

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND
BUILDINGS

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May 4, 2021
Start: 10:33 a.m.
Recess: 12:00 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Fernando Cabrera
Margaret S. Chin
Mark Gjonaj
Barry Grodenchik
Farah N. Louis
Bill Perkins
Carlina Rivera
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Melanie La Rocca
Commissioner
Department of Buildings

Ryan Modell

Laura Rothrock

Stephen Pierson

Joalis Silva

Lyric Thompson

Joel Kupferman

Manjari Sharma

Maria Lupianez

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Cloud has started.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Backup is rolling.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS LUGO: Thank you.

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Sergeant Martinez, with your opening statement,

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please.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS MARTINEZ: Good morning,

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and welcome to today's remote New York City Council

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hearing of the Committee on Housing and Buildings.

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At this time would all panelists please turn on their

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video for verification purposes. To minimize

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disruption, please silence your electronic devices,

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and if you wish to submit testimony you may do so via

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email at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that

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email address is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank

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you for your cooperation, and we're ready to begin.

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CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: We're ready?

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[gavel] Good morning, everyone. I'm Council Member

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Robert Cornegy, chair of the Committee on Housing and

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Buildings. Today the committee will hear seven

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bills. I'll introduce each bill in turn. First,

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Intro 354, sponsored by Council Member Helen

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Rosenthal, would increase penalties for demolishing

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or altering a building without a Department of

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Buildings issued permit when such a building is

1 calendered for consideration by Landmarks
2 Preservation Commission. Second, Intro 1127,
3 sponsored by Council Member Holden, would require the
4 Department of Buildings to expedite work permits
5 where they are necessary for ongoing work to proceed.
6 This legislation would also require DOB to expedite
7 amendments to permit applications. Third, Intro
8 number 1336, sponsored by Council Member Moya, would
9 require the Department of Buildings to collect
10 information regarding insurance coverage available at
11 construction sites and to store this information in a
12 public online database. Fourth, Intro number 1635,
13 sponsored by Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo, would
14 require the Public Design Commission to solicit works
15 of art from the public for possible display on
16 sidewalk sheds at construction sites. Fifth, Intro
17 number 1667, sponsored by Council Member Steve Levin,
18 would require contractors to report on
19 environmentally monitoring of construction or
20 demolition work to both DOB and the Department of
21 Environmental Protection. This legislation would
22 also require contractors to post this environmental
23 monitoring information at construction sites. Sixth,
24 Intro number 1737, sponsored by Council Member
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2 Rivera, would require that an after-hours variance
3 issued for public safety purposes expire 15 days
4 after issuance. It would also limit the number of
5 days, um, ah, an AHV application could request an
6 AHV, restrict the hours for which an AHV could be
7 issued, and require DEP to provide written
8 explanations for its AHV issuance decisions. DEP
9 could be required to report to the council and
10 [inaudible] administration of the AHV process.
11 Finally, we'll hear proposed Intro number 1939-A,
12 sponsored by Council Member Alan Maisel. This
13 legislation would require newly constructed and
14 substantially renovated nursing homes, adult homes,
15 and risk housing, and certain assisted-living
16 facilities to have stand-by power sufficient to run
17 essential appliances and utilities for no less than
18 72 hours. I look forward to hearing testimony
19 related to these bills from the Department of
20 Buildings and interested members of the public. Ah,
21 before we move on, I want to acknowledge the presence
22 of my colleagues. I can't see them, so if someone
23 else, ah, preferably, ah, Committee Counsel, ah,
24 would identify the members.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure. Right now we
3 have Council Members Louis, um, Perkins, Rosenthal,
4 and Gjonaj.

5 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you. I'd
6 like to also, I'd like to thank my colleagues from
7 the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I'd also
8 like to thank bill sponsors for who, who are present
9 today. For those who have opening statements, we'll
10 hear those statements during the question and answer
11 portion of the hearing following administration
12 testimony. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks, everybody.
14 Um, I'm Austin Branford. I'm counsel to the City
15 Council's Committee on Housing and Buildings. Before
16 we get started, I want to remind everyone that you'll
17 be on mute until you are called on to testify, at
18 which point you will be unmuted. During the hearing
19 if council members would like to ask a question,
20 please use the Zoom hand raise function and I will
21 call on you in order. We will be limiting Council
22 Member questions to three minutes, including
23 responses. Bill sponsors making opening statements
24 during the Q&A portion of the hearing will have five
25 minutes. We will first be hearing testimony from the

1 administration, which will be followed by council
2 member questions, beginning with the sponsors of the
3 bills we hearing today. This will be followed by
4 testimony from members of the public. From the
5 administration, we will hear from the Department of
6 Buildings, represented by Commissioner Melanie La
7 Rocca. I'll now administer the oath. After the oath
8 I will call on you to affirm for the record.

9 Commissioner La Rocca, please raise your right hand.

10 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
11 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
12 respond honestly to council member questions? Oh, we
13 can't hear you. We seem to have lost audio.

14
15 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Yes.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, there you are.

17 Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Sorry.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can start when
20 you're ready.

21 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Good morning,
22 Chair Cornegy, and members of the Committee on
23 Housing and Buildings. I'm Melanie La Rocca,
24 commissioner of the New York City Department of
25 Buildings and I'm pleased to be here to discuss the

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2 legislation before the committee, which touches on
3 several different aspects of our work. Intro 354
4 creates a new penalty for altering or demolishing a
5 building that has been calendared by the Landmarks
6 Preservation Commission without a permit issued by
7 the department. We take very seriously any
8 construction work that occurs without a required
9 permit and support imposing penalties where a
10 building calendared by LPC is altered or demolished
11 without a permit. Intro 1127 requires the department
12 to issue permits when five days where work on a
13 building is in progress and additional permits are
14 needed to proceed with such work. The department is
15 opposed to this legislation given that it presents
16 operational challenges and does not improve upon
17 existing processes. Permit applications are reviewed
18 and permits are issued in the order for which they
19 are applied. This proposal could result in
20 disruption to service levels for our customers
21 seeking to begin a project or continue a construction
22 project. It should also be noted that we review
23 applications submitted in connection with
24 construction projects expeditiously and can issue
25 permits shortly thereafter. Additionally,

1 applications submitted to the department can be
2 professionally certified by a registered design
3 professional, in which case a permit could be issued
4 instantaneously. Last year we also launched our
5 online customer service dashboard, which is a new
6 online tool that allows the public to understand the
7 wait times they should expect when starting a
8 construction project. Intro 1366 requires the
9 department to collect insurance information from
10 contractors to make such information available
11 online. We support this legislation as it enhances
12 our current practice and continues our commitment to
13 transparency. Contractors are required to submit
14 proof that they, that they comply with applicable
15 insurance requirements at the time they are seeking a
16 license or registering with the department. And that
17 insurance must be maintained when they're engaging in
18 a construction project. Intro 1635 allows for art to
19 be displayed on temporary construction equipment,
20 which includes sidewalk sheds and construction
21 benches. Temporary construction equipment is
22 required to protect the public from construction
23 activity, but there is no reason why these structures
24 can't be beautiful as well. The City Canvas pilot
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1 program, pardon me, which we have implemented in
2 collaboration with our partners at the Department of
3 Cultural Affairs, already allows for art on certain
4 temporary construction equipment. It is a great
5 example of how art and temporary construction
6 equipment can come together to improve the pedestrian
7 experience and create opportunities for artists to
8 present their work. We support this program and look
9 forward to working with our partner agencies as well
10 as the City Council to create permanent pathways for
11 art to be displayed on certain temporary construction
12 [inaudible] both city-owned and private moving
13 forward, provided that this shared goal can be
14 achieved safely. Intro 1667 requires contractors,
15 ah, contractors that are mandated to create a plan
16 relating to environmental conditions created by
17 construction or demolition work, to submit such plans
18 and report additional information to the Department
19 of Environmental Protection as well as the Department
20 of Buildings. Contractors are already required to
21 control for airborne contaminants and must mitigate
22 noise during certain construction operations. Noise
23 mitigation plans must be prepared and submitted to
24 DEP online and contact information for the contractor
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1 providing work for which such plans have been
2 submitted must be made publicly available at
3 construction sites. DOB would welcome the
4 opportunity to discuss this legislation further with
5 this committee to better understand how these
6 proposals interact with existing requirements
7 contractors must already comply with. Intro 1737
8 establishes restrictions on issuances of after-hour
9 variances, which allows construction work to occur
10 before 7:00 a.m., after 6:00 p.m., or on the weekend.
11 Restrictions including placing limits on the hours
12 that an AHV can be issued for work and the number of
13 days an AHV can be requested. The legislation also
14 requires reporting regarding the AHV issued in the
15 preceding year. We understand the impact
16 construction has on the community and are committed
17 to increasing transparency around the issuance of
18 AHVs. On a weekly basis the department already sends
19 reports on AHVs issued to community members,
20 including elected officials and community boards, so
21 that they have relevant information about after-hour
22 construction going on in their neighborhood.
23 Additionally, the department has released an
24 interactive map that shows the location of each
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1 construction projection for which an AHV has been
2 issued, including the dates for which such AHV was
3 issued and the reason why it was issued. The COVID-
4 19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on many
5 industries, including the construction industry. As
6 the department visited construction sites throughout
7 the city last year to conduct proactive inspections
8 we found that many sites were closed for several
9 months. The department urges this committee to
10 consider the impacts placing restrictions on the
11 issuance of AHVs would have on the recovery of the
12 construction industry. We are committed to working
13 with this committee and our industry partners to
14 balance community interest with the need for
15 construction to continue in a safe manner and look
16 forward to discussing this issue further. Finally,
17 Intro 1939 requires certain new buildings, including
18 nursing homes, adult homes, and assisted living
19 facilities to be provided with standby power systems
20 capable of providing power for at least 72 hours for
21 certain building systems, including elevators,
22 cooling and heating, refrigeration, and lighting.
23 Standby power systems can improve safety in the event
24 of an emergency, including a power outage. The
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2 department is supportive of this legislation given
3 that it can improve safety in a building that will
4 house vulnerable populations, and we look forward to
5 working together on this issue. Thank you again for
6 the opportunity to testify before you today, and I
7 would welcome any questions you may have.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. I'll now turn it over to questions
10 from Chair Cornegy, but first I want to acknowledge
11 we are also joined by Council Members Chin, Cabrera,
12 Grodenchik, and Cumbo. As a reminder, if other
13 council members would like to ask a question just use
14 the Zoom raise hand function and I'll call on you in
15 order. Chair Cornegy?

16 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, good morning,
17 Commissioner, it's always great to see you. Ah, I
18 have a few questions. I'm going to start with, ah,
19 Intro 354, which, as you know, is a local law to
20 amend the administrative code in relationship to
21 penalties for the unauthorized alteration or
22 demolition of premises calendared by the Landmarks
23 Preservation Commission. Ah, for some of us who are
24 in increasing gentrifying areas that have very
25 valuable assets in our architecture and our property,

1 landmarks preservation has created a pathway to some
2 level of conserving the, um, the integrity of, of
3 communities, especially in brownstone and limestone
4 areas, like I represent. Ah, how did, how do the
5 Department of Buildings and Landmarks Preservation
6 keep track of buildings that have been recommended
7 for landmark status, and is there communication about
8 that, between the two offices?
9

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Certainly, thank
11 you, Chair, for that great question. Yes, there is
12 definitely, ah, ah, a very robust level of
13 communication between LPC and my agency. Um, we do
14 at the Department of Buildings keep track of
15 buildings that have been landmarked and that is
16 information that is available to our plan examiners
17 and as well as constant communication with the, the
18 LPC with Landmarks Preservation Commission on
19 buildings, um, for which they are seeking
20 calendaring.

21 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So can you, if you
22 don't mind, could you walk us through how both
23 agencies, or both offices, communicate when a
24 building is recommended for landmark status? Oh, I'm
25 sorry.

2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Certainly. So...

3 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: When, when it is
4 recommended for landmark status, I hate these, I hate
5 these multilevel questions, but, ah, when it's, ah,
6 recommended for landmark status, when inspections are
7 conducted and, ah, when, ah, permits are filed. Like
8 what is, what's the interaction generally during
9 those periods?

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Certainly. So as
11 you know, when LPC is advancing a project, um, we are
12 made aware of their calendaring of properties. Um,
13 as it relates to the intersect of that work with our,
14 ah, required review of application, um, we do, ah,
15 have a certain amount of period by which we're
16 required to act should we have, ah, plans filed.
17 Now, um, when it comes to work on existing buildings,
18 just to give a sort of, a, a sense of the
19 collaboration, ah, throughout the city, obviously
20 there are, there are a number of properties that are
21 landmarked. Um, we do ensure that we have that
22 information of each individual building that is
23 landmarked as well as those that are calendered so
24 that our plan examiners who are reviewing any
25 submittal are aware of the LPC designation. I will

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2 note that there are instances where work may be
3 happening on a landmark property, for example, um,
4 where permits are not required from the department
5 but, ah, LPC, ah, approval is required, and so there
6 is certainly a heavy overlap, but there definitely
7 are instances where our involvement is, ah, limited,
8 um, to the extent where we're not issuing permits
9 because the work, ah, does not require that, but
10 certainly LPC's approval, ah, is always in place.

11 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, so I'm curious.
12 What triggers, ah, a complaint of unauthorized
13 alterations of [inaudible]? Is it, is it inspections
14 that trigger a complaint or is it reporting that
15 triggers that complaint?

16 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Ah, typically,
17 and I would say for any building in the city,
18 typically, um, ah, it is generated through a
19 complaint from a members of the public, whether that
20 be an elected official or, um, you know, any, any
21 sort of regular citizen calling in 311, where they
22 see activity but don't see a permit displayed
23 publicly, or even in instances where there is a
24 public, but they, ah, sorry, a permit publicly
25 displayed but they believe that there is work going

1 on that is beyond the scope of that permitted, ah,
2 work. That is typically, um, how those complaints
3 are, are made to the department.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, in 2019 and
6 2020 approximately how many properties were
7 calendared by LPC for landmark status, or to?

8 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Ah, between,
9 sure, between, ah, that period, 2019 and 2020, there
10 were, um, 732 buildings, ah, that were designated and
11 calendared, ah, as landmarks by the LPC.

12 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: How many of those
13 properties had previously received complaints for
14 unauthorized alterations or demolition work?

15 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Um, we are not
16 aware of any complaints for unauthorized
17 construction, ah, involving any of those buildings.

18 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: This, this is New
19 York City and there's some very unscrupulous people
20 here, so I would find, I would find that hard to
21 believe it during that calendar period, except for
22 the fact that it was a difficult time during that
23 period, so, um, I'm, I'm a little surprised. Ah, how
24 does DOB currently track buildings when unauthorized
25 alterations and demolitions, ah, have occurred?

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2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: So, again,
3 broadly speaking, ah, for any property type across
4 the city our typical pathway for complaints about
5 that, ah, ah, work of that nature is through 311, ah,
6 and then depending on the building type there are
7 certain actions that are required thereafter, ah, if
8 it is an occupied building, um, an occupied multiple
9 dwelling, sorry. There are certain requirements that
10 the council has placed through various pieces of
11 legislation that will require us to take action on
12 that owner, ah, in different ways. So depending on
13 the type, ah, of building, but always, ah, ah, the
14 way the complaint starts, our action starts, is, um,
15 through complaints generated by the public.

16 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: And, ah, does LPC
17 have a role and/or responsibility in that process?

18 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Our conversations
19 with LPC are, again, you know, we have many
20 conversations with LPC around the buildings that they
21 have calendared and/or designated and certainly if we
22 were to find an instance, ah, of a building that was
23 designated, for example, as a landmark in the city
24 where we had unauthorized construction, ah, we would
25 certainly collaborate on enforcement because there

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2 are, you know, um, there would be, ah, enforcement
3 likely on both ends.

4 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, is, is, is this
5 information, ah, publicly available currently?

6 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: The information
7 of the number of buildings where we've had
8 complaints?

9 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Um, you know, I
11 have to check to see if we have that information, ah,
12 in such a way that would be easy for the public to
13 ascertain.

14 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: And what's the
15 current process for obtaining a DOB-issued permit for
16 demolishing or altering a building?

17 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: So currently
18 speaking, again, if it were broadly speaking, ah, a
19 registered design professional would be applying to
20 the Department of Buildings for an alteration,
21 depending on the type. Ah, you'd be doing a major
22 alteration or a minor alteration, and if it is a
23 demolition of a property you'd be applying for a full
24 demolition of that property. So that would, that
25 would take you through a plan review process, um, and

1 following that there are certain requirements, um,
2 that we have in place to ensure that the property is
3 able in the, ah, example of a demolition, that the
4 property is actual able to be demolished. Ah, so we
5 would be doing inspections prior to demolition, ah,
6 to ensure all the conditions and the plans are there
7 and that all the safety requirements we have are met.
8 Um, should that happen a permit would be issued and
9 then the work would proceed from there.

11 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Um, so this, this
12 is a rather substantive suite of bills and I know
13 that the administration has said that they're in
14 support of some and not supportive of others. On
15 Intro 354 where do you stand in terms of being
16 supportive or not supportive?

17 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Ah, on Intro 354
18 as it relates to increasing, ah, creating new
19 penalties for alternating or demolishing a building,
20 um, we certainly are supportive of any, ah, such
21 proposal that would, um, strengthen our enforcement,
22 ah, abilities.

23 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: OK. And then, ah,
24 the other, what are the concerns about the other
25 components to the bill that you're not supportive of?

2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: With respect to
3 354?

4 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Ah, I think we
6 are, generally speaking, supportive of 354, period.

7 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: All right. Thank
8 you. Um, I am going to allow for my colleagues to
9 ask some questions and I'll come back with, with a
10 second round on some of the other bills. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
12 Cornegy. I'll now call on, call on other members to
13 ask questions, starting with sponsors of the bill we
14 are, we are hearing today, ah, the bills we're
15 hearing today, pardon me. Um, so far we know that
16 there are opening statements coming from Council
17 Members Cumbo and Rosenthal, so we'll start there.
18 Um, bill sponsors making opening to be limited to
19 five minutes. Other council members please keep your
20 question to three minutes, including responses. If
21 there's a second round of questioning council members
22 questions will be limited to two minutes. Council
23 Member Cumbo?

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you. Good
3 morning. I first want to thank Chair Cornegy for
4 putting together this hearing. This is really
5 critical and I'm so glad and pleased, um, that so
6 many important bills in terms of improving, um, the
7 aesthetics, but most importantly the safety of
8 building and construction in the City of New York is
9 prioritized at this time. Intro 1635 provides an
10 opportunity for sidewalk sheds, or as most people
11 know it, sidewalk scaffolding, to be a blank canvas
12 for artists. New York City is the cultural capital
13 of the world. And every square inch of it should be
14 reflective of our, our artists, our creativity, our
15 innovation. Art is synonymous with the City of New
16 York. As currently written, the bill would require
17 the Public Design Commission to solicit and approve
18 four works of art from the public in consultation
19 with the Department of Buildings and Department of
20 Cultural Affairs. Building owners would be allowed
21 to install these works of art instead of the standard
22 green that dot our city's public spaces and frankly
23 quite boring, uninspiring, and really a wasted
24 opportunity for the City of New York to explore and
25 to imagine and to celebrate all of the creativity

1 that makes up New York City. There is over 300 miles
2 of scaffolding in New York City. Organizations like
3 the Studio Museum in Harlem and Art Bridge, thanks to
4 DCLA's City Canvas program have already shown us the
5 magnificent possibilities that our local artists can
6 have on the urban pedestrian experience. I hope to
7 see this bill improved and passed prior to the end of
8 my term. The city needs and can have more vibrancy,
9 more culture, and more opportunities for its artistic
10 community through this legislation, beyond the drab
11 green so ever present today. I am eager to hear
12 suggestions on the bill from the public and our city
13 agencies today. But I just want to close by, ah,
14 thanking, ah, Jason Herm, my legislative director.
15 Ah, I want to thank certainly [inaudible] and Chair
16 Cornegy for hosting this and seeing this as important
17 during this really particular, um, time in our
18 history. And I just want to say so many artists
19 throughout the New York, throughout New York City are
20 looking for so many ways to express themselves, to
21 put [inaudible] communities of color, scaffolding has
22 been, ah, a dark cloud over their community. It
23 would be important for us to be able to open up the
24 city with this vibrancy all throughout our 300 miles
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2 of available space. Thank you. I just want to add
3 at this time are we reading our opening statements
4 and then doing questions, or reading our opening
5 statements and then going back for a round of
6 questions?

7 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, it is my
8 understanding that you're reading your opening
9 statement and then asking your questions if you'd
10 like. Ah, but I...

11 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: All right.

12 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I have a question
13 for you. Um, ah, the, the bill...

14 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: You have a
15 question for me, Council Member Cornegy?

16 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Yes, Madam Majority
17 Leader.

18 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: It's a little
19 unorthodox, but let's go for it.

20 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Exactly. This is
21 [inaudible] it's how I run my hearings. No, but in
22 all seriousness, I know that art is curated, ah,
23 through time periods. Um, the, the bill doesn't
24 specifically state the amount of time that, you know,
25 'cause these are regular artists, this is not, you

1 know, graffiti art, with all due respect, it's not
2 graffiti artists. These are, you're, you're
3 proposing that, that, that regular, um, ah, ah,
4 artists, local artists, get this opportunity. Were
5 you, were you referring to curating this art in the
6 same way, with the same timeframes, ah, that are
7 suggested in galleries?

9 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I can hear you,
11 yes.

12 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: We had some
13 technical difficulties. Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Yes, I can hear
15 you, Madam Majority Leader.

16 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Your, your
17 question got cut off. You were, you were talking
18 about, um, you were talking about the magnificent
19 talent of our graffiti artists throughout New York
20 City. Go on.

21 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Absolutely. And
22 whether or not your proposal includes the timeframes
23 that are generally associated with the curating of
24 art in, in gallery spaces?

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2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: So the way this
3 legislation was planned or proposed would be after,
4 scaffolding can sometimes go up for a couple of days,
5 a couple of weeks, or even a couple of months. So
6 this would be, as was designed, this wouldn't be for
7 like temporary for a week or two, or this would be
8 more so for long-term, um, projects that potentially
9 three months or more, um, would be eligible for this
10 type of scaffolding, um, with artistry, um,
11 superimposed on it. So the goal for this would be
12 for it to stay with the life of the scaffolding, um,
13 until it is taken down or removed. Um, the goal of
14 this also would be, we're hoping in New York City,
15 that we can create a way, particularly in our NYCHA
16 and public housing developments, one, to beautify,
17 um, scaffolding, but also to create an environment
18 where scaffolding is utilized not as almost a
19 permanent fixture of the architecture of the
20 building, but that it's taken down rapidly as well.
21 So this would be something to beautify the
22 neighborhood for temporary, ah, scaffolding projects
23 and taken down, but with approvals from the
24 Department of Cultural Affairs, um, to ensure that
25 it's reflective of the community, um, where it's

1
2 going be seen, as well as the Public Design
3 Commission.

4 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So it, it, it is
5 that, again, I think the bill, the bill is great,
6 but, um, but, not but. Ben Kallos and myself have
7 worked diligently to decrease the amount of
8 scaffolding that we're seeing and I wouldn't want
9 then think that, you know, their, their art isn't
10 valued. Like we've, I've put in several pieces of
11 legislation because scaffolding, unfortunately in the
12 City of New York, has been used, ah, not in its
13 correct form in some instances. It's actually, you
14 know, some developers have, have used it and would
15 actually rather pay the fines and have the
16 scaffolding up for, for way past the extended time
17 than actually [inaudible] repairs. So as [inaudible]
18 through that to make sure that we can provide safety,
19 ah, around scaffolding and that the scaffolding isn't
20 being, ah, used and abused inappropriately, um...

21 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: ...[inaudible]
23 great program. So I, I, I look forward to working
24 with you to make sure that we get the best out of,
25 ah, this opportunity.

1
2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you so
3 much, and, you know, scaffolding is always gonna be
4 part of the construction process. I mean, New York
5 City is going to continue to build. It's going to
6 continue to demolish. It's going to do, it's going
7 to continue to go through that cycle. But
8 essentially what this bill is saying is that that
9 process does not have to be a blight on the
10 community. It can be done in a way that during that
11 time that artwork is utilized for that purpose. Now,
12 we're still gonna be working out the logistics in
13 terms of will it be work that will be pre-printed and
14 then imposed on the scaffolding, or will artists
15 create the work strictly right onto the, um, the
16 wooden boards that are used for the scaffolding. So
17 those types of dynamics have to still be worked out.

18 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I look forward to
19 working with you on it, ah, Madam Majority Leader.

20 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you. And
21 just think about it in terms of schools that are in
22 the nearby neighborhood that would be able to have
23 their work, schoolchildren would be able to have
24 their work on a mural, um, in their community. We
25 can have our senior centers doing work in their

1
2 community. Ah, local artists would have an
3 opportunity to reimagine how they see their space and
4 to impose art within, ah, the community space. So
5 there's a lot of excitement, um, that can happen
6 there. So I'll just...

7 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: [inaudible] your
8 energy, Madam Majority Leader.

9 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: You know how I
10 am. So is it, is it time for me to ask the
11 commissioner questions, or do you still have
12 questions for me, Chair Cornegy?

13 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: No, I think, I
14 think I'm done, I'm done. Thank you so much, Madam
15 Majority Leader, for answering my questions.

16 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you. So I
17 just wanted to, um, ask in terms of this particular
18 legislation, I guess the million-dollar question, how
19 does the administration feel about this particular,
20 ah, legislation, Intro 1635?

21 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: So with respect
22 to the Intro, as I mentioned in my testimony, we're
23 supportive of creating a permanent pathway for art,
24 ah, on both public and private properties, ah, to be
25 displayed on our temporary construction equipment.

1
2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: And how do you
3 feel currently as the bill is written, it's, not to,
4 not to my liking, but it's limited now at four. What
5 do you think that the administration, what would be a
6 comfortable number that the administration feels that
7 they could ramp up to, um, in order to be able to
8 provide, ah, this opportunity for artists in the
9 community?

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: I would say this.
11 Our investment with beautification, ah, ah, temporary
12 construction equipment, sidewalk sheds, are the most
13 common of them, um, has been through the City Canvas
14 pilot program, where obviously we're working very
15 closely with, ah, our colleagues at Cultural Affairs.
16 I don't believe the Department of Buildings, while we
17 fully support any opportunity to beautify, ah, our
18 temporary construction system, ah, equipment, pardon
19 me, and I just do want to say philosophically we do
20 believe that there is, ah, a very appropriate
21 connection between, um, taking what is required by
22 code for public protection and allowing a community
23 to enhance it and truly create a dynamic street,
24 streetscape, pardon me, instead of just relying on
25 the code required hunter green, ah, which is what our

1 sheds are currently. So we're fundamentally in
2 agreement. We do believe that things can be safe and
3 beautiful at the same time and create dynamic
4 streetscapes for a community to really celebrate
5 their local artists or, you know, even more broadly.
6 Um, I don't think, though, that it's really the
7 Department of Buildings', ah, place to talk about
8 what is the level of, ah, or number of, ah, art, ah,
9 ah, sort of samples, if you will. I really, I'm
10 gonna defer to my colleagues at DCA who, ah,
11 Department of Cultural Affairs, pardon me, who are
12 far more, ah, expert in that. Um, but I will say
13 this. We are fundamentally supportive of the notion
14 that, ah, required safety, ah, temporary equipment
15 can in fact be, um, additive to a community instead
16 of taking, ah, from them.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: And I'll just add
20 this one question and then move on. Um, do you have
21 any experiences in terms of hearing or understanding
22 feedback from the Art Bridge program? Was there some
23 sort of assessment done to determine what were the
24 pros and the cons of that program? Um, how was it
25 received by the community or, and/or developers,

1 landlords, in terms of how this project was done and
2 implemented?
3

4 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: I don't know the
5 specifics on whether somebody has looked back at the
6 Art Bridge, ah, pilot to see if there were pros or
7 cons that have come from that. But I, I will say,
8 ah, that it is certainly true that I have heard from
9 a handful of, ah, developers and other property
10 owners who are generally interested in, ah, finding a
11 way, ah, to enhance their required public protection,
12 whether it be through art or a, ah, loosening of, um,
13 ah, the code mandates on colors. And it is worth
14 noting the pilot is not over yet. We, we still do
15 have a, a number of months left in the pilot. So
16 there still is opportunity to see more and learn
17 more, um, but it is certainly true that, that we've
18 heard interest from owners and property, ah, you
19 know, neighborhood associations, um, that are
20 definitely keenly interested on, on, ah,
21 beautification for these structures.

22 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: OK. Um, well,
23 thank you. If there is an opportunity for another
24 round of questions I'm here. Um, so I will turn it
25 back over to Chair Cornegy.

1 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 34
2 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you, Madam
3 Majority Leader. Next up, I don't, I can't see, I
4 think it's Margaret Chin [inaudible].

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [inaudible] hearing
6 and opening and questions from Council Member
7 Rosenthal, followed by opening and questions from
8 Council Member Rivera.

9 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great. Thank
12 you, thank you so much. Thank you, Chair Cornegy,
13 for holding this important hearing, and I really
14 appreciated your questions about my bill and, ah, I
15 will, I'd like to continue on those in one quick
16 second. Commissioner, always great to see you.
17 Appreciate your time and effort, um, I really
18 appreciate the work that you're doing at buildings.
19 Ah, so Intro 354 is a very straightforward mandate
20 that applies penalties to unauthorized demolitions
21 and alterations to building calendared for
22 consideration, ah, by the Landmarks Preservation
23 Commission. Emphasize calendared because I'm getting
24 across the point that it's already part of the city
25 agency process. Over the years a significant number

1
2 of historic buildings in our city have been torn down
3 or altered beyond recognition while they were being
4 considered for protected status. Such actions are
5 fundamentally criminal. My legislation targets
6 developers who are determined to secure a site, so
7 determined to secure a site that they'll defy a city
8 order and illegally tear down that building or tear
9 down the artifacts on the building which make it so
10 special without consideration for its history or even
11 for the safety o for the community around it.
12 Illegal demolitions take place at night without
13 proper permits and sometimes without gas,
14 electricity, or water shut off. Developers are not
15 above the law. We have a well established process
16 that's supposed to give the city and local
17 communities an opportunity to consider whether a
18 structure should be saved. New York City's built
19 environment reflects our and complicated history and
20 the demolition of older buildings in the middle of
21 the night is a matter of concern to all of us. Above
22 all else, any demolition should be managed safely and
23 in full view of the public. And let me give you one
24 example, Commissioner. Um, during my tenure, I think
25 in the first couple years, ah, a developer purchased

1 a building even called the Carriage House, um, with
2 beautiful artifacts of, ah, um, horses and, and sort
3 of wreaths around them, um, and even though that
4 building was now used not as a carriage house but as
5 bars, um, or another one as a parking garage, um,
6 they still reflected the history of our city, um, but
7 the developer in the middle of the night, despite the
8 fact that the community and community groups had it
9 landmarked, um, on the calendar for landmarking, in
10 the middle of the night the developer just
11 demolished, um, the artifacts. And so, you know, I
12 know penalties are harsh and I know these seem large,
13 um, but the impact that that these developers have,
14 given that they're unscrupulous, I think, you know,
15 they need to in some way be held accountable for
16 their action. Obviously what would be even better is
17 if they stopped it and there were some way to have a
18 system to do that. Um, sorry, I'm about to sneeze.
19 But, you know, they do this in middle of the night.
20 It's not like even if we require, I mean, so, they do
21 it in the dead of night. Ah, they don't care about
22 permits, and so we're looking for something that we
23 can do, um, and I appreciate Chair Cornegy's, ah,
24 comments about his district, um, they're coming for
25

1
2 you next, Chair Cornegy. Ah, so I'm curious what you
3 think about this, Commissioner, and if you have ideas
4 to make the bill even stronger or whether you, how
5 you think we should proceed?

6 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: So I hear the
7 concern, right, and I think it's just important to
8 say up front yes, we are supportive of any, ah,
9 penalties or a penalty regimen, if you will, um, that
10 reinforces our commitment to insuring that owners are
11 held accountable when they do unpermitted work,
12 period. Um, and so for that we're supportive of the
13 legislation. I do want to think a little more about
14 whether there are opportunities to provide my agency
15 with more tools, um, to get at the heart of what
16 you're addressing. Um, but as written, we're
17 supportive of the legislation.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Um, what jumps
19 off your head in terms of more tools? I'm always
20 interested in that.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Ah, Chair, I
23 just, I won't ask any more questions.

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: I want to, I want
3 to think a little, I want to think a little more,
4 Council Member...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK.

6 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: ...and come back
7 to you...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great.

9 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: ...and come back
10 to you with a, with a reasonable, responsible, ah,
11 not knee jerk answer.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, terrific.
13 I really appreciate. I'm, I'm glad you're thinking
14 about it and I, I appreciate that the agency would be
15 supportive of this legislation. Thank you so much.
16 Ah, back to you, Chair Cornegy.

17 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you, Council
18 Member Rosenthal.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
20 Council Member Chin.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.
23 Um, good morning, Commissioner. Great to see you.

24 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Good morning.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Um, I wanted to ask
3 you a question about the, um, the legislation that
4 deals with, um, after-hour permits. Um, that is a
5 big issue in my district because there's so much, you
6 know, construction going on. There's so much road
7 work, Con Ed, so my question to you is that does the
8 agency look at, um, the kind of work and the amount
9 of work that's going on in a specific area when they
10 issue after-hour permit? Are there are any kind of
11 coordination, ah, so that we don't have a whole bunch
12 of, you know, after-hour work in, in one neighborhood
13 at the same time? Because, ah, I know that when you
14 talk about, you know, recovery, yeah, I mean, a lot
15 of project has started up, and in my district we try
16 to coordinate. I, I know that your staff has been
17 very helpful, um, to try to make sure that, ah,
18 quality of life is maintained. So I just want to see
19 if the agency itself kind of look at, OK, after
20 permits, after-hour permits coming in and how many
21 and in a specific area. I just want to make sure
22 that one neighborhood don't get inundated with so
23 many [inaudible].

24 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Sure. And, and
25 thank you, ah, Council Member. Obviously I know

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2 your, your neighborhood among, ah, among the
3 neighborhoods in the, in the city certainly sees, ah,
4 its fair share of after-hour activity. And you know
5 the reporting that we do currently, ah, to members as
6 well as the community board to ensure that they have
7 the information at the time that we're getting it as
8 well. So we do really want to, ah, to continue to
9 work on and strengthen that real time relationship,
10 ah, that we have. So we're obviously open to
11 anything that allows us to continue that, deepen
12 that, and, ah, continues our commitment to
13 transparency. Um, with respect to neighborhood, ah,
14 ah, sort of a neighborhood level look, um, you know
15 that there's, ah, a fair amount of work that occurs
16 outside of the Department of Buildings, ah, ah,
17 purview. Um, you had mentioned street work, Con Ed,
18 um, typically that, um, type of work does not come to
19 the Department of Buildings for any sort of, ah,
20 oversight or approval. So with respect to that, no,
21 we're not able to do that level of cross checking.
22 Um, obviously our borough commissioners and their
23 teams are, ah, committed to working with communities,
24 so where we have concerns we look at the, ah, after-

1
2 hour variances to ensure that the communities' needs
3 are being met.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So you don't work
5 interagency right now? There's no communication, um,
6 between like Department of Transportation and
7 Department of Buildings when street [inaudible] are
8 being done?

9 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Again, you know,
10 for projects that are street-based, those types of
11 projects are not permitted through the department.
12 So we would not be, ah, we would not have, um,
13 purview over that scope of work. But that being
14 said, obviously where we have concerns with the
15 community, um, or where we have concerns that
16 community members are raising with respect to our
17 work, certainly there are opportunities at that
18 juncture where we are now bringing in our colleagues
19 if we know other work is occurring to, ah, find a
20 path forward, ah, that is, ah, responsive to all,
21 all needs.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I mean, yeah
24 'cause right now we, we have to do it ourselves, um,
25 the coordination. So I think it would be a, you

1 know, a great help if the agency themselves are also
2 conscious of what this is happening and do some
3 interagency coordination at the same time. Thank
4 you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now circle back
7 to any additional questions from Chair Cornegy,
8 followed by a second round of questions from council
9 members.

10 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, yes, one
11 second, I do have a second round of questions. And,
12 and my, my second round of questions, ah,
13 Commissioner, would begin with, ah, Intro 1127,
14 which, as you know, is a local law to amend the
15 administrative code of the City of New York in
16 relationship to expediting permits. Um, how long
17 does it currently take to obtain work permits from
18 the city, and, and I'm saying that tongue in cheek,
19 because depending on who you ask the timeframe
20 varies. I know that you've streamlined a lot of it
21 quite frankly and for that we thank you and have
22 brought, um, ah, some level of, of consistency to the
23 process. On the books, though, for the record, what
24 is the, ah, the, the amount of time currently that it
25 takes to obtain work permits?

1
2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Sure. So and,
3 and thank you for the compliment, Chair. Obviously
4 every day is a work of, ah, ah, for us of getting
5 better. So we are truly committed to it, increasing
6 our service level and seeing greater consistency
7 across the board. With that, it requires greater
8 transparency for the public, which is why we've
9 released our customer service dashboard, where any
10 members of the public can go on our website and see
11 what our service levels are for planned reviews, um,
12 based on their borough and then average citywide.
13 Um, currently for new buildings or major alterations,
14 ah, it takes on average five days for our first
15 review, first action. Um, and then for more minor
16 alterations we're reviewing those plans within three
17 days. Um, and then obviously permits can be applied
18 for, ah, once the plans are approved. But our first
19 action times continue to be incredibly strong, um,
20 with a, with a very, ah, solid service level for our
21 customers.

22 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: And the amount of
23 time for an existing project to continue and for a
24 new project are similar?
25

1
2 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Correct. So as
3 it stands today, um, and a applicant of record can
4 decide how they want to pursue their project. What
5 is the filing strategy that best meets their needs,
6 whether that be all, um, ah, potential permits, um,
7 ah, ah, going for a plan review together, whether it
8 be, um, parsing out the work based on their phasing
9 schedule or the way in which they're bringing on
10 their, um, ah, their construction trade. So, again,
11 we're here to meet the needs of our customers. So
12 for any ah, ah, applications that come in for new
13 permit reviews, ah, or new reviews that would lead to
14 a new permit, those service levels continue to remain
15 at that average five to three days, depending on the
16 type.

17 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, so we had a lot
18 of conversations about, um, the rate, the high rate
19 of attrition, actually, in, in DOB, um, and, and what
20 impact that may have on processing, ah, permits. Um,
21 the, the reason I bring that up is because, um, while
22 on the books there's, there's one thing and, and I
23 know that you're struggling trying to achieve that
24 [inaudible], um, I get a lot of questions [inaudible]
25 my office as the chair, um, about expediting the

1 process of a, of a permit, um, which is costing a
2 developer an exorbitant amount of money 'cause they
3 can't get it through. Is there an, and I feel crazy
4 asking this because you gave us the timeframes, but,
5 you know, on the other end of them I'm, I'm getting a
6 lot of call about expediting. Is there an expediting
7 process for permits, and what would the criteria be
8 for an expedited permit?
9

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Well, I would say
11 two things. So, ah, today any applicant can come in
12 and file, ah, their plan. So first step is you're
13 filing your plans, which, once approved, leads to a
14 permit. Any applicant can come in today and file
15 with our professionally, under our professionally
16 certified program which allows registered design
17 professionals to submit, um, their plans, attest to
18 the fact that they are fully code compliant, ah, as
19 well as compliant with all other regulations at the
20 city, state, and federal level. Once that is done
21 permits are nearly instantaneously issued. So when
22 it comes to expediting we have tools that are
23 available to all, ah, ah, registered design
24 professionals today to meet their need for feed, um,
25 then again if a, ah, applicant wants to come in for a

1 full plan review, um, we do have very strong service
2 levels to date. My hesitation and the opposition to
3 the bill is it creates a tiered system where I have
4 to put on hold, ah, potentially have to put on hold a
5 new filer because of an existing filer's, ah, ah,
6 additional permit types. Now we all know
7 construction comes in many different, ah, slices
8 across the city. You could be doing a minor
9 alteration in your existing kitchen, which is, you
10 know, one permit type potentially, or you could be
11 building, you know, a 100-story, ah, building, um,
12 which obviously is gonna require a host of, ah,
13 permits, um, ah, for that project. At the end of the
14 day we want a owner and their design professional to
15 lay out the course that is most appropriate for them.
16 That may mean they come in and look to do foundation
17 work prior to, ah, ah, filing for other work types.
18 That's perfectly fine, um, but I don't want to
19 penalize somebody who is coming in for their project,
20 their kitchen renovation, their minor home
21 renovation, ah, because I've got to wait for somebody
22 who has a certain trajectory that they want to carry
23 out for their project. So the long way of saying I
24 think our service levels are very strong, ah, for
25

1
2 first review. We obviously require, um, quick
3 turnaround time from the applicant. This is a, this
4 is a bit of a, it takes two to tango. Um, I'm
5 committed to making sure our staff continues to
6 deliver strong service levels. We can't act until we
7 get a response, ah, from the other side. So, um, so
8 I think we're, I think we are giving our customers
9 exactly what they want, the flexibility to decide the
10 path for them, and the service that is, ah, ah,
11 deserved for a city of this, of this size and stature.

12 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So that brings me
13 to my next very obvious question is, um, would the
14 DOB need additional staff to facilitate, um,
15 [inaudible] or expedite permits, um, and I mentioned
16 before, ah, between, you know, the level of, of
17 attrition and turnover, also, um, these, ah, cutbacks
18 based on, um, COVID spending and our 9 to 11 billion
19 dollar deficit last year, and the inability to, to
20 make new hires in this, in this climate. Um, all of
21 that coupled seems as though it has ah, ah, a
22 negative impact on the ability to expedite and/or
23 get, things, things are backed up all over the city,
24 right, this is not an indictment on DOB. Um, but my
25 question would be would, would additional staff in

1
2 particular areas within your office, ah, help, ah,
3 move things along faster potentially?

4 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: With respect to
5 the bill as written, yes. There, that would have a
6 very significant impact on our staffing, on our
7 service level, and in order to maintain the service
8 that we're providing at the levels we're providing,
9 yes, that would have a significant staffing impact,
10 ah, and, ah, impact on our existing resources. Um,
11 with respect to more broadly, ah, certainly, um, I, I
12 would say this. We are fully staffed currently on,
13 ah, at our plan exam levels. And yes, I am keenly
14 aware of attrition, ah, in the department, ah, for a
15 host of reasons, among them consistency and the
16 ability to maximize one's, ah, work, ah, potential.
17 Um, that being said, should, ah, should the council
18 seek to refine our service levels or create a tier
19 which we're talking about, yes, resources would be
20 strained in order to do that, ah, and additional
21 resources would be needed.

22 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So, um, the
23 [inaudible] office, ah, portions of the bill or just
24 the bill's entirety are you [inaudible]?

1 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Ah, ah, as it is
2
3 currently written we are, we are opposed to the bill,
4 ah, in its entirety, as it is currently written.

5 Again, if there is a, we believe that there is
6 opportunities today to allow an applicant to, ah,
7 achieve a permit on their proposed work in a
8 expeditious fashion through our professional
9 certification process, which, again, requires a
10 registered design professional to attest to the, ah,
11 completeness of their plans as well as that their
12 plans are compliant with all requirements. Ah,
13 should an applicant go that route, ah, a, a permit is
14 issued nearly instantaneously, and when I say nearly
15 instantaneously we're talking about a day or so.

16 That is extremely fast. Um, when we are looking at a
17 full plan review, again, we're looking at three to
18 five days on average for first, ah, action. Ah, if
19 an applicant, ah, turns that product around to us,
20 addresses the objections, we see a pathway to
21 approval very shortly, and we are looking at ways to
22 identify, ah, opportunities to strengthen the
23 turnaround time, certainly through the continued roll
24 out of DOB Now. You'll see our ability to more
25 precisely, ah, narrow the universe on where the

1
2 delays, if any, are, whether they be with my plan
3 examiners and turning around an additional plan
4 review, whether it be with the applicant, um, we can
5 now measure how much time a plan spends at each
6 course, um, and monitor and, and, and actually
7 review, um, how many times a plan has to get re-
8 reviewed before approval. Those are tools we didn't
9 have. So certainly you'll see a continued emphasis
10 on strengthening that part of the universe now that
11 we have a large number of our work types on DOB Now.
12 We can actually do that level of due diligence to
13 ensure we're continuing to press our service levels,
14 ah, and, and get the product out to the applicant
15 much faster.

16 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, ah, thank you,
17 Commissioner. I'm gonna move to colleagues, more
18 colleague questions.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have any
20 additional council member questions?

21 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, ah, oh, you're
22 asking.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, if not we can
24 move on to testimony from the public. I'd like to
25 remind everyone that unlike our in-person council

1
2 hearings we'll be calling on individuals one by one
3 to testify. Once your name is called a member of our
4 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will
5 set a timer in announcing you again. Your testimony
6 is limited to two minutes. We will start by hearing
7 from Ryan Monell, followed by Lauren Rothrock and
8 Stephen Pierson. Ryan, are you ready?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: One moment, all
11 right, we have one council member question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Hey, ah, thank
13 you, thank you for catching that, Austin. I really
14 appreciate it. Is the commissioner still available?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK, sorry, I'm
17 on my, on my phone. Um, I wanted to ask about
18 Council Member Chin's bill and just make the point
19 that, um, Commissioner, as you say, there are, um,
20 this a lot of information that's pushed out by your
21 office about after-hour variances, and we've talked
22 about this before, um, and I, I always appreciate
23 that information. My staff appreciates it. It's
24 nice to have. Information is power. The problem is
25 that, um, and I guess especially because of the pause

1
2 and making up for that time, um, you know, the impact
3 on the community is, is rough. Um, you know, the
4 noises and [inaudible] goes all night. Um, and so
5 I'm wondering, you know, I can see if the burden is
6 too much, um, for Council Member Chin's bill but I
7 really hope that there's a path to, um, some sort of
8 relief for the community and, um, I'm wondering if
9 you're willing to, I mean, I know this is Council
10 Member Chin's question, but just sort of if you're
11 willing to think about other ideas, other ways to get
12 relief to communities, um, some way of negotiating
13 with this bill.

14 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Oh, there we go.
15 Sorry, I was muted. Um, ah, yes. I think there is
16 definitely opportunity for us to continue the
17 conversation. As I mentioned in my testimony, you
18 know, we have to, we have to be mindful of the
19 impacts that COVID had on, ah, the city as a whole,
20 but very narrowly for my universe certainly the
21 construction industry. That being said, I am keenly
22 aware of concerns that communities have. Ah, you
23 know, I used to be a member of my community board.
24 I, you know, prior to being at DOB, spent a lot of
25 time working with...

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: ...ah,
4 neighborhoods on their concerns. So I certainly
5 understand and value that, and I do believe that it
6 is, you know, truly incumbent on this committee to
7 think through the potential impacts to the industry,
8 but we, but as a department we do believe that there
9 can be a balancing, ah, of both needs, um, so that we
10 can ensure construction work continues safely. And
11 that does mean sometimes, ah, through the use of
12 after-hour variance. Um, ah, but to your sort of
13 broad question about whether we're willing and able
14 to continue the conversation to find a path forward,
15 yes. Certainly this department stands ready to, ah,
16 engage in conversation with the committee as well as
17 our partners in the industry and certainly, ah,
18 communities across the city to identify ways to
19 ensure construction always occurs safely. That will
20 always our primary concern. Um, but where we can be
21 responsive to the needs of, of the communities as a
22 whole.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And you know I
24 think it has been a particularly rough year because
25 families are home. So to the extent the kids have

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2 been remote learning at home, construction going on
3 all day, and then it continues all night, night after
4 night after night, it's sort of just a bad confluence
5 of events, um, and, ah, you know, but we really do
6 have to support our families as well. Thank you very
7 much. Appreciate your, your help.

8 COMMISSIONER LA ROCCA: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And thank you,
10 Austin, for noticing my hand.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No problem. Give us
12 just one moment here. We're sorting one thing out on
13 the back end. Just bear with us here, one moment.
14 So as Carisa planned, we will start by...

15 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I'm, I'm sorry,
16 Austin, um, one of, one of the, um, ah, ah, Council
17 Member Rivera, who also wants to make public comment
18 on and ask questions won't be on until a few minutes
19 later at, at, at, um, at 12:00, but she wants to know
20 if the commissioner is available or if she has to
21 run.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We may have just lost
23 the commissioner, but we can reach out on our end and
24 see if the commissioner can return. Um, if we not we

1
2 can Council Member Rivera's questions and ask them to
3 the commissioner after the hearing.

4 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Um, so we will be
6 hearing from Ryan Monell, followed by Laura Rothrock,
7 and Stephen Pierson. Ryan, this time for real.

8 RYAN MONELL: Think positive.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 RYAN MONELL: And thanks, ah, Chair
11 Cornegy, ah, for the opportunity to testify today.
12 I'm Ryan Monell, representing the Real Estate Board
13 of New York. Ah, we did submit testimony that's
14 fairly comprehensive, um, in regards to the majority
15 of the bills on the, on the docket today, um, and
16 I'll be able to share that with, ah, council member
17 offices after the call, or after the hearing. Um, I
18 do want to, ah, hone in on two bills that we have,
19 um, particular concerns with. Ah, first is the
20 after-hour variances legislation, Intro 1737. Ah, I
21 think, you know, we do appreciate absolutely the
22 concerns that are being raised, particularly from
23 Councilwoman Chin and Councilwoman Rosenthal. Ah,
24 and we want to be partners in making sure that
25 quality of life surrounding construction projects is,

1
2 um, you know, taken into consideration in regards to
3 how we can improve, ah, situations in regards to
4 noise, ah, air pollution, etcetera, that we can
5 address. I would say, though, that 1737 is not the
6 solution to those problems, ah, and in fact, um,
7 particularly as we're trying to come out of the
8 pandemic and create jobs, ah, and economic
9 development throughout the city, ah, limiting
10 construction, ah, through, ah, eliminating after-hour
11 variance opportunities, ah, is particularly
12 concerning, um, not only from a perspective of, of
13 economic development, but also, as you can imagine,
14 you know, some situations which require, ah, work to
15 be done after hours is imperative to safety of the
16 public and so doing, um, what we feel is a, is a
17 blanket elimination of after-hours opportunities, ah,
18 really goes in the wrong direction. Um, not to
19 mention, as Councilwoman Rosenthal, I think, alluded
20 to, you know, it is quite, um, conflated right now in
21 regards to folks being at home, ah, what constitutes,
22 um, after-hours anymore, ah, and I think that needs
23 to be taken into consideration as well. So, ah, we
24 look forward to finding opportunities to work with
25 both the council and DOB to, to find solutions, but

2 we believe Intro 1737, ah, is not that solution. Ah,
3 in regards to...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 RYAN MONELL: I'll leave it at that and
6 happy to take any questions.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ryan.

8 Next we'll be hearing from Laura Rothrock, followed
9 by Stephen Pierson and Joalis Silva. Laura.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 LAURA ROTHROCK: Good morning, Chair
12 Cornegy, and members of the City Council. My name is
13 Laura Rothrock. I'm providing testimony today on
14 behalf of the New York Coalition of Code
15 Consultations, also known as NYCCC. We're a
16 nonprofit trade organization and we specialize in
17 securing construction and development approvals and
18 building code and zoning consulting. Um, and we
19 appreciate the ability to provide feedback on these
20 bills today. Regarding Intro 354, we understand the
21 intent, but the way that the bill is written any
22 alteration on any, on a building calendared for
23 landmarks would have steep penalties, and because the
24 term major alteration is not defined, this could
25 include interior work that needs to be done for

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2 safety reasons. Um, and so the description of the
3 bill explains that the penalty would apply to work
4 without a permit, but when you read the actual
5 language of the bill it states that a penalty would
6 apply to any work. So we're gonna need clarification
7 on that. Um, and while we support Intro 1127 in
8 theory, that's someone that requires DOB to expedite
9 permits, we recognize that the 24-hour turnaround,
10 especially for complex construction, um, is, is
11 difficult to achieve. Um, and Intro 1737, that is
12 limits and reduces the after-hour variance permits.
13 You know, the reason these variances are approved is
14 because construction activity is not safe during
15 regular business hours and so after 15 days the
16 safety issue will not necessarily disappear, um, and
17 public safety should remain paramount. So, you know,
18 as Ryan said, this bill would adversely affect the
19 ability to complete construction sensibly during a
20 time when the industry needs support during our
21 city's recovery. And finally on Intro 1667, which
22 requires DOP environmental monitoring reports to be
23 publicly accessible, our industry would like
24 clarification on how this process would work. Would
25 another document required, be required to be uploaded

1
2 prior to permit release? This process would be
3 another delay on the already complex process for
4 little gain that, that we could see. Thank you for
5 your consideration and we welcome the ability to
6 discuss with you further.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks, Laura. Ah,
8 we'll next hear from Stephen Pierson, followed by
9 Joalis Silva, and Lyric Thompson. Stephen?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 STEPHEN PIERSON: Thank you. I'm Stephen
12 Pierson from Art Bridge, a public art nonprofit. I'd
13 like to comment on Intro 1635, as Art Bridge is
14 implementing the City Canvas pilot program, which
15 enables art installations on construction sites.
16 Over the past 21 months through City Canvas we've
17 exhibited 38 local artists at 17 sites, installing
18 more than 12,000 square feet of art. At the most
19 basic level, City Canvas provides incredible exposure
20 for local artists while making art accessible to all
21 New Yorkers. However, I do believe that public art
22 offers so much more potential than simply beautifying
23 the city or showing off the work of talented artists.
24 City Canvas has work best for us when we've enabled
25 artists to be collaborators and community builders.

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2 Central to our City Canvas implementation has been
3 our citywide program with NYCHA residents. At each
4 site we work with residents to select local artists
5 from an open call. Often the artists are themselves
6 NYCHA residents. We then build a months-long program
7 of engagement through the artists and residents,
8 partnering with local community groups and hiring
9 residents to facilitate all this. Through this
10 process the artists create large-scale art works that
11 amplify the complex voices of residents, their
12 problems, their accomplishments, their joys, and even
13 their humor. It's a way to use art to empower NYCHA
14 residents to control the way their lives are
15 described and to control their own public living
16 spaces. Site specificity is everything in public
17 art. What works in the South Bronx won't make any
18 sense in eastern Queens. If written and implemented
19 properly Intro 1635 can allow for these site-specific
20 collaborative exhibitions across the city. It's my
21 hope that through this legislation the city's 300
22 miles of construction fencing can be used to
23 strengthen the voices of communities through artists.
24 Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks, Stephen.

3 Next we'll hear from Jolias Silver, followed by Lyric
4 Thompson and Joel Kupferman.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

6 JOLIAS SILVA: Hi, um, my name is Jolias
7 Silva. I am an artist and resident of NYCHA Jacob
8 East House. I was commissioned as an artist fellow
9 by Art Bridge to create art works for my community.
10 Um, and I'm just, I'm beyond happy to be able to say
11 that I was a part of this project. Um, I was blessed
12 with the opportunity to create something that has
13 actually tangible, that has visibly lifted the morale
14 within my community. The connection I have to my
15 community is now very obvious, evident even, and I
16 have City Canvas to thank for that as well as Art
17 Bridge. These times have been especially difficult
18 for us and this work has given us visibility. This
19 work was an act of love. This work has been
20 affirming and it's been uplifting. The resilience
21 and the adversity that has been prevalent in my
22 community is being commemorated in our very own space
23 and that has been monumental for us. Since these
24 pieces have been up, the interactions that I have
25 witnessed have ranged from sentimental to joyful, and

1
2 they've made room for hard conversations. They've
3 made room for the possibility of moving past some of
4 our trauma. And they've even opened doors for who I
5 am and can be as an artist. Because of all that, I
6 truly believe this program is vital and therapeutic
7 even. I believe that it serves as a lifeline to a
8 community like mine and I'm very grateful.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Jolias.

10 JOLIAS SILVA: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll be hearing
12 from Lyric Thompson, followed by Joel Kupferman and
13 Manjari Sharma.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 LYRIC THOMPSON: Hi, can you hear me?

16 All right. Hello, I'm Lyric Thompson and I'd like to
17 speak about egress doors. Council Member Cornegy,
18 you have promised me that you would call for an
19 oversight hearing regarding HPD's lack of enforcement
20 of our fire standards for egress doors. You told me
21 this two years ago. Yet to date you have done
22 nothing but ghost us. This is a problem that isn't
23 only isolated in our building. 68% of NYCHA
24 buildings have issues with egress doors. This is an
25 issue that is both expensive and dangerous for not

1
2 only the tenants that live in these buildings, but
3 the firefighters that have to show up and put out the
4 fires due to shoddy construction work. So I'm asking
5 you now, when are you going to do this, or are you
6 never going to do this? Do we need to wait till we
7 have another chair of housing? I mean, you're the
8 chair. It's your job, Robert.

9 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you, Lyric.
10 We've called for that hearing. That hearing will be
11 upcoming before I'm out of office.

12 LYRIC THOMPSON: I look forward to it,
13 and I'm gonna hold you to it.

14 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: No problem.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, next
16 we'll hear from Joel Kupferman, followed by Manjari
17 Sharma. Joel?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 JOEL KUPFERMAN: Thank you very much for
20 having this hearing. I'm the executive director of
21 the Environmental Justice Initiative. I have been
22 dealing with bad construction sites in the city for
23 the last 20 years. I just want to point out that
24 there's a systematic underassessment and enforcement
25 of what happens in unfettered construction.

1
2 Especially now that COVID-19 brings heightened
3 concern about an adverse disparate effects. Air
4 pollution increases vulnerability, especially on
5 environmental justice neighborhoods. Beware of the
6 word expedite. It encourages cutting corners. Its
7 use is an excuse by contractors, including federally
8 and city funded contractors as an excuse to give up
9 on the safety rules and the health rules and their
10 monitoring. The air monitoring now at most
11 construction sites is insufficient. The Tenant
12 Protection Law the City Council passed is not being
13 enforced. Cursive, um, insufficient plans are being
14 accepted. Um, more monitoring is required for
15 brownfields in the city than where people live. The
16 insufficient community monitoring plans require more
17 intensive provisions for particulate matter, VOCs and
18 lead, which is unearthed at construction sites. We
19 have, still have a lead problem in New York. The
20 Tenant Protection Bureau does not have technical
21 expertise they claimed, and they also said that they
22 could only know that a site has toxic problems if it
23 has an E designation. Most housing sites, including
24 NYCHA, do not have an E designation, so there's
25 definitely an underassessment and underprotection

1 [inaudible] there. Part of the problem with NYCHA
2 housing is that when we, ah, NYCHA have called 311 to
3 make a complaint to Buildings Department they're told
4 that NYCHA residents cannot get the services of the
5 city, including Department of Buildings, and referred
6 to NYCHA. This is environmental apartheid. I think
7 you should investigate 311. This doesn't relate to
8 all the things that you're talking about here in
9 terms of tenant protection or people complaining when
10 they can't even make the complaints. Also, you're
11 talking about the...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 JOEL KUPFERMAN: ...reporting, can I just
14 get one more minute, please?

15 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, yes, sir,
16 please.

17 JOEL KUPFERMAN: There's a time lag. We
18 need the information about [inaudible] at sites
19 immediately, you know, not a year later. That's the
20 one way to stop bad construction, all right? The
21 problem is that they do the construction. A year
22 later we get it, and then there might be a fine
23 imposed. The fine system is not working. The city
24 has over a billion to a billion and a half of
25

1
2 uncollected fines. A \$300 fine on a million dollar
3 construction does not work. What the city has to use
4 is their bad actor policy, and this Department of
5 Buildings is not enforcing that. When there's a
6 problem there's a provision for aggravated
7 violations. They're not using that all the time, and
8 part of it is, is that when they have that, a few
9 aggravated violations, it reaches a certain level,
10 they should not be getting any more permits and not
11 only that, the city should not be hiring or leasing
12 from these people. We're have people putting
13 pollution into, into the neighborhood and the city
14 rewards them by giving them leases and the like, all
15 right? There's an easy way, you know, to stop that,
16 is, is really tightening up the bad actor policy the
17 Department of Buildings can use and should do. Also,
18 there's a problem with air monitoring is that the
19 city's paid for, the air monitors are stationary.
20 They're not placed, they're not mobilized around the
21 construction site. We need that information to find
22 out what a site is doing or not doing to make up for
23 the self-certification that they're holding hand-held
24 monitors and saying that there's no air pollution and
25 when there are exceedences they say it's not, it's

1 not detrimental. So I think it's important that you
2 look into monitoring that the city should be
3 enforcing a monitoring program, especially in
4 neighborhoods where there's a lot of construction
5 going on people have bad past records, all right,
6 and I think it's also, it's need to [inaudible]
7 agencies. There's a lot of requirements that a
8 construction site has to fulfill and Department of
9 Buildings is not looking to DEC for storm water
10 management problems. A lot of times there's run-off
11 at sites, all right, so you can't find all this
12 information in two, three days. So I just want to
13 say as an environmental attorney and a civil rights
14 attorney and public hearing attorney the word
15 expedite is very scary, all right, and we should slow
16 things down a little more, especially with COVID and
17 also the word is out there that, that, you know,
18 that, um, there's less inspections, and also I'm
19 concerned Department of Buildings is not supervising
20 School Construction Authority inspections. I believe
21 there's files where the School Construction only said
22 there were 1700 schools, um, you know, fine with
23 ventilation. Those reports are not there. So
24 there's a lot more the Department of Buildings could
25

1 do and I think it's important that, you know, um, you
2 listen to public health people and, and, and there's
3 a health, um, problem in, in the city and a lot of it
4 is coming from unfettered construction. Thank you.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So, ah, I want to
7 thank you for your testimony and ask if you submitted
8 that and those recommendations in writing?

9 JOEL KUPFERMAN: I will.

10 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: All right. Thank
11 you so much.

12 JOEL KUPFERMAN: OK, and, and I also
13 believe that, you know, there should be, um, also to
14 just let you know that there's, there's state and,
15 and federal agencies and have been working with
16 NYCHA, including the federal monitor, and the city is
17 not doing their job to protecting all those NYCHA
18 residents, including Department of Buildings and HPD,
19 all right.

20 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you. I
21 really, I really need what you said written, though.
22 Thank you.

23 JOEL KUPFERMAN: OK.

24 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: So I could go
25 through it, if you don't mind. Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, we'll
2 now hear from Manjari Sharma, followed by Maria
3 Lupianez.
4

5 MANJARI SHARMA: Hello, hi, how are you?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 MANJARI SHARMA: Ah, my name is Manjari
8 Sharma and I am, um, from born and raised in Mumbai,
9 but I am, ah, you know, a New Yorker, and, um, I just
10 want to talk passionately of in favor of the City
11 Canvas program. Um, I've been an artist for 20
12 years. I pour my energy and emotion into, ah, my art
13 and I just want to advocate for how important it is,
14 the timeliness of, ah, an open call. Um, you know,
15 there's 300 miles of staggering amounts of
16 scaffolding and, um, and Art Bridge, I'm on the board
17 of Art Bridge, but I'm here to speak as an artist.
18 And Art Bridge announces these really timely calls
19 for the artists and, and with an emphasis on local
20 artists, and this art finds, finds a space within a
21 community on, on these scaffoldings and this is
22 extremely crucial because the timeliness of this is
23 what's important. If we can keep this going and we
24 can keep a space for the artists, the local artists,
25 not to just find places like galleries and museums,

1
2 but on the streets, this is, this is critical, and I,
3 and I hope that the City Canvas program will
4 continue, um, and Art Bridge has done a phenomenal
5 job on giving a voice and a space to the local
6 artists. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Thank you, thank
8 you so much for your testimony. Um, [inaudible] we
9 get to the next person, I just want to take a second,
10 um, one to thank, ah, especially our artists who are
11 on today and took the time to spend time with us and
12 give us their, their thoughts. I think it's
13 incredibly important. The arts and culture portion
14 of recovery and resiliency isn't talked about much,
15 but I believe that this is a real, true component to
16 recovery and resiliency, that those two words get
17 thrown around a lot, ah, ah, for post pandemic, but a
18 post pandemic that is free from art and culture as a
19 part of recovery and resiliency is a failed policy.
20 So thank you for, thank you for [inaudible], um,
21 obviously the Majority Leader believes that, I
22 believe that, Jimmy Van Bramer believes that, so
23 there's a few of us who really believe in, ah, the
24 vibrancy of art as it plays a part in our recovery
25 and resiliency. So thank you so much. Ah, and

1 before we move on I just want to say that
2 unfortunately for me this is, um, ah, the, the, , ah,
3 committee counsel's Austin Brandford's last hearing,
4 and I really wanted to say this while the, ah,
5 commissioner was here, how grateful I've been for the
6 way that he's worked with our community, how he's got
7 me organized and kept us going. He's leaving some
8 incredibly big shoes to fill. Austin, we really,
9 really appreciate you and, um, ah, big, big shout out
10 to you and prayers and blessings for the endeavors
11 that you seek in the future.

12
13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, thanks so
14 much, Chair Cornegy. It's been a pleasure.

15 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: I appreciate you,
16 Austin, honestly.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, we do
18 have one more panelist, but before...

19 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: [inaudible]
20 soliloquy to the last panelist, I'm sorry.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [laughs] Don't worry.
22 Um, thank you so much again. Um, we have one
23 question from Council Member Rosenthal.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
25 thank you so much, sorry, double multitasking here.

1
2 Um, Joel, ah, I just want to commend you for your
3 consistent, um, you know, um, attention to the plight
4 of tenants and the, um, you know, the difficulty that
5 they have to live through when particularly
6 unscrupulous building owners, ah, you know, do
7 construction whether in their homes and, and all
8 sorts of problems. You've been incredibly helpful to
9 me in thinking through some legislation. We're
10 hoping to come forward with a little bit more. Um,
11 but one thing I want to point out, just for, ah, the
12 record, is that the hiring freeze that has been, ah,
13 citywide and, you know, for all agencies, um, with
14 three, every three people leaving one person is
15 rehired and I know, um, that the mayor's changing
16 that for the next fiscal year. But here what you've
17 described are the implications of this hiring freeze,
18 that by not, ah, hiring building inspectors when they
19 leave it means that fewer buildings can be inspected,
20 and I think that, you know, after we passed a whole
21 slew of bills in, ah, um, stand for tenant safety
22 package, one of the bills, I think it was Council
23 Member Levin's bill, brought in a lot more staff to
24 do inspections, um, and to do them quickly. And, you
25 know, that, that worked for a while. But when we,

1
2 um, can't hire enough staff to do this work the
3 implications are tenants suffer. And so again it's
4 why I just want to commend you for your constant,
5 persistent bringing attention to this matter. It's
6 incredibly important. So, so thank you.

7 JOEL KUPFERMAN: Thank you. Looking
8 forward to working the committee and the committee's
9 counsel.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, last
11 but not least, we're going to be hearing from Maria
12 Lupianez. Maria?

13 MARIA LUPIANEZ: Hi.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 MARIA LUPIANEZ: Hello? Hi, um, so I'm a
16 local artist, um, who lives in New York City. Um, I
17 actually reside in NYCHA housing. Um, I participated
18 as part of the Art Bridge residency program and I did
19 a mural in the city. So I'm just loving just to, um,
20 continue like these murals and art works going on in
21 the city, but not just to only make it temporary
22 installations because like the mural that we did is
23 supposed to be temporary since it's on scaffolding,
24 um, but to also make it more permanent. You know, I
25 don't know, I know like the scaffolding around my

1 residence, I live in the Chelsea area, um, has been
2 up for as long as I've been here, um, and I've been
3 here for a little over two years now, and I don't
4 know how much longer the scaffolding is gonna be up,
5 but I would at least like to see art work on there,
6 um, while the scaffolding is around. You know, I
7 don't, I wouldn't um, like to go back to seeing plain
8 scaffolding. Um, I think it's important in the
9 community, especially, um, you know, I just got so
10 much feedback from my neighbors and portraits that I
11 painted, um, about the positive impact that it had on
12 them, you know, seeing, um, art work, seeing like
13 something positive in the neighborhood. So and I
14 think, you know, we need to like spread this. You
15 know, I love how there's this big movement going on,
16 um, but, again, it's, a lot of it is temporary, you
17 know, and I would like, you know, some of it,
18 especially on the scaffolding part, to be more
19 permanent, you know, um, and that's it. I thank you
20 so much for giving me, um, your time. I also thank
21 you for your support in the arts. Um, um, Mr.
22 Cornegy, you spoke, um, very, um, favorably about it
23 and, you know, we definitely like appreciate it.
24 Thank you so much, Sharma, um, all right, thank you.
25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Um, this
3 concludes our public testimony. If we have
4 inadvertently forgotten to call on someone to
5 testify, if that person could raise their hand using
6 it Zoom raise hand function we'll try to hear from
7 you right now. All right, seeing none, I'll now turn
8 it back to Chair Cornegy to close the hearing.

9 CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Ah, again, thank
10 you so much, Austin, for your great work at the
11 council. We wish you Godspeed going forward, and if
12 there's anything that this office or myself or my
13 office in the council can do to help I would gladly
14 do that. This commences the hearing on Housing and
15 Buildings scheduled for the 4th. And as corny as it
16 may sound, may the Fourth be with you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Bye, Austin.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 25, 2021