

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS, STATE AND
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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March 13, 2026
Start: 12:30 p.m.
Recess: 4:44 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 3

B E F O R E: Gale A. Brewer,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald J. Feliz
Ty Hankerson
Frank Morano
Althea V. Stevens
Susan Zhuang

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

Yume Kitasei
Commissioner, DCAS

Shana Midelton
First Deputy Commissioner, DCAS

Keith Herman
Deputy Commissioner Fleet Services and Chief
Fleet Officer, DCAS

Laura Ringelheim
Executive Deputy Commissioner of Real Estate
Services and Facilities Management and
Construction, DCAS

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Deputy Commissioner/Chief Human Capital Officer
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Executive Director, BOE

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Deputy Executive Director, BOE

Vilda Vera Mayuga
Chief Administrative Law Judge and Commissioner
Arnab Das Brian Connell Public, OATH

Shawn Campbell
District Manager BK CB14

Taya Meuller
District Manager BK CB2

Celestina Leon
District Manager BK BC4

Robert Camacho
Chair BK CB4

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION 4

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
3 the Preliminary Budget Hearing on Governmental
4 Operations, State and Federal Legislation, recorded
5 by James Marino in Hearing Room 3 on March 13th,
6 2026.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to
8 today's New York City Council Preliminary Budget on
9 the Committee of Governmental Operations, State and
10 Federal Legislation. At this time, during today's
11 hearing, no one may approach the dais. Please silence
12 all electronic devices.

13 Chair, you may begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [GAVEL] Thank you very much.
15 I am Gale Brewer, I'm Chair of this Committee on
16 Governmental Operations, State and Federal
17 Legislation. It says here I'm happy to return, but
18 that was like 100 years ago. When I was Chair of this
19 Committee before.

20 So I'll just say I'm glad to be here and this is
21 on the Fiscal '27 Preliminary Budget for the
22 Department of Citywide Administrative Services, known
23 as DCAS, the Office of Administrative Trials and
24 Hearings, known as OATH, the Law Department, and the
25 Board of Elections. Um, I wanna thank everyone who's

1
2 joined us here today from the different
3 administrative agencies.

4 Following testimony and questions with all
5 agencies, we will hear testimony from the public at
6 around 4:30, or maybe a little bit earlier. Thank you
7 to the advocates and the community members who join
8 us today. I will be brief on what I have to say.

9 This Committee has jurisdiction over a wide
10 variety of city agencies and offices and boards that
11 play a crucial role in the operation of city
12 government. The services administered- administered by
13 these agencies include legal matters, elections,
14 campaign documents and records, payroll, as well as
15 the largest agency in our jurisdiction, DCAS.

16 As the Commissioner knows, DCAS oversees the
17 operations of city government ranging from supplies,
18 fleets, property leases, green energy trainings, and
19 civil service exams. The Law Department is
20 responsible for representing the city, city
21 officials, and reviewing city policy and legislation.
OPE, which is the city's independent tribunal,
adjudicates fair and timely hearings. And the Board
of Elections, which as we know, administers the

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2 city's elections, including general, municipal, and
3 special.

4 Today, we would like to get a deeper
5 understanding of the agencies expense budgets, DCAS's
6 capital plan, the impact of services to agencies and
7 the general public, metrics that are used, and key
8 agency initiatives. We wanna dive into the metrics
9 reported for these agencies in the Fiscal Year '26
10 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. I have my own
11 copy. Just want you to know.

12 As Chair, I look forward to working alongside the
13 Administration to come up with ways to create, fund,
14 and implement new and improved programs to help our
15 government to work efficiently and effectively, as
16 well as to determine ways to change existing
17 operations to save the city money, which is— it seems
18 to be the number one issue right now, but also
19 maintaining essential services.

20 So to begin, I wanna thank the Commissioner of
21 uh, DCAS and her staff. Today's first hearing will be
with DCAS. Welcome to the newly appointed and very
capable Commissioner Yume Kitasei. DCAS's Fiscal '27
Preliminary Budget is, according to here, \$1.69
billion, but I don't know that that's the exact

1
2 number according to DCAS, which is 100— which is
3 \$81.2 million less than the Fiscal '26 Adopted
4 Budget. DCAS is absolutely the backbone of our
5 government, making city government work for all New
6 Yorkers, including recruiting, hiring, and training
7 city employees, managing 55 public buildings, if
8 that's the right number, acquiring, selling, and
9 leasing city property, purchasing goods and services
10 for agencies, overseeing the vehicle fleet, for the
11 city and leading the city's efforts to reduce carbon
12 emissions.

13 The Preliminary Plan includes 3 new needs
14 totaling \$8.3 million in FY26 for non-capitally
15 eligible repair projects, including emergency facade
16 and roof work, office consolidations, and the very-
17 look forward to— new tours at 1 Center Street,
18 although as Borough President, I was the first and
19 mine were free. I just want you to know.

20 I look forward to learning more today about
21 DCAS's efforts to convert the city fleet to electric
vehicles, to increase revenues generated for the
city, and how the agency will respond to the Mayor's
savings mandate, which is quite extensive. I would
like to thank the Committee staff who have helped

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2 prepare this hearing. Saiyemul Hamid, who's a Senior
3 Financial Analyst, Julia Haramis, who's Assistant
4 Director of the Finance Division, Jahari Frazier,
5 who's Legislative Counsel. Erica Cohen, who's a
6 Policy Analyst and in my office, Shulamit Puder,
7 Chief of Staff, and Cynthia Hornig, Budget Director.

8 So without further ado— and we have Council
9 Member Feliz online. Without further ado,
10 Commissioner, DCAS, all yours, and thank you very
11 much for being here.

12 YUME KITASEI: Thank you, Council Member.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, we have to swear you in.
14 I'm sorry.

15 YUME KITASEI: Do you want to swear in our Deputy
16 Commissioners as well at the same time?

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, please.

18 YUME KITASEI: To save you time. Okay, great. Um,
19 we will now hear testimony from the Administration.
20 Before we begin, I will administer— I will administer
21 the oath of affirmation. Panelists, please raise your
right hand.

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

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PANEL: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, you may begin when ready.

YUME KITASEI: Thank you. Um, and, uh, in deference to the temperature of this room, I'm going to, um, read the 5-minute version of our testimony. Um, but we're submitting a longer version that, uh, for, for folks, uh, online and, um, for the Council Member here, you can certainly dig into.

Um, so good afternoon, Chair Brewer and Members of the Committee on Governmental Operations. I am Yume Kitasei, Commissioner of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and I will say that I am very happy to return here. I— may I just say that I think that we collectively did a very nice job on the renovation here.

Um, as I begin my second month at the agency, I'm pleased to join you all to discuss the Preliminary DCAS Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. Last December, we announced that since 2006, the city government had reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 31%, outpacing the private sector by over 6 percentage points.

At the same time, government operations have reduced energy consumption overall by nearly 16%. In

1
2 short, our facilities are utilizing cleaner sources
3 of energy like solar and consuming less of it, all
4 while steadily increasing service delivery. Despite
5 our progress, there's still important work to be
6 done.

7
8 Local Law 97 is a necessarily ambitious mandate
9 to match the greatest existential crisis of our time.
10 Notwithstanding this, we are on track to meet the
11 mandate in the local law by 2030. We've also made
12 tremendous strides in upgrading, updating, and
13 greening our municipal fleet.

14
15 We have the largest and cleanest fleet in the
16 nation, and in partnership with DOT, we operate the
17 largest electric charging networks in the state. Our
18 current count of plug-in electric vehicles stands at
19 over 5,750, with orders in place to reach 6,100 in
20 the coming months.

21
22 To complement the growth of our electric fleet,
23 we installed and operate over 2,400 charging ports.
24 Thanks to the work of our Fleet Management Team,
25 we've reduced greenhouse gas fleet emissions in the
26 city by 46% through FY24 and will exceed 50%
27 reduction in the FY25 reporting.

1
2 At DCAS, we're responsible for maintaining the
3 city as an employer of choice for New Yorkers. Our
4 priority is to help agencies fill critical positions,
5 offer more promotional opportunities to our city
6 workers, and break down barriers to entry.

7 Over the past 2 years, we have undertaken an
8 effort to review the minimum qualification
9 requirements of entry-level, supervisory, and
10 managerial titles. This review is to determine
11 whether the existing qualifications for the positions
12 accurately define expectations or could be revised.

13 To date, I'm proud to share that nearly 70 titles
14 have been revised, with 13 more in review,
15 potentially increasing access to municipal work for
16 hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. This effort is
17 ongoing, and we expect to review additional titles
18 this year.

19 Further expanding our reach, we have continued to
20 offer bridge exams. These exams offer the public an
21 opportunity to take one multiple choice test for
multiple titles and have their name appear on
multiple civil service lists simultaneously. In
short, what would have required someone to take 4
different tests, pay 4 different fees, and wait for 4

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2 different ex- and wait for 4 different exams to be
3 graded -- is now done in one convenient exam. Our
4 Office of Citywide Procurement is the engine that
5 keeps our sister agencies stocked with the materials
6 needed to execute their missions.

7
8 Most recently, our office played a critical role
9 in the city's rapid response to the historic snowfall
10 this winter. In the past several months alone, our
11 Central Storehouse has delivered over 1 million
12 pounds of salt to DSNY and DOT to keep our roads
13 clear and passable, and distributed thousands of
14 blankets to partner agencies for vulnerable
15 populations.

16
17 A bit closer to home, last fall, we renovated the
18 brick-and-mortar city store located at 1 Center
19 Street. This is the store that is, uh, the, uh,
20 unofficial Gale Brewer, uh, store where we sell her
21 scarves. Hmm. Modernizing and brightening the
storefront with a fresh open design. The in-house
renovation boasted a new dedicated entrance directly
from Center Street, welcoming foot traffic and making
the store more accessible and inviting for locals and
visitors alike. And most excitingly, we've announced

1
2 a brand new municipal child care initiative at 1
3 Center Street.

4 As we look ahead to the next Fiscal Year, we'll
5 be taking you through the DCAS Budget. In FY27, our
6 Operating Budget is \$1.7 billion inclusive of all
7 funding sources, with \$244.1 million covering payroll
8 and other personnel services costs and \$1.4 billion
9 covering other than personal services. \$1 billion,
10 uh, or 61% of our budget will be used to support
11 citywide utility payments for heating, lighting, and
12 power. These are fixed costs based on forecasted
13 energy usage and utility rates.

14 The good news is that DCAS is working every day,
15 both internally and with our sister agencies through
16 multiple programs, to reduce energy use. I'm proud to
17 say that this work has generated more than \$156
18 million in annual energy costs since 2014. Beyond
19 providing utilities to our sister agencies, we are
20 also tasked with identifying physical spaces for city
21 agencies and other public entities to meet their
operational needs. Of our overall budget, \$170
million is dedicated to these costs associated with
multi-tenanted leased sites.

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2 Given DCAS's role as a citywide service provider,
3 we are also thinking, uh, about ways to increase
4 revenue opportunities to the city's general fund.
5 Every year, DCAS generates a significant amount of
6 revenue on the city's behalf. In FY27, our revenue
7 target is \$62 million.

8 The final piece of our budget is our Capital
9 Plan, including the funds allocated towards upgrading
10 and renovating our infrastructure. The Preliminary
11 Budget reflects an updated 5-year plan of \$7.6
12 billion from FY26 through FY30, including \$4.2
13 billion for projects managed by DCAS. This plan
14 includes maintenance and enhancements to our
15 facilities, the renovation of leased spaces, and
16 continuing our energy conservation and fleet
17 electrification efforts.

18 As we work through the budgeting process, we will
19 continue to advance the core missions of this agency
20 and uplift innovative ideas to make this city work
21 better for New Yorkers and our sister agencies. Among
22 these, leading into Fiscal Year 2027, we will double
23 down on our efforts to modernize the civil service
24 system and speed up hiring efforts critical for
25 filling vacancies across the city.

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2 We will also lean into our work to reduce carbon
3 emissions through electrification and retrofitting
4 existing infrastructure as we advance towards our
5 local, our, our local law mandates.

6 In closing, I want to thank the Council for its
7 partnership and for providing me with the opportunity
8 to testify. And I also want to just thank my staff--
9 they did not write this into my testimony, um, for
10 all the work that they did, um, in preparation for
11 this. Um, so I, I really appreciate all of the work
12 that you all have done in the last couple weeks. Um,
13 with that, I would be happy to answer any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. We've been, uh,
15 yeah, we've been joined by Council Member Dinowitz
16 and Councilman Morano, along with Feliz. No, Feliz is
17 on and Morano is here. Feliz is on Zoom, as I said
18 earlier.

19 So, um, thank you very much, and thank you for
20 wearing your-- the scarf. I want you to know this is
21 pride -

YUME KITASEI: Oh yeah, it was too hot though to
wear-

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I would insist that they be
3 long and not square, and when they open, they have
4 many long scarves.

5 YUME KITASEI: And it's the- it's the city
6 skyline.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You have no idea how much-
8 that's 20 years trying to get this big scarf in the
9 store.

10 YUME KITASEI: Also, you get a- all city employees
11 get a discount, just a reminder, at the City Store.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. So, um, uh, as you
13 know, the Mayor issued the Executive Order calling
14 for each agency to appoint a Chief Savings Officer,
15 and that person is to find savings. Um, we know that,
16 uh, they have to be 1.5% of the budget, and I know
17 that this is not due until March 20th. But are there
18 some, I, I, you know, er, in some general way, are
19 there programs that would be exempt from the savings
20 requirement?

21 Could you share with us the areas that you might
be including? And I was glad to- we're all glad to
hear about the end of the 2-for-1.

YUME KITASEI: Yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, but it's concerning to
3 hear the agency will be permitted perhaps to fill
4 only half of their current vacancies. So I didn't
5 know how many vacants you have and just generally,
6 how are you approaching this budget challenge?

7 YUME KITASEI: So thank you, Council Member. I
8 will just start by saying, um, Shannon Midelton, uh,
9 who is my new First Deputy Commissioner, is also our
10 Chief Savings Officer and also our former Chief
11 Financial Officer. So she's wearing 3 hats here
12 today, um, and I will be, um, uh, giving her the
13 opportunity to give a lot of numbers to you. Um,
14 that's why her budget is thicker than my- I mean, her
15 binder is thicker than mine.

16 Um, so as you noted, we are, um, working towards
17 the March 20th deadline. So unfortunately, it is sort
18 of tricky for us to be able to, um, bring you some of
19 the ideas that we're already working on, but we are
20 working on ideas right now. Um, and I think we feel,
21 um, you know, as, as an agency that has a lot of
opportunities to generate revenue and find savings
through creative means, um, through our procurement
and other mechanisms, I think we're, um, cautiously
optimistic that we'll be able to, um, help the city

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2 and this current fiscal, fiscal circumstance. I don't
3 know if you wanna add anything.

4 SHANA MIDELTON: No, I think you covered it. We're
5 looking at our strength—

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Please speak into the mic.

7 SHANA MIDELTON: Sorry. The Commissioner covered
8 it. We're looking to leverage our strength as a buyer
9 in procurement and how we can look to deliver those
10 services, um, more efficiently and cheaper for all
11 other city agencies, not just for DCAS.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And how many vacancies do you
13 have? Because that could be impacted.

14 SHANA MIDELTON: Yes. So our total vacancies is
15 370 as of January, and that's about a 15% vacancy
16 rate.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I guess that could be
18 used as part of it, but—

19 SHANA MIDELTON: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Ah, hmm. How does DCAS assess
21 which vehicle models and brands are the best suited
for city operations? This is all about the city
electric vehicles. How do you measure reliability and
efficiency and longevity of what you purchase? Are
there, uh, factors such as range, charge times, the

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2 battery mileage taken into consideration? And of
3 course, I read in the papers, you know more than I
4 do, that, you know, that guy in the White House is
5 scaling back, uh, electric, which is obviously a
6 mistake in our opinion, and I'm sure in yours. But
7 how does the production, uh, or manufacturing, how is
8 it impacted by federal, um, standards? And has this
9 posed any difficulties to procure um, and then I have
10 more questions. You do have a really great guy who
11 runs your fleet.

12 YUME KITASEI: Yes, I think his name is Keith. No,
13 um, so-

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We know him very well, we
15 love him. Go ahead.

16 YUME KITASEI: Yes. So um, I'm gonna have, uh,
17 Deputy Commissioner Kerman answer this question
18 because, uh, there's a lot of technical pieces to
19 this that I think he can, um, help bring detail to.

20 KEITH KERMAN: Okay, Keith Kerman, Chief Fleet
21 Officer. Good to see you again, um, Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Nice to see you.

KEITH KERMAN: So one, you know, we work with the
agencies to specify all the different vehicles. The
city has an unbelievably complicated fleet, 120

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2 on-road models, 70 off-road. We're really running
3 hundreds and hundreds of different service
4 operations, you know, so when we say it's a fleet,
5 but it's a pretty complicated thing. We work with
6 agencies on the specifications, including for
7 electric vehicles. Um, we continue to be, um, all in
8 on electrification. Um, and, and we've made a lot of
9 progress.

8 You know, just 3 years ago, I could not have told
9 you that we had a single all-electric pickup or van.
10 We're operating 800 now and growing that fleet and
11 very popular vehicles working tremendously. We've
12 introduced our first electric garbage trucks, um,
13 non-plowing units, our first electric box trucks, our
14 first electric sweepers, our first electric rack
15 trucks and, and many other models.

15 We're working with NYBD. We just introduced the
16 first pursuit-rated, police-rated, all-electric
17 vehicle, the Chevy Blazer EV, and NYBD has their
18 first 50 units and are testing them now. Uh, there's
19 a lot of proof that has to go into that kind of
20 transition. Um, so we're, we're continuing to, to be
21 all in. There's no question that federal policy has
led to some announcements recently. You know, we

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2 really were a big adopter of the Ford Lightning, the
3 pickup truck, and that's gonna go off the market at
4 least for a short. Um, but we do have another EV
5 model, um, that is available. Um, we are the largest
6 national user of the Chevy Bolt and so there's gonna
7 be a short period left that we can get the Bolt.
8 We're gonna try and get as many as we can.

9 Um, but right now we have not, you know, we read
10 the news too, and, and these models, and we are
11 talking to manufacturers constantly.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They're still manufacturing
13 electric? Because I-

14 KEITH KERMAN: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: If you read the papers, you'd
16 think not.

17 KEITH KERMAN: No, correct. That's not true. No
18 part of our program has stopped. Have we lost a few
19 vehicle models? Yes, but we have other models to
20 replace them. Are we concerned about the supply
21 chain? Of course, we're, we're out there. But I will
say that DCAS is doing everything possible to
advocate for electric vehicles. To partner with other
cities, with other jurisdictions, and we hope to say
a lot more about that in just the next couple months

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2 to make sure that we keep the pressure on. EV hybrids
3 are unbelievably efficient. You, you, you mentioned
4 efficiency.

5 We just published our Local Law 75 use-based fuel
6 economy report. We thank you for that. Um, going
7 back, I, I think about 15 years. Electric vehicles
8 are incredibly efficient, 9 times more efficient than
9 combustion vehicles. If you care about efficiency,
10 then electrifying your transport is what you would
11 do. Um, we- a plug-in hybrid is more efficient than a
12 hybrid. Or I, I should go, an EV is more efficient
13 than a plug-in hybrid. A plug-in hybrid's more
14 efficient than a hybrid, and a hybrid is way more
15 efficient than a gas.

16 Everything in the electrification, we are
17 achieving efficiency, and we just published that
18 report. So, um, you know, we are still all in. We
19 think these are the smart investments. Save
20 enormously on fuel and emissions, but they also save
21 enormously on maintenance. 60 to 70% fewer
breakdowns, less maintenance costs.

So you are saving on these vehicles, not just
reducing pollution, but they're smart, efficient
investments. And, you know, we're concerned about the

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2 marketplace, but we'll do our best to influence it
3 and so far, everything moves forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, that's helpful because
5 when you listen to the, um, Press, you hear
6 differently. Now, um, I think your deadline is 2035.
7 What does that deadline, uh, mean? No, what, what do
8 you— what deadline do you have to supposedly,
9 depending on the manufacturing situation, to be
10 electric all the way?

11 KEITH KERMAN: So—

12 YME KITASEI: Oh, go ahead.

13 KEITH KERMAN: Uh, so Local Law 140 requires the
14 light and medium duty vehicles of the city to be
15 electric by 2035.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

17 KEITH KERMAN: And then the heavy and specialized
18 and emergency by 2038.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

20 KEITH KERMAN: If doable.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

KEITH KERMAN: On the, you know, on the main, uh,
er, light and medium duty vehicles, your pickups,
your, your vans, your SUVs, your sedans, you know,

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2 today there are models out there and we can implement
3 and we're moving forward.

4 There's no question that when you get into things
5 like obviously plow trucks, we just went through a
6 big storm emergency. There is not an electric viable
7 plow truck on the planet Earth today. So that we have
8 to see, right?

9 We're talking to manufacturers. We're gonna- if
10 we can push it and achieve it, we will but, you know,
11 we have to be realistic. There are limitations.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We have to be realistic based
13 on the federal situation too.

14 KEITH KERMAN: As well, right? Certainly, you
15 know, our ability to implement electric models
16 depends on further investment in the industry. It
17 depends on further development in the industry.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

19 KEITH KERMAN: Um, but we are moving forward in
20 2035 for light and medium would be that first big
21 target. There's a lot more opportunity to electrify
the light and medium side than when you get into plow
trucks, some of our fire trucks and ladders-

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

1
2 KEITH KERMAN: Where there's a lot more
3 complication operationally.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Now, how much funding
5 do you have from OMB to purchase? In other words, are
6 you— can you get as many as you want? Do you have a,
7 you know, maybe, I don't know, 200-something that
8 you're funded for and you need another 500?

9 How, how does the funding work? Because of
10 course, I mean, I think, you know, everybody would
11 love to be able to buy everything tomorrow, but I
12 didn't know if that's a challenge.

13 SHANA MIDELTON: So currently in our Expense
14 Budget, we have \$10 million every Fiscal Year. Um,
15 and in our Capital Budget, just in Fiscal Year '26,
16 we have \$7.8 million.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

18 SHANA MIDELTON: Now that supports— that \$10
19 million supports roughly 220 vehicles a year. I think
20 in order to hit the numbers we need to by 2035, on
21 average, we should probably be doing around 640, uh,
22 vehicles.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 640 per, per year, okay. And
24 now it's 222 or something like that.

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2 SHANA MIDELTON: Yes and we're in conversations
with OMB continuing.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, well we need to make
4 sure— we've been joined by Council Member Lee and
5 Council Member Hankerson. Thank you both for being
6 here.

7 Okay, the other question I have is, um, I know
8 this sounds silly, but my, um, city store, how much
9 revenue have you generated I guess, in '26, um, and
how is this revenue utilized?

10 YUME KITASEI: Thank you, Council Member. Yes, I'm
going to turn that to my numbers person.

11 SHANA MIDELTON: Yes, so we're happy to report,
12 um, in Fiscal Year '25, our revenue increased, um,
13 from \$387,000 in Fiscal Year '24 to \$463,000.

14 So we've definitely seen, you know, the impact of
15 the beautification, the renovations, and the
16 highlighting um, of the city store. That's a revenue
17 that goes to support the general fund and help— helps
18 the city close the gap, um, similar to all other DCAS
revenue streams. Um, yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Um, and then the auto
20 auction contract with GovDeals. Why was a new
contract required and what factors were considered

1
2 with this vendor? Was there an issue with the prior
3 one? And then how long is this contract with
4 GovDeals?

5 KEITH KERMAN: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: This is on the auction end,
7 yeah.

8 KEITH KERMAN: Sure, so, um, we had a vendor, IAA.
9 We've been doing online auctions, as you know, since
10 2012, and that in general has been very successful
11 and grown our market to really a national market.

12 Um, but we did default the vendor IAA, um, and we
13 went through a long process with them. At the most
14 basic, they were not providing the full level of
15 public access to these auctions that was required in
16 the contract. And we tried to resolve this issue with
17 them, but were unable to do so.

18 Um, we've gone to GovDeals and the good news, we
19 do not have a public access issue and we've got about
20 40% more revenue per vehicle coming in. Those issues
21 kind of being tied together.

22 So we are in a good place right now. We're having
23 a very, very strong auction year in Fiscal Year '26.
24 We will far exceed our target. Um, and we're seeing
25 much more return in a much more vibrant market.

1
2 So we did what we had to do to move that vendor,
3 um, uh, to change the vendor, but we are in a strong
4 place now.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How long is that contract
6 for? Gov-

7 KEITH KERMAN: The current GovDeals contract? I
8 would need to check on the terms for that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I think you talked
10 about this issue, but to meet the city's renewable
11 energy goals and achieve Local Law 97, because that's
12 what -not only does the city have to do it, but the
13 private sector, they always calling me.

14 Um, do you have adequate resources to reduce the
15 emissions from government operations by 50% by 2030?
16 Which of course is- I know you talked about it a
17 little bit, but can you be more- This is a huge
18 question from the community.

19 YUME KITASEI: Yes, thank you, Council Member and
20 I just want to say, you know, I, I acknowledge that,
21 um, uh, that we have more to do. Um, this issue, even
mandates aside, I think as, as we've sort of
discussed on with my team, you know, I think even if
and when we exceed targets, there's still going to be
more to do because this is such an existential issue.

1
2 And, um, that's why we're working very aggressively
3 every year to deliver projects that reduce our
4 emissions.

5 Um, I am, um, pleased to say that we are on track
6 to, um, with our, with our current funding, to, um,
7 to exceed, um, our targets, um, by 2030.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and why do you think
9 that's possible? Just because you have the funding or
10 you have already good infrastructure or—

11 YUME KITASEI: So yeah, so, so it's, it's a
12 combination of things. One is, um, a large number of
13 projects to reduce our emissions, um, which, uh, we
14 can— we're happy to go into greater detail if that's
15 helpful. Um, and then the other thing is that we're
16 bringing online, um, uh, er, a large, um, project
17 that will be delivering, um, clean power, uh, via
18 Hydro-Québec, um, bringing down, um, hydropower from
19 Canada. Um, uh, er, and it'll be about 20% of New
20 York City's electricity and 100% of all of New York
21 City government's electricity.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Huh, okay. Is there anything
23 you wanna add to that? Cause any other aspect to it?
24 In other words, you really feel that you're gonna get
25 to that point? Okay.

1
2 YUME KITASEI: Yes, that's coming online this- I'm
3 scooping myself a little. That's coming on online
4 this year.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, alright. Um, DCAS, do
6 you gonna- we're all talking about Rikers Island. I,
7 I assume it closes.

8 YUME KITASEI: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then I assume the
10 Renewable Rikers Act of 2021 will go into effect. Um,
11 and obviously we want it to be a sustainable
12 situation. Do you have resources and a timeline to
13 complete a master plan, um, to, uh, design and build
14 this new infrastructure? I think we're talking about
15 wastewater closing for plants, as I understand it,
16 and then moving them, and then there's much more. So
17 I just didn't know where you are in those plants. Of
18 course, the facilities, borough-based, are not even
19 built yet.

20 YUME KITASEI: Right. Yes, it is a little bit, um,
21 it is, it is a little bit in the future. Um, and, uh,
you know, obviously we're, um, we've, we've already
been sort of in the past Administration has already
been sort of thinking about that. Um, we, um, with
the changeover of the Administration, um, obviously

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2 there's new appointments that had to be made for that
3 um, Committee that meets, um, which we participate
4 in.

5 Um, so, um, we'll be, um, uh, resetting that
6 soon, but, um, uh, you know, it is a little bit in
7 the future right now, so I would say that the plans
8 are not, uh, not yet at the stage where, um, things
9 are fully fleshed out.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, I mean, it's a huge
11 program to plan for, so hopefully—

12 YUME KITASEI: Yes, but we're, you know, I mean,
13 any opportunity I think that we have to build, um,
14 solar or any other, um, uh, infrastructure for, um,
15 reducing our emissions is obviously an exciting
16 opportunity for us.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Now, the hottest summer
18 days are not here, but when they do arrive, the
19 Energy Demand Management Program, which reduces
20 pollution, reduces energy costs, and saves public
21 agencies obviously money on the hottest days, uh, the
data shows that DCAS has energy savings and revenue
generated by the program have plateaued in recent
years. So my question is, do you have the resources

1
2 to expand this successful energy demand management
3 program? But particularly in the summer, obviously.

4 YUME KITASEI: So you're talking about our demand
5 response program, right?

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I am, yup.

7 YUME KITASEI: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I mean, how's it going
9 basically is what I'm trying to say.

10 YUME KITASEI: Yes and first of all, I would just
11 like to say it feels like we are exercising our
12 demand response in this room right now. Um, uh, but,
13 um, yes, we're definitely obviously thinking about
14 all options about how to expand, um, you know, our,
15 our ways to save energy through demand response. Um,
16 I don't know if you wanna add anything to that.

17 SHANA MIDELTON: Yep um, on the resource side, um,
18 it, it fluctuates, right? Because it's based on the
19 weather, it's based on peak usage. Um, but we have
20 been seeing solidly at least \$2 million, um, every
21 fiscal year. And we use that revenue to reinvest into
our buildings and create more energy efficiency, um,
upgraded, uh, equipment.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So \$2 million savings is what
you're saying?

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SHANA MIDELTON: Um, revenue, yes.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Too much revenue.

SHANA MIDELTON: Revenue, yep.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, alright I, I hope that works. Uh, can't— we've been joined. Go ahead. You wanna add something? Go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, now we are. Uh, and this is a citywide revenue program too. So we, we are, we have grown over the past few years in terms of citywide revenue led by our energy supply team and, uh, we are expecting it. We have enrolled the highest number of facilities in program history right now. So we are expecting it to continue to grow.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and this includes, I mean, I, I don't sort of an aside, but I am always concerned and hopeful for the CIGs, Cultural Institution Groups, and that they're in this pile of being better managed for all of these above reasons. So you only, you manage those that are power and light, right? Is that something that DCAS is involved with? I think you are.

UNIDENTIFIED: Um, could you repeat the question?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sure, the, the, CIGs, which are the—

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: Their enrollment in demand
3 response?

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yes.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Um, only enrollees who are able to
6 meet the requirements of the program are enrolled.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, it depends then.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, the, the facility has to
9 confirm ahead of time that they are able to meet
10 their obligation.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: During that period of peak load, if
13 they can, they're enrolled.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: And there, it's never going to be a
16 continuity of service issue.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, the reason I ask is
18 we're always trying to make sure they get saved
19 because they have so many cuts. Yeah and they're
20 barely surviving with the federal cuts.

21 Um, Council Member Zhuang has joined us, and, uh,
Chair Lee, you have some questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, good afternoon. Um, and
it's great to see you, Commissioner. I feel like it's

1
2 been a lifetime since we last interacted when I was
3 at KCS.

4 YUME KITASEI: Oh yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Ah, yes. Um, so just really
6 quickly, um, in terms of the Space Savings
7 Initiative, um, throughout various plans we have seen
8 several adjustments to account for various space
9 savings initiatives, and, uh, they aim to make better
10 use of the city's owned and leased spaces to reduce
11 costs. And just wanted to know how much did the city
12 save from space savings initiatives in FY25, and how
13 much has been saved to date in FY26?

14 YUME KITASEI: I just want to note, um, on the
15 space savings, uh, obviously there's been a
16 tremendous amount of work that has b-been done to
17 survey all all of the agencies, and that's one of the
18 things that I'm really excited to dig into because I
19 think there's a lot of potential there. But, um, we
20 have already started to do some of that work, so
21 I'll, I'll give it to, uh, the First Deputy
Commissioner to sort of add the numbers here.

SHANA MIDELTON: Thank you, Commissioner. Um, so
Fiscal Year '25 was a big planning year, um, getting
the surveys out, identifying, um, agency space usage

1
2 needs. Um, in Fiscal Year '26, um, year to date,
3 we've already realized almost \$8 million, and that's
4 a combination of cost avoidance as well as actual
5 savings to the lease budget.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect and, um, do you keep
7 a record of which agencies, uh, are sharing spaces?
8 And is this publicly reported anywhere that we can
9 access?

10 SHANA MIDELTON: Um, we'll have our DC of- our EDC
11 of real estate and facilities management.

12 LAURA RINGELHEIM: Good morning. Thank you for
13 that question. So it's not currently publicly
14 reported except that our- all of our lease data is
15 available, uh, online and, and that is publicly
16 reported. So you would be able to, you know,
17 eventually see, uh, lease reductions where we're
18 vacating a space entirely.

19 Uh, but some examples are, um, the Law Department
20 consolidated some of its space at 100 Church Street
21 and we were able to move the Campaign Finance Board
out of another lease site into that site, thereby
relinquishing space at 80 Main and Lane. Um, another
example is HRA consolidating out of, uh, 404 Pine or
Department of Finance, um, consolidating into one of

1
2 their other sites so HRO could move into their
3 vacated site.

4 So that's just some examples of how we got to
5 those numbers.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect. Um, and how do you
7 determine which agencies would be best suited to
8 share space? Is there some kind of survey or-

9 LAURA RINGELHEIM: Um, we persuade them nicely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I'm sorry?

11 LAURA RINGELHEIM: We persuade them nicely. I
12 mean, I mean, it really works.

13 YUME KITASEI: Well, I was just gonna say, I mean,
14 I think the general process as we're sort of, um, as
15 people's leases come up and stuff like that, we look
16 at a case-by-case basis and what the agency's needs
17 are, and we, um, think about like where we can
18 actually put them. And at that point, you know,
19 because there's a little bit of a moving target as
20 we're sort of doing each of these moves because, um,
21 you know, the space, the space evolves as people- as
you know, from being in an agency, the space evolves
as people sort of have moved from one space to
another.

1
2 So we're constantly refining and having
3 conversations with the agencies about their needs,
4 and then we'll figure out where we can fit people.
5 But our number one goal, obviously, is to make sure
6 that we're being responsible with the taxpayer
7 dollars and, um, you know, also making sure that
8 agencies have adequate space to work in.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect, thank you. Um, and
10 just moving on to Con Edison Smart Charge and other
11 adjustments I say this as someone who drives an EV
12 car, full EV, and selfishly I have a question
13 because-

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to- she wants a
15 charging station at City Hall Park.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: No, but you know what's crazy
17 is that I asked if I could charge here and I was told
18 no because I'm technically not a city vehicle, but I
19 would gladly pay if I was like in some kind of
20 emergency situation. So I'm just wondering if we're
21 allowed to charge at City Hall.

 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: She's been asking this since
the day she started.

 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, exactly.

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2 YUME KITASEI: I will just say, um, we are very
3 aggressively expanding our charging infrastructure.
4 And in fact, one of the things that I like to, um,
5 brag about early and often is that DCAS is— has the
6 largest, uh, charging infrastructure in the state.
7 Um, and, uh, er, along with DOT. Um, and, um, we are
8 constantly looking for places to install, um,
9 charging, not just for city fleet, but we also are
10 now, um, starting to install public, um, charging
11 places. Um, so we are very eager if you have any
12 sites in your district that you think might be a
13 viable option, obviously tell us.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: One at City Hall.

15 YUME KITASEI: Yes, I'll let, I'll let Keith speak
16 to that specific location.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, and just to add really
18 quickly, I can recommend places because we're a
19 transit desert in Eastern Queens, and so there's no
20 trains or subways or Long Island Railroads. And so
21 this is something that the community would love.

YUME KITASEI: That would be great. Yeah, and I
mean, I think the— obviously there, there are certain
criteria that you have to sort of look for in terms
of like the electric grid, um, and that's something

1
2 that we work closely with Con Ed on. But, um, I don't
3 know, Keith, if you wanted to add anything.

4 KEITH KERMAN: Sure. So the first, the good news,
5 we have a workplace charging initiative. City Hall is
6 in it. We can work out right after this meeting for
7 you to charge. You will have to pay because it is
8 your personal car. But that done, we will have you
9 set up before the end of the day or as soon as we are
10 in touch with you.

11 And then, yeah, we are very open to ideas about
12 additional charging. You know, finding space is the
13 challenge for us. We are in the field every single
14 day with Con Ed assessing locations. If it's viable
15 at a logistics level, right, you gotta have access.
16 And of course, there's got to have juice. We have to
17 have available electric but if you provide us with
18 lists, we can be out there, you know, very soon and
19 in assessing those locations.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect um, and then just
21 more going to the budget piece of this, uh, the Smart
Charge. I know the Preliminary Plan includes an
additional \$1.2 million in other categorical funding
for FY26. Only for incentive revenue received for the
city's participation in the program. And so how does

1
2 Con Ed determine the incentive funding and what types
3 of services and activities are considered?

4 YUME KITASEI: Keith, you're their most popular
5 guest star.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

7 KEITH KERMAN: Uh, hmm, so Con Ed has been a
8 really important partner for us and they have the
9 Smart Charge, but then the Ready Charge is actually
10 the big one for us. And so they are providing for
11 every one of the electric chargers that we're
12 installing and just for background, we run the
13 largest, like, fast charging electric network in New
14 York State. We have 415 fast chargers. We are
15 installing more fast chargers literally every single
16 week.

17 So they're providing an offset based not on the
18 pedestal, not on the unit, but based on the
19 electrical upgrades or the electrical costs and those
20 are extraordinarily important funds for us, and we
21 are using those to reinvest uh, that's actually how
we do Level 2 chargers. So the slow charger, the
overnight charger, most of that is funded through Con
Ed grants.

1
2 It's also how consistent with Local Law 140, we
3 train mechanics and city fleet operators, um, to
4 really learn about EV and understand how to operate
5 and maintain EV. So the Con Ed partnership has been
6 very important and it really is a daily thing. We are
7 in the field with Con Ed today and every day. And,
8 and what- are there any limitations in terms of how
9 you can utilize the funds once they come back?

10 KEITH KERMAN: I don't believe there is a
11 limitation. I do believe it comes in as general
12 purpose, um, grant funding because it is an offset to
13 expenditures but the reality is how we do in fact use
14 it is to reinvest in our sustainability program.
15 Right.

16 Um, and have you assessed ways to increase
17 participation in the program by city agencies to
18 increase the incentive revenues from Con Ed?

19 KEITH KERMAN: So on the smart charge, yes. So we
20 do have a smart charge program. It involves
21 incentivizing you for basically off-peak charging.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Uhm, mmm.

KEITH KERMAN: And so we do that with all our
non-emergency agencies where we can. Right? So there
are some agencies, you know, I, I, I can't restrict

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2 the charging of police electric cars and other
3 emergency response vehicles. We have to give them
4 flexibility. But certainly, say, at the Parks
5 Department and DEP where you can charge overnight, we
6 are doing that and we are bringing in a revenue
7 stream. As you noted, we are bringing in that smart
8 charge revenue, revenue stream.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and I just have one
10 quick question Chair, if that's okay, on Local Law
11 97.

12 Um, only because this is a law that really
13 impacts my district heavily because I, despite what
14 people may think, I actually have the most number of
15 co-ops and condos in my area. And so I bring this up
16 to say that there's a bill- there's a couple bills we
17 have that are sort of making adjustments. I know it's
18 probably different for you all because you're, um,
19 city buildings, but, um, the- based on what I'm
20 understanding, the Governor and the State Comptroller
21 themselves have come out with reports basically
saying that the grid's not going to be ready in time.
And so we're trying to figure out a way, um, at least
on the constituency side and the residential side,
how to not have the penalties be exorbitant?

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2 Because I know in 2030, um, that's really when
3 the higher fines are going to start and so, if
4 there's a bill in place that we have that literally
5 just matches, uh, the penalties and fees to when the
6 grid will actually be ready, um, is that something
that would be helpful, or is it something that would-

7 YUME KITASEL: I think from, uh, DCAS's
8 perspective You know, we, I think, feel not only are
9 we mandated, but we have a moral obligation to, to
10 move as fast as we can on this. Um, and as, um, uh,
11 you know, as I was sort of referring to earlier when
12 we were doing Q&A, we do have, um, this large source
13 of hydropower that's coming online soon, which will
14 actually allow DCAS to, um, to allow the city to, to
15 meet the targets. So, um, uh, and exceed, I, I should
16 say. And, and also we are very aggressively working
17 on all of the these projects to reduce our
18 consumption.

19 So I don't think that, um, I think for, for, for
20 us, um, even, you know, mandates aside, we want to do
21 as much as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hmm, mmm, no and I totally
get that and I think it's just challenging for- I, I
get, and it's good that on the city side you feel

1
2 very confident that you can meet those goals. I think
3 the other issue just goes on beyond the, you know,
4 city buildings and where we land with that. So I just
5 wanted to get your thoughts on that, but that's good
6 to hear. So thank you.

7 YUME KITASEI: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. Uh,
10 Council Member Hankerson.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Thank you, Chair. Uh, I
12 just have a couple of questions, um, regarding some
13 of the recruitment strategies, um, that DCAS uses.
14 Uh, what is DCAS doing to attract more applicants for
15 city jobs? If I can start there.

16 YUME KITASEI: Thank you, Council Member. Um, so
17 this is something that I'm very excited to dig into
18 because I think, um, there's a, there's a lot of
19 strategies that we already do, and then there's more
20 that I think that we can do. But, um, one of the
21 things I'll just say, and then I'll pass it to our
Deputy Commissioner, um, to talk, um, in greater
detail about the programs that we do have, is sort of
even just demystifying what the civil service system
is.

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2 Um, 80% of our, um, jobs are civil service jobs.
3 And I think if you ask a normal New Yorker, they
4 probably couldn't tell you what civil service is. Um,
5 so, you know, I think we're having, you know,
6 conversations with, um, the team, uh, including our
7 comms team about, you know, how can we sort of
8 explain to New Yorkers what civil service is and make
9 sure that when tests are posted, um, that, uh, that
10 people actually know about it and not just people
11 who, you know, would normally know about it, but also
12 broader parts of New Yorkers, especially our
13 graduating high school students and our graduating
14 college students.

15 Um, so we just, um, uh, cut a TikTok video— not
16 TikTok video, Instagram video, sorry— with, um, our
17 DEP commissioner, for example, um, to promote one of
18 our, um, engineering, um, intern exams, um, which
19 will be, uh, which, which will hopefully, you know,
20 help us reach sort of a broader audience.

21 So things like that but I'm gonna pass it to
22 Deputy Commissioner Porter because we also have a
23 number of, um, you know, um, ah, Public Service Corps
24 programs and such that, um, also specifically target,
25 um, broader populations.

1
2 KATRINA PORTER: Sure, thank you for the question.
3 Um, so first and foremost, we work hand in hand with
4 city agencies to develop our annual examination
5 schedule. Um, as Commissioner mentioned, 83% of the
6 positions used across city government require a civil
7 service list. Uh, so we work very closely with
8 agencies to ensure that their hiring needs are, um,
9 met through the, the civil service process.

10 In addition to that, uh, our workforce operations
11 team at DCAS, which consists of, um, uh, the, uh,
12 Pathway Programs team, uh, the Public Service Corp
13 team, as, um, Commissioner mentioned, they work hand
14 in hand to use data to drive, you know, the areas
15 that we visit for, um, available hiring events, and
16 also, um, working closely with the New York City
17 Public School to, um, uh, educate our youth about,
18 uh, available civil service exams.

19 There are also a number of local laws that help
20 to drive how we recruit, um, for the City of New
21 York. Um, so there are many different ways that we do
so, but the ma- major driver is Civil Service Exam.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: I appreciate that and I
know, uh, that you mentioned Instagram, uh, which
kind of leads or segways to my next question. Um,

1
2 what's the agency's means of marketing and how much
3 of your budget is allocated toward marketing efforts?

4 YUME KITASEI: So, um, we have, uh, in addition to
5 all of the work that we do, um, in our, um, you know,
6 public affairs team, which I think from a budget
7 standpoint might be difficult to sort of separate out
8 because it's sort of all intertwined. We also have an
9 office of recruitment within human capital. Um, but
10 I'll, um, I'll hand it to you to add any numbers.

11 SHANA MIDELTON: That's right, Commissioner. Um,
12 the marketing budget is intertwined. Um, but our
13 Office of Recruitment, which sits under Human
14 Capital, they have a budget of about \$500,000, and
15 they have— they're a small but mighty team, 6 of
16 them. They go out to, um, uh, college events.

17 They do Civil Service 101 presentations across
18 the city. Um, and, um, we— they, they were
19 instrumental when DCAS did the hiring halls. They
20 were supporting agencies across the city in those
21 events.

YUME KITASEI: And if I can just sort of
shamelessly, um, plug, uh, we're— we are actually
currently hiring for a director of digital content,

1
2 um, uh, in order to sort of help drive some of this,
3 um, more social media oriented strategy.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Oh, that's great, okay.

5 YUME KITASEI: So if you have any good candidates,
6 please send them our way.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Will do. Um, I know in,
8 in the, the last, uh, Administration, Uh, there was
9 an initiative that, um, required DCAS, uh, to host
10 job fairs citywide. Uh, how many individuals were
11 hired as a result of those, uh, job fairs?

12 YUME KITASEI: Um, sorry, go ahead.

13 KATRINA PORTER: Um, so we can get back to you
14 with the number. Um, but the hiring halls that DCAS
15 participated in were back in, uh, 2023. That process
16 has now transitioned to the Small Business Services,
17 and they hold- host, um, hiring pool- hiring halls,
18 um, with both public and, uh, private sector
19 employers.

20 Um, DCAS's role, um, in that process is to, um,
21 connect city agencies with these events, um, to
22 recruit for city jobs.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: That's my time. Thank
24 you.

25 KATRINA PORTER: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You can keep going. You have
3 another question?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: I have one more
5 question.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go right ahead.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Um, er, I don't know if
8 you have the data for this, but going back to the
9 initial- the original hiring halls, um, do you know
10 which agencies seen an increase, uh, in terms of
11 hiring as a result of those hiring halls?

12 KATRINA PORTER So we saw major success with
13 hiring halls across the board. Um, I think it would
14 be more helpful for us to get back to you since this-
15 that, uh, particular event happened some time ago. I
16 don't wanna misrepresent.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Thank you so much.

18 KATRINA PORTER: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, thank you. Um, did you
20 get any state money? 'Cause I know the Proposed
21 Executive Budget in January came out. Now we're
waiting for the- One House bills to be negotiated,
but were there any state good or bad opportunities in
that budget? What did you think?

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2 YUME KITASEI: Yeah, so there were some, um,
3 positive impacts in the, um, the budget, which, um, I
4 think we have here that we can, we can go into. I
5 think a lot around vehicles, for example.

6 SHANA MIDELTON: Mostly around policy, um, climate
7 policy that we're always supportive of.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

9 SHANA MIDELTON: Um, the state removed the cap on
10 rebates. Provided to municipalities for clean vehicle
11 infrastructure, which I'm sure Keith is very happy
12 about. Um, they're also extend- they're- the
13 Governor's Budget is proposing to extend the
14 alternative fuels exemption for 5 years.

15 Um, so we're always happy to see, um, more state
16 policy going towards helping us achieve our climate
17 goals.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, that's good. Okay, so
19 basically it wasn't money per se, but it is in the
20 end.

21 YUME KITASAEI: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay um, emergency oil
purchase. The plan preliminary includes an additional
\$3.0 million in intra-city funds for FY26 only for
heating oil for, from the Department of Education. I

1
2 guess it's, you know, it's called some other name
3 now, something about public schools. How was this
4 amount determined? Does this funding relate to the
5 warming centers that were operating at those DOE
6 facilities during the snowstorms?

7 Do you manage all energy-related expenditures for
8 DOE? And if so, why are they managed by— why by DCAS
9 and not DOE? And what portion is covered by DCAS and
10 what portion by DOE?

11 Um, the reason I ask this is it is complicated
12 for those of us on the outside to know because you
13 are so integrated.

14 YUME KITASEI: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Other agencies. Um, how does
16 this all work? So how does the oil and DOE and you
17 work?

18 YUME KITASEI: So, yeah, so, um, this was
19 obviously a very historic winter. Um, in terms of the
20 amount of snowfall and the, the many days of, of, uh,
21 extreme cold. Um, so we were, um, called in to help.
Um, and, uh, there's an emergency, um, fleet
emergency fuel task force which we helped, um,
coordinate. Um, and, uh, it's, it's sort of— so I
guess the short answer is it is sort of like an, an

1
2 additive, um, effort, um, on our part to sort of come
3 in and sort of help them supplement their fuel.

4 Um, but, uh, Keith, do you wanna add anything to
5 that?

6 KEITH KERMAN: Sure, on a day-to-day basis, um,
7 New York City Public Schools has their own version of
8 the DCAS fuel contract that they actually manage
9 day-to-day.

10 So on a day-to-day basis, we are not managing
11 your fuel deliveries because of the extreme cold
12 temperatures. There was really a, you know, an
13 enormous amount of demand on heating oil. There was
14 also in the broader marketplace, but also impacting
15 city government, a dearth of available drivers.
16 There's law that mandates how your drivers have to
17 have rest periods. And, you know, our vendors were
18 searching far and wide, getting drivers from other
19 states. But, and so we came in to manage through our
20 emergency contract with this, which is actually not
21 with the day-to-day vendor.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

KEITH KERMAN: An emergency trucking operation to
support the public schools. So Sanitation, um, DCAS,
the fire department, the police department, the

1
2 Department of Transportation, all using their city
3 trucks to make sure that heating oil got delivered to
4 the schools, um, during really about a, a week to
5 10-day period when it was just incredibly cold and,
6 and we wanted to make sure there were no problems.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so that basically that
8 was your effort during that time period.

9 YUME KITASEL: Well, it's a, it's a coordinating
10 effort. So like, for example, shout out to Department
11 of Transportation, who in particular gave us a lot of
12 drivers for this effort. Um, so we coordinate other
13 agencies to do it. So I don't want to steal their
14 thunder, but I will say, like all things DCAS,
15 quietly, very dramatic behind the scenes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And there was a cost,
17 obviously, in addition to your usual budget. Do you
18 have some numbers for that?

19 SHANA MIDELTON: Yes, um, because it was an
20 emergency, the cost was estimated around \$300,000 a
21 day.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

SHANA MIDELTON: Um, we didn't— at the time, we
didn't know how long it could have been, so we
estimated assuming we would need to do it for about

1
2 10 days. The actual cost came in a little lower,
3 about a little over \$1 million. So we intend to give
4 some of that— give the rest of the money back to DOE.
5 So you may see that reversed in the next budget
6 cycle.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, thank you. Um, the
8 Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$1.9 million
9 in this Intracity funds for FY26, only for— from the
10 DOE for Geotab equipment.

11 So what kinds of vehicles, DOE vehicles, are the
12 Geotab equipment used for? What are the metrics for
13 tracking them? What's done with the data? And are all
14 of DOE's vehicles equipped? And if the Geotab
15 equipment, is it used on school buses for tracking?
16 Now we all know that the school bus issue is
17 challenging on all fronts since I get so many
18 complaints.

19 So, I know you're working on this, and so I just
20 want to understand it for the parents and for the
21 public.

22 KEITH KERMAN: Okay, thank you. So all of New York
23 State Public Schools city-owned vehicles, about 300
24 or so, are tracked through our Fleet Office of
25 Real-Time Tracking, which is Geotab. That's funded

1
2 through DCAS. Um, but then DCAS also tracks a little
3 bit more than 10,000 school buses live.

4 So there is a local law that requires tracking,
5 as you know, that was passed a number of years ago
6 during— after a major sudden storm. The tracking for
7 the school buses does happen through the Fleet Office
8 of Real-Time Tracking, um, with all the companies. We
9 provide all of that information on a daily basis, and
10 of course live access to New York City Public
11 Schools, to the Office of Pupil Transportation.

12 Each company also has access to their
13 information.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You mean each company, each
15 busing company?

16 KEITH KERMAN: Each busing company also has access
17 to their information, so they can be mon— and we are
18 monitoring safety, utilization, idling, and, and many
19 other—

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Times, delivery times.

21 KEITH KERMAN: All kinds of indicators, right? You
know, the data is very robust. Um, the actual
management of the school buses is still, of course,
the Office of Pupil Transportation. We're really the

1 telematics support service but we also develop a lot
2 of, uh, reporting for them.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And what do you do with that
4 data? The reason I ask, of course, is that
5 unfortunately, uh, you don't get the accolades for
6 doing a great job. Everybody thinks this is all DOE,
7 just so you know, in terms of this program. So my
8 question is, what— did the DOE use the data to try to
improve? Is that the idea?

9 KEITH KERMAN: Yeah, I mean, absolutely and we,
10 you know, in the end, the Office of Pupil
11 Transportation and the Department of Education, these
12 are all contracted services through the Department of
Education, not through DCAS.

13 So ultimately, it, it, you know, it's their
14 charge, not DCAS's, to manage the school bus
15 operation but we are supporting them on a daily
16 basis, providing safety reports, utilization reports,
helping them analytically wherever they ask us to.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and it's your
18 impression that all of the school buses are equipped?

19 KEITH KERMAN: All of them are equipped.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.
21

1
2 YUME KITASEI: And I, I will just add, um, I think
3 it would be fun to have, um, any Council Members here
4 who are interested come see the Fort where we do our,
5 um, fleet coordination as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I would, I would like to do
7 that. I think the bus contract is like 2.5 years.
8 It's shorter than it has been in the past. So we'll
9 see how this data, uh, helps with any future
10 decisions about school buses.

11 My, my disabled students often don't get there on
12 time. So I have a lot of concerns. Um, I think the
13 city secured a federal grant to help purchase
14 electric buses, but have these funds have been slow
15 to be dispersed? I didn't know the funding, uh, went
16 to DCAS or to DOE and if you have any update about
17 purchasing these electric school buses.

18 YUME KITASEI: It goes to the DOE.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It goes to the DOE. So
20 they're, they're the ones who are purchasing the very
21 slow, er, not slow buses, but slow arriving Federal
22 money, they're dealing with it, not you.

23 YUME KITASEI: Yes, yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, that's lucky for you, I
25 would say. Um, uh, a couple of things. Hmm, goal 80

1
2 times 50, there's a carbon reduction goal to reduce
3 80% of our overall emissions, and I think you're, you
4 know, doing a, a great job, um, by 2050 using 2006 as
a baseline for our city.

5 So do you feel that the 2006 baseline is a good
6 measure and have you assessed whether it can meet
7 this mandate? The carbon reduction.

8 YUME KITASAEI: I'm not, um, I'm not sure that we,
9 um, have any objection to the 2006 baseline, but, um,
I don't know if you—

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But do you feel like you can
11 meet the mandate? I think that's a more important
question.

12 KEITH KERMAN: I, I think we're quite honestly,
13 the law passed 6 years ago. So we've just been
14 hustling to get to 2025 and 2030.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

16 KEITH KERMAN: Uh, now that we are kind of getting
17 to that point where we can safely say we're pretty
18 confident we're gonna hit 50% by '30, now we're
planning for the future, so.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, on solar, you've
20 established a goal of 100 megawatts of solar, uh, on
21

1
2 city-owned buildings by 2030 and 150 megawatts by the
3 end of 2035. That's the 90 local law 99.

4 YUME KITASEI: Yep.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How much has been installed?
6 How much is set to be installed? And what funding do
7 you have? And I guess one of my questions would be,
8 again, you have your DCAS buildings, but do you also
9 help the other buildings of which there are many?

10 YUME KITASEI: Yes uh, especially schools. Uh, so
11 to date—

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, I was gonna ask about
13 schools, yeah.

14 YUME KITASEI: The city has completed over 204
15 solar installations, which is about 33.5 megawatts.
16 50% of the capacity is in disadvantaged communities.
17 And we have in our pipeline 39.5 megawatts, um,
18 across 134 projects, 63% of which are, um, in
19 disadvantaged communities. And we're working very
20 hard to identify other sites.

21 Um, uh, these are basically sites that don't
require roof repair— repairs generally. Um, is, is
the ideal. Um, so, um, we, we do believe that we are
on track, uh, and have the funding to do 100 by 2030.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I mean, this is a silly
3 question, but again, the federal government, I don't
4 think he likes wind. He doesn't like air. He doesn't
5 like sunshine. So is it hard to get solar equipment?
6 Obviously, I hear about the EV, but I didn't know if
7 it's hard to— I don't know.

8 YUME KITASEI: Yeah I mean, I think one of the
9 things that, um, uh, has sort of, you know, has the
10 potential to impact is the, um, there was a, a
11 federal credit for solar, um, that has gone away. Um,
12 but, uh, I don't know if you want to add anything
13 about the supply chain.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: No, I think, um, this again, going
15 back to '90s— '97 passing in 2019, shortly after that
16 was COVID, shortly after that is supply and supply
17 chain disruptions.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right?

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Basically this entire time since
20 then. So, uh, yes, it, it can be an issue and can be
21 a cause. We haven't seen it be major at this point
though, so far. 'Cause you are the ones who'll be
buying quite a bit of solar equipment, I would
imagine.

1
2 Um, we are proud of the progress we've made so
3 far, uh, in spite of these challenges. So I, I don't
4 think we're at the, at the point where we would say
5 it's stopped us or blocked us, but it's something to
6 navigate as we're continuing forward, yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. That's helpful. Um, in
8 terms of lighting, the Preliminary Commitment Plan
9 includes \$630.9 million uh, for 5 years, over 5 years
10 for direct installation of lighting systems in the
11 schools.

12 So how many schools does this funding provide
13 for? Um, can you provide a list? Not necessarily
14 right now. What's the scope of this program? What's
15 the completion of this program? And I, I believe
16 there's another \$300 million planned for other DOE
17 lighting projects. Can you provide a list and a
18 timeline for the projects funded? And you just
19 basically- how many schools and how much it costs?

20 YUME KITASEI: So I think you're talking about the
21 direct install program.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah.

23 YUME KITASEI: So we've completed lighting
24 upgrades in 367 schools and we have 433 to go, um, to
25 achieve the 800-school target. Um, and, uh, we've

1
2 allocated \$630 million in the Capital Plan to
3 complete up to 800 additional schools after the
4 original target is met. Do you want anything?

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so you feel that you're
6 on schedule, basically.

7 YUME KITASEI: Yes, as with all things, we are,
8 uh, working as fast as possible.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. The Citywide Resiliency
10 Measures East Side Coastal Resilient Project, a
11 project that you and I know very, very well.

12 YUME KITASEI: I do indeed.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I feel like I have gray hair
14 from that project. Um, so the, uh, Preliminary Plan,
15 the PCCB, includes \$432.5 million across 5 years for
16 citywide resiliency measures as part of this plan.
17 What is the scope of the project, and what's the
18 estimated timetable and completion? Now, you just
19 have a small portion of it. It's a much bigger plan.
20 Mhm. But how are you involved and what's going on
21 from your perspective?

YUME KITASEI: Yeah. Um, I will, I will just say
this is a, actually, a DDC-managed project. So, um,
I'll have to defer to them on some of the details
here.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, alright. 70 Mulberry,
another project that you and I know very well.

3 YUME KITASEI: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Because we spent some time
5 when the fire took place, horrible fire. So it was
6 \$149.1 million across 5 years for reconstruction of
7 70 Mulberry. Can you give us an update? Can you tell
8 us about the scope? Um, what's gonna happen in the
9 future? Um, I know it's not happening as fast as
people would like, put it that way.

10 YUME KITASEI: Yeah and, um, again, I'm not trying
11 to pass the buck, but this is also a DDC-managed
project.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So you don't have anything to
13 do with either one of these?

14 YUME KITASEI: Um, I mean, ultimately we will,
15 but, uh, in terms of the actual construction, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Managing 70 Mulberry for
sure.

17 SHANA MIDELTON: Yeah, yeah, they're, they're
18 currently in the process of amending the CP um, and
19 they're working with OMB on that, um, \$21 million. So
the budget passes through our budget.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Correct.
21

1
2 SHANA MIDELTON: So \$21 million has been
3 registered already. Um, I believe they're waiting on
4 that amended CP to, um, continue. But we would get
5 more specific timelines from DDC on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, yeah, you can ask them
7 to, um, Staten Island. I know it is Frank's— yeah,
8 he's gonna ask. Go, Frank, you ask the Staten Island
9 question. Not the forgotten borough though. Go ahead.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Well, for starters, uh,
11 since I have the opportunity, I'd love to ask about
12 the, uh, the status of the borough flag that used to
13 be atop of, uh, City Hall and, uh, I know that was
14 discontinued and wondering if there was a financial
15 reason for that, or what our chances of getting each
16 borough's flag flying above City Hall again might be.

17 YUME KITASEI: Yeah, so, um, I did look into this
18 and actually that falls under City Hall operations of
19 the building, so it's not, um, a DCAS, uh, decision.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Fair enough. Um, so in
21 terms of, uh, Staten Island, the Preliminary Capital
Commitment Plan includes \$202 million, uh, across the
5-year plan, uh, for Staten Island's master plan, uh,
the Phase 2 renovations. Uh, what's the scope of the
work being done?

1
2 YUME KITASEI: Which— sorry, which building are we
3 talking about?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: This is, uh, this is a
5 Court Capital project.

6 YUME KITASEI: Okay. Project.

7 SHANA MIDELTON: Um, also, this is one of the ones
8 where it's in our budget, but we're not actively
9 managing it. Um, it's being managed with OMB and
10 state DASNY.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Understood.

12 SHANA MIDELTON: Yep.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Got it. Let me see what
14 else am I— give me a moment, Chair, to— thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I can ask— please. Uh, just,
16 um, I'm very excited about your tours I have to say.
17 So you have money for 1 position increasing to
18 \$172,000 for 2 positions to go to the top of 1 Center
19 Street. So what are the 2 positions? What are they
20 going to be doing? Um, and then, uh, just talk a
21 little bit about the \$6 million, which is the capital
amount to do— I guess you're going to put fences. We
didn't believe in fences. We just did it. So I'm glad
you have a little fence around it. Go ahead.

1
2 YUME KITASEI: Yeah. So there are, I guess, 2
3 pieces to this. So the first is the personnel. Um, we
4 have, as you noted, we have 2 people that we're
5 hiring for this. One is, um, for IT to support the
6 actual sort of reservation system. Um, we need
7 somebody to actually maintain that system. Um, and
8 then the other is, um, a DCAS police officer who will
9 help escort the tours up. Um, and so, um, that's what
10 the two positions are.

11 Um, in terms of the \$6 million, um, you know, one
12 of the things we're, we're touting, of course, the
13 public access that will be— the people will be able
14 to reserve from the City Store but, um, the City
15 Store and online, actually. Say, um, but, um, the \$6
16 million obviously encompasses a much broader set of
17 work including, um, redoing the facade and sort of
18 repairing the, um, the, the tiles up there and stuff
19 like that. So, um, it's really, um, you know, a
20 broader project that is about sort of restoring the
21 cupola in general for future generations and making
sure that it's able to sort of have a longer
lifespan. So we're excited to do that work.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That elevator is pretty
small.

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YUME KITASEI: It is a small elevator, yes.

2

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Spin on it.

3

4

YUME KITASEI: Yes, intimate. I think that's what
we like to say.

5

6

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Very. Yes, you're gonna-
you'll have enough reservations-wise, I guess, your
limit to be able to access the elevator.

7

8

YUME KITASEI: It's, it's, it's 5 per tour, and
then plus the, um, person who will be accompanying
them.

9

10

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

11

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: I have one more, Chair.
Yeah, if you would.

12

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead.

13

14

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you. Uh, as
obviously you know, DCAS manages the city's real
estate portfolio and helps determine where agencies
locate offices and services. Staten Island residents,
uh, as the Chair was kind enough to point out, we
often feel like our borough is forgotten.

15

16

17

18

YUME KITASEI: Yes.

19

20

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: And that, uh, we get fewer
government service locations than other parts of the
city. How does DCAS consider borough equity when

21

1
2 deciding where to place new agency offices or leased
3 facilities? And are there opportunities to expand
4 city services on Staten Island?

5 YUME KITASEI: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, um, you
6 know, as we are sort of approaching every lease,
7 we're obviously thinking about two things. One is,
8 um, how do we get the best deal for our taxpayers,
9 and also about the operations of city agencies and
10 what works for, you know, whatever service they're
11 providing.

12 Um, but I'll, um, turn it to my Executive Deputy
13 Commissioner to sort of add some detail there.

14 LAURA RINGELHEIM: So in general, we - we work
15 with the agencies to determine what their catchment
16 area is, and they use their, um, you know, whatever
17 their needs are in either the public-facing services
18 might dictate where they need to be or their core
19 operations or headquarters need to be.

20 So certainly, I-I, if there's something that you
21 think, um, an agency needs to, you know, have a, an
additional presence, then we can talk about that and
work with the agency to see what that would look
like.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Just, uh, sitting here the
3 other day at the Department for the Aging, there was
4 a discussion about 14 Wall Street, hmm, and the fact
5 that it seemed really expensive in terms of their
6 moving from as an agency into there. I think that
7 somebody from the public or from a Council Member
8 asked that it was almost as expensive as the entire
9 budget of the agency.

10 So can you talk a little bit about 14 Wall
11 Street, how that got determined as a location, and,
12 you know, how you're gonna look at it in the future?
13 Because I'm sure it's lovely for the Department for
14 the Aging, but we're all trying to figure out how to
15 save money. So, yeah, I think— the best deal we could
16 get?

17 LAURA RINGELHEIM: I'm not, um, you know, we, we
18 did see, um, our sister agency testify, and I think
19 we weren't sure, um, what number that was referring
20 to. But I will say that the way that we do, um,
21 leasing, we think of it in terms of the, like, term
of the lease, um, usually when it's a budget number.
So it may seem larger than it actually is. It's not
an annualized number. So that was my guess that

1
2 that's maybe what the reaction is to that, um, the
3 specifics of that deal.

4 I will just say, you know, um, I know, uh, er,
5 one of the first things that I did when I started was
6 I, um, went over to 2 Lafayette just to see the DYFTA
7 space and sort of assess the conditions there. And I
8 know that they're very anxious to get into newly
9 renovated space.

10 So, um, that obviously is something that we're,
11 we're, um, very anxious to do for them.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Um, and then I know we
13 heard earlier about the need to, uh, do applications
14 and information about civil service. There were, uh,
15 er, ah, hmm, there was a story in the city the other
16 day about 31 people hired from the 80,000 people who
17 applied for the Mandami Administration. This was pre-
18 -coming into office. I know that. So my question is,
19 I don't know if it's possible to have some
20 conversation with those 80,000 applicants. 31 were
21 hired from that list.

22 So to say, sorry, you can apply for civil
23 service, that wouldn't make sense because you need-
24 er, or maybe they're not interested. Who knows? Is

1
2 there some way to do that or is that not possible?
3 Software-wise or some other way?

4 YUME KITASEI: Yeah, we're, um, looking into that.
5 That was actually a question that I asked when I, um,
6 started as well. Um, uh, you know, I think it's a
7 separate system obviously from, from the hiring that
8 we do, but, um, obviously if there's an opportunity
9 to sort of do something there, we'd, we'd be very
10 open to it. Um, it's just, you know, I think a
11 question of, um, you know, where that data is stored
12 and, and how easy it is to sort of speak to, um,
13 between the two systems.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, I think that's
15 helpful. I think the main takeaway for me is you need
16 more money to buy more electric vehicles and so I
17 would say that that is the takeaway that we— that I
18 have from this conversation. Thank you very much.
19 And, uh, we look forward to the next, uh, the law
20 department.

21 YUME KITASEI: Yes, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, thank you very much
23 for being here, Law Department. So this, uh, hearing
24 will be with the Law Department. We had DCAS before,
25 as you know. I wanna welcome the newly confirmed but

1
2 not new Corporation Counsel, Steve Banks. The Law
3 Department's Fiscal '27 Preliminary Budget is \$345.1
4 million. It's my understanding, which is \$68.3
5 million more than the Fiscal '26 Adopted Budget, and
6 it's partly due to funding in the Preliminary Plan
7 for additional attorneys and support staff, which are
8 desperately needed.

9 The Law Department, as we know, represents the
10 city, the Mayor, city agencies, City Council, and
11 other city elected officials in civil litigation
12 matters. The Preliminary Plan includes \$46.1 million
13 in new needs, growing to \$67.2 million in FY27 and in
14 the out years for additional legal staff at the
15 agency, court-appointed monitors, which are also
16 expensive, and special masters, which are expensive,
17 and for the remediation manager costs mandated for
18 the Department of Correction.

19 I look forward to learning more today. We all
20 know how the Law Department plans to hire for the new
21 positions, how they will be used to save the city
money on tort liability in particular, and how the
agency will respond to the Mayor's savings mandate.
And I'm delighted that Council Member Stevens is
here.

1
2 So now you need— who's on? Ah, yeah, Santosuosso
3 is on. She is having a baby soon, and so she's not
4 here. We're very excited about the baby.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Not right now.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, but soon.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, hmm, she looks like
8 she is right now.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Soon. Uh, you need to be
10 sworn in. Go ahead.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright, we will now hear
12 testimony from the Administration. Before we begin, I
13 will administer the oath of affirmation. Panelists,
14 please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell
15 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
16 before this Committee, and to respond honestly to
17 Council Member questions?

18 PANEL: Yes.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright, you may begin when
20 ready.

21 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you. Good afternoon, uh,
Chair Brewer, members of the Committee, uh, as well
as other members of the Council who may come during
the course of the hearing. It's a pleasure to come
before you to discuss the Law Department's Fiscal

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2 Year 2027 Preliminary Budget. I'm joined by First
3 Assistant Corporation Counsel Sheryl Neufeld, uh,
4 Managing Attorney Eric Eichenholz, and Chief
5 Administration, uh, Chief of Administration Jenny
6 Nagle-Yndigoyen.

7 Uh, the Law Department represents the city, the
8 Mayor, the City Council, other elected officials, and
9 the city's agencies in all affirmative and defensive
10 civil litigation. The department brings proceedings
11 in family court, uh, uh, with alleging violations of
12 criminal laws and represents the people of the state
13 of New York in proceedings filed in the criminal
14 court to enforce the City's Administrative Code.

15 Law Department attorneys draft and review local
16 and state legislation, real estate leases,
17 procurement contracts, financial instruments for the
18 sale of municipal bonds. The department also provides
19 legal counsel to city officials on a wide range of
20 issues such as civil rights, education, intellectual
21 property, land use, and environmental prop- uh,
policy. The department's work embraces all entities
and operations. Our work impacts all areas of daily
living in New York City.

1
2 The department currently has approximately 785
3 assistant corporation counsels and 600 legal support
4 professionals. We're proud to be a leader in the
5 legal profession with approximately 31% of our
6 lawyers racially and ethnically diverse and 58%
7 women.

8 Over the past few years, headcount reductions
9 have impaired the Law Department's ability to fulfill
10 its mission in representing the city, its elected
11 officials, including the Council, and other city
12 entities. The 200 new attorney lines and 100
13 professional support lines provided to the Law
14 Department in the proposed budget will be allocated
15 to support all areas of the Law Department.

16 This increased staffing will help mitigate the
17 increases in monetary settlements and payouts
18 resulting from a number of factors, including the Law
19 Department's reduced headcount in the past
20 Administration.

21 The increase in staff will allow us to restore
our ability to settle meritorious cases earlier and
make dispositive motions and try cases that lack
merit, reducing payouts in both types of cases. Other
new staff will focus on enhancing the Law

1
2 Department's ability to advise and support the city
3 through legal advice, uh, and affirmative litigation
4 initiatives.

5 This new staffing will also enable the department
6 to increase the provision of risk assessments in
7 order to help agencies reform practices and avert
8 litigation against the city in the first place.

9 Through all of this, we'll advance the city's
10 affordability agenda as well as the interests of the
11 city, the Mayor, the Council, and other elected
12 officials.

13 A large focus of the Law Department's work this
14 past year has been addressing potential challenges
15 regarding federal funding requirements which have
16 changed and evolved rapidly over the past year.

17 To do so, we have set up a special team to focus
18 exclusively on these emerging, emerging challenges.
19 Our work has already been critical safeguarding
20 billions of dollars in federal grants that touch on
21 all aspects of municipal life, including
infrastructure, policing, housing, social services,
and mission-critical objectives such as disaster
mitigation and counterterrorism efforts.

1
2 With the increased staffing, we'll be positioned
3 to litigate affirmatively and defensively to protect
4 the city's rights and interests. For example, we
5 brought a lawsuit to protect funding the city
6 received from the Federal Emergency Management
7 Agency, FEMA, in accordance with federal law to
8 reimburse the city for services to asylum seekers. We
9 sued to protect New York City Public Schools magnet
10 school funding that was cut based upon reported
11 violations of Title IX due to the public school's
12 guidelines to support transgender and
13 gender-expansive students.

14 We also joined coalitions of other cities and
15 states to challenge grant conditions that violated
16 federal law because they intended to commandeer, uh,
17 the recipients to enforce federal immigration policy
18 and federal executive orders, among other things.

19 Similarly, we filed and joined more than 25
20 amicus briefs on topics such as immigration
21 enforcement, federal funding, deployment of the
National Guard, and New Yorkers' rights and benefits
to ensure that the city's voice is heard as courts
consider these emergent legal issues, even in
circumstances in which the city is not a party.

1
2 At my confirmation hearing before the Council
3 last month, I emphasized the importance of the Law
4 Department being promptly attentive to the needs of
5 all of its individual and institutional clients,
6 including the Council and Council Members.

7 Since assuming the position of Corporation
8 Counsel, I'm pleased to report that we have been
9 working in collaboration with the Speaker and the
10 Council in a number of areas. Individual members of
11 the Council have also reached out to me directly to
12 discuss matters of concern. Our office will continue
13 to work side by side with Council staff on crafting
14 legislation, providing legal advice in a timely
15 manner, and ensuring legal clarity and defensibility
16 in doing so. An excellent example of this is our
17 recent work together on procurement reform
18 legislation.

19 The Department's work in both revenue saving- is
20 both revenue saving and revenue generating. For
21 example, in FY25, the Department saved the city \$128
million by resolving \$140 million in claims and
contractual disputes for a total payment of only \$12
million.

1
2 Similarly, the Department's defense of real
3 property tax assessments protected \$96 million in
4 property tax receipts in FY25 and almost \$65 million
5 during the first half of FY26, which prever- preserve
6 funding for city services.

7 During this Fiscal year so far, the Department
8 has recovered over \$35 million for the city in and
9 his entities. This includes monetary recoveries for
10 property damage, breach of contract, restitution,
11 False Claims Act cases, securities fraud, public
12 health and safety matters, including anti-youth
13 vaping, uh, and tenant protection code enforcement
14 cases, and opioid settlement payments, among other
15 things.

16 In this Fiscal Year, collection law firms
17 supervised by the Division have, uh, recovered
18 another- \$30 million. In addition to recovering
19 monetary damages, the Department sues to enjoin
20 unlawful and harmful practices that cause or
21 contributed to a public nuisance or otherwise
negatively affect public health and safety. For
example, we are currently litigating against Kia and
Hyundai over their failure to install
industry-standard engine immobilizing technology in

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2 low-end models of their vehicles, which, when
3 highlighted as part of a TikTok challenge led to
4 massive spikes in thefts of those models in the city,
5 as well as dangerous driving, property damage,
6 injuries, and deaths.

7 We're also currently litigating against 4 major
8 social media companies for harms that have resulted
9 in the mental health of young people and the cost of
10 those harms imposed on the city as a result of the
11 deliberate design, marketing, and operation of
12 addicted social media platforms, which intend to
13 nationally target youth. And as reported yesterday,
14 we recently obtained a ruling assessing \$2.1 million
15 in fines against a landlord who has failed to make
16 repairs to a residential building and \$1,000 in
17 ongoing daily fines until the conditions are
18 corrected.

19 These cases and other litigation aim to change
20 behavior by compelling compliance with city law and
21 policy to enhance public health and safety and to
protect New Yorkers from unlawful and harmful
conduct. We also anticipate saving the city over \$1
million in this Fiscal Year in payments from the
Judgment and Claims Fund through our continuing

1
2 activity to compel insurance companies to defend and
3 identify the city.

4 This program, which began in the late 1990s, has
5 saved more than \$3 billion in judgments and claims
6 payments through insurance takeovers since its
7 inception. Every case that the insurance company
8 steps in to defend is a case that does not have to be
9 defended by city attorneys, thus saving enormous
10 legal resources. Settlements and judgments paid by
11 insurers in cases falling within policy coverage also
12 save the city substantial sums.

13 The Law Department also represents the city in
14 more than 70,000 cases annually. We continue to
15 experience an increase in pending cases.
16 Approximately half of our pending cases, some 35,000
17 involve tort matters. These pending cases include a
18 large number of Adult Survivor Act and Child Victims
19 Act cases, and we anticipate a continued influx of
20 these cases which involve claims of misconduct that
21 occurred many years ago.

22 We also expect a continued increase in Gender
23 Motivated Violence Act cases with claims for past
24 conduct. Given the significant impact of these cases
25 on the city, we are looking for solutions to give the

1
2 city certainty regarding exposure while properly
3 compensating survivors with meritorious claims. The
4 Department also serves as the statutory mandated
5 presentment agency for all juvenile justice,
6 adolescent offender, interstate child support cases
7 referred to the New York City Family Court.

8 Under the Rehabilitative Mandate of the Family
9 Court Act, the Department must work to achieve
10 outcomes that serve the needs of each individual
11 young person brought before the court, while at the
12 same time protecting the interests of crime victims
13 and ensuring the safety of the community at large.
14 Law Department attorneys also appear in the New York
15 City Family Courts to handle petitions to establish
16 parentage and obtain, modify, or enforce existing
17 child support orders.

18 Uh, in 2025, Justice, uh, juvenile justice case
19 referrals increased by 11%, um, from, uh, 77, uh, ah,
20 hmm, 7,740 to 6,964 referrals, uh, in 2024. 66% of
21 the referrals represent felony charges.

18 In 2025, there were 348 firearms cases referred
19 to the Department, which is a decrease of 15% from
20 411 firearms cases in 2024. The number of child
21 support referrals in 2025 remain virtually the same,

1
2 uh, with, uh, 1,889 child support referrals in 2024
3 and 1,894 in 2025.

4 My testimony today provides an overview of the
5 very broad and varied legal work performed by the Law
6 Department. By keeping the interests of all New
7 Yorkers at the center of our work, we can do what is
8 right and just, solve problems, reinforce trust in
9 government and help meet the needs of New Yorkers.

10 I thank you for your support for the Law
11 Department and look forward to our continued
12 collaboration. Happy to answer any questions that you
13 may have.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. We've been joined
15 by the Speaker, and she has her first, uh, question,
16 and then I'm gonna, uh, ask the woman, uh, who's
17 having the baby soon for a question.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Ah, okay. Thank you, Chair.
19 Um, so thank you, Steve, for being here. We
20 appreciate it. Uh, got a couple questions for you.
21 The 9/11 files, as you know, this is something that
is very important to the City Council. The fact that
the city has sat on these 9/11 files for years, the
fact that thousands of people, uh, became sick and
died of cancer because the city did not, um, disclose

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2 the fact that the air was not safe to breathe, um, in
3 conjunction with the federal EPA and former EPA head
4 Christy Todd Whitman.

5 So my question is, and I had asked this during
6 the confirmation hearing, what is the status of the
7 release of the 9/11 files?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, thank you for that question. I
9 can report that since I was, uh, confirmed a couple
10 of weeks ago, we have set up a team that is reviewing
11 what documents can be posted on a portal to provide
12 access to the public and the cost for maintaining
13 such public access, uh, and what documents cannot be
14 posted. For example, documents with, uh, personal
15 information or individual- of individuals such as
16 medical information.

17 We're also looking at the cost of determining
18 what documents can and cannot be posted. We will keep
19 you posted on what we are doing, but that's what
20 we've done the last several weeks, and we're working
21 on this very hard to be able to, as I said, post
documents available to the public, having made a
determination of which ones, uh, can't be posted and
which ones can, with the ones that can't be really
ones that involve individual, uh, people's, uh,

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2 personal identifying information in their medical
3 records.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I mean, obviously we don't
5 wanna post people's personal identifying information,
6 but I'm gonna urge you and the law department to be
7 as fulsome as possible in the release of the records.
8 How quickly will that portal be up and running, and
9 how quickly do you think that the documents will be
10 released to the public?

11 STEVEN BANKS: I think the key fact here, uh, you
12 have my commitment to be as fulsome as possible, but
13 I think the key factor is there are tens of thousands
14 of documents and to review them properly so we don't
15 have a repeat of what just happened when the federal
16 government released records. We wanna make sure that
17 what we release are in fact not, uh, revealing
18 people's personal information.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. I'm gonna ask that
20 you update my office directly with this so that we
21 understand when the portal is up and running, which
documents have been released so that we are aware of
the timeline and that when these documents are
actually public.

1
2 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, absolutely. We'll keep you
3 advised.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you. I know, I
5 appreciate that. Um, the second question I have
6 followed up on something I asked you in the
7 confirmation hearing, which is on Timothy Pearson,
8 and is the law department still representing Mr.
9 Pearson?

10 STEVEN BANKS: I have reviewed Timothy Pearson's
11 right to legal representation at the city's expense
12 under the general municipal law and for related
13 matters. Based upon my review of new evidence since
14 the original decisions were made, I have determined
15 that he is not entitled to representation by the city
16 in these matters. Thus, the city will no longer pay
17 for Mr. Pearson's legal representation.

18 Similarly, based on my review of new evidence, I
19 have also determined that Jeffrey Madry is not
20 entitled to representation under the general
21 municipal law in the 4 lawsuits involving allegations
against Mr. Pearson. As such, the city will no longer
pay for Mr. Madry's legal representation in those
matters.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: This is excellent. I wanna
3 commend you. I wanna commend, uh, the law department
4 for reaching what is the right decision in this
5 matter. Neither Mr. Pearson nor Mr. Madry should have
6 ever been represented by the city law department. And
7 I hope that then this will serve as a clear warning
8 sign that, that those types of representations, which
9 are clearly compromised, will not happen again. So
10 thank you for doing that.

11 STEVEN BANKS: I appreciate it. Thank you for, uh,
12 asking me to do it, and thank you for the right-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I have one last question,
14 which is, um, having worked at the City Law
15 Department, which is something I'm incredibly proud
16 of that experience, I know the importance of all the
17 work that you're doing and you're serving also as our
18 counsel, which we really appreciate, the agency
19 counsel, all the work that the Law Department does in
20 so many different areas. You have a lot of vacancies.
21 What's the status of the filling of those vacancies?
What are the plans to do so?

STEVEN BANKS: Uh, thank you for that question as
well. So, uh, we are very pleased to have, uh, 200
attorney lines and, uh, 100, uh, support professional

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2 lines in the budget. Uh, we, uh, I have experience,
3 by the way, with hiring 200 lawyers when I was at the
4 Legal Aid Society for a very relatively short period
5 of time. We have an excellent in-house recruitment
6 team that is already well advanced in terms of
7 recruiting the class of entry-level, uh, assistant,
8 uh, corporation counsels. And we are on track for the
9 things we've been doing internally, uh, to hire
10 significant numbers of staff over the course of the
11 next number of months.

12 Uh, we will complete this, uh, certainly during
13 this fiscal year or this coming fiscal year, FY27,
14 and as soon as possible during the fiscal year
15 because of the urgent need to fill, uh, these
16 positions in order to do, uh, two things.

17 One is to fill lines that have been hollowed out,
18 uh, as a result of the last administration. Uh, the
19 need for those kinds of, uh, uh, lawyers is prevalent
20 in when we look at things like judgment and claims,
21 uh, but also we wanna make sure that we have, uh,
enough lawyers to take on the kinds of things that we
think, uh, will help New Yorkers in their everyday
lives.

1
2 Like, for example, the announcement yesterday of
3 the \$2.1 million, uh, fines and \$1,000 a day fines,
4 uh, with respect to a landlord on the worst landlords
5 list.

6 So we have two goals. One is to be able to, uh,
7 return ourselves to the strength that we think is
8 needed, and two, to be able to be, uh, ready to move
9 forward with the kinds of needs that New Yorkers
10 have. And appreciate your championing, uh, the Law
11 Department, given your, your role as a Speaker, but
12 also your role as a former member of the Law
13 Department.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great, thank you so much.
15 Those are my questions. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I just want to follow up on
17 9/11. So, um, it's— I really do appreciate the fact
18 that you understand the importance of this. It was,
19 uh, certainly the, uh, DOI that I think got the
20 discussion started before you started. And, uh, when
21 I was Chair of Oversight and Investigations, and now
I understand that there's, uh, there was an answer to
a FOIL. Now there's a response. So that's sort of
what you're going on in terms of the timeframe,
trying to figure out the previous response that the

1
2 law department made on FOIL and now you're taking up
3 when they've, um, sent a second letter.

4 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I think there's a, a- and I
5 appreciate that you had reached out to me, would have
6 conversations about this. I think that the challenge
7 is to address the situation which is built up over
8 several, several decades.

9 Uh, we want to be expeditious, we want to be
10 fast, we want to be responsible. Uh, the FOIL law,
11 uh, has much tighter time frames than, uh, we can,
12 uh, be responsible in responding to. So we wanna be
13 respectful of the people that file the recent FOIL
14 requests, respond to them, and try to address their
15 concerns in the context of whatever appeal they're
16 filing. But you have on the record what we're
17 attempting to do. Uh, might there be disputes about,
18 uh, how fast we're acting?

19 Uh, I think the Speaker has made it clear that,
20 uh, and we do speak quite frequently, that this will
21 be a topic of our, uh, ongoing conversations, and
22 maybe that will give some, uh, solace to the people
23 who are pressing for these documents.

24 As I said at my confirmation hearing, this is
25 also personal to me. My daughter, uh, then in the 5th

1
2 grade, was at school on Chambers and Greenwich
3 Street, was one of the young children evacuated as
4 the buildings were coming down.

5 So, uh, I am well aware of how urgent it is that
6 we should act, and we are moving with, with urgency.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you and that's great
8 news about Mr. Pearson, Mr. Andre, um, do you know
9 how much money we would be saving or how much money
10 has already been allocated to their, uh, legal
11 assistance?

12 STEVEN BANKS: The total amount that had already
13 been, uh, paid out in these cases that I was
14 referring to was approximately \$645,000.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so that'll be— that's
16 what will be saved in the future plus. Okay.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Um, just for the record, uh, uh,
18 Chair, just we can't predict exactly how much it
19 would have been. It could be spending it at a higher
20 rate, spending at a lower rate.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We don't know.

STEVEN BANKS: But we won't be spending this money
anymore.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, thank you. Um, from,
uh, the Council Member Santosuosso, who's on the

1
2 Zoom, I am reading her question because she cannot,
3 uh, ask it.

4 What mechanisms can the Law Department take to
5 reduce our average settlement cost? You alluded to
6 that and utilizing the risk department could help
7 prevent liability before it occurs and thus result in
8 savings. What is the plan to boost the influence of
9 this department across agency operations?

10 STEVEN BANKS: So, first-

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And again, a person also who
12 worked at the Law Department at one point.

13 STEVEN BANKS: First and foremost, congratulations
14 and wishing you all the best. Uh, secondly, at the
15 confirmation hearing, I appreciated very much the
16 Council Member's questions based upon her experience
17 in working in some of these units.

18 For the record, uh, the Law Department did
19 establish or has established a risk uh, unit, uh,
20 that is intended to look at the kinds of problems
21 that arise in these cases that are featured in the
Judgment and Claims number.

Uh, the additional hiring will enable us to
enhance that unit so that we can be, uh, proactive

1
2 and address underlying problems that lead to the
3 judgments and claims.

4 Uh, I think as the Council Member correctly
5 pointed out, Uh, when we have appropriate staffing,
6 we can assess cases at an earlier point in the
7 litigation and therefore make settlements at, uh, a
8 rate and at a level, uh, that, uh, we are unable to
9 do when the case is at a much later stage of
10 litigation. Uh, but to level set, in taking the kind
11 of comprehensive look that we are going to be taking
12 at these cases, we may well settle more cases
13 initially, uh, that might show up in our budget
14 number. But the aim is to get to a place where we
15 can, uh, make reforms to reduce the numbers of, uh,
16 the amounts and the numbers of the payouts.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Council Member Restler
18 can't be here. These people love asking you
19 questions.

20 So I understand the contracts division of the law
21 department has 13 attorneys responsible for reviewing
every single contract that the city's executing. In
addition to doing other things. They do a great job,
but that's not a lot of people for reviewing \$40
billion in contracts. So do you have plans to add

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2 more attorneys to this division? Does the law
3 department track contract delays and how long each
4 contract is under law review? And do you have plans
5 to increase the tech expertise of the division to
6 help on review of the increasing tech contracts?
7 Obviously AI being in there, I assume that the city
8 is executing?

9 STEVEN BANKS: We will be, uh, increasing the
10 staffing in the contracts, uh, area, uh, and we'll be
11 evaluating what kind is needed based upon the
12 contracts. I think as, uh, Council Member Restler
13 knows, uh, addressing procurement issues is near and
14 dear to my heart as a former head of a nonprofit and
15 then the former head of an agency that had about 25%
16 of the city contracts, uh, and I have, uh, a number
17 of approaches that we're going to be taking to try to
18 address, uh, what has been a problem for many years
19 in terms of, uh, uh, contract processing in the city.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I have many more
21 questions, but, uh, Council Member Lee, you have
22 questions?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes. Hello, how are you?

24 STEVEN BANKS: Good, how are you?
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And I too, uh, love talking
3 about procurement reform, so as a former nonprofit
4 head too.

5 STEVEN BANKS: Um, I think we talked about some of
6 these for procurement reform before my confirmation
7 hearing.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, no, we did. Um, okay,
9 so really quickly about the courts-appointed monitors
10 and special master's new need. Um, the Preliminary
11 Budget includes \$36.6 million in city funding in FY26
12 with a baseline \$9.3 million in city funding, um,
13 beginning in FY27. And this funding is for such
14 expenses as special masters, experts, court-appointed
15 monitors. And so how were these funding amounts
16 determined?

17 STEVEN BANKS: Well, to give an example, we- that,
18 uh, that budget line includes the recent appointment
19 of the remedial manager, uh, for Rikers Island, and
20 that was a court-approved, uh, amount of money to pay
21 for the special master- I'm sorry, for the
remediation manager, in addition to the court-
monitor.

So maybe if we could take a step back, one of the
things we're looking at is all the cases that have

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2 monitors or, or special masters or different levels
3 of oversight, and what can we do to work with
4 agencies to begin to bring the agencies to a place
5 where the oversight, uh, can be phased out. Uh, the
6 oversight is there because problems have built up
7 over many years. Uh, and one of the things that we
8 wanna be able to do is to work with the agencies, uh,
9 to begin to get to a place where the, that kind of
10 oversight is not needed.

11 Uh, in terms of, you know, the core of your
12 question, the amounts are being set in the context of
13 the litigations that are involved, uh, as opposed to
14 the, the Law Department independently, uh,
15 establishing the rates.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Got it. Okay, helpful to
17 know, thank you. Um, and do you anticipate, uh,
18 additional funding being needed in FY '27 and in the
19 out years?

20 STEVEN BANKS: I mean, we're, we're in a situation
21 in which we, we've just gotten funding for 200
22 lawyers and 100, uh, support professionals. Uh, in my
23 experience, both in the not-for-profit sector, which
24 I know you have as well, and my experience in, in
25 government over the course of 8 years, uh, that is an

1
2 extraordinary, uh, commitment to the work of the Law
3 Department. At the same time, we wanna be, uh, good
4 partners, uh, for— with OMB in addressing, uh, cost
5 containment wherever we can.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hmm, mmm and what major
7 cases, um, is the funding associated with for the new
8 needs? I think it was—

9 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, the funding is associated with
10 our overall need to restaff. The, the funding is
11 associated with our overall need to restaff vacancies
12 in throughout the Department, uh, including, uh, in
13 the areas that the Speaker asked me about, uh, uh,
14 hmm, mhm, and, and the Chair asked me about in terms
15 of the tort, uh, area, the risk assessment, the
16 contracts, and, and so many areas of the Department
17 there's been reduced, uh, staffing over the past 4
18 years.

19 Uh, in addition, we want to be able to staff up
20 to be able to meet the moment we're in. Uh, and so
21 the shortest answer to give you is all parts of the
Law Department will be receiving additional staffing,
uh, that need it in order to manage the workload and
to be able to respond to new needs that are coming
in.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect um and just, uh,
3 lastly on the payout for judgments and claims, um,
4 the payouts for the judgment and claims against the
5 city in state federal courts decreased by 49.7%
6 during the first 4 months of FY26 when compared to
7 the same period last year.

8 Um, and in FY25, payments for judgments totaled
9 \$1.38 billion, down from \$1.52 billion in FY24. Um,
10 so what— to what do you attribute the decrease in
11 judgments and claims payouts?

12 STEVEN BANKS: I think it, it's the vagaries of
13 litigation. Uh, one of the big drivers, uh, for, uh,
14 for these cost increases over the years with the
15 Child Victims Act cases, the adult survivor cases,
16 and now the gender-motivated, uh, uh, bias cases. And
17 there'll be ebbs and flows of litigation in terms of
18 when those, uh, payments will be made.

19 As I said a little bit earlier, uh, we're looking
20 for ways to address that— those categories of cases
21 that both recognize the city's financial challenges,
22 but also the need to compensate survivors.

23 Uh, and so in the short run, there may be
24 increases in some of those areas. Uh, but the aim
25 here is to get to a place where we're driving, uh,

1
2 the judgment claims down, uh, by addressing the
3 underlying reasons why people bring lawsuits against
4 the city.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yep um and which agencies are
6 the largest portion of the judgment claims related
7 to?

8 STEVEN BANKS: I mean, there are a number of
9 agencies. There's been public reporting on, on some
10 of them. Uh, we can certainly give you a breakdown if
11 that would be helpful to you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, that'd be great. Um, and
13 just, uh, which ones have seen the biggest increases
14 over the last few years and largest decreases?

15 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I, I think that might be a,
16 you know, rather than calling out individual agencies
17 and making estimates, it'd probably be more helpful
18 to you to give you a, a, a, a written response about
19 the numbers.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. Um, and
21 lastly, will additional staffing provided to the Law
Department further decrease this number? I would
assume.

STEVEN BANKS: Uh the Law Department, additional
staffing in, in the torts department in particular,

1
2 will certainly help us with early assessment of
3 cases, uh, and early uh, determinations about
4 settlement reduce the ultimate, uh amounts that are
5 paid out. Also, assessments of cases in early stage
6 help in the cases that should be litigated, uh, to
7 put us in a better position to, uh, prevail for the
8 city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, great.

10 STEVEN BANKS: The number of the cases we have now
11 in our pending caseload, again, like 35,000 of the
12 70,000 cases are in the tort area. Those are for
13 conduct that has occurred in years past. So the
14 ability to do what I, I told the Speaker we're going
15 to do, which is to assess the, the risks with
16 enhancing our risk unit, uh, is, is going to take
17 some time to— for us to start to see the outcomes.
18 We'll be doing the work on an expedited basis, but
19 since there's a lag by a number of years between
20 something that happens in a lawsuit, uh, there may be
21 some time before we're actually able to effectively
drive down those numbers as much as we would like to
by avoiding the need for people to sue the city in
the first place.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Great, thank you. Thank you,
3 Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member Morano.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you. Thank you for
6 your testimony, Mr. Banks. Uh, it's great to see you
7 again. Congratulations on your appointment and your
8 confirmation.

9 Um, New York City taxpayers, as you've been
10 talking about, they pay hundreds of millions of
11 dollars each year in settlements and judgments. I
12 know when Council Member Lee was asking you about
13 this, you didn't want to mention specific agencies in
14 this forum, which I understand.

15 I'm wondering if you can identify the 3
16 categories of cases that are costing the city the
17 most money and what policy changes we might look at,
18 or the Administration might look at, to reduce those
19 costs going forward.

20 STEVEN BANKS: I mean, so, it's a great question.
21 Uh, I, and again, it's not that I - I, uh, am
unwilling to give the agencies. I just think it would
be better to, to have you look at a, a full
presentation, uh, that way. I mean, there are, there
are disputes, uh, that arise when the public

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2 interacts with members of the government, and that
3 happens across agencies. It could be the Police
4 Department, it could be the Taxi and Limousine
5 Commission. Uh, there are, you know, torts that arise
6 in connection with, uh, potholes. The number of them,
7 as you probably heard in the last couple days, are
8 being filled to avoid that kind of problem.

9 So, you know, I, I think it would be out of
10 context to just say these 3 are the most common
11 problems, because I think what, what I have known
12 from my own time as a civil rights lawyer is that
13 when government and people interact, there's the
14 potential for friction, and then that potential for
15 friction results in potential lawsuits.

16 I see the Law Department's role as not simply
17 defending those cases, but what can we do to minimize
18 that kind of friction between the public and the
19 government.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Your testimony references
21 a number of lawsuits and amicus briefs. Involving
federal policy and national issues.

STEVEN BANKS: Mmm, mmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: How does the Law
Department decide when it's appropriate for the City

1
2 of New York to involve itself in a broader political
3 or policy dispute rather than focusing primarily on
4 defending the city from litigation and protecting
5 taxpayers?

6 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, I, I, I certainly answer that
7 question. I would wanna modify your question
8 slightly, which is to say our determination to get
9 involved with litigation, either if it's us, uh,
10 suing affirmatively or joining in amicus, is when
11 there's a financial interest of the city at stake.

12 So to the extent that funding for Head Start is
13 at risk, or to the extent there's funding, uh, for,
14 ah, housing programs are at risk, those are the kinds
15 of situations that we would wanna make sure that the
16 city's interests are represented, given the potential
17 for substantial loss of dollars for critical city
18 services.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: You mentioned—

20 STEVEN BANKS: Just to, you know, give an example,
21 when there was the potential loss of counterterrorism
22 funds, which would have had a tremendous impact,
23 particularly here in Lower Manhattan, uh, that was
24 the kind of case that the Law Department would get

1
2 involved in, given the, the financial impact, uh, on
3 a very important city service.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: You mentioned litigation
5 related to FEMA reimbursements for services provided
6 to asylum seekers. Uh, can you give us a sense of how
7 much money the city, city's currently seeking to
8 recover and what the Law Department assessment is of
9 our likelihood of actually recovering those funds?

10 STEVEN BANKS: My recollection is that was
11 approximately \$80 million, uh, that were dispersed to
12 New York City based upon an act of Congress, uh, and
13 the city has had success at various stages of that
14 case.

15 Uh, you know, in the grand scheme of things, uh,
16 80- every \$80 million counts.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Your testimony also
18 mentions that insurance takeovers have saved the city
19 billions of dollars over time. Are there additional
20 areas where the city could require more robust
21 insurance coverage from contractors or vendors so tax
22 taxpayers aren't left covering litigation costs.

1
2 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, among the areas that our risk
3 team will be looking at are those, are those kinds of
4 issues.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Obviously, there's a lot
6 of attention, as always, paid to what's going on in
7 the world of social media, and, ah, the Law
8 Department's currently suing several social media
9 companies over youth mental health, um, and other
10 related issues. What specific damages is this, is the
11 city seeking and how confident are you that the city
12 will actually recover meaningful financial
13 compensation?

14 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, any good lawyer would always
15 tell you I'm very confident in the cases that we have
16 pending, uh, and we intend to litigate them
17 vigorously. But they are— again, the city's interest
18 is the cost that the city is paying for services for
19 young people, uh, who, ah, are caught up, uh, in the
20 kind of social media uh, uh, er, efforts that we are
21 addressing in litigation.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Final question. You
referenced the continued influx of Adult Survivors
Act and Child Victims Act cases. What's the estimated

1
2 long-term financial exposure for the city, and how's
3 the Law Department preparing for that?

4 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I, I think that, uh, the
5 estimated impact, uh, is uh, something that is still
6 being developed because the cases are still coming
7 in. Uh, and in fact, there were additional, um,
8 additional, uh, modifications that were made in terms
9 of people's ability to file those claims so they
10 still could ripen in the future, as opposed to it was
11 a closed time period and none could be filed.

12 So, uh, projecting the city's potential ultimate,
13 um, uh, financial exposure, uh, it's, it's a
14 literally a moving target given the, uh, ability of
15 people to continue to file those cases. You know,
16 what we're doing about it, as I said in the testimony
17 a little bit earlier, was looking for ways in which
18 we can address the cases that are both, uh, in the
19 city's financial interest, but also respectful of
20 the, uh, real needs of survivors of the kind of
21 conduct that, uh, caused the legislature to
initially, originally, um, pass those kinds of acts.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

STEVEN BANKS: Thanks for those questions.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Um, one question I
3 had was the external legal counsel. The plan includes
4 an additional million in intracity funding in 26 only
5 from the Department of Education to extend their use
6 of an external legal counsel contract held by the Law
7 Department by 1 year.

8 The plan also includes another \$240,000 of
9 intracity funding in 2 states only from the
10 Department of Environmental Protection to utilize the
11 Department's contract with external legal counsel.

12 Can you talk about these 2, uh, opportunities and
13 situations? What legal matter is, uh, being addressed
14 and why are external law firms required? And do you
15 see a need for further funding in this area?

16 STEVEN BANKS: Well, the one, uh, the
17 environmental protection one is just a good example
18 of, of why, uh, contracts are, are some periodically
19 needed. There's particular expertise in water rights,
20 uh, that are relevant to the kinds of advice and
21 potential litigation support.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Upstate, the Quotin
23 situation. Upstate Quotin?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, no, I think it would be best in
3 a public forum not to get into what exactly the
4 matter is, but it—

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I've been up to Quotin
6 and seen all those.

7 STEVEN BANKS: It's not that one though.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, alright.

9 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, but it involves, uh, particular
10 water right issues that, uh, ultimately the expertise
11 would be really— and will be really important for us
12 in terms of defending the city's interest.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then there's a DOE also.

14 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, the DOE is— that kind of advice
15 is also relevant to a whole range of different legal
16 matters that they have. Um, there are times when the
17 Law Department will say, we don't have in-house
18 expertise. One of the challenges in the last several
19 years is whether the Law Department had the internal
20 resources, and the additional staffing will help us
21 be able to make judgments uh, about whether to go and
get external counsel in fewer instances because we'll
have the in-house expertise.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, you talked a little
23 bit—

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Sorry, we'll have the in-house
resources, so hopefully less outside counsel.

3 STEVEN BANKS: When we have the right resources as
4 opposed to the particularized expertise, uh, which
5 it's more cost-effective to seek outside help than to
6 build expertise that may only be needed periodically.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. You talked about
juvenile detention a little bit, but the plan
8 includes an additional \$21 million of state funding
9 in 26 that replaces city funding for the Department's
10 role providing support service related to juvenile
11 justice. What role does the Law Department play in
12 juvenile justice, and what is the total amount of
13 funding in the budget for costs associated with
14 juvenile justice? And I think— I didn't know if the
15 state would do this or if it's back to the city. And
16 the reason we ask, of course, there are so many more
young people, as you know, in detention than in the
past.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Right. I mean, the, the city, the
18 Law Department's role is representing, uh, the city's
19 interest in, in those matters. Uh, the additional
20 state funding is, is part of a state assumption of,
um, uh, certain responsibilities in this area. And

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2 those, those dollars will help us continue to provide
3 the services.

4 The family court, as you know, is a court of
5 rehabilitation, uh, and therefore it's particularly
6 important that our lawyers work with the array of
7 services that are available to help, uh, youth move
8 on a path, a positive pathway forward. And that's-
9 the additional resources will help us do that.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, um, I think we all know a
11 lot of situations that exist in family court. Is that
12 a place where some of your new attorneys might also
13 be situated because it's a very slow process between
14 ACS, et cetera. It's a slow process.

15 STEVEN BANKS: Uh, all across the agency,
16 including the, uh, our, our lawyers that, uh,
17 represent, uh, uh, the agency in family court, that
18 will be one of the areas where we'll be, uh,
19 providing some additional support. As I said at the
20 outset, almost every area of the Law Department
21 suffered, um, pretty significant uh, staffing impact.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

STEVEN BANKS: Over the last 4 years.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We talked about correction a
little bit earlier. The plan includes \$4.3 million in

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2 city funding in '26, increasing to a baseline \$9.8
3 million in '27 for this new manager, which I guess we
4 now have a- from Judge Swayne, we have a name. So how
5 were these amounts determined? Was it just the court?
6 Do you have- gonna need more funding? I guess maybe
7 you don't know. And then, um, you know, how do you,
8 how do you make sure that people are on the
9 remediation manager's team? And I guess also back to
10 the, what you said earlier, fix the problem and then
11 you don't need the remediation. So this is a big
12 challenge.

13 STEVEN BANKS: Well, on this, I would say we've
14 met with the remediation manager. Uh, um, Ms. Neufeld
15 and I have met with the remediation manager,
16 remediation manager, uh, both of us on a number of
17 different occasions.

18 I think that they're, uh, we've met with the
19 remediation manager along with Commissioner, uh, uh,
20 the new DSC Commissioner who we both know, uh, for,
21 for many years. Uh, and I think that this is a good
moment to make some progress. Uh, and the remediation
manager sees his role as helping us get to a place
where, uh, the agency can, uh, operate without a
remediation manager. That is a good start.

1
2 In terms of setting the level of the funding, it
3 was based upon— in terms of setting the level of
4 funding, it was based upon the remediation manager's
5 desire, uh, to, um, uh, the presentation of what he
6 needed, and ultimately it was with the approval of
7 the court, and the Law Department will be reviewing,
8 uh, the request for payment.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Um, I know in terms of
10 new needs, just so we're clear, obviously, uh, more
11 attorneys and more support staff. Is that the, the
12 list that you want us to come away with? Of course.
13 Are there any other new needs? If you had your
14 druthers, that you would like to have at the Law
15 Department? Obviously, funding is always the issue.

16 STEVEN BANKS: Ah, ah, having 200 lawyers and 100
17 support professionals is just a, a really, really
18 important step forward to help, uh, rebuild, uh, the
19 staff from the staffing cuts. And we'll be working
20 with OMB in terms of addressing any needs we have,
21 but also our role in the overall, uh, city efforts to
save dollars. So we're gonna be good partners.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and the state budget,
obviously there's a Preliminary Governor's Budget,
there's a couple of one-house budgets, et cetera. Um,

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2 did you see anything in those that would positively
3 or negatively, um, uh, have any impact on what you're
4 doing? Obviously there's policy in there, there's
5 budget in there, etc. On the state, state level.

6 STEVEN BANKS: I, I think the state budget
7 process is still underway. You and I have both
8 learned from being involved in it over many years
9 that it, it, it's not ended till it's ended.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, okay, because I know
11 we'd love to see some of the money that comes here.
12 Um, and then we heard, we heard a little bit about
13 the federal issues. I am very supportive of what
14 you've been doing, be it Head Start, food stamps, the
15 list is endless. And so I am very supportive of any
16 efforts you can make for us New Yorkers on the
17 federal level, um, in terms of litigation.

18 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, but, uh, have you done— I
20 mean, you don't know what's next, what's the next
21 shoe to drop in terms of issues, but do you have any
sense of what guidelines— you talked about it a
little bit— may impact the city?

1
2 And are there any, uh, budget that have been
3 modified in response to changes in federal
4 guidelines? Again, we don't know what's coming next.

5 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I, I think, you know, you've
6 answered your own question in a certain regard
7 because we have to be ready. Um, and I've, I've
8 learned in years of as a litigator not to predict
9 what's coming next, but just to be ready for
10 everything.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, okay. Thank you very
12 much, and we look forward to working with you.

13 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you very much. Appreciate
14 everyone's time today.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Next will be the, the Board
16 of Elections. The Board of Elections Fiscal '27
17 Preliminary Budget totals \$146.9 million, which is
18 the same as this budget in the Fiscal '26 Adopted
19 Budget, according to my notes.

20 The Board of Elections is responsible for the
21 implementation of fair and honest elections within
the city pursuant to state law, playing a major role
in educating New Yorkers on their right to vote and
administering elections. The plan includes one new

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2 need of \$32.5 million in Fiscal '26 to support
3 election costs in Fiscal '26.

4 I look forward to learning more about the Board
5 of Elections election costs, how early voting
6 locations are selected— always a discussion point—
7 maintaining voter privacy, and how we can increase
8 voting access for justice-involved individuals. And
9 now I'd like to turn it over to be sworn in for the
10 presenters.

11 We will now hear testimony from, uh, the Board of
12 Elections. Before we begin, I will administer the
13 affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right hand.
14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
15 nothing but the truth before this Committee, and to
16 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

17 PANEL: I do, yes.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, you may begin when
19 ready.

20 MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Uh, good afternoon, uh,
21 Chair Brewer and, uh, Councilman Morano. Um, my name
is Michael Ryan. I'm the executive director of the
Board of Elections, uh, and joining me today, uh, is
the board's, uh, deputy executive director Vincent,
uh, Ignizio, who is well known to this body as well.

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2 Um, we have prepared testimony. We've submitted the
3 written testimony. Uh, we're prepared to rely on the
4 written submission if that, uh, is the— sits well
5 with the, uh, uh, with Madam Chair and move on to,
6 uh, any questions that the, uh, Committee members may
7 have.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead and read your
9 testimony. That's fine. So the public knows what
10 you're saying. Yep.

11 MICHAEL RYAN: Okay. So, um, we'll review the
12 2026, uh, Fiscal Year, which we, which we, uh, always
13 do in our budget testimony. Um, we want to thank the
14 Mayor's office, uh, and the City Council for
15 providing the necessary, uh, support to the board for
16 Fiscal Year 2026.

17 Uh, that funding met the constitutional and
18 statutory mandates as well as the needs of the voters
19 of the City of New York. I extend, uh, a special, uh,
20 thank you for addressing the board's funding needs,
21 uh, during these very difficult times.

Uh, in FY 2026, the board conducted several
election events, including the mayoral general
election conducted on November 4th, uh, 2025, special
elections for the State Senate District 47, New York

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2 State Assembly Districts 36 and 74, uh, conducted on
3 February 3rd, 2026. Uh, we will conduct another
4 special election for the 3rd Council District on
5 April 28th, 2026, and the June primary for federal
6 and state offices. Uh, each of these election events
7 includes 9 days of early voting. Um, uh, the board
8 successfully maintained 156 voting sites across all 5
9 boroughs, um, under the Make Voting Easy Act,
10 ensuring accessible voting for all contests.

11 In Fiscal Year 2026, the board managed multiple
12 election events with significant turnout, uh, across
13 the general election and primary— primary and special
14 elections, and total operating expenses uh, estimated
15 at \$263 million, which would include personal
16 services of \$126 million and other than personal
17 services of \$137 million.

18 Poll workers and related seasonal costs
19 represented a major factor, followed by leases,
20 services, printing, and transportation. Voter
21 outreach generated substantial impressions throughout
various media channels and operations maintained at
the 156 early voting sites with minimal equipment
issues. The board complies with the New York State
election law requirements for mail ballot canvassing

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2 requiring extended public access, uh, prior to
3 Election Day. The statewide online mail ballot
4 application and tracking portal, online voter
5 registration, and automatic voter registration
6 initiatives such compliance has ongoing effects on,
uh, or ongoing budget and fiscal implications.

7 The board works closely with the Office of
8 Management and Budget, uh, to manage these mandates
9 and finalize funding for all elections. Uh, in
10 addition, the board works very closely, uh, with the
11 New York State Attorney General to ensure full
12 compliance with the New York State uh, Voter Rights
Act, which is also known as the John Lewis Voter
Rights Act.

13 Moving on to Fiscal Year 2027, uh, again, the
14 board expresses its gratitude to the city
15 Administration and the City Council, uh, for
16 partnering with the board. For Fiscal Year 2027, the
17 board projects, uh, potentially a budget of \$280
18 million to meet the demands of major statewide
election cycle addressing critical infrastructure
19 upgrades.

20 Uh, the board is requesting \$130 million to be
21 allocated to personal services and \$150 million to be

1
2 added- allocated to OTPS, including, uh, one-time
3 capital investments. In FY 2027, the board will
4 conduct two major election events, November 3rd,
5 2026, general election, uh, for, uh, governor and
6 lieutenant governor and other statewide, uh,
7 congressional, uh, and congressional offices, and a
8 primary election on June 22nd, 2027. Each event
9 includes 9 days of early voting.

10 Conducting early voting for a continuous 9-day
11 period has fundamentally altered the board's approach
12 to elections transitioning from single-day events to
13 10-day operations over approximately 2 weeks,
14 maintaining the 156 early voting sites necessitates
15 additional funding for equipment, office space, staff
16 training, leasing, poll site costs, and public
17 education to meet increasing demands from statewide
18 contests and citywide contests.

19 The budget also includes essential upgrades and
20 enhancements to ensure reliable, secure, and
21 accessible elections. Um, replacement of 2,287 ballot
marking devices and potentially upwards of 700 more,
uh, at an estimated \$8,000 per unit, and additional
ancillary equipment totaling approximately \$30
million. Uh, this addresses end-of-life concerns,

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2 memory limitations, and compatibility issues in the
3 current fleet, ensuring full accessibility for voters
4 with disabilities, ah, and compliance with the Help
5 America Vote Act requirements and supporting high
6 turnout in statewide elections.

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8 It must be clearly noted that replacement of the
9 BMDs BMD devices compatible with the board's current
10 voting machines have not been certified by the New
11 York State Board of Elections. Uh, and the board is
12 not permitted to use any BMDs unless the New York
13 State Board of Elections completes its certification
14 process.

15
16 Accordingly, the board is providing this
17 information to advise that we have been informed that
18 the certification process is underway and anticipated
19 to be completed at the end of Fiscal Year 2026.

20
21 Upon certification, the board intends to submit
replacement costs as a new need during Fiscal Year
2027. Um, further, with respect to technology issues,
to ensure compatibility with Windows 11, uh, and
continued enhancement of cybersecurity security, uh,
all computers utilized by the board, and I believe
other city agencies as well, must be replaced.

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2 The cost for such replacement is estimated at up
3 to \$8 million. This includes workstations,
4 administrative systems, and to prevent
5 vulnerabilities, support mo- modern voter
6 registration slash absentee portals, and maintain
7 secure operations. Um, we'll also have to replace
8 some vehicles. Replacement of 4 aging Sprinter vans
9 used for transporting, uh, voter equipment and
10 supplies that are utilized by the borough offices.
11 Uh, although we have 5 borough offices, only 4 are
12 presently eligible for replacement, and that
13 estimated cost is between \$300,000 to \$500,000. These
14 vehicles are critical for logistics across, uh, the
15 1,200- more than 1,200 Election Day locations and the
16 156 early voting sites, as well as regular business
17 conducted between the boroughs, uh, particularly
18 during extended early voting periods and multiple,
19 uh, event cycles.

20 The board is working with DCAS to finalize the
21 approval process for the purchase of the vehicles,
uh, that fully meet the needs- the board's
operational needs. These capital investments
coordinated with the Office of Technology, uh, and
Innovation and fleet management protocols are vital

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2 to prevent disruptions, uh, in the 2026 gubernatorial
3 cycle and align with ongoing mandates for secure,
4 accessible voting.

5 The board is committing to phasing, uh, these in
6 where possible, uh, to manage fiscal impact. Uh, the
7 board will continue appropriate outreach to voters
8 and poll workers. The board reaffirms its request to
9 establish municipal poll workers— uh, a municipal
10 poll workers slash a municipal workers slash poll
11 workers program. Uh, ongoing voter education remains
12 essential. The board will implement media campaigns
13 in partnership with groups like the Campaign Finance
14 Board for message, message consistency and board
15 coverage, uh, building on successful outreach, uh, in
16 prior elections, uh, cycles.

17 Excuse me, I just need a little water. Uh,
18 expanded early voting heightens cybersecurity needs.
19 The board maintains ongoing monitoring and a strong
20 relationship, uh, with OTI. The New York State, uh,
21 Board of Elections directs enhanced requirements
necessitating additional staffing. The board must
implement an internal cybersecurity staff task force
with added staff, including, uh, potential TIGR
grant, uh, support. And OTI, when it was, uh, in its

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2 prior iteration as NYC3, Uh, provided the
3 contractual, uh, mechanism that allows the board to
4 have external 365 by 24 by, by, by 7 by 24 monitoring
5 of all of us, uh, all of our, uh, systems and, uh,
6 and servers, uh, so that we, we, we work, uh, at
7 preventing any cybersecurity, uh, breaches.

8 Uh, the board is committed to working closely
9 with its government partners and interested parties
10 to effectively serve the voters of the city of New
11 York. Uh, any resources will be used responsibly to
12 meet the needs of the voting public. The board
13 remains sensitive to the fiscal challenges of New
14 York City and mindful of its obligations. The board
15 is committed to the partnership with the
16 Administration and the Council.

17 The board is confident that additional funding
18 requests, including essential upgrades, will enhance
19 our ability to serve the voters. The board reaffirms
20 its commitment, uh, that allocated resources will be
21 used wisely, uh, and the public trust will continue
to be a guidepost. Uh, and now myself and Mr.
Ignizio, uh, will be happy to answer any questions
that the Committee may have.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, thank you. I'll ask some.
3 I'm sure my colleague from Staten Island will have
4 some for you also. Um, the- what- I know you talked
5 about the need for these new machines whenever it
6 gets certified by the state, etc. Um, so what capital
7 request is the department, uh, the board making to
8 OMB now? Is it- are we doing the- starting with the
9 machines? We don't even know what machines we're
10 getting.

11 MICHAEL RYAN: Right? What we have done to this
12 point is basically indicated to OMB that we're
13 anticipating a new need ask. We can't make the ask,
14 as, uh, the Chair rightly points out, until the
15 machines are certified. We have been given other
16 dates in the past when the certification process
17 would have been completed. Um, those dates were not
18 met. B-but where we, we have received assurances that
19 it is on, uh, a better path now and that they're
20 expecting to certify, uh, by the end of the year.
21 Keep in mind that that's not just within, um, within
the ambit of the State Board of Elections. It
requires, um, cooperation from the vendor, and the
vendor must meet, uh, its mile markers as well,
because all of these technological, uh, equipment

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2 that is related to elections all gets, uh, verified
3 through an outside lab to check that all of the
4 coding, uh, is done properly and works effectively.

5 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And, and Mike, if I could, if I
6 could add, Madam Chair and to the Committee, the-
7 there is an international RAM shortage, uh, across,
8 across the globe right now due to the AI technology,
9 and it's sucking up all the excess, uh, RAM that's
10 going on across in the world.

11 So the company itself would need to ramp up in
12 order to meet the needs of a large order that we
13 would place here for New York City. So what we're
14 trying to do is encourage our friends at the, at the
15 State Board of Elections to work with us such that we
16 have the runway sufficient to have them ready, um,
17 have them in place by a 2028, uh, year. So that's the
18 goal.

19 Because we're New York City, because we're so
20 large, we have- we need a lot longer runway than a
21 smaller county upstate would and we're hopeful to be
22 able to provide these BMDs to our accessible
23 community.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And do the upstate folks have
25 the same BMDs? They have the same-

1

VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah-

2

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They would be a statewide
3 contract, I assume. Is that how it works?

4

VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, they, they would be
5 approved and then they can buy- the counties can buy
6 them at, at, at-

6

MICHAEL RYAN: And to the extent that they have
7 the same vendor that we have.

7

8

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's what I'm asking.

9

MICHAEL RYAN: Right, if they have the same vendor
10 that we have, then they have the same problem.

10

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

11

VINCENT IGNIZIO: But they're buying 10. We're-
12 but, you know, all due respect to our friends at
13 Oneida and Onondaga County, they're buying far fewer
14 than we are.

14

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and is there any
15 discussion about what kind of machines? There's
16 always a discussion down here. I mean, is it just up
17 to the state? Do they take import from the people who
18 are going to be using them down here?

18

VINCENT IGNIZIO: They do the certification.

19

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And you know here's always a
20 lot of drama about the machines that are purchased.

20

21

1
2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: They do the certifications, and
3 we require machines that would actually speak to our
4 machines as well. So, um, not ones that just- so we
5 would- we are required to purchase what those that
6 have been certified by the State Board of Elections.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

8 MICHAEL RYAN: And, and Madam Chair-

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Having been through this
10 before?

11 MICHAEL RYAN: Right. This is going to be about,
12 uh, you know, a roughly a \$30 million expenditure.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

14 MICHAEL RYAN: And that's only for the BMDs.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, I understand.

16 MICHAEL RYAN: And that would be leaving our
17 current voting machines in place.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right?

19 MICHAEL RYAN: So to give that, you know, uh, a
20 perspective of scale, if we were to at some point
21 down the road replace the voting machines themselves,
we would be talking about a far greater-

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, I know.

MICHAEL RYAN: Uh, expenditures.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But I'm just saying, even
3 within the disabled community, which is something
4 that we're talking about, they always have what they
5 like and what they don't like. So that's why I was
6 asking.

7
8 MICHAEL RYAN: So, so I, I think the reason for
9 us, uh, bringing this up today and making sure that
10 we stress it now is so that we don't sneak up on the
11 fiscal planners for the City of New York, number one,
12 which would be unfair.

13
14 But number two, to let the, the, uh,
15 accessibility community know that we are thinking of
16 them. We acknowledge that the current ballot marking
17 devices are not meeting their needs, and we're doing
18 everything we can to be prepared, uh, to meet their
19 needs better when the new machines are, are able to
20 be utilized.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I'm- I just- we've all
23 been through this before, so I didn't want to go
24 through it again. Are there other requests that will
25 be- obviously this is not immediate- going to OMB for
26 capital?

27
28 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Um, the vehicles that we
29 referred to that are, that are at their, their life,
30

1
2 uh, lifespan, we will be requesting of those but
3 that's it for, for, um, additional needs.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, you talked about
5 those? Okay. I was thinking about some of the- I
6 mean, I don't know, they're not as expensive, but you
7 always need- I don't know what you call them-
8 gangplanks to get from one end of the non-accessible,
9 uh, area to another. You know, sometimes you need
10 those long-

11 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Are you referring to our ramp
12 contracts?

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I call them gangplank.

14 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, yeah, we, we, I think we
15 have approximately 17 vendors that provide for RAMP
16 contracts.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And those are capital or
18 that's-

19 MICHAEL RYAN: That's expense.

20 VINCENT IGNIZIO: That's expense money. I mean,
21 we, we've encouraged several times to work with both
the- all of our providers to see if we could have
capital improvements that meet the requirements that
we wouldn't need them. And that can- those

1
2 conversations are ongoing for every school whenever
3 they come up, or for whatever library.

4 MICHAEL RYAN: And obviously our preference would
5 be for all of the buildings, uh, that we utilize to
6 be, uh, permanently accessible.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Accessible for your
8 guidelines.

9 MICHAEL RYAN: Right, right.

10 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Towards our standards, yeah.

11 MICHAEL RYAN: But we do what we have to do.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I know.

13 MICHAEL RYAN: And that's all coming out of
14 expense money.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So along those lines,
16 obviously there's, uh, the lab school on the east
17 side is the one that sends me many emails, and there
18 are probably other schools. I know you'd love to get
19 out of the school business, I understand that it's
20 hard to find other places. So my question is twofold.

21 One, in that particular instance, um, they had
suggested some nearby cultural institutions. I know
you were kind enough to make that change on the Upper
West Side where we went to the American Museum. Um,
so I'm just wondering, in that particular situation,

1
2 is there movement to find another place? This is the
3 Lab School.

4 MICHAEL VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah so-

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then also just generally,
6 how can we help you get out of some of these schools?

7 MICHAEL VINCENT IGNIZIO: So, uh, the umbrella is
8 out of 158, uh, schools that will be- 158 early
9 voting sites, about 25% of them are schools. We would
10 love to be out of them as much as possible. We reach
11 out to Council Members, we reach out to market makers
12 and say, please provide us with, uh, ideas on how we
13 can, can do so.

14 The problem once again is the runway. We can't
15 decide in 2026 that in for this primary or for the
16 general we're going to switch and move and into a
17 different location. So that's always been an issue,
18 and finding suitable sites that are accessible, that
19 do have the ability to hold a polling site and the
20 requirements they're in, is not as easy.

21 With regards to this specific site, the- I might
say it wrong- the, the, is it the Rubin Museum?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yes.

1
2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Our understanding is that that
3 building was sold and unavailable, uh, it has been
4 surveyed and there was a second suggestion which -

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I- I think it was the
6 Whitney.

7 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Which I don't know much about
8 the Whitney, um, and/or we have- but we have, you
9 know, I, I work very closely with the Deputy
10 Chancellor Kevin Moran, as does Mike, and we have a
11 great relationship to try to accommodate. But we
12 would like to be clear, we would like to be out of
13 schools as well. We just need a suitable alternative
14 to do so.

15 So we'll review the Whitney Museum, um, and have
16 our-

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They're suggestions I mean,
18 after 400 or 500 emails, I'd love to work with you to
19 try to find something else because-

20 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Happy to-

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They come in every day.

VINCENT IGNIZIO: Happy to.

MICHAEL RYAN: And Madam Chair, uh, quite frankly,
uh, you have worked with us, uh, in your former
capacity as the Borough President as well, and, and

1
2 we, and we appreciate that because we really do
3 believe that the elected officials in practical
4 reality are and should be the eyes and ears of the
community.

5 Uh, and to the extent that there's, uh,
6 information that we're missing or a potential, uh,
7 blind spot, we're happy for that to be pointed out to
8 us and, and work to make, uh, any necessary
corrections.

9 VINCENT IGNIZIO: I know my friend Dan Slippin is
10 gonna want a shout out right now, so thank you to the
11 Met for being a, a, a very good neighbor with regards
to moving the cipher.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Definitely deserves it. I
13 yield to my, uh, counterpart from Staten Island.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MORAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.
15 It's always a treat to see, uh, two Staten Islanders
16 at that table, and a special treat when one of them
17 is not only a former member of this body but a former
representative of the 51st Council District.

18 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And the best man at your
19 wedding.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Naturally. Oh, hey, I I
21 didn't wanna— I didn't wanna out you. Um, according

1
2 to the Mayor's, um, Preliminary Budget Report, uh,
3 complaints about— and Management Report, uh,
4 complaints about poll workers dropped from 551 in
5 Fiscal Year 2023 to just 90 in Fiscal Year 2025,
6 which is obviously a pretty dramatic improvement.
7 What changes did the board actually implement in
8 either training, management, or whatever else that
9 led to that reduction?

10 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Let me point out that I was
11 hired in 2022.

12 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, uh, apparently, uh, it was
13 all related to, uh, Mr. Ignizio's arrival, uh, but
14 truthfully, we, um, our recruiting, uh, program that
15 we've implemented, uh, which of course we usually
16 utilizing social media and all the other, you know,
17 tools that are available uh, has been, uh, a very,
18 uh, has been more robust than it had been in the
19 past. And, and to keep, uh, to keep the, uh, public
20 kind of misperception, uh, that the Board of
21 Elections is this, you know, only political things
happen at the Board of Elections, the number of
percentage of poll workers that come directly from
political parties has been dropping steadily from, uh

20 -

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's a good I'm sorry.

3 MICHAEL RYAN: During my 13 years through no
4 specific effort other than the fact that it's just
5 dropping steadily. And I think we're under 25% of the
6 poll workers come directly from the political parties
7 and 75% come from interested citizens who go on to
8 electiondayworker.com and wanna sign up to help the
9 community.

10 So I think that, you know, taking it away from
11 us, taking responsibility for all the great things
12 and flipping it back to the community, I think we do
13 have a lot more community interest, uh, in people
14 wanting to serve and taking pride in that service.

15 So yes, our training has improved, all of those
16 things that you would expect that would lead to it,
17 but we also have a lot of a lot of public interest,
18 and that's, uh, I think the poll workers need to be
19 praised for that.

20 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Frank if I, if I can add, we, we
21 have, we have a very professional staff. The stat-
the, um, New York City Board of Elections has the
only CIRA-certified office of managers in the entire
country. Um, so while it's fashionable sometimes to
throw shots at it, uh, we're very proud of the

1
2 management team we've assembled. They are
3 CIRA-certified certified, the only in the state. They
4 are doing a fantastic job, and good management ends
5 up being, uh, you'll see it in the, in the product.
6 And I think many people, including those in the, uh,
7 those that have bashed, continually bashed the Board
8 of Elections, have seen a noticeable difference of
9 quality elections that were served to the people of
10 the City of New York over the last several years.

11 So we're proud of it. We're gonna, uh, continue
12 to build on it but we have so many people who want to
13 serve uh, we have more poll worker requests than we
14 do, uh, slots for them because people want to be a
15 part of, of the civic process, and we, we welcome it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Since you both mentioned
17 the changes in poll worker recruitment and everything
18 else, again, according to the Mayor's, uh,
19 Preliminary Management Report, it shows that poll
20 worker attendance on Election Day has remained above
21 96%, which is obviously pretty impressive. Given the
size of the system. The— what strategies has the
board used to recruit and retain such a reliable poll
worker workplace, given, as you said, the decrease in
direct referrals from the political parties?

1
2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Well, the, the public's been
3 very generous with their money as well. They're,
4 they're paying poll workers now \$2.50 for the day and
5 \$3.50 for coordinators, so that does attract people
6 as well. People wanna be more engaged, and I think
7 every time that there is a major race, you know, a
8 mayoral race, a presidential race. People are more
9 interested in getting involved, and, and that's been
10 great. And, you know, we've had a— we've had a very
11 good team of, of, uh, folks that have been getting
12 the word out about what's going on at elections, and
13 people just want to get involved.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: You know, speaking about
15 the swings in turnout, I'll ask you both this, Mr.
16 Ryan. The, the Mayor's Management Report shows huge
17 differences in turnout depending on the election
18 cycle. Whether we're talking a Mayor's race, a
19 presidential race, or a City Council race. How does
20 the board scale staffing and logistics to handle
21 those large swings in voter participation?

MICHAEL RYAN: What we have— what we have done is
we treat every election event— but when I was talking
citywide election events, we treat every citywide

1
2 election event as if there's going to be 100%
3 turnout.

4 So we don't have large fluctuations in terms of,
5 say, the number of poll workers. Because, you know,
6 the analogy that I use is if you're going to throw a
7 party and you're going to invite 100 guests, you have
8 to buy all the food for 100 guests, you have to buy
9 all of the paper goods for 100 guests. And if only 10
10 people show up, you might have a lot of leftovers,
11 uh, but you still were prepared for the 100 people
12 that you invited. And, and that's what election
13 events are. We have to prepare as if 100% of the
14 voters are going to turn out.

15 Now, that having been said, we recognize that in
16 this order—presidential followed by gubernatorial
17 followed by mayor and then followed by the Queens DA
18 and the Staten Island DA—you know, those are our, uh,
19 highest to lowest, uh, election, uh, events. And that
20 hasn't changed, although the numbers within you know,
21 some presidential years are more robust than others,
but in terms of that order, that pecking order, that
hasn't changed in the, in the 13 years that I've been
here.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Uh, the Chair asked you
3 about early voting, and you mentioned in your
4 testimony that early voting has effectively
5 transformed elections from this single-day event into
6 roughly a, a 10-day operational period. How has the
7 board adapted its planning and staffing to manage an
8 expanded time frame like that?

9 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, we had to establish, you
10 know, it's a little bit, it's a little bit technical,
11 but when we would do the, uh, the canvassing that
12 used to occur all after Election Day, uh, and we
13 really did think, uh, when the state legislature
14 passed that, that that was going to be highly
15 problematic for us if we had to do it ahead of time.
16 What we found out was, with appropriate planning and
17 appropriate, appropriate readjustment of full-time
18 staff, we didn't have as many problems as we thought
19 we were going to have. And in fact, um, it has turned
20 out to be a blessing not only for the Board of
21 Elections but for, uh, the elected officials and, and
the voters as well, because we have to stop
canvassing mail ballots on the Friday before the
Tuesday, uh, uh, of Election Day.

1
2 What that means is the overwhelming majority of
3 mail ballots, which we're calling them now instead of
4 absentee ballots, are canvassed and completed before
5 Election Day. Now we can't publish the results um,
6 until 9 o'clock on Election Day. But now when you're
7 looking at election results, you're seeing all of the
8 results from Election Day, all of the results from
9 early voting, and the overwhelming majority of mail
10 ballots.

11 So all of that back-end rancor that used to
12 happen— how come the Board of Elections can't, you
13 know, count all the ballots and why is it taking so
14 long? Doesn't happen anymore.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Yeah, we should, we should
16 point out we're the fastest also in the state. I'm
17 going to keep being a cheerleader for the New York
18 City Board of Elections. The fastest returns in the
19 entire New York state is the New York City Board of
20 Elections by roughly 9:30-ish, and you have over 80,
21 90% in. And that's because of effective work by great
people. There are people watching right now, I'm
sure, at their desk at the board, and, you know, we
want to thank them.

1
2 When it was 100-degree weather during the primary
3 February, people showed up and, and were, and were
4 there. When it was a blizzard, people showed up. So
5 these are our neighbors. They're not, you know, they
6 don't come from Mars. They're our poll workers, our
7 staff members do an excellent job and continue to and
8 I just wanted the one message I want them to hear
9 Mike and I say is that we honor them for their
10 service.

11 MICHAEL RYAN: And Councilman, uh, I know you want
12 to get on to the, the next thing, but I also want to
13 extend another thank you to the City Council. Uh,
14 because when we made that presentation, I think it
15 was back in 2019, 2018, whatever it was, uh, we made
16 the presentation to the City Council that we needed,
17 um, we needed laptops, uh, for the poll sites so that
18 we could upload the results from the poll sites.

19 That was an investment that continues to pay
20 dividends today because that's one of the major
21 things that allows us to get our results, uh, so
quickly on election night.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Let me take advantage, if
I may, Madam Chair, of the fact that we're all Staten
Islanders. You know, we heard a lot during the recent

1
2 snowstorm when the Mayor was explaining the
3 difficulties of plowing Staten Island about the
4 unique topography of Staten Island and the unique
5 difficulty of catering to a borough like that.

6 Are there any operational challenges unique to
7 boroughs like Staten Island, whether it's related to
8 geography, site availability, staffing, that the
9 board has had to address in recent election cycles?

10 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, let's stick with Staten
11 Island just for, just for a second, and we'll get to,
12 uh, other areas in the city. Uh, one of the problems
13 that Staten Island has is because of its, uh, unique
14 character, not necessarily topography. We don't have,
15 uh, the plethora of government-owned buildings, say,
16 that some other boroughs might have in a
17 concentration.

18 Uh, so we have what we call in, in inside the
19 board as deserts within Staten Island where we don't
20 have real options. We only have one option. This is
21 the place, it's the only place that's available, it's
the place we have to use.

So when you hear some complaints about some
locations in Staten Island— we won't name them—
that's one of the reasons. In terms of topography,

1
2 uh, one of the most difficult places in terms of
3 topography is Washington Heights.

4 Uh, we had, we had moved, we had moved a poll
5 site literally one block in Washington Heights, and
6 we got— this was a number of years ago— and got a
7 crazy number of complaints.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I remember.

9 VINCENT IGNIZIO: You know, and we went to the
10 place to visit it, and we brought one of the experts
11 with us, and he said to me, uh, a term that I had
12 never heard before. He, he called it a hand burner,
13 meaning that the block was so steep that if somebody
14 was a manual wheelchair user, they would not be able
15 to stop the wheelchair with their bare hands. And
16 that was not a— that was not a term of art, it was a
17 term within that accessibility, uh, uh, evaluation.

18 So of course, you, you know, challenges occur
19 when you— we learned a lesson from that. You can't
20 look at a map, a flat piece of paper, and necessarily
21 come to the best conclusion. You really have to
22 evaluate, uh, these, uh, these matters specific to,
23 uh, the locations that you're dealing with.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: And that's why we dovetail
25 to Council Member, Council Members, Chairs. If you

1
2 have issues with regards to an early voting location,
3 please let us know because we know you are the
4 experts in your districts. So please evaluate, send
5 us, uh, send us sites you want us to survey and look
6 into. They won't always work, and they won't-
7 sometimes they don't even want you there or us there.
8 So, but we're happy to work with any and all who, who
9 want us to look at different sites.

10 MICHAEL RYAN: And one of the one of the things
11 that led to the expansion, A, the establishment of,
12 and then B, the expansion of the number of ramp
13 vendors that we use was an acknowledgement that
14 temporarily retrofitting a location is often the
15 better alternative than moving the poll site
16 somewhere else.

17 And that was an evaluation that we made. We get
18 much, much less complaints about poll sites and poll
19 site relocations, although they still do happen, but
20 not nearly with the frequency that they used to
21 happen years ago.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Lastly, Madam Chair, I
19 think between the 4 of us- the 2 of you and the 2 of
20 us- we've collectively run in 21 elections, most of
21 those the Chair. But, um, the point is - The point

1
2 is, uh, you guys know your way around, uh, the, the,
3 that aspect of the electoral arena as well. And you
4 know how much skepticism there is among the public
5 about election integrity and voter integrity.

6 In, uh, 2004 when President Bush won, you had a
7 lot of Democrats claiming that the machines in Ohio
8 were rigged, or some version of the the, uh, er, the
9 result was inaccurate. In 2020, when President Biden
10 won, you had a lot of Republicans voicing similar
11 skepticism.

12 So with that, public confidence in elections is
13 pretty critical to democracy. Can, can you walk us
14 through the safeguards that the New York City Board
15 of Elections has in place to ensure that the ballots
16 are secure, voter rolls are accurate, and that every
17 vote cast in New York City is counted properly?

18 MICHAEL RYAN: So New York state election law has
19 probably one of the most stringent, uh, bodies of law
20 in the country with respect to maintaining ballot
21 integrity. Now, one of the things that they, that
they did from the very beginning— and I, and it was,
uh, a matter of robust debate uh, in the State Board
of Elections and in the state legislature was they do

1
2 not allow voting machines at poll sites to be
3 networked.

4 There is the potential to have an air card within
5 those voting machines that would allow the, uh,
6 results to be, uh, trans- uh, transmitted that way.
7 And there's also the potential of the voting machines
8 being linked from one to the other. None of that is
9 permitted, uh, in New York State.

10 So when you, when you vote on a particular voting
11 machine, the ballot goes in, it gets kept, uh, into
12 the, uh, into a secure box, uh, in that cabinet that
13 you're voting on. But more importantly than all of
14 that, there's no way to externally access that
15 machine to be able to change the vote, the, the vote
16 totals.

17 You would have to have access, physical access
18 to, to that voting machine, which would mean if you
19 were gonna change vote totals for any, in any great
20 way, people would have to go into the 1,200 poll
21 sites on Election Day, somehow remain invisible and
undetected, and then be able to physically access,
uh, the, uh, the, the, the ports on the back of the
machine to change the vote totals, and then somehow
change those vote totals on the paper too, so that if

1
2 we— when we detected that there was a problem, the
3 recount of the paper would match, uh, the, uh,
4 electronic totals.

5 It is a, it is a virtual, uh, extreme
6 impossibility.

7 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And it's also with use of the—
8 with our partner agencies, the NYPD, which doesn't
9 happen everywhere, um, a chain of custody of ballots
10 with the NYPD as well. And it's, you know, it's
11 important to note that when we do either sense or
12 believe that there is a— any type of, uh, election
13 interference, we have made several referrals to both
14 the federal, uh, city and state agencies for
15 prosecution.

16 MICHAEL RYAN: And we, and we see that typically,
17 you know, with, uh, uh, either the absentee process
18 or the voter registration process, not with the
19 Election Day process. And then post-election, which I
20 neglected to mention, uh, there is an audit process
21 that is required by state election law. You'll hear
it called a 3% audit, but it's really not. It, it
could be up to 100% audit but it's 3%. If there's a
problem with the 3%, it goes to an additional 5%,
which would be 8, and then up the chain.

1
2 In my 13 years, there's only been one time where
3 it's— where any audit has gone beyond 3%, and it was
4 in a few districts, uh, in the Bronx about 8 or 9
5 years ago. Uh, so we're confident, uh, in the
6 integrity of the system and we're further confident
7 with the integrity of our employees, uh, who are
8 responsible, uh, for making sure that all of these
9 vote totals are calculated properly.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you both and next
11 time you're here, I hope you'll bring the, the
12 board's operations manager, Georgia Katsamanis, with
13 you so we could thank her on behalf of the public for
14 the great work she's doing as well.

15 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, she's watching it, uh, from
16 her desk.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: And probably cursing you
18 right now.

19 MICHAEL RYAN: So you just thanked her. So, uh,
20 thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. So, um,
justice involves voters. There are many individuals
in our jail system that are eligible to vote as they
are either awaiting trial and haven't been convicted
of a crime or have only been convicted of a

1
2 misdemeanor. According to the Fiscal '25 MMR data,
3 the city's jail population has grown each year since
4 '21. It is quite possible that there are also many
5 who are eligible to vote that are either unaware or
6 have trouble figuring out how to vote. And I know
7 League of Women Voters, Legal Aid, and so on, they're
8 all trying to make this barrier less so that people
9 can vote.

8 So what are the barriers to facilitate voting?
9 How is voter eligibility communicated to those in the
10 facility at Rikers in particular? What lessons have
11 you learned from election cycles? I know there has
12 been some effort to make this a reality for people.
13 What coordination exists between the board and
14 agencies such as probation and correction? And how
15 are you addressing misinformation in justice-involved
16 communities where individuals may incorrectly believe
17 they are permanently barred from voting? I hear a lot
18 when I go to NYCHA Family Days that people feel this
19 is not you, this is just the way our society works,
20 that they have completed everything in terms of their
21 sentence, but they do not feel they can vote.

That's a real problem.

1
2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Well, just the umbrella, and
3 then, and then I guess Mike will- he, he's very well
4 schooled on this, having served as a probation
5 officer and, uh, as the board Chair. But we have
6 instituted a working group with all interested
7 parties that speaks every single month, and they've
8 done a great job of working to, uh, working with both
9 the interest groups and the Department of
10 Corrections, uh, to ensure that they, they have a
11 system in place that any incarcerated individuals
12 can, can vote. Uh, I don't know, Mike, if you-

11 MICHAEL RYAN: Right, so it is the, um,
12 responsibility of the New York City Department of
13 Corrections to impart, uh, the information to those
14 uh, whose care they are responsible for, for the
15 period that they remain incarcerated.

15 Um, so in the past, it was the board doing its
16 job and the Department of, uh, Corrections, uh, doing
17 its job and I don't want to say never the twain shall
18 meet, but they were further apart than they should
19 have been.

19 And since, uh, Council Member Morano already
20 mentioned, uh, Ms Katsamanis, I'll mention her again.
21 Uh, our operations manager really took, uh, the bull

1
2 by, uh, the horns and, uh, insinuated the board into
3 the process more than we had been in the past. And
4 one of the things, uh, that we did, uh, which I think
5 has really helped the Department of Corrections, um,
6 is we have now an internal process where all of the
7 documentation that needs to to be turned over to the
8 Department of Corrections with respect to, uh,
9 voting-eligible, uh, incarcerated individuals are now
10 transmitted internally to the Queens office, uh, and
11 it's kind of a one-stop shopping for the Department
12 of Corrections.

13 Uh, they get all the information that they, they
14 need, and all of the exchange of documents is handled
15 out of the Queens office, uh, so that we can main-
16 better maintain, um, control over it. But also, uh,
17 this- the Department of Corrections doesn't have a
18 tremendous amount of staff that's, uh, dedicated to
19 this process, and they used to go from borough office
20 to borough office.

21 So instead of them circling all around the city,
we work with them, uh, we, uh justify the numbers
every month to make sure that we're not missing
anything or nothing's, uh, falling through the
cracks. Um, and from what I understand has, has been

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2 reported to me, uh, although I'm not as maybe
3 well-versed- I'm certainly not as well-versed in it
4 as Ms. Katsamanis- but that the Legal Aid Society,
5 who works closely, uh, in this process, has been
6 largely, uh, complementary, uh, of the board's
7 efforts and our assistance to, uh, the Department of
8 Corrections in, in making this process work better.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I think it's improving. I
10 know that there are many, I don't know, something
11 like almost maybe 500 people, but there were
12 thousands registered. So it's a hard, I'm not gonna
13 say it's easy, but is there a portion of the budget
14 that is allocated toward this effort in terms of
15 marketing, in terms of staffing, or is it just-

16 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, so we don't have direct, we
17 don't have direct access to the individuals that are
18 incarcerated. But we provide the Department of
19 Corrections all of the information, uh, that they
20 need and as it's updated, as its updates are
21 required, we, we update.

VINCENT IGNIZIO: And I don't believe it's a
budgetary issue. We could- so we could supply them
with whatever they need. They have, uh, they have
sufficient budget as well. I think this is- some

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2 people don't engage as well. Like, just because
3 you're registered and you— it doesn't mean you wanna
4 partake in the system any more than anybody in Staten
5 Island or Manhattan or whatever does.

6 So, um, but we're, we're committed to working and
7 continue on a monthly basis. If people can build a
8 better mousetrap, we're, we're happy to be a partner
9 in that to the extent we can.

10 MICHAEL RYAN: So a couple things in terms of the
11 budget as well, uh, we have over 5 million registered
12 voters in the city of New York when you, when you add
13 inactive and, and active voters.

14 So if we're talking about, you know, 500 to 1,000
15 individuals from the Department of Corrections, it
16 really is a drop in the bucket in terms of, uh, our
17 voter processing, uh, budget. So that's— it's not
18 going to be a funding issue.

19 One of the challenges, I think, in fairness to
20 the Department of Corrections, uh, is that they're
21 dealing with a transient population, and they might
touch, uh, an individual, uh, with respect to voting
uh, information and then that individual either makes
bail or has their case resolved and gets out, or has

1
2 their case resolved and moves on to the State
3 Department, uh, of, uh, Division of Corrections.

4 So, you know-

5 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Or the ballot expires.

6 MICHAEL RYAN: Yeah and it's a, it's a little bit
7 of a moving target for them as well, uh, but we
8 certainly, uh, want to be, uh, and, and should be and
9 want to be as helpful in that process as we can
10 because our job is to, is to service all of the
11 voters of the city of New York, or eligible voters of
12 the City of New York.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so what hap- just once
14 you say, for instance, you do get, um, registered,
15 you're there for a series- and the League of Women
16 Voters is there often, and so is Legal Aid. They're
17 both trying. And so once you are registered, I guess
18 there's some, you know, it's a pretty major election
19 coming up in November and there's some primaries.

20 So if you're there, then the ballot would go-
21 would be filled out there and then brought back to
Queens. Is that the idea? Is that how you would- how
you would-

MICHAEL RYAN: Right and before, I think the big
change was there was no tracking in place for- that I

1
2 would say unified tracking between the, the- between
3 the Department of Corrections and the board over how
4 many are dropped off and how many are processed back.

5 It used to be that the Department of Corrections
6 would drop off what they dropped off, we'd process
7 what we processed, and nobody was comparing numbers.

8 That's now happening on a monthly basis to make
9 sure that we, uh, prevent as many as we possibly and
10 humanly can, uh, from falling through the cracks.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, you wanna say-

12 VINCENT IGNIZIO: I was just gonna- it's not an
13 ignored population, it's one that we're working on.
14 And quite frankly, the, the benefit of having
15 tracking throughout, uh, has been a benefit to
16 everybody in the city because we're able to see where
17 your ballot is, where it is along the process, when
18 it's mailed and, and, uh, working with the post
19 office, we can see what's coming back.

20 So it's been a- it, it's been a good endeavor to
21 have that tracking system throughout.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

MICHAEL RYAN: And also, we compare numbers like
you should, kind of like little mini audits every
month with the Department of Corrections and, and the

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2 Board of Elections and then we're on the same page
3 when those numbers are shared with the Legal Aid
4 Society. So we think that that's also contributing to
5 more faith in the system on the part of the Legal Aid
6 Society because they're not getting one set of
7 numbers from the Department of Corrections and an
8 apparently different set of numbers from the board.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so the tracking is
10 working. Um, regarding voter privacy, uh, related to
11 Local Law 31 of '25, voter privacy and awareness
12 obviously are necessary. You know that as well as I
13 do. How many voters currently utilize confidential
14 voter registration status under, uh, election law
15 5-110, and what is the average processing time for
16 these requests?

17 VINCENT IGNIZIO: It's about 150, I would say,
18 city, uh, citywide.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 150, okay.

20 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Um, yeah, and it's within 24 to
21 48 hours it's processed. We had a scenario that
existed not too long ago where it was processed
within 8 hours.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

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2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: We recognize the delicate nature
3 of the request and how sometimes the impact on it is
4 immediate, uh, so we, we do not take a back seat to
5 something so serious.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So how do you tell voters
7 about this available protection? You know, obviously
8 I passed a bill recently for the domestic violence,
9 uh—

10 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, that's right. So the CFPB
11 was charged— the CFPB was charged with that through,
12 uh, um, through your bill. However, we have it on our
13 website, it's on the state board's website, um, it's
14 available for people. We have— I believe we have a
15 flyer on it as well, but, um, but we encourage people
16 to, you know, should they require or need that
17 protection, to avail themselves of it, because we
18 will process it right away. It's a very serious, very
19 significant issue that we are, uh, um, happy to
20 ensure that proper adjudication of.

21 MICHAEL RYAN: And the state law was amended, uh,
when it first, uh, was, uh, initiated, an individual
who was the victim of domestic violence had to
actually go to court and file. So the good thing is
now there's a State Board of Elections, uh,

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2 promulgated form that allows the, the, the victim of
3 domestic violence, uh, to simply fill out the form,
4 uh, and then we, uh, we process it, uh, and it's,
5 it's much easier for, uh, for those individuals that
6 need it.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and do you have any way
8 of sort of knowing whether or not these campaigns
9 that do say you can be private in your vote are
10 reaching the residents and people who need it? Do you
11 have any way of doing that?

12 MICHAEL RYAN: I mean, it's hard for us to tell
13 because how do you define, uh, the domestic violence
14 population?

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Or any— I mean, there are
16 other populations too. It's not just DV.

17 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Well, even with the, even with
18 the judges, I mean, um, we, we have, uh, worked
19 closely, uh, with, with the federal court, uh, most
20 recently, but before that, the state courts. Um, the,
21 the alternative for a judge that wants their, uh,
address to become private is that they have to vote,
uh, either, uh, by affidavit or in the office. And
what we've seen so far is, um, there hasn't been a
mass migration towards that process. There have been

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2 some, uh, but, you know, a lot of people still like
3 to vote on the machine.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I agree. They just may
5 not know about it though. I'm just, you know, listen-

6 MICHAEL RYAN: Well, there has been internal, uh,
7 education processes in place in both the state, uh,
8 Office of Court Administration, uh, and at least one
9 district of the federal court that we've dealt with.

10 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And my understanding is the
11 nonprofits in that sector, and primarily, uh, DV, are
12 very well aware and have advised them to do that as a
13 way of taking their names off a list that, uh, the
14 potential, uh, somebody can see.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. This is a Civics for
16 All week in the City Department of Education. So 16
17 and 17-year-olds can pre-register to vote, as you
18 know.

19 VINCENT IGNIZIO: My daughter did.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I make sure that they do. So
21 what steps are you taking to ensure you receive voter
information or registration so that they can vote
when they're 18? What data do you do? Because you're
tracking, I hope, what is, uh, signed up for, um, and
are there some, uh, school district disparities? Um,

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2 how do you evaluate the success of this voter
3 registration in high schools? Uh, do you participate
4 in Civics for All? Or- I was there this morning and
5 yesterday at the programs and if legislation lowering
6 the age- this is my issue, I know you don't like it-
7 the voting age for municipal elections were enacted,
8 what changes would be required and what timeline? I
9 think that has to be done by the state and not the
10 city. I tried this.

11 VINCENT IGNIZIO: So, uh, my question is really
12 how do we get the 16 and 17-year-olds in the high
13 schools to pre-register and how are you tracking it?

14 MICHAEL RYAN: So we cooperate, uh, with the
15 Department of - of education. When, when this was
16 first brought up, I could tell you, uh, when there
17 was an expansion of Local Law 29, uh, and an
18 Executive Order that was related to that, uh, it was
19 Executive Order Number 1 in the de Blasio
20 Administration. Um, the board, uh, quite frankly, uh,
21 resisted being, uh, the police for city agencies and
our position at the time uh, and remains so, uh, to
some extent, is that this- to the extent that those
agencies, whether it be the Department of Education
or others, have a reporting, uh, requirement to the

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2 City Council, then it's their responsibility, uh, as,
3 uh, you're kind of co-equal, uh, partners in
4 government to make sure that they're reporting
5 accurately. It's not not really-- the board should not
6 be put in the middle as a, a go-between or, or a
7 policing of the city agencies.

8 That having been said, um, we understand that
9 there's been certain requirements imposed upon the
10 Department of Education by the City Charter, and they
11 have asked us, uh, to issue voter registration forms
12 with a code on them. So you may recall that Code D
13 is, uh, for the CUNY.

14 We're now gonna do a code S, which is starting
15 with the printing of the new voter registration forms
16 for this year, a code S for the schools, uh, so that
17 they can, uh, more accurately, uh, track, uh, the
18 process, uh, from their end, the processed, um, voter
19 registration forms.

20 From our end, those forms come in like every
21 other form, and we process them the same way that we
process all of the other voter registration forms.
With respect to the ages, uh, 16s and 17-year-olds,
um, it is built into the system that those
individuals get put into the system as future voters,

1
2 and when their birth date hits, the system
3 automatically, uh, graduates them, uh, for lack of a
4 better term, into a full voter.

5 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And I could tell you it works
6 because my daughter did. So, um, and so it works
7 well. We, we did participate in, uh, Civic Week this
8 week. We did have the code— I was— it 8 or S?

9 MICHAEL RYAN: S.

10 VINCENT IGNIZIO: S, Okay, we did have it active,
11 and there was, uh, City Council legislation on this
12 as well, uh, that was passed last year. So we, we
13 work fully with our friends at the Department of Ed,
14 and, um, and, you know, do visit upon being— upon
15 request as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I mean, with all do
17 respect for DOE, they have lots of, uh, issues to
18 address. And I just wanna make sure that this is one
19 of them. So I think it has to be all hands on deck in
20 order to get these young people registered. I mean,
21 you have a receptive audience. If they register at
this early age, and then they're automatically
registered to vote, that's huge.

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2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, my daughter did it when
3 she got her, uh, when she got her, uh, driver's
4 permit.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Learner's permit. Yeah, yeah
6 but that's your daughter.

7 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yes. Well, I'm just-

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Not everybody else, I'm just
9 saying. So I'm just, you know, having known thousands
10 and thousands of high school students, it would be
11 fabulous to get them registered and this is one way
12 to do it.

13 So I'm just saying, I think we should put more
14 effort into it. I understand DOE is supposed to be
15 doing that. They're supposed to be doing the outreach
16 but I think also you, you, you all should be doing
17 the same thing.

18 MICHAEL RYAN: The, the other thing though, that
19 I, that I think we have to give some thought on, uh,
20 and I'm, and I, recognize that this is not a, a fully
21 and complete thought to a resolution and, uh, of the
22 problem. Um, you hand a kid today a pen and a piece
23 of paper, they look at you like you're crazy. We have
24 to migrate this process to the, uh, online voter
25 registration process.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What are you doing about
3 that?

4 MICHAEL RYAN: Uh, well, the Department of
5 Education asks us for like 100,000 pieces of paper.
6 Um, one of the, one of the feedbacks that we've
7 gotten from not only the Department of Education but
8 other entities that do online, that do voter
9 registration drives, is there is no process in place
10 for them to track if it goes into the, uh, electronic
11 system, and that the paper allows, uh, more accurate
12 tracking. But if the paper is allowing for more
13 accurate tracking but not accommodating a population
14 that is otherwise resistant to filling out pieces of
15 paper, you know, I think that's a conversation worth
16 having.

17 That's like a software issue. Why is— why can't
18 this be addressed?

19 VINCENT IGNIZIO: We have overcome it. That's
20 with, with the, with the new codes that we have
21 employed. Well, we can, but now it's about having
our, our friends and colleagues in, in schools adopt
the model of bringing more iPads or laptops in order
to register and not hard copy. But, you know, it's a
work in progress. We're doing well. We just have to -

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, you can't track the S if
3 it's online. Who would fix that? Is that a— who, who—

4 VINCENT IGNIZIO: No, what I'm saying the
5 opposite. I'm saying the opposite. What I'm saying is
6 that the entities that are doing the voter
7 registration drives can't track how many individuals
8 they processed if it's online.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, why not? That's what
10 I'm saying. In other words, you're in the— you— what—
11 you could track it if they use your code, right?

12 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Right, it's a hurdle that we've
13 overcome just this year.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You can track it.

15 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But so you'd have to take
17 some paper and some online and combine them, right,
18 for the tracking.

19 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, we, we can convey to the
20 Department of Ed, should they want, what, what and
21 whom, how much registrations we've had this year
alone or next year.

That's, that's the ultimate goal of it, which,
which we've—

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2 MICHAEL RYAN: It's just about- I don't think it's
3 an impossible task. What it is, is it's about
4 breaking an old habit.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah.

6 MICHAEL RYAN: People are used to doing it this
7 way and used to handing out the forms. And, you know,
8 we need to get to the point where the, the younger
9 folks, especially whether it's school students or,
10 you know, millennials as they say, have to know that
11 they can pick up their cell phone and do it right
12 from their cell phone.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm aware of that, but I'm
14 just- well, it's not going to be cell phone in the
15 high schools, Mike, in case you didn't know, but it
16 could be, uh, laptop. So I think we should work-
17 we'll work with DOE to try to get them to do it but
18 as long- you can count. Somebody may still do it on
19 paper. We put the two together, you gotta-

20 MICHAEL RYAN: Right.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's not hard.

 MICHAEL RYAN: Correct.

 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: One plus the other is what
the total is. All right, so that's something to work
on for us. Um, homeless people who are housing

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2 instability situations. Obviously it's hard for them
3 to receive voter information. Voter registration
4 forms ask for an address. I think you can vote
5 without having a permanent address, but please answer
6 that. What steps have you taken to deal and get
7 people who are homeless to understand that they can
8 vote? And, um, what guidance is provided to poll
9 workers when somebody comes in, when they do list a
10 shelter or is it park bench? I've seen that.

11 Um, do you coordinate with the outreach, uh,
12 workers at different shelters? Have you conducted
13 outreach to city shelters or to supportive housing
14 facilities? And again, do you have data? That's
15 another place where you collect data on this issue.

16 MICHAEL RYAN: Yeah, so the education part of that
17 is the, uh, we work with, uh, the Campaign Finance
18 Board because that falls into, uh, their
19 responsibility, and we provide them, uh, with updated
20 information to make sure that, you know, uh, that
21 Madam Chair may remember a few years back when there
was some misinformation that was promulgated with
respect to, uh, who was eligible to vote if they
were, uh, a convicted felon. And we worked with the
Campaign Finance Board to make sure that they had uh,

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2 the correct and updated information to avoid that
3 from happening again in the future.

4 Um, and in, in similar regard, when there are,
5 um, outreach requirements that the, the, the Campaign
6 Finance Board has, we, uh, have worked, uh, very
7 closely with them to make sure that they have the
8 accurate information.

9 In terms of, uh, special, uh, instructions to the
10 poll poll workers. The system, the registration
11 system, is designed to accommodate, uh, people who
12 don't have a permanent address, and it's in the
13 system.

14 So as long as- if the person shows up to vote,
15 uh, there's nothing that really needs to be done on
16 the part of the poll worker. They show up to vote,
17 they give them their- if their name, it comes up on,
18 on the iPad, uh, they sign their signature uh, and
19 move on.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right and, but in terms of
21 there's no tracking for those who are in shelters or
in, I would just call temporary housing, there's no
tracking for that?

VINCENT IGNIZIO: There's not.

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2 MICHAEL RYAN: No and, and again, similar to the
3 incarcerated population, that is also a very
4 transient population within the City of New York. Uh,
5 so I, I honestly can't see how we could implement an
6 effective tracking system, uh, that involves
7 individuals who may be, uh, on the move on a regular
8 basis.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, I thank you very
10 much. I would look forward to dealing with that one
11 school that is quite upset and trying to find another
12 location. We can work with you on that if you want,
13 and then, um, you know, we work with you on your
14 capital needs that are more immediate with your vans,
15 and then just look forward to, um, getting as many
16 people as possible to vote.

17 I think obviously in the last election many more
18 people did vote but what was the new number that you
19 had in terms of voting for last election?

20 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Uh, it was north of 2 million.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: North of 2 million, okay,
alright.

VINCENT IGNIZIO: I don't know the exact number,
right, which is, uh, that was in the mail.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I do have one more question.
3 Thank you for reminding me. Council Member Dinowitz
4 has a question. He's - I forgot that he's, uh, had a
5 question. Let me read to you right now. Hold on, hold
6 on. Yeah, I know. I'm just trying to find it. Here it
7 is. Okay. It is. Thank you for reminding me.

8 I think he sent a letter to you in 2024 outlining
9 the concerns about the way party positions appear on
10 primary election ballots, and he didn't get a
11 response. So number 1, party positions such as
12 District leader, state Committee appear on the
13 primary ballot when there's a contested primary. How
14 -historically there were two seats for each position
15 within an assembly district, one designed for a male
16 and one designed for a female, and the ballots
17 reflected that structure.

18 Male and female candidates were listed separately
19 and voters were instructed to vote for one candidate
20 for each seat. More recently, the rules governing
21 these positions were changed so that the two winners
must be the top vote-getters of different genders.
However, the ballots have not been updated to reflect
this change.

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2 At this current time, all candidates appear under
3 a single heading regardless of gender, even though
4 two candidates of the same gender cannot both win the
5 seats. That's for sure.

6 This creates confusion for voters and candidates
7 alike because the ballot does not clearly communicate
8 how the winners are actually determined. So the
9 question is, will the Board of Elections commit to
10 updating its ballot design so that party official
11 candidates are clearly separated by gender and the
12 ballot explicitly states that only one candidate from
13 each gender may be elected for a maximum of 2
14 positions? Only Council Member Dinowitz could think
15 of this question.

16 MICHAEL RYAN: So, uh, that, that may be, uh, the,
17 the, the impression, but I can tell you without
18 naming names that one of the board's commissioners,
19 uh, agrees in some respects, uh, with Councilman
20 Dinowitz.

21 The difficulty here is, and the short answer is
to the councilman's question is no. And the reason—
no, we will not be changing and the reason is not
because we want to be obstreperous or we want to

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2 create difficulty, but what's not being factored into
3 that question is X.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

5 MICHAEL RYAN: Right, so if, if the question was
6 we have two variables, male or female, then the
7 question is is more straightforward. When you add in
8 X and turn 2 variables into 3 variables, um, there's
9 really nothing, uh, that the city board can do about
10 it and have been so instructed by the State Board of
11 Elections.

12 Uh, you know, I think one misconception that I
13 always try to beat back is that we simply have a free
14 hand to do whatever we want. The state legislature,
15 uh, tells us to do things, uh, the state board of
16 elections, and in this particular case did tell us
17 how we have to do it, and we follow what they're
18 telling us. And from time to time, this body, uh,
19 has, uh, made enactments that tell us to do things.

20 So we're not just, you know, freehandedly doing
21 whatever we feel like doing. So we follow the state
law, we follow the state board of elections guidance
and directive in this regard. And, you know, unless
and until there are changes in one of those two

1
2 areas, uh, we're going to continue to do things the
3 way that we've been doing them.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, I mean, Council Member
5 Dinowitz spends much more time. I just get elected
6 and win, so I don't- my question is, so you could end
7 up with two men or two women or an X and a- because
8 then that's not how the process works. You have to
9 have- it could be X and a man or whatever but I guess
10 when you end up voting in this situation- I have not
11 paid attention like he has-

12 MICHEAL RYAN: So, to make it -

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: To end up with situations, to
14 make it viable.

15 MICHAEL RYAN: To make it simple, uh, and, and by
16 the way, the party rules-

17 VINCENT IGNIZIO: There's a party bylaw-

18 MICHAEL RYAN: And the party rules and bylaws
19 factor into this as well. But in, in- because the
20 councilman is a Democrat, we'll stick with the
21 Democrats.

If it were, say, 3 people running for a party
position -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Correct.

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2 MICHAEL RYAN: Two women and a man. We'll leave X
3 out of it for now. Both women can't win.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, they can't.

5 MICHAEL RYAN: So if the, if the man gets a vote-

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

7 MICHAEL RYAN: And the two women get 2,000 votes
8 and 1,500 votes, it's gonna be the one that got the
9 2,000 votes and the one vote man that voted for
10 himself.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so it's in the end it
12 works out.

13 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Yeah, short answer is not us.

14 MICHAEL RYAN: Exactly.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I got it. You're gonna
16 have to talk to the Council Member. Uh, poll- second
17 question: poll site changes result in voter confusion
18 and can have the effect of disenfranchising New
19 Yorkers. What- while the Board of Elections may send
20 out notifications of polling sites, voters who are
21 voting at a different site may require a separate
explicit notice that their poll site has changed.
Question: will the Board of Elections commit to
sending out an additional notification to those
voters poll site has changed?

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2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: We do.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Or explicitly, explicitly
4 highlight that there's a change in voting sites?

5 VINCENT IGNIZIO: We do send out when there's an
6 alteration, um, and to be clear, all of our poll site
7 alterations at this stage have to be run through the
8 Attorney General's office under the John Lewis Voter
9 Rights Act as well.

10 MICHAEL RYAN: Right and, and if the change
11 occurred prior to the annual information going-
12 annual information notice going out, probably for the
13 last- well, Val Vásquez was still there, so I want to
14 say it was 2014, 2015. We reworked the information
15 notice, and there's a banner on the information
16 notice. If your poll site's changed, it tells you
17 right on the outside of the information notice that
18 your poll site has changed.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, okay. He might be
20 talking about if it's the last minute, I don't know.

21 MICHAEL RYAN: Well those, uh, poll site change
22 notices are auto-generated when we make the, when we
23 make the change. So everyone, um, who has a, has
24 their poll site change gets a poll site change notice
25 that's auto-generated by the system.

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CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I - poll sites in the mail?
You talk about in the mail?

MICHAEL RYAN: Right, yes.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, how many people do not
open their mail? I'm just saying, it's amazing they
don't.

VINCENT IGNIZIO: There is a certain level of
personal responsibility with that, but it also goes
through the Attorney General's office for, uh, for as
well, so.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

MICHAEL RYAN: Right and so to, to Mr. Ignizio's
point, under the John Lewis Voter Rights Act, the
Board of Elections, um, has lost, uh, I, maybe I
don't want to say it that way, but we don't have as
much autonomy as we used to have in terms of poll
site moves. And we have to go through a pretty, uh,
rigorous process and make the submission to the
Attorney General's office. We've worked very closely
with them and we have it down to a pretty good
science right now, uh, but we can't move a poll site
without the approval of the, uh, Attorney General's
office unless of course it's a very last-minute thing

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2 like there's a gas leak in a, in a poll site and we
3 have no other choice.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, um, how do you use
5 social media to tell people about these things, about
6 anything?

7 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Um, we robustly use Twitter or
8 X, whatever you call it these days. Um, we use it
9 very frequently. In fact, we've, we've received a lot
10 of accolades over the past several years for
11 informing people on voter hours. We do it every
12 single day that there's voting is open. Um, in the
13 preamble to an election, we let people know, uh, and
14 we send messages throughout, uh, periodically.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You're not allowed to use
16 TikTok, right? Are you allowed to use-

17 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Uh, in accordance with the city
18 regulations, I think the state has the same
19 regulations they were advising against it. I don't
20 know where we are today, but that was as of, you know
21 several -

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, you're right? But it's
23 crazy because that's where everybody's paying
24 attention, so.

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2 VINCENT IGNIZIO: But we do a lot of push
3 notifications, uh, throughout the various platforms.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, TikTok is where they
5 want to go.

6 VINCENT IGNIZIO: I can't help you.

7 MICHAEL RYAN: Is that where they want to go?

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: People want to go there. All
9 my staff, TikTok, TikTok.

10 MICHAEL RYAN: Should I, should I not admit for
11 the purposes of this hearing that I've never been on
12 TikTok?

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You should admit that-

14 VINCENT IGNIZIO: That's a factor of age.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's- yeah. I'm on all the
16 time. I love TikTok. Um, do we have a plan for ICE?
17 God forbid they show up at a polling place.

18 MICHAEL RYAN: Do, do we?

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, in other words, people
20 are nervous about ICE and obviously I don't know who
21 they'd be looking for because-

VINCENT IGNIZIO: I mean, you know, we have NYPD
at every, at every poll site.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, but most people voting
are Americans, but they don't seem to care these

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2 days. So the question is, the public is asking, do we
3 have a plan for ICE showing up at a polling place?
4 Would it be part of your training? So, I mean, to me,
5 the answer is you cannot come in here if you don't
6 have a judicial warrant. Get out but I don't know
whether that training is -

7 MICHAEL RYAN: Right, overall poll site security
8 is the responsibility of the New York City Police
9 Department. So we work, uh, very closely with the,
10 with the New York City Police Department and if there
11 was an individual, uh, circumstance where, where it
12 was impeding voting, we have mechanisms in place to
deal with, uh, circumstances where people are being
deprived of the right to vote.

13 VINCENT IGNIZIO: And as per the New York State
14 Constitution, only citizens can vote, so we don't
15 expect, uh, any issue.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I know, but it's a
17 question that people are asking generally now these
18 days. Alright, thank you very much for your
testimony, and thank you for your-

19 MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank
20 you to the members of the Committee, and thanks to
21 this Council.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

3 VINCENT IGNIZIO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think we'll hear from OATH
5 next. Yes, okay, OATH's Fiscal '27 Preliminary Budget
6 totals \$80.1 million, which is \$851,725 less than
7 Fiscal '26 Adopted Budget.

8 As we know, OATH is the city's central
9 independent administrative law court comprised of the
10 trials, hearings, and more recently, special
11 education hearings division.

12 The Preliminary Plan includes no new needs and
13 very minor adjustments to OATH's budget. I look
14 forward to learning more today about the role in the
15 collection of fines, staffing practices for ALJs,
16 Administrative Law Judges, which I know many, and
17 hearing officers, and how the agency will respond to
18 the Mayor's Savings Mandate, especially given the
19 agency has just 2% vacancy rate.

20 So now we'll swear you in. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alright, we will now hear
22 testimony from OATH. Before we begin, I will
23 administer the affirmation. Panelists, please raise
24 your right hands.

1
2 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
3 and nothing but the truth before this Committee, and
4 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

5 Alright, you may begin when ready.

6 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you so much. Good
7 afternoon, Chair Brewer. From the Committee of
8 Governmental Operations, State and Federal
9 Legislation, my name is Vilda Vera Mayuga, and as
10 Chief Administrative Law Judge and Commissioner of
11 the New York Office of Administrative Trials and
12 Hearings, I thank you for the opportunity to testify
13 today about the tribunal's work over the past year
14 and the budget project- projection for this coming
15 year.

16 OATH is New York City's central and independent
17 administrative law tribunal. As I start leading this
18 tribunal, I am confident in our continuing to deliver
19 our mission to ensure due process, fair and impartial
20 hearings and timely decisions for everyone who comes
21 before OATH.

22 In calendar year 2025 alone, we received over 1
23 million summonses, held over a quarter of a million
24 hearings, issued over 1,800 appeals decisions,
25 conducted over 500 trials, and closed nearly 18,000

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2 special education cases. Overall, this is an increase
3 from the volume of work we did in calendar year 2024.
4 And these tremendous figures are a testament to the
5 amazing public servants who are part of the OATH
6 team. In each of these hundreds of thousands of
7 cases, the committed staff at OATH take great care to
8 ensure that every party who appears before us is
9 treated impartially and is accorded due process.

10 We accomplish this by having administrative law
11 judges and judicial hearing officers who listen to
12 all sides, review the evidence without favor, favor,
13 apply the law fairly, and avoid external influence.
14 At OATH, we believe that there is one standard of
15 justice for all. The members of the public who have
16 cases at OATH are treated no differently from the
17 city agencies that appear before us. We do not take
18 direction from any city agency on our cases. Our role
19 is to adjudicate cases, not to set policy.

20 OATH's Fiscal Year 2026 Adopted Budget was \$80.9
21 million, and the current modified budget is \$81.8
million. Preliminary budget for Fiscal Year '27 will
be \$80.1 million, including \$62.7 in personal
services and \$17.4 in other than personal services.
Our authorized headcount, it's set at 470 in Fiscal

1
2 Year '27 Preliminary Budget, which does not include
3 the currently active 172 per session judicial hearing
4 officers in the Hearings Division, all of whom work
5 on a part-time schedule.

6 OATH has 3 separate units that conduct
7 adjudications: the Trials Division, the Hearings
8 Division, and the Special Education Hearings
9 Division. The law will generally specify which cases
10 go to which division, and all of them offer in-person
11 and remote options for the parties to appear and
12 present their cases. At the Trials Division, we
13 adjudicate a wide range of cases filed by city
14 agencies, boards, and commissions, Trials are
15 conducted by administrative law judges appointed to
16 5-year terms, and the division's caseload includes
17 employee discipline and disability hearings for civil
18 servants, as well as cases involving city-issued
19 license suspensions and revocations, city vendor
20 contract disputes, the conflicts of interest law, the
21 city human rights law, consumer and worker protection
laws, LOFT law, short-term rentals, press passes,
watershed protection, retention of police vehicles
prior to forfeiture proceedings, and campaign finance
violations.

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2 During the first half of Fiscal Year '26, the
3 trials division heard 152 cases, and more than 94% of
4 the decisions issued by OATH ALJs were adopted by the
5 agency heads who referred those cases to OATH.

6 The hearings division is comprised of
7 adjudications, clerk's office, and appeals.
8 Adjudications conducts hearings on summonses issued
9 by more than 20 different city enforcement agencies
10 for alleged violations of law or city rules.

11 City enforcement agencies that issued these
12 summonses include Building and Sanitation, DEP, Fire,
13 Parks Department, DCWP, Health, the Department's, uh,
14 Finance Office of the Sheriff, and the Taxi and
15 Limousine Commission.

16 During the first half of Fiscal Year '26, the
17 Hearings Division processed over 500,000 summonses,
18 heard over 250,000 cases, and handled 875 appeals.
19 This reflects an increase of 14% in cases heard from
20 the prior year.

21 Although respondents have the option to appear to
a hearing in person, most continue to take advantage
of our telephonic hearings, a safe, easy, and
convenient option. Our clerk's office assists
respondents with scheduling remote hearings by email,

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2 and offering a callback option to eliminate the need
3 to wait on hold for the hearing officer to start
4 their case.

5 The Special Education Hearings Division handles
6 filings related to claims for services for students
7 with special needs. Each complaint is assigned to an
8 impartial hearing officer who must adjudicate the
9 matter in a fair and timely manner.

10 As of March 2nd, there have been close to 13,000
11 cases filed in Fiscal Year '26, and cases do continue
12 to be filed each day. And of those cases filed, the
13 division has closed approximately 6,700 and I am
14 happy to report that 89% of those cases closed this
15 year have been closed within the statutory compliance
16 deadline.

17 Now, since 2016, OSE Center for Creative Conflict
18 Resolution has served as the city's government
19 central resource for conflict resolution services and
20 restorative practices in support of city government
21 agencies, businesses, and the general public. The
center offers a number of workplace conflict services
for city agencies, including mediations, conflict
coaching, group facilitation, restorative circles,

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2 dispute system design services, education, and
3 training.

4 And a primary goal of the center is to support
5 city government agencies and offices build
6 alternative dispute resolution and restorative
7 programs to strengthen agencies' internal conflict
8 resolution capacity, including in their public-facing
9 work.

10 During the past year, the Center has provided
11 close to 500 consultations, coaching sessions,
12 conflict resolution and restorative practices
13 trainings, workplace and community mediations, and
14 group facilitation.

15 Now, OATH's mission requires it to prioritize the
16 public's access to justice, and to do so, OATH
17 ensures Language Access Services serves respondents
18 through the Help Center— sorry, uh, and conducts
19 outreach.

20 OATH ensures information is accessible by
21 providing it in plain language and translating it
22 into the top 10 languages spoken in New York City.
23 Everyone has access to free translation services for
24 Hope sessions, trials, hearings, community service,
25 and mediation.

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2 OATH also makes its forms and applications
3 available in the top 10 languages, as well as other
4 documents such as outreach flyers, informational fact
5 sheets, and handouts. Additionally, OATH provides
6 hearing decisions in any language requested by a
7 respondent free of charge at both of its high-volume
8 adjudicatory divisions, namely the OATH Hearings
9 Division and the Special Education Hearings Division.
10 In fact, the Comptroller audited OATH's language
11 access services in late 2025 and found that OATH had
12 institutionalized language access and was in
13 compliance with all language access laws and
14 regulations.

15 OATH is proud to report that the Comptroller had
16 no recommendations for improvement in this area. Now,
17 not having a lawyer should not limit one's ability to
18 navigate OATH's processes. Without providing legal
19 advice, OATH's Help Center ensures that unrepresented
20 respondents receive answers to their questions, are
21 aware of their rights, and understand the hearing
process, engaging with unrepresented respondents in
their language of preference via telephone, text,
email, and in-person at OATHS offices.

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2 Procedural Justice Coordinators respond to
3 requests for help sessions within 1 calendar day on
4 average. This means that in 2025, the help center
5 staff assisted nearly 150,000 respondents. This is an
6 increase of more than 50,000 when compared to the
7 prior year, and for eligible cases, the help center
8 staff can also refer unrepresented respondents to
9 independent legal services providers for possible
10 representation at an OATH hearing at no cost to the
11 respondent. And the help center did so in close to
12 250 cases last year.

13 This type of personalized assistance helps OATH
14 ensure that all New Yorkers have access to justice.
15 In addition, OATH's help center has specialized units
16 to focus on assistance to small businesses, veterans,
17 and older adults. And since 2021, the help center
18 began conducting help sessions in OATHS Trials
19 Division for unrepresented for-hire vehicle drivers
20 facing license suspension or revocation and vehicle
21 owners seeking to recover their vehicles after NYPD
seizure pursuant to an arrest.

More than a dozen explanatory fact sheets on
enforcement agency processes and OATHS hearing
process are available at the Help Center and can be

1 translated into the top 10 languages. Understanding
2 that city government can sometimes be challenging to
3 navigate, OATH has various vehicles for keeping
4 respondents and practitioners updated on new
5 developments. This includes the Tribunal's website,
6 our monthly Bench Notes e-newsletter, and as of last
7 fall, the publication of OATH Trials Division case
8 summaries in the New York Law Journal.

9 Committed to bringing greater access to justice
10 to all New Yorkers, OATH continues to leave our
11 offices and visit our city's diverse neighborhoods,
12 educating residents and small businesses about what
13 we do and how New Yorkers and New York City
14 businesses can resolve their civil violations.

15 In the first half of Fiscal Year '26, OATH
16 conducted over 100 public-facing educational events
17 in collaboration with elected officials, business
18 associations, community groups, and more. And these
19 educational events include one of OATH's most
20 successful initiatives, OATH Resource.

21 This involves OATH staff working with Council
Members and the Brooklyn, New York, and Queens Public
Libraries to assist library visitors on matters
related to their summonses and the hearing process.

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2 We are grateful for the collaboration with our
3 libraries and elected officials and look forward to
4 working more with the Council to continue to find
5 ways to ensure New Yorkers have greater access to
6 justice with OATH. Whatever challenges await the
7 city, OATH's amazing staff have dedicated themselves,
8 um, to meeting the moment and making sure that New
9 Yorkers receive impartial hearings and timely
10 decisions.

11 OATH staff is very much New York's fairest. Thank
12 you again for the opportunity to testify before you
13 today. I look forward to our continued collaboration
14 with the City Council, and I welcome any questions
15 you may have.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. We have lots of
17 questions, but we have to wait a minute while they
18 reset the technology, so thank you.

19 Well, first I wanna thank John Castelli. That's
20 like number one in my world. I know where you're
21 sitting there, sir, but you are awesome. I just wanna
say to start with, um, my question just, um, just in
terms of savings, obviously May 20th, that's the date
that you have to come up with if there are some ways
to, um, curtail or cost or revenue.

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2 So are there programs uh, in your budget that are
3 exempt from the savings requirement? And if so, which
4 ones? And can you, even though it's not March 20th
5 yet, do you have any areas where you're considering
6 in this savings exercise?

7 We're all glad to hear about the 2-for-1 hiring
8 policy ending, but it is concerning to hear that
9 agencies will only be permitted to fill out half- to
10 fill half of their current vacancies. You may not
11 have very many vacancies compared to other agencies.
12 So I think you have maybe 13. I don't know if that's
13 still the current number.

14 So are you going to be eliminating some of your
15 vacancies? And if so, uh, what, which ones?

16 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you, Chair Brewer and
17 yes, as, as you mentioned, because we're still, uh,
18 that's due on the 20th, and yes, we are still having
19 a lot of conversations internally trying to meet with
20 the team and try to understand all of the operations
21 of the tribunal so that we can make the right
22 decision on what to propose to OMB and City Hall
23 based on the ask that they've made of us.

24 For OATH, there's no programs per se, right?
25 It's, it's all of the different divisions that do

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2 adjudications, and of course the areas that support,
3 as well as the Center for Creative Conflict
4 Resolution. I don't expect that we'll be cutting any
5 programs, even, you know, wherever we're finding the
6 savings, but it is true that we are still in that
7 process of making some decisions.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And is 13 the right number of
9 vacancies?

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We, we have 10.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You have 10.

12 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes. Um, the other question I
13 have is, um, you and I spent quite a bit of time
14 closing and we, uh, illegal, I guess, tobacco shops,
15 also known as cannabis shops. They seem to go
16 together and, um, which was great and then I assume
17 most of those went to OATH. I think it was very hard
18 to collect.

19 Now, Finance does the collection. I know, in
20 other words, you adjudicate, this is what your fine
21 is, and then I guess it goes off to Finance because
one of the concerns that I have is, you know, Finance
is supposedly responsible for the collection of the
fine, but we don't know how much is uncollected. And
I don't know if there's anything we can do working

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2 together to improve the collection rate because we're
3 all trying to figure out how to have more money in
4 our coffers. And I did a report with IBO a few years
5 ago, it was \$2 billion just for that year, hmm,
6 uncollected.

7 Um, so I'm just wondering, I know it's not, I,
8 every time I ask OATH is, oh no, no, it's not my
9 problem, it's Finance. I talk to Finance, they say we
10 can't really do anything. It's frustrating because,
11 you know, those of us, those New Yorkers who pay all
12 their taxes and pay their fines and pay their fees.
13 Then they see other people are not doing it.

14 So I didn't know if there was any discussion
15 going on, um, that it could be a better collection
16 rate.

17 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We haven't had any
18 discussions, and yes, as you mentioned, OATH as a
19 tribunal, you know, we've been the impartial party
20 that adjudicates, does not get involved in
21 collections.

22 If we can be of help in terms of providing
23 information based on just numbers that come to us and
24 the adjudications that we make, we're happy to work
25 with the Council to provide that information that we

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2 may have, but it is true that we do not engage in
3 collection efforts or-

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, it's not working with
5 the Council so much as working with Finance. In other
6 words, right now is- I just think it's a little bit
7 on the siloed end. You know, there may be some ideas
8 that the ALJs have for how to, uh, best contact that
9 person. That person's gonna leave, you know, your
10 courthouse, so to speak or your online Zoom and
11 they've been assessed X, but sometimes they just
12 don't pay it.

13 So I, I know that Finance has collection agencies
14 and they make phone calls, but I just think some
15 conversation should be going on because maybe the
16 ALJs will have some idea about how to do a better
17 job. I don't know, but it's a big number that's not
18 collected. And the worst of the cannabis, they just
19 took off. Yeah so anyway, I'd love to hear more about
20 that. There's, you know, we're all excited about
21 making sure that people have justice, but they don't
22 pay their fines a lot. So I want more on that.

23 Um, same issue, Environmental Control Board. Uh,
24 those fines make up the largest cohort of unpaid
25 fines and the uncollected revenue. You know, all of

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2 this could be used to close the budget gap. So I
3 didn't know, again, do you talk to the Environmental
4 Control Board? Is there anything OATH can do to help
5 collect those fines? Again, a different body.

6 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yeah, I mean, we limit
7 ourselves to issuing those decisions, and certainly
8 we do have a lot of reporting that we can share in
9 terms of decisions that we make, what are the— how we
10 adjudicate them, um, what are the results of those.
11 And the enforcement agencies are of course at liberty
12 to then use that information for the next steps based
13 on the decision that the tribunal has issued.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay um, and just in terms of
15 online versus in-person, so I guess pandemic, much
16 more online and I think now even there's no pandemic,
17 but I think much of it is online. So I just didn't
18 know, do you need as much staff? How do you
19 supervise? How does it technology— I have a whole
20 bunch of friends who are ALJs. How does— and they're
21 always sitting in their kitchen, I guess.

Um, I don't— I think you should come in, but
that's okay, alright. So then again, I would assume
less space needed. I would assume, uh, you mean more
supervision? I don't know. How are you dealing with

1
2 this very new, um, I'd like to know the percentage
3 that are doing their work online and I'd like to know
4 what the technology is at home. Can you get into the
5 IT? Some of them say it's sometimes hard to get an IT
6 person. I'm just saying. Because it's, um, you know,
7 people having problems with their home computer. And
8 then also supervision. How do you know it's going
9 well? When you're in the office, you can check.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Can- er, Chair Brewer, first,
11 you know, thank you for caring so much, because
12 certainly these are the issues that I, I also
13 welcome, having just completed my one month at the
14 agency. The majority - so going back to my testimony,
15 right, we have 3 main areas of adjudication, right?
16 You have the trials division where those ALJs are
17 definitely, I mean, I, I'm seeing them all the time
18 in the office, so I know that they're there. And
19 there is, uh, diversity of number of cases that may
20 be in person and some via WebEx for the trials
21 division. We do then have the special education
hearings. A lot of those are also via video.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's Carter, I call that
Carter- the Carter cases.

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2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct and then we- the
3 biggest, the highest volume, it is the Hearings
4 Division, and that is the one that perhaps you're
5 referring to. Correct. We have a little bit over
6 30-something in-person hearing officers, right? There
7 are attorneys that work in- 30 in person, you said?

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 30 in person?

9 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, yes, from the Hearings
10 Division and 33 to be precise, full-time hearing
11 officers. And then we have the per diem hearing
12 officers that, as the word says, right, they work
13 part-time. They have, uh, most of them have a limit
14 of hours that they can work during the year and that
15 number in terms of the active ones is 170 of them.

16 Now, the amount of hours that each of them works
17 varies. It depends, right? We understand a lot of
18 them have other things that they're doing with their
19 professional life, and they might be doing this on
20 the side, or maybe this is all that they were doing,
21 perhaps they retired in their practice.

We support them technologically if they have
issues because they have to remote into our system.
So there are- sometimes we have space issues. Yes, if
we wanna have more people come in person or we wanna

1
2 have more in-person hearing officers available, but
3 at the same time, we're using all the space in the
4 most creative ways that we can because we still need
5 those judicial hearing officers that are working
6 remotely to remote into our system. And so we do
7 provide them that support as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, uh, but what's the
9 percentage? I said you— a number you gave me, 170. We
10 don't know how many of those are online, right? I
11 mean, what's the percentage of— what I'm trying to
12 find is online versus in person, just in terms of
13 generally for the hearings. I know about the trial in
14 the Carter.

15 In other words, how many of all of your per
16 diems? I guess the 33 are all in person.

17 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But of the per diems, that's
19 for—

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: They're all remote.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They're all remote.

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Uh, all remote all the time.

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Hmm, I didn't realize that
3 okay and do you, do you think there's a problem with,
4 um, the IT staff? I don't know how many people you
5 have, get answering all their questions at the
6 appropriate time. No, I'm, er, is that a problem?

7 I'm not aware of it being a problem at the
8 moment. I mean, I, again, it's just sure there's lots
9 that I haven't learned about the agency. And if there
10 is, of course we will wanna address that and see if
11 there's anything that is about resources or if it's
12 about how we're set up so that we can find the best
13 solution to move it forward.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and you said that the
15 number of cases has gone up. I think you said that in
16 your testimony.

17 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, uh, do you need more
19 staff for that? Would that be more in person, more
20 per diem? Are you able to handle all of that?

21 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I mean, at the moment we are
doing that assessment because just as part of the
Chief Saving Officer exercise to look at, is there
anything— are we seeing a bump, but do we expect— are
there any predictions that we can make, right, in

1
2 terms of how do we address if that continues to rise,
3 or is it something that we will need to ask for new
4 resources to OMB and City Hall?

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, well, just one more
6 question to the per diem versus— can the person who
7 has— is paying the sanitation ticket or whatever, can
8 they request to be in person, or do they have to go
9 online? How does that work?

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So most of the hearings are
11 conducted by phone. When somebody gets their summons,
12 there's information for them to call us to make sure
13 that they get a PIN number so they can call for their
14 hearing.

15 If the respondent, the constituent, desires to do
16 it in person, then they can also let us know. We put
17 that information as well in the summons so that
18 usually it's 5 days. We ask them for 5 days so that
19 we have more time to plan and can give them a date
20 that will be available for them to come in and appear
21 in person.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do they have a choice?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: They do have a choice, yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I guess most people select
3 the, uh, online. So when I say online, I mean
4 telephone.

5 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's not appropriate to do it
7 online? I mean, uh, in a Zoom situation? Is that more
8 expensive, more time-consuming? I'm always trying to
9 think of what's the fairest thing, right, for the
10 person who's got the summons. I, I don't know.

11 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So to answer your question,
12 Chair Brewer, to go video, to offer the option of
13 video for the hearings division, our highest, um, uh,
14 er, the, the one that produces the most or handles
15 the most summonses, we're not prepared for that right
16 now. It- we don't have the technology for it. It is
17 -we do 700 to 800 hearings, telephonic hearings a
18 day.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Mhm.

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So we don't have the
21 infrastructure for it but I do wanna emphasize that
any of the options are fair for those that are
appearing before us. There's no compromise in the due
process that we give them. Every, every single one,
whether it's in person, whether it is by phone, they

1
2 are afforded entirely all other due process. If they
3 do prefer to show up in person, by all means, they
4 have that opportunity. We wanna continue to educate
5 everybody who has to appear before OATH because what
6 I'm also, what I've been learning is that some of the
7 businesses or individuals who request in person
8 believe that they might encounter the agency issuing
9 officer also in person. And that is not an
10 expectation that they show up because that agency
11 will still appear in a remote way and so we don't
12 wanna waste anybody's time.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The, the agency will be
14 remote no matter what.

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Um, the other question
17 I have is just training, I guess, for everybody, but
18 maybe particularly the per diem, because you can't-
19 don't- do you not go from TLC to sanitation to
20 restaurants to daycare centers? I don't know. You
21 could come up with some others.

So are- do you specialize or do you get
everything and you're supposed to know about
restaurants and taxis and so on? How does that look
for spending?

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We do expect - of course.
3 Thank you, Chair Brewer. We do expect them to be able
4 to handle any of the cases that may come before OATH,
5 and we provide the training to make sure that they
6 can handle those cases.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, so they can go from
8 one to the other and you feel it's seamless?

9 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Um, for the Carter
11 cases, I know that was Liz Vladek who put that
12 together many years ago. Um, how- like, maybe you
13 said that, but how many- because that's, that's a
14 topic of discussion in every corner of the city
15 because of the cost.

16 Again, nobody- I don't think anybody's talking
17 about cost of sanitation summonses in general, but
18 they are talking about the cost of Carter and Connor.
19 There's two of them, cases of just astronomical for
20 the city of New York, up and up and up.

21 So, cuz you're paying tuition for all these
schools. So my question is like, how many, and are
those all in person or are those online? How do, how
do you handle what you call Department of Education,
I call Carter- Connor Carter.

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you, Chair Brewer. Uh, a
3 lot of those, most of them are gonna also be via
4 video, not necessarily by phone and not in person.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Video, not, not— those are
6 video, not by phone?

7 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct, yes and they have
8 been going up. I mean, as I shared in my testimony,
9 we have, uh, received today um, let me get you that
10 number again. We have received 12,742 cases in Fiscal
11 Year '26 as of March 2nd.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Wow.

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: They do continue to be filed
14 each day. Usually the biggest, uh, number comes at
15 the beginning of the school year because of certain
16 deadlines, right, to file those and then it sort of,
17 you know, tapers down a little bit.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yep.

19 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: And we have closed so far of
20 those that were filed, we have closed approximately
21 6,780 and that means that of those cases, that's 89%
of those cases have been closed within the statutory
compliance deadline. I hear you on the cost for us,
the concern is also meeting those statutory
deadlines.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, I agree. I'm just, I'm
3 just trying to get different agencies to think to
4 work together because, um, none of this is gonna
5 happen by itself and I, it's on everybody's list.
6 What about the Carter cases? Uh, you know, it's sort
7 of along, like, one of the 3 top increasing costs.
8 Sort of City FHEPS, Carter cases, and one more. It's
9 all anybody's talking about. So you've got the
10 adjudication and everybody definitely needs to have
11 their child have the best, uh, opportunity for an IEP
12 student but this number is just astronomical.
13 Alright, and those, those folks come from, uh,
14 lawyers from DOE, or they're your, uh, judges? How,
15 who, who's doing the adjudication on this? Because
16 you don't jump from this to sanitation.

17 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct, the impartial hearing
18 officers that do the special education cases, only do
19 special education cases. They are specialized.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do you hire them or DOE hires
21 them?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We hire them.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You hire them?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and how many of them are
there approximately?

3 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We are currently at 101.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 101, okay. All right and then
5 in terms of the trials, it's a very small number,
6 like 150 or something like that. Is that in person or
that's also, um, Zoom or I should say phone?

7 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: No, so all- none of the trials
8 happen by phone. They happen either in person or via
9 video.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so that's video or in
11 person, okay, all right. And how many, uh, persons
are doing that? How many?

12 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: 17.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 17, okay, alright. Um, I
14 guess- and then my- again, back to this - so I guess
15 what happens is you're basically not needing space
16 for the- I call them the hearing officers, ALJs,
because they are never there.

17 I, I, okay- so if you want in-person, then you
18 deal with one of those 33 people and not one of the,
uh, part-timers.

19 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct.
20
21

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How do you recruit
3 part-timers? I know that's not the right term, but
4 the ALJs, how do you, do they, do you come on a
5 regular basis? Do they, you need them on a regular
6 basis?

7 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Okay, I thought it was— okay,
8 okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead, I'm sorry.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, yes, of course. I was
11 just trying to confer here because I'm still learning
12 some of the things of some of these, this, uh, some
13 of the stuff that we have and even for the per diem,
14 it's the regular city hiring process, but we would
15 post the position, and as people apply, we would
16 assess whether they're the right fit and onboard
17 them.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But it doesn't go through
19 DCAS, you do it on your own?

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct, yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: In terms of the, um, what I
call AOJs for special education, is that— are there
101? Is that what it is, or are there part-times too?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: No, they are all—

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All part-time?

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: No, no, no, they're all
3 full-time.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And so there are no part-time
5 individuals working in special education?

6 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Not to do the hearings, no.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Not for the hearings okay or
8 for any other aspect of that effort?

9 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We might have some for, for
10 administrative support. I don't know if I have those
11 numbers here, but we can certainly share those.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, but it's all the
13 full-time 101-

14 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: As hearing officers, yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: For the Carter cases, as I
16 call them. Okay, um, and then just finally, so do you
17 see that you have any new needs? I don't know that
18 you do, but are there some new needs that you have as
19 a result of your short time period there and
20 discussion with staff?

21 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Not yet. I'm still trying to
assess everything. Wanna make sure that, you know,
we're gonna ask for something, it's addressing the,
the needs that we may have depending on numbers and

1
2 everything that we should be taking into
3 consideration.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, do you find that there
5 are a lot of repeat individuals, or you don't track
6 that? In other words, somebody who gets sanitation
7 summonses or, you know, that kind of thing. I know
8 that what's frustrating to us, I can tell you, is
9 that there are people, um, who put up signs on
10 lampposts, you know, that's illegal, and they are
11 advertising something. You can't find these people.
12 So there's a lot of that. That's not a repeat, but
13 it's a very frustrating, um, uh, situation where
14 supposedly the person's doing something illegal,
15 sanitation summons, I assume, and you never can find
16 them.

17 So again, that's finance, right? Or you can't
18 even find the guy to bring them in to get on the
19 phone once he gets his summons. Do you ever track
20 those people down or that doesn't— No, they got
21 summonses, right? But they're

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We don't track recidivists.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: That is certainly something
for the enforcement agencies and I, I know that there

1
2 may be higher penalties for recidivists depending on
3 the violation and the enforcement agency.

4 We track a default, you know, if people— how many
5 people may not be showing up for their hearings but
6 at the same time, even those who may default, they,
7 they may be the ones that you're describing, Chair
8 Brewer, but sometimes people don't get the
9 information or don't understand it or misplace it.

10 So then we also, you know, we're gonna be focused
11 on the access to justice and the due process as well,
12 making sure that we let them know that there was a
13 default so that they also have an opportunity to then
14 contest that default decision.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Whatever language is
16 appropriate.

17 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Correct, Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, and do you keep track of
19 what the default percentage is? Because I'm sure
20 those are some of those uncollected fines, that
21 there's a relationship between the two. Yeah, so
what's your default?

VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Okay, you just give me a
moment.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sure, sure.

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Chair Brewer, in Fiscal Year
3 '25, we had, uh, 42% defaulted. This is specific to
4 the humans division.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay and will you try to
6 lower that percentage in the future, or is this just
7 too hard to do? Is that an, is that, ah, an okay
8 number? I don't know.

9 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Oh, I, I, I don't know. I
10 don't know that is an okay number or not an okay
11 number. I, I, I can tell—

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It seems high to me, that's
13 why I was asking. I'm not— what— it seems high.

14 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: I can tell you that
15 historically it's been around that number. The
16 highest number seemed to have been in Fiscal Year
17 '21, and, you know, during the pandemic but in Fiscal
18 Year '25, it was 42%.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

20 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: We don't have a goal of any of
21 these numbers. We do have a goal of making sure that
individuals are aware of their rights. And so that is
something that we would focus on to make sure that we
are notifying them that there was a default decision

1
2 and that they have an opportunity to ask for a new
3 date.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I have a goal of
5 getting more money out of them. The, the plan
6 includes \$21.5 million— this is about special
7 education, um, in '27 for your special education
8 unit, which is responsible for, as you know, the
9 hearings at DOE's due process cases. Um, again, do
10 you think this— there's adequate funding to meet this
11 mandate, or do you anticipate needing more money?
12 What was the actual spending for the unit in '25, and
13 how much has been spent in '26?

14 Um, can you talk a little bit more about the due
15 process cases? Does OATH come on board only if a case
16 requires a hearing or trial, or do you also assist in
17 a settlement process, which often comes up with these
18 families? I, I know too many families who've gone
19 through this process. And how many due process cases
20 have been filed in '26? How many are open or settled
21 or withdrawn? And how long does it take? This is—
these families complain all the time, but not
necessarily by you, but just about how long the
special education process is.

1
2 Um, how long does it take to get through the
3 process from filing to decision? I know you
4 mentioned, you know, there was a— you had 12,000 or
5 something, and, you know, a lot of them had been
6 settled.

7 So I— but so this is like generally where are we
8 with this unit? It's an important unit in your
9 division, so.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, thank you, Chair Brewer
11 and I, I will argue that every unit that we have is
12 important for different people.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I agree, this is just the one
14 that is newest.

15 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And certainly has a lot of,
17 um, attention being paid to it.

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: And yes, for the special
19 education, uh, particularly the due process cases, I
20 can tell you the entire unit of special education in
21 Fiscal '25, we had a total budget of \$19.8 million.
And so far in Fiscal Year '26, we have spent \$13.8
million.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

1
2 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: In terms of the settlements,
3 we actually have little involvement, particularly in
4 this type of case. A lot of the cases that— most of
5 the cases that do settle in special education, those
6 settlements happen outside of OATH.

7 If we are needed and can be helpful, we will
8 certainly get involved, but our experience so far, as
9 we continue to implement and, and welcome this new
10 division, as you said, is the newest one. We will
11 assess if there is need for OATH to get more involved
12 in settlements.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, but so you don't get it—
14 that would be the families and their lawyer usually,
15 and the Department of Education is what you're
16 saying? That's where most, most of them sort of end
17 up, like, for lack of a better word.

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright, so how— but how long
20 does it take if you are involved from filing to
21 decision just normally if, if you are involved?

22 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: The average time that had—
23 that we've tracked from appointment of an O— Special
24 Education Hearing Officer to closing a case, the
25 4-month action Fiscal Year '26 is 116 days.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 116 days, okay. So some are
longer and some are shorter.

3 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes, every case is certainly
4 going to vary. Yes, Chair Brewer.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, I guess there's still
6 confusion about what is the difference between ALJs
7 and hearing officers? What is- I mean, to me, the
8 ALJs are part-time, so maybe there's some other
9 difference. So tell me the difference between the
two.

10 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: So I think the confusion may
11 come from the, the trials division. The ALJs are
called ALJs just as per the Charter.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: They are appointed to 5-year
14 terms, and the law has designated the type of cases
15 that they're going to hear. It's a long list. The
16 hearings division - they're all hearing officers.
17 They're just- they're all adjudicators, it doesn't
18 matter but the hearing officers, we've called them
hearing officers.

19 I honestly don't have the history of why we're
20 calling them hearing officers, um, the name, but
those are the ones in the hearings divisions that are

1
2 all remote and are per diem, right? Except the
3 attorneys that we have in-house and also-

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 33.

5 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

7 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: And then we have the Special
8 Education Hearings Division, and they are also
9 hearing officers. Impartial Hearing Officers is the
10 formal term that we use to identify them.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so they're all Hearing
12 Officers, they're not ALJs, it doesn't- or is it sort
13 of synonymous?

14 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: They're all adjudicators.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: They're all adjudicators,
16 okay, so there's not really a difference, it's the
17 same thing?

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: It is the same thing in terms
19 of the work that they do.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. There, there seems to
21 be some confusion about that. I don't know why, but
there is. Um, okay, that's it. Is there anything else
here that you thought? Okay. Alright uh, I think
that- I think that's it. I appreciate very much your
participation, and I think the only thing- the only

1
2 thing I would say is I still wanna see some, you
3 know, from City Hall, if nowhere else, figuring out
4 how to collect more of this money.

5 Again, it's not your problem, but it is all of
6 our problems, and you have people who might have some
7 idea how to address it in some more meaningful way.
8 We're letting a lot of money just slip out and, you
9 know, it's, it's at this particular time, it's, uh,
10 challenging.

11 If you look at \$2 billion here and \$2 billion
12 there, that's a lot of money.

13 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So I'd love to see some more
15 discussion about that. So, alright, maybe we'll pass
16 a law saying you have to meet. Alright, thank you
17 very much.

18 VILDA VERA MAYUGA: Thank you.

19 PANEL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The public is next. We'll be
21 with you in a minute. Okay, so now we're opening the
hearing for public testimony. The public should know
that this is a government proceeding. Decorum shall
be observed. Members of the public shall remain
silent at all times. The witness table is reserved

1
2 for people who wish to testify. No video, no
3 photography. Further, members of the public may not
4 present audio or video recordings as testimony, but
5 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
6 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion.

7 If you wanna speak at today's hearing, please
8 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
9 and you will be recognized. When recognized, you will
10 have 3 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic.

11 Which I think, you know, are all about the
12 individuals who have testified and the topics that
13 have come before us today in government operations.

14 If you have a written statement or additional
15 written testimony you wanna submit, please provide a
16 copy to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also email
17 written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within
18 72 hours of the close of this hearing. No audio and
19 no video.

20 For in-person panelists, please come up to the
21 table once your name has been called. So I will call
right now Shawn Campbell and Taya Mueller. Thank you
very much. Thank you for joining us. You can begin
whenever you wish. Thank you.

1
2 SHAWN CAMPBELL: Good. This is cozy. Good
3 afternoon. Uh, so glad to say Chair Brewer, um, and,
4 uh, those assembled here today. My name is Shawn
5 Campbell. I'm the district manager of Brooklyn
6 Community Board 14. Um, I'm here to offer testimony
7 in support of a budget increase for community boards,
8 baseline budget increase. You've heard this spiel
9 before. Um, I do want to note that this budget
10 increase is part of Community Board 14's district
11 needs statement and budget priorities for FY 2027,
12 2027.

13 Um, and while this is the need I wish to amplify
14 today, I do want to also discuss that the register of
15 budget requests and the agency responses that came
16 back to us for this request, as well as the 20
17 additional capital requests, 27 additional expense
18 requests, were absurd.

19 They were nonsensical. They were meaningless at
20 best and the process by which the community board,
21 uh, its members and members of the public devote
hours and hours into the district needs statements in
the, in the hearings that take place for the budget
priorities— the fact that the public is not getting
meaningful response from the agency is just

1
2 respectful for- to the people of the City of New
3 York.

4 It is a process that is so irreparably broken,
5 um, and it needs serious review. Um, but back to the,
6 the community boards. I've actually, in my testimony,
7 provided our registers to, you know, so you can feel
8 our pain.

9 Um, I also included the letter of request that
10 went to all overlapping community Council- er,
11 Council- City Council members with the, the community
12 district, um, to um, sort of outline the reasons for
13 our need for a baseline budget increase, which as you
14 know, we haven't received one, uh, that is
15 significant in 20 years. During the same period,
16 inflation has beat our budget adjustments, and so we
17 have not kept up.

18 Inarguably, our responsibilities have grown,
19 demands from our communities have grown,
20 technological needs have grown, and we are really up
21 against the top of our budget line. Right now, I, the
district manager, um, I've not gotten a merit raise
since 2020. I haven't provided a merit increase for
my, um, my staff in 2023 and 2024 respectively, and

1
2 we will never be able to do so again with our current
3 budget.

4 Um, we- I'm sorry, I thought my time was up. Um,
5 we talked, we talked about a \$50,000 budget increase
6 the last time we talked about this. Um, that would be
7 0.02% of the city budget. Um, while I know our budget
8 is constrained in the City of New York, I consider it
9 an investment because we're going to need a lot more
10 local community engagement, um, as we work through a
11 new administration that's coming up to speed. And as
12 there's many new programs being in- introduced by,
13 uh, several city agencies across the district, local
14 community input is more important than ever and we're
15 the people who assist in doing that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

17 TAYA MILLER: Good afternoon. Um, it is usually
18 intimidating to follow my cam- my colleague Shawn,
19 but in this case I'm grateful she covered many of the
20 basics which I can skip because our board is largely
21 in agreement.

Uh, my name is Taya Miller. I represent Brooklyn
Community District 2, um, downtown Brooklyn and the
Northeast Corridor. Um, having been able to skip some
of the basics, I'm going to actually drill into 3

1
2 specifics which are detailed in further detail in
3 your- in the attachments.

4 So BKC B2 also recommends a comprehensive
5 assessment of our operating and technical needs and a
6 commensurate increase in our baseline operating
7 budgets. Specifically in 3 categories:
8 infrastructure, public outreach, and staffing.

9 So starting with infrastructure, community
10 boards, as you know, because so many members of this
11 Committee are former board members, we are the most
12 grassroots and accessible level of city government,
13 and the public rightfully expects that our offices
14 should utilize modern digital tools.

15 To the best of our knowledge, there's been no
16 citywide assessment of community board technical
17 needs since Windstream acquired Paytech's municipal
18 contracts in 2011, at least in Brooklyn. We recommend
19 assessment and investment, including basic office and
20 field equipment updates, a survey of phone, internet,
21 and broadcasting infrastructure and gaps, a survey of
staff training and upskilling needs, and baselining
of the fundamental tools including design and
communication software such as newsletters and the

1 news database and research subscriptions which are
2 out of scope of our current OTPS allocation.

3 Public outreach; I do not need to describe to you
4 the uniquely democratic role the community boards
5 play. A recurring theme expressed by our city agency
6 partners across all of this year's borough budget
7 consultations was, quoting, we are already budgeted
8 to address X, Y, Z, but we need your support with
9 direct local outreach.

10 Investing in community boards is an investment in
11 accountable, equitable, and responsive local
12 government. The simplest example: a very modest
13 infusion of \$27,000 would facilitate an annual
14 postcard mailer to our 80,000 households to inform
15 them of the city charter-mandated municipal
16 information, resident assistance, and civic
17 participation opportunities that are available to
18 each of them through their community board and
19 district office.

20 The urgency is timely. This kind of basic
21 outreach is going to be more important in the coming
decade as community board term limits take effect in
just 12 months from now. It, it's going to
significantly shift the burden of institutional

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2 knowledge from board members to district office
3 staff.

4 Speaking of, the final point is staffing. Um, we
5 are the, the 59 community boards are the smallest
6 city agencies and operate with 1/3 of the staff of
7 the 51 City Council offices despite serving a similar
8 size population. Um, that's actually- I, I can't read
9 the data to you, but the, the attachment on page 3 is
10 just an example of our board's growth in
11 responsibilities and, and output. Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So do you have- I remember
13 some years ago you got some sort of OTPS money, not
14 something- not really staffing, it was more OTPS I
15 think some idiot bought a car, which really messed us
16 up.

17 TAYA MEULLER: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Um, it was terrible. So then
19 the question is, do you have, uh, as a group of 59,
20 do you have an amount that you're asking for? Or are
21 you sort of waiting to see what's available or how,
how are you handling- we talking about a staff
person? How, how are we looking at the number?
Because I know the, the borough presidents are also
working with you, my understanding to- yep. To try to

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2 come up up with some numbers, yes, yeah, they are to
3 try to support the community boards in getting more
4 money.

5 TAYA MEULLER: I can share two specific numbers in
6 our request.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That'll be helpful.

8 TAYA MEULLER: Um, one was \$27,000 for an annual
9 mailer, not a car. Okay. Um, and the second was
10 recommending a baseline increase of our staffing
11 budget from 3.5 to 4.5 full-time employees. If I may
12 have 10 seconds on that point.

13 Um, all city agencies take pride in finding
14 creative ways to do more with less. It's part of our,
15 our service to public interest. Um, but with only 3.5
16 FTE, that means that when community boards experience
17 the regular absence or normal attrition of one
18 full-time employee as a loss of 29% of our agency
19 workforce and institutional knowledge. So our
20 specific ask was to go from 3.5 to 4.5.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's very helpful. You, uh,
using this generally across the board what people
would be looking toward across the board?

TAYA MEULLER: I can't speak for all of my
colleagues, but I think 3.5 FTE is common.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. No, I think it's common
3 in terms of what you're asking for. It's basically
4 what you're saying. Okay, alright, thank you both
5 very, very much.

6 Next is- Um, Celestina, Celestina Leon and Robert
7 Canal. I can't read that, Robert. Come on in. I, you
8 do. That's okay. You can, you can introduce yourself.
9 Whomever would like to start. You wanna start? Go
10 ahead.

11 CELESTINA LEON: Chair Brewer, thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify. My name is Celestina Leon,
13 and I serve as the district manager of Brooklyn
14 Community Board 4, representing Bushwick. I'm
15 speaking both from the experience of our own district
16 and from the collective concerns raised by district
17 managers citywide in recent meetings.

18 Those discussions have made clear that many of
19 our challenges are not isolated. They are recurring
20 citywide patterns that this Council can directly
21 address through the budget. And I wanna really hone
in on two things. I know you've heard from colleagues
already, and I echo, uh, many of those concerns, um,
and share, um, you know, advocacy for the, the
proposals that they've presented. Um, the one I wanna

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2 focus on first is funding the community boards to do
3 what the work that the Charter requires. Um, I say
4 this right now, I am the one full-time staff member
5 at the community board. Um, we have a part-time staff
6 member.

7 Um, it is true that when you lose that one
8 person, it is that 29 to 30% of your workforce. Um,
9 and the already complicated job of a district
10 manager, um, becomes even more challenging as we
11 navigate term limits, seeing a turnover of already
12 17, uh, new board members as of last spring and
13 anticipating more.

14 Uh, many boards cannot afford, uh, to pay a
15 living wage to staff. Um, we cannot recruit or retain
16 qualified personnel, and we operate with a minimal
17 headcount even as mandates grow. Um, I wanna skip
18 ahead since we've already focused on this to also
19 talk a little bit about um, strengthening and not
20 sidelining community boards.

21 I know in previous hearings we talked a little
bit about the redundancy in, uh, civic infrastructure
such as the Civic Engagement Commission. Uh, they
exist. I personally see it as something I have to
work with. I can delegate responsibly to them. Um,

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2 but at the end of the day, I think that when we look
3 at how, uh, government may grow and how we look at
4 local democracy, it's important to focus on the
5 infrastructure that we have and making sure it's
6 functional.

7 Uh, as I know that there's been a history, um,
8 that you have working with the community boards. And
9 then the last thing I want to mention, um, I know
10 this has come up in a variety of different ways in
11 other hearings, um, but investing in training and
12 orientation for community board members.

13 Um, there are often, um, inconsistent practices
14 across the boards. Everyone is unique. They should be
15 able to adapt to their communities, but providing
16 support to have models presented to those boards so
17 that way they at least starting with some semblance
18 of a structure. Can help prepare them.

19 And I, I would even dare say that investing- a
20 modest investment in community boards could
21 ultimately save the city money down the line. Thank
22 you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. Go
ahead.

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2 ROBERT CAMACHO: Thank you, thank you, uh, uh,
3 Chair, uh, Brewer. My name is Robert Camacho. I am
4 the Chair of Community Board 4. I've been on the
5 board for about 42 years, 8 years as the Chair. I
6 lived in Bushwick all my life, uh, volunteered all my
7 life in regards to my community. And now with term
8 limits, uh, in effect, I think that, uh, they're
9 removing the pillars of the community that made the
10 community what it is, because new people coming in
11 here and don't have a clue or idea on what it's like
12 and how to run a community board.

13 So we really need education to teach, uh, the new
14 people to cut when they do come in because they come
15 with different ideas and different, uh, things and
16 not including the community as a whole. So I know
17 yourself, uh, as a, a, a, a, of the Chair and of, of,
18 of, of the, a Borough President, uh, echoes and try
19 to protect us as much as we can because we are, are-
20 I think that we really need to fix this budget in
21 regards to what we haven't- haven't increased in a
long time.

19 She's working on her own, and as the Chair, I'm
20 doing a lot of- when she's inside the, the office,
21 I'm out in the field, uh, doing the meetings and

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2 going to visit people, site visits, or seeing things
3 where incidents occur, because I, I need her at the
4 office to check out the email.

5 So we work both hand in hand, and, and really, we
6 really need to address that budget in regards to how
7 are we gonna turn over and get the people to come in.
8 And, and, and the applications and, and, and the
9 people that we're getting, it's, uh, it's
10 mind-boggling in regards to, uh, when they fill their
11 applications out and we interview them in regards to
12 their philosophy and we ask them, do they know the
13 community? Some of them are new to the community.
14 They don't have an idea on how it's like.

15 So I think, uh, when employing, uh, really we
16 need really to focus on the community's needs, uh,
17 more than ever.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, thank you both. Would
19 you agree somewhat in the numbers that you heard
20 earlier about what is needed per community board? I
21 guess there was a number for mailing, and then there
was a number perhaps for more staff. Would that be
within your ballpark?

CELESTINA LEON: Absolutely. I would concur. The
only thing that I would add is it's come up in

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2 conversations before. There have been different
3 formulas, um, and fully recognizing as the city
4 navigates a fiscal crisis, um, the reality of being
5 able to respond to a request for an increased budget
6 at this time, um, one of those formulas took into
7 consideration the Borough President budgets and
8 divided that amongst community boards.

9 Um, there was another suggested formula that took
10 the positions that are available to a community board
11 starting at community assistant, community associate,
12 community coordinator, assistant district manager,
13 and district manager, and looking at what that total
14 budget would be like to see if the board would be
15 able to have those personnel, um, in those positions
16 up fully staffed.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, so talking about
18 literally how many you needed and how you would fund
19 it. Okay, thank you both very, very much. Thank you.
20 So thank you everybody for testifying. There's nobody
21 on Zoom, so this hearing is ending. However, the, the
work goes on.

I wanna thank the staff who's here today. They're
phenomenal, and I hope you who testified and listened
online could see that there's a lot of effort made,

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and, uh, but it's not the end of the discussion.

Thank you very much. [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 May 7, 2026