

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS JOINTLY  
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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December 9, 2019  
Start: 10:07 AM  
Recess: 11:20 AM

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm 14<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: JUSTIN BRANNAN  
Chairperson

PETER A. KOO  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Costa Constantintides  
Ruben Diaz, Sr.  
Deborah L. Rose  
Eric A. Ulrich  
Adrienne E. Adams  
Joseph C. Borelli  
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Carlina Rivera  
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James G. Van Bramer

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

Sarah Krautheim our VP of Public Affairs  
Trust for Governor's Island

Clare Newman, Trust for Governor's Island

Marissa DeDominicis, Earth Matter

Mary Birnbaun, Friends of Governors Island

Maggie Flannigan, Waterfront Alliance



1 COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS JOINTLY  
2 WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION 4

3 (sound check)

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are you guys ready?

5 [background comments, pause] Okay, good morning

6 everybody. My name is Justin Brannan, but I've to

7 [gavel] I always forget that. Good morning everyone.

8 My name is Justin Brannan, and I have the privilege

9 of chairing the Committee on Resiliency and

10 Waterfronts. I want to welcome you to our hearing on

11 Governor's Island today. I also want to extend my

12 thanks to my good colleague Council Member Koo who

13 chairs the Parks and Recreation Committee for joining

14 me today. This hearing will provide our committees

15 with an opportunity to hear from the Trust for

16 Governor's Island, the Governor's Island National

17 Monument, advocates and tenants on the island about

18 ongoing proposed construction projects, plans for

19 future tenants and the new passenger ferry that went

20 into effect this past summer. The Council has

21 historically conducted regular hearings on Governors

22 Island to learn about ongoing developments, and use

23 of the island. Since it has been a few years since

24 our last update, our committees look forward to

25 hearing from all the parties here today. Governs

Island is located about two miles from where we are

3 her at 250 Broadway. It's currently open to the  
4 public from May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. In 2003, the  
5 federal government sold 150 of the island's 172 acres  
6 to the City of New York with the remaining 22 acres  
7 declared the Governors Island National Monument  
8 overseen by the National Park Service. The island is  
9 home to an award winning park, historic buildings,  
10 the New York Harbor School and cultural facilities. I  
11 July the Trust for Governors Island added a new 400-  
12 passenger ferry to its fleet, and this past September  
13 the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council opened a 40,000  
14 square foot art center that includes artist studios,  
15 galleries, performance spaces and a café. Visitors  
16 to Governors Island enjoyed biking and walking along  
17 the great promenade playing and relaxing in one of  
18 the four hills and taking in breathtaking views of  
19 the city and New York Harbor. What will the island  
20 look like in the next few years? In 2016, Mayor de  
21 Blasio announced plans to transform Governors Island  
22 into a year-round destination, and in August of last  
23 year, the city initiated the Public Review Process to  
24 rezone approximately 33 acres on the southern portion  
25 of the island to create up to 4.5 million square feet  
of new development. In October, the New York Times

3 reported that the Trust is considering developing a  
4 center for climate adaption research and has reached  
5 out to consultants to help study this idea.

6 Additionally, uses being considered include a hotel,  
7 dorms, a university, convention center, offices and  
8 retail space. It is very important that whatever

9 development does occur on the island that the island

10 remains open and accessible to all members of the

11 public, and not just the select few who can afford

12 these new recreational opportunities. So, we look

13 forward to hearing where the Trust is in this

14 process, and how the trust will balance the need to

15 fund operations on the island with the need for open

16 space. We also look forward to hearing how

17 additional development will account for the effects

18 of climate change specifically sea level rise,

19 coastal surge and flooding. Will 4.5 million square

20 feet of new development stress the island's current

21 infrastructure? What resiliency measures will be

22 considered? How will tenants, residents and visitors

23 be evacuated in the case of an emergency? Although

24 we may be early in these planning stages, the trust

25 must consider all these factors and issues as it

proceeds through the environmental review and

3 rezoning process. So, before I begin, I want to, of  
4 course, thank my committee staff, Committee Counsel  
5 Jessica Steinberg-Albin; Senior Policy Analyst  
6 Patrick Mobile, Senior Finance Analyst Jonathan  
7 Seltzer and my Senior Advisor Jonathan Yedin and, of  
8 course, Council staff from the Parks and Recreation  
9 Committee for putting—for all the hard work in  
10 putting this hearing together. So, I now want to  
11 turn is over to Council Member Koo for his opening  
12 remarks.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Chair  
14 Brannon. Good morning. I'm Peter Koo, Chair of the  
15 Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation. I'd  
16 like to thank Council Member Justin Barron Chair of  
17 the Committee on Resiliencies and Waterfronts for  
18 agreement to hold this joint meeting. Today's  
19 meeting will examine the status and plans for  
20 development on Governors Island. The Council has  
21 typically studied—No. The Council has typically  
22 conducted periodic hearings on the progress made on  
23 the Governor Islands because we know that this island  
24 holds so much promise from an educational, historical  
25 and recreation point of view. Govern Island has a  
long and distinguished history in the New York City

3 first serving as a military base from the late 1700s  
4 until the late 1600s. Then a Coast Guard facility  
5 until 1996, and most recently as recreation-  
6 recreational area for New Yorkers. In 2003,  
7 ownership of the island was transferred to New York  
8 City from the federal government and the island was  
9 jointly managed by National Park Service and the  
10 Governors Island Preservation and Educational  
11 cooperation a non-profit corporation formed for the  
12 purpose of redeveloping and managing the island.  
13 Ultimately, the Trust for Governor Island was created  
14 in 2010, and it's responsible for all-overall  
15 operations and redevelopment of the island. After-  
16 while the U.S. National Park Service is responsible  
17 for various historic buildings and monuments on the  
18 island, ever since the city gained control over the  
19 island, numerous ideas have been proposed on what if  
20 any developmental occurrence. It is important to  
21 note that as part of the transfer from the federal  
22 government, a series of fee restrictions was imposed.  
23 For example, the island must remain accessible to the  
24 public in perpetuity and at least 90 acres must be  
25 used from partnering educational and open space uses  
and low residential development may occur. [coughs]



3 Ove the years as the island became a more attractive  
4 destination from a recreational and historical point  
5 of view, with the creation of the Hills Park, various  
6 event programming and restoration of historic  
7 buildings. Additionally various organizations rooted  
8 themselves on the island including the Billion Oyster  
9 Project, the Harbor School, the Lower Manhattan  
10 Cultural Council with the goal of making the use of  
11 the island for cultural, educational and recreational  
12 purposes. The ultimate purpose of this island is  
13 still up for debate and consideration with most  
14 agreeing that you should continue to serve the  
15 various purposes that have been associated with the  
16 island since the city took over. However, development  
17 of the south side of the island remains unclear. The  
18 Mayor in 2016 launched a plan to make the south side  
19 of the island into an innovation center bringing  
20 together innovations and entrepreneurs and educators  
21 to generate new ideas and-and economic activities.  
22 The plan also calls for keeping the island open year  
23 round with the hope that you will create several  
24 billion square feet of educational, cultural research  
25 and retrial uses. Since then, the city initiated the  
Public Review process for rezoning the south side in

3 order to do the—in order to develop about 4.5 million  
4 square feet for commercial, academic and cultural  
5 purposes. I'd like—I would like this hearing to  
6 explore what the island's financial status is, and  
7 the likelihood that of it being financially self-  
8 sustaining for the long term, and whether the ravage  
9 efforts revenue generations through attracting  
10 various commercial establishments have been  
11 successful. I would also like to explore how  
12 generated revenue is being used to create and  
13 maintain partners and recreational spaces for the  
14 island's visitors. The committees will also examine  
15 the status—the committee will also examine what the  
16 status is regarding various infrastructure projects  
17 such as construction of polar boat water pipes (sic),  
18 the possibility of expanding recreational boater  
19 access to the island, and whether there are plans to  
20 expand ferry service to more areas of the city. I  
21 hope this hearing will provide more insight into the  
22 status of the island's operation, and I look forward  
23 to learning more about the development of positions,  
24 current funding issues, and the concerns of  
25 advocates, businesses and the general public. Thank  
you once again, and welcome.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair  
3 Koo, and with that, I will now turn the floor over to  
4 Clare Newman and Sarah Krautheim from the Trust for  
5 Governor's Island. If you can please raise your  
6 right hands so Counsel can swear you in today.

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the  
8 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
9 your testimony and before these committees, and to  
10 respond honestly Council Member questions?

11 SARAH KRAUTHEIM: I do.

12 CLARE NEWMAN: I do.

13 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead. Thank  
15 you.

16 CLARE NEWMAN: [off mic] Great. Thank  
17 you, Chairman Brannan for having us today. We are  
18 very excited to (off mic/pause) Oh, great, and now  
19 my microphone is on and I'm joined by Sarah Krautheim  
20 our VP of Public Affairs to assist with any  
21 questions. Starting off—oh and prior to that I know  
22 some people in this room from my stint at the  
23 Brooklyn Navy Yard. I was the Chief of Staff there  
24 for five years immediately before starting up the  
25 Trust. Starting off with our mission, we are a

2 501(c)(3) not for profit, and as alluded to in the  
3 opening remarks our mission is really to make sure  
4 that Governors Island is an extraordinary public  
5 place and resource for new Yorkers and that's what  
6 had guided our work since the city took control of  
7 the asset all of those years ago, and remains really  
8 at the center of every thing that we do on the island  
9 from operations and maintenance to programming and to  
10 the future growth. We have a very fascinating  
11 history on the island, and I do think it's worth  
12 talking a little bit about because it provides some  
13 important context for the conversation today. The  
14 island has always been a really strategic location in  
15 the New York Harbor and in very early days it was use  
16 by the Lenape as a fishing and hunting camp, and was  
17 ultimately then used as a military base really for  
18 close to 200 years from about early 1800s until the  
19 mid-1900s. In the mid 1900s, the Coast Guard took  
20 over, and they operated the facility from 1966 to  
21 1996. What was really fascinating about the Coast  
22 Guard days is that the island operated as really a  
23 totally self-sustaining facility, and so there were  
24 3,000 Coast Guard families living on the island and  
25 they had everything they needed out there, a

2 supermarket, Burger King, a bowling alley, 12, 14-  
3 story tall barracks where families lived and worked  
4 and so the island has a very long-term history of  
5 being the sort of multi-purpose, multi-use place that  
6 can sustain a 24/7, 365 operations. The Coast Guard  
7 departed in 1996, and, um, since that time there's  
8 been quite a bit of planning for the island. It was  
9 sold to a joint entity of the city and state in 2003  
10 for one dollar, and then ultimately it was  
11 transitioned from that joint control into full city  
12 control in 2010, and during that period the city  
13 has made extraordinary strides in terms of what the  
14 island is and can be for New Yorkers. Where we are  
15 today. As mentioned, the island is owned and  
16 operated by us, the mission driven Trust for  
17 Governors Island. As Chairman Koo alluded to, there  
18 are deed restrictions that were passed to us from the  
19 sale of the federal government. Those are located-  
20 noted up here, but the important thing is that we  
21 really manage everything that happens on the island  
22 day in and day out, and so we run and pay for most of  
23 the ferry service. We own and operate all the  
24 infrastructure and, um, the pedestrian pathways  
25 around the island in addition to the open space and

3 the 1.3 million square feet of historic resources  
4 that exist on the island today. I like to tell the  
5 story of when I first went to Governors Island, which  
6 was about 12 years ago, and at that time it really  
7 was sort of like a very spooky, but also incredibly  
8 gorgeous ghost town in the sense that the Coast Guard  
9 had, you know, basically walked out the door, um, and  
10 dropped their keys at the footsteps of each building,  
11 and said bye-bye and so it had this real frozen in  
12 time feel, but you could tell even back then driving  
13 around the island in a tram that the island had  
14 extraordinary potential, and for me I'm a born and  
15 raised New Yorker. I had never heard of Governors  
16 Island let alone been there, and so the idea that  
17 there was this resource in the center of the harbor  
18 that could be re-opened to New Yorkers was exciting  
19 even then, and what I've been extremely excited by in  
20 starting in this role is to flash forward that decade  
21 and just see how much that has changed in that 10-  
22 year period. What do we attribute that to? Really  
23 three core things that the city and leadership at the  
24 Trust has been working on. First, the City has  
25 invested close to \$300 million into the island and so  
a lot of that went to building a truly world class

3 public open space and park. We'll talk a little bit  
4 more about that in the Resiliency Plans as part of  
5 the park, but it also went into core infrastructure  
6 for the island and so we're proud to say that now  
7 today we do have potable water, and we have such  
8 exotic luxuries as electricity. We also have built  
9 strong educational and cultural partnerships with  
10 tenants and programming entities. Um, and it's with  
11 them that we really bring life to the island and help  
12 to draw visitorship to the island and we'll talk as  
13 well about those partnerships. And then third and  
14 really anchoring everything that we do and the core  
15 of all of our work is this idea of building this  
16 public resource and attracting a diverse mix of New  
17 York City residents to the island. And so, we have  
18 grown from our opening season of about 8,000 visitors  
19 this summer to this year we had over 750,000 visitors  
20 and so we're very proud to say that, you know, we  
21 think we have succeeded in helping to put Governors  
22 Island on the mental map of New Yorkers and to really  
23 stitch it back into the fabric of the city. So, we'll  
24 focus on that to start. What is it we do in terms of  
25 public access and in terms of attract-attracting  
visitors? Um, as mentioned, we grew from that early

2 figure of about 8,000 visitors to the 750 to day.

3 Over the course of the 13 or so years we've been  
4 open, six million people have visited the island and  
5 each year on average we increase visitorship by about  
6 12%. You know, sometimes there's jumps and flatter  
7 periods, but that's that blended average. Um, we're  
8 extremely proud of the fact that over 80% of our  
9 visitors come from the five boroughs of the city, and  
10 that's a very strong number for a sort of  
11 destination, um, facility like we operate and it's  
12 really proof that this is succeeding in its goal to  
13 be a resource for the city. And then I also want to  
14 highlight that 1 in 2 were repeat visitors. So, one  
15 thing we find—found and we continue to look at this is  
16 that once people come to the island, they want to  
17 come back again and a gain, and so we have a  
18 balancing act in both attracting new audience, but  
19 then also making sure that we have those folks who  
20 have been before and love it. When they come back,  
21 there's continually new things to explore, and we  
22 continue to deliver on the promise of having and  
23 extraordinary time. But all of that, of course,  
24 starts with access. Governors Island can be visited  
25 by ferry. The main routed that people take to and



3 from the island is from the Battery Maritime Building  
4 located in Lower Manhattan. Um, the great thing about  
5 that facility is it's highly accessible by subway and  
6 other forms of public transit including bus. From  
7 there it's about 8-minute ferry ride to the island  
8 and the Trust for Governors Island operates that  
9 service. As mentioned earlier in the preamble, we  
10 did launch a new ferry earlier this summer, and what  
11 that has allowed us to do is increase weekend  
12 frequency to serve the Battery Maritime Building  
13 every 20 minutes, and that's been a huge thing for  
14 visitors. It means that they can come. They don't  
15 have to worry about the schedule. The boat is going  
16 to be there within a relatively reasonable waiting  
17 time and they can come and enjoy the island. In  
18 addition, we run on the weekends in public season a  
19 shuttle to Brooklyn to Pier 6, and we are connected  
20 by a shuttle route to the New York City Ferry, which  
21 leaves from Pier 11 also on summer weekends, and so,  
22 people can use any New York City ferry line, take it  
23 to Pier 11 and then transfer to the Governors Island  
24 shuttle. Um, today our ferry service is run as I  
25 said from B&B. It is \$3.00 round trip. It is free  
before noon. On the weekends it's free for all

3 people under the age of 12 and to IDNYC holders, and  
4 so, we do as much as we can to make sure that the  
5 island remains accessible in terms of ferry pricing  
6 as well. Our public events and programs we had over  
7 80 in the this past public season. I helps us to  
8 attract audience and to keep the island lively. Of  
9 those 80 programs, 70 were free public events, and so  
10 again the vast majority of what happens on the island  
11 day in and day out is open and accessible to the  
12 public, and so you can come and spend the day,  
13 explore the island and know that almost everything  
14 you're going to happen upon is something you can  
15 explore with your family. One of the main areas that  
16 we have a focus is in arts and culture, and I should  
17 say, too, that each season what we do is we issue an  
18 RFP to the non-profit community of New York City and  
19 we basically offer up the houses that are located in  
20 Nolan Park and along Colonel's Row for free for non-  
21 profits. We're willing to do weekend public  
22 programming, and so each season we selected close to  
23 30 partner entities who come and occupy those spaces.  
24 You can see some of the examples up here, and there  
25 will be more on further slides, but they range from  
Mocada, which is an arts organization to Pioneer

3 Works, which is arts meet the environment, and they  
4 run these houses with extraordinary programming that  
5 supports their mission and they make sure that on the  
6 weekends there is something great happening on the  
7 ground floor that the public can wander into. We  
8 also have many of these partnerships focused in  
9 science and the environment, and so the Climate  
10 Museum has one of these houses, and they did an  
11 extraordinary amount of programming this summer  
12 really focused on activating youth to think about  
13 figuring our solutions to climate and becoming real  
14 climate advocates themselves. Another example, um,  
15 actually here today is Earth Matters, New York's  
16 Compost Learning Center who operates on the island,  
17 and again, focused in the science and environment and  
18 offering programming for the public. We have a  
19 strong base as well in kids programming and so, you  
20 know, it ranges from STEM kids whose focused on  
21 science, technology, engineering and mathematics to  
22 Children's Museum of Arts, which is focused on the  
23 are arts, um, all the way to Art Force 5, which is a  
24 great public program focused on crafts and arts for  
25 children as well, and these operate across the island  
during the six month public season. The Trust has a

3 long history in commissioning public artworks, and so  
4 this is something that we've done really since the  
5 island's inception to make sure that we're bringing  
6 life to these acres that we operate, and each season  
7 we elected a couple of public art works. We look to  
8 solicit grant funds from the private sector, and we  
9 actually commission these works. What it means is  
10 that as people come to the island and they're  
11 exploring it, they get to really begin to feel the  
12 island in a way that is different than just a  
13 standard open space where you can turn around a  
14 corner and encounter some fabulous cutting edge  
15 public artwork, again, totally free. Similarly, and  
16 you'll see this theme continues, we have a strong  
17 base in recreation. We have a bike rental facility  
18 on the island. We have an agreement with that bike  
19 rental company that allows them to rent bikes for  
20 free on week days before noon. The Downtown Boat  
21 House operates free kayaking from the island, and  
22 then we have fabulous fields across the island,  
23 soccer, football, softball, baseball. Again, totally  
24 free to use if you're visiting the island, and then  
25 we also have grills, which, you know, especially for—  
I'm sure Chairman Koo hears a lot of this. People

3 love having access to grills in the parks, and we  
4 offer that really across the island north and south  
5 for families to come, spend the entire day doing a  
6 barbecue, a picnic, whatever. National Park Service  
7 is not here today, but as alluded to of the 172-acre  
8 island, we own and operate 150 acres. The Park  
9 Service owns and operates 22 We work in very, very  
10 close communication with them to make sure that we  
11 are holding hands on all of the public tours, and  
12 that their facilities continue also to be an  
13 extraordinary resource for the city, and so, Fort Jay  
14 and Castle Williams, which are both national  
15 monuments are open on the weekends for free to the  
16 public and the Park Service offers tours of those.  
17 We work very closely with the Friends of Governors  
18 Island on visitor services across the board to make  
19 sure that people coming to the island have the  
20 information they need to enjoy a full day. We  
21 translate our guides both on paper and on the website  
22 into four languages. We offer through the—with the  
23 Friends 250 free tours every single season to members  
24 of the public and we have welcome centers and  
25 information centers located across the island to help  
guide visitors to everything that the island has to

3 offer, and then in 2020 we're very excited to  
4 announce thanks to the support of our Council Member  
5 Chin, that we will be launching a free eco-shuttle to  
6 help, um, visitors get around the island as quickly,  
7 easily and seamlessly as possible. These are  
8 electric vehicles. Um, they will operate on a fixed  
9 route throughout the island, um, serving both as a  
10 means of transportation, but also will be offering  
11 tours and information as you're on the shuttle.

12 Again, we'll be working on that with the Friends of  
13 Governors Island. We're starting with two, and we'll  
14 see how that goes, and if there's need to add more in  
15 the future, we are committed to doing that to ensure  
16 again that visitors can navigate the island easily.

17 And then it's very important to us that everything we  
18 do here in terms of outreach, in terms of programming  
19 we are doing in partnership with our community  
20 stakeholders. So, we run a Community Advisory  
21 Council. Some of the participants in the Council are  
22 located—listed on the screen. Our elected officials  
23 participate in that. Island Tenants and Partners  
24 participate in that, and then, um, various advocates  
25 from across the city who are interested in the future  
of Governors Island also participate. This really

3 helps us make sure that what we are delivering on the  
4 island is staying true to what people actually want  
5 out there, and so the purpose of these is to make  
6 sure that we are straying on track, and that we are  
7 making real time adjustments as needed to all that  
8 the island has to do. So, this is a really important  
9 way that we're getting feedback in addition to, um,  
10 the survey work that the Friends of collects from  
11 visitors in addition to our kind of hearings like  
12 this, and our meetings with elected officials to make  
13 sure that we're staying true to our mission. Um, we  
14 know the council is—the committee was very interested  
15 in hearing a little bit about resiliency and so we  
16 focused here on the park that we developed recently  
17 and various resiliency efforts on the island. The  
18 park was the result of a 2010 master plan that was  
19 developed for the island and this is important to  
20 rest on for a second. As you can see, the island  
21 sort of has two halves. On the northern part up here  
22 this is a New York City landmarked district. It is  
23 historic. It is where also the original natural  
24 boundaries of the island were. We have about 1.3  
25 million square feet of historic buildings on the  
north part of the island, which are landmarked, and

3 which we are committed to adoptive reuse for. We  
4 also have extraordinary open space on the north  
5 island. The southern part of the island was added in  
6 the early 1900s by fill, by the U.S. Military to  
7 expand the island. The Southern part of the island  
8 is where we focused the new park space and where  
9 because the island was naturally flat as a pancake we  
10 had to add significant grade in order to make sure  
11 that park will remain resilient. As you can see  
12 here, the park was developed in two phases. The first  
13 half was opened in 2014, which consists of Liggett  
14 Terrace, the Hammock Groves and other, um, open space  
15 facilities, and then more recently the hills were  
16 opened, and those are the four hills that rise on the  
17 southern, more southern tip of the island. This park  
18 really came out of an international design  
19 competition. We selected West 8 to do the design of  
20 the park in the part because they were so focused on  
21 delivering really the first truly resilient park in  
22 the United States, and so that concept of  
23 sustainability and resiliency is stitched into every  
24 single design decision that was made for the park  
25 starting really with the desire to raise the  
typography of the island to protect it from storm



3 surge and sea level rise, and you can see here how  
4 the island was elevate, the southern part of the  
5 island was elevated up above the flood plain. Um, but  
6 that wasn't all. It isn't just about raising up the  
7 typography. We also had a resilient planning  
8 strategy, and so what the park designers did and  
9 their team was to make sure that we were planting the  
10 park both trees and shrubs and really every, you  
11 know, piece of vegetation you see out there with a  
12 great diversity of life. So that that way you would  
13 have an ecosystem that can survive as New York City's  
14 climate starts to change and evolve. Plantings range  
15 from really native to New York City all the way down  
16 to native to Virginia. The idea being that again as  
17 climate changes, we will have a park that is diverse  
18 enough and adaptive enough to survive that. We also  
19 were very, very focused on wave action, and on making  
20 sure that the perimeter of the island is rebuilt to  
21 be more resilient and so we adjusted a lot of the  
22 exterior of the island to a construction technology  
23 called Riprap, which is much better both longevity,  
24 but also for, um, resiliency issues, and then we  
25 reused all of that sea wall that we've taken out as  
integrated it into the construction of the hills,

3 which both served as an extraordinary design feature  
4 and, but also as a great example of how we can  
5 adaptively re-use elements of the island in a way  
6 that's actually additive and a creative to the  
7 island's forward growth. Storm water manages-  
8 management is a critical component of the park's  
9 development, um, and so that, too, is integrated  
10 really into every design feature of the island. On  
11 the island we do not have a combined system. We are  
12 able to capture and re-use most of the sea water  
13 that comes onto the island. Um, the design is such  
14 that it allows that sea water to be directed down  
15 into areas of the parks that need greater irrigation,  
16 and then we have storm water outfalls, um, that then  
17 take any water that isn't, of course, reabsorbed and  
18 integrated back into the East River, but that's  
19 totally separate from the sewage system. And then  
20 coming to our last bucket, of course, as I mentioned  
21 we have tenants and partners, um, who are-with whom  
22 we focus on using the historic space of the island,  
23 but also enlivening parts of, um, the future  
24 development zones for the island. And so, what you  
25 can see here is that in the northern part of the  
island, we really currently have four tenants who are

3 under a long-term lease. First, we'll about these in  
4 more detail. Um, but they're laid out here. They  
5 run from being a public school, um, to an art center  
6 and actually in the hospitality and Amenities Bucket  
7 a Day Spa. So, as mentioned during the opening  
8 remarks the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council opened  
9 the doors of their brand new facility in September of  
10 this year. We are really proud of this partnership.  
11 It was many years in the making and LMCC has created  
12 I think a truly special facility out on the island.  
13 It serves as a great example of how the historic  
14 buildings on the North Island can be adaptively  
15 reused, and put back into public use. There are two  
16 large free public exhibition spaces. LMCC also runs  
17 an artist residency program out of this space with  
18 dance studio, rehearsal space with space for multi-  
19 media performances and then individual artist  
20 studios. Um, and the, of course, now will be open  
21 year round--or they're open year round in terms of the  
22 artist studios, and the exhibits are open during the  
23 public season. Um, New York Harbor School and  
24 Billion Oyster Project were really our first tenants  
25 out on the island. They have been there for a number  
of years. This is a public DOE high school focused

3 on CTE careers in various maritime fields. Um, they  
4 are a great well regarded public school that draws  
5 from all five boroughs and is a real attraction for  
6 the island, and very much in line, of course, with  
7 the island's mission to maintain this as a public  
8 resource dedicated to education and also thinking  
9 forward about issues of environment, resiliency and  
10 climate, and then as I mentioned the day spa is  
11 coming. It is under construction now. The doors are  
12 expected to open in 2021 that will occupy three  
13 buildings on the northern part of the island. People  
14 can come, enjoy the day in these pools looking out  
15 over Lower Manhattan, and again, one-one more way to  
16 draw people out to Governor's Island. And then, of  
17 course, coming back to the map future development.  
18 So, of course, we are dedicated to re-using all of  
19 this 1.3 million square feet of building on the north  
20 island. We have a ways to go on that. We have a  
21 million square feet or so vacant, and then from the  
22 days of the master plan's creation back in 2020-2010,  
23 excuse me, there have been two development zones  
24 allocated on the southern part of the island. This  
25 is the area that is contemplated for rezoning. Um,  
the current plans basically contemplate up-zoning

3 those parcels from very low density residential,  
4 which as alluded to, permanent residential is  
5 precluded on the island to a mid-density sort of  
6 mixed-use commercial zone. The northern part of the  
7 island was actually rezoned back in 2013 to allow for  
8 a broad mix of uses under the deed, but at that time  
9 we did not do the southern half of the island, and so  
10 we're coming back, you know, now to do that Um, and  
11 what we're currently exploring to leas the vision for  
12 that southern part of the island is the idea of  
13 making Governor's Island a true global center for  
14 climate adaptation, research, advocacy and education.  
15 We are currently in the research phase of that  
16 project. We're working with a consultant to help us  
17 think through what exactly a program like that could  
18 look like on the southern island, but also in some of  
19 the North-North Island buildings. That would really  
20 I think embrace what's special about the island in  
21 terms of its access to water, in terms of how it has  
22 lead on issues of resilience, how we have such strong  
23 partnership in the environmental sector to really  
24 crate something on the island that is dedicated to  
25 climate solution making, but also to educating a  
group-members of the public to demand that we begin

2 implementation of these solutions, and the island as  
3 this extraordinary public resource is positioned well  
4 to do both of those things to help generate the ideas  
5 but also to make sure that we are showing those ideas  
6 to the world, and helping again to make sure that we  
7 have kids, students at the Harbor School, visitors to  
8 that, and then understand what a sort of resilient  
9 version of the future looks like, and in this iconic  
10 location of Governors Island that could have real  
11 impact. So, um, thank you again for having us and,  
12 um, that was our--actually I hope a fairly brief  
13 version to catch everyone up on what's been going on  
14 on the island and we are happy to take questions.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. I want  
16 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member  
17 Cohen.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Hello, hello.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, um, thank you  
20 for that. I-I-I wanted to, um, reference the Times  
21 article from last month. It was October--

22 CLARE NEWMAN: Uh-hm.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: --that was talking  
24 about the city sent a request for proposals to  
25 contractors. What other item--for southern to sell

3 to other partners. What other ideas have been  
4 submitted so far aside from what we've seen.

5 CLARE NEWMAN: Great question. Um, so the  
6 RFP that was referenced in the New York Times article  
7 was actually, um, only sent to research consultants  
8 specifically with the idea of helping us to think  
9 through this idea, the idea of really bringing a  
10 climate center to the island. You know, the island,  
11 um, has been studied very much over the past 15 years  
12 or so. We've done RFEIs out there. We've done RFPs,  
13 we've had numerous different consultant teams look at  
14 what could work on the island. We've had public  
15 input processes for the island, and so I'd say this  
16 latest idea is really building on a lot of that  
17 thinking and work, which is—has often focused on the  
18 idea of bringing education or research as an anchor  
19 use and then pairing that into what is I think a  
20 logical fit for the island, and also just something  
21 we are all as a city focused on today, which is  
22 making sure we are prepared for climate change.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And the—and the  
24 plan is still to—to make Governors Island into a  
25 living laboratory for climate change?

2 CLARE NEWMAN: Yes, um, and so as part of  
3 the research, the living laboratory idea is something  
4 we are very focused on, um, and it's something that I  
5 think others who—with whom we've talked to on the  
6 Community Advisory Council and tenants are very  
7 excited about. You can imagine walking around the  
8 island and seeing, I don't know, the latest carbon  
9 capture technology, um, demonstrated out there. You  
10 can imagine looking at the surrounding waterways and  
11 seeing what the latest thinking is in terms of  
12 resilient engineering, and so bringing that forward  
13 into the public space, um, as something exciting for  
14 visitors to experience, um, we—we are—we believe  
15 would be a core part of this plan.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, do you see  
17 something like the spa as—as a sort of gateway drug  
18 to get people to come to check it out?

19 CLARE NEWMAN: Um, I'm going to use that  
20 analogy in the future. Um, no, but we do think that  
21 hospitality and amenity are going to be a key  
22 component to really any use that we see out there,  
23 but it is especially I think attractive for  
24 educational or research users, um, the people need a  
25 place to stay, an overnight accommodation the spa is



2 not this but in the hospitality bucket, is important  
3 both for bringing audience to the island, but also  
4 allowing to have people experience it not just from  
5 10:00 to 6:00, but that 24-hour look, but the reality  
6 is that the island needs things like places to eat,  
7 places to have a drink, um, hotel, spa to fill out  
8 that amenity bucket and, um, yes, help be a gateway  
9 drug. (sic)

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, I know you said  
11 the ferry costs three bucks, right?

12 CLARE NEWMAN: Uh-hm. Round trip, yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what's-what's  
14 the-the cost to operate that? What's the subsidy on  
15 that?

16 CLARE NEWMAN: Um, it's still mostly  
17 subsidized.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

19 CLARE NEWMAN: So the-the cost of the  
20 ferry for us is about \$6 million a year, and that  
21 includes both the service to B&B and to Brooklynn,  
22 and we generate currently from, um, the ferry revenue  
23 about \$600,000 a year.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is—have you seen an  
3 increase in ridership or what's been the trend since  
4 they expanded with NYC Ferry.

5 CLARE NEWMAN: Yes.

6 SARAH KRAUTHEIM: Sorry. I just need to  
7 put my mic on. I can answer that. um, we've seen—the  
8 new ferry has a lot of security, and an additional  
9 2,000 passengers on a give Saturday or Sunday. Um, we  
10 are currently operating that ferry on weekends only,  
11 but intend to expand that in the future. Um a few  
12 other just broader interesting trends we've seen is a  
13 growth in weekday visitorship, which I think is  
14 really important as Clare mentioned earlier in her  
15 testimony to sort of putting Governors Island on the  
16 mental map of New Yorkers and how that will be woven  
17 the operative fabric of the city. Um, the Friends of  
18 Governors Island conduct a visitor survey each year,  
19 and that analyzes zip code data. Um, we've seen kind  
20 of an increase in visitorship from not just Manhattan  
21 and Brooklyn, but all five boroughs. Um, I think part  
22 of that can be attributed to NYC ferries increasing  
23 our connectivity. Um, last year I believe we saw a  
24 12% increase in visitors from Queens, um, and, um,  
25 roughly 90% of all New York City because they are

3 represented in our visitorship. So, um, that's  
4 something that we're really, um, that's really  
5 important to us that the island is not just a  
6 resource for nearby neighborhoods, but really for the  
7 entire city.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How long are most  
9 people staying? Are they staying all day?

10 CLARE NEWMAN: That's a good question. I  
11 think many people do take a day trip there, but I  
12 think on average visitors spend about four to six  
13 hours.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And I guess in light  
15 of some of the -the proposed redevelopment or the  
16 imagining for it on-on the southern part of the  
17 island, are we considering-Um, two things: Are we  
18 considering additional-are we anticipating an  
19 additional need for transportation? Also, what other  
20 infrastructure improvements are we anticipating?

21 CLARE NEWMAN: Yeah and as-as alluded to  
22 the E-I-S obviously, we're in the midst of that, and  
23 working to look at all of the growth and what the  
24 impact will be on infrastructure, but yes we will  
25 certainly need to dramatically expand ferry access,  
um, both in terms of what we the Trust are offering

2 with respect to the service back and forth from the  
3 Battery and Maritime Building, but we do also work  
4 closely with EDC to contemplate ways to, um, you  
5 know, better stitch into NYC Ferry as growth  
6 continues. We also have a capital plan that looks  
7 out into the future as growth occurs, and we very  
8 closely make sure that the city capital investments  
9 are aligning well with the expected demand of  
10 infrastructure as new growth happens on the island.  
11 Um, we have plans for additional sewer service  
12 upgrades. We have plans to add electric service  
13 upgrades and we also will one day in the future add a  
14 second water line from Brooklyn. So, those are a few  
15 of the highlights.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sounds like you're  
17 preparing more than some of the neighborhoods should  
18 be preparing.

19 CLARE NEWMAN: Thank you. We appreciate  
20 that. [laughs]

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, I want to  
22 acknowledge we've been joined by Councilwoman Adams  
23 and Councilman Borelli. Um, I guess how much—how  
24 much thought in your meetings is being put towards  
25 making sure we have that—that we strike that balance

3 between the retail, the high end retail hotel kind of  
4 stuff and—and I liked hearing that the majority of  
5 the programs are free.

6 CLARE NEWMAN: Uh-hm.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, but how much  
8 talk is—or how much, you know, priority is being  
9 given to—to making sure that that—the public access  
10 piece is—is priority?

11 CLARE NEWMAN: Yeah. I mean I think the  
12 honest answer to that is that that really is the end  
13 all and be all of our mission, and so really  
14 everything we do on the island has to be in service  
15 of making sure that Governors Island is always an  
16 extraordinary public resource for New Yorkers, and  
17 that is the center of all of the planning we do, and  
18 so, while there will be additional development on the  
19 island in the future, um, one of the things we talk  
20 about actively both ourselves, but also within our  
21 board and—and conversations with City Hall is making  
22 sure that the island never feels like a place that is  
23 privatized.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, yes.

25 CLARE NEWMAN: Um, and that amenities  
that are on the island are publicly accessible, and

2 we mean that from the sense of actual, the physical  
3 feel of welcoming, but also price point Um and so  
4 those kinds of considerations have to be at the core  
5 of all of the development that happens out there. I-  
6 I-nothing we're talking about today I think would,  
7 um-the retail and sort of more luxury or high-end  
8 components of this will always be relatively de  
9 minimis compared to, you know, the fabulous opens  
10 space, um, compared to working with non-profits in  
11 that environment or arts and culture sector, and-and  
12 -or compared to the educational programming we  
13 continue to bring to the island.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, that's good  
15 to know. It's good to-that's good to know. Um, yeah,  
16 I mean I think-I think it all sounds great. I just  
17 think you want to be careful not to create sort of an  
18 air of exclusivity-

19 CLARE NEWMAN: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: with this kind of  
21 stuff.

22 CLARE NEWMAN: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, alright. I want  
24 to turn it over to, um, Chairman Koo. We've been  
25

2 joined by Councilman Gjonaj. I want to turn it over  
3 to Chair Koo for some questions as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes, thank you chair  
5 [coughs] Thank you, Ms. Newman. So, what was the  
6 current budget requirements for Governors Island, and  
7 how much of that is the city responsible for?

8 CLARE NEWMAN: Sure. Um, our current  
9 Operating Budget for the Island is about \$20 million  
10 a year. That covers the cost of, as I mentioned,  
11 operating the ferry. It covers the cost of  
12 maintaining, of course, the historic buildings on the  
13 northern part of the island, um, and running all of  
14 the public programming that we were discussion  
15 earlier. Of that \$20 million, about \$16 million  
16 comes from the city and the other \$4 million is  
17 various forms of earned revenue, and over time, um,  
18 of course, we are focused on increasing the share of  
19 earned revenue.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, what is the  
21 projected operating budget for next year's season?

22 CLARE NEWMAN: Next year we will probably  
23 be right stabilized at around \$20 million again.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: \$20 million. [coughs]  
25 So, um, what is the timeline for competing or

2 completely opening up Governors Island's year round  
3 while evolving on a summer and seasonal basis.

4 CLARE NEWMAN: Sure. It's something that  
5 we continue to make strides for. Each year we try  
6 and increase access, um, there is, of course, always  
7 the balancing act between that and our budget  
8 restrictions. So, opening up year-round continues to  
9 be our goal, and again, we hope to each season expand  
10 access until we achieve that, and actually, Sarah,  
11 maybe you can talk a little bit about moves we've  
12 made over the past 10 years to expand access.

13 SARAH KRAUTHEIM: Sure, um, so when the  
14 island first opened to the public it was opened for a  
15 few select weekends in the summer, and over time as  
16 Clare mentioned, we've really expanded access. Just  
17 in 2017 we, um, we went from a four-month public  
18 season to a six-month public season. So, we are now  
19 open from May through the end of October, um, and  
20 that's been really interesting to witness seeing  
21 visitors enjoy the island in three seasons, spring,  
22 summer and fall. Um so it's not just a summer get-  
23 away any more. It's-it's really again, part of the,  
24 um, fabric of the city. Um, we've also experimented  
25 with, um, expanding our hours during the summer. So,



2 last year we, um, we're open until 10:00 p.m. on  
3 Fridays and Saturdays, um, from Memorial weekend  
4 until Labor Day weekend. Um, and that allowed us to  
5 add some additional programming. Um, we did a free  
6 outdoor film series for the first time, um, in  
7 partnership with a film at Lincoln Center, um, which  
8 I think attracted some folks to the island that may  
9 not have come just to visit a park. Um, but we also—  
10 the park was completely open so people had the  
11 opportunity to see the sunset over the harbor, um,  
12 enjoy programming from some of our other cultural  
13 partners and enjoy, um, sort of the added food and  
14 beverage on the island.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, if you want to  
16 expand the season I mean how much funding—how much  
17 more funding you need?

18 CLARE NEWMAN: That's a great question.  
19 It's a question we're actually answering right now.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Peter has his  
21 checkbook out.

22 CLARE NEWMAN: Yeah, I see. I know.  
23 [laughs] We would be more than happy to get back to  
24 you with the, um, exact answer to that question in  
25 the coming weeks.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Alright, so does the  
3 Trust keep track of the number of people that visited  
4 the island on a daily or a seasonal basis?

5 CLARE NEWMAN: Um both. So, we have—we  
6 do track every single day. I think I'll just flip  
7 back here for a second. As Sarah mentioned, we've  
8 seen a lot of growth on the weekdays, which we're  
9 very excited about. Um, there we go. So, um,  
10 average on weekdays is about 2,800 and on the  
11 weekends it goes up to about 7,000 per day, um, but  
12 on popular weekends or if there's a big event, we can  
13 see upwards of 20,000 visitors a day.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, this is the last  
15 year?

16 CLARE NEWMAN: Yes on the screen are last  
17 year's numbers. We'd be happy to provide more  
18 information just about the growth. Um, but we do  
19 track, um, visitor traffic coming from all ferry  
20 lines, um, and then in addition, our partners of the  
21 Friends of Governors Island conduct that visitor  
22 survey that gives us kind of a better look at our,  
23 um, demographics each year.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay and then does the  
25 deed between the city and the federal government

2 define the department and how the jurisdiction over  
3 such department will be divided between the city and  
4 the National Park Service?

5 CLARE NEWMAN: Uh-hm. Yes, it does go  
6 into some detail around that. So, effectively what  
7 the deed from the federal government does is it--there  
8 is an overt requirement that X acres of the island  
9 be, um, continue to serve as a--excuse me. I'm trying  
10 to get to the slide itself and I'm going the wrong  
11 way. Um, park and open spaces. Um, we have met that  
12 commitment of the deed although, of course,  
13 [coughing] we will actually have exceeded it. All  
14 that park that's there today and all the open space  
15 that's there today will stay. Um, and the deed  
16 requires that that commitment always be honored. In  
17 addition, um, when the federal government disposed of  
18 the property to us, there was a sort of parallel  
19 sister deed to the National Park Service which, of  
20 course, keeps that demarcated as a national monument,  
21 which will always operate as a park and open space  
22 for the public.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, you mentioned  
24 earlier that the island uses sea water--

25 CLARE NEWMAN: Uh-hm.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You say use sea water  
3 to—

4 CLARE NEWMAN: Oh, sea wall, the sea  
5 wall.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: No, no, that's a now  
7 the sewage I'm talking about.

8 CLARE NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You don't have a  
10 combined sewage system?

11 CLARE NEWMAN: No separate, totally  
12 separate.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You use sea water to  
14 flush the toilets?

15 CLARE NEWMAN: Oh, um, no we use water--

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Fresh water?

17 CLARE NEWMAN: Yeah, fresh water, but,  
18 um, when water goes down the drain, um, the storm  
19 water is separated from sewage water, and so the  
20 storm water is mostly reused in the park and then  
21 whatever is not is put back into the East River  
22 whereas the sewer water or the water that goes down  
23 the drain in the sink goes back into the city sewage  
24 system.

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh, okay.

2 CLARE NEWMAN: But it's good because when  
3 it rains heavily there's issue of the sewage system  
4 being overwhelmed.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes, okay. Yeah. I've  
6 finished my questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Well, thank you  
8 Chair. Um, any of my colleagues have questions? You  
9 guys are all good? Okay. Thank you guys very much.

10 CLARE NEWMAN: Thank you.

11 SARAH KRAUTHEIM: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have our  
13 first panel, first and only panel. Let's make it  
14 good. Um, no pressure. They've got more? They have  
15 more? Okay. Okay, cool. So we have Margaret  
16 Flannigan from the Waterfront Alliance, and we have  
17 Marissa DeDominicis or DeDominicis from Earth Matter.  
18 [background comments] Okay. You just got to fill out  
19 a-a thing yeah. Thank you. We also have Mary  
20 Birnbaun from Friends of Governors Island who is just  
21 signing in. Thank you. Okay, you—you guys can start  
22 whenever you're ready

23 MARISSA DEDOMINICIS: Chair, I'll go  
24 first.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

3 MARISSA DEDOMINICIS: Good morning.

4 Thank you for holding this hosting and inviting Earth  
5 Matter to submit testimony. This past season Earth  
6 Matter in partnership with the Trust processed 38  
7 tons of food scrap generated by visitors, vendors and  
8 events. We take in all GI's yard trimmings, too.  
9 This year our total combined compost is 520 tons.  
10 This translates to serving 2,500 households  
11 preventing what would otherwise be carted far, far  
12 away into landfills or incinerators. Next year with  
13 the increased visibility of our Joint Zero Waste  
14 Island Initiative, which we call JZWII, we anticipate  
15 the volume of GI generated food scraps will double.  
16 I'm Marissa Dedominicis. I'm the ED of Earth Matter.  
17 We're a non-profit dedicated to reducing waste and  
18 improving soil health through local composting. We  
19 have collaborated with the Trust formerly GYPECK  
20 (sic) since 2009 to develop GI into a closed loop.  
21 The crux of the Trust's mission is sustainability.  
22 Under Claire Newman's leadership of the Jewel of New  
23 York Harbor, they are putting GI in the forefront of  
24 helping New Yorkers embrace composting as a basic way  
25 so each of us can recover our own resources, limit  
our waste, which mitigates our destructive

3 contributions to climate change. Since hosting the  
4 first JZWII event in setting up the public source  
5 separations, the Trust has always embraced our work.  
6 Recently, they provided a three-year land use  
7 agreement for on acre of our site on the Urban Farm  
8 located in the Eastern Development Zone. This  
9 agreement provides us with grounding needed to grow  
10 our funding partners. Earth Matter with the help of  
11 chickens, our goats, our worms provides a place for  
12 people to get hands-on composting and environmental  
13 education. We serve over 13,000 people directly  
14 every year. People need to see in order to believe  
15 that their food scraps are composted locally, and we  
16 feel honored to have a home on Governors Island,  
17 which allows us to give and receive from all the  
18 people we meet and greet and are privileged to work  
19 with. Our Compost Learning Center is a DEC registered  
20 Compost facility, and we're supported from the  
21 Department of Sanitation. We process neighbor food  
22 scoops—faith—uhm—neighbor food scraps, and um, which  
23 is also funded from the Department of Sanitation from  
24 the Green Market Program. Where does all of our  
25 compost go? Most of it will go back to the GI  
landscape where New Yorkers play and get away.

2 Composting reduces the direct cost of waste disposal,  
3 and its associated carbon footprint. Compost used  
4 for soil stabilization, erosion control, and nutrient  
5 retention is an essential part of any resiliency plan  
6 involving planting. I reduces the need for  
7 fertilizer, and resulting nutrient run-off into the  
8 harbor, which can degrade marine life. The GI  
9 Horticultural staff focus on planning native species  
10 has had a measurable increase in the diversity of  
11 bird life. In fact, GI rivals' Central Park in this  
12 regard. The track—the Trust is on track for doing  
13 their part to steward our public land, and identify  
14 new partners who can help develop the island as a  
15 model of a livable world of tomorrow. Council  
16 Members, we know you share our dream of a green city.  
17 I humbly request that you expand all you do to create  
18 policies and incentives for a more resilient and  
19 sustainable New York City. Can you increase funding  
20 for education around altering things zero by 50? Can  
21 you increase funding to all New York City parks so  
22 staff can compost leaves and create their own local  
23 compost hubs? These measures would help the greening  
24 of New York City in a big, big way. Thank you for



2 your continued support of the Trust endeavors and  
3 thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 [background comments/pause]

6 MARISSA DEDOMINICIS: Um, is it on? That  
7 is on. Thank you. Good morning Council Members and  
8 hello to everyone. I'm Maggie Flannigan from the  
9 Waterfront Alliance, and I'm going to summarize the  
10 written testimony where you have full details.  
11 Waterfront Alliance brings together more than 1,100  
12 stakeholders all coming together in support of a  
13 common mission to have resilient, revitalized, and  
14 accessible coastlines for our communities. In 2018,  
15 Waterfront Alliance was engaged by the Trust for  
16 Governors Island to produce a maritime activation  
17 plan. It as for us building on a previous, um,  
18 year's work we did with Brooklyn Bridge Park in an  
19 activation then plan there, and it also built upon  
20 the great work the Trust has been doing that Clare  
21 has described all these years all along, and we are  
22 really proud that the Maritime Activation Plana, um,  
23 adds to the list of plans that you all mentioned as  
24 well, but is particularly unique in that it looks to  
25 the role of Governors Island as the pearl of New York

3 Harbor truly central to the maritime essence of our  
4 city as well. So, Maritime Activation Plan or MAP  
5 for short examines how the Trust could make the most  
6 of the unique waterfront assets of Governors Island  
7 while also addressing real challenges that exist  
8 living on the waterfront in New York City and being  
9 responsible for the public waterfront there. MAPs  
10 are created with input from dozens and dozens of  
11 local stakeholders, maritime experts. We interview  
12 folks locally and nationally in order to get some of  
13 the best minds thinking about how to make those  
14 connections. So, as the Trust moves forward with the  
15 transformation of Governors Island into a dynamic  
16 year-round destination, maximizing the waterfront is  
17 going to be critical along with other steps in  
18 achieving those goals. We have summarized our main  
19 findings into four different categories. We call  
20 them getting there, very transportation, of course.  
21 Enjoying island life, all the amazing programming  
22 that you already heard about. Moving the goods, all  
23 of the freight, construction and stuff people use on  
24 the island has to be handled and maximizing  
25 management, which is continuing to build the  
expertise and integration that the Trust has already

3 provided for the Island. So, I'll just offer some  
4 specifics on those topics. Key to ferry service we  
5 propose re-equipping Yankee Pier, investing in Yankee  
6 Pier to add more ferry slips and allow more runs to  
7 end there. The plan also calls out the importance of  
8 access from around, um, distant areas of the region  
9 as you are all paying attention to as well, but  
10 anything involving the ferries as you asked Council  
11 members with your question does involve serious  
12 concerns of operation and finances and the Maritime  
13 Activation Plan also provides some additional insight  
14 on that as well. For diverse programming, which this  
15 Trust has already done so much to build, we ask-the  
16 plan suggests that it continue to focus on the  
17 waterfront as well. Again, investment is needed to  
18 create a protected water touchpoint, but we propose  
19 examining, creating a place on the island where  
20 people could actually touch the water in a cove or  
21 get down. Um, the plan, uh, highlights some of the  
22 potential of Piers 101 and 102 to continue to support  
23 on water programming as is already being done by the  
24 Trust there, and as you all mentioned, Council Member  
25 Koo in particular to invite more boaters to the  
island. Perhaps figure out a way to include a

3 mooring field or encourage marinas to be part of  
4 those future or some kind of waterfront access be  
5 part of the future development that happens in the  
6 island. For moving the goods for freight access  
7 there's so much behind the scenes that the Trust has  
8 already worked so hard to manage, and we think key to  
9 that support is, um, providing a service entrance  
10 pier for the island. So, perhaps Lima Pier can be  
11 rebuilt to receive freight barges that serve the  
12 island, and help make future construction as well as  
13 handling materials easier, and then again for  
14 management, the Trust has done so much work already,  
15 and we propose that it be continued to be expanded  
16 and that management continues to integrate the  
17 waterfront with the operations and uplands of the  
18 island. So, some, um, specifics to be aware of in  
19 that is, um, waterfront operations always include  
20 some necessary upland space. So, as the Trust  
21 continues to integrate things well to remember things  
22 like Kayak storage area or staging areas for the  
23 trucks near the pier and the barges will an essential  
24 component of that planning, and, um, we also applaud  
25 the Trust's efforts to manage all the waterfront, and  
suggest to continue to increase that by adding a

3 maritime specialist someone perhaps with a resume  
4 that includes ferry work and/or SUNY Maritime that  
5 has the lingo and the contractual expertise that has  
6 already been done very well, but continue to enable  
7 you all to grow more when we—when we—when that area  
8 is strengthened. We completely agree that Governors  
9 Island could be an incredible model for climate  
10 resilient hub and education as you described carrying  
11 on the great work started by original tenants like  
12 the Harbor School and Billion Oyster Project, and the  
13 Waterfront Alliance also has a WEDGE Program  
14 Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines, and WEDGE puts  
15 together best practices for balancing resilience,  
16 ecology and access in the complex world of waterfront  
17 design and so we're continuing to be pleased to have  
18 tools to offer to support the great work of the  
19 Trust. So thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We've  
21 been joined by Councilwoman Rivera and have Mary  
22 Birnbaun from Friends of Governors Island.

23 MARY BIRNBAUN: Thank you for the  
24 opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Friends  
25 of Governors Island. For context, the Friends was  
originally established as Governors Island Alliance

3 in 1995 and as Clare mentioned in her overview, um,  
4 we were really founded as a sub project of the  
5 Regional Plan Association with a mission to turn over  
6 Governors Island to the people of New York to become  
7 a great resource, and basically, we succeeded and  
8 since that time, we have retooled our mission. More  
9 recently, we recognized the need for an independent  
10 non-profit to support the island with volunteers and  
11 private fundraising. So, in 2014, we officially  
12 received our 501(c)(3) status, and, um, really re-  
13 envisioned our mission and our name to be dedicated  
14 to taking care of the park and enhancing the public  
15 experience of the island working very, very closely  
16 with the Trust and the National Park Service. So, we  
17 work with Trust to provide funding and volunteer  
18 opportunities and resources to keep the island green,  
19 sustainable, vibrant. We also run a services  
20 program, which was also mentioned that focuses on  
21 providing information guides, and amenities such as a  
22 small retail outfit so the public can take full  
23 advantage of everything the island has to offer. We  
24 also worked to build a community for the island,  
25 which is challenging given that it is not in anyone's  
back yard or their-their neighborhood. So, we run a

3 membership program. We work and train volunteers and  
4 we also produce a number of free public events. I  
5 think the—the visuals in the presentation today and  
6 everything that Clare mentioned certainly touched on  
7 Governors Island's uniqueness. It really is a place  
8 for all New Yorkers and it's not tied to any one  
9 neighborhood or demographic. Um, so today I just  
10 wanted to give a very brief update on our activities  
11 and our organizational growth, which has been really  
12 exciting. So, in the past five year since becoming a  
13 new non-profit, we have tripled our annual budget to  
14 \$1.8 million in the past year. Um, so with this  
15 increased capacity, we've been able to achieve a few  
16 things. One is this year and something that we have  
17 been building towards, we helped to fund the island's  
18 first year-round team of professional gardeners to  
19 take care of the park. So, when the park was  
20 completed in 2016, it was under warranty until 2017,  
21 there's a lot of work that needed to be done where  
22 there wasn't professional gardening staff in place  
23 because it wasn't needed before. So, with all of  
24 these new exciting landscapes really needing to, um,  
25 increase the amount of support and maintenance is  
going into caring for the park, um, that's an area

3 where since there was no increase in the operating  
4 budget for the Trust, the Friends came in to really  
5 start, um, turning to the private sector similar to  
6 other park models, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Hudson River  
7 Park, Central Park Conservancy is highlighted to turn  
8 to the community of users and people who love and  
9 support the island to—to help us fundraise from the  
10 gardening staff. So, we were successful this year in  
11 transitioning from more of a seasonal base to a year-  
12 round team of gardeners to help take care of the  
13 park. We also operated the two welcome centers that  
14 Clare mentioned at the Ferry Landing providing the-  
15 the amenities and free guided tours to the public.  
16 Part of our mission has always been to engage  
17 volunteers. This was our most successful year. We  
18 had 2,400 volunteers both individuals and corporate  
19 groups who contributed over 14,000 hours of service  
20 to the island. This is equivalent to about six full-  
21 time staff members. We also produced a couple of  
22 major free public events, a spring volunteer festival  
23 and a fall pumpkin patch that's very popular, and  
24 it's brought about 20,000 people to the island  
25 combined over several weekends. And then, um, in the  
good news on our upticks for fundraising, we held our



3 most successful fundraising gala raising over \$1.1  
4 million, which all went into these amenities for the  
5 island. There's a huge gap that we still need to  
6 fill. We're still not fully covering the cost of  
7 these gardeners. It's something that we've been as I  
8 mentioned tripling the budget. We have ambitious  
9 goals to-to continue that level of growth over the  
10 next couple of years to really meet the demand of  
11 this incredible world class part, but it does require  
12 a world class level of maintenance to-to take care  
13 of. So, I just want to thank you for calling today's  
14 hearing and for the opportunity to testify for a  
15 place that is really at the cutting edge of  
16 environmental sustainability and resiliency and  
17 providing incredible open space resource for a city  
18 that is often lacking in those types of amenities.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Do any  
21 of my colleagues have questions?

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, I have a  
23 question.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Chair Koo.

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, I have a a  
question for Ms. Birnbaun.

3 MARY BIRNBAUN: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: You know how-how-where  
5 do you draw your membership from?

6 MARY BIRNVAUN: So, our membership  
7 program started, um, three years ago, and it's, um,  
8 similar to other park memberships. We have \$50, um,  
9 opening contribution. We have deals with the vendors  
10 on the island. They give discounts to members. We  
11 offer a number of free tours and events and things  
12 for the membership. We have about 300 active members  
13 now. The program has been pretty flat so one of the  
14 things that we're looking to do, um, next year is  
15 have a \$25 price point per membership, um, to try to  
16 increase that to a broader base of people. It's been  
17 I think a little challenging just because, um, we  
18 are-we marketed to the people who come to the island  
19 already, and we've sort of saturated that point. So,  
20 hopefully reaching out with a lower price point. We  
21 also offer a free membership to NYC ID holders for  
22 their first-first year, um, joining as members and we  
23 send a lot of member communications, try to engage  
24 them in volunteer opportunities and events and things  
25 that happen on the island.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: How many of them—do  
3 they live in the neighborhood or no?

4 MARY BIRNVAUN: It's very broad.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

6 MARY BIRNVAUN: The island draws from all  
7 over the city so, um, I would say that the majority  
8 of our members live in Brooklyn and Manhattan similar  
9 to the distribution of those visitors coming to the  
10 island, but we definitely have members from Staten  
11 Island, Bronx and Queens who come to the island  
12 regularly as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: And—and these also  
14 apply to the—to volunteers, right?

15 MARY BIRNBAUN: Yes, the volunteer  
16 population is extremely diverse um, coming from all  
17 over the city and often from places where they just  
18 don't have a space like Governors Island, people who  
19 want to come and work on the landscapes and garden  
20 are coming from very far. We've even had people come  
21 and volunteer from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and  
22 take the train into the city for that opportunity.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Thank you  
24 for your service. Yeah, thank you.

25 MARY BIRNBAUN: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS JOINTLY  
2 WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you  
4 guys very, very much and with that, we are  
5 adjourned.[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 15, 2019