

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
2 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 1
3 CITY COUNCIL
4 CITY OF NEW YORK

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6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

7 Of the

8 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE
9 ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
10 HOUSING

11 May 7, 2019
12 Start: 11:16 a.m.
13 Recess: 3:17 p.m.

14 HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

15 B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM
16 Chairperson

17 MARGARET S. CHIN
18 Co-Chairperson

19 ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL
20 Co-Chairperson

21 COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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- 23 DIANA AYALA
- 24 RUBEN DIAZ, SR.
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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 3
2 A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

3 Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez
4 Commissioner of the New York City Department for
The Aging, DFTA

5 Sasha Fishman
6 Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Fiscal
Operations of the New York City Department for
7 The Aging, DFTA

8 Caryn Resnick
9 Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs of the
New York City Department for the Aging, DFTA

10 Kathryn Garcia
11 Interim Chair and CEO for the New York City
Housing Authority, NYCHA

12 Vito Mustaciuolo
13 General Manager of the New York City Housing
Authority, NYCHA

14 Plachikkat V. Anantharam
15 Executive Vice President for Finance and Chief
Financial Officer of the New York City Housing
Authority, NYCHA

16 Deborah Goddard
17 Executive Vice President for Capital Projects of
The New York City Housing Authority, NYCHA

18 Brian Honan
19 Director of the Office of Intergovernmental
Relations in the New York City Housing Authority,
20 NYCHA
21
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23
24
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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good morning
and welcome to the City Council's second day of
hearings on the Mayor's executive budget for fiscal
2020. My name is Daniel Dromm and I Chair the Finance
Committee. We are joined by the Committee on Aging
Chaired by Council Member Margaret Chin. We've been
joined by Council Members Steve Matteo, Council
Member Diana Ayala, Council Member Vanessa Gibson,
Council Member Debi Rose, Council Member Laurie
Cumbo, Council Member... and I guess others will be
joining us shortly. Today we will hear from the
Department for Aging and the New York City Housing
Authority. Before we begin, I'd like to thank the
Finance Division staff for putting today's hearing
together including the Director Latonia McKinney;
Committee Councils Rebecca Chasen and Stephanie Ruiz;
Deputy Director Regina Poreda Ryan and Noah... Nathan
Toth; Unit Heads Dohini Sompura and Chima Obichere;
Finance Analyst Dan Kroop and Sarah Gastelum and the
Finance Division Administrative support unit Nicole
Anderson, Maria Pagan, Lattina Brown, Courtneigh
Summerrise who pulled everything together, thank you
for your efforts. I'd also like to remind everyone

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1 that the public will be invited to testify on the
2 last day of the budget hearing on May 23rd beginning
3 at approximately two p.m. in this room. For members
4 of the public who wish to testify but cannot attend
5 the hearing, you may email your testimony to the
6 Finance Division at finance testimony at council dot
7 NYC dot gov and the staff will make it part of the
8 official record. Today's executive budget hearing
9 starts with the Department for Aging, DFTAs fiscal
10 2020 executive budget is 363 million dollars which is
11 approximately 22.6 million dollars less than it's
12 adopted budget for fiscal 2019. In the fiscal 2020
13 preliminary budget response the Council called for
14 fully funding 500 million dollars of capital needs
15 across 255 senior centers and community centers in
16 NYCHA's portfolio. The Council also called for a
17 dedicated new expense funding stream of one million
18 dollars to ensure rapid completion of emergency
19 repairs to cooling and heating systems at senior
20 centers located on and off NYCHA developments. In
21 response to the Council's call and the budget
22 response the administration baselined four million
23 dollars in new expense funding in DFTA's budget and
24 doubled the previous two million dollar fund at DYCD.
25

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1 Although this change in funding will assist in
2 addressing immediate needs at senior centers such as
3 air conditioning and minor repairs, there continues
4 to be a large gap in funding to fully address the
5 essential capital work needed across the senior
6 centers and community centers citywide. I look
7 forward to learning today on how DFTA intends to
8 address this issue. Another recommendation made by
9 the Council but not addressed in DFTA's executive
10 budget is related to phase one of the senior center
11 model budget. In the preliminary budget response, the
12 Council called for ten million dollars in baseline
13 funding to be added for model contracting in fiscal
14 2020 rather than fiscal 2021. The funding would
15 support staff and programming at senior centers. DFTA
16 however, did not heed the Council's recommendation
17 and including this as part of their fiscal 2020
18 executive budget. I look forward to learning today on
19 how DFTA intends to address this and several other
20 budgetary concerns. Before we begin, I'd like to
21 remind my colleagues that the first round of
22 questions for the agency will be limited to three
23 minutes per Council Member and if Council Members
24 have additional questions, we will have a second
25

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2 round of questions at two minutes per Council Member.

3 I'll take this opportunity also to congratulate the

4 new Commissioner, Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez on her

5 appointment as Commissioner and now turn this over to

6 my Co-Chair, Council Member Margaret Chin.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair

8 Dromm. Good morning, I'm Margaret Chin, Chair of the

9 Committee on Aging. Welcome to the fiscal 2020

10 executive budget hearing for the Aging Committee held

11 jointly with the Committee on Finance Chaired by

12 Council Member Danny Dromm. Today we will hear

13 testimony from the Department for the Aging or DFTA

14 on its proposed 363-million-dollar budget for fiscal

15 2020 and general agency operations. I would like to

16 begin by welcoming the new Commissioner Lorraine

17 Cortes-Vazquez to the Council for her first hearing,

18 welcome Commissioner. There's no doubt that in

19 partnership with the administration we have made

20 progress for seniors over the past six years, however

21 the Council's preliminary budget response includes

22 key items for seniors that was notably absent in

23 DFTA's executive budget. Chair Dromm has already

24 raised a need for the second tranche of ten million

25 dollars for model budgeting this year not in fiscal

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2 2021. We are in lockstep on this because we both know
3 that senior centers need this money now and while I
4 too am grateful for the four-million-dollar baseline
5 for NYCHA senior center maintenance including
6 immediate repairs to air conditioning, for cooling
7 center as OMB Director Hertzog has promised. The
8 administration is playing a cynical game with our
9 senior's club. The budget proposed closing of five
10 DFTA operated and seven NYCHA operated clubs to
11 achieve a paltry 885,000 dollars in savings but how
12 many seniors were asked their opinion before this
13 decision came down and what about the seniors who are
14 too frail or simply uninterested in waiting for a
15 DFTA van to take them to a nearby senior center?
16 DFTA's own data provided to the Council suggests
17 seven of these 12 transfer clubs are already over 100
18 percent utilization. I hope to hear these concerns
19 answered today and while I'm glad to see 1.5-million-
20 dollar baseline to bring 19 senior clubs into DFTA's
21 permanent service portfolio, these are not full
22 senior centers. I'd like to hear more about... this
23 morning about the services, offerings DFTA proposed
24 at these clubs. Meanwhile a major outstanding issue
25 is the administration's chronic underfunding of

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2 senior meals and kitchen staff. The Council's budget
3 response calls for a reasonable 11.7 million to be
4 baselined to raise the meal reimbursement rate by an
5 average of one dollar per meal. Instead we had to
6 fight tooth and nail to get an agreement over the
7 weekend to add 2.84 million dollars for home
8 delivered meals only and only on a one-time basis. I
9 urge the Commissioner to press hard for the full 11.7
10 million dollars for meals in DFTA's baseline and not
11 just for better food but fairer treatment for low
12 paid kitchen staff. If this is the fairest big city
13 in America as the Mayor said our kitchen staff
14 deserve better. Finally, while I'm glad the state has
15 increased the ICEP funding for case management and
16 home care even DFTA has said it's not enough, that we
17 need five million not 3.9. Let's stop playing games
18 and clear the wait lists in fiscal 2020 with
19 additional city funds and I called on the
20 administration to put an automatic cost escalator in
21 place to, to clear the wait list whenever it emerges.
22 It's not right for frail or low-income seniors to
23 languish on wait lists for the care they need now.
24 While the executive budget doesn't make seniors a top
25 priority, there's still time for us to change that.

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1
2 DFTA's own research show that investment in health,
3 fitness and nutrition yields big health care savings
4 and more rewarding lives for our seniors. I look
5 forward to working with the administration to make
6 sure that the fastest growing sector of New York's
7 population get the attention they deserve. I'd like
8 to echo Chair Dromm's gratitude to the Finance
9 Division and the Aging Committee staff and I'm
10 pleased to introduce the Commissioner of DFTA,
11 Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez and the Committee Counsel
12 will now swear you in, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just before we swear
14 you in let me just say we've been joined by Council
15 Member Adrienne Adams, Council Member Peter Koo,
16 Council Member Ruben Diaz Senior, Council Member Andy
17 Cohen, Council Member... did I say Vanessa Gibson
18 before, yes, okay and Council Member Chaim Deutsch
19 and Council Member Barry Grodenchik as well and we've
20 also been joined by the international charter school
21 fourth grade students, international charter schools
22 in Brooklyn and they're going to be walking back over
23 the Brooklyn Bridge when they leave us here today,
24 welcome to all these students. Okay Counsel would you
25 swear in the witnesses please, we are joined by

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Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, the Commissioner for Aging,
Deputy Commissioner Caryn Resnick and Deputy
Commissioner Sasha Fishman.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm that your
testimony will be truthful to the best of your
knowledge, information and belief?

[panel affirms]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, you may begin.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you and
good morning Chairpersons Dromm and Chin and to the
members of the Finance and Aging Committees. As I've...
as you know I am Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez and I'm
honored to be the new Commissioner for the New York
City Department for the Aging and excited to lead
DFTA today and to set a pathway for the future. I am
confident that in partnership with the City Council
we will address the growing needs of older New
Yorkers. DFTA's goal has always been to use its
current resources to meet the most pressing needs of
adults 55 and older which we all know is the fastest
growing segment in the city's population. Yet, DFTA
as you do not lose sight that we also need to
consider and serve the vast age spectrum in the 55

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2 plus older population in this city. It is clear to me
3 as was mentioned earlier by the Chairwoman that since
4 2014 this administration has made major investments
5 in DFTA including an increase of more than 65 percent
6 in baseline city tax levy funding representing an
7 overall increase of 100 million dollars. This funding
8 has allowed us to not only baseline services but also
9 to enhance our programs and... as well as to rebuild
10 and replace the significant losses that DFTA had
11 experienced in the previous years when its budget was
12 drastically cut. I am joined as the Chairman said by
13 Sasha Fishman, the Deputy Commissioner for Budget and
14 Finance as well as Caryn Resnick the Deputy
15 Commissioner for External Affairs and we thank you
16 for this opportunity to discuss this executive budget
17 in my second year of service... I mean my second week,
18 sorry, my second week. The executive budget as was
19 mentioned earlier is six... 363.1 million dollars of
20 which 158 million is for senior centers, 39 million
21 for home delivered meals, 37 million for case
22 management, 30 million to support home care for non-
23 Medicaid eligible homebound seniors, seven million
24 for our NORC programs, and another eight million for
25 caregiver services. This budget also includes the 5.5

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2 million invested to address... to address the transfer
3 of NYCHA senior clubs and the repair and upgrades of
4 cooling centers. I would like to mention that in
5 fiscal year 2019, DFTA received over 30 million
6 dollars in discretionary funds from the City Council
7 to support its programs. This level of support is
8 important and has made a significant impact on the
9 services that community-based partners provide to the
10 network including the management and reduction of
11 these waiting lists that have been mentioned
12 previously. Before proceeding with the executive
13 budget, I'd like to briefly update you on two items
14 that were raised during the preliminary budget, they
15 are DFTA's geriatric mental health program and the
16 phase two of the senior center food model budget. As
17 you know, an additional 1.7 million dollars in Thrive
18 NYC funding was allocated to DFTA to expand its
19 current program, allowing DFTA to embed more licensed
20 clinicians in centers across the city and to give
21 seniors greater access to important mental health
22 services. We are pleased to share that as of February
23 2019, nearly 1,700 seniors have been assessed by
24 mental health clinicians and over 720 participants
25 have received mental health services. Members have

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2 also participated in nearly 21,000, 21,000 times in
3 structured engagement activities which, which are an
4 integral part to destigmatize mental health.

5 Clinicians conduce mental health assessments and
6 provide psychotherapy to individuals, groups,

7 families and couples and they make referrals when
8 needed. The geriatric mental health services I'm

9 pleased to say are provided by bilingual, bicultural
10 social workers who are fluent in the language spoken

11 at senior centers including Spanish, Cantonese,
12 mandarin, polish, Russian and Ukrainian. Since the

13 announcement of this expansion, we have been

14 analyzing, analyzing data on the demographics and
15 membership profiles of our senior centers to

16 determine where the funds may be placed, where are
17 they most needed. Staff are in the process of

18 visiting numerous centers to determine one, if they a
19 good match for the program to assess whether the

20 organization has the capacity to incorporate these
21 services and also if the facility meets the

22 requirements of the New York State Office of Mental
23 Health. We expect to identify 25 additional centers

24 in the upcoming fiscal year for a total of up to 50

25 geriatric mental health sites, but it is important to

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2 note that prior to Thrive NYC funding DFTA was unable
3 to provide comprehensive mental health services for
4 older New Yorkers. Lastly, the update on phase two of
5 the senior center food model budget a topic of great
6 interest to us all. We have recently shared with
7 Chairwoman Chin in a... in a letter that we remained
8 engaged in the second and final phase of the model
9 budget process centered on food costs and food
10 service staff costs. The first phase was to ensure
11 equity and parity of services across the network of
12 249 senior centers. The second phase in collaboration
13 with OMB and our stakeholders we are reviewing data
14 sets including the local law 140 report. Our goal is
15 to determine the funding needed for food purchase and
16 preparation, the adequate level of, of food service
17 staff required and comparing their salaries to ensure
18 that DFTA workers receive fair market wages. The end
19 goal is always providing high quality meals with
20 cultural diversity throughout the senior center
21 network. The good news is that we're continuing this
22 complex and detailed task, we are making progress
23 although some may think we're not and we look forward
24 to sharing you... sharing with you the results soon. We
25 made a commitment that we would do it by the late

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1 spring and we will. Now on to the executive budget.

2
3 As a direct result of ongoing dialogue and
4 partnership with the City Council, the administration
5 recognized the importance of enhancing senior centers
6 and made an investment of four million dollars for
7 NYCHA senior center maintenance. The priority for
8 this additional baseline will be to continue critical
9 repairs and replacement of problematic HVAC systems
10 in these centers. You will recall that during the
11 summer of 2018 there were approximately 30 sites that
12 could not be... that could not serve as cooling centers
13 because of inadequate air conditioning, this is a
14 major priority for the administration. We are happy
15 to report that DFTA in collaboration with our sister
16 agencies has been diligently working towards
17 completing the necessary repairs which will... which
18 all varied substantially and were complex. A majority
19 of the repairs have already been completed and we are
20 working towards full completion by the summer of 2019
21 in time for the heat season. In addition to this four
22 million baselined investment the FY... the fiscal year
23 '20 executive budget also includes a commitment of
24 1.5 million dollars to transfer seven NYCHA senior
25 clubs into DFTA's portfolio. In the Bronx these

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2 include High Bridge Gardens, Sedgwick, and the
3 Soundview senior clubs. The Brooklyn clubs are
4 Brownsville, Glenmore Plaza and Cypress Hill. In
5 Manhattan the Wagner Center... senior club will also be
6 included into DFTA's senior network. Now to meet the
7 challenges presented by an uncertain revenue and
8 economic future, the Mayor instituted this
9 administration's first citywide saving initiative
10 calling for 750 million dollars in savings in the
11 executive budget. DFTA's two million savings target
12 included approximately 250,000 through a six-count
13 head count reduction agency wide and as was mentioned
14 earlier nearly 900,000 dollars in savings through the
15 NYCHA senior club consolidation. With that said this
16 mandated service... savings program did not result in a
17 direct decrease in DFTA's overall budget or essential
18 services. DFTA is always committed to providing
19 senior service members a safe and healthy environment
20 where they can participate and enjoy quality of life
21 engagements therefore the decision to consolidate
22 some NYCHA senior clubs has been challenging and
23 complex yet I believe it is the appropriate decision
24 as many of these senior centers were not meeting in...
25 essential senior center health and safety standards,

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2 many were not ADA compliant, had chronic leaks,

3 flooding and sewage backup. Additionally, some had

4 low participation rates that resulted in higher than

5 usual per participate cost. Given the current

6 physical plant issues and a thorough review and

7 analysis, DFTA came up with an alternative service

8 approach to continue serving members of the 12 senior

9 clubs. All of the clubs have one ore more quality

10 senior center within close proximity, three quarters

11 of a mile of their... less than three quarters of a

12 mile of their location and in some cases only one or

13 two blocks away. We recognize that there are concerns

14 with this process, however we will work closely with

15 the members of the NYCHA senior clubs as well as the

16 alternate senior centers to provide a smooth

17 transition. This approach affects 12 NYCHA senior

18 clubs in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan, four for

19 each borough cited. In conclusion I thank you for the

20 opportunity and I applaud the City Council and

21 Chairwoman Chin for her continuous commitment to

22 older New Yorkers. We know that older New Yorkers are

23 the bedrock of our neighborhoods and city; they

24 volunteer, they continue to care for family, they

25 contribute greatly, and they also have very high

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2 civic participation rates. Today, there are more
3 adults 65 and older than there are children under the
4 age of five and younger. And by 2030 that number will
5 be that they are 65 plus older persons that outpace
6 those that are 18 years of age and younger. Today I'm
7 confident that we will meet these challenges of this
8 growing population not only today but also, we will
9 create a pathway for the future. I am pleased to take
10 any questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much

12 Commissioner. Before we go to questions let me just
13 say we've been joined by Council Members Rosenthal,
14 Eugene and Powers. Thank you for your testimony and
15 let me just talk to you a little bit about planning
16 for senior population growth. Today around 19 percent
17 of New Yorkers are seniors, that's equivalent to
18 about 1.6 million people, this percentage will only
19 rise in the coming years yet DFTA's fiscal 2020
20 executive budget is less than 400 million dollars and
21 its ten-year capital strategy is only 59 million.
22 Which programs most urgently need funding to support
23 all 1.6 million senior's needs?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you,

25 thank you for the support, thank you for the question

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2 but we know that there are always needs and as this
3 population grows they will continue but I am
4 confident that this budget as it stands will address
5 the most pressing needs. I cannot say that; you know
6 in human services the resources never match the level
7 of need, but I know that together and in constant
8 conversation and continued conversation with OMB we
9 will be able to address these as we move forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How much money is
11 there in the ten-year capital strategy to construct
12 new senior centers?

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm going to
14 turn that to Sasha Fishman.

15 SASHA FISHMAN: There's no funding for
16 specifically constructing senior centers, there's
17 funding for innovation of the senior centers
18 including the ones in the city buildings, the total
19 capital... the total... the total ten-year plan was 69
20 million.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, our concern is
22 that if you look at the chart that, you know in the
23 out years it's nothing so we are concerned about what
24 it would look like moving forward especially when
25

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2 more folks become my age actually and, and need to
3 use senior centers.

4 SASHA FISHMAN: Most of the funding is in
5 the current fiscal year however capital funding is a...
6 is... always rolls over into future years so... [cross-
7 talk]

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes and...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Does the... does the...
11 [cross-talk]

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: ...thank you for
13 that... for that... for that point and that is something
14 that we will continue to work with you as well as OMB
15 on because you're right the out years are less amount
16 of money.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Does the, the current
18 plan include capital funding for specialized senior
19 centers like SAGE and immigration... immigrant group,
20 grouping centers that, you know were put into place a
21 couple of years ago and I know that we want to do
22 more work in those areas as well?

23 SASHA FISHMAN: The, the current capital
24 plan does not have projects but it...

25

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, we
3 are working closely... right now SAGE will have a
4 senior... affordable senior housing complex being
5 opened up and we are in conversations with OMB about
6 how best to serve the population in that particular
7 complex.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's the one in the
9 Bronx?

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: There's... no,
11 that's the one in Brooklyn, the one in the Bronx will
12 be in... probably in other years... nine months.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, we, we need one
14 in Queens too. The executive budget shuts seven
15 NYCHA senior clubs and five DFTA senior clubs which I
16 know you mentioned in your testimony to achieve a
17 paltry 885,000 dollars in savings, many of these
18 clubs are on NYCHA developments with very frail or
19 low-income seniors. In addition the administration's
20 own PMMR indicators show that NYCHA social clubs are
21 very popular with 132 percent utilization in the
22 fiscal 2018... in fiscal 2018 and 142 percent
23 utilization in the first four months of 2019 and I
24 have to say that this is a very big issue amongst
25 Council Members especially those in the districts

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2 where the closures or the consolidation is being
3 discussed. What is the background to these DFTA
4 senior clubs which operate outside of the DFTA
5 network of contracted providers?

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I, I think the,
7 the numbers that we gave you are the numbers that
8 were under DFTA and then they were the ones that were
9 under NYCHA, there are five that were DFTA facilities
10 and there were seven that were NYCHA facilities
11 addressing the issue that you just raised. If
12 utilization were the only issue that we tended or
13 paid attention to you would be accurate, however the
14 major concern was health and safety issues, that was
15 the primary concern, many of these centers have been
16 wholly inadequate in terms of health and safety
17 issues; flooding and clog... sewage problems and things
18 of that nature.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did DFTA... [cross-
20 talk]

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...talk to any of the
24 seniors involved before the closing?
25

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am not sure
3 that that was part of the process.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay because from
5 what I'm hearing although one is not in... I don't have
6 one in my district, you know the clusters of people
7 who attend these, these, these social clubs, these
8 senior clubs are people who are familiar with each
9 other from their own community, from their own
10 buildings, etcetera and so forth and so on and then
11 to be put into another center a few miles away is
12 kind of like a displacement for them.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well... yeah...
14 [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Even though the
16 transportation is going to be provided.

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We, we share
18 the concern, we share the concern and we are making
19 every effort and will continue to make every effort
20 that they have a smooth transition but our primary
21 concern is health and safety and yes, they are
22 groupings and we will make sure that the host site,
23 the alternative senior center also welcomes them and
24 makes provisions for them so that there is no loss in
25 engagement of those members.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, in, in the
3 centers where these seniors will be going are... is
4 cultural competency the same in each case like if
5 it's with... [cross-talk]

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well the..
7 [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...you know folks
9 speaking Spanish, is the center that they're going to
10 able to accommodate them language wise and food wise?

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you,
12 that's, that's... as you know Council Member,
13 Chairperson there's nothing that's more important
14 that I have dedicated my life to, there have been
15 three issues; equity, cultural diversity and
16 inclusion and I am pleased to say that all of our
17 centers are prepared to address the vast number and
18 cultural differences that exist in our city and that
19 is something that you know that I will keep pushing
20 for. In terms of ethnic senior centers, given the
21 change in demographics there are very few programs
22 now that just serve a single ethnic cultural, racial
23 or religious population because of all of the
24 changing neighborhoods so we will make every effort

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2 to make sure that they are incorporated and feel
3 welcome in their new host facility.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let's talk a little
5 bit now about the Council initiatives, there's
6 currently a 30 million dollar deficit resulting from
7 the absence of Council senior initiatives and the
8 administration's one time additions for senior
9 programs like NORCS which is very concerning to me,
10 senior centers and home delivered meals, by not
11 baselining these programs in the fiscal 2020
12 executive budget the administration runs the risk of
13 funding cuts to these essential programs for seniors.
14 So, why has the administration refused to fund these
15 programs and will DFTA commit to no service
16 reductions in fiscal 2020?

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We do not
18 anticipate any service cuts in NORCS or senior
19 centers, home delivered meals in fiscal year 2020.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Commissioner in the
21 Council's funding we put in a million dollars for
22 three NORCS that were not included in the last RFP
23 not because they didn't meet the standards that are
24 necessary to have been funded but because DFTA ran
25 out of funding, I think Deputy... I think Miss Resnick

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2 knows what I'm talking about the, the Northridge
3 Southridge Brulene in Jackson Heights, the JASA in
4 Jamaica and another one in former Speaker Mark
5 Viverito district, so every year we have to go back
6 and then fund that from Council funding and it's been
7 a concern to us. I know that... I think in 2021 you're
8 going to put out another RFP so can you talk a little
9 bit about one, is there... would you consider picking
10 up the million dollars which is not included in the
11 Mayor's budget right now and two, what the RFP might
12 look like going forward and how much money would be
13 included that... in there so that each existing NORC
14 can feel confident they have a good shot at getting
15 funding?

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We have... you...

17 as you well know we have seven million dollars in the
18 NORC program, and that RFP will be released I believe
19 in 2021 and we will make every effort to ensure that
20 all existing NORCs are eligible and able to apply.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, in 2021 the three

22 that were left out the last time the money, it was
23 approximately a million dollars to keep them going
24 would then be included in the funding that you're
25 going to propose moving forward?

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well Council
3 Member as you well know if it's an RFP it's a
4 competitive process, they will have the ability to,
5 to apply and will be considered just like all other
6 NORCs.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But the problem last
8 time was not the, the quality of the program, it was
9 just the lack of funding so we certainly wouldn't
10 want to see that happen that these highly qualified
11 NORCs programs don't get funded due to not enough
12 funding in the RFP that's my concern.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And that's
14 something that we will keep working with you and OMB
15 on.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. The Council
17 provided 1.5 million to support senior centers for
18 immigrant populations in fiscal 2019, the next... the
19 next DFTA RFP for senior centers will be released by
20 December 2020 with services starting in, in fiscal
21 2022, so what outreach is DFTA providing to these
22 immigrant centers to help make them competitive for
23 baselining? Often times what happens is that, you
24 know more sophisticated organizations are able to put
25 in for the RFP but newer upper come... upcoming centers

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3 particularly immigrant based centers don't have that
4 type of sophistication to write an RFP so is any
5 outreach being done to organizations to possibly help
6 them in the RFP process?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I want to
8 answer that in twofold way, first of all I think the
9 phase one of the senior center model budget will
10 address some of that, second of all I commit to you
11 that if there is technical assistance required for
12 any ethnic or cultural or immigrant group they will
13 get it from this Commissioner and the Department for
14 the Aging.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, good, would you
16 consider baselining the Council's funding for the
17 immigrant centers that we support?

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That is a
19 conversation that we will continue to have with you
20 and OMB.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, because that's
22 also very important to us here in the Council.
23 Alright, I'm going to turn it over to Council Member...
24 or Chair Chin to continue some questions.

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, no
problem.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Can I make just
one correction?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of course.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The, the RFP
for the senior centers will be released this
September not the subsequent September, alright,
sometime in the... this fall, early this fall and the
same thing with... and the contracts will begin in July
2021.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so if... then...
even we need to talk even more about... [cross-talk]

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Even faster...
[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...that, yeah... [cross-
talk]

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: ...even more
faster... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, more quickly...
[cross-talk]

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: But I can tell
you the commitment to technical assistance for
immigrant groups will be something that we will
provide.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
3 much.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You're welcome.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, thank you. I
6 am going to follow up with some of the questions that
7 Chair Dromm has started. For the senior center RFP
8 are you, you're going to be doing a concept paper
9 first, right?

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, because the...
12 right now the Council fund with discretionary funding
13 ten centers serving immigrant populations. I think
14 that what we're looking at is that we hope that they
15 will be able to compete for the RFP but meanwhile
16 we've been funding them for at least for the last
17 five years and, and every year we try to increase
18 more funding but it's still not enough to run a
19 center, I think right now we are funding them at...
20 like 150,000 dollars and that is not a, a budget to
21 run a senior center or a NORC and I think that the
22 technical assistance needs to start now, it didn't
23 start before to really help them be prepared so that
24 they can be competitive in those RFPs and also I
25 guess within the, the concept paper to really look at

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2 are they going to be able to get, you know more
3 points, you know for serving a newer population with
4 language and cultural competency something that can
5 really help them because they are serving an emerging
6 population and they've been doing it for the last few
7 years raising money on their own along with what the
8 Council can support.

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah. So, my

10 answer to you will be no different than what I...
11 Chairwoman Chin will be to... what I said to, to
12 Chairperson Dromm is that we will make every
13 commitment, we make... we've made a commitment to make
14 every effort to ensure that they get the appropriate
15 technical assistance so that they can compete, there
16 is nothing that I'm committed to more than making
17 sure that underserved populations, long term
18 underserved populations can get the adequate
19 services.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Well... yeah, right

21 now maybe to really look at it, do you know if DFTA
22 staff have visited these centers and, and provided
23 technical assistance and suggestions and, and work
24 with them and they have like a program liaison person
25 that they can contact even though they're not

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2 officially in the DFTA portfolio, have they been
3 getting visits and, and meetings with you?

4 CARYN RESNICK: Yes, we do give them
5 technical assistance, we've met with certainly the
6 leadership of each and every one of those programs,
7 we've helped them with fiscal support making sure
8 that they're in passport and have done all of the
9 pre-registrations so that at the time of RFP they'll
10 be ready to go and be able to submit proposals.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, I know that
12 we were talking about NORC earlier and that is the
13 nursing hour and I know that you know that a lot of
14 the NORCs are losing the volunteer service hour,
15 nurses hour and they're all looking, you know to the
16 Council and to the administration to get support and
17 we're, we're looking at it as a potential cost of
18 another 1.3 million to be able to fill this gap.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we are...
20 we are aware of that and we have been working with
21 health and hospitals to talk about a way to replace
22 maybe some of those services but we're also in
23 conversations with OMB around this same issue because
24 we know that nursing services in NORCs is an
25 essential service so it... we have... it's not lost on us

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2 and we started conversations early on when we first
3 heard of this possibility with health and hospitals
4 and looking for some models of how we can replace
5 that service.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, I'm going to
7 go back to the meal and the food service worker
8 because I was very disappointed... [cross-talk]

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm surprised...
10 [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...that, that it
12 wasn't in the executive budget and after all the back
13 and forth and you know our Speaker fighting strongly
14 for us that a little bit was put back for the home
15 delivered meals. The last time there was an increase
16 on the food reimbursement was back in 2014, right, 25
17 cents for a regular meal and 50 cents for kosher
18 meals and right now the city is reimbursement rate is
19 20 percent below the national average so we got to
20 get back out there and the Council was only calling
21 for 11.7 million to be added and that's about an
22 average of a dollar per meal and approximately 7.2
23 million for congregate meals which was not addressed
24 so far. So, I hope, you know to work with you
25 Commissioner to make sure that we do get it into the

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2 budget before it is adopted and I'm glad that the,
3 the report that... the, the study that OMB is working
4 with DFTA, its almost done, I mean the, the.. [cross-
5 talk]

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Almost done..

7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...budget... the budget
9 director was here yesterday and she was telling me
10 that we're going to sit down and have a briefing and
11 I know that from the study that definitely will show
12 that there needs to be an increase for food and food
13 service worker because for the past two years with
14 the model budget the food service worker that worked
15 very hard they didn't get any increase, okay, I know
16 that you said COLA but it's not what they, they
17 deserve a living wage especially for the kitchen
18 staff. I mean imagine a chef getting like minimum
19 wage and he's the one.. or he or she is the one that's
20 responsible for planning the meals and shopping and,
21 and meeting all the requirements set by DFTA, right..

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...and they did not
24 get compensated and it's two years already, I don't
25 think we could wait any longer.

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, we made a
3 commitment by the end of... by late spring and we will
4 honor that commitment but I want to just re-emphasize
5 two points, we are not only looking at food costs,
6 we're looking at food cost, we're looking at the
7 number of food service staff that may be required but
8 we're also looking not COLA but looking at salaries
9 in terms of market rate to make sure that the workers
10 have fair wages so once that study is complete at...
11 and as our OMB Director said it is close to
12 completion, we still need some more analysis this has
13 been very arduous, it's 249 centers that we've had to
14 look at, it's the complexity and the differences it's
15 not a one formula we could apply to all of them so
16 once that is complete the conversations with OMB will
17 continue and with the City Council.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But I think along
19 with the advocates what we're asking for is a
20 commitment to really put money into the budget and to
21 really get that going even just... I mean like on the
22 food reimbursement we're 20 percent below the
23 national average and we're New York City where costs
24 are very high so that is something that we really
25 have to address and time is of the essence, I mean I

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2 don't want to wait another budget year because the

3 model budget the past two years we know that the

4 center, you know needs money because you took care of

5 so... you know the professional staff... [cross-talk]

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, yeah...

7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...but you forgot

9 about the kitchen staff but we also ask that another

10 ten million instead of being put in, in the next

11 fiscal year that you put it in this fiscal year to

12 really address all of the other needs that the senior

13 centers have that you didn't meet because the Council

14 we still have to give discretionary funds to the... to

15 the center in order for them to run so I hope that

16 you will help push for that meeting and, and get... you

17 know get that study done as quickly as possible, I am

18 looking forward to a meeting before the end of this

19 month so that we can make sure that we can get it in

20 the budget.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We commit...

22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Before we finalize

24 it... [cross-talk]

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: ...to get it to
3 you as soon as it's finalized, we'll have a
4 debriefing and look forward to it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, I'm going to
6 pass to my colleagues that have questions and I can
7 come back.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very
9 much Chair Chin and now we're going to go to Council
10 Member Peter Koo followed by Council Member Gibson,
11 I'm sorry. Council Member Koo.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Hi Commissioner so,
13 I have a question on the combining NYCHA senior
14 centers, in my area, in my district we have the Bland
15 house senior center which is located in a NYCHA
16 building, in Bland house and even though the
17 attendance is not high but we have a, a much more
18 senior citizens living in that compass, the reason
19 they didn't go to the senior center because the
20 facility is not good and the programming is not good,
21 you know for a long time you have been neglecting the
22 maintenance of the senior center at Bland House so
23 now you say you're going to combine it with another
24 senior center CPC which is like when you walk it's
25 not too far away but if you bus them it will take

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2 like 15, 20 minutes, you know half an hour, you have
3 to go downtown Flushing traffic, you go one way, you
4 have to make a square, you know go, go around and go
5 to Nan Shan senior center and that place is already
6 over capacity, way over capacity so how can you say
7 hey, we're going to bring 76 people, 76 senior
8 citizens go to Nan Shan senior center and you are at...
9 you are just creating an extra burden to, to CPC Nan
10 Shan senior center, I don't... I don't know how they
11 can handle it so, so what is the thought of that now,
12 can you think about not doing it because your
13 facilities right at... on campus, you have a nice
14 senior center there, you just need to update it so
15 you said you have four million dollars to upgrade the
16 senior centers you... can you use that four million
17 dollars to upgrade that facility?

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The four
19 million dollars is for HVAC issues and repair of air
20 conditioning, the issue with the Bland senior center
21 with all due respect was that it was not ADA
22 compliant and that was one of the things that we had
23 to consider and it's also had a very low
24 participation rate. You're absolutely correct CPC is
25 a well-run, high quality, well utilized program, they

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3 are aware that they will be absorbing the members of
4 the Bland Senior Center, of the senior club and we
5 will make every effort to make sure that it's a
6 smooth transition but as you know those numbers that
7 we sometimes have are averaged daily numbers so we
8 believe that CPC will be able to accommodate any new
9 members into their operations.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I, I think there are
11 too many people on wheelchairs on, on Bland House
12 Senior Center and its... logistically it's really hard
13 to bus them to a nearby senior center maybe you can
14 bring the other... there are a lot of groups they want
15 to bring in programs as long as you update a
16 facility, updating a facility is not that difficult.

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We will
18 continue having this conversation with you to make
19 sure that the needs of the members are met and so I
20 welcome having this conversation with you so that
21 there will be minor disruption for the members and
22 thank you for bringing up some of the special needs
23 that we have to be attentive to.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, are you going to
25 go ahead...

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The plan is to
3 move forward, yes sir.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Well I think you
5 will regret it, you know, most, most people won't go
6 because you... a citizen... in order to be successful you
7 have to be culturally and, and cuisine, you know
8 sensitive to the groups, if you move them to CPC they
9 eat Asian food every day there, some... African
10 Americans or Hispanics they, they might not... they
11 might... they might enjoy it once in a while Asian but
12 they don't want to eat every day the Asian food so
13 you have to come up with a special meal for them
14 because they're different... you know we, we grow up in
15 different places, right, we have... we have different
16 languages and you might... if you send them to CPC you
17 might isolate them because they've become... no,
18 because most of the other members are Asian Americans
19 its really hard for them to communicate with them,
20 Asian Americans have a lot of seniors they don't
21 speak English, they only... and they socialize with,
22 with their own people so it's not... you... then you're
23 being... you're trying to segregate them, you know we
24 don't want to combine... integrate and then it becomes
25 segregation at the center, you see what I mean?

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LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, I, I, I
fully understand what you mean and we identified a
senior center as an alternate senior center that is
not to say that there are no other center in close
proximity as well as when we start working with the
members we will transition them and make sure that we
are able to address as many of their needs as they
present.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I still think that
the best way is, you know you upgrade the location at
Bland Houses right now, spend some money, make sure,
you know the seniors can go there, I mean why.. if
you, you have a senior center right on campus where
it takes you five minutes to go and you have to bus
them half an hour to another place, you know it's not
logical. Alright, thank you.

18

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council
Member, Council Member Gibson.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you Chair
Dromm and Chair Chin, good afternoon Commissioner to
you and the team at DFTA, congratulations on your
appointment, I'm looking forward to working with you
in this new capacity to bring life and more energy
into DFTA. We've been doing great work with the

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2 agency but I'm looking forward to taking it to an

3 even greater level now under your leadership, so I

4 welcome you aboard and I just had a couple of

5 questions that I'll go through quickly. The NYCHA

6 senior clubs that you talked about in your testimony

7 that are being baselined I'm grateful for that

8 recognizing that DFTA really has the ability to take

9 over many of these senior and social clubs as

10 compared to other providers but I wanted to

11 specifically ask a question about the consolidation

12 and the closing of the 12 senior clubs that are on

13 NYCHA property. Yesterday we had OMB testify before

14 the Council and the idea behind this consolidation is

15 to shift many of these seniors that are currently in

16 these underutilized NYCHA centers to the nearest DFTA

17 center. Now we at the Council have looked at some of

18 the DFTA data to date and we recognize that some of

19 those potential DFTA nearby clubs, senior centers

20 rather are already at capacity in terms of

21 utilization and coupling the fact that more seniors

22 may come to those centers adding on more of the

23 seniors that will come from the NYCHA centers that

24 we're closing our concern is we want to make sure

25 that during this budget conversation if there is

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2 additional money which I'm assuming there will be
3 from these DFTA providers to accommodate more seniors
4 than the agency is willing to accommodate that in
5 terms of more program money, so is that a safe
6 assumption to make?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The, the safe
8 assumption to make is that we will continue working
9 with the providers as we always do and if they.. as
10 their needs increases.. as their needs increase, we
11 evaluate that and then we will address whatever
12 needs... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay... [cross-
14 talk]

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: ...we have.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and also
17 wanted to make sure we... when we're... while we're
18 having this conversation it's much more than
19 providing transportation for seniors, I'm
20 particularly concerned because these are seniors that
21 live on NYCHA, they have been used to their senior
22 center on their development and so now we're asking
23 them to relocate for better services but I also think
24 it's about the continuity, it's about the comradery
25 that seniors have established so I want us to be very

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2 mindful of that in these conversations recognizing

3 that we have to make decisions, NYCHA has not been in

4 the position to operate these centers for quite some

5 time and year after year the Council has been

6 continuously supporting it's operation year after

7 year and so while I'm not, you know overly joyed that

8 this has to happen I want to make sure that we

9 understand all of the variables when we're talking

10 about seniors transitioning to a new center.

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It... we will be

12 working not only with the centers and the members of

13 the centers that are being transferred but we will

14 also work with the host center, the alternate site to

15 make sure that they can and do incorporate welcome

16 and have cultural sensitivity as well as other

17 inclusions and integrate them fully into the

18 operation.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and my final

20 question as my time is up, I wanted to ask

21 specifically about DFTA's capital budget, my

22 Subcommittee on Capital has done a lot of work

23 working with DDC and OMB as it relates to the overall

24 capital and infrastructure and I wanted to ask the

25 question, do you believe that DFTA's capital budget

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3 is sufficient to meet the needs today with a growing
4 older population and what is the coordination that
5 DFTA has today as it relates to capital projects and
6 infrastructure upgrades with DDC and OMB as well, so
7 does DFTA manage these contracts or does it go to the
8 Department of Design and Construction?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, let...
10 Caryn is going to address that.

11 CARYN RESNICK: Hi...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, hi.

13 CARYN RESNICK: The projects that are
14 capital eligible and we did have a whole hearing on
15 this and that's part of... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh... [cross-
17 talk]

18 CARYN RESNICK: ...the underlying issue is
19 the eligibility for capital, but we do not project
20 manage them, they do all go to either EDC or DDC...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and what's
22 the relationship that DFTA has with that, is there a
23 point person that oversees all of the capital
24 eligible projects working with EDC and DDC?

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, yes there
is and, and subsequent to our capital hearing we have

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3 reengaged and strengthened the relationship so that
4 we have better coordination.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you,
6 thank you Chairs.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
8 Council, Council Member Cumbo.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you Chair
10 Chin, thank you for hosting this, Council Member
11 Dromm. I wanted to jump right in. I was asked a
12 question by an organization, Heights and Hills that's
13 having quite a number of challenges in their current
14 space. So, their question goes to senior
15 organizations are suffering the same fate as their
16 clients when it comes to gentrification, how is the
17 city handling the cost of moving and higher rents as
18 organizations are forced to move not just senior
19 centers but other service sites, case management and
20 care giver services, as staff are added so is the
21 need for more space so as organizations that you work
22 with, are in your portfolio if they have to move as a
23 result of gentrification or they are being pushed
24 out? What they are being told is that they're not
25 going to be given any more additional resources for
the higher rent that they are going to have to pay

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2 either because their lease expired, or they were
3 forced to move to another community.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't know... I
5 do not believe that that's the general policy, the
6 policy is that as space issues come up DFTA addresses
7 those one by one with, with that facility and tries
8 to find either... negotiate with the landlord or try to
9 find additional space. So, I don't know that we would
10 say that our policy is that we are silent on any move
11 or space issues with the... with the...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, are there
13 occasions when an organization loses their lease and
14 or are forced to move that you do provide in certain
15 cases additional resources to cover the cost of the
16 rent increase?

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That has been
18 the case, yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, I can go back
20 to this organization and others who have said that
21 they have not gotten an increase and that you're
22 willing to talk with them in order to be able to come
23 to a solution?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Sure, we always
25 talk to the provider around space issues as we do

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2 with repairs or any other issues that effect a senior
3 center and those are discussions, you know the
4 magnitude of it is that for every senior center, no
5 those are discussions that then when it reaches a
6 point that we could no longer afford it it's
7 conversations that we have with OMB and our other
8 oversight agencies.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I'm glad that

10 you're open to it. I also wanted to go into, into..
11 the testimony it states that DFTA is committed to
12 providing senior centers with a safe and healthy
13 environment where they can participate and enjoy
14 quality social life, there, therefore the decision to
15 consolidate some NYCHA senior clubs has been
16 challenging as many of them were not meeting
17 essential senior health, safety standards, many have
18 chronic leaks, flooding and sewage backup. So, if
19 there were a senior center that had all of that going
20 on I certainly would not want to be there but if we
21 made those capital improvements to create a more
22 viable, happy, healthy, safe, nice looking space then
23 those seniors would come back to those particular
24 spaces and so my question for you is why was there no
25 consideration about putting the capital

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2 infrastructure to bringing those particular spaces up
3 to code and then making sure that we have a viable
4 space that seniors would want to be at and as retail
5 is a premium in New York City what's going to happen
6 to the fate of those senior centers that are being
7 closed that you're proposing to close, we're going to
8 fight tooth and nail to keep them open and to make
9 sure that the capital improvements that should be
10 made there are made there but what was the thought
11 process behind closing them, not improving them and
12 what is the proposed plan that you've put forward to
13 utilize those particular centers for?

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of those

15 centers I can talk... I'm going to talk to you about
16 the five that are DFTA or under DFTA's portfolio.
17 It's always a touch decision to, to make when you
18 need to transition a senior center, right, it's
19 always a tough decision but these have been long
20 standing issues in terms of facility, you know
21 inadequate facilities and this opportunity came up to
22 start looking at alternatives for some of these
23 senior centers and that's what we did. The NYCHA
24 facility will still be there and its future is to be
25 determined but what we're saying is if it's going to

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3 house senior center programming or senior club
4 programming it should be done in an environment
5 that's safe.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, there's no
7 plan for the senior centers that are... spaces that are
8 being vacated, they're going to just be left dormant?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't know
10 that I can answer that question forthrightly, the,
11 the facility, the physical plant stays there and I'm,
12 I'm sure that it will be repurposed but what we're
13 saying is that they were inadequate to continue as
14 senior centers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: It's disappointing
16 that seniors who often have mobility challenges, I
17 see that there's going to be transportation and who
18 knows exactly what that will look like but it's a...
19 it's, it's, it's tragic to me that seniors are going
20 to have to walk past a closed facility to get on some
21 sort of transportation or facility to go maybe a mile
22 or someplace else further away to experience the
23 services that they've grown accustomed to in their
24 own neighborhood in a subpar poor standard, not up to
25 code center so I, I think that we're at a bit of a...
we're not in a good place in terms of where the

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2 administration has decided to land there so I'm going
3 to pass the mic over to my colleague.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I just want to
5 correct one thing there is... none of the... none of the
6 facilities are miles away, they're less than three
7 quarters of a mile away and in many, many situations
8 there's a neighboring center, a fully operational
9 center within a block or two blocks away.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Well I just want
11 to remind you I'm 44 and every day I say I'm going to
12 walk a mile to lose weight and it hasn't happened
13 yet, it is a challenge for even a well able bodied
14 person such as myself who in theory could walk a mile
15 but unfortunately just doesn't happen because the
16 task seems just too daunting to think about walking a
17 mile everyday with the everyday challenges of my life
18 so while a mile may seem like a, a hop, skip and a
19 jump to whipper snappers like us it may be more
20 challenging for a senior.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't think I
22 would consider myself a whipper snapper although I
23 try.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Rose.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you Chairs
3 Dromm and Chin and welcome Commissioner.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: The summary of the
6 key funding changes indicates a slight indication to
7 the budget head count pertaining to full time
8 equivalent positions and a removal of six full time
9 vacant positions, which titles were fulfilled and
10 which were eliminated to produce a baseline savings
11 of 281,000 dollars and what titles will you continue
12 to associate with this title freeze and why does DFTA
13 continue to have a far higher vacancy rate than the
14 citywide average?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The latter I
16 cannot answer but that's something that I will
17 definitely look into because it's not been brought to
18 my attention that we have a higher... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay... [cross-talk]

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: ...than average
21 vacancy rate. What I can tell you is that there is a
22 citywide freeze for all agencies, in particular we
23 have not identified the actual positions but what we
24 will commit is that there will not be positions full

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3 time equivalent positions that will impact essential
4 services.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, no direct staff
6 will be... will be impacted, any... [cross-talk]

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Not, not for
8 essential services, absolutely.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And about the
10 higher vacancy rate, you're not able to answer that
11 but does someone else because... [cross-talk]

12 CARYN RESNICK: I'm not aware that either
13 that it's... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I find it amazing...
15 [cross-talk]

16 CARYN RESNICK: ...higher than other...
17 [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...that you... [cross-
19 talk]

20 CARYN RESNICK: ...agencies... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...weren't able to
22 fill positions that, you know at a higher rate than
23 other city agencies, you have these vacancies they
24 existed for quite a while before the freeze.

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I cannot
answer... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Can you tell me
3 what they are, what job vacancies they are?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get
5 back... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: What title, what
7 job titles these vacancies existed?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get back
9 to you with what I will know as the vacancy list and
10 I will also get back to you if there is an answer if
11 it's accurate that we have a higher vacancy rate than
12 most other city agencies.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I'm just saying
14 because the need is great and it... [cross-talk]

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, it is
16 great... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: ...just seems...
18 [cross-talk]

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And as a new
20 Commissioner I also know that the need is great for
21 me to have an adequate and full functioning
22 department so it's something that I also will take
23 very seriously and look into.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, thank you.
25

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member
Grodenschik followed by Council Member Rosenthal.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
Chair Dromm and Chair Chin. I've got lots of seniors,
I'm not on this committee, I'm on the Finance
Committee but it's not unusual in my district in
Eastern Queens where we have prairie and all that and
we have working farms to have people living in this
same... we have the original NORCs which are run by the
same and they do such a wonderful job, we have five
wonderful senior centers, its not unusual to find
people who have been there for 60 or 70 years in the
same residence, it's quite common actually. I, I just
wanted to echo some of the comments that were made, I
think Chair Chin made a comment, we need more money
for food. I have been a huge advocate for emergency
food in this Council and we have more than doubled
the baseline funding for food but as you can see,
thank you whoever put that up, we need more money and
that's what I'm hearing from my service providers and
I know you're brand new but I know you're certainly
not new to government Commissioner and so that's
something I want to impress on you today. The other
thing is that and Peter Koo hit it on the head, I

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2 represent an area of absolutely incredible diversity,
3 it's just staggering and I, I just want to make sure
4 that as we move forward with the next round of RFPs
5 that those folks who may be intimidated because their
6 English isn't so good and coming to a senior center
7 we do work on that and I'd be happy if you'd like to
8 come out to Eastern Queens... [cross-talk]

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I was just
10 there...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I will take
12 you to lunch at one of our fine restaurants and we'll
13 visit a bunch of senior centers but we do have
14 tremendous diversity in the senior centers but we, we
15 just need to be on top to make sure even within, you
16 know the East Asian community have tremendous
17 diversity, the South Asian community we have
18 tremendous diversity so it's just something that I, I
19 wanted to keep on your radar as you go forward over
20 the next... certainly the next month or so but the next
21 months as, as you continue as Commissioner and I
22 really don't have a question but I just wanted to
23 impress that upon you because our seniors are
24 wonderful, they are the rocks of our community and
25 they're still there, they're not going... people... they

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2 just don't go, they just don't leave which is great

3 and that's brought such tremendous stability to my

4 district so Chairs I want to thank you for holding

5 this hearing of course and, and just happy to be... add

6 my voice to those particular things that I touched on

7 today.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, we

9 share that, that interest and that concern in

10 diversity and making sure that they're inclusive and

11 not left out.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Yeah and I

13 think people do feel welcome, you know I, I go in

14 the... it depends on where you are of course in the

15 district but, you know I do see tremendous amounts of

16 diversity there and that's good and you know... as you

17 know the, the senior shop with their feet depending

18 on the menu, depending on what's going on so I have a

19 lot of... 90 percent of the households in my district

20 have cars so that's the kind of district I have but

21 they, they know how to shop with their feet so thank

22 you very much, thank you Chair Dromm... [cross-talk]

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you...

24 [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: ...and thank
3 you Chair Chin.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council
5 Member Rosenthal followed by Ayala. We'll go to
6 Council Member Ayala.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you, that's
8 me. First of all, I wanted to welcome the
9 Commissioner, I'm really excited to have you but I
10 have a couple of just... I, I think they're not so much
11 questions but just some observations. One, the budget
12 doesn't really call for any new money for social
13 workers. In my district we've seen a, a shift in some
14 of my senior centers specifically in the East Harlem
15 part of the district where we have a growing Asian
16 population and we have enough staff to deal with the
17 day to day of what's happening at the center on a
18 daily basis but there's no, no one there that speaks
19 Mandarin or Cantonese that can actually, you know
20 adequately provide services to this new population
21 that's non English, English speaking. At Covello
22 Senior Center we were able to fund through an
23 initiative at the Council a social worker and we're
24 in the process of doing the same thing for Union
25 Settlement however I don't really feel that the

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2 Council should be responsible for funding services
3 that should be a natural part of programming. So, I
4 wonder what the assessment is if there is an annual
5 assessment that is done for communities that are
6 changing, right, populations are shifting and, and
7 older adults are moving up north because it's cheaper
8 but we're not really bringing the resources with that
9 and that concerns me because I've had seniors at a
10 senior center for close to three or four years and
11 the population was growing, I mean to the point that
12 we had maybe 70 at breakfast and there was not one
13 person that was linguistically capable of addressing
14 any of the, the needs in that center and so it
15 shouldn't have to take, you know a Council Member
16 entering one of these facilities to acknowledge that
17 and to then address it through, you know the City
18 Council budget process, that should have been done
19 anyway, right and so that's one observation that I
20 kind of wanted to bring because it's not addressed in
21 the budget and it's a huge issue in my community and
22 I'm sure that it is in the communities that my
23 colleagues represent as well. And then the funding
24 for the mental health services, well I appreciate
25 that because I under... having been a director of a

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2 senior center I know the growing demand that there is
3 for mental health treatment options for our older
4 adults however in, in Manhattan there, there's an
5 abundance of access to services, in the South Bronx
6 there are none and you know I wouldn't have even
7 known that had I not been the Chair of the Mental
8 Health Committee and so for me that's disturbing
9 because the statistics that DOHMH have put out
10 specifically, you know points to a correlation
11 between poverty and mental illness and yet when
12 dollars are being designated to Thrive for mental
13 health social workers at senior centers the.. those
14 social workers they didn't really necessarily end up
15 in communities like the South Bronx where they were
16 desperately needed and so I, I hope that there's a
17 little bit of attention brought to that and I've
18 asked several times, I don't know if this is before
19 you for a list of senior centers where those services
20 are currently being rendered and I still haven't seen
21 it.

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will provide
23 that to you... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: If you could I
25 would appreciate it, thank you.

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, as soon
3 as I leave, you'll get that list.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And yes, this
6 gives us an opportunity with this expansion to
7 address those areas that are... that have been
8 underserved.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member
10 Adams followed by Council Member Diaz.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you Chairs
12 and thank you Council Member Chin for this important
13 hearing today. You know I was just sitting here and
14 as the Majority Leader was speaking I was just
15 becoming very sad because of her... heard her
16 statements and for me I represent district 28 which
17 South Jamaica... South Jamaica Houses is a part of
18 that, a part of NYCHA and you know DFTA left a few
19 years ago due to low participation which the seniors
20 still tell me was not the case over there so what is
21 left over there is a dilapidated, deteriorated space
22 that was once very vibrant and it continues to blight
23 and oppress seniors who are discouraged because they
24 quite frankly feel that the city just doesn't care
25 about them anymore so we're now going upside down

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2 with this budget this time and we're looking at
3 transitioning seniors because of spaces that may be
4 problematic to them and, and to the work that goes on
5 over there. My, my problem is that we're looking at
6 it again a little upside down because I'm very
7 fearful that seniors will not transition, I've seen
8 it, that seniors will not transition to other
9 locations because of mobility and health challenges
10 that they face and like my colleague said instead of
11 taking the time to look at repair and replacement of
12 problems in these locations we are now moving seniors
13 who already have medical issues, they have mobility
14 issues, some have mental issues and so we're really
15 looking to transition them to other places that
16 they're not familiar with, I'm just very fearful that
17 the transition is not going to work, I've seen it,
18 they become very depressed in situations where we
19 need to be lifting them up, it just looks and feels
20 to them that we're throwing them away. So, I just
21 wanted to express my concern for that and it just
22 makes me very sad to hear that really regardless of
23 the circumstances that we are sitting here today
24 closing 12 senior clubs, four of the jewels of our
25 community for what I personally aspire to be and it's

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2 just very disheartening to me to hear that the city
3 is just going to sit back and watch these spaces
4 deteriorate and become dilapidated as it has for us
5 over at South Jamaica Houses. Thank you.

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Diaz.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Thank you
9 Mr. Chairman. Commissioner I know that you only have
10 two weeks in your job.. [cross-talk]

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uh-huh... [cross-
12 talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Could you
14 tell me how many centers have... did your department
15 close in the last two years?

16 CARYN RESNICK: None.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: None, let
18 me... let me read something that you said in your
19 statement, page one. DFTA current resources are used
20 to meet the most pressing needs of adults 55 and
21 older, which we all know is the growing... is the
22 fastest growing segment of the city's population, and
23 you're saying you, you have not closed any, any
24 centers and asked seniors to walk or take a train to
25

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2 the close... to another one, you're not doing that
3 Commissioner?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You're... is your
5 question have we ever closed or is your question...
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: The question
8 is that... my question is that you are saying how much...
9 you come... you... the Department comes and they say how
10 much you care for senior citizens and how much we
11 protect... you protect senior citizens but show the...
12 your action shows different because you have been
13 closing centers and you have been asking seniors of
14 those centers to walk and move to another one or take
15 the train but at the same time you are saying that
16 this is the fastest growing population so I don't... I
17 don't see how we are taking care of those seniors...

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, let me see
19 if I can understand this, this process was looking at
20 12 facilities that ran senior clubs that as we've all
21 discussed were, were woefully inadequate whether it
22 was because of physical plant issues or whether it
23 was a non ADA compliance and several other issues and
24 low participation. These decisions don't come
25 quickly, our commitment to serving the most

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2 vulnerable will never wain or waiver. What is very
3 clear and we will agree that maybe the approaches
4 could be different, alright, or disagree that the
5 approaches may have been different but what we've
6 done is decided that health and safety is a high
7 premium and that we want to have members go to
8 facilities that offer high quality, safe senior
9 services.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: So, you,
11 you, you putting... them to go to overcrowded places
12 and, and if they are the, the, the fastest growing
13 population you're supposed to be opening centers not
14 closing but let me ask you another question so we can
15 finish. In page one you also state this budget
16 includes five million dollars to address the, the
17 transfer of NYCHA senior clubs and the repair of... and
18 upgrades of cooling... of cooling system... centers,
19 every year... I'm telling you since I was... since I was
20 in state senate, I've been telling the Department and
21 NYCHA about the problem and the abuses that every
22 year the Department and NYCHA put seniors through,
23 during the winter no heat, during the summer no
24 cooling system. I state one for example, Castle Hill
25 Center in the Bronx, you know how many years we have

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2 been fighting and telling you guys to take care of
3 the seniors that go there so maybe now that you are
4 the Commissioner and.. I'm not blaming you, you have
5 only two weeks but I'd hate to come back to the next...
6 the... especially during this summer and come back in
7 the heat and ask you again, what have you done about
8 protecting the seniors and correcting the problems
9 that Castle Hill Senior Center among others but I'm
10 using one, Castle Hill Senior Center have been
11 confronted, the seniors there for years and years and
12 years maybe we need a... maybe we need a Commission
13 that you... like you to come and fix the problem.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well what I can
15 tell you is that there were 30 centers that had HVAC
16 and other air conditioning problems and the
17 Department along with NYCHA have worked very closely
18 to repair most of them and there are a few remaining
19 ones that will be done with the monies that have been
20 allocated that this administration put in, in
21 partnership with the City Council to make sure that
22 those facilities are taken care of before the heat
23 season. So, I don't know if you heard me say that
24 before but I want to make sure that you're aware that
25 we've done major end roads in repairing the 30 that

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2 were identified last year, it's a, a continuous
3 process and that we make a commitment...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Commissioner
5 I'm just saying that I'm... sometime, sometimes people
6 get tired of hearing other people say how much they
7 care for senior citizens, how much they do for senior
8 citizens and they... and, and what they're doing is
9 abusing and doing... and putting the senior through,
10 through very difficult situation because if we really
11 care for seniors then we will spend money on fixing
12 the air conditioner and the heater and don't put
13 seniors through the situation that is in winter
14 sometimes they, they, they get... sometimes they don't
15 even go to the center, sometimes we have face... we
16 have been faced with closing centers during the
17 winter or during the real cold days because there's
18 no... there is no heat so maybe you could take care of
19 that and then you will... the Department could come
20 here and say how much we care for seniors... [cross-
21 talk]

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well I look
23 forward to having this conversation with you in a few
24 months and you will say that.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Love you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Alright,
3 we're going to have some final questions from Chair
4 Chin.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. I don't
6 want to end the hearing without talking about the
7 wait list for case management and home care, though
8 it's great that the state added in 15 million and New
9 York City got 3.9 but even according to your estimate
10 that you need five million to close the case
11 management and home care wait list. So, we got to
12 make sure Commissioner that we have to work to get
13 OMB to put in at least 1.1 to make it up to five
14 million from the 3.9 that you got that we eliminate
15 the wait list for seniors who's waiting for home care
16 services and case management and then I would like to
17 really follow up and continue to work with you to see
18 how we cannot have a wait list every year because
19 that's what we've been, you know dealing with. So, I
20 hope that, you know you will... [cross-talk]

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I, I look
22 forward... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...make that
24 commitment to working... [cross-talk]

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I look forward
3 to working with you on that because as you know as
4 grow... as demands and needs grow, you know wait list
5 is, is a revolving issue in the human service arena
6 but I, I... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Especially for home
8 care because I used to program... serve seniors who are
9 not qualified for Medicaid and, and it's a wonderful
10 program and now more and more seniors are finding out
11 about it, I mean the seniors in my district that
12 we're able to help get on the program they think is
13 wonderful, they're very grateful for the service and
14 there's going to be more and more need so we got to
15 make sure that... because when a senior call that's
16 when they need it not a couple of months from now so
17 we got to make sure... [cross-talk]

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah... [cross-
19 talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...that we... [cross-
21 talk]

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You... [cross-
23 talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...we eliminate the,
25 the wait list... [cross-talk]

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You're
3 absolutely right, we will continue working together
4 on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And also we're
6 happy to hear that there is money put in, the four
7 million baselined for the maintenance of air
8 conditioning and other problems so what's going to be
9 the process or protocol that the center will be able
10 to access this funding or make the request so that
11 they can get the, the resources to fix the repair in
12 the center... [cross-talk]

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I think that's
14 an ongoing process, we... the point of... the point of
15 reference is always the program officer and that... you
16 know the minute we find that out then we start
17 working with them and NYCHA or any other sister
18 agency that's involved in the repair process and we,
19 we will work on it diligently but that's a... the point
20 of reference is always the program officer.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And one final thing
22 is on the capital budget, I mean we, we saw the slide
23 earlier, I know often times, you know especially for
24 senior centers they come to the Council and they ask
25 for money for capital projects but DFTA definitely

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2 has to have its own capital funding because when
3 we're talking about new centers and I remember in
4 other hearings when we're talking about we're going
5 to build more housing for seniors and every one of
6 those new senior buildings is going to have a senior
7 center in there and we have to make sure there's
8 money to support that, to outfit it so I think DFTA
9 really needs to have its own capital funding line
10 just like other agencies so that you can help really
11 build these new centers and take advantage of the
12 opportunity of the new senior housing that the Mayor
13 is talking about helping to build. So, I look forward
14 to working with you Commissioner...

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Same...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...and we got to make
17 sure money for meals and meal service workers,
18 kitchen service workers are in this year's budget,
19 okay?

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We... good, we
21 will continue the conversation, thank you so much.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair...

23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank, thank you
25 Commissioner and I have to agree with what you said

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3 in the beginning, there's no better advocate for our
4 senior community than Council Member Margaret Chin
5 so...

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely...
7 [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...thank you. We're
9 going to end the hearing here; we're going to take a
10 15-minute break and then we'll come back and we're
11 going to start with NYCHA.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you all
13 very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

15 [gavel]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay we will now
17 resume the City Council, Council's hearing on the
18 Mayor's executive budget for fiscal 2020. The Finance
19 Committee is joined by the Committee on Public
20 Housing Chaired by my colleague, Council Member
21 Alicka Ampry-Samuel. We just heard from the
22 Commissioner of DFTA and now we will hear from
23 Kathryn Garcia, the Interim Chair and Chief Executive
24 Officer of the New York City Housing Authority. In
25 the interest of time I will forego an opening

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statement but before we hear testimony, I will open
the mic to my Co-Chair Council Member Ampry-Samuel.

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you
Chair Dromm. Good afternoon, I am Council Member
Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Chair of the Committee on Public
Housing and we are here to conduct an oversight
hearing the city's fiscal Year 2020 executive budget
and NYCHA's five year operating and capital plans for
2019 to 2023. I would like to first thank my Co-Chair
for this hearing, Council Member Danny Dromm... Daniel
Dromm and the members of the Public Housing
Committee. I also want to acknowledge that I'm
joined today by Council Members Ruben Diaz Senior,
Council Member Donovan Richards, Council Member Diana
Ayala and also Committee Member... Council Member Van
Bramer and Council Member Vanessa Gibson. As many of
you know I proudly represent the 41st council
district and nearly 11,000 of my units are home to
the most concentrated group of public housing
developments compared to any other district in New
York City. NYCHA has operated the largest public
housing program in the nation for over 75 years
providing affordable housing to over 400,000 low- and
moderate-income city residents. In recent years the

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2 budgetary challenges and funding shortfalls facing

3 NYCHA have been front and center as the authority

4 attempts to address the varied physical needs across

5 its aging buildings and pursue strategies to address

6 structural funding deficits. These efforts have

7 fallen short of providing real improvements that

8 NYCHA residents can see and feel. While the long-term

9 funding challenges confronting NYCHA cannot be

10 resolved immediately, significant influxes of funding

11 are currently available to the authority for the

12 first time in recent history. At the city level the

13 administration has allocated 2.7 billion dollars in

14 capital funds in fiscal year 2019 to 2023 for roofs,

15 heating systems and other critical building system

16 improvements and is also providing an additional

17 three billion dollars over a ten-year period for

18 capital work. At the state level another 450 million

19 is expected to supplement this work. While these new

20 capital resources are critical for NYCHA, they also

21 come at a time when there are leadership changes

22 across the top levels at NYCHA and a federal monitor

23 has recently been appointed to oversee major reform

24 efforts at NYCHA leaving residents and other

25 stakeholders feeling uncertain about the path

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2 forward. The city's fiscal 2020 executive budget adds
3 to this feel of uncertainty and this budget transfers
4 seven NYCHA managed senior centers to DFTA management
5 and closes or consolidates the remaining seven NYCHA
6 managed senior centers while providing transportation
7 options to an alternate senior center nearby. These
8 decisions were not made with involvement or
9 coordination from residents or the City Council and
10 these actions are gravely concerning. Residents have
11 a right to know why major changes to services are
12 implemented and should be provided with advanced
13 notice. During.. I just want to call your attention to
14 last year's budget hearing, we specifically asked
15 about a long term plan for the senior centers and at
16 the time the EVP stated we are in active
17 conversations with DFTA not only about these centers
18 but about a long term plan around capital and
19 maintenance needs, our goal will be to eventually
20 pull these 14 centers into that fold and find a model
21 that's appropriate. How do you go from that to
22 closing senior centers to save what comes up to less
23 than a million dollars, that's an insult to seniors
24 and to the Council that's been constantly trying to
25 find ways to partner and make it work for all? It

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2 boils down to priorities, clearly, clearly the
3 priorities of the Council are different from the
4 priorities of the administration. And speaking of
5 priorities I also want to highlight the ongoing need
6 for new housing units in particular new senior
7 housing. In the past two weeks two elderly seniors
8 were brutally murdered... in the past two years two
9 seniors were brutally murdered in their NYCHA
10 apartments which screams for a need to ensure our
11 seniors are safe and have programs and resources they
12 need. Hopefully we can get a clearer understanding
13 about how funding has been allocated toward new
14 housing and security for our seniors. The Council
15 will continue our partnership with NYCHA throughout
16 these changes and will continue to seek new
17 opportunities to strengthen the, these partnerships
18 and secure additional resources for NYCHA operations
19 and repairs and as a reminder during the executive
20 budget hearing cycle all public testimony is to be
21 given at one hearing at the conclusion of the cycle,
22 this year, it was stated a little while ago, public
23 testimony will be heard on Thursday, May 23rd
24 starting at three p.m. in Council Chambers. I would
25 like to thank NYCHA staff for joining us today and

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3 for their collaborative work with the City Council
4 and I look forward to hearing from the administration
5 and our Counsel will now swear in... swear you in
6 before turning it over for testimony, thank you. And
7 we've been joined by Committee Member Carlos Menchaca
8 and Peter... and Council Member Peter Koo.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm that your
9 testimony will be truthful to the best of your
10 knowledge, information and belief?

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: I do.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: Chairs Alicka Ampry-
14 Samuel and Daniel Dromm, members of the Committees on
15 Public Housing and Finance and other distinguished
16 members of the City Council good afternoon. I am
17 Kathryn Garcia, NYCHA's, NYCHA's, NYCHA's Interim
18 Chair and CEO. I am pleased to be joined by General
19 Manager Vito Mustaciuolo; PV Anantharam, Executive
20 Vice President for Finance and Deborah Goddard,
21 Executive Vice President for Capital Projects. Thank
22 you for this opportunity to provide an update on
23 funding allocations for the Authority as well as the
24 progress we're making to improve the quality of life
25 for the residents we serve. With new leadership at

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2 the helm and new initiatives underway, our NYCHA 2.0
3 long-term strategic plan as our guide, and a federal
4 monitor as a partner, we're working to strengthen our
5 organization and our delivery of services to
6 residents and ensure the longevity of public housing
7 in our city. For instance, we are providing residents
8 with seven days-a-week janitorial services for the
9 first time ever after collaborating with our
10 workforce leadership to launch Alternative Work
11 Schedule. AWS began at 13 consolidated developments
12 this spring. It launches at another 39 developments
13 this summer and will be rolled out to all of our
14 developments within the next year. I'll provide you
15 with more updates on our work later in my testimony;
16 first I'd like to take you through some of the
17 funding news that has become available since we last
18 met with the Council. Congress has allocated
19 approximately 549 million in capital funding for
20 NYCHA for 2019, 243 million more than we expected.
21 I'd like to thank Senator Minority Leader Schumer,
22 Senator Gillibrand, and our congressional delegation
23 for securing dollars that our residents and our
24 buildings so desperately need. We are investing these
25 funds in facade repairs, elevators and heating

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2 plants, and apartment rehabs that will help address

3 mold and lead. We must continue advocating for

4 increased federal support of public housing and to

5 ensure that the President's draconian vision does not

6 come to fruition for 2020, he is proposing zeroing

7 out the capital funding for public housing and

8 reducing operating funding by 40 percent. This would

9 be particularly detrimental considering the

10 Authority's estimated 32 billion in capital needs and

11 the fact that the federal government has already

12 underfunded NYCHA by a total of approximately three

13 billion in capital and operating since 2001. For

14 2019, NYCHA has been allocated 99.5 percent of the

15 Section 8 funding it is eligible for, just over a

16 billion dollars, which is a quarter of a percent

17 lower than the prior year's funding. This allocation,

18 along with other factors such as program attrition,

19 will allow NYCHA to support an additional

20 approximately 5,000 vouchers, including those

21 previously committed for project-based Section 8

22 contracts and Section 8 PACT conversions. We have

23 been speaking weekly with the Governor's Office and

24 relevant State agencies, making progress to finalize

25 the grant agreement of 450 million committed by the

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2 State in last year's and the prior year's budgets. We
3 want to put that money to best, best use for our
4 residents as quickly as possible, for additional
5 heating plants and elevators. I'd also like to thank
6 Mayor Bill de Blasio for his unprecedented
7 investments in NYCHA. He has committed 6.5 billion to
8 support NYCHA's capital infrastructure and operations
9 over the next decade. This is enabling us to fix over
10 900 roofs, repair facades at nearly 400 buildings,
11 enhance security at 15 developments, upgrade and
12 replace heating systems across the city, reduce the
13 work order backlog, and more. However, it should be
14 noted that while City funds can make a big difference
15 in residents' quality of life, they are not a
16 replacement for adequate federal funding or
17 addressing the totality of NYCHA's major long-term
18 capital needs. With NYCHA 2.0 as our roadmap, we are
19 bringing major repairs and improved quality of life
20 to residents. At the heart of these efforts is our
21 groundbreaking work to convert 62,000 apartments to
22 Section 8 funding over the next decade through our
23 Permanent Affordability Commitment Together program.
24 Since we last updated the Council, we released two
25 Requests for Qualifications seeking both large and

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2 small development teams, property managers, general
3 contractors, and social service providers to partner
4 with us as we transform residents' homes. Responses
5 are actually due later this week on May 10th. We are
6 also in predevelopment on the PACT conversion of 30
7 developments containing nearly 5,700 apartments in
8 Brooklyn and Manhattan, home to more than 12,000
9 residents. These conversions are slated to be
10 completed by the end of 2019. As you know, NYCHA
11 entered into an Agreement with the federal government
12 earlier this year that is focused on implementing
13 significant health and safety related improvements at
14 the, the Authority. We have been working with the
15 monitor appointed by the federal government, Bart
16 Schwartz and his team, to fulfill the Agreement's
17 obligations. Here are some recent highlights of our
18 work. As of May 6th, NYCHA has corrected presumed
19 lead paint failures in 2,336 apartments with a child
20 under 6 and attempted to remediate 223 apartments. We
21 continue to work with our residents to gain access
22 and make the corrections. We kicked off our
23 unprecedented 88-million-dollar initiative to test
24 over 134,000 apartments for the presence of lead-
25 based paint using high-tech XRF analyzers by the end

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2 of 2020. Testing began at Harlem River Houses on
3 April 15th and on May 1st at seven additional
4 developments; Bronx River, Castle Hill, Johnson,
5 Marble Hill, Red Hook West, Saint Nicholas, and
6 Williamsburg Houses. Residents are receiving testing
7 results for their apartment, and cumulative results
8 are being posted on our website. Mayor de Blasio and
9 I worked together on creating LeadFreeNYC, the City's
10 roadmap to eliminate childhood lead exposure in New
11 York City, and NYCHA apartments are an important part
12 of this plan. We established an Environmental Health
13 and Safety Department dedicated to making
14 improvements in several high-priority areas impacting
15 residents, and a Quality Assurance Unit to
16 proactively identify and report on issues at the
17 Authority, review the work performed by NYCHA, and
18 oversee enhancements to the work order process. We
19 have begun assessing the total costs of our
20 compliance with the Agreement, including the creation
21 of the new departments. Since many of the expected
22 costs are not yet known such as lead abatement based
23 on the XRF testing results we are still refining that
24 figure. We look forward to sharing additional updates
25 with you as our work and progress continue. As I have

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2 described today and in recent hearings, NYCHA is
3 making real and substantial changes that are moving
4 the agency forward and improving the quality of life
5 for residents. Thank you for your support as we
6 preserve this vital resource of affordable housing
7 for current and future residents. We are now happy to
8 answer any questions you may have.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
10 Commissioner let me start off with children with
11 elevated lead exposure. And I thought we were going
12 to have a chart on that. Alright, under the January
13 2019 executed HUD agreement with the U.S. Attorneys
14 Office for the southern district of New York NYCHA is
15 required under the supervision of a federal monitor
16 to reform its operations and remedy living conditions
17 for its residents including lead paint hazards, mold
18 growth, pest infestations, lack of heat and adequate
19 elevator service. Please describe NYCHA's efforts
20 around lead paint hazards pursuant to this agreement?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: Certainly, so we were
22 required to do a visual assessment and created
23 immediate action lists for any apartment with a child
24 under six, that was completed and then we had
25 remediated or we had corrected the lead hazard in

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2 those apartments as of the beginning of March, there
3 are a few that we have had access issues but we
4 continue to go back and pursue administrative action
5 in those cases. We have provided the federal monitor
6 with information regarding all of the exemptions that
7 we have had on file and so they have been provided
8 with that, they were provided with access to
9 thermostats that are in apartments that they can see
10 that on real time basis and so we continue to go
11 through and make... meet all of the obligations within
12 this agreement.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What's the average
14 time to resolve service requests related to lead
15 paint?

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: I would have to get you
17 the exact time frame but right at this moment because
18 we had gone forward and done visualizations of all of
19 the apartments we have about 50 percent of our work
20 orders are paint related work orders and they are
21 presumed lead based paint. I want to make the point
22 that one of the reasons we are spending so much
23 funding on doing the XRF analysis is to figure out
24 whether or not that where there is lead so we can
25 focus our resources and so we are moving forward with

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1
2 a set of contracts and going development by
3 development to ensure that we are just sort of
4 bringing all of our resources to bear regarding paint
5 that is chipping or peeling, presumed lead paint and
6 so we... they are currently at 12 developments right
7 now so we did the first chunk was the immediate
8 action list which had to do with apartments where
9 there were children under six and we are now
10 expanding that to deal with the other apartments that
11 we identified during the visualization process but I
12 can get you the service level agreement.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, that would be
14 good. How much of NYCHA's 2019 to 2023 capital plan
15 is dedicated to lead paint removal and the same
16 question for NYCHA's 20 to 29 capital plan?

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I, I want to be
18 clear we don't know exactly what we are going to need
19 for dealing with paint at this point in time and so
20 we have a lot of unallocated money at the moment both
21 for this and for other activities under the agreement
22 but primarily under the paint agreement is... we have
23 not programmed any of the money committed to... under
24 the consent... under the agreement. So, that 2.1
25

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1 billion is still available for any of these
2 activities.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Last year I was
5 very concerned about day care center repairs, I used
6 to work in a day care center, Grant Houses. The
7 city's fiscal 2020 executive budget baselined 24
8 million from fiscal year 2020 through 2023 for
9 repairs at NYCHA senior and community centers. While
10 this is an important investment over 200-day care
11 centers provide programming at NYCHA and these
12 facilities are also in need of repairs, what is the
13 estimated day care center capital need across the
14 portfolio?

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I don't think we
16 have it broken down for day care needs in terms of
17 what we do as the, the PNA however most of the money
18 in terms of any repairs or capital work being done in
19 our community centers or in any of our early
20 education centers are being carried on the city's
21 budget and on either ACS, DOE, SCA, DFTA and DYCD and
22 so we intend to actually after I think years of
23 challenges around what the relationship is between
24 NYCHA and the city is that we are going to do a
25 citywide MOU slash master lease with the city that

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2 will specifically dictate who's responsible for what
3 and make sure that we have clearer lines of what's
4 supposed to happen and the city put money in for
5 repairs and maintenance and the other agency budgets
6 to see that happen so that's not sitting in NYCHA's
7 budget at this point in time.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How much funding,
9 maybe this is partially included in your other
10 answer, operating and capital is NYCHA allocating in
11 the near term for day care center repairs?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we're not allocating
13 money... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: At all... [cross-talk]

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...for... the city is going
16 to be allocating the money and I believe it was three
17 and six million.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, let me ask you
19 about the federal monitor. In February 19 a federal
20 monitor was appointed to ensure NYCHA complies with
21 its obligations of agreement entered into on January
22 30th, 2019 between the U.S. Department of Housing and
23 the Urban Development, NYCHA and the city of New
24 York, since the appointment of the federal monitor a
25 team of high profile, profile lawyers and consultants

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2 are said to have been recently assembled and tasked
3 with overseeing NYCHA. As a condition of the
4 agreement the city will be responsible for funding
5 this and other costs of the federal monitor. In a
6 statement made by a city hall spokesperson last week,
7 it was stated that the administration is waiting to
8 receive additional information on the cost in order
9 to proceed with the contract process and I think you
10 mentioned this in your testimony a little bit. Has
11 DFTA received the necessary information to the
12 Chairman the cost of the federal monitor?

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: I believe that actually
14 what, what... I was referring to the cost that we will
15 incur by changes, but I don't know whether or not the
16 law department has received the budget for the
17 federal monitor yet.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, when does the
19 administration plan to commence the contracting
20 process?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: My understanding and you
22 would really need to speak specifically to the law
23 department is that they have been in negotiations and
24 they I think have basically finalized the contract
25 but need the budget in order to complete the, the

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2 document and send it over to the Comptroller because
3 I assume it has to get registered.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I'm
5 going to turn it over to my Co-Chair, Council Member
6 Alicka Ampry-Samuel.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.
8 I'm just going to ask a, a few more questions related
9 to the community centers...

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...I know
12 Council... Chair Dromm asked about the day care centers
13 and the needs on those and you also mentioned funding
14 is with the other agencies but the city funds of the
15 four million dollars that are allocated in the fiscal
16 2020 and in the out years to DFTA for maintenance and
17 small work order repairs... [cross-talk]

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...at various
20 senior centers that operate at NYCHA developments...
21 [cross-talk]

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...and
24 additionally city funds of two million dollars are
25 added in fiscal 2020 and in the out years to DYCD for

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2 work order repairs at various community centers
3 citywide... [cross-talk]

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: How will
6 NYCHA inform and coordinate with the different
7 agencies to guide in the repair process?

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, that's primarily
9 going to be driven by the community-based
10 organizations who are in the facilities who will know
11 what the work is that needs to be done. We don't
12 necessarily know when they have a faucet that needs
13 to be repaired that's not necessarily something we
14 would know. We anticipate that they will deal
15 directly with their parent agencies to get the
16 repairs done and executed unless it is a major
17 capital thing where say you're in the bottom of a
18 building and it's an issue that is above you and we
19 are causing a flood from above and obviously we have
20 to take care of that because we're impacting your
21 space but within their space they would be
22 coordinating with their... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: So... [cross-
24 talk]

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KATHRYN GARCIA: ...individual agencies...

[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...so,

because there's a difference between inside the box
and outside the box that's what I'm actually
referring to... [cross-talk]

KATHRYN GARCIA: Okay... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...because

we've had, you know countless hearings and I... and,
and what comes to mind is when Council Member
Salamanca came with the visuals about the senior
center in one of his developments that was... there was
like... it was literally raining in the center. So, at
NYCHA's... a follow up question, at NYCHA's fiscal 2020
preliminary budget hearing in March that we just
held, NYCHA testified that there is one dedicated
staff member at NYCHA who handles work order and
maintenance repairs at community and senior centers
throughout the portfolio, does this new city funding
for repairs include funding for additional staff to
facilitate repairs at centers? So, remember inside
and outside the box and we know that just like inside
of the apartments a lot of the repairs that are
needed are based on structure and what's happening in

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2 infrastructure and so is there... how is NYCHA

3 determining what levels of repairs or what repairs in

4 certain centers are happening and are they getting

5 it... how are they receiving this information from the

6 residents that participate in the centers or the

7 programs or the community based organizations that

8 are managing the, the centers and how will you coord...

9 because you already know what's going to happen and

10 they, they... those are your buildings and so therefore

11 you should know what's happening in your buildings

12 because sometimes what it... what... a direct impact on

13 the center could be something that's coming from the

14 apartments above so you should know so we're just

15 asking, you know... [cross-talk]

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: Sure, so I think that

17 you... that you really hit it on the head in terms of

18 inside and outside the box, clearly we will know if

19 there's like a flood from above and those are things

20 that we need to address and obviously we will still

21 have staff on our site to address those types of

22 challenges, there are going to be things that we

23 don't know about that are happening within the space

24 that is held by the community organization but we are

25 part... we are in a process with OMB right now to

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2 continue that and until we get there we're not going
3 to make substantial changes to our processes at the
4 moment, we are... we are moving in that direction and
5 we anticipate that we will have something done by
6 this fall that will delineate very specifically who
7 does what, when and I think that will be helpful
8 because I suspect that you have felt in many hearings
9 that you were bounced between NYCHA and the city of
10 New York around who's responsible and we are trying
11 to get that completely resolved. I think this is a
12 big step forward.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, I, I

14 still don't hear anything concrete and you know I go
15 back to previous hearings where we've mentioned and
16 NYCHA has testified that there's... you know there's
17 been a working group and there's been ongoing
18 conversation to literally figure out who's
19 responsible for what and we're always told that, you
20 know we're figuring out and we should have a better
21 answer in the months to come and we're back at the
22 same place again so it... so now... [cross-talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Do I... I mean... but the

24 one thing that I would point out besides the fact
25 that I have like a personal commitment from the

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2 Director of OMB to get this done is that the city
3 actually put funding in the other agencies which I
4 think is a big step and shows their commitment...

5 [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Oh, it
7 definitely is a big step... [cross-talk]

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...to making it so this is
9 going to be real, this is not going to be we write a
10 document and then nobody has any money to fix
11 anything going... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: But... so, I...
13 [cross-talk]

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...forward... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...so, the
16 fact that the money has been allocated does not mean
17 that that's the, the, the fixer of it all, we know
18 that this is an agency that has been allocated, you
19 know billions of dollars in the past and it has had
20 trouble or, or challenges with being able to, to
21 allocate the funding and, and make repairs necessary
22 so I just wanted to hear if there's any kind of plans
23 or like a plan in place to be able to address these
24 repair needs now that the money is in the budget
25 because that was supposed to have been done it was

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2 just a matter of trying to advocate to get the
3 funding, the city to allocate the funding now... and
4 the city... you know the, the Council pushed to have
5 this funding allocated it's like okay, what are you
6 going to do about it and I would hope to hear that
7 there was some kind of plan in place.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yeah, so many of the,
9 the broad outlines are, are in place but I would... I
10 cannot say that we have finished the negotiation on the
11 MOU or master lease yet.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Chair
13 Dromm mentioned the previous budget hearing with
14 DFTA, the city's fiscal 2020 executive budget
15 allocates 1.5 million dollars to DFTA for the
16 transfer of seven NYCHA managed senior centers to
17 DFTA management beginning on July 1st, the remaining
18 seven senior centers currently managed by NYCHA will
19 be closed with DFTA to provide transportation
20 services to an alternate nearby senior center. Now in
21 the full disclosure this kind of hits home because
22 everybody knows I have a few of the centers, senior
23 centers in my district... [cross-talk]

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...and
Langston Hughes Houses is slated to be closed...

[cross-talk]

KATHRYN GARCIA: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...what
criteria was applied to determine which of these 14
senior centers were underused or had low
participation rates and before you get started to not
waste anyone's time Langston Hughes Houses and I'm
sure my colleagues have the same situation there was
a Director there, may she rest in peace Miss
Carrington, who left the center, she retired, that
senior center was a robust senior Center, they were
making dolls, they had food and you couldn't count
the number of seniors that was in this center and
they also received funding from the Council to
operate. Now since, over the past year attendance has
dropped because there is no Director there, but it
does not mean that that particular center should not
be an operating, fully operating, a viable center for
the seniors in Langston Hughes and the surrounding
area. So, I just wanted to put that out there to, to,
to not hear oh well the participation was low so

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2 that's why we closed it, let's have a real answer as
3 to... what was the criteria that was applied...

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Folks, let's, let's
6 show our approval this way and our disapproval this
7 way, okay because we need to have a, a hearing that's
8 orderly, I would appreciate your cooperation with
9 that, thank you.

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you Council
11 Member, I appreciate the question, my understanding
12 is that OMB and DFTA used several criteria not just
13 attendance but also where services were at other
14 senior centers as well as how close they were to
15 other senior centers so I, I don't believe that it
16 was just around the utilization numbers or the
17 attendance numbers but also whether or not they were
18 ADA compliant and several other factors.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, why has
20 the administration made a priority of closing popular
21 senior clubs or centers for hardly like any real
22 savings because we heard about the, the savings for
23 the ones that are closed is some like 885 million
24 dollars but when we're looking at an overall 92
25 billion dollar budget and what agencies are supposed

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2 to save on how... like what's... can you like just

3 explain to us or what you've heard... [cross-talk]

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yeah... no, I mean... I mean
5 as you know I'm, I'm not as... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: It's such a
7 small... [cross-talk]

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...right, no, I'm not as
9 subject to some of the savings programs at NYCHA as
10 city agencies are faced with and what are they able
11 to do in order to meet the requirements of those
12 saving PEG programs which are pretty aggressive, that
13 number was not small. I, I can't really say why this
14 was chosen or this was enough, I assume that from
15 what I've been hearing from other agencies they are
16 literally putting up lots of programs some with
17 higher dollars some with smaller dollars to meet the
18 requirements of the PEG program.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: And what
20 outreach was made to make seniors who use these
21 centers aware that their center was going to close or
22 that particular center...

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we have not done
24 outreach yet because it is not finalized in terms of
25 the budget in general being finalized so once we are

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2 very clear about these are closing, this is the final
3 budget we will do outreach to seniors as I assume
4 that DFTA will do and make sure that they are
5 coordinating on the transportation to go to the new
6 centers and may... and, and figure out what we're doing
7 going forward but you know because we had not
8 anticipated the full closure even though in the
9 preliminary OMB had not funded these again, it's not
10 unusual that they're funded between preliminary and
11 adoption.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: And are
13 there any staff at NYCHA that will be impacted by
14 these closures and transfers if so, how many and will
15 senior centers staff be moved elsewhere throughout..
16 [cross-talk]

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, there, there are 18,
18 I think one is on... is on leave at the moment who will
19 be impacted by this.. [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: 18?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: NYCHA employees and so
22 we will either absorb them into our organization
23 primarily in the resident engagement side of the shop
24 or we will allow them to move with the centers, I'm,
25 I'm unclear whether or not they, they might have

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2 opportunities to go to the new centers, I think we
3 need to work that out.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: And 18
5 employees at NYCHA which division do they work in or
6 unit or departments?

7 KATHRYN GARCIA: I don't know. Yeah, they
8 are currently within resident engagement, they will
9 go to another part of resident engagement with
10 insidious group.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay,
12 alright. Thank you, that'll be all for right now.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so we're going
14 to stop here and then we're going to go to member's
15 questions but before we start let me say I've also
16 been joined by Council Member Peter Koo and our first
17 question goes to Council Member Reverend Ruben Diaz
18 Senior.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Thank you
20 Mr. Chairman. Commissioner back from the moment of
21 April, April there was a case of senior citizen by
22 the name of Bienvenido Martinez and Bianvenido
23 Martinez living house.. in housing project in the
24 Bronx and he was going through.. he went through a leg
25 amputation so he was in rehabilitation center and

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2 unable to pay the rent while, while being on the... in
3 the center... in the rehabilitation center NYCHA came
4 to the apartment and broke the door and took
5 everything down and... even his, his belongings, his
6 social security card, the birth certificate, all his
7 belongings were thrown into the garbage and... because
8 he was unable to pay the rent and that was a case of,
9 of a very inhumane but by the way what has NYCHA have
10 done to correct that wrongdoing to that senior
11 citizen, 72 years old senior citizen?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: Certainly, Council
13 Member that should not have happened. So, he is in a
14 new apartment and we replaced his furniture and
15 belongings.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: He, he's
17 back in the apartment?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: And where
20 his belongings you, you... [cross-talk]

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: We paid for them...
22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: ...brought in...
24 you brought... you bought new things for... [cross-talk]

25

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: We bought new stuff..

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: ...him... okay,
5 now the... [cross-talk]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: It should not have
7 happened.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: ...no, that...
9 whoever did that deserve to be fired but you didn't
10 do anything about that?

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: We are pursuing
12 discipline as appropriate.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: But you are...
14 you are pursuing, it's about... what... today is about...
15 that's simple, who... how are you going pursue these, I
16 mean you... its simple that's hey... [cross-talk]

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: All, all, all... [cross-
18 talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: ...what do you
20 do... [cross-talk]

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...unionized employees in
22 the city of New York are allowed a process and due
23 process so that is... that is what is happening..

24 [cross-talk]

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: We... yeah,
3 we, we agree the... a person that commits something
4 like that to a senior citizen that just got the...
5 their leg amputated and unable to pay rent
6 disciplinary action or something had to be done so
7 also... all the other employees learn that... [cross-
8 talk]

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: We, we have taken
10 disciplinary action Council Member.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Okay, so
12 will you let me know, you... will you let us know what...
13 who went to what?

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: We, we'll follow up on
15 personnel... I don't... I don't want to testify... [cross-
16 talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: What you do
18 internally... [cross-talk]

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...specific personnel
20 matters... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: ...of... you do
22 internally it was secret, so nobody knows?

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, I'm pretty sure
24 people know.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: I know the
3 news... I know the news that we read a few months ago
4 was the NYCHA in, in, in their inspection of the
5 lead, lead poisoning apartment on Bronx River Houses
6 98 percent of the... of the apartments inspected came
7 up positive and you promised that you were going to
8 do something about it so you would prevent children
9 and... to get infected, what, what has NYCHA been doing
10 to correct and to do something with Bronx River
11 Houses?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, Council Member let
13 me be clear that in all of our developments we are
14 repairing lead paint hazards because if its not
15 chipping or peeling it's not a hazard. At Bronx River
16 we have begun doing the XRF testing which is where we
17 use x-rays... where we use x-rays to... for... find out
18 exactly where the lead is that began on May 1st, the
19 results of that will get posted on our website and
20 then we will make a plan for how we will abate which
21 means basically eliminate any lead so the lead hazard
22 should not be there now because we have been doing
23 those repairs but to do a permanent plan after we
24 know exactly what the issue is, primarily we've been
25 finding lead paint based on these XRF tests on, on

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2 one component which I believe is the windows to date
3 but we are in the process of doing that and then we
4 will design the capital project using the funding
5 that we got from the Mayor's Office to do the
6 abatement.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: So, so we
8 don't know when me and the Council Member will be
9 sending Bronx River Houses even know when I could
10 tell the people the problem is gone.

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: Well right this second
12 there should not be a, a lead paint hazard for any..
13 particularly any apartment with a child under six in
14 it because we have done those immediate repairs as
15 required by, by HUD regulations, we are then going
16 another step further beyond what is required of any
17 other landlord in the city of New York to fully abate
18 all of the apartments but in order to get rid of the
19 lead we need to know where it is and so that is why
20 we are going through an XRF testing, so far we have
21 primarily found it on the windows and so obviously we
22 will design a capital project that will deal with
23 that specific component. If it had been for example
24 on the baseboards we would design the capital project
25 to deal with the baseboards, if it had been on

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2 certain walls we would design the capital project for
3 those walls but we anticipate that once this is done
4 that then we will begin the capital process to do the
5 abatement and we will be able to provide you with a
6 more specific schedule once we understand exactly
7 what it is we need to do.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ SENIOR: Thank you
9 Commissioner, thank you Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
11 Council Member Richards followed by Council Member
12 Koo.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you
14 Chairs and thank you Chairwoman. Quick question, so I
15 wanted to go into heating and hot water a little bit,
16 we seen that... I believe you have close to 200 million
17 budgeted for heating system improvements in NYCHA of
18 20 developments, can you go through the status of the
19 ten developments that I believe are sharing 110
20 million dollars for... in improvements, where are they
21 at right now with... in terms of boiler replacement?

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I just want to make
23 sure that I'm, I'm doing the right bucket because
24 there are a bunch of developments that will be... we'll
25 do the boilers with the state money, are we talking

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3 about the 200 million dollars of city money that we
4 announced earlier this spring?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: 90 million I
6 believe was allocated for 39 new boilers, so I
7 believe yes, city money.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: It's two... I think it's
9 200 million for the city money... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Total, right.

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: But we did... all of those
12 projects are currently being finalized with OMB with
13 their CPs, they should register soon, and those
14 plants ended up being because of the cost there are
15 nine facilities that heat 11 developments so it's
16 Morris one, two and Morris Sienna, its Taft Houses,
17 Cypress Hills Houses, Faragut Houses, Sotomayor,
18 Rangel, Fiorentino Plaza, Long Beach Baptist Houses,
19 and Robinson Houses.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And how did you
21 prioritize those, those were developments that
22 specifically had the most outages or...

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Right, they're rated and
24 then we sort... we were rating boilers and elevators
25 and roofs and we just sort of keep going down the
list.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And let me go
3 through Sandy impacted developments like in the
4 Rockaways, where are we at, are all those
5 developments getting new boilers? I know I had a few
6 complaints yesterday about the Red Fern Houses them
7 having cold water yesterday so I just wanted to get
8 more of an update on where we're at with the
9 discovery.. the disaster recovery funds and when can
10 we anticipate all of the developments to be wrapped
11 up or beginning?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: Just give me a second.. I
13 have.. so, your boilers at Red Fern are under
14 construction.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Yes and, and
16 can you just go through all of the specific
17 developments.. [cross-talk]

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: All of the ones.. [cross-
19 talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: So, all, all of
21 the developments out there.. [cross-talk]

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes.. [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ..are they all
24 receiving new boilers? Its okay, you can get me the..
25 Brian can get me the answers.. [cross-talk]

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Okay... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...after the
4 hearing... [cross-talk]

5 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...I... there's like... not on
6 all of them I don't believe but I can tell you which
7 ones... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Yeah, if you
9 can specifically... [cross-talk]

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...we are... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...point out
12 which ones are...

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, within your
14 district... yeah, yeah... no, I found... I finally found it
15 in my giant book. Carleton is getting a new boiler
16 and electrical annex... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Uh-huh... [cross-
18 talk]

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...Ocean Side, I do not
20 see boilers at Ocean Side, they are getting
21 generators, flood walls, vacuum pumps, electric
22 risers; Ocean Bay, Bay Side got new boilers... [cross-
23 talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Uh-huh... [cross-
25 talk]

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Red Fern we just said
3 are getting new boilers, Hammel Houses is not getting
4 new boilers... oh no, it is being... getting new boilers,
5 the remediation work and boiler demolition has been
6 completed... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay, don't
8 worry, you can get me the rest on the side because I
9 just... I kind of... if the Chair is going to indulge me..
10 [cross-talk]

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: I think that was all of
12 it... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...for just two
14 other questions... [cross-talk]

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...I thought that was all..
16 [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...but that's,
18 that's not bad, that's... alright, that's a good thing
19 and I'm just looking for a status update on where
20 we're at with all of those boilers. Can you speak
21 about, you know the, the overall strategy, so I know,
22 you know the Mayor's obviously budgeted money for
23 capital improvements, can you speak about RAD where
24 are we at in that... [cross-talk]

25 KATHRYN GARCIA: Certainly... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...specific
3 process, are we entertaining the federal government,
4 entertaining RAD, do we expect any more expansions of
5 RAD and then lastly I have to speak for my
6 colleagues, Adrienne Adams who is not here because I
7 saw Baisley Houses on this list and I'm interested in
8 knowing what the community notification was in terms
9 of closing these senior centers as well, how did we
10 alert elected officials, community officials so that
11 they could prepare in the case that you're closing
12 these centers.

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I'm going to do the
14 second question first and, and then the... and then
15 then RAD question. So, we have not done any resident
16 engagement, we were only recently informed that the
17 city was not funding some of the centers that are
18 housed at NYCHA and that they are transferring the
19 others, we will work with DFTA to make sure that we
20 are reaching out to both elected as well as to the
21 residents who are using those sites. In terms of RAD
22 we are absolutely moving full steam ahead. As the
23 Mayor announced back in December for NYCHA 2.0 our
24 goal is to move 62,000 units through the RAD process,
25 we are on track to do another 5,000 units this year.

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2 As you know we've done big bundles for Brooklyn and
3 for Manhattan and we actually just put out a request
4 for qualifications so that we can incorporate more
5 small developers and more local social service
6 organizations into these... into the pipeline to make
7 sure they're part of this process so we are intending
8 to keep moving that full steam ahead.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Alright, I'm
10 going to close out by just saying, you know I hope
11 that NYCHA really is doing a really robust community
12 engagement strategy and I want to credit you for the
13 work we did in Ocean Bay Houses, I know we'll be
14 cutting a ribbon shortly on that but I want to
15 stress... [cross-talk]

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: Can I just say... [cross-
17 talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: ...that... [cross-
19 talk]

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...for your... for your
21 colleagues because I know that you were out there and
22 you were supportive and, and you were really helpful
23 to us but not everybody loved the idea... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: I know... [cross-
25 talk]

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...and now they... and now
3 all of your residents love the idea so I just would...
4 it'd be great if you could convey that it actually...
5 they, they like it out there now.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: I will let my
7 colleagues make their own determinations but I, I
8 always welcome them to tour and, and see what we're
9 doing out there, I'll just stress lastly that on the
10 Sandy contracts the job numbers are really dismal and
11 it's a shame that we're spending billions of dollars
12 across NYCHA developments that we can put people to
13 work and, and the numbers are not where they're at so
14 I know you're... you've just come on board but I'm
15 hoping that this is an area that you're going to
16 focus on, you know we can really create some upward
17 mobility for our residents with all this money being
18 spent and right now they're looking out their windows
19 seeing the work happen.

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: Right and, and just
21 very, very quickly Council Member we agree with you,
22 we are working with the city on the negotiations for
23 the project labor agreement to make it easier for us
24 to ensure that we are having NYCHA residents trained
25 and getting the jobs that are happening on our

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3 projects more fully and we think there's some tweaks
4 that we can make to that that will make it so it's
5 more affective.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you
7 Chairs, thank you Chairwoman.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Koo
9 followed by Gibson.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Chair
11 Dromm and, and Ampry-Samuel, yeah. Commissioner, oh
12 I'm sorry, Chair Garcia, yeah, thank you for your
13 courage of leading NYCHA. One of the items in the
14 executive budget is to close down Bland senior center
15 and to consolidate with CPC Nan Shan center, this has
16 been discussed before, but it never happened because
17 there was a clear need for the senior center to be
18 kept open for this community. The current attendance
19 of 25, 30 senior at plant house covers only about 30
20 percent of the senior population in plant houses, the
21 seniors specifically said they do not want to go to
22 senior center because of the lack of programming and
23 amenities so the proposed transfer Bland House to CPC
24 Nan Shan Center which has more than 100 percent
25 utilization rate, how would bringing in 76 seniors

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2 from Bland not make the overcrowding issue worse at
3 CPC?

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, really Council
5 Member I have to refer you to what the Department of
6 the Aging has really testified to in terms of their
7 approach because I'm not seeing the full picture that
8 they see and I'm relying on their expertise in terms
9 of where city resources should be allocated for
10 senior centers.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: My, my... I have
12 another question though, we also have groups who
13 would like to bring their programming to plant with,
14 with DFTA contract but the facilities were not just
15 up to par so would NYCHA be committed to renovating
16 plant senior center and if you can bring in
17 programming with another group?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, my real focus right
19 now Council Member is making sure that I am doing the
20 capital work within the apartments, I need to be
21 laser focused on doing the improvements required
22 inside the apartments at this point in time and we
23 are working very hard to make it so that for things
24 like renovations of community centers and, and senior
25 centers or 3-K or Pre-K that the city is taking on

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2 that role and responsibility or that it's, it's
3 clearer that they will be the ones to do those sorts
4 of renovations.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah but I, I think
6 it will be a big mistake if you bus all these seniors
7 from plant house to CPC even though the walk
8 conditions not that far but if you put in a bus it'll
9 probably take a half an hour just to go there and
10 then create more traffic congestion and what about
11 the seniors on wheelchairs it will be very chaotic so
12 I hope you will keep Bland house senior center open,
13 thank you and I want to thank you for your
14 leadership, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Chair,
16 Chair Ampry-Samuel wants to make a statement.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you
18 Chair Dromm and I also want to recognize I'm not sure
19 if we recognized you already Council Member Inez
20 Barron who's here with us. It's, it's a question
21 actually, I just want to... yeah, I just want to ask
22 this question because we were just talking about RAD
23 and it made me think about development. We just had a
24 press conference outside on the steps of City Hall
25 and the press conference was about the 500-million-

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1
2 dollar allocation for new construction senior
3 housing. Last year during our hearing we heard from a
4 former EVP of real estate that mentioned when we
5 asked about housing and this is a quote, we
6 definitely hear your concerns loud and clear and I
7 just wanted to state that NYCHA has met with a number
8 of members of the Council in addition to internally
9 having discussions, she went on to state, we
10 responded with an RFP for three independent senior
11 only developments on our existing property on three
12 of our existing campuses and she said so that RFP is
13 out, we'll hopefully be awarding those developers in
14 the coming months but I just wanted to also say that
15 approximately half of our pipeline for new
16 construction is dedicated to senior housing because
17 we do take this concern very seriously and that's
18 what the former executive vice president of real
19 estate stated at last year's hearing and I just
20 wanted to read it and quote because we've been
21 hearing... you know some people will say something and
22 turn around and, and say it wasn't said and so I just
23 wanted to make sure that I put that in quote. So,
24 that statement was made prior to the 500-million-
25 dollar promise made by the Mayor in the FY 2019

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2 executive budget, that was prior to. Please explain
3 to us what happened with that funding priority and
4 explain the difference in funding that was already in
5 the pipeline and the units that will come onli9ne
6 with the additional 500-million-dollar funding
7 commitment?

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: My understanding of this
9 is that there's sort of... the... what had already been
10 committed to that had been moving through and you
11 know we I think are about to finish construction on
12 some of those projects in the very near future and we
13 just announced I think that we were going out with
14 development for Sotomayor and one other one. The ones
15 that I believe are the after, the new commitment are
16 the six sites two of which NYCHAs doing the other
17 four which are HPD and those locations are
18 Kingsborough, Morris one and two, those are the ones
19 that NYCHAs doing and then HPD is doing the Astoria,
20 the 516 Bergen Street at Dean Street the Fulton A and
21 B and 97 West 169th Street so those are what I
22 believe are the ones that were the second tranche
23 after the announcement and that... but there has been
24 quite a bit of 100 percent affordable going on before
25 that and so we have had buildings that are about to

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2 come online, buildings that are in construction and
3 have been... have developers designated and then these
4 are the new round or tranche of, of 100 percent
5 affordable for seniors.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: The six
7 that you just named were not part of the pipeline of
8 new construction dedicated to senior housing or NYCHA
9 property outside of... [cross-talk]

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: That is my
11 understanding, I will get someone to make sure that
12 it's clear because I wasn't here when that statement
13 was made and so I will have someone look at it and
14 hopefully before the end of this hearing make sure
15 that it's clear for you and one other thing I want to
16 correct the record on, on... in terms of Mr. Martinez I
17 thought he had... he was supposed to have moved in but
18 apparently we're waiting for a medical bed, a
19 hospital bed to be brought in that we're applying for
20 him so has not moved in yet, we're waiting for that
21 to happen.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, so
23 we'll follow up in a few about the senior housing.

24

25

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yeah, I have.. I know
3 that there is a list that I don't want to just flip
4 pages and look for.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How long for the bed?

6 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: So, that is being
7 provided by the medical provider, by the facility
8 that he's being released from, we had expected that
9 it would be delivered this week. Alright, the
10 furniture that we purchased is already in place.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It should only take
12 a, a couple of days, right?

13 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: That's correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, alright, thank
15 you. Council Member Gibson followed by.. and I forgot
16 to announce Council Member Inez Barron has joined us
17 as well then, she'll follow up after Council Member
18 Gibson.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you
20 very much Chair Dromm and Chair Ampry-Samuel and
21 thank you to everyone for coming today, very
22 important that you're here, we appreciate your
23 presence and I wish you safe travels as you travel
24 back home and thank you for keeping up the momentum
25 and focusing on senior housing for residents that

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

2 live in public housing. Good afternoon Chair, good
3 afternoon NYCHA. I have lots of questions but I'll
4 try to get through as best as I can and I say this..
5 yesterday we started the first round of hearings, the
6 Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm and myself and one thing
7 I want everyone to understand when we talk about this
8 being a challenging budget we have additional revenue
9 that we have identified that we can honestly use for
10 many of the programs that we are calling for and have
11 called for in our budget response so the personal
12 income tax revenue was higher than we projected and
13 we believe at the City Council that at least 200
14 million dollars of additional revenue is available
15 for us to use. So, when I hear the idea of closing
16 senior centers and senior clubs, I find it really
17 appalling that we're even going to ask seniors to
18 move to a DFTA center. Although we claim it may be
19 nearby for seniors to travel is not always the
20 easiest and so I want everyone to understand it's
21 much more than providing transportation. Some of
22 these DFTA centers that we are moving these seniors
23 to are already at 100 percent utilization, some of
24 them are higher than that and we're not talking about
25 adding more money to these providers and giving them

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2 more money and so I want NYCHA, DFTA was here earlier
3 to understand that if we're making these types of
4 decisions we have to make sure that things are put in
5 place. We can't make a decision and tell seniors
6 after the fact and so I want you and your team to
7 really understand that. The money that was actually
8 put in the executive budget dedicated to expediting
9 repairs at NYCHA community and senior centers we
10 called for that in our budget response but not at six
11 million dollars, that is not enough money to deal
12 with all the capital work that we need in these
13 community cornerstone programs as well as senior
14 centers, four million is for DFTA and two million is
15 for DYCD. So, I would love to understand the
16 mechanism behind the six million and how we're going
17 to spend that money because it's not enough to go
18 around and I also would ask that you look at and
19 consider the requests that have been coming in from
20 the local providers on the ground so I know NYCHA may
21 go in and do their own assessment but the providers
22 that work there every single day can give you a
23 greater understanding of some of the real capital
24 needs that they have at these locations. I wanted to
25 focus on the physical needs assessment and your

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2 colleague knows very well, the 32-billion-dollar

3 price tag that we have. In the physical needs

4 assessment most of the concern and area of priority

5 that was focused on are internal apartment upgrades

6 and if you look at the total capital budget both

7 federal dollars and city dollars most of the

8 priorities are on outside, boiler, infrastructure,

9 exterior work and that is absolutely very important

10 but I would also argue that the residents that have

11 lived in NYCHA for many years have never seen paint

12 jobs and upgrades and new cabinets and all the things

13 that they should be afforded. So, my question is,

14 with new dollars the 450 million that we have yet to

15 get from Albany and I don't know if there's a plan,

16 is there any way that these capital dollars can be

17 focused on internal apartment repairs not brand new

18 tenants coming in because we give them brand new

19 apartments but the tenants that have been apartments

20 for years, I want them to get attention not just

21 external attention but I want to see apartment

22 upgrades prioritized in this capital plan, is that

23 possible?

24

25

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I mean I understand
3 your desire to see... because it is the biggest piece
4 of the pan, it's a little bit over... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Yes... [cross-talk]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...12 billion dollars has
7 went in apartment but if we don't do the, the bigger
8 pieces, if we don't do the roof and we don't do the
9 façade anything that we do inside will get ruined and
10 if we don't have heat then we're not meeting sort of
11 like the basic health and safety needs of the
12 residents so you're right, we have prioritized the
13 less fun things in this but I would also say that
14 right now we have an enormous number... one of the
15 things that happens when we do RAD conversions is we
16 are able to take care of all of the major building
17 systems as well as any... like new apartments, new
18 bathrooms going forward as, as Council Member Donovan
19 would tell you is... it is a different... it is a totally
20 different place at Ocean Bay at this point and there
21 are many buildings that are currently in construction
22 right now having full rehabilitations done and that
23 is because we are leveraging and accessing funding
24 through tenant protections vouchers and section 8
25 program to make that happen.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I understand but
3 it doesn't mean Commissioner that we can't also look
4 at internal upgrades, yes we have to take care of
5 external but I cannot tell you how many requests that
6 my colleagues and I get for our council dollars to
7 fund some of these basic things like LED lights,
8 playground upgrades, basketball repairs, elevators, I
9 mean we have all been funding a lot of these projects
10 but because it's city dollars the city dollars are
11 spent on a different timeframe from federal dollars,
12 right, we acknowledge that, NYCHA spends federal
13 dollars quickly because there's a timeframe, the city
14 dollars every year we re-appropriate every single
15 year because the process is different so what I'd
16 like to see in addition to the local Council Members
17 and the capital dollars that we give we just want to
18 see attention in all areas so, another area of
19 priority for me have been elevators, elevators need
20 to be completely replaced but I understand if you are
21 going through a roof replacement that has to be done
22 but it doesn't mean it falls on the back burner and
23 we never get to it but in your internal mechanisms
24 you go through priorities and assessments. So, for
25 instance many of my developments are in the top ten

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1
2 but I don't know when we'll ever get to them, they
3 could be in the top five but it's just we're trying
4 to figure out how to expedite this process and I
5 worked with your colleague very closely on capital,
6 on the certificates to proceed, all of the internal
7 things that need to move in order for us to draw down
8 on city dollars at a faster rate just as we do with
9 federal dollars so that's my frustration and I'm
10 hoping that, you know there is a plan with all the
11 different levels of oversight that we have with the
12 federal monitor and state that we do find some way to
13 move on these, these priorities that are equally as
14 important to external capital work.

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: And, and we do have a
16 very large elevator plan moving forward and have been
17 focused on that, it is actually one of the things we
18 want to use a large amount of the state money for is
19 to do elevator replacements and we are committed
20 under the HUD agreement to do an enormous amount of
21 elevators as well as boilers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay and thank
23 you Chair, my final question Chair Ampry-Samuel
24 talked about the six additional developments that
25 were identified for senior housing on underutilized

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING
2 NYCHA land, that is not in the 500 million dollars
3 that's already been allocated. So, I represent one of
4 them and my question is if we've identified these
5 sites where is the money and where is that going to
6 be reflected in the budget?

7 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, my understanding
8 these are, are total cost of development numbers so
9 it's not as if you necessarily see a line item in the
10 capital budget because there will be low income
11 housing tax credits used as well as other funding
12 mechanisms that HPD uses in order to do that funding
13 so it's not like you necessarily just see a line item
14 in the capital budget for these sites.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So, are these
16 sites going to go through... you said NYCHA and HPD,
17 how is that going to work because HPD already has
18 projects in their pipeline so is this going to fall
19 in line with that or will there be some priority
20 given for all of these sites that are identified?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: I... my understanding is
22 that they are all on track to be moving on the
23 timeline that had been committed to.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, well we...
25 [cross-talk]

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: And I know... I need... you
3 the answer on what was before, what were they talking
4 about before.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, I'd love to
6 talk offline about that because I represent one of
7 those developments and I've not had one meeting or
8 one conversation with anyone about development on a
9 property in my district and so until I have that
10 conversation I really need to understand what's
11 happening with this and where we can make sure that
12 it's fully funded and if there are any gaps in
13 service then I want to make sure that happens.

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, absolutely I think
15 that'd, that'd be good to sit down and go
16 individually through what we planned at each one of
17 the developments and what if any funding gaps there
18 are.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you,
20 thank you Chairs.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
22 Council Member Barron followed by Ayala.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you to the
24 Chairs for hosting the hearing and thank you to the
25 panel for coming. I'm glad Council Member Donovan

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
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3 said that each of the members could speak for
4 themselves regarding the RAD and PACT, so my first
5 question is going to be about the PACT. Is it... I
6 represent east New York and parts of Brownsville, is
7 it true that Linden Houses and Boulevard Houses had
8 been designated for the PACT program?

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: My understanding
11 was initially PACT was going to be designated to
12 smaller developments so that they could make sure
13 that they worked out all of the problems so my
14 question is why have you now included Linden and
15 Boulevard in who... which are very large developments
16 in a program that's still in it's fledgling stages
17 and what is the impact of section 18 which has many
18 more restrictions in terms of being implemented as a
19 PACT in those two developments?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: We are currently doing
21 some, some larger developments now, they've not been
22 all small developments. I know these are very, very...
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: They're nowhere
25 near... [cross-talk]

KATHRYN GARCIA: ...large... [cross-talk]

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1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...as large as
3 Linden and Boulevard.

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: Right, no they are... they
5 are... they are both very large but they are also what
6 are considered the unfunded which means they never
7 had federal operating dollars associated with them
8 and so this will give them a stable operating subsidy
9 for all of those units going forward and you're right
10 it's a little bit different as they don't have public
11 housing, they can't... public housing dollars attached
12 to them, they can't transfer under RAD exactly so
13 they transfer under what is called section 18 of the
14 public housing law and one of the things we committed
15 to in any of our transactions is that all of the
16 rights of the tenants stay exactly the same no matter
17 which way we are moving through the process. It does
18 make... so, the closing is more complicated and some of
19 the underlying financing more complicated, but we
20 want to make it so that the tenants have exactly the
21 same experiences they have today but that they have
22 better apartments. The one thing... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What about... go
24 ahead... [cross-talk]

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

2 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...that Council Member
3 Gibson and I think... she's tired of waiting for better
4 apartments, this is the fastest way I can get money
5 into apartments to make them better.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, this is the
7 fastest way, what is the timeline for completion of,
8 of getting new apartments or getting all the... all the
9 work done in these housing developments?

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, it's... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...these
12 apartments?

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: Its... so, I think that
14 within the ones that we are currently in construction
15 we anticipate that we will be complete within the
16 next 18 months... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, you, you
18 expect that when you start at Linden and Boulevard it
19 will be done in 18 months, all of them?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: We have not done the RFP
21 yet.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-
23 talk]

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I really cannot say
25 specifically about what the construction timelines

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2 will be, obviously these are very large developments
3 with many thousands of units and so we can make sure
4 that you... we keep you in the loop about exactly what
5 the timeframe is but it is... it is fast, you know in
6 the scheme of...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I... my...

8 [cross-talk]

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Let me put it this way...

10 [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...the clock...

12 [cross-talk]

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...in the scheme of

14 capital work in the city of New York... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I have a

16 lot... [cross-talk]

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...is fast... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...more questions,

19 how many unoccupied apartments are there in NYCHA?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: I have that number

21 somewhere, hold on a second... it's less than one

22 percent but I think that you are looking for the

23 actual number?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

25

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes, that is... that is
3 what I was looking for, but I do not think that... I
4 had it on a sheet of paper at my office, I may have
5 to have someone pull it up and let you know... [cross-
6 talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-
8 talk]

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...because I don't think I
10 have that right at the moment.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you and in
12 your earlier testimony I think I heard you... I thought
13 I heard you say that all children under the age of
14 six have been... their apartments have been abated of...
15 [cross-talk]

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, no... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...lead... [cross-
18 talk]

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, I want to be very...
20 [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: No... [cross-talk]

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...clear... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-
24 talk]

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...we have done repairs to
3 eliminate the lead hazard, they have not been abated,
4 we are going through as part of the XRF testing to
5 make the plan on how to abate apartments and you know
6 they're, they're going to be whole developments where
7 there is no lead, there will be apartments that, that
8 there are... there is more lead and so it's going to
9 really vary on exactly what our approach is.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, do we know
11 how many children under six are currently living in
12 apartments that have lead paint, lead based paint?

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: We do not...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: We do not...

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: We presume that all of
16 them have lead paint unless we have documentation
17 that they are either post 1978 or we have
18 documentation that we have abated them.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, when do we
20 expect that once they've been identified that those
21 apartments particularly with children under eight...

22 [cross-talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Under eight or under
24 six?

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I mean under six
3 will have apartments fully abated?

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, it really is going
5 to depend so I can't... so, if it's an easy job we're
6 going to do it very quickly, I mean if it's just
7 we're going to have to rip out the baseboards and
8 there's nothing else in the apartment that needs to
9 be done in order to eliminate lead that's what we're
10 going to do but if it is we need to gut rehab the
11 entire apartment or many apartments that's a longer
12 timeframe.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Would you
14 prioritize apartments with children that are under
15 six once you've identified... [cross-talk]

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-
18 talk]

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...we are... we have been
20 prioritizing even doing the testing... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-
22 talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...to areas where we
24 either think that there might be lead and where there
25 are children under six.

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1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, Mr. Chair
3 please I beg your indulgence a few more questions?

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: And, and just... so, as of
5 May 3rd we had 1,913 vacant units in the process of
6 being rented.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: How many?

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: 1,913.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: In the process of
10 being rented so that... [cross-talk]

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: Which means they're on
12 the list to... you know people are picking them, we're
13 doing the, the regular process for when we have
14 vacant apartments... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right... [cross-
16 talk]

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...you know we take them
18 off the housing list... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And just quickly
20 I heard that NYCHA has identified... that the city has
21 identified a NYCHA property where they're going to
22 demolish a particular building, put up... relocate the
23 people, the residents of that building in another
24 facility or another... [cross-talk]

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1 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

2 KATHRYN GARCIA: Let me... let... I think
3 what we're talking about and what's been in the news
4 recently... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes... [cross-talk]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...is that Fulton Houses
7 in Chelsea and we have started some very robust
8 resident engagement and we are trying to have the
9 conversation with the residents first, it's
10 challenging but this is an idea to deal with the very
11 large need at this... at this facility and I want to be
12 crystal clear, we will demolish nothing unless a new
13 building has already been constructed and the tenants
14 can move into the new building. If there's no new
15 building they're not going anywhere and it's going to
16 be on their campus.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: The new building
18 will be constructed...

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: Then you move people
20 into the new building... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Then move people
22 in... [cross-talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Then you... [cross-talk]
24
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: All of those
3 persons who are presently living will have the...
4 [cross-talk]

5 KATHRYN GARCIA: Any, anyone... [cross-
6 talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...opportunity...
8 [cross-talk]

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...any... we have committed
10 that we will move them either into another apartment
11 within the development if they want to stay and in
12 one of... if they want into one of those or into the
13 new building and all of them, no one moves off the
14 campus.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And the new
16 construction will include market rate apartments?

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: The... what we have looked
18 at with all of NYCHA 2.0 is including market rate
19 apartments.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I don't see how
21 that addresses the issue of homelessness and people
22 who... [cross-talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Well there, there...
24 they... the reason we're taking down the other... the
25 buildings just so that there... this is our idea, this

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2 is something we need to really meet with residents

3 on, so I want to be crystal clear, we want to engage

4 with residents on this concept is we will then have

5 space to build other buildings which would give us

6 more apartments to sort of deal with the overall

7 crisis.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And is demolition

9 also a possibility under the PACT because I've read

10 that it is?

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we actually don't

12 view it as one or the other, it's a set of tools and

13 every development will be different so there are

14 developments for Linden and Boulevard we are not

15 intending to do demolition we are intending to do a

16 straight PACT deal but if you have an opportunity to

17 make sure that we're dealing with all of the needs

18 using any and all of these tools but for some place

19 where we're talking about putting... taking down or

20 ever doing demolition it's not going to work

21 everywhere because I need a site for a new building..

22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Exactly.. [cross-

24 talk]

25

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...before I can take down
3 anything else so that's what I want to make sure is...
4 [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And, and just...
6 [cross-talk]

7 KATHRYN GARCIA: ...not doing it the other
8 way.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Finally, Unity
10 Houses, Unit, Unity Plaza we've been working with
11 Brian in that regard its interesting the project
12 calls for renovation of the community center, when I
13 came into the position in 2014 NYCHA had no
14 recollection, no information, no documentation that
15 this project had already been started by my
16 predecessor, had I... had it not been my husband and
17 had we not talked.. [cross-talk]

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Talked.. [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...it would have
20 fallen off the table, I think that that's not
21 acceptable, you know we had to fight... we had to go
22 back and find the documentation to prove that in fact
23 it had already been targeted to be renovated and now
24 we're at the point where plans are moving forward,
25 plans are moving forward and they want to give me a

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2 choice of either renovating the boys bathroom or
3 renovating the girl's bathroom, that's unacceptable
4 to say that you want to do a major renovation and you
5 only want to provide for one bathroom and expect that
6 to be a choice either or, so I just want you to
7 consider that and lastly, we need better security at
8 Carter Houses, Carter Woodson Houses as has been
9 perhaps spoken to earlier. There was a senior who was
10 found dead in her apartment, a victim of a crime and
11 approximately two or three years earlier that same
12 development had a senior who was found dead in her
13 apartment and I don't believe that crime has been
14 solved so we need to make sure that we increase the
15 security for the residents who are in these senior
16 houses particularly now we've had two incidents
17 within in the last two or three years.

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes, I agree, thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, thank
20 you so much for your indulgence.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely Council
22 Member. Okay, we have Council Member Ayala followed
23 by Salamanca and then Gibson.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you Chair.
25 My question is really around the public safety

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2 perspective of New... the New York City Public Housing
3 Authority, in our preliminary budget response we
4 specifically asked for more funding for lighting
5 improvements to... as, as a means of kind of addressing
6 some of this, there was no money added, there was
7 also no money added to sidewalk repairs which we
8 desperately need so I'll start with the, the lighting
9 issue, you know as... in my... the representative of a
10 district that has the highest rates of gun violence,
11 my residents feel, you know totally unsafe and they
12 have been begging for years for lighting improvements
13 at these developments, for doors to be repaired, for
14 cameras to be installed and there seems to be very
15 little attention being given, you know to that. I
16 understand that we have limited resources and you
17 know a bunch of priorities and that we're focusing a
18 lot of that attention on the lead remediation, the
19 mold and the interior conditions of the apartments
20 but I would argue that, you know public safety is
21 also a health issue and it is one that we need to
22 take just as seriously. When people feel unsafe in
23 their community, I mean what, what is the public
24 benefit to that? My seniors can't sit in bench, my
25 kids are getting shot day in and day out, we have

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2 seniors that are being murdered in the comfort of

3 their own home, there obviously is a lack of

4 attention and resources being channeled that way and

5 I... again I understand that there are competing, you

6 know demands but the fact that there was not, you

7 know a dollar allotted to address some of the public

8 housing needs is really inexcusable to me. On top of

9 that to add insult to injury, we as a Council

10 sometimes fund some of these projects and so in some

11 of my developments I have put in I think... we put in

12 money, 500,000 dollars at Mill Brook Houses last

13 year, 500,000 dollars at Mitchel Houses for lighting

14 improvements to help supplement and it, it was pretty

15 obvious that the work that the state had done as part

16 of the allocation through Assembly Woman Arroyo they

17 did that through... that was, you know the lighting and

18 one side of the development is like really bright and

19 the lighting in the other... in the other... the opposite

20 side that was funded with the Council funds is really

21 dim and so I don't understand the inconsistencies but

22 my residents really, really feel unsafe and I'm sure

23 that this is not specific to my district, I'm sure

24 this is something that's happening citywide as

25 evident, you know on the news and so I expect to see

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2 more. I have... we funded public safety cameras that
3 I'm being told sometimes don't even work, there's no
4 one paying attention or even, you know reporting back
5 if the cameras are not operational, why are we not
6 repairing them, you know on a timely basis, we put in
7 money for layered access to secure doors specifically
8 in the senior buildings, the layered doors break and
9 it takes sometimes a year to replace them. So, you
10 know these are more comments than questions but I'm
11 really just frustrated because I feel like, you know
12 my residents are not safe, they do not feel safe and
13 it is my responsibility as their elected official,
14 you know to really reiterate that time and time again
15 and lastly I'll just say that, you know in terms of
16 the sidewalk repair we don't put in a lot of
17 resources, there's a three million dollar allocation
18 yearly to DOT to repair sidewalks, many of my
19 constituents who are wheel chair users are really
20 navigating the streets because they can no longer
21 navigate the sidewalks safely because of the
22 conditions that they are in and again that's another
23 issue that... again, you know we're talking about,
24 about a vulnerable population that is unseen and
25 unheard because we are not addressing the conditions

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1
2 of the sidewalks and so I would love to see, you know
3 those two matters addressed a little bit more
4 efficiently before we vote on this budget because I
5 think that these are issues that speak to, you know a
6 large constituency and so I look forward to hearing
7 more.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you Council Member
9 we do have some projects obviously that need to be
10 implemented in your district and we're happy to talk
11 through what the specifics are, and the timing are as
12 well as the need for more sidewalk repair.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,
14 Council Member Salamanca.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you
16 Chair Dromm, good afternoon Commissioner... Chair. I
17 would like to start off by.. I want to thank you Vito
18 and Brian, we've had two small town hall meetings
19 with my NYCHA developments which have been very
20 successful, the tenants that do show up they.. it's,
21 it's really refreshing for them to see that level of
22 leadership from NYCHA to come and answer their
23 questions, are all the issues resolved, absolutely
24 not but just to see you there I wanted to personally
25 thank you and, and.. on the record. In terms of the

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2 budget two cycles... two budget cycles ago I was able
3 to allocate three million dollars, get three million
4 dollars for Merrill Houses for security purposes,
5 declared access, I have yet to see anything happen
6 with that funding, you know Melrose is one of my
7 highest crime NYCHA developments that I have and I
8 just wanted to see if there's a status on that. While
9 you look for that I was also able at 372 East 152nd
10 Street there is... that's a senior... a NYCHA senior
11 building that I have in my council district and I
12 was... I also allocated about 275,000 dollars because
13 there were security issues in that building where
14 kids from the high school down the block were in the
15 building, they.. you know they were smoking weed but
16 some of my seniors were actually getting robbed and
17 assaulted in the building and I have yet to see any
18 progress for that funding that I allocated to see so
19 I would like to check what's the status of the
20 security cameras in, in, in that building?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: I'm going to ask Deborah

22 to look and check exactly where that is and, and
23 hopefully get back to you before the end of the
24 hearing.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay and then
3 two things Madame Chair, the sidewalks on the NYCHA
4 developments whose responsibility is it, is it NYCHA
5 or is it DOT?

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: It's NYCHA.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: It's NYCHA,
8 well I'm having a difficult time getting... well I'm
9 having a difficult time getting some of my sidewalks,
10 they're being lifted because of the roots of the
11 trees and at times I feel that, you know I try to
12 deal directly with management, with the property
13 managers and it's frustrating that, you know they
14 point fingers, they are unaware of who's responsible
15 for what and I have to constantly call Vito or Brian
16 to get answers to these questions and I just feel
17 that these property managers should be a little bit
18 more knowledgeable of who's, who's responsible for
19 what instead of giving, you know their tenants and us
20 the run around.

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we will work harder
22 on making sure property managers are aware, obviously
23 DOT will go in they perceive it as a sidewalk
24 violation and do the repair and bill us but... as they
25

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2 do to regular private homeowners, but it is our
3 responsibility.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright, I
5 have one last question, I know this question was
6 asked, last year the Mayor promised senior housing,
7 he promised half a billion dollars to... for, for NYCHA
8 senior housing, it seems that that money or that
9 funding we can't find it in the budget but there's a
10 piece of property... the... there's, there's a group of
11 coalition they, they've had rallies at least in my
12 council district because there's a big lot on 152nd
13 Street which is vacant and they're asking for senior
14 housing, it belongs to NYCHA and they're asking for
15 senior housing and we have yet to get a response from
16 NYCHA as to what they're going to do with that piece
17 of property so I'm asking on the record does NYCHA
18 planning to... on doing anything with that vacant lot
19 and if so is senior housing in the works since it's
20 much needed and the Mayor promised seniors in the
21 City of New York that he was going to allocate half a
22 billion dollars for senior housing?

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, my understanding on
24 that project was that it was tied to six sites two of
25 which NYCHA is doing the RFP for, four of which are

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2 being done by HPD, I don't know specifically what

3 this site is, I can tell you what the sites are that

4 are in that process that I think are tied to that

5 commitment which I, I'm happy to go through again and

6 give you, I don't see 152nd Street, the one in the

7 Bronx is actually in High Bridge but we can look and

8 see whether or not... what the plans are for that site

9 obviously we've worked very closely with HPD in terms

10 of using our property to help deal with the fact that

11 we have this citywide affordability crisis and we

12 continue as a city to try and make sure that we are

13 putting up more senior housing across the city.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright, thank

15 you, thank you Madame Chair, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member

17 Gibson.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you,

19 I'll be quick, thank you Chairs again. I just wanted

20 to ask a quick question, the Saturday blitzes that

21 NYCHA has recently started where staff goes in on

22 Saturdays at particular developments and does a

23 series of different apartment repairs, so I've

24 mentioned this to the staff before and I certainly

25 want to go on record and reiterate it again that the

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2 City Council considers itself an equal partner with
3 this administration so when there are new initiatives
4 and efforts that are put forth by an agency it's
5 really our expectation that we would get a series of
6 different levels of communication, Saturday blitzes
7 can be good if they are promoted properly. I got
8 notified on a Friday at five p.m. about a Saturday
9 blitz the next day, that is unacceptable and I've
10 said this to staff many times and I'm saying it to
11 you as Chair that if we have Saturday blitzes we want
12 to do our part to make sure that residents are home
13 on a Saturday so if you can share the information
14 with us in advance notice not the day before it would
15 be super helpful because it's an effort that helps to
16 expedite work ticket orders and things that need to
17 be done and I just think it just falls in line with
18 our ongoing partnership. I wanted to ask specifically
19 about some of the new agreements that NYCHA has
20 embarked on with regard to Teamsters, Local 237 with
21 the workforce; evening extended hours and weekend
22 hours which I think can be very good but in addition
23 to that are we hiring more staff, are we hiring more
24 groundskeepers and others because a lot of times
25 there's such a, a difference in staff from

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2 development to development so I have Morris Houses

3 which are 19 buildings compared to High Bridge

4 Gardens which is six and sometimes the staff there's

5 not that much of a difference. The property managers

6 our offices work closely with but Chair I can tell

7 you Vito and Brian know very well I asked for a list

8 of property managers because they change and we're

9 never notified so we don't know who to call and a lot

10 of times residents will reach out to us because they

11 put work tickets in like we want them to but they're

12 not being addressed and so it's helpful for us if we

13 increase the level communication and we do it in

14 sufficient notice not just the Saturday blitzes but

15 the workforce. So, I wanted to ask about the

16 workforce and what we've done with the series of

17 agreements and how that's going to play out and what

18 metrics do you use to determine where the additional

19 staff is going in the NYCHA portfolio?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: Absolutely, so we

21 actually... staff brought back the challenge of you

22 being notified late on a Friday, that was

23 unacceptable and we have gone and put in processes so

24 hopefully you will see improvement to make sure

25 there's notification both for residents and for

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2 elected officials at least a week in advance. We want
3 it to actually work for everyone and it's not only... I
4 think the positive portion of weekend blitzes is not
5 only the work orders we get corrected but also the
6 management office is there to answer questions, to
7 get recertifications done, all of the things that
8 they may not be able to do during the week. So, for
9 caretakers we are intending and actually have
10 completed hiring an additional 200 caretakers and so
11 the way that they're allocated is by unit and by
12 acreage, in terms of making sure that we are balanced
13 in terms of the amount of work that, that we do and
14 we will certainly provide you with a current list of
15 property managers in your district with their phone
16 numbers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, I

18 appreciate that and please understand that that does
19 change and I, I recognize that but I guess the bottom
20 line is we just want to be helpful in the way we can
21 and I feel that it's personally just as Council
22 Member Ayala said, I have every right to compliment
23 but also to critique because every year when we pass
24 the budget here I am giving NYCHA money and I give
25 money for basketball courts, I've funded sprinkler

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2 systems, exterior LED lights, elevators, I just gave
3 money for playground renovations, I do it all and I
4 shouldn't have to but I do it because I don't believe
5 that my developments are going to get the priority in
6 the overall portfolio and I do it because it's also
7 necessary, I want to help and add to the work you do
8 but what I don't appreciate is when the work is
9 moving slow or I'm not getting proper answers in a
10 sufficient amount of time. So, I truly think again if
11 we improve communication it can work a lot better and
12 really make sure that we put in systems where we add
13 the workforce to the developments that are really
14 needed because those staff on the ground work really
15 hard and I've seen them, it's some of the emergencies
16 I've had, I had Niagara Falls in one of my
17 developments and the staff was literally sweeping up
18 water cascading down the stairwells for seven days
19 straight and it was a nightmare but the workers
20 stepped up and so in those particular instances I'm
21 reminded of how hard they work but we also want to
22 make sure we support them, we need to give them the
23 services they need and make sure that they have the
24 resources on the ground, we don't... we shouldn't have
25 to wait for someone to come from headquarters or from

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2 1200 Waters but we should already have them in place
3 so that things can be expedited in a quicker fashion
4 so I thank you for that and look forward to our work
5 during this budget process, thank you Chairs.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council
7 Member Treyger and then... followed by Chair Ampry-
8 Samuel.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you to the
10 Chairs for the leadership, welcome to the leadership
11 here of NYCHA. I'll, I'll begin with just a, a brief
12 positive to say that I, I said this before I'll keep
13 saying this that I think Vito is a blessing to have
14 at NYCHA and I, I don't... those who know me I don't
15 compliment very often but he is a blessing, he
16 responds all hours of the night on very pressing
17 issues and I do think it's important that as we are
18 scrutinizing issues that are very serious that we do
19 give acknowledgment to folks who really do all that
20 they can to get back to us and... on behalf of our
21 residents so Vito I do want to publicly again
22 acknowledge that and thank you and your team. Having
23 said that I think it's no surprise to NYCHA that I am
24 still furious that the Surfside Community Center in
25 Coney Island is still not open and I just want to

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2 give further context to what this means, again this

3 is a center that was even closed before Sandy,

4 devastated by super storm Sandy, NYCHA is in receipt of

5 a lot of money from the federal government to rebuild

6 damaged housing stock including the... including this

7 center, we were told by NYCHA and in fairness

8 President Garcia you were not leadership at the time

9 but we were told, we were promised it would be

10 reopened in the fall of 2017, it's now May 2019. The

11 layers to this, so HeartShare is supposed to be

12 running a cornerstone program, after school program

13 for children and our families, this is not a

14 neighborhood that we could afford to lose precious

15 community space for our children, our seniors and,

16 and for our families when other centers were damaged

17 as well so HeartShare can't run the program there, we

18 don't have a lot of space in Coney Island so what

19 that means is that they had to temporary relocate to

20 a school that has other programs which means they

21 are... they are limiting seats for kids in Coney

22 Island, not all the children are receiving the

23 promise of a critical cornerstone program. It also

24 rattles the confidence of folks in NYCHA because

25 NYCHA always says and rightfully so that they need a

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2 lot more money to, you know complete billions of
3 dollars in capital plans, emergency things but in
4 this example NYCHA has the money, the center from my
5 point of view from the outside looks pretty much
6 complete, I don't understand why there's still a lock
7 and key... there's still a lock denying kids access to
8 this space. It, it really hits a nerve on so many
9 levels and I'm pleading with you open that center for
10 our community once and for all and I'd just like to
11 get an update where does this stand?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, it's ready to open,
13 we just need the signature from the CBO in terms of
14 their agreement on this space and they need to buy
15 furniture that's all, we're ready to go.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: The CBO was with
17 me the other week and that, that's not what they
18 shared with me, they, they've been waiting to hear
19 from city agencies when they could implement this
20 program to let our kids in.

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: My understanding is
22 we're basically ready to open, we need furniture and
23 we need the signature on a document.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, when can we
25 tell the community that the center will reopen?

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2 KATHRYN GARCIA: As soon as those two
3 things happen.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Is it... [cross-
5 talk]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: I can't tell you when
7 they will sign.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Are they aware
9 that they have to sign?

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: They are very aware that
11 they have to sign.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And why haven't
13 they signed yet?

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: I do not know; we
15 resolved the other issue that was blocking their
16 signature.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I will reach out
18 to the CBO today but respectfully if I... if I'm told
19 different stories back and forth this bureaucratic..
20 [cross-talk]

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: You can call me.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I... [cross-talk]

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: I think you have my
24 number...]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I think... I think
3 you know I will, Brian Honan knows I will and others
4 know I will, the center has to open, more reasons
5 than one, I am publicly pleading with you to get this
6 done because we have a lot more work to do and I
7 thank the Chairs for their time.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,
9 Chair Ampry-Samuel.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I have
11 three quick follow up and just clarification
12 questions. Are there any plans for use of the
13 center's space, the centers that will be closed, are
14 there any plans for... [cross-talk]

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, we haven't developed
16 new plans for any of the centers yet, no.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay and as
18 far as the alternate work schedules are you at all
19 working with any of the other labor partners around
20 the skilled?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: We're starting to have
22 conversations in proposals development with... first
23 with the Office of Labor Relations and then we'll go
24 to the table but, you know we want to see similar
25 types of schedules when they make sense, for some

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2 they're not going to make sense but where they make
3 sense in the skilled trade area as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, like
5 the painters and the plaster... [cross-talk]

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: Right, depending on...
7 yes, like to have like evening... to have weekend
8 hours, it's just... to be able to better coordinate
9 with our residents about when we're having work done.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, okay.
11 Okay and my last question is related to the state
12 funding, the 450 million and I know that the... Council
13 Member Gibson asked a question about that but was
14 there... do you have like an updated spending plan and
15 can you just explain to us briefly exactly what the
16 plan is to utilize that particular... [cross-talk]

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: Certainly, we do that we
18 have shared with the state; about 100 million is for...
19 I'd like to beg... 89 million is for elevators and the
20 rest is to go to boilers and so we have all of the...
21 we have provided them with what the list is of... for
22 boiler and elevator replacement and I mean I could
23 run through it right now if you wanted me to, we are
24 in conversations, there's a lot of paperwork involved
25 in getting the state grant but it's been very

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
2 AGING JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING
3 positive so far and we anticipate wrapping it up
4 relatively soon.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay...

6 KATHRYN GARCIA: And then they will
7 release the money hopefully, that's my goal.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Like a
9 couple of months type of soon or...

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: Like hopefully sooner
11 than a couple of months so that we can start
12 executing projects much sooner than that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay...

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: Like soon, soon, like
15 now soon.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very
19 much Commissioner and NYCHA team for coming in and
20 providing testimony today, we appreciate your
21 presence here, thank you very much.

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and with that
24 this hearing is adjourned at 3:17 in the afternoon.

25 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

June 3, 2019