Deputy Mayor specifically on this topic. I don't
22 have anything additional to add beyond what was
23 discussed at that meeting, but I know you're working
24 with her to come up with a go-forward plan.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: You don't have any
3 thoughts on whether you would consider continuing
4 that should we have the additional resources?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I know that you're
6 working directly with my boss to come up with a go-
7 forward plan, which is the right person to work with,
8 and so I look forward to the outcome of those
9 conversations and hearing what the go-forward plan
10 is.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: This is not the
12 same facility, though. I'm asking about Canarsie, and
13 that was specifically about Lower East Side.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay, so then it's
15 something that we will have to discuss later. I don't
16 have an answer right here and right now.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. You
18 mentioned the rat-proof litter baskets, which are
19 exciting.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: They are missing
22 on many corners in my District. I want to
23 specifically point out 2nd and 3rd Avenue in the East
24 20s and 30s, some of the busiest streets and corners
25

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2 in Manhattan. How can we get these litter baskets
3 back on the corners?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We never took litter
5 baskets off of the streets. We have about 23,000
6 litter baskets out there so, if there are litter
7 baskets that are missing, we'll obviously want to
8 know where they are and we can replace them, but Ryan
9 has something to add.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Member, can I
11 ask you just a clarifying question?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yeah.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: We had put
14 out some rat-proof litter baskets together actually
15 last year (INAUDIBLE), right?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yeah, yeah, and we
17 need those desperately and more around Tompkins.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: I just want
19 to make sure those are what you're referring to and
20 that you're seeing other baskets on the street that
21 you're talking about.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: The location where
23 they're missing is Second Avenue and Third Avenue in
24 the East 20s and 30s. It's like the Kip's Bay
25 neighborhood.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Okay, we'll
3 look into that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I can get you
5 specific corners, no problem, because it's been an
6 ongoing issue.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Thank you,
8 Member.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. My last
10 question is, my office has been working on addressing
11 and, again, these are regular bins, but if we can get
12 the upgrade, I have to ask, the Union Square bike
13 lane garbage so my office has been working on
14 addressing a garbage condition on a bike lane on
15 Union Square East. It's a sanitation quality of life,
16 it's a safety issue, not just for the Park workers
17 and the bikers, but also the Sanitation workers who I
18 think about being a priority for safety. This area is
19 ideal for innovative containerization solutions, and
20 I would love to work more closely with you on
21 bringing those locations this sort of solution. Do
22 you have any information about this location or any
23 plans in the works you can share?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure. Go ahead.
25

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Member, thank
3 you very much for that question. Your office has been
4 fantastic and bringing us, DOT, Union Square
5 Partnership together on that one. I know to answer
6 that question, though, I've got to have my DOT
7 colleagues because they've been working hand-in-hand
8 at this moment with Union Square Partnership on how
9 to reimagine the streets around it to create space
10 for both containers as well as more safe collection
11 so I'd love to get back to you on that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. Thank you. I
13 think Union Square is very busy. I appreciate what
14 you said about litter baskets, outdoor dining,
15 especially in Alphabet City and then, as for the
16 Ecology Center, I look forward to working with you
17 all on that issue. It's incredibly important to us
18 and certainly an agreement that we came to with the
19 City that we intend to have them fulfill. Thank you,
20 Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
22 Member.

23 I would also like to recognize Council
24 Member Banks. Hello.

25

2 All right. We have ways to go, so I
3 appreciate your patience because we have to ask some
4 questions on the record. The November Plan includes
5 PEGs which eliminated the lot cleaning program. The
6 PEG was the result of a reduction of 15 uniform
7 positions for 205,000 dollars in FY24, increasing to
8 269,000 in the outyears. What was the rationale for
9 eliminating the funding for lot cleaning?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It was one of the
11 very painful 60-million-dollars' worth of cuts that
12 we had to take. I mean at its height, we had 150
13 people working in lot cleaning at the New York City
14 Department of Sanitation and, as of this PEG, it's
15 zero.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Will the reduction of
17 these positions be made through layoffs or
18 relocation?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Not through layoffs.
20 Reallocation so relocation of Sanitation workers so
21 the Sanitation workers who had previously been
22 assigned to lot cleaning are now generally either
23 assigned to a district or highway unit or another
24 unit.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Now, given the PEG,
3 who's going to handle the upkeep of these lots and
4 other areas that will...

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Property owners.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Excuse me.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The property owners.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Property owners. All
9 right. So we know how well that's been going. With
10 regards to the PEGs to household hazardous waste
11 disposal events, my community, everyone I think loves
12 these events. I know you have about two events a
13 year. The savings incurred by this reduction will be
14 roughly 1.2 million in FY24 and the outyears. How
15 many hazardous waste disposal events were there
16 before this PEG?

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There were two. It's
18 cut in half, from two to one.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Did you find these
20 programs to be effective?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, they were
22 effective, and it was another difficult cut that we
23 had to make given a very difficult budgetary
24 environment.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How will the reduction
3 of these events to five per year impact the
4 accessibility of hazardous waste disposal options for
5 residents, particularly those in underserved
6 communities or with limited transportation options?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It will cut them in
8 half.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It will cut them in
10 half?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes. You said, how
12 will it affect it? It will half it.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What potential
14 consequences or risks are associated with the
15 decrease in household hazardous waste disposal events
16 in terms of increased improper disposal of hazardous
17 materials, potential environmental harm, or public
18 health risks?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: New Yorkers have a
20 few options to deal with electronic waste. They have
21 e-cycle, they have the safe events, and they have the
22 special waste drop-off sites so there are other
23 options, but obviously you can collect more if there
24 are two events rather than one event per borough per
25 year.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would you like to see
3 more events in your ideal world?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We had to take very
5 difficult cuts in this Department. In my ideal world,
6 I'd like a lot of things, but I try not to live in
7 the ideal world because it would make me crazy.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I think there's a lot
9 of things we can do in the ideal world.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There are, and there
11 are places where we should definitely strive.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Our favorite topic,
13 containerization.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: There are a lot of
16 just cost questions that we have, but just want to
17 put out there, you've been a champion for
18 containerization. Very happy to see the pilot being
19 announced in Manhattan 9, which encompasses over 90
20 percent of my District potentially, and we're seeing
21 the impact. 68 percent decline in rat sightings. We
22 see it and we feel it and we really appreciate that.
23 In April 2023, DSNY released a study of best
24 practices, challenges, and steps forward for the
25 containerization of waste in New York City. This

2 report, *The Future of Trash*, includes several models
3 which could alleviate the ongoing trash problem
4 within the city. One key containerization method
5 presented in the report was the use of wheeled shared
6 containers. What would the cost of the standard
7 wheeled shared container be?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We already rolled
9 those wheeled containers out on the 10 blocks in your
10 District and at 17 schools. The cost for that pilot,
11 the 10 blocks, oh, the 19 schools, was 225,000 in
12 FY23 and 600,000 in FY24. That's not the cost though,
13 just of the container. It's the cost of the program.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Just the containers.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't know how much
16 the specific containers costs, but they weren't
17 terribly expensive.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay and, if you can
19 please share the cost..

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I will get you, yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That would be greatly
22 appreciated.

23 In the report, it claims that the
24 durability lifetime of these containers would be

2 three years. How did the Department arrive at this
3 figure?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We talked to a lot of
5 other cities that are doing this. As I've said many
6 times, we are not going to be the first city to
7 containerize our trash in the world. We're going to
8 be one of the last..

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Right.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And so we have
11 reached out to Sanitation Departments in other cities
12 worldwide as well as manufacturers of these
13 containers who are largely based in Europe, but not
14 exclusively, and that was the general consensus that
15 we got.

16 Oh, I have the cost of the containers. I
17 was looking on the wrong page.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Oh no, you're fine.

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It was 500 bins. Is
20 this the right one, Joe? 500 bins. 1.4 million.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What was the last
22 figure?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: 500 bins. 1.4
24 million.

25 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right, thank you.

2 One of the main supporting arguments for
3 implementing a wheeled container system was the ease
4 with which it could be utilized with the current
5 fleet of trucks. The report mentioned that this could
6 be realized with retrofitting. Can you please explain
7 what retrofitting would be necessary?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah. For the large
9 buildings, the buildings of 31 units or more, there
10 are two options to containerize trash. They both
11 involve large four-cubic-yard containers. The options
12 are four-cubic-yard containers on wheels or four-
13 cubic-yard containers not on wheels. We piloted the
14 four-cubic-yard containers on wheels because you can
15 roll that container up to the back of a normal
16 sanitation truck that's slightly retrofitted with a
17 tipper, put that big container on a tipper and tip it
18 into the back of the truck. That's not the go-forward
19 strategy for New York City because I think having
20 hundreds of thousands of four-cubic-yard containers
21 on wheels in this city is a terrible idea for safety
22 reasons, for many reasons, so the go-forward model
23 involves the four-cubic-yard containers not having
24 wheels, and instead of using the retrofitted truck,
25 we would use a special side-loading truck that we

2 have developed, much like what is used in Europe,
3 where the truck lifts the container and dumps it.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The main alternative
5 to wheeled containers are the stationary containers?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: These are generally
8 more durable and have larger capacities. What would
9 the cost of a standard shared container be?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The cost of the
11 truck, because we developed our first truck, was like
12 just over 500,000 dollars.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: For one truck?

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: For one truck. It's
15 maybe like 10 percent more expensive than our
16 existing sanitation truck. The 550,000 dollars, I'm
17 not convinced that's going to be the go-forward
18 price. That included the R and D that was required to
19 develop the first U.S. dense urban environment
20 automated side-loading truck.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And there was an RFP
22 that was just issued, right?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We did..

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: On these trucks.

25

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, we just issued an
3 RFP to buy the containers, which is so exciting. That
4 RFP focuses in its first instance on the containers
5 for Manhattan 9 but gives us the ability to buy the
6 containers citywide when that pilot goes well in
7 Manhattan 9 and so it basically is handling all of
8 the contracting and administrative processes
9 associated with rolling out high-density
10 containerization citywide.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is there any way to
12 anticipate what that cost will be?

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Because it's subject
15 to bidding, right?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, I have a guess,
17 but I can't say it because I don't want to ruin the
18 RFP process.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The stationary
20 containers would require a new fleet of automatic
21 side loaders, ASLs?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What would be the cost
24 of building and acquiring a truck with an ASL? You
25 said 500 K, right?

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: 576,000 was the cost
3 of the first one but, as I mentioned..

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That is a significant
5 capital cost, and is there any anticipation that when
6 you buy in bulk, given that it's moving Manhattan-
7 wide and then citywide, do you have any anticipation
8 of what that number would be?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't. Given that
10 we haven't bought any but the R and D ones yet, I
11 don't have a price for it, but I would like to see it
12 come like close in line with the cost associated with
13 our rear-loading trucks. Right now, it's about 10
14 percent higher. Just for context the past two years,
15 we've spent half a billion dollars on Sanitation
16 trucks and completely upgrading and overhauling our
17 fleet and, boy, did it need it. The City didn't buy
18 any new Sanitation trucks or place any orders for
19 Sanitation trucks during the pandemic so when Mayor
20 Adams showed up, the average life of our fleet was
21 and very high and so with these unprecedented level
22 of purchasing of Sanitation trucks, we are bringing
23 that average life of the fleet down.

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: If the Department were
25 to switch over the different trucks due to

2 containerization, what would happen with the existing
3 fleet?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, so we're not
5 going to get rid of the existing fleet entirely,
6 which is great. As I mentioned, there's three
7 different models based on the size of the building.
8 The one-to-nine-unit buildings will still be serviced
9 by our normal rear-loading Sanitation trucks. The new
10 ones of those that we buy are going to have tippers
11 on the back so that when all the one-to-nine-unit
12 buildings place their trash out in our standardized
13 New York City bin, the Sanitation worker, if their
14 back is hurting, not feeling like lifting that day
15 can put the container on the tip and tip it rather
16 than throwing individual bags, and that will be an
17 option available to them, but we'll still be using
18 the rear loaders for the one-to-nine-unit buildings
19 as well as any of the 10-to-30-unit buildings that
20 decide to put their trash out in wheelie bins as
21 opposed to opting to use the stationary on-street
22 container.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you think there
24 would be an excess of...

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Also, sorry, also,
3 just whispered to me, recycling citywide. We are not
4 planning to containerize either recycling stream
5 because it's put out once a week so the rear loaders
6 will still be used for recycling as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: If the old trucks
8 could potentially be retrofitted with this new
9 technology, what would be the potential cost savings
10 like?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There's no cost
12 savings. By the time we buy enough automated side
13 loaders to do automated side loading citywide, the
14 side loaders will just replace some of the aging out
15 rear loaders. It's not extra cost.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Council
17 Member Banks, do you have questions?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chair, and good afternoon to the Commissioner and to
20 her team.

21 This is pertaining to the January
22 restorations. The November Plan includes PEGs
23 reducing the litter basket collection in five
24 boroughs, and the Mayor recently announced that this
25 PEG will be reversed and litter baskets would be

2 returning to the city. The reversal of the PEG
3 includes the restoration of 9,000 litter baskets in
4 the city. Could the Department break down
5 approximately where these basket reductions were to
6 take place?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Blessedly, no,
8 because the basket reductions never happened.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Meaning that PEG was
11 reversed before the baskets came off of the street,
12 which spared some years of my life hopefully.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you. The
14 November Plan also includes PEGs eliminating a job
15 training program in the Sanitation Department. The
16 savings incurred from the elimination of this program
17 was about 1,085,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2024
18 increasing to about 1.1 million to the outer years.
19 The Mayor recently announced that this program was to
20 be restored in the Preliminary Budget. I want to know
21 can you provide a description of the work that the
22 individuals in the JTP program do?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, they provide
24 various cleaning functions so we have two general
25 categories. We have indoor and outdoor. The indoor

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2 JTPs provide cleaning services inside of our
3 facilities and the outdoor JTPs provide cleaning
4 services in the community.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And who's eligible
6 for this particular program?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So the JTP program is
8 actually an HRA grant diversion program. The DSNY JTP
9 pool is generated from our sister agency, HRA. I
10 don't want to speak for HRA, but I know that there
11 are certain requirements. They must not be currently
12 working, must be receiving public assistance, and be
13 either the head of household or the payee on their
14 income taxes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And what is the
16 total budget of this this particular program, the JTP
17 program?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: In FY 24, it was 1.85
19 million, and in FY25, it's 3.87 million.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And how many slots
21 are being restored?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: 195.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay, and is this
24 the full amount of slots..

25 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: That were
3 eliminated in the previous PEG? Excellent.

4 Will this program still be managed by
5 HRA?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Excellent and, if
8 so, why is this program in Sanitation's budget?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, the program is
10 funded through an intra-city agreement with HRA, and
11 the participants are hired and paid by DSNY.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. With the
13 elimination of the lot cleaning program, can we
14 expect that individuals from the JTP program will be
15 tasked with a lot of cleaning?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There were cuts to a
17 lot of cleaning programs so the work of the JTP is
18 going to be as important than ever. I don't think,
19 for safety reasons, they can be assigned specifically
20 to lot cleaning, but they will be working to clean up
21 our communities where cleaning is necessary.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you,
23 Commissioner. Thank you, Chair. Appreciate it.

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
25 Member.

2 Council Member Nurse.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Good afternoon,
4 Commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good afternoon.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I just want to also
7 underscore my support in being upset about the cuts
8 to some of the nontraditional areas of cleaning, the
9 targeted task force, I forget, my brain's dying
10 today, but the places where you clean that are not
11 the streets..

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The Targeted Task
13 Force.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yes. That's been
15 really helpful in my District around the North
16 Conduit Boulevard where no agency seems to claim it
17 and around the Jackie Robinson so I really hope the
18 updated budget can reflect that.

19 I just wanted to share I want to thank
20 Council Member Ung, I know she had to leave, but I
21 feel like she has really done a lot to try to find
22 consensus with her bill. I think it was really harsh,
23 the first version of it, and I think she's done a lot
24 to get us to a better place and I think it still has
25 the intended effect of creating stronger consequences

2 without necessarily crushing some of our small
3 businesses.

4 I just had a couple of questions. One was
5 on the Solid Waste Management Plan. I don't know if
6 it was brought up. I know in the November Plan, the
7 you had to cancel the contract with the consultant so
8 just wondering if you're confident that you all are
9 going to be able to meet the requirements for that.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I am.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and how are
12 you planning to meet those requirements?

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, we're entirely on
14 pace to complete the Solid Waste Management Plan on
15 time. There are two different phases of it. The first
16 half of it, which we are finishing up right now is
17 going over current conditions and so we're finishing
18 that up on time. The second piece will be the
19 analysis of the proposed new programs, and I expect
20 that the funding need associated with completing that
21 important mandatory plan will be reflected in an
22 upcoming budget.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: How much does it
24 cost to finish out the work that you...

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You know, we looked
3 at it, and it is substantially less than what was
4 initially budgeted, but we won't have a precise
5 answer until that work is contracted out.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you for that.
7 I'm excited to see the first zone rollout...

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The what?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: The first zone, the
10 first commercial waste zone. I saw that in your
11 testimony. It's going to roll out in Queens in a
12 particularly very diverse area...

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So I'm just
15 curious, and I know you also had a PEG to your
16 outreach and communications budget last year, I think
17 it was 6 million, so I'm just curious what the plan
18 is to prepare this community of small businesses,
19 which speak a lot of languages to get them onboard?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We literally, just
21 two weeks ago, registered the contract for outreach
22 for the first zone and many more like beyond the
23 first zone, and the plan for outreach has not changed
24 from what I briefed you on, I think, about a year ago
25 now at our hearing which is two months of door-to-

2 door knocking to each of the nearly 7,000 businesses
3 before the transition phase even begins, and we will
4 hone and refine that model based on what we see from
5 the pilot and the process of turning on the first
6 zone so it's a two-month advanced outreach and then a
7 four-month phase for the carters to go and speak to
8 potential customers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and how many,
10 just a reminder, how many carters it will be, it will
11 be a full three carters...

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It's three carters
13 for the traditional service and also five citywide
14 containerized carters, and those are our carters who
15 collect from dumpsters or compactors as opposed to
16 curbside collection.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and then I
18 just have one other question related to the street
19 vendor enforcement. One, I just want to thank your
20 team for being really responsive. We have one
21 particular challenge that I don't, we'll figure it
22 out I guess, but I just want to thank you all for
23 being responsive to that. There was a video that went
24 around in our District around the Myrtle Wyckoff area
25 of like, it wasn't clear who this person was, were

2 they PD or were they Sanitation, because they were
3 just in a black t-shirt and they had something on,
4 but you couldn't really see what the badge was in the
5 video. I'll share it with you, but I ask this
6 question only for you to put on the record, when
7 there is an enforcement action with impounding or
8 removing anything, can you describe what those people
9 will look like? Will they be wearing a sanitation
10 uniform or... just for the record, so we have it.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Our Sanitation police
12 all wear a Sanitation police uniform, which happens
13 not to be green, it's navy blue, so they will be
14 fully in gear, like in their collared, badged shirts.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: That is my
17 understanding, and I will check with our Chief of
18 Enforcement to make sure that there aren't other
19 circumstances that would require plain clothes and
20 correct the record if I need to, but that is my
21 understanding.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And if PD does any
23 type of enforcement action, do they inform you all
24 after the fact?

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, the Police
3 Department doesn't have to inform us of their
4 enforcement actions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, I'm just
6 asking because when that video went around, it was
7 very unclear who it was. We asked our inspector. She
8 wasn't sure if it was you..

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: (INAUDIBLE)

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Member, I
11 appreciate that, and one of the things that I do for
12 the Department is stay in close contact with the
13 Street Vendor Project. They have routinely sent me
14 videos to ask clarifying questions about, is this
15 NYPD, is this Sanitation police, is this somebody
16 else? I'm always happy to take a look at it, and I'm
17 always happy to receive those from the advocates so
18 that line of communication is open but, as the
19 Commissioner said, we expect our Sanitation police to
20 be in the full Sanitation police uniform, and PD does
21 their own operations within their precincts.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, I appreciate
23 that. I just wanted to have that reiterated publicly
24 for advocates who are concerned. That's my questions.
25 Thank you, Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, of course. Thank
3 you, Council Member.

4 I have three more questions and then
5 every other question that I have I will just forward
6 it to you and, if you can provide your responses to
7 them, we would greatly appreciate that. Can we get
8 that?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Of course.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Were there any funds
13 that will be unexpended from this year's snow removal
14 budget?

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: From this year's?

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Snow removal budget?

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, our snow removal
18 budget. We have not spent our full... Are you asking if
19 there's funds remaining? Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How much is in budget?
21 How much have you spent? How much is remaining?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I have to get that.
23 Hold on. Winter weather. Is this the updated?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Yes.

25

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay, sweet. All
3 right. Our FY24 snow budget is 98.2 million dollars.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 9.8 or 98?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: 98.2 million. To
6 date, in Fiscal Year 24, we have spent 57.1 million.
7 I want everyone to keep in mind though, before...

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We can fund community
9 composting six times there.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Hold on.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Maybe eight or nine.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Hold on, what'd you
13 say?

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm saying we can fund
15 community composting with the difference just right
16 there.

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Hold on. Just to make
18 very clear, I want to make very clear on the record,
19 since we're talking about snow that the 57.1 million
20 that was spent, a lot of it is fixed costs, meaning
21 getting the plows for the trucks and buying the
22 calcium chloride and all of the salt so we didn't
23 spend 57.1 million dollars on overtime plowing snow
24 for two storms. I just want to be clear about that.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. It's pretty nice
3 out outside today. I don't think it's going to be
4 snowing much from here to the end of the year.

5 My second question is precision cleaning.
6 I know this is something that was in FY23 budget, but
7 it didn't make it for FY24. Is this something that
8 you would like to see return?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As I mentioned, we
10 took 60-million-dollars' worth of cuts to the agency.
11 The vast majority of them were around our cleaning
12 programs. Precision cleaning was one of those things
13 that was cut. We had to make very difficult choices
14 given the very difficult budget situation that we
15 were in. We have not yet started to see the effects
16 of the cuts on cleaning. I expect, if they are not
17 restored, that we will start to see the effects this
18 summer as we get more attrition and certainly by the
19 fall as the organics program begins because right now
20 we're doing all of our cleaning using our surplus
21 sanitation workers.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you by any chance
23 have the cost of what it was in FY23, the Precision
24 Cleaning program? And if you don't have it, you can
25 send it over.

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2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Joe, do you have the
3 FY23?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Yeah,
5 sure. In FY23, it was a total of 97 headcount, and
6 that was inclusive of what the baseline city funding
7 was in addition to the 60 full-time equivalents we
8 got from City Council funding, and that was a total
9 of 9.6 million dollars.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That's significant.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right. My last
13 question.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Now it's at 15.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. That's a big
16 decrease so something for us to also be on the
17 lookout for. Priority community composting, though.
18 Come on. Let's be real.

19 My last question is on Preliminary Budget
20 new needs. The Preliminary Budget includes 44 million
21 in personnel service adjustments for Fiscal 2024
22 only. What was the reason for this new need and what
23 will this funding support?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Joe could answer
25 that.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Sure. This
3 is really more of a technical adjustment than it is a
4 new need. Every year, we do receive money for various
5 personal services costs like the different ancillary
6 costs like holiday pay and those types of things. Our
7 personal services budget gets adjusted every year
8 based on actual expenditures. Just keep in mind that
9 our PS budget is over a billion dollars so accurately
10 predicting how much we're going to spend each year is
11 a little bit more of an art than it is a science so
12 we do receive these adjustments annually.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The Preliminary Budget
14 also included 34 million in OTPS for Fiscal 2024.
15 Similarly there, what was the reason for the new need
16 or technical adjustment, whatever you call it?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Yeah, so
18 this was primarily for waste export. Our waste export
19 costs are in excess of 500 million dollars a year.
20 Again...

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How much?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: 500
23 million a year so we do every year also receive an
24 adjustment to our waste export cost based on actual
25 expenditures throughout the year.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: In our follow up
3 questions, we want all those costs on exports and all
4 that.

5 My last question is, there seems to be an
6 increasing cost for overtime and with decreasing
7 headcount. Normally, we see increasing headcount
8 corresponding to increased overtime, but here we're
9 seeing decreased headcount but more overtime. Can you
10 explain the rationale for that?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Chair, we have the
12 highest number of Sanitation workers this year right
13 now than this Department has had in 25 years so we
14 definitely do not have a decreased number of
15 Sanitation workers. We have over 8,000 uniformed.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: My apologies on that,
17 it was increasing headcount.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay. And our non-
19 snow overtime in the first eight months of this year
20 is down significantly since last year. Joe, do you
21 have the numbers?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: Sure. Last
23 year through the end of February, our non-snow
24 uniform overtime was approximately 100 million
25

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2 dollars. This year, year-to-date, we've only spent 80
3 million so we've decreased significantly.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I'll just say,
5 though, with snow, it balances out. With snow, it's
6 about 106.8 versus 106.6 between the two years, but I
7 think the non-snow is the number that you're looking
8 for and is most relevant to the conversation, and
9 that is down substantially.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The average budgeted
11 overtime amount for uniformed workers is 157.9
12 million, but the actual spending has averaged 27.7
13 million for Fiscal 2022 and 2023. I understand that
14 overtime fills an important role in keeping staffing
15 levels appropriate and ensuring adequate Sanitation
16 response, but the budget does not adequately reflect
17 actual spending. What can be done to better budget
18 overtime?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANTONELLI: In past
20 years, overtime was relied on for a lot of regular
21 functions. I think now, based on the budget situation
22 that we're in now, overtime is truly only going to
23 the unplanned, nonrecurring-type event so snow is a
24 perfect example. Another nonrecurring-type expense
25 that we have is if there's a holiday during the week

2 and Sanitation workers are off, it's a Monday,
3 garbage does get put out and we do have to chase that
4 garbage throughout the week, so there's overtime in
5 those weeks, but I think if you look at our overtime
6 on a daily basis when we're in a normal week, we have
7 basically zero Sanitation worker overtime on normal
8 operation days so a lot of the overtime is
9 unpredictable, which is why the budgeting is maybe
10 not as precise as it could be, but we have done
11 everything we possibly can to limit the usage of
12 overtime.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That was my final
14 question. I want you to know that I'm super grateful.
15 This Committee is very grateful to you, Commissioner,
16 to your team. There are a lot of important issues
17 that I hope we get worked out. It would bring me a
18 lot of joy to see community composting in the Mayor's
19 Executive Plan in April, the full restoration. Also,
20 we have a lot of work to do to make sure we keep our
21 street clean, and I know that, in you, we have
22 partners to get that done, but I really hope it
23 doesn't take too much to get the community composting
24 in the budget because our green workers deserve it.
25 They are doing, I consider God's work, educating our

2 communities, collecting food scraps, processing the
3 compost. I was just at Governor's Island earlier this
4 week at Earth Matters, seeing their operation, and
5 I'm going to continue to visit other sites. Let's not
6 rob them of the civic engagement of collecting,
7 organics and putting out their food scraps and
8 putting them in the local compost bin. That's really
9 a civic activity and, the more that we can replicate
10 that, I think that we're going to see your program
11 succeed as well, and I think it's not an either or. I
12 think we need both so thank you so much,
13 Commissioner, and to your team, really grateful for
14 you and, until I see you again.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: We will be
17 taking a five-minute break before turning to public
18 testimony.

19 Okay, we will now turn to public
20 testimony. Each panelist will be given two minutes to
21 speak.

22 For panelists testifying in person,
23 please come to the dais as your name is called and
24 wait for your turn to speak.

2 For panelists who are testifying
3 remotely, once your name is called, a Member of our
4 Staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms will
5 give you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the
6 Sergeant to announce that you may begin.

7 During testimony, you must remain on
8 topic and please maintain decorum. Witnesses are not
9 permitted to record themselves or this Committee as a
10 hearing will be provided online.

11 Our first panel will be four members,
12 Corey Wilkins, Phyllis Yip, Nando Rodriguez, and Lena
13 Frey.

14 NANDO RODRIGUEZ: Hello. Good afternoon.
15 Thank you, Chair Abreu and the Members of the
16 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Sir, I'm so
18 sorry to interrupt you. We just need to pause for a
19 moment for the Chair to come back. I'm deeply
20 apologetic to interrupt your testimony.

21 Thank you for your patience. You may
22 begin your testimony when you're ready.

23 NANDO RODRIGUEZ: Hello. Good afternoon.
24 Thank you, Chair Abreu and Members of the Committee
25 on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for this

2 opportunity to testify. My name is Nando Rodriguez,
3 Senior Manager of the Environmental Program at the
4 Brotherhood of Sister Sol, a non-profit youth
5 development and social justice organization serving
6 in New York City since 1995. The Brotherhood Sister
7 Sol with long term partner, Open Road New York have
8 joined forces to advance the 1,000 Composting System
9 Initiative, a campaign to advance the New York City
10 2030 Zero Waste Management. This campaign was also
11 influenced by the community composting and it's
12 complementary to it. Our objective is to establish
13 1,000 food waste processing sites in each borough of
14 New York City. Collectively, these sites will have
15 the capacity to divert tons of local food waste from
16 our landfills each day. Ultimately, we envision an
17 interconnected network of community composting sites
18 throughout New York City with local stewards who are
19 actively engaged to improving the health of our
20 community and mitigating the effects of climate
21 change. The 1,000 Composting System Initiative will
22 accomplish multiple goals, including these three.

23 Increasing environmental education and
24 activism among New York City residents. With these
25 new sites, we bring together New Yorkers of various

2 ages to manage the local composting systems. Each
3 will become self-sustained partner in their
4 composting community and, in turn, educate and draw
5 food waste from hundreds of local residents.

6 Number two, supporting healthy
7 communities and environments. The local composting is
8 one of the powerful ways that communities can work
9 together to improve community health and address the
10 challenges of climate change. By collecting food
11 waste locally, we are greatly reducing the garbage
12 sent to landfills. In addition, compost is a critical
13 ingredient in the development of healthy soils.
14 Compost provides plants with nutrient-reduced
15 availability to heavy metals and plant uptakes, and
16 it suppresses soil diseases, which is a growing
17 danger in climate change. By producing and
18 distributing compost locally, we are supporting local
19 communities with the ability to grow food healthy and
20 to be used, personal and community, and therefore
21 improving the food insecurity.

22 Supporting green jobs, number three. The
23 1,000 Composting System Initiative will provide
24 employment for hundreds of youth around the
25 community, around the city, and train to build and

2 maintain a local composting system as well as educate
3 and organize their local community and support
4 projects. I would like to..

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. I'll give
6 you 10 more seconds.

7 NANDO RODRIGUEZ: 30 seconds, I'm done.

8 Lastly, I would like to share that in the 1990s when
9 the initiation of New York City Compost Project was
10 created, I was in my teens learning about urban
11 composting in the Lower East Side. The idea of New
12 York City residents separating food waste from their
13 garbage had me full of doubts, but I was interested,
14 inspired by the group's emerging Earth Matters Lower
15 East Side Ecology Center. Fast forward today, I now
16 work with an organization where I see over 500
17 participants per year learning and practicing
18 composting. I have witnessed the growth of the most
19 diverse community in New York City, which has erased
20 all doubts that I had about New York City residents.
21 I am now filled with hopes and dreams of New York
22 City leading the movement to combat climate change
23 through our community composting. I look forward to
24 looking forward to working with the Council Members

2 and to make composting a reality across New York
3 City. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Nando. You
5 guys try to keep it to two minutes. We have a lot of
6 people who have to testify.

7 COREY WILKINS: Thank you, Council Member
8 Abreu, and thank you to the Committee for having us
9 today for public testimony. My name is Corey Wilkins
10 and I'm a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers
11 Collective, a labor union represented by RWDSU, the
12 Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union. Today
13 I'm testifying on behalf of a union member of mine
14 named Courtney Scheffler.

15 I work as a compost coordinator and
16 driver for New York City with GrowNYC. Together with
17 our partners at New York City Compost Project, we
18 provide New Yorkers with waste equity access through
19 food scrap collections and processing, outreach,
20 education, and finished compost. It is imperative
21 that City Council fully restore sufficient funding
22 for community composting in the 2024 budget this
23 spring and mandate that these programs exist through
24 legislation. We are asking for organics to be
25 processed hyperlocally through community composting

2 and for the health of our neighbors and livelihoods.

3 I live paycheck-to-paycheck like many of my coworkers

4 and like many New Yorkers. The defunding of zero

5 waste programming will lay off 78 of my coworkers by

6 June. That is over half of our union, and our work is

7 essential and is not expensive. The cost is only

8 0.003 percent of the City's Sanitation budget, yet it

9 has made a positive impact on the lives of tens of

10 thousands of New Yorkers. The City's tax revenue is

11 up, and there is more than enough money to fund these

12 vital programs. There's always money for the NYPD to

13 surveil and brutalize the communities we serve but

14 never enough for community services. With service

15 gaps and inadequate outreach, curbside and smart bins

16 alone will not realize the waste equity needs of our

17 city. If this Administration were earnestly committed

18 to its purported environmental objectives, the

19 services we provide the public would be adequately

20 funded and legislated beyond our year-to-year

21 contracts. Investing in communities is always worth

22 it, especially those disproportionately experiencing

23 environmental injustice. Community compost, Zero

24 Waste Schools, and Stop and Swap have been defunded

25 just as our union has entered negotiations for our

2 first contract to make our workplace truly
3 sustainable for all workers. We are fighting for both
4 a fair contract and the jobs of over half of our
5 bargaining unit. Defunding our programs is an
6 inadequate justice to communities we serve, the parks
7 and street tree beds we nourish, and to our union
8 workers. Thank you. Courtney.

9 LENA FREY: Hi, good afternoon, Chair
10 Abreu and also Sandy Nurse. Thank you, guys, for
11 sticking around to hear public testimony. My name is
12 Lena Frey, and I am addressing you today as a proud
13 community compost worker and also a member of GrowNYC
14 Workers Collective represented by RWDSU. The recent
15 decision to cut all funding for community compost and
16 GrowNYC Zero Waste programs will deny millions of New
17 Yorkers the ability to keep their food scraps out of
18 landfills, and it means over 140 people like myself
19 will lose our jobs. This is a labor issue, and 79
20 union workers, including myself, across three
21 departments will be unemployed by June. We are in a
22 critical moment for our union and for green labor
23 across New York City with jobs in waste management
24 and education now hamstrung by these short-sighted
25 budget cuts. We need our City to invest in

2 sustainable waste management, build community
3 resilience, and fund green labor, yet the Mayor and
4 Sanitation Commissioner are choosing to do just the
5 opposite. The City cannot sustain a viable curbside
6 organics collection program while working against
7 community composting and the people who maintain it.
8 With the imminent loss of all of the outreach,
9 education, and access that is provided by GrowNYC's
10 Zero Waste programs and the New York City Compost
11 Project, the City's curbside program will continue to
12 stagnate in participation and suffer high rates of
13 contamination. We know that when there are gaps in
14 service, good habits are lost and, if these programs
15 are not renewed, the compost diversion rates will
16 likely never recover. I implore the City Council to
17 reinstate funding for the Zero Waste Programs at
18 GrowNYC and the New York City Compost Project. Funds
19 for these contracts must be made immediately
20 available to save our jobs and the 30-plus years of
21 progress we have made towards a sustainable New York
22 City for all. Thank you for your time and
23 consideration.

24 PHYLLIS YIP: Good afternoon. My name is
25 Phyllis Yip. I am a union member of the GrowNYC

2 Workers Collective. I am also a District 10 resident.

3 Mayor Eric Adams and his Administration like to use

4 the word inefficient to describe community compost,

5 and they will continue to use the word inefficient to

6 describe our Zero Waste programs. Inefficient means

7 insignificant. They believe we, the Zero Waste

8 workers, are insignificant, the work we do is

9 insignificant, a complete waste of taxpayers' money,

10 but will they say to the single mother picking up

11 free clothes for her baby at a Stop and Swap event

12 that she is insignificant? What about the senior

13 citizen who doesn't have a smartphone to use a smart

14 bin? Would they also say that he's insignificant and

15 then there are the young high school students

16 learning the science behind turning food scraps into

17 fuel for growing new plants? Are they too

18 insignificant? We know there are a lot of competing

19 issues worthy of your attention. I ask this Committee

20 and all of City Council to please make Zero Waste

21 jobs your top priority. You are not only fighting for

22 us union workers, but you are also fighting for the

23 people we serve. They are the city's most vulnerable

24 population, communities of color, immigrants,

25 seniors, and low-income New Yorkers so do everything

2 in your power to get us back our funding. Thank you
3 for listening.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.

6 Next, we will have Arif Sunmonu, Sitra Bowman,
7 Nathalie Huang, and Christine Datz-Romero.

8 ARIF SUNMONU: Okay. Hi, good afternoon,
9 Chair Abreu, Members of the Committee. Thank you for
10 the opportunity to testify today. My name is Arif
11 Sunmonu, and I'm the Government Affairs Lead here at
12 GrowNYC. GrowNYC is here today to support the
13 restoration of funding and reinvestment in community
14 composting as well as the other Zero Waste
15 programming at GrowNYC. The Mayor's budget cuts have
16 eliminated the funding for GrowNYC and the seven
17 organizations that make up the New York City Compost
18 Project. In addition, the City is not intending to
19 continue funding for our Zero Waste Schools Program,
20 which since 2010 has been instrumental in introducing
21 the next generation of New Yorkers to the importance
22 of and practices of waste reduction, composting, and
23 recycling as our colleagues will testify today. While
24 GrowNYC has received stopgap funding to support the
25 compost program, these funds will not carry us

2 through the next Fiscal Year. Further, our popular
3 Stop and Swap reuse program is also at risk. While
4 not officially cut, the City has provided no
5 indication of what the process and timing for the
6 restoration of the funds for the compost project and
7 the GrowNYC programs would be. If it is an RFP
8 process, then it is unlikely that we will be able to
9 financially sustain the gap between the restoration
10 of funds and getting a City contract in FY25. Our
11 need is urgent and our situation is dire. If the
12 funding for GrowNYC's program is not restored
13 immediately, the programming we have provided to
14 millions of New Yorkers over the past 18 months,
15 empowering them to take personal action against
16 climate change, could cease to exist on June 30th. In
17 addition, if funding is not restored for our partners
18 in the compost project, we are at risk of losing the
19 longest running community composting program in the
20 nation and dismantling of the processing capacity
21 that that have diligently built over the last 30
22 years on which GrowNYC relies. These budget cuts also
23 have a human cost. A loss of the funding for GrowNYC
24 programs alone will result in the loss of 94 jobs, 79
25 of which are union jobs. We are carefully slated to

2 lay off the bulk of our compost staff on May 20th,
3 and there seems to be no funding light at the end of
4 the tunnel. In addition to our numerous waste
5 diversion accomplishments, we have invaluable
6 educational component to our programming and engaging
7 communities through free compost give-backs, street
8 care events throughout the five boroughs. Our Zero
9 Waste Schools program helps train the next generation
10 of environmental leaders, and our Stop and Swap
11 program facilitates and reinforces the importance of
12 reuse and disposal. We respectfully request a
13 restoration of 7 million for the community composting
14 program, the restoration of 2 million for the Lower
15 East Side Ecology Center to complete the build of its
16 composting facility in Canarsie, the restoration of
17 2.5 million for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools Program,
18 the timely release of an RFP for GrowNYC's Stop and
19 Swap Program, the long-term extension of the license
20 for Big Reuse to continue its composting processing
21 capacity at the Baby Bridge Park in Queens, and the
22 long-term extension of the license for Earth Matter
23 to continue its compost processing facility capacity
24 on Governors Island. Thank you so much for the time
25 to testify.

2 NATHALIE HUANG: Good afternoon, Chair

3 Abreu and Members of the Sanitation Committee. Thank
4 you for this opportunity to testify. My name is
5 Nathalie Huang and, like some of the people who have
6 testified before me, I am a proud member of the
7 GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by RWDSU. I
8 have worked as a compost coordinator at GrowNYC for
9 two years now, and together with our partners at the
10 New York City Compost Project, we represent the
11 community composting programs who serve millions of
12 New Yorkers. GrowNYC's compost program was extended
13 in December due to a generous private donor and,
14 while we were told this funding will last until June,
15 we received news last month that due to cutting
16 operational costs, me and my 53 colleagues will
17 instead lose our jobs on May 20th. I owe my life to
18 community composting, from interning at Earth Matter
19 to training in the Master Composter program at the
20 Lower East Side Ecology Center. They empowered me to
21 advocate for community composting and taught me what
22 the citywide organics collection program could not.
23 The joy, beauty, and community that comes from
24 building a compost pile with other people and being
25 able to touch and feel the product of our shared

2 labor, finished nutrient-rich compost. As community
3 compost workers, we engage in face-to-face
4 interactions to teach people about composting
5 methods, recycling initiatives, and tangible ways to
6 be more sustainable. The citywide organics collection
7 program does not come close. The finished compost
8 created from community composting is returned to
9 local communities to improve their soils. The biogas
10 produced from the majority of organic waste collected
11 from brown bins and smart bins do not. The City
12 cannot have a successful citywide organics collection
13 program without working in partnership with community
14 composting organizations. We deserve to keep the jobs
15 we have the heart and passion for and to continue
16 serving local communities who need us for community
17 composting. The City Council must fight to fully
18 restore funding to GrowNYC's Compost Program and the
19 New York City Compost Project in the upcoming budget,
20 and mandate that these programs are protected through
21 legislation. Thank you for your time and
22 consideration.

23 SITRA BOWMAN: Good afternoon, everyone.

24 Thank you for this opportunity to testify today. My
25 name is Sitra Bowman, and I'm speaking today as a

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 123

2 member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented
3 by RWDSU. I am here today to ask for the restoration
4 of the Zero Waste Programs at GrowNYC and the
5 community composting program. I have been working as
6 an Education and Engagement Lead in the Zero Waste
7 Schools Program at GrowNYC for almost two years.

8 During my time, I have seen how these initiatives
9 provide vital services that are key to creating a
10 sustainable waste infrastructure for this city. As an
11 Education and Engagement Lead, my job entails
12 providing support and education for schools so they
13 can be in compliance with the curbside composting
14 program. The past two years have seen the expansion
15 of the program to cover all schools within the five
16 boroughs. This is a great opportunity for schools to
17 divert their waste from landfills. Up to 51 percent
18 of the waste created by schools can be composted.

19 Another 30 percent can be recycled. It takes a long
20 time to successfully implement new systems and create
21 new habits. The current format that we have of
22 serving eight schools over six weeks is not enough
23 time to create any type of real change regarding
24 behaviors and attitudes about recycling and
25 composting. Over the past two weeks, I've had three

2 schools reach out to me that I no longer work with.

3 Two of them were from the Bronx where I worked last

4 year. The Zero Waste Schools Expansion Program

5 started in the Bronx because it has historically been

6 underserved. We would do a disservice to communities

7 when public programs are rolled out without adequate

8 resources to make them successful. This past fall, I

9 was assigned to schools in Brooklyn when curbside

10 composting was rolled out throughout the borough. At

11 every school I visited, teachers, administrators, and

12 faculty members had questions about what materials

13 could be composted at home and how residential

14 pickups would actually happen. The confusion I

15 encountered was emblematic of the lack of funding and

16 commitment to outreach and education at DSNY. There

17 is an ongoing need for the outreach and education

18 that the Zero Waste Schools program provides,

19 especially in marginalized communities. Zero Waste

20 Schools, Stop and Swap, and community compost are

21 programs that are part of a green job ecosystem. The

22 cutting of these programs will result in the loss of

23 78 green union jobs. Without these jobs, how can I

24 demonstrate to students that this is a viable career

25 option? I am not only advocating for my own job, but

2 for future green jobs. These programs and
3 opportunities provide students with essential
4 education and not only teach them about climate
5 change, but also provides them with the skills and
6 knowledge on how to cope with it. This program is
7 vital as climate change will continue to affect young
8 people throughout their lives. We are educating a
9 generation of future environmental stewards who will
10 have the tools to improve on the systems that we have
11 already put into place. Thank you for your time.

12 CHRISTINE DATZ-ROMERO: Thank you. It's
13 such an honor to sit at this table with the next
14 generation of leaders coming up, and it just really
15 demonstrates what we what we stand to lose if we lose
16 this program. My name is Christine Datz-Romero, and
17 I'm with the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and I
18 think in this room, we all agree that community
19 composting really delivers the greatest positive
20 social and climate impacts in terms of fighting
21 against the escalating climate crisis. We really
22 appreciate the leadership of the Chairperson of the
23 Sanitation Committee, Shaun Abreu, in asking for this
24 money. It seems like we just learned that there's 40
25 million dollars left in the budget from snow removal

2 that could fund this program over and over again, and
3 what we're really hoping is that the compost project
4 budget line will be baselined in the future and to
5 find ways to not always be like this bargaining chip
6 in the negotiations because it really affects
7 people's lives and it also affects programs that
8 really need to go on year-over-year and not this
9 constant threat of stopping and going. I don't think
10 I need to get into all the benefits that we are
11 creating, but I want to just really emphasize that
12 also besides the programs that we run, we also need
13 the infrastructure to run these programs on and
14 infrastructure, of course, is people, but it is also
15 physical places, and I want to just reiterate that
16 community composting has a place in public land,
17 especially also in public parks, and we need to find
18 ways to really secure those locations so that we're
19 not constantly feeling threatened to our existence.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.

23 Next, we will have Eric Goldstein, Justin Green,
24 Anneliese, excuse my pronunciation, Zausner-Mannes,
25 and Justin Wood.

2 You may begin when ready.

3 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good afternoon

4 (INAUDIBLE) Natural Resources Defense Council, and

5 I'm going to summarize my written remarks. First,

6 we're very excited by the Sanitation Department's

7 Containerization initiative. It has great potential,

8 and we congratulate Commissioner Tisch on moving that

9 program forward. We urge the Council to continue to

10 fully fund it and to carefully review the results of

11 the initial pilot project.

12 Second, we also support fully funding for

13 restoration and expansion of the Street Litter Basket

14 Collection program and the Illegal Dumping Camera

15 program. We urge the Council to provide funding for

16 both of those and to ensure that all neighborhoods,

17 regardless of income level, receive the benefits of

18 the litter basket service, which hasn't always

19 happened in the past.

20 The most important point today is an

21 urgent plea for the Council to restore full funding

22 for community composting. In particular, this means 7

23 million dollars for funding the New York Compost

24 Project and funding, wherever it comes from, for

25 processing facilities for Lower East Side and for Big

2 Reuse. Their work is essential to the success of the
3 Department's entire curbside organics collection
4 program. The men and women who work at the Department
5 of Sanitation have a hard job, and they work with
6 great dedication but, in terms of composting, they
7 cannot do it alone. At the last hearing, a spokesman
8 for the Sanitation Department said, in essence, that
9 the work of these non-profit community composting
10 groups, that they did a terrific job, but they're no
11 longer needed, and so thanks very much. That
12 sentiment is ignorant, short-sighted, and dead wrong.
13 Curbside composting will never achieve the full
14 potential it has without the work of these non-profit
15 groups, GrowNYC, LES, Big Reuse, Earth Matters, and
16 the Botanic Gardens. These groups are providing the
17 training, education for residents, school kids, and
18 even businesses that are necessary for full
19 participation to make the curbside program cost-
20 effective. The early data from Queen's curbside bear
21 this out. According to a recent analysis by Professor
22 Samantha MacBride, only 4 percent of the potential
23 material in Queens curbside composting is now being
24 collected. Clearly, a much stronger education and
25 training effort is needed, and that's exactly what

2 the community composters can do. DSNY should embrace
3 these non-profit groups rather than take a go it
4 alone approach. Together, it can be a great program
5 and, meanwhile, the Parks Department needs to wake up
6 and extend the license for the nationally honored Big
7 Reuse non-profit's Long Island City site beyond June
8 30th, rather than seeking to convert that solid waste
9 jewel into a Department parking lot. Really? Two
10 final points. Regarding commercial waste zone
11 implementation, we support full funding for
12 implementation of all 20 zones by the end of 2025, if
13 not before. This includes for money, not only for
14 implementation, but enforcement and transparency so
15 that the Council and the public can understand
16 exactly what's happening with this landmark program.
17 The public needs assurances that the contracts being
18 awarded are consistent with and supportive of the
19 environmental labor protection and environmental
20 justice goals that led the Council to pass this
21 legislation in the first place.

22 Finally, the Council should ensure
23 sufficient funding for completion of the 2026 solid
24 Waste Management Plan. That needs to include public
25 engagement in plan development and, while we're at

2 it, the Council should inquire about implementation
3 of projects that were supposed to have been
4 undertaken pursuant to the 2006 Solid Waste
5 Management Plan. The marine transfer station's
6 conversion to handle a portion of commercial waste
7 that is otherwise slated for export and the
8 completion and redeployment of marine transfer
9 stations at Gansevoort and the Upper West Side 59th
10 Street. Both of those unfulfilled promises from the
11 2026 plan have strong justifications in terms of
12 environmental justice. Both measures are long overdue
13 and warrant a dusting off and timely reexamination by
14 the Department. We look forward to continue to work
15 with you. We appreciate so much your leadership, the
16 two of you and the other Council Members, and we hope
17 that you will right the wrong and restore funding for
18 community composting in the final budget. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Eric.

20 JUSTIN GREEN: I'm Justin Green. I'm the
21 Executive Director of Big Reuse. I wanted to really
22 thank the Chair for leading an amazing rally, great
23 hearing, amazing questions to Sanitation from Council
24 and especially the Chair. Thanks to ex-Chair Nurse
25 for sticking it out and being here. You guys have

2 formed an amazing team to take some of these
3 questions on, so really thank you.

4 With the budget cuts last year, Big Reuse
5 has been a partner with the Department of Sanitation
6 for the last decade on the compost project and
7 outreach and composting. With the budget cuts last
8 year, we had to lay off 16 of our staff, amazing
9 staff who've done amazing work composting over 2
10 million pounds of material each year at three
11 composting sites, providing 1,000 cubic yards of
12 finished compost to 300 parks, community groups, and
13 street tree care projects. Our outreach team, of
14 which there is still a tremendous need for, was also
15 laid off. They spoke to 75,000 New Yorkers, knocked
16 on 35,000 doors every year, and were at 600 events a
17 year, speaking seven different languages. The really
18 short-sighted cuts from the Department of Sanitation
19 cut our program and programs like ours at the
20 Botanical Gardens, GrowNYC, Earth Matter, and Lower
21 East Side, programs that are necessary and the best
22 option for composting in the city. I know we're
23 trying to go easiest and simplest, but it doesn't
24 make sense to get rid of the best option that
25 actually has the biggest impact, which is community

2 composting, as we all know that engages the most
3 people, is the most equitable, and has the sort of
4 most ecological impact of any other solutions, so I
5 support restoration of the budget of 7 million
6 GrowNYC budget for education, budget for the build
7 out of Lower East Side Ecology site, and our site in
8 Queensbridge, as Eric just mentioned, is also getting
9 pushed off. It doesn't need any money. We just need
10 to be allowed to stay, and that's all Parks needs to
11 do. Thanks.

12 ANNELIESE ZAUSNER-MANNES: Hi, my name is
13 Annalisa Zausner-Mannes. Thank you for being here,
14 former Chair, current Chair, incredible work. This
15 isn't about the budget, 1.9 million, quick math, I
16 was a math teacher for many years. Our program's 7
17 million, it's a rounding error percentage of the
18 entire budget. I worked in schools for about 15
19 years, in the middle school classroom, and across the
20 U.S., I was in Asia, I was in Europe, and what I saw
21 consistently happening was replacing programs. We
22 would take one program and replace it. Everyone here
23 has engaged with the school in one way or another,
24 and we're familiar with that. I see that happening
25 with this program. We are starting a new program and

2 a new program, and as a result, we're putting funds
3 and allocating funds to something new when we have
4 something currently that's in place and works. We are
5 often not providing training, no actual education,
6 and an expectation of a seamless transition, which is
7 very simply not possible, especially when funding is
8 an issue. I'm here to advocate that the City needs
9 multi-faceted infrastructure that incorporates
10 different methods, not throwing out something old and
11 introducing something new, but weaving together tried
12 and true with new to create a robust program, a truly
13 diverse way to divert waste. Community composting
14 sites collect and produce actual compost, I want to
15 just emphasize that, actual finished compost, which
16 is a soil (INAUDIBLE) that stays in our city and goes
17 right back into our parks and our street trees. That
18 means fewer vehicles on streets, that means fewer
19 gasoline, fewer emissions, and a circular system. It
20 improves the health of our urban landscape, street
21 trees, air quality. Anaerobic co-digestion, which is
22 where the majority of smart bins and curbside goes,
23 does not. I'm ending with letters from Ms. Cahill's
24 class at PS503, who are watching right now, and wrote
25 letters that are going to Mayor Adams and

2 Commissioner Tisch fighting for organics to stay here
3 in New York City through community composting
4 facilities through those partners that my colleague
5 here just named. Thank you for your time. Thank you
6 for your advocacy.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

8 JUSTIN WOOD: Thank you, Chair Abreu and
9 former Chair Nurse for the opportunity to testify.
10 I'm Justin Wood. I'm the Director of Policy at New
11 York Lawyers for the Public Interest. We're a
12 founding member of the Transform Don't Trash New York
13 City Coalition.

14 I'll summarize written remarks. Thank you
15 to the Council for doing your own financial analysis
16 and pushing back on some of the revenue projections
17 that have been used to justify really harmful cuts to
18 the City's climate, sanitation, green jobs, and so
19 many other programs. It's just not enough. Every year
20 that we're here talking about what we just learned is
21 upwards of half a billion dollars in waste export
22 costs when the climate crisis is increasingly and
23 more severely impacting more New Yorkers every month
24 so we appreciate the sustained effort to sustain real
25 Sanitation diversion programs and job creation

2 programs. To name just a few, I want to emphasize
3 what my colleague, Eric, said about the Solid Waste
4 Management program planning. We've not yet held the
5 City accountable for the unfulfilled promises of the
6 last Solid Waste Management Plan, which include the
7 buildout of major marine transfer stations and the
8 use of marine and rail facilities to lessen the
9 grossly unequal impacts of a truck and export
10 intensive waste system, and so we're looking forward
11 to a real engagement with communities and with the
12 Council on the new program. We're concerned that the
13 budget for the engagement consultant was cut and, in
14 our view, the new Solid Waste Management Plan should
15 be fully advancing the statewide and economy-wide
16 emissions reductions goals of the Climate Leadership
17 and Community Protection Act, and this is also in
18 keeping with the Zero Waste Act. Thank you, former
19 Chair Nurse, for your leadership on that. It's not
20 enough for Sanitation to simply publish a laundry
21 list in our view of laudable but noncomprehensive
22 programs. It's got to be all of the different
23 diversion and job creation programs we've talked
24 about today comprehensively. I'll just wrap up by
25 saying with commercial waste zones, we're excited for

2 the rollout of a landmark program. We're concerned
3 that the language around it continues to be one of a
4 pilot, especially when both to scale up diversion,
5 safety, and efficiency in the commercial sector, it
6 really needs to sync up in New Yorkers' minds and
7 behaviors with the massive and ubiquitous public
8 education effort that's going to be needed to have us
9 all doing organics recycling at home, at work, in
10 public spaces, and everywhere so I'll wrap up with
11 that. We look forward to submitting written comments
12 and thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for that.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.

15 Next, we'll have Eric Arnum, Eric Menjivar, B.O.
16 Moore, and Kate Wimsatt.

17 You may begin. Thank you.

18 ERIC ARNUM: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and
19 past Chair Nurse. My name is Eric Arnum. I'm from the
20 Forest Hills Green Team out in Queens. I'm a
21 volunteer with that organization. I've been there for
22 about five years. When I first started with the Green
23 Team, we were planting daffodils and tulips and
24 cleaning up parks and, almost four years ago to the
25 day, the world changed. I remember it vividly. March

2 13, 2020, the world shut down because of the
3 pandemic, and something else that shut down was the
4 composting operation that was going on in McDonald
5 Park, which is right near the post office in Forest
6 Hills. The Green Team saw an opportunity to fill a
7 void and we began doing community composting
8 collections every Sunday morning at McDonald Park
9 and, pretty soon, we had 200 clients who were coming
10 every single Sunday to see us, and I remember there
11 was this one woman I knew from when my daughter was
12 in school. She got very mad at me because I told her
13 that we were going to be there every Sunday, and then
14 we took Memorial Day off and she came with her bag,
15 one of these, and we weren't there and she was very
16 upset by that, and what I want to say is that
17 community compost, we talk about the education, but
18 we also should talk about it becoming a sort of town
19 square for people to come and, especially during the
20 pandemic, when we were so isolated and trapped in our
21 homes to come in and interact with their neighbors,
22 with us. Something else that we do, we put out a
23 table, we gave out masks and all of the other what do
24 you call it, the sanitizer and the test kits and
25 everything like that, but why are we still in

2 business? The reason is because out in Queens, as Mr.
3 Goldstein just said, the rate at which people are
4 complying with this program is so low, even in my
5 building, we do not collect so I think that community
6 composting provides that service. Thank you very
7 much.

8 ERIC MENJIVAR: Good afternoon, Chair
9 Abreu, and Members of the Sanitation Committee, and
10 also anyone else who is listening on through Zoom,
11 along as well as my Councilwoman, Vickie Paladino.
12 Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is
13 Eric Menjivar, and I'm a proud member of the
14 Bargaining Committee of the GrowNYC Workers
15 Collective, represented by RWDSU, along with whom my
16 job titles as Green Market Manager at Corona and
17 Forest Hills, I also work as a Compost Coordinator
18 for GrowNYC as part of the Zero Waste Program that
19 was defunded this past December. We, the workers of
20 the Zero Waste Program, divert more than 8.3 million
21 pounds of organic waste every single year, along with
22 85,000 pounds of reusable items that are collected
23 across the city and provided to our communities, and
24 we educate over 450,000 people about authentic
25 sustainability through community composting. My

2 objective here today is to simply reiterate what I've
3 been saying the last couple of times while I've been
4 here and, last time I spoke about consequences, and
5 we are seeing the consequences in real time regarding
6 these budget cuts. We were saved miraculously because
7 of an anonymous donation, but it is limited and,
8 because of that, hours have been reduced and sites
9 have been closing, among them in Forest Hills in
10 which we had to reduce an hour of service leading to
11 a lot of people who are frustrated and also public
12 trust diminishing. These budget cuts are nothing less
13 than betrayal of public trust and also disrespect to
14 the workers of GrowNYC and also our community
15 composting organizations. The best plan for
16 infrastructure that we have for community composting
17 is already present, and it is unjust to simply ignore
18 it and to simply start over with something new, and
19 the plans that DSNY has been providing are simply
20 inadequate and have been very vague. I ask that the
21 City Council reject the tolerance of this vagueness
22 and ignorance that DSNY is displaying and that we ask
23 for the complete restoration of the funds, not only
24 for the New York City compost project, but also for
25 all Zero Waste programs because these are vital for

2 all of our communities in New York City, and not only
3 for restoration, but also to see that we have enough
4 funding to actually do the job right, being able to
5 address certain communities in which we haven't been
6 doing outreach and also any blind spots we have in
7 operations. I'll end this testimony by saying that
8 not only are we asking for restoration but also the
9 cementation of the Zero Waste programs and also the
10 New York City compost project through legislation to
11 ensure it's existing for future years to come. Thank
12 you.

13 KATE WIMSATT: Thank you, Chairperson
14 Abreu and former Chair Nurse, for the opportunity to
15 testify today. My name is Kate Wimsatt and I'm the
16 Director of GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools. As we know,
17 the Mayor's Preliminary Fiscal Year 25 budget
18 eliminates entirely funding for GrowNYC Zero Waste
19 Schools, ending a successful and effective 13-year
20 partnership that provides the technical support and
21 education essential for curbside composting to work
22 in New York City public schools. I cannot overstate
23 the deep concern of how this void will impact
24 schools' ability to participate adequately in
25 curbside composting. Since 2011, GrowNYC Zero Waste

2 Schools has been the educational partner of DSNY and
3 NYCPS. Our education and operational support to K
4 through 12 public schools across all five boroughs
5 has been instrumental in increasing recycling and
6 curbside compost collection in the largest school
7 system in the United States. At the end of this
8 month, after an ambitious two-year expansion, all
9 schools in New York City will have curbside
10 composting service from the Department of Sanitation.
11 Service availability does not equal high level
12 participation. Our work getting schools to divert as
13 much as 86 percent of their waste is not yet done.
14 Why? The pace of the rollout to over 1,200 schools
15 and over 700 buildings did not allow for the deep
16 education, training, and troubleshooting necessary
17 for the systems to become fully established. The
18 GrowNYC Zero Waste team laid the groundwork for
19 success, but ongoing support is most critical at this
20 time. Compared to previous expansions, schools
21 enrolled these past two years in the Bronx, outer
22 Queens, and outer Brooklyn received the least amount
23 of support. Timing allowed for only four to six
24 visits per site over a few months, a far shorter
25 period than the one to three years provided in

2 previous expansions. While many in this room are
3 committed and excited about compost, not all schools
4 new to the service welcome the change. We don't
5 expect everyone in a school to become a champion of
6 compost, but we do expect them to do what is
7 necessary to separate waste in their buildings for
8 proper collection. This requires a sustained effort
9 to change behaviors, habits, and systems in the
10 process and, when the system is working, many along
11 the way come to realize the benefits of compost.
12 Schools experience a high level of turnover. The
13 staff, administrators, and students reached today are
14 not the people present next year. Without funding,
15 GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools would not be able to
16 provide the training, troubleshooting, and when
17 necessary, escalations of issues to our agency
18 partners so that school-based staff are able to
19 operate a smooth-running waste management system that
20 results in clean, uncontaminated, containerized,
21 separated waste put out on the correct day for
22 collection by DSNY. We will not be able to provide
23 the outreach to empower New York City students, the
24 next generation of New York City's leaders...

25 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

2 KATE WIMSATT: Makers and doers. We are
3 respectfully requesting the restoration of 2.5
4 million of GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools budget as well
5 as the restoration of 7 million for community
6 composting, including GrowNYC's food scraps drop off
7 sites and New York City compost, and the timely
8 release of an RFP for GrowNYC's Stop and Swap
9 programs.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.
11 Next, we will have Lacey Tauber, Matthew Civello,
12 Marisa de Domenicis, and Mia Velez.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thanks for your
14 patience. I know you've been waiting a few hours.

15 LACEY TAUBER: Hi, Chair Abreu and former
16 Chair Nurse. My name is Lacey Tauber. I'm
17 representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio
18 Reynoso. My testimony is long so I'm going to
19 summarize and submit written as well. As former Chair
20 of this Committee from 2014 to 2021, the Borough
21 President remains deeply invested in a comprehensive
22 approach to waste management that centers
23 sustainability and environmental justice and is
24 concerned about this Administration's approach to the
25 FY 2025 budget including a few things that I'll

2 outline. The first is administrative staffing,
3 outreach, and communications. As we've discussed,
4 this year DSNY is going to implement some of its most
5 transformative programs, including commercial waste
6 zones, curbside organics collection in Manhattan, and
7 requiring residential building owners to containerize
8 their trash. All of these programs are complicated.
9 They require significant planning, oversight and,
10 most critically, public engagement in order to be
11 successful. Additionally, the recycling diversion
12 rate is actually going down. It's short of
13 Sanitation's goal, which is actually lower than that
14 of many other cities. Education and outreach are
15 critical to getting this number up and to the success
16 of these new programs so cutting outreach, education,
17 and staffing for implementation seems short-sighted,
18 particularly given the recent re-estimates that
19 predict budget surplus. Similarly on the solid waste
20 management plan, I just want to underscore that this
21 plan is going to guide solid waste management in the
22 city for the next 20 years, and the 2006 plan had
23 really transformative measures in it including
24 bringing a metal, glass, plastic recycling facility
25 to the city, which is now operating in Sunset Park,

2 developing the MTSs which was a huge win for
3 environmental justice advocates who really had a role
4 in participating and shaping the plan because it
5 really helped get trucks off our streets. Oh no, I'm
6 sorry, okay, really quickly, community composting,
7 he's a big supporter. You've heard it all already. I
8 will just add specifically that he really wants to
9 see Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center
10 continue to operate in their spaces and then,
11 finally, something kind of random. The Brooklyn
12 District 1315 Sanitation Garage. He's been advocating
13 for this to be part of the Capital Plan because their
14 facilities are among the worst physical plants in
15 DSNY's holdings, and they continue to not be part of
16 the Capital Budget. Despite the fact that City
17 Council had approved site selection for a site in
18 2006, it was never funded, and actually that site was
19 just sold by National Grid to a real estate company
20 for 51 million dollars so we lost our opportunity.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

22 LACEY TAUBER: Thank you so much.

23 MATTHEW CIVELLO: I guess I'm next. I'm
24 Matthew Civello, Chair of the Manhattan Solid Waste
25 Advisory Board, and I am reading on behalf of the

2 four Solid Waste Advisory Boards. Thank you, Chair
3 Abreu, today for holding this important hearing, and
4 thank you to former Chair Nurse for holding so many
5 of these meetings in the past. It was greatly
6 appreciated. The current Solid Waste Management Plan
7 of 2006 recognized waste export as unsustainable,
8 recommending aggressive recycling diversion goals,
9 education initiatives, and in-city processing
10 facilities. Of our new waste policy initiatives, most
11 notable is mandatory curbside organics collection,
12 which organics make up 40 percent of what we export
13 to waste for landfill and incineration disposal.
14 Curbside organics is expected to divert, eventually,
15 a substantial portion of the 1.1 million tons of
16 organics annually away from disposal to landfill and
17 incineration and shift nearly 200 million dollars in
18 associated fiscal spend to beneficial uses like
19 compost and composting. Our past initiatives,
20 however, should inform our current policy
21 initiatives. Today, the planned support for mandatory
22 organics is similar to our 35-year support for
23 recycling, offering curbside collection, smart bin
24 availability, enforcement and perhaps additional
25 organics collection days. Absent from this support,

2 however, is the New York City Community Compost
3 Project's outreach and education that leveraged the
4 true believers to convert the non-believers, the
5 indifferent, and the outright hostile to participate
6 in an ongoing organics diversion program. Small by
7 design, with an approximately 4-million-dollar annual
8 budget, the 30-year-old compost project was also
9 effective, engaging 500,000 residents, collecting 8
10 million pounds of food scraps and yard waste each
11 year, and it was very efficient. Of every 1 spent on
12 the New York City compost project's FY22 budget, 63
13 cents were spent engaging the public in processing
14 and collection and 37 cents devoted entirely to
15 experiential outreach education. Lessons from the 35
16 years of recycling indicate that it would be wise to
17 continue this tiny ongoing investment to make
18 curbside organics success and help realize hundreds
19 of millions in fiscal benefits. Our full comments on
20 many more of these items that we spoke about today
21 will follow. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much.

23 MARISA DE DOMINICIS: Good afternoon.

24 Thank you for this opportunity and all of the great
25 work that you've been doing. I'm going to waive my

2 testimony. I'll submit that online in order to humbly
3 present one of the student's testimony who had to go
4 to work. This is coming from Lina Lajqi, a senior at
5 the New York Harbor School in marine affairs at the
6 CTE track.

7 I've worked closely with Earth Matter
8 since my sophomore year. I couldn't imagine not
9 having a resource like Earth Matter in my school
10 life. They are a crucial part of my education. I use
11 my skills in school and implement them into my daily
12 life outside of school. If the compost budget doesn't
13 change, my education will. My peers and I will have
14 fewer resources along with other New York City
15 schools that want to practice sustainability and
16 composting. I have firsthand experience with
17 composting. I have seen change that compost brings at
18 school and in my Brooklyn Heights community. Without
19 the help of Earth Matter, composting would be unknown
20 to me. Ten New York City schools were picked to do
21 the Exploring Sustainability in Green Careers pilot
22 program, and my school was one of the 10 to be chosen
23 but, without a resource like Earth Matter, there is
24 no inside support for this program even to succeed.
25 We even utilize Earth Matter's practices in our

2 school's urban garden. We use compost in our garden
3 to give our crops the exact supplements they need to
4 grow. We learn this by watching Earth Matters
5 Tactics. Finally, our garden began to thrive. This is
6 only one example of many others showing how much we
7 learn. Community composting is much needed resources.
8 I can wholeheartedly say that removing the budget for
9 community composting harms not only the state of our
10 city but also New York City schools' abilities to
11 teach composting topics that will apply far into the
12 future. Our education and our future is in your
13 hands. Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

15 MARISA DE DOMINICIS: Thank you, Lina.

16 AUDREY JENKINS: Hello my name is Audrey
17 Jenkins, and I will be delivering testimony on the
18 behalf of Mia Velez, also a student at the Harbor
19 School.

20 Good afternoon. My name is Mia Velez. I
21 am a concerned resident of Brooklyn and a student of
22 the Urban Assembly in New York Harbor School. I am
23 reaching out today to express my deep concern about
24 the 2025 composting and waste management budget. I
25 started getting involved in community composting at

2 my career technical education program at the Harbor
3 School. In my career technical education program,
4 marine affairs, we do all sorts of sustainability and
5 most importantly, composting. I've worked internships
6 with one of its partners, Earth Matter, through my
7 school. During my three internships, two summer and
8 one fall, I learned the importance of composting and
9 why it should be spread throughout the city. Not only
10 did I learn the importance of composting, but I was
11 also able to educate visitors and fellows students of
12 the facility on composting because of how in depth
13 they taught me. Without City-funded composting
14 facilities, a lot of people wouldn't be educated on
15 the importance of composting and why it's so helpful
16 to our city. If the budget is cut for composting,
17 Earth Matter will not be able to educate people on
18 the importance of composting and what it really does
19 to help fight climate change. Many volunteers,
20 corporations, and even Council Members are educated
21 by Earth Matters. Since they are educated, they can
22 spread the information they have learned and take it
23 back to their communities. The evolution of
24 composting has been improved since COVID-19 when it
25 was shut down. We are going back down that path. When

2 we didn't have our food scraps drop-off sites, there
3 was so much more food waste, leading to more garbage
4 being thrown out. Some may think that Earth Matter
5 does not make an impact, but it does. Earth Matter
6 not only educates on composting, but also educates on
7 farming and sustainability. Earth Matter is a non-
8 profit organization that works closely with its
9 partners and is the best help it can be. With my
10 experience at the Harbor School, the organization has
11 helped us start an urban farm, educate us on
12 composting and use the compost made directly from the
13 school lunch scraps back into our garden. Without
14 Earth Matter, none of this would have been possible.
15 Council Member Abreu, as a fellow Latin American, I
16 hope you will see that there are not many people of
17 color in this field and cutting this funding will not
18 help with this issue. Cutting funding for community
19 composting will be problematic for composting
20 facilities and their partners. Every facility opens
21 people's eyes to how negatively climate change will
22 affect us if we don't take action. As I speak, my
23 teacher and peers are working with Earth Matter
24 staff. My teacher consults community composters to
25 learn and develop a curriculum. We have that

2 privilege and others should have that privilege. The
3 Mayor wants to move us into a green careers-driven
4 city. It seems contradictory to force schools to
5 teach to the future and then for the Mayor to cut the
6 funding for the future. Thank you for your time. It
7 is greatly appreciated.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, and whose
9 testimony was that again? You said it was a student?

10 AUDREY JENKINS: Yes, that was the student
11 who wasn't able to be here as well. Mia Velez.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Great. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you. Our
14 next panel will be Anita Chan, Samantha MacBride,
15 Robin Nagel, and Andrea Liskey.

16 ANITA CHAN: Hi, good afternoon, Chair
17 Abreu and Committee members. My name is Anita Chan,
18 and I'm a lifelong New York City resident, a
19 composter, an Earth Matter New York board member, and
20 a member of 350NYC Waste Not. I am here today to urge
21 the City Council to restore the funding for community
22 composting for the upcoming Fiscal Year and beyond.
23 As we're trying to combat the climate crisis and
24 achieve our City's sustainability goals, we need to
25 invest in green jobs. My first green job was when I

2 was 16, and I've worked many more since. Two weeks
3 ago, Mayor Adams said that he wants to make New York
4 City the leader in green collar jobs. We must first
5 restore the jobs that were lost last year and secure
6 the ones that will be lost in the upcoming months due
7 to the budget cuts, and then we can go on to creating
8 more jobs for the new graduates, people looking to
9 switch careers, and our youth who are planning to
10 pursue degrees in climate. Earth Matter, Big Reuse,
11 Lower East Side Ecology Center, the four botanical
12 gardens, and GrowNYC have proven their ability to
13 efficiently utilize a very small budget to create
14 robust compost programming, education, collection,
15 and processing that benefits a large network of
16 organizations, schools, gardens, and individuals
17 year-round. When you participate in community
18 composting, you are able to trace your food scraps to
19 a processing site and know that it's composted and it
20 will nourish our soils. Having staff at scrap drop-
21 off sites, in-person compost education, local
22 processing, and door-to-door outreach are crucial for
23 the success of the brown bins and the orange bins
24 program and the organic waste diversion as a whole in
25 our city so community composting should be funded

2 through the City, not by private donations. The City
3 needs to properly fund it and let them lead on the
4 expansion of organic waste diversion. Thank you to
5 all the city Council Members who have been showing
6 their support already, and we hope to get everyone
7 else on board to restore the community composting
8 budget. Thank you.

9 SAMANTHA MACBRIDE: Chair Abreu, Members
10 of the Committee, former Chair Nurse, it's an honor
11 to address you. I'm Samantha MacBride. I'm a
12 professor at Baruch College and formerly worked at
13 Department of Sanitation for over 20 years. I would
14 like to ask you to think about collection costs.
15 Collection costs were why the last curbside organics
16 program was cut. Collection costs were very high
17 because tonnages were low, and there were
18 inefficiencies in collection. The same thing is on
19 its way to happening again. I have done a detailed
20 analysis of tonnages collected in the Borough of
21 Queens, which is the first borough that has had
22 collection for a year. As mentioned before, the
23 capture rate is 4.3 percent. Collection costs are
24 going to be sky high at that rate. The other thing I
25 want to point out and implore you to do is to ask

2 tough questions about the tonnages and poundages that
3 Sanitation reports to you as being diverted in
4 organics. The 211 million pounds or 105,000 tons that
5 was mentioned earlier in this hearing as a record is
6 simply not a record. First of all, it is counting
7 almost 40,000 tons of food donations in that total.
8 It is counting over 26,000 tons of private landscaper
9 tonnages dropped at Fresh Kills in that total. If you
10 added the same categories of organics in FY18, it
11 would have been 104,000 tons. You need to ask them,
12 and I humbly say this with great admiration for you,
13 you need to ask them tough questions.

14 ROBIN NAGEL: Thank you, Chairman Abreu
15 and former Chair Nurse and the Council. I'm Dr. Robin
16 Nagel. I'm a professor of anthropology and
17 environmental studies at New York University.
18 Community compost represents the best grassroots
19 community organizing efforts of New York City and has
20 taught us how important compost is. Amputating
21 community compost tells New Yorkers who have
22 dedicated themselves to the City's environmental
23 well-being through decades of work with compost
24 initiatives that their work doesn't matter. It
25 disrespects the countless hours of labor and faith

2 that have propelled the entire organics conversation
3 into the mainstream. Worse than that, it deepens
4 distrust in government, especially when that
5 government has pledged a commitment to climate
6 positive sustainability initiatives but then kills
7 one of the most enduring and successful
8 sustainability initiatives of the last 30 years.

9 Frankly, it mocks Mayor Adams Getting Sustainability
10 Done goals. It is illogical and it's destructive.

11 Commissioner Tisch said several times that the cuts
12 to the compost programs were painful, but cutting
13 those programs undercuts the future success of the
14 Department's curbside program because it amputates
15 the public education function of the community drop-
16 off initiatives. It also in the off, on again, off
17 again rhythms of budgetary priority, it communicates
18 an insincere commitment to some of the most effective
19 environmental programs that the City has ever seen. I
20 highly recommend my colleague Samantha MacBride's
21 article in the most recent issue of Biocycle, which
22 is a trade magazine all about compost and organics
23 recycling, it's dated March 11th, you can find it
24 online, and what she alluded to in her testimony is

2 outlined in great detail in that rather extraordinary
3 piece of research and writing. Thank you.

4 ANDREA LIESKE: Good afternoon. My name is
5 Andrea Lieske. I have been staff at Earth Matter for
6 the last 10 years. In this time, I've been part of
7 the compost operation team, I have staffed compost
8 drop off sites, I've been an educator, and currently
9 I'm the Zero Waste Island Manager for Earth Matter on
10 Governors Island. Today, I want to tell you about the
11 transformative power of seeing, touching, smelling,
12 composting in action. Over the years, I have led
13 hundreds of tours at our site. We very often start at
14 the intake pad, where the fresh food scraps, the yard
15 material, and the compostable serviceware come in,
16 and are being combined into the compost recipes. We
17 then progress with a tour as the compost process
18 evolves until we end with a finished and sifted
19 compost that smells and feels like soil and is ready
20 to be used on our farm. Over and over, I have seen
21 how people went from hesitation, even disgust, to awe
22 and wonder at the final product. Very often, I feel
23 like a magician turning something disgusting and
24 worthless into something beautiful and valuable. I
25 can see how people transform and how they now can all

2 of a sudden see themselves potentially getting
3 involved in composting. We, as a society, have to see
4 our waste as a resource, and we have to keep showing
5 people the value of it and the importance of handling
6 our waste responsibly. Community composting does
7 exactly that effectively and confidently. In order
8 for the city to have a successful citywide composting
9 system and move ahead with its sustainability goals,
10 it is important that this funding for community
11 composting is being restored. Thank you so much for
12 all your work.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you all.

14 We have one more panelist, Gil Lopez.

15 Is there anyone else whose name has not
16 been called for testimony?

17 GIL LOPEZ: Hi, my name is Gil Lopez. I'm
18 a compost professional, but I'm a community composter
19 first. I'm a Big Reuse employee and I serve on the
20 Queen's SWAB. I have to start by saying that the Long
21 Island City Industrial Business Zone, where my
22 community garden is located, now has over 1,000
23 single male residents housed and fed nearby with zero
24 trash cans. My community has been continually denied
25 3-1-1 requests for litter baskets by DSNY, and we

2 demand service in this area. Okay, so we all read the
3 New York Times headline last December declaring that
4 Composting's True Believers Jilted as New York City
5 Compost Program Grows. This headline implies that
6 some folks are nonbelievers. As an environmental
7 educator who regularly preaches the gospel of
8 composting, I'm here to testify and to convert any
9 nonbelievers. I'm sorry to see that the folks in DSNY
10 have already left the room. Times are hard, but have
11 you heard the good news? True believers have, like
12 the jilted school Green Team students, who know that
13 putting carbon in the form of compost back into the
14 soil enlivens the living soil food web, which feeds
15 that circle of life. While composting plays a leading
16 role in that cycle, the supporting staff are all of
17 us true believers. Together, the composting community
18 goes beyond DSNY's mission of solid waste management
19 by also bringing ecological resilience and
20 environmental justice to our city. A few examples
21 include the jilted street tree stewards who maintain
22 that compost supports urban canopy, which cleans the
23 air and improves community health, jilted
24 environmentalists (INAUDIBLE) the fact that compost
25 can alleviate flooding and mitigate combined sewage

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2 overflow, jilted civic leaders know that weekly food
3 scrap drop-offs bring neighbors together during this
4 crisis of loneliness, jilted teachers know that
5 processing food and composting offers endless hands-
6 on learning opportunities, jilted residents know that
7 composting cools the planet. There's many more jilted
8 people. There's lots of true believers in New York
9 City. I stand with them in affirming to any
10 nonbelievers that we actively decrease waste to the
11 landfill, and it is us who paved the way for the
12 brown bins' touted success and, no matter your belief
13 system, we are worth every penny of the modest budget
14 we once received. In fact, we are worth so much more.
15 We know it's not DSNY's job or mission to sequester
16 carbon or promote civic leadership, teach our
17 children, provide green job training, mitigate
18 climate change, all of which the New York City
19 Compost Project actually does, or did, and we did all
20 of this while reducing tonnage to landfill for DSNY
21 because we acknowledge and we are living proof that
22 these social, environmental, and economic issues are
23 not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are actively
24 informed by one another, and manufacturing a budget
25 crisis to deny funding to the crucial work is not

2 only foolish and cruel but, in fact, in the face of
3 this global climate crises, and the fact that New
4 York City declared a climate emergency, this
5 defunding of the New York City compost project is
6 unethical and completely indefensible. I'll end it
7 there and submit the rest.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Very
9 powerful.

10 GIL LOPEZ: Thank you all, y'all are
11 great.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Very powerful, thank
13 you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you. We
15 will now move on to remote testimony on Zoom.

16 We'll begin with Joyce Bialik. Joyce, are
17 you available, please?

18 JOYCE BIALIK: Yes, I am.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Nice to see you,
20 Joyce.

21 JOYCE BIALIK: My name is Joyce Bialik.
22 I'm a retired social work educator who currently
23 volunteers as a solid waste educator, member of the
24 Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board and WE ACT for
25 Environmental Justice. I am testifying on my own

2 behalf. My sanitation focus has been increasing
3 healthy composting and decreasing plastics and their
4 toxic chemicals. First, I'd like to see a restoration
5 and an increase in funds for community composting.
6 This program has a proven track record in conducting
7 outreach and education to New York City residents
8 about the importance of diverting their food scraps
9 from trash and how to do this. If we hope to increase
10 participation in food scrap diversion, good
11 widespread education is critical. This program also
12 produces excellent quality, healthy compost compared
13 to the industrial scale compost prepared in Staten
14 Island by the Department of Sanitation, and this is
15 where plastic comes into play. Department of
16 Sanitation, DSNY, permits residents to throw plastic
17 bags containing food scraps in collection bins. If
18 DSNY does not actively encourage residents to empty
19 their food scraps from the bag, compost produced by
20 DSNY will contain, from the plastic, such toxic
21 chemicals as PFAS, phthalates, and formaldehyde as
22 opposed to the healthy compost from community
23 composting. I also propose a new category of funds
24 that would go toward providing incentives for
25 businesses to change their practices..

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has
3 expired.

4 JOYCE BIALIK: I'm sorry?

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. thank
6 you.

7 JOYCE BIALIK: To change their practices
8 or upgrade their machines to reduce plastic
9 contamination. This issue arose with last year's
10 Choose to Reuse bill. The intent of the bill is to
11 reduce single use plastics in food establishments.
12 However, the usual value of ending single use falls
13 apart when we consider plastic as a container for
14 food and beverages because the more plastic is used,
15 the more its toxic chemicals are likely to leach onto
16 its contents, in this case, the food we eat and the
17 beverages we drink.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Hey, Joyce. Hey,
19 Joyce, your time is up, but...

20 JOYCE BIALIK: Can I have a half a second,
21 a minute more?

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, you can. 15
23 seconds.

24 JOYCE BIALIK: I want to get to a very
25 important piece of legislation. So we're seeing

2 research of the link between plastic and bad health
3 effects. I ask that you include funds in our budget
4 for incentives so that when the Choose to Reuse bill
5 is reintroduced, the incentives will encourage food
6 establishments to substitute metal, ceramic, or glass
7 for plastics for serving and taking out food. Another
8 use for incentives is for washing machine companies
9 to encourage their building machines that are filters
10 for capturing the millions of plastic microfibers
11 that are emitted from each washing machine cycle. For
12 consideration is an upcoming bill to require such
13 filters in commercial washing machines, and the
14 incentive would reduce opposition from the washing
15 machine industry. Thanks for giving me another
16 minute. Bye.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Joyce. We
18 really appreciate what you're doing for Manhattan
19 SWAB and what you're doing in the Upper West Side.
20 We're very grateful for you. Okay. Have a good one.

21 JOYCE BIALIK: You too.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.
23 Next, we'll have Jane Selden followed by Rachana
24 Shah. Jane, you may unmute yourself.

2 JANE SELDEN: Thank you. I'd like to thank
3 Chair Abreu and former Chair Nurse for giving me the
4 opportunity to speak today. My name is Jane Seldon,
5 and I Chair a Committee on Waste Reduction at the
6 Climate Activists Group 350NYC. We at 350 recognize
7 the vital role community composting programs play in
8 educating New Yorkers about the benefits of organic
9 recycling, and we urge the Adams' Administration to
10 restore funding for these programs without delay.
11 Successful implementation of the mandatory curbside
12 composting law will only happen with widespread
13 participation. Many New Yorkers will need to acquire
14 new habits and behaviors regarding waste disposal and
15 be motivated to do. This is where community
16 composting programs play an essential role. A flyer
17 or a sign posted above a brown bin is no substitute
18 for a friendly conversation at a farmer's market
19 organics drop-off site. Community composting programs
20 also provide New Yorkers with an opportunity for
21 hands-on experience creating closed loop food systems
22 and the chance to work alongside neighbors of diverse
23 backgrounds and ages. The social benefits of
24 composting like civic engagement and community
25 resilience can't be quantified numerically, but their

2 value on a human level is immense. We also believe
3 the City should prioritize converting organic waste
4 into compost, not biogas, and utilize public parks
5 and local compost processing operations in order to
6 minimize greenhouse gas emissions from
7 transportation. This high-quality compost can be used
8 to nourish the soil of community gardens, street
9 trees, and urban farms, and compost acts like a
10 sponge, retaining up to six times its weight in
11 water. Applying compost to the City's green
12 infrastructure, including its over 12,000 rain
13 gardens, and its new mini-forest on Roosevelt Island,
14 will greatly enhance the effectiveness of these
15 climate resiliency measures.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has
17 expired.

18 JANE SELDEN: Okay, one more sentence,
19 just the funding for community..

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You can finish that
21 thought out, finish your thought out.

22 JANE SELDEN: Yeah, just one sentence, the
23 funding for community composting, a minuscule
24 fraction of the City's budget, is money well spent.
25 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you.

4 Next, we'll have Rachana Shah followed by Anna Sacks.

5 Roshana, you may begin.

6 RACHANA SHAH: Hi, thank you for allowing
7 me to speak. My name is Rachana Shah. I'm a resident
8 of Forest Hills in Queens, New York City, and I'm the
9 mom of two young kids, ages 10 and 7. I'm a Zero
10 Waste consultant and educator by profession. I'm the
11 Co-President of Beyond Plastics Queens, and a member
12 of Queens SWAB and the Joint SWAB Legislative
13 Committee. I think I'm going to have to cut some of
14 this for time, but with regards to waste, yes,
15 reorganizing waste is important as a quality-of-life
16 issue and, even though out of sight might be out of
17 mind, it doesn't mean it's out of our lungs and ways
18 that affect us. This is really personal to me. I have
19 been working in this space for the last six years. I
20 decided not to work for eight years because working
21 in this space would have earned me less money than it
22 would have cost me to have childcare. I moved to the
23 city because there was a lot of encouragement from
24 our PlaNYC, from our 2030 climate goals, and from
25 Mayor Adams saying that we're going to be a leader in

2 green jobs. I had a lot of signals from the City that
3 this would be a smart and good place to contribute my
4 talents. I have since then been very discouraged and,
5 also, I should point out, when I lived in Manhattan,
6 since 2012, we composted by taking our food waste to
7 the GrowNYC tables at the Union Square Market, and
8 when we moved to Queens, we took it to the Forest
9 Hills Farmers Market, where it was processed by
10 Queen's Botanical Garden and, in both places, we had
11 such a great amount of engagement, education. We knew
12 if we were composting the wrong things, what to leave
13 out and, since then, I've had great relationships
14 with those organizations. I'll say in October last
15 year, I applied for a position at Lower East Side
16 Ecology Center to help them manage their Master
17 Compost Composter Program.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time
19 expired.

20 RACHANA SHAH: I'm sorry, I'll just finish
21 up quickly. I bragged about the leadership my City
22 provided wherever I could, but what can I say now
23 when professionals like me that come with deep
24 experience, education, commitment, and passion to do
25 this work, willing to do it for such a small fraction

2 of what they could be doing other jobs for because
3 they want to be in something that's part of the
4 solution and not working like I used to do for big
5 banks that's accelerating a polluting economy, that's
6 destroying ecosystems and environmental justice
7 communities. I want to work for the solution, and
8 investing in community composting is investing in
9 people and people are a city's most valuable resource
10 so I just wanted to finish with this analogy. If a
11 family was facing big cuts at home because maybe one
12 of the income earners lost their job, what would they
13 cut? Would they cut grandma? Grandma is an economic
14 burden to the family with her medical bills. No, that
15 would be unthinkable. Grandma has things that are
16 priceless, which is wisdom, and that's the value of
17 community composting so I urge you, don't cut
18 grandma, don't cut community composting. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for that
20 analogy and your testimony. Appreciate it.

21 RACHANA SHAH: Thanks.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Next will be
23 Anna Sacks followed by Lonnie Portis.

24 Anna, you may begin when ready.
25

2 ANNA SACKS: Hi, thanks for having me. My
3 name is Anna Sachs. I'm the Legislative Chair of the
4 Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board and member of
5 Save Our Compost Coalition, but I'm testifying as
6 myself today. I want to go back to the rollout of
7 curbside, which we knew from the get-go that it would
8 be a large upfront cost, and we knew, according to
9 the IBO report, that once we got volumes up, it would
10 be able to save the City around 30 million dollars
11 per year because what is the most expensive part of
12 waste is the collection piece and, once you have the
13 volume up, then you would have on a per pound basis,
14 trash and organics being the same in terms of the
15 labor per pound collected and then the difference
16 would be the tipping fee, and the tipping fee is
17 cheaper for organics than it is for trash, as it
18 should be, and so we knew there would be this upfront
19 cost and yet we're cutting back on it at exactly the
20 time we should be investing in it, investing in the
21 education outreach, investing in getting New Yorkers
22 to participate to get the tonnage up so that we can
23 get that cost-saving. It really doesn't make sense,
24 and I feel like we're setting ourselves up for
25 failure and, given the history of New York City's

2 rocky relationship with the organics rollout, I don't
3 know if there will be another chance if this program
4 does not succeed for curbside so really community
5 composting is integral to the success of the curbside
6 program, and it is integral to the overall shifting
7 of New York City's waste management from one of
8 trash, where around 89 percent of our waste goes,
9 something like that, to a more holistic program where
10 hopefully we're able to reduce what we're putting in
11 the trash by 40 percent if we're separating out the
12 organics. These are local green jobs, and it's really
13 disappointing yet again to be in this cycle when
14 really the City should be expanding community
15 composting in the face of the climate crisis.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has
17 expired.

18 ANNA SACKS: Not cutting it. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Anna.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Thank you. Our
21 final panelist will be Lonnie Portis.

22 LONNIE PORTIS: Hi. Good afternoon, Chair
23 Abreu. Thank you so much for hosting this hearing.
24 I'm Lonnie Portis, the New York City Policy and
25 Advocacy Manager at WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

2 WE ACT is here to urge the City Council to support
3 and fight for the re-instating of environmental
4 justice of 7 million dollars per year in the funding
5 of community composting operation as well as the
6 previously promised 4 million dollars for building
7 out additional community composting sites to increase
8 local composting capacity. The Mayor claims he wants
9 green jobs, he wants a cleaner city, a healthier
10 city, he wants to invest in the youth who are the
11 future in our city, he talks about sustainability,
12 combining the climate crisis and reducing the city's
13 emission. Community composting programs do all of
14 those things and more, and there's no other program
15 in DSNY's budget that positively impacts multiple
16 dimensions of the quality of life of New Yorkers. We
17 need the City Council and this Committee to hold
18 Mayor Adams accountable and push back on these short-
19 sighted budget cuts. You cannot accept an adopted
20 budget that does not include funding for community
21 composting. Additionally, curbside organic collection
22 and smart bins cannot be the only aspects of our
23 expanding organic waste diversion infrastructure. New
24 York City is undergoing a cultural shift when it
25 comes to household and building (INAUDIBLE) organic

2 waste. Community composting operators are vital to
3 increased participation in all composting-related
4 programs because of their valued outreach and
5 education efforts. I really appreciate your
6 leadership on this subject and this topic and looking
7 forward to working with this Committee and the
8 Council more to reinstate community composting in the
9 budget.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Lonnie, we love
11 working with you and thank you for everything that
12 you're doing at WE ACT. Appreciate you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BARRETT: Is there
14 anyone on Zoom who I have inadvertently missed?

15 Okay. Seeing none, I will turn it over to
16 Chair Abreu for closing remarks.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I will be gaveling
18 out. This hearing is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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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 April 15, 2024