

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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February 26, 2020

Start: 1:20 PM

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm, 14th Fl

B E F O R E: PETER A. KOO  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Adrienne E. Adams  
Joseph C. Borelli  
Justin L. Brannan  
Andrew Cohen  
Mark Gjonaj  
Robert F. Holden  
Mark Levine  
Francisco P. Moya  
Carlina Rivera  
Eric A. Ulrich  
James G. Van Bramer

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

Margaret Nelson, Deputy Commissioner for Urban Park Service and Public Programs. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

Edwin Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner of Urban Park Service, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Matt Drury, Director of Government Relations, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Joe Puleo, President, Local 983 and Committee Chair for D37 on Parks

Marlena Gigo, Bronx Resident

Emily Walker, Director of Outreach and Programs, New Yorkers For Parks

Roseanne Delgado, Friends of Pelham Parkway

Allen Morales, Chairman, United Athletic Association



2 (sound check) (pause) (background  
3 comments/pause)

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Hi. We're going to  
5 start the meeting. (gavel) Good afternoon. I'm Peter  
6 Koo, Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation,  
7 and today we are joined by members--Council Member  
8 Rivera, Council Member Holden, Council Member Gjonaj  
9 and Council Member Moya. Today we will be examining  
10 the Parks Department's Park Enforcement Patrol  
11 Program also known as PEP. The PEP Program was  
12 created in the early 1980s in order to help relieve  
13 the increasing amount of crime and quality of life  
14 issues facing the parks--facing the city's parks  
15 during that time. PEP Officers are--are peace officers  
16 who enforce the rules of the parks and are empowered  
17 to issues summonses and even arrest those who are  
18 late--lost in the parks. Some of the typical issues  
19 they deal with are issuing summonses or unauthorized  
20 vending, illegal postings, unleashed dogs, illegal  
21 dumping, smoking and alcohol possession. They also  
22 deal with parking and vehicular moving violations,  
23 disorderly conduct and unlawful possession of weapons  
24 to name a few. It has been estimated on average PEP  
25 Officers issues about 20,000 summonses, respond to

2 over 40,000 requests for service, and make numerous  
3 arrests per year. In addition, PEP Officers review  
4 park facilities for health and safety issues  
5 including animal waste, broken tree limbs and broken  
6 glasses. However, PEP Officers are not only limited  
7 to enforcement duties in parks, they also assist in  
8 crowd control in large park events, assist the  
9 homeless in providing information, and directions to  
10 the general public in parks. They are like the NYPD  
11 and even have a horse mounted unit to help them  
12 patrol our parks. As you can see, the work that PEP  
13 officers do is no doubt critical to the ability of  
14 the city to keep our parks safe and secure, but the  
15 PEP Program needs consistent attention from  
16 policymakers to ensure the needs—the needs of the  
17 park system. For example, the park—for example, the  
18 number of PEP Officers has significantly fluctuate  
19 over the years as project—project priorities have  
20 changed during different times from the height of  
21 close to 500 during the late 1990s that number has  
22 decreased to about 170 during the economical  
23 recession. It has slowly rebounded to about 340  
24 today. Most visibly was an increase of about 80  
25 officers resulting from last year's budget increase.

2 This was in no small part due to effort of advocates  
3 and city officials working together to realize how  
4 important a strong PEP force is. We have to make  
5 sure that PEP levels remain at a consistent level and  
6 are not subject to the whims of the yearly budget  
7 dance and different priorities. In addition to  
8 focusing on PEP Officers numbers, numerous other  
9 issues affect the quality of the program, and I want  
10 to make sure we address today. Some of those issues  
11 include PEP Officers training and retention, the  
12 equitable allocation of to PEP Officers to parks in  
13 each of the five boroughs, how PEP interacts with  
14 other parks—how PEP interacts with other park  
15 security personnel; how quickly can the Parks  
16 Department with the NYPD addressing the allocation of  
17 PEP Officers to patrol parks than they have seen in  
18 uptake in crime or other violations and all the  
19 personnel have all the resources they need to do  
20 their jobs. There are other issues to explore, to  
21 explore as well relation to PEP Officers, but I want  
22 to ensure that this hearing is a strong step towards  
23 making PEP Program a more successful and effective  
24 program for the City Parks, residents and PEP  
25 Officers themselves. I look forward to examining

2 this issue greater depth today, and I would like to  
3 welcome the Administration and other advocates who  
4 come today to testify. Thank you very much. Oh, we  
5 also have Council Member Cohen just joined us. The  
6 first panel will be from the Administration. They  
7 are Margaret Nelson from the Department of Parks.  
8 She is the Parks Deputy Commissioner, and Edwin  
9 Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner of Urban Park  
10 Service and Matt Drury, Director of Government  
11 Relations. Will the Counsel please swear them in.

12 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the  
13 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
14 your testimony before this committee today?

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Well, you may start  
17 Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Okay. Good  
19 afternoon, Chair Koo and members of the Parks  
20 Committee. My name is Margaret Nelson, Deputy  
21 Commissioner for Urban Park Service and Public  
22 Programs at the New York City Department of Parks and  
23 Recreation. I'm joined by Edwin Rodriguez our  
24 Assistant Commissioner for Urban Park Service and  
25 Matt Drury, Director of Government Relations. Thank

2 you for inviting us to discuss the work of our Parks  
3 Enforcement Patrol Unit today. The safety of our  
4 patrons, parks and public facilities is one of our  
5 most important responsibilities. The PEP Unit's  
6 mission is to preserve and protect our parks and  
7 public spaces by enforcing rules and regulations,  
8 educating the public, advocating conservation and  
9 responding to the needs of our patrons. PEP achieves  
10 this mission through the combined efforts of the  
11 various teams that fall under the umbrella of the  
12 Urban Park Service UPS division, which I'd like to  
13 quickly outline in more detail. Our central  
14 communication staff are the internal link to the-to  
15 first responders throughout the agency, providing  
16 support as 24/7 365 call center utilized to report  
17 incidents, request help, dispatch employees, and  
18 respond to emergencies. Emergency Management Team  
19 advocates for continuity planning, and spearheads  
20 agency responses to larger incidents. Their  
21 operations are critical to ensuring that PEP is  
22 supported during their patrols and prepared for any  
23 situation. Currently we have city tax levy funded  
24 budget lines for 254 PEP Officers, sergeants and  
25 captains in the field plus 81 PEP staff lines, which

2 provide contract security services to 11 parks  
3 through funding provided by third party  
4 organizations. This does not include administrative  
5 staff, the PEP instructors in our Academy, our  
6 Central Communications Division or the 80 additional  
7 lines for this year made possible by Council funding  
8 provided through the Play Fair Campaign led by the  
9 New Yorkers for Parks and other park advocates for  
10 which we are very grateful. Thank you. PEP was  
11 founded in 1981 as a companion to the Urban Park  
12 Ranger Program. PEP personnel are uniformed,  
13 shielded officers with NYC Special Patrolmen and New  
14 York State Peace Officer status who provide security  
15 and safety in city parks, educate patrons on Parks  
16 rules and regulations, and safeguard Parks wild life  
17 and facilities. PEP Officers are entrusted to  
18 enforce New York City Parks Rules and Regulations in  
19 addition to the New York State Penal Law and New York  
20 City Health Code. Though they do not carry firearms  
21 officers are equipped with ballistic vests, batons,  
22 handcuffs, and pepper spray. Their focus is on  
23 quality of life offenses and deterring patrons from  
24 violating Parks' rules through education, but they  
25 are empowered to issue summonses for violations in

2 Parks property including street trees and to make  
3 arrests where necessary. Our officers patrol city  
4 parks by bicycle, horseback, car and on foot.  
5 Officers also provide security at many events held in  
6 parks as well as rallies, protests and concerts  
7 throughout the city. They also maintain order,  
8 manage pedestrian traffic flow and conduct security  
9 checks at citywide events such as the Saint  
10 Patrick's, Puerto Rican and Thanksgiving day parades.  
11 PEP Officers play a substantial role in the city's  
12 response to emergencies. In the past year, PEP  
13 Officers were recognized for heroic life saving  
14 efforts from pulling an accident victim from a  
15 burning vehicle, stopping someone from jumping into  
16 frigid waters of the East River, and administering  
17 Naloxone and medication designed to reverse opioid  
18 overdoses on five separate occasions. PEP has also  
19 been called upon to help close parks, direct patrons  
20 to places of safety, report downed trees, road  
21 conditions and other damage in addition to supporting  
22 NYPD as needed. They also assist the New York City  
23 Department of Homeless Services in engaging and  
24 aiding the city's homeless population in parks  
25 especially during Code Red and Blue emergencies. As

part of the Mayor's Homelessness Taskforce, our PEP Officers conducted over 12,000 patrols aimed-aimed at finding and aiding people experiencing homelessness and assisting DHS and NYDP with the relocation of clients and their belongings from Parks. Upon being hired, PEP recruits enter the UPS Academy and undergo 12 weeks of training to prepare them for the many responsibilities of the job. Training encompasses, but is not limited to public engagement skills, self defense, equipment use, patrol, arrests, summons writing, gang awareness, fire safety, Naloxone, CPR and first aid for mental and physical health. Our PEP Academy instructors are certified by the State of New York Division of Criminal Justice Services and methods of instruction and train on all general topics of the basic course for peace officers. After the 12 week training staff are given their assignments. We have begun targeting a broader band of new recruits with emphasis on security and military experience in order to continue our success in addressing the issue of attrition in PEP. This improved targeting along with careful analysis of data has led us to pinpoint trends, and work on a multi year plan to reduce our turnover rate. We are

2 already seeing improvements, but strive to make even  
3 more progress. We are proud to see more officers  
4 making PEP and New York City Parks their home for  
5 long-term careers. PEP is mostly organized into  
6 borough commands each led by a captain and a number  
7 of sergeants. They typically provide coverage from  
8 7:30 a.m. to midnight each day at our parks  
9 patrolling fore either a daily fixed group patrols or  
10 several times per week with mobile patrols.  
11 Additional patrol priorities are developed in  
12 conjunction with Borough Commissioners and their  
13 Chiefs of Operations, and reflect issues or concerns  
14 raised by community members, elected officials,  
15 partner agencies, service requests received through  
16 311, and quality of life conditions such as K-9  
17 waste, graffiti and vandalism documented through the  
18 Parks Inspection Program. In addition to our  
19 standard foot and mobile patrol units, PEP also  
20 patrols by horse and bicycle. Mounted PEP is a  
21 specialized unit of equestrian officers trained in  
22 horse care and stable management. The unit currently  
23 consists of six horses, three sergeants, 11 officers  
24 and 2 hustlers. Our stables are located in Van  
25 Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, Central Park in

2 Manhattan and Ocean Breeze in Staten Island. We also  
3 have a mounted of ULAR (sic) Units, which is a 501(c)  
4 (3) non-profit group of dedicated and organized  
5 volunteers who assist the mounted unit a special  
6 events, on patrols and in the stable. We also  
7 recently reinvigorated and expanded our Bicycle  
8 Patrol Unit, which is comprised of approximately 24  
9 officers citywide. These officers are trained and  
10 outfitted with uniforms and bicycles that are fully  
11 equipped for patrol. Both the Mounted and Bicycle  
12 Patrol Units provide an alternative method of patrol  
13 that allows staff to cover different areas of  
14 parkland property that vehicles may not reach. PEP  
15 additionally includes our Park Security Service, PSS  
16 officers, which consists of two types of uniformed  
17 staff. City Seasonal Aids or CSAs who are hired to  
18 provide extra security of parks, beaches and pools  
19 during the busy season and at our recreation centers  
20 citywide, and Parks' Opportunity Program workers or  
21 POP, who receive six-month security jobs with Parks  
22 providing on the job training experience that helps  
23 prepare them for future employment. These uniform  
24 staff members, however, are distinct from PEP. Their  
25 training—their training takes place over eight days.

2 They are not empowered to write summonses or make  
3 arrests, and unlike PEP do not carry weapons. At our  
4 recreation centers the Parks Security Service  
5 provides front desk security and patrol the facility  
6 to ensure a safe environment. CFAs provide additional  
7 uniformed presence at beaches and pools, advise the  
8 public about swimming rules and help find lost  
9 children. They also support PEP with crowd control  
10 at Parks events like the U.S. Open and the New York  
11 City Marathon and conduct foot patrols of regional  
12 parks. Like most of the agency PEP staffing and will  
13 expand as the summer approaches. It begins in April  
14 when the first round of roughly 350 seasonal PSS  
15 employees are hired and trained to help establish the  
16 right tone at ball fields and picnic areas and to  
17 assist with large events and festivals. This  
18 deployment continues through May and June as we  
19 establish summer commands at beaches in the Bronx,  
20 Queens and Brooklyn and Staten Island, and maintain  
21 safety at our 54 outdoor pools. This past year we  
22 saw great success during the beach and pool season,  
23 which experienced a significant decrease in locker  
24 break-ins and incidents. Of course, our summer  
25 responsibilities are not limited to beaches and

2 pools. All our patrols cover hundreds of events and  
3 activities that occur in the parks throughout the  
4 city. The additional place Air Funding provided by  
5 the Council in Fiscal Year 2020 has enabled us to  
6 increase staffing levels for standard citywide  
7 patrols, increasing time spent in parks across the  
8 city. We also assigned some of this new staff to a  
9 new taskforce unit comprised of one sergeant and six  
10 officers. This unit can be deployed to any park  
11 citywide at any given time to address any conditions  
12 that require additional resources. The unit also  
13 focuses on special deployment such as assisting and  
14 patrolling parks with a high volume of drug related  
15 issues and addressing illegal dumping citywide. In  
16 closing, without the diligent work of PEP and our  
17 partners, the park experience would be greatly  
18 diminished. Every day we work to ensure park rules  
19 and regulations are being upheld and a helpful hand  
20 is provided to patrons in need. We are proud of the  
21 work of our officers and thank them for their  
22 continued service to the City of New York. Also, in  
23 recognition of the tremendous support we received  
24 from the Council we would like to invite you to our  
25 upcoming Urban Park Service Graduation ceremony on

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

16

2 March 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM at the Prospect Park Picnic  
3 House to welcome our new PEP Officers as they begin  
4 their service. I appreciate the opportunity to  
5 provide this testimony and welcome any questions you  
6 may have.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you Deputy  
8 Commissioner Margaret Nelson. Thank you. Now we are  
9 also joined by Council Members Van Bramer, and  
10 Brannan and Borelli. (pause) So, Commissioners, how  
11 does EPR determine the allocation of PEP Officers  
12 throughout the parks—for the—the parks and for the  
13 city? Yeah, we have a breakdown of which parks and  
14 seen an increase of PEP Officers assigned to them,  
15 and how many currently are assigned to Flushing  
16 Meadows and Corona Parks? Yeah.

17 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you. So,  
18 first of all, I want to thank the Council again for  
19 the Play Fair Funding and just acknowledge that  
20 between the efforts of the Council and this  
21 Administration and Mayor de Blasio, we are actually  
22 at the highest patrol strength than we have been  
23 since 2005. So, I think it's a tremendous testament  
24 to people's appreciation of the work that our PEP  
25 Unit does in keeping our parks safe, and our parks

2 patrons obeying the rules of our park system. So  
3 thank you. We deploy our PEP Officers equitable-  
4 equitably throughout the boroughs. We have 31  
5 commands where PEP Officers work out of. Some of  
6 those are fixed post patrols, but most of them are  
7 mobile. So, they will start out at a command, and  
8 then go from there out to a variety of parks. We try  
9 to cover all of our major parks and playgrounds  
10 multiple times if not daily every week, but we really  
11 because we have about 300 PEP Officers on patrol, we  
12 really use it to focus on where we have conditions  
13 that we know we need to address. So that will be  
14 more of a mobile patrol, and we—we look at what's  
15 coming in through 311, what we're hearing from  
16 elected officials about conditions in parks, what  
17 we're hearing from our borough commissioners. We  
18 have a very close working relationship with them, and  
19 obviously from that the New York City Police  
20 Department as well. So, right now we have 53 officers  
21 assigned to the Bronx, 47 assigned to Brooklyn, 54  
22 assigned to Manhattan, 54 assigned to Queens, 30  
23 assigned to Staten Island, 7 assigned to this  
24 taskforce. We have 20 that are currently in the  
25 Academy that will be coming out and go on assignment,

2 and then we have 24 that are on leaves of absence for  
3 a variety of short-term or longer term issues. In  
4 terms-

5 MALE SPEAKER: You were supposed to check  
6 in.

7 COMMISSIONER NELSON: The parks that have  
8 fixed post locations we have 12 sites total. So,  
9 that's Crotona Park, Van Cortlandt Park with the  
10 mounted unit; Prospect Park, Battery Park and Peter  
11 Minuit, Morningside Park currently; Flushing Meadows,  
12 Corona Park, Bella Abzug Park, which is I believe  
13 paid for through grant funded lines; East River  
14 Esplanade; Madison Square Park, again funded by  
15 Madison Square Park was first exposed; (sic)  
16 Randall's Island the same day pay for additional PEP  
17 in addition to the PEP we have there; Riverside Park  
18 and Washington Square Park. So, we do have a fixed  
19 post at Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Alright, So, how many  
21 officers are assigned to Flushing Corona Park?

22 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I'm going to turn  
23 it over to Council Member-sorry-Commission Rodriguez  
24 to answer that question.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We  
3 currently put out two patrols from 7:30 to 4:00 and  
4 another two patrols between the hours of 2:00 to  
5 10:00.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, how many officers  
7 are there?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So,  
9 you have on a daily basis, you have four officers in  
10 the morning, and four officers in the later.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: They are only in  
12 Flushing Corona?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:  
14 Strictly for Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. so how many  
16 summonses were issued by PEP Officers for the last  
17 three fiscal years?

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you. I just  
19 want to point out before we get into summons data  
20 that again our PEP Officers' mission is to educate  
21 before we issue summons. The idea is that we want to  
22 make sure all of our park patrons and our vendors are  
23 obeying the rules and the—the laws of our parks, and  
24 sometimes people might not know what those rules are.  
25 So you might a tourist who's visiting from a

2 different country and they're smoking and they don't  
3 realize they can, you know, can't be smoking in our  
4 parks. So, we always first seek to educate before we  
5 get--before we escalate to the summons writing unless  
6 it's again something that we've dealt with the same  
7 person over and over again, and might need to  
8 escalate to a summons, and our summons data has  
9 pretty much stayed the same for the past couple of  
10 years. I have two years worth of data. It's been  
11 about 18,000 summonses a year.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, what are the most  
13 common categories of summonses that the PEP Officers  
14 typically are working. Yes, like smoking or  
15 offenders?

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes, I mean--yes, so  
17 we basically--there are two ways to answer that  
18 question, right? So one way is the way our summonses  
19 are really broken out by summonses that go to OATH  
20 for adjudication and then summonses that are more  
21 related to parking violations. Actually, our parking  
22 violation numbers--I don't know if I can--first I've  
23 got to find the data. Okay. Right. So, our OATH  
24 summonses were about 8,000 whereas our parking  
25 violations were about 11,000, and then just a few

2 like 8 moving violations, and 64 violations that went  
3 to Criminal Court, and then again we don't  
4 necessarily have it broken down by specific rules so  
5 they come like failure to comply with fines or  
6 failure to comply with an officer, unauthorized  
7 vending, smoking, alcohol, but we don't have the  
8 summons data actually broken out by that level of  
9 detail, but we're happy to get it back and get it to  
10 you after that.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: But I would say, or  
13 the second point I wanted to make is when you look  
14 at—we pulled our 311 requests because again that is  
15 one of the ways that we look at the deploying  
16 officers to see what kind of complaints we're getting  
17 in parks that we should be responding to. So, in  
18 2019, for the whole entire park system we got about  
19 18,000 311 requests, 18,000 and then 1,800 were ones  
20 that specifically went to PEP so that was about a 10%  
21 rate of all of the complaints coming to Parks versus  
22 what was going to PEP, and the top three complaints  
23 that PEP was assigned was dog off leash was far and  
24 away the number one. Number two was smoking in parks  
25 and number three obstructing public use and

2 barbecuing outside authorized areas. So. those are--  
3 they're the kinds of complaints we're getting from  
4 311 for our PEP Officers to enforce people breaking  
5 those rules in our parks.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thanks. So, um,  
7 Commissioner, again, can you describe what was a  
8 typical daily tool for a PEP Officer who is stationed  
9 in a specific park? Like what does he do there beside  
10 being there and put on his uniform and what's a  
11 typical tool?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I  
13 think that I can explain how the PEP Officers are  
14 deployed. PEP Officers are deployed to most of the  
15 NYPD. So, at the start of each tour, the tour  
16 sergeant conducts a roll call among them. At that  
17 review there are two officers together go over the  
18 daily deployment, go over any conditions. The  
19 officers get a list of parks that they must patrol.  
20 Also a list of requests for services complaints. So  
21 the typical day is once the initials (sic) are  
22 signed, the officers will go out on patrol and hit  
23 all the parks on that list. Once they get to the  
24 park, they conduct a mobile patrol, a foot patrol.  
25 They address any conditions that were given to them

2 by a patrol sergeant and investigate any complaints  
3 that were given to them by the tour sergeant. At the  
4 end of the tour, the officers come back a half hour  
5 before the tour is over, and they'll go over the tour  
6 sergeants on their findings, and that sergeant will  
7 then speak to the late tour sergeant, and if it's a  
8 unit has to go back to that park, they'll send a unit  
9 back to the park. The officers have the option of  
10 doing a mobile patrol. They can also—in some smaller  
11 parks, they'll part outside of the park. They  
12 conduct a foot patrol, and at times the sergeant just  
13 might drop off two officers and put them on bicycle  
14 patrol for the day in a certain park. That's a  
15 typical day for our PEP Officers patrol.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, what about for  
17 those officers who are not on a station in a specific  
18 time? What does it mean?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We  
20 pretty much deploy them the same way. They're given a  
21 list of complaints. They're given a list of  
22 conditions for them to address, and they know the hot  
23 spots within the park. So, it's typically the same  
24 day they'll address the position that was given to  
25 them by tour sergeant and the complaint.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So how many like  
3 different shifts you have, two different shifts?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Two  
5 shifts, two different shifts. We have a 7:30 to 4:00  
6 and a 3:30 to 12:00.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: And sometimes we do  
9 shifts slightly differently. So, in Battery Park for  
10 example, it's more like 11 and it goes—it's like one  
11 tour, but it goes in the middle of the day.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So,  
13 how does the PEP Program interact with the--New York  
14 City Park Ranger Program and park security personnel?

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, our Park Ranger  
16 Program they technically hold the same civil service  
17 title. So, they both--positions go through the same  
18 training academy together. So, they also are Peace  
19 Officers and they are--have the ability to make  
20 arrests, but that unit of rangers really once they  
21 come out of the academy they go into two--there are  
22 two separate divisions. So, the rangers really focus  
23 on educational programs. They go out into schools.  
24 They conduct trail hikes. They do pop-up programs in

2 our parks. They do some patrols of natural areas.  
3 So, you know, they tend to be pretty separate.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, is there any  
5 overlap in intentions for these?

6 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would say there's  
7 a lot of events that we do in Parks where you're  
8 doing special events where you might have rangers  
9 there conducting certain pop-up activities, and we  
10 also have our PEP Officers there to provide security  
11 and safety for the crowds that are there, but I don't  
12 know if the Commissioner has any other examples of  
13 working together.

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And we  
15 also work together on major events. So, like the  
16 Commissioner stated the rangers do a lot of  
17 education, but we work very close together.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Uh-hm. So, how many  
19 rangers are currently employed by the Parks  
20 Department?

21 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think we have  
22 about 40 city tax levy rangers and then the Council  
23 generously gave us 50 on-shot rangers for this year.  
24 So, they're actually--what we did is we hired them.  
25 They were out in the field so that they were getting

2 to be out in the field in the fall when the weather  
3 was nicer, and now they're in the Academy now going  
4 through the training and then they'll be back out in  
5 the field when the weather is nicer again.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Uhm. So, um, how many  
7 past security personnel in the Parks Department, and  
8 what is the age ranging process?

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. So the  
10 Parks Security Service is much more seasonal. So,  
11 they're not city tax levy full-time positions. I  
12 think it gets to be a couple hundred during the peak  
13 season. Again, we're going to start hiring for those  
14 positions now for the CSAs. I think we have a few  
15 around for the CSAs, but for the most part they're  
16 seasonal. So, we want to staff all of our beaches and  
17 pools as we open them up with CSAs. We also step up  
18 PEP to be step-up sergeants to supervise the CSAs as  
19 we bring them on so we have appropriate supervision.  
20 So, we want to cover all of our beaches and pools  
21 with CSAs, and with POP, which again that's kind of a  
22 year-round program with people come in and out for  
23 six-month lines, but we at PEP do utilize them, train  
24 them for eight days, it's an eight-day training, and  
25 they also get assigned to our beaches, our pools and

2 to some extent in our—in our parks during the peak  
3 season. I don't know if you want to add any—and our  
4 recreation corner exactly.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, how are they being  
6 deployed? It depends on the season? How many are  
7 assigned to a swimming pool, and recreation center?

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think we assign  
9 it so that we have constant coverage at every pool  
10 during the hours the pools are open so that—I don't  
11 know if you want to get into more details of  
12 deployment?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes,  
14 they get assigned to pools citywide, and between the  
15 hours of 10:00 to 7:00 and also they get assigned to  
16 beaches for additional hours.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I heard before that you  
18 have a hard time to recruit these part-time people,  
19 right, you know, because many people they have no  
20 interest in doing part-time work any more.

21 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We actually—we get  
22 a fair—we don't have trouble filling—filling those  
23 positions. But we have a lot of people who return  
24 year after year, and what's great about that  
25 especially on the POP side is we see great people.

2 We can try to hire them onto full-time lines as we  
3 have them, which is a nice way of people moving up in  
4 our agency and providing some clear weathering. (sic)

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, you mentioned  
6 there's a horse monitor in the PEP Program. So, for  
7 what purpose is the Unity point? You know, they--  
8 under what circumstances they go out to reach?

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We--we actually use  
10 the PEP mounted units to do basic patrols of parks.  
11 So, they will go out, you know, on patrol on horses  
12 just to cover the park and see what, you know, kind  
13 of see what's going on and interact with park  
14 patrons. We also use them for special events because  
15 they're very helpful with crowd control. So, a lot  
16 of the larger special events and parades we often  
17 deploy them, but I'm also going to let Commissioner  
18 Rodriguez kind of give more detail because he  
19 actually was in that unit for a while.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.  
21 Also the mounted unit is used in areas where it's  
22 hard to get by mobile or foot patrol. So, the  
23 mounted to me it's a big help, and very helpful our  
24 special events where we have create some inspection  
25 of the park.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, so where is the  
3 unit stationed?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We  
5 have a unit station in Van Cortlandt Park, one at  
6 Central Park Ville, and the other one at the Ocean  
7 Breeze Compound on Staten Island.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, how many horses you  
9 have?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We  
11 have six horses, and we have an officer.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: A total of six horses.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: A  
14 total of six horses.

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: But we also trailer  
16 horses so we're bringing them from one borough, the  
17 parks that they are stationed into other parks to  
18 also patrol. So, I believe for example the horsed in  
19 Staten Island can go to Brooklyn, and we also go to  
20 Queens as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. So, I want to  
22 ask other members of the committee to ask questions.  
23 We are also joined by Council Member Adams. Council  
24 Member Rivera, you are first on the list.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Hello. Thank you  
3 so much for being here and for your testimony. I  
4 know, you know, that the PEP Officers they—they see a  
5 lot and they experience a lot, and I think that, you  
6 know, I mean certainly this year we'll be advocating  
7 for that expansion. I think there are important  
8 people in our parks. So, I just want to ask a couple  
9 quick questions because I know you're limited on  
10 time. So, in my district we've seen that there is a  
11 very big challenge in coordinating between NYPD and  
12 PEP with significant access to major corridors and/or  
13 small to midsize parks that don't have traditional  
14 park features, and in my district I'll give you an  
15 example. Stuyvesant Square Park and Bellevue South  
16 Park where we received a lot of complaints that there  
17 is not significant PEP presence there. What are the  
18 catchment areas, patrol patterns for PEP for these  
19 kinds of smaller parks and does the Department of  
20 Parks and Recreation coordinate with NYPD? Does it  
21 happen on a regular basis or is it more complaints  
22 driven?

23 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, there's a  
24 couple ways in which we coordinate with NYPD and  
25 again, we really defer to them as the lead agency in

2 terms of law enforcement and crime data. So, we—we  
3 focus our PEP Officers more on quality of life  
4 complaints, and on rules and rule violations. So, we  
5 interact with NYPD in a couple ways. One is we check  
6 in with them twice a day to check on any sort of  
7 major crimes that are occurring in our parks, and  
8 make sure we're getting that information. We also  
9 attend all the NYPD Precincts Community Council  
10 meetings so that we're hearing what communities are  
11 concerned about, and what issues are coming up there.  
12 Our borough commissioners also are in pretty regular  
13 contact with their precincts commands and commanders,  
14 and we'll get calls sometimes from the NYPD  
15 specifically if they have a condition they're trying  
16 to address, and we need to work together on. So I  
17 would for those specific parks, we would love to sit  
18 down and work with you to kind of see if we can come  
19 up with a better solution because I would say on our  
20 smaller parks we tend to visit them on a regular  
21 basis, and then put more patrols there if we're  
22 seeing a condition that needs to be addressed that we  
23 think having PEP there would be helpful. If you see,  
24 yes, for example like a trend in complaints or a  
25 surge—

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Exactly. So I  
3 know that you—you're with many kinds of personalities  
4 and sometimes people in parks can get aggressive, but  
5 I know it's a two-way street. I did receive a  
6 complaint from a constituent that in October 2019  
7 there was an incident in Washington Square Park  
8 between a PEP Officer and someone who was selling  
9 their art, and they said that the artist was selling  
10 it illegally, and was not providing identification,  
11 which I understand regardless of the—that the arrest  
12 was warranted, in terms of the aggressive behavior,  
13 what kinds of de-escalation techniques are PEP  
14 Officers trained in? Is it an essential part of the  
15 training?

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes. So, de-  
17 escalation techniques are an essential part of the  
18 training and again, all of our officers are trained  
19 to first educate before issuing summonses. So, we  
20 really try to educate our vendors in our parks about  
21 what the rules are and to make sure they comply, and  
22 only, you know, issue summons or have to go to an  
23 arrest if warranted. So, we have very few arrests.  
24 Our officers are—do have the power to make arrests,  
25 but again, if we issued 18,000 summonses, we did

2 about 48 arrests last year. So, it's really only a  
3 last resort, and we try to de-escalate conflicts as  
4 much as we can. Although sometimes if people are not  
5 compliant, we need to take that next step and make an  
6 arrest.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I understand and  
8 I've—I've only received one complaint that describes  
9 the type of interaction as being very aggressive, and  
10 they said that the officer grabbed and threw the  
11 artist to the ground. So, I just wanted to ask about  
12 what kind of training was included and understanding  
13 that this is actually an isolated complaint that we  
14 have received. So I just wanted to bring it to your  
15 attention. So, you brought up the arrest and the—

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: And I would just  
17 add.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yeah, sure, sure.

19 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, I mean that  
20 specific case was investigated by our public-public  
21 advocate? No, Parks I think—Parks Advocates Office.  
22 So, any time if you hear of—you feel like a Parks  
23 employee that has crossed the line or done something  
24 wrong there is always a way that you make a complaint  
25 and have that investigated, which is what we did in

2 that case, and it was found that their handling of  
3 that situation was appropriate and warranted.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay, great. So  
5 then just my last question you mentioned the summons  
6 that—that you issued last year, 18,000. You said the  
7 second highest type of summons was related to  
8 smoking, correct?

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: No. Actually, so  
10 the 311 data in terms of what was incoming was  
11 related to smoking, but our summons data was not  
12 broken out by those kinds of complaints. We're going  
13 to have to—if people are—if council members are  
14 interested in seeing that data, we're going to have  
15 to try to see what we can pull out by category and  
16 get that to you. You don't have that data.

17 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic]

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right, but out of  
19 the 18,000 over half was parking related, and then  
20 8,000 was OATH, which would include the summonses for  
21 smoking in parks. Also a dog off leash canine cases  
22 like that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So do you know  
24 how many people were smoking? You issued how many  
25 summonses?

2 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yeah, we don't have  
3 them number here.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay, and if you  
5 also whether it was for tobacco versus Marijuana I'd  
6 be very interest I'd be very interested in knowing  
7 whether you flagged the difference.

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Well, again, I  
10 just want to thank you. Again, I know we'll be  
11 advocating this year for the expansion of the PEP  
12 Officers. I do think they are an important presence,  
13 and they are typically very friendly.

14 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you for that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Well, thank you  
16 for answering all of my questions and I look forward  
17 to the follow-up with some of that information.  
18 Thank you Mr. Chair for the time.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Council  
20 Member Holden.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair  
22 Koo. As somebody who has been working with Parks for  
23 over 40 years it is always very frustrating that we  
24 couldn't get enough PEP Officers, and did we get that  
25 80 officers? Were they hired and on the ground?

2 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, we hired—we  
3 made offers to 83 officers through the process of  
4 hiring them and having to go through background  
5 checks and going to the Academy, we have had some  
6 attritions. We have 64 on right now of the PEP line,  
7 and we're going to be hiring back-ups to fill those  
8 vacancies in the spring.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We're actively  
11 recruiting now for--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So 64 are out  
13 there?

14 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And the  
16 frustrating part that we're seeing because we just  
17 called the—we called 311 just about a half hour ago.  
18 We have the—we have unleashed dogs in some of the  
19 parks on the ballfields, and dogs are not supposed to  
20 be unleashed or even leashed on a ball field, and the  
21 public cannot talk to PEP. You can't reach PEP  
22 through 311. Did you know that?

23 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think you can  
24 make a complaint and they just right over the phone.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right, but you  
3 can't—I mean you can make a complaint, but shouldn't  
4 you be able to—like I can call my precinct. I could  
5 file a 311, but I could follow up because not  
6 everything, you know, things don't, you know,  
7 actually when it gets relayed to 311 and then it goes  
8 to PEP, it doesn't always jibe. It doesn't always  
9 work out where all the information is being gathered,  
10 and we're seeing that a lot, and that's a problem  
11 with PEP that the regular person on the street unless  
12 you're with a community board possibly, you have some  
13 ins and outs with PEP Officers, you can't contact  
14 PEP. You can't talk to them, and the general public  
15 doesn't talk to PEP. Do you think that's—that's  
16 good?

17 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would say that,  
18 you know the 311 system was developed to be able to  
19 track and receive all sorts of complaints from people  
20 so that we see what the incoming is. So, if you just  
21 were having people call directly, you wouldn't be  
22 able to kind of track in categories what was coming  
23 in, and I would say that when calls come into 311,  
24 they get routed very quickly to our Central  
25 Communications, which then gets them out to the right

2 PEP Officers and especially if a dog is off leash,  
3 you know, there's a certain time. We're seeing what  
4 that time is that you're--that complaint is referring  
5 to, and we'll try to send officers out around that  
6 same time to be able to catch that in the future.  
7 But if there are specific, you know, areas that you  
8 would like to focus on--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, so, you're  
10 saying you really--so PEP can't handle dealing with  
11 the public?

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Well, PEP--PEP  
13 Officers are actually out in the parks all the time  
14 dealing with the public.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: No, no, no, I'm  
16 just--I'm talking about communications because solving  
17 problems is very, very important. That's why we have  
18 311 and that's why we have PEP. So, I'm just--I'm just  
19 throwing it out there. I don't know what extra buggy  
20 you would need, but I think there has to be more  
21 communication. If this--if this is going to work if  
22 PEP is going to work as it should, and I think it  
23 should be a much larger agency because we have  
24 billions of dollars invested in our parks, and yet we  
25 invest so little to protect it, and not only--You

2 know, the policing is not—I mean we—historically—  
3 again, I've been a civic leader longer than I want to  
4 admit, yet, I could not get dogs off the leash or,  
5 you know, addressed because the cats are now going to  
6 go in and you're not going to ticket someone, and PEP  
7 was—there was not enough of them. So, the dog can—  
8 the dog situation I have people at PAC, Ditton, you  
9 know chase like unleashed dogs and it's a—  
10 historically a problem within New York City Parks,  
11 and it's not being addressed on a large scale because  
12 there are so few PEP Officers. I don't care if you  
13 have 80 more, I don't care if you have 480 more, it's  
14 still not going to be enough to address the situation  
15 of protecting our parks, and making it an enjoyable  
16 experience because the police are not going to. They  
17 can't, they won't. They don't have enough time, and  
18 there's not enough cops either, but certainly PEP, we  
19 need to communicate with PEP, and we need to have the  
20 public communicate with PEP. Now I've—I've had a  
21 number of cases where we have parks administrators in  
22 my district, and Queens is one that I think has the  
23 most parkland. I can say that I think with  
24 confidence. I'm not going to—what have you with  
25 that, and I'm from Queens. I'm going to say that.

2 We have—I'm going to say that. Now, that's what I  
3 was told by the Queens Borough Office. So, I'm going  
4 to go with that. Whatever the acreage, whatever it  
5 is, we have a lot of parkland. We have the very  
6 important parkland for us, and I want to protect it.  
7 However, and have parks administrators. However,  
8 when we make—when somebody makes a 311 complaint the  
9 information is not getting to the park administrator.  
10 That's what we're hearing on the grounds. So, this is  
11 why I'm talking about the 311: It's not always keen,  
12 you know the end all and it's not always getting down  
13 to—to Parks Administration—administrators or the  
14 people that really need to know things, and that's  
15 why I would like 311 to connect me if I asked, and we  
16 just asked and they said no they don't have that?  
17 Why?

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I mean that's  
19 something we can look into because maybe there's a  
20 way to transfer directly to Central Communications,  
21 which is our central communications or some so we can  
22 look into that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes, 311,  
24 connects you with almost every—if I ask, you know,  
25 give me a precinct number, give me that, they'll do

2 it. Why—why haven't out a way where they can call  
3 somebody at 311 and talk to the actual officers or  
4 talk to a commanding officer or talk to somebody out  
5 there in the field. Because the way communications  
6 are much better. Rather than the 311 Operator,  
7 relaying some information that gets locked.

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: In general 311  
9 works very well and we get a lot of different  
10 complaints and it's better to kind of have the  
11 complaint recorded, and systematized in 311 so that  
12 it can be followed up with appropriately and that we  
13 can see that that--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: (interposing) My-  
15 my Committee of Technology oversees 311, and I  
16 disagree that 311 works very well. I totally  
17 disagree with that, and I'll show you how if you have  
18 some time, and I'll meet with you, but it doesn't  
19 work very well. It can work a lot better. It may  
20 work in some cases. In some agencies it works, but  
21 it doesn't in many agencies. Now we get false  
22 information, and we get—when we call the 311 in about  
23 a parking situation they say it was solved, and it's  
24 not solved, and that happens a lot and so on the  
25 ground there are problems, and I'm trying to fix

2 them, and I'm trying to get 311 to be more responsive  
3 in my—in my committee, but also get 311 to have  
4 complaints that could be addressed not in 14 days as  
5 I got on these calls because that's what they tell  
6 you on 311. Oh, you have 14 days to address this  
7 unleashed dog that keeps terrorizing the  
8 neighborhood. What does that mean?

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yeah, I—I hear you  
10 and I think we would like to work with you on that,  
11 and I think you're raising an interesting point about  
12 I think when it comes to our agency it gets really  
13 depending on what the complaint is to a specific  
14 division to handle. So, in—in your case what you're  
15 saying is if things go directly to PEP to handle  
16 that's not necessarily going to the Park  
17 Administrator and maybe there's something we can do  
18 internally to look at that so that you're right, the  
19 park administrator should be getting that data, too,  
20 because they're helping to manage the park and they  
21 should know what the conditions are that are being  
22 complained about.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, I'd like to  
24 have my committee figure this out with 311 people how  
25 to communicate with PEP, and I think if we—and if you

2 tell us that you need, you know, x amount of people  
3 lines then we'll--then the City Council can look at  
4 that because we want to protect our investments, and  
5 you know, the City Council, you know as you saw is  
6 willing to do that. So, if you can figure it out why  
7 you need this many people in the offices, then we can  
8 try to address that, but to handle the communication  
9 because that's why I think PEP is falling short for  
10 us because I, you know, very seldom we can I talk to  
11 PEP, even as a civic leader. You always have to go  
12 through somebody else, and then the information would  
13 get out, and it was very frustrating. So, I-I, you  
14 know, even hiring the 80 officers we should have like  
15 I said before a lot more and that's 64 out of the 80.  
16 We should have overflow . we should have people, but  
17 you get attrition in every agency, and we should  
18 expect that. I just want to go to the seasonal  
19 because I know, and I'll--then I'll stop because I  
20 know we have a lot of questions. I know we're going  
21 like this, but what's seasonal salary? I know there  
22 are different seasonals, but can you give me a  
23 general? Like how much is that costing versus hiring  
24 full time pay?

25 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Because the  
3 seasonals always felt—they looked like PEP, but  
4 they're not PEP, and they're—they're good--

5 COMMISSIONER NELSON: And they--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --they're good  
7 but they're just sort of okay. They're not—they  
8 can't issue summons, they can't really enforce a lot  
9 of that.

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think we have a  
11 tiered approach, right. So, I think our PEP officers  
12 go through three months of training, they're full  
13 time, their salary is around \$50,000 a year--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --but we need to  
16 supplement that security force--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --but because you  
18 can see that.

19 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --with seasonal.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: How much is  
21 seasonal?

22 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, the seasonals  
23 do a great job at what they do, and what they're  
24 hired to do, but they don't have that same level of

2 training, and they're not on the same salary scales.

3 I don't know if we have the scale--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: (interposing)

5 Yeah, you know the seasonals are great. Everybody

6 does a great job. Well everybody would say that.

7 COMMISSIONER NELSON: If they pay--they get  
8 paid hourly \$15.00 an hour.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: \$15--\$15 an hour,  
10 okay. So, that's \$15 an hour and all seasonals  
11 because there are different seasonals. All seasonals?

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Not--I don't think  
13 all seasonals, but in these but in these--these two  
14 lines that's what we're trying--not that--I just want  
15 to just double check and get back to you. I don't  
16 have that data on hand although they look like  
17 they're getting it so, we'll--we'll have it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Oh, well, if we  
19 can get it at some point, I--I just want to--I don't  
20 want to monopolize this so, I'll--I'll just let it go  
21 back to the Chair. If you guys want to jump in later  
22 and let--let us know what--what your pay structure is  
23 I'm anxious to see that. Thank you so much. Thank  
24 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Council  
3 Member Holden, and—and you are like them. You should  
4 have more communication or direct communication with  
5 the PEP, you know, either to the commander or to the  
6 PEP officers directly so we aware as a committee to—  
7 with the department to seeing how we represent, you  
8 know. The next please, Council Member Gjonaj.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,  
10 Chairman. So, it's intended that we appreciate PEP  
11 Officers and the job that you do, and we appreciate  
12 it so much, but we want more of you. I want to  
13 piggyback on a couple of questions from a Council  
14 Member. On the number of arrests and tickets that  
15 were issued are they also—will you get those numbers  
16 to us? Can we have them by race? I'm just curious to  
17 see if it's a Marijuana or smoking or for barbecuing  
18 is there a racial concern that we should be looking  
19 at, and I guess that would depend on the number and  
20 the information that you get to us.

21 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. We don't  
22 track by race, both OATH, which is the agency that  
23 adjudicates all those kinds of tickets, we believe  
24 does track by that. So, we're going to have to see  
25 and their data of what they have for Parks versus our

2 data of what we have don't necessarily exactly line  
3 as data sometimes does not do. So, I think we're  
4 going to have to look at this and see what we can get  
5 back to you that is responsive to your questions.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Well just now  
7 comes the second follow-up question on racial bias  
8 training. Are our PEP Officers doing any training?

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Our officers  
10 themselves are a very diverse group of people. I  
11 think we have a really strong group of people.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: (interposing) So  
13 is our NYPD.

14 COMMISSIONER NELSON: What?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So is NYPD.

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: And so I'm going to  
17 ask Commissioner Rodriguez to answer that question.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes,  
19 our officers do get the proper training with all the  
20 gender training, EO training, Right to Know training.  
21 The officers are fully trained, and I can also—  
22 although we don't try for summonses, I can give you  
23 that data on the amount of arrests we made by race.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But I think it  
3 would be in our best interest for transparency  
4 purposes if we have a better understanding on this.

5 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. Again I  
6 think we made 48 arrests last year and we have that  
7 data for that, but on the 18,000 we don't have the-  
8 the 7,000 for the OATH. We don't have that data, but  
9 we do more than Oath to get it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Maybe you should  
11 be looking into this, and do a deeper dive. So, I'll  
12 say-not to correct my colleague, but when I get a  
13 deep-when I do get a chance I'll give a fact or two.  
14 Although the Bronx has the largest park in New York  
15 City Pelham Bay Park or over 2,700 acres with its own  
16 beach, and that I'm certain of, and we don't see  
17 enough of our PEP Officers out there. It's a massive  
18 park. We need to see more of you out there  
19 especially during the peak times, but off peak times,  
20 which leads to the next question: When do parks  
21 close? What are the hours of their closure?

22 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So the-the  
23 standard park hours are 6:00 AM TO 1:00 AM, but we  
24 also-there's many parks that we've made a decision to  
25 have them close earlier. So, there is reason

2 sometimes in consultation with the NYPD, sometimes in  
3 consultation with the community. So there are parks  
4 that close at 10:00 or 11:00 as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It used to be--

6 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, they're not  
7 all at once.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It used to be  
9 points of dusk right, and we're--

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Play-grounds  
11 used to. So, we have playgrounds within parks and  
12 our playgrounds sometimes has earlier closing hours  
13 than the overall parks.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, our current  
15 parkway in the borough of--the great Borough of the B  
16 Bronx, it's not a park, it's not a recreation area,  
17 but it's a green space open area. What time should  
18 everyone be off Pelham Parkway. The park, right, the  
19 Parkway itself.

20 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes and there's a  
21 greenway through that right? I don't know what time  
22 it closes now. We can check and get back to you and  
23 have that conversation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Well, I can tell  
25 you this, the local harmless community knows it very

2 well because the moment that the PEP Officers are  
3 gone encampments pop up, and they break down in the  
4 morning before the PEP Officers get out. So, I have  
5 to constantly try to coordinate between PEP and the  
6 49<sup>th</sup> Precinct to get them out there to break these  
7 encampments up, which are a real problem, and it's  
8 more than a quality of life issue. It's actually a  
9 security issue. People use—the residents of that  
10 area use those greenways to cross over their  
11 transportation options. They get to their homes,  
12 their cars. They come home at all hours of the  
13 night, and when they run across one of the  
14 encampments, it's a problem.

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes. We don't  
16 allow—it's against our Parks rules to have people  
17 sleeping in our parks overnight, and so when we hear  
18 of instances where that's happening we do try to  
19 work, you know, with PEP and NYPD to intervene. We  
20 are working very closely right now with the Mayor's  
21 Taskforce on Homelessness, and we really are spending  
22 a lot of concentrated effort in PEP patrols to be  
23 checking hot spots where there might be people in  
24 need of assistance. We're working with Department of  
25 Homeless Services about doing outreach, and we're

2 really trying to make sure that when we hear of  
3 places where there might be structures that are being  
4 developed in our parks that we respond quickly and  
5 make sure people aren't sleeping in our parks.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right, but how do  
7 you respond. You've got two shifts, 7:30 to 4:00,  
8 3:30 to 12:00.

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right, so we--.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Who is out there  
11 from 12:00 to 7:30?

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We mostly don't  
13 patrol in those hours because we don't because our  
14 parks are closed, but we can do overtime. We can use  
15 the overtime to have shifts go later if there's a  
16 condition that needs to be addressed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Sure and--and I  
18 think it's that difficult, but if a park is open  
19 until 1:00 AM, you can't chase them out. Your tour  
20 end at 12:00, and dealing with that point--

21 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again most--most of  
22 our people--right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: --they're not  
24 breaking any rules or regulations.

2           COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. Most of our  
3 parks people are not there, you know, after hours.  
4 So, if there are parks where people are constantly  
5 being there after hours I think we want to work on  
6 that condition and try to address it, but it's not  
7 like we--there's a lot of people in our parks at  
8 12:00--12:00 at night or 1:00 AM, which is why we  
9 don't have a shift at that time.

10           COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But that's when  
11 people--that's when the encampments get built and it--  
12 this is not unique to my area. This is citywide. I  
13 know those pocket parks that we were talking about  
14 earlier are very small isolated areas owe and going  
15 at a train station inundated--inundated. You can't  
16 walk through that park. It becomes an encampment.  
17 People don't feel safe walking through that area.  
18 They call it 4-9 or 4-5 initial there or first to  
19 putt, call a putt. We visit the lanes in normal  
20 hours, their shifts don't match up. So, we have a  
21 real problem, and a concern. We need real officers.

22           COMMISSIONER NELSON: Okay, So I--I hear  
23 your concern with those areas, and I think we should  
24 work to try to address them better. .

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And when it comes  
3 to dogs and we've heard of some horrific incidents  
4 where children and park-goers were being mauled by  
5 dogs that—and it's not the dog's fault. It's  
6 normally the owner's fault, but I want to make sure  
7 that's clear that so and so not for us to get rid of  
8 the dogs. It's the dog owners that take the leashes  
9 off these dogs and some of the dogs have been  
10 aggressive and a couple have bitten a child and we've  
11 had several incidents on Pelham Parkway as well as  
12 the barbecuing and I keep going back to this. At a  
13 time with the limited officers that we have and it's  
14 two tours—two tours, how many do we have on weekends?  
15 So, if we know the numbers two tours at 7:30 to 4:00  
16 and 3:30 to 12:00, we know the number of officers.  
17 It's 7-day work weeks, how many officers do we  
18 actually have out there when you take into  
19 consideration vacation days, sick days. This is a  
20 huge city.

21 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again, I think that  
22 we are fortunate due to the Council's support and  
23 this mayor's support to have the most PEP officers on  
24 the patrol than we have in 15 years, but as you said,  
25 it's still 300 compared to say NYPD's 36,000. So we

2 have to be very targeted at how-how we deploy those  
3 officers to have the maximum effect. So, we do try  
4 to cover all of our parks, but the parks that are  
5 having more problems we try to have more PEP officers  
6 be in those parks to help address those problems.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And my last  
8 question to you Deputy Commissioner, if you had a  
9 magi wand what's the magic number that you need to  
10 adequately cover our parks? Give me a dollar  
11 amounts. This is budget season. We've got council  
12 members who want to be very helpful to you .

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think we feel  
14 like the number we have is a great number that-that  
15 we can do what our job is to do, but we always--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Ah-ha.

17 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --appreciate more  
18 and we look forward budget conversations as we  
19 continue this.

20 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again, I think that  
21 we are fortunate due to the Council's support and  
22 this mayor's support to have the most PEP officers on  
23 the patrol than we have.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: You were just  
25 given an area (sic) to actually dunk, and you said

2 okay and you hear everyone here saying that we can  
3 use more--

4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We can always do  
5 more with more, but again, this is always--was  
6 envisioned as a targeted workforce that we think we  
7 have strategies to target and use them very  
8 effectively, and so, yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, definitely  
10 I'm reverse that. Who should decide how much--how big  
11 the budget should be to adequately patrol our parks  
12 with PEP Officers?

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again, I think that  
14 we have a tremendous workforce. It's been--it's the  
15 highest its been in 15 years. I think that our  
16 officers out there are doing a great job. As crime  
17 has been the lowest it's been in decades, and we  
18 know--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But yet you have  
20 to decide that. Do we hear complaints and I want to  
21 see more of you, and you're--and I understand that you  
22 have a job and you're protecting the Administration.  
23 I wouldn't say anything negative, and I'm asking  
24 based on what you've heard already and my own  
25 experience and my own complaints, we need more PEP

2 officers. What would that number be so we can  
3 translate into dollars. This is the budget season.  
4 Happy to advocate for you. I want to do this, and  
5 when you say we are at historic highs with PEP  
6 Officers and historic lows of crime, that's not what  
7 you're going to hear here today--

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We-we--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: --and anyone--any  
10 council members say we have too many PEP Officers,  
11 please e send my way. I'm more than happy to take  
12 them.

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, we very much  
14 appreciate the Council's support of the PEP Unit, and  
15 -and the 80 officers that you gave us this year, and  
16 I think we've really been able to take those 80  
17 officers and do great work with them. So, we want to  
18 thank you and we look forward to the ongoing budget  
19 negotiations, the conversations coming up this  
20 spring.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Thank you,  
23 Council Member. [on mic] Next is Council Member  
24 Moya.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you, Chair  
3 and this is what happens when you sign up late. Most  
4 of the questions I had were already asked, but I do  
5 want to stand up for my colleague here in Queens  
6 because we do have the largest amount of parkland and  
7 proudly representing the fourth largest park in the  
8 city of New York Flushing Meadows Corona Park. I  
9 just want to go back to one thing that you said  
10 earlier that the Chair asked. So, there's—there's 4-  
11 -6 parks rangers at Flushing Meadows Corona Park?  
12 They do two shifts?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes,  
14 we put out team mobile units in the morning, which  
15 consists of four officers. There are two mobile  
16 units and a day tour. (sic)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, the park is  
18 anywhere between 897 acres to 1,200 and change  
19 depending on how you want to do the math. Is that  
20 what you feel is the sufficient to cover that park  
21 given that it has the USDA to do the museum, the  
22 theater in the park the Hall of Science, multiple  
23 events that are there. Is that what you feel is an  
24 adequate number?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well,  
3 when have the large events like the USDA or Cinco de  
4 Mayo festival we detail additional officers to the  
5 park to cover those events.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Right, but my  
7 question is throughout the year with a heavily  
8 utilized park, right, do you feel that that is an  
9 adequate number to have patrolling a park?

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes, we do.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: So, I disagree  
12 completely. The fact that I have to have sector cars  
13 from the 110<sup>th</sup> Precinct get pulled out of their  
14 sector to patrol Flushing Meadows Corona Park because  
15 there's not enough PEP Officers, there's not enough  
16 park rangers there to cover the park. The fact that  
17 now I have to be fighting in the budget to get a  
18 substation for the 110<sup>th</sup> Precinct to operate out of  
19 there to me like I think going through the same theme  
20 as what my-my colleague Mark Gjonaj was talking  
21 about. We're the ones on the front lines here. We're  
22 the ones that receive the complaints. I live four  
23 blocks away from Flushing Meadows Corona Park.  
24 That's where I learned how to play soccer. To me  
25 that is just not enough and for you to think that

2 that's adequate I just find that to be just a little  
3 bit disturbing. You know, we should be baselining  
4 this. It shouldn't be that the Council has to  
5 continue to look for extra funding. This should be  
6 baselined out of the Administration, but yet we're  
7 struggling again to get just enough to cover our  
8 parks, and so when you say that it just leads me to  
9 believe that really our complaints aren't being  
10 necessarily heard even to the smaller part of the  
11 parks that I represent that are close by. There's  
12 four parks. I've asked now for the last two years  
13 had to have a roving pack of homeless people that are  
14 there. Three out of the four parks are right across  
15 the street from schools. I get complaints all  
16 the time. I've asked to meet—I had—I had to do  
17 cabinet meetings with the 110<sup>th</sup> Precinct Captain and  
18 your enforcement agencies and the borough  
19 commissioner. It still hasn't solved the problem. I  
20 had to ask so that the 110 gets keyed to close our  
21 parks at night because the complaints are just too  
22 much, and so I guess what—the frustration is is  
23 that I know the great service that PEP Officers bring  
24 to the community, how we can right the ship. I'm  
25 just a little bit frustrated right now that you're

2 saying that what we have is adequate to cover the  
3 city when it is—you're hearing from everyone up here  
4 it's just not enough. So, I'm just trying to figure  
5 out how you come up with these numbers. The  
6 coordination isn't there with the 110, with the  
7 precinct. I guess it's on an individual basis that  
8 that happens. 311 complaints is how its driven, but  
9 if you're in communities like mine that are heavily  
10 immigrant communities they have a fear of calling  
11 311. They're not going to call 311 when they—when—  
12 when they see these issues. So, we get the  
13 complaints, and then when I have to ask to sit with  
14 enforcement and say what's the long term plan, you  
15 can only give one PEP Officer a week, well there's no  
16 solution to this. It's going to be, you know, a  
17 never ending problem. So, again, I'm just going to  
18 go back. Do you believe that this is enough to help  
19 cover parks like Flushing Meadows Corona Park and the  
20 other smaller parks that we all represent throughout  
21 the city of New York?

22 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right, and you have  
23 to remember that our PEP Unit is-is focused on  
24 enforcement Parks' rules and regulations and quality  
25 of life infractions and the NYPD--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But everything I've  
3 said is all--is all that, right? I'm not talking  
4 about major crime. I'm talking about the enforcement  
5 of exactly what you just listed, but yet I don't have  
6 the numbers to actually help solve those problems in  
7 a park like Flushing Meadows Corona Park, and in the  
8 surrounding parks around my district.

9 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right, but you had  
10 mentioned before about like the NYPD needing to come  
11 into to Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Correct.

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I just would like  
14 to point out that we do work closely with the NYPD  
15 and again they focus on crime and law enforcement and  
16 do patrol many of our parks when they, you know, when  
17 they're seeing that there is a need to do that, and  
18 do that in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. So, I thin  
19 there is a partnership and again with--with their  
20 patrol strength of 36,000 officers versus our patrol  
21 strength of 300 officers. We have to kind of work in  
22 coordination and be targeted in our enforcement.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But--but I think  
24 that it will--

2           COMMISSIONER NELSON: Here again, you  
3 have brought—I think you had brought to our attention  
4 Avenue of America's Park and the problems there, and  
5 I think we have worked with your office to have fixed  
6 those patrols that are there now, and we're doing it  
7 in a way where we're covering one shift and the NYPD  
8 is covering the second shift. So, I think it's that  
9 kind of partnership that we're willing to do when  
10 needed.

11           COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But that—that—that  
12 is not on a consistent basis, and so we're never  
13 going to solve that problem if I get certain shifts  
14 one day out of the week. It goes and—and takes the-  
15 the—the people out of that. Look, I've even brought  
16 Breaking Ground to go in there to help with a lot of  
17 the homeless families that we have in that community  
18 to try to solve that because there's also a human  
19 aspect to this, but we do need more enforcement in  
20 our parks, and the frustration I think that we're  
21 getting here is that when we've asked: What do you  
22 need from us, you're saying we're good. I think  
23 we're saying we're not good. We need more and we  
24 need to have a real strategy on how to combat the  
25 problems that we're facing in our parks especially in

2 boroughs that have large public space that is  
3 parkland that's there, and when the community is  
4 crying out for some support here.

5           COMMISSIONER NELSON: I mean I hear your  
6 interest in having more PEP and we look forward to  
7 those budget negotiations as they go forward but  
8 again, over time we have—right now the current place  
9 we're in right now we have more PEP Officers on  
10 patrol than we have in 15 years. So, I'm not  
11 discounting that, you know, you would like to see  
12 more patrols and I hear that, and I think we should  
13 really work to figure out whether there's a way to do  
14 more targeted patrols in some of the areas you are  
15 having problems with because I think those problems  
16 do need to be addressed. But again, I'm not sure it's  
17 necessarily more officers versus looking at the  
18 strategies and looking at working with NYC and their  
19 strategies (sic) to work with.

20           COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But the strategies  
21 are working and I can tell you that I worked with  
22 NYPD. They'll—I think that a meeting with you if you  
23 want to do it off line, and they'll you the same  
24 thing what is happening in Flushing Meadows Corona

2 Park, which is a big park. So, that's what I'm  
3 saying.

4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We're looking  
5 forward to hearing about it. (sic)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'm happy to sit  
7 down and I'll take—because I know my other colleagues  
8 have questions, but I just want to say that that's  
9 not always accurate. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Council  
12 Member. Next we're going to have Council Member  
13 Brannan.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you,  
15 Chair. I know—how do you—how do you guys—how do you  
16 guys determine which—how you distribute officers to  
17 different parks or different districts?

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, we try to hit  
19 every major park and playground multiple times a week  
20 if not daily, but we also look at what's coming in  
21 from 311, you know, what the crime data is showing  
22 us, what we're hearing from community groups that we  
23 work with. We're in constant contact with the  
24 Borough Commissioner who hears certain—you know, our  
25 Parks Borough Commissioner who is hearing certain

2 things, and so while we have that minimum level,  
3 we've been also deployed based on kind of the  
4 complaints that we're having come in to try to  
5 address those conditions. So, for example if we hear  
6 about an illegal dumping situation, we might devote a  
7 lot of resources like we did in the Bronx to actually  
8 doing stakeouts, actually looking at cameras—you  
9 know, having cameras and really focusing attention  
10 and effort to a specific problem--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Uh-hm.

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --to try to address  
13 that problem.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, it sounds  
15 like it—I mean—I don't know. I feel like we've  
16 fought—I mean I think the PEP Officers are great. I  
17 rarely see them in my area, but I feel like we fight  
18 a lot to get increased funding for officers, but  
19 then, you know, unless it's Central Park or Prospect  
20 Park we don't really see them at least where I am. I  
21 mean so I don't know if that's because it's more of a  
22 reactive strategy rather than a proactive strategy,  
23 but like when I hear we fought to get, you know, 60  
24 more officers or whatever it is, I don't—I'm not

2 seeing them in my parks. Is that because the  
3 complaints aren't there to warrant them?

4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Um, again, I think  
5 we did distribute the PEP throughout the five  
6 boroughs, and I don't think in looking at the data  
7 that we're doing more in, you know, on a per-acre  
8 basis whatever in Prospect Park and other parks. But  
9 again that minimum when you take 60 people and you  
10 try to spread them throughout--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Well, it's a  
12 whole lot. You know, we get it.

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --you know there's  
14 2,000 parks and 30,000 acres. You might not visually  
15 see a big difference, but know that that really has  
16 helped us with our patrol strength, and really does  
17 make a difference in what we're able to do and  
18 especially makes a difference when we need to do  
19 sensitive targeting enforcement. So, I would say if  
20 you--if you have a condition that you're feeling that  
21 we need to address better, we would love to work with  
22 you on that with our PEP Officers.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yes, and I have  
24 a great relationship with my borough commissioner,  
25 but sometimes especially in the summer it does seem

2 like there's stuff that sending to him is probably  
3 and he's just going to then send to PEP, right?

4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, it would be  
6 helpful to have a better, you know, or more direct  
7 line. in the summer when most of the force gets  
8 dedicated to the beaches and the pools, what-what  
9 happens then to—you know they're leaving their posts  
10 to go to the beaches and the pools. How are we  
11 covering for when they're leaving?

12 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, we—we hire a  
13 lot seasonally as the—for the Parks Security Service.  
14 So that's BSAs and POPs. So it's a couple hundred  
15 people that then primarily detailed to the beaches  
16 and pools. We do step up about 37 PEP Officers to  
17 become seasonal sergeants to oversee those people.  
18 So, there is a slight loss in coverage but really  
19 it's made up by the fact that we have all this  
20 additional seasonal workforce to send them out.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But you do your  
22 best to add as many as you're taking away, I assume?

23 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would say that  
24 that's—that's the case. Basically we're stepping up  
25 a certain number of PEP Officers. We're going to try

2 to back for them at least the CSAs to maintain the  
3 coverage.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: How many  
5 vehicles do you guys does PEP have covering the  
6 parks?

7 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We have about 82  
8 vehicles citywide.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, 82 vehicles  
10 and how many—and how many officers is it citywide?

11 COMMISSIONER NELSON: We have about 300  
12 officers, but again on different various tours. We  
13 can use the vehicles on more than one tour a day.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, and you  
15 mentioned before that the—your Central Communications  
16 Division, how many people are there and they a part  
17 of—are they a part of PEP?

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: They are a part of  
19 PEP. Right now we have 25 officers assigned to  
20 Central Communications in addition to the 300  
21 officers who are out in the field, and we also have  
22 11 additional officers in the PEP Unit.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And those 25—  
24 those 25 communications people are just for the—just

2 to look after the 300 PEP Officers or are they doing  
3 other stuff? Do you think 25 is enough?

4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I mean so we have a  
5 Central Communications Division that's there 24/7/365  
6 and they're, you know, fielding all the incoming 311  
7 and other calls and--and making sure that conditions  
8 are just patched out. I will turn to Commissioner  
9 Rodriguez to see if he wants to add any more color on  
10 that.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So,  
12 they--now when you take calls from PEP Officers  
13 calling from Macy's (sic) and Operation Division, and  
14 all 25 officers are not UPR. Some of them are  
15 technicians and CSAs, but they do not just take calls  
16 from PEP, but the whole agency whether it be  
17 Forestry, whether it be N&O (sic) whether it be a  
18 downed tree. All those four things are essential so  
19 it can be redirected to proper division.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, I mean are  
21 you--are you in a place to weigh in on if you feel  
22 that's enough or not? Is that something we should be  
23 fighting to get more funding for?

24 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would say our  
25 Central Communications Division is--is well staffed.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, um, does any  
3 my colleagues, I think Council Member Holden was  
4 saying before, you know, when you put—if you're  
5 putting in a part—like if someone calls 311 with a  
6 Parks issue, who and say it's something immediate.  
7 It's happened right now, but something that you call  
8 911 and they're going to tell you to call 311. Like  
9 if there's a dog loose. I know my chances are  
10 they're going to say to call 311. How does that then  
11 flow down? When does someone actually see that 311  
12 call and make that decision to go and look after this  
13 dog off the leash or whatever it is? How is that  
14 triaged?

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I mean it comes.  
16 The 311 call comes into Central Communications--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay.

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --who then  
19 dispatches it, but I—I'm going to let Commissioner  
20 Rodriguez talk about the timing related to that.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah,  
22 whenever we get a 311 call—I'm not completely sure  
23 how fast we get it in real time--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

71

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: --but  
3 once Central Communications gets it, let's say it's a  
4 dog condition and I just—I think CP and Central  
5 Communications will dispatch the unit so that every  
6 day the tour sergeant will fax over the deployment so  
7 Central Communications know exactly what officer goes  
8 to what park. They come on the radio and dispatch  
9 that officer who handles the conditions they'll  
10 receive from 311. I just can't tell you how fast we  
11 get it in real time?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yes. I mean, you  
13 know, that's just like, you know, there's a downed  
14 tree or something that is not an immediate danger. I  
15 think you know, I mean it might be a question for  
16 311, but the disconnect is definitely in the urgency  
17 of the call, right? Because 911 is going to tell  
18 you. Chances are they're going to say that's not for  
19 us. That's for 311, but then you tell 311 and they  
20 tell you even though it's not going to take 14 days  
21 for you to respond to a dog off a leash, that's, you  
22 know, that's—if you do it on the app that's what it  
23 tells you, and there's no, there's never any—there's  
24 no way to know if someone actually responded unless I

25

2 stand there and, you know, and-and see that it  
3 happens.

4 MATT DRURY: Yeah, and my understanding-  
5 and again I think I think 311 is probably the entity  
6 most able to speak to this, but I think they are  
7 given sort of a preset sort of scripted responses.  
8 So, I think that's probably where the sort of 14-day  
9 window direct--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I just want to--  
11 my concern is--my concern is not your lack of  
12 responsiveness. It's that I want to make sure that  
13 that is getting to you in the way that it's, you  
14 know--if there's a broken swing I mean that can wait a  
15 couple of days. I'd rather it get fixed right away,  
16 but it can wait right? Whereas if it's an immediate  
17 situation where 911 flips you over to 311, I'd like  
18 to know that they're getting that to you, and not,  
19 you know, it's in some que.

20 MATT DRURY: Yeah, I think our internal  
21 understanding is that that information is transmitted  
22 very, very rapidly. We just couldn't speak to the  
23 exact timing of 311 at the time. (sic)

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah, I'd love  
25 to know. That's all. Alright, thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, Commissioners I  
3 have two more questions. Which conservancy won  
4 Parks' contract, wrote paid PPR to have PEP Officers  
5 stationed in the parks? I know Central Park is one  
6 of them. At which conservancy has a contract with  
7 you guys?

8 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Sure. So, again,  
9 most of the data I gave today is just talking about  
10 city tax levy and the place they are funding to get  
11 to the 300 patrol strength that we have right now.  
12 Separate from that we have about 81 lines that are  
13 advance funded lines. Some of those are for parks  
14 that aren't technically city parks. They are more  
15 city/state entities like— Hold on a second. Like  
16 Hudson River Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park. So, they  
17 have about 50 of those 81 lines in those two parks,  
18 and then other parks and conservancies do pay us for  
19 contract positions, PEP positions for their park,  
20 which frankly enables us to move our city funded  
21 lines to other parks. So, by them paying to kind of  
22 extra and above to have dedicated PEP staff there, it  
23 allows us to move our city tax levy lines other  
24 places, but that includes Riverside Park, the  
25 Highline, West Harlem Piers, Washington Square Park,

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

74

2 Madison Square Park, Randall's Island, East River,  
3 Hudson Yards the Met.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Well, quite a field.

5 So, how many officers total?

6 COMMISSIONER NELSON: (interposing) So,

7 all of those total like 30.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, how many officers?

9 Total 30?

10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Those total 30 plus

11 the other HRP and Brooklyn Bridge Park to another 50

12 so the total is 81.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: 81?

14 COMMISSIONER NELSON: 81.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Oh, the--

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Our grand funded

17 line.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: --have the contracts?

19 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: That's good to know. So

21 how many officers in total in those parks, 81?

22 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, it's 81 grant

23 funded lines and then there's an additional four PEP,

24 two for Randall's Island is part of that cooperative

25

2 agreement and two for Riverside. Again, as part of  
3 our Cooperative Agreement.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, what was the dollar  
5 amount contracted for each of these parks? The  
6 arrangement, you know, from how much to how much?

7 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yeah, I-I-  
8 Unfortunately, I only have the number of lines. I  
9 don't have what that will opt into-into the amount of  
10 the contract, but we can get that for you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. So, why-why are  
12 PEP Officers not armed as Police Officers?

13 COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, again if you  
14 think about the history of the program and the PEP  
15 Program it was really focused at a time where the  
16 NYPD was focused on crime and those kind of more  
17 serious conditions and no one is really patrolling  
18 our parks for quality of life offenses, and that was  
19 really detracting from people's enjoyment of the  
20 parks. So, PEP was really created to focus on  
21 quality of life and Park rules so that somebody was  
22 enforcing those rules. We understand that any time  
23 you are interacting with a park patron, you know, it  
24 has the ability to-it could be contentious. We want  
25 to make sure our officers are safe. That is why they

2 always patrol in pairs, and they wear ballistic vests  
3 and they carry, you know, handcuffs and pepper spray  
4 and batons, but we think that strikes the right  
5 balance to kind of—the NYPD focuses on crime as we  
6 focus on our quality of life offenses and park rules  
7 and again, we understand that just having PEP  
8 presence in our parks helps the safety and security  
9 and so we appreciate that, and that is a great value  
10 to our parks, but we feel like that's the right  
11 balance.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. So has there  
13 ever been an effort made to arm the PEP Officers?  
14 Have you ever talked about it?

15 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again, I think they  
16 are armed in the sense of batons, just not with guns,  
17 and I think it's something we, you know, we look at  
18 periodically to kind of make sure we're striking the  
19 right balance, but we feel we are at the right  
20 balance now.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Any more  
22 questions?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.

3 I just have one or two questions. When because  
4 following up on the Councilman Brannan's question  
5 about real time, we have an unleashed dog in the  
6 park. Sometimes we'll call 911 even because the dog  
7 was dangerous let's say or it appears dangerous and  
8 we've had dog, you know, go after roller-bladers and-  
9 and even going up to somebody, a mother pushing her  
10 stroller and the dog would come up and lick the child  
11 in the face. Those are disturbing things, but it's  
12 not a 911. But some of these unleashed dogs--dog  
13 complaints should be addressed quickly, and I don't  
14 think that's happening with PEP. So, that's why I  
15 think the City Council would love to hear the real  
16 time what's--how are these call coming across? If  
17 there's a dog that's kind of dangerous or people feel  
18 unsafe, that the PEP should-should respond because  
19 again NYPD rarely responds. Over my years of working  
20 we haven't seen that. So, that's why we need to know  
21 if we have to have another category 311 where there's  
22 something a little bit more of an emergency, yet  
23 where PEP can-respond quickly.

24 COMMISSIONER NELSON:

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN:

2           COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. I think you  
3 raised a good point, and I think it's something we're  
4 going to look into, and we'll do it. (sic)

5           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right, yeah, but—  
6 but I—I just want to get into something that I—and I  
7 think you have to get back to me on this probably,  
8 but when you do give a summons, when PEP does give  
9 summons to somebody with an off-leash dog, they  
10 should also check for—if the dog has a license.  
11 That's—this is the law by the way and the Health  
12 Department Code says you have to—if your dog is  
13 unleashed in a New York City park or anywhere, you  
14 have to have papers. You have to have that the dog is  
15 licensed, and also that a dog has been immunized, you  
16 know has been given all the shots. I don't know how  
17 many people carry that around or even know about  
18 that. So, I would like to know how many summonses  
19 were issued where somebody was given, you know, a  
20 citation or a summons for not carrying these papers.  
21 Because if we're going to have a law, it's got to be  
22 enforced and if it's not enforced because let me tell  
23 you why this is important because I've had in Juniper  
24 Valley Park somebody bitten. The person—the dog  
25 owner gave false information to the person that was

2 bit and then took off. Now, you know what that  
3 person that was bitten on the ankle has to do. You  
4 know that, and that's why this law is on the books,  
5 but if we're not getting it enforced, well if the PEP  
6 Officers don't know about it or are not issuing  
7 summonses, because I want to know how many summonses  
8 were issued in the City of New York in 2019 for  
9 somebody walking a dog off leash without these  
10 papers.

11 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I understand the  
12 question, and why it's important, and I think we're  
13 going to have to get back to you on with all the  
14 data--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, but I-

16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: --but I don't know  
17 if Commissioner Rodriguez wants to based on his  
18 enforcement experience add anything to that.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We  
20 train for that at the-at that training academy. It's  
21 my understanding the law is that you cannot your  
22 license, the dog license without having all that  
23 paperwork. So, the officers--some ask for paperwork  
24 but they do make sure that the dog is licensed. So,  
25 they don't have to be updating

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --So they don't  
3 need updated shots with the pet-rabies?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well,  
5 the license. We'll go by the license. So, if the  
6 dog has a license, then we're assuming that because  
7 of the law because you have to update--maintain your  
8 license that the dog--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So you just ask  
10 for the license, but I still would like to know how  
11 many--

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah  
13 we can tell you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --if you didn't  
15 carry your license what happens? I mean would  
16 somebody be issued a summons and because they didn't  
17 have their license? Right? Okay.

18 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yeah, we're going  
19 to look into that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank  
21 you, Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Yeah, you  
23 made some great points. Yes. So, we are done with  
24 our questions of you. The chair is done. So, we are  
25 going to call the second panel. We have Joe Puleo

2 DC37 and Lalana Giger from Local 983. (background  
3 comments/pause) So thank you for coming. So please  
4 identify yourself and then you may start, yes.

5           JOE PULEO: Okay, Good afternoon City  
6 Council, good afternoon Chairman Koo, Good afternoon  
7 City Council Members. My name is Joe Puleo. I am  
8 the President of Local 983. I am also the Committee  
9 Chair for D37 on Parks. Okay, I'd like to thank each  
10 one of you for doing such a great job. In my 20  
11 years of being an elected official with the union,  
12 I've been on most satisfied with this particular  
13 Administration. I just want you to know that, and  
14 I'm very thankful for the 80 PEP Officers and the 50  
15 Park Rangers. That's been a significant boost, but  
16 year that is still not enough. It barely scratches  
17 the surface. Instead of being in the hundreds we  
18 should be in the thousands. You know, there's not  
19 enough PEP Officers out there to do the job. I just  
20 want to remind everybody that the PEP Officers are  
21 proactive not reactive. A lot of people say why not  
22 just call NYPD? Don't they do the same job? Yes,  
23 they do a great job, but they only respond to calls  
24 and when they do respond to calls--and I understand  
25 Councilman Holden's frustration--it's not a priority,

2 and there's lack of communication and we keep going  
3 over the same problems over and over and over again,  
4 and I think it was Einstein that said, right that the  
5 interpretation of anxiety was, you know, you keep  
6 doing the same thing over again and expecting  
7 different results. We have to make changes. That's  
8 the only way we're going to resolve these issues. We  
9 need--number one, we need to keep that money for  
10 these PEP Officers that we hired for the summer and  
11 the rangers and these have to be baselined. That is  
12 the most important thing that we can do right now.  
13 Do we need more? Yes, we need more, and if we could  
14 add more, I'd like to see like I said hundreds more,  
15 and I understand Commissioner Nelson. Nobody wants  
16 to tell their boss that they need more money, and I'm  
17 sure that four PEP Officers are insufficient for a  
18 park like Flushing Meadows Park that has I believe  
19 1,200 acres of park land depending on who you talk  
20 to. We need--we need all of our force just to cover  
21 that park alone. You know, that park deserves that  
22 that civil service underling whose a PEP Officer.  
23 I've been there. I worked in a number of different  
24 parks. A lot of the time is spent in Queens. I know  
25 that I did--I did a lot of time in Juniper Valley

2 Park. It's all now in Council Member Holden's  
3 district, and I know—I know how frustrating it gets  
4 with these big dogs in the ball field. Some of  
5 these, you know, appear to be vicious at times  
6 unfortunately, and it creates, it creates a lot of  
7 fear in the people of that community. We need—again  
8 I can't—I can't emphasize how much we need more PEP  
9 Officers. They are 24-hour peace officers. Erica has  
10 mentioned and she said: Why aren't they armed? Well,  
11 they're not armed because the Park Commission chooses  
12 for them not to be armed. You know, would we be  
13 receptive to the idea? Yes, you know, it could be  
14 brought to our attention about, you know, about—about  
15 how many. I'm open to questions if anybody has any.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Does anybody  
17 have questions?

18 MARLENA GIGO: Okay. How are you. My  
19 name is Marlana Gigo. I'm proudly from the Bronx.  
20 I've been a PEP Officer for 15 years. Currently I'm  
21 working as a union rep. PEP is definitely a  
22 necessity in New York City, and I can attest to the  
23 fact that we are proactive more than reactive. We're  
24 a deterrent and take enforcement action in all  
25 situations. Okay, we issue dogs off lease—leash,

2 unlawful exposure, people exposing themselves in  
3 parks, unlawful vending, any situation we come upon  
4 we take action. I have responded to people with  
5 firearms in a park. So, no matter what it is, we're  
6 there, we take action, an PEP I vital to all five  
7 boroughs. Mr. Holden, you hit it right on the nose  
8 with the dogs off the leash. PEP Officers they do  
9 address the dogs off the leash. My number one  
10 summons for 15 was dogs off the leash. One of the  
11 issues that we face as PEP Officers is the dog  
12 owners, and I'm a dog owner myself. I do rescues,  
13 but the dog owners will give us hell. They—once they  
14 assault us, they belittle us, they make complaints on  
15 us and a lot of times we don't get the backing from  
16 the agency because at time we do have to make the  
17 arrests and the last thing that a PEP Officer wants  
18 to do is arrest somebody for their dog off the leash.  
19 Now the dog has to get impounded, and the owner goes  
20 to the precinct. So, at—many times we just advise  
21 the person leash the dog up. The good thing is that  
22 the—the dog owners that we see, we—we typically see  
23 them daily. So, I may see you today and give you a  
24 break, but tomorrow when I catch you, you're not  
25 getting a break. You're going to get the summons.

2 So, that's the number one complaint that—that we  
3 receive regarding when an officer has to go to the  
4 advocates. I just want to add that there's still not  
5 enough PEP Officers in all boroughs, and retention is  
6 still a problem due to the salary. Another issue is  
7 a lack of command space for our officers. The  
8 officers are on top of each other. They're in  
9 trailers, they're in bathrooms. It's gotten better,  
10 but it's still really hard to find space for our  
11 officers. It's like a low priority for the  
12 department, and lack of vehicles. In Manhattan South  
13 alone there are only two vehicles to respond to all  
14 of Lower Manhattan from 59<sup>th</sup> Street and lower. So  
15 definitely a problem and then in the summer starting  
16 in May our PEP Officers get assigned to the beaches  
17 and the pools, and typically the work day is from  
18 11:00 to 7:00, which leaves two to three officers in  
19 the whole borough. It's more like 60 officers that  
20 get stepped up, which leaves less officers in the  
21 boroughs at the height of the season because in the  
22 summertime you have more dogs off the leash, you have  
23 more illegal vendors, you have more people coming to  
24 the park to do illegal things, and the amount of  
25 officers is even lower. What I want to add Mr.

2 Holder is years ago you used to be able—a member of  
3 the public used to be able to call Central  
4 Communications and state: There's dogs has left the  
5 leash in Flushing Meadows or Pelham Bay Park at a  
6 particular location. In real time those officers  
7 were dispatched. The call went right from Central  
8 Communications out to the borough with the exact  
9 location in real time. I have no idea why we went  
10 away from that, but that's something that we can talk  
11 about with the agency to bring back, and it was a 1-  
12 800 number and it was actually posted different parks  
13 throughout the city. And then I just want to add  
14 that the unlicensed dog summons we do issue it. I've  
15 issued a number of them. It's a hefty fine. It's a  
16 \$250 fine by having your dog unlicensed. The problem  
17 is a lot of people don't even know about this law.  
18 Most people choose to purchase their dog from puppy  
19 mills or back yard breeders, and nobody is actually  
20 disseminating the information about the law. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Council  
23 Member Holden yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN. Right and that's  
25 a, you know, that's an important point that the city

2 doesn't tell people this and that's their  
3 responsibility, and so they need you guys out there,  
4 and you have to enforce the law. Yeah, if people  
5 don't know about it, and then they're going to be  
6 upset at you for this hefty fine and then you catch  
7 heck on the front lines, and I—and I've seen and I've  
8 seen you—the PEP Officers in action and certainly I  
9 feel as—a as somebody who ran an association a local  
10 civic association for a number of years and was on  
11 the front lines with the PEP Officers the frustration  
12 because you're out there yet you're not backed by the  
13 Administration. You're not—I mean you're starting  
14 salary is it \$50,000?

15 MARLENA GIGO: Correct.

16 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] It just went up.  
17 It was at \$32,000

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: 32.

19 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] I think it goes  
20 to \$50,000 when you're retained so we've been working  
21 hard on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And what's the  
23 top salary.

24 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] The top salary  
25 for PEP Officer, that's like \$28,000 to \$60,000.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay that-that-s  
3 so again for what. That's low for what-living in New  
4 York City for 20 years of service on the front lines  
5 dealing with the public and in law enforcement that is  
6 very, very low and, um, we will-we will certainly  
7 talk about this in the future, but that-that is  
8 unacceptable, and that's why you-you don't-you can't  
9 keep people very long because you can't live in New  
10 York City and make, you know. You have-you have to  
11 have a second job probably and to survive. But  
12 dealing, you know, dealing with-and I-and I know that  
13 dealing with especially unleashed dogs it's a-it's a  
14 safety issue because like I mentioned people if  
15 they're not carrying papers and their dog attacks  
16 somebody and he's bitten, somebody is bitten and they  
17 give false information or have no information or just  
18 take off, and that happens a lot in New York City  
19 parks, and what I think this administration and the  
20 previous administrations have done is they placate  
21 everybody to feel that they're safe because oh, we  
22 have PEP out there. Yes, but you're not telling how  
23 many PEP Officers are out there, which are very few  
24 historically, and as the City Council I think we have  
25 to put in more than just 80, and like I said before,

2 if we had 480, 580, it still would not be enough, and  
3 we need, and if we want to protect billion dollars of  
4 investment in our parks, the PEP Officers are the  
5 number one protection that we can offer the public.  
6 So, I think as the City Council I hope we fight this  
7 year for a bigger a much larger budget, but also give  
8 you the tools. Not give you vehicles or gators to  
9 get around larger parks is an insult or to give—don't  
10 give—if they don't give you the equipment it's an  
11 insult and this is what each administration has done,  
12 you know, that I've been around. They always make it  
13 like I said, it's a symbol. PEP is a symbol. We're  
14 out—we're listening to the public. Yeah we have PEP  
15 Officers, but if you look behind the screen there's  
16 nothing—there's very little there that they're—  
17 they're providing these officers, and very little  
18 support. The fact that you don't have equipment is a  
19 disgrace in a city with a \$96 billion Budget, and you  
20 don't have—you don't have the necessary tools, but I—  
21 I thank you for your service and thank you for all  
22 the work that you've done.

23 MARLENA GIGO: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [off mic] Council  
3 Member Miller how many more is this? (sic)

4 JOE PULEO: [off mic] Like I said, and  
5 I'll give you an example of this. 30 something  
6 thousand for police officers. I think we have over  
7 3,000 practicing. We only have 307 PEP Officers.  
8 Again in my estimate this wouldn't basically do the  
9 job adequately. I would say they need about 3,000  
10 minimum for us to really get to the standards that we  
11 already have here in your statement. There should be  
12 stationary PEP Officers in each park. You shouldn't  
13 have these roads and these details or response set  
14 for five minutes, and if you don't see anything  
15 happen you just go onto the next. And again, I don't  
16 that—they haven't mentioned it. I think we do this  
17 together but it's in the summertime. We already  
18 depleted, we sawed it off there. The thing we take  
19 whatever have little, you know, we put in beaches and  
20 our pools. So, could you imagine there's nobody in  
21 the park during these times unfortunately, and then  
22 we also have to account for people being sick, IBOs,  
23 regular days off, holidays. You know, all of these  
24 things, you know sick—all of these days that, you  
25 know, there is down time and sometimes our officers

2 have to patrol unfortunately by themselves and the  
3 seasonal help that we get they don't have the powers  
4 to do this job. You know, they—they come in very—  
5 with very minimal powers. You know, all they can  
6 basically do is call another PEP Officer to get on  
7 the radio and ask for help with NYPD.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. So, can  
9 you—can I ask you something else then. I mean what  
10 are the challenges PEP Officers face everyday?  
11 Sometimes they are assigned to like some parks that  
12 have no people, right? So, it's kind of very boring  
13 for them. Well, I don't—I don't know about boring.  
14 Not in this city.

15 MARLENA GIGO: No. [laughs]

16 JOE PULEO: There's a lot of activity to  
17 go around especially when you're short staffed, and  
18 we also sometimes forget these are first responders,  
19 you know, and we forget that these are the same  
20 people that responded to 9/11 when we were here in  
21 Battery Park City. You know we were there, you know,  
22 and, you know some of us unfortunately are getting  
23 sick from what's happened in 9/11. You know, we  
24 respond to the situation. We don't make the

2 determination when we—we witness a crime being  
3 committed.

4                   CHAIRPERSON KOO: We take action. Okay,  
5 so, um, that—that—that puts us all in control. We  
6 don't just pick up the phone and say something bad is  
7 happening here. We make the arrest, and when we make  
8 the arrest, we don't just drop them off at the  
9 precinct. We do the paperwork, and then we take them  
10 to Central Communications or Central Booking where we  
11 process them, and if we deal with the emotionally  
12 disturbed people we take them to the hospital, and  
13 we, you know we make sure that they don't hurt  
14 themselves.

15                   CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, yeah.

16                   MARLENA GIGO: Well, I just want to add  
17 any of the major events whether it be an event in  
18 Central Park or in Flushing Meadow, what you have to  
19 understand as well is that when the officers are  
20 detailed, they're detailed from other boroughs and  
21 other locations, which means that those are the  
22 locations are going to be short-staffed for either  
23 the day or two weeks. The New York City Marathon the  
24 officers are detailed in from Manhattan specifically  
25 for the Marathon. So, you're taking away from the

2 other boroughs, and there is never a dull moment in  
3 PEP by the way. I mean you name it, we do it from  
4 animal rescue to homeless encampments. For the most  
5 part the public is happy to see us, and I have to say  
6 I truly love my job because of that. It's a great  
7 job.

8 MALE SPEAKER: We're sure not here for  
9 the money that's for sure.

10 MARLENA GIGO: Right.

11 MALE SPEAKER: What you see in that  
12 salary range is really deplorable. We think because  
13 we like the parks we like to work outdoors, we like  
14 to help people. That's I think the viewpoint of also  
15 our members.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you very much and  
17 thank you for your service. Yes.

18 MARLENA GIGO: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Next we have the last  
20 panel. There's Emily Walker from New Yorkers for  
21 Parks, and Al Morales from United—the United  
22 Association and Roseanne Delgado from Friends of  
23 Pelham Parkway. (background comments/pause)

24 FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Ready.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah. (background  
3 comments/pause)

4 EMILY WALKER: Thank you. Good  
5 afternoon. My name is Emily Walker and I'm the  
6 Director of Outreach and Programs at New Yorkers For  
7 Parks. I want to thank the Committee on Parks and  
8 Recreation for inviting us to testify at today's  
9 important hearing. NYC for P believes that the safety  
10 of our public parks and open spaces is critical for  
11 their accessibility to the widest number of New  
12 Yorkers and its visitors as possible. Perceptions of  
13 park safety are key to a number of constituencies  
14 feeling safe to visit and use our parks in particular  
15 women, families with children and elderly. The  
16 presence of uniformed staff such as Parks Enforcement  
17 Patrol Officers and urban park rangers in our parks  
18 is one critical way to ensure that visitors can feel  
19 safe in their local open spaces. Last year our  
20 organization spearheaded the creation of the place  
21 air pollution. I'm joined by the two members of that  
22 coalition on this very panel and we advocated for a  
23 \$100 million addition to the city's expense budget  
24 for NYC Parks. One of our coalition's successes I  
25 think as the Council well know is the addition of \$6

2 million to the FY20 budget to fund the 80 new Parks  
3 Enforcement Patrol Officers and the \$3 million to  
4 fund 50 new urban park ranger positions. While these  
5 positions are different in many ways as we've heard  
6 into today's hearing, they both share the ability to  
7 enforce park rules and regulations, and we believe  
8 help convey safety to park goers when they are  
9 present. While our coalition was thrilled to  
10 successfully advocate for these new staff homes we  
11 also feel that we need to strongly convey our concern  
12 that this funding, which was made possible by the  
13 City Council on the one shot basis, it's set to  
14 expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. There are advanced  
15 education requirements for both positions as well as  
16 a lengthy mandatory background check and month long  
17 training process for PEP, and as you've heard for  
18 also the Urban Park Ranger staff line. These are  
19 good things. We want our uniformed park safety  
20 professionals to be the right one for the position.  
21 We want them to be trained sufficiently, but that  
22 will take time, but as we also know that costs money.  
23 Although we won the funding for these positions last  
24 summer many of them as a result of this process have  
25 only just recently deployed into our park at the

2 beginning of this calendar year. We are concerned  
3 that without a commitment from the Administration to  
4 baseline and make permanent these positions, the city  
5 will lose these critical 80 PEP and 50 Urban Park  
6 Rangers staff lines come July 1<sup>st</sup> when the FY21  
7 Budget goes into effect. We wouldn't just lose those  
8 dedicated professionals. We would lose the  
9 significant investment the city and in particular the  
10 City Council has made in recruiting and training  
11 these hard to sell critical positions. The Play Fair  
12 Coalition will be asking the Mayor to baseline these  
13 positions to the FY21 Budget at a minimum, and to  
14 preserve these hard fought jobs and to ensure the NYC  
15 Parks' investment in training these new PEP Officers  
16 and Urban Park Rangers is preserved. Finally, New  
17 Yorkers for Parks strongly believes that the safety  
18 of our parks and open spaces depends on a number of  
19 factors beyond the work done even by our PEP Officers  
20 or within Park Rangers. Parks that lack sufficient  
21 maintenance and programming are parks that are  
22 overall less likely to feel welcoming to the  
23 communities that they are located within. Depending  
24 on the features of a park, there are even specific  
25 horticultural maintenance issues that can lead

2 visitors to feel unsafe in their park. To that end,  
3 we firmly believe that creating a more welcoming and  
4 safe park system for all New Yorkers depends on  
5 robust dedicated funding from our permanent baselined  
6 staff from PEP Officers and Urban Park Rangers to  
7 safe park workers and gardeners. This idea is at the  
8 heart of work convening the Play Fair Coalition, and  
9 it informs their advocacy work to seek more resources  
10 for NYC Parks maintenance and operation staff. All  
11 of our NYC Parks play an integral role in keeping our  
12 parks safe, clean and beautiful, and we urge the  
13 Council to remember this as we enter budget season.  
14 Thank you for inviting me to speak today and I'm  
15 happy to answer any questions that the Council may  
16 have.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Yeah, so  
18 why don't we finish with the speaker first.

19 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Hello, hello. Thank  
20 you--

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes.

22 ROSEANNE DELGADO:--Chair Koo for holding  
23 this oversight meeting because I know that the many  
24 powers that be want to save the planet, but no one  
25 wants to take care of their own back yard. So, I

2 appreciate you for taking the leadership and caring  
3 for our parks. This is our back yard, and as more  
4 people on this planet need to be cared for and  
5 protected because they're not going to be over-  
6 developed. Now, I'd like to say at the Central  
7 Parkway we had issues with 311 where the response  
8 time is over 24 hours. If sometimes over the  
9 weekends it's not addressed until the following  
10 Monday, and the issue with that is it's a short  
11 timeframe, very short when the violations we process  
12 are bark chewing, urination, public urination or  
13 drinking or fireworks and even something as well. So  
14 we have that short time where we actually have  
15 numbers in central communications when I called them  
16 to discuss a meeting to the violation-site violation.  
17 Now, like I said, you don't—it's not an optimal means  
18 in reporting violations. So, when you say you want  
19 to make this program successful well, when there's an  
20 initial space of this program has a lot of issues  
21 meaning that it's not that successful when the public  
22 cannot report the—the violation in a timely manner to  
23 PEP to Enforcement, that really breaks the—this  
24 program. So, with my issue with 311 like I said, I  
25 avoid 311 and have to call Central Communications

2 directly, but the issue is that with Central  
3 communications is that they dispatch the PEP  
4 Officers. A lot of times they don't know if a PEP  
5 Officer responded and how-if it was job. So many  
6 times I could see PEP Officers passing by to even  
7 barbecuing, it's driving by and then they didn't know  
8 that they responded, but it bars (sic) to the  
9 facility progress. So I have to close Central again  
10 saying wait. Nothing has resolved. That's where-  
11 where PEP doesn't follow. They have my number. I  
12 gave them my phone number, I gave them my email, I  
13 gave them my address, I gave them my phone number, I  
14 gave my phone number, everything to contact me, but  
15 they don't follow up with me saying you still got us.  
16 We have received a response from you that's there's  
17 even the bar to, you know, with the staff or the SS  
18 site, and we understand that they're driving by. My  
19 second issue is that I have been visiting NYC Parks.  
20 I know it also makes sense. I understand that the  
21 work that is really going on the manager has the  
22 capability to pitch a point of shareholders like to  
23 the CEO. I understand parks is-it's in a-it's  
24 between two rocks between the public and political  
25 fears, but honestly there's not enough PEP Officers.

2 It's that ultimate parkway. We're like a stepchild  
3 of a stepchild because we're not close to their  
4 playgrounds so sorry. We're going to put at the  
5 school scaled parkway so they are—both parkways  
6 looking and really nothing. We hardly see—I recall  
7 where a couple of things the public is glad to see  
8 them, but we never see them so we can't be elated  
9 because we don't see they're at—they're present at  
10 the parkway. Now regarding I'd like to say regarding  
11 the racial aspect, I have this week Mark Gjonaj, the  
12 issue is actually partially the actual air is the way  
13 they're coming. In an area where cars are not inside  
14 those communities, it's where there's not enforcement  
15 and they hold summons, and because actually I spoke  
16 to her on PEP Officers, and I didn't disclose names.  
17 I'm not that kind of person. It states that they—they  
18 decided this is the culture of the Bronx where  
19 drinking, illegal parking and you get public  
20 information about coaching. That is quite offensive  
21 because that is not our culture. Many would love to  
22 be on that process, Queens and that's why many of us  
23 are Bronx, you know, the time writing our own  
24 resources helps keep us positive, community and  
25 states with me. Regarding this park enhancement of

2 the park, actually will speak. He has Liza Loudner  
3 who addresses issues because I lack the scale to  
4 address it and they actually when she reported all  
5 the encampment of 16 young men doing K-2, urinating  
6 even defecation on the benches, down at the Jealous  
7 Court and DHS and—and the Department of Health and  
8 Parks, and these people responded and they were—there  
9 were moved overnight. So the parkway close official  
10 at 1:00 AM. The park tours ends at 11:00 PM. So  
11 there's a gap between that where are sometimes  
12 several individuals who do sleep on the Parkway, and  
13 I'm still—I'm sad about them being homeless. It's not  
14 a place for people to live because there's no public  
15 bathroom and the defecate and it's not a sanitary  
16 condition for the public and me, and I'll make this  
17 really short regarding because I know you have even  
18 something it's called—Holden said to provide a test  
19 of their equipment that's needed. There is too much  
20 even and there's no bath. You can see the pictures,  
21 the furniture, metal scraps. You name it. Anything  
22 you can imagine except for a dead body has been  
23 dumped on Pelham Parkway. It's just too much dumping.  
24 What's needed is due to the lack of PEP Officers and  
25 technology, just basic cameras. Well, this could pay

2 for itself because most of the dumping is done by  
3 commercial buildings, commercial dumpsters by even  
4 superintendents. I mean they have large pockets.  
5 That's done by poor people who are like bringing  
6 their furniture and bring it because they have a  
7 trash pickup. It's the businesses that don't want to  
8 pay for the trash pickup. And lastly, my main concern  
9 and the main thing that harms our property is the  
10 illegal barbecue because like I said, for some reason  
11 not only do parkways does not receive any couple of  
12 placings like they're looking all the way around  
13 because they think of our culture? No, our culture  
14 is I mean were aren't trade trees for these things,  
15 and we want to have the enjoyment of the park. They  
16 want to have the clean air. We didn't want that we  
17 would not be seeking the park. We would not be  
18 cleaning up the Parkway, and that has to be really  
19 addressed because the barbecue is really destroying  
20 the trees and we have—we have a very small number of  
21 trees in the compacted lower side. We did right by  
22 talking to NYCHA. Right. A lot of the co-op owners  
23 were old people, immigrants. You can name it, okay.  
24 I think it's at lease 35% spoke it in that community,  
25 all unite for I love trees, I love grass. I hope—

2 thank you for your time. I thank you for taking the  
3 leadership in addressing this issue. Thank you  
4 again. Bye.

5 ALLEN MORALES: Good afternoon Chairman  
6 Koo and members of the Council. My name is Allen  
7 Morales and I'm the Chairman of the United Athletic  
8 Association. It's a non-profit advocacy group that  
9 advocates for little leagues and adult leagues and  
10 recreational programs. I want to thank the committee  
11 for the great questions to the PEP Officers-  
12 officials. A lot of them they covered a lot of what  
13 I was going to be asking. Our main concern is  
14 currently Morningside Park. As you know, we had a  
15 tragedy there recently, and over the past three years  
16 our players have been making calls to PEP and to the  
17 local PD emergency calls because of the harassment  
18 that was developing. Obviously, it's committed to  
19 this point now, and so just wanted to highlight that.  
20 Obviously there's-I see a PEP car there during the  
21 afternoons. I'm not sure what's happening at night.  
22 We will be monitoring that when the spring season  
23 comes, but generally speaking the problem I've had,  
24 we've had wit the PEP and the PD is response time,  
25 we've asked others that. One of the Council Members

2 mentioned that, and, you know, I'm-I'm-we're still  
3 recommending that they, you know, do a better job and  
4 maybe some preventive action. There are parks that  
5 are getting calls more call from more parks than  
6 others with problems. Maybe they should be  
7 stationed, and I know they have less vehicles than  
8 they should have. Maybe there should be a PEP  
9 vehicle stations near and the vicinity of those  
10 problem parks the response time is cut to-  
11 considerably, which is a real problem. Basically  
12 that's it. I mean our-our main concern is that  
13 response time. You know, once they get there, they  
14 do a good job with the police with PEP. We need to  
15 cut the response time and work on some preventative  
16 measures that they can help with. I've been involved  
17 with PEP since '81 since they started and I'm  
18 impressed with the work they do, and they do a good  
19 job once they show up. That's the problem is getting  
20 them on time. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, thank you. So, our  
22 committee will work very hard to make sure the city  
23 the Administration and our budget is baselined at  
24 least those PEP Officers we already have, and those  
25 lenders (sic), you know, we have. And my question

2 to-to Roseanne is you mentioned strongly about an  
3 illegal barbecue.

4 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: At first-sometimes it's  
6 a larger barbecuing, but you made a primitive one.

7 ROSEANNE DELGADO: There are-Chair  
8 they're at the same areas like Bronx barbecues like  
9 Catona Park, Budget (sic) Park and Pelham Bay Park  
10 in designated areas. But in other parts like well  
11 Pelham Park is not a park, but Bronx Park there is no  
12 barbecue committed, and Pelham Park it's not a park  
13 and there's permitted for barbecuing.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Do you have a sign that  
15 says no barbecuing?

16 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Yes, thank our advocacy  
17 efforts because over a year I finally have a sign  
18 stating because I would actually call NYPD because I  
19 would go to a point I freeze and I also blocked them.  
20 Sorry, and they come, but they say well there's no  
21 sign. So, we really tell people. So we finally do  
22 have some signs, and we do need more signage, but I  
23 have to say and I love PEP because they are good men  
24 and women, but at the same time it's like they seem  
25 sometimes to look the other way because they say that

2 it's a culture. It's not a culture. They created  
3 that poster by the lack of enforcement--

4 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Uh-hm.

5 ROSEANNE DELGADO: --and if you go to  
6 other parks like Madison Park, you can't even smoke.  
7 You'll be surrounded by the pay. Because everybody  
8 pays for their pets. You'd be surrounded within a  
9 second after you did not smoke or you'd be summoned.  
10 That's not the case in Pelham Parkway. Unfortunately  
11 we're--we're the last here because we're not even  
12 considered a park, but yet the uses of Pelham Park is  
13 greatly large especially in the summer and you can  
14 see like hundreds of people picnicking, biking,  
15 cycling. It's a party of both Bronx of the two  
16 largest parks in the Bronx because there's a lot of  
17 people, a lot of traffic, foot patrol. So, I feel  
18 like we need some kind of enforcement. I think  
19 designated park enforcement or just the park staff.  
20 We kind of educate the public. Like we do tabling  
21 but we do it in lawn chair base, and it can't be a  
22 full time everyday, but we make it just part of the  
23 people now actually using trash cans, picking up  
24 their dog. But we have issues with the fire pit and  
25 the main thing is that you're taken away from the

2 pressure from the scene and as well as damages to  
3 shore trees that can never be replaced. No money.  
4 Well, if you carry the church people we have a few  
5 there older than you are chair, and we want them safe  
6 and we want to keep them for the next generation.  
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, and we  
9 appreciate your advocacy for the city.

10 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Thank you Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: We will make sure we  
12 work together with the Administration to really solve  
13 this problem.

14 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Council Member Holden.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you all for  
17 your testimony, and Ms. Delgado, I identify with  
18 your—with this because I used to do this. I used to  
19 take photographs. I was a photographer in my  
20 previous life, but I was also a park advocate, and  
21 let's look at frustration. People barbecuing. We  
22 had a capital project in my park a very large park  
23 and I dreaded the fourth of July-

24 ROSEANNE DELGADO: I do, too.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --because people  
3 would descend on the park and after reconstruction  
4 we—we went for a year and a half of reconstruction  
5 they almost burned it down in one night because of  
6 the fireworks, but finally what I did as a civic  
7 leader I brought it up, I photographed it,  
8 demonstrated how we just wasted millions of dollars  
9 on a park that was burned down in one day. After that  
10 for the next 25 years they would put the Police  
11 Command Center next to the park to, you know, find  
12 people or, you know, chase them if they had any  
13 fireworks, and that worked for almost 25 years, and  
14 then we made sure as a civic association and that—  
15 that park was protected. These are the kind of  
16 efforts, and you saw and you—you all highlighted the  
17 problems with 311 and reporting these kind of  
18 incidents. You—you call 311 and report barbecuing in  
19 a park, forget about it. You're wasting your time.  
20 You've got to call 911, which we try to do, they  
21 start an open fire, you know, I'd say. I would have  
22 to, you know, I would have to exaggerate almost to  
23 get the cops there because otherwise they would burn  
24 the place down, but you get to a point where that's  
25 what you have to do. So, the city Administration

2 discourages all the volunteers like you guys because  
3 you're beating your head against the wall many times.  
4 There's not enough PEP officers. They're not  
5 responding in real time, and, of course, the police  
6 are not going to come to somebody barbecuing in the  
7 parks when they have a lot of other things going on.  
8 So, it falls between the cracks, and like you said,  
9 they are creating a culture. They are creating a  
10 culture like do anything you want in the park,  
11 destroy the parks, abuse the parks and they leave  
12 what you've shown here, they leave garbage behind and  
13 they get away with it. So, if we're going to continue  
14 this it's like we're in a vicious cycle but what—what  
15 they don't know about is all the volunteers like you  
16 that they discourage them because you get a lot more  
17 volunteers if you're making a difference and you  
18 could see if you stop this, you'll feel better,  
19 you'll feel emboldened. You will get more  
20 volunteers. We have volunteers in my district that  
21 clean up the parks regularly, that take care of it.  
22 They stay with the parks. They make sure the parks  
23 are beautiful because we don't have enough parks  
24 maintenance people. We know that.

25 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: New Yorkers for  
3 Parks already, you know, know that we've never had  
4 enough maintenance money, or maintenance workers ever  
5 in my lifetime for all the acreage that we have and  
6 all the parks that we have. They've never put enough  
7 into it. They put a lot into capital, and then very  
8 little into maintenance to maintain it, which doesn't  
9 make any sense. So, I would—I would say let's, you  
10 know, let's put less in the capital--

11 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --and more into  
13 the maintenance so we could balance it off a little  
14 better, and things would live longer, and we wouldn't  
15 have to have these huge projects. But I want to—I  
16 just want to—I so identify with this because I went  
17 through this battle many, many times and I continue  
18 to do it, but now I'm going to fight to try to get  
19 more PEP Officers but certainly in my position, but  
20 certainly, you know, we all will, but certainly to  
21 encourage more volunteers. and we thank you for  
22 coming down today because this is such a—I know it's  
23 sitting here so many hours and all the work that you  
24 guys do, it's appreciated at least by many of us in  
25 the City Council and I thank you.

2 ROSEANNE DELGADO: I have faith in the  
3 Chair and the members that they will do the right  
4 thing by Parks as I am here to advocate. I do think  
5 that you—I think that you can feel our pain if you  
6 understand where the problems—the roots of the  
7 problems are and we need you powers and advocacy to  
8 fight the community. Thank you so much, Chair.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: We'll do it  
10 together. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. So, the  
12 Administration is still here. They heard all your  
13 questions and all your problems. I hope like in the  
14 future months we will sit together and we will solve  
15 the problem together.

16 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Any time, Chair, any  
17 time.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

19 ROSEANNE DELGADO: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, any more --

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1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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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 March 11, 2020