

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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April 15, 2019
Start: 10:14 a.m.
Recess: 1:28 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Diana Ayala
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Vanessa L. Gibson
Mark Gjonaj
Carlos Menchaca
Donovan J. Richards
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Ritchie J. Torres
Mark Treyger
James V. Van Bramer

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

Karen Blondell, Professional Organizer, NYCHA
Resident

Crystal Glover, Washington Houses, East Harlem

Lalise Lozano, Treasurer, Citywide Council of
Presidents, Resident and Chair of Bronx North Tenant
Association, President of Parkside Resident Council

Robert Hall, Resident of Gun Hill Houses, North Bronx

Lisa Kenna, Tenant Association President, Vandyke
Houses

Darold Burgess, Resident Leader, Ingersoll Houses,
Brooklyn

Lorraine Stevens, Financial Secretary, Boulevard
Houses

Clara Woods, Tenant Association President, Boulevard
Houses,

Diana Blackwell, President, Fred Samuel City
Development

Audrey Clemmons, President, PS-139, Senior Building,
Central Harlem.

Isa Torres, Resident Association President, Alfred E.
Smith Houses

Ronald Topping

Margaret Mastic, Ex-treasurer for Oceanside Houses

Carmen Quinones

Princella Jamison, Resident Leader, Millbrook Houses

Cripian Noel, TA President, Langston Hughes
Development

Sideya Sherman, Executive Vice President for
Community Engagement and Partnerships, NYCHA

David Pristin, Executive Vice President for External
Affairs, NYCHA

2 [sound check] [pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [gavel] The
4 hearing is coming to order. Good morning and thank
5 you everyone for coming to today's hearing. I am
6 Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel and I Chair the
7 Committee on Public Housing, and I am joined right
8 now by committee member, Council Member Ruben Diaz,
9 Sr. The subject of today's hearing is Tenant
10 Participation Activity Funds also known as TPA funds.
11 The term TPA Funds describes an allocation of money
12 provided by the United States Department of Housing
13 and Urban Development, known as HUD to public housing
14 authorities such as NYCHA, which in turn distribute
15 the funds to resident councils. Resident councils or
16 what we refer to as resident associations may use
17 these funds to support activities that improve
18 resident satisfaction and quality of life, foster
19 self-help initiatives, and enable residents to create
20 a positive living environment for families living in
21 public housing. The rules that govern this funding
22 allocation is dictated in clear words within code for
23 Federal Regulations 24 CFR, 964.150 along with Notice
24 2013-21 that was issued in August—on August 23, 2013.
25 The notice explains the role of the Public Housing

2 Authority, the role of the resident council,
3 allowable activities, along with details about other
4 administrative information. TPA funds are a valuable
5 resource for residents, and in my previous role as a
6 member of NYCHA's Department of Community Engagement
7 and Partnerships, I worked to figure out ways to make
8 these funds more accessible. I played a role in
9 drafting the guidebook utilized today that explains
10 how TPA funds are administered so that residents can
11 connect to much needed services. Still, now as
12 member of the New York City Council I continue to
13 hear concerns from residents that NYCHA is falling
14 short in its administrative responsibilities, and
15 being supportive of proposals, supportive of
16 projects, and supportive of the overall association
17 body. According to federal regulations, housing
18 authorities such as NYCHA must upon request guide
19 residents in establishing and maintain resident
20 associations. NYCHA must offer training to resident
21 associations, and engage residents about its TPA
22 policies. Importantly, NYCHA must collaborate with
23 resident associations on the distribution of funds.
24 In recent years, NYCHA has undergone reforms to
25 improve the administering of the TPA funds, and we

2 know that there was a hearing on TPA funds in 2017.
3 So today's hearing gives us the opportunity to
4 reflect on what has worked, what has not, and what
5 residents should expect from NYCHA moving forward. I
6 look forward to hearing my NYCHA residents this
7 morning, and advocates about strengthening their
8 partnership and optimizing the TPA process. As NYCHA
9 move into the lands of unknown, residents should
10 have—should be able to have control over how they can
11 improve their lives, the lives of their neighbors,
12 and the overall experience in their developments.
13 So, with that being said, we have 12 residents who
14 are signed this morning to testify who came in early
15 to be heard. We will break into three separate
16 panels of resident panels before we hear from NYCHA,
17 and because we have so many residents who would like
18 to speak, we will have to put you on a timer, and so,
19 there will be a 3-minute timer per speaker, and
20 hopefully, this will help guide the discussion after
21 with NYCHA based on what the residents actually said
22 before. And we have been joined by Committee Member,
23 Council Member Diana Ayala, and so now we will first
24 see a short video about the TPA program, and the
25 Commercial Cloud Program with NYCHA. We will first

2 watch the video, and then we will immediately go into
3 the resident panels. So, first we will hear from--
4 [background comments/pause] Well, one sec. Before we
5 hit play on the video, I just want to call the first
6 panel just to be seated, and then we'll go into the
7 video. So, the first panel will be Karen Blondell,
8 Crystal Glover, Ms. Lozano, and Robert Hall. [pause]
9 And I do apologize again to the residents. We really
10 do have to adhere to the timeframe, and so if you are
11 going over a little bit, I am going to have to remind
12 you. Three minutes. [background comments/pause] And
13 I see that some have prepared remarks and some are
14 pretty lengthy, and so again, a reminder about the
15 timeframe. Okay. [pause] Who is ready to press
16 play for the video? [pause]

17 VIDEO PLAYING: [Musical introduction]

18 FEMALE SPEAKER #1: Well, I think all TPA
19 presidents should get a card because always you have
20 to decide where the proposals went to, who signed it
21 for that, but now with this, you just have to put it
22 in the proposal to the TPA Unit, and then it goes
23 through there, but you're able to track it, and the
24 leases.

2 FEMALE SPEAKER #2: The purpose of Tenant
3 Participation Activity Funds is to promote resident
4 involvement and participation through the resident
5 association of their development. In 2017, we
6 introduced the Resident Association Commercial Card.

7 FEMALE SPEAKER #3: We use our TPA funds
8 for holding meetings, events that we might have.
9 This process for us is much quicker, right? Because
10 we do a budget, and because I used the card and
11 didn't have to go through the procurement process
12 that I didn't have to pay more. In signing up for
13 the card, we can come to you at your development and
14 offer training there onsite, or you can come to
15 NYCHA's offices. [exit music] [pause] [bell]

16 KAREN BLONDELL Good morning. I know we
17 have three minutes, but I'm speaking to everybody in
18 this room. I'm a professional organizer so I was told
19 this morning when I ran in to make copies at my job
20 that I was here representing myself. That's what
21 non-profits do. They take money out of the public
22 housing community. They host all kind of trainings,
23 but when it's not done by the tenants for the
24 tenants, it doesn't work because then I have to give
25 up my valuable time taking care of their business

2 first before we could to my business, and by that
3 time the tenant is tired. They're tired of being
4 trained. They're tired of running around to 99,000
5 meetings, and getting nothing in return. So, that's
6 how I'm going to start this off. Secondly, I want to
7 say to everybody in this room who's been a TA
8 president more than two years or two terms, you
9 should be ashamed of yourselves. You should be
10 nurturing young people in your community to take your
11 roles over and to advance our communities further,
12 but that's not happening because you all don't know
13 how to relinquish control. Thirdly, the stuff you
14 just showed on there, I've been going to Resident
15 Council since 1996. I even ran three times against a
16 corrupt election process, but guess what? That's not
17 what the Tenant Manual tells the tenant leaders to be
18 doing in their communities. Number one, it say you
19 have to follow the bylaws. I've been complaining
20 that the bylaws are antiquated, old. They've been set
21 up since 1995 in my community with no one looking at
22 them or revising them since 1995. That's a violation
23 of HUD 964 Rule, which says you have to look at those
24 bylaws every three years. I have a package here.
25 I'm not going to try to read it, Alicka, because it

2 is lengthy, but know that the one that I sent to HUD
3 to Lynn Patton is three times as thick because I'm
4 tired of playing games here. Tenant Association is
5 supposed to be educating the tenants on things like
6 this: Public housing. How many people do we have?
7 How do we build power? I've been going to tenant
8 association for 30 years, and it don't happen. So, I
9 went and started working for non-profit so I can hold
10 those type of workshops. When we have read and it's
11 still going on in our community, and you only come
12 and tell us when you get to our development, that's
13 not due process. So, we went and we created graphs
14 to show where the public housing in our community
15 fits in with all of the affordable housing, which
16 isn't affordable to most New Yorkers. They fit at
17 the 30% range, which means they will be paying about
18 \$600 to \$700 a month in rent. That use to be good
19 rent in New York a few years ago. Unfortunately, in
20 public housing people like me are paying over \$1,000
21 and then I don't have money for food. I don't have
22 money for cloths. I don't have money for my
23 grandchildren. This is sad because I pay a good dime
24 for public housing and in taxes. [bell] So, I'm not
25 gong to sit here and take up all your time, but

2 public housing needs to run using the bylaws and the
3 rent-and the TPA Guidebook, and all of the activity
4 that they're doing can be hot dogs and hamburgers and
5 got nothing to do with what the regulations in HUD
6 964 says they're supposed to be doing. They're
7 supposed to be hosting the workshops that I got to
8 give my life to a non-profit to host.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

10 CRYSTAL BLONDELL: You're welcome.

11 [applause]

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: [off mic] No clapping.
13 Don't do that, don't do that. (sic)

14 CRYSTAL GLOVER: Good day, City Hall
15 Council. I was going to give a special hello to Ms.
16 Catherine Garcia. I assumed she was going to be
17 here, but she's not here. My name is Crystal Glover,
18 and I'm a resident of Washington Houses, East Harlem.
19 I'm representing myself because in Manhattan South
20 there is no representation. CCOP doesn't even smell
21 us more or less look at us. The CCOP meaning Council
22 of Presidents, okay, but Ms. Bee I will give you a
23 special shout-out. I think here name is Linda Bee.
24 She testified on March 3 at this hearing. She told
25 everything that needs to be told. Getting back to

2 me. I found out about Tenant Participation Activity
3 Funds back in November 2011. I was just elected for
4 president of Washington Houses. That which was called
5 Community Operations then is now called Resident
6 Engagement. Resident Engagement didn't share TPA fund
7 information with me. I found out about it while in a
8 conversation with a consultant from the Share for
9 Life Program in 2012. From that point forward, my
10 Board and I started going to leadership conferences
11 meeting with organizations like the National Low-
12 Income Housing Coalition and the National Alliance
13 for Resident Services and Affordable and Assisted
14 Housing just to name a few. We flew to different
15 states meeting many resident association leaders. In
16 2018 as part of Next Generation NYCHA in partnership
17 with the Fund for Public Housing in CUNY, our
18 Resident Leadership Academy was launched. I was told
19 \$145,000 was spent that the housing- Public Housing
20 Committee spent on this program. When NYCHA's
21 Resident Engagement asked me to become a student, I
22 declined. I said to myself, did any of them consult
23 the residents before creating this academy to see if
24 it was even needed? Considering the hundreds of
25 thousands possibly millions of dollars-of TPA fund

2 spent on leadership conferences flying all over to
3 different states, why didn't they get the residents'
4 opinion first? Surely that money could have been
5 spent on cameras—cameras for at least one
6 development, the \$145,000 I'm talking about. Surely
7 you'd like to know what my point is bringing all that
8 up is. The point is residents are no better off now
9 than we were back then. You talk about federal
10 monitors. Was anybody monitoring the [bell] the
11 progress of TPA funds to ensure the residents will
12 become self-sufficient or becoming the leaders that
13 they are intended to be? The Federal Monitor and
14 Lynn Patton need to visit every NYCHA development
15 that claims to have a resident association and
16 conduct an open meeting not one just from resident
17 associations and their boards. Many tenant leaders
18 for many years have withheld information from their
19 residents, and residents have told me that when they
20 ask questions at monthly meetings, police have been
21 called on them. Membership is supposed to have
22 privileges according to the Bylaws. I pay my dues.
23 I want to be included in the planning of activities
24 at my development. Many RA leaders don't even abide
25 by the rules of their bylaws and because residents

2 showed an enthusiasm or concern, some boards stay on
3 for many years. Unless HUD wants to continue
4 throwing good money away, I suggest they do what I
5 asked. They could have these open meetings borough
6 by borough. The unfortunate thing is that there is a
7 changing of the guards meaning the chairperson every
8 five minutes and so forth. In the words of Fellaini,
9 the attorney, NYCHA is kicking residents butts, and
10 she a 100% right. To conclude, to all the residents
11 have tried—that have tried to make developments where
12 they live a safer and better place to live for all
13 the heartache, misunderstandings, looking the other
14 way, lies, sleepless nights, suffering and diseases
15 brought on by stress and even death, I Crystal Glover
16 salute you.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,
18 Crystal. Thank you.

19 LALISE LOZANO: Good morning. Good
20 morning. My name is Lalise Lozano. I come before
21 you today in three capacities, as Treasurer of the
22 Citywide Council of Presidents, as the Resident and
23 Chair of Bronx North Association, a resident council,
24 and finally as President of the Parkside Resident
25 Council. Given the amount of time available to me, I

2 will summarize the points that go to the heart of
3 opposition. I applaud the rumor NYC TPA funds will
4 be forensically audited, but it must be aid that any
5 audit must go back to the beginning of TPA
6 distribution and must include both the 60 given to
7 the resident association and the 40 held back by
8 NYCHA. The failure of NYCHA to negotiate an MOU with
9 CCOP rests on the shoulders of resident engagement
10 and the Community Engagement Division that its
11 failure is in the direct violation of 964 Regulation.
12 NYCHA has attempted to subvert the good faith
13 negotiation process with CCOP by imposing MOUs on
14 individual resident associations under the implied
15 threat that failure to sign what was present would
16 result in the denied access to TPA funds. None of
17 these MOUs were negotiated. They were imposed on us.
18 NYCHA reversed the process in place for decades, and
19 gave a meaningful role to CCOP and DCOP in the
20 approval of the TPA requests determined that NYCHA
21 should serve as only the approval authority for TPA
22 requests. This was done to diminish the roles of
23 CCOP and DCOP, and done to impose the arbitrarily-
24 arbitrary will of NYCHA on the legit desires of
25 resident associations. NYCHA further subverted the

2 role of CCOP and DCOP and decided that resident
3 associations could opt out of contributing to the
4 budget of their district in order to deprive the
5 district of physical-fiscal capacity to engage in
6 districtwide training, which we used to provide
7 councilwoman that we can no longer provide because
8 we—we really are starving because of resident
9 engagements because they are dysfunctional. NYCHA in
10 addition to failing to negotiate in good faith
11 adopted TPA Guidelines and treats them not as
12 guidelines, but as mandatory regulations binding on
13 associations while avoiding both the regularity and
14 the procurement process. NYCHA violates 964 and New
15 York law by taking the position that they have the
16 power to determine the content of organization's—
17 their bylaws. NYCHA takes the position that if
18 Bylaws are not certified by NYCHA then they cannot be
19 used, and the TPA money can, therefore, be withheld.
20 The word 'certified' does not exist in 964
21 Regulations. 960—NYCHA violates 964 arbitrarily
22 regulating the ULURP (sic) process of the not-for-
23 profit resident association, and refusing the
24 certified election is not conducted in the manner
25 dictated by NYCHA, and then withholding TPA funds for

2 lack of certification. Again, I repeat the word
3 'certify' does not exist in 964 Regulations. NYCHA
4 violates HUD procurement policy by arbitrarily
5 denying and blackballing certain vendors who provide
6 training aimed at empowering resident leadership, and
7 NYCHA violates HUD procurement policies by
8 arbitrarily denying certain types of programs
9 authorized by 964 and chosen by association leaders
10 on arbitrarily and suspicious grounds. More
11 importantly, NYCHA has violated HUD and NYCHA's
12 procurement regulations by artificially imposing a
13 \$5,000 micro purchase requirement on resident
14 associations thereby requiring all bids in excess of
15 \$5,000 to have three bids while the threshold for New
16 York City is \$20,000 and the federal threshold is
17 even higher. With all that being said, I have been
18 doing this for over 30 years and I just—I just have
19 to honestly say that, you know, all of us resident
20 leaders we put our heart and soul. We don't get paid
21 to do what we do. We do it because we take pride in
22 where we live, and we do it because someone has to.
23 We—we have to do something to effect change and
24 improve our quality of life, but it's just very
25 disheartening that NYCHA has just literally have—have

2 bullied us to the point that we—we can't—we can't
3 produce anything or we can't provide anything to our
4 resident association nor our community.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

6 ROBERT HALL: Good morning—good morning
7 Chair Samuels. I—I come before you—my name is Robert
8 Hall. I'm from Gun Hill Houses in the North Bronx. I
9 come before in my 17th year a TA president. Okay. I
10 have before me testimony. I was told by the present—
11 the present resident engagement crew that the 964 s
12 and the TPA funds were distributed from 2006 up until
13 the present. I've just provided information that I
14 have before you. Alright, and you can email me. I
15 have information that I was given from Jerry Lamb who
16 taught and trained me with regards to TPA. I have
17 gone to meetings since 2002, and I was given pieces
18 of paper, and I have it. You can look at in your
19 testimony. These are the amounts that were due to
20 the individual housing developments in Bronx North,
21 and for some reason, the present people who run
22 resident engagement have no inkling of this money
23 that exists since 2002. They can tell you about 2006
24 on. I was appalled when I was told that what I was
25 talking about was embarrassing. Alright. They need

2 to understand they're violating the 964 regs because
3 NYCHA as well as CCOP are supposed to get together
4 and come with an admirable plan of action with
5 regards to these TPA funds. Since 2012, all that has
6 happened on the campus of New York City Housing
7 Authority is NYCHA dictating and controlling these
8 funds when, in fact, they are only the custodian of
9 these funds. This is wrong. It's inhumane, and
10 everyone has problems with the philosophy that's been
11 presently created by NYCHA, alright. In Bronx North,
12 what we did is we educated ourselves on the process,
13 and we took some of our experienced people and we put
14 them in charge of all the procurement aspects. Then
15 we sent the—all of the proposals out. For some
16 reason, NYCHA finds something wrong with every
17 proposal and/or the consultants that we want to
18 utilize. They are monopolizing our way of life as
19 far as freedom of using our TPA funds, and something
20 has to be done immediately if not sooner. I thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you, and
23 thank you so much for your testimony. Now, we'll
24 switch out to the—Do you have a question at all? No.
25 Okay. So, now we'll switch to our second panel.

2 Thank you, and we've just been joined by our newest
3 member of the Committee who returned to the Committee
4 Council Member Vanessa Gibson. The next panel with be
5 Lisa Kenner, Darold Burgess, Lorraine Stevens, and
6 Clara Woods. [background comments/pause] And we're
7 also being joined by member--Council Member Carlos
8 Menchaca, [background comments] and you had server
9 people ask about you first things morning. So, then
10 you are here. [background comments/laughter/pause]
11 And just a reminder, we are on a clock. We have a
12 significant number of residents who would like to
13 testify this morning. [background comment] You can
14 begin.

15 LISA KENNA: Good morning. My name is
16 Lisa Kenna, and I am the TA President of Vandyke
17 Houses. Like the young man said, he's been the
18 president for 17 years. I've been the president for
19 17 years, and I've been training people, but nobody
20 want to step up and do the job. I want to sit down.
21 At the end of this month I'll be 60 years old. I
22 started this journey when I was like 24, and believe
23 me, you want to sit down, but you can't sit down
24 because if you don't have nobody to fight for where
25 you live at, everything falls apart. Now, I've seen

2 that little commercial they made because I like the
3 commercial card. You know, you don't have to run
4 around with these—these receipts. You download the
5 receipts. I had to learn. I'm still learning, but
6 it's -but the things about it what I like is that the
7 citywide don't have control over the TPA funds. They
8 had control over the TPA funds back in 2003, and the
9 administration that was in—in there is not here. At
10 that time it Hugh Smith. I got to keep it real. I
11 went to Hugh Smith. I said you spent. How come we
12 can't spend our money? Oh, you got to go through
13 your citywide chair. At that time, the citywide
14 chair was you know who? I don't want to mention his
15 name because I don't want nobody suing me, but
16 everybody know. You have to run down the person to
17 get the proposal signed. So, why should I have to go
18 to somebody else to donate to my development that
19 don't know what my people need to go sign a proposal?
20 It didn't make no sense. You ask for the budget, the
21 breakdown, you can't even get a breakdown. The last
22 time when it first started back in 2003, I think then
23 I had \$238,000. Then when we asked for the Budget,
24 you're supposed to have a breakdown of the budget
25 from the district. We never got it. I have a letter

2 that I had written to our District Chair, which he
3 was the citywide Chair, where is the budget at? I
4 think this is better for each control we've done out
5 where they live at. This way you know and you have
6 the accountability what's going on. You know, like I
7 said, I have to call this like I see because Hugh
8 Spence at the time, I went all the way down there to
9 ask, and he said, Oh, you got to go see your chair.
10 Why I got to go see my chair and I'm out here
11 fighting to make sure my residents have a decent,
12 clean and safe place? And we don't paid. I'm here
13 fighting a fight for \$100 and you be working—I do it
14 seven days a week. Sometimes I can't get up and go
15 to church. I told my pastor. I said, Reverend
16 Johnson, I'm on the highways and byways because Jesus
17 wasn't in church all the time neither. He was on the
18 highways and byways, and that's how I got away with
19 it yesterday [bell] because I was preparing for this.
20 So, I just say that this part that I think everybody
21 is accountable, and you see and you could see it,
22 that it shouldn't go back to citywide. You know, we
23 should have a say because we don't give no money to
24 the district because he don't provide no breakdown.

2 How can I keep giving you money to the district and
3 you don't provide a breakdown. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

5 [pause]

6 DAROLD BURGESS: [cough] Good morning.

7 My name is Darold Burgess, and I'm the Resident
8 Leader for the Ingersoll Houses in Brooklyn. I also
9 agree with Ms. Kenna when it comes to TPA activity,
10 and the Commercial Card has been a big help to us at
11 Ingersoll. We're a 501(c)(3) organization, and
12 proposed activity and expenditure must meet TPA
13 eligibility and proposed submission must have
14 required supporting documents to avoid approval and
15 process delays. The commercial credit card was
16 introduced to Ingersoll, and it has become easy to
17 use, and it lets us integrate the commercial card
18 data into our—and accounting system. The Smart Data
19 provides a workflow based on extensive Management
20 Solution, which enables us to better administer
21 expenses. It is an intelligent and management tool
22 for optimizing business spending with—spending with
23 user IDs, passwords and security control questions.
24 It helps in accessing our organizational—
25 organizational information. Upon submittal of TPA

2 proposals, we receive a response within 10 business
3 days. We follow our TPA Guide Book, fund an
4 agreement template and annual spending plan. The
5 funds may be used at the citywide district or local
6 levels in collaboration with residents and NYCHA.
7 Once a purchase is made, we scan the receipts into
8 the Smart Data where they are uploaded, reviewed and
9 saved. Through this process resident associations
10 have access to utilizing the funds for the benefit of
11 NYCHA residents and community. Our Resident
12 Engagement Coordinators are always available for me
13 for assistance, and again, I have big development,
14 and we do not contribute to the district level
15 because that funding is for our development, and
16 we're at a state in our development where we have to
17 go out and do everything: Encouraging our youth.
18 Getting our youth involved is a hard task. In fact,
19 they're faced with many peer pressures, and they're
20 faced with a lot of gang activity. So, we come up
21 with different resources using our Map Engagement
22 Coordinator to better fit our communities. Thank you.

23 LORRAINE STEVENS: Good morning. My name
24 is Lorraine Stevens. I'm from Boulevard Houses. I'm
25 the Financial Secretary and as far as the TPA

2 Commercial Card, we at Boulevard we really like the
3 card because it benefits. We're able to do whatever
4 we need to do as far as concerning the residents.
5 It's very helpful and it's convenient, and like we-
6 one we do our purchases we upload it, and we are good
7 to go, and if it's anything that needs to be taken
8 care of, we take care of it. Our Resident
9 Coordinator she's always available to help us in any
10 shape, form or fashion, and we-our tenants it helps
11 us to help our tenants more efficiently to provide
12 programs and activities for our youth and our
13 seniors, and we would like to say on record that we
14 support the CPA program-the card because it's-it's
15 easier than going through any other channels. This
16 way we put our proposals-proposals in, and once it's
17 approved, we are good to go. We have had no problems
18 with it, and like I said, once we do what we do, our
19 residents are happy, we're happy, and it keeps ups
20 focused, and we know exactly how much money we have
21 to work with. And I just want to say again that we
22 really support this program, and we hope that it
23 stays in place. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

25 One second. We had a few seniors that are up against

2 the wall, and so, I just want to make sure that we
3 can--thank you. Okay. There are a couple of chairs,
4 a couple of seats in the second row. [background
5 comments. [laughter] [background comments] Okay.
6 So, you know how we do in church. [laughter] If
7 there are any young people or men that are able
8 bodied that could get a--

9 FEMALE SPEAKER: This year so far.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Thank
11 you.

12 CLARA WOODS: Good morning. I'm from
13 Boulevard Houses. I'm the President of Boulevard
14 Houses. I'm finding that the--that the card that we
15 have is very helpful to us because it helps us keep
16 account of how our money is being spent, and what is
17 the balance of our money. Not only that, through
18 using the card we are able to keep a paper trail on
19 everything we do, and everything that we spend. It
20 allows us to build a folder of everything that we
21 use. Not only that, I am very happy with the
22 coordinator Ms. Jacqueline Howard because she has
23 helped me and my board to walk through the process of
24 knowing how to use the card, how to write proposals,
25 how to get in other organizations to come in to help

2 us in our development as far as health-health issues
3 and different things that we need; organizations for
4 our children to come in; daycare programs and
5 different things that we need to bring into our
6 development through us having a coordinator. Every
7 month when we have a meeting, a cluster meeting, she
8 brings in information for us that we normally don't
9 get from NYCHA. If we don't get it from our cluster
10 meetings, we don't find out about it. So, I'm very
11 happy and grateful for the cluster meetings because
12 it helps us to find out what's going on inside of
13 NYCHA that us as TA Presidents that NYCHA does not
14 volunteer that information to us. So we find those-
15 those informations out through the cluster. Another
16 thing that I am happy for is that our coordinator
17 comes out to our office to help us if we're having
18 any type of problems with downloading receipts or
19 anything dealing with the computer because I'm not
20 computer savvy. So, I've had to learn all of this,
21 and I'm grateful because I've been guided through the
22 process step by step, and when it was the other way,
23 we had to keep running down here to 90 Church of to
24 go-to find out who to-to sign this paper. If that
25 person wasn't in, it was held up for weeks at a time,

2 and sometimes we were running in to occasions and
3 affairs that we had to have that we couldn't get our
4 documents signed and approved on time. So through us
5 having resident engagement some of that has been
6 avoided. So, I'm grateful for the Smart Card, and
7 I'm grateful for the information that I was taught
8 how to go about using it, writing proposals, and
9 becoming more active, and it takes up less time with
10 us being able to explain what we are learning to our
11 residents. So, I'm grateful. I just want to thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
14 much for your testimony, and now, we're going to hear
15 from the third panel. Any questions at all from the
16 questions--

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I have a
18 question. Okay, one second. Sorry, can you hold on a
19 minute? Can you hold on a minute? One second. We
20 have questions. Could you any of you explain what
21 the--the outreach was when--when--when NYCHA started
22 this program, there was a series of meetings
23 throughout the city with NYCHA Resident Associations.
24 How engaged did you feel in that process? Did you
25 feel like you were being told that this was going to

2 happen? Did you—did you feel like you were a part of
3 the planning decision committee? Did you feel like
4 you were adequately engaged? Obvious—obviously you,
5 this panel is very I guess accepting of this new
6 process, but how—how—could you walk us through the
7 engagement part of it?

8 CLARA WOODS: I think we were meeting and
9 it's been so long ago. At times you could do some
10 more, but that—the meeting was called at 90 Church
11 Street. I think they had a meeting or something and
12 was talking about putting out the plan, and I felt
13 good because in the district—in the district where we
14 lived that he wasn't doing this—teaching us this.
15 So, they wanted to come along and teach this, and
16 you'd have to pick up and grasp what things are right
17 and what things are wrong, and I just want to give a
18 shout-out to Ms. Howard because she sure has helped
19 me because I don't know nothing about no downloading
20 and she—I was taught something—learned some thing
21 new. So, I didn't give the shout-out before, but I
22 she has helped. That was a part of the process that
23 I think they called you in, and was talking about it.
24 Then you have—every month, you go to the cluster
25 meeting, there's always something different to learn,

2 and we have a lot of seniors and, you know, a lot of
3 seniors don't know about computers, and she has come
4 out, and you set up appointments. She'll come out.
5 If she's not doing paperwork at her office, she'll
6 come out and help you on the computer. Well, she
7 sure enough taught me how to scan some receipts.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Uh-hm. Yes.
9 No, I-I know that's—that was one of the hardest parts
10 of the process, but when you were having the
11 conversation about transferring over to the card
12 system, did someone say to you, Hey, you know, we
13 don't—we don't really think that the old system is
14 working or it's a little bit antiquated, and we want
15 to, you know, modernize it a little bit, and we think
16 that if you go into a card system it will probably be
17 easier for you to make purchases and keep a better
18 track of what—how you're spending your money. What
19 do you think about that? Did anybody ever ask you
20 that or were you simply brought into a room and told
21 this is the new way that, you know, this is where
22 NYCHA is heading. We're moving away from the old TPA
23 system, and we're heading, you know, south? Is that
24 what happened?

2 CLARA WOODS: That's-that's the way they
3 was telling you that this is the way, you know, NYCHA
4 is heading to a different way. It wasn't that they
5 told you do you want to do it? They didn't ask.
6 They told you that this is the way they--they roll it
7 just like when they had the community centers, no
8 body asked us did we want to give up our community
9 centers. You know, they just took the community
10 centers and our community is--all our community is
11 suffering. Like DYCD came in. Like that's the worst
12 thing you ever done. You know, but they--they didn't
13 access, they told us.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: That's what I
15 wanted to know. Thank you so much.

16 CLARA WOODS: Uh-hm. I can't lie them.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Oh, please go.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you, and--
19 - I appreciate the actually. It's really important
20 that we get all of the information. Well, we'll--
21 we'll stand with--we'll stand with you. We'll
22 definitely stand with you. Ms. Howard, I'll ask you
23 this question.

24 CLARA WOODS: I'm Ms. Woods. Ms. Howard
25 is back there.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Oh, Ms. Howard.
3 I'm sorry. What was your name?

4 CLARA WOODS: Clara Woods from Boulevard
5 Houses.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Wood,
7 Boulevard.

8 CLARA WOODS: Well, when they came to us,
9 they set up in different locations and different
10 centers, and they came out and they started talking
11 to us about the card, and at that time some of us did
12 not want to change over to the card because we didn't
13 understand--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

15 CLARA WOODS: --and we were being told
16 that we had to. We didn't really have a choice.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right, and I
18 want to--I want to pick up on that because there's--
19 there's a couple things--there's a couple of things
20 that have been consistent--

21 CLARA WOODS: Uh-hm.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --in terms of
23 wanting more support, wanting more understanding in
24 relationship with NYCHA--

25 CLARA WOODS: Uh-hm.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --and-and I
3 think there's another component to this. There's
4 another side that's the relationship with the tenants
5 on the side, and people that can support you in
6 leadership and I kind of want to get a sense about
7 how-how you then turn to the community and say I-I
8 need-I need your support. Can I engage with a
9 maximum amount of people? And so what then do you do
10 as a leader to bring more people to the table to
11 engage more people? How do you measure that? How do
12 you track that?

13 CLARA WOODS: Well, every month in my
14 development I have a meeting, and whatever
15 information that I collect about NYCHA from the
16 cluster meetings or any other meetings that we go to,
17 to bring back, I bring back information to my
18 residents, and literature to my residents so that
19 they can read up on what's going on as well as what
20 I'm finding out, I bring it back to them.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, those
22 meetings are-are really important to-

23 CLARA WOODS: [interposing] Those
24 meetings are very important now that I'm telling it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]

3 Tell me a little bit about—so, and I'm going to walk
4 you through a few questions so we can get to the next
5 panel, but I have meetings, too, in the district and
6 not everybody comes to even my meetings as a City
7 Council Member with a larger group of people. So,
8 I'm—I'm continually frustrated and—but also trying to
9 figure out ways to engage more people, and so I—I
10 don't know what it is in your development and in Red
11 Hook there's a lot of challenges there, too. A few
12 people come with a group of eight. Ten thousand
13 people living in a development and 15 or 20 people
14 will come. And so, help me understand how beyond
15 those meetings, you can engage more people because
16 here's the question: These dollars are important to
17 impact many people. We heard about the young people.
18 We heard about seniors. There are so many different
19 populations. We haven't even talked about immigrants
20 who don't speak English who need translation, and so
21 there's all these barriers, and so I—I kind of want
22 to get a sense—I just asked you, but if anybody has
23 any more things to say about that, that's—that's one
24 of the other questions that can help build power to

2 demand more from NYCHA, but you can't have one
3 without the other.

4 CLARA WOODS: Well, we bring out speakers
5 with literature that comes to our development. They
6 can speak to our tenants and explain to them what is
7 going on. Every month we have different people from
8 different agencies to come out to our meetings to
9 speak to our tenants.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank--thank
11 you. I want to get some--

12 CLARA WOODS: [interposing] Because we
13 try very hard.

14 CLARA WOODS: They is hard. You know,
15 sometimes people don't read the flyers. What I've
16 learned to do, I purchased a sound system. I go to
17 the street. People listen more than they read--

18 LISA KENNA: Uh-hm.

19 CLARA WOODS: --and I'm --and that's what I
20 find to be effective. I started off with a bullhorn
21 and I carry this thing and a mic and stuff like that
22 so people can hear. Also, you know, we have people
23 that don't speak English.

24 LISA KENNA: Uh-hm.

2 CLARA WOODS: I have a person that speaks
3 Spanish, but I only speak a little bit. So, I have to
4 have somebody with me who can speak Spanish because
5 this way they understand, and I find that by having
6 the person, I get more Hispanic people to come to the
7 meetings. You know, but I think like you said, if
8 people don't come to your--your meetings, maybe you
9 need to ride around in the car and put the sound
10 system up for you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [laughter]
12 Yeah, well, and--and we're always trying to do that,
13 and that's--that's a difficult thing. The last
14 comment I want to make is I also heard that--that
15 you're volunteers, and there's a small stipend, and
16 that's not easy so there's a lot of pressure on you
17 to do this work without any kind of professionalism
18 that also requires more responsibility and
19 accountability for you and your meetings, and making
20 sure that you register people who are coming in to
21 really have a track record and transparency of your
22 meetings. That all takes professionalism, and--and I
23 think that's what I'm hearing more that we need to
24 push as we look at TPAs how do we professionalize
25 these councils so that the term limits and all the

2 things that are required get followed so that you can
3 have the most robust opportunity to communicate to
4 most people and bring—and get more empowerment for
5 everyone. You know what I mean and our elders.

6 CLARA WOODS: But let just say this to
7 you because a lot of people have missed
8 interpretation about the people in public housing.
9 Yes, you do professionalism, but I went to college.
10 I may live in public housing, but I want to college.
11 I got a BS in Public Administration. Okay, you may
12 not think it but I do--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yep.

14 CLARA WOODS: --and with my knowledge from
15 the school I went to, and with the knowledge that I
16 learned from them picking up from different, even
17 from different presidents. I may live in Brooklyn.
18 I know presidents in the Bronx and Manhattan, I keep
19 them connect. I don't just know presidents in
20 Brooklyn. You know, I know what's going on in
21 Manhattan, the Bronx. I have Mr. Topland (sp?) call
22 me from Manhattan or somewhere or the Bronx, but I
23 know he's up there and live in Brooklyn.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

2 CLARA WOODS: But, the thing is that
3 people have to realize not everybody may have went to
4 college, but people got common sense, and as a
5 president or a leader, you have passion where you
6 live at.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

8 CLARA WOODS: I don't want housing to fall
9 down because if the housing falls down where I'm
10 going?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: That's right.

12 CLARA WOODS: I'm not trying to move down
13 ore something. I knot it's against our self.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: That's right.

15 CLARA WOODS: But I know one thing, in New
16 York I can catch a bus or subway any time of the
17 night--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

19 CLARA WOODS: --you know, but it just
20 have to be--I just know that the Administration has to
21 be more sit down and talk and communicate and don't
22 think that we are less than people. Okay.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: It's respect.

24 You're asking for respect.

2 CLARA WOODS: It wasn't for the residents
3 they wouldn't have no jobs.

4 LISA KENNA: Uh-hm.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

6 CLARA WOODS: And a lot of them are making
7 six figures, and we are only making \$100 a month.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Well, and
9 that's what I'm saying.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: But thank you.
11 I'm going to have to-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --because
14 this is--this is a lot.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And I do
17 appreciate. I'm going to say this: I do appreciate
18 the dialogue because again when we come into these
19 hearings, we only hear from the Administration, from
20 the agency. They may leave or, you know, continue to
21 have somebody there, and then we hear from the
22 public. This is an opportunity to be able to hear
23 from the residents, hear what's going on, and then
24 have NYCHA respond to that, but we do have to make
25 sure that we hear from everyone because we've already

2 been in this hearing for one hour, and so we still
3 have seven more residents to speak, and so thank you
4 so much for your testimony and we're going to call on
5 the next group. Audrey Clemmons, Diana Blackwell,
6 Ronald Topping, and we have been joined by Council
7 Member Ritchie Torres. Thank you for being here.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: And Chairlady, can
9 I ask you a question?

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Can you ask me
11 a question? Sure.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: [background
13 comments] While they're getting settled, do you want
14 to ask me a question? No, just you-you just said
15 that the purpose of this meeting is for your
16 residents to come and for NYCHA to respond.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Is there anyone
19 from NYCHA here?

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: All of NYCHA
21 is here.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Who is NYCHA?

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: They're
24 testifying after and they-we're-we're listening to
25 them after.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I'm—I'm asking
3 about and to NYCHA—someone from NYCHA that could make
4 this issue.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Yes, so the
6 Executive Vice President--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --is here.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. [pause]

11 Just a reminder that we're on a clock. Thank you.

12 Ms. Blackwell. [background comments/pause]

13 DIANA BLACKWELL: I'll say again Good
14 afternoon, Chair Samuel and honorable Council
15 Members. Before I begin, I just want to give a
16 shout-out to my Zone Coordinator who is absolutely
17 wonderful. I have to say they fit her. She really
18 didn't have a lot of knowledge. I'm kind of beat
19 her, but she's fine now. She's excellent.

20 [laughter] So, I really appreciate that part, but
21 I'll start again. My name Diana Blackwell, and I'm
22 President of Fred Samuel City Development. I'm here
23 to testify to what I consider a failed system for
24 NYCHA TPA when using the Commercial Card and the
25 digitized proposal for fund requests. Being that I'm

2 a natural progressive person, I believe that I was
3 one of the first resident leaders to sign an
4 agreement to use the Commercial Card. I believed that
5 this card would be an asset to the leaders being that
6 we could purchase our own products in a timely manner
7 while providing each leader with a slight savings in
8 our budget. This proved not to be true in every
9 case. The proposal process with its new form proved
10 to be a failure also being digitized should have made
11 it a simpler process. It did not. Mistakes were
12 made on the form, new instructions were added, but
13 the form was not updated or corrected to reflect
14 these items. At cluster meetings these adjustments
15 were spoken of, but nothing happened. The process
16 takes up to 10 business days while going through
17 multi-hands and can be delayed even longer if a
18 mistake is made and/or one person is out and there's
19 no coverage. Furthermore, since the last
20 postponement of this hearing, NYCHA resident
21 engagement was able to add to the Handbook. There
22 are new tip sheets, additional instructions, and our
23 updated budget of 42 developments. As for me, I have
24 a personal grievance that after following the rules
25 and submitting my per diem request for a September

2 conference, I never received the per diem. I tried
3 unsuccessful for weeks to conclude this matter with
4 resident engagement, but to no avail. We are still
5 waiting for our reimbursement. Today, in our new tip
6 sheet, they now state that this will be one of the
7 items that NYCHA will still handle with a note that
8 it may—but the note is that it may take longer than
9 usual, but six months waiting. There is much more,
10 but I'm going to yield my time, and I would like to
11 say due to the time constraint I have limited my
12 testimony, but will follow up with a subsequent
13 letter. Thank you.

14 AUDREY CLEMMONS: Good afternoon. I'm
15 the President of PS-139, a senior building in Central
16 Harlem.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Can you just
18 state your name?

19 AUDREY CLEMMONS: [interposing] I'm here
20 today to voice my concerns.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
22 Just state—just state your name.

23 AUDREY CLEMMONS: Alrighty.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Your name.

25 AUDREY CLEMMONS: Okay. Audrey Clemmons.

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

3 AUDREY CLEMMONS: Okay. So, I've done
4 that. I'm here today to voice my concerns about the
5 new Commercial Card that we are now using in NYCHA
6 for TPA. To begin, I don't like the new system
7 because it is hard to use. It's just not friendly to
8 seniors. When I shop with the card, that's okay,
9 instead of someone else shopping for me, but once you
10 get the card, if you don't use it in a certain amount
11 of time, or forget to write down your password, then
12 you must try to get in contact with NYCHA Commercial
13 Card staff, and they are not quick to respond. When
14 I must turn in the receipts this is very different-
15 difficult because I do not know how to use the
16 computer well enough to do this even though I've
17 taken-I have taken a computer class. Instead of
18 NYCHA taken the receipts for us, we must scan them
19 and save them. I don't understand how to scan. I
20 must seek help each time for my proposal and
21 receipts. NYCHA said that we must scan them within
22 five days and sometime I have no help to do this.
23 Then I am locked out and I have trouble getting back
24 in. In order to turn in our receipts, there's a long
25 process that has almost 12 steps, and I have tried to

2 understand how to do this, but it is hard. In
3 conclusion, I will say again that this new system is
4 hard to use especially for us seniors. There should
5 be a choice of which way we place our orders, and not
6 be forced to do it in a new way. This system we do
7 not know since this is not what our generation grew
8 up on. We only use computers for family, fun and
9 things. This is what--this is what a paid person used
10 to do at NYCHA, and now we are doing it for free.
11 Thank you.

12 RONALD TOPPING: [off mic] Peace and
13 grace. Can you hear me?

14 RONALD TOPPING: That's on now. Can I
15 speak?

16 MALE SPEAKER: Yes.

17 RONALD TOPPING: Peace and grace. We got
18 a good morning. Thank you, Council for allowing us
19 as tenant leaders to come in and speak. We finally
20 arrived at Holy Week following my Monday, Thursday,
21 Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. Amen to all of
22 that. I want to--I want to start off by saying that
23 this is--a couple talking points I have here. I'd like
24 to know what is the legal justification for signing
25 up for a Commercial Card that there is no place that

2 rule in HUD that says that we have to do that? If we
3 don't sign up for it, we're being forced and told
4 that we're not going to be able have access to your
5 TPA money. To me that sounds like control. It's not
6 their money. It's the Tenant Association
7 participatory funding. That's where that money
8 belongs. That's why resident leaders have guide to
9 work and have that sort of stuff. They have no
10 justification for that. When it comes to get monies
11 for things like our Internet service where we have to
12 upload the card, there is no monies being paid out in
13 advance for our services. If you don't get a
14 proposal in on time, when it comes time for you get
15 those Internet services, paid, they cut your service
16 off. If you got stuff that you purchased, you're not
17 able to upload. You can't run to the library. They
18 give you 45 minutes. So, then you turn around and
19 you're stuck with having your money shut down because
20 you can't upload receipt. How ridiculous is that
21 when there's money in your account whether it be
22 allocated money or reserved money. You understand?
23 These--these are the problems that--that--that we're--
24 we're dealing with. When it comes to HUD provides
25 \$25 per dwelling unit and NYCHA takes \$10 out of the

2 \$25, most cities in the North Hills of America only
3 take less than 40%. HUD says up to 40%. They take
4 their time 40% and say they're going to use it for
5 administrative costs and provide services. They
6 provide this little winkle dink trainings for us,
7 overloading and handing us literature and expect us
8 to know what to do. People learn from different
9 ways. They learn from hands-on, they learn from
10 visual. They learn from a variety of sources. If you
11 don't have these opportunities available to people
12 and have a little bit more flexibility, you're going
13 to have a series of problems of people not doing.
14 We're penalized. Once again, you're controlling our
15 TPA funds. The--the clear inventory--or cluster
16 meetings throughout, although they--the ideas were
17 good. The meetings causes too much confusion,
18 mistrust among the resident association president,
19 and the executive board members, which seems to cause
20 a division. Divide and conquer is what they're doing
21 in in this atmosphere. That needs to stop. We have
22 many concerns as to what kinds of messages are being
23 transmitted to our Executive Board. They need to
24 understand you talk to me. I'm going to be
25 responsible. I relayed it to the message board when

2 you come in, you come in. We work for free. You get
3 paid. We do this job because we care for our
4 communities and we care for our people, and we love
5 where we live. You can't [bell] tear us down with a-
6 a bulldozer. You have to blow us up, and get-and get
7 us out. That's the way we will get out. NYCHA has
8 no longer allowed us to use the tax exempt
9 certification, the purchase that's made with TPA
10 funds, but with the same breath we are told that tech
11 supplies or purchases they must pay for them out of
12 their own pockets. Once again, we do not get a pay
13 check. Without out of-with-with out-of-town travels
14 with the per diems for uploading on the Commercial
15 Cards, and you just heard earlier, some get them on
16 time. Some don't. There is no accountability for
17 real records of true funding that participate and
18 develop. (sic) Also, NYCHA states that the funds on
19 the cards were to reach destinations of funds
20 available for resident leaders to end up using of
21 their own services, and the meter car services.
22 Uber, we can't use the card with Uber. I mean come
23 on, what have we got the card for if we have
24 limitations? You can't go to Costco. All of these
25 things that they actually are anticipating don't run

2 in the South Bronx neighborhood. The Green cabs
3 don't want to go above 110th Street. So, now if
4 we're using other services that charging us more
5 money our cab services to get around. It doesn't
6 make sense. That has to change. The purpose of the
7 Commercial Card is flawed. It needs to be revised by
8 total leadership. Once again, people, I want to say
9 I thank you all for allowing us to express there's a
10 lot more to this. You—I—I can't tell you all what to
11 do. Please don't be doing a text and listen to us
12 and hear us. When you have a sit-down with NYCHA,
13 don't buy into their—what they're all saying. Listen
14 to what we are saying. They have already taken what
15 was—what's ours and taken \$14 million, put it into a
16 pot and disperse it. That's illegal. This where the
17 problem began. When they started doing something,
18 you take from Peter to pay Paul and Paul never got a
19 paycheck. So, what we finally need to do is
20 understand how we can rectify that problem. Stop
21 thinking that we're stealing because it's already
22 been stolen, \$17 billion have already been taken from
23 us. We have not community centers. We have nothing.
24 We have very little. This is why tenant protection
25 sometimes may be low. They are tire and—and weary

2 and they don't believe in the new leadership because
3 we've already been beaten down by NYCHA itself. I'm
4 not even talking about mold. I'm talking about TPA.
5 [background comments]

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

7 Thank you, Mr. Topping. Thank you. Thank you.

8 [applause] So, we have one last—we have ones last
9 panel. This the last panel before NYCHA testifies,
10 and we're going to need one more chair. [background

11 comments] Carmen Quinones, Princella Jamison, Isa
12 Torres, [background comments] Margaret Mastic and
13 Ciprian Noel. We need one more Chair. One Chair.

14 [background comments/pause] Thank you and again, the
15 reason why we have the testimony from the residents
16 first is make sure that you're voices are heard, and
17 that we can have an actual real conversation, a real
18 discussion, a real hearing with NYCHA based on what
19 is said from the residents.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Ms. Torres, we
22 can start with you. [background comments]

23 ISA TORRES: Okay. Good morning, Council
24 Members. My name Isa Torres, and I'm the Resident
25 Association President of Alfred E. Smith Houses

2 Resident Association, Incorporated. The history of
3 the TPA funds and NYCHA in the past have been if you
4 have a godfather you get—you get your—you—your
5 baptized. However, with the card system, there is a
6 jump at transparency that never existed before, and
7 even though there might be glitches and they still
8 need to—like any new system things need to be fixed,
9 but at the end of the day the transparency that we
10 now have with this card system never existed. You're
11 speaking to a resident association that had to hire
12 an attorney just to get—just to get certified with
13 our election. You're speaking to a resident
14 association who tries very diligently to keep our
15 residents informed. We try to do a lot of things.
16 However, the way the TPA funds were being done, when
17 you wanted to buy something—I have translation
18 equipment that I actually need desperately that have
19 been sitting in the boxes because when I had to do
20 the other system, the person who ordered for NYCHA
21 didn't know what they were doing. Then they would
22 come into the Management Office and sit there. So, by
23 the time you got the things you ordered, there were
24 no good. So, they're still sitting in the box brand
25 new, sealed because I haven't been able to use

2 something that I desperately need for my residents to
3 be informed, and that is their right, and my
4 responsibility as president is not only to inform my
5 executive board, but to every resident who lives in
6 Alfred E. Smith Houses, and I take this
7 responsibility serious. No, we don't get paid, and I
8 get that, but I chose to do this. I'm retired now so
9 I have more time, but I just came from a retreat, and
10 part of the reason we were able to do it with the
11 Executive Board and my Chairpeople of my committee
12 because we have several committees, was because we
13 used the-the card, and I was able to find a place
14 that was reasonable, do all the things that I needed
15 to do to accommodate because now that we're
16 incorporated, we not only have obligations to NYCHA
17 and to everyone else, but we also have legal
18 fiduciary responsibilities [bell] and everybody needs
19 to know. So, I am in favor of the program. Yes,
20 something needs to be done, and there might be things
21 to fix, and I want to give a shout-out to my
22 coordinator Daneesha Wheeler because she's done an
23 excellent job of supporting and helping the people
24 who use the card. Thank you.

2 MARGARET MASTIC: Good morning. My name
3 is Margaret Mastic. I'm the ex-treasurer for
4 Oceanside, and I just would like to talk about some
5 of the glitches in the card. It's one card to two
6 people in the board, and only those two people can go
7 to the training about the card, which I think is
8 wrong because I think all the board members should be
9 able go to the trainings to be on one page. They
10 shouldn't just make it to a stickler for just those
11 two people. Then the other thing with the card, the
12 card has the name Oceanside on it. My name is not
13 Oceanside. So, when I go shopping I have to kind of
14 kind I get some kind of teenager or clerk or cashier
15 that doesn't really care or have to talk them into
16 using the card because when I went to Transit to get
17 our Metro Cards, they gave me the third degree. I
18 needed this, I needed that because no matter what IDs
19 I showed them, I have no NYCHA ID, and I even tried
20 to get one. They told me they don't issue it
21 because—and then it's like Costco when I applied for
22 Costco and also for the bank card it had Oceanside
23 and Corporation and my name underneath. So, I don't
24 know why would NYCHA be cheap enough not to do that.
25 Just a card with, you know, and some people if the

2 truth be told, you have to—you can't always every
3 place you go convince people that you are that
4 person, and then there times where I use the card and
5 the young person, the cashier I guess they have a
6 trust and faith, they didn't ask for no ID. So that
7 means anybody could really use that card. So, I
8 think that's a huge flaw, and then there are places
9 where like I said they won't give you—they're going
10 to give you a heard time to try to use it because
11 your name is not on the card. Why would two people
12 be able to use that same card and I was told when I
13 went to the training that you have to trust your
14 board member. I'm like I don't even trust my own
15 sisters [laughter] with my, you know, with my big—
16 how am I going to trust a board member? You they can
17 do anything with the card, and then my name and their
18 name is, you know, whatever.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: It goes back
20 to you.

21 MARGARET MASTIC: It-it-yes, it still can
22 go back to me. I don't have money to be paying back
23 anybody anything, and then, you know, it's really
24 true. Anybody could use the card because-and it's
25 like really frightening that because sometimes I had

2 to—I was telling the president if he had the card,
3 and I know he has people in his house that me I can
4 say I may not trust them. Suppose they take the card
5 and do whatever. It still goes back to me, and I
6 think that's, you know, that needs to be improved and
7 also I am somewhat computer savvy. I am educated, and
8 it took a while for me to learn the uploading thing,
9 and—and I went to training twice just—and I thank God
10 I was able to go twice [bell] and I think we can go
11 even a little longer, and we need to know about this
12 20% given money to be a little bit more clear. Thank
13 you so much.

14 PRINCELLA JAMISON: Good morning. My
15 name is Princella Jamison. I'm the Resident Leader
16 for Millbrook Houses. I'm here to talk about the
17 Commercial Card. The Commercial Card is way beyond
18 most of the resident leaders' ability to work with.
19 In order for some of the resident leaders to upload
20 the receipts, the coordinators will have to come and
21 help them do it. Once you get the card, and you use
22 it, they are telling resident leaders that they have
23 72 hours to upload the receipts. NYCHA is now moving
24 June 1st 2019 for the remainder of the Resident
25 Leaders who would not want the card take it. If they

2 don't the card they will not be able to use TPA
3 funds. I'm going to give you an example of something
4 that happened when I recently went for training for
5 some of the people that came out there with the
6 cards. They came out for training. They didn't have
7 their per diem. They didn't their money to put them
8 in the hotel in order for them to get in the room. I
9 forgot what you call it, but if like you have to give
10 them, the card so that this way you would be able to
11 enter the room. There was no money on the card.
12 Some residents couldn't even pay for their
13 registration for the training. So, I have a lot of
14 concerns about the way NYCHA is moving so fast to get
15 these cards in our possession. I have many concerns
16 and I hope that you are hearing our testimony that
17 you all would ask those questions of NYCHA why are
18 they moving so fast without proper training? Another
19 thing I want to say: We need a total and full
20 accounting of TPA funds. This must be done as soon
21 as possible. We've been asking NYCHA for years for
22 an accurate account of these funds, and we still
23 haven't received them. Recently, when NYCHA decided
24 to revamp TPA, they took all of the money from the
25 districts and the developments, and they put into one

2 pot, and then they split it up amongst all of the
3 resident leaders' developments. There was resident
4 leaders that had a whole lot of money in a TPA
5 account that now you can't find it. It's missing by
6 thousands of dollars.

7 FEMALE SPEAKER: There you go.

8 PRINCELLA JAMISON: So, the next problem
9 is with resident—with the Resident Engagement
10 Department. There is a total lack of communication
11 and non-responsiveness of the department. So, in
12 other words [bell] if they are not happy or pleased
13 with you, you get no call back, and I want to also
14 say that my coordinator Ms. Alena Williams really
15 comes out and tries her best to help the resident
16 leaders. Thank you.

17 CARMEN QUINONES: Okay, is this on? Is it
18 on? Yes, it's on. First, let me say thank you for
19 having this CPA meeting or rather a forum I call it
20 because we've been waiting. Actually, I was kind of
21 upset that it was cancelled twice because I believe
22 that everyone in this room has been waiting a long
23 time to talk about CPA. I don't use the card. I
24 don't have the card. I never signed—well, I signed
25 the agreement now, but I have not used any of the

2 money. First and foremost, when I became President
3 actually almost five years ago, they gave me a
4 budget. The budget said \$252,000, right? Then the
5 following year, I got another budget. It was \$89,000.
6 Now, you do the math. I am not—as—as I want to know
7 where that money went. First of all, in my
8 development every apartment is accountable. You
9 count every apartment. That's how the CPA monies are
10 gotten. So, how would you take my money and give it
11 to another development? That's illegal and it needs
12 to be looked into. Now if they took that type of
13 money from me, I want you to add it up. Add it up by
14 all of the developments. We're talking about
15 billions of dollars. Where is that? I really can't
16 talk to you about how the card works and how the card
17 doesn't work. I'm—I'm quite sure that I'm capable of
18 working the card, working everything that—that I need
19 to do, but that's not the issue. The issue is that
20 this is a dictatorship, and it cannot happen. How
21 can you dictate to us when you're supposed to oversee
22 only. Even—even our consultants are attacked, and
23 I'm talking in general, okay. If we want someone to
24 represent us as a Council, they have something to
25 say. If this is, in fact, my development I know

2 what's going on. I want my own counsel. You don't
3 have to say who—who does it or not. That's not your
4 business. We are—we should be allowed to have
5 representation, and there's always a problem when you
6 get it. Either they don't like him or they do like
7 him. Now, another thing, TPA and a lot of the
8 presidents, listen, this is a—this a dictatorship
9 instead of a democracy. We have a lot of presidents
10 that are on the side of NYCHA. Why? You all need to
11 investigate that. [bell] Okay, you all really need
12 to investigate that, but then we have real presidents
13 like the ones that sit here and tell you the truth.
14 Alright, but all of this is just a real big
15 dictatorship, and then I would love to see the
16 partnership come back. There was a time when we were
17 partners with New York City Housing Authority, when
18 we were respected as leaders we were included in the
19 process. I don't know where it broke down, but we
20 need to back to that because we need to be partners.
21 We can't keep fighting each other, but you got to
22 know that these leaders that like they said, they
23 don't get paid, you need to start respecting. You
24 come in my development, respect me because we're on
25 the ground. Our skin, our sweat is in our

2 developments not anyone else. Our caretakers are
3 being misused. Their backs are breaking because they
4 got more than one building, and 20-story building. I
5 got one woman in a 20-story building. I got two of
6 my great men getting ready to go out. One has
7 cancer. The other one has a slipped disc. I guess
8 so carrying all that garbage by yourself 20 floors.
9 I'd have a slipped disc, too. This whole thing is-
10 is-is corrupt for real. It is really a corrupt
11 system [bell] and you really have to do a forensic
12 audit. You got to—you—your guys got some jobs to do,
13 and I'm going to tell you I love you guys, but if you
14 don't do it, then you are not for us because we are
15 tired, tired, tired. I've been in the trenches 30
16 years, 30 years as a district leader, State Committee
17 Woman, a liaison. I've work for almost every elected
18 official. You all, we elect you guys. You need to
19 represent us because I'm going to tell you if you
20 don't represent me, I'm coming after you.
21 [background comments] That's real. I got 19
22 grandkids and five great grands. I ain't taking
23 nobody's stuff. Enough is enough. The system is
24 wrong. It's wrong. You're going to hear people for
25 it, and you're going to hear people against it. The

2 people that are for it got a vested interest. That's
3 real. They got a vested interest. Everything needs
4 to be investigated. [bell]

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

6 CARMEN QUINONES: it is the only way.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

8 [bell] Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Noel, you're the
9 last resident to testify.

10 CIPRIAN NOEL: Well, thank you so much.
11 Thank you so much, and a pleasant good day and good
12 morning.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
14 And we have been—we've been joined by Council Member
15 Van Bramer. Bring us home, Mr. Noel.

16 CIPRIAN NOEL: Thank you so much, and a
17 pleasant good morning to everyone on the panel. I'm
18 just here simply just to testify for my people. My
19 name is Cripian Noel. I'm the TA President for
20 Langston Hughes Development. I have a very small
21 development, three buildings. One of the—I don't
22 have the TPA card. I don't have the card. I do a
23 proposal. One of the most frustrating things is when
24 you the proposal, they keep rejecting it because they
25 want you to spend the money, and what they want to—

2 what they want they do, but I—I take the position so
3 I can fight for the people. I can be a voice for the
4 people. I want—I hear what the people. NYCHA don't
5 know what the people want because they—they just come
6 and work and they leave. They people in the
7 development know—I know what they want because they
8 talk to me. So, when we do proposals to try to get—to
9 get the—the funding, they keep rejecting us because
10 they're saying, oh, well, the funding of that for
11 his, but it's for this. Why give us money and then
12 tell us to sell it. It don't make no sense. I'm—I'm
13 a single father of four kids, and I give them—I give
14 my kids a stipend, and I tell them you use this money
15 for your—for your own. Whatever they spend the money
16 on I have to approve it because I give it to them.
17 You've given us some funding, but you're telling me
18 what to spend it on. I have—I have so much young
19 people in my development. I have so much seniors.
20 One other thing is I love to look over my seniors.
21 We're trying to get commerce with that or we're
22 trying to make it better for the seniors. I really
23 appreciate my seniors, but not giving what the
24 seniors what the seniors want, we try to do some
25 classes for the seniors, but they're telling me no we

2 can't get funding for that because it's not in the
3 guidelines and all of that, but why give any money?
4 You know, I'm—I'm frustrated. I really am frustrated
5 when you have to try to get money to—to fight for
6 these people. So, you've got to use your own money.
7 People tell me you're crazy. You can't be doing
8 that, but not getting the money from—from—from, you
9 know, they're not giving it to me. So, it's really
10 frustrating. My thing is I really want to see you
11 all fight on behalf of the people. Fight on behalf
12 on the TA President. I'm a new president in office.
13 I'm a new president in office. I could have
14 definitely, you know, just give up this thing and
15 just take care of my four kids, but no, I want to see
16 changes in the development. I want to see my-my
17 development look good. You know, and it takes money
18 to—to make it happen, and it takes people in higher
19 up to make it happen because I—I suggested we vote-
20 vote all in office. We expect a different result,
21 and I hope that this doesn't go to one area and come
22 to the next, and then after all this beautiful
23 testimony that everybody crying and spilling their
24 guts, them to go back to zero again when, and we get
25 started all over. So, I hope NYCHA is really

2 listening to take heed to what we're really saying
3 and to really act on it. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.
5 Thank you so much to all of our resident leaders who
6 have—who took the time this morning to passionately
7 testify on behalf of your residents. I just have one
8 quick question for Ms. Torres. You mentioned that
9 you had to hire a legal attorney in order to be able
10 to assist with your election process. Can you just
11 explain to us briefly why you had to hire outside
12 counsel in order to help with your election?

13 ISA TORRES: [bell] Because they—they
14 didn't want me to be president. I mean I-it's not
15 this administration, but the previous administration.
16 I gave them hell.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay.

18 ISA TORRES: I mean it's okay. I landed
19 up in the OR room, but, you know, I gave them hell
20 because it wasn't right what they were trying to do,
21 but I did hire—hire a legal team. We took NYCHA to
22 court and we won, and we held everybody accountable.
23 I—I just find—I just find that with the TPA funds now
24 that we have with the cards, there's more
25 transparency, and there are guidelines that you have

2 to follow, you know, and there are things that you
3 have to do and—and everybody is held accountable, but
4 we also have a spreadsheet that gives us the balance
5 every quarter of how much money we spent, how we
6 spend it with line items. That never happened
7 before.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay.

9 ISA TORRES: You know, it was like what
10 she's saying, one day, you know, you have this much
11 money, and then you turn around and you didn't have
12 that money. It was crazy, and so there are glitches.
13 There are serious glitches, but they can be
14 corrected, and that's all part of the process when we
15 start a new program.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, okay. I
17 just wanted some clarity on you having to hire legal
18 counsel. Again, thank you so much. Thank you.

19 ISA TORRES: Thank you.

20 CIPRIAN NOEL: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you and
22 I think that everything that we've heard over the
23 past hour and a half should lend to a very helpful
24 discussion in hearing the testimony from NYCHA, and
25 hopefully, you can speak your responses based on what

2 we've heard from the residents. [background
3 comments] Okay, and we've been joined by Committee
4 Members, Council Member Salamanca, and we've also
5 been joined by Council Member Treyger, and is this
6 someone's birthday today. Happy birthday Council
7 Member Treyger, and thank you for spending your
8 birthday with us. [siren] From NYCHA we have David
9 Pristin and Sideya Sherman and so you can wait to be
10 sworn in by counsel.

11 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm—I'll say
12 again. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
13 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony
14 before this committee and to respond honestly to
15 Council Member questions?

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I do.

17 DAVID PRISTIN: I do. [pause]

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Chair Alicka Ampry-
19 Samuel, members of the Committee on Public Housing
20 and other distinguished members of the City Council.
21 Good morning. I'm Sideya Sherman, Executive Vice
22 President for Community Engagement and Partnerships
23 at NYCHA. Joining me is David Pristin, Executive
24 Vice President for External Affairs. Thank you for
25 this opportunity to discuss our work to empower

2 residents by helping them access and use Tenant
3 Participation Activity Funds. You just heard from
4 some of our residents association leaders and their
5 experience accessing TPA Funds, and we appreciate
6 their feedback. I'd first like to explain how TPA
7 funding is allocated to NYCHA. TPA funds are
8 governed by a federal regulation 24 CFR 964.150,
9 which stipulates how the funds are dispersed and
10 used. In sum, HUD requires that every public housing
11 authority set aside a specific portion of its federal
12 operating subsidy for resident associations. These
13 funds are designed-are designated by HUD to be used
14 for eligible tenant participation activities that
15 engage residents in fostering a positive living
16 environment. As part of our operating subsidy, these
17 funds are subject to the same financial controls as
18 the rest of our operating subsidy meaning that NYCHA
19 must ensure accountability and oversight of their
20 expenditure. These are taxpayer dollars that are
21 intended for the public good. Some examples of
22 eligible tenant participation activities include our
23 membership building activities, information
24 dissemination, resource fairs, development clean-up
25 days, educational classes and workshops and the

2 purchasing of office supplies, travel for training
3 conferences and seminars may be eligible as well.

4 For example, at Tilden Houses, TPA funds supported a
5 3-day legal conference for residents hosted by
6 Brooklyn Legal Services. They covered topics such as
7 reentry following incarceration and clearing one's
8 record for employment. At Promenade Houses TPA funds
9 were used to purchase emergency go-bags for residents
10 participating in emergency preparedness workshops
11 sponsored by the New York City Emergency Management
12 Office. TPA's funding was established in the early
13 2000s. We were four of NYCHA's TPA program in 2016 as
14 part of Next Generation NYCHA, a long-term strategic
15 plan and continue to make improvements to the process
16 based on feedback from residents. When NYCHA last
17 discussed this topic with the Council in 2017, my
18 colleagues committed to several actions that would
19 improve the TPA funding process for residents. These
20 included several processes in transparency
21 improvement and I'm pleased that we have accomplished
22 the following since then: We've updated the written
23 agreement between NYCHA and resident associations on
24 the use of TPA funds based on comments from resident
25 leaders and the City Council as well as input from

2 the Legal Aid Society. That involved simplifying the
3 agreement's language. We updated the Plain Language
4 Guidebook that accompanies the Funding Agreement, and
5 this is available online. To help familiarize the
6 Council with the process and answer your questions,
7 we hosted a webinar, and briefed Council Members one-
8 on-one as requested. We introduced the Commercial
9 Card, which RAs use to make the few purchases up to
10 \$5,000 to streamline the purchasing process. For
11 instance, RAs can buy office supplies at a local
12 store with out having to order them through NYCHA's
13 Procurement Department. The card can be used for
14 approved travel making travel arrangements easier and
15 faster, and for reoccurring bills like phone and
16 Internet. RAs can reconcile their spending through
17 our online system, a process that promotes
18 accountability and oversight. Currently, nearly 80%
19 of RAs who are accessing funds are using the
20 Commercial Card. We shared earlier today a video
21 that showcases the Commercial Card, and that's
22 available on the home page of our NYCHA website. We
23 created and posted online a tip sheet on topics such
24 as travel, budgeting, accessing funds to help
25 residents make the best use of their TPA funds. We

2 also posted online quarterly budget reports that list
3 the TPA funds spent and available by development so
4 that RAs, residents and the public have full
5 visibility on spending. Let me take a moment to give
6 you an overview of the TPA funding process. HUD
7 requires a written agreement between PHAs and RAs on
8 the use of TPA funds. HUD also directs PAJs to
9 provide residents with guidance on their—their use
10 and—and the process. As I mentioned, we updated our
11 Guidebook to make the process clearer for residents.
12 To access the funds, RAs submit spending plans on an
13 annual basis. They submit separate proposals to
14 determine eligibility for activities. TPA funds
15 should benefit all residents. RAs should endeavor to
16 include as many in the activities as possible as
17 required by HUD's regulations. Again, all of this
18 information is available online, and my office is
19 always happy to answer questions or assist with the
20 process. Last year we processed over 1,500 TPA
21 spending proposals. Our staff provides technical
22 assistance to RAs to make sure expenses are eligible
23 and to help with procurement issues. Each RA can also
24 get support from one of NYCHA's 15 local Resident
25 Engagement Coordinators in addition to support from

2 the central office staff who administer the TPA
3 funds. In accordance with HUD regulations on
4 leadership building, we also host monthly cluster
5 meetings to provide RA board members with updates on
6 important and relevant topics. RA leaders select the
7 topics of these meetings, and we host more than 30
8 per month. We also provide residents the tools that
9 can help them use TPA funds to the maximum benefit of
10 the community. For example, we surveyed seniors to
11 identify their top priorities, and have discussed
12 these TPA funds to support their civic engagement
13 projects. We also will launch a guide for using the
14 funds on health programs. While resident engagement
15 coordinators will work with RAs on identifying
16 resources to support their efforts, it is ultimately
17 the RAs that determine how to spend their development
18 TPA funds. Going forward, we are working with RAs to
19 achieve 100% utilization of the Commercial Card by
20 this summer. To minimize the administrative burden
21 on RAs and NYCHA we are improving our system for
22 processing stipend payments, eliminate certain
23 requirements for RAs who submit proposals for most
24 small purchases such as refreshments and office
25 supplies, and consulting with HUD on other ways to

2 streamline the process while still satisfying the
3 regulatory requirements of the program. This means
4 faster access of TPA funds for residents.
5 Facilitating the TPA funds process—funding process is
6 just one way that our office—that we engage and
7 support residents at NYCHA. Guided by our long-term
8 strategic plan, the Community Engagement and
9 Partnership Division worked tirelessly to empower
10 residents and resident leadership. In partnership
11 with NY with NYC Service and Capital One, our 13
12 Youth Leadership Councils are giving youth a voice,
13 and a role in calculating the community's most
14 pressing issues. Nearly 100 senior champion
15 volunteer worked with NYCHA and community members to
16 engage their fellow seniors on health, safety and
17 educational projects. Thanks to support from the
18 City Council and CUNY our Resident Leadership Academy
19 is helping establish and inspiring resident leaders
20 take a more active role in their community including
21 their resident associations through training and the
22 cultivation of leadership skills while earning
23 college credits. These are just a few examples. Our
24 team supports a host of other initiatives across the
25 Authority that help create safe, clean and connected

2 communities through services to seniors as well as
3 entrepreneurship programs. TPA funds provide
4 financial support to engage residents bolstering
5 NYCHA's work to specifically engage New Yorkers. TPA
6 funds can be a powerful tool to improve resident
7 quality of life. They are most effective when all
8 residents are at the table and engaged. In our work
9 with resident associations across the city we've seen
10 the impact of this potential for even more. We
11 welcome the Council's feedback and partnership in
12 working with the community so that more residents can
13 help make a difference through the use of TPA funds.
14 Thank you and we are happy to answer any questions
15 you may have.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.
17 So, you've heard countless residents come and testify
18 about their experiences with the TPA process, the
19 Commercial Card usage. Some are extremely supportive
20 of the process, and say that it's helpful, and some
21 have some serious concerns.

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And so, it
24 would be helpful and just—just a couple of words that
25 I heard during the testimony from the residents. I

2 heard dictatorship. I heard mandatory rules. I
3 heard forced to sign an agreement, and so that's very
4 strong language especially in and era of a new
5 process.

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: This has been
8 reformed, and so clearly there are some serious
9 issues that we need to discuss. So, again, I'm
10 thankful for the testimony that we had before. So,
11 just start and now ow much funds did NYCHA receive
12 from HUD for the TPA process? Or just let's talk
13 about for the past year, the pre--well that--

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, I can get you
15 the exact amount, but it's around \$3 million within
16 our--

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
18 Say that one more time.

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: It's around \$3, a little
20 over \$3 million dollars total, and the residents who
21 are sharing--

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
23 Annually.

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Excuse me.

25 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Annually?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Annually. Yes. So-so
3 this year--so within our--our allocation it's \$3.8
4 million, and the--

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: \$3 point--?

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: \$3.8 million.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: \$8 million.

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Which is subject to
9 proration. That's--that's the total, and the resident
10 portion is \$2.3 million or we'll--we'll confirm the
11 amount, but there's 40%, which stays with the PHA and
12 60%, which goes to--

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
14 So what's NYCHA's?

15 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, NYCHA is allocation
16 is around \$1.5 million.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: \$1.5 million
18 annually? [background comments] Okay, and so I know
19 that there was some discussions about that money is
20 used to assist in the administrative part of the TPA
21 process. So, can you walk us through how NYCHA
22 utilizes the \$1.5 million annually?

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, we have a
24 number of obligations to carry out with respect to
25 administering TPA funds as well as meeting our other

2 requirements under 964. So, the funding is primarily
3 used for staff time spent administering the funds as
4 well as our Resident Advisory Board process.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Let's wait a
6 bit. (sic) Staff time spent?

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, it goes to staff
8 time as well as our Resident Advisory Board. So,
9 there are stipends, meals, transportation, other
10 expenses with our Resident Advisory Board that NYCHA
11 uses a portion of that allocation for and then—and
12 then in terms of our staff time, there—a portion of
13 the funding supports our local coordinators who you
14 heard referenced many times in the testimony today,
15 who are the local staff who are on the ground who are
16 providing one-on-one--

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
18 So let's go through that.

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So take a step
21 back. Who are the NYCHA employees by title that
22 actually are responsible for the TPA process?

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, I—I don't
24 have the—the list of employees, but there are 15
25 Community Coordinators.

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
3 You don't have to say the names. So, not the names,
4 but the-

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: There are 15 Community
6 Coordinators across the city.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: 15 Community
8 Coordinators?

9 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Across the city. A
10 portion of their time is charged to TPA. We have a
11 bookkeeper. We have two administrative staff, and
12 then there is a supervisor who oversees the unit. On
13 our budget side, we there are two employees who
14 handle responsibilities within our Budget Department,
15 as well, and so it's-it's the equivalent of 14 full-
16 time employees based on the percent allocation across
17 the number of staff involved.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, you just
19 said 14 full-time employees, right, but they don't
20 spend their full-their full-time duties are not to do
21 TPA, right?

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: It, so it-it equates to
23 14 full-time STAs based on the time allocation across
24 the employees that--

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]

3 So, alright. So, it-so-so that's a serious statement
4 right? So, can you explain to us how their time is
5 utilized? Because now that I'm thinking about if
6 you-if you just-if you work in a law firm, right, and
7 you're charging a client billable hours, right--

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --and you have
10 staff on task that are supposed to be responsible for
11 a particular case, those particular attorneys or
12 whoever is staff in that firm have to be able to
13 state: I spent two hours on this particular case, and
14 this is how much I charge per hour, right. So if
15 their billable hours are \$150 an hour, and they
16 worked two hours, that's \$300 that they're going to
17 charge per whatever that case is. So, can you
18 provide us with some-some type of breakdown of the 14
19 staffers who are working on the TPA process. So, that
20 we could get a clear understanding of how that--
21 because it's easy to say oh we have full-time
22 staffers and they're doing this and they're doing
23 that, but really be able to break down how their time
24 is allocated on the TPA process. Are you able to
25 provide us with that?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So-so, just I'll
3 answer that question in two parts. So, just a point
4 of clarification. It's 14 STEs. So, if there's more
5 than 14 staff, that are involved in TPA, it's a-the-
6 based on the percentage of their time allocation as
7 well as staff who are 100% allocated to TPA. It's
8 the equivalent of 14 full-time employees, but just to
9 clarify what the roles are, the roles are very
10 prescribed. So, in the case of our 15 coordinators,
11 they host the monthly meeting. So, there are 30
12 meetings per month, which happen in the zones, and so
13 those are specifically with resident associations,
14 and their board members. They receive and process
15 proposals. So, as I mentioned, we processed over
16 1,500 proposals last year. We have staff who process
17 stipends and payments exclusively. So, we process
18 over 400-4,000-1,400 of those stipends last year as
19 well as a percentage of time within our Budget
20 Department for the staff who-who are allocating the
21 funds maintaining them or producing the monthly
22 reports. And so, in terms of time allocation and
23 expenditure, last year our 40% equated to \$1.5
24 million. In terms of staff time, we spent around-the

2 equivalent of \$2.1—around \$2 million in terms of
3 staff time. So, NYCHA--

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I-I-so, I
5 still don't understand how you came up with that
6 figure. It-it seems like you're like most applying
7 just like the staff itself, but not the actual work
8 that's being done. You get what I'm saying?

9 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I--

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
11 So, that's something—I'm just trying to really get a—
12 a clear understanding of just on a—I don't know. Like
13 a—an hourly basis or a weekly basis, something—
14 something different.

15 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, so, I'm not able to
16 provide you like an hourly break-breakdown, and
17 aggregate of—of the staff time across the--

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
19 Because when I look at the number, like so \$1.5
20 million right and you divide that by 14 people, that
21 could be a salary of like \$107,000 per-per-like per
22 worker, but we know that they're not making that
23 amount of money. So, that's why I'm just trying to
24 really get an understanding--

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] So that's
3 not--

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --of how the
5 money is spent.

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yeah, so I mean that
7 salary and fringe. So, NYCHA's expenditures include
8 our fringe rate as well as any other cost pertaining
9 to staff. So, we're happy to provide you with like
10 the percent breakout by title. I don't have that
11 with me today. I have in total the amount that was--
12 that was expended in personnel costs in connection to
13 TPA. I'm happy to provide that breakout to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: That would
15 yes. So that would be helpful. Not just that it's
16 helpful, but is necessary because I--

17 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --still don't
19 have a clear understanding of how the time is
20 allocated to justify the amount of funding that NYCHA
21 receives for the administration especially when we
22 just hear so many like concerns of when they call
23 NYCHA in order to get assistance or have some kind of
24 follow-up or feedback, there's no response. You
25 know, we've--I've--we've heard from several residents

2 where they would make a call, and no one returns the
3 call, and I know that as a Council Member I receive—
4 I'm bcc'd on a lo of emails and copied on a lot of
5 emails that are back and forth between Resident
6 Engagement asking for assistance with different
7 vendors or proposals or bills, and-and it's—the email
8 that you see is, you know, you have not responded
9 yet, and now I'm copying my Council Member. And so,
10 if you are doing this particular work, we should be
11 able to see exactly how much time is allocated per
12 employee for the TPA process so that we can have a
13 clear understanding.

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I'm happy to provide
15 that breakout, but I just also want to reiterate a
16 lot of this work is happening in our coordinators and
17 their role that is—which is locally based, and so on
18 a weekly basis they're reaching out to their TAs.
19 They are regularly meeting with them. They're
20 assisting them with the process. So, there were
21 tenants that you heard today. We've discussed, you
22 know, my coordinator came out to my development and
23 helped upload receipts. We are hosting 30 meetings
24 per month going through these topics, and so there is
25 lots of hands—direct assistance that's being offered

2 by our staff as well as the back end administrative
3 function. So, we're happy to provide you with that
4 breakout.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, thank
6 you. So, moving on, there were references made to,
7 you know, HUD being like the-the-the organization
8 that guides this whole process, but then we also
9 heard that NYCHA has its own policies and-and
10 regulations and restrictions. So, can you explain to
11 us the difference between what HUD actually mandates
12 related to the money, and what extra restrictions
13 NYCHA put in place?

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm. Sure. So, each
15 housing authority has to adopt-should adopt a policy
16 based HUD regulations, and so we are expected to
17 adopt the policy. Our policy is consistent with the
18 regulations. So, with respect to additional
19 restrictions, there-there are no restrictions in
20 terms of eligibility or expenditures that conflict or
21 are different than what has been outlined in the
22 regulation. The process is outlined by the PHA,
23 which HUD does not specify process, and that is the-
24 what's reflected in our policy. [background
25 comments]

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. So, can
3 you give us an example of if the policy is written
4 but NYCHA just has to interpret the policy, can you
5 explain to us how you may interpret one of the
6 policies?

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, when we—we
8 use proposals in order to evaluate the resident's
9 locations requests based on the HUD criteria. So,
10 HUD has a list of do's and don'ts or ineligible and
11 eligible activities and that's actually verbatim in
12 our Guidebook. We also use the PHI Notice to inform
13 our Guidebook. So, if there is a resident
14 association making a request, we will review their
15 proposal relative to what the—what is in the
16 Guidebook to make a determination. So, our policy is
17 consistent with what has been outlined by HUD as
18 eligible and ineligible, and our review process is
19 using the proposals to review.

20 [background comments/pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, we'll
22 have to come back to that because we just have some
23 questions about the actual eligibility—eligibility
24 restrictions that NYCHA does not impose. However,
25 there seems to be just some serious problems and

2 restrictions that are coming from NYCHA, and so we
3 just want to like—I'm going to just kind of figure
4 that out.

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, just to give—if it's
6 helpful, just to give some context. As I mentioned
7 in my testimony, we received over 1,500 proposals
8 last year. Only 28 proposals were rejected, and so
9 the vast majority of proposals that we receive are
10 approved. Of the proposals we receive, 59 were
11 initially rejected, 31 were resubmitted based on the
12 guidance that was offered by NYCHA. 28 were
13 ultimately rejected due to ineligibility. So, 4% of
14 the proposals that we received have a conditional
15 rejection, and then 2% are actually rejected. The
16 majority of proposals that we receive are eligible,
17 are within the guidelines, the training, the
18 technical assistance is proving to be effective on
19 NYCHA's end we are working with TAs to make sure that
20 the proposals that they submit are ultimately
21 accepted.

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. I'm
23 going to go back and forth between my questions, but
24 I know that we've been here for two hours, and so I'm
25 going to allow my colleagues to interject with their

2 questions. I will go back and forth. So, the first
3 question will come from Council Member Ruben Diaz,
4 Senior followed buy Council Member Ayala.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you, Madam
6 President. Good morning, Ms. Sherman and ladies and
7 gentlemen. What is the purpose of the TPA?

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, TPA funds should be
9 used for activities that support a positive quality
10 of life, within the developments. They can include
11 self-sufficiency activities, community building
12 activities, organizing, outreach.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: And the TPA
14 President is supposed to be the eyes, ears and voice
15 of-of-of NYCHA?

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes. So, the-the funds
17 are allocated through our Resident Council who are
18 the local organized body on the ground who would best
19 know how to use employment (sic) development.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, the best person
21 to know what's going on in the development would be
22 the TA President.

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Agreed.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: They-they-they will
25 know more than NYCHA.

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So the people who live
3 in a community are—are the experts. So, our
4 expectation is if you—if you--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: [interposing] No,
6 what I'm saying is if something happens in the
7 development, a problem happens, the TA President—I
8 assume, and I assume that that the—the TA President
9 will know more than NYCHA was doing?

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, we regularly seek
11 information from our resident associations that are
12 on the ground.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, when—so when
14 something happens, NYCHA comes forward, the TA
15 President or NYCHA doesn't give the TA President that
16 credit?

17 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I'm sorry. Can you with
18 NYCHA?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: If something
20 happened in the development, a tragedy, a problem or
21 something, NYCHA will consult the TA President before
22 taking action? [background comments]

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Be quiet please.

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I'm sorry. I don't--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I'm saying—I'm
3 saying what kind of response—what kind of
4 responsibility NYCHA believes the TA President has or
5 does NYCHA give credit to them or no just there are
6 there like--?

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I'm—I'm unclear
8 about—about your question, but the—the expenditure of
9 TPA funds is driven by the Tenant Association.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: No, my question is—

11 SIDEYA SHERMAN: They decide what best
12 for their community.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Yes, I could—I
14 could ask my question again. TA presidents are there
15 to help NYCHA and to be consulted. When something
16 happens to NYCHA we have the clear picture most—more
17 or less of what's going on. Yes or no?

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes, that's the role of
19 the Resident Association.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, if something
21 happens. NYCHA will consult the TA President?

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I—I would need an—
23 I'm—I'm unclear what you're asking me.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: [laughter] I don't
3 know what I'm asking. For example—for example, let
4 me—we have a problem in the Bronx.

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: This week there was
7 a problem. A person by the name of Ben Banito
8 Martinez. He's he was 99 who was kicked out of is
9 Bronx apartment by careless NYCHA person. A 70—a 72-
10 year-old man was not only evicted from his home of 14
11 years, but all of his personal important possessions
12 were thrown into the garbage. Did you know about the
13 case?

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I do.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Okay, before NYCHA
16 took the action o throwing Mr. Bienvenido Martinez
17 out, did NYCHA consult with the TA President of the-
18 the development and ask, did you know about this
19 person? Do you know what happened?

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I can't speak to
21 the—the steps involved in that case and, you know, we
22 certainly find it to be regrettable and are working
23 to make sure that—that he's—that we're taking care of
24 him. I can't speak to those situations that--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: [interposing] My
3 question is how many more Mr. Bienvenido Martinez.
4 We have to all the city of New York because doesn't
5 take the time to consult the TA President: What's
6 going on? Do you know something about it before
7 taking action? What I'm-my concern is do we have
8 the TA President, we have the TA Association. What-
9 what do have in there to-what do we have them there
10 if they are not consulting? NYCHA just don't-don't
11 care about them. Let me take on already. TA
12 Presidents they have a room right? They-they have
13 plenty of room. So, in our community, we would like
14 to have a room with the TA President of the TA
15 meeting or TA Association should-would like to have a
16 nice room, clean, something. So, if they spend money
17 that happened to Ms. Monique Johnson, if they from
18 that development, if they spend money to fix their
19 office, to be that-their room, however they are able
20 to put the water or whatever, what is being
21 investigated? Why is she being investigated for
22 that? Why is she being accused of something?
23 Because-because if she's doing something for the
24 development or for the association to have a nice
25 room, a nice place?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, so I mean I can't
3 speak to specific to that, and that would DOI who is
4 the investigating party, not NYCHA. I can speak
5 broadly to tenant association spaces, and so we are
6 required to the extent available to provide spaces
7 for resident associations to convene. They should be
8 in good condition. So if there are day-to-day repair
9 issues, they would work with their property manager
10 to-to address that. That usually happens at the local
11 level and that--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: [interposing] I
13 just want-I just and want to say lastly, I would like
14 to say this The NYCHA President and NYCHA
15 association they are volunteers. They don't get
16 paid. They give their time to help NYCHA and to
17 other residents to have a good relationship and to
18 get the feedback-to get the feedback they need. Why
19 NYCHA doesn't-doesn't think-doesn't see that? Why
20 NYCHA can say, oh, yeah, they-they did it to help me?
21 They have to help us. Why are we here and they-yeah,
22 they, and-and don't give them what they need so they
23 could help larger because I think that's what NYCHA
24 take into consideration. They are trying-they are
25 volunteers, and-and give them the resources and-and

2 don't put so many problems for them to get the
3 resources. I think that we—our people would look—
4 would do better and—and—and the TA president and the
5 TA—the TA Association would do better. Do you agree?
6 Well, my—my—I ask—my question to you is why don't you
7 NYCHA giver more respect and more consideration and
8 more credit to people that are volunteers, I mean
9 giving their time trying to help our—our residents?
10 Why don't you give more credit to them? I mean they—
11 they deserve that at least, and that's my question.

12 [background comments]

13 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, did you want me to
14 respond to that or--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Yes.

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I would say, Council
17 Member I share your respect with resident
18 associations and agree that they are volunteers.
19 They work hard in their community. Some of the most,
20 you know, passionate, dedicated New Yorkers I've met
21 have been NYCHA resident associations, and so the
22 process that we put in placed was designed to make
23 sure that accessing funds was easier, and—and we are
24 seeing the results. So, the majority of requests
25 that come in are approved, and the majority of

2 resident associations are using the Commercial Card
3 to draw down and make purchases more quickly.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Why did the TA
5 President testified this morning?

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I was here. I-I
8 have been listening. They are all complaining most
9 more-more about the same. So, if you don't think that
10 that-that their testimony wasn't worth anything, I
11 mean they say help us. Please. Not a word but help
12 us. You are kidding I wanted to say. (sic) I don't
13 know.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you. One
15 minute Council Member. How many resident
16 associations are recognized right now?

17 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, we have 245
18 recognized associations.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, and--

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: What was that?

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Recognized
22 associations. [background comments] You mentioned
23 that NYCHA received about 1,500 proposals, right?

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And if that's
3 245 recognized resident associations, that's an
4 average of about six proposals for the year.

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Right?

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yeah, I mean there's a
8 range from association, yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: That's not a
10 lot of proposals, and it's not a lot of work related
11 to the proposals when we're talking about \$1.5
12 million in administrative work, right, and then when
13 said 30 of them were rejected, it was, you know, and
14 it was 1,500 and you—you compared that to just 30,
15 but when you look at the number of actual resident
16 associations, the numbers just don't really add up,
17 and so, it would be helpful again to be able to get a
18 list of the—how the funds are actually used because
19 six proposals, 5, 6 proposals is just not a lot of
20 proposals when we're talking about 245 developments.
21 I mean an association. So, we'll come back to that.
22 Council Member Ayala. Sorry about that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: [laughter]

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: It was in my head.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: She answered my
3 question, but I—this is one of the things that I—I
4 mean one of the issues that I hear consistently about
5 my resident leaders. They are absolutely not
6 satisfied with this process. They've never been
7 happy with the process. They felt like they were
8 excluded from conversations. They felt like they
9 were being told what they had to do. They were never
10 asked if they wanted to participate. It doesn't
11 appear based on—on what I'm hearing today that HUD
12 actually mandates this specific program. Right, this
13 is a policy that NYCHA instituted. Is there—I mean
14 based on everything that you've heard today, is NYCHA
15 willing to go back and re-engage? Because it's
16 pretty evident that enough people are dissatisfied,
17 and enough people feel like they're not being heard
18 that a conversation needs to be had, and I think that
19 the fact that we continue to bypass that is our—is-is
20 a reflection of exactly what the residents are saying
21 here today that they are not being heard because if
22 enough people are telling me, Council Member, I don't
23 like the way that you're doing something, then I have
24 to stop and readjust, and I have to rethink how I'm
25 doing things because I want to make sure that I'm

2 representing my constituency correctly. So, what is
3 NYCHA ready—you know, like has there been any
4 internal conversations about maybe revamping this
5 system? Is there an opt out, you know, an option for
6 those resident leaders who don't want to participate.
7 As you heard today, even my elderly they had
8 difficulties even navigating new electronic system.
9 So what does that look like internally for NYCHA?

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, we're always
11 happy to community engage and go back to the table.
12 That's—that's for sure. Just to take a step back,
13 the—the way this process was reformed actually
14 started with resident focus groups. So, there are
15 11 focus groups of resident leaders across the city.
16 They provided input on not only what they wanted to
17 see change with respect to tenant participation, but
18 the other ways in which NYCHA engaged resident
19 associations. What we heard was people wanted to
20 have more visibility on their funding. The process
21 that NYCHA had where we procured every single good
22 and service on their behalf was not working, and they
23 wanted to make sure that they had a way to access
24 funding, but that it was not—people were concerned
25 about having cash, right, and NYCHA as well, but

2 certainly tenant associations having access to watch
3 some of the cash. And so the process that we've put
4 in place was the Commercial Card because it was the
5 most responsive to what we heard from resident
6 associations where NYCHA was for many years procuring
7 goods and services with the same supply chain system
8 that we used to procure refrigerators, and stoves,
9 right. So, very inefficient systems for what are
10 usually very small purchases. We also know that
11 having a cash based system for allocating millions of
12 dollars was not effective or safe for resident
13 associations, as well as NYCHA. And so the
14 Commercial Card was introduced to really solve for
15 that problem. We have implemented it over an eight-
16 over a year and a half actually. So, there was not
17 an immediate-immediate switch to the Commercial Card.
18 It's been over a year and a half that we've rolled in
19 the process, and it's not complete. So about 78% of
20 tenant associations are using the card. We still
21 have a remainder of associations that we're looking
22 to bring onto the card by the fall.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: [interposing] So
24 how many-how many resident associations are in the
25 system?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: 78%.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: And, now do you
4 keep track of how many really felt like they were
5 being forced to—to sign the agreement? Because it—
6 it, you know, based on your testimony, it sounds
7 like, you know, people were hunky dory, you know,
8 signing onto this agreement, but the reality is that
9 a lot of people felt like they were told if you don't
10 sign the agreement, you're not going to get any
11 money. There will not be family day, there will not
12 be activities. Nothing is going to happen in your
13 development. That was the message that was being
14 conveyed. Maybe that's not what you intended, but
15 that's what I—I was hearing, and I-I get that it's
16 take a year and a half, but I think that it's taken a
17 year and a half because there's been a lot of
18 pushback. So, out of the 78% that are in the system,
19 how many of those resident leaders willingly said,
20 you know, what, this is the process that really
21 worked for me. I'm really excited about it. I'm
22 going to go in and how many of them were told, you
23 know what? If you don't sign up, you're not going to
24 get your money, which is why we still have resident

2 associations that haven't seen a penny after this
3 rollout two years later.

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, during this period
5 the Commercial Card has still been a choice, and so
6 as people come into the system, they're doing so by
7 their choice, and as we've worked with resident
8 associations when they've found their, you know,
9 neighbor who is using the card, usually that is the
10 person that has brought them along and—and they have
11 expressed an interest in the card. We also have had
12 instances where an entire cluster within a specific
13 zone of ours will start to use the card, and they'll
14 get trained together, and support each other through
15 the process, and so, it has still been a choice and
16 the agreement reflects that it is a choice until we
17 move into a 100% process.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I'm being told
19 that resident leaders have until June I believe to
20 sign on if they want to see money, and they're—
21 they're not even—now they don't even have the option
22 because last year it was like if you don't sign, you
23 simply don't get your money, and now it's like this
24 year 2019, by—by June, whatever date, you know, is

2 set, you will be signing onto this agreement whether
3 you like it or not.

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, just there's two
5 separate questions rolled in there. So, one is you're
6 required to have a funding agreement to access
7 funding whether you use the Commercial Card or not.
8 That's a HUD requirement. The tool to access your
9 funding has been a choice using the Commercial Card
10 until—and yes, our goal is this summer to have 100%
11 utilization of the card so that we're not managing C
12 Systems where NYCHA is still procuring meeting
13 refreshments through what is a very inefficient
14 process. And so during that—the rollout of the
15 Commercial Card, we did in the initial pilot phase of
16 survey around 80 tenant associations who were like
17 the first group in the card, and some of what we
18 heard is certainly consistent with what we heard
19 today, and it—it reflects the changes that we're
20 looking to make when we move fulling into the new
21 process. So, the receipts are required to be
22 uploaded in 72 hours. We're looking and that
23 requires some adjustment with departments other than
24 ours as well as the bank to make that into a 7-day
25 process. We're also looking to eliminate the

2 requirement for proposals for a number of activities
3 that we consider routine, and this is where we're
4 looking to get more guidance from HUD as-as to
5 whether that will still satisfy the requirements, but
6 that will make the process much easier. So, if you
7 just set your refreshment budget for the year, you
8 have that amount available on the card. There's no
9 need to come back to us until next year when you set
10 your budget. So, there's ways in which we are
11 looking to make the process more efficient, but
12 between the choices of NYCHA procuring everything or
13 NYCHA outlines tasks, having a card based system is
14 what we consider to be the most efficient, and also--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: [interposing] Is
16 this the most efficient for the residents, or is it
17 the most efficient for NYCHA?

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: The majority of
19 residents, again, when we surveyed them during the
20 process, their-the-the-the-of the things that they
21 liked about the card, they expressed that it was
22 convenient. Around 60% said that it was much more
23 convenient, and also that they could buy local. Like
24 they're not limited to vendors that do business with
25 NYCHA, which is something that we heard so--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: [interposing] I-I
3 appreciate the intent. I really do. I think that a
4 lot of our systems are really antiquated and that we
5 need to, you know, modernize. I get that. I just-I
6 really strongly feel that, you know, resident leaders
7 many of whom I represent that are here today, have
8 been excluded from a true conversation about the
9 pathway for really doing that in a way that is
10 reflective of the needs of all of the resident
11 leaders, and that what may work for you, may not work
12 for me. That may work for one development, doesn't
13 necessarily work for the other. I have a lot of
14 concerns about this-this transition. I have been,
15 you know, attempting. I think, you know, even
16 through-through my former-my predecessor, you know,
17 there were many conversations we had back and forth
18 about this agreement, and so I don't want to
19 monopolize so much the time because my colleagues
20 have been waiting. But I really do hope that, you
21 know, the outcome of today's hearing is that NYCHA
22 really truly listens to the concerns that were raised
23 hear today and come back, you know, with a-with some
24 sort of action plan that is a little bit reflective
25 of those concerns. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

3 Council Member Gibson. [background comments]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you, Chair.

5 Thank you. Good afternoon, Ms. Sherman. Good
6 afternoon. Thank you so much for coming and I want
7 to certainly acknowledge and recognize all of our
8 resident leaders that came from all across the city
9 for coming here today. I know it's not easy to come
10 to City Hall, but we really appreciate a lot of the
11 input, and just for your understanding, I represent a
12 number of developments in the Bronx, particularly
13 Forest, McKinley, Webster, Butler, Morris Highbridge,
14 Sedgwick, Claremont Parkway and Claremont
15 Consolidated, and I remember when this program was
16 rolled out just a few years ago and, you know,
17 honestly I am amazed that so much has been done with
18 so little input from tenants. This has been to me a
19 virtual nightmare, and I really, really am
20 sympathetic to NYCHA, and I understand this is a-a
21 task that you have had to implement under, you know,
22 HUD regulations, and HUD guidelines. But this just
23 was flawed from the beginning, and so I just have a
24 couple of questions just to better understand because
25 most of the feedback, and I'm speaking just on behalf

2 of myself. My colleagues can speak on their behalf,
3 but most of the City Council's involvement in this
4 process of the TPA program has really been because
5 we've demanded it. NYCHA did not come to the City
6 Council early on, and even engage the Council
7 members. I came to NYCHA when I got a slew of
8 complaints and concerns from all of resident leaders
9 across my district. And so, just even in that
10 regard, we have a communication problem between the
11 City Council and housing, and that has to change.
12 So, under HUD regulation, up to 40% of the TPA
13 program NYCHA is allowed to take for administrative
14 purposes. Correct?

15 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So, that means
17 that NYCHA can make a decision to not take up to 40%
18 of the administrative costs? Is that correct?

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So, at any given
21 time if NYCHA decides to take less than 40%, would
22 that money in turn go back to the TPA program for the
23 resident associations?

24

25

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, NYCHA just—two
3 points. So, NYCHA doesn't have a choice in terms of
4 carrying out its obligations.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-hm.

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: One of the few mandates
7 that we have is actually funded, and so we use the
8 funding to support the work that we do at NYCHA
9 relative to not only TPA, but elections and a number
10 other responsibilities that we have. We exceed the
11 amount allocated to us in the work that we do because
12 it involves departments far beyond resident
13 engagement. That being said, if we were to—if we
14 were discussing this at a time when resident
15 associations were inadequately funded and not rolling
16 over funds, I think that would be a very different
17 thin, but resident associations by and large
18 extending their—their current allocation, but still
19 have rollover allocations available to them. I think
20 secondly we are looking to use some of our—our TPA
21 funding to support bringing on providers that can
22 offer assistance to some of the smaller resident
23 associations where we see that they are—are not as
24 consistently spending money. So, I think the work
25 that we—the way that we would use our funds will

2 continue to be in service of tenant participation
3 funds and resident associations, and whether it's
4 directly using to support the--the work at NYCHA or
5 using some of our administrative allocation with
6 third-party groups, it would in service of the
7 program.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and the
9 reason why I asked I think because it would seem to
10 me that Housing should be doing everything possible
11 to ensure that we maximize funds for resident
12 associations, and essentially, the administrative
13 costs that we're talking about, the \$1.5 million is
14 the 40% of the overall number. The staff that you
15 talked about and alluded to, the Resident Advisory
16 Board, the local coordinators and the 14 FTE staff
17 you talked about are NYCHA employees today. And so,
18 there's a portion of their salary that is being
19 subsidized by the TPA firms, correct?

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: This is our operating
21 subsidy.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: It is allocated for
24 this--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing] But
3 no I'm—I'm accurate in that statement?

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Absolutely.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, okay. So,
6 and I guess the reason why I'm asking that is because
7 I understand that in the change and the shifting of
8 this program, we're trying to streamline the process
9 better, but where I'm getting most of the concern
10 and—and the feedback and a lot of the inquiry is that
11 if the resident associations do not sign up for this
12 particular agreement, and just to speak on the
13 agreement, you reference Legal Aid and—and the City
14 Council and others that were involved. We did that
15 because we were getting so many complaints about the
16 language in the agreement, and so I—I recognize that,
17 you know, NYCHA is taking credit for including the
18 City Council and Legal Aid, but let's understand
19 that's only because we demanded to be a part of this
20 process because we were excluded in the beginning,
21 And so, I understand and I'm thankful for Legal Aid,
22 and I'm thankful for the City Council, but this
23 process could have happened better at the start if
24 NYCHA recognized that you have partners in the
25 resident associations as well as the City Council,

2 and so we're here talking about this for a reason.
3 Because there was truly a fundamental level of flaw
4 that happened in this process to begin with. So, the
5 staff that we're talking about whose salary is
6 subsidized by the TPA program, what I'm trying to
7 understand is with all—with the proposals that you
8 received the 1,5000, what is the timeframe? Because
9 lot of the issues that we're getting is timeliness
10 and expediting payments and agreement approvals. So,
11 what is the average time frame that your office
12 handles all of the proposals that you're receiving?

13 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, just to take
14 a step back in terms of our staff and our involvement
15 in TPA, right. So, our goal is the same—is the same
16 as yours. It is to see this money benefit residents
17 and improve quality of life at developments, and
18 that's the work that we're doing, and it—again, it
19 doesn't only involve the reside engagement teams, but
20 many other NYCHA departments. In terms of the
21 proposal submission process, the proposals go into a
22 central box. It's reviewed by staff for like a first
23 round of eligibility. That response is usually
24 within 72 hours. It then moves into our internal
25 system. It is—and—and the—the proposals were—is

2 approved from thereafter. If it is a something
3 simple like meeting refreshments or a stipend for
4 instance, it would—that—that approval process
5 wouldn't through very quickly. If it is something
6 that is more involved like 1014 (sic) or there's
7 supporting documentation needed, there could be a lot
8 of back and forth with he tenant association if we
9 don't have the materials needed. Once the program—it
10 is approved, if you have the Commercial Card the
11 expenditure is automatic. Your—the funding is made
12 available. You can expend. I think where we have
13 delays is when NYCHA is in charge of procuring
14 thereafter and that could—you—typically that's 30
15 days post approval. So, the process can be lengthy,
16 which is one of the many reasons why we introduced
17 the card so that if you submit your proposal, you're
18 approve and the goal of that if you are a resident
19 association and use the Commercial Card process, you
20 submit all of your proposals for the quarter. Once
21 that's approved, that amount of money is available on
22 your card. There's no need to return to a proposal
23 approval with NYCHA until the next quarter.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Have you looked
25 so far at all the proposals you received to look at

2 trends? So if there are consistent proposals that
3 are being sent to you from the RAs, does that lessen
4 the timeframe or does it lessen the possibility of
5 duplication? Does the resident association still
6 have to submit another proposal even though it was
7 something that was already submitted in the previous
8 quarter because they're having consistent meeting if
9 it's trainings, or if it's OSHA or any other
10 certification programs, do you look at patterns that
11 that RAs have been submitting in terms of proposals?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: We do. So—so that's part
13 of one of the things that I—I mentioned where there
14 are certain types of proposals that we want to
15 eliminate. So, HUD requires that we have
16 justifications for the expenditures, and we have had
17 discussions and reviews with HUD where they, you
18 know, were—were interested in like specific
19 information about how funds were expended by resident
20 association, and so we want to make sure that we have
21 that level of justification, but that is easier for
22 residents. So, based on the trends that we see,
23 we're looking to remove the proposal requirement from
24 most small purchases, and so this is refreshments,
25 telephone, things that are pretty consistent where we

2 feel that the budget is sufficient to justify the
3 expenditure. Where we've seen challenges are
4 proposals for consulting services, out-of-town travel
5 in particular. And so, last year we issued tip
6 sheets to resident associations, which really pulled
7 out from the Guidebook that pain points that—that we
8 consistently see with those proposals, and offer
9 specific guidance around how to make those proposals
10 align with the regulations, and also where the
11 activity of explicitly ineligible that we're offering
12 a clear justification as to why. So, those are two--
13 based on what we've seen, those are two areas where
14 we either offered more guidance, and more technical
15 assistance, or where we're looking to make a change,
16 and that change would be to actually eliminate the
17 proposals altogether.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and for the
19 resident associations that have not yet signed an
20 agreement, and I understood what you're saying in
21 terms of HUD requires that an agreement is in place,
22 but I also believe that if you are, you know, holding
23 TPA funds hostage, and you're telling tenant
24 associations that in order for you to receive, you
25 know, your TPA funds, you have to sign onto this

2 commercial card. I mean that's coercion. That's a
3 sign of force, and it's, you know, a lot of the
4 tenant associations that have already signed on, it's
5 not like many of them felt like they did it
6 willingly. They felt like they had not other
7 opportunity, they had no other choice, and so my
8 question is: How are we preparing to get other TAs
9 either online or what are we doing to make sure that
10 we can fix a lot of the discrepancies that have been
11 talked about today that your office is very well
12 aware of to make this program actually successful? I
13 don't imagine that we're going to start from scratch,
14 but if we can tweak the system and make it better, is
15 that something that NYCHA is prepared to do?

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, again, we're always,
17 this is a continued improvement upon the process.
18 We're always willing to have those conversations with
19 residents, and address those concerns, as well as we
20 are happy to come back to you around, you know,
21 specific items in your district to—to talk to those
22 as well, too. I will just add that, you know, prior
23 to this reform process, TPA funds were kept at
24 district level. There was—there was very little
25 visibility for resident associations, and the general

2 public around those funds. That has changed. We
3 also had a process that required NYCHA to procure
4 every single good and service. That has change as
5 well. We have resident who are engaged in the
6 process who are using these—the allocation to make
7 positive changes in their development, and last year
8 residents largely maximized their annual allocation.
9 So their portion of the funds were almost fully
10 extended, and that's a big change from the way the
11 funding has been allocated in the past. So, this is
12 a continue improvement upon the process, and for the
13 remaining resident associations that are not on the
14 card, that is the work that we're doing now is the
15 one on one assistance to be able to introduce the
16 program and help them come on board.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: My last question
18 before I turn it back to our Chair. With every
19 resident associations' timing the TPA agreement they
20 assume all responsibility and all liability for the
21 usage of the Commercial Card. So, if there are
22 missing documentations of missing vouchers or any
23 sorts of receipts, what's-what role does NYCHA play?
24 Are we putting the entire responsibility of this card

2 on the resident associations because they have signed
3 this agreement?

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, NYCHA is physically
5 conveyor (sic) of the funds. (sic) We are ultimately
6 responsible for the funds. It is—that is the reason
7 that we also have to have accountability measures in
8 place if we're disaggregating among hundreds of
9 resident associations. So as a resident association,
10 you are responsible for making sure that you're
11 spending your funds in the guidelines in the proposal
12 that has been approved, which you presented to NYCHA.
13 You're also responsible for making sure that there
14 are receipts for your expenditures. The tolls that
15 we have available really are focused on supporting
16 people through the process. So, if you have not
17 uploaded your receipt, we are calling you to identify
18 where the receipts are. If there are concerns about
19 using the system, you heard examples today of what
20 our staff have gone out to the development and sat in
21 the office with you to help you upload the documents
22 that you need. If you were submitting a proposal, and
23 it doesn't meet the HUD criteria, the reason why
24 we're sending it back to you is so that you are
25 adding the information so that you are presenting an

2 eligible proposal. So, our role is to work in
3 partnership with the association to make sure that
4 they are used in accordance with the guidelines, but
5 yes both parties are certainly accountable, which is
6 why we put systems in place to support resident
7 association around their expenditures.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. My final
9 comment. I know we need to keep the hearing moving.
10 I really appreciate the work that really honestly has
11 been undertaken. I think there's a lot more work
12 that needs to be done. Generally speaking, I am not
13 satisfied at where we have, you know, been in terms
14 of where we are today. I do not think that NYCHA
15 should take a full 40% for administrative. I think
16 you should look at lowering that amount and giving
17 more back to the tenants, and the reason I say that
18 is because my colleagues and I every single year when
19 we pass a budget here at this City Council, we give
20 our tenants associations money directly to the
21 tenants associations. And so, the less you give
22 them, the more they come and ask us, and again, I'm
23 happy to support my tenants associations, but what I
24 am not going to do is allow NYCHA to continue to take
25 money that could essentially go to the resident

2 associations. And so, I would ask you again—I don't
3 know if this is possible, but it's something to
4 consider. NYCHA does not need to take a full 40%.
5 We're talking about NYCHA staff that is already
6 salaried coming from NYCHA and that money could
7 simply be used to help our tenant associations.
8 Coupled with all of the things I generally know my
9 tenants associations are doing, and I'm asked all the
10 time, all the time to support a number of events, and
11 where I can, I do, but I'm not a bank. I don't have
12 it all. I help support, but I can't foot the bill,
13 and I think NYCHA should really do more to make sure
14 that you can maximize the funds that you do get, and
15 also look at how you can give the tenants
16 associations a little bit more to make sure that
17 they're doing more to provide basic services for the
18 tenants that they represent. So, that's just my two
19 cents in this conversation, and I'll turn it back
20 over to the Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you. I
22 have two quick questions before we go to Council
23 Member Menchaca. How many developments do not
24 currently have a resident association, and what is
25 the current plan to get them running?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, we have 37
3 developments without active representation so that
4 means that they—there is no tenant association at all
5 or there's a tenant association that is not
6 recognized at this time. Right, they may have missing
7 officers or be—or we actually have an election
8 process underway right now with 37 developments. So,
9 some of them are in that election process as we
10 speak. So, there—there's a mix. When we started this
11 process there were around 20 plus developments that
12 did not have representation. We're down to now only
13 12. These are a lot of our small scattered sites.
14 So, part of the plan there, and I mentioned this
15 earlier, is we are looking to see where after we
16 really finish what has been an administrative
17 transformation is to really focus more on the
18 programmatic, and that includes bringing in partners
19 who can assist those small developments either
20 informing a tenant association or leading with a
21 participatory process for residents who live in those
22 buildings so that they make use of the funds. Some
23 of these developments are rehabs that could be
24 connected to their quote/unquote "parent
25 association." So, those are some of the strategies

2 that we're looking at there, and the other
3 associations are developments where the association
4 exists, but they may be not recognized at this time
5 either because they're going through an election or
6 they have a vacancy or a number—a number of items.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
8 Have any of these developments been without an
9 association for a considerable amount of time?

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, the—the 12 for sure.
11 So, these are developments where at least as far as
12 our records show they did not have a history of
13 having a resident association, and there were another
14 12 where is one now, and so some of these are those
15 non-established long-term non-established are in our
16 current election cycle as we speak, and these are
17 again a lot of the small rehabs.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, and
19 another quick follow-up is about the out-of-town
20 travel. You said you saw some trends, and there's
21 been some—just some experiences, and you're working
22 on that policy. Can you just give us an example of
23 what are some of the problems that you see with out-
24 of-town travel?

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, I—when we're
3 reviewing the proposal for out-of-town travel, we
4 want to—want to make sure and HUD requires this that
5 there's a compelling justification for the resident
6 association and travel outside of its jurisdiction.
7 So, if it's a service or consultant that can offer
8 the program locally, that should be the first course
9 of action. If it's something that needs to be out of
10 town because there's—there's—there is a compelling
11 justification, the resident association would need to
12 provide that. We would also seek to ensure that the
13 resident association has provided broad access so
14 that the out-of-town travel has been advertised to
15 residents within the community that the participants
16 are different over the years, and that there's more
17 participation from the membership. And so, we've
18 given that guidance to resident associations as those
19 proposals come in, and they've either gone back and
20 modified or—or have also moved to hosting the
21 workshop that they're interested in. For instance
22 locally, which also would allow for more—more
23 residents to participate.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Just for
25 purposes of—of, you know, something that we see on an

2 annual basis, can you give us an example of let's say
3 the residents go to Albany for the caucus. On an
4 annual basis they go up to Albany the month of
5 February, are there any issues that are related to
6 that particular out-of-town travel to Albany for the
7 Legislative conferences, and can you explain to us
8 what those issues are or if there are no issues?

9 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes. So, I mean as the--

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
11 It's just an example to give us something that we
12 actually that we would actually be on a consistent
13 basis.

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yep. So, that's not
15 something that could be offered locally. So, our
16 conferences like low-income housing conference.
17 People, you know, go there a lot as well. I think
18 the-the important item would be to make sure the
19 proposal is submitted within enough time for NYCHA to
20 review. In the past, NYCHA essentially performed all
21 of the travel arrangements for resident associations,
22 and so now with the Commercial Cards they can very
23 quickly make those arrangements themselves. There
24 may be certain items with the conference agenda that
25 aren't permissible base on the HUD Guidelines, but

2 that is a perfectly permissible expense. Again, we
3 want to see that the resident associations has had a
4 process to select who's attending, and has opened
5 that up to—to the community and the, you know, they
6 are bringing what they've learned back to their local
7 association.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, thank
9 you. Council Member Menchaca.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,
11 Chair. Thank you, Ms. Sherman and Mr. Pristin for
12 being here today. I—I think my colleagues have done
13 a god job of—of—of kind of unveiling some of the
14 bigger questions, and so what I want to do is—is ask
15 some specific questions on the accountability side,
16 and there was a number that was thrown out of \$5
17 million that was lost between the—2000 and 2005, and
18 can you comment on that, and—and where those funds
19 are, what happened, and what your office has kind of
20 received in terms of that allegation or loss of
21 information for TPA funds.

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes, so, I'm—I'm not
23 able to speak to that specific allegation. I can
24 give you and overview of how the funds were
25 reallocated and—and just what that process was.

2 NYCHA performed a 10-year lookback in 2016 on TPA
3 funds. That was based on everything was in the
4 Authority's bank balance at that time. NYCHA
5 maintains custodial a custodial banking account on
6 behalf of resident associations. That was a 10-year
7 lookback. So, that was 2006. It does not mean that
8 there wasn't funding provided before then. It's just
9 that review period was over those 10 years.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, how much--
11 how much did that lookback reveal in terms of funding
12 that was not allocated and was needing to get re-
13 appropriated?

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure, so, what it really
15 reflected was the-the process, right. So NYCHA's
16 process prior to 2016 was that we allocated funding
17 by district. So, the nine districts across the city
18 adopted--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
20 How many?

21 SIDEYA SHERMAN: The nine--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: The nine?

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --Council Districts at
24 that time adopted a budget annually, and then what
25 remains from that budget was then disaggregated by

2 dwelling units amongst the resident associations that
3 were in their district. The spending was
4 proportional to dwelling unit that—that was
5 identified and the recommendations from our Audit
6 Department was to reallocate the funding by dwelling
7 unit, but to really use the—the formula that HUD has,
8 which is that it starts at the bottom and then—then
9 moves to the top, right. So the funding is now
10 allocated across all of our developments.
11 Developments then opt in to fund their districts, and
12 the funding is closer to where if HUD would determine
13 who the beneficiaries are. So, that—that was really
14 what that was reform process was about, and moving
15 forward it has been allocated at the development
16 level funds.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And I must—I
18 don't know. I was writing. Did I miss the number
19 that—that was out there.

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, it was \$13 million
21 at that time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: \$13 million at
23 that time, and that's what you're talking about in
24 terms of redistributing across the districts. You
25 mentioned nine districts.

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Exactly and so to that
3 point, right, that was \$13 million that had
4 accumulated well over a decade and so where we are
5 now is that we are seeing resident associations. The
6 resident portion of TPA funds for last year was
7 around \$2.3 million. Resident associations spent a
8 little over \$2 million. So, they're—they're almost
9 fully maximizing their annual allocation, which is
10 really a step in the right direction, and so the goal
11 is to really work strategically around how we
12 reallocate those back funds, right, and how we work
13 with resident associations to more strategically plan
14 those funds. And so, you know, I think this also
15 speaks to the Council Member question around NYCHA's
16 portion of the allocation. Resident associations all
17 have funding, and most have funding that has still
18 carried over from—from years prior. Any additional
19 streamlining that we have NYCHA's end with respect to
20 our administrative funds we're looking to use to
21 bring on partners who can offer more technical
22 assistance in extending those prior allocations.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Got it. I'm—
24 I'm still a little confused, and so help me here.
25 So, \$13 million for the 10-year lookback. You've

2 come up with a plan to reduce your refunding to the
3 districts based on tenancy o apartment dwellings
4 per—you're—you're trying to do equity here, and now
5 we're at a spending of about \$2 million to the \$2.3
6 allocated per year so you're saying.

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Uh-hm.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, there's
9 still—there is still a gap of—of funding that is not
10 yet kind of redistributed, and so you're trying to
11 figure out what to do with that?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, it's—it's
13 redistributed. It's not being—well, it's—so every
14 resident association has access to the annual
15 allocation, and all of their rollover funds. I has
16 been redistributed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Got it.

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Every year they get a
19 letter with the amount that's rolled over from the
20 prior year--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great.

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --if any you have.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay. Now I'm
24 getting—now I'm getting more clear, and I think what-
25 what's important and this is something that I-I

2 expect and—and I get often from Red Hook and that's
3 the only Red Hook east and west that I represent, the
4 largest in Brooklyn, the second largest
5 conglomeration of—of apartments in the city. There's
6 a—there's a real true connection to wanting a
7 participatory democracy of transparency—a transparent
8 democracy participatory budgeting has really given a
9 lot of young people a new way of thinking about
10 funding and the transparency around funding. And so,
11 are all those details open to the public?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, yes. So, prior to
13 this reform was to create a more transparent process
14 so for the first time at least in my history at NYCHA
15 or at least from our knowledge, that information is
16 publicly available. It's online. We provide the
17 budget for every single development. If you are a
18 resident of Red Hook, you can go online and find out
19 how much was allocated to your development.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: The annual—the
21 annual and the rollback?

22 SIDEYA SHERMAN: The rollback. You know,
23 the full amount available.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: We are looking to
3 provide spending profiles so that you also have a
4 sense of how that—in large category how that was
5 spent as well, and then again looking to work with
6 partners who could support our participatory process
7 with resident associations or support resident led
8 activities that could focus on some of those prior
9 allocations, but that is available.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great and—and I
11 think the last piece is—and—and I know you've been
12 testifying for a long time. So, I want to continue
13 this conversation and really kind of think about Red
14 Hook as—as a space. This is such a massive project,
15 and the only way we can get through is at a
16 development by development basis and so we want to
17 work with your office to do this, but there was a lot
18 of conversation about—about and—and what I called
19 professionalism or professionalizing, it might have
20 gotten lost in translation, but the idea that—that
21 people should be paid for their work. And a lot of—a
22 lot of what we're doing here is—is—is kind of demoing
23 and requiring certain levels of ability that are—are
24 kind of—could be connected to a sense of—of pay for
25 work. This is—his is work. This is a lot of work,

2 and it's not easy, and so for a volunteer who makes—
3 has to make a decision about going to work, whatever
4 job they have and then coming back and doing this as
5 a side gig, that's unpaid, is—is unfair. And so how—
6 how is NYCHA thinking about this in terms of the 40%
7 administrative to be instead rethought of as—as
8 paying the administration for this from the Council.
9 Is that something that you've been thinking about in
10 terms of the continued reform? And—and then the
11 transparency piece has to kind of be on it. Because
12 once you start paying folks and then everyone has to
13 be held accountable, and then—then we can really put
14 all the accountability in terms of the guidelines,
15 the TPA Guidelines, and—and I'm thinking that's—
16 that's—that's—that's the way into this. That's—
17 that's the way in. That—that brings respect and—and
18 payment for work that's being done for the people's
19 budget. This is a people's budget. This is and—and
20 not a volunteer. This is serious because we're
21 seeing a lot of problems here. So, do you want to
22 comment on that?

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, I agree that,
24 you know, we want to make this process easier. The—
25 the obligations are significant as well just based on

2 the guidelines these are, and I want to emphasize
3 these are operating dollars just like any other
4 operating dollar that comes to NYCHA. They're held
5 to the same procurement requirements, the same
6 fiduciary requirements, and our expectation is not
7 that a resident association is taking that on, and so
8 it is for that reason that NYCHA as many PAJs, have
9 to have to have infrastructure to make sure the
10 funding is administered according to the regulatory
11 framework. That being said, there is a level of
12 accountability that's required with resident
13 associations and our goal is to make that process as
14 easy as possible. If you're a resident association,
15 you have a one-on-one local coordinator who is your
16 point person, and it was—it was pleasing to hear that
17 even those tenant associations have had challenges,
18 have expressed how important their coordinator has
19 been to them that on an annual basis is going through
20 your letter with you, can assist you with your
21 budget, and going through what's required. The
22 Budget is a one-page form. It just outlines
23 categories. Once that is submitted, you would then
24 submit a proposal, which is also a one page form for

2 the activities that you want to do. We're looking
3 to--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
5 Can I

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --eliminate the
7 proposal.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, can I just
9 pause it because--

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] Sure.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --I think—I
12 think what you are saying is—is no that you have a
13 process that's really kind of geared to support a
14 volunteer team. What I'm saying is re-shifting the
15 thinking here, and really—really bringing in the
16 Council as partners paid—paid partners with all the
17 other TPA guidelines like or—kind of resident council
18 guidelines with term limits and like they're—these
19 are—these are jobs. These could be—these could be
20 jobs. These could be—these could be jobs, and I
21 think that's—that's what I'm hearing as an idea that—
22 that I'm—I'm not hearing you say that you're open to.
23 What you're saying is we have a process. We're going
24 to keep supporting. We're going to keep going status

2 quo. We're going to try to make it easier. What I'm
3 saying that's--that's not going to help that--

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, so that's not what
5 I'm saying. I just want to clarify.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: What I'm saying is that
8 we're using our operating funds to support our
9 regulatory requirements. We are also working to make
10 that there a process that is more seamless for
11 resident associations. Resident associations
12 obviously can access stipends, which I know is very
13 different from having a paid job. I-I don't disagree
14 with you--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --on the need to-and-and
17 again, professionalizing that I agree that's not
18 necessarily the best term, but to pay people for
19 their work, I don't disagree with you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

21 SIDEYA SHERMAN: What I'm saying is that
22 the allocation that NYCHA has for administering TPA
23 funds aligns with the requirements that we have not
24 only with TPA funds, but with all of the resident
25 consultation engagement, all of the regulatory

2 requirements that we have within 954. It not only
3 uses resources from within our Resident Engagement
4 Team, it's our Procurement Department, it's our Legal
5 Department, it's our Budget Department, all of who
6 support this process. So that that doesn't change,
7 but I don't disagree with you that there should be
8 ways in which we can allocate resources to really
9 support many emerging leaders. You know, I'm very
10 excited that we have our Resident Leadership Academy,
11 which is offering college credits to leaders in our
12 community who are, you know, professionalizing their
13 work in other ways, but I think it's just two-two
14 different things that we're discussing, but I don't
15 disagree with the statement that you made.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, and maybe
17 we can bring some of that work to Red Hook and maybe
18 do some pilot-pilot projects--

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] Sure.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --and just test
21 things out. I think there's a massive laboratory of
22 possibility for-for experimenting, failing and
23 succeeding. So, let's-let's-let's not create one
24 process for everybody, but-but allow for -for
25 different developments to offer different-different

2 proposals for modernization of the resident
3 associations, and are there any examples of resident
4 modernization and repair committees that are mandated
5 by HUD 964. That's like another example of I think
6 maybe what we're talking about.

7 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, Committees within
8 the association?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yes.

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, off hand, I can't
11 think of—I can't think of any that have formed new
12 committees. We do have our Resident Advisory Board,
13 which is part—which is combined—comprised of resident
14 associations. Who do annually review the capital
15 plan, development plans like that is their role, and
16 so that's a citywide committee within local resident
17 associations. I don't know off hand--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
19 Okay.

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --who's formed those
21 committees?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. There's
23 a lot of energy Red Hook to think differently, and I
24 know some of them are having trouble trying to get
25 information from the presidents, and how do we—how do

2 we ignite more leadership to pay theme for the work,
3 and just bring more people to the table. So, let's
4 keep kind of that together. (sic) Thank you

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

6 Just a quick follow-up before we go to Council Member
7 Treyger. In reference to the \$13 million in unspent
8 funds, Resident Leader Quinones mentioned that she
9 originally had in her—in her development's account
10 \$252,000 and then after the reallocation, it dropped
11 down to \$89,000. So \$252,000 down to \$89,000. So,
12 can you just clarify what the difference is between
13 what was in the developments originally, and then
14 after the \$13 million was reallocated or
15 redistributed, down to \$89,000. So, it would be
16 helpful to know where that number came from with the
17 \$252,000 and what happened.

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. I can't speak to—
19 to the specific number. While Ms. Quinones was
20 speaking, I did quickly look up her balance and it's
21 \$205,000. So that's—that's the balance that we have
22 of—as of today. I will say, you know, in the past
23 NYCHA has this process where funding is allocated by
24 the district, and so the—the—it isn't until 2016 that
25 there is a specific development budget. Douglas is

2 Douglas 1 and Douglas 2 so maybe that's part, right.

3 Douglas 2 I think or one of the developments within

4 the Douglas association, has a smaller balance. It's

5 possible it was reported as only that balance, but

6 it--their--that association has a balance of two

7 developments, and it's over \$200,000.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, are there

9 situations where there are still residents who

10 complain about the fact that prior to the

11 redistribution of the \$13 million, they had a

12 significant amount more, and--and they feel

13 disgruntled or, you know, upset or cheated or feel as

14 though NYCHA stole the money or--or whatever. So, can

15 you--can you speak to--

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --that-

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --or where

20 those numbers came?

21 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure--sure, so again, the

22 funding was allocated by district, which really means

23 that NYCHA tracked it by the nine districts. Resident

24 associations and this--much of this process was easy,

25

2 but my understanding is that resident associations
3 receive what were called approximated budget.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So,
5 approximated meaning that the budgets that they had
6 in front of them or statements that they had the
7 were--

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: [interposing] So, they--
9 they were the--

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: --not the
11 actual budget?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Exactly. So there was a
13 definitive budget for the district. The district
14 adopted whatever that was for the year. What
15 remained was distributed to the residents
16 associations. In some districts their budgets were
17 50% of their local allocations. Some were 20%.
18 There was a range, right, and so the local
19 association received what was an approximated budget.
20 That is part of the reason why there was this reform
21 process. The information that they receive now is
22 directly from our General Ledger, and so that is the
23 balance for the development. Each quarter they get
24 an update. They see encumbrances, rollover, total

2 allocation and that information is reported to them
3 on a regular basis.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, can you
5 explain to us the rollover process in the even a
6 resident association does not spend all of their—what
7 was budgeted in the beginning, and they go into
8 another year. How is that money rolled over? Does
9 it—made within the development? Is it put into an
10 overall account?

11 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So they—so they receive
12 a letter at the beginning of the year with names of
13 the development and the amount that rolled over is in
14 that letter. So, when NYCHA closes its books, the
15 first quarter of the next year, and they would have
16 that—what that total amount is when we close.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And how long
18 will the money roll over if they don't spend all of
19 it on an annual basis?

20 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure, so we, you know,
21 we only have about a year and a half of—of this
22 process underway, and I think in fairness to resident
23 associations, we want to make sure that they continue
24 to have that rollover so that they can move to a
25 place of spending the back loans. I think, you know,

2 in the out years if we get to a place where there is
3 not expenditures or their resident associations that
4 are choosing not to—to spend the funds for whatever
5 reason, the PHA could work directly to support our
6 resident process for allocating the funds, and so,
7 that could be anything from bringing in a group to
8 perform the participatory process to supporting other
9 resident led activities like gardens and youth
10 councils and other activities. But our first
11 priority right now is making sure resident
12 associations have the opportunity to spend what was
13 allocated to them.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, and one
15 last follow-up in reference to the Commercial Card,
16 there's a process where if the resident uses the
17 Commercial Card they have to then upload receipts or
18 well receipts to the system and there's been some
19 discussion about how that could be sort of difficult
20 for seniors. Because NYCHA already tracks the
21 Commercial Card, and was being used and what the
22 funding is being spent on, do you already have the
23 receipt or like the—the statement that you receive
24 from the bank that the Commercial Card was used at

2 this this particular, you know, facility or with this
3 particular vendor, and this was the cost of it?

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, we have where the
5 transaction occurred, but the receipt is not
6 itemized, and so we still need to ensure just as any
7 fiscal practice we need to ensure that the money was
8 spent on what the activity was, and-and-and right.
9 This was not-these are operating funds. They're part
10 of our annual financial audit. So, we still need to
11 have that kind of control in place. The system reads
12 the receipts so that it confirms that there's a
13 match, and where there are some challenges with
14 uploading, scanning our staff has gone around to
15 assist TAs.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, thank
17 you. Council Member Treyger.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you very
19 much, Chair for holding this very important I would
20 say very timely hearing. Welcome NYCHA. Just a
21 couple of follow-up questions and forgive me if I
22 missed some portions of earlier. This-this TPA Fund,
23 it-in your testimony you mentioned that HUD mandates
24 its-in terms of its use. Is that correct? Is it
25 provided? Is this a-a fund that HUD creates a

2 dedicated line of funding for or is this something
3 that NYCHA chooses to optionally create for
4 residents?

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, this is HUD allocate
6 within our—our operating funds. So, within our
7 operating subsidy there is defined set-aside for
8 tenant activities.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right, and
10 because you mentioned that you have 245 active tenant
11 associations. Is that correct?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Does HUD budget
14 for the full portfolio that you have or only budgets
15 for the active portfolio that you have?

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, HUD budgets for the
17 full portfolio. Those 206—45 associations represent
18 around 87% of our portfolio. So, right one
19 association they represent two developments like
20 Queensbridge for instance, Queensbridge South and
21 North, and then the remaining are where we're—we're
22 working to establish associations or working with
23 associations that maybe like a full board or have a
24 restriction to accessing funds because of their
25 compliance.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, what happens
3 if—so HUD gives you funding for your full portfolio.
4 We are acknowledging that some certain—certain
5 complexes for a variety of reasons don't have an
6 active—an active tenant association. What happens
7 with the funds for those buildings?

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, at present time
9 we've—we've allocated funds to those developments,
10 and so--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
12 How?

13 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, they are still—NYCHA
14 is maintaining those—we have a custodial account for
15 the funds. We allocate them by development, and so
16 there are 37 developments where there's either no
17 association, or where there's an association, but
18 we're working to bring them into compliance. So,
19 when they reach that point, we would be able to
20 release the funds. Our funds (sic)process has been
21 underway for about a year and a half. Prior to that
22 there were 24 developments that didn't have an
23 association. We now have 12 that don't have an
24 association, and then the 20 plus or so that are in a
25 status of what we would call inactive.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Well, I mean I
3 have one of those developments, Surfside--

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: --and I don't
6 see any use of or any type of effort to build
7 capacity. Many residents in the building will reach
8 out to me, and they'll become de facto leaders, which
9 I don't mind, and I actually do appreciate, Surfside
10 in Coney Island has been waiting for example years
11 after NYCHA received money to rebuild its Community
12 Center which is still close. Surfside has frequent
13 hot water and heating issues. So, and I've been now
14 a Council Member for over five years. I can't
15 recall a stable association or any efforts to kind of
16 really build capacity there, and so I am questioning
17 where the money went? How it's being used? I'm also
18 curious to know--in your testimony you mentioned that--
19 and I would appreciate response on Surfside after I'm
20 finished. Some examples of eligible tenant
21 participation--PA-TPA activities include membership
22 activities, information dissemination, resource fairs
23 and this--this one was is interesting, development
24 clean updates. [background comments] Residents
25 should not be using these funds for operations that

2 NYCHA is responsible for. That is the function of
3 NYCHA, and if you had a--more maintenance workers and
4 cleaners for developments, and a better ratio to
5 workers to residents, they were never--I mean, can you
6 tell me--do you have a percentage breakdown of how
7 they actually are spending their funds?

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Yeah. So, yes. So,
9 just a few things. So, Surfside--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
11 Please.

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I'll start with
13 Surfside.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.

15 SIDEYA SHERMAN: I don't personally know
16 the situation at Surfside. I know right now we have
17 over 30 elections that are under. I will see if
18 Surfside is on that list and what the attempts there
19 have been. As I mentioned, there are resident
20 associations that are inactive or not established
21 where we have made attempts. Our--our next effort is
22 to try to bring on third-party groups who can assist
23 us in that process. So, we'll get you an answer on
24 Surfside--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.

2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --and we will be happy
3 to work with your office--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --on ways to help
6 encourage leadership there. In terms of eligible
7 activities, the examples that we gave are reflective
8 of some of the proposals that we see come in. I
9 think you're absolutely correct. Tenant
10 associations, residents should not perform NYCHA's
11 obligations. I think what, and that's probably
12 clearly worded, what we've seen are proposals for
13 stewardship campaigns, good neighbor campaigns,
14 things that are focused on promoting cleanliness,
15 quality of life in the building, do neighbor to
16 neighbor interaction. Not necessarily bringing trash
17 out of the compactor or anything of that nature. The
18 majority of funding at present time is really set
19 between stipends, office equipment, supplies. A lot
20 of the funding is actually allocate to activities
21 that are like baselined activities within the
22 resident associations needing refreshments, et
23 cetera. With this new process we are starting to see
24 more and more proposals that are--include activities
25 like the go bags and you know, educational resources

2 or some of the examples that you heard this morning
3 where people brought in third-party consultants at
4 their development on specific issues, and so, there's
5 a real opportunity with some of the funding that
6 rolled over to, you know, worked with in big projects
7 while still making sure that the baseline needs of
8 the association are met.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: But do you have
10 the overall spending categorized based on different
11 areas in terms of where money is being spent?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: We do. So, I don't have
13 that with me, but we can give to—to you and to all
14 the Council Members what the expend—expenditures were
15 within you district by category.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And when you say
17 proposals, it seems that there's like additional
18 added layers of burden on the tenant associations to
19 acquire resources that are dedicated for them. So,
20 you've switch over to this card. Why do I still hear
21 complaints from residents that there's a significant
22 turnaround time or the turnaround time is so—so, you
23 know, it's—it's very-- For example, I'm sure the
24 Chair knows that the summertime is usually family day
25 time for—for NYCHA presidents. Our budget adoption

2 usually is around early June. Hopefully—hopefully
3 again early June. We'll—we'll see, but family days
4 begin sometimes in July and August and I know when it
5 comes to the school system if we allocate funds for
6 PTAs or for schools it takes months and months and
7 months for things to process. Their family days they
8 work so hard to put together a beautiful community
9 event, but I keep hearing that the money is not
10 available for them on time for their family days.
11 Can you speak to this?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, just quickly
13 in Surfside, there is an election underway in
14 Surfside now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Oh, wow, great.

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, we will connect with
17 your office.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: An election is 60 to 90
20 days based on the ballots, we'll—we'll be connected
21 with them on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Great.

23 SIDEYA SHERMAN: In terms of the—the
24 turnaround time, so, in the proposal. So, we—we need
25 to provide, ensure that the expenditures have

2 justification within the TAs own words. The proposal
3 is really a form. It's a one-page form. There are
4 check boxes based on the eligibility criteria. We
5 were going to get as simplified possible, but we need
6 the tenant association to express what their activity
7 is relative to-to the guidelines. It's a-it's a-it's
8 a one-one-page form. We are actually still looking
9 to eliminate that for what we consider to be basic
10 requests. The proposals are submitted. They are
11 reviewed for approval or disapproval, and then they
12 move to processing. I think the concern that you're
13 speaking about really is a reflection of one of the
14 many reasons why we introduced the Commercial Card.
15 So, once the-the form is reviewed for eligibility,
16 and it's approved, if you have a Commercial Card, you
17 can go forth and spend. You also can just submit a
18 quarterly request for all of your activities, and
19 that funding is available to you and your card within
20 the quarter. If not, you're submitting a proposal,
21 and then NYCHA is moving your request through our
22 procurement chain, and so the-as I mentioned earlier
23 like the supply chain systems that we're using for an
24 agency of \$3 billion, we're using for a ream of

2 paper. It's not efficient. It's not. It's an
3 inefficient process.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right, but for
5 example, I—I have around nine-nine developments in my
6 district. I give each development funds. Our budget
7 is adopted in June. Family is beginning in July and
8 August. A frequent complaint that I get is that the
9 money is not available for them to withdraw—with-
10 withdraw from come Family Day, and they have to pay
11 invoices. They have to pay folks for rides or food
12 or other types of attractions. Why can't NYCHA get
13 them the funds in time for this event?

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I was going to say--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
16 yeah.

17 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --relating to Family
18 Day, so just one more point about the Commercial
19 Card. I know in your district, your district is one
20 of the districts where we had very few Commercial
21 Cardholders and that's recently changed. So, under
22 the leadership of that district leader, our tame has
23 gone out and provided training. So, a number of your
24 TAs will be on the Commercial Card this summer, and
25 that will make a big different because again, once

2 your Family Day application is in, we move forward
3 with-it's-the funding availability is on your card
4 relative to you TPA funds. City Council funds are-are
5 different. So, when we receive the funding, in order
6 to release their next year allocation, we need to
7 ensure that we have receipts from the prior year.
8 And so some of the challenges that we have are
9 outstanding receipts in certain instances, and so we
10 provided the letter to the associations before the
11 summer reminding them if they have any outstanding
12 items that we need to receive them. I think one of
13 the other challenges that we saw was electronic,
14 electronic funds transfer versus paper text. So, we
15 had a number of issues, and I remember in your
16 district in particular where there were texts lost,
17 et cetera. So, we're working to make sure that as
18 soon as we get notice of availability of the funding
19 that we already have the allocations, the expend-the-
20 -the payment receipt up for your bill. (sic)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I appreciate
22 that explanation, but are these associations
23 501(c)(3)s?

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So there-some are, some
25 but--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]

3 Because you're treating them like they are in terms
4 of the way this whole process is set up, and I hear
5 that some of them are trying to look or exploring the
6 possibility of becoming a 501(c)(3), but it really
7 appears that you're treating like a CBOs that we fund
8 in our districts with, you know, all these types of
9 receipts, reimbursements and paperwork, and one of
10 the issues we hear from CBOs providers is the amount
11 of compliance and paperwork that they have to deal
12 with when the folks just want to, you know, make sure
13 the residents' needs are being met, and build
14 capacity in their—in their building, and create
15 social activities or—or—or in some cases I'm reading
16 here clean-up days, which should be paid for through
17 their funds, but what—what are we doing to help build
18 capacity and to reduce paperwork, and comp, you know,
19 complications so these funds flow more smoothly. Of
20 course, I'm saying that compliance is necessary, but
21 we're treating them like 501(c)(3)'s when, in fact,
22 they are not, and do you have data on how many of
23 them are 501(c)(3)s out of the 247?

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, I don't have that on
25 hand, I—we—we--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

3 SIDEYA SHERMAN: --we could get that
4 information, but the--the process is not what we would
5 expect. So receive allocations for CBOs from Council
6 Members. That is much more protracted. We enter
7 into agreements with them, but that's what we're
8 doing with TAs. We get the allocation. We--we
9 provide them with a letter what has--they already
10 received a letter from the Council member what has
11 been allocated. If they've already returned receipts
12 from last year, they're good to go. There's a one-
13 page form. They fill it out. They send it to us and
14 the check is released.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Uh-hm.

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: If they have not turned
17 in receipts, and I think that's a very basic request,
18 then we are not able to release funding until such
19 time as those receipts have been provided to us, and
20 so we provide reminders throughout the year. We are
21 actually hosting orientations for Family Day season.
22 In May, we will be out at every single district to go
23 through what that process is.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Is there a base
25 amount that you provide in terms of TP--the TPA, and

2 forgive me if that was covered earlier. I'm just
3 curious.

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So there is \$15.00 per
5 dwelling unit subject to proration.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: \$15.00 per
7 dwelling, and who—who set that ratio? Who set that?

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, that's based on the
9 HUD formula.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Does HUD tell
11 you that that's the floor or that's the ceiling?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, the—it's \$25.00 per
13 dwelling unit. Forty percent remains with the PHA.
14 Sixty percent goes to the resident association. So,
15 the maximum potential is \$25.00 per unit.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

17 SIDEYA SHERMAN: The resident portion
18 just \$15.00.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: My—my colleague
20 has mentioned before and—and thanks for the time,
21 Chair. I'm wrapping up, but my colleagues mentioned
22 before that 40—up to 40% is optional. It's not
23 mandatory. My question is this \$15.00 per—per unit,
24 is this an option 2 or this is something that NYCHA

2 just, you know, tell me is it a mandate or is it—is
3 it discretionary, arbitrary from NYCHA's leadership?

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, it's arbitrary. It
5 is required for us to allocate the-the funding per
6 unit, and we do, and our requirements don't change,
7 right. So, whether we take the 40% of not, we still
8 have the regulatory requirements to meet.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right. I'm
10 going to just conclude in addition to certainly I—I
11 echo the concerns of my colleagues that I think that
12 this process is still unnecessarily burdensome and
13 complex for residents. I'm also concerned, Chair,
14 and—and—and so, folks hear that I—I am concerned that
15 tenant associations are—are being forced to spend
16 money on items that really are the responsibility of
17 NYCHA, their day-to-day operations and functions.
18 When I hear from some tenant associations in my
19 district for example if I could allocate funds for a
20 functioning computer, I would imagine that when you
21 help set up a TA, you know, association, that they
22 have in office, and that they have a computer, and
23 that they have basic supplies. It's almost like
24 forgive me for making common sense should be common
25 just like, you know, a classroom teacher should have

2 paper and pens and pencils in the class. So, we need
3 to define what a TA office is, what should it—what it
4 should include, and they should not be charged for
5 coming up with a base amount of supplies and base
6 things just to open and stay functioning. I think
7 these resources are—are to supplement what a—a
8 thriving association should already have and so and
9 I—I would just urge NYCHA as we're fighting very hard
10 to get more resources to NYCHA because make no
11 mistake, folks, NYCHA is in great need of additional
12 resources from Washington, the state and the city as
13 well. But we need to make sure that those—those
14 resources reach the developments, and if they're not
15 paying for things that should be covered on a day-to-
16 day basis by NYCHA operations, and so I thank the
17 Chair very much for this very I think important and
18 timely—timely hearing because quite frankly there's a
19 lot of work to do. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And we're
21 winding up now. I just had just a couple more
22 questions and my colleague Council Member Gibson has
23 some follow-up as well. NYCHA's latest development
24 plan, NYCHA 2.0 relies heavily on a RAD program.
25 What's steps or guideline has NYCHA put in place to

2 facilitate the usage of TPA funds in the RAD
3 developments, and how will NYCHA guarantee that in
4 mixed income developments, TPA funds are directed to
5 only low-income residents. So, can you just explain
6 the TPA process if there is one for RAD or PACT (sic)
7 which was done in the past and what the plan is.

8 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So, we are
9 requiring all of our development partners to have TPA
10 within their—their program regardless of the—their
11 preservation tools. So, RAD, PACT. Well, the PACT
12 program in its totality will include that. That's in
13 the Operating Agreement between NYCHA and the new
14 landlord.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And whatever
16 back funds are in those accounts now will move over
17 with these?

18 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, our Budget
19 Department has already started that process. When we
20 close, they release to the—the new owner to work with
21 the resident association. New allocations come out
22 of the managing agent's budget.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Council
24 Member Gibson.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Just a quick
3 question. It's been referenced that there is a June
4 1st deadline for the remaining RAs that have not been
5 in compliance with the TPA Agreement. You referenced
6 the NYCHA is looking to bring on a Social Service
7 provider. So, my question is timing. Is that June
8 1st deadline real, and when are you going to bring on
9 the Social Service provider?

10 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So-so we--the--the timing
11 for the June 1st is--is--is correct. We're working
12 one-on-one with those specific TAs who are not using
13 the Commercial Card. We are looking to bring
14 providers on in the fall, but specifically in
15 developments where there is not an association. So,
16 those are two different timelines.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, and are we
18 expecting to pay the Social Service provider?

19 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, in the--for the small
20 developments, yes. We would be looking to bring on
21 providers that we would fund to do that work. It
22 would probably subject to a competitive process. So,
23 I--I can't speak in great detail, but the goal would
24 be to work with the developments where there have

2 been no established association after we complete
3 this current election cycle.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. So, is it
5 accurate to say that NYCHA is going to use its
6 operating dollars to pay for this, and it will not
7 have any impact on the TPA funds for the social
8 service because it's—it's something separate. You're
9 talking about building up tenants' associations where
10 there are none. Correct?

11 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So—so the—the funds are
12 still allocated for that purpose. So, we would be
13 working to—whether it's NYCHA's operating funds or
14 the—the TPA funds for the developments specifically
15 for that purpose. The funding source is still in the
16 amount. It's still being defined, but it wouldn't
17 impact any current tenant association.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, and as you
19 process and review some of the proposals that we've
20 talked about, in terms of—I'm going back to time
21 limits and expediting some of the approvals of these
22 proposals. There have been several instances in my
23 district where Council Member Treyger talked about
24 upcoming Family Days. So, how closely does NYCHA pay
25 attention when a proposal is submitted and there's a

2 actual event associated with that? Does that have
3 any impact on expediting the approval because I've
4 had multiple instances where money was put on the
5 Commercial Card the night before a scheduled Family
6 Day meaning the night before after bank hours, after
7 office hours money was put on Commercial Cards after
8 5:00, essentially not even allowing the tenants
9 association to be able to purchase items for their
10 Family Day. So, I guess overall, while I cited just
11 one specific instance, but do you pay attention to
12 deadlines and events and things like that as you're
13 reviewing these proposals?

14 SIDEYA SHERMAN: We do, and so that is
15 exactly why we have a family oriented day-
16 orientations in May a resident association right in
17 that meeting can drop off their Family Day
18 application. The Family Day in and of itself is its
19 own event. There's an application. It's the same as
20 it's been for many years. They can submit it that
21 day, and we will begin processing. I think the issue
22 is we're happy to share with each Council Member. In
23 certain districts we've had challenges collecting
24 receipts on time or getting the Family Day
25 application on time, and so if there's ways that we

2 can work with the Council Member to assist in our
3 follow-up with the resident association, we're happy
4 to collaborate and do that. We can also make sure
5 that you're included when we send out reminder
6 notices to resident associations regarding their City
7 Council allocations in particular.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, I'd
9 appreciate that. I know you cited that each of the
10 RAs works with a resident coordinator. I'm sure most
11 of my colleagues don't know who the coordinators are
12 because there really isn't any engagement. It would
13 be great if we could get that information beforehand
14 and if there's an ongoing dialogue. It doesn't have
15 to be a dialogue when there's only an issue. It
16 should be an ongoing dialogue. We talk to our
17 tenants associations all the time, and we at the
18 Council often get information on the ground before we
19 get it from our own, you know, resident coordinators
20 or property managers. That has been the case as long
21 as I've been her at the City Council, and while I
22 know today's hearing is very specific to TPA, but
23 generally speaking the communication at NYCHA has got
24 to improve. It is insulting to us as Council Members
25 and it's insulting to our resident association

2 leaders. We are the ones that are on the ground
3 every day in these developments more so than staff
4 that really understand what's happening. And so, as
5 we are looking to make improvements, as you're
6 looking to identify the gaps in the system, and
7 improve efficiency, I really—really—really urge you
8 to communicate to the residents associations,
9 understand what they're going through and be willing
10 to help them. I mean everyone has talked about the
11 willingness to help, but it's just talk. It has to
12 be action, and I understand things have been done,
13 but I'm saying it's not enough, and so on behalf of
14 my districts in the Bronx, I expect more from NYCHA.
15 Because the residents I represent expect more of me,
16 and I give them as much as I can, and I'm asking
17 NYCHA to do more. This process has not been off the
18 ground in a good way. It has not been smooth, and
19 even now two years later I recognize that we have
20 more to do, but it's helpful and it makes your job
21 much easier if you're talking to the resident
22 associations and engaging with them through the
23 entire process. Not when a decision is made and you
24 tell them about it, but as we're looking to make
25 these changes in the program. So, just a couple of

2 suggestions because these are the things I'm hearing
3 from my tenants associations, and it just would be
4 helpful as we move forward if we are to have a real
5 productive working relationship. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,
7 Council Member. So, I—I don't have any more
8 questions. There were a few questions that came that
9 we will submit to you in writing along with the
10 follow-up letter, but I just want to say that for so
11 long no one has really looked out for the residents
12 to the level that they deserve, and over the past few
13 years it's been a consistent amount of attention and
14 focus on the residents and their living conditions.
15 We are thankful that this money that's allocated from
16 HUD exists, right. Elected officials do what they can
17 when they can through discretionary funds, but this
18 is funding that is actually built into the law. It's
19 built into the actual CFR, and so at this point if we
20 don't get anything right, we should be able to get
21 this process right because this funding is literally
22 about livelihood, right. A resident said earlier,
23 We're not talking about mold. We're not talking
24 about lead right now. We're just talking about
25 funding that is in the law that should be allocated

2 directly to residents to address civic engagement,
3 their livelihood, and now to be, you know, one with
4 their neighbors, and so again, if we don't get this
5 right, what the heck else is going to be correct?
6 And so, I really, you know, just state on the record
7 and, you know, I'm thankful to everybody who—who's
8 here, and the tenants that showed up and testified
9 for an hour and a half this morning, but let's just
10 get this right, and utilize us as the true partner
11 along with the residents. So, that's all I have to
12 say, and we will hear from our last resident who
13 showed up right after the resident panels. So, Mr.
14 Tyrone or--[background comments/pause]

15 TYRONE: Am I pressing this?

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, yeah.

17 TYRONE: There we go. Alright, I think
18 that's better. Good afternoon. I have a couple of
19 questions about TPA. One, the turnaround time
20 between requesting and the—sometimes two weeks is not
21 enough. It's way too much. You know, when you need
22 equipment for computerized and whatever, this is now
23 the time that we're actually going and getting
24 children into the Summer Youth Program. Most of that
25 is digitized. So, we need wire leads to upgrade our

2 systems or we connect. We need to have that so we
3 know rather than later, and there's a lag time
4 between that. Also, we pay 20% into district, but
5 does the district get a card? Are they able to use
6 the funds, or is this just 20% that's coming out of
7 our TPA for no reason? There's several of other
8 things. How is \$1.5 million 40% of \$3 million and
9 that should be 50. I'm not seeing any of that. So,
10 if anybody could actually answer those questions, I
11 would be—I would love to hear that. That was a quick
12 statement.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

14 TYRONE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

16 Thank you so much. So, I just want to—as we close
17 today's hearing, I just want to thank committee staff
18 Madeepa Denny, Counsel; Jose Conde, the Senior
19 Legislative Policy Analyst, Ricky Challah (sp?), the
20 Legislative Policy Analyst, and Sarah Gastelum, the
21 Principal Financial Analyst as well as my staff
22 within the 41st Council District. So, thank you so
23 much for your time, and again, let's just get this
24 right and I look forward to our—we've got the--

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: As far as agents up to
3 speed.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
5 Oh, we

6 FEMALE SPEAKER: Well, this needs to be
7 said. The mission statements on the bylaws of the
8 tenants associations states--[off mic] it states--it
9 states that each mayor is planning to go back. (sic)
10 That's why this engagement doesn't intervene. We're
11 staying in clusters plus all tenants associations are
12 independent. We are democratic. So, basically there
13 are situations where they do not intervene, and
14 that's a problem. If the tenant associations that
15 deals with the tenant, we want to ball the in our
16 court.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay.

18 FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] The ball is
19 in our court, managing our principal ways our Council
20 Members, the management ain't paying. [off mic]

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [interposing]
22 Okay, thank you. Let me--let me--let end this hearing.
23 Thank you so much. This is the end of the NYCHA
24 Management and Tenant Participation Activity Funs

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

166

2 oversight hearing on April 15th with the Public

3 Housing Committee. Thank your. [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 May 15, 2019