

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT

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March 15, 2024  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N. De La Rosa  
Oswald Felíz  
James F. Gennaro  
Kevin C. Riley  
Lynn C. Schulman  
Kalman Yeger  
Susan Zhuang

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

Jumaane Williams  
Public Advocate

Laura Kavanagh  
FDNY Commissioner

John Hodgens  
FDNY Chief

Nafisa Noonan  
FDNY Associate Commissioner of Workplace  
Development

LIZETTE CHRISTOFF  
FDNY Deputy Commissioner of Management and  
Budget

Daniel Flynn  
FDNY Chief Fire Marshal

Michael Fields  
EMS Chief of Operations

Michael Reardon  
Fire Protection Inspector

Michael Tracey  
United Fire Officers Association

Helen Northmore

Zachary Iscol  
NYCEM Commissioner

Christina Farrell  
NYCEM First Deputy Commissioner

Christopher Blanco  
NYCEM Chief Financial Officer

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

Nancy Carbone  
Friends of Firefighters

Doug Adams  
Exam 569 Lieutenant Eligibles Group

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome  
3 to the Preliminary Budget hearing on Fire and  
4 Emergency Management. Please at this time, please  
5 silence all electronics, and please do not approach  
6 the dais at any time. If you wish to submit a  
7 testimony online, you may do so at  
8 testimony@council.nyc.gov. If you need any  
9 assistance, please contact a Sergeant at Arms. Chair,  
10 you may begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good morning and  
12 welcome to this Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget  
13 hearing for the Committee on Fire and Emergency  
14 Management. My name is Joann Ariola, and I am the  
15 Chair of Fire and Emergency Management Committee.  
16 Today, we will review the Fire Department and the New  
17 York City Emergency Management's Fiscal 2025 budgets  
18 to understand how they address the needs of all our  
19 New Yorkers. I would like to begin by thanking our  
20 members of the Fire Department for their sacrifices  
21 over the past year and years before that. The front  
22 line responses of EMTs, paramedics, firefighters have  
23 bene on fully display throughout this year, and  
24 because of their direct life-saving actions our city  
25 is a safer place. The Department's EMS members and

2 firefighters are known as New York's best and  
3 bravest. I believe those names have been aptly  
4 given. I would also like to thank the members of the  
5 New York City Emergency Management. They have been  
6 working incredibly long hours to assist in the City's  
7 response and performing a job that does not often get  
8 recognition it deserves. The Fire Department's  
9 Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget costs \$2.2 billion  
10 with 16,984 budgeted positions. The Fiscal 2025 in  
11 the Preliminary Plan is \$226.3 million less than the  
12 Fiscal 2024 Adopted Budget. The Department had three  
13 new needs for Fiscal 2024 totaling \$90.1 million and  
14 federal funding supports the majority of Fiscal 2024  
15 increases, primarily from the State Homeland Security  
16 grant and Urban Areas Security Initiative grant. The  
17 Fire Department's Fiscal 2024 to 2028 Capital  
18 Commitment Plan totals \$1.1 billion and supports 325  
19 distinct projects. The Committee has held oversight  
20 hearings on various topics over the past year about  
21 the City's emergency preparedness and response to  
22 public health emergencies, the failure of the City's  
23 dispatch system. We will hold a hearing regarding  
24 fire and life safety inspections, bolstering the  
25 City's ability to prevent fires before they have a

2 chance to irreversibly change lives. There were  
3 needs in the Preliminary Financial Plan including \$68  
4 million for PS adjustments, including uniformed  
5 overtime and \$20 million in various OTPS adjustments.  
6 The Committee would like to revisit these items and  
7 others as they relate to the budget including  
8 November Plan PEGs and the January Plan's  
9 restorations of the November Plan PEGs and how they  
10 possibly affect services, the increasing amounts of  
11 lithium ion battery fires and what the Department is  
12 doing to mitigate that issue. We would also like to  
13 discuss staffing and headcount, overtime, and the B-  
14 HEARD program. It is the Council's responsibility to  
15 ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent,  
16 and accountable to New Yorkers. Hence, as the Chair  
17 of this Committee, I will continue to push for  
18 accountability and accuracy to ensure that the budget  
19 reflects the needs and interest of the City. It is  
20 essential that the budget that we adopt this year is  
21 transparent, accountable and reflective of the  
22 priorities and interest of the Council and the people  
23 we represent. This hearing is a vital part of the  
24 process, and I expect that FDNY and NYCEM will be  
25 responsive to the questions and concerns of Council

2 Members. I look forward to an active engagement with  
3 the Administration over the next few months to ensure  
4 that Fiscal 2025's Adopted Budget meets the goals the  
5 Council has set out. I would like to thank our  
6 committee staff for their hard work, Financial  
7 Analyst, Tanveer Singh, Unit Head, Aliyah Ali  
8 [sp?], Committee Counsel, Josh Kingsley, our Policy  
9 Analyst, Will Hongach [sp?], and my Chief of Staff,  
10 Phyllis Inzerillo [sp?]. I'd like to thank our  
11 Commissioner Laura Kavanagh and our firefighters,  
12 EMTS, paramedics and the Department's civilian staff  
13 for all the work that you do, and I'm looking forward  
14 to hearing form the Commissioner and the Committee--  
15 but I'd like to, before we swear you in-- I don't  
16 know where our-- we did have- oh, there she is.  
17 We're joined by Council Member Lynn Schulman. And  
18 now Committee Counsel will swear you in.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much,  
20 Chair. Form the Fire Department we'll hear from  
21 Laura Kavanagh, the Commissioner, Chief John Hodgens,  
22 Nafisa Noonan, the Associate Commissioner of  
23 Workplace Department, Lizette Christoff, the Deputy  
24 Commissioner of Management and Budget, Chief Daniel  
25 Flynn, Chief Fire Marshal, and Chief Michael Felix

2 from EMS. Will all of you please just raise your  
3 right hands and just affirm that you will tell the  
4 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
5 your truth in your testimony today and to answer  
6 honestly to Council Member questions. I see you all  
7 have affirmed, so you may go ahead. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you, Chair.  
9 Good morning Chair Ariola, Council Member Schulman,  
10 and all the members of the Fire and Emergency  
11 Management Committee. I want to thank you for the  
12 opportunity today to discuss the Preliminary Budget  
13 for the New York City Fire Department for Fiscal Year  
14 25. 2023 was a successful year for the Fire  
15 Department in many ways. It was our strongest year  
16 ever in terms of outreach and education. The Fire  
17 Safety Education Unit gave fire safety presentations  
18 to 423,000 individuals. This an increase of 180  
19 percent in only two years. We also increased the  
20 number of Fire Safety presentations in New York City  
21 schools by 30 percent. The Mobile CPR Unit trained a  
22 total of 67,000 individuals to perform basic CPR.  
23 This represents 127 percent increase in training  
24 since the previous year. This continues a positive  
25 trend of more robust CPR education, and the 2023



2 figure represents a more than 800 percent increase  
3 since 2021. It was also a strong year for smoke  
4 alarm installations performed by the Department. In  
5 partnership with the American Red Cross, we installed  
6 nearly 22,000 alarms which is a 50 percent increase  
7 from 2022. Through this voluntary program which is  
8 conducted at no cost to the resident, we visited  
9 approximately 7,600 homes, which is an increase of 42  
10 percent. I invite all the Council Members here today  
11 to follow up with the FDNY Community Affairs Unit  
12 after this hearing. We would love to schedule  
13 education events and alarm distributions for your  
14 constituents. FDNY youth programs had their most  
15 successful year to date. In June we launched the  
16 FDNY Fire Cadet program and cadets are now on their  
17 third rotation, receiving a well-rounded introduction  
18 to the Department. We certified 111 young men and  
19 women from our Youth EMS Academy as New York State  
20 Emergency Management Technicians, which brings the  
21 total number of alumni certified through our programs  
22 to 599. Of those who were certified in 2023, 94  
23 percent filed for the Civil Service Exam to become  
24 FDNY EMTs. Youth Academy alumni were hired as EMTs  
25 and as FDNY Cadets, making 2023 the year with the

2 highest number of alumni being hired by the  
3 Department. The FDNY Captain Vernon A. Richard High  
4 School had a graduation rate of 93 percent last year  
5 which is higher than both the borough-wide and  
6 citywide averages. We also continued our successful  
7 FDNY Exploring program. Across eight Explorers  
8 posts, FDNY Explorers completed nearly 600 hours of  
9 community service at 55 different events. We honored  
10 the legacy of departed members in 2023. To cite just  
11 a few examples, we renamed the FDNY headquarters  
12 auditorium after the Department's first Black Fire  
13 Commissioner, Robert Lowery. We hosted a plaque  
14 dedication and street renaming in honor of EMS  
15 Captain Alison Russo. We also released a public  
16 service announcement and messaging to encourage organ  
17 donation in honor of firefighter Billy Moon who  
18 donated his liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys so that  
19 five others may live. The legacies of all three live  
20 on as heroic examples of our FDNY family. Another  
21 highlight of the last year was FDNY members using  
22 innovative technology to carry out significant life-  
23 saving operations. In April after the partial  
24 collapse of a parking garage in the Financial  
25 District, the FDNY Robotics Unit used a robot

2 Dalmatian to survey the wreckage and assist with  
3 searches. In July, Manhattan fire companies were  
4 dispatched to a high-rise building that was under  
5 construction in response to a crane on fire. The  
6 FDNY Robotics Unit used drones to provide eyes in the  
7 sky, coordinating hose streams, and enabling engine  
8 and ladder companies to evacuate tenants, extinguish  
9 the fire and assess structural damage. In December,  
10 after a seven-story building collapsed in the Morris  
11 Heights section of the Bronx, FDNY units arrived on  
12 scene within 90 seconds. After occupants of the  
13 building were moved out of harm's way, the FDNY  
14 Robotics Unit incorporated the use of drones along  
15 with first responders and trained dogs to search for  
16 potential patients in need of aid. Together, they  
17 spent hours combing through a massive pile of debris,  
18 ensuring that no victims were left behind.

19 Ultimately, we were very fortunate to confirm that  
20 despite the magnitude of the collapse, there were no  
21 fatalities. Of course, time-tested technology  
22 continues to be instrumental to our life-saving  
23 mission as well. I took a great deal of pride a few  
24 weeks ago when members of Ladder 28, squad 41 and  
25 Rescue 3 performed three daring rope rescues at a

2 fire in Harlem. Among the courageous individuals who  
3 went over the side of the building to rescue  
4 individuals hanging from windows was Jason Lopez, a  
5 probationary firefighter who has less than a year of  
6 service. He is a true example of the difference that  
7 each member of the FDNY can make, from the most  
8 experienced member of a company to the pro-b who only  
9 has a few months in the firehouse. The fire in  
10 Harlem was caused by a lithium-ion battery for an e-  
11 bike. 2023 was a challenging year for the Fire  
12 Department with regard to the frequency of lithium-  
13 ion battery fires. The number of fires caused by  
14 batteries for micro-mobility devices such as e-bikes  
15 and e-scooters increased to 268 in 2023. As we've  
16 previously described to the Council, these fires are  
17 tremendously destructive. 150 people were injured in  
18 lithium-ion battery fire, and 18 people were killed.  
19 It's a problem that is plaguing the City. Though not  
20 prevalent on Staten Island, these fires occur in  
21 significant numbers across the remaining four  
22 boroughs. The Council has been a great partner as we  
23 work to combat this crisis. Last year, we passed a  
24 package of bills aimed at creating rules and  
25 safeguards for e-bike use in the City. Together, we

2 prohibited the sale and rental of uncertified devices  
3 and restricted the assembly and reconditioning of the  
4 second-use batteries. We developed a comprehensive  
5 public education campaign and then worked for their  
6 fellow agencies such as the Department of Consumer  
7 and Workforce Protection and the Department of  
8 Transportation to perform outreach to e-bike  
9 retailers and consumers, including online retailers.  
10 Our partnership has continue this year with the  
11 Council recently passing legislation that granted the  
12 Fire Department cross-enforcement ability enhancing  
13 the penalties for repeat offenders and requiring  
14 stores that sell e-bike, e-scooters, and other  
15 personal mobility devices to post safety materials  
16 and information guides. We are grateful for the  
17 attention paid to the issue by this committee, and in  
18 particular to Chair Ariola for your ongoing advocacy.  
19 Turning the budget, the Department's Fiscal Year 25  
20 budget is \$2.53 billion. This includes \$2.28 billion  
21 in personnel services and \$241 million in OTPS. Our  
22 Fiscal Year 25 budgeted fulltime headcount is 16,984.  
23 Our Fiscal Year 25 Capital Budget is \$216 million.  
24 Our ten-year Capital Budget from FY 24 to FY 33 is  
25 \$1.9 billion. We are fortunate to have two of our

2 PEGs, the program to eliminate the gap, from November  
3 reversed in January by the Mayor. Fifth Firefighter  
4 staffing on 20 engines was restored, as was the LSS  
5 long-term disability termination PEG. In the Mayor's  
6 Preliminary Budget, the Department received funding  
7 in FY24 to replace the five EMS units that were  
8 previously being operated by Beth Israel Hospital.  
9 Beth Israel has stopped running those units, and a  
10 result of this funding, residents of the area served  
11 by those units will not experience any decrease in  
12 service. We also received new needs funding to cover  
13 PS deficits for EMS and civilian members of the  
14 Department as well as OTPS funding to cover  
15 structural deficits, primarily in the area of auto  
16 parts for FDNYC services. This will enable the  
17 Department to continue making necessary purchases to  
18 keep trucks, ambulances, and other FDNY apparatus on  
19 the road. With the support of Mayor Adams and the  
20 City Council, we look forward to another strong year  
21 ahead. At this time, I would be happy to take your  
22 questions.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,  
24 Commissioner. We're going to go a bit out of order

2 right now. I'd like to ask our Public Advocate to  
3 make his opening statement. Thank you.

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very  
5 much, Madam Chair. As mentioned, my name's Jumaane  
6 Williams and I'm Public Advocate, City of New York.  
7 Thank you, Chair Ariola and member of the Committee  
8 on Fire and Emergency Management for holding this  
9 hearing and allowing me to share a statement. Thank  
10 you, Commissioner and team, for being here. Fire  
11 safety is a top concern for New Yorkers. The Prelim  
12 Mayor's Management Report state that there have been  
13 102 civilian fire fatalities this fiscal year which  
14 means a civilian death once every three days, very  
15 sharp increase from the last two fiscal years with 64  
16 civilian fatalities in Fiscal Year 21. Fire safety  
17 is a public safety concern. I appreciate the Mayor  
18 has acknowledged it during the Prelim for Fiscal Year  
19 2025 by exempting the FDNY from additional PEGs. Of  
20 course, there still needs to be stem in the trend of  
21 fire deaths. Under the Prelim Budget for Fiscal Year  
22 2025, the Mayor's Office budget added a fifth  
23 firefighter to 20 companies. Very much support the  
24 increase in the fifth firefighter and applaud the  
25 Adams Administration for supporting fire safety.

2 However, this means that only about 10 percent of  
3 engine companies will have five firefighters, or 20  
4 out of 193 engine companies, and just restored an  
5 extremely recent December 2023 cut. It's less of a  
6 positive change and more putting out a fire that  
7 you've started yourself, which in and of itself would  
8 be a return to the broken status quo. I agree and  
9 stand in support of the Uniformed Firefighter  
10 Association calls for a fifth firefighters. Part of  
11 the growth in civilian deaths from fires can be  
12 contributed to lithium-ion batteries. Lithium-ion  
13 batteries are difficult to contain and the fire can  
14 spread very quickly, putting civilians and  
15 firefighters in danger. Fire Commissioner Kavanagh  
16 announced that lithium-ion batteries are now a  
17 leading cause of fires. Everyone agrees and  
18 acknowledges how lithium-ion fire batteries are a  
19 significant challenges for New Yorkers, and  
20 thankfully, this council is passing legislation such  
21 as restricting reconditioned batteries. We, of  
22 course, must continue to look ahead. The micro-  
23 mobility devices usage of lithium-ion batteries will  
24 only become more common place. One of the easiest  
25 ways to prevent lithium-ion battery fires at the



2 source is using a fire retardant storage case for  
3 storing lithium-ion batteries at home or in the  
4 office. They're relatively inexpensive, protect  
5 batteries during charging, the process when batteries  
6 are most vulnerable to overheating. Fire retardant  
7 bags can cost as little as \$20. This relatively  
8 affordable investment will pay a huge dividend in  
9 decreasing the number of fires as well as saving  
10 lives and infrastructure. The Office of Public  
11 Advocate is recommending that the Administration  
12 immediately puts some money into purchasing these for  
13 free delivery. Our research shows that about just  
14 for \$1.3 million you can get all 65,000 delivery  
15 workers a bag. For half a million you can get about  
16 20,000. With the City's bulk purchasing power, we  
17 can probably get 65,000 just for 500, 65,000 bags for  
18 just about \$500,000. That would be a great way to  
19 immediately try our best. This can be similar who  
20 what we did to giving out smoke detectors ore free  
21 battery distribution programs. Furthermore, delivery  
22 aps can mandate that drives using and own certain  
23 equipment such as possessing a fire retardant storage  
24 bag in order to be able to make deliveries or provide  
25 them themselves. Often in government we are forced to

2 make hard decisions about whether the impact of the  
3 policy is worth the price tag. Here, though, we have  
4 a simple cost-effective solution that will ultimately  
5 save money, and much more importantly, save lives.  
6 This does not solve the issue fully or forever, but  
7 it can have a real and immediate impact at a moment  
8 when this destruction is constantly on our streets  
9 and our screens. We urge the Administration to fund  
10 this purchase and distribution without delay. In the  
11 long-term, we must redesign New York City's  
12 infrastructure to accommodate electric micro-mobility  
13 devices. Devices help to transport New Yorkers who  
14 otherwise may use a car or use a gas-powered moped,  
15 as well as assist the disabled community. We must  
16 encourage wide-scale adoption to addressing  
17 outstanding safety concerns. It is now common in  
18 Southeast Asian countries to see battery swap  
19 stations where e-bike owners can pay a monthly  
20 subscription to swap a dead battery for a fully-  
21 charged battery so they do not have to charge the  
22 device at home. The City should consider creating a  
23 franchise agreement for battery swap system with  
24 singular battery standard as we have similar  
25 infrastructure in the Citi Bike system. Delivery

2 apps also have responsibility for supporting  
3 infrastructure for its delivery drivers. Companies  
4 offering 15-minute delivery local service like Getir  
5 already provide charging stations to their drivers.  
6 The ownership and delivery companies to set up  
7 charging stations for their drivers. And finally New  
8 York City Council Committee on Fire and Emergency  
9 Management has been doing an excellent job responding  
10 to the lithium-ion battery safety concerns while  
11 comprehensive legislation. Hopefully the committee  
12 continues to make that legislation be enforced by  
13 holding oversight hearings to determine if it's being  
14 put into place. Thank you so much, Chair, and thank  
15 you so much, Commissioner. I know it's a tough job  
16 for the Department as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much to  
18 our Public Advocate. I'd also like to mention that  
19 we've been joined by Council Member Carmen De La  
20 Rosa. Since we're on the topic of e-bikes, we'll  
21 start with e-bikes. How's that sound, okay? So, has  
22 the Fire Department identified any trends in where e-  
23 bike fires are occurring that could inform proactive  
24 inspections or outreach?

2 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, we have-- and  
3 I'm going to have our Chief Fire Marshal, Chief Flynn  
4 speak specifically to the data, but do want to say  
5 one thing that's so important to this group which is  
6 we've seen that our enforcement supported by the  
7 Council is working. We're not seeing as many or  
8 actually recently of these fires in commercial  
9 locations. We're seeing them all in residential  
10 locations, which is the one place we can't inspect,  
11 right, and so that really reinforces some of the  
12 outside-of-the-box thinking that the Public Advocate  
13 mentioned and education and outreach events. So,  
14 with that, I will hand over to Chief Flynn to talk  
15 about exactly where we're seeing these fires still in  
16 the city.

17 CHIEF FLYNN: Good morning, and thank you  
18 for having us and thank you for your excellent  
19 question, Public Advocate. So, just for a breakdown,  
20 in 2023, borough break-down, we had 74 fires from  
21 lithium-ion batteries in the Bronx, 97 in Brooklyn,  
22 47 in Manhattan, 48 in Queens and two in Staten  
23 Island. So, with the exception of the borough of  
24 Staten Island, they've been pretty well-distributed  
25 throughout our city. Our Hazmat Units have tested

2 several products to try to alleviate this problem.  
3 There are some promising products out there on the  
4 market. Some that we've tested have failed. So,  
5 it's important to have that feedback and actually  
6 real world testing on these products. We've partners  
7 in-- our federal partners at the CPSC [sic] with UL  
8 Solutions to try to figure out products that would be  
9 suitable for our city and protect the residents that  
10 already have these products. We've been in  
11 discussion with the delivery platforms to try to  
12 increase safety and increase education for their  
13 workers to make sure that they are safe and they  
14 understand that these products that they use do pose  
15 some type of danger. As you mentioned, last year,  
16 calendar year 23, we had 106 fire fatalities in the  
17 City. That's a very high number and it's very  
18 alarming to us. In 2020 we had zero fire deaths  
19 related to lithium-ion batteries, zero. Last year we  
20 had 18. Scary situations developing quickly. I hope  
21 at some point we plateau and we don't continue to  
22 increase. Our numbers have exponentially increased  
23 year over year since 2020. It's a problem that we're  
24 attacking from all angles. We've partnered with our  
25 sister city agencies that we-- DCWP. We go out on a

2 daily basis. We have established a taskforce where  
3 we go out and we inspect all of these locations that  
4 are selling these batteries to educate, as well  
5 conduct enforcement on locations that are-- that we  
6 see egregious violations. It is not our intention to  
7 hurt small business. We want to educate and make  
8 sure that these businesses are selling safe products  
9 and are engaged in safe practices. So, for example,  
10 last year we conducted 467 inspections specific to  
11 lithium-ion batteries. We issued 375 FDNY summonses,  
12 816 violation categories were on those summonses, 229  
13 violation orders, 46 criminal summonses, 33  
14 referrals, and 16 vacate orders. We've even stepped  
15 up our efforts this year, so far conducting 143 total  
16 inspections with 147 summonses, 174 violation  
17 categories on those summonses, 46 violation orders  
18 five criminal summonses, 17 referrals, and four  
19 vacate orders. We do that in conjunction with our  
20 partners in DCWP, NYPD, DOB. So this is a full  
21 effort from all agencies within the City. We want to  
22 thank them for their efforts and their assistance.  
23 We thank the Council for the measures that they've  
24 enacted. I think they will make a difference. Local  
25 Law 39 I think is an excellent step in the right

2 direction. I've traveled with the Commissioner over  
3 the last few months to D.C. several times to support  
4 federal legislation. That was proposed by Council  
5 Member Torres, 1797, to put that to a vote and  
6 establish some type of a national standard. We can  
7 only limit so much here in the City. We can-- it's  
8 difficult to limit products that are coming into the  
9 city, if they are legal to be sold right across our  
10 border. So, the Commissioner, I believe, traveled to  
11 Albany recently to support state legislation as well  
12 to curb the tide of these dangerous devices. So, we  
13 are tackling this from all angles, and we appreciate  
14 the support of the Council on this issue.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for that  
16 comprehensive response, and I want to acknowledge  
17 Council Member Zhuang on Zoom. Okay, in keeping with  
18 e-bike-- and you answered a lot of questions that we  
19 have here. So I really do appreciate that. So just,  
20 what type of products have the FDNY been testing  
21 regarding bikes and batteries?

22 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, we hold  
23 forums at Randall's Island which is our training  
24 academy, and we've tested, as the chief mentioned, a  
25 number of products from bags to crates to different

2 types of containers that would hope to contain one of  
3 these if they caught on fire in addition to some  
4 suppression materials. We-- as he said, we have a  
5 couple of things that are promising, but have not  
6 gone-- haven't really proven to be fully fire safe.  
7 We have a number of things that sadly people have  
8 brought to us and have failed entirely. But we do  
9 have both the support of CPSC, but also some funding  
10 from the Department of Homeland security to continue  
11 to test these devices, because we do believe  
12 especially when it comes to the delivery apps, it's  
13 one of the things that we want to make sure is  
14 required that they have access to. I believe we will  
15 be having a number of these forums at the Academy in  
16 the future. We'd be happy to invite you guys so you  
17 can see what sorts of products are coming forward,  
18 what works and what doesn't, and then I also want to  
19 mention that we announced a couple of weeks ago with  
20 the Mayor's Office and the Department of  
21 Transportation the outdoor charging stations which  
22 does mimic what we see successfully in other  
23 countries, and we are very, very hopeful about that.  
24 You know, really for us getting these outside is  
25 really 90 percent of the battle, right? They're



2 really deadly when they're in an apartment, and I  
3 want to remind people that even when they aren't the  
4 cause of the fire, they're deadly. Think about being  
5 a firefighter and going down a hallway and hearing  
6 one of these erupt behind you, effectively trapping  
7 you in the apartment. So, we really want to see a  
8 world in which we can get these outside of people's  
9 apartments, and so this pilot we think is very, very  
10 promising for doing that. We'll continue to test out  
11 more of both those outdoor stations, and to really  
12 support that pilot, but also more of these bags and  
13 other things that once they're actually are proven to  
14 work could be given out to the delivery workers or  
15 required of the delivery companies.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you,  
17 Commissioner. So, the Council recently enacted  
18 legislation authorizing FDNY to conduct enforcement  
19 of Local Law which prohibits the sale, rental or  
20 leasing of e-bikes, scooters, and batteries that do  
21 not have certified, accredited batteries from a  
22 laboratory. How does the FDNY intend to conduct  
23 these increased inspections relating to this new  
24 grant of authority? Does the FDNY enforce the sale,  
25 and how with online realtors-- I'm sorry-- yes,

2 realtors, and does FDNY intend to enforce the  
3 certification requirements on establishments that  
4 rent and lease e-bikes?

5 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, so we work  
6 with our partner agency, DCWP to consistently  
7 reviewing what's sold online, talking to the  
8 companies about taking off the uncertified products.  
9 I think as many of you have heard, we've also  
10 recently encountered people selling fake UL stickers  
11 on these sites, and we've tried to really  
12 aggressively approach that. I'll ask Chief Flynn to  
13 also talk about what they're doing on the enforcement  
14 side, especially with the passage of that law and the  
15 expansion of that authority to us, which we  
16 appreciate very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. And then  
18 I want to talk about contaminants from those fires,  
19 because this is kind of new territory for us all.  
20 So, we know that they-- e-bikes and their batteries  
21 product noxious fumes and chemical byproducts that  
22 can contaminate firefighters bunker gear and place  
23 firefighters at increased risk of illness. What  
24 protocols does the FDNY have in place to ensure  
25 firefighters are protected from the chemicals created

2 during the e-bike fires, and how frequently are  
3 firefighters' bunker gear cleaned and are there  
4 special protocols for the decontamination following  
5 an operation related to e-bike fires?

6 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, we are very  
7 concerned about this as well, and I think it's worth  
8 saying that in addition to the e-bikes, a lot of what  
9 burns in a fire in 2024 is more toxic than it used to  
10 be, and so we have concerns for our members going to  
11 these fire with e-bikes, and we do both encourage  
12 making sure the people are fully encapsulated before  
13 they into these fires, that they're donning and  
14 doffing their bunker gear correctly, and that they  
15 are deconning and washing their gear more often. We  
16 are also working with our national partners to make  
17 sure we actually study this. So, trying to study the  
18 health of our firefighters, study what's on the gear  
19 when they come out of fire like this? The marshals  
20 are actually pulling some of the information from the  
21 Medical Examiner for victims of e-bike fires to see  
22 what is actually in their system afterwards to come  
23 at a number of ways of figuring out whether or not  
24 these additional chemicals do actually make their way

2 into those who are at the fire, especially the  
3 members.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, it's very  
5 important. I just want to mention that we have  
6 Council Members Gennaro and Felíz on Zoom as well.  
7 And I think I cut you off before. I don't know if  
8 you were going to chime in on the law that was  
9 recently enacted, you know, for the--

10 CHIEF FLYNN: [interposing] That's the  
11 dual enforcement for the--

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yes, I  
13 wasn't sure that if I had cut you off with it before  
14 we went into contamination.

15 CHIEF FLYNN: Yeah, we really appreciate--  
16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] I'm  
18 sorry if I did.

19 CHIEF FLYNN: I'm sorry. We appreciate  
20 enacting that dual enforcement power for us. I think  
21 it'll be helpful, but I don't want to take away from  
22 the efforts that DCWP has been conducting since  
23 September when that law was able to be enforced.  
24 They have been out there with us every day conducting  
25 enforcement. I believe we visited every location

2 that we are aware of that are selling these devices.  
3 The dual enforcement helps, but it's not to take away  
4 from the efforts that DCWP has been conducting thus  
5 far. It would just allow us to also write violations  
6 related the sale of non-certified batteries within  
7 the City.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: good. I think we're  
9 on the right track. We're on the right track. We're  
10 working together and listening to all of the, you  
11 know, outside of the box kind of ideas that they--  
12 that we have all put together, including the Public  
13 Advocate's ideas which I'd love to share with you  
14 later, because I thought they were very interesting  
15 and I think be very helpful. Thank you. I'm going  
16 to switch to budget now. The November Plan  
17 eliminated 190 uniformed positions, and with the  
18 savings incurred after this reduction would be  
19 approximately \$14.3 million in 2024, increasing to  
20 \$30.8 million, but then that was reversed. So, can  
21 you provide a description of how this reversal of the  
22 PEGs that you were going to have to kind of work  
23 around how it would they have increased your budget,  
24 and what services will remain in place and others  
25 that may not?

2 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Absolutely. I  
3 mean, as you can imagine, we were very appreciative  
4 of the Mayor with his commitment to public safety  
5 reversing those cuts for us. those cuts were two  
6 things, the fifth firefighter, as was mentioned-- and  
7 you know, that's especially important given the  
8 environment that we're in right now that we were just  
9 talking about with the lithium-ion battery crisis,  
10 you know, really presenting more dangerous fires than  
11 ever. We were very grateful to have that additional  
12 staffing back. And the other Administration positions  
13 were not front line positions, but they were long  
14 term light-duty members we are able to make sure that  
15 they are not separated from service. So we are very  
16 grateful that both of those cuts were restored.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We were able to  
18 replace the 20 engine companies that had the fifth  
19 firefighter.

20 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, that was  
22 wonderful. So has the demand for the fifth  
23 firefighter gone down or gone up since the lithium-  
24 ion batteries have caused so many additional fires in  
25 our city?

2 CHIEF HODGENS: Good morning Chair Ariola  
3 and all Council Members. Well, you know, we respond  
4 to fires-- when we get the 911 call, we respond the  
5 same for every type of fire. We don't necessarily  
6 it's a lithium-ion battery fire. The demand for the  
7 fifth firefighter has not increased due to this  
8 fires. Certain situations trigger us putting the  
9 fifth firefighter on the apparatus, and mainly  
10 weather-related events, a large amount of snow could  
11 trigger us to use the fifth firefighter, and that's  
12 for practical reasons, where stretching a hose line  
13 becomes more difficult because of the snow and it's  
14 more taxing. And we need more-- it's also probably a  
15 delay in other units getting on the scene. So, we  
16 need the extra hands, but under normal conditions  
17 have been operating. When this happened in 1990  
18 through collective bargaining where they lost the  
19 fifth firefighter, we have changed our operating  
20 procedure way back then. We continue to operate  
21 under that same-- those same procedures and it's been  
22 effective.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much  
24 Chief Hodgins. I would like now to turn to our  
25 committee members. Council Member Schulman?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you,  
3 Chair, and thank you, Commissioner and Fire  
4 Department for all the wonderful work that you do.  
5 you actually-- there was an e-bike shop in my  
6 district a few blocks actually from where I live the  
7 you closed down because they were selling illegal  
8 batteries and everything else and there were other  
9 issues there. So, much appreciated. So my question  
10 is, the Department has uniformed personnel complete  
11 risk-based and mandatory inspections based on fire  
12 code and fire operation requirement? The number of  
13 risk-based inspections by uniformed personnel has  
14 decreased in the first four months of Fiscal 2024,  
15 what do you attribute this decline to?

16 CHIEF HODGENS: There's been many  
17 different things going on in the City that could  
18 potentially contribute to that. Typically, that  
19 number will fluctuate throughout the year, but  
20 there's been-- you know, typically in say the borough  
21 of Manhattan, each engine company is responding to  
22 between 5-7,000 responses a year. With that work  
23 load, there's not a lot of time in between to do  
24 inspections, because that-- we do it on duty. So I  
25 think that has contributed somewhat to, you know, the



2 small decrease. But whenever we have the  
3 opportunity, we're out there, we're doing the  
4 inspections. There really has been no policy or  
5 anything that would create the deficit, but we're  
6 always monitoring and making sure that, you know,  
7 we're keeping track of everything closely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: do you need  
9 more inspectors?

10 CHIEF HODGENS: in this case, it's the  
11 fire companies that do these inspection.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

13 CHIEF HODGENS: So, we would-- that  
14 really wouldn't apply.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: What is the  
16 average length of time between the request for an  
17 inspection and when the business owner receives the  
18 certificate of occupancy?

19 CHIEF HODGENS: SO, that refers to a fire  
20 prevention issue, meaning a business wants to open  
21 up. They submit plans to Fire Prevention and plan  
22 review is examined, and if they pass, the ultimate  
23 result is they get an inspection. IN 2022, the wait  
24 time was between 13 and 16 weeks, but we've made some

2 great efficiency improvements, and at this time, the  
3 wait time is three to four weeks.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. Can--  
5 this is just a general question. Can artificial  
6 intelligence help with any of the operations around  
7 the Fire Department? Because obviously it's a new  
8 arena, and you know, there's a lot of talk about it.

9 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, absolutely.  
10 You might see recently some articles about a project  
11 we have with NYU that's based on artificial  
12 intelligence where we're going to be using what they  
13 call a digital twin that we make along with NYU to  
14 study the impacts of traffic, which we already know  
15 is having a huge impact on our response times. and  
16 so to understand what sorts of changes we can make,  
17 that would help decrease that and even just  
18 understand better what is actually happening with  
19 traffic and how we can think outside of the box in  
20 order to deal with that increase in traffic so that  
21 the issue isn't how to get from where we are to where  
22 the patient is with too many cars in between for us  
23 to go even with lights and areas. We're also looking  
24 at a number of other areas where it could be helpful.  
25 So I'm talking to DHS, talking to the lab here that

2 DHS has about the different uses of AI, especially  
3 when it comes to ensuring, you know, greater  
4 situational awareness which is really always what  
5 we're trying to give our members with Fire and EMS  
6 when they're going into a situation in the middle of  
7 the night with mere minutes or seconds to respond to  
8 try and understand how AI can give them more  
9 information about what they're responding to. So, we  
10 think it's an exciting space, potentially will save  
11 lives and we're going to keep looking at it.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I'd love to hear  
13 the progress of that. So, two things I want to  
14 mention. One is if there's anything that you think  
15 the Council can do, especially -- so I sit on the  
16 Zoning and Franchise Committee where when we have new  
17 developments, if we need to ask them to put a  
18 separate place for e-bike storage or anything like  
19 that, we should talk about that and see what we can  
20 do, especially now with the City of Yes. Have you  
21 been in conversations around that to add this to that  
22 equation?

23 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, we've bene  
24 asked-- we've asked and it's really been granted to  
25 be included in those conversations earlier for two

2 reasons. One, and Hudson Yards is a good example, is  
3 understanding what growth is going to occur in that  
4 area may precipitate the inclusion of an EMS station  
5 or firehouse in that new neighborhood.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay

7 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: As well as making  
8 sure that the infrastructure that we're talking about  
9 with e-bikes, especially the outdoor charging  
10 stations can be part of the plan. So we've been  
11 included in those decisions, and those conversations  
12 earlier, and we're hoping that makes a difference as  
13 you were saying to the city of the future.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, great.

15 And so as Chair of the Health Committee-- so two  
16 things. One is, as you know, the Mayor launched  
17 Healthy NYC, we-- the Council codified it, went  
18 through legislation that I introduced. We're going  
19 to be talking to stakeholders, the Commissioner and  
20 I, so we want to make sure that EMS is part of that  
21 equation and the Fire Department is part of that  
22 equation. That's one. The second is that the Office  
23 of OCME comes under me, so if there's anything in  
24 terms of even in legislation or any kind of resources  
25 that you need around that in terms of the

2 contaminants that you're looking at, in terms of the  
3 victims, please let us know.

4 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We appreciate  
5 that very much. We'll send you a briefing what we're  
6 doing with OCME and the contaminants so you can  
7 understand how they're being helpful, and then of  
8 course, I've also spoken to Commissioner Vasani, and I  
9 know you know this, but it's worth emphasizing that,  
10 you know, for so many New Yorkers if they do not have  
11 access to primary healthcare, EMS becomes their  
12 primary care. And while we are always happy to  
13 respond, that's usually not the best care, but also  
14 it explains the increasing response times for EMS  
15 because call volume is really skyrocketing,  
16 especially with those non-urgent calls for people who  
17 need care and don't have any other place to get it,  
18 and so we would love to work with you on how to make  
19 sure those New Yorkers have better access to better,  
20 more appropriate care.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Absolutely.  
22 Much appreciated. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Council  
24 Member Schulman. You made mention of the Fire  
25 Prevention Inspectors. When was the last time there

2 was a Fire Prevention Inspector class? [inaudible]  
3 there were hires.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: I  
5 actually don't have the specific month of the last  
6 Fire Protection Inspector class, but I will say that  
7 we are-- we have been hiring up in that title, so  
8 we're currently at budgeted headcount. It is one of  
9 the titles that has been exempt from the hiring  
10 freeze restrictions.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Great, and what is  
12 the budgeted headcount?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: For Fire  
14 Protection Inspector and other positions in that  
15 title series, the budgeted headcount is 377.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Great, thank you.  
17 Council Member De La Rosa?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: thank you,  
19 Chair, and welcome. Thank you for being here today.  
20 I have a question. So I chair the Civil Service and  
21 Labor Committee, and one of the issues that continues  
22 to come in those conversations is around the EMS and  
23 the paramedics, and obviously dissatisfaction with  
24 the raises have that been negotiated. Our concern is  
25 really retention of this critical service and then

2 response time impacts if we're not able to retain.  
3 And so I wanted to ask around-- what are the plans  
4 around those contentious discussion at the moment,  
5 and what can we do to help in that conversation?

6 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah. I mean, I  
7 appreciate your advocacy always. I think you and me  
8 and the Mayor all agree that EMS should be paid more.  
9 I think that's been a pretty consistent message of  
10 mine and I fought for that in all of our past  
11 contract negotiations, but we continue to see them  
12 being paid less than any of us would want to see.  
13 So, you know, I know the mayor mentioned this week  
14 his commitment to that issue. We remain committed to  
15 it. We were hoping we can look at what's happening  
16 with collective bargaining and figure out what the  
17 next steps are. Certainly, retention concerns us as  
18 well. I will just say one thing, you know, on behalf  
19 of our members. The increase in response time is  
20 really related to external factors that are not  
21 controlled by EMS. You know, our members are  
22 responding with the same dedication and swiftness  
23 they always have, but between traffic and the  
24 increased call volume to 911 and the closure of  
25 hospitals, that is really what's impacting EMS

2 response time, and those things are outside of our  
3 control. So, certainly just want to mention that on  
4 behalf of our members who, you know, are graciously  
5 dealing with all of that and continuing to do even  
6 more work which is really exhausting, but definitely  
7 agree that we want to see them paid more in the  
8 future.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Before we go on, I  
10 would like to just welcome students from 721M which  
11 is in Council Member Bottcher's Council District. So  
12 in case you didn't know, you're at the Fire and  
13 Emergency Management budget hearing, and this is  
14 where we talk about how much the agencies of the Fire  
15 Department and NYCEM, New York City Emergency  
16 Management, how much money they need to keep going  
17 and the programs that they have and what programs are  
18 working and what programs aren't, and where we can  
19 change it, and where we as Council Members and  
20 members of the City government get together to have  
21 good, honest, conversation about it, and then after  
22 it's over we get to work on seeing how we can make it  
23 happen. So thank you for having an interest. This  
24 is Civics Week in school. So, just thank you for  
25 being here and if you have a question, you can just



2 let Naslie [sic] know, and she can run it down to us.  
3 Thank you. I'd like to just continue in the vein of  
4 EMS. So, according to data provided by the FDNY to  
5 Council in December of 2023, 40 percent of the City's  
6 ambulances were out of service, meaning that nearly  
7 300 ambulances were not available to provide New  
8 Yorkers with vital emergency care. This is  
9 particularly notable as emergency response times for  
10 the Department continue to increase. For what reason  
11 would an ambulance be out of service, and what terms  
12 of-- in terms of out-of-service ambulances, what is  
13 the breakdown of those units? And in terms of basic  
14 life support, versus advance life support, ALS?

15 CHIEF FIELDS: so, in respects to  
16 ambulances being out of Service there could be  
17 numerous reasons. Most of them are mechanical. When  
18 you have a vehicle that runs for a 24-hour period,  
19 365 days a year, you can definitely imagine that  
20 there will be wear and tear. We do have a spare  
21 fleet in which we inhabit. After the COVID-- after--  
22 during and after COVID, the amount of parts that you  
23 can receive in respects to mechanics, spare parts  
24 that they would need to fix those vehicle there were  
25 numerous delays in respect to that. So, that would

2 account for some of the units being off-service. As  
3 far as 40 percent, I'm not quite sure that we were at  
4 40 percent of service rate any given time. We ran our  
5 tour counts [sic] for the most part. Any time that  
6 we didn't, it was not because of vehicles being off-  
7 service. It may be more of personnel sick leave.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: When they're out of  
9 service, was it ever because it was due to the  
10 Department's inability to meet the established  
11 staffing levels at any given point for paramedics and  
12 EMTs?

13 CHIEF FIELDS: In respects to paramedics  
14 and EMT headcounts, we are above. Headcount is--  
15 we're above headcounts with paramedics and EMTs. So  
16 that was not the issue.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That includes with  
18 sick leave, right?

19 CHIEF FIELDS: Give me the whole  
20 question.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What is the sick  
22 leave rate, and when we know that you're above in  
23 headcount, but is there a head-- you know, a sick  
24 leave rate that would significantly reduce that

2 headcount and put you in a position to not be able to  
3 run your ambulances?

4 CHIEF FIELDS: We check sick leave or  
5 medical leave rate weekly. Doctor Vasan provides  
6 those numbers. Last rate that we checked, we were at  
7 10 percent in respects to sick leave, and please,  
8 everyone understand that these are paramedics and  
9 EMTs that are dealing with sick patients, sick  
10 residents, so therefore they are coming in contact  
11 with communicable diseases, so therefore they are on  
12 occasion are sick.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: 100 percent  
14 understandable, and I'm surprised that it's at 10  
15 percent considering what they do and see and who they  
16 take care of on a daily basis. So, in what title  
17 roles is here the greatest need for increased  
18 headcount to ensure more ambulances are operational?

19 CHIEF FIELDS: Officers, our front line  
20 officers which is lieutenants.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How does the FDNY  
22 account for difficulties in maintaining adequate EMS  
23 headcount?

24 CHIEF FIELDS: Right now, our headcount  
25 is adequate.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right.

3 CHIEF FIELDS: We are in preparation for  
4 future promotional examinations within the Fire  
5 Department. We have an increase in the EMT headcount  
6 right now. We also have an increase in the paramedic  
7 headcount, because we haven't been able to promote  
8 lieutenants due to the-- we don't have a DCAS [sic]  
9 examination right now. So, in respects to headcounts  
10 for the front line officers other than lieutenants,  
11 we're good. We're sustaining.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Alright, good. And  
13 the mayor's announcement for pay parity, a  
14 possibility of it, couldn't hurt either, right?

15 CHIEF FIELDS: It shall not hurt.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: It won't hurt from  
17 when the next test is given. So, let's put that out  
18 into the universe for reality. I want to talk about  
19 mental health. I'm sorry-- oh you want to run a list  
20 for-- to ask a question? Go right ahead. Go right  
21 ahead.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: sorry, thank  
23 you. I wasn't trying to interrupt, but thank you so  
24 much, Madam Chair.

25 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Mi casa, su casa.

2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Just really  
3 quick I wanted to make clear, because I know Andrew  
4 Adensbor [sic] from the Uniformed Fires Association  
5 mentioned the fifth firefighter need. So are we  
6 saying that we don't need additional engines to have  
7 firefighters that don't have it now, a fifth  
8 firefighter? I just want to be clear.

9 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I think we're  
10 saying we're very grateful to have it on the 20.  
11 That is part of collective bargaining, but the Mayor  
12 generously gave that back to us in the PEG, and we  
13 also do apply the fifth firefighter to all engines in  
14 a number of cases. So, we are able at this point to  
15 use it when we need it most under the Mayor's  
16 guidance. Because it's a collective bargaining  
17 issue, we will be bringing it up in collective  
18 bargaining to see if there's additional flexibility  
19 that could be given to the Department in the future  
20 that doesn't limit it just to those 20 or to certain  
21 emergency situations.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay. So I if  
23 I could use my words, not yours, the fifth  
24 firefighter would absolutely be helpful if it can be  
25 done? Is that a good synopsis in my words?

2 CHIEF HODGENS: yes, absolutely. More  
3 hands is always better. You know, but as the  
4 Commissioner mentioned, it's not up to the Fire  
5 Department. It's a collective bargaining issue.

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: I got it. I  
7 got it. I'm a thousand percent understanding what's  
8 happening.

9 CHIEF HODGENS: Yes, yes, yes.

10 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Now, with the  
11 lithium, I appreciate the responses. I just wanted  
12 to be clear. Are-- are we saying that we haven't  
13 found the right bag yet, or are we aren't doing-- are  
14 we just now starting to test to find the right bag. I  
15 just want to see where we--

16 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: [interposing] No,  
17 right now there's not a product in the market that  
18 has withstood our testing.

19 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We don't think  
21 that that means there isn't. We're continuing to  
22 test them. Sometimes it's-- you know, some work  
23 better than others, so with the ones that work  
24 better, we're trying to figure out how they can get  
25 to that final point where we could really sort of

2 guarantee that they can make a difference. But like  
3 I said, you know, I think for us, we're going to  
4 continue to do that. I do think it's essential, and  
5 we can include you in those demonstrations that the  
6 vendors give to us, but also getting them outside  
7 also will do something similar, right? If we can get  
8 these outside-- outdoor charging stations, and the  
9 exchange sort of programs that you mentioned.

10 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: No, 100  
11 percent. The infrastructure, I know that might take  
12 a little longer, and we've been facing some nimbyism  
13 trying to get some of those charging stations out  
14 there. So it's I know there's going to-- it's going  
15 to be a little push. So, I'm trying to find  
16 something that can be done immediately. But if we  
17 can find a product that works, between you and DCWP,  
18 could we be able to get it out the way we do with the  
19 smoke detectors and--

20 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: [interposing]  
21 Yeah, I mean if-- as soon as we found a product that  
22 worked, we would let you know, and we would find--  
23 we'd go to every avenue possible, whether it's  
24 requiring the delivery companies to fund them as they  
25 do now with some of the equipment, or year a

2 public/private partnership. But I agree, if we found  
3 something that we knew would work, we would really  
4 urge people to get it out there publicly, and I'd  
5 also say, if you're facing any resistance to these  
6 charging stations please let us know. I can't  
7 emphasize enough how important they are in saving  
8 lives. So if we can help, you know, ring that alarm  
9 that getting these outsides and having these charging  
10 stations is essential, we'd be happy to do that.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 And just lifting two things up-- don't have to have  
13 responses, just want to make sure I name it. One, I  
14 want to just associate myself with the Council Member  
15 that left with the-- and the pay parity with the  
16 EMTs. And also, I know the Vulcan [sic] Society had  
17 had some issues brought up particularly with black  
18 firefighters and issues that they're facing and a  
19 whole host rang of things. I just want to make sure  
20 I name there here. Hopefully we can follow up to  
21 figure out how to address these concerns.

22 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, both of  
23 those issues are incredibly important. We'd be happy  
24 to follow up with you.

25 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. I'd like to  
3 address mental health services. So how much funding  
4 does the FDNY's counseling service unit receive from  
5 the Department and are there other sources of funding  
6 for CSU, and has CSU funding increased in the past  
7 years/

8 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't know if  
9 Lizette has exact figures. If not, we can get them  
10 to you. We have seen some increases, but I would say  
11 it's important to note that CSU is largely funded  
12 with grant funds, ranging from the World Trade Center  
13 to the IAFF to other forms of national firefighting  
14 organizations, and private-- a lot of private  
15 donations. So we certainly have seen not only an  
16 increase in funding, but we've actually deployed some  
17 of our active duty uniformed members including  
18 training a lot more members of EMS to be peer  
19 counselors over the last few years. That was  
20 especially important coming out of COVID and what  
21 they faced coming out of COVID. Do we have exact  
22 numbers? If not, we can--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: We don't  
24 have exact numbers, but we can follow up. You're  
25 right, though, that you know it is-- it is supported

2 by not only City funds, but significant grant  
3 resources as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think it's  
5 particularly important because we have had cuts to  
6 the B-HEARD program, and we know what, you know,  
7 mental health services is vital to our first  
8 responders and making sure that they get that. Do  
9 you know what the current budget is for B-HEARD?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: The  
11 current budget associated with B-HEARD is \$24.9  
12 million.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And do you think  
14 that is sufficient funding for this program?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: That  
16 funding supports not only the dedicated units that  
17 exist right now, but also supports a differential for  
18 the entire EMS workforce that was tied to mental  
19 health training that was rolled out everyone.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And how efficient is  
21 the B-HEARD services?

22 CHIEF FIELDS: B-HEARD services are  
23 extremely efficient. I believe we had a total of  
24 5,000 calls through for the first half. January 1<sup>st</sup>,  
25 2023 to June 30, 2023 we responded to 5,000 calls.

2 The very important part of that is that 42 percent of  
3 those patients received additional services and what  
4 that means for me, especially, is that they're not  
5 calling 911 again. They're able to get directly in  
6 connection with the mental health services that they  
7 need. So, B-HEARD is definitely a high-performing  
8 part of the EMS services. It takes care of the  
9 mental health emergencies of New Yorkers, and it's  
10 definitely essential.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you very much.  
12 I'm going to switch now to our legislation that I was  
13 proud to sponsor about putting facilities for female  
14 firefighters in houses that were able to accommodate  
15 it. So we're-- now that the survey is completed,  
16 what are our next steps?

17 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: so, the next  
18 steps are internal briefings. So, I'm actually being  
19 briefed Monday. I will let you know how that goes.  
20 But also to brief the United Women Firefighters who  
21 represent our female firefighters and a number of our  
22 other stakeholders, including the Vulcan Society who  
23 represent a number of the female firefighters as  
24 well, and after we do that internally, we will circle  
25 back to the Council and can let you know where we're

2 at. And then I believe that the law requires us to  
3 share that by June. So all of those meetings will  
4 happen between now and June.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And those meetings  
6 that you had with the surveying, that was inclusive  
7 of women who were firefighters and inclusive of their  
8 input, yes?

9 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It is, but one  
10 of the reasons we want to meet with the UWF and the  
11 other fraternal organizations afterwards who  
12 represent the women is they may represent women who  
13 either were on medical leave or otherwise not  
14 assigned to their firehouse at the time that this was  
15 done, or frankly the perspective. You know, they've  
16 all been female firefighters in our Department for  
17 many decades, most of them. so they may have some  
18 perspective that wasn't maybe available to the  
19 individual firehouse, but to the larger plan for the  
20 Department, especially in terms of, as you know,  
21 overhauling a Fire Department facility is quite  
22 difficult given how old most of them are. So, some  
23 perspective also of how we can prioritize some of the  
24 most acute needs of the women. So, we do believe  
25 their input will-- although it has already been

2 included, the individual members and the houses, the  
3 input of the fraternal organization may add something  
4 else to this report.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And during the last  
6 few probationary firefighter classes, has the Chief  
7 Officer inspected the women's bathrooms before the  
8 woman was assigned to a house?

9 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, so for  
10 every graduating class, once we know where the female  
11 firefighters are assigned, we do a number of checks  
12 between fire operations, the academy, my office  
13 facilities, and the UWF to make sure that that  
14 firehouse in particular is ready and the facilities  
15 are up to date and ready for the women to arrive.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And during the  
17 surveys, you had to come across bathrooms that were  
18 already there in some firehouses. Have funds been  
19 allotted to repair those bathrooms for the female  
20 firefighters and locker rooms?

21 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't know that  
22 we fund that specifically. Certainly, they do get--  
23 some of them that are out of service and have a woman  
24 assigned to get repaired. I don't know if there's a  
25 separate budget line for that.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: There  
3 isn't a separate budget line tied specifically to  
4 female firefighter's bathrooms. All of our  
5 facilities should have a female firefighter bathroom  
6 already. To the extent that there are repairs  
7 necessary, we do have lump sum funding for facilities  
8 improvements. So, over our ten year plan, our  
9 facilities improvements are actually close to half of  
10 our budget.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, because there  
12 are some firehouses that have eve three or more women  
13 in it, so we would need some type of renovation to  
14 make the accommodations larger. Prior to the survey  
15 being completed, and now that it is, and prior to us  
16 being able to implement what we have found, have  
17 there been any short term solutions to assisting  
18 females who are firefighters who work in a house that  
19 may not have female facilities for locker room and  
20 bathroom?

21 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, a number of  
22 them are. So the fact we do have a female facility  
23 in every firehouse, that was a short-term solution  
24 put in over the last few years to make sure that  
25 there was at least that minimum standard in any

2 firehouse. Again, as you know, because they're so old  
3 and there's so much time and money that required to  
4 overhaul them, often we've had to make do with what  
5 was the air rights. We converted the existing space  
6 into a bathroom and locker-room for the women. We've  
7 also put into our specifications for all future  
8 facilities, a full female bathroom and female locker  
9 room to accommodate what we hope is a growing number  
10 of women in the Department. So, you will see any new  
11 renovation reflecting that, but certainly in every  
12 fire house we've made sure that there's a facility.  
13 We've also put in pods for female firefighters who  
14 have recently given birth and are breast-feeding. So  
15 there's a number of accommodations we make, but I  
16 will say, we always, as you just mentioned, need to  
17 keep making adjustments. It's great that there'd be  
18 three women in a house, but that is something that  
19 when we actually assign that third woman we have to  
20 make sure is what we did on a short-term basis  
21 actually enough to accommodate three women. So, we  
22 always are making adjustments as we put out new  
23 classes.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That is very good to  
25 hear, Commissioner. I want to talk about the--

2 okay, it's just us. So, FDNY Foundation, what kind  
3 of-- what are the sources of funding received by the  
4 FDNY Foundation?

5 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Do you mean what  
6 do they pay for in the Department?

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, what are the  
8 sources of funding that they receive. I know we fund  
9 them, right?

10 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, you'd  
11 actually have to ask them. We don't--

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We are not privy  
14 to who donates to them. I will say, you are one of  
15 the-- the Council and the Mayor's office have long  
16 been two of the biggest donors to the FDNY  
17 Foundation. Also, our partners in public safety are  
18 often donors. So, smoke alarm companies like Kidde  
19 have long donated a large portion of their products  
20 in kind to us to make sure we can get them out there.  
21 But we would have to-- we can ask the Foundation. I  
22 believe they may have some sort of public filing  
23 that's required.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's fine.



2 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We can ask them  
3 and give you a list.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: that's fine. I know  
5 recently we met regarding the Davidson Law, meeting.  
6 I think it was very productive, and I'm not sure if  
7 you came prepared for questions on the Davidson Law  
8 today, but if not, I would like to after the meeting  
9 just give you the questions that we have.

10 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, I can  
11 answer it broadly.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If you are, we would  
13 love any updates.

14 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I an answer it  
15 broadly. Fire Operations is compiling the data you  
16 asked for in the letter.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: yes.

18 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: And we'll get  
19 that back to you fairly soon. But I'd say two  
20 things. I know you share this. you know, the  
21 Davidson anniversary is coming up in just a few days,  
22 and I just want to emphasize that even, you know, to  
23 this day how present his loss if for all of us. You  
24 know, I was there at the hospital and everybody  
25 sitting up here was in the Department at the time and

1           it was just absolutely heart-breaking. And we  
2           continue to want to make sur that this law is  
3           implemented in his memory, and as Eileen Davidson has  
4           continually pushed for this, we're so happy to be  
5           working with her. So, on the two parts of the law--  
6           there are two parts, as you know. The first one has  
7           been implemented for a while, and that's the sharing  
8           of the movie production locations with the local  
9           firehouse. That has been going successfully. For  
10          the indoor alterations, which is where the real  
11          concern is, that is what happened in the Davidson  
12          fire. But we actually learned through your meeting  
13          last week that the fire companies wanted more  
14          information on the outdoor locations, and so  
15          operations is working to make sure that they're  
16          getting that data, and that will-- we'll have an  
17          implementation date by the time we write back to you  
18          with the letter. On the other piece of the law,  
19          which is the rule-making process around the fire  
20          safety directors and other pieces of that law, we are  
21          planning, I believe, to meet with you again to come  
22          back together and discuss how we want to move forward  
23          with that, balancing our safety concerns with the  
24          concerns of yourselves and the industry.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: thank you. I very  
3 much appreciate that. Just give me a moment. Okay,  
4 I have checked with everyone. You have been  
5 terrific. I thank you so much, Chief Hodgens,  
6 Commissioner Kavanagh, and everyone on this panel for  
7 having answers to our questions. and if any other  
8 questions arise, you know, after you leave, then we  
9 will be happy to send them to you, and I look forward  
10 to the good work that we're going to do together in  
11 the future to keep this city safe.

12 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you for  
13 your continued support for our agencies.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Always.

15 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: You've always  
16 been consistent and we appreciate it.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Always. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We're going to take  
20 a short break until NYCEM comes. Thank you.

21 [break]

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We'll now ask our  
23 Counsel, Josh Kingsley, to call up the first person  
24 for public testimony.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you so much,  
3 Chair. So we're going to do some folks here now, and  
4 then after NYCEM goes, anyone who hasn't had a chance  
5 to speak will also be called then. So, first, we'll  
6 hear from Michael Reardon [sp?] followed by Michael  
7 Tracy followed by Helen Northmore. So, come up one  
8 at a time or two at a time, however you choose, and  
9 then we'll we go from there. Thank you. You all  
10 may begin. Michael Reardon, you may go ahead first.  
11 Thank you.

12 MICHAEL REARDON: I'd like to thank City  
13 Council Chair Joann Ariola, and all City Council  
14 members for allowing me to speak today on behalf of  
15 the Fire Protection Inspectors. With the help of the  
16 City Council, we had two separate classes of new FPIs  
17 during the month of April 2023. We had another  
18 class-- well, a class of 45. In October, we had a  
19 class of 50 FPIs. So I thank you for your help on  
20 that, pushing that through. The FDNY budget canceled  
21 our April 2024 class. We need two classes, one this  
22 year at least, and one next year. The Department  
23 doesn't look at the Fire Code Chapter Four for the  
24 need of hiring more Fire Inspectors. We are now  
25 operating-- I believe they said 377 inspectors to

2 date in 2023. We have lost some FPIs to other  
3 agencies, and some moving out of the City. We are  
4 seeing few retirements in 2023, and additional senior  
5 inspectors start in 2024. All the construction going  
6 on with the new buildings up in the five boroughs,  
7 this will require a need for more inspectors, so we  
8 can keep up on a daily inspections, as well as  
9 testing and all types of fire suppressing systems in  
10 all types of buildings, restaurants, commercial  
11 facilities, power plants that we are testing at. Our  
12 CDA Unit was our construction unit, inspecting  
13 construction sites every day to make sure of  
14 compliance to safety measures, issuing permits,  
15 checking fire protection systems required at all  
16 construction sites. Fire prevention is in desperate  
17 need of new equipment-- or equipment to do our jobs  
18 better and safer in the five boroughs. In 2023, Fire  
19 Prevention brought in I believe around \$61.9 million  
20 to the City. if we were given just one percent out  
21 of this, we would be able to provide seal meters, gas  
22 meters, safety harnesses for climbing up on the water  
23 tower tanks on buildings, climbing up on the inter  
24 dykes [sic] surrounding both fuel facilities where  
25 there's million gallon tanks. Bulletproof vests for

2 our Public Assembly Unit performing nighttime  
3 inspections at places of public assembly, night  
4 clubs, etcetera. And our Special Inspection Unit  
5 dealing with salvage yards, metal scrap yards, junk  
6 yards, illegal storage of propane, compressed gases,  
7 cylinders, gasoline and many other hazardous  
8 materials. Enforcing new legislation regarding  
9 lithium-ion batteries used for personal mobility  
10 devices, ensuring safe charging and storage  
11 requirements [inaudible] ensuring proper handle and  
12 removal of compromised batteries. I gave you a copy  
13 of what his unit does. There's many things on there  
14 and I wish the Council would review that and see all  
15 the work that this one unit is doing on their own.  
16 Department vehicles are required for working in the  
17 five boroughs. Working night details, you know,  
18 having high mileage, been in accidents-- these  
19 veterans are never replaced. We're constantly having  
20 to take public transportation or inspectors use their  
21 own vehicles which is unfair. There are additional  
22 equipment required, too much to list here. I want to  
23 be clear, not all our units need the same equipment.  
24 We all perform different inspections throughout the  
25 City. We need a separate budget for all types of

1 safety equipment. Our over time cap, FDis do not  
2 have a cap for overtime. Our level twos and threes  
3 inspectors were capped and starting November--  
4 January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and we're still capped today.  
5 We're not getting any reason, you know, why. After  
6 filing a grievance last year, our caps were raised in  
7 December 2023. To put in-- many of us are still  
8 capped, and OMB is holding off on approving our caps.  
9 Our union [inaudible] has been working with the  
10 Department on raising our caps. Many inspectors are  
11 still putting for overtime on paper so that they can  
12 submit their overtime in and when overtime is  
13 approved, if ever approved. You can't everyone on  
14 board to stop working overtime, which many companies  
15 contract is [inaudible] companies would suffer most  
16 of all. Many people would be unsafe in the City.  
17 Fire Protection Inspectors main goals and has always  
18 been to keep firefighters, or the people living in  
19 the five boroughs, as well as visitors, people on  
20 vacation. Doing their safety inspections to keep  
21 firefighters and everyone else in the City. And  
22 testing all the fire-- protection systems. I thank  
23 you for your time.  
24

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: thank you so much,  
3 and thank you so much for all that you do, and I  
4 think it's important that people that Fire Prevention  
5 Inspectors are uniformed officers and not civilian  
6 members of the Fire Department. I thank you very  
7 much for that. Now we'll hear from Mike Tracey.

8 MICHAEL TRACEY: Good morning the  
9 Committee. Good morning Chair Ariola. Good morning  
10 Councilwoman Schulman, Councilwoman Brewer. Thanks  
11 for the opportunity to speak. Happy budget season.  
12 I just wanted the opportunity to affirm some of the  
13 fiscal needs of the Department and how it relates to  
14 the life safety, not just for the citizens of this  
15 great city, but also for the health and safety of New  
16 York City fire officers that we represent. While we  
17 acknowledge many of the accomplishments that the  
18 Commissioner mentioned in her testimony. The UFOA  
19 believes far more can be done by identifying gaps in  
20 the budget. For starters, as the Commissioner noted  
21 in her testimony, lithium fires have wreaked havoc on  
22 this city, killing citizens and destroying property.  
23 While this issues has been given sufficient attention  
24 in the media, what has gone largely overlooked are  
25 the potential health effects these fires place on



2 firefighters and fire officers. We employ the city  
3 budget to allocate funds towards health monitoring  
4 and early cancer screening. Additionally, we need to  
5 get these batteries off the streets and out of  
6 buildings. Battery buy-backs, much like the gun buy-  
7 backs that have existed for decades, is one idea that  
8 can help reduce the risk of these batteries as they  
9 age, get damaged, and pose greater fire risks.

10 Speaking of guns, yesterday we were reminded of the  
11 dangers firearms pose in public areas. Many on the  
12 Council may not be aware that there's a procedure for  
13 firefighters and fire officers to respond to active  
14 shooter events. We are now being asked to do with  
15 only one day of training. I was a member of one of  
16 these units, and was expected to enter active shooter  
17 warm zones with just a few hours of training. We ask  
18 the City Council to allocate additional funds to  
19 provide adequate training days. The age of some--  
20 next, the age of some apparatus precludes companies  
21 from inspections of high [inaudible] buildings. We  
22 ask the budget to address the backlog in these old  
23 apparatus so companies continue to do these duties.

24 And lastly, the New York City Fire Department has not  
25 been immune to some of the staffing issues that other

2 agencies have faced since the recovery of the  
3 pandemic began. While the change in the City's  
4 fiscal outlook has addressed some of these budget  
5 cuts to the Department, and thus the staffing issues  
6 fire officers face is not necessarily budgetary in  
7 nature, the City has created a staffing crisis by  
8 failing to properly grade, process, and eventually  
9 promulgate a list for the most recent lieutenant's  
10 test. This issue mimics fiscal cuts by pushing  
11 officer headcount to dangerously low levels, leaving  
12 the fire officers supervising firehouses in this city  
13 overworked from the increased fire duty. We'd also  
14 like to note that the 10 members of this Department  
15 who have not been rehired due to the vaccine mandate.  
16 These two issues and the fiscal implications that can  
17 result, can be fixed today. We implore the City to  
18 do so in addition to ensuring an adequate budget for  
19 this Department to help the greatest fire officers in  
20 the world do their jobs properly. Thank you very  
21 much.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: thank you so much,  
23 Mr. Tracey, and you're right, we need our  
24 firefighters back. Thank you. Ma'am?

2 HELEN NORTHMORE: Sorry. Chair Ariola,  
3 Member Schulman, Council Member Brewer, and all the  
4 members of this committee, De La Rosa, Feliz,  
5 Gennaro, Riley, and Yeger, and Zhuang. The 4,000+  
6 women and men of the FDNY Emergency Medical Services,  
7 the EMS, who are New York's best deserve equity and  
8 pay in benefits with New York's bravest, New York's  
9 finest, New York's boldest, and New York's strongest.  
10 On page nine of today's report on the Fiscal 2025  
11 Preliminary Plan for the Fire Department, we can once  
12 again read, "The EMS are consistently the lowest paid  
13 first responders in New York City. The Council has  
14 long advocated wage equity for the EMS, making their  
15 salaries competitive with other first responders."  
16 Unfortunately, this is nothing more than a rehash of  
17 the recurring theme in such Council reports. Three  
18 years ago when the same members of this committee  
19 were not on this committee, in march 19, 2021 report,  
20 one can read, "As the lowest paid first responders in  
21 New York City, the Council has continually called for  
22 an increase in the salaries of EMS members." Well, as  
23 we all know, wage and benefits parity didn't happen  
24 when the City negotiated the EMS labor contract that  
25 year. Over the years, members of this Council,

1 including the Chair, have spoken many kind words in  
2 support of the FDNY EMS. The sad fact is that no  
3 Council report, no mayoral candidate's promise, no  
4 Council Member's speech, no Council law, and no  
5 Council resolution has ever brought pay parity to the  
6 FDNY EMS. We can all ask ourselves, how is that? In  
7 this year's report on the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary  
8 Plan for the Fire Department, emergency medical  
9 personnel are still referred to as civilians instead  
10 of the uniformed first responders that they are.  
11 FDNY EMS members are still paid not thousands of  
12 dollars less, but tens of thousands of dollars less a  
13 year than the other uniformed services, Sanitation,  
14 Corrections, Police, and Fire. The pay gap between  
15 EMS and the other uniformed services keeps getting  
16 wider. For example, under their new contract,  
17 Sanitation workers will make 40 percent more than  
18 Emergency Medical Technicians. Pay parity has been  
19 achieved in this year with other City workers. The  
20 8,000 nurses of the City's Health + Hospitals  
21 Corporation have gotten pay parity in their contract.  
22 In the first year of their contract, nurses' salaries  
23 will jump \$16,006, and then jump another \$5,551 in  
24 the second year. A jump of over \$21,000 in two  
25

2 years. I ask this City Council to adhere to the  
3 words of Council Speaker Adams. On Wednesday she  
4 stated that the Council is a co-equal branch of City  
5 government with the duty to turn ideas into effective  
6 laws and to conduct oversight. Take action and  
7 conduct rigorous oversight in this budget process to  
8 guarantee that the city treats the FDNY EMS as the  
9 uniformed first responder that it is, and that pay  
10 parity happens in the upcoming EMS contract. I'd like  
11 to share with you the headlines in today's Chief,  
12 "FDNY EMS Moves Forward after Judge Rejects the  
13 City's Arguments." Why do they have to go to court?  
14 Why do we have to spend money reimbursing the  
15 plaintiff's legal fees, over \$600,000 for one case  
16 alone, and this is about the fourth case. Thank you  
17 very much for letting me share my views.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your  
19 testimony. Thank you so very much. I appreciate you  
20 coming in. Thank you. I would like to invite NYCEM  
21 up to the table. Hi, how's everybody? Hi. For the  
22 record, I'd just like note that we were joined by  
23 Council Member Gale Brewer, as well as Minority  
24 Leader Joe Borelli. I'd like to welcome Commissioner  
25

2 Iscol, Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell, and  
3 your name, sir?

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO:  
5 Christopher Blanco, Chief Financial Officer.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I welcome you as  
7 well, and we look forward to your testimony today.  
8 I'm going to now turn to Counsel Josh Kingsley for  
9 you to be sworn in.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure. Thank you so  
11 much, Chair. So for New York City Emergency  
12 Management we'll hear from Commissioner Zach Iscol,  
13 Christina Farrell, and Christopher Blanco. Can you  
14 please repeat the following: You affirm to tell the  
15 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
16 your testimony today and to answer honestly to  
17 Council Member questions? Just affirm that you will  
18 indeed. Okay, thank you so much. You may go ahead.

19 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Great. Good  
20 morning, Chair Ariola, Council Member Schulman,  
21 Council Member Brewer, and members of the Committee  
22 on Fire and Emergency Management. I am Zach Iscol,  
23 Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management.  
24 I am joined today by our remarkable First Deputy  
25 Council Member Christina Farrell and our wonderful

2 Chief Financial Officer Chris Blanco. As the agency  
3 serving New Yorkers before, during, and after  
4 emergencies, the Emergency Management coordinates the  
5 City's preparedness, response, recovery, and  
6 mitigation efforts in an ever-evolving threat  
7 landscape. We are thankful for our government  
8 nonprofit, private sector, elected, and community  
9 partners who help us serve New Yorkers as we build a  
10 more inclusive and resilient city. 2023 was another  
11 busy year, and the pace in 2024 has not let up. Time  
12 and again, our staff adapts plans and strategies and  
13 responds always incorporating lessons learned from  
14 previous incidents to improve outcomes for our city  
15 and its residents. I'm incredibly proud to work with  
16 the best, brightest, and hardest working Emergency  
17 Management professionals in the world, and would like  
18 to highlight some key programs and data points.  
19 Emergency Management continues to keep the public  
20 informed through the Mayor's Management Report  
21 submissions and the agency's annual report,  
22 highlighting the impressive progress the agency has  
23 made toward achieving goals outlined in our strategic  
24 plan. Notable recent accomplishments include  
25 preparing city government and external partners for

1  
2 disasters by holding the agency's first in-person  
3 interagency emergency operation functional exercise  
4 since 2019, which included over 100 participants from  
5 partner agencies, and we've offered over 100  
6 instructor-led Emergency Management training  
7 assessments. Our most public-facing program, Notify  
8 NYC which is available in 14 languages, including  
9 American sign language issued almost 2,500 messages  
10 last year, and we are currently t over 1.22 million  
11 subscribers. The Notify NYC program continues to  
12 evolve. For example, in 2023, notify NYC launched a  
13 notification group for residents living in basements  
14 or cellar apartments to sign up for notifications  
15 regarding life-threatening weather conditions, with  
16 over 2,500 currently subscribed. Additionally, Notify  
17 NYC expanded graphics for messages to increase  
18 message accessibility and clarity for all users.  
19 Emergency Management also continues coordinating  
20 emergency response and recovery for disasters at all  
21 scales and types. Our Operations Bureau which tracks  
22 incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week,  
23 monitored and responded to over 2,200 incidents in  
24 2023. These included building collapses,  
25 infrastructure incidents, the asylum-seeker



1 emergency, water main breaks, incoming weather,  
2 fires, and more. Regarding activations, we continue  
3 to be activated for different phases of the City's  
4 asylum-seeker operations. We also simultaneously  
5 activated over the past year for extreme weather,  
6 significant fires, building collapses and other  
7 emergencies. In 2023, our CERT [sic] volunteers  
8 participated in a total of 203 deployments, and  
9 reported 13,375 volunteer hours. The program trained  
10 and added 90 new volunteers to the program. The  
11 strengthening communities program added 20 new  
12 networks to its roster, expanding the program to  
13 include a total of 35 community networks across all  
14 five boroughs, working towards a more equitable  
15 response and recovery operations in hard-to-reach  
16 communities. These partners helped us distribute  
17 over 2,450 hydra barriers and 2,900 flood alarms  
18 throughout the City, organized 18 preparedness events  
19 for National Preparedness Month and spread the word  
20 during the September 29<sup>th</sup> flood emergency by  
21 amplifying our messaging and notifications through  
22 multiple social media posts, 49 emails, 263 text  
23 blasts, and 624 phone calls to over 44,000 community  
24 members in all boroughs. Ready New York held 330  
25

2 preparedness events across the City, trained nearly  
3 28,000 New Yorkers in emergency preparedness and  
4 distributed over 52,000 emergency preparedness  
5 guides. In September 2023, Ready New York and CERT  
6 celebrated their 20-year anniversaries with Mayor  
7 Adams issuing a proclamation recognizing September  
8 12<sup>th</sup> as Ready New York and CERT Day in recognition of  
9 the contributions of the program to increasing  
10 preparedness. Emergency Management supported the  
11 City's response to the asylum-seeker emergency by  
12 opening and operating respite sites for overnight  
13 guests. We continue to manage the wait list for all  
14 available cots, including coordinating overnight  
15 waiting areas with our partners at New York Disaster  
16 Interface Services and the Housing Recovery Office.  
17 Since October, we have been operating a re-ticketing  
18 center that has re-ticketed over 3,000 guests.  
19 Emergency Management has also supported the expansion  
20 of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers  
21 and partners closely with the Office of Asylum-Seeker  
22 Operations, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs,  
23 Health + Hospitals, Housing Preservation and  
24 Development, and other agencies to identify a long-  
25 term strategy for the influx of asylum-seekers,

2 helping support the City's transition to a  
3 sustainable operation. We continue to look ahead to  
4 find new ways to prepare the City and our residents  
5 for the next emergency. With that, let me now  
6 provide a snapshot of our budget for the next fiscal  
7 year. Our projected total Fiscal Year 2025 City Tax  
8 Levy Expense Budget is \$170.7 million of which \$141.2  
9 million is for the agency's asylum-seeker emergency.  
10 We rely on our City Tax Levy Expense Budget to  
11 support the majority of the Agency's administrative,  
12 technological and operational cost. The projected  
13 Fiscal Year 2025 City Tax Levy Personnel Service  
14 Budget is \$9.5 million which supports the 92  
15 personnel lines paid directly through our City Tax  
16 Levy funds. This includes \$1.5 million in funding for  
17 16 staff members dedicated to working on increasing  
18 communication and services to people with  
19 disabilities access and functional needs. Our other  
20 staffing is supported through grant funds and  
21 personnel on assignment from multiple city agencies.  
22 Our projected Fiscal Year 2025 Other Than personnel  
23 Services Budget is \$161.2 million which includes  
24 \$141.2 million for the agency's asylum operations.  
25 The remaining \$20 million covers all agency operating

2 and administrative costs. This budget includes a  
3 significant portion of non-discretionary funding.  
4 These funds are designed to cover our warehouse  
5 lease, utilities, and telecommunication costs  
6 including the maintenance and operation of our  
7 Emergency Operations Center and our back-up  
8 facilities. This money also supports our fleet and  
9 all additional equipment, supplies, and material  
10 needed to run the Agency. The Agency receives grant  
11 funding to support many of our core programs. In the  
12 past year, we secured \$33.3 million in federal  
13 funding, primarily through the Urban Area Security  
14 Initiative Grant. This funding is vital to our  
15 ability to run many of our initiative, including the  
16 Ready New York Public Education Program, Community  
17 Emergency Response Team Program, Continuity of  
18 Operations Program, geographic information systems,  
19 training and exercises, watch command and response,  
20 and citywide incident management system planning, and  
21 the emergency supply stockpile. We work with City  
22 Hall, OMB, the city's congressional delegation and  
23 our partner agencies to push for full Homeland  
24 Security funding in future years. This money  
25 supports critical operations within ours and several

2 other agency's budgets and it's critical to the City.  
3 I would like to express my admiration for our  
4 incredibly hard-working and dedicated emergency  
5 managers who continue to work tirelessly to ensure  
6 our city meets challenges. I'm honored to lead this  
7 agency and look forward to continuing our progress  
8 and growth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
9 today. I look forward to working with the Council,  
10 and I am happy to take your questions. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,  
12 Commissioner Iscol. Thank you for all that you do. I  
13 always say that I'm so proud to be the Chair that  
14 oversees NYCEM because they are a really small agency  
15 that does a really big job, and you do it well. So  
16 thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: In November, we all  
19 got a little bit of a scare, because you guys were  
20 going to realize some cuts, and then the Mayor  
21 thankfully found that he was able to reverse some  
22 PEG, and we were most interested in our, you know,  
23 our flood protection program. So, can you provide  
24 details on the importance of the interim flood  
25 protections program in providing temporary coastal

2 surge flood risk reduction for critical New York City  
3 facilities and low-lying neighborhoods like are in my  
4 district?

5 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: yep. We spend a lot  
6 of time in your district.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, you do.

8 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: You are out there  
9 with us during every weather event in your boots,  
10 knocking on doors--

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yep.

12 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: making sure even  
13 beforehand that we're communicating to your residents  
14 and your constituents. We really appreciate the  
15 partnership with you and your office. I think the  
16 key part of the Interim Flood Protection Measures  
17 Program is the "I". It's an interim program. It was  
18 established in 2016 initially with 57 locations of  
19 which approximately I think it's 32 are for DEP  
20 sites. We manage the other 25. And the idea  
21 basically is to use our interim flood protection  
22 measures-- they are temporary-- while we build other  
23 capacity to protect both neighborhoods and City  
24 infrastructure. We have now transitioned eight of  
25 those 25 that we were responsible for. Some of them

2 have been transitioned to permanent measures. That's  
3 Metropolitan Hospital. A number of NYCHA facilities  
4 have permanent mitigation measures now like Reiss  
5 Houses, Neighbor [sic] Houses, East River Houses,  
6 Astoria Houses. Others, we're in the process of  
7 transitioning to other agencies for them to manage.  
8 So it's an incredibly important program. It's also  
9 one that's temporary in terms of the cuts that were  
10 proposed in November. Most of the funding is spent  
11 between July and October during hurricane season. So  
12 those were funds for Fiscal Year 2024 that largely we  
13 knew we may not likely didn't have to spend. The  
14 concern was for the out-years. And again, as we start  
15 to off-load some of those to other agencies, as we  
16 reduce the number of interim sites that we need to  
17 measure, there's less need for that funding.  
18 Although, we do appreciate having it.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Can you elaborate on  
20 the potential consequences or risks of the cuts to  
21 the program that could have been posed to our safety  
22 and wellbeing of residents, businesses,  
23 infrastructure, and affected areas?

24 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah. So, I think it  
25 was-- look, this was something that the idea was not,

2 you know, we have tons of discretionary funding at  
3 our agency and we're going to-- this is where we're  
4 going to find savings. This is a program that--  
5 well, first off at our agency, we have very little  
6 discretionary funding. And so when we are looking  
7 for places that we can find savings, it was really  
8 one of the only place that we could look at. The  
9 other part of this, though, was that because we had  
10 reduced the number of sites already, because we had  
11 been through hurricane season, there was less of a  
12 concern in terms of those savings for that period of  
13 time. in fact,-- and Chris, you can speak a little  
14 bit more about that in terms of the actual numbers in  
15 terms of what we had spent and what we're forecasted  
16 to spend for the remainder of the years and the out-  
17 years.

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Yeah,  
19 sure. I think when we're looking at the overall  
20 portfolio of projects, again, as the Commissioner  
21 mentioned, as the number of sites has gone down, our  
22 budget has largely remained flat. So, as a result of  
23 that, there's about \$200,000 of unspent funds at the  
24 end of the fiscal year which we, you know, can use to  
25 reallocate towards other planning and training



2 exercises for the program or to support other needs  
3 across our agency's portfolio. Largely, you know,  
4 this was a no-impact excess funds as a result of just  
5 good management and part of the plan to transition  
6 the interim protections to permanent solutions.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And moving forward,  
8 are there any measures in place that would likely  
9 ensure the sustained support in funding for this  
10 interim flood protection program?

11 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: so, I think part of  
12 the hope is to continue to offload these to the  
13 agencies that it is protecting their facilities.  
14 There are some projects in the work for some of the  
15 neighborhoods that are protected with these interim  
16 flood protection measures, and then finally, there's  
17 also-- you know, and then a lot of them now have  
18 permanent measures that no longer necessitate an  
19 interim flood protection measure because they have  
20 completed those construction projects.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. I just want to  
22 talk about some staffing.

23 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yep.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, NYCEM, as I said  
25 before is a relatively small city agency and the

2 staff are highly specialized and it's difficult-- a  
3 test to coordinate emergency responses and work long  
4 hours to deal with life, property, wellbeing, and the  
5 additional responsibilities that you have been  
6 experiencing over the last two years. In order to  
7 operate at a high level, we must retain valuable  
8 employees. What is the agency's annual attrition  
9 rate?

10 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so our annual  
11 attrition rate right now-- let me pull this up. I  
12 believe it's-- right here. It's 13.1 percent, which  
13 is down from 21 percent in Fiscal Year 2022.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Great.

15 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'd also add if I  
16 could, one of the things when I came in as the  
17 Commissioner, I was the fourth or fifth commissioner  
18 in a year. The Agency had just been through COVID,  
19 and Christina Farrell who is really an incredible  
20 unsung hero in this city, she and her Chief of Staff--  
21 -

22 [applause]

23 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: She and her Chief of  
24 Staff, Yokarina Duarte, led an effort to improve some  
25 of the things we were doing around retention. Because

2 of their efforts, we now have 100 percent of our  
3 senior executive staff positions are filled. In  
4 December, for the first time, we are a majority  
5 minority agency, and on top of that, you can see the  
6 reduction in the attrition rate. I think one of the  
7 other things that they did is they really focused on  
8 developing career pathways for folks. And so when  
9 you look at our vacancies, one of the things it  
10 doesn't account for is the number of internal  
11 promotions. So when we promote somebody as opposed  
12 to hiring an outsider, it creates a vacancy, and so  
13 sometimes you then have twice the period of time  
14 where you have a vacancy because you have promoted  
15 somebody, but in terms of retention, in terms of  
16 succession planning, the work that Christina and Yoka  
17 [sic] led was really critical to that success, and I  
18 think for a smaller agency, where we do have  
19 specialized folks, this is going to continue to pay  
20 huge dividends for the future of our agency.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And are you going to  
22 request positions to be filled this year for those  
23 vacancies?

24 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're always looking  
25 to. I think the other thing I would add is we're

2 fortunate in that two-thirds-- is that correct? Two-  
3 thirds of our funding for personnel lines is grant-  
4 funded, so it is not impacted by reductions to city  
5 tax dollars or city tax-funded lines.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I will  
7 yield now to Council Member--

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Can  
9 I--

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yes.

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
12 Sorry, can I just add? First of all, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Sure.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
15 Second of all, I just wanted to say, and we were  
16 talking about this a little while ago. A lot of our  
17 staff, like you said-- thank you. Our staff are  
18 hardworking. They're very skilled. They're very  
19 dedicated, and that doesn't go unnoticed by other  
20 city agencies, even the State, FEMA, and so a lot of  
21 this turnover is our staff being recruited by the  
22 Health Department, by the Medical Examiner, other  
23 agencies. And while we'd like people to stay at  
24 Emergency Management, it is very helpful for the City  
25 certainly and for Emergency Management as well to

2 have our alumni in these agencies. we just ran an  
3 all-day exercise with City Hall and a lot of the  
4 operational agencies on Tuesday and so many of the  
5 people that were participating along with their  
6 leadership were our former staff members, DEP,  
7 Transportation, and so while we don't want people to  
8 leave, it is understandable, and it's great to have  
9 those people in other agencies. So sometimes, it's a  
10 win/win just a little. It looks a little different.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, I get it. I  
12 get it. I yield now to Council Member Gale Brewer.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, and I  
14 want to thank you because you've done a lot of  
15 outreach to elected officials, tours, and keeping us  
16 up-to-date, so I appreciate that. Not every agency  
17 does that. In the re-ticketing, according to the City  
18 record-- I could be wrong, but I think there's a new  
19 for-profit that is in charge of it. Can you just  
20 talk to us about what's the RFP? Who's doing the re-  
21 ticketing, etcetera? What's going on there?

22 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: So, where to start?  
23 This is a pretty significant operation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the cost of  
25 all this, too. Go ahead I'm sorry.

2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, I'll turn it  
3 over to Chris to talk a little bit more about the  
4 procurements and some of the actual work that's done.  
5 You know, we are-- we set up re-ticketing operations  
6 and this exists not just at the re-ticketing center  
7 at Saint Bridget, but at all sites. Almost all sites  
8 have the ability for folks to get re-ticketed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, all of your  
10 sites, you mean?

11 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: All site across the  
12 City re-ticketing. Almost all sites. I don't want  
13 to say 100 percent of them, but the vast majority of  
14 sites offer re-ticketing. What we did set up at  
15 Saint Bridget which is our site in the East Village  
16 is-- that is both a place where folks come after they  
17 have been discharged through the system to get re-  
18 ticketed to other places. It's also a place where  
19 folks can go to get back on the wait list, and we  
20 manage the wait list for people to get reassigned a  
21 cot, and this is only for adults. There are-- very  
22 rarely do you have families with children going to  
23 that site. it's only in cases where DSS has a family  
24 that needs to get re-ticketed and they need to get  
25 re-ticketed immediately, but there's no wait list

2 work that's occurring with families with children.

3 So it's all adult families there. Chris, do you want  
4 to talk a little bit about the contractors and the  
5 work that's done there by Medrite and others?

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Sure.

7 So for the re-ticketing center at Saint Bridget,  
8 NYCEM holds the contact for the translation service,  
9 in-person translation, fire guards, as well as site  
10 management. The actual re-ticketing cost as well as  
11 the-- I guess staff that primarily does the re-  
12 ticketing is through Medrite which is an H+H  
13 contract.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, Medrite has  
15 been there for a while? It's not-- because somebody  
16 said Cherokee got a contract there.

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: I  
18 believe that's a new contract that's in place for  
19 case management.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It is. So I want  
21 to understand what it is doing.

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: So,  
23 that's a brand new contract. I don't think it's been  
24 rolled out as far as actually putting folks on the  
25 ground to provide services. But my understanding is

2 that is tied to a specific RFP for case management  
3 through H+H.

4 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, that's-- it's  
5 a Health + Hospitals and we'd have to defer you to  
6 them for more information on this, but that is a  
7 contract that they're specifically using for more  
8 intense case management. They were specifically  
9 looking for organizations that have a lot of-- that  
10 have more experience with resettlement operations and  
11 also with sort of helping migrant populations, and  
12 so--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] But  
14 they'll also be located at Saint Bridget's as far as  
15 you know?

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: They  
17 are-- to my knowledge, they will not be located at  
18 Saint Bridget's. They could be, but right now I think  
19 they're primarily going to be at the arrival center  
20 or the Roosevelt Hotel working with migrant families.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then--  
22 so how long is Medrite's contract for and how much is  
23 it for?

24 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: We'd  
25 have to defer to H+H on that. I don't have specifics.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so you have  
3 just the translation and the fire guards, is that  
4 what you said?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO:  
6 Translation, fire guards, as well as a handful of  
7 folks that we have through our staffing contract with  
8 Haggerty Consulting which provides mainly sort of in-  
9 house support to us on our operations, but also does  
10 a small bit of case-- or excuse me, site management  
11 at a number of our sites.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so and who  
13 pays-- which agency oversees? You get a ticket to go  
14 to Idaho. Who pay-- nobody's-- it's sort of like not  
15 understood who's paying for that. Is that your  
16 agency? Is that H+H?

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: The  
18 actual funding goes through H+H through the contract  
19 to Medrite.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh, so in other  
21 words, they'll know how many people are going to  
22 Idaho or Oregon or whatever.

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Correct.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The other  
25 question I have is, when you mention the federal

2 funding which-- thank goodness. Somebody-- I use to  
3 write the federal grant for Dinkins and I never think  
4 that we're doing enough. So congratulations on  
5 getting the federal grant on the Urban Area Security.  
6 How long does that last, that grant?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: So, I  
8 can speak to that a little bit. So the Urban Area  
9 Security Initiative is part of a larger suite of  
10 grants from FEMA which are known as the Homeland  
11 Security Grants. The City gets an annual award and  
12 it dates back to basically 2001. So, post-9/11. But  
13 the City has received the largest allocation out of  
14 any municipality going back all the way to 2001.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then  
16 in the paper today, and I knew this because I was the  
17 National League of Cities over the weekend, but it  
18 looks like the Mayor's office has gotten some of the  
19 money, \$174,000. Is that something-- \$174 million.  
20 Is that something you were involved in or was it  
21 other agencies that have now gotten the paperwork  
22 together for lack of a better word?

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: So,  
24 we're involved, so far as we provide all of our  
25 information and spending contracts, all of the back

2 materials to OMB as it relates to our support for  
3 asylum-seekers. As far as the actual application of  
4 the funds, as you're well aware, you know, the City  
5 spent \$4 billion and we're getting \$174-odd million.  
6 And so, those costs are primarily going towards the  
7 agencies that have a larger portfolio around the  
8 sheltering. So, I defer to OMB on the specifics, but  
9 my understanding is this is going to HPD, H+H,  
10 Department of Homeless Services, or the ones that are  
11 doing a much large portion of the sheltering  
12 operation.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then  
14 maybe you said this, but what's your capital budget?  
15 I know-- I think you mentioned that you have to, you  
16 know, buy certain things, but what's your capital  
17 budget?

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: NYCEM  
19 does not have a capital budget.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You have no  
21 capital budget.

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: No  
23 capital.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because you  
3 mentioned that you-- so when you have your vehicle  
4 and so on, that's through DCAS?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: That's  
6 correct.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All through DCAS,  
8 everything is through DCAS. Alright, and then just  
9 one quick-- how many sites do you have now? I know I  
10 should know this, but how many sites do you have now?  
11 Obviously, Lincoln.

12 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so we  
13 currently have--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I  
15 know Lincoln, the-- thank you for that tour, by the  
16 way.

17 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, absolutely,  
18 absolutely. We currently have four respite sites  
19 operating. We have one of the overflow sites, and  
20 then we have the re-ticketing site.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then--  
22 I'm sorry, one more questions. So, all the mosques  
23 [sic] haven't paid their Con-Ed bill. Who's in  
24 charge of that?

2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: That's HRO. That  
3 is-- when you say all the mosques, I assume you're  
4 talking about the--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] The  
6 mosques, because they're leaving your Saint  
7 Bridget's, I'm just saying.

8 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And they don't  
10 have a place to go, so they're going to the mosques.  
11 So, my question is, now the mosque can't pay the Con-  
12 Ed bill. It's in the papers. It's discussed. I'm  
13 just trying to figure out who's going to pay. I'm  
14 not saying it's you, but I'm just wondering if that's  
15 something that's discussed.

16 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: SO, if it's the  
17 contracted sites, that's HPD and HRO.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's not  
19 contracted. It's no place to go sites. It's the, I  
20 would say, illegal guests who have no place else to  
21 go.

22 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'd have to learn  
23 more and look into to find out more.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm just  
25 letting you know it's a big problem.

2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Okay.

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yeah,  
4 I would just say one thing which Zach was  
5 referencing. HRO working with HPD does have a  
6 contract with New York Disaster Interfaith. There  
7 are several shelters and they have some overflow  
8 sites. If they're-- and they're always looking for  
9 more, because obviously they have other, you know,  
10 food pantries and thrift shops and different things  
11 that can help the asylum-seekers. So, if there are  
12 organizations, mosques, any house of worship, you  
13 know, we should work to put them in touch with NYDSS  
14 [sic] and HRO, because they do receive funding to  
15 help with things like Con-Ed.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm obnoxious, I  
17 know that, but I already know that they're not going  
18 to fit into that criteria. They don't have the  
19 sprinklers.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: But  
21 there are things-- there are hospitality sites during  
22 the day. There are the overflow sites. There are--  
23 classical shelter, yes, they are very stringent, but  
24 there are other possibilities. So I wouldn't say  
25 never. I would say let's talk.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I would just like to  
5 say that Council Member Riley has joined us, and I  
6 will now yield the floor to Council Member Schulman.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you.  
8 Thank you, Commissioner Iscol. You've done a great  
9 job I have to say. I remember when we toured the  
10 migrant center out at JFK. But and-- but just so you  
11 know, Christina is one of my peeps. So, New York  
12 City Healthy put out today that March is Severe  
13 Weather Preparedness Month. So, the prediction is  
14 that we're going to get really bad hurricane season  
15 this year. We haven't really had any huge storms  
16 since Sandy of that nature, but the possibilities are  
17 increasing as climate is changing. So, I wanted to  
18 know what kind of preparations that you guys are  
19 making.

20 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah. So, first  
21 off, we are working very, very closely with the  
22 National Weather Service to look at the seasonal  
23 outlook, and this is really where they and the  
24 Hurricane Center start to ramp up a lot of the work  
25 that they do in preparation for Hurricane season.

2 Yes, this looks to be a more active season, sort of  
3 initially, but we always anticipate it being a more  
4 active season. And so one of the things we start to  
5 do is as we get the seasonally outlook, we start  
6 working with our interagency partners, our federal  
7 and state partners, private sector partners. We  
8 start running exercises. As you know, the coastal  
9 storm exercises or the coastal storm plan is probably  
10 our most complex plan. There's a lot of work we go  
11 into educating the public around knowing your zone,  
12 having an evacuation plan, the public messaging  
13 piece. SO, that all starts in the lead-up to  
14 hurricane season which will start on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Great. I  
16 appreciate that. And do you have folks that go out  
17 to the different communities and do like forums,  
18 seminars, that kind of thing?

19 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, absolutely.  
20 So we do-- we have a lot of training that we do. We  
21 have a lot of community engagement programs that we  
22 do, and then one of the things we are most excited  
23 about is we have our Strengthening Communities  
24 Program. And so this is a network of community-based  
25 organizations. We currently have 35 networks across



2 the City. Last year we did some great work with them  
3 around flood preparedness, because as you know  
4 there's sort of two types of floods that we need to  
5 prepare for. There's coastal storm surge from the  
6 ocean. There's also cloudburst flood from rain which  
7 is much more difficult to predict and to prepare for.  
8 And so we do a ton of work with the Strengthening  
9 Communities program to prepare communities, as well.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And you work  
11 with DEP on some of the-- like, there have been  
12 floods in my district in Forest Hills. Congresswoman  
13 grace Meng got some monies from the Federal  
14 Government around that to help with that. So you  
15 coordinate with DEP on that?

16 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yep, and the Mayor's  
17 Office for Climate and DEP with Meera Joshi and her  
18 team at the Deputy Mayor for Operations Office.  
19 They're spearheading a lot of those efforts around  
20 infrastructure.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, from a  
22 budget perspective, I'm just curious-- so when you  
23 guys put in for FEMA money, does FEMA owe us any  
24 money? Or we're-- they're paid up on things that--

2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: [interposing] In  
3 terms of what, post-disaster or--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]  
5 That would be post, yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Not always. You  
7 know, it sort of-- it varies, right, as to whether--  
8 what's the level of damage, whether we have had a  
9 declaration, whether we hit certain thresholds. So,  
10 really, it varies based on the emergency, and as you  
11 know, it can take a long time for FEMA to distribute  
12 funds.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: If there's  
14 anything we can help with to talk to the  
15 congressional delegation or anything like, because  
16 you know, money is hard to come by now, especially  
17 you know, moving forward into this budget season. So  
18 if we can help to pull down some of that money, we'd  
19 like to be helpful. So please let us know--

20 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: [interposing] We'd  
21 love that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: if there's  
23 something specific around that.

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Can I  
25 just add two things?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes.

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: First  
4 of all, as Zach was saying, everybody remembers  
5 Hurricane Ida. There was a declaration. We did--  
6 the city did receive, you know, a share of money  
7 after that to work on mitigation, so we're doing  
8 programs around Notify NYC, around canvassing, weather  
9 forecasting. We're just one piece, obviously, of the  
10 whole city, but that money is coming into our budget  
11 now, strengthening communities. And the other thing  
12 I wanted to mention is with every emergency,  
13 obviously, we learn, we pivot. There always is a  
14 silver lining. One thing I would say about asylum-  
15 seekers is, as you noted, we haven't done large  
16 sheltering operations, feeding operation, all of  
17 those things since Sandy, you know, and most people  
18 have turned over in the last 12 years. So, you know,  
19 we've been using our emergency stockpile to bring out  
20 the cots and blankets and all of those thing. We  
21 have been trying new food contracts. We have a lot  
22 of city volunteers. They're volunteers in that they  
23 volunteer to do the work. We-- they are paid. But  
24 that are amazing in our site doing language access,  
25 helping with, you know, just different things along

2 the way. And so, you know, we've been looking at our  
3 assumptions, what's changed, what's worked well, and  
4 we are able to-- because that's really the most  
5 helpful when you have an actual emergency and you can  
6 test your assumptions and what worked and what  
7 didn't, and what's changed since Sandy. So we're  
8 taking all of that information in the off-season, and  
9 putting that into our hurricane plans, and that'll  
10 make the program that much stronger.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, Chair,  
12 can I just-- couple of different-- so, one I wanted  
13 to mention, you know, all of us give discretionary  
14 money to folks in our district to CBOs and all of  
15 that, some of which are food banks and things like  
16 that, and if there's a way to maybe coordinate what  
17 we're doing with what you're doing so there's no  
18 overlap and we can be helpful. Because I'm not clear  
19 on-- I mean, I know they do a lot of work, the food  
20 banks in my district, but I don't know how many,  
21 like, are for migrants, how many are for-- and so if  
22 there's a way to do that, we'd like to partner and  
23 figure that out.

24 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We'd welcome--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]

3 The other question, very different, is-- so, Notify  
4 NYC, the app, have you had an increase in people  
5 signing up? And also, can we help in terms of like  
6 just especially for these months that are emergency  
7 months or whatever that we can get the Council to put  
8 out like, hey, like, please sign up and all of that?

9 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We have seen a  
10 pretty significant increase in sign-ups for Notify  
11 NYC over the last couple of years. We can get you  
12 those exact numbers in terms of the growth in  
13 subscribers, and we would absolutely welcome your  
14 partnership. In particular, one area that we are  
15 certainly always looking for help is reaching non-  
16 English-speaking New Yorkers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Right? It's  
19 available in 14 languages. I think one of the things  
20 that internally we're always talking about is that a  
21 vast majority of those subscribers are English-  
22 speaking. And how do we really get folks that speak  
23 the other languages to sign up? Can be very  
24 difficult with some of the immigrant populations,

2 non-English-speaking populations, but would welcome  
3 your help on both fronts.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, and I  
5 just want to just mention, so I'm working with  
6 Commissioner Vasan on Healthy NYC which we-- which  
7 the Council codified and all of that. We're going to  
8 be going around, talking to different stakeholders in  
9 different communities. So, as part of that, we can  
10 add that to the equation as well.

11 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Right. We'll get  
12 you some materials on more information.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Alright. Thank  
14 you very much, Chair. Thank you very much,  
15 Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Council  
17 Member Riley?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: thank you so much,  
19 Chair, and excuse my tardiness, I had a school visit  
20 today, so that's why I'm late. I did have a bunch of  
21 questions for FDNY, so Chair, just hoping I could  
22 send you those questions so I could get those  
23 answered.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Absolutely.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Commissioner,  
3 thank you so much for being here today. Few questions  
4 really focused on flooding. I have a lot of-- my  
5 district is built around a lot of ponds, lakes, and  
6 rivers, so we do experience a lot of flooding when it  
7 rains very heavy. The Mayor did put a plan together,  
8 the Low Interest Disaster Loan Plan that just, I  
9 believe, applications were until September 4<sup>th</sup> of  
10 2024. Unfortunately, it doesn't say on the site that  
11 the Bronx is included in this plan, and we do have a  
12 lot of homes in my district that are experiencing a  
13 lot of flooding and damages during this time. So I  
14 don't know if there's any future plans to include the  
15 Bronx. Do you have any catchment areas that you're  
16 paying attention to in the Bronx? If not, would love  
17 to invite you out to speak to some of the homeowners  
18 that are experiencing this.

19 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so first off,  
20 would love to go out and speak with the homeowners.  
21 We do have catch basins in areas that are high  
22 priority areas throughout the Bronx that we pay  
23 attention to. Deepa [sic] Place is always one of  
24 them up there, but there are a number of others.  
25 We've had a number of rain events recently where we

2 had greater impacts around the Bronx River as opposed  
3 to other areas around the City, especially when you  
4 have higher amounts of rainfall or precipitation  
5 upstate, snow melt that can then cause greater  
6 inundation. And then in terms of the program, I  
7 would welcome a meeting and to talk more about that  
8 in ways that we could support your residents in your  
9 community up there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. I  
11 really appreciate that. And the last question, there  
12 has been a lot of-- according to asylum-seekers,  
13 there haven't been a lot of illegal, I guess,  
14 locations where people are hosting asylum-seekers. I  
15 believe I have a few in my district where people are  
16 utilizing homes. I even had one house in my district  
17 that had a sheet in front and it was housing asylum-  
18 seekers in the front yard. So is there any  
19 continuing plan to do outreach to see if these are  
20 possible sites that maybe you can look to house them,  
21 or I just want to know what the Administration's plan  
22 is on that.

23 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so we've now  
24 opened up, I think it's over 210. I think's 215, 217  
25 emergency sites across the City. As the Mayor has



2 made clear, we've now taken in over 180,000 asylum-  
3 seekers that we provide services to. Of that, I  
4 think we're very proud that only about 65-68,000  
5 remain in our care, and a lot of them, the vast  
6 majority, have made-- taken the next step in their  
7 journey. In terms of those sites, we're always  
8 looking to look at other sites. The City is not  
9 opening up many new sites, but we're always happy to  
10 take a look at things if you want to send us places  
11 to look at.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Alright, thank  
13 you. Thank you, Chair.

14 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I want  
16 to address artificial intelligence. So, in the  
17 November Plan, it included PEGs for \$250,000 in the  
18 out-years for software. I'm not going to pretend to  
19 pronounce the software's name. The software provides  
20 real-time AI detection of high-impact events and  
21 emerging risks from within publicly available data.  
22 How does NYCEM intend to use this software?

23 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, so we  
24 currently use Data Miner. It's just Data Miner, and  
25 it's a software platform that-- and most of the PEGs-

2 - correct me if I'm wrong here, Chris. It was  
3 around-- we have a lot of seats that we don't need to  
4 use, and then there are also seats that are used by  
5 other agencies that we wanted them to pay for the  
6 seats that they needed, but we sort of did an audit  
7 of do we need all of these seats for the Data Miner  
8 platform. And that was driving a majority of that  
9 PEG. We use this software really to maintain  
10 awareness of events that could impact City  
11 operations. It's a system that basically monitors  
12 information that's out there in the public, X, I  
13 guess not Twitter. It's what it's called now.  
14 Different messages that are out there, news alerts,  
15 and then it sort of collects that and provide and  
16 alert to our team in Watch Command so that they have  
17 a way of monitoring what is going on. Sometimes it's  
18 very accurate, but it at least gives them a signal of  
19 something that they need to pay attention to and look  
20 and then confirm if it's something that we need to  
21 respond to.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Do you think  
23 that's \$250,000 that can be used elsewhere better  
24 than--

2 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: So, it's an  
3 important part of our response, but in terms of--  
4 look, we're always looking for places to save money  
5 and if can reduce the number of seats that are used,  
6 we will, you know? And especially-- and that's one  
7 of the things we talk to our agency partners who also  
8 rely on it. You know, do they need all of their  
9 seats, or we can reduce the number of seats that they  
10 are also using.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, and I just  
12 have two questions on Floyd Bennett, believe it or  
13 not. So, we did see an evacuation for the wind  
14 incident that took place, but since then we have not  
15 had winds as high as 67 or 68 miles per hour, but we  
16 did have serious flooding there, and I just wonder  
17 why flooding is not considered a reason for  
18 evacuation of Floyd Bennett since the flooding, you  
19 know, was upward of two to three feet, and it had  
20 breached the parameter of the base camp. And what I  
21 thought to myself was this is a week day and children  
22 have to get off to school. How are they getting to  
23 the roadway from-- they have to walk through two feet  
24 of water. So I just wondered why water is not

2 considered a point of evacuation for a place that is  
3 a flood zone and a base camp?

4 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah, it's a great  
5 question. So, the elevation of Floyd Bennett Field,  
6 believe it or not, is higher than you would expect.  
7 And so the concern-- what you have seen out there,  
8 what people have seen in terms of flooding is really  
9 just rain water. It's not coastal storm surge. The  
10 big concern for that area is if we had models showing  
11 inundation of water coming in from Jamaica Bay or  
12 from the ocean. That's the type of thing where we  
13 would evacuate for a flood, but that is not something  
14 where we have ever-- we have had a forecast as of  
15 yet. We could during hurricane season, you know, if  
16 we had a zone two evacuation, that's something that  
17 we could do, but in terms of the actual water that  
18 we've had out there, it's really just been rain  
19 water. It has not been coastal storm surge. Now,  
20 sometimes that has coincided with times where we have  
21 had significant coastal storm surge in around like  
22 Howard Beach, Brighton Beach, Broad Channel were you  
23 also had heavy rains, but really all that you're  
24 seeing out there is rain which is not a danger, not a  
25 big issue. The way they built that air field, it

2 also-- they really knew how to build things back in  
3 the day, but it's crowned and so the way that it's  
4 built, the water runs off and onto the sides, and so  
5 there was never any impacts to the structures out  
6 there. It was never an unsafe condition. Whereas,  
7 if you have, you know, huge tidal waters coming in  
8 from the ocean, that is a very dangerous condition,  
9 but we have not seen that, and it is higher elevation  
10 than the surrounding areas by design.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I have no further  
12 questions. If my colleagues have any further? Then  
13 thank you very much for coming in.

14 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Thank you all so  
15 much.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I appreciate--

17 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: [inaudible]

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And I appreciate you  
19 like Council Member Schulman said, and Council Member  
20 Brewer, that you are always available and we  
21 appreciate that whether it's texting or calling, on  
22 the street, you know, boots on the ground as they  
23 say. You're always there and thank you very much.

24 COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We're going to go to  
3 the public portion of our meeting right now, our  
4 hearing. So would Nancy Carbone [sp?] please come  
5 forward? Thank you so much for coming in person.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Also, after in-person  
7 testimony, we'll be hearing from Doug Adams who's on  
8 Zoom. So, Doug, if you're available, please be ready  
9 to standby. Thank you.

10 NANCY CARBONE: Do I hold it while I  
11 speak? Thank you. Just wanted to be sure. My  
12 name's Nancy Carbone. I'm the Founder and Executive  
13 Director of Friends of Firefighters. I started  
14 Friends of Firefighters immediately following 9/11  
15 attacks, the firefighters. I went to a local  
16 firehouse to see what I could do like many, many  
17 people did. I can't cook. They would have gotten  
18 sick. I don't have money, so I couldn't give any  
19 money. And they started giving me different tasks.  
20 We need bunting for the firehouses. They needed a  
21 bugler for the funerals that they knew were coming,  
22 and then surprised me, he-- the firefighters that I  
23 met was John Sorentino [sp?], right across the bridge  
24 at 205 said we're going to need counseling. And that  
25 surprised me because my great uncle was killed line

2 of duty. These are strong members of the Fire  
3 Department that don't look for counseling. The  
4 counseling comes at-- usually as a mandate, 20 some  
5 odd years ago. So I was surprised and I did what  
6 they asked me to do, and around Christmas they asked  
7 if I would get a counseling center outside of the  
8 Fire Department because they felt that it would  
9 impact their careers if they went there. They didn't  
10 want the other members to know that they were getting  
11 counseling, but they were struggling with what they  
12 had experienced at that time at the pile. As ground  
13 zero started to be dismantled and then rebuilt, the  
14 firefighters supported me in building a center across  
15 in Red Hook, across the river. They came from ground  
16 zero to build this. So that to me, really did say  
17 that they needed help if they're going to build it  
18 themselves. It grew slowly. The Fire Department did  
19 not want me to do this. I don't have-- my husband is  
20 an artist, so I felt well, they can't fire me. They  
21 can't fire him. This is what the firefighters want,  
22 so I was very dedicated to it. I'm so proud to say  
23 that now 22+ years later, the Fire Department thinks  
24 what we're doing is fantastic. They actually have  
25 called and asked us to help them with situations, the

2 Counseling Services Unit of the Fire Department are  
3 sending us firefighters, family members, and so I the  
4 medical office. So, we're a victim of our own  
5 success. We didn't know this would happen, but I  
6 will tell you it doesn't seem to be slowing down at  
7 all. We have a 307 percent increase in use of our  
8 services from 2018 to now. I think a lot of it is  
9 COVID. I think a lot of families have been impacted  
10 so devastatingly that we're seeing trouble with the  
11 children. So we do see children. We see active and  
12 retired firefighters, and we have to see their  
13 families, because if you're not helping the families,  
14 you're really not helping the first responder. So,  
15 they have a very heavy load, as you're all aware, and  
16 I thank you so much. I should have started with the  
17 thanks. Thank you so much for allowing me to sit  
18 here, but also thank you for your support because you  
19 understand what the first responders go through.  
20 We're independent from the Fire Department, and while  
21 they do call us in, we do not share any information.  
22 And to make it more comfortable, I think, for the  
23 first responders, we operate out of an old firehouse  
24 that's privately owned, not by us, unfortunately, in  
25 Red Hook. During Hurricane Sandy we were flooded.



2 We had about four feet of water, which I took on as a  
3 challenge, and I was so silly. I just said we're  
4 going to be back tomorrow. What we did was we sort  
5 of abandoned the firehouse and we went to the  
6 affected areas, and over the next week or two  
7 firefighters came in in their own RV from Michigan,  
8 Texas, mostly New Orleans, and they wanted to  
9 volunteer. I went out and got 14 bunk beds and we  
10 became a center where we would deploy people 28 at a  
11 time. So we did-- we pumped out over 110 houses in  
12 Breezy [sic], in Staten Island, in Garrison. You name  
13 it, we were there. If it was wet, we were there, and  
14 we split up the groups, and as a result of that, the  
15 Fire Department started to look at us differently,  
16 because we don't have the restrictions the job does.  
17 We're able to have our counselors nights and  
18 weekends. They're not. We're able to cross lines  
19 that they're prohibited from. So they, I think, saw  
20 our value then, and now they're calling us. We don't  
21 take money from the Fire Department because I will  
22 not exchange identities of who comes to us. So, I  
23 didn't want to get into a relationship where we would  
24 then have to give them information. We do not accept  
25 social security numbers for that very reason. In the

2 very beginning, we didn't even get names. We got  
3 chicken scratches, four scratches and a line through.  
4 So what we are now is we're operating very  
5 successfully, so successfully that we're-- we need  
6 money so bad, and the reason why is that we're  
7 trusted. We operate out of the firehouse. The  
8 firefighters are very involved with this. We have  
9 what's called the Kitchen Table and the Kitchen  
10 Talks. They come for breakfast. It demystifies the  
11 process of counseling and they're comfortable, but  
12 better than that, they're going back and telling the  
13 others they should take advantage of this. We're  
14 hoping to expand to EMS, but without securing the  
15 financial backing for what we're already doing with  
16 Friends of Firefighters, we cannot launch our what we  
17 call Star of Life Program that will be dedicated to  
18 EMS. With funding, we'd be able to do both, and  
19 that's what we're hoping to get.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And you have  
21 applied?

22 NANCY CARBONE: I'm sorry, say again.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: You of course have  
24 applied for funding?

25 NANCY CARBONE: Oh, heck, yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

3 NANCY CARBONE: Yeah, Joe's been working  
4 on this like constantly.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

6 NANCY CARBONE: And I have as well, but I  
7 just want to say over the years we have gotten  
8 funding from the City Council, and it's made all the  
9 difference in the world. It's kept our doors open,  
10 but now the demand is so high that I'm asking that  
11 all of you help us to stay open, and grow with them,  
12 because the need is really tremendous. The other  
13 thing I wasn't here before. Joe was. The ion  
14 batteries, that's a whole 'nother way of  
15 firefighting, and that's a whole 'nother thing. We  
16 also have the 9/11 cancers. So these are new  
17 challenges for our Fire Department, and I know that  
18 you're very well aware of them, so I won't--

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] 100  
20 percent. And I thank you for your testimony and for  
21 the good work that you do.

22 NANCY CARBONE: It's an honor. Thank you  
23 very much

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll turn to  
3 Doug Adams. Doug is joining us on Zoom. Doug, are  
4 you present? I see you--

5 DOUG ADAMS: Hello?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hello. You may go  
7 ahead.

8 DOUG ADAMS: Hi, how are you?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 DOUG ADAMS: Thank you for your time. My  
11 name is Doug Adams. I'm a board member of the Exam  
12 569 Lieutenant Eligible's Group for the Fire  
13 Department. We just want to jump off what Mike  
14 Tracey said earlier. The delay in promoting off the  
15 exam has caused a staffing and public safety-- in  
16 turn a public safety crisis for the City. So what  
17 we're asking for now through the Board here is if we  
18 can graciously expeditiously ask the Mayor to make a  
19 decision on the promotions in the list. We can't  
20 really go any further until he does, and if we could,  
21 as I said, respectfully ask him to make a decision.  
22 We've been waiting at least six months for this.  
23 Councilwoman Ariola, thank you for all your help, and  
24 if there's any questions, I believe you have the  
25 contact for our group. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your  
3 testimony, and I just would like to let you know  
4 where we are on that, because this committee is very  
5 involved in that particular promotional exam and  
6 making sure that lieutenants are promoted. And we  
7 have spoken now directly with the Mayor and we are  
8 awaiting a response, and we all want the same  
9 resolve, the Mayor's Office, the Fire Department, and  
10 our committee, and of course, you as a person who's  
11 on that eligible's list. But it has been brought  
12 directly to the Mayor, and we are awaiting his  
13 response. We thank you for your service. Thank you.

14 DOUG ADAMS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If there's anyone  
16 else from the public or online that wants to testify,  
17 we're going to leave the hearing open until 1:15.  
18 Thank you so much. Thank you everyone who testified  
19 today. We're confirming that there are no other  
20 public speakers in the Chamber and on Zoom, and this  
21 concludes the Fire and Emergency Management budget  
22 hearing for today. Thank you all.

23 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 10, 2024