

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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B E F O R E: JOSEPH C. BORELLI  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Justin L. Brannan  
Fernando Cabrera  
Alan N. Maisel

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

John Sudnik, Acting Chief of the Department  
New York City Fire Department

Alvin Suriel, Deputy Assistant Chief of EMS  
Operations, New York City Fire Department

Christine Mazzola, EMS Division Chief  
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John Benanti, Deputy Commissioner of Support  
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Gerard Fitzgerald, President, Uniformed  
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George Farinacci, Uniformed Fire Officers  
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Owen Barzilay, President, Local 2506  
Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors

Michael Grecco

Vincent Variale, President, UMESCO

Josefina Sanfelieu, Founder of Latinos Against  
FDNY Cuts



[sound check] [pause] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I never know when-- whether it's one bangs of two bangs. So, bear with me if I've banged an incorrect amount of time. Well, good morning everyone or good afternoon. I'm Council Member Job Borelli. I'm the Chair of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. I want to thank the public for attending today's hearing, and I would also like to acknowledge the committee members who are here present. Just Councilman Cabrera and Council Member Ampry-Samuel, and we're also joined by Council Member Van Bramer who has a very, very, very strong interest in the topic of this hearing. Now, regarding today's subject, the committee will examine the impact of new developments to Long Island City's Emergency Services including both FDNY Engine Service and FDNY EMS service. As we all know, the department has historically and continues to do so an excellent job of promptly responding to the fire and medical emergencies, which helped save countless lives on a daily basis. During today's hearing we want to make sure that this remains the case specifically in areas like Long Island City, which have seen a robust increase in development over the past decade. In

addition to the rapid increase in residential development, we are looking to see how the addition of Amazon will impact the area with regard to emergency services. An estimated 18,000 new residential units have been constructed in the area since 2006, and there are an addition 10,000 units projected to be open by 2020. According to the Long Island City Partnership, perhaps they're biased, but Long Island City is considered the fastest growing neighborhood in the country. That being said, with all of this development and the planned installation of a 25,000 square foot facility that will usher in thousands of people, Long Island City needs to reopen Engine 261. As I stated last month during a press conference in front of existing Ladder Company 116, which lacks the equipment to put water on a fire, it is imperative that Engine 261 be reactivated in order to support the explosive growth in population and commercial activity in the community. So, today we look forward to addressing the real need for potential new emergency services and discuss among other issues the Fire Department's general preparation for increased population in LIC, how would the building industry assist or collaborate

with the department to provide New Yorkers with better emergency services, and if the FDNY plans to reevaluate the need for a firehouse, EMS station in- to be added in the area. I would now like to ask those members of the Administration who plan to testify to please state your name for the record, and just raise your right hand ad the Committee Counsel administers the oath. Oh, I'm sorry. First, we're going to hear from Council Member Van Bramer.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. First, let me just say thank you to Chair Borelli for taking such an interest in this particular issue that obviously has local consequences for us, but citywide implications for all of New York City because when you cut back on fire protection services and FDNY operations, you make no one safer, and it was never a good idea to close Engine Company 261. It's an even worse idea today, and let me just say as I said at the press conference it's never a good idea to close firehouses, engine companies, and we have learned that the decision made by Mayor Bloomberg in 2003 was short-sighted. Obviously, Long Island City has grown exponentially since then. Therefore, making it clear

to everyone that more and more people need the Fire Department, more and more people are in danger of the Fire Department's not being able to do their heroic work, not because they aren't rushing to the scene or aren't risking their lives, but because by closing that engine company both of those things have been made even harder. So with Amazon coming and whether or not those 25 or 40,000 people live in Long Island City, or work in Long Island City, it obviously will require the FDNY to respond to even more emergencies, and every day that we allow Engine Company 261 to remain closed, remains another day that we welcome tragedy because we know the need exists. We know how the local community feels, and I want to recognize and thank all the members of the FDNY and all to the various unions that represent the men and women of the FDNY. I also want to make sure that everyone knows that the Dutch Kills Civic Association our local Civic Association in the neighborhood has been fighting this fight for a long time, but as many of you heard me say at the press conference, Tony Benetatos who was an active duty firefighter with the FDNY was sworn in as the President of the Dutch Kills Civic Association just in December, and the fire on

Queens Boulevard that destroyed several businesses was poignant reminder to everyone in Western Queens just how important our firefighters are, just how dangerous their job is and Tony Benetatos is one of those who responded to that fire and was working on that fire all night, and risked his life as did all of those firefighters. So, the question even should Engine Company 261 be open, the question is how soon can the de Blasio Administration open it? And what else can be done to increase safety and around Western Queens. We know what's happened in terms of growth, and we know what we need, and with Amazon coming, should it come, we know that those needs have must increased exponentially further. So, I want to thank again Chair Borelli for his leadership, and we rallied several times over the last several years since I've been a Council Member, and the community has never forgotten the mistake made by the Bloomberg Administration 15 years ago to close this. We'll never stop fighting until it reopens. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and now we'll ask the members of the Administration to state their name for the oath.



LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? [pause]

Please state your name before speaking. Thank you.

[pause]

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Good afternoon Chair Borelli, Council Member Van Bramer, and all the Council Members present. My name is John Sudnik and I am the Acting Chief of the Department for the New York City Fire Department. I am joined today by Alvin Suriel, Deputy Assistant Chief of EMS Operations; Christine Mazzola, EMS Division Chief; John Benanti, Deputy Commissioner of Support Services; and Joe Mastropietro, Assistant Commissioner for Facilities. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the impact of new development on emergency services in Long Island City. Before I address that topic, I would like to take—like to take a moment to acknowledge a profound loss suffered by—last week by our department and the City of New York. Firefighter Steven H. Pollard died from critical injuries sustained while operating on a motor vehicle accident on the Mill

Basin Bridge in Brooklyn. Firefighter Pollard had a year and a half on the job at the time of his death. As his family mourns him, the department and the citizens of this city mourn him as well. I want to express my appreciation to Council Member Maisel for attending the wake and to Chair Borelli and Speaker Johnson for attending the funeral. Thank you both very much. Long Island City is an area of Queens that has experienced significant growth in recent years. According to the Economic Development Corporation, more than 8,100 housing units were completed within Long Island City between January 2008 and November 2018, and there are currently nearly 10,000 housing units under construction. With the recent announcement that Amazon will be locating a second headquarters in Long Island City there is certain to be additional growth both residential and commercial. This is also a location where an engine company, Engine 261 was closed in 2003 under the Bloomberg Administration. In all areas of the city, the Fire Department remains vigilant to ensure that we are able to maintain sufficient capacity to respond to emergencies. We pay careful attention to neighborhoods experiencing rapid changes in

population and building density and type. We work closely with agencies such as the Department of City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation to learn as much as we can about new growth and evaluate whether we need to add existing resources to serve the surrounding population. The department conducts constant monitoring of resources across the city on a daily basis. However, in light of rapid growth in Long Island City, we have studied the area more comprehensively to assess the need for additional resources in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Given what we know about the changing nature of the area, we were already in the process of considering whether additional resources were necessary due to the recent growth of the area when Amazon made their announcement. Among the data that we consider is-is the growing number of responses performed by the fire companies in the area, and the response times for those incidents. Another factor in this assessment is that the companies located in Long Island City also serve Roosevelt Island. When there is an emergency incident on Roosevelt Island and an incident in Long Island City, companies have to respond from further away. In Long Island City we

have seen an increase in the number of incidents and in response times to those incidents. In particular, in Queens Community Board 1 calls for all incident types increased 19% between 2014 and 2018 and response times to all calls were up 9% (sic). Our level of need for additional resources in Queens Community Board 1, is among the highest level for any areas in the city, and it's the highest level of need for any location in the Borough of Queens. We also study factors across the city to continuously determine where there is a need for additional EMS resources. The Long Island City neighborhood has seen an increase in incidents in recent years. To address this growing need in 2018, we added an additional Basic Life Support Unit to the-to service the area. We also added tactical response group units, and we have used the flexibility of the TRG program, which began in 2017 to position units in Long Island City neighborhood when call volume required it. We can anticipate with confidence that the growth in daytime population brought on by Amazon will lead to a greater number of incidents. Our understanding is that Amazon will initially create 25,000 jobs over 10 years with a plan to grow to

40,000 over 15 years. So, we will continue monitoring the growth of incidents and response times to ensure that we are devoting adequate resources to that area. Our existing need for resources in Long Island City will be expanded by the rapid growth that the area will experience when Amazon arrives. We anticipate a significant increase in commercial office space initially with Amazon itself, and subsequently do it to peripheral development. Amazon may also serve as a catalyst for further growth in residential units in Long Island City. We will continue updating our analysis of the need for additional resources to take into account the additional growth that the neighborhood and surrounding area will see as a result of Amazon. At this time, however, we don't yet have enough details about the Amazon development to precisely factor it into an updated analysis and make accurate projections. We expect to do that once we are able to determine projected square footage and occupancy type of the new developments, projected day time population growth and evening population growth and perhaps obtain an insight into the peripheral development anticipated by DCP and EDC. That

information remains unknown at this time, but we will work with our partners across city government as a it becomes available so that we are able to conduct an analysis of our growing needs with the most accurate and up-to-date information. Put simply, Long Island City is a neighborhood to which we were already considering adding resources due to the growing emergency response needs of the area. The development spurred by Amazon will only add to those needs, and we will refine our analysis and adjust our resources accordingly as we learn more about it. The Fire Department is dedicated to maintaining a network of capabilities that enable use to provide the best possible service to the people of New York. We monitor and evaluate daily in long-term performance metrics including incident responses and type, resource deployment, response times and overall effectiveness in our response in handling of emergencies across the city. If the results of our analysis of Long Island City show that we need additional fire and EMS assets, we provide the resources necessary to maintain the elite level of service that the people we serve have come to expect. We'd be happy to take your questions at this time.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Chief. I  
3 certainly appreciate your being here today as with  
4 the rest of your colleagues. Just a-a quick question  
5 to kick us off. You said that your-you don't-you  
6 can't adequately predict the type of development that  
7 Amazon may bring. Are you aware of the term tech  
8 bro? I'll read it to you. It is an Urban Dictionary  
9 term. It's a guy who works in the tech field often,  
10 but not always, lacking in social skills, sometimes  
11 focused on a career to the exclusion of female  
12 companions. It's a term for the people who kind of  
13 work at Amazon and Google or-and these sort of  
14 things. The reason why I'm asking you just as a-as a  
15 baseline, is there any reason we should expect that  
16 people who work in-in-in one of the 25,000 new Amazon  
17 jobs that they would not be experiencing any type of  
18 health emergencies that 25,000 other random New  
19 Yorkers will?

20 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: So, are you're  
21 saying is there any reason why they would not  
22 experience the same needs?

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right. Okay, good.  
24 They've added some crazy stuff at Amazon. You know,  
25 I wasn't sure what they were developing, maybe bionic

arms or something like that, but anyway that was my tech bro joke, everyone

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: It didn't go over well. [coughs] So, just let's start with a broad-a broad scope. When the department recognizes a need for more resources, what-what are the steps you-you take? You mentioned that you studied LIC. So, what are the steps in general that the department takes?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, obviously we'll have these conversations internally and we'll take a look at the broad spectrum of our resource needs across the entire city and, you know, we'll make a determination on what our objectives are and if we're meeting our objectives with the resources we currently have, as you know, recently we opened up a squad company in Staten Island. I believe that's where you call home, and that's one of the areas that we made a determination where we had that need, and thanks to the efforts of-of the City Council and the Administration, we're able to fulfill that need.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a formal process the department goes through to evaluate the-



the shifting needs? Is there a--is there an acronym for it or is this something you regularly do?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, we've done studies. We also have a working group that we have that takes a look at growth in the city, upzoning if you will, and they meet periodically every couple weeks and they take a look at the data that we have that's provided from our--our internal group of Analysis and Planning, and--and they have those conversations and--and they--they take a look to see which areas are considered in most need, if you will, going forward.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. We--to note we've been joined by Council Member Brannan of Brooklyn. Thank you, Council Member and Council Member Maisel also of Brooklyn. Nice of you to join us.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: [off mic] From Brooklyn.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And Queens is good. As a rule of thumb does the schools see an increase in tours both in fire and ambulance tours in areas where there has been a substantial population increase?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, it's—it's not from a fire perspective, it's not as a rule of thumb, you know, we'll—we'll—if we have—if we move assets around on the fire operation side, we move resources around based on activity, and most of that is done for example of there's a fire in the area, and there's a depletion of resources, we'll immediately move or relocate units into that area. I'll defer to EMS on—the EMS resources, but I know that they have these tactical response groups that I mentioned before, both in Queens and in the Bronx, and they identify needs that occur during a tour, and they'll reassign those resources as they see fit.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: That is correct. So, we continuously monitor the—the jobs coming in, and if we have to move units, we'll move the Bronx Tactical Response Group as well as the Queens Tactical Response Groups.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there an established standard or an established goal regarding a ratio between residential population of an area to an engine company or to an EMS ambulance tour. Is it like, you know, do—do you want one ambulance for every 10,000 people in an area or is—?

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2 DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: For the  
3 EMS site, no.

4 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: We don't have that  
5 on the fire side either. There is not an established  
6 ratio.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. So, prior to  
8 Squad 8, what were the previous last few engine  
9 companies that were opened in the city? Do we know?

10 DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: It's  
11 probably been awhile.

12 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: We did open up  
13 units in Staten Island in Cottonville. We opened up-  
14 -

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] 160-  
16 I think right?

17 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Yeah. We opened up  
18 in Queens. Before that--before that we opened up a  
19 ladder company in Jamaica, Queens.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And--and so you--do  
21 you recall what--or anyone on the panel, do you recall  
22 some of the reasons that went into opening these  
23 companies?

24 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I--I believe--it was  
25 so long ago, I believe I was either a firefighter or

a lieutenant at the time of--of the opening of Ladder 133 in Queens, and that was part of the previous administration. So, I don't have the specific access to the criteria that they used.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: For the-- for the EMS stations, I know we opened up the Queens TRG to assist with that. So, that's what we do in Queens and we're also in the process on with John or Joe trying to open a new station, Station 49 as well in that community.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Where is that?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: That's out in Astoria. It's actually not opening a new one. There's a station that exists right now under the Triborough Bridge. We're looking and we found a better location, and we're having DCAS negotiate for that better location.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: Well, that's--that's the result of a real estate need, not necessarily as a result of an increase in population or responses.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I'm sorry, I didn't--

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: That's—  
that's as of—that's addressing a real estate need not  
necessarily an increase in population or of  
responses.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Alright, well, I  
think the station we're looking to build is going to  
be a bigger station so they could put more units  
there if they need to.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What is the  
response time—so-so Queens as we know, has a slightly  
longer response time for an engine company than say  
Brooklyn. What is the—well first of all, what—what  
battalion would Engine 261 be in?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: It would be in 45  
Battlion.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the 45 Battalion  
on average have a slower response time or a faster  
response time than the citywide average? Do we know?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I don't have that,  
but they're all within acceptable response times.  
That's what's considered acceptable according to NFPA  
standards.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But slow—but faster is always better, I mean, you know, right, and that's--?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I will not disagree with you. Faster is always better.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And the response time that we found for-for Queens I think was four minutes and 50 seconds or something right around there. It was 4 minutes, 43 seconds. That's almost a minute slower than Brooklyn. When the FDNY calculates response time, when does the clock begin?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: It's going to get quite complicated, but, you know, certainly, you know, we just changed the—the metric on how we calculate our response times to include—to—to include processing time. You may or may not know that we've—we changed the parameters from how we receive calls from 911 now. So, I don't want to complicate the matters there, but generally speaking, I guess taking a look at the way our companies once they receive a call to the time they get and, you know, received a call at the firehouse at the time that arrive at the location. It's call travel time, and if we compare the travel that—comparing the travel time from say

one company or one area to the next would be a pretty accurate way to take a look at it.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, what about the time it takes to--when you stop at the front door of a building, if the building is two stories or three stories, is there a shorter time to put water on a fire than say if the building is 15, 20, 30 stories?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, clearly it would take longer to apply water to a fire to a 15-story building than it would to a 2-story building one you arrive at the front of the building. Correct.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the--the vertical response time is something that--that you know captains of--of the company and people on the ground would have to factor into the decisions they make?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, they're going to operate the way they operate given our current procedures for the type of building that they operate at. High-rise buildings have elevators. They utilize the elevators to get to the areas of fire for tactical operations. So, they utilize those. You

know, 2-story buildings, you know, are generally performed with hand stretches from engine company form the street.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So a rule of thumb, though, it would take longer for water to be put on a fire in a high-rise as opposed to a warehouse assuming there wasn't any special conditions.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: You know, there-- there's--it's--it's hard to answer that question because, you know, obviously the higher you go into a building, it's going to, you know, the--the more time it's going to take. So, why don't we for example take a high-rise residential building. So, theoretically, a fire on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of a--of a 60-story building, we--we would get to quicker, you know, than we would for a fire on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor. With the use of elevators, you know, that time is certainly reduced. A warehouse could have its own complicating factors. So, we don't--we don't necessarily compare, you know, our operations from or our operating time from one specific building to another. We do have our tactics that we perform for each particular building that we have established for--for centuries. So, you know, so--



CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But just from the—the—the, you know, the—the real operating time, I mean not—not based on the FDNY's metrics, but the actual time it would take to get from the firehouse to the 30<sup>th</sup> story of the building, do you foresee it being longer when Long Island City continues to be rezoned and higher—and higher density buildings are built?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: You know, certainly that's, you know, that would be a reason why we would—we could utilize additional resources in the areas where they're building high-rise buildings. If you take a look at fire protection in the borough of Manhattan, the firehouses or fire units are closer together, and that takes all that—I think the terminology use is the vertical response time. So, it would take that into consideration.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Was—was that the reason why 261 was closed down or was it a result of just a--?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Again, Council Member, with all due respect, you know, in 2003, I wasn't in a position to make the—the determination on when 261 was closed?

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I would love to know Captain Sudnik's opinions around the kitchen table when 261 closed?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: He—he worked in Eastern New York Brooklyn at the time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. [laughter] There was a statistic I saw in your testimony. Let's bring the location. So, responses—response times to all calls citywide were up 9%. Is that—is that response times to all types of calls?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Okay, so that—that was—that was for Queens and—and that took into consideration the—that took into consideration the new metric that we used including the processing time or are called end-to-end time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay but that—that's for EMS, Fires, every type of response?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: No that was—that's for fire units responding to those calls--

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] Okay.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: --from I believe 2014 to 2018.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, then it's safe to say --

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: [interposing] Oh, yeah and that's for community -for that community board, community board.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right, the community board one was 19% and then you said Queens was 9%.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Yeah, Community Board 1 in Queens was 9%.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So that means that just the--the incident types increased and the response times almost doubled the amount in Community Board 1 than elsewhere in Queens or am I reading that wrong?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: So, it's--the number of calls increased 19% during that period of time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Oh, I'm sorry and the response time was at 9%. Okay.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Right calls.  
[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: If a Queens community board responds--calls increase by 19% over the last four years, what has the Borough of Queens--Queens seen an increase in? Is it also 19% or is Community Board 1 outpacing the increase in Queens?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I don't have that information now, but I know that Community Board Analysis that we dug--did previously showed that Community Board 1 outpaced all other community boards in Queens.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, it's--it's--the--the fact that you--you have it, as you said, on the radar of the department is--is really a result of all these factors, the population and the response times and the number of calls, correct?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Yeah, that's correct among other things, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, what other things?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, we take a look at someone's workload obviously, which is called volume. We--we define at its impact. We look at the performance, which includes response times, unit availability plus, you know, which includes first and secondary units. We take a look at the population itself, the at-risk population, which would include take into demographic factors such as age, socio-economic factors. So, we--we do quite an extensive analysis, and--and include as many factors as we can

so as to get a complete picture of what's going on in a particular area.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, thank you. I'm going to hand it over to Council Member Van Bramer.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much again, Mr. Chair for taking this on, and thank you very much for your testimony. So, a couple of--of thoughts and then a couple of questions. You know, I feel like even your testimony is--is moving us towards what I hope will be the inevitable reopening of Engine Company 261, and this is not directed at anyone at this table, but really at the Administration. It just shouldn't have taken Amazon coming here to make this happen, and--and I think this should have been done years ago, and just a few thoughts about your testimony. You mentioned that according to EDC 8,100 new housing units completed since January of '08 with 10,000 more under construction but between 2003 when the engine was closed in 2008, there were additional units that were added in Western Queens as well. So, I guess I would say if 20,000 new units of housing come online, is that--is that not an argument for not only increasing

these kinds of life saving services, but certainly an argument against reducing them?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: [pause] Well, I-I would certainly advocate for not reducing them. Again, I'll leave it up to the Administration to make that determination on whether they need to increase the--the resources that the Fire Department needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Well I understand your--your respect for the--then chain of command, but I think it's appalling that the Administration has not already made that determination and given you all the resources that you need to save lives. Another part of your testimony as the Chair referenced in Queens Community Board 1 I would just like to point out, and I think you all know this, too, that a big portion of Long Island City, of course, is in Community Board 2, right. So, all of your stats are--are CB1. Relevant but a lot of the towers are actually in CB2. So, some of those factors need to be considered here. But just in CB1 alone, the call--calls increased 19%. The response time is up 9%. Is that also not a screaming argument for reopening Engine Company 261?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, certainly I'm—I'm glad that we're sitting here having the conversation about opening another company as opposed to closing companies like they were in 2003.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Amen to that, but and again, we didn't just have the press conference and again this is not directed at anyone sitting at this table or on December 1<sup>st</sup> with the Congresswoman, but I had rallies and protests with a lot of folks here and their predecessors over the years, and we had years to get this right, but now that Amazon has been announced, you—you would almost—you almost couldn't see this engine company not being re-opened, and it just shouldn't come to that. Politics really doesn't have a role to play when we're talking about saving lives, and again, that's not directed anyone at that table. So, you also mentioned that there's more crunching of the data. There are internal discussions going on. I guess I would just ask what more do you need to see in order to come to that what I believe is a rightful and inevitable conclusion, but Engine Company 261 is reopened? What—what—what are you missing in order to say, Damn it, we gotta reopen this thing. Lives

arte at risk here. It should have been done years ago?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Again, I think from our perspective if we're presented with the additional resource and of another engine company in the area, that area would certainly benefit from it.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: So, I-I-I have to say I won't put words in your mouth, and again, I-I respect you all and to some degree the position you're in, but as is the case with many things in the city of New York, this is about political will, and as you mentioned, resources. And so, it is incumbent upon the Mayor who cut the Amazon deal to make sure that the resources are provided to the Fire Department, the FDNY to be in a position to save lives of people in Long Island City including the Tech Bros that Council Member Borelli educated all of us on a little bit earlier. So, I'll just say thank you for your service and I believe again without putting words in any of-of your mouths that from Commissioner Nigro down to all of you, I would just assume that if the resources were provided, that all of you would very much want Engine Company 261 to be re-opened so that the hard working men and women



2 of the FDNY can do their jobs and do their jobs  
3 right. So, with that, I'll just say thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Next  
5 I'll have Council Member Cabrera.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so  
7 much to the Chair and to my colleague Jimmy Van  
8 Bramer for bringing up this issue. To be honest with  
9 you, I'm kind of scratching my--let me do it right  
10 now--scratching my head because you actually presented  
11 a really good case if I was coming here or if you  
12 were coming here as Council Member. As a matter of  
13 fact the data that you brought was the data that I  
14 was, you know, everyone would love to present where  
15 you have the fastest growing neighborhood in all the  
16 United States. You have, as it was mentioned, the  
17 19% increase in--in--in times--9% up in response time,  
18 right, and so if I get this right, is it the funding?  
19 Is that what I hear your saying, and that the  
20 Administration hasn't committed to the funding in  
21 order to restore? I just want it on the record.  
22 What--what's the problem? What's--what's holding?

23 ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, it's my  
24 belief that the conversations are happening at this  
25

present time with OMB and the folks in the Mayor's Office regarding the funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I'm a little surprised that it's taken this long in light of the fact that when the discussions took place with Amazon and I know this--this--this goes to the Administration, but when the discussions were taking place with Amazon and the millions and billions of dollars that were committed that that didn't take place at that stage. Have you heard if there were any discussions that took place during that time regarding, you know, having a situation? Because all the criteria has been met. I mean this is like a no-brainer. All the criteria has been made. Has--were there any discussions? Were there--from the Commissioner was there any communications that went to the Mayor's Office back the regarding the need for this or did this happen after the fact, after the agreement took place?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: We were not part of any discussions in regard to Amazon previously. I was told that Amazon has reached out and-and-to-and will work with the Department of City Planning to set up meetings with various city agencies, FDNY

included. So, we look forward to--to meeting with them when--when that become available.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: What--what--in terms of funding what would be the associated cost with maintaining and staffing this Engine Company?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I believe initially in the first year it's roughly--the initial cost is about \$4 million.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, it's really drop in the bucket really what we're talking about here, right? It's not a whole lot of money.

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: I'm a Fire Chief. I'm not a part to it. (sic)

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: [laughter] I wish the Commissioner was here so we could ask him these questions because--but I hear you. I don't want to put you on the spot, but I had to bring it forth so it will be communicated to the Commissioner, and to the Administration, but it's \$4 million. I mean, serious this is not a whole lot. Is there any capital improvement that is needed on the building or--was it--it's been maintained?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: There--there is some capital work that has to be done.

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2 Commissioner Benanti could talk you through the--that.  
3 Yeah, it's--actually it's expense dollars. It wouldn't  
4 really be capital dollars. We did take a look at  
5 the--my architects had gone and taken a look at the  
6 building to see what it would cost to bring it up.  
7 We would have to do some bathroom work, split the  
8 bunker room office--Officers' quarters would have to  
9 be done. We have a guestimate of about \$1.2 million  
10 on the facility side as far as bringing it up to  
11 speed?

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Can I ask a  
13 question of you, Mr. Benanti?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Are you doing the  
16 bathrooms at every firehouse?

17 COMMISSIONER JOHN BENANTI: Excise me.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Are you going to  
19 redo the bathrooms at every firehouse?

20 COMMISSIONER JOHN BENANTI: We have  
21 redone bathrooms in all firehouses.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Was this firehouse  
23 done already?

24 DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: The  
25 bathroom was done prior, but it was done as a single

company at the time. It was not done as a double. So, there's not enough showers, not enough urinals for a double company and the same thing for the officer.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Could I just ask a question then. This was a house that housed two companies. Then it was closed, and somebody made the decision to retrofit it but sort of downside and not perhaps think that one day the company would have to open again?

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: I would say it was one of you guys, but somebody made a-- hopefully it wasn't you guys.

COMMISSIONER JOHN BENANTI: I had asked the same question, but it came back as budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Mr. Chair, can I come back with a second question, second round?

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Sure. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER JOHN BENANTI: Chair, if I could--if I may, we just want to say the \$4 million figure I think there's more in there. We'd have to get more specifics on that.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: In the past when the department has reopened a firehouse, has that changed the—the hiring on numbers of the FDNY?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: It would increase the budgeted headcount I believe, but would it—would it—so, it would increase the budgeted headcount, but would it increase the actual headcount or would you more than likely pull people from other companies for a while?

ACTING CHIEF SUDNIK: Well, right now I could tell you that we're over-budgeted headcount in the FDNY so regarding how we would staff that unit or a new unit, any new unit going forward is something that we'd have to take a look at carefully to make sure that, you know, we had the right level of experience and—and things like that like in the company.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is—is Ladder Company 116 considered a busy house or a slower house?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: That's a pretty broad question, but--

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing]  
Right, in terms of-

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: --you know, comparatively to, you know, I would consider it to be as far as probably on average about average in activity compared to other ladder companies in the city.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, we pulled the data from the census tracks that make up downline Long Island City, and some of the immediate surroundings. Some of the census tracks have a population increase of 493% more than does others or about 200%, but the average for the seven census tracks that makes up Long Island City is 200%. So, doubling the population growth. Is there any other area of the city that you know of that--that has been on the radar for the department that has seen that sudden population growth over ten years?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: I don't have that information right now, but certainly there are areas that we've noticed or we've seen growth in population or repopulation, if you will, but I don't have the specifics on the statistics that you're referring to.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I'll ask it a different way then. What other neighborhoods of New

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40

2 York City is the working group looking at for adding  
3 services or amending services?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: When we  
5 complete our methodology and our criteria, which is  
6 some of the criteria that the Chief was talking  
7 about, we plan on doing a citywide assessment of it.  
8 In the meantime, we do meet with City Planning and  
9 we've gone over and did come up with a couple of  
10 areas that, you know, that they said that we could  
11 look at, but for the most part we're waiting until we  
12 get our criteria squared away so we can do our  
13 methodologies and do a citywide review and  
14 assessment.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: One final question  
16 and then I'll give it to Council Member Van Bramer.  
17 Should this be in the Mayor's Executive Budget  
18 Proposal this year? [pause]

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: The--?

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] the  
21 additional company?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: Should it  
23 be?

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: An addition  
25 ambulance tour as well?



DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: Again, I think the fact that it's already being discussed between OMB and City and City Hall, I—I think that the conversation is happening, and again, I, you know, I will—the fact that we're not talking about closing companies.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: They were in 2003. I think we're—we're going in the right direction, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, when the—when the Commissioner comes back in a couple of months and we're talking about the—the budget needs for FY20, do you suspect that—that this will be on the list or if not, you know, what else should we expect to see?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: I—I expect it's going to be part of the conversation.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, great.  
Council Member Van Bramer.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thanks. Just a quick follow-up on two things, and again I'm paraphrasing, but when I asked what more do you need the kind of metrics and data to make this final decision, you basically said, you know, we need to

hear from the Administration and--and OMB. So, just about the finer points on it. Do you think from the-- strictly from a fire protection services, FDNY angle, the question has already been answered in terms of whether or not we need an Engine Company 261 open, and that it's just simply the only question really that's remaining here is whether or not you're going to get the additional money from OMB.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: I don't know if I can answer that. What I can say is that given additional resources in that area, it will certainly improve our performance from a fire protection standpoint in those two community boards.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: So, I want to be respectful of you, but as the person you are and the rank that you hold within this organization are you able to say whether or not you believe the question has been answered strictly from a service and safety perspective?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: I--I think I know what you're trying to say. I'm again, going to-- I think the data--the data is--is favorable for certainly taking a close look at additional resources in the area, and I think that's what we're doing.

So, and I think that's the reason why we're here.

So, I'm confident that the conversations are happening at the right levels.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: I am, too, now, but I'll just reiterate again and this is not directed at you. It should take Amazon to have spurred this on. Speaking of Amazon, you mentioned one other thing--this is my final question--that Amazon is now meeting with City Planning and other city agencies, which is great. There are a lot of folks from Seattle who have helicoptered in to-to meet with some of our agencies but City Planning should always be meeting with city agencies including the FDNY to figure out what people need who are in these neighborhoods. It's great that Amazon is on a fact finding mission. They may spread some philanthropy around, but that's--that's not a substitute for good city planning and a good responsive city planning department would have seen this growth, and would have already gone to OMB and the Mayor's Office to say: By God, this FDNY engine company needs to reopen because of all these extra people that have come and/or are scheduled to come. So, maybe that's a little editorial. You don't have to respond to

that, but this is--this was a mistake when it happened in '03. It's been a mistake everyday, and it--it should not have come to this and been this long. Amazon is not a good cover for finally reopening an engine company. That's all I'll say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and, you know, sometimes I meet with City Planning and I--I can't figure out what they're saying either. So, I don't--I don't blame you guys for that. Council Member Cabrera.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Just a quick question. Someone mentioned that Station 49 is a new station. Who was it?

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: So, like he said it's not a new station. We're just looking for new property, correct?

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay. So, it's not a new station.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: Right, just moved.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I just--just want to clarify.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: It's a station and hopefully we can get more units in there as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Because it's bursting at the seams in terms of people working there, right, all the staff?

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: I can pull the

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, it's not—I just want to make sure because the question—the discussion was regarding new station, and I don't want Station 49 to be portrayed as a new one.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF SURIEL: Correct. It is not a new one. 49 exists currently under the Triborough, but the Borough Chief of Queens—Chris can answer that one for you.

CHRISTINE MAZZOLLA: Uh-hm. So, like Suriel mentioned, it's not a new facility. We have many members that are working in that facility. We have many units that—that turn out of that facility and cover Community Board 1 and 2. The idea with the brick and mortar versus where they are today, and being able to is a larger area that we're—that the department is trying to—to solidify so we would have

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2 room for expansion in that particular area knowing  
3 that we have additional call volume and--and the  
4 numbers as--as they are and have been discussed today.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay.

6 CHRISTINE MAZZOLLA: So, that's--that's  
7 currently in the process.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I appreciated  
9 that answer because I--I--what I don't wanted it to be  
10 seeming that we're getting more stations than we  
11 actually have--

12 CHRISTINE MAZZOLLA: [interposing] No.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: --which is all  
14 of it is--

15 CHRISTINE MAZZOLLA: [interposing] You're  
16 correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: --it's just a  
18 bigger building.

19 CHRISTINE MAZZOLLA: Yeah, with--with room  
20 for expansion. Where they are at the moment, they  
21 don't have that room for expansion .

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Got you. Thank  
23 you so much. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. [pause]

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you folks.  
25 Appreciate it. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENANTI: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the next panel will be Vincent Variale, Gerard Fitzgerald, Michael Grecco, Oren Barzilay and George Farinacci.

[background comments/ pause] If anybody else would— would like to testify, they can come up and fill out a card, and I want to point out that Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan has also submitted testimony to the committee. [background comments/pause] So, who would like to begin? Anyone? Gerard, you seem ready. Please.

GERARD FITZGERALD: Thanks. Good morning or Good afternoon. Just before I start, I would like to echo Chief Sudnik's thoughts about Firefighter Steven Pollard who was lost to us last week. I want to thank Council Member Joe Borelli for attending the funeral, Council Member Alan Maisel for being at the— the wake, and to Speaker Corey Johnson and—the Mayor for being at the funeral also. Thank you for remembering Steven Pollard. Please continue to do so. Okay, my name is Gerard Fitzgerald. I am the President of the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater new York. I want to thank you all for allowing me to—the opportunity to join the members of

this community and give testimony today in front of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. As President of the UFA, I represent the Health and Safety and interest of more than 85 New York—8,500 New York City firefighters and the citizens they keep out of harm's way, and as such, it is my duty to bring attention to a critical fire safety issue developing in Long Island City. Fifteen years ago, the City closed a longstanding firehouse in Long Island City Engine Company 261 due to—due to Bloomberg error budget cuts. Ladder Company 116 is now the only company in that area. Closing Engine 261 was a mistake from the get-go. The area has been short of fire protection since 2003, and in 2019 Long Island City is now the fastest growing community in the nation with thousands of new workers and residents coming to the area. This huge change in population requires upgrades to infrastructure and fire safety measures. On top of this, Amazon now plans to build one of its new campuses in Long Island City creating 25,000 jobs—25,000 jobs and a 600-seat intermediate school in the neighborhood. It is abundantly clear that Long Island City now lacks the resources to deal with fire safety issues



effectively. Reopening Engine 261 not only serves immediate needs in Long Island City, but also to expand capacity to protect Roosevelt Island. At present, without an engine company in the area, Ladder 116 lacks the equipment and personnel to fight fires adequately and relies on engine companies traveling from a greater distance. Increased population, growth and added congestion due in part to lane additions like extended bike lanes, bus lanes and traffic islands has already increased response times in the area putting lives at stake. Furthermore, the FDNY has broken its run record for five consecutive years. We are down—we are now doing more than ever before with the same number of or amount of resources. 2018 was our busiest year on record. We ran 32,000 more runs than we did the previous year, and 140,150 runs than we did in 2013. Availability is at an all-time low. With Amazon coming, we cannot wait any longer. Long Island City must be given a suit—given suitable infrastructure and safety precautions designed to match its future growth. Reopening Engine 261 should not be a major task. The facility already exists, and just to expand on that, it now has the same amount of

bathrooms and showers that it had before, and the need is highly apparent. We only require the resources to supply equipment and manpower. For the continued safety of the residents of Long Island City we urge the members of this committee, which I don't think is necessary as well as the Mayor and elected officials across the city to call for the reinstatement of Engine 261 at its former location. Bringing back 261 will ensure that Long Island City has the necessary equipment and personnel to fight fires adequately, and can respond in a timely fashion to any safety needs that arise. I would also—I would also like to add with the rapid growth and developments across the city not just Long Island City but also Hudson Yards, Harlem, Downtown Brooklyn and soon to come South Bronx. We cannot let these situations like these become the norm. As new neighborhoods and developments arise across the city we must make sure that New Yorkers' safety needs don't continue to get overlooked. We must plan responsibly. Lives are in danger. There is no—no more time to waste on this. Thank you again for your time today, and I am happy to address any questions you may have.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, thank you.

We'll probably save any questions for the end if we want to continue down the line with the well appointed George Farinacci

GEORGE FARINACCI: Hello, everybody.

Just a moment if I may. On behalf of Firefighter Steven Pollack thank you to the great people of the city and the Council sincerely for all your efforts and support. Very meaningful. Just something to take note of Firefighter Pollack passed while responding to an emergency. There was no spectacular flame coming out of a window or-or a tremendous heights. Just as an example of our day-to-day job that we sometimes take for granted, it is dangerous operating in the city of New York to an unknown event, whatever it is Fire, EMS, when you're in the streets and arriving and responding to something you have not been fully informed about, there are many, many dangers. So, thank you for that. I'm George Farinacci with the Uniformed Fire Officers Association. Our New York City population continues to grow. It's over 8.6 million people at this time. The population in New York City was barely over 8 million at the time of closing Engine Company 261 in

2003. That equates to a population increase of 5% over the last 15 years. Fire and emergency response is continuing to increase. In 2018, we responded to 619,000 fires and emergencies versus just five years before in 213 we responded to 479,000 fires and emergencies a record set that year, and has been broken each and every year following. This has been nearly a 30% increase in responses to firer and emergencies in only five years. What's the impact of this increased population in response? We have decreased unit availability. We have an increase in the distances the units have to respond when the first two units are unavailable. The increase in the time it takes to put water on a fire or mitigate your emergency. An increase in vehicle and pedestrian traffic throughout the city, the density that slows our fire trucks down. You may not be aware but the lights and sirens on our fire trucks do not have a magical power of getting people and vehicles out of the way. Responding Fire Department units often have to sit in traffic as-as we all do. The increase in Fire Department calls to fires and emergencies are far outpacing the booming population growth of New York City. The tremendous population growth of Long

2 Island City, Astoria and Roosevelt Island as well as  
3 the areas like Hudson Yards Development leaves the  
4 residents in need of more fire protection services  
5 not less. By not expanding the available resources to  
6 meet the growing needs of the people, as well as the  
7 growing population, we are failing to maintain the  
8 status quo of services in our great city. Please  
9 reopen Engine Company 261, put a firehouse in the  
10 Hudson yards another increasing area of development,  
11 and let's take care of the people in New York City  
12 and provide the care and protection services that  
13 they need.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Vincent.

15 [background comments] Sorry, or--

16 OWEN BARZILAY: Thank you. Good morning.  
17 On behalf of both the EMS locals, I would also like  
18 to extend our condolences and appreciation to the  
19 brothers and sisters on the other side of the aisle.  
20 We thank the committee for also being at the funeral  
21 this past week. My name is Owen Barzilay. I'm the  
22 President of Local 2506 for the Uniformed EMTs,  
23 Paramedics and Fire Inspectors. Over the past decade--  
24 decade Long Island City has experienced a drastic  
25 transformation sprouting up residential towers, the

life of Manhattan and becoming the fastest growing neighborhood in the country, but unacceptably its 911 response infrastructure has not gone with it.

Currently there are no preliminary dedicated EMS resources assigned to Long Island City. The closet brick and mortar facility is four miles away in Astoria and its back-up story is seven miles away in Woodside. Het nearest available unit is stationed Queens Boulevard and Greenpoint Avenue with its backup position at Roosevelt Island Bridge. This response model was created early in 2000 when Long Island City was a collection of warehouses and a few private residents—residences. In 2017, the area along Brennan Boulevard along saw a population increase of 6,700 residents. In 2018, it is estimated that the first 15,000 apartments will become available resulting in a population increase of 80,000 residents. That population increase will be coupled with the arrival of an estimated 25,000 Amazon employees. In the face of this remarkable growth the EMS Response Matrix has not been modified or enhanced. It has as usual been left in the rearview mirror. The current city population is at 8.5 million people. The FDNY EMS fields 828

ambulance tours per day, which yields to a ratio of one tour per 9,500 civilians. Therefore, the minimum at least 10 fifths would need to be added to the community to maintain the service level, which is currently at best essentially inadequate. To be clear, Amazon coming to New York will mean great things for investment and innovation for our great city. I will not—we must plan responsibly for such significant changes. We need to keep our neighborhoods safe and as well protected as the Upper East Side. We cannot keep leaving the Up Emergency Medical Service out of these infrastructure conversations when the wellbeing of Long Island City residents is being jeopardized by the city of New York Fire Department's current benign neglect, but as major development drive ahead with construction and job growth, bringing in new community resources like schools, parks and art facilities into Long Island City the Fire Department remains silent on how to address this demand for service. Across the city, EMTs and Paramedics who are currently facing a major personnel shortage are doing more now with fewer resources than ever before imagined. The FDNY MS has seen an increase in call volume every year for

decades, and the current unit availability—  
availability is at an all-time low. On a daily basis  
the response metric falls short of its target by  
nearly 60 shifts per day, which equates to 420 shifts  
per week, 1,800 shifts per month. We've seen the  
scenario play out in the newly gentrified areas of  
Williamsburg, Morrisania and Hudson Yards where  
massive rapid growth has left residents marginally  
protected as those boroughs have the worst overall  
response times. The overall response time now hovers  
around the 12-minute mark, which ruminates of the  
1970s. This infection of failing to field proper  
resources may not be allowed—must not be allowed to  
spread to Long Island City. We cannot let the  
current system of chronic managerial indifference  
become the norm. This distinct committee must ensure  
that the safety needs of our city don't continue to  
be overlooked as new neighborhoods arise. The Fire  
Department must be held responsible for planning and  
implementing the significant changes that are being  
mandated by exponential population growth and  
underfunding of the largest and busiest EMS system in  
the world. We need to keep our neighborhoods safe



and protective. Lives are at stake. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yeah. Michael.

MICHAEL GRECCO: [coughs] Ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for letting us speak. Amazon coming in is a good thing for EMS. It's a good thing because it gives us a chance to talk to you about the insufficient response times that EMS is currently under. I sat there and I listened to the department come in and basically dodge most of your questions either because (a) the best case scenario is they just didn't have it or (b) because of sheer incompetence. They talk about the TRG, the Tactical Response Group. Those two stations respond when call volume becomes too high in one area, jobs are holding 60, 50 jobs at a time and then they get sent. It's already too late. So, the fact that they have 15 units running out driving from Queens to Brooklyn to Manhattan to the Bronx and I'll be honest with you, they very rarely are in Queens. Bronx everyday is hold 60 to 70 jobs. So, they are constantly re-deployed to the Bronx. This is a citywide problem not just an Astoria problem. When we speak about opening up another firehouse, we are in agreement.

As an EMS Unit I'm not going to sit here and say we don't need another firehouse. Astoria needs it, the Fire Department needs it, the UFA needs it. I'm here talking about what EMS needs as well. There is over 200 firehouses in New York City. We have only 30 EMS stations. That's 3-0. So when my president talks about how it's just 7 miles between stations, that response matrix that was made sometime in the early 80s or 90s is just not significant. I speak to the Councilman who asked that \$4 million is a drop in the bucket. EMS needs 50 drops in the bucket. We need \$200 million. If you really want to protect Astoria, if you really want to protect the city, that's the sort of funding we need, and it's not just facilities, it's not just members, but it's pay as well. We have a service that we can't keep people because they're going to Fire they're going to Sanitation, they're going everywhere else but being in EMS. That is a critical point to staffing and properly representing the citizens in New York. We talk about when it becomes necessary to add. It's— it's not becoming necessary. It's there. We are waiting. We are waiting for the resources. We're waiting for the funding. We're waiting for this

Administration to turn around and say, you know, what the Emergency Services, EMS needs help. We are a system in crisis. If it's left up to this Administration right now, people will die, and they are dying because in our business seconds count, and we are minutes away. A 7-minute response time is terrible for a cardiac arrest. It's terrible. We talk about fires, we talk about getting water on the fire and four minutes is an NFPA standard. There is no standard when it comes to EMS. We should be looking to get the same exact response times to a cardiac arrest that we are getting to fires. We applaud our Fire Department. We applaud firefighters, because they sit there and they work and they know their job and they do it well and they're supported relatively well. They can always be supported better, but we are supported is non-existent. Right now our overtime rate is through the roof simply because we do not have the staffing. The Acting Chief sat up here and said right now they're over par for their firefighters. We are drastically underpart by hundreds and hundreds of members, paramedics and EMTs. So there is no cap on our overtime. Our answer is to sit there and work 16 hours and then if

you don't want to work 16 hours, chances are you're getting charges, which is a day AO or a day pay for refusing that mandation. So, now you want to take that same matrix-matrix and put it into Astoria and just expect it to magically happen. I don't know how they expect to take care of 2,500 people-25,000 people just employees when buildings are going up. They sat here and they said they have no metrics for it. They need more data. 25,000 people are coming into Astoria. Can we adequately staff and protect those 25,000 people? The answer is no. They won't tell you it but I will. The answer is no. Right now, with the seven stations that they're talking about in Queens alone, we only have seven. So, they talk about 49 as, oh, well, you know, we're looking to expand 49. They're not telling you they're getting kicked out that they don't want them there. The people who own the property say we need them out of there. So, they're going to sit here and tell you that oh, well, you know, we want to add more-more space. We want-they're doing it because they have to. We 100 people at a station minimum. We talk about bathrooms. God forbid you sat here and told the UFA President that the bathroom situation will be

solved by you going to the bathroom in your closest bodega. Sit on a corner. Don't come back to the station to use the bathroom. Make sure you use the dirty hospital bathroom. Make sure you use the bodega. Go beg the 7/11 guy to use the bathroom. That is the conditions that we are facing everyday. We are set on a corner and our response time is to go do the job, and we do more with less. We get sent from Astoria. Those units that they talk about that cover Astoria aright now are getting sent to Brooklyn because the closest available unit is 20 minutes away. We go out of our area. We don't know what battalion is. So, I thank you guys for having this hearing. I know it was directed towards the Astoria, but there is a grant-EMS is in crisis. So, the Astoria just happened to shine a light, and right now the cock roaches are running and we need your help to put the traps down. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and just to address this was about Engine 261, but that's really only because the-the previous Administration made the bizarre decision to-to close a firehouse at the same time they rezoned to up the density so I mean I that-that, you know, thankfully for all of us

in the room that just highlighted the—the misguided approach at time of the previous Administration but finally Vincent please.

VINCENT VARIALE: Thank you. I didn't prepare a written speech. But I just wanted to make some points. I think that Vice President Mike Rucker where he touched on. First, I want to say—I want to acknowledge the youth that passed away Firefighter Pollack. My condolences to his family and to the fire side, and thank you to the Chairman and the members of the Committee that showed up for the funeral. What my colleagues here have stated is—is absolutely correct. I understand this is a hearing for—to reopen Engine 261, which should never have been shut down from day one. That was a mistake. Fire protection is definitely needed, more firehouses definitely needed. New York City—I'm going to address the traffic problems that exist also because EMS is a very vertical city. It takes time to go up these high-rise buildings. So, you need these buildings. Now, that we're adding additional population, it's even more of a need, but what always seems to be getting forgotten by the city is EMS. The population grows and the EMS stations they—they

try to add additional units in the stations, pack them up like sardines, and we're bursting at the seams, but they never really add enough units to these neighborhoods. As Vice President Mike Grecco said, Station 49 they're being thrown out of there. The answer you heard was they're going to get bigger stations to add more units. Then that's not going to happen. The units they're relying on that are going to address the situation is the TRG that's in Queens-Queens. They call it Technical Response Group, and that group is already being used to answer the calls that are--are being held in Bronx, Brooklyn and everywhere else in the city. We--the bottom line is we don't have enough ambulance stations. When we were taken over by the Fire Department, they said that we were going to get 70 stations. Well, it's 22 years later and we're still at 30. We don't have enough stations and we certainly don't have enough personnel. In the last 12 months we've lost 900 EMTs and Paramedics to the Fire side, Fire promotion. On a regular basis we--we are down 40 to 50 ambulances daily that are going there simply because we don't have the staffing. That's the only reason why they're not being staffed, and that's just to cover

the basic minimum staffing. We don't have the personnel that's needed on top of that in case of, like, you know, in case if somebody gets sick. We deal with sick people. That does happen. So people working are going to get sick. Vacations, we don't even think about that. That's not even thought of. Two areas I want to bring attention to: Staten Island for example in Councilman Joe Borelli—Chairman, you are, you're from that area. There's only two stations on all of Staten Island. I'm glad they got a new squad company there. I know they needed it. Staten Island has two stations in all of Staten Island, 27 square miles, and there's only two stations. Two EMS Officers. You get one fire in Staten Island, the next you just come over to Brooklyn for EMS because we can't handle it. That means you've got to wait 30 to 40 minutes. If you're in cardiac arrest, you're dead. There are people dying every single day right now and it seems like nobody cares to do anything about it. The resources just aren't being put there to help it. Brooklyn South there's one station that covers Dika Heights, Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and—and—I just lost my train of thought.



MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Sunset Park.

VINCENT VARIALE: Sunset Park. Thank you.

[laughs] At Sunset Park one station and it's a small one. It's refurbished firehouse. It could barely fit one ambulance inside the garage. That's one station for all of those neighborhoods. That's what we're talking here. We are in crisis mode in EMS. There's no overtime cap, and I'm sure some people love it because they're making good money. They're making a decent salary I should say because the salary—we earn \$40,000 less than other emergency services. So, I'm sure when the overtime cap is—is now gone, a lot of people are making a decent salary out of it, but that's not a way—but that's not the right way to run a uniformed emergency service. This is New York City. We're supposed to be the capital of the world, and this is how we're running an emergency service. Those are just several points I wanted to make. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. I just have a question for Owen. In your testimony, you said—you're talking about the city population of 8.5 million. There's 828 ambulance tours per day, which yields a ratio of one tour per 9,500 people. Is

that--is that just a standard that we have or is that a standard that the city is trying to maintain?

OWEN BARZILAY: [off mic] That was just us. There is no-- [off mic] Well, I'm sorry. There is no official standard. That's just what it average out to.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The second question for anyone that wants to ask--answer it. Are there-- and let you why I'm concerned. Are there any voluntary ambulances that now service the Long Island City community?

OWEN BARZILAY: There--that's the one unit they--they mentioned that they added. It's in Astoria. It's not in Long Island City.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, if-if history is our guide, it's only a matter of time before that hospital pulls that service and then we're just short-staffed again.

OWEN BARZILAY: So--so--so--so, if you look at my testimony, in the back I attached a few [background comments]--a few rundowns so you can see where all the units are actually sitting. There's not one unit that covers that entire neighborhood.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And are all five of you in agreement that—that population and density are what—are the primary factors in the number of calls and the response time?

VINCENT VARIALE: Yeah, I agree with that.

OWEN BARZILAY: I mean that neighborhood is so bad also that sometimes you have units from Brooklyn, from Greenpoint, Brooklyn covering Long Island City, but and—and in one of the pages that you looked there's a copy of the station rundown for a Paramedic unit. It's not even staffed. There's not people to cover. So, even our backup resources are now depleted.

VINCENT VARIALE: I just want to about the voluntary units. Long Island City doesn't have a hospital. Alright, so when a voluntary unit is going to come in and service an area, they try to bump out the FDNY units to cover where their hospital is because it's a cash game for them. If they are not bringing patients close to their hospital, they're not going to just staff an area that's out of their own hospital. So, whenever you start adding money, which money is a problem. I mean if you gave me a magic wand, I would make FDNY not bill for services.

This way money taken out of the equation from where we respond, who we respond to, we don't charge them per fire, we don't charge them per 911 call to get the police, but cash gets involved when it comes to EMS which really does hurt response matrix and which areas get ambulances, and if there was a study done to see who had the better insurance and which areas had the better population, I'm sure there would be a problem to see their response time versus underserved areas and the socio-economic problems there.

VINCENT VARIALE: Just to add to that, I mean you kind of hinted towards it already, we can't rely on the private to the voluntary hospital's ambulance services because when the profit is not there, they're gone, and we've seen it time and time again just recently with Trans Care, 84 units gone overnight because they couldn't make the money or they were sold to a hedge fund or whatever it was and they were gone, and once again EMS has to pick up the slack. We had to pay unbelievable amounts of overtime to cover that area, and the people of the city ultimately is what—who suffers. It's not just the members of EMS. It's not about just the members of EMS. It's the service we're trying to provide for

the people of the city, and it-it hurts everyone.

So, we can't rely on the voluntaries of the privates in that area.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Gentlemen, next month there will be a hearing on EMS safety. If you wouldn't mind, I'm going to ask you for some statistics on the insurance component that if you want to just bring some-some fun facts, and I'll—we'll save it for the next week. But if you want to bring some fun facts on it even in the sense of how we could get a better understanding of why some decisions might be made, what to look out for and then we could kind of look at it from our end if that's okay.

MIKE GRECCO: A lot of it will be anecdotal because obviously the Fire Department in the city is not going to let us access some of the records due to HIPAA violations and all that. So, we all know the history of FOIL request with the city. It takes them a little while to get any information you ask for, but we can definitely bring some, you know, information at least tings to look for.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Well, I have two years, 300 and say 50 days left there. So, we'll—we'll try.

OWEN BARZILAY: I just also want to add earlier last year you had—you held a hearing about the budget the FDNY budget and we testified, but the department did not put in their request for additional funding for EMS resources.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Thank you gentlemen, and finally I think we have Josephina. There she is. [background noise/pause] Josephina, please.

JOSEFINA SANFELIU: Hi. My name is Josefina Sanfeliu. I founded Latinos Against FDNY Cuts, and I'd like to also add my condolences for Firefighter Faizal Coto who was killed apparently in a road rage incident. He was—it was line of duty. Now, my—I have comments related to the closings of 2003. The FDNY at one time commissioned a study from Columbia University. It found that each engine company annually save \$15 million worth of property. Acting Chie Sudnik mentioned I thin the cost of opening a fire company is \$4 million. So, it makes no sense to me the closing of any fire company on a

budget basis. Now 261 was closed in 2003. Also Bloomberg closed Engine 204, 278 which became the EMS Station which was mentioned in Sunset Park. They also closed Engine 209, which is—which is a shared house with a ladder company, and in Williamsburg Engine 212 and Foam Unit 91 and Engine 36 in Harlem. I mention them because it was not commented today that Engine companies provide EMS Services including defibrillators. So you cannot get sufficient ambulance services when I'm having a heart attack in the subway some place. You can—might be able to have an engine supplant that, and keep me alive until the ambulance service shows up. Now, rezoning is apparently an issue of population compared to fire coverage—Fire Department coverage or emergency coverage, and I would ask to push for more data on rezoning and increase population in New York City as you were able to get a squad company in Staten Island proving—proven by need of higher population in Staten Island or now in Long Island City. Fourth Avenue is next to my house, and this—it was rezoned for higher structures. So, I encourage the study of higher population compared to fire response, and in—for the—there's apparently slower response time at the same

that New York City is—is pushing for pedestrian safety and having traffic slow down designs, and also the Citi Bank parking is narrowing the lanes, and could be related to slower Fire Department response time and for the new response metrics on New to Me and I don't know if those were published, and they should have been published that there's different measurement of how long somebody gets to a burning house with people inside. The other question is that a hollow building, the warehouse is going to be comparatively like this, a hollow building whether it has sprinklers or sufficiently or not, it's full of flammables, and the flammables are going to be toxic released into the neighborhood. I've seen incidents like that of commercial places making it unbreathable for people in the area, poisoning people from the toxins, which are going to be different than a small house or a private apartment that's sealed off from the quantity in a warehouse. That's my comments for the day. Thank you very much, and I encourage the—I encourage the Chair and the Committee in the direction of getting answers that are not vague, and to continue pushing for the safety of the citizens of—and residents of New York. I thank you very much.



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2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Thank  
3 you for testifying as always and yes, of course, we  
4 will. Anyone else interested in testifying? No.  
5 We're getting kicked out of the room anyway so thank  
6 you very much. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date January 29, 2019