

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND INTERNAL GROUP RELATIONS AND SELECT COMMITTEE ON
LIBRARIES

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May 28, 2009
Start: 2:00pm
Recess: 6:00pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

DAVID I. WEPRIN
Chairperson

DOMENIC M. RECCHIA, JR.
Chair, Libraries

VINCENT J. GENTILE
Chair, Select Committee on
Libraries

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Elizabeth Crowley
Inez E. Dickens
Lewis A. Fidler
Daniel R. Garodnick

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James F. Gennaro
Eric N. Gioia
Robert Jackson
Letitia James
G. Oliver Koppell
Diana Reyna
Helen Sears
James Vacca
David Yassky

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

Dionne Mack-Harvin
Executive Director
Brooklyn Public Library

Elizabeth Condant
Student, Adult Literacy
BPL Coney Island Learning Center

Dr. Paul LeClerc
President and Chief Executive Officer
New York Public Library

Sharon Hewitt Watkins
Vice President for Finance
New York Public Library

David Ferriero
Andrew W. Mellon Director
New York Public Libraries

Dave Offensend
Chief Operating Officer
New York Public Library

Tom Galante
Chief Executive Officer
Queens Library

Kate Levin
Commissioner
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Eileen Muller
President
Brooklyn Library Guild, Local 1482

Peter Vreeland
President
American Museum of Natural History, Local 1559

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

Carol Thomas
President
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930 DC37
AFSCOUNCIL MEMBERE

Margalit Susser
President
Queens Library Guild Union, Local 1321

Cuthbert Dickinson

Randy Borscheit

Laurie Combone
Director
Mocada Museum

Norma Munn

Jenny Lalutes

Gibb Serett
Legal Services Staff Association, Local 2320

Edwina Martin
Director of Communications and Government Relations
Legal Services NYC

Arnold Leeman
Director
Brooklyn Museum

Julian Zioata
Brooklyn Museum

John Kaveli
Executive VP for Public Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society

Holly Blockum
Executive Director
Bronx Museum

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

Jonathan Stafford
Principal Dancer
New York City Ballet

Lana Flores
Volunteer and Patron
Brooklyn Public Library

Rita Meade
Children's Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Ingrid Abrams
Children's Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Eric Boblin
Young Adult Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Marge Lyden
Volunteer Adult Literacy Tutor
Bronx Library Center of the New York Public Library

Audrey Harkins
Library Volunteer
New Amsterdam Branch

Martha Krespil
Library Patron

Joseph Garber
Resident and Resident Leader
New York City Housing Authority

Katherine Tripani
New Destiny Housing Corporation

Lynn Serpy
Patron
Queens Public Library

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

Dee Damusis
Patron
Columbus Branch

Kathy Casey

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2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Could
3 everyone kindly find their seats, the Cultural
4 Affairs, Library International Intergroup
5 Relations Committee will begin its hearing. Could
6 the Brooklyn Public, Queens Library please find a
7 seat up here at the table.

8 Good afternoon ladies and
9 gentlemen. My name is Council Member Domenic M.
10 Recchia, Jr. I am the Chairman of the Libraries,
11 Cultural Affairs, Library International Intergroup
12 Relations Committee and I welcome you to City Hall
13 today and the executive budget. Sitting to my
14 right we have Council Member Gale Brewer from
15 Manhattan, we have Mr. Gennaro from Queens, we
16 have Diana Reyna from Brooklyn, we have Vinny
17 Gentile from Brooklyn and we welcome you.

18 Today we're going to hear from the
19 three libraries. We're interested in what you
20 have to say on how we become effective and really
21 address the issues. We know we are facing severe
22 cuts and we are finding ways to resolve this and
23 make it so it's not as severe as it appears to be.
24 But the times are tough in the economic crisis and
25 we all must work together for the best interest of

1
2 the people of this wonderful City of New York. At
3 this time I turn it over. Who would like to start
4 off?

5 DIONNE MACK-HARVIN: Good
6 Afternoon. I am Dionne Mack-Harvin the Executive
7 Director for Brooklyn Public Library. On behalf
8 of the libraries board of trustees and staff, I
9 would like to thank Committee Chairman, David
10 Weprin, Domenic Recchia and Vincent Gentile for
11 inviting BPL to testify today concerning the
12 executive budget and the devastating impact it
13 will potentially have on BPL operations and our
14 ability to continue to life skills and life
15 changing services to the people of Brooklyn.

16 BPL and Brooklyn's 2.5 million
17 residents are thankful for the outstanding support
18 that the Council has demonstrated for the library
19 over the past several years. This support has
20 allowed us to keep our doors open longer. 46
21 hours a week at each of 58 neighborhood libraries
22 and provide more hours of service than at any time
23 since we began keeping records.

24 Regrettably the executive budget
25 puts all of these service gains and much more at

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2 risk. My testimony today will give an overview of
3 the proposed budget and offer a look at the grim
4 impact reduced library funding would have on BPL's
5 1,100 full time staff and 500 part time employees,
6 days and hours of service and the resources and
7 services we provide. But more importantly, this
8 afternoon we have the opportunity to hear first
9 hand from one of Brooklyn Public Library's Adult
10 Learning Literacy students, Elizabeth Condant from
11 our Coney Island Learning Center.

12 Elizabeth is here representing tens
13 of thousands of library customers who won't be
14 able to borrow a book, research a term paper,
15 access a computer or attend a literacy class
16 should the funding proposed in the executive
17 budget be adopted for the 2010 fiscal year. The
18 numbers are disturbing and admittedly very
19 frightening for the future of library service in
20 Brooklyn and for the future we create for the
21 borough's millions of residents.

22 In FY10 BPL faces a potential
23 funding reduction of 21% or \$17.5 million from
24 operations when compared to FY09 adopted budget.
25 If we endure the full \$17.5 million cut we would

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2 be forced to eliminate as many as 272 positions
3 through a combination of lay offs and attrition.
4 That's almost one in four jobs. In addition, we
5 would have to cut our part time workforce by
6 eliminating 250 more positions.

7 We will reduce library service by
8 nearly half to 25 hours per week. We would only
9 be able to offer six day service at our central
10 library and our soon to be reopened Kings Library,
11 which prior to renovation was our second highest
12 circulated location. Our 58 other libraries would
13 be open from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm to ensure that
14 children have a safe place after school and
15 complete homework. But with a severely reduced
16 staffing level, we would not be able to offer
17 convenient mornings, late nights or weekend hours.

18 Against the mission of public
19 libraries we would have to deny service to
20 thousands of Brooklynites who would use their
21 libraries only during these popular hours. This
22 would include senior citizens, parents who home
23 school their children, customers who work 9 to 5,
24 teachers making classroom visits and many more
25 Brooklynites who support our public institutions

as tax paying citizens.

I am honored to be joined today by Elizabeth who is a student at our BPL Coney Island Learning Center at 1901 Mermaid Avenue. Please allow Elizabeth to say a few words.

ELIZABETH CONDANT: Hi, everyone. My name is Elizabeth Condant and I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to speak to you today. The first thing I would like to talk about is the funding cuts of the library learning centers in Brooklyn. If you cut the funds from the learning centers we won't have a place to learn how to read or write.

When I was growing up I had a hard time reading the signs on the subway. When I went to the supermarket, I had a hard time reading the labels. When I was 18 years old, I got pregnant with my son. After giving birth I was alone for four years raising my son by myself. Then at age 25 I met my husband. My life became much easier after that. My husband helped me raise my son. Even though I didn't know how to read or write I managed to help my son graduate from college. I am proud of him.

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2 I moved back to Brooklyn and I
3 found this amazing program here at the Coney
4 Island Learning Center. It took me 42 years to
5 find this amazing program. This program has
6 helped me learn how to read and write and have
7 confidence.

8 When I first started here I didn't
9 know how to read or write at all. I have been
10 coming to this program for two years and now I am
11 in the advanced class. Nick is my tutor and he is
12 great. I have seen other students in my class
13 progress, too. That's to show you that this
14 program works. Please help us get the funds that
15 we need for this program. If you close the
16 Brooklyn Library Learning Centers...

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Take your
18 time. You're doing very, very good. You're doing
19 excellent.

20 MRS. CONDANT: People like me won't
21 have a place to come and learn how to read or
22 write. Once again, please help us and thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right.
24 Let's hear a round of applause for her. That was
25 great.

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[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We hear what you have to say and we thank you. Miss Dionne, do you have anything else you would like to add to that. I think she said it all.

MRS. CONDANT: Yes, I think I did but please try to help us because this program works. It worked for me and I'm sure it's going to work for other people.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. At this time Councilman Gentile would like to say a few words. Mr. Gentile had an opening statement.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Chairman thank you very much for the opportunity and thank you for your leadership on the entire Cultural Affairs Committee as well as the library aspect of it. As Chairman said, tough economic times require tough budgetary decisions. It's not an easy task and tough choices must be made. But the fact remains and it's my duty as Chair of the Select Committee on Libraries to remind everyone concerned that libraries and all they provide and the availability of their resources are more important today than ever. When people have less

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2 money to spend on entertainment and book stores,
3 they turn to libraries as an inexpensive but
4 equally enriching alternative.

5 As unemployment rates throughout
6 the city rise, people turn to libraries for skill
7 development and help in their job searches.
8 Library services give people a sense of hope and
9 optimism in times that can often seem bleak. A
10 library is a beacon in every neighborhood, in
11 every borough throughout this city. When people
12 visit their local branch, they understand the word
13 library on the front of the building also means
14 help available here.

15 We can't take that help away from
16 them now. However, if the proposed \$46.5 million
17 in reduction of funding for the libraries is
18 adopted, our libraries will be ranked dead last
19 when compared to 19 other major U.S. cities in
20 library hours when it comes to average weekly
21 number of hours that the branches are open to the
22 public. Baltimore, for example, keeps its public
23 libraries open an average of 36 hours a week.
24 Houston keeps its branches open an average of 72
25 hours each week.

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2 Yet in our city, under these cuts
3 and I think each system will confirm this,
4 Brooklyn branches are planned to be opened just 25
5 hours a week down from 46. New York Public
6 Library will be opened an average of 32 hours per
7 week down fro 52 hours a week. Queens Library
8 will be down to 27 hours average per week. This
9 truly is a sad state of affairs.

10 Not only does our city, which is
11 considered to be a literary and cultural mecca
12 have some of the lowest hours of operation among
13 major city library systems in the country, but it
14 means that resources and services will be cut at a
15 time when library usage is on the rise. We at the
16 Council along with the library systems in our
17 communities understand realities of this city's
18 fiscal situation. Nobody is blind to the fiscal
19 situation. But we need to balance that knowledge
20 against the importance of maintaining services
21 that help our community flourish in spite of
22 economic bleakness.

23 We understand the importance of
24 investing in a resource that has the ability to
25 improve and enrich the life of every single New

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2 York City resident, regardless of income, gender,
3 race or age. No other city funded agency has the
4 local outreach or the physical facilities that our
5 library systems have. We must acknowledge that
6 special role they play in our very own backyards.

7 Recognizing libraries' special
8 function is not new. In 1901 Andrew Carnegie
9 wrote the letter to the New York Public Library
10 System testifying that branch libraries must
11 "reach the masses of people in every district".
12 Reach the masses that means everybody. He
13 provided \$5.2 million to establish 65 neighborhood
14 branches in 1901 so that everyone would have
15 access to the resources that libraries offer.

16 He said it would be "a rare
17 privilege to be permitted to furnish the money as
18 needed for the buildings. 65 libraries in one
19 stroke", he said, "probably breaks the record but
20 this is the day of big operations". That's 1901.
21 As the day of, in Carnegie's words, big operations
22 passed us by. I hope not.

23 Carnegie promised that the funding
24 to New York City would be on the condition that
25 New York City quote in his letter "agrees in

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2 satisfactory form to provide for their maintenance
3 as built." Maintenance in satisfactory form
4 includes keeping the buildings open and available
5 for use. That is directly from the Carnegie
6 letter, agreeing in satisfactory form for their
7 maintenance and use.

8 Are we going to renege on that
9 promise and that covenant made back in 1901? Or
10 do we instead follow the example of Fiora
11 LaGuardia who understood and revered this covenant
12 and made providing seven day libraries service a
13 priority during this time. Let me just end with
14 this, Andrew Carnegie are previous examples of
15 previous mayors are part of our city's history
16 that provides us with a covenant and framework to
17 guide us in supporting and honoring our public
18 libraries.

19 I believe that if we adhere to
20 Carnegie's covenant and follow LaGuardia's
21 precedent that I'm hopeful that the tough
22 decisions that must be made will be made in favor
23 of our library systems and not against them.
24 That, I believe, will by far be in the best
25 interest of all New Yorkers. So we'll continue

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now.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Councilman Gentile. Now we'll hear from New York Public Library.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Before you go, I'd also like to recognize we have been joined by Elizabeth Crowley from Queens, Dan Garodnick from Manhattan and Robert Jackson from Manhattan. Mr. LeClerc.

DR. PAUL LECLERC: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. My name is Paul LeClerc. I'm the President and Chief Executive Officer of the New York Public Library which brings library services to three of the boroughs in the city, Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island. I'm joined in this testimony by our Vice President for Finance, Sharon Hewitt Watkins and by David Ferriero who is the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries and by Dave Offensend who is our Chief Operating Officer.

It's always great to appear before you. You both as Chairpersons and all the members of the Council speak with such passion and such

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2 eloquence. In addition to the great historic
3 references, about a century of library service to
4 the people of New York that the three library
5 systems here represents in terms of what we do for
6 people today. We're very lucky to have you as our
7 friends. And you've been steadfast friends over
8 the years.

9 The proposed budget, which we are
10 talking about today is a very, very serious
11 problem for us. The proposed budget cut that the
12 New York Public Library faces today is
13 considerably worse than it was in March when I had
14 the privilege of last testifying before this
15 committee. The executive budget includes an
16 additional 4% reduction to the New York Public
17 Library's funding over what had been slated for us
18 previously, bringing the total FY10 proposed
19 budget reduction to a staggering 21% or \$28.2
20 million for us.

21 If enacted, this cut would be
22 greater than the cuts in the mid 1970s when the
23 city was bankrupt by a considerable magnitude. It
24 would be more than twice what the libraries
25 experienced at that time. In this testimony I'd

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2 like to outline the devastating impact of a cut of
3 this magnitude that it would have on the essential
4 services that libraries provide to our
5 communities. Our libraries are a valuable and
6 irreplaceable resource that is in danger.

7 The cold, hard facts present a grim
8 reaper of the wonderful progress that we've made
9 over the last few years. I would add as a
10 footnote that library usage is not only up across
11 the five boroughs of New York City, it's up
12 nationally. There's been an enormous amount of
13 press attention to this; front page of the New
14 York Times, front page story in the Wall Street
15 Journal. There will be on the morning of June 1st
16 on the Today Show about a three and a half or four
17 minute segment on the same story, how Americans
18 are increasingly turning to libraries for help in
19 all different kinds of ways in their lives.

20 The New York Public Library, like
21 our sister libraries in Queens and in Brooklyn,
22 continues to experience system wide surges in use
23 of our facilities and of our collections and our
24 services. During these hard economic times,
25 libraries we know are more important than ever.

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2 Every day over 60,000 New Yorkers use the New York
3 Public Library facilities, that is far more than
4 the combined visits to all New York City's other
5 cultural organizations, I'm told.

6 In the branch libraries, visits are
7 up by approximately 11% system wide from last
8 year. By the end of this fiscal year, we expect
9 in our branches to attract 15.6 million visitors,
10 the highest total in our 110 year history. Our
11 research libraries, the other part of our
12 organization, in addition will attract nearly 2
13 million people at our four locations, all in
14 Manhattan, during the first 10 months of fiscal
15 '09, up 20% from the year before.

16 Combined branch and research
17 libraries at the New York Public Library for the
18 past 12 months have had an attendance that will be
19 17.8 million, almost 18 million people, up 12%
20 from the prior 12 month period. This total is
21 more than double the attendance for both the
22 Yankees and the Mets home games for the entire
23 2008 baseball season. And the people who come to
24 libraries are New York residents, as we know.

25 In addition, we circulated 18.3

1 million items during the first 10 months of this
2 fiscal year, up 13% over last year. And we're
3 projecting a year end circulation of 22 million
4 items, the highest in the New York Public
5 Library's history ever. And in the Bronx, one
6 thing we're very, very pleased of is that
7 circulation is up close to 30%, 26.7% to be exact.
8 In addition we offer 34,140 programs in classes
9 with almost 700,000 people attending them so far
10 this year, also up 26% over the prior year.

12 People are still coming to the New
13 York Public Library in record numbers for job
14 search assistance. Unemployed New Yorkers are
15 particularly turning to their neighborhood
16 libraries for support in the various following
17 kinds of ways. The percentage of unemployed
18 patrons visiting New York Public Library in
19 February and March was three times higher, 23.1%,
20 than the New York State Department of Labor's New
21 York City February unemployment rate which was
22 8.4%. So a disproportionate number of our
23 visitors are unemployed.

24 Attendance at job search related
25 classes in our system are up 82%. The library

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2 anticipates offering 7,600 job related programs
3 this year and in March and April alone we offered
4 job and technology training to 7,200 people. We
5 anticipate now being in a position of helping more
6 than 45,000 people through free career coaching,
7 job related programs and training classes through
8 the rest of this calendar year. The library has
9 enhanced its partnership with the city's Workforce
10 One Community Partners program by establishing
11 relationships with the city at library hubs and
12 branches throughout our three borough system.

13 In addition, we have trained staff
14 at every single one of our facilities in job search
15 techniques so that anyone who walks into New York
16 Public Library will have expert service in helping
17 to reposition herself or himself in this tough
18 economic time.

19 Let's talk now about the proposed
20 executive budget and the decline in support that
21 it represents and the impact on our programs and
22 our services. The total FY10 reduction proposed
23 for the New York Public Library is, again, \$28.2
24 million, a 21% cut which includes reductions of
25 \$20.9 million in addition to the \$7.3 million

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2 fiscal '09 City Council restoration which was not
3 base lined in fiscal '10. Another reduction is a
4 30% or a \$10.7 million reduction of capital
5 funding in fiscal years 2010 through 2019.

6 And in addition to the proposed
7 reductions to the executive budget, the New York
8 Public Library is also facing the following
9 reductions. First, a cut of \$1.8 million or
10 approximately 9% in state funding. Second is a
11 reduction of private revenues of approximately \$20
12 million and an increase in non-reimbursable
13 expenses of approximately \$7 million.

14 What would the impact of a 28.2%
15 reduction in city operating support be for the New
16 York Public Library? The following, public
17 service hours would be decimated. 52 hours
18 average a week now would be reduced by an average
19 of 20 hours per week at all of our locations to a
20 new low average of 32 hours across the system.
21 Most facilities would operate on a four or five
22 day schedule instead of the six day schedule,
23 which we fought so hard to get. And which is now
24 universally available to our patrons.

25 In comparison, cities such as San

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2 Diego and Houston and even here in the
3 metropolitan area in Yonkers, which is not a rich
4 community anticipate for the new fiscal year that
5 their branches will be open at least six days per
6 week. In addition, we would lose as many as 435
7 jobs through layoffs. That's approximately 19% of
8 the New York Public Library workforce, one out of
9 every six of our employees. These reductions
10 would be major in both our branch and our research
11 libraries.

12 On top of that we're looking at a
13 \$4.5 million or 26% reduction in branch library
14 materials acquisitions and a \$6 million or 35%
15 reduction in research library materials
16 acquisitions. The greatest impact I think would
17 be felt by the four most vulnerable groups served
18 by our libraries, children, seniors, immigrants
19 and the disadvantaged communities including the
20 homebound to whom we deliver books.

21 Specific impacts include first
22 nearly 5 million fewer library materials would be
23 circulated. Second, 3.5 million fewer visits to
24 our library with 680,000 fewer children and young
25 people using libraries' safe and reliable places

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2 after school. 230,000 fewer young people
3 attending library programs, the place where we all
4 want them to be. 520,000 fewer computer sessions
5 offered across the system to the public for free.
6 2,000 fewer programs of children such as toddler
7 programs, reading aloud and technology programs.
8 750 fewer visits to libraries by classes from the
9 neighborhood schools that we service.

10 Reduced access for seniors who
11 often use our libraries in the morning, which I
12 really prefer because they're quiet then but we
13 would have to cut morning hours because the
14 attendance would be relatively slight. But senior
15 citizens are really, really important to us. The
16 last thing we want to do is to deny them access to
17 libraries when it's comfortable for them to be
18 there.

19 Conclusion, dramatic increases in
20 attendance and circulation send a clear message
21 that libraries now in New York are more important
22 than they ever have been before. We have never
23 seen the kinds of usage that our libraries are now
24 receiving - never, ever in its history. The
25 millions of people that will use one of our

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2 libraries this year in the Bronx, Staten Island
3 and Manhattan would all agree, I think, with this
4 statement. As would the 2,300 dedicated employees
5 that day in and day out help hundreds of
6 thousands, millions of New Yorkers come through
7 our doors.

8 We're in the midst of very
9 challenging economic times to be sure. Libraries,
10 I think, are equipped to help people survive this
11 crisis. In the past the Council has recognized,
12 as has its Speaker, how essential the services are
13 that libraries provide to New Yorkers. You
14 champion funding of this city's libraries and the
15 people of New York are grateful for that. The
16 FY10 proposed 21% budget reduction would essential
17 cripple the library's ability to deliver the
18 service that the people of this city are demanding
19 in record numbers.

20 We, again, seek your support in
21 keeping library doors open so that our communities
22 can access this incredibly important resource that
23 they value so much. Thank you for giving us the
24 opportunity to testify. And we all remain
25 available to answer any questions that you may

1
2 have now or at a later point in the future. Thank
3 you very much.

4 [Applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
6 Commissioner LeClerc. I want to thank you not
7 only for your testimony but thank you also for
8 breaking down the funding for each borough. We
9 requested that in the past and I'm glad to see
10 that you did it without us having to request it
11 and thank you for doing that. That means a lot so
12 my colleagues can actually see what's going on in
13 their borough. Queens.

14 [Applause]

15 TOM GALANTE: Good afternoon. I'm
16 Tom Galante, Chief Executive Officer of the Queens
17 Library. I want to begin by thanking Chairman
18 David Weprin, Domenic Recchia and Vincent Gentile
19 and also the other members that are with us today
20 including our Council Member from Queens, Leroy
21 Comrie and all the members of the Council for your
22 incredible ongoing support, especially in these
23 challenging economic times.

24 More than ever we seek to protect
25 the critical services that serve as a lifeline to

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2 those most in need and I know that you also share
3 our sentiments. I'd like to just sidebar for a
4 moment and just follow up on a few things that
5 have been mentioned today. The first thing that
6 the Council Member spoke about, Council Member
7 Gentile, regarding the Carnegie agreement, that
8 really is a very important thing to, I think, all
9 three systems in that I know for Queens and I
10 believe it's the same in the other systems. There
11 was an agreement by the city to seven day a week
12 service as part of their agreement within that
13 contract with Andre Carnegie, who was a great
14 lover of libraries. But seven day a week service
15 was the agreement.

16 [Applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I would ask
18 that you hold and refrain from applauding. Thank
19 you.

20 MR. GALANTE: The other item on
21 literacy, that is a great program that is citywide
22 that we all do. Ms. Condant showed a great
23 example that really touches the heart of how a
24 person can take and move themselves forward in
25 some of what we would view as basics but are very

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2 important to people's lives, being able to read
3 and write. I know in Queens, we had 6,000 people
4 a year that we teach how to read and write, adults
5 that we teach how to read and write. If our
6 libraries are closed one-third of the time
7 compared to what they're open now, there would be
8 2,000 less people that would learn how to read and
9 write next year. So I thought that might be worth
10 noting, too.

11 Also, the New York work on the
12 comparison with other cities. I think it's just
13 so obvious that we shouldn't be spending so much
14 time and effort to just try and stay even. We
15 really should be at a better place already that we
16 could then work towards going forward. Today is
17 doubly significant as it is our last attempt to
18 testify on behalf of the over 2 million people in
19 Queens who need their neighborhood libraries to be
20 open. In addition, today is Library Day at City
21 Hall for Queens library advocates, those are all
22 the folks that were clapping a moment ago.

23 Joining us in the chamber, almost
24 200 Queens residents who came to personally tell
25 their respective Council Members how critical

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2 their library is to them and their communities.
3 These are only a handful of our steadfast
4 advocates whose stories of resilience and hope I
5 am privileged to share with you at hearings such
6 as these. Their persistence and their strength
7 continues to encourage me. I hope that seeing
8 their faces and hearing their stories will only
9 strengthen your resolve to restore the severe
10 proposed budget cuts.

11 It is no secret that we are in a
12 fight of our lives with pending budget cuts that
13 threaten to drastically cut service hours.
14 Particularly eliminating weekend service in every
15 community library and possibly reducing our staff
16 by over 300 full time positions, a staggering 31%.
17 I know that no one in this room wants this to
18 happen. And I want each of you to know that we
19 are fighter hard and smarter than ever before for
20 the full budget restorations.

21 The executive budget calls for
22 funding to Queens Library to be reduced by \$17
23 million in fiscal '10 and this is on top of over
24 \$5 million in reductions already sustained. It is
25 unthinkable that the greatest city in the world

1
2 would see public library service brought to its
3 knees but that is exactly what we are facing. It
4 is equally tragic that the Saturday and weekend
5 library service that we all fought so hard to
6 bring back is in jeopardy of being eliminated once
7 again.

8 But the truth is that unless we see
9 significant restorations to our budget this year,
10 we could see some of the lowest service levels on
11 record, with some libraries open only two or three
12 days per week. We must not let this happen.
13 Despite the cuts we have already sustained,
14 looming budget reductions and some anxiety about
15 the future, we continue to go about the business
16 of enriching lives while refusing to sacrifice our
17 exceptional customer service, which is the reason
18 that we have been able to maintain our position as
19 the highest circulating library in the United
20 States.

21 We continue to offer top quality
22 programming, unparalleled services, all delivered
23 by the finest staff one could wish for. We have
24 already commenced activities and we are vigilantly
25 preparing for our kick-off event of the enormously

1
2 popular summer reading program in June. But to
3 continue our life enhancing work our doors must be
4 open. An arduous task lay before us yet we remain
5 focused and determined to achieve the goals set
6 before us and that is to continue to serve the
7 people of Queens, particularly those hit hardest
8 by the current economic crisis. With the
9 unemployment rate rising to 8.9% we know that we
10 need to succeed, that so many depend on us for so
11 much that is good in their lives.

12 In financially difficult times such
13 as these, it is understandable that library usage
14 has increased dramatically. Circulation has
15 continued to go up and with programs and service
16 also reporting an increase in attendance by 4%.
17 This would be the worse possible time to scale
18 back our hours and services. A reduction of hours
19 and services does not instill hope or equip people
20 looking for a brighter tomorrow.

21 Queens Library does not have all
22 the answers but we are one of the solutions. Each
23 and every day we are minded by our customers of
24 how essential our 62 libraries have become to the
25 sustainability of communities and families.

1
2 People enter our doors with hope in their pockets
3 and we ask for nothing in return. Due to the
4 economic downturn our trained and willing staff
5 assist more and more customers seeking to navigate
6 various job web sites while offering invaluable
7 job placement tips and skills building workshops.
8 Here our staff have become job counselors, often
9 providing a loving touch to a very human reality.

10 In addition, avid readers search
11 our shelves for the latest novel releases.
12 College students are able to reduce their book
13 budget by borrowing text books and families keep
14 up traditional movie nights by checking out their
15 favorite movie at the library. Our board of
16 trustees along with our senior management staff
17 has worked feverishly to come up with a budget
18 strategy and advocacy plan. We have also employed
19 the assistance of our friends groups as well as
20 over 15 million customers, some of whom have
21 joined us here today.

22 Our petition drive and postcard
23 campaigns have already gathered over 80,000
24 signatures in favor of budget restoration. And on
25 Monday, May 18th, almost 300 Queens residents

1
2 joined us on the steps of our Flushing Library
3 along with Council Member Gentile, I might add, to
4 stand up for libraries and also I should say
5 Council Member Crowley. To stand up for
6 libraries, passionately shouting out at the top of
7 their lungs, save our libraries.

8 One parent, who was at the library
9 with their two young children, came over and
10 expressed how much she and her children use the
11 library. She said I'm here every day with my
12 kids, as she and her children meandered their way
13 to the steps to join the rest of the supporters.
14 You can't close this library, you just can't.

15 I know I'm preaching to the choir
16 but let there be no mistake, public library
17 services critical service that must be preserved.
18 People need us and we must continue to be there
19 for them. We will fight every day to save Queens
20 Library this year so that when this economy turns
21 we will be well positioned to expand library
22 service to where it truly needs to be, open seven
23 days a week. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

1
2 very much. We've also been joined by Leroy
3 Comrie, Inez Dickens and Oliver Koppell. At this
4 time we have questions. Mr. Gentile you have a
5 question?

6 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Yes. Thank
7 you Mr. Chairman. I just want to ask a few
8 questions because I know it's a long day. We have
9 some other members want to speak also. I'm just
10 curious about this, this whole concept of a day.
11 We use the word day when we talk about six days to
12 four days or three days or two days. I think it's
13 important that we sort of define what a day is in
14 the terms of the library world. Maybe you can
15 speak, each one of you could speak to that. What
16 in your world constitutes a day?

17 DR. LECLERC: The average is seven,
18 seven and a half hours but that is not universally
19 applied. For example our very great and hugely
20 successful central library in the Bronx is open
21 seven days a week, 12 hours a day from 9:00 am to
22 9:00 pm. Others of our libraries have extended
23 hours as well. I know that we opened the St.
24 George's branch at 8:00 in the morning so that
25 people on their way to the ferry could stop by and

1
2 pick up books and things but on average seven,
3 seven and a half hours.

4 MR. GALANTE: For Queens, our view
5 of a library day would be 9:00 to 9:00, typically
6 for a library. And I think that's what you find
7 or 10:00 to 9:00. You'll find a 10:00 to 11:00
8 hour day in most libraries in a lot of those
9 cities where you see 60 hour averages, 70 hour
10 averages a week. That will be six or seven days a
11 week, 10 hours a day.

12 The difficulty for us to deliver
13 that given the funding we receive is that we can't
14 employ. You need two shifts of staff to be opened
15 longer than a seven hour day, obviously, right, or
16 an eight hour day. So it does involve double
17 shifts of staff which also helps with services for
18 children after school because then you have that
19 double shift that's there in the afternoon when
20 you're very, very busy with kids after school.
21 Our goal and really the standard that you would
22 find in most cities is not a seven hour day as we
23 have become accustomed to but really a 10 to 11
24 hour day in most every library. So they open up
25 in the morning, they're open in the afternoons and

1
2 they're open in the evenings so we can reach all
3 the people.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm just
5 curious because I guess that's what most people
6 would perceive as a day. But isn't it also the
7 case that in at least some branches you might be
8 open on a Wednesday from 1:00 to 5:00 or 1:00 to
9 6:00 on a Wednesday. That would constitute a day
10 of library service but in the world of most people
11 it's not a day at all because they can't get to
12 the library between 1:00 and 5:00 and 1:00 and
13 6:00 in the afternoon.

14 MR. GALANTE: That's why I think
15 and it's in the Mayor's Management Report as well.
16 The city does collect a statistic as to the
17 average number of days the library is open for
18 each borough but also the average hours. That's
19 why each one of us make sure that that's something
20 that we provide on a regular basis because hours
21 is really just as important as days, obviously.
22 When you're open a half a day it really is a half
23 a day.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Let me just
25 go on now, you each individually indicated what

1
2 impact this would have on your employees and the
3 number of your employees. I believe that the
4 total headcount reduction across the three systems
5 would be close to 1,100 employees I believe. Is
6 that correct?

7 DR. LECLERC: Well closer to 1,000.
8 It's 1,011.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: 1,011. Okay.
10 1,011. We were just doing some calculations and
11 it appears if you look at the Mayor's executive
12 budget that represents about 26% of the total
13 headcount reduction of all city agencies. That
14 sounds like a tremendous amount coming from one
15 sector, i.e. the free library system. Am I
16 accurate in saying that you're facing a 26% of the
17 total headcount will be coming from the library
18 systems?

19 DR. LECLERC: Yes.

20 MRS. MACK-HARVIN: I guess another
21 way we discussed it as is it's the equivalent of
22 closing down either Brooklyn or Queens because
23 that's our full time headcount.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's your
25 full time head count so it would be almost as if

1
2 you were to shut down on of those system. That's
3 tremendous. And I think my colleagues need to
4 realize that, that 26% of the total headcount
5 reduction will be coming from the three library
6 systems. That's, I think, quite important.

7 The other thing I wanted to also
8 make a distinction on is the fact that you have a
9 lump sum nature of your subsidy from the city. It
10 makes you a little bit different than other
11 agencies because you don't have any line item
12 reductions. You have less flexibility because
13 you're given a lump sum and there's no line item
14 cutting like other agencies. Am I correct in that
15 regard? I will ask you to explain this, there are
16 costs that you bear that some of the other city
17 agencies don't bear because they either have a
18 line item or they're covered in another way. But
19 because you're given a lump sum you have to absorb
20 all of it. Why don't you explain that?

21 DR. LECLERC: Given the fact that
22 we're non profits and not a city agency we absorb
23 all costs of our operations within the
24 appropriation we receive from the city. As an
25 example, within our operating subsidy from the

1
2 city covers the cost of retiree health care, our
3 branch leases, many things that a city agency
4 would not see within their budget but it would be
5 charged to a general city budget. So a cut to the
6 libraries of say 20%, 21% is in fact probably 27%
7 to 30% comparable to a city agency because we have
8 major fixed costs built into our operations that
9 are not included in the city agency budget.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: And that's
11 the same for all three systems, correct? Yeah.
12 Now Mr. Galante, I don't know if it's your
13 testimony or somewhere in the paperwork I've been
14 looking at you've indicated that an actual cost to
15 the city in unemployment costs as a result of the
16 positions that you would lose. You indicated it
17 would be about \$3.5 million of unemployment costs
18 to the city if you suffer these reductions in
19 positions. I'm curious, have the other two
20 systems also estimated what the cost to the city
21 would be in unemployment costs?

22 DR. LECLERC: I think the
23 unemployment costs would be for us in the area of
24 \$3 to \$3.4 million. However, there are a lot of
25 other costs on top of that that come with

1
2 separations. Our present estimate is the total
3 cost for involuntarily separating 435 from the
4 library. It would be \$11 million.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: \$11 million.

6 DR. LECLERC: \$11 million because
7 that includes accumulated vacation time, sick time
8 and all those other kinds of things that have to
9 be paid out as well as various kinds of legally
10 mandated payments depending on the period of
11 notice that one gives or doesn't give including a
12 couple months salary, so on and so forth. But our
13 present estimate as of an hour ago is \$11 million.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: What would be
15 the cost to the city in unemployment benefits to
16 the group that--

17 DR. LECLERC: [interposing] Simply
18 unemployment would be \$3 or \$3.4 million.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: \$3.4, okay.
20 But overall to you it would be closer to \$11.

21 DR. LECLERC: That's the cost to
22 us, not to the city. We would be paying for that;
23 the city wouldn't be paying for that.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I see, okay.
25 You're right. I'm sorry. That's right.

2 DR. LECLERC: Subsidy perhaps
3 but...

4 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Subsidy,
5 exactly. Let me just move on and ask you about
6 the stimulus money. I know that we spoke about
7 this the last budget hearing. The great financial
8 staff here on the committee has looked at some of
9 the stimulus categories and indicated possible
10 areas where libraries might be able to plug in to
11 some stimulus money. I'm curious if you agree
12 with these areas or have looked at them,
13 particularly economic and workforce development,
14 health and social support and education is what
15 the staff tells me are possible areas that might
16 pertain to library funding in some way. Are those
17 possibilities?

18 MR. GALANTE: They all are. We've
19 done work. I know that each system has. In fact,
20 we've worked with the administration in a couple
21 of common areas, too. We see great opportunities
22 in ERA. The factor that has to be thought out,
23 though is that if our doors are closed we can't
24 deliver those programs. Things such as, for one
25 example, there's considerable funding to expand

1 access for public computing within that bill.

2 We're going to seek that funding but if we
3 simultaneously close all of our public computing
4 centers by a third of the time they're presently
5 open, it doesn't really accomplish the goal.

6
7 As we talked before about the
8 numbers of hours in a day, the city could make
9 major changes in its access to public computing by
10 having libraries open ten hours a day every day of
11 the with, with facilities and infrastructure that
12 are already in place with computers that are
13 already there, with data networks that are already
14 there. Just by expanding hours instead of
15 decreasing them. So I know we're all aggressively
16 seeking the ERA funding.

17 We've partnered in Queens with a
18 number of organizations as well through
19 partnerships where we are a partner applicant with
20 them. And we're going to be going at some things
21 directly. Including the administration is also, I
22 know working on the citywide program for public
23 access to public computing workstations.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: What you're
25 saying though is even if you qualify for the

1
2 technology money it may be moot if your programs
3 are no longer in existence.

4 MR. GALANTE: We all would like to
5 upgrade our technology, at least in Queens. I'll
6 speak for Queens, we would love to update our
7 technology, add more workstations. But the gist
8 of it is you got to have your door open or what's
9 the point of having the technology so expanding
10 hours in libraries would accomplish that goal. We
11 all have tens of thousands of people a day that
12 use our computers. We could double that if we
13 were open double the hours. It's that simple.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I make come
15 back around, too. But I will move on from here.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.
18 Council Member Leroy Comrie. We've also been--
19 Diana Reyna.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Tish James,
21 did you mention Tish James?

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh, Tish
23 James from Brooklyn.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Thank you
25 Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask a question on you

1
2 talked about the levels of funding cuts that would
3 be approximately \$22 million over the last year
4 because there was a 5% cut during he year and a
5 \$17 million cut expected for next year. Is that
6 correct or is that the overall number including
7 what was lost in 2008? Isn't the actual
8 percentage cut higher if you look at the 2008
9 numbers compared to the 2010 numbers?

10 MR. GALANTE: That percentage
11 number for Queens reflects the reduction that we
12 took in '09 adopted and the proposed for fiscal
13 '10. It doesn't include the funding lost mid year
14 and the current year as well and it doesn't
15 reflect--I could give you a half a million dollars
16 of cost increases, rent increases and various
17 things, MTA tax that we all need to pay that also
18 adds to that percentage. So that percentage is
19 the base line from the city and we also had state
20 funding reductions that we've dealt with.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Together
22 with your reductions isn't it closer I guess
23 across the board to almost a 35% cut to all of the
24 library systems at least over the last year and a
25 year and a half. And then with your increased

1
2 expenses with the real city, would it be almost
3 40% of your operating budget that is being lost?
4 Would that be correct?

5 MR. GALANTE: At least for Queens I
6 think we'd be in the 30s. You take cost increases
7 that we've taken, budget cuts, the impact of other
8 costs we've had to absorb and state cuts we'd
9 probably be nearing 30 or more, yup.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: And that
11 would be the same for the other library systems as
12 well? But you're forced to pay the mandated
13 increase, the cost of living increases and
14 everything else but yet that's not be acknowledged
15 by the administration, correct?

16 MR. GALANTE: Correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I just want
18 to again re-emphasize that I think that it's
19 ridiculous that especially now when we have the
20 highest rate of unemployment ever that we need the
21 libraries to stand up for. The libraries are
22 doing an excellent job at providing employment
23 assistance. In fact, I was here for the rally and
24 I went to Queens to the Workforce One center where
25 the Queens Library has a presence. I know the Ne

1
2 York Library system started working with the
3 Workforce One centers and it's a critical
4 component that you've offered to make sure that
5 people have the ability to find jobs and to
6 restart their careers if they're in a career that
7 they're not making enough money to earn an income
8 and maintain a lifestyle in this environment.

9 I just want to re-emphasize what I
10 said outside that these cuts are horrendous. It's
11 a bad decision made by the administration. It's a
12 bad decision that will reflect on not just hurting
13 neighborhoods but impacting the quality of life
14 for seniors, impacting the ability of children
15 such as my children that are in public schools to
16 access library services. It's a bad decision for
17 people that are trying to get information that are
18 trying to, as you said earlier the English
19 language learners that are trying to get into the
20 system and for so many reasons that these are bad
21 decisions.

22 It's just frustrating to me that we
23 have to do this every year. Every year we lose a
24 bigger percentage of monies to the library systems
25 when we should be working to maintain in difficult

1
2 times. But the library system at course where you
3 could be at a full seven days. I just want to
4 stress to you again that I want to do everything I
5 can as the head of the Queens delegation, as part
6 of the City Council to put back as much money.
7 And I have to say put back as much money into the
8 library system as possible dealing with an
9 administration that has their head in the sand
10 about the real fiscal impact that the minimal
11 library system costs.

12 Because then you have more young
13 people in the street that are doing things that
14 are not positive. You have seniors that are
15 forced to do things because they don't have the
16 library to be a support system. It's not
17 positive. It winds up having bigger drains on the
18 city budget. I don't understand why they don't
19 see that. I don't understand why we can't get
20 back to, as you said earlier, the pacts that were
21 made during the Carnegie era where people realized
22 that a library system that was open seven days
23 saved the city money, created a better, positive
24 aura. And made sure that this city had something
25 that we could make sure that all of the people

1
2 could benefit from.

3 And we could make sure also that
4 when people needed a leg out or an opportunity or
5 to re-evaluate their career they can depend on the
6 library. I know that even though I try to refer
7 people to other entities, people want to go to the
8 library for their first stop to find out
9 information. If the libraries are not open then
10 people feel that they don't want to go to private
11 offices. Even if they get the referral from the
12 library to go to Workforce or from the library to
13 go to job training or from the library to find out
14 about immigration services, they depend on their
15 library as a friend. So we need to keep that
16 friend open seven days a week. Thank you Mr.
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
19 very much. Council Member Gale Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just want
21 to say going to the opening of your job center at
22 the Science Library was unbelievable. Those two
23 databases, oh my gosh. So I would agree with
24 Council Member Comrie that you have the best
25 career services and it should be open seven days a

1
2 week.

3 One of my questions is again if the
4 stimulus money through WEA, broadband, MTIA,
5 whatever comes through, does it help with what I
6 would call administrative fees? Meaning keeping
7 things open or is it just based on the career work
8 that the technology might provide? Do we have any
9 sense of that?

10 DR. LECLERC: I think the
11 expenditure of those monies has to be limited to
12 the purpose for which they're given not to
13 underwrite basic operations. And just as a
14 footnote to Mr. Galante's testimony. I think all
15 three systems have applications in to the city for
16 every single area in which we could get stimulus
17 money.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right, so
19 the bottom line is you still need the restoration
20 that we've been discussing here today?

21 DR. LECLERC: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Maybe this
23 got asked earlier but how are the security
24 reductions going to impact the libraries, if at
25 all?

1
2 DR. LECLERC: I think everything is
3 going to impact the libraries. For us at least,
4 it's not a single area of our functioning that
5 does not impact it, that will not feel some of the
6 pain. For all the obvious reasons we don't want
7 to have libraries without security personnel in
8 them. We need our staff and our patrons to feel
9 comfortable in the library and not to feel in any
10 way in danger. If we have to give up hours and
11 give up days we will do that and we will bring the
12 security staff down according but we're not going
13 to have the library without security personnel and
14 without custodians.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
16 Mr. Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
18 very much. Council Member Tish James from
19 Brooklyn.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Excuse me
21 but I don't seem to understand. I thought we
22 announced that they would no longer be a budget
23 dance. I thought that libraries were going to be
24 protected and they were going to be included in
25 all budgets and they would be held harmless. I'm

1
2 sitting up here looking at the fact--I'm thinking
3 about 2008 where the City Council, which has been
4 taking a leadership role in protecting the roles
5 of libraries in the City of New York.

6 We announced six days. We shook
7 hands, big hoorah, a lot of media attention. And
8 here we are and your budgets are being cut by 30%
9 to 40%. The possibility of shutting libraries,
10 particularly in districts where the literacy rate
11 is double digit and in my district where we have
12 high illiteracy rates, I could not imagine going
13 back to the time when the doors of certain
14 libraries were shuttered.

15 As you know in Brooklyn, I attend
16 all of my libraries. I know that the library on
17 Washington Avenue around the corner from my home
18 is filled with children. The children in the
19 schools in my district pack that place. The
20 central library on Saturdays, on Sundays is
21 packed. There's this burning thirst for knowledge
22 all throughout the City of New York. And this is
23 no time, particularly when so many people are
24 unemployed or looking for opportunities, that we
25 should close your doors or close them at all, one

1
2 day, two days, three days. We should maintain six
3 days; it should be a priority of this
4 administration.

5 I know it is a priority of the City
6 Council. I thank the leadership of Council Member
7 Gentile and Council Member Recchia, they have been
8 in the forefront. I just want to know what impact
9 will this have on your literacy programs, your job
10 training programs, your educational programs, your
11 recreational programs. Will those be the first
12 programs that get cut? If so, then apex to the
13 administration for even cutting you to the bone.
14 It is really, really an indictment that we have
15 gutted the libraries.

16 I have witnessed it, as you know.
17 I have said it publicly. My mother was in her 70s
18 and went to the library system in Queens and
19 secured her GED. That was one of her proudest
20 days and she wanted all of her children around
21 her. She's very sick now but that GED stands on
22 her mantle. As long as she's alive and as long as
23 I am in the City Council, I will join with my
24 colleagues, the leaders here and seek to restore--
25 not seek but will restore your funds. So to what

1
2 extent, again, on the other programs will they be
3 impacted?

4 MRS. MACK-HARVIN: I think as Paul
5 mentioned earlier, with severe cuts like this in
6 staffing. With staffing being the primary
7 deliverer of all those programs we will see some
8 significant reductions in just about everything
9 that we can offer across the board. That will not
10 be anything that is held harmless. We will have
11 less books, we will have less programs, we will
12 have less visits, we will have less computer
13 sessions. The library will look radically
14 different come July.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I know that
16 the city provides you with tax levy dollars for
17 operational also for energy. Is that true? And
18 to what extent as the energy stipend, energy
19 subsidy will that be impacted or is it all lumped
20 into one pot?

21 MRS. MACK-HARVIN: The energy piece
22 is sort of a pass through for us.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I see, so
24 you don't get that directly.

25 MRS. MACK-HARVIN: No.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Well, I
3 think Council Member Comrie and Council Member
4 Brewer and Council Member Gentile and Council
5 Member Recchia have said it all. I think we're
6 going to draw a line in the sand and we know what
7 you do in transforming lives. This is not the
8 time to turn back. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
10 Council Member James. Inez Dickens.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you
12 so much Mr. Chair. Thank you for coming down to
13 give testimony. It's good to see you Paul.

14 DR. LECLERC: Good to see you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have
16 some questions concerning the 10 year capital
17 plan. Because of the importance of libraries,
18 particularly during these times and the use of the
19 libraries during these times, by families, by
20 young people and by those who are unemployed.
21 There's a proposed 30% cut, is that cut.

22 DR. LECLERC: Yes, there is.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: A 30% cut
24 to the 10 year capital plan. Can you tell me
25 which capital projects would be cut or affected

1
2 and more importantly the maintenance that would
3 keep our libraries open and free of any problems
4 so that they can be utilized by families? Are you
5 able to tell me that? If not, can you please
6 provide it to the Chair?

7 DR. LECLERC: Yes, I have quite a
8 long list of all the reductions in capital in the
9 three boroughs.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Can we get
11 a copy of that?

12 DR. LECLERC: Yes, absolutely.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Are there
14 any, please forgive me but I'm very concerned
15 about my district. So I'd like to know on that
16 list what impacts upon my district.

17 DR. LECLERC: We're working with
18 your office to come up with a new site for McCombs
19 Dam Bridge. The Shomberg we're developing a scope
20 at this point for the \$7 million restoration
21 project.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Which one?
23 Say that again, please.

24 DR. LECLERC: The Shomberg. And
25 we're holding that number in the next fiscal year

2010 at \$5 million and then \$1 million in 2011 for the Shomberg.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Well the McCombs Bridge would be a new site.

DR. LECLERC: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: But the Shomberg is existing.

DR. LECLERC: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Now what about some of the others? Are there any critical maintenance plans that were placed in to the 10 year capital plan or maybe outside of it, that's one. Number two, are there any stimulus funds that are available for libraries or has that been excluded?

DR. LECLERC: I don't see any other in your district, Council Member Dickens, that are impacted in a negative kind of way by these reductions. The stimulus is not the best program for libraries that we would have liked. It would be great if there were stimulus, too, that would really enfranchise libraries both for capital projects and even programs.

We've been talking about broadband,

1
2 which is in major need in all the libraries
3 because that provides for substantial
4 infrastructure. One of the difficulties we're
5 facing is that we don't have a high enough speed
6 in terms of connectivity so that you can be at a
7 computer in a library and just wait a long time
8 for something to come up on the screen.

9 But the amount of stimulus money
10 that's been provided for the entire nation is \$200
11 million for the whole nation. So we're competing
12 basically for crumbs. We're all in there and it
13 goes to the states, the cities have to make its
14 recommendations to Albany. And then Albany will
15 deliver the money at some point to us. There are
16 some monies in the area of energy conservation
17 which would permit us to purchase more effective
18 heating systems, more effective air conditioning
19 systems, so on and so forth. There is more money
20 in that pot but we've got our application in there
21 as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: You said
23 you do have an application.

24 DR. LECLERC: We do have
25 applications in for environmental improvements.

1
2 That, in effect, takes the form of capital
3 improvements such as boilers and roofs and air
4 handling systems and so on and so forth.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Which
6 would help to not only preserve our libraries but
7 would provide stimulus for employment.

8 DR. LECLERC: Indeed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: What is it
10 that we can do on the City Council level? We know
11 about advocacy, we know about trying to put back
12 the money but what can we do to advocate because
13 that would serve a dual purpose. One would be the
14 upgrading of our systems and the other would be
15 employment. What can we do to try to assist you?

16 DR. LECLERC: I think the more
17 important thing the Council can do is keep one
18 number in mind. In the last 12 months there have
19 been for our three systems approximately 40
20 million visits to the 210 libraries that make up
21 the free public library systems, 40 million
22 visits. Those have been visits by New York
23 residents but there are other organizations in
24 town that will have lots of visits. No
25 organization, no entity matches what libraries do

1
2 in terms of the gross number of visits.

3 But the people who are in libraries
4 are New York residents and they're there to
5 improve themselves, to improve their lives, to
6 improve their levels of educational attainment.
7 Basically, what libraries in this town do, I
8 think, is to grow human capital. That's our
9 business to give people everything they need in
10 order to evolve; culturally, educationally,
11 socially, democratically.

12 When you invest in us and I think
13 overall we represent a very small fraction of \$50
14 billion plus in the city's budget. When you
15 invest in libraries you're not investing in us,
16 you're really investing in the people in the town
17 itself, in the neighborhoods, in the communities.
18 You are putting information and services, literacy
19 training, story hours for children, you're putting
20 something in to these people's lives that's
21 terribly meaningful for them. They wouldn't be
22 there in the numbers that they're there now were
23 that not the case.

24 Somehow it's become newsworthy,
25 suddenly, that libraries are relevant. We know.

1
2 We're not surprised by that. We've always known
3 the libraries are relevant. We've been the most
4 adept at change and at bringing technology to
5 people and being able to really almost turn on a
6 dime in order to adapt to new circumstances, new
7 ways of information distribution and so on and so
8 forth.

9 It's great that the news on the
10 front page and as I said earlier on the Today Show
11 on June 1st call attention to the broad public on
12 how essentially important libraries are. But my
13 sense is that there has never been a great city in
14 all of human history without a great library at
15 its center - anywhere, Timbuktu, Athens, Rome,
16 Beijing, Jerusalem. Every great city has had a
17 great library.

18 Libraries, since Andre Carnegie,
19 gave us these communities libraries has been over
20 par. So we have helped everybody get ahead. We
21 helped the President of the United States get his
22 first job as a community organizer in Chicago. He
23 came to one of our libraries, it happened to be
24 mine or ours of the New York Public Library. We
25 were there for him and we want to be there for you

1
2 and for every other person in this room and
3 everybody in New York. That's what I would like
4 you to do, to help us keep that in mind and stay
5 with us.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Paul, you
7 have us. You're preaching to the converted when
8 you talk to all of us. I agree with my colleague
9 Tish because we did have a big celebration last
10 year.

11 DR. LECLERC: Yes, we did.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And now
13 today we're here today we're here fighting again.
14 I fear that next year that we will be sitting here
15 again fighting once more. We're the converted but
16 I wanted to know if there were any specifics that
17 we as Council Members could do to assist in
18 helping you to secure or voice what could be done
19 through the stimulus package, either through the
20 energy and the broadband stimulus money. As
21 little as it is, we have to fight on all levels.
22 Unfortunately, yes, we're fighting for crumbs.

23 DR. LECLERC: I think first and
24 foremost you have to know what's being asked for
25 by the libraries in the stimulus package. I think

1
2 that advocacy of not only necessarily within the
3 city but also the state level because it is the
4 governor and his staff that will be playing a
5 critically important role in the distribution of
6 stimulus monies. I think outreach to Governor
7 Patterson and others at that level would be very
8 helpful to us.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Paul,
10 thank you.

11 DR. LECLERC: Thank you Council
12 Member Dickens.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
14 Council Member Inez Dickens. We've been joined by
15 Eric Gioia, David Yassky. Does anyone else have
16 any other questions, any quick question? Okay.
17 Before we end this part of the hearing I want to
18 thank all three libraries.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr.
20 Chairman?

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: However,
22 today is a very special day because it's Paul
23 LeClerc's birthday so everybody should join in and
24 sing happy birthday.

25 [Applause]

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[Signs Happy Birthday]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr. Chairman?

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I'm sure he would have preferred a present of saving the libraries.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oliver Koppell has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No, I have a comment, if I may very briefly.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Just to say that after many years I'm most pleased to see the cranes and bulldozers at the new Kingsbridge branch library in my district. We've been working on this for well over a decade. My predecessor June Iceland was involved and it's very exciting to see it going up. I know the library has labored very hard on that, had to re-bid the project and find extra money. We're finally

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2 building and it's a great landmark and very
3 important. If I get re-elected, that's why I'll
4 get re-elected so thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
6 very much. Thank you for coming here today.
7 Elizabeth, thank you, you were wonderful. Let's
8 give a round of applause for Elizabeth.

9 [Applause]

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: She testified
11 extremely well. We heard you loud and clear.
12 We're going to fight for you to see that we could
13 restore as much money as possible. Thank you very
14 much. Next we'll ask the Commissioner of Cultural
15 Affairs.

16 [pause]

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Can everyone
18 calmly find their seats? The Cultural Affairs
19 Committee will be starting. We have our
20 Commissioner Kate Levin. Can you please take him
21 up to the podium? Everyone kindly find your seat.
22 If you want to wish Paul LeClerc a happy birthday
23 please do it outside in the rotunda or you could
24 send him a birthday card.

25 Good afternoon, ladies and

1 gentlemen. I'm Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
2 I'm Chairman of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries
3 and International Intergroup Relations. I welcome
4 you to City Hall chamber. We will continue. We
5 started the first part of our hearing with the
6 libraries and at this we will continue with our
7 Commissioner of Department of Cultural Affairs,
8 Kate Levin. We want to thank you for being here
9 today. Thank you for all you are doing for the
10 cultural and arts organizations and welcome you.
11 Commissioner.

12
13 KATE LEVIN: Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'd just like
15 to introduce my colleagues. We have Diana Reyna,
16 Oliver Koppell, Inez Dickens, Gale Brewer,
17 Councilman Vincent Gentile, Tish James. Okay, we
18 got everybody. Welcome, Commissioner.

19 MS. LEVIN: Good afternoon. I am
20 Kate Levin, Commissioner of the New York City
21 Department of Cultural Affairs and I'm here today
22 to testify with regard to the Mayor's FY10
23 Executive Budget.

24 First let me discuss our expense
25 budget outlook. As you may recall, DCA's FY09

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2 adopted budget was \$152.5 million, which included
3 one time allocations of \$8.5 million. At that
4 time our budget base line, looking ahead to FY10
5 was \$144.1 million. As everyone knows the
6 national credit crisis and market downturn have
7 caused the U.S. economy to shrink by its largest
8 rate in decades. The economic downturn will
9 significantly reduce the city's revenues for at
10 least the next two years. And all agencies have
11 been charged with ensuring a balanced budget for
12 FY10.

13 To review, in November the Mayor
14 asked every city agency to forecast a 5% reduction
15 in its base line bringing DCA's budget to \$136.9
16 million. In January he asked all agencies to
17 forecast an additional 7% reduction for FY10.
18 This translated to an additional \$9.6 million
19 reduction for DCA in FY10, bringing the budget to
20 \$132.4 million. Most recently an additional 4%
21 PEG was requested. On a cumulative basis, the
22 FY10 reduction will bring the agency's total
23 budget to \$130.5 million.

24 In applying the reductions at this
25 time we have prorated them between our two expense

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2 funding pools, the CIGs and the program groups,
3 based on the percentage of our budget each pool
4 receives. For fiscal '10 CIGs will receive \$104.4
5 million, this is a reduction of \$9.8 million from
6 their original FY10 base of \$114.2 million. The
7 budget includes \$3.3 million in increased energy
8 subsidy and an additional \$5 million to cover
9 mandated collective bargaining increases for
10 organizations with union members. Program groups
11 will receive \$21.3 million, this is a reduction of
12 \$4 million from their original FY10 base of \$25.3
13 million.

14 Looking first at the CIGs, I'd like
15 to offer some context for the way that we propose
16 to apply the reductions. As you know, city
17 support for the CIGS includes both operating and
18 energy subsidies. It is our policy not to cut the
19 energy payments we make on behalf of the CIGs,
20 which are projected to be \$47.1 million in FY10.
21 Therefore the FY10 reductions of 16% translates to
22 a 26% cut to the operating portion of city support
23 to the CIGs. In allocating this reduction, we
24 looked at a number of options. After much
25 analysis we determined that an across the board

1
2 approach would be best.

3 At the preliminary budget you had a
4 number of questions about this approach in light
5 of concerns which we share, about the
6 vulnerability of smaller institutions. Let me say
7 a few words about that. You may recall that a
8 year ago, for the FY09 executive budget all
9 agencies were asked for a 7.8% reduction to their
10 out year budgets. At that time we applied a
11 tiered reduction to the CIGs. Organizations with
12 larger budgets took a slightly increased
13 reduction, which allowed us to significantly
14 reduce the impact on smaller institutions. This
15 tiered cut is already embedded in our FY10 budget
16 and is therefore already reflected in these
17 additional reductions.

18 Let me now turn to our program
19 groups. Here again, you've expressed concerns
20 about our proposed across the board reduction of
21 16%. While we examined the options again we
22 continue to believe that this is the most
23 appropriate approach. The challenge here is that
24 there is no correlation between the diversity of
25 our applicant's operating budgets which range from

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2 \$10,000 to \$150 million and the amount of DCA
3 support they receive, which ranges from \$5,000 to
4 \$250,000.

5 Organizations with very large
6 budgets may receive small grants. Funding them at
7 lower levels would not necessarily have an impact
8 on the overall distribution of funds to
9 organizations with smaller operating budgets. Of
10 course, it would be counter productive to lower
11 large grant amounts received by smaller
12 organizations. Accordingly we believe that the
13 most responsible approach is to allocate cuts on
14 an across the board basis. The 16% reduction for
15 FY10 will be applied to the 197 multiyear grants
16 currently underway as well as to the pool of funds
17 available to the 914 applicants coming before
18 panels for awards in fiscal '10.

19 Budget reductions have been asked
20 of every city agency. DCA is not being singled
21 out for cuts and no city agency is being held
22 harmless. At a time when private support and
23 endowments are significantly reduced we know that
24 it will be extremely challenging for our
25 constituents to absorb these cuts. But it is

1
2 imperative that the city balance its budget. In a
3 world of difficult choices we have structured the
4 reductions from the field in a way that we believe
5 is responsible and consistent with past practice.

6 I now would like to turn to DCA's
7 capital budget. Last summer in anticipation of
8 lower tax revenues the Mayor asked city agencies
9 to forecast adjustments to the capital budget that
10 were applied as part of the November plan. The
11 goal was to relieve the pressure on the city's
12 debt service obligations on the expense budget in
13 order to ensure that expense funding would be
14 available to sustain city services.

15 Since then, based on declining
16 revenue forecasts the Mayor has asked every city
17 agency to further reduce capital commitments by an
18 additional 30% over the next ten years. After
19 conducting an intensive review of DCA's ten year
20 plan, we have adjusted allocations to meet the
21 targets. In doing so we prioritized projects that
22 are in the ground, in advanced design or have
23 meaningful private support.

24 I know that these reductions will
25 pose challenges to our constituents and we have

1
2 worked to minimize the impact where ever possible
3 by breaking projects into phases and helping
4 organizations with multiple projects to
5 prioritize. Where possible we have realigned
6 design and construction funding with actual
7 project starts ensuring that funds will be spent
8 in the year they are allocated. Council staff has
9 been briefed on these difficult decisions. For
10 FY10 through '19 this include a \$32.2 million cut
11 to Council capital allocations and a \$143.9
12 million cut to expense capital allocations.

13 Despite the challenges we are
14 strongly committed to working in every way we can
15 to support the field during these very difficult
16 times. For example, we are working with the
17 Mayor's office to help meet the needs of the non
18 profit sector for technical assistance, cash flow
19 and Bridge financing. The Mayor recently announce
20 d a set of initiatives to help non profit
21 organizations during the downturn including
22 Greater New York, a strategic partnership program
23 that pairs business executives with non profit
24 executive directors in an effort to build
25 stronger, even more effective non profits. 25

1
2 cultural groups have expressed interest and the
3 first set of matches will be made over the summer.

4 Expansion of the Returnable Grant
5 Fund from \$8 million to \$20 million, on a 150%
6 increase for the next two fiscal years
7 administered by the Fund for the City of New York,
8 this program allows organizations to obtain Bridge
9 Loan financing at no cost for city expense
10 contracts. Since its inception in 1992, this
11 program has proved a key resource for non profits
12 and the expansion of the fund helps ensure that
13 there's enough capacity to meet the demand for
14 this service.

15 The city is piloting a program for
16 bulk purchasing of technology and insurance among
17 non profit groups that is estimated to save
18 millions of dollars for the sector. The United
19 Way has expressed interest in partnering with the
20 city to build on the work done by many groups like
21 the Council on Urban Professionals and the Arts
22 and Business Council to explore how we can help
23 pair non profits with talented board members.

24 Mayor Bloomberg also recently
25 announced the NYC Service initiative, answering

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2 President Obama's nationwide call for public
3 service. This program will not only increase
4 volunteer resources for organizations as needed
5 but will also raise awareness among New Yorkers
6 about the value of the non profit field.

7 I'm also happy to report that
8 earlier today an announcement by the Mayor
9 Department of Small Business Services Commissioner
10 Rob Walsh and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solace
11 included an innovative pilot job training program
12 for unemployed New Yorkers and underemployed
13 artists as art handlers. The demand for quality
14 art handlers at museums, galleries, corporations
15 and auction houses continues to exceed supply in
16 the New York metropolitan area.

17 DCA will work with arts
18 organization to enhance the skills of the
19 traditional candidate pool and connect them to
20 employment in the field. The program will also
21 provide credit counseling, financial planning and
22 workshops on legal and tax issues.

23 Closer to home I want to highlight
24 the success of DCA's Materials for the Arts. Last
25 year MFTA collected more than \$6 million worth of

1
2 reusable materials for use by students, teachers
3 and artists at more than 1,800 non profits and
4 schools in New York City. All goods are donated
5 and made available to organizations for free from
6 MFTA's Long Island City facility. The program is
7 especially important during these tough economic
8 times. We've seen an increase of over 13% in the
9 average number of groups served each month
10 compared to last year.

11 We're expanding our warehouse by
12 10,000 feet this summer to meet demand. And hope
13 to work with you to ensure that all eligible
14 constituents are registered and informed about
15 MFRA's valuable services. We celebrate MFTA's
16 30th anniversary this year as the city's largest
17 reuse program and a critical resource for the
18 cultural community.

19 Let me give you a brief summary of
20 other agency activities. A few weeks ago we
21 wrapped up the seventh annual Poem in Your Pocket
22 Day which gave us a chance to garner press
23 coverage for numerous spoken word and poetry
24 programs taking place across the five boroughs.
25 The initiative has also gone national thanks to

1
2 partners like the Academy of American Poets and
3 the Poetry Society of America. We're especially
4 pleased that the Academy just rolled out a new
5 book of poems available in book stores across the
6 country including City Store called, of course,
7 Poem in Your Pocket.

8 A number of new DCA funded cultural
9 facilities have opened, generating significant
10 attendance and positive media coverage. These
11 include in recent months the iconic new Brooklyn
12 Children's Museum, the renovated Intrepid, the new
13 TKTS booth in Times Square, the new home for the
14 Museum of Arts and Design and the redesigned Alice
15 Tulley Hall. Two weeks ago the First Lady made a
16 New York City organization the platform for her
17 first public address about the importance of the
18 arts at the reopening of the American Wing at the
19 Metropolitan Museum.

20 Currently we are looking forward to
21 the opening of major additions to the Queens
22 Theatre in the Park in Flushing Meadows. And in a
23 few months we'll celebrate the opening of the
24 newly renovated El Museo del Barrio. We are
25 encouraging New Yorkers to attend cultural events

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2 through our online cultural calendar and
3 partnership with NYC and Company. If you've not
4 already please visit the NY Cultural Calendar on
5 our web site in New York Citygo.com and encourage
6 the non profit cultural groups in your districts
7 to submit their events so they can be featured.
8 This service is free.

9 Since December we featured 130
10 cultural organizations from every borough in our
11 ongoing PSA campaign with WQXR radio. Earlier
12 this month NYC and Company announced the 9 in '09
13 campaign to encourage New Yorkers and visitors to
14 explore the extraordinary breadth of diverse
15 cultures in neighborhoods across the city,
16 including Little Sri Lanka, Little Ireland and
17 Korea Town, Flatbush and Jackson Heights.

18 In closing, I'd like to thank
19 Chairman Recchia, Chairman Weprin and all the
20 members of these committees for your unflagging
21 support of the cultural community. As we work
22 through challenging fiscal times, your partnership
23 becomes even more critical. Happy to answer any
24 questions you have.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you,

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2 Commissioner. We appreciate what you said. All
3 these cuts are devastating to our institutions.
4 What's the impact? Are any institutions or
5 program lines or theatres or museums, could they
6 close because these budget cuts that they're
7 facing?

8 MS. LEVIN: At the moment to date
9 we are aware of three organizations that have
10 closed. One of them, Amado Opera closed because
11 its owner decided that he wanted to retire and go
12 on to do something else. One group could no
13 longer afford to maintain its space. The third
14 group we actually have not been able to discover
15 whether they were registered as a non profit or if
16 for profit. But it was the Zipper Theatre space
17 that was used by a number of organizations.

18 Hard to predict what's happening in
19 the future but obviously funding is down from all
20 sources. So this is a very difficult period of
21 time for this community.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Has any of
23 these organizations told you that they might have
24 to close several days a week in order to say
25 alive?

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2 MS. LEVIN: We've heard some
3 organizations are considering closing. We
4 actually have an organization that's considering
5 opening for an additional day. So I think it's a
6 pretty mixed bag. But absolutely organizations
7 are considering reduced hours as one strategy to
8 deal with financial issues.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Could you
10 just go into a little bit more detail about what
11 you did last year? I'm not cutting everybody the
12 say but the tiered, just so my colleagues could
13 understand that and why you're cutting across the
14 board evenly this year?

15 MS. LEVIN: Sure. Going into last
16 year's executive budget the agency has asked to
17 take a reduction. On the CIG side we decided to
18 do this in a tiered manner. I think, Tim correct
19 me if I'm wrong, there are about 10 organizations
20 that receive the majority of city money and have
21 the largest budgets. They tend to group at the
22 top end of our funding sector.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So they took
24 the largest cuts?

25 MS. LEVIN: We cut them

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2 disproportionately in order to be able to spare
3 the remaining groups the full impact of the cuts.
4 So that difference is already embedded in our
5 funding spread for this year. To further increase
6 that difference at this particular point in time
7 when all organizations across the spectrum are in
8 trouble in different kinds of ways did not seem to
9 us to be appropriate.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I could go on
11 and ask you a lot more questions but one big
12 problem that's facing across the city today is for
13 these programs to stay alive, to keep on getting
14 funded but also job recovery. People are losing
15 jobs. Institutions can't stay open, programs
16 can't go on, teaching artists can't be compensated
17 the way they should be. What is your opinion
18 about this and you're working towards addressing
19 this issue?

20 MS. LEVIN: It is a deeply, deeply
21 difficult situation for all of our organizations.
22 The one bright spot is that across the board
23 attendance is slightly higher at cultural
24 organizations. By our calculations it's up about
25 5% and that's an average. In some places it's

1
2 much higher and some places have seen a diminution
3 of attendance.

4 Part of the concern is even for
5 organizations experiencing greater attendance,
6 they are experiencing lower revenue so I think
7 everybody's working to try and figure out how to
8 capitalize on the fact that more people want to
9 come to cultural organizations at a moment when
10 it's harder to provide basic services. About some
11 of the strategies we are undertaking taking to
12 make cash available, try to make Bridge financing
13 available for these organizations. I think
14 everybody's out there looking at as many
15 strategies as possible to help people.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'm going to
17 turn over to my colleagues now. Council Member
18 Gale Brewer, her first question is probably going
19 to be about Lincoln Center. Gale.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Lincoln
21 Center, American Museum, everything. My first
22 question is though arts education. Are you
23 experiencing any cuts in that area? I know that
24 there may be art teachers that the schools can
25 hardly afford the direct art programs that

1
2 supplement and make arts what it should be in
3 culture in the schools. Have you had any
4 discussion with DOE? What's the status of the
5 arts in terms of the general arts education?

6 MS. LEVIN: DOE has just finished
7 this year's round of Arts Count, which is the
8 survey that we do annually to try and figure out
9 what the actual art spend is. The results aren't
10 finalized but the numbers are in. So we are
11 awaiting some of that information. The latest
12 conversation I had with DOE did not show a
13 precipitous drop in arts spend but we are waiting
14 to see the effect of the most recent 5% cut on
15 individual school budgets.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because
17 when I was at Studio in the School last night it
18 was hundreds of parents loving their wonderful
19 programs. It just seemed to me that there are
20 cuts. That teachers may not cut but the actual
21 programs. Arts Stat or whatever it's called
22 account for that? There is a big difference
23 between a teacher not being cut and a program
24 being cut.

25 MS. LEVIN: Arts Count does look

1
2 both at spend within schools and spend that
3 schools do in partnering with outside
4 organizations. So yes it will pick up on the
5 partner spend.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Last time
7 we liked the report we didn't believe what it
8 said, just so you know. It was too good. Number
9 two, the job cuts for the CIGs could be what? If
10 in fact the budget cuts that you proposed or that
11 you don't want to propose but you're mandated to
12 by OMB go through, what would be your best
13 analysis of the numbers of jobs that would be cut
14 with the CIGs?

15 MS. LEVIN: We don't have
16 projections going forward for job reductions
17 because every organization is going to handle
18 these cuts in individual ways. To date, across
19 the CIGs there are about 400 positions that have
20 either been cut or are not being filled. So it is
21 certainly a significant loss of jobs.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So that's
23 just to date but you're saying that it could be
24 more but you don't know how many more?

25 MS. LEVIN: Some of that is in

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2 response. It has already anticipated reduced
3 budgets for next year. Some of it is responding
4 to the current moment so it's hard for us to
5 figure out whether that reflects an absorption of
6 the full dollar amounts. But again, organizations
7 aren't just dealing with cuts from the city. In
8 fact, the 16% cut we are hoping not to administer
9 is less than reductions in foundation and
10 corporate support that we're seeing.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

12 Because I've heard that between cuts and furloughs
13 it could be up to 1,000 jobs.

14 MS. LEVIN: That would not surprise
15 me.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's
17 horrific. Would you also agree that not only do
18 the museums offer--one of the reasons there are
19 such high turn outs now. I heard 11,000 people
20 showed up for the Brooklyn Museum Saturday Night
21 free program in Tish James' district. The record
22 at the American Museum the other day on Memorial
23 Day, the list goes on. And the Metropolitan
24 Museum, free stay in New York is what people are
25 interested in given the economy. So my question

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2 is isn't this sector, your cultural sector,
3 economic development and how, even though we talk
4 about this in this recession, isn't this the one
5 way that tourism can come into New York? Is that
6 something that gets looked at in terms of the
7 budget?

8 MS. LEVIN: It is absolutely that
9 gets looked at. George Furteda at NYC and Company
10 is rolling out a couple of promotion campaigns to
11 try and not just increase visitation but increase
12 spend at these organizations. Because if all of
13 these folks are going it would be nice if they
14 could spend more money there.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But the
16 issue is if they're not open then I'm not going to
17 be able to spend if they're not there the days of
18 the week, the hours, et cetera.

19 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely, it's a very
20 fine line trying to help keep them open, keep
21 people going, keep people spending at the--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
23 [interposing] What do you do when you're trying to
24 convince the Mayor and the OMB that we should have
25 much more money for culturals?

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2 MS. LEVIN: You can ask the Mayor
3 how much I irritate him and he will tell you it's
4 a lot.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right.
6 I'm just saying the CIGs and the programs, I don't
7 ever want to compete one against the other because
8 they both need funding. But you can be sure that
9 me and many other colleagues here are going to
10 fight like crazy to get rid of the numbers that
11 you proposed and to try to increase the budget for
12 these programs.

13 Alliance for the Arts is also a
14 group that has produced some of the information
15 regarding what's available. Is that something
16 that you find or is that part of the budget cut?

17 MS. LEVIN: I'm not sure what your
18 question is because--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
20 [interposing] Alliance for the Arts has a
21 wonderful--you mentioned NYC and Company, you
22 mentioned other free programs but you didn't
23 mention Alliance for the Arts as a place for
24 people to get information about what's available.

25 MS. LEVIN: We do fund Alliance for

1
2 the Arts and we fund the production of those
3 brochures that list pre-programming?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is that
5 being cut or is that being maintained in your
6 budget?

7 MS. LEVIN: To my knowledge that's
8 being maintained.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
10 Mr. Chair and thank you for all your work on
11 culturals. We're going to fight like the dickens
12 to restore the funding for culturals in the City
13 of New York.

14 [Applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just have
16 to clarify one thing. The funding that comes from
17 the Department of Cultural Affairs is from the
18 Department of Cultural Affairs and the City
19 Council. We always have to stress that; it's from
20 both of us. We've been joined by Helen Sears and
21 Lewis Fidler from Brooklyn. Tish James from
22 Brooklyn.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
24 Commissioner, though you've agitated the Mayor
25 unfortunately the budget that he has proposed does

1
2 not reflect that agitation. I would hope that you
3 would continue to agitate and advocate on behalf
4 of these cultural institutions, both the CIGs and
5 the programs.

6 Let me begin with the CIGs, as you
7 know the three largest CIGs in Brooklyn are
8 located in my district. As you know on average
9 between the three of them they employ about 1,000
10 residents, most of them from Brooklyn, the vast
11 majority of them live in my district. If these
12 three cultural organizations would have to lay off
13 some of these employees it would have a major,
14 major adverse impact on the local economy.

15 You know whenever the museums and
16 Bam, whenever they're opened, all of the
17 restaurants benefit. The streets are lively.
18 This cut can not be sustained. It's going to have
19 a devastating impact. As you know cultural
20 institutions are really an economic engine and
21 they should be seen in terms of economic
22 development and in terms of generating revenue in
23 the City of New York. Unfortunately tourism is
24 down somewhat but the reality is that a lot of my
25 constituents, they're not going away on vacation.

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2 They're doing what they call now staycations. So
3 I see them more and more in the cultural
4 organizations and in the institutions.

5 I guess my question to you is the
6 energy subsidy that you provide to these
7 culturals, which is a pass through. Was all of
8 those funds exhausted last year?

9 MS. LEVIN: Last year, I believe.
10 Every year the energy is projected and spent down
11 in the course of the year and then it's re-
12 projected for the next year. I believe last year
13 the projections were slightly higher than usage
14 but I haven't seen the final numbers. And for the
15 current year that we're in, we don't know yet
16 because we're still not through June.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So the
18 projections were higher so that means that we did
19 not spend down on any of those funds. This year
20 there is a slight increase in the energy subsidy.
21 What is the likelihood if in fact the projections
22 do not come to fruition in the middle of the
23 fiscal year that we could perhaps divert some of
24 those funds to the CIGs?

25 MS. LEVIN: We are looking at a

1
2 plan to do that. It's complicated in part by the
3 way that energy is projected but that is
4 absolutely what we're looking at if organizations.
5 In particular if we can figure out a way of
6 incentivizing energy conservation, it may be
7 possible to figure out a strategy to channel some
8 of the energy dollars into operating funds.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: All
10 estimates indicate that energy costs these days
11 are down all across the globe. So I would hope
12 that we can divert some of those energy costs to
13 the CIGs.

14 MS. LEVIN: The one thing I would
15 want to point out Council Member is that as we
16 build additions to these institutions and the
17 aggregate energy costs go up. So we're trying to
18 balance wanting to help facilities improve and
19 dealing with the additional energy costs that are
20 created.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just
22 changing subjects now to your capital. In your
23 capital budget are there plans for energy
24 conservation efforts in some of the CIGs?

25 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely. In fact,

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2 PlaNYC, Cultural Affairs is I think the agency
3 that has received the most number of projects
4 funded through PlaNYC. In general our
5 organizations are extremely innovative when it
6 comes to energy conservation. So we have piloted
7 a number of different kinds of strategies
8 including gray water re-absorption and various
9 other kinds of conservation projects so they are
10 going.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So as a
12 result of your agitation, are the CIGs and
13 cultural institutions a priority in terms of
14 PlaNYC and this energy conservation.

15 MS. LEVIN: PlaNYC, we are
16 certainly one of several. We, again, have been
17 very successful at working with our colleagues to
18 receive funding through PlaNYC.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Again
20 through your agitation and because these
21 institutions are economic development engines, I
22 would hope that again they would be placed in a
23 priority status in terms of New York City efforts
24 towards energy conservation. I will work with you
25 to agitate the Mayor. I do it on a regular basis

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and I've been very effective at that.

MS. LEVIN: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So I will join you both off the record or on the record. In terms of, again, the CIG, again explain to me this whole opposition to this tiered approach to the cuts.

MS. LEVIN: It's not an opposition to it. Last year we did tier the cuts. In other words we have a differential spread already embedded in what we are doing going forward. To do an additional tiered approach would further differentiate and would penalize organizations that already were cut at a higher amount last year. So at the moment we think rather than escalating that differential, the best way to go for right now is to do across the board.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You also know that the cultural institutions also provide educational programming, particularly to after schools and sometimes in school. And as you know, I have been in the forefront of trying to increase arts and culture in our public schools. Some of the organizations in my district do an excellent

1
2 job. Again, these cuts would impact--those
3 programs would be the first to go basically
4 because they're above and beyond their core
5 mission.

6 Again, through your agitation are
7 you getting to the Mayor? Does he understand that
8 because we do not provide arts and culture as a
9 part of DOE that these CIGs have stepped up and
10 have stood in the vacuum, that these programs will
11 be the first to go as a result of these cuts. Do
12 you include that in your agitations?

13 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely. He's
14 appeared at a number of events supporting arts
15 education both within the CIG world and within the
16 program universe.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
18 Particularly, obviously, I'm focused on
19 underserved communities. My district you know
20 I've got great wealth and I've got great poverty.
21 What I've attempted to do in my five years in City
22 Council and if the voters vote me back in is
23 attempt to bridge that gap and that divide. The
24 cultural institutions have been providing
25 resources and educational programming and

1
2 recreational programming to the residents of the
3 public housing where the needs are great.

4 Unfortunately they have been in a
5 desert for far too long and their needs have been
6 ignored. I have lobbied the CIGs, some have
7 stepped up and provided programming to these
8 residents. I thank them for that but
9 unfortunately again, that programming will be cut
10 if, in fact these cuts are realized.

11 I can't tell you, I have been
12 developing a closer and closer relationship with
13 these CIGs. I see what they do in Brooklyn and
14 beyond, Central Brooklyn. If they were to close
15 their doors, shut their lights, not have programs
16 both educational and recreational programming it
17 would have a devastating impact. I just want to
18 add my voice to the choir and I am now part of a
19 team to restore the funds to the CIGs. Again,
20 we'll join you in agitating the Mayor of the City
21 of New York.

22 I want to now turn to the programs.
23 I know that today and tomorrow they're
24 interviewing some of the programs, the panels. Is
25 that true?

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2 MS. LEVIN: The panels have been
3 ongoing. We are, I think, done with about 12 of
4 25 different panels so they're ongoing through the
5 month of June.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: How are we
7 doing thus far? Any status report?

8 MS. LEVIN: 12 down, 13 to go so I
9 think they're going well.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. A
11 number of organizations, again, that represent
12 emerging communities are part of that. I would,
13 again, hope that we would increase the diversity
14 in funding for cultural programs, not only in
15 Brooklyn but throughout the City of New York. And
16 that we would provide equity in terms of funding
17 in that particular area. I would hope that would
18 be a priority of yours. I know that it is.
19 Again, through your agitation I would hope that it
20 would be a priority of the Mayor of the City of
21 New York.

22 My last point is capital. I see
23 that one of my wonderful programs, Brooklyn
24 Botanic Gardens. I love them. The Children's
25 Garden Entrance project is cut by \$5.6 million.

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Is that true?

MS. LEVIN: The Entrance project is going forward. They had a water garden project that currently has been moved further out in the plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So are there any new capital projects that are going forward in my district right now? My position is that as opposed to cutting existing programs that all new capital projects, new programs, new institutions should be put on hold and that we should focus on capital projects in existing programs and existing institutions and not, again, provide public funds to organizations and institutions that would like to be located in downtown Brooklyn. Particularly during these challenging times, these institutions and these organizations definitely need capital funds.

This cut to the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens for this program I would oppose and will be working with the City Council to restore their funds. Speaking of that, how are we doing with Tafana, a theatre for a new audience. How much capital dollars is dedicated towards that project,

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which is a new project?

MS. LEVIN: I think at the moment the city has \$34 million. The organization, I think, has raised \$12. They've been actually able to raise dollars over the past six months in an extraordinarily difficult environment. We're making good progress, hoping for a ground breaking early in calendar 2010.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I hope that we could divert some of that funds to Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, to energy conservation, to the existing CIGs and to all the other capital projects and cultural institutions that desperately need those funds. I do not think that we should be using capital dollars to invest in a new organization at this critical juncture in our economy. So I thank you and I look forward to joining, with my colleagues, to restore these funds. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Council Member. Council Member Inez Dickens.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you so much Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: One question,

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only joking. She was ready to take my head off.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: My one question will have 15 parts.

[Laughter]

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Hello, Commissioner. How are you?

MS. LEVIN: Good, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have a question, a follow up question on the CDF panels and the funding. Is there an appeals process for an organization after receiving a decision from the panel?

MS. LEVIN: Yes, there is.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And is it a long process? Do you give them assistance, the organization?

MS. LEVIN: There are clear criteria for what may be appealed. We try and make a decision as quickly as possible after getting an organization's appeal. There's a deadline by which appeals must be filed and we try and act as quickly as possible once we received an appeal.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And that

1
2 information is given out to the organizations
3 readily so that they're acutely aware and focused
4 on it?

5 MS. LEVIN: It is--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS:

7 [interposing] Because what I'm afraid of is the
8 organizations in many of our communities after
9 getting a decision are not sure of the appeals
10 process or how to file it, how to go about it and
11 the deadline dates. So I just wanted to be sure
12 that they are noticed.

13 MS. LEVIN: I believe the
14 information is included in the application form
15 itself. But it is very readily available. It's a
16 very straightforward simple process. We don't put
17 organizations through a huge amount of rigmarole.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Knowing
19 that this is bad times, is it possible that your
20 office could notice them or at least notice our
21 Council offices of any organization that has
22 gotten a turn down so that we can be focused to
23 see that the organizations are aware of the
24 deadline?

25 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I would
3 appreciate that because sometimes what was in the
4 original application, we may not remember that
5 date so that's very, very--

6 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
7 Excuse me for one minute. May I interrupt this
8 please, Council Member? Is the appeal process
9 only if you did not receive any funding or is it
10 to let's say to increase your funding? If you
11 think you should have received more money.

12 MS. LEVIN: Kathy, do you want to
13 talk briefly about the appeals process?

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because I was
15 under the impression that the appeal process was
16 only for those organizations that did not receive
17 any funding.

18 KATHY: There are two grounds for
19 appeal. One is misrepresentation of information
20 and the other is non-presentation of information.
21 So if there were something that we withheld from
22 the panel that they did not see about an applicant
23 that we had at the time of the deadline, that
24 would be grounds for appeal. Or if they
25 misrepresented something within the application,

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2 that would be grounds for appeal. Generally
3 organizations do not appeal based on the dollars
4 that they are awarded. Appeals generally have
5 come from organizations that have not been awarded
6 funds, although that's not universal.

7 The number of appeals that we've
8 had in the past couple of years had been steady in
9 the 10 to 12 range.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Just so I'm
11 clear. The two grounds is one, that you were
12 misrepresented.

13 KATHY: If we withheld information.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If you
15 withheld information.

16 MS. LEVIN: In other words if the
17 notes of what the panel discussed said they didn't
18 have splat as part of their application and you're
19 clear they did--

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
21 But how am I supposed to find out if I'm program?

22 KATHY: The other piece is if the
23 panel conversation reflects a misunderstanding of
24 what was actually in the materials. So in other
25 words organizations are offered the chance to look

1
2 at the notes about the panel discussion and we do
3 as well. So if it turns out somebody appeals and
4 says the panel conversation said we did this, this
5 and this but you had brochures that we sent you
6 that show that that wasn't the case, that's
7 obviously a grounds for a successful appeal.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So the groups
9 have the right to come and see your notes.

10 KATHY: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You open your
12 notes to everyone?

13 KATHY: We discuss the panel notes
14 extensively with the applicants, yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And how long
16 after the awards come out could you appeal?

17 KATHY: Organizations are told that
18 they should appeal within 21 business days of the
19 notice that they receive from DCA. When they
20 receive a notice saying they are not being funded,
21 they also get information on the appeals process
22 at that time as well as in the application
23 materials.

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: The problem
25 with that is that it's during the summer and a lot

2 of times people go away and people don't open up
3 their mail. Because I know a lot of City Council
4 members, people don't find out about the award and
5 the time could lapse. I'll talk to you about

6 that, about the appeals process. See if we
7 could either extend it or make it a different time
8 limit. Council Member Inez Dickens.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you
10 so much Mr. Chair and your 10 questions don't
11 count towards my 15, by the way. Now, I want to
12 talk about the Museo del Barrio, please. I didn't
13 see them on the list but there is supposed to be
14 some capital work being done there. I'd like to
15 know is there going to be any problems there or is
16 it going to go forth? Are there going to be any
17 shortcuts made to that? Because that's very
18 important and I believe that some of the art work
19 is supposed to be transferred to another museum
20 temporarily in order to ensure the protection of
21 the art.

22 MS. LEVIN: I would like to think
23 we have had all the problems we're going to have
24 with that project. And we are looking forward to
25 a wonderful opening I believe in September.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: So there
3 should be no further problems?

4 MS. LEVIN: There should be. I
5 can't anticipate any more problems. We've had
6 several; we've dealt with them all and I think
7 we're done.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Because I
9 only have two SIGs in my district.

10 MS. LEVIN: Yeah, but you got good
11 ones.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have
13 excellent ones and that is the Studio Museum and
14 that is the Museo del Barrio. It's very important
15 to me that they're protected. Now, I was looking
16 at the executive budget here on the Studio Museum,
17 Museum of Harlem and I see that they've got
18 significant cuts. Is this reflective of the 7.4%
19 or is this some additional cuts?

20 MS. LEVIN: The total cut is 16%,
21 which is the same cut that other organizations are
22 receiving.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I
24 understand that and I heard your testimony earlier
25 about how it was calculated. I just have some

1
2 concerns about our smaller SIGs because they don't
3 have endowments and foundations that help them nor
4 do they have boards that are able to raise money
5 for them. If the larger ones don't get as much
6 money raised in bad times, the smaller SIGs don't
7 have ability to raise much of any because they
8 don't have the endowments. So I'm very concerned
9 about everyone getting the equal cut. I had
10 discussed that with you before so that you're
11 aware.

12 Our cultural institutions and our
13 programs are leading economic engines of the city,
14 generating billions of dollars in taxable revenue
15 for New York City. When we cut them and they have
16 to cut their hours, then the city at large is
17 losing revenue. We need to look at it and maybe
18 do a little math work. That's what I was sitting
19 here doing, a little math work to see how much a
20 loss that the SIGs receive and how much loss did
21 the city receive comparatively when our SIGs have
22 to close down, shorten their hours, shorten their
23 days, close down programs when the programs are no
24 longer available to our families and our young
25 people and our visitors from outside of the city.

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2 I just wanted to put that on the
3 table because of my concern. Then the last is
4 that they're major employers in the City of New
5 York. The loss of jobs that could come with this
6 is devastating to the economy and to the
7 circulation of the dollar that we all talk about.
8 So I just wanted you to know how concerned the
9 entire City Council is about this.

10 MS. LEVIN: We share your concern
11 and appreciate it very, very much.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Are you
14 finished Council Member?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I reserve
16 the right to come back again.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.
18 Council Member Helen Sears. I want you to know
19 that Tish James is in front of you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: You have to
21 realize I have to catch up because I came late but
22 here we are.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Good
25 afternoon. I'm glad to see you. I just really

1
2 have a question with a very short comment. I know
3 that SIGs are cut very hard and I know being on
4 budget negotiating of what we have to do in that
5 process. It's a very painful one. But I would be
6 remiss if I didn't speak about the institutions in
7 Queens because they get hit very, very hard. They
8 get hit not in the fairest of ways. So how is it
9 that we can look at these institutions and somehow
10 review exactly their distribution?

11 For instance if you take the Museum
12 of the Moving Images, it's hit so hard. It might
13 be open two or three days a week. That is a
14 citywide cultural institution. They've got
15 hundreds and hundreds of kids that come in our
16 classes from an entire city. The Museum of the
17 Hall of Science is the only one in the city of its
18 kind - the only one. They get from all over the
19 entire city and there is hardly ever a
20 consideration.

21 I look at the Queens Theater in the
22 Park. It has become a really focal point. These
23 institutions are in Flushing Meadow Park. And in
24 this deep economic crisis that park is used and
25 those institutions are used. They can not

1
2 continue to do what they do if they don't have a
3 fairer distribution of money. I'm really asking
4 how can Queens have a review of exactly how it is
5 determined that they get an allocation that, quite
6 frankly, is not fair for when they really deal
7 with a large part of the city as well?

8 I'm going to bring it up in
9 negotiating because it hits the institutions very
10 hard and the fact is, is that our institutions are
11 very new and they are the first ones to get cut.
12 Remember they came up way after the culturals in
13 Manhattan, the Metropolitan and those in which we
14 love and they are worldwide. But the cultural
15 institutions in Queens are babies in comparison to
16 the others and they're always like the
17 stepchildren.

18 For the borough of Queens in
19 developing that and maintaining it for our
20 schools--that's what they do in the schools, in
21 the Queens Botanical Gardens is throughout for
22 what they do. They win all kinds of awards
23 nationwide. So my question is how do we get to
24 sit down and re-review exactly what that process
25 is and how badly unfairly it affects Queens?

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2 MS. LEVIN: I'd be happy to sit
3 with you at any time that you find convenient to
4 go over the funding basis for Queens
5 organizations.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: We will do
7 that, thank you.

8 MS. LEVIN: I will say that in the
9 past few years, we have collectively invested
10 hundreds of millions of dollars in Queens
11 organizations for capital projects as one way of
12 both recognizing their excellence and promoting
13 them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: And it's
15 very, very much needed because they were, some of
16 them were huts because they were so young and they
17 really were put together with mud. I can
18 understand why that was done because it was an
19 extreme necessity to do that. I'll be glad to do
20 that.

21 MS. LEVIN: I look forward to that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I'm going to
23 sit down with our culturals in Queens and our
24 delegation and see exactly how we can help to
25 revise what is happening. Thank you Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Council

3 Member Tish James, one follow up question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just for the
5 benefit of my colleagues, I too was educated.

6 There's this notion that the cultural institutions
7 are sitting on these massive endowments. What we
8 learned and what I have learned is that they are
9 regulated by state law and that the body of the
10 endowment is often times restricted. A lot of
11 these endowments currently are under the water
12 because most of the institutions invest in funds
13 and they basically live off of or they just take
14 the interest from the endowments. Because these
15 endowments now are under the water, these cultural
16 institutions can not benefit from the endowments.

17 The second one is that the
18 foundation giving is a thing of the past. Most
19 foundations are not giving to CIGs so they have to
20 depend upon the largess of the city. Which is why
21 the room is packed here today and which is why the
22 City Council under the leadership of Council
23 Member Recchia, we have got to step up and provide
24 funding to the cultural institution.

25 There's another notion that I want

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2 to disabuse most people of and that is, is that
3 the cultural institutions only cater to the rich
4 and the famous. Having witness what happens at
5 Brooklyn Museum every first Saturday of every
6 month I can tell you it is not the rich and the
7 famous.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: It is my
10 constituents, the constituents in Bedford
11 Stuyvesant, East New York, every corner of the
12 City of New York that goes to Brooklyn Museum. To
13 such an extent that I can not enjoy it anymore
14 because I'm taking notes about every pot hole in
15 my district.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
17 very much.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So my
19 question to the Commissioner.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I thought you
21 were finished.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Now, that
23 was just a comment...

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right.
25 Quick question.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: ...about the
3 notion, sorry.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because
5 Council Member Inez who has a follow up.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Hurry up.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So there's
9 another institution that's not in my district but
10 it's literally two blocks out but I incorporate
11 them in my district and that is the Brooklyn
12 Children's Museum, which is now this iconic figure
13 of yellow. There's a possibility, a rumor in the
14 air that they may have to close. After building
15 this wonderful institution--and I took my two
16 nieces. Well I've got more nieces but I took
17 these two last Saturday and I couldn't get them
18 out. It was quite a sight because they wanted to
19 stay and I had to stay and I had to leave.

20 There's a rumor in the air that
21 Brooklyn Children's Museum, this wonderful
22 institution may have to close its doors. What is
23 DCA doing to address that? First of all is the
24 rumor true? And two, what can DCA do to address
25 that or prevent that?

2 MS. LEVIN: We have not heard any
3 such rumor. They are an organization that has
4 seen a huge growth. I think it's over 100%
5 increase in visitors since the new building
6 opened. They also have been very hard hit by a
7 downturn in various funding sources. So we are
8 working with them to understand some of the
9 financial pressures they're under but also the
10 various strategies that they want to use to
11 address them. In terms of changing hours, in
12 terms of certain kinds of admission fee policies,
13 helping them to recruit the strongest possible
14 board so that they have the resources that they
15 need to keep functioning because they are an
16 extraordinary institution.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Suggest a
18 meeting with the Brooklyn Children's Museum just
19 to see whether or not the rumor might be true.

20 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

23 Council Member Inez Dickens, this will be the last
24 question.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Just

1
2 quickly.

3 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Short.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Chair,
5 please. To piggy back on my colleagues said about
6 the state law that regulates endowments. We maybe
7 need to investigate to see what we can do to help
8 them to advocate the largest SIGs that do have
9 endowments that now need to maybe touch upon that
10 principal and are unable to do so. We need to
11 maybe advocate to see what we can do to help them
12 so that that law can be changed and amended so
13 that they can go in and use the principal and
14 replace it at a later date.

15 I'm asking would my chair be
16 willing to look into that and work with the SIGs
17 to try to see what we can do to assist in that.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yes, we
19 definitely can do that. We can have a meeting on
20 that and see what we can do.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Anyone have
23 any further questions? With that, Commissioner I
24 want to thank you for coming today.

25 MS. LEVIN: Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We will move
3 on. Thank you. Call the next panel please.

4 COUNSEL: Cuthbert Dickenson, Carol
5 Thomas, Margalit Susser, Eileen Muller and Peter
6 Vreeland.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.
8 Everyone calmly find their seats. This is not a
9 break. We'll continue on with our hearing. Could
10 everyone calmly find their seats? Whoever would
11 like to go first.

12 EILEEN MULLER: Hi, good afternoon.
13 I'm Eileen Muller, President of Local 1482, the
14 Brooklyn Library Guild, representing over 1,000
15 employees at the Brooklyn Public Library. Thank
16 you for giving me this opportunity today to
17 communicate with you again.

18 I feel, though, that my speeches
19 sometimes are just an echoing of what I've said
20 before. Our problems remain the same in the face
21 of this diminishing financial resources. You have
22 always been very supportive of us in recognizing
23 the importance of the public libraries to the
24 people of New York City. We all understand that
25 we are dealing with a very different time today

1
2 than we have in the past. The only thing that has
3 not altered is the library patron who comes to the
4 library as if nothing has changed. That person
5 knowing first hand the effects of the country's
6 economic situation, they feel it definitely at
7 home. But they still need the services of the
8 library more today than ever before.

9 Today you heard from our director
10 Dionne Mack about the projected service cuts to
11 the hours at all libraries at the Brooklyn Public
12 Library. Right now Brooklyn Public Library is
13 planning on only having 58 of its branches open
14 five days a week, Monday through Friday from 1:00
15 pm in the afternoon until 6:00 pm in the evening.
16 Although a few branches will be open for evening
17 hours, I believe it's only two. Also Saturday
18 hours will only be a few branches as well. Sunday
19 hours are long gone; the libraries are no longer
20 opened on Sundays.

21 But the public who will be
22 challenged by these hours will be the school aged
23 children coming to the library for class visits,
24 young preschoolers coming to the library with
25 their mothers or their babysitters, the elderly

1
2 people seeking the library to read their
3 newspapers, people who are unemployed coming to
4 the library to use our computers looking for jobs
5 or even the working people who are paying taxes
6 will no longer be able to use the libraries.

7 I believe that the library has made
8 the choice of their service hours to provide a
9 place for children after school when they need
10 access to books as well as a safe place to go.
11 This is a very valid reason and I can't argue with
12 it but our society is not made up just of school
13 age children. We have people from all walks of
14 life and all age groups that need to use the
15 library.

16 What I ask of you today is to
17 please consider the funding to the public
18 libraries. And I know you have supported us in
19 the past and I look forward to you supporting us
20 again. We need every penny that you can scrape
21 together to give us because we need to keep the
22 libraries open. Thank you very much.

23 [Applause]

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.
25 If you could keep your applause down. Thank you,

1 really appreciate it. Next.

2
3 PETER VREELAND: Hi, Pete Vreeland.
4 I'm the President of Local 1559, the American
5 Museum of Natural History. Thank you to Chairs
6 Recchia and Gentile and the members of the
7 Committee on Cultural Affairs for this
8 opportunity.

9 Numbers kick around and I see again
10 what was proposed and what people talk about.
11 Part of this, I think, the Department of Cultural
12 Affairs was talking about was the fact that the
13 city needs more art handlers. Art handlers are
14 part of my members. Unfortunately when money is
15 cut to the Museum of Natural History, a person
16 that works in my local who makes about \$45,000 is
17 shown the door where meanwhile we have people
18 making in excess of \$350,000 who are still there.

19 What I'd like to see is when we
20 talk about all these numbers and we kick it
21 around, we try to instill a little bit of money
22 back into the working class people who vote in New
23 York City, pay taxes in New York City, send their
24 kids to public school in New York City, which are
25 my members. So when you talk about cutting monies

1
2 back and monies being cut to the culturals my
3 members are going to be shown the door.

4 I've been in the cultural
5 institutions 19 years. I started at the Brooklyn
6 Children's Museum. I worked there six years. A
7 really good friend of mine who worked there for a
8 long, long time passed away. People work for
9 culturals because their heart and soul is in it.
10 It's not for the money, normally. But the problem
11 being is when you guys cut the Department of
12 Cultural Affairs money, all the city money, my
13 members get sent out the door.

14 When things were really, really
15 good my members didn't get the same amounts of
16 increases in pay that I've seen happen in upper
17 echelons with the museums and within management.
18 So as things are tough and as things are tight, I
19 want you guys to remember that my members are
20 working class people, blue collar. They send
21 their kids to public schools, they take advantage
22 of the same cultural institutions that they work
23 in. When they get shown the door, that is a major
24 problem.

25 I'd like to see also, and I know

1
2 you guys have been really, really helpful with
3 this, Urban Advantage which is something near and
4 dear to my heart. A major initiative that takes
5 care of eighth grade extra projects within the
6 city. Let's not kill this baby with the bath
7 water. It's a good project. It should be funded.
8 Thank you. Sorry for going over.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay.
10 I just want to say we're going on the clock, two
11 minutes per person. I just want to correct you on
12 something. We, the City Council, Speaker
13 Christine Quinn and my colleagues, did not cut the
14 budget.

15 MR. VREELAND: Okay, I know but--

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
17 There's the Mayor that cuts and we fight to
18 restore. Please--

19 MR. VREELAND: [interposing]
20 Please, please, please fight.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because
22 there's press here, there's people here and they
23 hear people say we cut the budget and they're
24 looking at us. Then when we go out there to
25 fight, people say why are you cutting the budget.

1
2 We heard at the City Council. So we don't' cut
3 the budget.

4 MR. VREELAND: That's good to hear
5 because the guy gets his way a lot. Let's not let
6 him get his way on this one.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Next.
8 Plus Urban Advantage is very important to us.
9 It's our program and Rob Jackson, head of the
10 Education Committee. Believe me, we would love to
11 expand that program. We ask the DOE to chip in
12 with us to expand it and we have not been
13 successful in that. Next.

14 CAROL THOMAS: Chairman Recchia and
15 distinguished Committee members, I am Carol Thomas
16 President of the New York Public Library Guild
17 Local 1930 DC37 AFSCOUNCIL MEMBERE, representing
18 1,650 frontline library employees in the Bronx,
19 Staten Island and Manhattan.

20 For all New Yorkers, free access to
21 information is more than a quality of life issue.
22 It is an absolute necessity in the world of today.
23 Libraries are valued by their users and have been
24 the pride of elected officials in the City of New
25 York as they should be. I am sure that everyone

1
2 here today wants to maintain high quality public
3 library services that prepare our children to
4 enter a workforce that each day requires greater
5 skills and educations.

6 As you know, for urban and low
7 income families public libraries provide the only
8 access to computers and the internet, which is
9 crucial in today's job market. The value of a
10 safe haven for children and young adults can not
11 be underestimated. It is unconscionable that the
12 Mayor's executive budget is calling for budget
13 cuts for fiscal year 2010 in the midst of an
14 economic downturn.

15 This proposed budget includes a 21%
16 or a \$28.2 million cut in the operating funding
17 for the New York Public Library. These cuts
18 translate into a drastic reduction of hours, books
19 and other services and massive layoffs of 415
20 staff members. The layoffs are the opposite of
21 what President Obama is trying to do in
22 Washington, which is to stimulate the economy by
23 creating and protecting jobs.

24 Please take a look at the
25 remarkable statistics of the circulation and

1
2 attendance that the New York Public Library has
3 provided. These figures can not be overlooked.
4 They prove the high quality of service that has
5 been provided by the staff. And that libraries
6 are crucial today more than ever, especially when
7 we face a deep depression and people are relying
8 more and more on library resources for job
9 searches.

10 We can not allow the proposed
11 budgets to undo all of your hard work, support and
12 dedication of getting libraries to the point that
13 they are today. Don't let this economic disaster
14 be a disaster for the New York Public Library.
15 Maintaining and keeping all libraries open six and
16 seven days a week with no layoffs must be a
17 priority. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
19 very much, next.

20 MARGALIT SUSSER: I'm Margalit
21 Susser, Queens Library Guild Union President and
22 I'm here with my other colleagues to note the
23 importance of keeping libraries whole. With the
24 proposed budget cuts to the library systems by the
25 Mayor, you notice I said by the Mayor, we will see

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2 reductions that were mentioned by my colleagues
3 Miss Miller and Miss Thompson. I do want to
4 emphasize that it will damage not only today the
5 libraries but in the future.

6 You'll see the losses of new staff
7 who will provide services in the future. Once the
8 economics get better and the appropriate money is
9 restored, it would mean just restoring the damage
10 that is done this period rather than moving the
11 libraries forward into the future. That's all I
12 have to say. I was less than two minutes.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
14 very much, next.

15 CUTHBERT DICKINSON: Good afternoon
16 all, Chairman and members of the City Council. My
17 name is Cuthbert Dickinson and I'd just like to
18 say I echo the sentiments of my library
19 colleagues. May I just add as well, at the
20 library we are told that we can not buy any
21 materials. We have to get approval because of the
22 reductions we have suffered so far. So I'll take
23 my time to speak about the botanical gardens,
24 specifically Queens and Rave Hills, which are
25 small institutions. They have done everything in

1
2 their power to save money.

3 I plead to you because these
4 institutions are so small they can't take anymore
5 cuts. You understand? So I'm asking you to think
6 hard and long and three, four times to restore
7 some of that reduction. It's very hard for them
8 to continue in an environment such as this. Not
9 to say the situation is any less than Brooklyn and
10 Queens and New York Botanical Gardens is any less
11 in the financial situation. But the small
12 institutions is more devastating, the reductions
13 in cuts are to them. So I'm asking you please. I
14 know I'm preaching to the choir so have a good
15 day.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you. I
17 just want you to know that we have a
18 representative from cultural affairs you remained
19 here, Sara. They're over here so they're hearing
20 what you have to say, they'll take it back to the
21 Commissioner. I want to thank you for staying
22 throughout this hearing. Thank you very much,
23 please call the next panel.

24 COUNSEL: Laurie Combone, Randy
25 Borscheit, Norma Munn and Jenny Lalutes.

2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If anybody
3 would like to speak, please sign up. If you would
4 like to just submit your testimony, submitting
5 your testimony is the same as testifying; we read
6 it, it goes into the record. The next panel,
7 Randy Borscheit, call it again.

8 COUNSEL: Randy Borscheit and Norma
9 Munn, Randy I see.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Norma Munn?
11 Okay. Anybody else? Okay, cool. Jenny Lalutes.
12 Here they come, Norma Munn, Jenny Lalutes. Paging
13 Norma Munn, we don't want to hear that we don't
14 call you. We have to excuse you; you're injured.
15 Jenny Lalutes?

16 RANDY BORSCHIEIT: Thank you very
17 much Chairman Recchia and your colleagues on the
18 Committee. I'm grateful for this opportunity to
19 talk to you about the proposed cultural affairs
20 budget. We in the cultural community are
21 suffering the same economic pressures as every
22 other sector during this terrible recession. Like
23 businesses, government and non profit
24 organizations active in other fields, we are
25 concerned about maintaining our public service and

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2 at the same time about protecting the job security
3 of the thousands of people employed directly or
4 indirectly in the arts.

5 We know that the task of planning a
6 responsible budget, which maintains city services,
7 is a great challenge to the City Council and the
8 Mayor. We understand that equity and fairness
9 must apply to all decisions you make about the
10 allocation of limited city funds. But we also
11 want to work with you and the Mayor to consider
12 the positive role that cultural organizations play
13 in the economy, understanding that city funding to
14 the arts does not just provide cultural services
15 to the public but acts as an investment in the
16 health of our communities and the city's economy.

17 It is in the public interest to
18 keep our cultural institutions strong. We hope
19 that reductions will be planned so as to limit the
20 impact. The rule of thumb that every city dollar
21 invested in the arts is repaid in city taxes works
22 both ways. Reduce the investment; reduce the tax
23 income. I recognize that there is no easy
24 solution to this quandary but I hope we can look
25 to the city's response to an earlier fiscal

1
2 crisis, our neat bankruptcy in the mid-1970s for a
3 model on how to mitigate the unavoidable cuts in
4 public funding.

5 At that time the city took
6 advantage of the federal CIDA program to allocate
7 funds to cultural groups to enable them to protect
8 the jobs of or rehire hundreds of workers who
9 would otherwise have been laid off. There is no
10 CIDA program in 2009 but there is great interest
11 in Washington in maintaining employment. The
12 cultural community is eager to work with our
13 friends in city government to take advantage of
14 any jobs programs that might be available or to
15 encourage Congress to create new jobs programs,
16 which might serve our industry. After all, the
17 arts are as natural to the big apple as apple pie;
18 they are one of our most important home
19 industries.

20 The facts are well known, the arts
21 contributes \$21 billion in economic activity to
22 the city. They generate 160,000 jobs and \$900,000
23 million in city taxes. The non profit sector
24 alone has an economic impact of \$6 billion and
25 generates 40,000 jobs. It pays \$170 million in

1
2 taxes to the city, considerably more than the
3 cultural affairs budget you are considering today.

4 Although all city services are
5 important and some are vital to our health and
6 safety and the future of our young people, few
7 areas of city expenditures generate a return on
8 investment as great as the DCA budget. I can go
9 on; I have a longer statement but I will leave it
10 with you and your friends.

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Do you want
12 to add anything else?

13 MR. BORSCHIEIT: Just real quickly I
14 wanted to just add two things. I know we're
15 talking primarily about the cultural affairs
16 budget at this moment but I wanted to put a word
17 in for the public libraries as was just said by
18 the last speakers. They are an extremely
19 important, invaluable and very broadly based
20 community service to the public, both as cultural
21 institutions and as educational institutions.

22 A 20% increase in use at the New
23 York Public Library since November. This is an
24 indication of just how valuable they and other
25 cultural institutions are to this city. And also,

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2 I'd like to ask the Council to consider
3 maintaining the highest possible level of support
4 to NYC and Company. Tourism is more than ever, an
5 important industry in this city. You and the
6 Mayor have made a commitment to marketing the city
7 to the world, to tourists and to the business
8 community. Hardly anything is more important to
9 the economic regeneration to our city. The
10 cultural institutions are extremely important in
11 attracting tourists. They also will benefit by
12 the increase in tourism.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, thank
14 you very much.

15 MR. BORSCHIEIT: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Next.

17 LAURIE COMBONE: Good afternoon. I
18 want to thank you for the--Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Hold on
20 Laurie, before we--we've just been joined by
21 Council Member David Weprin, Chairman of the
22 Finance Committee.

23 CHAIRPERSON WEPIN: Mr. Borscheit,
24 I enjoyed your statistics, specifically the one
25 about the \$21 billion in economic activity. Is

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that on an annual basis?

MR. BORSCHEIT: That's on an annual basis, yes.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: I've been making the argument for years about the multiplier effect of the money that we put in to cultural institutions. I've been using a 10:1 multiplier, which is for every dollar that we put in, in government dollars towards the arts we get back about ten fold, \$10 in economic activity. Would that be a close ratio to the \$21 billion you're referring to?

MR. BORSCHEIT: I think it's at least that much. Plus, we get more than dollar for dollar back in city taxes for every dollar in the cultural affairs budget so that's direct income to the city budget.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Go ahead, Laurie.

MS. COMBONE: Thank you. I want to thank you for the invitation today and the reminder. I also want to thank you for the

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2 opportunity to speak today. I am ultimately a
3 product of the CIGs. My first internship
4 opportunity was at the Metropolitan Museum and
5 then I went on to the Brooklyn Children's Museum,
6 where finally I worked with Arnold Leeman at the
7 Brooklyn Museum of Art. So I am a prime example
8 of what the CIGs can do. I'm happy to say that
9 I'm in support of the CIGs because that's
10 ultimately the community that I come from. But as
11 the Director of the Mocada Museum, which is a
12 smaller museum in downtown Brooklyn with a very
13 large mission, I have to speak on behalf of the
14 cultural equity group as well as on behalf of the
15 museum.

16 I wanted to address today several
17 of the issues that were addressed while the
18 presentation was going on and understanding the
19 CIGs and the cultural equity group and the
20 challenges with the disparities in funding.
21 Talking to my intern that's here today, many of
22 the questions that she asked in terms of why does
23 the city government work this way reminded me very
24 much of how Martin Luther King described to his
25 daughter why she couldn't attend the amusement

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2 park that she saw so many people enjoying. I feel
3 that that same disparity is felt so much so in the
4 inequities in the funding.

5 Also, the Commissioner mentioned
6 that we talked about these rumors about many of
7 the organizations closing. Many of the smaller
8 organizations as well as the larger organizations
9 are afraid to discuss the well being of the
10 organization with the Department of Cultural
11 Affairs, their funders or their corporate sponsors
12 because of fear that if the organization does not
13 seem viable that it will not be supported in the
14 upcoming year. So we don't really have an
15 accurate snapshot as to how organizations are
16 faring in the current climate because that has not
17 really been encouraged throughout our history to
18 discuss financial matters as well.

19 I also wanted to mention briefly,
20 too, there's an 09 in 09 tourism campaign. The 09
21 in 09 tourism campaign I thought was a wonderful
22 idea but it was also an idea that was orchestrated
23 through the city; it was not necessarily one that
24 came from the community or the people. I would
25 encourage the City Council to start to encourage

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2 more of the ideas from their constituents versus
3 idea that they create themselves within the
4 Council.

5 The other aspect that I wanted to
6 mention is that the African Diaspora as well as
7 the Latino, Asian, Native American, Asian arts
8 organizations provide invaluable cultural
9 opportunities and educational programming within
10 our schools. Our current curriculum system is not
11 created so that young children can learn about
12 their own history and culture. So when you go
13 into many of the classrooms, many of the children
14 are learning about art but they're learning about
15 art through Saisson, Picasso, Del Ali, Saisson and
16 the others and they're not learning very much
17 about their own culture or history.

18 The other aspect, too, is that
19 what's very important to understand is that we
20 have words such as underserved and
21 underprivileged. We accept there are underserved
22 communities and underprivileged children and
23 underserved communities but the city as well as
24 the Department of Cultural Affairs currently
25 operates, it doesn't take into account at all that

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2 there is a word called underserved or
3 underprivileged and what exactly it is that we do
4 about that.

5 Further, we voted in this
6 particular election for change. So far everything
7 that has been directed towards our community has
8 been that there are going to be no new
9 initiatives. Everything for this year and the
10 past year has been based off the fact that there
11 are going to be no new initiatives. These new
12 initiatives keep things currently the way they are
13 currently operating, which is ineffective for our
14 communities.

15 Finally on the last scale, this in
16 a quality and funding, it certainly creates an
17 unbalance in the world. I think a lot of the
18 challenges that we are experiencing is because of
19 this imbalance that we don't allow equity to flow
20 throughout all of our communities.

21 On the final point with that, the
22 cultural equity group has definitely been looking
23 in terms of how can we create not just more money
24 and resources for our institutions but there are
25 seven communities in New York City that currently

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2 feed the prison industrial complex system. The
3 city and the cultural budget has not looked at
4 those communities in any kind of meaningful way to
5 say that we need to draw more resources into those
6 communities so that we can actually help and
7 assist. We're basically just looking at cutting
8 organizations across the board with no thought,
9 rhyme or reason about the communities that are
10 most in need, the communities that are most
11 feeding this prison industrial complex system. We
12 need to look at that across the board instead of
13 just cutting basically just straight down the line
14 with not rhyme or reason for the communities or
15 those communities in need.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
17 very much. I just want to address that. This
18 City Council has worked extremely hard to do fair
19 funding for everyone, for all ethnicities across
20 the table. We've met with the group and we work
21 very, very extremely hard to make sure everybody
22 gets their fair share of the pie. As far as new
23 initiatives, there's just no money. We would love
24 to have new initiatives, believe me.

25 When we come up with ideas and

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2 programs, we listen to the community of the people
3 of the City of New York. This is the people's
4 house and we get many of our ideas from different
5 communities across the city. So we do listen to
6 people and their ideas and their initiatives. I
7 just wanted to say that.

8 MS. COMBONE: I respect that but
9 when you look at the borough of Brooklyn and you
10 look at the cultural landscape, building and
11 construction, brick and mortar, the amount of
12 cultural institutions in Brooklyn, New York that
13 are reflective of African American, Latino, Asian,
14 Native American institutions is null. We don't
15 really have anything to necessarily show in our
16 borough for this diverse culture that represents
17 the majority of the Black and Latino communities.
18 The largest in Brooklyn, New York than it is in
19 any of the five boroughs but it's nothing visible
20 to show that.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We fund many
22 groups of ethnicity and many groups that serve the
23 African American community that are run by African
24 Americans. And, again, I'm not going to--we
25 discussed this, we're funding them. We showed you

1
2 the statistics and I'll leave it at that. Norma
3 Munn.

4 MS. COMBONE: Thank you.

5 NORMA MS. MUNN: My apologies for
6 causing your slight delay.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay.
8 You're injured.

9 MS. MUNN: No, I kicked a state
10 assembly. I'm kidding, of course. I want to
11 thank you for the opportunity to testify today and
12 I also want to acknowledge that these are really
13 extraordinary times. I haven't seen pressures and
14 demands on the city budget in over a decade such
15 as this. I know that you as City Council Members
16 are really aware of how much the cultural
17 community as a whole needs your support and you've
18 shown yourself repeatedly over the years
19 responsive to those needs. The question facing
20 you this year is not only how do you restore but
21 how do you do it equitably and how do you even
22 define what equitable means.

23 I'm going to provide you with a
24 very quick snapshot of a very small survey that I
25 did only within a certain group of the program

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2 category. The CIGs have gotten statistics
3 together so I felt that what you needed was
4 something from the other group. I survey 61
5 groups covering all the boroughs with budgets
6 ranging from \$100,00 to \$1 million. I did not
7 include any museums in that because for many
8 reasons I only had one or two I could have reached
9 out to and the sample was a little tight for time.

10 67% of those groups have either
11 laid off workers or not filled a vacant position
12 since last June. 17% had converted full time jobs
13 to part time jobs. 16% are using a combination of
14 furloughs, pay cuts or have an executive director
15 or artistic director or general manager who has
16 foregone salary during the past few months. All,
17 every single one of them expect to have further
18 lay offs, furloughs or pay cuts over the next few
19 months.

20 This is not easy to translate into
21 jobs lost but when I combine the best guess that I
22 could get of those numbers with what I know of the
23 CIG numbers and larger institutions in the program
24 groups, we're talking about 8% to 9% of current
25 unemployment and at least 1,100 jobs already lost

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2 in this sector since last June. This translates
3 into fewer programs, lesser earned income and a
4 lot of people struggling without a job and a lot
5 of people seeing less programs available to them.

6 I'd like to spend the rest of my
7 time talking to you a moment about what we just
8 heard in the hearing and some of the concerns that
9 have come out of it and why people are caucusing
10 around the neighborhood, so to speak. The
11 challenge really is how you restore or face these
12 cuts equitable. I just heard a hearing in which I
13 finally started counting and don't misunderstand
14 me, I'm appalled by the cuts to everybody. I'm
15 stunned by the operating level of cash to the
16 CIGs.

17 The rest of my written testimony is
18 a plea for them to get their energy money when
19 they save money. I'm very relieved to hear that
20 DCA is at least considering that option. We've
21 been talking about it and begging for it for five
22 or six years at least. But we can't go back to
23 the day when the words program groups or cultural
24 development groups is mentioned three times in a
25 City Council hearing aside from the presentation

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2 made by the Chair. That's not acceptable anymore
3 than what Laurie is talking about is acceptable.
4 That is also inequitable in attitude and content.

5 I would like to see both the CIGs
6 and the program groups restored to the greatest
7 extent possible. I'm begging you, do not pit one
8 against the other. It is not helpful to hear that
9 a program group should not receive capital funding
10 in order to fund a CIG. And no CIG, by the way,
11 would stand up and tell you that. That is not
12 something they would do. I'm putting this on the
13 table because somebody's got to and I'm the only
14 group in the room that doesn't receive any funding
15 from you. I'm the only who is, I think, free to
16 say whatever needs to be said.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You want
18 funding?

19 MS. MUNN: Nope. It leaves me free
20 to say. You've always been very fair as a
21 Council, don't revert to ten years ago. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
24 very much. One more, okay, sorry.

25 JENNY LALUTES: Last, but not

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least.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Never least.

MS. LALUTES: I do get city money.

I get a lot of city money and I'm grateful to all of you for the money that you give to the Alliance of Resident Theatres New York, which serves 350 not for profit theatres, two of them are Cultural Institution Groups. One is the New York Shakespeare Festival, it gets \$2 million and one is Queens Theatre in the Park that gets about \$500,000. So I am aware of the needs of the small and the large CIGs. I also represent 348 programs including the Roundabout Theatre, the Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Arise, Repertory Espanol, Mye Filipino Theatre Company, Carl Clay's Black Spectrum Theatre, Woody Kings New Federal Theatre. The list goes on.

Here's what I'm seeing, senior management is cutting their salaries, voluntarily. Mama Theatre to save money has created a furlough, Mondays they are closed. They can't afford the utilities and they can't afford the salaries. So people are getting paid for a four day week and they keep the theater open for is days because

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2 they have performances on Saturday and Sunday.
3 They need one day when they don't have heat, hot
4 water or electricity.

5 I would predict that 100 people in
6 the theatre community are going to lose their
7 jobs. Probably 300 actors are going to lose work
8 because the number of productions are going to be
9 cut. Cut productions mean fewer people going out
10 to dinner, fewer people parking cars.

11 For the first time since the last
12 recession I'm seeing my organizations putting
13 their organizational expenses on their personal
14 credit cards. This is a ticket to personal
15 bankruptcy and we've seen what's happened with the
16 recent credit crisis. They are doing it. I'm
17 afraid for them.

18 I'm going to also say, even though
19 I shouldn't, that I too felt very disenfranchised
20 by what was said earlier by my own Council Member
21 Tish James. There is a capital project in her
22 district, mine, South Oxford Space. We're doing a
23 renovation. It's modest but it's creating jobs in
24 Brooklyn. We're hiring people in Brooklyn.

25 Also Theatre for New Audience is

1
2 not a new organization. They have been around for
3 many years. They were invited to be part of the
4 BAM cultural district and anybody who can raise
5 \$12 million in capital funding in this
6 environment, my hat goes off to them.

7 Last but not least, I don't like
8 being pit against my CIG brothers and sisters.
9 They do get foundation funding. They do have board
10 members who I would kill for so please don't do
11 this. I was with Inez Dickens in the elevator and
12 she told me this was really a CIG hearing. I
13 thought it wasn't. I thought it was a cultural
14 hearing but she told me I had it wrong.

15 And Mr. Jackson, I'm glad you're
16 here because I want to tell you that what I'm most
17 concerned about is that one of our playwrights who
18 is on a commission said he was going to stop
19 writing his play because it had 18 characters and
20 no theatre would produce it. If our playwrights
21 stop dreaming, there's going to be nobody going to
22 schools to tell our children to dream. Our
23 children, many of them are from other countries
24 and live in other boroughs aside from Manhattan,
25 my son goes to one, have dreams, the American

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Dream.

Program groups, CIGs, everything, the libraries, we're all part of the American Dream. I ask for an equitable restoration for all of them. Thank you.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That was a very, very.

MS. LALUTES: You left the room purposely, right?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, I didn't leave the room--listen.

MS. LALUTES: You missed both of us Domenic.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: My wife called me because I was supposed to go pick up my daughter and I said I'm stuck here at the City Council.

MS. LALUTES: I'm stuck here, thanks.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, no-- listen. This hearing is for cultural affairs and we love all of our children the same. We treat

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them all the same--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] Well we weren't referenced the same.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Inez Dickens did not mean it that way. At the time--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] No, she was pretty clear.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: At the time she was talking about CIGs.

MS. LALUTES: I took her in the elevator. I was late because I was in the elevator with her.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right Jenny. I just have to say this City Council and the Speaker, we love all the children the same. We fight evenly. Under this City Council, the programs have never been doing better.

MS. LALUTES: Because you put \$6 million into the theaters before. We know.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We love everybody the same and we work for everybody.

MS. LALUTES: But, we want to make sure that you continue to love us because we have lost so many jobs. I don't have time to see you

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all the time.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I know.

Listen, we love you so much we even made sure Laurie was notified today to come.

MS. LALUTES: What?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Nothing, a private joke.

MS. MUNN: Domenic, since you did leave the room I want to make sure you understand that we did, while you were out, recognize that the Council has been very, very fair. And that's not always been our history. Also, none of us in this field--the CIGs sitting in this room do not want to be pitted against the programs--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing] I know. That's why we are working hard.

MS. MUNN: We heard only three mentions of programs except from what you said early on. That wad disconcerting. It was like we were back in Rudy Giuliani territory and--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing] All right. We don't want to talk about that.

MS. MUNN: We don't want it to go forward, no one in this room does.

2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: This
3 administration, believe me, they really notice all
4 the good work the program lines do and you're on
5 their radar screen and we're working very hard.

6 MS. LALUTES: But we're suffering
7 too.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Jenny, we
9 hear it. Believe me, we know it and we fight
10 hard. We're going to try to make everyone happy
11 as best we could.

12 MS. LALUTES: You're not going to
13 be able to make everyone happy, just know that.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I bet that we
15 can make--

16 MS. LALUTES: [interposing] But you
17 have to do it fairly.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And that's
19 exactly what we're doing.

20 MS. LALUTES: That's all I'm
21 asking.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We're going
23 to do it fairly.

24 MS. LALUTES: Because don't measure
25 us by the ability for us to come to your office

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2 because all my groups can't afford lobbyist. They
3 pay me to speak for them and I pay somebody to
4 help me speak for them. But they can't all afford
5 somebody to help them.

6 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: In this
7 environment today you don't need consultants or
8 lobbyists or whatever. Our doors are open to
9 everyone to come visit us and we make a point of--

10 MS. LALUTES: [interposing] We're
11 going to be visiting you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: My door's
13 open. We welcome you. I'll supply the coffee.
14 Call the next panel.

15 MS. LALUTES: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Gibb Serett
17 from UAW and Edwina Martin from Legal Services New
18 York City.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just want
20 you to know that this is the open public hearing
21 of the executive budget so we take dearly with
22 everyone. So now we're going to deal--welcome.

23 GIBB SERETT: I'm Gibb Serett from
24 Legal Services Staff Association, it's a unit of
25 the UAW. We're the unionized employees of Legal

2 Services in local 2320 where the unionized
3 employees of Legal Services NYC, MFY, Housing
4 Conservation Coordinators, Garden Riverside SRO
5 Project and the Citywide Task Force. We do much
6 of the same work as our sisters and brothers in
7 Local 2325, the Civil Division and Legal Aid.

8 As you know, we do great good and
9 we are cost effective. Yet, last year we were
10 targeted for cuts and as then as now, it was
11 initially at the behest of the Mayor. But those
12 cuts wind up being proportionately and absolutely
13 greater to our programs than to non-unionized
14 programs. You will find the amounts of our losses
15 cataloged in our leaflet, that's the bright yellow
16 one.

17 Jobs and services were lost when
18 they were most needed. Unionization and
19 everything that goes with it can not be penalized
20 again, even unintentionally. We must not be cut
21 further. Our pogroms losses should be restored.
22 And this is very important, in the same
23 proportions as they occurred up to 2008 funding
24 levels if possible. All this you have heard and
25 understood and we appreciate it. We are very much

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2 your partners and you've treated us that way and
3 you've come to our rescue in the face of an
4 uncaring executive time.

5 Again, because something else that
6 you recognize is that you work very hard to create
7 standards and rights for tenants, for the
8 protection of tenants and the preservation of
9 housing in the city. But you also recognize that
10 without day to day struggle to enforce those
11 rights, they don't amount to a great deal. So we
12 do thank you for your support. Again, we need
13 restoration, we need it proportional, up to 2008
14 levels if possible.

15 Again, I thank you on behalf of our
16 members and I thank you for the sake of the people
17 we serve.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

19 EDWINA MARTIN: Good afternoon
20 Council Members Gentile, Weprin and Jackson. My
21 name is Edwina Martin and I'm the Director of
22 Communications and Government Relations for Legal
23 Services NYC, the largest provider of free civil
24 legal services to low income people in the nation.
25 Our offices, located in every borough of the city,

1
2 have provided free legal help to people who have
3 nowhere else to turn for over 45 years.

4 I am here today with my colleague
5 Gibb Serrett to thank you for the opportunity for
6 allowing us to speak to you at this hearing. To
7 thank you as always for partnering with us to
8 provide civil legal services to the poor and most
9 importantly to ask you to restore the funding for
10 the HPD anti eviction program to its fiscal year
11 2008 level.

12 Why is this program important in
13 this difficult fiscal year? For almost 30 years
14 the City Council has put funds into HPD to provide
15 legal services to low and moderate income people
16 faced with illegal eviction and displacement from
17 their homes as well as to provide legal services
18 for low income SRO tenants who face displacement.
19 These programs have helped thousands of working
20 poor, disabled and elderly in all the city's
21 boroughs through direct representation of
22 individuals and households and through counseling
23 and training.

24 The benefits to the city are
25 twofold. The elderly, disabled and working poor

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2 who get legal help avoid the disasters of eviction
3 and homelessness. And the city benefits
4 financially because the people served stay out of
5 city homeless shelters and out of city funding re-
6 housing and social services programs, thus saving
7 the city millions of dollars a year.

8 The provision of civil legal
9 services to those that can not afford counsel is
10 crucial to the fair administration of justice. In
11 the past, the Council has stood firm in preserving
12 the precious city funding for access to justice
13 and we thank you for your work. However, in the
14 final fiscal year 2009 adjusted budget funding for
15 the HPD anti-eviction program was reduced by 25%
16 from \$3 million to \$2.25 million. That has
17 reduced our funding to provide legal services to
18 927 units of services and that includes full case
19 representations, outreach sessions, trainings,
20 tenant association meetings, et cetera.

21 This program was hit hard last year
22 and on top of it in his proposed fiscal year 2010
23 budget, the Mayor has once again completely
24 eliminated funding for this vital program. We
25 urge the Council to restore the funding to the

1
2 fiscal year 2008 level of \$3 million for the HPD
3 anti-eviction program. We are happy to take any
4 questions from you now.

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
6 very much. That's fine. The next panel consists
7 of Arnold Leeman from the Brooklyn Museum and CIG,
8 John Kaveli from the Wildlife Conservation Society
9 also SIG, Julian Zioata from El Museo Del Barrio,
10 Katherine LeClair from New York Ballet. Whoever
11 wants to start.

12 ARNOLD LEEMAN: Thank you. Good
13 afternoon Chairman Weprin and Chairman Recchia and
14 to the members of the Committee on Cultural
15 Affairs, Libraries, International and Intergroup
16 Relations and the Finance Committee. I'm Arnold
17 Leeman, Director of the Brooklyn Museum. For
18 today's hearing, specifically as Chair of the
19 cultural institution's group, thank you for
20 allowing me the opportunity to testify today in
21 response to the proposed executive expense budget
22 for fiscal year 2010.

23 I would also like to thank the
24 members of this committee for your very strong and
25 indeed passionate leadership. And support over

1
2 many years for the 33 extraordinary cultural
3 institutions in every borough of the City of New
4 York represented by the Cultural Institution Group
5 and the critical contribution each and every CIG
6 make to their surrounding community and to the
7 city at large.

8 I'm testifying today on behalf of
9 these 33 cultural institutions which are charged
10 with and which provide exceptional stewardship for
11 many of the most important New York City owned
12 properties throughout the five boroughs. Among
13 the CIGs are many of our city's cultural and
14 neighborhood cornerstones. And proudly, a large
15 number of the most respected arts, science and
16 performing institutions in the world.

17 Our incredibly diverse programs and
18 services attract 20 million New York residents,
19 families, school children, teachers and
20 international tourists each year. We provide them
21 with a better understanding of the world, our
22 nation and our neighborhoods for outstanding
23 visual and performing arts, science and natural
24 history, our cultural heritage and our shared
25 experiences. Together we share an ongoing and

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2 increasing obligation every year to the 2.3
3 million school children we serve on an annual
4 basis. To the nearly 11,000 people we employ and
5 to the communities across the city where we are
6 increasingly economic engines and neighborhood
7 stabilizers.

8 According to a 2005 study by the
9 Alliance for the Arts, the not for profit culture
10 sector contributes \$5.8 billion annually to the
11 city's economy. The same study found that the
12 cultural sector contributed \$904 million to the
13 city's revenues via personal taxes, sales and user
14 taxes and business taxes alone. All of us know
15 that the current national and local fiscal
16 challenge requires extremely difficult budgetary
17 decision making.

18 We believe, however, that the
19 fiscal 2010 executive budget unduly burdens a
20 sector of the city's economy, arts and culture,
21 all arts and culture, that is essential to
22 economic recovery. The Mayor's budget proposes an
23 \$18.1 million reduction in the CIG operating
24 budget support. These reductions are in addition
25 to the combined loss of funding in FY2008 and 2009

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2 of nearly \$15 million more, which included Council
3 initiatives, support for increased security and
4 all new needs funding.

5 We are deeply concerned about the
6 horrific impact these proposed cuts will have on
7 the CIGs ability to provide essential services to
8 students, seniors and communities that depend on
9 us, now more than ever before. In the light of
10 the reductions outlined above, institutions have
11 been left with no choice but to cancel
12 exhibitions, performances, programs, close
13 galleries, reduce open hours, close days, increase
14 entrance fees, reduce salaries and furlough and
15 lay off hundreds and possibly several thousand
16 employees and next.

17 CIG member institutions have
18 already reported that in FY09 they have had to
19 reduce their workforce by nearly 500 positions.
20 Furloughs have already affected hundreds of CIG
21 staff and there may be as many as 1,000 or more
22 additional staff members that will be furloughed
23 in the new fiscal year. Each of these jobs
24 represents a person that only provided essential
25 high quality services a their institution but who

1
2 contribute to the local economy and tax base.

3 Cultural institutions, not only
4 serve and help people, they are people. We urge
5 the Council to help fiscally stabilize the city's
6 cultural institutions by adopting two following
7 initiatives.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Are you
9 almost finished?

10 MR. LEEMAN: Two more pages but may
11 I have Julian has seated his time to me.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh, okay. No
13 questions for Tish James.

14 MR. LEEMAN: Thank you. A
15 restoration of the 25% to 26% cut to the CIG
16 operating support, which is \$18 million and the
17 restoration of former Council initiatives to
18 maintain current jobs and restore CIG jobs of \$10
19 million. A significant investment by the City
20 Council and this committee, in particular, is
21 necessary to preserve the jobs and the countless
22 programs they support.

23 One of the two critical elements
24 that we propose is this job investment program.
25 These funds were cut in FY09 and are critical to

1
2 the survival of the 33 members of the CIGs.

3 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
4 very much. You finished? Oh, I thought you were
5 finished.

6 MR. LEEMAN: I was trying to get
7 through this Council Member Recchia.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, okay.

9 MR. LEEMAN: The investment in
10 these two programs translates into major economic
11 returns, contributing to jobs, economic
12 development and the vital support of the tourism
13 industry. I believe that many of you already know
14 our contributions as a CIGs to the economy and tax
15 base. We return \$8 in economic activity for every
16 dollar of city support invested. Indeed, the
17 members of the Cultural Institutions Group is now
18 more integral to the economic and social health
19 and welfare of our city more than ever before.

20 I'm going to make one statement on
21 behalf of the Museo del Barrio. A recent economic
22 impact study conducted by the Harvard Business
23 School for El Museo, located in East Harlem found
24 that El Museo's overall economic impact during
25 FY2005-2008 was in excess of \$120 million. The

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2 city support for El Museo during that same time
3 period was \$2.3 million. I think no clearer
4 statement to the value of this investment by the
5 city can be made and I thank you very much for
6 indulging me in this statement.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That report
8 from Harvard Business School. I read that report.
9 That is probably one of the best reports I have
10 read that was written for a cultural institution
11 and the impact it has, not only on the city but if
12 you read the report about the impact it has on the
13 surrounding community. It's a phenomenal report.

14 MR. LEEMAN: Thank you very much.
15 I'm happy to take any questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We'll let
17 everybody testify and then we'll take questions.

18 JOHN KAVELI: Good afternoon and
19 thank you for this opportunity. My name John
20 Kaveli and I am the Executive VP for Public
21 Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You're on the
23 clock.

24 MR. KALVELI: I'm on the clock and
25 I'll be brief. I just want to run through a

1
2 couple of statistics for you to help make the
3 point regarding the important economic impact that
4 we have as an institution.

5 From our perspective we actually
6 generate \$414 million in economic activity in 2008
7 alone, creating jobs, purchasing goods and pumping
8 money into the cash registers of local businesses.
9 Let me give you some specific examples of the
10 economic impact of the Bronx Zoo and the Aquarium.
11 We've had more than 4 million visitors at our
12 facilities. The Bronx Zoo and the New York
13 Aquarium are both located in underserved areas.
14 WCS offers free Wednesday admission to all and
15 then free Friday afternoon at the New York
16 Aquarium. We are one of the largest employers of
17 youth in the Bronx and in FY08 we hired 800
18 seasonal employees at the Bronx Zoo including
19 students and retirees and people on public
20 assistance.

21 Much of the impact on the local
22 area, though, can not be measured by these
23 quantitative measures alone. The Cultural
24 Institution Group enhances and benefits the local
25 community through its provision of education and

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2 teacher training, its entertainment and recreation
3 facilities and its community outreach programs.
4 These work to improve the quality of life and
5 attractiveness of New York City visitors and
6 residents, particularly in largely underserved
7 groups.

8 These two statistics shocked me but
9 the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium serve 567,765
10 school and camp groups. And provided free access
11 and community programs to 592,184 individuals in
12 FY08. That's the type of impact of one of our
13 institutions. I am here representing WCS but
14 there are many other institutions within the CIG
15 that can give you such numbers as well.

16 I will add with one other
17 statistic. Since the economic downturn, we've had
18 a 28% increase in our free day visitation. So
19 people are coming to our parks right now because
20 these are the places that they can go with their
21 families. If I can leave you, though, with one
22 thought I hope you will agree that funding culture
23 is good for business and good for the people of
24 New York. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

1
2 very much.

3 MR. KAVELI: And I have 50 seconds
4 left.

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's all
6 right. Arnold used it. Next. The Bronx Museum,
7 how you doing?

8 HOLLY BLOCKUM: Good, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good.

10 MS. BLOCKUM: Thank you very much
11 for this opportunity to speak before the City
12 Council and thank you for your continued support.
13 I'm Holly Blockum, the Executive Director of the
14 Bronx Museum. I worked as a curator at the Bronx
15 Museum from 1985 to 1988. I did grow up on these
16 cultural institutions. I have now been at the
17 Bronx Museum for two and a half years.

18 We opened a brand new building.
19 And we have a wonderful place to show off however,
20 we very much need your support. I want you to
21 know that the Museum is really seen as a free,
22 safe zone in New York City, particularly in the
23 Bronx. This has been an important challenge for
24 us, a small museum but to work very closely with
25 our partners and our colleagues and CIGs. These

1
2 funding cuts are huge and incredibly difficult for
3 us to truly plan. It has an incredible impact.

4 The most recent outdoor street
5 fair, 1,700 people attended, mostly from the
6 community. First Fridays is a wonderful program
7 similar to the Brooklyn Museum where Friday nights
8 the museum is open late once a month where we can
9 do programs. Citywide, national, international
10 visitors come to visit our community as well as
11 the museum to see the galleries and exhibitions.
12 This is hugely important.

13 We annually serve 20,000 children,
14 students, community residents, artists, general
15 museum visitors who participate in school day,
16 after school and weekend programs. 5,000 of these
17 are comprised of Bronx K through 12 schools,
18 teens, resident families. Approximately 95% of
19 the museum's education attendance is under the
20 ages of 21. 55% of education audience surveyed is
21 from the Bronx Empowerment Zone. This past year
22 we've seen an increase in visitation, 3% up from
23 last year.

24 We had a record breaking, various
25 cultural programs including openings. This is a

1 huge cut for our museum. 198,600, very important.
2
3 The overall CIGs and colleagues provide a wide
4 array of art, history and science. This is really
5 important.

6 Then I'm just going to say that
7 with these cuts the Museum is force to retrench,
8 reduce work force this years, measures including
9 instituting a hiring freeze through 2010, senior
10 curator, plant manager, maintenance positions are
11 vacant and not be filled. Cutting three part time
12 security positions, laying off four full time
13 security union positions, all are Bronx residents.
14 Having all staff operate on a four day week
15 schedule in order to save 20% of payroll.

16 The Museum is not operating thin,
17 bare boned staff of 24. Existing staff are
18 absorbing the responsibility of all of these
19 positions and programs. We are now closed on
20 Mondays with fewer days to serve the public,
21 cancelling summer education programs.

22 I'm just going to end by hope that
23 you will restore the projected 25% cut to the
24 CIGs. Restore \$10 million in City Council
25 initiatives to support jobs. Lastly, I do not

2 want to return to the 1970s with the economic
3 crisis. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: New York City
5 Ballet.

6 JONATHAN STAFFORD: Good afternoon
7 Chairman Weprin, Chairman Recchia and
8 distinguished committee members. My name is
9 Jonathan Stafford. I'm a principal dancer with
10 the New York City Ballet. I'm going to speak on
11 their behalf today.

12 I have been employed full time by
13 the company for the last 10 years. I am one of
14 100 dancers who are full time employees of the
15 company, though next year our numbers will be down
16 by 11 dancers. These dancers layoffs have been
17 really tough on all of us because of our close
18 knit community. Also because collectively we work
19 165 performances every year in New York City alone
20 for 365,000 audience members, that is 23 weeks of
21 7 performances a week between November and June.

22 To put that into perspective, we
23 perform as many times as our beloved Mets and
24 Yankees play in the regular season. Plus we go
25 out on tour when we're not dancing in New York.

1
2 Just like New York sports teams are among the top
3 teams in the country, NYCB is one of the premier
4 places to dance and to see dance in the country,
5 some would even say the world.

6 In fact, I was just speaking to a
7 gentleman the other night after one of our
8 performances who lives and works in London and
9 flies over here on a regular basis just to see the
10 New York City Ballet perform. I have come across
11 numerous people like this during my career who are
12 proud to say that they schedule long trips to New
13 York City just to come see the ballet and to
14 experience New York City's diverse arts culture.

15 New York City Ballet also employs
16 63 musicians who play for every performance. Live
17 music is especially important for a dance company
18 to put on a truly exciting and dynamic
19 performance. I have danced to taped music before
20 and I always feel that something is missing
21 because the energy that is created by a live
22 orchestra really is what drives our performance.
23 Just like professional athletes, our work demands
24 a lot of our bodies. At NYCB we have physical
25 therapists, a company doctor and other health

2 professionals who help take care of us.

3 My years at New York City Ballet
4 have honestly been a dream come true. I came from
5 a small town. I wasn't really sure if I wanted to
6 be a professional dancer until I saw NYCB perform
7 live for the first time. I can still remember the
8 name of the ballet and the dancers that were
9 performing it 13 years later. My experience has
10 been even more special since my younger sister
11 Abby also joined New York City Ballet. Now my
12 parents get to come up to the big city and see
13 their kids up there on that stage. It has been
14 really special to share that with them.

15 We have made a point of reaching
16 out to the local children in the city. New York
17 City Ballet performs an extra few shows a year
18 strictly for children from the local school
19 system. Attendance is free and during the 2008
20 and 2009 school year 5,000 students from grade K
21 through 12 and from all five boroughs were able to
22 attend.

23 I have actually sat in the audience
24 during a couple of these school shows and it's
25 really fun to hear the gasps from the kids after

1
2 an impressive turn or jump. And to hear the ooo's
3 and ahhh's when they see the girls in their
4 beautiful costumes. It actually sounds a bit like
5 a rock concert at the end of the show with all the
6 children screaming and clapping. In some ways
7 it's our favorite performance of the year because
8 the audience really gives it to us. The company
9 also puts on several productions a year like
10 George Valentine's The Nutcracker and Capalia that
11 include local children who get to perform
12 alongside all of us, which is really exciting for
13 them.

14 At New York City Ballet we
15 understand there are many competing needs in
16 difficult budget times. But the high quality and
17 consistency of New York City Ballet's work and how
18 it represents our home here in New York remains
19 constant. Restoring support for our efforts will
20 have a residual and long term effect on making
21 possible the high standard we all expect of our
22 longstanding cultural institutions. Thank you
23 very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you,
25 any Council Members have any questions? Yes, com

1
2 Tish James from Brooklyn.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just a
4 comment. Obviously we recognize; you're preaching
5 to the choir. We will stand up for cultural
6 institutions because we recognize all of the
7 benefits that you provide to the general public.
8 We thank you for your service to the residents of
9 the City of New York. It's now time for us to do
10 our job. I'm confident that the members who are
11 present here and those who were here earlier will
12 do just that. I thank you. Mr. Leeman, my
13 proposal to you still stands. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
15 very much. At this time we have a public address
16 announcement. We will be moving the rest of this
17 hearing into the committee room. There is an
18 activity going on in the chamber so we will move
19 into the committee room. Sorry.

20 [pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, we'll
22 continue the hearing. Call the next panel please.
23 Sorry for the inconvenience.

24 COUNSEL: Marge Lyden, Lana Flores,
25 Rita Meade, Ingrid Abrams.

2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good

3 afternoon. For those of you who never testified
4 before the City Council before, we ask that you
5 state your name, if you're from an organization or
6 you're here on behalf of an organization, state
7 that organization that you're here on. Whoever
8 would like to go first.

9 LANA FLORES: My name is Lana

10 Flores and I'm here on behalf of all the
11 libraries, especially Brooklyn Public Library. As
12 you see my daughter, the public library has a lot
13 of impact on the children. So that's my plea. I
14 volunteer at the Brooklyn Public Library where I
15 conduct a story time session for children from
16 birth to 5 years old. I'm also a library patron
17 as I use the library as a source of reading
18 material for me and my family. I'm sorry, I'm
19 speaking through here because I have to get out.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You're doing

21 great. Don't worry about it.

22 MS. FLORES: I would like to

23 discuss my observation as a volunteer and a patron
24 on what parents think and how the library is used.
25 I hope you factored that when you considering on

1
2 the library funding decision. I have had many
3 conversations with parents that attend my story
4 time. Every one of them is grateful for the
5 program and gets a tremendous amount of joy of
6 attending the story time session with their
7 children.

8 Many of the families that attend
9 have only one parent working so the story time
10 program provides a welcome relief as a free source
11 of kid friendly entertainment. This will be
12 especially important in the summer when kids are
13 not in school. In addition, the Reading is
14 Fundamental program has always been a great source
15 of free books, which helps libraries promote the
16 importance of early reading.

17 In addition, many children do not
18 have a safe place to go after school because their
19 parent works. As a result the parents or guardian
20 directs the children to go to the library where
21 the children will be in a safe environment and be
22 able to get help with their school assignments.
23 Libraries have become a safe haven for children
24 who do not have anywhere else to go after school.

25 About a month ago I came across one

1
2 such child. I met her outside the branch that
3 closed early because their heating system went
4 down. I asked her why she did not go home and she
5 told me that her mother works and didn't have a
6 key for the home. During the day I noticed how
7 the usage among adults has increased. Some people
8 tell me that they were recently laid off and they
9 use the library resources to aid them as they
10 search for work. The library offers training in
11 computer literacy, GED programs and many other
12 valuable job search resources.

13 My own experience with the library
14 began with me brining my daughter, Marielle,
15 that's her name, there for story time. With the
16 help of the librarians I learned how to teach my
17 daughter pre-literacy skills. I found various
18 story time program because it helped my daughter
19 learned the alphabets, numbers, colors, shapes and
20 the name of the animals.

21 I decided to volunteer about a year
22 ago when I noticed that the cut backs were leaving
23 some libraries understaffed and unable to conduct
24 story time. The Librarian was supportive and
25 encouraged me to further develop the story time

1
2 program. On library in particular, Ms. Kristine
3 mentioned to me and encouraged me to pursue a
4 graduate degree in library science. With her
5 support I enrolled into graduate school of Library
6 and Information Studies over at Queens College.

7 As you can see the librarians at
8 Brooklyn Public Library are very valuable assets
9 to the community and I urge you to reconsider
10 cutting funding. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
12 very much. Next. We're going on the clock so
13 everybody will have two minutes. Are we ready
14 with the clock? If you would like to submit your
15 written testimony, is that a copy?

16 RITA MEADE: Thank you. Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Go ahead.

18 MS. MEADE: We're a bunch of
19 librarians up here. I don't think we could say it
20 any better than that. So I'll try to keep it
21 brief. My name is Rita Meade. I'm a children's
22 librarian for Brooklyn Public Library at the
23 Pattigat Branch in Canarsie. I'm also a Bay Ridge
24 resident so I like to thank Council Member Gentile
25 for his tireless support of the library.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: He's the library king in New York City.

MS. MEADE: I know. I couldn't be happier to live in Bay Ridge.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: He goes all over. You will find him everywhere you go.

MS. MEADE: I just want to read a letter that a nine year old patron wrote when I was speaking to him and he heard about the library cuts and he was very upset. I didn't help him with this at all, no one else did. He wrote it right in front of me. He was very inspired. I did help him with spelling because we mailed it out.

This is to Mayor Bloomberg. Dear Mayor Bloomberg. I don't want you to close down the library. This is where I come to read books and get information. Library teachers mean a lot. A lot of nice people work here. They help me find books and do homework. The library is a quiet place to read and do homework. I would be really sad if you close the libraries of Brooklyn. Please don't close the libraries. I love it and so do other people. From Ethan age 9.

1
2 It is my sincere hope that Mayor
3 Bloomberg gets this message. We've heard a lot
4 today about what the cuts are going to do in terms
5 of library services and programs. We know how
6 detrimental it will be to the city. So for the
7 sake of New York City residents young and old, I
8 just want you to keep fighting the good fight for
9 libraries. Thank you. Rita Meade.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Rita, did you
11 speak recently at the community board also?

12 MS. MEADE: Yes, I spoke right
13 before you got there.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's right.
15 Great, good work.

16 MS. MEADE: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
18 very much. Next.

19 INGRID ABRAMS: My name is Ingrid
20 Abrams. I am a children's librarian. First at
21 the Midwood Branch but now I'm at the Greenpoint
22 Branch. It's hard for me to explain how important
23 libraries are to the community since the library
24 is such a huge part of my life. But for anyone
25 who doesn't understand how important libraries

1
2 are, I invite them to come to my branch in
3 Greenpoint. I invite them to come early in the
4 morning when I see the stroller parade coming for
5 our free programs for toddlers, babies, parents
6 and their caregivers.

7 Sometimes we have so many children
8 that we have to turn some of them away. Sometimes
9 we have so many children that we do two classes
10 back to back. Before New York City school system
11 sees children in their first five years, the
12 public library is there to see children in the
13 first five years. It's so developmentally
14 crucial.

15 Our programs help encourage a love
16 of reading. We also spark a lifelong intellectual
17 curiosity. We increase their vocabularies. We
18 build social skills and we even help them with
19 their growth and fine motor development. We are
20 there getting them ready for schools, preparing
21 them to be better students.

22 When the schools were closed, when
23 the snow was coming down, BPL was open with our
24 doors open for children who had no other place to
25 go. When schools were closed because of the swine

1
2 flu, we were there with antibacterial soap and
3 tissues, waiting for them. We're also there for
4 schools who don't have libraries of their own.

5 Libraries are so much more than
6 shelves of books and rows of computers. It's the
7 dedicated staff that breathes the life into the
8 library. A library is also the programs that we
9 provide and the care and dedication we have for
10 our communities and their needs. If anyone thinks
11 libraries are a luxury, I invite them to our
12 branch at Greenpoint and you'll see that we're a
13 necessity. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

15 ERIC BOBLIN: Hi, my name is Eric
16 Boblin and I'm a young adult librarian for the
17 Brooklyn Public Library. It has been my pleasure
18 to work in the Ocean Hill neighborhood of Bedford
19 Stuyvesant for the last year and a half. I'm
20 fortunate enough to have some nice things being
21 said about the library today that I don't need to
22 reproduce those statistics and all that
23 information. So I think I will be able to keep it
24 short.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We'd love

1
2 that.

3 MR. BOBLIN: It's not my usual
4 style but I'll do it here. I just want to provide
5 you with a little extra fire for the fight that
6 you have ahead of you in securing a more equitable
7 budget for us. I just want to say, and I think
8 you know it, that for the economically depressed
9 areas such as the one where I work at Saratoga,
10 the library is really the only place for a lot of
11 people to go, especially teenagers which is the
12 group I work with most but for job seekers and for
13 anyone, for seniors, for the homeless who end up
14 spending large portions of the day at the library
15 but more than that the library is a space.

16 I don't know the best way to phrase
17 it but the library is the answer to the unformed
18 question in the minds of a great many citizens of
19 this city. We not only form that question for
20 them but we help them find ways to answer it. I
21 know that the budget for this city is under fire
22 this year but a great bit of what has been
23 accomplished in the city and what will remain to
24 be done in this city will be inaccessible if the
25 libraries aren't preserved at the present level

1
2 because it becomes so hard just to navigate within
3 the city towards a great many resources that are
4 available.

5 From personal experience and just
6 reflecting again on the hours of operation, I had
7 a family come in right before we closed or
8 actually right as we were closing at 8:00 pm on
9 our late night. It was two parents and their
10 child and they've just been evicted from their
11 apartment. They showed up on our doorstep and
12 were looking for a shelter to go to. I imagine
13 you're all familiar with how you have to actually
14 go through central booking in order to get into a
15 shelter. But it's actually a fairly complicated
16 process and you need to know how to do it.

17 I was fortunate enough to have gone
18 through that with patrons in the past that I was
19 able to dispense that information to them. That's
20 basically the point that I wanted to make in
21 closing is that--

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Time's up.
23 Say one last thing.

24 MR. BOBLIN: Okay. Is that it's
25 just we are the place they go when they have the

1
2 questions and we have to be open in order to do
3 that.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
5 very much. Next.

6 MARGE LYDEN: Good afternoon. My
7 name is Marge Lyden and I'm a volunteer adult
8 literacy tutor at the Bronx Library Center of the
9 New York Public Library. I appreciate having this
10 opportunity to speak before the Council on behalf
11 of my students and fellow volunteers.

12 I recently came across a quote from
13 Emily Brookwald, a children's book publisher. She
14 stated, children are made readers on the laps of
15 their parents. I thought but what about those
16 children whose parents can't read. Roughly half
17 of my students have told me that reading to and
18 helping their children was their main goal and
19 reason for coming to our center. One teary eyed
20 father asked me if I could imagine what he felt
21 when his three year old son placed a book in his
22 lap and asked him to read a story. He had to tell
23 his child, go ask your mother. Now this father
24 proudly read Green Eggs and Ham.

25 Other students come to us with

1
2 different immediate goals. These include getting
3 a better job and completing applications for bank
4 accounts, apartments and jobs. Some want to be
5 able to read letters from family or notices from
6 their children's schools. They need help
7 deciphering signs on streets and buildings and in
8 airports. Some want to obtain drivers licenses or
9 citizen papers. Others express difficulty
10 communicating with doctors, reading prescription
11 and food labels, understanding insurance forms and
12 interpreting health consumer information.

13 As you can see the impact of
14 functional illiteracy on the day to day lives of
15 adults is wide reaching, limiting and sometimes
16 dangerous. As a former health care professional I
17 find the deficiencies in health literacy to be
18 particularly troublesome. At the Bronx Library
19 Centre the goals, interests and lives of our
20 students and are reflected in the materials we
21 use.

22 Volunteers are facilitators,
23 providing literacy instruction to small groups of
24 adult learners. Although class time is limited we
25 often touch base with each student individually to

1
2 assess progress and to revise approaches and
3 techniques. Individual instruction via computer
4 phonics and language programs also enhances
5 independent learning. Our student population is
6 culturally diverse, a mixture of native and
7 foreign born. They bring with them a wealth of
8 experience and knowledge but sometimes lack the
9 necessary literacy skills to reach their goals.

10 Because of the high demands, some
11 of our students have had to wait up to six months
12 to gain a coveted seat at our center. Many
13 students tell me that if they could choose to live
14 anywhere in the world they would choose New York
15 City. I agree. They are amazed at the
16 opportunity the city affords their children and no
17 opportunity is more valued than the education of
18 literacy services.

19 Many of the students, especially
20 the women, have never had the opportunity to
21 attend school in their native lands. I believe
22 that the individual with newly acquired solid
23 literacy skills is not the only one who accrues
24 benefits. Literacy is a paid forward asset. The
25 parent who has learned to read as an adult has

1
2 modeled for his or her child the value of an
3 education.

4 The community also benefits as
5 these men and women acquire better jobs and learn
6 to navigate more wisely the health and financial
7 systems. I am so pleased with my experience in
8 the reading and writing center. It's gratifying
9 to see someone make measurable progress in their
10 journey to literacy. And the students are pleased
11 with their own progress and see reason for hope
12 and change in their lives.

13 I told my students that I was
14 coming here today and asked them if there was
15 anything they wanted me to tell you. Besides
16 detailing their individual achievements they had
17 two comments. They hope the city will find a way
18 in these challenging financial times to continue
19 its commitment and financial support to their
20 literacy program. And they wanted to say thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
23 very much. Thank you all for coming out.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Thank you for
25 taking the time to come down. Call the next

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panel.

COUNSEL: Martha Krespil, Frederick Bloom, Edward Plummer, Audrey Harkins.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Ms. Harkins do you want to start?

AUDREY HARKINS: Good afternoon and I know you're tired right now but thank you very much for having us here today. My name is Audrey Harkins. I am a volunteer at the New Amsterdam Branch of the public library at Number 9 Murray Street. Normally I'd be putting books on shelves today or talking to our clients but I'm sitting for the library.

Reading is one of the most important acts that any of us will ever accomplish. It is the key to our survival. Reading is enjoying a good book. Reading is trying to get through the instructions for the do it yourself kit that you bought that said if you can read this you can put it together in ten minutes. Reading is filling out an application for a job and we have many clients who come in to our library now and ask us for all kinds of help.

We are user friendly and we give

1
2 you all of our time and attention. We are
3 basically your top, bottom and all the lines in
4 between. Now I know that you people aren't the
5 ones that cut the budget but we urge you to urge
6 the Mayor to keep the library budget intact and
7 thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: We can be the
9 ones that stop them from cutting the budget.

10 MS. HARKINS: Beg your pardon.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I said,

12 MS. HARKINS: Well, please do so.

13 {Chuckles} Thank you very much.

14 FREDERICK BLOOM: Good evening, my
15 name is Rick Bloom, no relation although I am from
16 New England and I did think New England was the
17 cultural capital of the world until I moved here.
18 And I'm not leaving. I'm not here today to
19 protest, provoke any negative feelings on the said
20 proposals but to speak out on the advantages of
21 keeping the libraries at their current schedules.

22 I am currently a product of what
23 most Americans are fearing most, unemployed, an
24 ex-Wall Streeter. However, I was in
25 administrative support so I bear no involvement

1
2 and why we are where we are today. I created
3 revenue. If I may quote Star Trek, the public
4 library is the final frontier for free learning.
5 It's no longer an electronic warehouse for books.
6 It's an electronic free learning center.

7 In these troubling economic times,
8 records of numbers of New Yorkers are going to the
9 library more than ever, unemployed people,
10 children, et cetera. At some point in February at
11 the end of a fruitless job search, at the end of
12 the rope I volunteered at my public library.
13 Worlds have been opened up for me. Originally I
14 was put on as two days a week. I am now four days
15 a week, hedging on five. Maybe I have a good
16 back, I don't know.

17 But I feel very passionate about
18 what I do. It gives me a reason to get up in the
19 morning, to practice my working skills, to learn
20 new skills until I do secure employment. In
21 closing I implore you to think about what's at
22 stake here. New York City has a population of
23 close to 9 million. We can not close free public
24 learning institutions at this time. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

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very much.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I appreciate it, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Next.

MARTHA KRESPIL: My name is Martha Krespil. I go to the Bronx in Kingsbridge to read and write. I'm a little nervous. I hope you keep on. This is my second time I come here. The library helped me a lot to read and write. I come for other students that could not come today, all different people who come to learn and write.

I'm very proud to be here for the library. I hope you keep on helping us because we take our books out to learn how to read more and we write a little better and our tutors help us a lot. That's all I have to say.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Thank you. This is your second time so you're experienced now, right?

MARTHA KRESPIL: I still get a little bit nervous.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Great job. I'm just so impressed about the number of people who took their own time to come here today to talk

1
2 about libraries on their own time. Mr. Chairman,
3 thank you. New panel?

4 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: We have a new
5 panel. Joseph Garber, Virginia Franco, Katherine
6 Tripani and Roxanne Rios. We'll read the rest
7 also. Some people may have left. Lynn Serpy,
8 Eric Boblin, if I screw up the name I'm having
9 trouble with some of the handwriting, Kathleen
10 Casey, Dee Damusis, Patricia Deans. Is there
11 anybody else that hasn't filled out a slip that
12 wants to testify? Speak now or forever hold your
13 peace. Okay, Mr. Garber.

14 JOSEPH GARBER: Good afternoon
15 Chair Weprin, Chair Gentile, Chair Jackson,
16 members of the Council staff and members of the
17 public. My name is Joseph Garber. I'm a resident
18 and a resident leader in the New York City Housing
19 Authority and I will confine my remarks regarding
20 the first hearing of this morning, the New York
21 City Housing Authority.

22 I'd like to first want to echo
23 everybody's praise of Chairman Ricardo Elias
24 Morales for his stellar, superb performance as the
25 interim Chair for December 15th through 24:00 May

1
2 31st. He was a hands on take charge administrator
3 who took decisive action on numerous fronts, his
4 interrogation of directors of NYCHA at the board
5 meeting to ensure that they were completely
6 familiar with all the items which they were
7 presenting. I'd like to discuss various concepts
8 now.

9 On page one of the Chairman's
10 testimony it states that NYCHA has a portfolio of
11 178,400 apartments. However, on page 13 of the
12 draft annual plan released by NYCHA on May 4th it
13 states 180,244 and in the Council briefing it
14 states 181,000. So I definitely think everybody
15 has to get their figures straight. It also states
16 that NYCHA now has 338 developments. I don't know
17 where this figure came from because in the annual
18 plan release on May 4th it stated 340 and last
19 year's annual plan, which was filed to HUD on
20 October 17, 2008 it stated 343. So I really think
21 this has to be looked at.

22 There are 403,000 legal residents.
23 This has to be pointed out. The unknown number of
24 residents that are not legal is infinite item and
25 therefore we're losing a lot of money from not

1
2 collecting proper rents. On page four of the
3 draft annual plan that was as of April 27th it
4 stated that 1,206 Section 8 transitions took place
5 from city and state developments to the federal
6 government.

7 There was a lot of discussion this
8 morning regarding the Section 3. I attend board
9 meetings regularly and Section 3 is covered very
10 strongly by the board. They interrogate the
11 respective directors in capital to ensure how many
12 Section 3 residents are being hired. And the
13 board has stated they're not happy with the
14 results.

15 Now this morning Commissioner Lopez
16 testified on use and on proper designation
17 regarding resident employment. She said the
18 employment department. There's no such a thing in
19 the NYCHA organizational structure as employment
20 department. It's called Resident Employment
21 Services, which are located at 350 Livingston
22 Street. On page 3 of the testimony it states
23 reassign provisional managers to non-managerial
24 positions. As a Director of the Civil Service
25 Merit Council, I am concerned if there were

1
2 provisionals over the mandatory nine month
3 provisional status, were any civil service--

4 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: [interposing]
5 Mr. Garber, can you sum up because--okay.

6 MR. GARBER: I just want to finish.
7 Nobody else has spoken about the Housing Authority
8 so I just want to. On page six it states that all
9 meetings--the town hall meetings. Please be
10 advised that so far we've had two town hall
11 meetings. There are three town hall meetings
12 scheduled and there's also the public hearing.

13 It also should be noted that
14 there's a new document called the revised cost of
15 location plan. Now Councilwoman Brewer was
16 concerned on how many employees are in information
17 and technology. The total is 256 and the total
18 number of NYCHA employees is 11,644. I suggest
19 that the Finance Committee and the sub committee
20 on Public Housing do an analysis where are these
21 11,644 employees assigned. Because I still feel
22 it's top heavy and duplicative units and I just
23 want to illustrate.

24 For instance you have a group of
25 units, you have GDM in charge of administration.

1
2 Then you have Facility Planning and
3 Administration. You have a unit called Budget and
4 Financial Plan, then you have a unit called
5 Accounting of Fiscal Services, then you have a
6 unit called Risk Finance and Analysis, then you--

7 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: [interposing]
8 Can you sum up, please? We understand there's a
9 lot of duplication.

10 MR. GARBER: Yes, that's what I
11 want to highlight. I don't believe that NYCHA has
12 really eliminated all the redundant, bureaucratic
13 functions.

14 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, thank
15 you.

16 MR. GARBER: Thank you.

17 KATHERINE TRIPANI: Good afternoon.
18 My name is Katherine Tripani and I'm from New
19 Destiny Housing Corporation. I'll also be making
20 some remarks about the Housing portion of this
21 morning's hearings. I've prepared some written
22 testimony but I do want to make some brief points
23 today with respect to time limits.

24 NYCHA does have a domestic violence
25 priority available to applicants that can prove

1
2 their status as DV victims. However, only 2% of
3 households exiting the domestic violence emergency
4 shelter system left a shelter for NYCHA Section 8
5 or NYCHA public housing apartment, even though 38%
6 have the required documentation for that priority.
7 That low placement rate is due to the long
8 processing times with these applications coupled
9 with the short maximum length of stay in the
10 emergency shelters. We would like to see
11 resources dedicated to the processing of
12 applications specifically from domestic violence
13 shelters to better align the processing time with
14 the length of stay to improve outcomes.

15 Also, HPD has a smaller Section 8
16 program designed to help re-house those living in
17 homeless shelters. In October of 2007 the
18 domestic violence shelter system was awarded 10%
19 share of the homeless housing resources and used
20 up the entire allocation by December of 2008.
21 Since exhausting those resources in December, no
22 new HPD resources have been available to the
23 domestic violence shelters, leaving many families
24 who don't qualify for other permanent housing
25 programs with no resources to safely move on from

1
2 shelter. We therefore do request that DV shelters
3 once again be given a 10% share of any new
4 homeless housing resources from HPD.

5 Such housing programs are of vital
6 importance at this time in New York City's
7 history. The demand for domestic violence
8 shelters has increases since last year. But while
9 the number of those who need domestic violence
10 shelter has increased, the fact remains that
11 during calendar year 2008 only 14% of households
12 exited the emergency domestic violence shelter
13 system with permanent housing.

14 If efficiencies could be found in
15 the application process for NYCHA public housing
16 and NYCHA Section 8 and if HPD's resources were
17 made available to domestic violence shelters, we
18 believe that outcomes could be markedly improved,
19 thus reducing homelessness and offering life
20 saving stability to survivors of domestic
21 violence, who if allowed to remain homeless as so
22 many do at the end of their shelter stays could be
23 forced back into dangerous situations. Thank you
24 for this opportunity to testify.

25 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

1
2 LYNN SERPY: hello, my name is Lynn
3 Serpy and I live in Astoria, Queens. I want to
4 thank Council Member Gentile in particular because
5 when I called your staff asking for the library
6 section on the executive budget he emailed it to
7 me within three minutes. But I want to thank the
8 other Council Members who are still here as well.
9 I know it's a long day.

10 I am a regular library user and
11 read almost a book a day. I often go there to
12 check the internet and to use the printing
13 services as well. My community garden uses the
14 library to hold our community garden meetings.
15 We've heard today about a lot of the different
16 uses of the library so I don't want to go too much
17 in detail. I actually want to talk about the
18 numbers on the page.

19 I was initially really shocked to
20 see that the adult literacy was down \$1.3 million
21 but then I noticed that was in the non-city
22 funding column. So I decided not to focus too
23 much on that. Instead I wanted to focus on the
24 two and a half times increase in the energy costs,
25 which I just don't understand. You're going from

1
2 a \$700,000 energy cost to a \$1.7 million energy
3 cost and yet you're reducing hours and service.
4 How can you have a two and a half times increase
5 in your energy costs when you have decreased open
6 hours? It makes no sense to me.

7 So I came here more with a
8 question. At a time when the city is talking
9 about greater, greener buildings, why is it that
10 our libraries, our municipal buildings are having
11 such a drastic increase in energy costs? For me,
12 libraries are the ultimate in reuse, particularly
13 libraries are all about reuse of books and
14 materials.

15 To me, they can be a model of
16 sustainability. What better place than our public
17 library to teach those lessons about conservation,
18 which is not just a good green idea than economic
19 reality for so many of us. What better place than
20 libraries to teach those lessons to New Yorkers of
21 all ages?

22 But I would very much like to know
23 why there is such a drastic increase in energy
24 sources. So I'm very happy that you're here
25 Council Member Gentile. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's a good
3 point and I don't have an answer.

4 MS. SERPY: It's \$1 million
5 increase.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Okay, we'll
7 check that out.

8 MS. SERPY: Great.

9 DEE DAMUSIS: Hi, my name is Dee
10 Damusis and I am speaking for Mr. Ed Palmer who
11 had to leave. We're in a little library in Hell's
12 Kitchen called the Columbus Branch. For me, I'm a
13 senior. I got terminated from my job three years
14 ago. That library is as much for my body as it is
15 for my soul. It gives me a purpose to get out
16 every day. I'm going to be 68 in September but
17 I'll be damned if I'm ready for the grave or the
18 rocking chair.

19 I go in to use internet services,
20 printing. I live in an SRO on the corner of
21 Eighth Avenue and 46th Street. What Columbus does
22 for me can not be described in words Mr. Gentile;
23 I can not. All I can say is please in the name of
24 God and all that's good and holy, don't cut us
25 off. Seniors use it. Mothers with little babies

1
2 use it. Teenagers use it.

3 If I didn't have that library
4 branch--where I live I have a laptop in my house
5 that has wireless but I can't get any reception.
6 That library connects me with people around the
7 world. It gets me necessary resources that I need
8 for my English classes because I teach at the
9 Brooklyn Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The
10 materials that are available to me at my little
11 local branch can not--they're just wonderful.

12 I can't afford to buy anything
13 myself. If I'm cut off from my library branch I
14 don't know what I am going to do personally and
15 I'm just one person. So I'm just giving you a
16 basically little short, impassioned speech. Don't
17 cut the budget.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I just want
19 to make it clear that we're considering here the
20 Mayor's proposed cuts to the budget. We, as the
21 City Council, negotiate that. We want to hear
22 from the public as to what you feel will be the
23 impact of the Mayor's cuts. So just to
24 characterize it the right way; this is the Mayor's
25 proposed cuts.

1
2 MR. DAMUSIS: Please pass the word
3 up the pipeline because without you, we can't do
4 it.

5 PATRICIA DEANS: Good evening. My
6 name is Patricia Deans. I live in Brownsville,
7 which for me for the duration of my tenure it
8 makes me wonder if it's politics of inclusion or
9 if it's politics of exclusion. I'm amazed at what
10 happens in my community. I'm here on behalf of
11 the library because I think it's one of the only
12 institutions that's in the community that's
13 functioning up to par. When I got downsized in
14 1993 after working 30 years in healthcare I was
15 devastated at what was happening in our schools.
16 I don't see the new system in terms of education
17 being an improvement over what it was. I think
18 that across the board we need to think more in
19 terms of equity for all people, not just some
20 people.

21 Sometimes I feel like you give
22 people your all, you give them beauty but they in
23 turn give you ashes. I think that to live in an
24 area at one time in 1993 when I was downsized
25 Brownsville looked like a forgotten city. It

1
2 looked like the city dump. Across the street from
3 every school you had nothing but garbage. Now
4 you're starting to clear that up but then the
5 people are at risk. I come from North Carolina
6 where I had a dad who built a house, brick, cement
7 blocks, steel case windows. Nothing had to be
8 improved in 50 years except the roof. I don't
9 understand for \$4,700 he built that.

10 Why do we have our people living in
11 shelters. Why is it that we can't get equity when
12 it comes to the basic services, across the board
13 for all people? You have less than, you have
14 greater than, but at least have than. We have to
15 have something for the next generation of
16 children. That freedom is not a conquest, it's a
17 bequest. By virtue of being we all have a right
18 to be and that's an exercise in whatever direction
19 people want to pursue in their life, they should
20 have the opportunity.

21 So I'm here today on behalf of
22 Brownsville and Stone Avenue Library because I
23 think it's very important that they remain as they
24 are. Thank you.

25 [Applause]

2 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: You make good
3 points, good points.

4 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you all
5 for coming. The Finance Committee is going to be
6 adorned until Monday morning at 10:00.

7 KATHY CASEY: Excuse me. I'm one
8 of the people, I didn't get my chance to testify
9 yet.

10 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Oh, you didn't
11 get a chance to testify.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm sorry.

13 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, you got
14 it in at the last minute then, go ahead.

15 MS. CASEY: No, I signed up at
16 1:25.

17 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm sorry
18 about that.

19 MS. CASEY: I was called but there
20 wasn't enough room at the table.

21 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: No problem, no
22 problem. Go ahead. The roll is still open.

23 MS. CASEY: I'm Kathy Casey. As
24 always I'm in favor of keeping all public
25 libraries open seven days a week, 12 hours a day.

1
2 However, not all of our public libraries truly are
3 public. The NYPL branch libraries are controlled
4 by a self perpetuating, multi millionaire board of
5 trustees who know and care nothing about the
6 people who use those branch libraries.

7 I'm confident that sufficient
8 number of Council Members who will refuse to go
9 back to the - - drill of the library budget dance.
10 I'm here today to talk about the elephant in the
11 living room though I may be the only person who
12 mentions it as I was the only person during this
13 budget hearing last May. From now on my remarks
14 relate to the closing of the Donnell Library and
15 the billion dollar so called one library plan
16 using taxpayer dollars but with no public input or
17 even knowledge.

18 The unique world languages
19 collection has been largely destroyed with the
20 large majority of the books irreplaceably removed
21 from the collection. This is a criminal harm and
22 a tragic loss to our city's immigrants and to many
23 other people. Teenagers are deprived of any
24 central library for them in Manhattan for most of
25 the school year and will continue to be deprived

1
2 of most of teen central indefinitely if not
3 forever. Children, families and teachers were
4 deprived of any central children's room for most
5 of the fall semester.

6 Gentile and Recchia have
7 shamelessly evaded their responsibilities to stop
8 the profligate waste, wrong doing and incompetence
9 with taxpayer money and public assets by the New
10 York Public Library board and overpaid executives.
11 Council Members of intelligence and integrity must
12 take the lead, one to investigate and publicize
13 what was done to destroy the Donnell Library.

14 Two, to renew the World Languages Collection,
15 three to replace teen central fully in a Midtown
16 location, four to restore a branch library for the
17 tens of thousands of people who live, work and
18 visit near the Donnell Library building every day,
19 many of them commuting from Brooklyn and Queens on
20 the E Train. And five to retain and fully use for
21 cultural programs the outstanding well equipped
22 auditorium that was part of the Donnell Library.

23 City Council should use its power
24 to make the NYPL board of trustees accountable to
25 the taxpayers who mainly fund the branch

1
2 libraries. The Council should do so by refusing
3 to vote a single dollar for the NYPL budget for
4 the 2010 to 2011 fiscal year unless NYPL agrees to
5 sell the Donnell Landing building back to the city
6 for \$1 each. If the Orient Express Hotel purchase
7 contract is not fulfilled by full payment on the
8 start of construction in calendar 2009--I'll
9 summarize.

10 Then legislation should be put in
11 place to form a citizen and immigrant task force
12 to study and advise on the desirability of
13 replacing the three, actually, private and
14 unaccountable public library systems with a single
15 city department, parallel to the Department of
16 Parks, the Department of Cultural Affairs or the
17 larger Department of Education.

18 PlaNYC includes the goal of having
19 a city park within 10 blocks of every residential
20 building. The word library appears nowhere in
21 PlaNYC. All New York City residents need truly
22 public libraries just as much as we need truly
23 public parks.

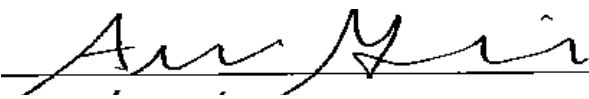
24 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.
25 The Finance Committee is now going to adjourn

until Monday morning at 10:00 when we're going to
hear from the Department of Finance.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Amber Gibson, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature  _____

Date June 29, 2009