

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA GENERAL MANAGER VITO MUSTACIUOLO**  
**PREPARING FOR THE WINTER: HEAT AND HOT WATER AT NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS**  
**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING**  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2018 – 1:00 PM**  
**COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY**

Chair Alicka Ampry-Samuel, members of the Committee on Public Housing, and other members of the City Council: good afternoon. I am Vito Mustaciuolo, NYCHA's General Manager. I am pleased to be joined by Cathy Pennington, NYCHA's Executive Vice President for Operations; Deborah Goddard, Executive Vice President for Capital Projects; and Javier Almodovar, our newly appointed Director of the Heating Management Services Department.

Delivering services such as heat and hot water are at the heart of NYCHA's responsibility as a landlord. As part of our NextGeneration NYCHA mission, we are changing the way we do business to become a better landlord for residents. We've recently brought on board a new Senior Vice President for Operations Support Services, Joey Koch, whose responsibilities include overseeing the management of heating systems at NYCHA. With new leadership at the helm, including Interim Chair Stanley Brezenoff, we have undertaken significant steps to improve heat and hot water service for residents. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss those efforts today.

### **Historic Challenges**

Last winter presented the longest stretch of below-freezing days the city has experienced in nearly 60 years. The failures in our equipment put a spotlight on the unfortunate reality we've been discussing for years: that NYCHA's aging infrastructure has been starved of the investment and resources it desperately needs. A \$3 billion reduction in federal funding since 2001 has contributed to a nearly \$32 billion backlog in capital improvement needs.

### **Taking Action to Improve Service Delivery**

Despite the magnitude of these issues, NYCHA remains committed to doing as much as we can with limited resources, including making operational improvements that enable us to restore service as quickly as possible. And we are thankful that Mayor de Blasio has stepped up to help us begin to tackle the significant challenges. He committed \$13 million in January and another \$200 million shortly thereafter for our heating systems, money we're putting to good use in advance of the coming winter season.

Here are some of the actions we've taken since last winter to improve heat and hot water service at NYCHA:

- We performed annual preventative maintenance on our heating equipment, including making welding repairs and repairs to boiler controls. We have overhauled 1,918 boilers citywide (98 percent of our boilers) in preparation for this heating season. The remaining 48 boilers are currently undergoing repairs that we expect to complete by the first week of November.
- During the heating season, as the weather gets colder we increase the number of off-hours personnel. These "Roving Teams" include Supervisors, Oil Burner Mechanics, Electricians, and Plumbers.
- We determined that new skills were needed for our heating response, in addition to the positions I just mentioned. As part of a pilot program for this winter, we added Stationary Engineers – who can better diagnose and repair issues that affect service disruptions. Stationary Engineers help NYCHA to immediately make the necessary repairs and thus lessen the time our residents are without service.
- We've invested in heat-related improvements that target 87,000 residents:

- Twelve heating plants have received new boilers, with several receiving complete upgrades. Two more plants will receive replacements soon;
  - New mobile boilers at six developments;
  - We will also have five new mobile boilers to be used as contingency and for vulnerable sites; and
  - New window balances (to help retain heat) at our buildings for seniors (7,600 apartments).
- As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, boilers at 41 developments are being serviced and repaired by third-party vendors, and a 42<sup>nd</sup> site is coming online later this year.
  - When freezing temperatures are expected, we're adding additional heating and emergency services staff, enabling faster repairs for residents. This includes permanent staffing lines for eight Plumbers, eight Plumbers Helpers, and six Oilers.
  - We improved the way residents can report heat and hot water issues, and enhanced the notification process after a service interruption, through automated calls that allow for instant feedback from residents. This provides us more detailed information, enabling resident complaints to be identified and addressed quickly.
  - We accelerated the design process for nine heating plants funded for replacement by Mayor de Blasio, meaning that they'll come into service six months faster than is typical for such work.
  - This past spring, we worked with the FDNY to streamline the notification process for staff whose certificates will be expiring; 274 staff have received their certifications to work in the boiler plants.

## **Introducing Modern and Efficient Technology**

Long overdue technological improvements are helping NYCHA better connect with and serve residents. Since last heating season, we have implemented multiple new measures, with more coming online soon, to speed our responses to service interruptions. For instance:

- We are digitizing boiler room inspections and fuel requests, which will provide real-time, centralized updates on where repairs are needed and increase accountability.
- We enhanced heat-related work order data, providing visibility into the root causes of service disruptions. This allows staff to perform predictive and preventive maintenance and proactively address problems.
- We improved the Heating Metrics System by integrating data into one dashboard. This provides visibility into the functioning of the heating systems and enables us to identify trends. The data informs preventative and predictive maintenance, improving the operation of heating systems and allowing NYCHA to provide better service to residents.

## **Delivering Capital Repairs Faster**

Our work to replace outdated boilers and modernize heating system controls and hot water-making technology continues. Additionally, the 32 new boilers at 9 heating plants (serving 11 sites) that were funded by Mayor de Blasio earlier this year are on track. The bids for these boilers are due back by November 5<sup>th</sup>. We hope to begin construction on these plants this spring. To be clear, these boilers are not off-the-shelf purchases, but traditionally take one year to scope and design before they go out to bid. There is an additional four to six months

included for the procurement process before we can award the contracts. Finally, construction takes two to three and a half years, depending on the size of the boiler plant. That means, historically, boiler plants take three and a half to five years before they are fully renovated.

This timeline has presented many issues, but the most serious is that we cannot deliver a new, permanent heat source to our residents faster. In March, we announced an expedited timeline to streamline the process. We were able to cut one to two years out of the total timeline, depending on the size of the heating plant. We are keeping our promise – NYCHA scoped and designed the heating plants in six months, on schedule – and boilers are coming faster than ever before.

As part of our five-year capital plan, we are investing a total of \$808 million in heat-related programs with federal, State, and City funding as well as investments from our Energy Performance Contracts (EPC). HUD's EPC program enables us to replace boilers and modernize heating systems with assistance from energy service companies, without spending capital dollars upfront (the improvements are funded by the cost savings from reduced energy consumption).

## **Conclusion**

It must be reiterated, however, that despite our best efforts, a fundamental fact remains: NYCHA needs more funding to replace outdated infrastructure and to maintain our buildings in a state of good repair. Our portfolio requires billions for heating plants and related infrastructure alone. This includes 1,100 boilers that need to be replaced. These boilers, at this stage of their life cycle, are unreliable and will not deliver the level of service that our residents deserve.

We appreciate that the Mayor has identified heating as a critical need and provided additional funding to help us make these repairs. The State, for the past two budgets, has included funds dedicated specifically to boiler replacements, but

these funds have not yet been released, and the residents living at developments in the State pipeline continue to depend on aging, unreliable boilers.

But we are not letting these financial hurdles limit us. While there is no silver bullet that will ensure there will never be an outage at NYCHA, we are doing everything we can, making substantive changes to provide residents with the services they deserve.

We look forward to our continued work with the City Council and other partners to get the resources NYCHA needs to best serve our residents. And we will continue to use our limited resources wisely, to the maximum benefit for residents.

Thank you for your support. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



**FOR THE RECORD**

THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

LINDA B. ROSENTHAL  
Assemblymember 67<sup>th</sup> District

CHAIR  
Committee on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

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**Testimony of Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal Before the Committee on Public Housing on  
Preparing for the Winter: Heat and Hot Water at New York City Housing Authority Developments**

**October 24, 2018**

I am Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal, and I represent the 67th Assembly district, which includes the Upper West Side and Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan. I would like to thank Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuels for the opportunity to discuss the challenges and realities faced by my constituents who live in public housing, and to shed a light on the stories of those who battled last winter's heat outage. I represent three New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments: Harborview Terrace, Amsterdam Houses and Amsterdam Houses Addition.

During the January 2018 bomb cyclone that ravaged the city, a senior building at Harborview Terrace, located at 525 West 55th Street, New York, NY 10019, was without adequate heat or no heat at all for nearly three weeks. Freezing Harborview residents warmed their apartments by running space heaters, leaving ovens on and wearing multiple layers of clothing and blankets at all times.

For two weeks, Carmen Crespo, a senior citizen resident of Harborview Terrace, lived in her apartment without heat. While she understood the dangers of warming her apartment with electric heaters and a stovetop, NYCHA's unresponsiveness left her with no other viable options. Carmen donned multiple sweaters, several pairs of socks and multiple blankets; she made numerous heat complaints to NYCHA and blasted a space heater for hours on end. Unfortunately, Ms. Crespo's situation was not unique.

Just a few doors away from Ms. Crespo's apartment, a 91-year-old constituent without heat called her son begging for help as the windchill fell to a mind-numbing -20°. Thankfully, this constituent's son reached out to my office for assistance. As my staff started calling tenants throughout the building to confirm whether they had heat, we learned that many tenants had been frantically filing complaints with NYCHA, only to find that their cases had been "resolved" and closed. As we all know, the cases had not been resolved, and the boiler had not been repaired. NYCHA prematurely closed heat repair tickets without actually attending to the underlying conditions, leaving tenants with no heat and no answers. The city's inability to communicate transparently with NYCHA residents allowed this scene to be replayed in NYCHA developments across the five boroughs.

My office received a heat complaint from a Harborview Terrace tenant on January 2, 2018, who reported that she had no heat for more than a week. My staff immediately called and emailed NYCHA to report the issue, and requested information on the total number of heat complaints received, information on the type of work occurring at the development and a timeline for when the repairs were to be completed. I called NYCHA on the afternoon of January 2<sup>nd</sup> demanding answers. Later that evening, NYCHA informed me that the situation had been resolved and the heat had been restored to the development at approximately 9:00 pm.

The next morning, my staff contacted residents to confirm that the heat was in fact working. It was not. Again, my office contacted NYCHA and repeatedly requested further information about the boiler repair work and emphasized the need for a contingency plan for Harborview tenants. After numerous emails and calls, NYCHA finally agreed to inspect individual apartments after my office provided it with a list of tenants who were without heat.

To add insult to injury, the inspections conducted by NYCHA were riddled with inaccuracies and half-truths. The NYCHA inspector informed one of my constituents that the temperature in her apartment was 55 degrees at the time of inspection. When my staff requested additional information about the results of the inspection, NYCHA claimed the indoor temperature had actually registered at 68 degrees, not 55 degrees. Officials believed the tenant felt chilly because of drafty windows in the unit; not surprisingly, NYCHA did not offer any assistance in sealing the tenant's windows. During another inspection, a NYCHA official claimed a tenant's poor living room setup was the reason that the resident felt colder than usual. In-addition to being absurd, the tenant's living room furniture had been in the same spot for decades.

NYCHA's resistance to helping its tenants and its refusal to acknowledge there was an issue at Harborview Terrace is baffling, alarming and not acceptable. When I spoke to the many tenants who had been battling the cold in their apartments, they were most frustrated by NYCHA's silence and closed work orders. I've testified to this point once before, and I will say it again: lines of communication must be open between the city and its tenants. Silence breeds distrust, and distrust breeds hostility.

If my office can't trust NYCHA to accurately report temperatures, how can tenants trust that their landlord will honestly communicate with them? I am sadly not surprised that aging boilers malfunctioned during one of the coldest weeks in January, but I am surprised by NYCHA's inability to communicate or prepare for that possibility. It appears that NYCHA only addresses systemic issues once they become uncontrollable emergencies once the press susses out the truth and reveals cover-up after cover-up. As the landlord to approximately 400,000 New Yorkers, the city does not have the luxury of shirking its responsibilities or acting in a reactive manner.

Buildings experiencing heat outages should have been papered with updates, staff should have doorknocked in buildings where there were reports of heat outages to ensure the most vulnerable were cared for, heating centers should have been announced in advance of the storm, staff should have been dispatched to developments to seal windows, NYCHA should have rehired the 100 maintenance workers they lost over the summer of 2017 and my office should have received reliable updates from the city.

This year must be different. NYCHA must provide the Council Committee on Public Housing with the total number of maintenance workers currently employed by the agency, an inspection plan and results of every boiler inspection at each development, a development-wide outreach plan in case a boiler fails, potential locations for heating centers, a separate and comprehensive hotline number for heat complaints, a weatherization plan for at-risk developments and an efficient communication plan for tenants, elected officials and community boards.

Without question, years of financial disinvestment at all levels of government has led to the decay of NYCHA's infrastructure. However, NYCHA's inability to plan ahead and communicate with its tenants is independent of funding issues. If NYCHA intends to address the lessons learned from last winter's debacle, then it must submit an exhaustive plan to mitigate concerns while earning the trust of its residents.

Thank you.



# City-wide Council of Presidents, INC.

The Official Representative Body for  
the Public Housing Community of Resident Associations in the City of New York

October 24, 2018

## City Council Hearing on Heating

Madam Chair and Committee Members as the Citywide Council of Presidents Chairman I am honored that I have been given the opportunity to Testify before this Committee regarding the Heating Situation at NYCHA. We were here in this same position as we were last year, and the only difference is the year and we are still faced with heating outages and closing tickets because you restored the Plant, but NO one went to assure that all the units were restored that reported the outages. Last Year You started the hearing on Oversight and Public Housing with this being stated how it was unacceptable leaving the Residents in the Dark or the COLD. You also spoke of the basic Responsibility of Heat and Hot Water being Provided to the Residents wasn't being done and the Residents Agreed. Last Year there was 320,000 Residents who went without heat and Hot water and Now we are at the beginning of the Heating Season this year and already faced with 4,000 Residents of Queens bridge Houses Reported by the NY Post on October 19, 2018 that are affected by service interruptions and they have New Equipment. We had the Coldest Day thus far last week and the Contact Call Center went Down, and Residents couldn't put in Work orders, so I used Social Media to get the Outages to report to NYCHA for Repairs for Two (2) days. Or we can Go up to the South Bronx to the Patterson Houses who for the Past Five (5) Years or

more been provided heat by Mobile Boilers which are old and needing Replacement but were fully funded for NEW BOILERS and there has been Nothing to this current Day. Or we can look at Morrisania Air Rights where a Steam leak repair was held up because the Yankees made the Playoffs and didn't resume till they were Eliminated. All this shows you that the Residents of Public Housing aren't Respected and are Not Treated as if they are People that Count, and this Statement presented today is very similar to the statement given at the hearing last year with the mentioning of the Same developments. NYCHA isn't ready for the Heating Season in my opinion as we all know and see. As this tragedy and Lack of Services Plagued us last year there were Developments that were Slated to receive New Equipment and that has yet to happen, But the Mayor stated that the Heat would be Fixed in JULY, but Nothing happened. So, the Residents are asking for better Accountability with the Formulating of an Monitoring Committee along with Residents and the Council to Provide Basic Services and to Correct the Violation of our Basic Human Rights. Again, Thank You for this Opportunity to be heard by this committee.

Daniel Barber

Citywide Council of President Chairman



Testimony by The Legal Aid Society

Before the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing  
Oversight Hearing: Preparing for Winter — Heat and Hot Water at NYCHA  
Developments  
October 24, 2018

*Introduction*

The Legal Aid Society, (the Society) is the nation’s oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. With a staff of more than 2,000 lawyers, social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff; and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society’s law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Society is counsel on numerous class-action cases concerning the rights of public housing residents and is a member of the New York City Alliance to Preserve Public Housing, a local collaboration of New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”) resident leaders, advocates and concerned elected officials.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the City Council's Public Housing Committee on these important issues and thank the Public Housing Committee Chair, Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel for her leadership and commitment to public housing residents.

### **A Landlord's Obligation to Provide Heat and Hot Water in New York City**

New York State law imposes on a residential landlord the obligation to maintain its premises in habitable condition, which includes the requirement to supply adequate heat and hot water to its tenants. Consistent with this legal obligation, the New York City Administrative Code requires landlords to provide tenants with hot water throughout the year and to supply heat at certain temperature thresholds during the annual "heating season."

Under Section 27-2028 of the New York City Administrative Code, heat must be provided between October 1 and May 31 as follows: (i) between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., each apartment must be heated to a temperature of 68° F whenever the outdoor temperature falls below 55° F; and (ii) between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., each apartment must be heated to a temperature of at least 62° F regardless of the outside temperature.

Today, NYCHA promises the over 400,000 residents of its 326 housing developments "A Home to Be Proud Of."<sup>1</sup> This promise includes a pledge to "provide[] hot water around-the-clock and heat in accordance with the New York City Administrative Code during the heating season (from October 1 until May 31)." As former NYCHA Chairperson, Oyeshola Olatoye testified before this Committee, providing "basic services like heat and hot water go to the heart of NYCHA's responsibility as a landlord."

### **The 2017-2018 Heat Season**

Through its representatives' sworn testimony before this Committee on February 6, 2018, NYCHA has admitted to its own "staggering" and "unacceptable" failure to provide heat and hot water to its residents during the 2017-2018 heating season. NYCHA's widespread violations of its legal obligations to supply heat and hot water to its tenants left hundreds of thousands of NYCHA residents in uninhabitable conditions during some of the coldest days in New York City's recent history.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Home To Be Proud of, A Handbook for Residents*, New York City Housing Authority, available at <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/nycha-tenant-handbook-2017.pdf>.

Indeed, then Chairperson Oyeshola Olatoye admitted that, during the period from October 1, 2017 through January 22, 2018, about 143,000 of its approximately 175,000 housing units experienced heat and hot water outages, leaving approximately 323,098 NYCHA residents without access to the fundamental services to which all New York City tenants, whether in public or private housing are entitled by law. By NYCHA's own reckoning, in other words, it failed to meet its "most basic responsibilities" as a landlord for approximately 80% of its housing units.

During these heat and/or hot water outages, residents were forced to fend for themselves and did so by layering on clothes and blankets and attempting to warm their homes via stoves and/or space heaters and boiling their own hot water. NYCHA is well aware of the dangerous position this put residents in: indeed, its Resident Handbook warns residents "[n]ever use your stove to heat your apartment. Poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) gas has no smell, builds up, and is deadly ..." But, having left hundreds of thousands of residents without heat, NYCHA could easily anticipate that its residents would resort to such forms of self-help to protect themselves from the ravages of minus 20° F wind chills.

NYCHA has admitted that 43% of the Authority's 1,980 boilers were identified as "having failing and/or obsolete equipment which cannot be replaced" and must be replaced "immediately." These problems were exacerbated by NYCHA's failure to maintain a qualified workforce to service those boilers that remain in operating condition. In 2013, for instance, NYCHA employed 391 boiler heat plant technicians ("HPT"). By 2017, however, that number had fallen to 248, a decline of approximately 37%.

On January 18, 2018, in response to the large-scale heat and/or hot water outages throughout NYCHA's apartments, Mayor de Blasio announced a \$13 million investment to help NYCHA respond more rapidly to heating emergencies and replace failing equipment. The funds were to be spent on hiring 57 repair staff; renting 3 mobile boilers; sealing and repairing 9,600 windows at senior developments; replacing 8 boiler plants at two developments with chronic outages; installing 7 gas-fired boilers at Patterson, Independence and Pelham Parkway Houses; and purchasing 5 new mobile boilers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/043-18/mayor-de-blasio-dedicates-13-million-speed-nycha-response-heat-outages-replace-equipment>.

On January 31, 2018, the Mayor announced a further investment of \$200 million to replace boilers and upgrade heating systems at 20 NYCHA developments experiencing chronic outages.<sup>3</sup>

### **The 2018-2019 Heat Season**

October 1, 2018 marked the beginning of the new heat season. Significantly, from June 1, 2018 until October 18, 2018, NYCHA made no public announcement about the steps it had taken during the summer to ensure that it can provide adequate and consistent heat and hot water during the 2018-2019 heat season. Information reported on NYCHA's own website during this heat season belies its very recent claims that progress is being made: according to the website, from October 18, 2018 through October 23, 2018, approximately 33,000 individuals have experienced heat and hot water outages.<sup>4</sup>

Most recently, on October 18, 2018, at a press conference held at Wald Houses (at which individuals were given a tour of the new boiler that has recently been installed), Mayor de Blasio and several NYCHA executives finally announced plans that NYCHA has allegedly put into place in preparation for this year's heat season. These include: hiring two private contractors to manage heating plants at 41 plants in 34 developments at a cost of over \$ 1 million per year; and the hiring of 50 technical support staff. Shockingly, within hours of the boiler tour at Wald Houses, the *entire* development of close to 4,000 individuals was without heat and hot water after an unplanned outage.

### **Recommendations:**

- NYCHA needs to provide regular, clear and consistent updates about the measures it has taken to ensure that residents are provided with reliable and consistent heat and hot water this Winter. Currently, there are conflicting statements about how many boilers have been purchased and installed; how many mobile boilers have been purchased and/or rented; how many staff have been hired and what work they will be performing. Residents deserve to know about how NYCHA has spent the funds allocated to it and how NYCHA intends to comply with its legal obligation to provide heat and hot water. Despite recent announcements that on their face seem to be positive, there is no

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/072-18/mayor-de-blasio-invests-200-million-replace-boilers-upgrade-heating-systems-20-nycha>

<sup>4</sup> <https://my.nycha.info/Outages/Outages.aspx>

evidence to back-up that anything that was said on January 18, 2018 or January 31, 2018, respectively, would happen, has in fact happened.

- The City needs to provide additional funding to ensure that NYCHA can upgrade aged equipment and infrastructure, hire adequate staff for maintenance and repair of boilers and provide the services to which residents are entitled by law.
- The State should immediately release the \$550 million that has been allocated to NYCHA in the Governor's Executive Order No. 180 issued on April 2, 2018 so that NYCHA can replace 63 boilers at the 14 developments that it has identified as experiencing chronic outages, thereby helping the 32,000 residents that live in these developments.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully Submitted:

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## FOR THE RECORD



**Fifth Avenue Committee**  
Our Community. Our Future.



### **GNCJ & T3 Testimony to NYCHA Committee on Public Housing Oversight: Preparing for the Winter: Heat and Hot Water at NYCHA Developments**

Back in January, 2018 the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) and Turning the Tide (T3) for Environmental Justice – both collaborative initiatives led by the Fifth Avenue Committee - sent a letter to our Congressmember Nydia Velazquez regarding the heat and hot water outages occurring in Red Hook East and West, Gowanus Houses, Warren Street Houses and Wyckoff Gardens all public housing developments, located in South Brooklyn.

Since this letter was written our Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez has sent correspondence to NYCHA on our behalf. We appreciate all of the work both Stanley Brezenoff and Vito Mustaciolo have been planning and rolling out to correct the issue of over 3 quarters of NYCHA's tenants being without heat or hot water during last year's cold season. In summary, they have added private management into the mix and have reportedly hired 50 Heating Plant Technicians (HPT) and have also brought balancers for the windows for seniors. We see some improvements, but unfortunately **the properties listed do not include Red Hook and Gowanus** and this is now the 6<sup>th</sup> year since Superstorm Sandy and residents are still waiting for new boiler replacements for those that were destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. **Red Hook Houses, Gowanus Houses and now, Wyckoff Gardens, are all operating on mobile boilers**, and in some cases the infrastructure to house the new Central Heating Plants have not even been erected in these waterfront developments.

Sandy impacted Red Hook and Gowanus Houses have also requested a need for improved emergency response protocols when buildings experience system failures, such as what occurred last year when the boilers and heating systems failed in Red Hook and Gowanus. **We still lack coordinated emergency response plan protocols for these local developments in South Brooklyn therefore we are resubmitting our previous recommendations for activation & communication around emergency response protocols for heat & water outages (see below recommendations list).** Please note all of the recommendations provided in this letter, as well as comments and questions in our testimony are also gathered from years of working directly with the South Brooklyn public housing community.

Attached we also include last Sandy Update for the Gowanus Houses dated May 2017. The Project scope was reduced from a boiler replacement to retrofits and we still don't have an answer as to if this year will prove to be another year where public housing residents in Gowanus are left out in the cold.

- **We'd like to know how are the upgrades to the boilers at Gowanus Houses are being prioritized as of today?**



One of the reasons Gowanus Houses residents were given about the no heat and no hot water issue was the failure of two of the five boilers that serve the Gowanus Houses development. So we'd also like to know:

- **Was the boiler burner fan at Gowanus Houses repaired?**
- **What type of new insulation for the boilers is being used?**
- **Were the condensation pumps and vacuum pumps replaced?**

The fact that these boilers were not working properly was apparently not conveyed to the Manager even though maintenance workers employed by NYCHA had known about this problem days before the cold snap. Some tenants on specific apartment lines said they never get heat, while others complained about way too much heat on average. Either way this is unacceptable and if we are to reach 20/30 or 80/50, these issues will have to be addressed and residents need to live in adequately provided for housing with communications and response protocols enacted when there are such life threatening emergencies as no heat or water in extreme temperature situations.

As part of the new plan NYCHA is installing **better windows** and 7,600 senior apartments will received new window balances. These repaired windows will lock in the heat more securely for NYCHA's elderly residents, but

- **WHAT ABOUT THE SENIORS IN RED HOOK AND GOWANUS?**
- **Will there be window balances for those living in South Brooklyn who are still losing energy through windows that don't close properly?**

In regards to the new HPT's we'd also like to understand if Red Hook and Gowanus Houses will have to continue to rely on one set of HPT's that cover Red Hook, Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, Warren Street Houses and Ingersol, which was the case last year.

- **Each one of these developments is multiple buildings housing hundreds of tenants which should require a dedicated Heating Plant Technicians onsite throughout the duration of Heat Season.**

We thank you for your attention to these matters in hopes our concerns will be addressed in a timely matter to prevent all residents of public housing from having to suffer from any further inadequate or excessive heat or any water outages. **We also re-extend our invitation to NYCHA and other stakeholders to a roundtable discussion regarding these and other issues that have been brought to our attention. It is our goal to assist NYCHA through our continued advocacy in Gowanus and Community Board 6 at large.**

#### **PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED TO Congressman Nydia Velazquez in January, 2018.**

##### **Activating & communication around emergency response protocols for heat & water outages**

- **Lack of overall communication from NYCHA about crisis; daily updates for each development should be provided when there is an emergency outage.**

During the aforementioned crisis only 1 out of the 11 NYCHA Cold Weather Updates sent to community based groups, like the update the Fifth Avenue Committee, received had any development specific details about which developments had outages.

- **Lack of communication from NYCHA to and from property managers.**

We found out many days into the crisis at Gowanus Houses RA meeting on Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 2018 that Gowanus Houses had 5 boilers in 1 boiler-room and two of those boilers have been out for over a week during the cold snap.

**When there is a building wide outage or multiple unit outages within a building, residents should not be told that the only way to request services is to put in a repair ticket; there must be a difference between repair requests and activating emergency response protocols for water & heat outages during extreme weather / disaster.**

- What establishes the need for local warming centers and how are tenants notified?
- 311 protocols must be standardized to accept all complaints from NYCHA residents.
- NYCHA notices need to be provided and assistance given to getting folks to warming centers.
- Seniors & disabled; babies, i.e. residents with special needs, more vulnerable, need to be checked on.
- CB6 NYCHA Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) teams should also be developed and activated to assist in emergency response.
- Boiler / heat technicians' capacity to respond must be improved.
- Provide Technicians with temperature heat guns to quickly measure temps indoors.
- There needs to be at minimum one heating technician supervisor per development. There is severe uneven heat distribution across the buildings.

**Below we have listed FINDINGS, QUESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS from Gowanus Houses residents based on their experiences during the recent heat and water outages:**

- **Heat technicians are getting improper temperature readings because residents are using personal space heaters, ovens and stovetops to create steam to heat rooms when heat is out. (This also creates excessive moisture and creates and increases mold growth.)**
- **During the weekend and when there are weather events residents stop calling the central call center number out of frustration. The wait time during the cold snap was over 20 minutes and in some cases if you waited the 20 minutes out, the line automatically disconnected the residents from the call center.**
- **We recommend a development wide 24 hour number that the tenants can leave a recorded message so the local management can monitor the calls specific to each development.**
- **The Gowanus Houses rooftop water tank pipes burst around 9pm during the cold snap and tenants watched water cascading down the stairwells until the pipe was shut off subsequently creating a water outage and forcing the tenants outside in the cold to get water from a truck.**

- **Temp boilers should be supplied to buildings where heat is out for more than 24 hours.**
- **Electric space heaters should be supplied to residential units when heat is out for more than 24 hours.** Many residents are keeping ovens turned on for warmth and that could lead to gas leaks and fire risks.
- **Since these are Sandy impacted FEMA buildings why wasn't FEMA notified to help with response to the heat and water crisis at these developments?**
- **We recommend that NYCHA stays abreast of any upcoming weather events and any FEMA designated Sandy Recovery building that is in the weather crosshairs gets a boiler-person on site for the duration of the weather event.**
- **Residents should be given rent abatements and reimbursement for any water or heater purchases made.**

In addition to these above needs and recommendations, we wish to discuss with NYCHA executive staff these outstanding items from previous dialogue:

- **Outstanding operating and capital needs at Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens and Warren Street Houses.**
- **Updates and communications to tenants on status of FEMA repair work at Gowanus Houses.**
- **Requesting a South Brooklyn Public Housing Town Hall with local tenant leadership.**
- **Updates and communications to tenants on status of project at Wyckoff Gardens & progress from Resident Stakeholder Group**
- **Updates on *Moldbusters* mold abatement program for Wyckoff Gardens & Warren Street Houses**

Sincerely yours,

**Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice**

**Please direct all responses to this letter to the:**

**Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice c/o**

Sabine Aronowsky  
 South Brooklyn Accountable Development Initiative  
 Fifth Avenue Committee  
 621 Degraw Street  
 Brooklyn NY 11217  
 (718) 237-2017, ext. 117  
[saronowsky@fifthave.org](mailto:saronowsky@fifthave.org)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10/24/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lucy NEWMAN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DANIEL BARBER

Address: 765 Courtlandt ave, Bx NY 10451

I represent: Citywide Council of PRESIDENTS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Javier Almodovar

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Director For Heating, NYC HA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Name: Cathy Rehrington Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: EVP for Council

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Name: Deborah Goddard Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: EVP for Council

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Name: Vito Mustaciolo Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: EM, NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 10/24/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Blondel

Address: 621 Degraw Street

I represent: GNCJ (Governor's Neighborhood Coalition for Justice)

Address: 621 Degraw Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carleen Quinones

Address: 840 Colman Ave

I represent: Douglass House

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: OCT 24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DOUGLAS DAVIS

Address: GREENICH ST NYC

I represent: FISONIC ENERGY

Address: WOOLWORTH BLDG NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Oct 29, 2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Assemblymember Linda B. Roseenthal

Address: 230 West 72nd Street, Suite 2F

I represent: the VWS / Hell's Kitchen NYS Assembly

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Marcinek

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: HR Deputy Director / NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bob Marano

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CID, NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms