

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY
AND WATERFRONTS

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November 13, 2019
Start: 1:07 p.m.
Recess: 2:25 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room,
14th Floor

B E F O R E: Justin Brannan
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Justin Brannan
Costa Constantinides
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Deborah Rose
Eric A. Ulrich

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

Michael Marrella
Director
Waterfront and Open Space Division
Department of City Planning

Mike DeLong
Senior Attorney
Hudson Riverkeeper

Roland Lewis
President
Waterfront Alliance

Graham Burchall
President
Downtown Boathouse

Katherine McVeigh Hughes
Financial District Neighborhood
Association

Luke Gaford
Operating Director
Museum Ship Lilac

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2 DAN HOPE: Mic test, mic test, one, two,
3 one two. Today's date is November 13, 2019. Today's
4 committee hearing is on Resiliency and Waterfronts.
5 It's being record by Daniel.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OK, good afternoon.
7 My name is Justin Brannan. I have the privilege of
8 chairing the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts.
9 I want to welcome you all to our hearing on the
10 update to the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, or
11 Vision 2020. This hearing will provide us with an
12 opportunity to hear from the Department of City
13 Planning regarding improvements in resiliency
14 measures developed along the waterfront since Vision
15 2020 was released in March 2011. We will also take a
16 look at what is envisioned for the updated plan,
17 which is set to be released at the end of next year.
18 In 2008 the City Council passed Local Law 49, which
19 requires the city to development a Comprehensive
20 Waterfront Plan and update that plan every 10 years.
21 Vision 2020 created a blueprint for the future of the
22 city's 520 miles of waterfront through eight broad
23 goals: To expand public access, to enliven the
24 waterfront, support the working waterfront, improve
25 water quality, restore the nature waterfront, enhance

2 the blue network, improvement government oversight,
3 and increase climate resilience. Since Vision 2020
4 was released in 2011 NYC Ferry was launched. New
5 parks and greenways were created along the
6 waterfront, such as Domino Park in Brooklyn and
7 Hunter's Point South Park in Queens. A wetland
8 mitigation bank was established on Staten Island, the
9 Waterfront Navigator was established, an online tool
10 to help the public navigate the waterfront permitting
11 process. Much has been accomplished since 2011, but
12 we still have much more work to do. What will the
13 next five to ten years look like along our
14 waterfronts? A more important question is what
15 should the next five to ten years look like along our
16 waterfronts? How will the updated plan address
17 challenges the city is facing along the waterfront.
18 These challenges include ensuring that any
19 development is not only resilient, but also does not
20 put those who live, work, and visit waterfront
21 communities at risk. The city is facing significant
22 threats from climate change. These threats, like sea
23 level rise and flooding, will hit many of our
24 waterfront communities the hardest. We need a
25 comprehensive, resilient, and inclusive plan for our

2 waterfront, a plan that accounts for climate change,
3 protects and enhances wetlands, ensures that all New
4 Yorkers have access to the waterfront, and does not
5 site all heavy manufacturing uses in environmental
6 justice communities. Six of the significant maritime
7 and industrial areas, or SMIA's, are located in
8 environmental justice communities and are all
9 vulnerable to storm surge and high winds. Many are
10 within FEMA's one-hundred flood plan. Low-income
11 residents and people of color living and working near
12 SMIA's are especially vulnerable to the potential
13 release of contaminants in the event of extreme
14 weather events. We need to be more progressive in
15 our thinking. For example, by incorporating green
16 infrastructure in these areas, and we need to ensure
17 that these industrial businesses are more resilient.
18 We look forward to hearing the administration's
19 testimony and answering our questions about what has
20 been done since Vision 2020 was released back in
21 March of 2011 and what should be included in the
22 updated plan. The committee is especially interested
23 to hear how the updated plan will address increasing
24 climate resilience in light of what we know today
25 about climate change and sea level rise and how we

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2 can ensure that it will be given the necessary
3 attention when a new administration assumes office a
4 year after the updated plan is released. Before we
5 begin, I want to thank my committee staff, of course
6 committee counsel Jessica Steinberg Alban, policy
7 analyst Patrick Mulville, finance analyst Jonathan
8 Seltzer, and my senior advisor, Jonathan Yettin, for
9 all their hard work in putting this hearing together.
10 I also want to acknowledge Councilman Ruben Diaz,
11 Sr., who has joined us today so far. With that, I'll
12 now turn the floor over to Michael Marrella from the
13 Department of City Planning. If you can, please
14 raise your right hand so counsel can swear you in.

15 COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
16 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in
17 your testimony before these committees and to respond
18 honestly to council member questions?

19 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I do.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Please begin.
21 Thank you.

22 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Chairman Brannan,
23 members of the Waterfront Committee, thank you for
24 the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon
25 about the city's efforts to update the city's

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2 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. I am Michael
3 Marrella, the director of waterfront and open space
4 division at the Department of City Planning. In this
5 role, my responsibilities include preparing the
6 city's Comprehensive Waterfront Plan pursuant to the
7 City Council's legislation passed in 2008. That
8 legislation required the plan be updated by December
9 31, 2010, and every ten years thereafter. We are now
10 underway in our planning and public outreach for the
11 next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan due by the of
12 2020, roughly 13 months from now. Today I'll share
13 with you our initial thinking about the major themes
14 of the next Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, the
15 extensive outreach that we've done so far, and the
16 plans for additional public outreach in the next few
17 months. Before I talk about the next Comprehensive
18 Waterfront Plan it is necessary to discuss the
19 evolution of the plans as this will be the third plan
20 that the city will issue. The first plan was written
21 in 1992. It was the first time the city studied and
22 planned cohesively for all of the city's waterfront.
23 One of the major recommendations to come out of that
24 plan was the establishment of waterfront zoning,
25 which was adopted the subsequent year in 1993. That

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2 required that waterfront public access be provided at
3 sites or redeveloped for higher-density, excuse me,
4 mid- to high-density residential and commercial uses.
5 This important zoning tool has opened up miles of
6 shoreline to the public that had been inaccessible
7 for decades and led to the creation of over 2000
8 waterfront public spaces, paid for by the developers
9 of the adjoining buildings. In 2008 the City Council
10 passed legislation that the Department of City
11 Planning update the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan by
12 the end of 2011, excuse me, by the end of 2010,
13 recognizing that the transformation along the
14 waterfront in the roughly decade and a half since the
15 first plan. The second plan recognized the diversity
16 of uses along the waterfront and, as just as
17 importantly, the importance of the waterways
18 themselves. As such, the second plan highlighted
19 what we refer to as the blue network, where using our
20 waterways for transportation, recreation, education,
21 and cultural celebration. And, importantly, the plan
22 also recognized the costal climate risks we face as a
23 waterfront city. The second plan helped advance the
24 establishment of the ferry system, first starting as
25 a pilot project on the East River and now blossoming

2 into a ferry system that will service all five
3 boroughs. And we started much of coastal resiliency
4 planning in advance of Hurricane Sandy in 2012.
5 Since the last plan, we have made terrific strides
6 along our waterfront. We've invested billions of
7 dollars in improvement water quality. We've built
8 new waterfront parks and advanced coastal resiliency.
9 We've built new resilient housing in waterfront
10 neighborhoods and launched the ferry service that
11 takes an advantage of the waterways that surround our
12 boroughs. But clearly there's so much more to do
13 going forward. As we start planning for the next
14 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan we are guided by three
15 overarching lenses: Resiliency, equity, and health.
16 As we navigate our planning process, these three
17 issues are our Polaris, our North Star. Let me take
18 a moment to describe the intent of each. Resiliency
19 - as a coastal city we face climate risks, as we were
20 painfully reminded seven years ago when Sandy hit.
21 But as we move forward we must discuss resiliency in
22 concert with all other aspects of the city's
23 waterfront. Equal - while we have made great strides
24 in providing new parks, housing, and jobs along the
25 waterfront, access to those parks, homes, and jobs

2 have not been shared by all. In this next plan we
3 will be looking closely at the distribution of these
4 resources along the waterfront and will re-examine
5 how they can be more equitably distributed across the
6 waterfront. Health - the health of our waterways
7 should rightly be recognized as the cornerstone for
8 the development of our waterfront. But health should
9 also capture the public health aspects of our
10 waterfront, including the benefits of active
11 recreation along that waterfront. Now, those are
12 just our starting point for the plan. The plan will
13 be informed by extensive public outreach that we've
14 done thus far and will be doing going forward.
15 First, let me talk about the work that we are doing
16 with the Waterfront Management Advocacy Board, the
17 group convened by the mayor and the speaker to help
18 inform the city on the preparation of the
19 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. That group was
20 reconvened last year and we've met six times since,
21 including a boat trip, excuse me, a trip on a tugboat
22 in the past year to discuss various topics and
23 potential elements of the plan. I'd like to
24 recognize Councilwoman Debbie Rose, who has been an
25 active member of the board and I thank her for her

2 participation. This past spring on May 20, the day
3 in which we celebrate the 520 miles of our
4 waterfront, we launched a broader public outreach
5 with walking tours along the waterfront in all five
6 boroughs. And rather than issuing an RFP, or a
7 request for a proposal, seeking planning firms to
8 help prepare the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, we
9 issued an RFV, a request for visions, allowing New
10 Yorkers, the true experts on the waterfront's needs,
11 an opportunity to provide us with their ideas for the
12 waterfront. Key objectives of our outreach efforts
13 are to broaden people's awareness of New York City
14 waterfront, highlight the fact that New York City is
15 a waterfront city, and enhance our relationship to
16 the waterfront and our waters. We've held 15 events
17 along the waterfront this summer, including our
18 waterfront planning camp in which we discussed
19 various waterfront issues and learning about water
20 quality monitoring from DEP and trying on SCUBA suits
21 with the Billion Oyster Process, ah, Billion Oyster
22 Project, to preparing go bags with New York City
23 Emergency Management and designing waterfront sites
24 with the Waterfront Alliance. We also had a Link NYC
25 campaign running through the month of August

2 throughout the city. Later this month and through
3 early next year we're starting a series of five
4 public listing sessions in partnership with the
5 Waterfront Alliance. These forums are an important
6 opportunity for New Yorkers to learn about and engage
7 in key waterfront issues, promoting equity and
8 environmental justice through our waterfront
9 communities and to actively inform the next
10 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. We're also partnering
11 with the New York chapter of the American Institute
12 of Architect for a series of six public sessions that
13 focus on different water bodies intended to provide a
14 platform for architects, design experts, and the
15 general public to express their points of view and
16 experience on the city's waterfront. We're also
17 working with local planning graduate schools to delve
18 into specific aspects of the waterfront, leading with
19 the overarching question what does New York City have
20 to do to make waterfront a part of your everyday
21 life? We're looking to expand this outreach to local
22 public schools as well in collaboration with Brooklyn
23 Boat Works. We are holding a series of meetings with
24 various users on the waterfront, maritime groups,
25 recreational boaters, to get feedback on them and

2 their interests and their priorities for the
3 waterfront. These sessions are tailored for the
4 organizations and their members to have an
5 opportunity to learn more about the Comprehensive
6 Waterfront Plan and again to share their input to
7 shape the future of the city's waterfront. Starting
8 late winter-early spring we'll be holding public
9 workshops in all five boroughs, giving communities
10 the opportunity to discuss their local waterfronts.
11 Should the council like to partner with us on this
12 outreach we would be eager to work with them. Excuse
13 me, we would be eager to work together. This amount
14 of outreach even surpasses the outreach we did for
15 the last Comprehensive Waterfront Plan and for good
16 reason. All of this will help to inform what we
17 write in the plan, as the plan ultimately is only as
18 valuable as the ideas contained within it. The plan
19 is not binding on the next administration so public
20 support is critical for the work to be carried out
21 beyond the current administration. In addition to
22 the public outreach, the plan is also deeply informed
23 by our work with our partnering city, state, and
24 federal agencies. Though the plan is led by the
25 Department of City Planning, the document is

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2 ultimately a reflection of the administration, which
3 is why we're working closely with a long list of
4 agencies - Parks, Economic Development Corporation,
5 Department of Environmental Protection, Department of
6 Transportation, Department of Small Business
7 Services, Department of Citywide Administrative
8 Services, Department of Buildings, Department of
9 Cultural Affairs, the Mayor's Office of Resiliency,
10 and many, many more. We are also working with New
11 York State Department of Environmental Conservation
12 and New York State Department of State, who have
13 provided us with a grant to fund our work, including,
14 excuse me, to help provide us with funding for our
15 work, and are discussing elements of the plan with
16 federal agencies, including the US Army Corps of
17 Engineers. In summary, the next 13 months will
18 certainly be busy for me and my colleagues, but it's
19 an important time as we have the opportunity to shape
20 the future of the city's waterfront.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Ah, thank you.

22 What are some of the, just zooming out a little bit,
23 what are some of the biggest challenges that the city
24 faces along the waterfront?

25

2 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Certainly this
3 continues to be an evolving challenge for is, is how
4 we are going to be addressing this [inaudible]. The
5 city is a dense urban environment. Providing coastal
6 protection is, of course, a challenge. It's an area
7 of the city where we have oftentimes are built, we
8 have, our buildings, our highways, parks that people
9 love and rightly so along our waterfront already, and
10 so weaving coastal protection into that environment
11 has already proven difficult and it will be a
12 challenge for us going forward. But our opportunity
13 in the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan is to discuss
14 what, what are the strategies that we need to use to
15 help solve for that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are there already,
17 are there already new challenges that we weren't
18 thinking of when we first started thinking about this
19 stuff that have come along as we're working on it,
20 since it's not due til next year?

21 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: In our outreach thus
22 far?

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

24 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Certainly. Well, I
25 think that, that one thing that has changed, I would

2 say, in the past ten years. Ten years much of the
3 public conversation was about public access. That
4 that would, I would say that was by far the type of
5 comment that we heard most.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Meaning more people
7 wanted to engage with the waterfront?

8 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: And get onto the
9 water.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

11 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: That's right. This
12 time around, now in the preliminary conversations
13 that we've had, the questions of resiliency are often
14 leading the conversations, and so I would say that's
15 a shift. That's not a surprising shift, in many
16 ways, but it is a shift in the nature of the
17 conversation.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Two of the goals of
19 V2 were to enliven the waterfront with residential,
20 commercial, and mixed use development, and to
21 increase climate resilience. What has been done to
22 meet or address those goals and can those goals be
23 mutually compatible, and if so how have you addressed
24 them so they are?

2 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Yes, so I think that
3 those goals in fact very much align. That the
4 question of resiliency in New York City has to start
5 with a recognition of what's already on our
6 waterfront. In New York City' flood zone, as defined
7 by FEMA, there are roughly 400,000 residents living
8 in what FEMA define as today's 1% annual chance of
9 flood zone. With that large of a population, which
10 is roughly the size of a pretty large midwestern
11 city, with that type of population the question is
12 how do we address what's already there and plan for
13 the future. So the question is about retrofitting
14 our existing buildings and our infrastructure,
15 building new buildings that are made to be resilient,
16 and building infrastructure that's made to be
17 resilient. And that's very much tied to this
18 question of new development along the waterfront, and
19 through the work of, ah, at the Department of City
20 Planning in partnership with our other agencies we
21 have made, we've made important steps in increasing
22 the resiliency of new development. You can look the
23 improvements that we've made to the building code as
24 well as updating the maps that we are using as the

2 basis for our, for resiliency as an important stent
3 as part of that process.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So say the past
5 decade, how has development along the waterfront
6 taken into the access the efforts of climate change
7 and sea level rise flooding?

8 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Sure. So there are
9 several things that I think the first and foremost is
10 building code and the maps that are referenced within
11 building code.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So what are some of
13 the big changes that have been made?

14 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So one of the big
15 changes is that right now we are, the building code
16 references the updated FEMA flood maps, the
17 preliminary flood insurance rate maps. Those are a
18 significant improvement by and large over the
19 previous maps that were established. That said,
20 there's still much more work to do as those maps get
21 finalized to make certain that they're a reflection
22 of the risks that we, ah, the risks that we face
23 today and the steps that we'll be taking to ensure
24 that, that regulations are addressing the risks going
25 forward as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So you don't see
3 development and climate resilience as competing?

4 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I think, broadly
5 speaking at its broadest, no, and, again, it's in
6 part because of the foundation on which we have to
7 recognize the risks that we, the city already faces
8 with 400,000 residents in the flood zone today. I'll
9 give an example, and this is perhaps an important
10 point that we'll be also discussing in the next
11 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, is trying to explain
12 the city strategy on this, which is that building
13 codes matter, that we saw this during Hurricane Sandy
14 it has been shown time and time again with storms
15 across the country and FEMA backs this as well, just
16 that buildings that are built to more robust
17 resiliency standards are able to withstand the storm
18 damage. And we saw that during Hurricane Sandy. The
19 distinction being older wood frame buildings being
20 entirely knocked off their foundation, comparing that
21 to newer buildings that were built to resilient
22 standards that were able to sustain very limited or
23 even no damage. And that was the case. You know, in
24 the Rockaways there are examples of buildings being
25 knocked off their foundation, being only a couple of

2 miles away from new buildings that had virtually no
3 damage, and so building to resilient standards is an
4 important strategy for the vast majority of our
5 city's flood zone, where we're talking about the risk
6 from the infrequent, though growing in frequency,
7 that infrequent storm.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: With so many
9 communities who are vulnerable living on the shore,
10 do you think it's smart for the city to be
11 encouraging more development on the waterfront?

12 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Well I think we're
13 going to have the opportunity to discuss that, both
14 with the public through our public planning process
15 as well in the plan itself. Again, I think that in a
16 broadest sense, looking across the flood risk of the
17 city as a whole, new development can be made to be
18 resilient, yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What about the
20 pressure put on infrastructure that more development
21 along the waterfront will entail? How do we account
22 for that?

23 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I think there's a lot
24 in that question. So I will say, though, that the
25 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan will also be an

2 opportunity for us to discuss the infrastructure
3 needs of the waterfront communities.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are you working
5 with EDC in drafting the plan?

6 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: In what ways?

8 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: We meet with them on
9 a regular basis. They are also involved in the
10 Waterfront Management Advisory Board. They're one of
11 the city agencies that work closely with us in
12 advancing the work of the Waterfront Management
13 Advisory Board and so that in many different aspects
14 and many different roles that EDC has from ferry
15 service to the maritime work that they also do.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Would you support
17 council, when this plan does come out, would you
18 support the council legislating to make parts of this
19 plan law and codifying it.

20 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I think it's a little
21 too early to same insofar as the plan is not yet
22 written. I think that there may be recommendations
23 coming out of the plan specifically for proposed
24 legislation, but at this point it's too early in the
25 process to tell.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm assuming if DCP
3 comes out with the plan you're going to stand behind
4 the plan.

5 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I would assume, yes,
6 though I think there is, there's perhaps a subtle but
7 important distinction between things that are
8 recommended and that should be further explored or
9 further analyzed, and mandating them immediately.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OK. With regard to
11 SMIA's, will the updated plan address making SMIA's
12 more resilient and how, if so, how.

13 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Yes, ah, so the
14 Significant Maritime Industrial Areas are an
15 important part of the city as a whole, but they do
16 face significant challenges. Just about two years
17 ago the Department of City Planning released its
18 Resilient Industry Study which looked at how this
19 exact question, of how industries along our
20 waterfront can be made more resilient, and it's in
21 some ways a departure from much of our thinking
22 about resiliency insofar as recognizing that industry
23 really serves, performs a different function and that
24 building walls and building new buildings may not be
25 the appropriate response for industry, and rather the

2 study looked at what are the operational tools that
3 can be used to make industry more resilient in terms
4 of storage of materials, continuity of operations for
5 businesses, etc. And so I think the Comprehensive
6 Waterfront Plan will be an opportunity for us to
7 discuss that work as well as, again, listening to the
8 public and with the maritime community as well about
9 the issues that they face.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you know how
11 many acres of waterfront land has been acquired by
12 the city as parkland?

13 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Not off the top of my
14 head, but I can get back to you on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OK, I'd like to
16 know, in what neighborhoods and if any new parks are
17 being constructed on this land. For sites that are
18 developed under the brown field program, how many of
19 them provide public access to the waterfront?

20 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I don't know the
21 number off the top off of my head, but I would say
22 that as brown fields are redeveloped on the
23 waterfront for higher-density, mid- to high-density
24 residential, commercial, and mixed use for non-heavy
25

2 industrial uses, public access has to be required
3 pursuant to zoning.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So do you think
5 public access would be expanded under the new plan,
6 or do you think it should be?

7 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Most certainly yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The New York City
9 Waterfront Action Agenda outlined 130 key projects to
10 be initiated within the first three years of the V2
11 release. Can you tell me how the city included
12 resiliency to these projects or give me a progress
13 report on any of these projects?

14 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Sure. So the 130
15 projects that were included in the action agenda were
16 tracked for the duration of those projects. Within
17 four to five years after the plan we completed, I
18 believe it was something like 97% of them. The
19 other, if I recall correctly, it was two or three
20 projects, I'd have to get back to you on the exact
21 numbers. The last couple of projects that were not
22 pursued ended up being projects that were re-thought,
23 in part because of Hurricane Sandy. One of the hose
24 projects was decided not to be pursued because of
25 Hurricane Sandy. I'd have to get back to you on the

2 details, though. It's been quite some time with
3 those few projects.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Can you tell me how
5 much funding went into these projects?

6 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: It was roughly 3
7 billion dollars.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Three billion.

9 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How successful has
11 the Waterfront Navigator been in assisting applicants
12 who need permits for projects along the waterfront?

13 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So this is anecdotal
14 is that based on my conversations with my colleagues
15 that EDC, who prepared that, as well as members of
16 the maritime community as well as other entities who
17 are seeking permits that they found the information
18 to be quite helpful. It is a starting point for
19 applicants, to be clear, though. It provides the
20 applicants with information about the materials that
21 would be needed for application and for applying for
22 permits.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you have ideas
24 of ways it could be made better?

2 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I think it's probably
3 something that we need to look into again. It's been
4 a few years since it was last, since it was put
5 forth. It would be, it's appropriate for us as part
6 of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan to be looking at
7 that once again.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: One of the things
9 that I've been thinking a lot about it is the time,
10 the sort of timing of the plan as it relates to the
11 terms of a different administration. So the updated
12 plan will be released by the end of 2020 and new
13 administration will come in a year later. How can
14 the city ensure that the updated plan will be given
15 the attention it needs by a new administration, so
16 you're not just passing the baton to the next
17 administration.

18 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So this is in part
19 about is how we're addressing our public outreach.
20 Because the plan is only as good as the ideas that
21 are contained within. We want to make certain that
22 the ideas have public support and are generated by
23 the public and so that public is able to put pressure
24 on the next administration to carry forth the plan.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So Vision 2020 was
3 released at the end of the Bloomberg administration.
4 Did that affect the attention this administration has
5 given to the plan?

6 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So I'd say that the
7 broad goals of the last Comprehensive Waterfront Plan
8 were continued to be embraced by this administration.
9 The projects that were established under the action
10 agenda, again, were continued and were carried out,
11 many of those continuing into this administration as
12 well.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So in your opinion
14 do you think it would make more sense to realign this
15 so that the plans lined up with administrations?

16 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: I think where we are
17 right now is that we have already started this work.
18 We've had a lot of public discussions on it. I think
19 this plan being released at the end of 2020 is the
20 course we are on right now. I think for subsequent
21 updates it's certainly worthy of a conversation.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I guess our concern
23 is you're basically leaving a to-do list behind for
24 the next administration. I think it's, you know,
25 obviously we all need to focus on, you know, planting

2 seeds for trees whose shade we'll never enjoy, but
3 this is also politics, right, and different
4 priorities are different priorities.

5 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So the concern
7 there, you know, I'm hearing as well from advocates
8 is, is, you know, this is like hey, we're leaving,
9 here's what you need to do.

10 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: And the timing does
11 lead to those questions. I would say, though, that
12 the plan is more than just a to-do list. It's going
13 to be providing the rationale behind that to-do list
14 as well. And I think, should we do that job well,
15 we're going to be providing a rationale that the next
16 administration, whomever that may be, will be able to
17 embrace and see the logic in embracing it.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So right now how
19 does DCP measure or track progress of the plan's
20 recommendations?

21 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So with the last plan
22 it was with 125, excuse me, 130 action agenda
23 projects. We are still in discussion as to how best
24 provide metrics for this next plan.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So after Vision
3 2020 was released did you review what recommendations
4 were implemented?

5 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Ah, we have, as part
6 of the action agenda, as part of the tracking the
7 action agenda.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So what did we
9 learn?

10 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So I think that
11 measurable results are, of course, important. I
12 think that was one of the important lessons, was that
13 that being able to track our projects and our
14 progress is incredibly important, especially in
15 something like the waterfront where it does, by its
16 very nature, require the interaction and the
17 coordination amongst various agencies.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Vision 2020
19 emphasized people's active access to the waterfront
20 and the plan tasked the city to create pier and
21 bulkhead design standards that would enable a wide
22 variety of vessels to access the city's waterfront
23 infrastructure, but since 2020 outside of ferry stops
24 and the rezoned waterfront of Brooklyn people don't
25 have much of an opportunity to get in or out of boats

2 or touch the water. In addition, some repaired
3 piers, such as Pier 17 here in Manhattan, actually
4 took away the infrastructure that boats use.
5 Investments were made in my district at 69th Street
6 Pier for ferry access, but the pier is large enough
7 to serve a variety of maritime uses if the
8 infrastructure were there. Could you give an update
9 on the city's pier and bulkhead standards that Vision
10 2020 plan to create, and I guess describe how Vision
11 2030 could, can use zoning and permitting and
12 governments, ah, governance to ensure we have
13 waterfront infrastructure that actually allows people
14 to engage with it.

15 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So let me start by
16 saying that this is a topic that we're already in
17 discussions with both our partner in the agencies as
18 well as the general public about recognizing that
19 there is a strong desire for the public to get into
20 the waterfront and through a variety of different
21 uses, whether that be just large motorized boats, but
22 also human-powered canoes, kayaks, etc., all of which
23 require different standards. I'm trying to figure
24 out what I would say are probably not design
25 guidelines but best practices to allow for those

2 different users of the waterfront, is something that
3 we're actively engaging with, engaging on already.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Will the update,
5 the updated plan, consider new industrial uses, like
6 offshore wind power?

7 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Yes. The next
8 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan recognizes, is going to
9 be recognizing and through our process will be
10 discussing the opportunities for offshore wind and
11 how New York City can best position itself to take
12 advantage of offshore wind.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How can we connect
14 the updated plan with the need for comprehensive
15 long-term resiliency planning, like in Intro 1620?

16 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: So the Comprehensive
17 Waterfront Plan will be our opportunity to discuss
18 the city's approach broadly for resiliency across our
19 shoreline. It's not going to necessarily get into
20 the details of individual projects for shoreline, for
21 coastal protection and I would argue it's not
22 necessary that we do so at this time, given the Army
23 Corps' work on the hardware and tributary study.
24 That said, as part of this planning process we'll be
25

2 evaluating the work of the Army Corps of Engineers
3 and responding to that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I know before you
5 sort of agreed that development and climate
6 resilience doesn't have to be a binary choice, but
7 how will the city ensure that new development does
8 not lead to fewer green spaces on the waterfront?

9 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Well, I think if
10 anything new development along our waterfront has
11 proven to actually be providing green spaces, that in
12 New York City, by and large, new development doesn't
13 occur on undeveloped lands, it's a question of
14 redevelopment, especially along our waterfront. That
15 our waterfronts, particularly those areas that were
16 previously industrial and have over time been
17 redeveloped for new uses, that's been an opportunity
18 for us to provide new waterfront public access as
19 part of the development [pursuant] design.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OK. OK, thank you
21 very much.

22 DIRECTOR MARRELLA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We're
24 going to call up our first panel. We have Roland
25 Lewis From Waterfront Alliance and Michael Delong

2 from Riverkeeper. You can start whenever you're
3 ready.

4 MIKE DELONG: Thank you, Chairman Brannan
5 and members of the Resiliency and Waterfronts
6 Committee for allowing to testify on this, on the
7 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan for 2020. My name is
8 Mike Delong. I'm the senior attorney at Hudson
9 Riverkeeper. We are a member-supported watchdog
10 group dedicated to defending the Hudson River,
11 including all of the tributaries in and around New
12 York City, and to defending the drinking water supply
13 of nine million New York City and Hudson Valley
14 residents. I'm here to talk about four things today
15 - why this plan, why the Comprehensive Waterfront
16 Plan is important, the outreach that DCP has done
17 over this last couple months, some of Riverkeeper's
18 proposals for 2020 and, most importantly I think,
19 what the plan won't accomplish. So I'll start with
20 the good stuff. We support creation of these plans.
21 We think they're very important. They've had a
22 positive impact on New York City's waterfront.
23 They've created special natural waterfront areas.
24 They've restored hundreds, or the plans have led to
25 the restoration of hundreds of acres throughout the

2 city of wetland and other natural areas, creating
3 habitat, providing protection for ecosystems.

4 They've led to the development of hundreds of acres
5 of greenway and waterfront parks, as were just

6 described, and the zoning requirements for public

7 waterfront access on private residential developments

8 have benefitted a lot of neighborhoods, including

9 mine in Williamsburg, especially Domino Park, and so

10 these plans are good and we expect good things coming

11 of this 2020 plan. Now in the lead-up to this plan

12 DCP has met with Riverkeeper to discuss some of the

13 issues. They've been very open to hearing our

14 perspective. We know they've met with other groups

15 as well and we are excited to take part in DCP's and

16 Waterfront Alliance's public forums on some of the

17 substantive issues that this plan is going to cover.

18 Now I think all of those forums, five forums, are

19 going to take place in Manhattan. We understand that

20 other forums or other public hearings will be held in

21 other boroughs. It's, I think there could be a

22 little bit more outreach in terms of all of the

23 communities, all of the shoreline communities, and

24 specialty of all the languages that those, the

25 different languages that are prevalent in those

2 shoreline communities. The people that are there
3 have the best perspective on what they want to see
4 over the next 10 years and over the next 50 years on
5 their waterfront. We have proposed a few initiatives
6 for the 2020 plan, specifically flowing from our
7 vision plans for Newtown Creek and Flushing
8 waterways, Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek. In
9 Newtown Creek we've proposed 85 projects in that plan
10 and these are plans that were driven by community
11 forums and getting the perspectives working with city
12 agencies, city elected officials, a number of groups
13 on these waterways, and the result of those plans
14 were proposals for street-end parks, a continuous-
15 loop greenway in and around Dutch Kills up in Long
16 Island City, and restoration of Maspeth Creek to a
17 wetland. Up in Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek we
18 propose a bridge over Flushing Creek that would
19 connect the community of Flushing with the Flushing
20 Bay promenade, along with a number of amenities on
21 the promenade and the bay, right along the community
22 of East Elmhurst, which is starved for parkland.
23 They need parklands, parkland improvements on that
24 waterway. There are a number of proposals for green
25 infrastructure and amenities such as better paths,

2 tiered seating, etc., so we want that promenade to
3 look like the west side of Manhattan, or at least
4 provide the same amenities that the people on the
5 west side of Manhattan have. We provided some wider
6 policy recommendations, including, so the plan that
7 allows or the zoning that allows for public access in
8 front of new developments is specifically for
9 residential and that mixed use commercial. There are
10 a lot of industrial waterfront properties that don't
11 actually use their waterfront for anything. Think
12 big storage warehouses, other commercial buildings
13 that even, they don't even allow their workers, in
14 some cases, to access that waterfront. So there are
15 many properties that do use the waterfront, all
16 kinds of shipping, trash, waste transport, etc. For
17 the ones that don't use that property they could
18 develop that into a public space. They could develop
19 their waterfront to be usable. For the ones that do
20 use it, we want them to continue using it. Actually,
21 that's a great part of these plans that they support
22 industrial use of our waterfront. And we had also
23 supported or proposed a grant program for industrial
24 sites that have green roofs and green shores and we
25 think these types of sites should be rewarded for

2 protecting water quality and for the benefit that
3 they're going to have that those amendments would
4 have for water quality in New York. Now, what this
5 plan will not accomplish. Resiliency measures should
6 a key aspect of this plan, broadly speaking. This
7 plan will not develop, will not propose a way to
8 protect all 520 miles of coastland, coastline. It
9 will not protect all communities in New York City.
10 It won't get into that level of detail. I do not
11 think we can rely on the Army Corps alone to set that
12 plan forth, and I think New Yorkers know how to
13 protect themselves better than the federal government
14 knows how to protect New Yorkers. Therefore, we urge
15 you to continue to pursue Intro 1620 and to continue
16 refining that to develop such a plan or such a method
17 to get into that plan. DCP doesn't have the
18 resources now and they don't have the time. That
19 time of plan, to gain community input, real
20 meaningful community input, would take much more than
21 a year and it would take much more than the staff
22 that DCP currently has allocated to this plan. I
23 think that is a longer-term effort and it's a very
24 important effort that can and should be done
25 separately. One other thing that this, based on

2 other previous plans, this will not accomplish, is
3 improving water quality. The plan we expect will,
4 again, roughly parrot what DEP plans currently are to
5 improve water quality in the city. DEP has 11 long-
6 term control plans. It has nine, but it's developing
7 two more. So we expect that this plan will roughly
8 parrot what those are going to do. And not a single
9 one of those plans is going to bring our waters into
10 compliance with the Clean Water Act to make them
11 fishable, swimmable, and usable. Right now there's
12 20 billion gallons of sewage going into the harbor
13 every year. That's almost every single waterway.
14 We're talking Bronx River, Newtown Creek, Gowanus
15 Canal, down in Staten Island. So roughly there are
16 sewage discharges in the city on roughly one-third of
17 the days, making water unsuitable for human contact
18 on one-third of the days. This is going to get much
19 worse in terms of, or much worse because of climate
20 change in terms of intensity and frequency of storms
21 that cause these CSO discharges, and so...

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So that's happening
23 right now, you're saying. Why?

24 MIKE DELONG: Why is it happening? So on
25 normal days the city has enough sewage treatment

2 capacity to treat all of its sewage. So on a sunny
3 day like today everything's getting treated, it's
4 going through a treatment plant, and then treated
5 water is coming out on the other side. When it
6 rains, that capacity, our sewer system under 60% of
7 the city, mostly the heavily developed areas, the
8 sewage mixes with the storm water, the polluted storm
9 water coming off of streets, coming off of industrial
10 properties, and it goes into the same pipe and then
11 it overwhelms the capacity of the sewage treatment
12 plant. So there are 450 outfalls that dot all the
13 coasts along the 520 miles of coastline and you have
14 raw sewage coming out all over the city and almost
15 neighborhood, except southern Long Island, or
16 southern Staten Island, where there are a lot of
17 separated sewer systems. So we don't expect this
18 plan to get into detail to be able to fix that, and
19 so we urge you to pass Intro 1618, it's a sewage
20 study bill, that will get into these issues. It
21 will, there is, there are a bunch of studies in this
22 bill. One would be to inventory pollutant conditions
23 in each waterway. Another is to identify green
24 infrastructure opportunities to reduce the amount of
25 precipitation that would make its way into those

2 storm sewers and thereby prevent at least some of
3 that volume from overwhelming the sewage system. It
4 would study the impacts of chlorination. There is a
5 proposal to chlorinate some of the combined sewer
6 overflow and just dose it with chlorine and then let
7 it flow out the other end of the pipe. We are
8 calling for a study of what the impacts would be of
9 residual chlorine sitting in that water or
10 chlorination byproducts that might remain in that
11 water as it comes out the other end of the pipe. And
12 the last study would be a holistic approach to water
13 quality protection. The long-term control plans look
14 at CSO only. There is a lot of, there are a lot of
15 other pollutant sources, including 40% of the city
16 has what we call MS4. It's a separate sewage system
17 and there are pathogens and there are other
18 pollutants that come out of that system, too, and so
19 looking at these things on a water body basis as
20 opposed to on a CSO-only basis might lead to some
21 solutions, good solutions for New York City that
22 could improve water quality in a relatively cheap
23 way. So these are, in this bill there are not a lot
24 of directives for the city to do things. The city
25 should study things and come up with solutions that

2 might be better than what they have on the table now.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: It sounds like you
5 take issue with the term comprehensive.

6 MIKE DELONG: I think it would be
7 impossible to do a Comprehensive Waterfront Plan that
8 encapsulates all of these to the level of
9 granularity, and I think Mr. Marrella said that. In
10 terms of resiliency you could not come up with a plan
11 for all 520 miles specifically, property by property,
12 to look at how you're going to protect that
13 coastline. It's similar with sewage. I think it's a
14 very big issue that wouldn't be able to get done
15 through this plan because of the timing and because
16 of the resources that DCP currently has.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So what do you
18 suggest?

19 MIKE DELONG: Ah, well, I do suggest
20 those two bills get passed, so what we're looking for
21 are greater, wider studies. Of these...

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But do you think a
23 different agency should be handling it?

24 MIKE DELONG: Ah, the 1620, sorry, the
25 1680 study on sewage, that would be DEP...

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

3 MIKE DELONG: They might have more, a
4 little bit more expertise in sewage specifically,
5 although I'd hate to put them in a silo by
6 themselves. There are a lot of other city agencies
7 that can and should be involved in something like
8 that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure.

10 MIKE DELONG: Similar, it is possible
11 that DCP should be in charge of the 520-mile plan. I
12 don't think they should be, can or should be alone in
13 doing so. But they certainly don't have the
14 resources to do it given what they have now. They
15 would need to be provided those.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OK. Thank you.
17 Roland.

18 ROLAND LEWIS: Sure. I'm Roland Lewis,
19 president of the Waterfront Alliance, an alliance of
20 over 1100 civic organizations and businesses with
21 Riverkeeper and many others, some in the room right
22 now. Your last question to Mike, I'll answer it. I
23 think one answer to that question is Intro 928, the
24 Mayor's Office of the Waterfront, a bill with 45
25 sponsors that I think might be able to...

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm confident that
3 we're going pass that soon.

4 ROLAND LEWIS: And I think, well, we pass
5 it and also I think having it being an independent
6 body within the Mayor's Office to, right now there's
7 a question of whether it sits within DCP or if it
8 sits outside of DCP, and I think outside is where it
9 will have the mayoral imprint and ability to...

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, it should be
11 a stand-alone.

12 ROLAND LEWIS: There you go. So let me
13 get the, I'll get back to that in a minute. But I
14 just want to state for the record that the current
15 iteration of this Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, I'm
16 very proud to say, was started with the council.
17 Former Speaker Quinn announced the legislation
18 working with us on our City Water Day event back in
19 2008, and I won't I guess reiterate all the
20 accomplishments, but there has been, I think, great
21 movement within the city, recognizing the waterfront
22 as a thing, as a thing that each community has,
23 sometimes in the negative portion in your district
24 and in many others with the CSO challenge, but also
25 ferry service and access and parks, things that

2 people want, educational opportunities for the
3 children at the water's edge. So we've had the
4 ability, again, I'm proud to say that through the
5 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan and the outreach that
6 we did with DCP, sometimes at the beginning maybe
7 they were a little reluctant, but the Waterfront
8 Alliance brought groups like Riverkeeper and many,
9 many others into large forums which not only inform
10 the plans with some of the best thinking, as you've
11 heard just a minute ago, but from a variety of
12 sources from all throughout the city, but also a lot
13 of people to own this as a document that they knew
14 that they had contributed to, the issue of, ah, um,
15 industrial, environmental justice issue of industrial
16 areas being flooded in a storm, which did happen.
17 The Five-Borough Greenway, these were ideas that came
18 into the plan from groups outside that DCP adopted
19 and went forward with it. So, ah, the mitigation
20 bank we've championed is now a reality with Saw Mill
21 River Creek. Citywide ferry service we also
22 championed is now a reality. Resiliency projects
23 that have gone forward and need to go forward. I'll
24 talk about that in one second. The one thing you
25 asked Michael about the action agenda. There are

2 130-odd items. One thing that didn't get adopted by
3 the city was a set of design guidelines. We
4 championed that idea. The city didn't move forward
5 with that. And in partners with the city and others
6 we developed the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines
7 ourselves, WEDG, which has now been used by about 10
8 different projects up and down, throughout the
9 boroughs, to make waterfronts that are more
10 resilient, accountable, and provide ecological
11 benefit. So that idea, while the city didn't move
12 forward with it at the time, has become a reality.
13 There is new access that we've helped with eco dot
14 program, preserving working waterfront, the Red Hook
15 Container Terminal, other things that we've
16 championed. So lots of things that were outlined in
17 the plan have happened with us and also just by the
18 city itself. But, as I think we are here to talk
19 about, this is not about accomplishments from Vision
20 2020, it's what we're planning for 2030. Now I'm
21 actually just going to reiterate some of the things
22 that Mike has talked about. I think the resiliency
23 legislation that you're a cosponsor of, 1620, is
24 critically important. I don't think it's there yet.
25 I think it's a, it's a start and I believe that we

2 need to put a lot more meat on those bones. As we've
3 discussed previously, we have established a
4 resiliency task force and are coming forward with a
5 campaign that will mine those great ideas at a
6 neighborhood level, from finance, the finance
7 communications, governance, give a roadmap to do
8 things better, quicker, and with communities to
9 protect the city against the greatest challenge we
10 all face of sea level rise. 1618 that Mike talked
11 about extensively I think is another important issue
12 that we have to do. Building code revisions,
13 maritime investment to create. As you are probably
14 aware, UPS is creating a facility in Red Hook.
15 There's no place for them to do roll on, roll off
16 along the Manhattan shoreline. So those trucks still
17 have run around to get over the bridges. We can move
18 so much goods by the water. So that's the real most
19 important thing. I'll finish where I started, which
20 is governance. How do we make this happen? I
21 commend DCP for the job they've been doing and with
22 the resources they have. But it is limited. We
23 need, you know, you go ten years back. We weren't
24 thinking about wind power, were we? You know, we
25 weren't thinking about the severity. We knew sea

2 level rise was an issue, but we didn't understand the
3 severity and it's gotten worse, and it's great that
4 we focus every 10 years to take a deep dive and look
5 at it. But those years two through nine need
6 management, right? We need to be able to nimbly
7 attack problems as they arise, you know, grab
8 opportunities as they arise, as we are doing with
9 wind power right now. So I believe that Mayor's
10 Office of the Waterfront is a great step in that
11 direction. It will give mayoral clout to attack
12 these critical issues, this, this committee, and most
13 importantly I think that, that of resiliency. We are
14 truly at the precipice of adapting and perhaps
15 changing the way the city looks, functions, and
16 operates for generations to come and if we do it
17 right our children and grandchildren will thank us.
18 If we do it wrong, a pox on our house. Thank you
19 very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I would just ask, I
21 guess, in closing, what are, the same thing I asked
22 the administration, what are some of the biggest
23 challenges you think the city faces along the
24 waterfront?

2 ROLAND LEWIS: The risk of repetition.
3 It's, it's how we build and protect neighborhoods,
4 and if we build, the trade-offs.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

6 ROLAND LEWIS: That we're...

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I mean, do you,
8 like the, I'll pose to you what I posed to DCP, do
9 you think we should be encouraging more development
10 along the waterfront?

11 ROLAND LEWIS: I, I think we have to
12 think twice about certain areas. There are, there
13 are places where if the projections are correct, and
14 the problem with projections as I see them is that
15 they only go in one direction. They've only gotten
16 worse. There's never been one where the NPCC has
17 said well, we made a mistake. Things won't be quite
18 as bad as we thought they'd be.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

20 ROLAND LEWIS: So I think managed retreat
21 and equitably managing retreat in certain areas are
22 probably, um, we've done it in Oakland Park in Staten
23 Island, but there are probably a couple of others.
24 Ah, more dense areas, I think we have to just fortify
25 and, you know, and build places, soft edges that can

2 absorb, you know, parks. I think, you know, as
3 Michael said earlier, parks are often a great
4 solution to [inaudible] in that they absorb and are
5 not, human life is not at risk. So I think we can
6 and will build in certain areas, but we must build
7 really much smarter. The WEDG guidelines are, I
8 think, where people, developers are coming to us now
9 to use those WEDG guidelines and I think people are
10 realizing it's a necessity, some in the private
11 sector and also public sector. So, I guess, the
12 question is it depends on the area and that's where
13 that, you know, deeper dive, 1620, that comprehensive
14 plan for resiliency is really needed to supplement
15 the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, not to replace it.

16 MIKE DELONG: I agree, resiliency is one
17 of the greatest challenges, and at the risk of
18 repetition or just throwing it out the window, I'm
19 going to repeat myself. But our waterfronts are only
20 attractive when water quality allows and that goes
21 for aesthetic enjoyment and recreation to actually
22 using it as a, as an industrial site, and so cleaning
23 up those waters, making sure that they are not
24 dangerous for human contact, not dangerous to having
25 workers around, not dangerous to have your family

2 picnicking on the waterfront. That requires cleaning
3 up the waters.

4 ROLAND LEWIS: Amen.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And, I guess, last
6 thing. Do you have a concern, or do you share my
7 concern with the lifecycle of the plan not being in
8 alignment with the administration's, with the terms?

9 ROLAND LEWIS: I actually, well, with
10 respect, I think of it as an opportunity, as you know
11 better than I as a practitioner of the political
12 arts, but, you know, we have, we'll have a number of
13 folks who want to be, um, there's a huge change, as
14 you know, in the number of people who are running for
15 office. If, ah, we as civics can use this
16 opportunity to put together a progressive plan this
17 could become a litmus test or, you know, a baseline
18 for which they can, ah, tell, tell us as the civic
19 organizations and the people of the City of New York,
20 do you think these are the best ideas? If not, what
21 are your better ideas? So I view it not, not giving
22 the last administrations, this is where the public
23 investment, oh, I should also remind, we will have
24 one outreach session in Queens so far, and we will
25 have one in each borough, the outreach we're doing in

2 partnership, so if we do a good job about this
3 outreach, get people involved, the 1100 members of
4 our alliance and many others that hopefully reach out
5 to others, I think it becomes a marker for the next
6 mayor and the next borough [inaudible].

7 MIKE DELONG: Well said. I think this,
8 the ambition and the practicality and the strength of
9 the ideas will carry forward and give us as advocates
10 something to fight for, something to compare what's
11 done, a plan to compare against the actions that are
12 taken. So we can push for the good ideas. We'll
13 push for those and if there are any bad ideas,
14 hopefully not, we'll fight against those. So I think
15 it will be good to have a plan in place, to give us a
16 roadmap to compare what actually happens to it.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So we've been
18 joined by Council Member, do you have any questions?
19 OK, thank you guys very much, thank you.

20 MIKE DELONG: Thank you.

21 ROLAND LEWIS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The next panel, we
23 have Graham Burchall from the Downtown Boathouse,
24 Luke Gaford from the Lilac Restoration Project, I'm
25 sorry, I can't read the handwriting, Katherine Hughes

2 from FDNA. If you guys are all here just come up.
3 Whenever you're ready, go ahead.

4 GRAHAM BURCHALL: I am Graham Burchall.
5 I am president of the Downtown Boathouse. We provide
6 free kayaking in lower Manhattan to approximately
7 30,000 people a year, more than 500,000 people since
8 we began. Every year in New York City approximately
9 100,000 people, or actually more than 100,000 people
10 go kayaking on the harbor, mostly for free. There is
11 no other major city in the world where this is the
12 case. It sounds like good news, but it's not good
13 news in a city of more than eight million people.
14 There are issues of safe capacity, for example. I've
15 got 200 boats in my boathouse, but I can only put 70
16 on the water because I can't get more than that off
17 the water if I need to, for a security reason, for a
18 rapid change in climate, ah, weather. So if I have a
19 lightening storm I need to be able to evacuate the
20 harbor in less than five minutes. Right, I mean,
21 it's the same with the security situation. The city
22 can host a concert of half a million people in
23 Central Park, but it can't put more than 500 people
24 on the water that surrounds Manhattan at the same
25 time and get them off safely. So as we talk of

2 building waterfront, ah, one of the issues I have
3 about is waterfront access. When you talk about
4 water access, which is a very different thing, in a
5 city of millions of people you have to build to size.
6 If you build a vanity dock here or a vanity dock
7 there you are not really providing access. It's just
8 a gimmick, right? As I, if you can find any, ah, if
9 I had a beach, and there are no beaches in Manhattan,
10 right, and there are none planned, at least none, no
11 beaches that touch the water, the only beaches
12 planned don't actually touch the water, which is not
13 a beach, it's more of a sand pit. Ah, so what I am
14 saying here is the city is leaving billions of
15 dollars of economic value and social value on the
16 table every year because it is not enabling the
17 residents of the city to use the harbor
18 recreationally. If there were 100,000 kayakers there
19 ought to be, given the relative popularity of the two
20 sports, approximately a million people going swimming
21 in this harbor every year. Ah, as Riverkeeper pointed
22 out, the harbor is actually clean enough to swim in
23 most of the time. Not all of the time. In other
24 large urban cities which have similar harbors with
25 similar situations in regard to occasional pollution,

2 like Copenhagen, Oslo, Sydney, you can go swimming in
3 the harbor when it's clean, and there are, I found
4 apps you can get to know when it's not clean. But
5 what happens in New York City is we simply don't
6 allow swimming anytime because it's occasionally
7 dirty. And there ought to be, as I said, you know,
8 in a city of eight million people on a nice summer
9 day there ought to be 100,000 people swimming in the
10 harbor. It would be good for the people. But
11 there's no access and there's no systems. And these
12 are not expensive things to solve. But they're not
13 happening, right, and so, ah, as we plan for a city
14 it's always going to be an island city. It's always
15 going to have enormous costs that competitive cities
16 don't have because we're an archipelago of islands.
17 Either we find a way to use the harbor recreationally
18 safely for large numbers of residents, or we will
19 always be at an economic disadvantage compared to
20 those cities that don't have the physical challenges
21 that we have. And I am not comfortable, I'm
22 certainly not happy with the results of the last
23 planning cycle, and I'm not comfortable going forward
24 that this is going to change, that we are always
25 going to be at a competitive disadvantage relative to

2 other cities if we don't make much better use of the
3 harbor. Ah, somewhat off topic, but on topic, just
4 as a policy statement, I don't believe, well, I
5 believe the only way to protect New York City from
6 global warming is to stop global warming. You will
7 not build a barrier to protect the city. The only
8 place you could build a barrier is Breezy Point.
9 It's probably never going to happen. Get used to it.
10 The city has to be resilient to flooding. I had four
11 feet of water in my boathouse during Hurricane Sandy.
12 I didn't lose anything because I had planned for
13 that. The city has to do the same. But, you know,
14 you could protect, you can build a barrier but that
15 doesn't protect Long Island, the Jersey shore,
16 Bangladesh, and there will still be hundreds of
17 millions displaced if we have global warming. Our
18 civilization will still be at threat if we have
19 global warming. If the city is concerned about
20 global warming, stop global warming everywhere. Do
21 not believe that you can mitigate or be resilient to
22 it, because you can't. It's coming. Stop it. Or
23 you're going to lose. I'm done.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

2 KATHERINE MCVEIGH HUGHES: Good
3 afternoon, Chair Brannan and Council Member Ulrich.
4 My name is Katherine McVeigh Hughes. I served 20
5 years on Manhattan Community Board 1, you're located
6 in Manhattan Community Board 1, half of that time as
7 chair or vice chair. Today I'm representing the
8 Financial District Neighborhood Association, known as
9 FDNA. Five I is home to roughly 50,000 residents and
10 is the fourth-largest business district in the
11 country. As of yesterday, the text for T219-5328 was
12 not available on the New York City website, so I'll
13 first focus on the status of the March 2011 Vision
14 2020 New York City Comprehensive Waterfront, a 10-
15 year vision for the future of the city's 520 miles of
16 shoreline for Reach To, which is for lower Manhattan.
17 So I've included a little map from the actual
18 document and then what needs to be included in the
19 city's next 10-year vision to make sure that lower
20 Manhattan 20 2011 plan is finally implemented and
21 that our community is protected from sea level rise,
22 storm surge, and extreme weather events. So on the
23 second page of the document I copied what was to be
24 completed in lower Manhattan, so item, the first item
25 is the Reach Why. It was about ferries and tour

2 boats. Um, the boats still need to minimize their
3 carbon footprint, noise, and wake, and earlier today
4 at a Bloomberg conference event cohosted by [Series]
5 I learned that there is a technology you can actually
6 put on boats. It's a new coat of paint which you'd
7 be putting on anyway and it could increase energy
8 efficiency by 10% depending on where it is. So there
9 are different things that you can actually look at
10 as, you know, echoing the importance to decreasing
11 our carbon footprint. OK. So if you go through the
12 different points, such as the Brooklyn Bridge area,
13 it's still being planned, to the esplanade
14 construction, that's not yet been begun, between Pier
15 17 and Brooklyn Bridge. There's no educational use
16 on Pier 15. 2-A is still being planned. That's the
17 new market building. 2-B, Pier 17 is complete. The
18 Tin Building is under construction. I would like to
19 note that's private investment. 2-C, um, Pier 16, no
20 improvement or new infrastructure. 2-D, ah, Pier 13,
21 nothing done. Item 3, Battery, Maritime Building,
22 um, completed. 3-A, construction in progress. 3-B,
23 um, the Coast Guard station, nothing done. 3-C,
24 esplanade at the Battery, nothing done. 3-D, Pier A,
25 completed. That was completed by the Battery Park

2 City Authority. 4, Governors Island, some
3 development underway. 5, Statue of Liberty and Ellis
4 Island, um, working with the National Park Service to
5 improvement transplantation access to destinations.
6 Ticket vendors still are a serious problem down in
7 the park in terms of safety. So one year after the
8 release of Vision 2020 in 2011, Superstorm in 2012,
9 Superstorm Sandy devastated New York City. Sandy
10 caused 48 deaths in New York, 71 billion in the
11 regional economic damage, with 19 billion in losses
12 to New York City. Just for the record, two people
13 drowned in lower Manhattan here in CB1. The media
14 impact only, lasted only weeks. Major
15 infrastructures, including transit, electrical, and
16 telecommunications sustained lasting damage, and some
17 of which is still not fixed. The Financial District
18 Seaport Climate Resilient Master Plan, which was
19 announced in March 2019 just had its first meeting in
20 October to kick off a two-year planning process with
21 a conceptual timeline with no specific date.
22 Currently the city's Interim Flood Protection
23 Measures, IFMP, are only north of Wall Street. So
24 the segment between Wall Street and the Battery
25 remains at risk. In conclusion, Sandy taught us the

2 importance of preparation and investment to prepare
3 for the worst potential impacts of global warming. A
4 few things to remember. The future of the National
5 Flood Insurance Program, NFIP, continues to be
6 uncertain. We do not know if or how much the federal
7 government will assist in rebuilding our communities
8 after the next Sandy. Two, Moody's, a major credit
9 rating agency added climate to credit risks and
10 warned cities to address their climate exposure or
11 face rating downgrades. In addition S&P ratings
12 incorporate environmental sustainable governments
13 guidelines and climate to the extent that it affects
14 an entity's ability to pay its debt. Cities that
15 suffer downgrades will not only be able to make the
16 investments, not only be able to make the investments
17 they need, including the investments required to
18 adapt to climate change and to recover from future
19 storms. In 2018 global disasters totaled 160 billion
20 dollars. A third of that total, 80 billion, came
21 just four events in the United States. Climate
22 change is a factor since the insurance company
23 [inaudible]. Action items remaining for Vision 2020
24 in what needs to be included for Vision 2030:
25 Complete the Vision 2020 goals that should have been

2 completed by next year. Incorporate resiliency
3 planning and implementation in the capital budget in
4 the 2020 plan. Only funding for the study of the
5 LMCR, Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency for the
6 Financial District Seaport Climate Resilience Master
7 Plan has been funded. The funding for the
8 [inaudible] LMCR study was insufficient. Construct a
9 multilayered defense of local seawalls and a regional
10 New York Harbor storm seagate system to address a
11 future sea level rise and storm surges. A local
12 perimeter of land-based seawalls will be necessary to
13 provide protection from rising sea levels. However,
14 a huge storm surges are best addressed by a layered
15 defenses built around a regional storm surge seagate
16 system that vastly shortens the coastline. Here
17 roughly a thousand miles down into less than 10 miles
18 and provides comprehensive protection against the
19 deviation caused by occasional, hard-to-predict,
20 massive storm surges. The US Army Corps is only at
21 the beginning of a long process in its evaluation of
22 the regional storm surge barrier. It's New York, New
23 Jersey, harbor and tributaries, coastal storm risk
24 management feasibility studies includes natural and
25 nature-based features and examples such as tidal

2 marsh, vegetative dune, oyster reef from freshwater
3 wetland. It is imperative to save the metropolitan
4 region while maintaining a healthy Hudson and East
5 River. It's actually a strait, but I'm sure you know
6 that. Equitable waterfront access and amenities,
7 including CB1, the east water, East River Waterfront
8 immediately south of Brooklyn Bridge continues to
9 have an East River esplanade in disrepair and only
10 thin strip of open space south of Pier 15 through the
11 Battery. If there will be additional land added
12 through the extension of the waterfront open space
13 needs to be created for the densest community in the
14 country since dozens of skyscrapers were added since
15 September 11, 2001. And most importantly, a sobering
16 graph is at the bottom, included in my testimony,
17 incorporate changing estimates of sea level rise in
18 waterfront projects. So you can see with the IPC see
19 it originally estimated and what NOAA estimates. So
20 there's been a lot of new information coming out in
21 the last 10 years. So thank you very much for the
22 opportunity to testify.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Yeah,
24 it's concerning because, you know, from our vantage
25 and from what I'm hearing from folks in the outer

2 boroughs, the other boroughs, you know, there's a
3 sentiment that not enough is being done. But to
4 hear, and we look to lower Manhattan is where all the
5 attention is being paid. So this very eye-opening.

6 KATHERINE MCVEIGH HUGHES: So, um, it's v
7 confusing. Um, there's the East Side Coastal
8 Resiliency Project. That stops at Montgomery St.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

10 KATHERINE MCVEIGH HUGHES: And then
11 there's the segment of north of Brooklyn Bridge going
12 up to Montgomery, and then there's the Lower
13 Manhattan Coastal Resiliency Project. So a lot of
14 attention has been paid to that 1.4 or 5 billion
15 dollar project for that, a little over two miles.
16 But a lot of it still needs a lot of attention, so
17 thank you very much for allowing me to share that
18 with you...

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

20 KATHERINE MCVEIGH HUGHES: Because you
21 are in a position to make a difference here.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, I appreciate
23 it. Thank you.

24 LUKE GAFORD: Good afternoon. My name is
25 Luke Gaford. I'm the operator director of the museum

2 ship Lilac, which is operated at Pier 25 in the
3 Hudson River. I've been restoring ships for 45 years
4 of my life. I've also served in the Royal Australian
5 Navy as a diver. I've traveled all around the world
6 to various different maritime ports and I came to New
7 York City 20 years ago. I also worked for the
8 Department of Sanitation as a welder for the City of
9 New York and I'm a part of the essential services
10 that keeps the city running during emergencies. When
11 everyone else goes home I have to go out and keep the
12 equipment maintained. One of the things that I'd
13 like to illustrate with this is, especially since
14 last year where we had the snowstorm where the whole
15 tristate area of the east coast was not prepared for,
16 it was a massive illustration of how the gridlock and
17 absolutely lack of planning can be used for the
18 street systems and highway systems in the New York
19 and its greater area. As illustrated during the
20 events of 9/11, the greatest maritime evacuation in
21 the history of the world occurred during the months
22 after 9/11. Not only were all call of hands of
23 vessels were made, and it was under the decision of
24 people not through like agencies or government
25 agencies, but through the use of people of maritime

2 background. And the problem we're having is the City
3 of New York is giving up its maritime background
4 access. All piers should have access for emergency
5 services, for the use of bits and bites and ships
6 tying off in states of emergencies, keeping waterways
7 dredged and clear for your needs of an event has
8 occurred before and could occur again. That is my
9 main point. Now coming here to hear about the
10 resilience of the City of New York, I'm a member and,
11 ah, of the Staten Island community. I actually went
12 out and witnessed the flooding waters coming through,
13 both down at South Beach as I was driving my four-
14 wheel drive truck and I saw it coming over the berm
15 that the Parks Department had built on the beaches.
16 I was, by the time I got to my truck it was already
17 at my wheels. By the time I was getting down near
18 the hospital it was already up above my wheels and I
19 was telling people who were driving the other way I
20 think you should follow me. I then proceeded to
21 follow the floodwaters coming along, along where
22 Miller's Launch is, had become flooded, which is now
23 part of the, ah, EDC redevelopment plan on Staten
24 Island, um, and I then followed the floodwaters all
25 the way down to Richmond Terrace, where you could

2 actually see where it came in various different
3 waves, depending on the, the topography of the marine
4 waterfront. One of the things I did hear, which was
5 a question put together, which is a very good thing
6 to consider, is number one, where industrial areas
7 and, ah, areas are opening up for redevelopment, is
8 maybe reconsidering not developing on them at all,
9 because the effects of global warming around the
10 world is real. I've seen rising sea levels my whole
11 career in the military. I've seen in here in the,
12 ah, the maritime front in New York Harbor as well.
13 During periods of time of high moon sometimes the
14 Staten Island Ferry cannot actually discharge its
15 passengers because they cannot lift the ferry gate
16 heads, bridgeheads, sorry, up high enough to actually
17 allow the Staten Island Ferry to dock. It is a
18 reality. And I am true believer that the solution
19 is, is what Greg said, is like unless you actual
20 tackle the major problem it's one of the things is to
21 actually reconsider the development of the waterfront
22 to actually reduce the amount of people that are
23 going to be put at risk. Thank you very much.

24

25

1 COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY
AND WATERFRONTS

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
3 much. Thank you all. OK. This concludes today's
4 hearing. Thank you again so much. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 6, 2019