

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY,  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AND COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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March 31, 2014

Start: 10:15 a.m.

Recess: 5:24 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

MARK TREYGER

Chairperson

DONOVAN J. RICHARDS

Co-Chairperson

JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Stephen T. Levin

Costa G. Constantinides

Rory I. Lancman

Eric A. Ulrich

Public Advocate Letitia James

Margaret S. Chin

Carlos Menchaca

Steven Matteo

Vincent M. Ignizio

Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito

Corey D. Johnson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

Alan N. Maisel

Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.

Antonio Reynoso

Rosie Mendez

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Mark Levine

Ritchie J. Torres

Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Ydanis A. Rodriguez

Helen K. Rosenthal

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

David Wynn  
President  
Seagate Association

Joseph Palmer Doyle  
Resident

Teresa Cirillo  
Far Rockaway Resident

Pamela Harris  
Coney Island Resident

Rocco Brescia  
Coney Island Resident

Amy Peterson  
Director  
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General Counsel  
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Anne-Marie Hendrickson  
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Calvin Johnson  
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Roland Gorton  
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Louis Coletti  
Building Trade Employers' Association

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

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Resident  
New Dorp Beach, Staten Island

Vladimir Visnovsky [phonetic]

Uliana Owenek [phonetic]  
Resident  
Sheepshead, Brooklyn

Tammy Karakedi [phonetic]  
Resident  
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Susannah Dyen  
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Simone S. Peele  
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Mike Delpino  
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Michael Harbin  
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Ilya Geller  
Resident  
Midland Beach, Staten Island

Margaret Becker  
Director  
Disaster Recovery Unit  
Staten Island Legal Services

Rev. Karen Jackson  
Staten Island Long Term Recovery  
Organization

Young Lee  
Attorney  
Legal Aid Society

Dan Marzano  
Belle Harbor Resident

MALE VOICE: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. [background comments] Folks, if I can have your attention please. If there is anybody here that wants to testify at today's committee meeting, you need to fill out of these slips. Anybody that wants to testify, you need to fill out one of these slips, even if someone told you that you're on some sort of list, if you don't fill out one of these, your name will not be called; this is what we go by. If you have any written copies of testimony, hold onto those copies until your name is called to testify; at that point you will be comin' up to that table on your left-hand side, we'll ask you for your statements and we'll disseminate that information to the members. If you have any electronic devices that are gonna make noise during the meeting, please turn the audio off, any cell phones, set them to vibration right now; if you need to take a call you can exit the room and you can take your call outside by the rotunda; once you're done...

[pause]

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Good morning. My name is Councilman Mark Treyger; I am Chair of the

1  
2 City Council's Committee on Recovery and Resiliency;  
3 this is a joint hearing with the Committee on  
4 Housing, with Chair Jumaane Williams and as well as  
5 the Committee on Environmental Protection with Chair  
6 Donovan Richards. This is a hearing to discuss the  
7 progress of the Build it Back program post-Superstorm  
8 Sandy and we are joined today by the Speaker of the  
9 City Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, and I just wanna  
10 point out before we moved forward that upon the  
11 election of the new members and upon the election of  
12 Melissa Viverito as the Speaker of the City Council,  
13 there was an urgency that was held by all and the  
14 Speaker recognized that urgency and that is why she  
15 helped create a new committee in the City Council  
16 called the Committee on Recovery and Resiliency to  
17 better investigate, to vigorously investigate the  
18 Sandy recovery process and we had a very powerful  
19 hearing previous month and for the first time ever in  
20 Coney Island in a public housing complex in Carey  
21 Gardens where we exposed the troubling temporary  
22 boilers which are now being addressed and today we  
23 are vigorously looking at the program that is  
24 supposed to assist thousands of impacted property  
25 owners and renters across the city that were

1  
2 devastated by Superstorm Sandy, and having said that,  
3 it is my honor to announce and to call the Speaker,  
4 who has been really just leading the charge here,  
5 shown great leadership in making sure that we get  
6 this recovery right on behalf of all Sandy-impacted  
7 residents. It is my honor to call up Speaker Melissa  
8 Mark-Viverito.

9           SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: Good morning.  
10 Thank you so much, Mark. I wanna say good morning to  
11 everyone that is here, I wanna thank the different  
12 committees that are represented here - Environmental  
13 Protection, under the leadership of Donovan Richards  
14 and Housing and Buildings, under the leadership of  
15 Jumaane Williams and as well as Mark Treyger, who is  
16 now chairing our Recovery and Resiliency, and I have  
17 to say that Mark has been an incredible, as well as  
18 all of those that represent impacted areas, but Mark  
19 has demonstrated in a very short period of time  
20 incredible leadership and being very vocal and  
21 forceful on making sure that we continue to have  
22 vigorous oversight; that we really continue to make  
23 this a priority issue and as such he is just the most  
24 apt to be the chair of this committee. So I wanna  
25 thank the members of these three committees



1  
2 [background comments] and I think we're all well  
3 aware that there's a great deal of work still be done  
4 in restoring housing to a fully functional level in  
5 areas that were hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy. It's  
6 important to me and to this council that we keep  
7 Sandy recovery on the forefront moving forward.

8           This weekend many of us welcomed the  
9 announcement from the Administration regarding new  
10 key appointments that will help bring a new focus to  
11 Sandy-affected communities as they continue on the  
12 road to recovery. So we look forward to working with  
13 Bill Goldstein, Amy Peterson and Daniel Zirilli to  
14 help these communities rebuild.

15           For many parts of this city Hurricane  
16 Sandy may seem like a crisis that has come and gone,  
17 but for many communities in other parts of the city  
18 the impacts of the hurricane and subsequent property  
19 damage are still a daily problem. [background  
20 comment] It has been a year-and-a-half since  
21 Hurricane Sandy and we can't wait any longer to  
22 finish rebuilding our city. People are still waiting  
23 to move back into their homes, which is unacceptable  
24 and needs to change as soon as possible. There have  
25 been some obvious problems and mistakes with the

1  
2 Build it Back program; those mistakes need to be  
3 corrected and that is why we are here today. If  
4 there have been problems with paperwork flow,  
5 communication and poor case management, we cannot let  
6 that continue. If applicants are having difficulty  
7 choosing an option for Build it Back, there needs to  
8 be better outreach in the first place, before the  
9 decisions are made.

10 Not only are we asking New Yorkers to  
11 wait an unreasonable amount of time while this  
12 program gets its act together, but we are running out  
13 of time to make use of the federal funding that we've  
14 received. There is a two-year time limit for Build  
15 it Back funding and we need to ensure that not only  
16 is this money spent appropriately but also on time.  
17 So I'm looking forward to this hearing, the testimony  
18 and helping New Yorkers get back to their homes and  
19 to the best extent possible, back to normalcy. So  
20 with that, again I wanna thank all of the members  
21 that are here, everyone that is here to testify; we  
22 will obviously look to be in partnership with the  
23 Administration, but we look very much forward to  
24 hearing from you and figuring out ways that we can  
25

1  
2 make this process all the more smooth and effective.  
3 So thank you very much, Mark.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Speaker  
5 and thank you for being so vocal, both publicly and  
6 privately on this issue and we cannot thank you  
7 enough on behalf of all of the neighborhoods that  
8 were hurt by Superstorm Sandy.

9 We're also joined by another very  
10 important advocate on this issue who has been very  
11 vocal on this from day one and I'm so honored and  
12 proud to have her here, the Public Advocate, Tish  
13 James and I think she has an opening statement as  
14 well.

15 [background comments]

16 [pause]

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Yeah, okay. I  
18 guess... they wanted me to go to my traditional seat.  
19 So to Chairperson Treyger, Chairperson Williams,  
20 Chairperson Richards and the members of the Committee  
21 on Recovery and Resiliency, Housing and Buildings and  
22 Environmental Protection, and of course, to Speaker  
23 Melissa Mark-Viverito, thank you for allowing me to  
24 say a few words, and to Amy Peterson, I appreciated  
25

1  
2 your call over the weekend and congratulations on  
3 your appointment and to all your staff.

4           So in my conversations with people, I've  
5 heard time and time again that the Build it Back  
6 application process is seriously flawed. I've also  
7 heard that some staff members don't have a full  
8 understanding of the program and there is constant  
9 rumbling about the loss of paperwork. The Office of  
10 Public Advocate has heard from people from Staten  
11 Island to the Rockaways, to Queens, all throughout  
12 the city of New York and Southeast Brooklyn, that  
13 when people schedule their options review meeting  
14 they get all their paperwork together; they get a  
15 call the night before that the meeting is cancelled,  
16 and so my question really is, where is the sense of  
17 urgency and we need to know more with regards to the  
18 SBA issue; how many individuals have applied for the  
19 loans, why is that money being against any potential  
20 Build it Back; what is being done to resolve the  
21 issue? We also want to ensure in the Office of  
22 Public Advocate that there's lines of communication  
23 between civic leaders and leaders at the Build it  
24 Back program, there needs to be more of a direct line  
25 and the feedback will ultimately make this program

1  
2 more successful; it's really critically important  
3 that here we are a year after... several years after  
4 this horrific storm and individuals, unfortunately,  
5 are still not being housed, it's just totally  
6 unacceptable. I look forward to this hearing; I look  
7 forward to getting some answers and I look forward to  
8 getting this resolve on behalf of all New Yorkers of  
9 the city of New York. Thank you Madame Speaker.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Public  
11 Advocate. I also just wanna recognize the Council  
12 Members who are here in attendance who have all  
13 worked very diligently together to make sure that the  
14 Council is providing as much oversight as needed to  
15 get this recovery right. We are joined by Councilman  
16 Carlos Menchaca, Council Member Margaret Chin,  
17 Council Member Donovan... Chair Donovan Richards of the  
18 Environmental Protection Committee, Chair Jumaane  
19 Williams from the Housing and Buildings Committee,  
20 Council Member Steve Matteo, the Minority Leader,  
21 Vincent Ignizio... I didn't miss anybody else?  
22 [background comments] Oh, and Council Member Corey  
23 Johnson, and Public Advocate was recognized as well.

24 As mentioned, my name is Council Member  
25 Mark Treyger; again, I'm the Chair of the Council's

1  
2 new Committee on Recovery and Resiliency and I  
3 welcome you all to this joint hearing on the status  
4 of the city's Build it Back program. As mentioned,  
5 with me today is Chair Williams and Chair Richards  
6 from both Housing and Environmental Protection  
7 Committees.

8           Today's hearing is going to be and should  
9 be an emotional and difficult one, but an important  
10 one. Nearly one-and-a-half years ago Superstorm  
11 Sandy devastated this city, taking peoples' lives,  
12 their homes and their livelihoods. Tremendous  
13 efforts have been made by the citizens of New York  
14 City to rebuild and as much as possible, to get back  
15 to normal. As part of those efforts, in June of last  
16 year, then Mayor Mike Bloomberg announced the new  
17 Build it Back program, an ambitious plan to help  
18 those whose most valuable possession, their home, was  
19 lost or damaged by Sandy. The program has several  
20 different elements to it; by far the biggest is the  
21 program to repair or elevate or build one- to four-  
22 family homes, called the Homeowners Program, some  
23 20,000 applicants are currently enlisted in the  
24 program. There is also a smaller but vastly  
25 important program for buildings with five or more

families, including condos and co-ops and a rental assistance program. Build it Back was in many ways a continuation of the Rapid Repairs program set up by the city in November of 2012 to help residents make their damaged homes livable until there was money and a process to fully repair or rebuild them. Nearly one year later that plan has largely failed to live up to its lofty goals. Poor communication, endless bureaucracy, inadequate resources and other problems have thwarted the rebuilding of even a single home. Homeowners stuck in what seems to be like an endless process are frustrated and losing faith that they will ever get help. Others who have made it far enough to be given an option to repair or rebuild are left with incredibly complicated financial and logistical problems that make moving forward difficult if not impossible, and without additional funding from the federal government, there might not be enough money to help everyone in Priority 2 and Priority 3, although some announcements were made over the weekend that that hopefully will be changing. Finally, many eligible homeowners or shareholders and co-ops or renters never knew about the program and they are locked out of participating

1  
2 even though they too have their homes or apartments  
3 damaged or destroyed due to an arbitrary date set by  
4 the City for signing up for Build it Back. This  
5 situation is simply not acceptable and to be fair,  
6 those now administering Build it Back are starting to  
7 make changes to improve the program, but that is not  
8 enough.

9           The program needs to be one of the top  
10 priorities for City Hall. Now over the weekend the  
11 Mayor made some announcements with regards to a Sandy  
12 czar, Bill Goldstein, who will be overseeing the  
13 various aspects of this Sandy recovery. The recovery  
14 we know is complex; however, there must be a sense of  
15 urgency to move on this process and to get this  
16 right. Mayor also announced the hiring of Amy  
17 Peterson, who will be overseeing the Housing Recovery  
18 Office, which Build it Back falls under and we will  
19 be hearing from them shortly. Mayor de Blasio has  
20 promised to build or preserve over 200,000 units of  
21 affordable housing and housing in the city over the  
22 next 10 years; well Build it Back is where he should  
23 start; should be a top priority. We are talking  
24 about the homes of hardworking middle class that are  
25 at the heart of some of the greatest neighborhoods in



1  
2 this city and they deserve his full attention.  
3 Meanwhile, we can't allow for arbitrary deadlines or  
4 lack of resources that leave some New Yorkers out of  
5 the program, there should be a commitment made that  
6 every resident whose home was damaged or destroyed  
7 will be given the resources, information and aid  
8 needed to get back to his or her home, anything shy  
9 of that is just unacceptable and unfair.

10 As I said, this is a joint hearing with  
11 the Committee on Housing and Buildings and the  
12 Committee on Environmental Protection, so now I will  
13 turn to Chair Williams of the Housing Committee for  
14 his opening remarks.

15 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Chair  
16 Treyger. I'm Council Member Jumaane Williams and I  
17 chair the Housing and Buildings Committee; I'm happy  
18 to be here with the Speaker, Chair Treyger, Chair  
19 Richards and of course the Public Advocate. I think  
20 Chair Treyger did an excellent job describing Build  
21 it Back and explaining the situation we're in now, so  
22 I'm not going to run through all the details again.  
23 For me what it comes down to is this, the city and  
24 the federal government needs to finish what they  
25 started. Right after Sandy we had the Rapid Repairs

1  
2 program; that program got a lot of people back into  
3 their homes, but it wasn't comprehensive, it wasn't  
4 focused, only on fixing basic systems like power,  
5 heat and hot water. Sorry, it was focused only on  
6 fixing basic systems like power, heat and water.

7 Build it Back was supposed to pick up where Rapid  
8 Repairs left off; it was supposed to complete the  
9 repairs and the building and the elevating of homes  
10 damaged by Sandy. It's a great idea in theory; the  
11 problem is that it's been about 10 months and Build  
12 it Back hasn't actually built anything back yet.

13 We've heard a number of reasons for the  
14 delay. For example, some applicants have complained  
15 that they don't have a single caseworker or point  
16 person that can help guide them through the  
17 complicated rebuilding process. Another issue is  
18 outreach; we have heard from people who say they  
19 didn't even know that Build it Back was an option and  
20 they're upset that they can't register now that the  
21 program is closed. Build it Back itself estimates  
22 that there could be as many as 2,000 eligible  
23 families out there who aren't signed up. This makes  
24 us concerned that Build it Back didn't do enough to  
25 get the word out in the Sandy-affected communities.

1  
2 I think we all understand that the blame for Build it  
3 Back's problems doesn't really fall on the  
4 representatives before us today, after it all, it was  
5 the past administration that came up with the  
6 program, made the framework and handled outreach, but  
7 that doesn't change the fact that we all need to  
8 figure out a solution going forward. I also wanna  
9 say I was happy to meet with some people from Build  
10 it Back administration on February 18th; did a  
11 breakdown of what the program is, what is going on; I  
12 thought I had all my questions answered;  
13 unfortunately, two weeks after I saw on the news that  
14 we actually hadn't built anything yet and I was quite  
15 dismayed that that had not come up in my briefing and  
16 hopefully briefings going forward, all the  
17 information will be given to me. This administration  
18 may not have made the mess, but this administration  
19 has to clean it up. With that said, I'll turn it  
20 back to my fellow chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
22 Williams. And now I would like to call up Chair of  
23 the Environmental Protection Committee, whose  
24 district, like mine, was really devastated by  
25 Superstorm Sandy and he's been a passionate advocate,

again from day one, and it's my honor to turn now to Chair Donovan Richards.

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Thank you Chair Treyger and you've done a phenomenal job in a short period of time, so I wanna thank you and also the Speaker for her work on this issue as well.

Good morning, I am Chairman Donovan Richards, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection and today's hearing is an oversight hearing on the status of the Build it Back program. Superstorm Sandy hit New York City with intensity unparalleled by any coastal storm in recent history; as a result, dozens of New Yorkers lost their lives and tens of thousands were injured. By December of 2012 the Department of Buildings had tagged about 800 buildings as damaged or destroyed around the city and at least 70,000 housing units were registered with the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency and found to have suffered some amount of damage. On November 9, 2012, then Mayor Bloomberg announced the start of the Rapid Repairs program, a first of its kind program, to assist homeowners utilizing FEMA grants in making basic repairs. Over the next five months the program restored some services to almost

12,000 homes with over 20,000 residential units. Build it Back represents the next major program the city has developed to help homeowners complete repairs and rebuilding projects and help rebuild both multi-family and single-family one- to four-unit homes damaged by Superstorm Sandy. Build it Back uses funds from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery programs, which pass through the city's Department of Environmental Protection and are overseen by the New York City Housing Recovery Office, administered by the HPD. The program offers homeowners one or more of several options for their properties, repair, repair and elevate reimbursement for out-of-pocket previous repairs, rebuild and acquisition. To participate in the single-family program, eligible homeowners had to call 311 or go to Build it Back's website. However, registration for the program closed on October 31st, 2013. Once registered, applicants have a in-person intake meeting at a Housing Recovery Center and submit required documents. Multi-family buildings of two or more units, non-owner-occupied homes and more damaged

homes go through a multi-stage process, but the property owners or applicants are contacted by a project manager from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development or a related entity to verify eligibility and answer additional questions. Then applicants compile relevant documents and get them to the project manager. Finally, the property is inspected by a Build it Back-approved entity to assess damage and in most cases, develop a resiliency plan for the building. Some applicants are also eligible for the Temporary Disaster Assistance Program (TDAP) through Build it Back. The program, run by HPD, was set up to provide subsidized housing for low-income renters displaced by Sandy. The pace of Build it Back has been slow and many applicants have become frustrated; complaints have often focused on poor communication between Build it Back staff and contractors and applicants. Complaints include such things as long wait period to hear back from Build it Back, lost paperwork, confusing procedures, missed appointment, and additional document requirements. Even Mayor de Blasio has criticized the pace, stating that it's self-evident that the pace has been a profound problem. Not one single family had begun

1  
2 reconstruction in the homeowners program, although  
3 close to \$10 million of the allocated money has  
4 already been spent.

5 By January 3rd, 2014, just over six  
6 months after the program started, of the  
7 approximately 20,000 applicants only 106 had reached  
8 the option-selected stage, the final one before  
9 construction can begin on homeowners' homes. By  
10 February 6th the number had crept up to 108 before  
11 picking up somewhat to 462 by March 12th and 590 by  
12 March 24th of 2014. While Superstorm Sandy was a  
13 unique situation and the damage experienced by New  
14 York City homeowners was unprecedented, the resources  
15 remain available to cover repairs not previously  
16 undertaken or pay for reimbursements. In order for  
17 repairs, replacements or reimbursements to happen,  
18 the program management must be improved. Now let's  
19 hear from the Administration. I'll turn it back to  
20 Chair... for the Chair to say that. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you...  
22 [laughter] thank you... thank you, Chair Richards and  
23 I'd just like to point out, in addition to the  
24 thousands of people who have really not seen  
25 progress, there are really, true, that thousands more

1  
2 who had no idea that they were eligible for this  
3 program; when we had an update meeting in my district  
4 in Coney Island and Seagate, there were lose who  
5 lived in co-ops who had no idea that co-ops were a  
6 part of this program; it was their understanding that  
7 it was just a single-family home program. And there  
8 were renters, people who displaced that had no idea,  
9 no knowledge of TDAP, the Temporary Disaster  
10 Assistance Program, so Chair Richards is absolutely  
11 correct, there was a clear breakdown in communication  
12 and we should revisit the registration deadline.

13 I'd like to point out that we've now been  
14 joined by additional council members and I thank them  
15 for their attendance, Council Member Chaim Deutsch,  
16 Council Member Alan Maisel, Council Member Rafael  
17 Espinal and Council Member Antonio Reynoso.  
18 [background comments] Okay.

19 So Sandy was an unprecedented storm, the  
20 response will require an unprecedented response and  
21 today we're gonna try something new here in the City  
22 Council chamber. Normally we do have members of the  
23 administration testify first and I would like to  
24 recognize and thank that [background comments] we do  
25 have the new directors of the House and Recovery



1  
2 Office, Amy Peterson, in attendance here today and I  
3 appreciate that; also, Dan Zirilli, the new director  
4 again of the Resiliency Office and Mayor's Office,  
5 but we'd like to hear from the residents first. So  
6 we have a panel and I know there are a lot of folks  
7 here today, but we're gonna limit the panels around  
8 five people first and then... so administration and all  
9 of us here in the Council could hear their concerns  
10 and frustrations first and that will better inform  
11 the responses we'll hear from the administration and  
12 then after the administration speaks we will allow  
13 all other stakeholders to speak. I will be here all  
14 day and we will get all the information that we need  
15 to get this recovery right.

16           So I'd like to call up to the first panel  
17 Joseph Palmer Doyle, Rocco Brescia, Pamela Harris,  
18 Teresa Cirillo [phonetic] and David Wynn.  
19 [background comments] I would like to point out that  
20 since we have a lot going on here today; we will put  
21 the clock at four minutes each for each of the  
22 witnesses here. [background comments] And we will  
23 ask all their testifying today to swear an oath, so  
24 if all could please raise your right hands. Do you  
25 swear or affirm to the truth, the whole truth and

nothing but the truth before our committees here today?

MALE VOICE: I do.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I guess we'll start from that direction; move forward; we'll begin with David Wynn.

DAVID WYNN: Thank you everybody for letting me speak here. My name is David... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Please speak into the microphone, David; make sure it's on and...

DAVID WYNN: It's on. Thank you everybody for letting me come here and speak on behalf of the Seagate Association. My name is David Wynn; I'm the President of the Seagate Association.

Just real quick. Seagate's been established in 1899, we're located on the most western point of Coney Island, on a peninsula surrounded by water on three sides. We have 850 homes and we have a population of excess of 7,000 people.

When Superstorm Sandy hit, we had 47 homes that were totally devastated; I'm talking about structural damage, people couldn't live in them anymore; 8 homes had to be torn down. To date we

1  
2 have 27 homes that are still unlivable. An estimated  
3 815 homes out of 850 homes were flooded, completely  
4 flooded out, with an excess of 2-3 feet in the house.  
5 People right now had no choices to going anywhere  
6 else, are living in homes with no kitchens, no  
7 bathrooms and have raw sewage in the heavy rain  
8 backing up into their house because of our sewer  
9 situation from Superstorm Sandy. An estimated 50  
10 percent of these people applied to Build it Back.  
11 When homeowners call for their status, their typical  
12 answer is, "it's under review." These people have no  
13 place to go, they're living in huddles in the shell  
14 of their homes that they lived in for 20 and 30 years  
15 in Seagate. Not one homeowner ever received any  
16 benefits from Build it Back as it stands today.

17 And then a quick overview on our sewers,  
18 our sewers got devastated from Sandy, devastated; it  
19 got impacted with debris and sand and literally  
20 destroyed our sewer system, that's why we're having a  
21 lot of the homes having the backups into their  
22 houses. And from the sewage sinking into the ground  
23 from all the devastation of all the debris going into  
24 the sewers we have these huge street problems with  
25 sink holes and sewers collapsing and we've been

1  
2 repairing and replacing as we go and we're never  
3 gonna catch up.

4           Some of the quick other damages we had,  
5 we had over 5,000 feet of bulkhead destroyed, police  
6 headquarters was destroyed, our Seagate  
7 administration offices are gone, we lost over 300  
8 street signs, which I'm still trying to get back,  
9 where proceeds to go the city and state from our  
10 police force. We have many fire hydrants that are  
11 damaged and I'm still tryin' to get them repaired and  
12 our street lights, we lost about 150 street lights  
13 out of 220, which is only startin' to get repaired  
14 now. And that is the effects of Sandy that happened  
15 with Seagate Association.

16           CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, David  
17 Wynn and next we'll have Joseph Palmer Doyle.

18           JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: Thank you. On July  
19 19th, 2013 my wife Barb and I enrolled with the Build  
20 it Back program, we were thrilled that we had an  
21 opportunity to be reimbursed for some of our  
22 unmanageable expenses occurred while repairing and  
23 also to help with finishing repairs on our home. We  
24 were not prepared for the nonsensical, unfair,  
25 disorganized and frustration of the program. It

1 started with a very lengthy process as they scanned  
2 all of our info and had us fill out numerous forms;  
3 we were told that there would be a home assessment  
4 done within four to six weeks. Three months passed  
5 and at the end of October I visited the office  
6 located at Fort Tilden; I was told that our case was  
7 under review. I told them we had registered in July  
8 and they said they were overwhelmed with  
9 applications. I received the same answer again in  
10 November. How can HUD be overwhelmed with 26,000  
11 cases; I asked and was told to be patient. I then  
12 contacted Councilman Ulrich, who scheduled a meeting  
13 between HUD and our community at several sites. I  
14 attended one of those meetings on December 9, 2013; I  
15 listened to Miss Mallon and questioned her on the  
16 awards. I then spoke to a Mr. White from the Arverne  
17 office who told my wife and I that there was a  
18 problem because we signed up too early in the  
19 program. We met with him the next day in his office  
20 during a heavy snowstorm; we filled out more forms  
21 and my wife had to go home 80 blocks to get her  
22 passport. We later realized that we had already  
23 filled out all of those forms in July and they had  
24 already had a copy of her passport. Finally, on July  
25

1  
2 3rd, 2014 [sic] we had our home assessment; the three  
3 people who came were very professional, the woman  
4 doing the assessing agreed with what we were looking  
5 for and how desperate we were to get our home resided  
6 so there would be no leakage done to the interior  
7 work we had done. She informed us to make sure we  
8 had all of our receipts, bills and contracts with us  
9 when we went to our next meeting. She was very  
10 sympathetic when I spoke to her about financial  
11 difficulties incurred from the work we had done. On  
12 January 27th we went to what we thought was our award  
13 decision meeting; unfortunately we were told that we  
14 had a problem; we would have to go from rebuild to  
15 repair and we would have to fill out a Request for  
16 Review form. Upon arguing with the boss at the  
17 scene, we were told to fill out the form or opt out  
18 of the program. So here we were going from thinking  
19 we were getting money to now going backwards again in  
20 the program. On February 21st, 2014 we received the  
21 first of three letters from New York City Housing  
22 Recovery, the first two letters telling us that they  
23 had received our request and needed more time to  
24 process, the third letter was received on March 18,  
25 2014 and informed us that the program had determined

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2 our pathway. We were told that our appropriate  
3 pathway was repair and elevation; now the problem  
4 with elevation is, we had informed every person in  
5 every step of this program that our home could not be  
6 elevated. The woman doing the assessment agreed at  
7 the time of her visit that our home could not be  
8 elevated. So now we are told that an architect and  
9 engineer would be contacting us for an appointment to  
10 come and go over the details. A total waste of time,  
11 money and effort, as my home cannot be elevated.  
12 Even if it could, the damage to our interior would be  
13 devastating. We have still not been contacted and I  
14 was told by a member of Build it Back to just let  
15 them come, they will realize it cannot be elevated  
16 and you will go back for review. I don't need or  
17 want to go back for review; we have done everything  
18 asked of us and more; we supplied bills, receipts,  
19 contracts; documentation of all monies received. We  
20 have been frustrated and heartbroken at every step of  
21 this process; we are financially ruined. People have  
22 told me to forget it, give up, they will never give  
23 you a dime. I am a very proud man who has worked his  
24 whole life; I have spent most years working two and  
25 three jobs to own my own home and put my children

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2 through college. I am a disabled New York City  
3 Firefighter with a rod in my neck through an injury  
4 incurred while fighting a fire. I have worked at  
5 both World Trade Centers, I have never shirked my  
6 duty; I am a tireless activist for my community, as  
7 Council Member Ulrich can attest to. [bell] All my  
8 family wants is to get our home completed, pay off  
9 our contractor and get reimbursed for money spent  
10 that has left us a financial crisis. On March 5th,  
11 2013, \$1.77 billion was given to the program. On  
12 November 18th, 2013, \$1.44 billions was received;  
13 this money was sent to help rebuild New York  
14 families' homes, businesses and communities; nobody  
15 in our community has received a dime. We have police  
16 officers, firefighters, teachers, tradesmen, nurses;  
17 small business owners; these are all wonderful  
18 hardworking family members desperate for assistance.  
19 People from other parts of the City have no idea what  
20 we are going through; we have lost neighbors through  
21 illness, suicide and death; neighbors are getting  
22 sick due to the stress, frustration and heartbreak of  
23 getting home. You must help us, enough is enough,  
24 show us the money.

25 [cheers, applause, background comments]



CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Next we have, I believe, Teresa Cirillo.

TERESA CIRILLO: Good morning. My name is Teresa Cirillo; I live in Far Rockaway and I'm a member of Faith in New York. My house was very damaged by Hurricane Sandy; with 10 feet of water our entire first floor was under water and living room and dining room in our second floor were destroyed. Our insurance company gave us \$46,000. We was able to fix half of my home; we wasn't able to fix everything. So far our first floor is undone. We apply immediately to Build it Back to get the rest of the house fixed. My family have gone through all phases of the application process, but we now are just waiting and we do not know if we're have been accepted or rejected. My husband called Build it Back last week and we was told that we have to wait because we do not know how they can help us, they don't know how they can help us, so we're waiting for an appointment with them. We applied July 26th, 2013 and still we are waiting; is very disappointing. I have asthma and my husband tried to put insulation on the third floor so the cold don't come through the second floor and it's very difficult for me because

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2 with the insulation it attack my asthma, but it still  
3 come through and affects my asthma; I'm very tired of  
4 the waiting for a report; I need my home back. I  
5 raised [Speaking Spanish].

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Gracias, Teresa,  
7 thank you very much for being here. [applause] Next  
8 we'll have Pamela Harris.

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Just one second...

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

11 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: If we can try not to  
12 clap; we try to do this so it's a little quieter in  
13 the chambers. Thanks.

14 PAMELA HARRIS: Thank you. Good morning.  
15 Usually I'm very anal retentive, I write down  
16 everything; I make sure that I'm prepared, but every  
17 time I went to write in reference to Hurricane Sandy  
18 I started crying... You know, I'm probably one of the  
19 small, fortunate is that we are back in our home now;  
20 we just recently moved back into our home completely.  
21 I own a two-family home in Coney Island on Neptune  
22 Avenue; we are all attached brick homes, our homes  
23 were built in the early 1960s and when Hurricane  
24 Sandy hit us, it hit us so bad that we lost all of  
25 the first floor, we had well over nine feet of water

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2 in our first floor and then we lost the second floor  
3 floor; it just stopped at the second floor. For  
4 myself, some years ago we decided to build a third  
5 floor to our home because we house 50 teenagers who  
6 come in and out of my home because of my program. So  
7 thank god for that, because when the water came to  
8 the second floor I was able to take myself and my  
9 neighbors up to our third floor and we kind of  
10 decided to play games that night. And now I'm  
11 realizin' Build it Back is not a game... it... they think  
12 it's a game, but it's not a game to us homeowners. I  
13 did what I was supposed to do; we did what... we  
14 registered for Build it Back on time; I got all my  
15 paperwork and as I said, I'm anal retentive, so I put  
16 one of three on my receipts and I put... I indicated, I  
17 made copies, I did everything that I was supposed to  
18 do and I went to the Build it Back office and  
19 presented all my paperwork and they made copies and  
20 they filed it and said we were gonna be okay. When  
21 we got our appointment a month-and-a-half later to  
22 come and visit them, I got there and they told me,  
23 "you don't have enough receipts, when you get our  
24 money for Build it Back, you're gonna owe us money."  
25 I was like, are you serious; why would I not have

1  
2 enough receipts? And I noticed on her computer that  
3 even though the receipt said one of three, she only  
4 had two of three. So I said to her, "Ma'am, if you  
5 only have two of three, which means you're missing  
6 one and I do have that with me; I can give it to  
7 you." So I gave... she told me she would make another  
8 appointment, even though I had it in my envelope with  
9 me, that she would make another appointment for me to  
10 come back to bring her that receipt. I then said,  
11 "Okay, no problem; I think this is a great program;  
12 I'll be back." They set up another appointment for  
13 me a week later; instead of me being able to have  
14 that appointment, I got a phone call a half-an-hour  
15 before I got there telling me that, "Don't bother to  
16 come in, because it's not about the receipts, it's  
17 about your insurance, that you received two checks  
18 for the insurance, one for \$4,900, one for \$3,900 and  
19 that means you got \$6,900," and I went... [background  
20 comment] that's not even \$6,000; that's over \$6,000;  
21 I don't understand what you're saying." They were  
22 tellin' me that there was now a problem with the  
23 insurance payments. When I sent in to go visit with  
24 them, I got confronted by the boss who told me that I  
25 should not be there, that all my paperwork is done

1  
2 and there's nothin' they can do for me. Build it  
3 Back has been a total disaster. I'm gonna leave you  
4 with this picture. I have a 5-year-old nephew who  
5 lives in my home and two weeks ago I was sitting  
6 cooking and he was sitting at the table with me and  
7 he was drawing, so I looked over and I said,  
8 "Puddin',..." we call him Puddin'... [bell] "what is that  
9 a picture of?" He can barely say my name, but he  
10 clearly said Hurricane Sandy. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank  
12 you, Pamela Harris. And now we'll have Rocco  
13 Brescia.

14 ROCCO BRESCIA: Good morning, thank you.  
15 My name is Rocco Brescia; I'm a homeowner in Coney  
16 Island for the last 30 years and I left one hour  
17 before the storm hit. I took myself and my car and  
18 my neighbor and we went over to my brother's house.  
19 Came in the following morning and of course, Pam and  
20 I are friends and we run two organizations out in  
21 Coney Island, came back in and I had to walk through  
22 waist-high water to get to the house, got to house,  
23 went through the house; I said, okay, this is it,  
24 this is the fact, you gotta live with it and we did.  
25 I am one... not only do I work for myself and to get my

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2 house put together, but I also help the community and  
3 people in the community, so when I say me, I'm  
4 talking about all of Coney Island residents that live  
5 right outside of Seagate. We had the Rebuild it  
6 program... Rebuild it... the other program, the first  
7 one, which came in and gave us heat and hot water.  
8 Well here I am getting to the house at 6 in the  
9 morning, leaving 8:00 at night, go back to the  
10 apartment, come back; have been doing this... till  
11 today doing that; they came in, they put the heat and  
12 so forth, all of a sudden my power was cut for two-  
13 and-a-half months. Thank god we had a man in our  
14 area, Andrew Olson, who helped me through the way,  
15 with him fighting with ConEd to get the power turned  
16 on and we did, we moved ahead. I did not start work  
17 up until April of last year because of lack of  
18 funding and trying to help people in the community,  
19 which we were good with that. We started to do  
20 construction, the Rebuild it program came in,  
21 assessed me; we'll get back to you; never did; I  
22 waited. Meanwhile, I had to redo all my heating unit  
23 that was put in for me because it was poor equipment;  
24 I'm on my third water heater already, less than a  
25 year-and-a-half, okay; now I get all my paperwork

1  
2 done and I go to the program and they said, "Oh, Mr.  
3 Brescia, you're awarded \$120,000." I said, "Great.  
4 Now what?" "Well we have to elevate you." I said,  
5 "I'm in a row of houses; how can you do that?" "Oh,  
6 your first floor becomes a carport and we add an  
7 additional floor above." I said, "Okay. So what  
8 does that do with my first floor?" "Oh, it has to be  
9 gutted out." I said, "Wait a minute, hold on. I  
10 spent all my insurance money on my first floor, to  
11 get it back in. I started in April; where were you,  
12 you came to the house? You didn't tell me, oh, the  
13 first floor is gonna be gutted. Come on." I'm  
14 devastated; I'm been good throughout this whole  
15 process, but when... to tell me that all the work that  
16 I'd done to put on the first floor has to be  
17 destroyed and that I have a grant, you know what, I  
18 don't know what to believe. I'm still not back in  
19 the house. I mean I'm trying, FEMA gave me money for  
20 my rental assistance, but that ends May 1st, so I  
21 have to get back into the house. Hook or by crook I  
22 have to get back in. But I'm not getting any help  
23 from them. They're tellin' me you're at the  
24 designing stage. What does that mean? It means  
25 nothing. All the money that I got from the insurance

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2 company is wasted, according to them and they don't  
3 care. I mean [bell] and that's me with everybody  
4 else in the area. As I say, whatever happened to me  
5 happened to everybody else. So I'm talking for  
6 myself and the homeowners that live in Coney Island  
7 and I represent 180 homes out there and we're all  
8 faced with the same problem. Thank you. [interpose]

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you... thank  
10 you, Rocco and we've also now been joined by Council  
11 Member Rosie Mendez and Council Member Brad Lander.

12 I would ask my colleagues and the chairs,  
13 if we have any questions for this panel, let's please  
14 keep it brief, we wanna hear and definitely speak  
15 with the administration that's been patiently here  
16 waiting, so I think Minority Leader, Vincent Ignizio  
17 had a question.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yes, thank you  
19 very much hand thank you all for your heartfelt  
20 stories; I represent the South Shore of Staten Island  
21 and I assure you, the stories are no different and  
22 just as terrible there; in fact we had several deaths  
23 and it's just something that keeps coming back,  
24 living it through your words.  
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2 My question for you guys is; what was the  
3 time period between when you first went to Build it  
4 Back and then the intervals of when they contacted  
5 you back, if you understand the question? And just  
6 out of curiosity, if you can...

7 JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: I... [interpose]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: That's my final  
9 question, by the way, Mr. Chairman.

10 JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: I signed up July  
11 19th, was told four to six weeks I'd have a home  
12 assessment. I had the home assessment the end of  
13 December, after going to a meeting that Councilman  
14 Ulrich set up on the 9th of December. In-between I  
15 had gone five different occasions to see where I was  
16 at... process, process, process... [interpose]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: But sir, did  
18 they ever call you back or it always had to be you...  
19 [crosstalk]

20 JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: No.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: calling...

22 JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: I always had to go  
23 down to either Arverne... [crosstalk]  
24  
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: 'Cause you were  
3 supposed to have a caseworker; did you ever have a  
4 caseworker?

5 JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: I... I either went to  
6 Arverne or Fort Tilden. Finally in July I got put on  
7 kind of a fast track, Mr. White from Arverne helped  
8 me out tremendously when I went to the meeting in  
9 December. So I was supposed to have a home  
10 assessment done in August; it was done in December.  
11 Now it's... we're goin' into April and now I'm in a  
12 completely different ballgame; I went from an award  
13 decision, five... and here's a copy that I sent... these  
14 are the six steps of the process; I was at five, the  
15 lady said I had to go to 4.5 because I had to go from  
16 rebuild to repair. When I sent this to the gentleman  
17 at Build it Back that I'd been dealing with, he  
18 laughed, I faxed it to him and people in his office  
19 were hysterical laughing, 'cause they were wondering  
20 where did 4.5 come from. So that's what I've been  
21 dealing with.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Thank you. Can  
23 you all answer the same question? Thank you.

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2           DAVID WYNN: Speaking for the community  
3 of Seagate, and myself, 'cause I applied for Build it  
4 Back...

5           CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: David, just speak  
6 into the mic please. Thank you.

7           DAVID WYNN: Oh okay. Basically for the  
8 people of Seagate, and I'm talking for myself here,  
9 'cause I can't talk for everybody, I filed out all my  
10 paperwork, they have all my paperwork and it went  
11 into the black hole, that's it. And every time I've  
12 called personally, myself, and that was on 19th  
13 Street and it was at Abe Stark in the parking lot at  
14 first and around, I think West 19th Street, if I  
15 believe it was, I gave my paperwork, I sat down with  
16 them, they have everything and that was it, never  
17 heard from them; when I call to find out, the typical  
18 answer's, under review and we'll get to you when we  
19 get to you, and I've spoken to Andrew Olson about  
20 this at other meetings that we... you know, on the  
21 state of what's going on and he's been as much...  
22 tremendous help, but at the end of the day we're  
23 still at the same stage.

24           ROCCO BRESCIA: The problem where we were  
25 finding was, I applied the day... same day as the

gentleman did and I never heard from them and then we were having meetings and then at the end of the meetings they asked you if you had any problems or questions, go over to the intake person. Every time I went in there they said to me, "Oh, you're missing a form." I say, "How could that be, you never called me; how would I know this?" So went through the process, gave 'em the form. The last meeting we had at Our Lady of Solace was... and I went to the girl and I assumed everything was done, she said, "Oh, you're missing forms." I said, "How can that be?" I says, "I have all the copies that you asked me for." Well P.S., I come to realize, they've added forms and they keep on adding forms, but they don't let us know that we don't have these forms and we just sit there. If we don't go ask them, they don't tell us, and that's the problem.

PAMELA HARRIS: I also applied the same time; actually, myself and Rocco applied; he was at his home on his computer; I was at my computer and we were applying at the same time. Literally, when they opened it up, I was right there to apply. So that was also in July. I think it took, for myself it took until six months before I heard anything from

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2 them to come down; they were gonna make the  
3 appointment... they were gonna call me back to make the  
4 appointment; it was almost like they called to say hi  
5 and then they would call me back to make the  
6 appointment, which I didn't know why they didn't make  
7 it that day. But Andrew Olson had actually set up  
8 something in Coney Island where we can come... they  
9 would have... he would have them come to us, which was  
10 actually good because it was then... I actually got a  
11 priority number and was given priority number one,  
12 which I thought, you know, hip, hip hooray, this is  
13 great, you know now you know we're moving and it's  
14 not the case. So to answer your question, six  
15 months.

16           TERESA CIRILLO: My husband applied on  
17 July 26, 2013 and in December he kept going to the  
18 office in Arverne; in December the lady and two other  
19 person came to do the assessment to the house; they  
20 call and give us an appointment for February the 13,  
21 but on the 12th of February they call and they say  
22 they're not ready for us; we in the third phase, we  
23 don't know what that is, and that we have to wait for  
24 another call. He called last week and they tell him  
25 that we had to wait. Thank you.

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[background comments]

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JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: Mr. Chair, one... one quick... [crosstalk]

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Go ahead. Yes, yes; very brief, please.

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JOSEPH PALMER DOYLE: I've heard a lot about missing paperwork; when I first went in there, everything was scanned into what was supposed to be your disc, okay. So now the last time I went there was no disc, so we had to supply the paperwork, so what happened to the original disc when we went in and they... for four hours they scanned every piece of paper that we had in July, now all of a sudden they're not scanning anymore, you know it's like the Twilight Zone.

17

18

ROCCO BRESCIA: Mark, excuse me... [crosstalk]

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, this is the last point, Rocco and then we have to go.

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ROCCO BRESCIA: Okay. Yeah, sure. What is also happening is that I met with them and my neighbor who lives on the corner met with them; they told me I had to elevate; they told this gentleman nothing about elevation; they were giving him money

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2 to repair his first floor; we live in the same area,  
3 we're less than 50 feet away from each other; let's  
4 keep the story straight, if you're gonna tell us one  
5 thing, stay with one thing, don't give each person a  
6 different angle of it, it's just making the confusion  
7 and nothing's happening. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I  
9 thank... anyone else? I thank the first panel for your  
10 very powerful and informative testimony and that will  
11 be driving many of the discussions we'll be having  
12 now with the administration. Thank you all very  
13 much. [background comments]

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I'd like to also  
16 just point out that we heard before from Minority  
17 Leader Vincent Ignizio and he as well and also  
18 Council Member Steve Matteo and the Borough President  
19 of Staten Island have been very, very vocal,  
20 dedicated leaders on this issue of Sandy recovery and  
21 I just want to acknowledge that as well.

22 And now I'd like to call up Anne-Marie  
23 Hendrickson from HPD, Calvin Johnson, New York City  
24 Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Amy Peterson,  
25 Mayor's Office Housing Recovery Operations, and

Thaddeus Hackworth, General Counsel, HRO.

[background comments] [pause] 'Kay. We will ask everyone as well to... if you could please raise your right hands. Do you swear or affirm to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before our committees today? [collective yes] Thank you. I guess we'll begin with... [interpose]

AMY PETERSON: Yeah, I think I'm...

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Amy Peterson, the newest member of the de Blasio administration who will be in charge now of the Housing Recovery Operations.

AMY PETERSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Please.

AMY PETERSON: Thank you all for having me here, it's great to see the Speaker this morning and the Public Advocate. Good morning Chairperson Treyger, Williams and Richards and all of the council members. It's been an illuminating few weeks, but it was illuminating to hear directly from the homeowners at the first part of this panel, so thank you for that opportunity.

My name is Amy Peterson and I'm the Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery



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2 Operations or HRO. I was appointed this Saturday by  
3 Mayor de Blasio and I certainly feel the sense of  
4 urgency that was discussed and I'm here to offer  
5 testimony on behalf of the city and with this panel  
6 here. I'm grateful to begin my tenure with you this  
7 morning, these committees have played a crucial role  
8 in the city's recovery from Hurricane Sandy over the  
9 past year-and-a-half, from passing building codes  
10 that will make homes stronger and more resilient to  
11 keeping a watchful eye on city programs that are  
12 intended to help families and restore neighborhoods.  
13 Unfortunately, we are here today in part because too  
14 many people still feel the impacts of Hurricane Sandy  
15 on a daily basis and I share your sense of urgency to  
16 help these people and I'm eager to listen to your  
17 recommendations and to the testimony of the people  
18 here.

19               This morning I am joined by several  
20 colleagues who have been instrumental since the  
21 beginning of the de Blasio administration and  
22 refashioning the City's aid programs so they can  
23 deliver results more quickly and more broadly,  
24 Thaddeus Hackworth, General Counsel of HOR, Calvin  
25 Johnson, Assistant Director at the Office of

1  
2 Management and Budget and Anne-Marie Hendrickson,  
3 Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Asset and  
4 Property Management at Department of Housing  
5 Preservation and Development. My testimony this  
6 morning will focus on the New York City Build it Back  
7 program, a federally funded and city-administered  
8 effort to assist residents whose primary homes were  
9 damaged or destroyed by the storm. My goal is to  
10 provide you with a clear assessment of the program's  
11 challenges and outcomes to date; in particular I will  
12 address your concerns, which are shared widely among  
13 impacted communities and the general public about the  
14 unacceptable length of time it has taken the city to  
15 help those in need. I will describe to the best of  
16 my understanding how early missteps, unrealistic  
17 assumptions and overly complicated processes have  
18 hindered rebuilding and made it more difficult for  
19 residents to resume normal life. I will then  
20 describe the de Blasio administration's efforts over  
21 the past 90 days to remedy the program's deficiencies  
22 and I will conclude by echoing the Mayor's remarks  
23 from this past weekend in which he talked about  
24 several major changes to the program and alluded that  
25 there's more on the way, which there is, and that

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2 will enable the city to make good on the program's  
3 commitment to provide a permanent, safe and  
4 sustainable housing solution to those who are most in  
5 need.

6 I would like to begin by describing the  
7 city's efforts immediately following Hurricane Sandy,  
8 which made landfall on October 29th, 2012. Mayor  
9 Bloomberg created the Housing Recovery Office within  
10 a week after the storm to work with city, state and  
11 federal partners to coordinate efforts to return  
12 residents to their homes quickly, these efforts  
13 included creating the Rapid Repairs program, which  
14 enlisted contractors to help restore basic services  
15 in homes that were damaged but habitable,  
16 establishing an online housing portal to help  
17 families find temporary housing and working with  
18 philanthropic and nonprofit partners to offer many  
19 forms of assistance, including mold training and  
20 remediation.

21 One of those efforts, the Rapid Repair  
22 program I'd like to highlight. Within two weeks of  
23 the storm the city launched Rapid Repair, the first  
24 of its kind emergency sheltering program to provide  
25 free repairs to thousands of homeowners left without

1  
2 heat, power and hot water following Hurricane Sandy.  
3 The program was created in collaboration with FEMA  
4 and was designed to allow homeowners to use their own  
5 homes as shelter in the storm's immediate aftermath.  
6 In less than 100 days, Rapid Repairs restored heat,  
7 power and hot water service to over 11,700 buildings,  
8 which included over 20,000 units and addressed the  
9 needs of approximately 54,000 New Yorkers. The total  
10 of the cost of the program was estimated at  
11 approximately \$640 million, over \$604 million of  
12 which has already been paid out for direct  
13 construction costs and indirect program costs. FEMA  
14 has authorized reimbursement of approximately \$228  
15 million to the city, the maximum reimbursement amount  
16 expected for the city, which is based on the 90/10  
17 FEMA-city cost share of eligible items under Rapid  
18 Repair, is \$533 million. The city is applying for  
19 CDBG funding to cover additional costs not covered by  
20 FEMA.

21           Although Rapid Repair has helped  
22 significantly to restore order in affected  
23 neighborhoods, the recovery process had only begun  
24 and it was clear that the city would need extensive  
25 help from the federal government to fund the

1  
2 rebuilding of homes and communities. This help has  
3 come primarily through the federal government's  
4 Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery  
5 Grant (CDBGDR), which is administered by the U.S.  
6 Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).  
7 It is worth taking a few minutes to describe how  
8 CDBGDR is structured and the resources the city has  
9 received to date.

10 CDBGDR grants are sources allocated to  
11 help areas recover from presidentially declared  
12 disasters, they are subject to the availability of  
13 supplemental appropriations. In mid-January 2013,  
14 three months after the storm and after a battle over  
15 the federal budget, Congress passed the Disaster  
16 Relief Appropriations Act, which was the legislative  
17 vehicle for distributing CDBGDR grants to areas  
18 impacted by Hurricane Sandy; it is important to note  
19 that the funds were designated not only for Sandy  
20 relief, but also to cover any other federally  
21 declared disaster that occurred in 2011, 2012 or  
22 2013. So far the city has been granted \$3.22 billion  
23 in CDBGDR money, which is currently being distributed  
24 through two separate allocations which the federal  
25 government refers to as tranches of funding. Of that

1  
2 amount, \$1.695 billion is directed towards the city's  
3 housing efforts, with \$1.45 billion specifically for  
4 the New York City Build it Back program, which serves  
5 homeowners, owners of rental buildings and very low-  
6 income renters. The remainder in housing funds will  
7 go towards improvements to public housing  
8 infrastructure that is managed by the New York City  
9 Housing Authority and was damaged by the storm.

10           The City's other CDBGDR dollars cover  
11 programs that will address the storm's impact on our  
12 businesses, repair critical infrastructure systems  
13 and make investments in resiliency measures across  
14 New York City so that we are better able to withstand  
15 future weather events. Funds are also dedicated to  
16 covering the city's post-storm administrative costs.  
17 Although the city will receive a substantial amount  
18 through its CDBGDR grant, we do not have enough  
19 funding to serve all individuals who were impacted by  
20 the storm and have applied to the Build it Back  
21 program. We currently estimate that the city would  
22 need an additional \$1 billion dedicated to housing to  
23 meet the needs of everyone who is an active  
24 registrant of the program. We anticipate receiving  
25 additional funds through a third tranche, but we do

not yet know how much will be allocated to the city, thus there are significant uncertainties about the city's ability to serve all applicants to the program.

Before moving on, it is important to point out that utilizing this particular funding source involves significant complexities that have influenced the design and operations of Build it Back program. Specifically, the city is required to administer its CDBGDR funds in accordance with a plethora of federal laws, regulations, guidelines and objectives, all of which have grown over time and do not always match prior disaster recovery requirements. There are three issues I'd like to highlight.

The national objective. First the city is required by law to expend at least 51 percent of its CDBGDR funds on low and moderate income populations, which are households that are at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI) for the New York City region, a metric that is defined by HUD. This translates, for example, into a family of four with an income of \$67,100 or less and a family of three that earns no more than \$60,400. Helping

1  
2 those who are most in need is a primary  
3 responsibility of government and this provision is  
4 intended to advance this goal, however, the rigidity  
5 of this requirement, which applies to all money  
6 granted to the city, including business and  
7 infrastructure recovery efforts, has led to  
8 inefficiencies and suboptimal outcomes, certainly.

9           Since the Build it Back program is one of  
10 the only city programs that directly serves  
11 households, it bears responsibility for ensuring LMI  
12 compliance for almost the entire CDBGDR grant and  
13 mitigation the risk of the federal government  
14 refusing to reimburse the city for its recovery  
15 expenditures. In practice, this has meant the Build  
16 it Back program is almost exclusively focused on  
17 serving LMI customers regardless of the amount of the  
18 work they need done, ensuring compliance has  
19 necessitated a time-consuming process to collect and  
20 verify income information for all applicants,  
21 including homeowners and tenants who live in building  
22 that have registered.

23           Duplication of benefits is another issue.  
24 CDBGDR funding is intended to supplement and not  
25 duplicate other resources made available to disaster



1  
2 victims. Before the city spends federal funding on a  
3 customer we are obligated by law, specifically the  
4 Stafford Act, to make sure that we are not spending  
5 federal money to cover a need for which funding has  
6 already been provided by another source, including  
7 awards from FEMA, loans from SBA, that I know are an  
8 issue, or insurance payouts, among others. To make  
9 sure we are not duplicating benefits, the program is  
10 required by law to collect information from our  
11 customers and spend time reconciling any previous  
12 disaster recovery assistance they have received, with  
13 expenditures they've made from those awards. In  
14 practice, this means that customers have to fill out  
15 paperwork that explains how much money they've gotten  
16 from other resources and how they've spent it. We  
17 are required to vet and verify that information; it  
18 can be a cumbersome and confusing process for both  
19 the City and the public and it's one that often  
20 requires multiple interactions with out program  
21 staff.

22           The third issue is our program must meet  
23 federally-mandated environmental requirements; this  
24 includes lead mitigation and necessary documentation  
25 for environmental clearance. In practice that means

1  
2 that we must perform a time sensitive and complicated  
3 environmental review, including an onsite review of  
4 each property that comes through Build it Back. I  
5 highlight these items not to imply in any way that  
6 the federal restrictions have been the sole cause of  
7 Build it Back's delays, but to just explain in some  
8 ways in which federal rules have impacted the  
9 development of the program. CDBG funding is in some  
10 ways flexible, but it's in no way a blank check.

11 That said, the city has worked with our  
12 federal partners, including the Hurricane Sandy  
13 Rebuilding Task Force that was launched as an  
14 interagency effort in December 2012, HUD, FEMA and  
15 SBA to streamline our city's recovery and to use the  
16 funding in ways not possible for prior CDBGDR  
17 grantees.

18 The Build it Back program was not  
19 designed to be a traditional check-writing CDBGDR  
20 program; in those cases, customers do their own  
21 construction management and then must prove that the  
22 repairs were done according to federal standards; if  
23 they cannot meet those complex standards, they may be  
24 forced to repay the funds back to the government,  
25 potentially leaving them in a worse position than

1  
2 when they started. The Build it Back program was  
3 designed to avoid these and other challenges  
4 experienced by cities in post-disaster situations,  
5 especially New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast  
6 following Hurricane Katrina. Many residents in those  
7 areas experienced contractor fraud, received poor  
8 construction services or simply used grant funds on  
9 other ineligible purposes. As a result, despite the  
10 level of federal investment in these area, many  
11 communities were still marked with extensive damage  
12 and erratic rebuilding years following the storm.

13 In designing the Build it Back program,  
14 the Bloomberg administration decided to take a  
15 different approach, based on these lessons, and  
16 also the unique complexities of building in New York  
17 City. The goal of the program was to have the city  
18 administer all construction activities ranging from  
19 relatively simple repairs to much more expensive and  
20 time-consuming home elevations and reconstruction.  
21 Admittedly, the city-managed construction project  
22 would take longer to set up on the front end, but the  
23 intent of the program was to feel assured that the  
24 construction would be done correctly, to the  
25

resilient building standards and that they would bear no risk that funds would be reclaimed or extorted.

The award options under the Build it Back single-family program include repair, repair with elevation, rebuild, reimbursement and acquisition for redevelopment. Under the repair and repair with elevation options, the program will complete any remaining repairs of storm damage to a customer's home using either the program's own contractor or a customer-selected contractor. If the customer's home was substantially damaged by the storm, the program will also elevate the home to above base flood elevation. Under the rebuild option, the program will build a new elevated home for customers whose home was demolished, completely destroyed or damaged beyond repair by the storm, using either a program developer or one of the customer's choosing. Under the reimbursement option, the program reimburses customers for out of pocket expenses they already incurred repairing storm damage to their homes and under the acquisition option, customers with destroyed or demolished homes may be eligible to be referred to an acquisition program the city runs jointly with the state, under which the state

purchases such properties with the goals of  
redeveloping them into more resilient homes.

The multi-family program focuses on  
properties with five or more apartments, including  
rentals, condominiums and cooperatives; this program  
is also run by HPD and includes individual owners of  
condo and co-op units as well as building owners.  
Financial assistance will be provided as a forgivable  
loan to cover unmet need for rehabilitation of  
buildings that sustained damage as a result of  
Hurricane Sandy. In addition, the city intends to  
strengthen housing infrastructure by identifying  
opportunities to increase resiliency against future  
events.

The Temporary Disaster Assistance  
Program, or TDAP, serves very low-income renter  
households who were displaced from their homes as a  
result of Hurricane Sandy. As background,  
immediately following the storm there was hope that a  
federal rental assistance program would be activated;  
ultimately HUD and FEMA established the Disaster  
Housing Assistance Program, or DHAP, but the  
eligibility for this criteria, which was run by the  
state, was restrictive; the city was concerned it

1  
2 would not meet the needs of the highest need  
3 displaced tenants. In response, the city allocated a  
4 portion of its CDBGDR funding to create a separate  
5 Rental Assistance Program, TDAP; the city was granted  
6 a necessary regulatory waiver from HUD and the  
7 program was included in the city's first Action Plan.  
8 TDAP is modeled after Section 8 as a two-year rental  
9 assistance program for low-income residents, those  
10 whose income is less than 50 percent AMI. TDAP  
11 rental subsidy is limited to two years and must be  
12 used within New York City; households are required to  
13 pay 30 percent of their income towards rent.

14           So I think everyone's here to hear a lot  
15 about the delays. Managing federal funds and their  
16 accompanying rules certainly added a layer of  
17 complexity to program development and implementation,  
18 but the program has struggled, certainly, with issues  
19 on a more local level. When Build it Back began  
20 accepting registrations on June 1st, 2013 and  
21 processing applications on July 8th, the program had  
22 challenges finalizing and implementing policies and  
23 procedures to move customers through the process.  
24 This included handling customer expectations,  
25 communications, changing required program documents

1  
2 after registration opened and difficulty managing  
3 vendor contracts across multiple city agencies.

4           When Build it Back opened, without a... For  
5 example, Build it Back opened without a dedicated  
6 customer service team in place; this was a mistake,  
7 it took several months, until late October of 2013,  
8 to bring online the needed resources to provide  
9 applicants the attention and service they deserved.  
10 During those early months we struggled to communicate  
11 effectively with our customers, particularly those  
12 with English proficiency, we also experienced  
13 difficulty in collecting documentations from  
14 customers, including instances where were unclear  
15 about what was needed and instances where we failed,  
16 and we heard about this morning, to track customers'  
17 documentation through our system. Since that point,  
18 however, our customer service team has responded to  
19 approximately 5,400 customer inquiries; today, any  
20 customer with questions about the program can reach a  
21 dedicated Build it Back customer service  
22 representative at the number 212-615-8329 and we have  
23 recently, just recently added senior staff, Build it  
24 Back workers to all of the centers to help deal with  
25

1  
2 some of these case management issues that obviously  
3 are being dealt with.

4           We also recognize in efficiencies in the  
5 process we developed to shepherd customers from  
6 registration through the benefit offerings; this  
7 process includes multiple different steps in which  
8 customers interface with a variety of different  
9 contractors and specialists. From a process  
10 standpoint, the continued passing of responsibility  
11 from one contractor to another has had the effect of  
12 diminishing accountability. And from a customer  
13 service perspective, we understand that it's  
14 confusing to deal with a revolving door of  
15 specialists.

16           The city's program was also designed  
17 before we gained a full understanding of the impact  
18 of transfer payments to our customers. For example,  
19 our policy was to request transfer payments from  
20 customers prior to detailed scoping and design  
21 consultation process, which presented them with a  
22 difficult choice to make without the benefit of the  
23 full information they needed to make, and I think has  
24 hindered people from making that decision. Finally,  
25 internal city process has also been problematic; the



1  
2 Housing Recovery Office, which was established  
3 quickly to respond to the needs of New Yorkers, did  
4 not have all of the resources and capabilities it  
5 needed at first. For example, they lacked the  
6 infrastructure needed to hold and manage contracts  
7 which meant that the contracts being let for Build it  
8 Back vendors were being managed by other city  
9 agencies. Beyond this, the city needs to do better  
10 at clearing away the bureaucratic hurdles that stand  
11 in the way of construction starts, such as DOB permit  
12 issues. [cough] Excuse me.

13 As a result of some of these early  
14 issues, the program did not begin presenting  
15 customers with offerings until November and closed  
16 out 2013 with about 500 offerings made. In short,  
17 while some of these delays were the result of complex  
18 federal requirements, some were self-inflicted,  
19 mistakes were made. I will discuss some of the ways  
20 that we're addressing the problems later.

21 Outcomes to date. Everything I'm talking  
22 about certainly is in the past tense; since January  
23 1st the program has made a series of improvements to  
24 serve New Yorkers more effectively and  
25 compassionately; prioritizing the fast and efficient

1  
2 delivery of relief. I will now provide a brief  
3 description of outcomes to date and recent progress.

4 TDAP. The city has reached out to all  
5 2,306 applicants that registered to TDAP, 80 percent  
6 of that number could not be reached, did not meet  
7 basic program criteria or declined assistance. Of  
8 the 483 active TDAP applicants, 232 coupons have been  
9 issued and 83 of those applicants have signed leases  
10 utilizing this benefit. HPD, which is running TDAP,  
11 is expanding its eligibility requirements for this  
12 program to meet recently emerging needs of renters  
13 who had originally found housing right after Sandy  
14 but are now experiencing a significant rent hardship.  
15 HPD will reach back out to those initially deemed  
16 eligible upon approval by HUD of Amendment 5 of the  
17 New York City Action Plan.

18 On the multi-family program, intake has  
19 been completed for over 80 percent of about 700  
20 active registrants and the rest are being actively  
21 completed at this time. These applicants are working  
22 directly with project managers in the program, from  
23 intake to closing and through the end of  
24 construction. About 60 percent of the applicants  
25 represent buildings containing varying numbers of

1  
2 units and are serving tenants across the city. This  
3 program is prioritizing funds for buildings that  
4 serve more low-income tenants. The multi-family  
5 program has closed on three loans with construction  
6 underway and we estimate 50 additional closings by  
7 June. The city has also dedicated a limited amount  
8 of building mitigation funds to address resiliency  
9 efforts within high-need projects with no existing  
10 federal guidelines or standards for multi-family  
11 residential resiliency work, an interagency team has  
12 worked extensively, including engaging external  
13 stakeholders to develop a program to implement these  
14 funds.

15           And the single-family homes. Over the  
16 last three months the administration has made  
17 significant progress to accelerate the single-family  
18 program and expand program offerings to better suit  
19 the needs of applicants. This began with removing  
20 red tape and streamlining the intake and project  
21 development process. To date the following progress  
22 has been made. We've completed nearly 10,000 damage  
23 assessments, 7,000 alone since January, we've  
24 conducted intake for over 13,700 customers, we've  
25 conducted intake verification for 5,100 Priority 1

1  
2 customers, insurance verification for 11,600  
3 customers and other benefits verification for over  
4 6,000 customers. This is an important part of the  
5 duplication benefits analysis I described above. And  
6 we also have reached out to 5,000 unresponsive  
7 customers and that has brought in an additional 1,200  
8 customers interested in reentering the program.

9           Now that program operations are ramped  
10 up, Build it Back has presented over 3,000 customers  
11 with award pathways, over 600 have accepted  
12 offerings, a number that's higher than the numbers  
13 that were being discussed this morning is growing  
14 rapidly and are now in the first stages of their  
15 award paths. Included in that number are about 70  
16 repair customers who've moved to the next stage and  
17 are now in the process of having their scope of work  
18 prepared, over 40 homes with elevation design process  
19 underway and another 40 whose homes will be rebuilt  
20 and who are working with developers on the designs  
21 for the new homes. Construction began last week and  
22 the first reimbursement checks have been mailed to  
23 homeowners. More meetings are now being scheduled  
24 and completed every day, the estimated total value of  
25 awards that have been accepted is about \$40 million;

the total value of awards that have been offered at this point to homeowners but which have not yet all been accepted is estimated to be over \$312 million.

Since January the administration has also designed and operationalized a first of its kind program to provide reimbursements to applicants who have already completed work. The city worked closely with state and federal partners to make this reimbursement option available for the first time as part of a CDBGDR program, the program has completed grant agreements with customers totaling almost \$135,000 in reimbursements or repair work and the first checks were mailed last week.

Build it Back has also made major improvements to its public engagement and customer service efforts. In January of this year, Build it Back opened a new center in Far Rockaway to make sure that program services are accessible to all impacted communities. The program increased the presence of city staff at its centers to provide direction and oversight and increase communication with customers to identify what documents they need to move through the process and explain their next steps. Build it Back has also translated all required forms and

documents into top languages most common for customers and hired additional foreign language-speaking staff. And this week an applicant guidebook will be posted online so that our program's policies are clear and accessible to applicants.

The program has also engaged an extensive outreach in all communities impacted by the storm, meeting with residents, elected officials and community groups to provide Build it Back updates, answer status questions and get feedback in person.

Our other efforts include transparency. As the program moves forward we intend to keep our city partners and the public aware of our progress and how the program is spending its funding to the effect. Build it Back has assisted in the creation of a publicly accessible database to monitor, track and ensure full transparency around the expenditure of funds and our progress in connection with Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts. The Sandy Funding Tracker database provides public access to all city contracts for the allocation expenditure of Federal Disaster Relief Funds, including contractor vendor information. Currently the website provides the number of customers registered and processed by a

1  
2 variety of geographies, including council district,  
3 the program milestones and details of executed city  
4 procurement contracts for New York City Build it  
5 Back. Over the coming months the city will post even  
6 more detailed information on contract grant loans  
7 funded with federal recovery dollars, both CDBGDR and  
8 FEMA public assistance program.

9           The city also intends to make available  
10 information on estimated jobs created by the program  
11 via the Sandy Funding Tracker. It is the policy of  
12 Build it Back to create, and one of the reasons that  
13 I'm excited to be here, to the greatest extent  
14 feasible, employment and business opportunities for  
15 residents of projects that... for residents of areas  
16 that occur... projects that occur in their communities.  
17 The city and HRO specifically have developed a  
18 Section 3 plan consistent with the federal  
19 requirement; the recipients of certain head funds  
20 provide job training, employment and contract  
21 opportunities the greatest extent possible for low or  
22 very low-income residents in connections with  
23 projects in their neighborhoods.

24           This progress is just the beginning; over  
25 the weekend Mayor de Blasio spoke at the Seaside

Library in Rockaways, recently reopened, and outlined major changes to the program; he introduced the new leadership team and accountability structure, including the appointment of Bill Goldstein, a Senior Advisor to the Mayor for recovery resiliency and infrastructure and myself. The Mayor then announced plans to reallocate \$100 million in CDBG funds from other programs towards the City Housing Recovery; with this additional money we will be able to rebuild every home that was destroyed by the storm and has registered for New York City Build it Back regardless of income level. Other actions include increasing the Housing Recovery Office staff by 35 percent, accelerating the design process for home repairs and rebuild by moving the design consultation to immediately after an offer is given, allowing homeowners to set aside their transfer amounts for temporary relocation expenses if they have to move during reconstruction, eliminating permit and procedural bottlenecks that are slowing repairs and rebuilds, clearing out standing DOP permits that have prevented some rebuilds and repairs from moving forward, and we've made a huge dent in that in the last few weeks, ensuring customers with missing



documents that they turn them in within a few weeks of opening an application and that we obviously get better information out to the applicants about what documents they're missing so that we can ensure that we can move faster through the process. And just last week the city announced the effort to ensure that FEMA was contributing \$100 million to replace the destroyed and damaged boilers in over 100 public housing buildings. All of these changes are streamlining the process and accelerating the speed of our recovery efforts and we're looking to find additional ways to make that happen.

In conclusion I'd like to reiterate; the Housing Recovery Office is committed to serving New York City residents, they can repair and rebuild safer and stronger; we certainly hear the sense of urgency and I am excited to be here today to address it and am planning to do that moving forward. The process has been far from seamless, we recognize that, we're taking proactive steps to address the communication gaps and delays that we've heard about just this morning that have impacted our ability to provide meaningful relief and we're making progress, the money's starting to get out, the buildings are

1  
2 starting to happen; we've kind of opened the door to  
3 really seeing the money out there and I think we're  
4 gonna be able to see a lot of progress in the coming  
5 weeks and months. So thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Are  
7 there any other opening statements or that covers it  
8 all? [background comment] Okay. I'd like to also  
9 just recognize we've been joined by Council Member  
10 Costa Conantidies... Constantinides, I'm sorry, Council  
11 Member Mark Levine, Council Member Eric Ulrich, who  
12 as well has been really one of the leaders in the  
13 Sandy recovery; I applaud all of his efforts, Council  
14 Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member Robert  
15 Cornegy, Council Member Steven Levin, and Council  
16 Member Ritchie Torres, who was very helpful with this  
17 committee and exposing the problems with temporary  
18 boilers in NYCHA buildings and I thank him for his  
19 leadership and his partnership.

20 Where do I begin? Thank you Miss  
21 Peterson for being here and to all here who have  
22 joined you. So the first thing is, you had mentioned  
23 that I believe that there's been about 2,306  
24 applicants to date; is that correct, as far as the  
25

number of people who have applied to Build it Back?  
Is that as of the October of last year deadline?

AMY PETERSON: Yes, that is.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many of  
those numbers have received in hand a reimbursement  
check; do you have an exact figure for that? Any  
type of... [interpose]

AMY PETERSON: \$80,000 in checks was  
mailed out last week.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Last wa...  
[background comment]

AMY PETERSON: Last week. [background  
comments]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So 80... \$80,000 in  
checks were sent... [interpose]

AMY PETERSON: In reimbursement checks.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: reimbursement  
checks were mailed out last week?

AMY PETERSON: Actually, \$100,000 was  
sent out last week and we expect... we have about  
\$800,000 committed and we're expecting to figure...  
ensure that we can get those out quickly.

[background comments] And those are the

reimbursement checks, which is a new part of the program, another part of the program. [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. Do you have figures on how many applicants exactly that equals up to?

AMY PETERSON: No, but I can get you that.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You can get back to me on that?

AMY PETERSON: Yes. Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would really appreciate that, because this is what we're hearing... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: Right.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and dealing with on a day to day basis and we just need to make sure that in order to make the best decisions we have the best information with us available as possible. How many are at the option stage of that number of 2,306?

AMY PETERSON: So 676 have selected their option and some of the numbers I heard this morning, that was about at 100 in February, so we're certainly moving faster on that process; 3,000 have completed their option meeting. So one of the things I'd like

1  
2 to focus on is how we get the 3,000 that have  
3 completed their option meeting to selecting their  
4 option and how we increase the number above the 676.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But how many do you  
6 have at the completed option stage? How many peop..  
7 [interpose]

8 AMY PETERSON: 676 have selected their  
9 options, so they've... [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So... so they... they  
11 have...

12 AMY PETERSON: they've been offered their  
13 option and they've selected it. Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: They've selected  
15 their options?

16 AMY PETERSON: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. Now prior to  
18 this announcement of 35 percent additional folks  
19 working at the Housing Recovery Office, how many were  
20 working at Build it Back to process over 20,000  
21 applications?

22 [background comments]

23 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Thaddeus Hackworth,  
24 General Counsel for HRO. HRO has approximately 75  
25 full-time staff; in addition we have contract vendors

1  
2 who do a lot of the work at the centers and I can get  
3 you a number on the approximate there...

4 AMY PETERSON: We'll get you that number.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, because that  
6 would be helpful. Now because I'm... question I'm  
7 tryin' to get as is, if we're adding 35 percent more...  
8 [interpose]

9 AMY PETERSON: And that's just for... so  
10 the distinction is, there's vendors that are working  
11 at the centers and then there's the kind of main  
12 administrative office and so the city staff is going  
13 from 70 to 105 and the vendor staff is the larger  
14 number that he's...

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: And that's  
16 approximately 200.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 200? How many?  
18 Vendors?

19 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: At the centers, yes.

20 AMY PETERSON: Staff.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Question on that;  
22 where are these vendors from?

23 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So the case  
24 management pro... excuse me, the case management  
25 contract is with PFM and there are... [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Say it again.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: It's PFM...

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: PFM.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: and there are three subcontractors; the staff at the Housing Recovery centers is supplied by the subcontractor URS.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, because I just wanna say, one of the frustrations that I've been dealing with in my district, and I'm sure this applies to all impacted areas and districts, is that there seems to be a disconnect between the people who are at these offices and the communities which they're serving and I am not clear on the process that was used to select these groups and it would make sense to me that we work with local organizations that are in these communities that know the people, that have an understanding of the history of the neighborhoods and how complex each neighborhood is so they would become, in effect, the case managers for the impacted residents, because that has been one of the main problems we're dealing with here, is a breakdown in communication and we hard that clearly from the first panel, that they speak to someone new each time and they don't really

1  
2 have an understanding and the next person goes back  
3 to square one saying well you miss additional forms.  
4 So it is really unclear to me, number one, on the  
5 selection process of these groups. Can you speak to  
6 that?

7 AMY PETERSON: Well obviously the  
8 selection process occurred long before I got here...  
9 [interpose]

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

11 AMY PETERSON: and it's a big question to  
12 me also in terms of how we ensure that the people who  
13 are in the communities, meeting with the community  
14 residents have a knowledge of these people and the  
15 knowledge of the communities. One of the first  
16 things I wanna do is look at who are these employees  
17 and are they from these residents; my understanding  
18 is about half of the contracted people working there  
19 are local residents, but I also wanna figure out if  
20 there's a way we can involve some of the community-  
21 based organizations more; I know that they've been  
22 doing a good job; they created a donor network to  
23 ensure that a lot of the community-based  
24 organizations were actually helping us with outreach  
25 and things like that and I'd like to see if we can



1  
2 expand that a bit to help deal with some of these  
3 issues.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: That is so crucial,  
5 Miss Peterson... [crosstalk]

6 AMY PETERSON: I agree.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I mean, because  
8 there is a major, major disconnected system right now  
9 and I'd like to also point out that, I understand and  
10 I fully understand that you know, you're new and the  
11 team here is [background comments] assembling here is  
12 a new team, but if there was prob... there were  
13 problems last year... to me there are problems at the  
14 information-gathering stage...

15 AMY PETERSON: Right.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: in gathering  
17 information and trying to set up an organized system  
18 to perceive and process complaints from impacted  
19 residents, so therefore, if the developing process  
20 was flawed, the product is therefore flawed...

21 AMY PETERSON: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and that's what  
23 we're dealing with right now, so residents, in my  
24 opinion, are number one, still dealing with the  
25

1  
2 impact of Sandy [background comment] and they're  
3 dealing with the impact of inaction...

4 AMY PETERSON: Yep.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: or slow action for  
6 over a year-and-a-half and we have to be cognizant of  
7 that, because I don't believe there were adequate  
8 number of people working with this program to handle  
9 the volume of applicants, and I would also like to  
10 point out that I don't believe that we did proper  
11 outreach to inform all of the impacted people. There  
12 were people who were living in Mitchell-Lama co-ops  
13 who had no clue that they were eligible for this  
14 program, there were renters, people who were  
15 displaced from their apartments, who had no knowledge  
16 of TDAP and this was evident when there was a meeting  
17 in my district with Build it Back and I... to their  
18 credit, they set up a nice PowerPoint and they had  
19 people there and... but when I saw that there were a  
20 little over 800 applicants in my district when I knew  
21 that thousands were impacted and you see the  
22 fluctuation in numbers in other districts where they  
23 have thousands of applicants, something went wrong,  
24 and that is why it is really... it is my request and  
25 the request of others that not only do we expedite

1  
2 the process for those who are impacted, but we also  
3 reopen the program to allow thousands more,  
4 especially the most vulnerable of our populations, to  
5 be a part of this... to get the assistance of the  
6 recovery effort. I'd also like to ask you to comment  
7 on something that... in your testimony you state that,  
8 thus there are significant uncertainties about the  
9 city's ability to serve all applicants to program,  
10 but in your closing remarks, and from what I heard at  
11 the press conference on Saturday, that with this  
12 reallocation of \$100 million we will be able to  
13 rebuild, assist every home destroyed by the storm  
14 regardless of income level. Can you speak to that  
15 confusion?

16 AMY PETERSON: Yes. So there's... there is  
17 the... the homes that were destroyed or substantially  
18 destroyed... [crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

20 AMY PETERSON: and they need to be  
21 rebuilt, and so while there used to be, before this  
22 weekend, income level restrictions on whose homes of  
23 people who'd applied for that program could be  
24 rebuilt, those have been lifted and this \$100 million  
25 is to ensure that anyone who's applied for the

1  
2 program, regardless of income level, whose home was  
3 destroyed will have that rebuilt. There is still a  
4 question, and I think the senator certainly said on  
5 Saturday that there's more funds that are available  
6 and we're certainly working with the federal  
7 government to try to get more funds, is to whether we  
8 can serve all of the people who have repair needs,  
9 but not rebuild. [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So as of... So as of  
11 right now, as in this moment, [background comment] do  
12 we have in our possession enough money to assist all  
13 of the applicants that have applied so far?

14 AMY PETERSON: Based on our current  
15 projections, we do not think we have currently enough  
16 funding to do the lower priorities, so the higher  
17 income level people who have repair needs and repair  
18 and elevate needs actually, but we're working with  
19 the federal government to one, ensure we understand  
20 how much funding we need and that they can get that  
21 funding to us.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Can you give our  
23 committees a chart [background comment] explaining  
24 how much money we have and how much money we need  
25 additionally to make sure that all applicants are

1  
2 getting the assistance which they deserve, because it  
3 was my understanding from the press conference that  
4 there will be enough money to assist all and I think  
5 it's important that we get this information cleared...

6 AMY PETERSON: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: because if there's  
8 additional monies we need from Washington or from any  
9 of these agencies, we need to know that right now...

10 AMY PETERSON: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: because it was... I  
12 received that information as regardless of Priority  
13 1, 2 or 3, if your home was damaged or severely  
14 damaged, we will help you, and we must make sure that  
15 we keep our word to all Sandy victims, regardless of  
16 income levels.

17 I would like to just speak... and then I'll  
18 let my co-chairs... some questions... what type of  
19 counseling or information do you provide the  
20 applicants in making some of these decisions? These  
21 are... let's be very clear, these are significant,  
22 important, life-altering decisions with regards to  
23 their properties and I... they have become their de  
24 facto advocates; in addition to getting their lives  
25 back up and running, in addition to working and

1  
2 struggling to make ends to meet, they now have the  
3 added burden of trying to navigate this bureaucracy  
4 as you are navigating this bureaucracy, so what type  
5 of counseling do we have available to impacted  
6 residents when making these very, very important  
7 decisions with regards to what options to choose and  
8 which option best suits their needs?

9           AMY PETERSON: 'Kay. So we've been  
10 working with the Center for New York City  
11 Neighborhoods to do just that counseling when they  
12 need to figure out, especially with some of the  
13 financial issues related to the mortgages and SBA  
14 loans if this is the way they should move forward,  
15 but it's certainly one of the things I wanna look at,  
16 in addition is, are there other resources that we  
17 could bring in that we could bring in that could help  
18 them make that final decision.

19           CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because this is  
20 crucial, you know these are major decisions they have  
21 to make and I don't know who is... you know even after  
22 they make their decision and they have to now deal  
23 with the contractor or deal with this, someone needs  
24 to advocate for them, someone needs to be their  
25 voice, someone needs to make sure that their rights,

1  
2 their interests are being protected. And in addition  
3 to my position that we have to, number one, expedite  
4 the process for those who have applied; number two,  
5 reopen the program to allow thousands more in that  
6 had no idea about the program; number three, I really  
7 believe that we should work with local organizations  
8 in impacted communities to become the voices and  
9 advocates for these impacted residents; they cannot  
10 do this alone and I think the government has an  
11 obligation to recognize that. I would like to now  
12 turn to Co-Chair Williams, Chair of the Housing and  
13 Buildings Committee.

14 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you Mr. Chair.  
15 Thank you Miss Peterson, et al. for your testimony.  
16 So I am tryin' to allow for the fact that we have a  
17 new administration and I know you yourself are fairly  
18 new; the only way I can do that is if the information  
19 is free-flowing and it helps me feel comfortable. I  
20 don't know if you're aware, on February 18th I think  
21 it was; I did meet, I believe it was with your  
22 predecessor and some other folks from Build it Back  
23 and I thought I had a very good conversation and then  
24 two weeks later I was told that nothing had been  
25 built, and so that was very troublesome for me to

1  
2 feel like we have a free-flowing conversation, if we  
3 have an hour-and-a-half meeting to go through the  
4 whole program; I asked questions about how they're  
5 helping, who they're helping and it was answered  
6 quite eloquently, actually; it's just that it was... I  
7 don't know what it was based on, I don't know if they  
8 were basing it on the Rapid Repairs, I don't know  
9 what it was, but to find out two weeks later that  
10 nothing had been built was very disheartening, to say  
11 the least, so I hope that doesn't happen again; if it  
12 does, you know all that goes out the window -- new;  
13 not new. Also, I'm just a little surprised... you seem  
14 to have all the numbers down, except for the one that  
15 says how many people do the \$80,000 represent. So is  
16 there any way we get that number before the end of  
17 the... you said that \$80,000 was sent out last week?

18 [background comments]

19 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay, that's fine.

20 [background comments] And you said there was  
21 \$135,000; what was the... there was \$135,000 number,  
22 something that was being sent out again or about to  
23 be sent out? I don't know; I heard \$80,000 sent out  
24 last week, \$100,000 being sent out or something like  
25 that. [interpose]



1

2

AMY PETERSON: Oh, \$100,000 sent out.

3

Yeah, I screwed up the first number. So it's three

4

homes and this is just the reimbursement, so that's

5

something... [interpose]

6

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

7

AMY PETERSON: it's a newer program;

8

\$100,000 was sent out and there's \$800,000 committed

9

and one of the things that I wanna do first, and I

10

know people have been talking about here and really

11

working on, is how we get those checks out as quickly

12

as possible.

13

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Alright. So there's

14

a lot of numbers here and I'm sorry; I just wanna

15

spend some time [background comment] trying to really

16

unpack it. So the Rapid Repair, \$640 million was

17

spent, \$604... \$640 million were there, \$604 million

18

was spent; where's the other \$40 million?

19

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So the remaining... so

20

those are FEMA funds for Rapid Repair; the remaining

21

funds, and Calvin Johnson at OMB may be able to speak

22

to this further; we're still... Rapid Repairs is still

23

working through some of the claims that the

24

contractors made, so it's anticipated that additional

25

payments will go out to the contractors.

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And so help me fully  
3 understand the connection of Rapid Repair and Build  
4 it Back; are those folks going through now Build it  
5 Back; is it two complete different things? What's  
6 the relationship?

7 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I... [background  
8 comment] So they are two separate programs with two  
9 separate funding sources; they were both run out of  
10 the Housing Recovery Office, so Build it Back in some  
11 ways kind of used some of the leg work that had  
12 already been done for Rapid Repairs, so for example,  
13 used the Rapid Repairs clients to reach out to them  
14 about their interest in the Build it Back program and  
15 some of the staff remain the same that worked on both  
16 programs, but they were two separate programs with  
17 different funding sources.

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: How many homeowners  
19 were assisted with Rapid Repair?

20 [background comments]

21 AMY PETERSON: 11,700 buildings and  
22 20,000 units... [crosstalk]

23 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Say that again,  
24 11,000...

25

AMY PETERSON: 11,700 buildings and  
20,000 units.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And how many tenants  
were assisted?

AMY PETERSON: A total of 54,000 New  
Yorkers is the number.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: 54,000. And those  
were for minor repairs or you're including getting  
electricity back?

AMY PETERSON: That was the main push  
right after the storm to... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So those...

AMY PETERSON: heat and power and hot  
water.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So most of those...  
even though the name is Rapid Repair, most of it was  
getting back things like electricity and heat; not  
necessarily repairs?

AMY PETERSON: Yeah, it was just to allow  
them to kind of shelter in place. So it was to get  
the... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Who?

AMY PETERSON: the... the residents.

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So I'm clear, Rapid  
3 Repair did not make any repairs, they restored  
4 needed... whatever, power, heat... okay. So now we go to  
5 Build it Back to get the repairs done; correct?

6 [crosstalk]

7 AMY PETERSON: Correct. Correct.

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Just to clarify. So  
9 under Rapid Repairs, there were repairs of things  
10 like boilers and in some cases, emergency repairs to  
11 structural areas, but not, you know, significant,  
12 complete scope repairs to homes.

13 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. And I've seen  
14 a lot of different numbers here -- TDAP, 2,006;  
15 multi-family, 700 active registrants, and then you  
16 had a breakdown, completed nearly 10,000 assessments  
17 -- so there are... there were 22,000 applicants; is  
18 that correct? How many were homeowners?

19 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So... [background  
20 comments] we have that number... It is approximately  
21 16,000; I can find the precise number.

22 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I'll go with that,  
23 approximately 16,000. How many were tenants; the  
24 rest? [crosstalk]

25 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Uh... 2,000? 2,000.

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: How many were co-ops  
3 or condo owners?

4 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So... I think that...  
5 that may be a little more difficult for us to parse  
6 out, because some of those folks are going to be  
7 counted as homeowners, because they considered  
8 themselves homeowners when they registered...

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I see.

10 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: others may have  
11 registered as a multi-family building, so I think we  
12 can get you better numbers on that, but I...  
13 [crosstalk]

14 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: don't know that we  
16 have them with us. [crosstalk]

17 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So yeah,  
18 approximately 16,000 homeowners, 2,000 tenants;  
19 that's 18,000, just still short about 4,000 of those  
20 you say applied. But let's just go with these  
21 numbers. Okay... [interpose]

22 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Sorry, and some of  
23 the applications were duplicates because there were  
24 multiple registrations, so... [crosstalk]

25 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I see.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: it'll never quite add up to the full amount of registrants.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you. And so with TDAP, the city has reached out to all 236 applicants, 232 have received coupons. So of those 230... 2,306, it says of the 483 active TDAP applicants. So that means of the 2,306 applicants there were 483 that were considered active; is that correct?

[background comments]

ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Good morning Council Member.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Good morning.

ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Of 2,306 people who registered as rent... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Please state your name for the record.

ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: I'm sorry. Good morning, I'm Anne-Marie Hendrickson from HPD. There were 2,306 people who registered as renters; 80 percent of those 2,306 couldn't even be reached and even when we reached them, we called them multiple times, some people declined assistance, some were

1  
2 not... some weren't income eligible at the time they  
3 were contacted... [interpose]

4 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So just let me clar...

5 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Uhm-hm.

6 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: what... when was the...  
7 when was the attempts to try to reach them?

8 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: We reached them  
9 since October 2013, we tried at least three times to  
10 reach them via phone; we emailed them as well.

11 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

12 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Okay? So 7  
13 percent of them declined assistance when we reached  
14 them, 8 percent were income-eligible when we reached  
15 them, 23 percent didn't respond... [interpose]

16 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I'm sorry; how many  
17 was income ineligible?

18 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: 8 percent were  
19 income ineligible...

20 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Uhm-hm.

21 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: meaning they  
22 were more than 50 percent of AMI, 23 percent didn't  
23 respond and then 41 percent of them weren't found to  
24 have been displaced; they were in long-term housing.  
25

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So you just added...  
3 that's more than 100 percent, right? So there was  
4 multiple reasons?

5 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Yeah, there's  
6 multiple reasons... [crosstalk]

7 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

8 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: why people  
9 weren't eligible, but when we got to a population,  
10 483 actually applied and met the criteria and we're  
11 going through the various stages of the process.

12 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And 232 have received  
13 a coupon?

14 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Yes.

15 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. And the others  
16 are waiting for the coupon?

17 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: There are 73...  
18 there are 79 that are in process, meaning that  
19 they're going through the stage to receive a coupon  
20 and 172 of those applicants were ineligible.

21 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Now for the  
22 homeowners, about 16,000 homeowners, so for multi-  
23 family it says there were 700 active registrants and  
24 for single families there's a whole lot'a numbers  
25 here. And so it looks like Build it Back has



presented over 3,000 customers with award pathways, which that means they could get an award but probably didn't; over 600 have accepted offerings. So help me understand those numbers, please. So 16,000 homeowners applied and where are we with those 600?

AMY PETERSON: Yeah, so what I... what I have here, and you know, I'd love to sit down and go through this in more detail; 14,000 had their initial meeting, 90... [interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So wait... 16 applied, but 14 had an initial meeting?

AMY PETERSON: Had an initial meeting.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What about the 2,000?

AMY PETERSON: We had about 5,000 unresponsive and I don't have the breakdown between... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

AMY PETERSON: the different programs, but of that we've just done a huge outreach effort and I think engaged 1,200 of those back into the process and are continuing that outreach.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

1  
2 AMY PETERSON: So 14,000 initial  
3 meetings, 9,500 damage assessment, so that's...  
4 [crosstalk]

5 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: 9... 900?

6 AMY PETERSON: 9,500 damage assessment...

7 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

8 AMY PETERSON: damage inspections, and  
9 then over 3,000 have had their option meeting and  
10 that's completed, but only of those, 676 have  
11 selected their option. So there's obviously people  
12 still going through the process at each of those  
13 stages and we need to figure out how to speed up  
14 those and there's already been... one of the big things  
15 that's changed is the ability to go right into design  
16 from option without having made your decision on the  
17 major payment on the transfer amount and that's  
18 really gonna increase the amount of people who make  
19 their option selection... [crosstalk]

20 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So of those 3,000,  
21 does that include the 700 multi-family active  
22 registrants?

23 AMY PETERSON: No, it does not.

24 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. So where are  
25 they a part of this number? Where...

1

2

AMY PETERSON: The multi-family?

3

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Yeah.

4

AMY PETERSON: Can you speak to that?

5

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Wait, so these 16,000

6

homeowners; are they multi-families and singles or

7

just multi-family?

8

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Those are just

9

single-family. [background comment]

10

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay, so we have to

11

have another number for multi-family. How many

12

multi-families applied?

13

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So we have 978

14

registrants for the multi-family..

15

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What's the definition

16

of multi-family?

17

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: It's five or more

18

units in the building.

19

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And of those you have

20

700 active registrants; is that right?

21

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Uh... [background

22

comment] it looks to me... yes, 700.

23

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What does that mean?

24

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So 168 of those

25

registrants are unresponsive; they have not been

1  
2 responding to our calls and other forms of contact,  
3 111 have been determined to be ineligible, leaving  
4 approximately 700.

5 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So they have options,  
6 is that...

7 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So of those 700,  
8 approximately 554 have completed their applications,  
9 383 have had their damage assessments... let's see...  
10 about 60 have finished their... well have started their  
11 environmental review, one of the requirements that we  
12 mentioned in the testimony, and the... just going down  
13 the list here... 30 have made it through the  
14 duplication of benefits, or what we call coordination  
15 of benefits requirement where we compare the amount  
16 of assistance they previously received to what has  
17 already been spent... [interpose]

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So how many are at  
19 the place where they can get an option now?

20 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So there have been  
21 four buildings where a contractor's been selected and  
22 there have been three closings so far.

23 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I see. So out of 700  
24 active registrants, we have 4 and 3 closings. Okay.  
25 Alright. Just a couple more questions, then I'll

1  
2 hand it over. I have a lot, but I guess I'll come  
3 back; I don't wanna take up too much, but I do have  
4 to ask a couple more. So from what I saw in one of  
5 the testimonies, I think the maximum for a family of  
6 four that is income-eligible was about \$67,000; is  
7 that correct?

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's from the  
9 testimony... yes.

10 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Yeah. I just... and  
11 help me understand this, because I know that some of  
12 this also can be used to rebuild or purchase a home;  
13 is that the same income requirements; if it is; how  
14 do you purchase a home with 67,000?

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So the income limits  
16 apply to applicants regardless of what pathway or  
17 program option they ultimately choose; with the  
18 acquisition option, it's run in partnership with the  
19 state, so ultimately the state will acquire the  
20 property for the pre-storm value of the property so  
21 that the customer who choose that option can then  
22 purchase a home elsewhere. So they'll receive...  
23 [crosstalk]

24 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: You said... run that  
25 again please.

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So applicants who  
3 choose the acquisition for redevelopment pathway...  
4 [interpose]

5 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So let's say I'm a  
6 family of four, I happen to own a home even though  
7 AMI, whichever it is, that lets me meet \$67,000...

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Okay.

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I want to choose an  
10 acquisition of a new home...

11 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So what will happen  
12 is, we will work with the state to refer you to a  
13 program... we do a lot of the front end work, but the  
14 state ultimately will make you an offer on... assuming  
15 that you're eligible for that option... will make you  
16 an offer based on the pre-storm value of your home,  
17 so... [interpose]

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: But it will have  
19 nothin' to do with that HUD \$67,000?

20 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's sort of just  
21 what gets you in the door; that's how we count you...  
22 [crosstalk]

23 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I see...

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: as whether or not  
25 you meet that national objective or not. So these

options are available to more than just low and moderate-income families, but HUD requires that 50 percent of the projects be low to middle-income families.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And I know you said you can't duplicate services, which is understandable; one of them... I guess it's not your ruling, but a loan to SBA seems to me to be different than grants given or insurance money given, so why is a loan included there and they would not even be able to use that to repay the loan?

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Mr. Chairman, if I can just issue a point of information... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: The acquisition for redevelopment, which Council Member Oddo and I brought back from New Orleans and introduced here is post-storm value; I just wanna... thought I was going crazy; it's post-storm value with other homes with an allocation for relocation.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So you're saying that's actually less money?

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Well I'm saying that acquisition for redevelopment is based on the

assessment... appraisal of the house post-Sandy...

[interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: That'll be after  
Sandy?

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yeah.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: That may make it less  
money than if it was pre... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Right. But what  
the administration can do and what the program can do  
through the state is to allow for an allowance for  
relocation so that they bring 'em up to a level of...  
[crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So those...

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: I just wanna be  
clear for the record.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Those two benefits  
combined are approximately for pre-storm... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: And I didn't  
mean to insult you; I just wanna be clear on the  
record.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's right.



1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Yeah, so why is the  
3 SBA loan... this confused me a little; it's different  
4 than in any of the other ones that were on that list?

5 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I think many of  
6 us are in agreement with you, that it is different  
7 and it doesn't quite make sense; the reason that it's  
8 on the list is because HUD issued a guidance a few  
9 years ago on duplication of benefits and specifically  
10 required that SBA loans be counted as assistance  
11 received, notwithstanding the fact that it's a loan  
12 that has to be repaid as opposed to a grant.

13 [interpose]

14 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So if they want an  
15 exception; that has to be changed at the federal  
16 level?

17 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So... and in part it  
18 was. So after some conversations with HUD about the  
19 difficulty of that requirement, they issued further  
20 guidance which allowed us to not count an SBA loan as  
21 assistance that was received if it was declined by  
22 the applicant, provided that... because under the old  
23 guidance... [crosstalk]

24

25

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: If it was declined,  
3 that should mean that you... I mean I don't understand  
4 what you just...

5 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I agree with you;  
6 under HUD's previous guidance though, if a loan was  
7 offered to an applicant but declined, HUD considered  
8 that to be a benefit offered to the applicant that  
9 should count for duplication of benefit service.

10 [crosstalk]

11 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: But so any changes  
12 now would have to be on the federal level? Like if I  
13 want somebody who receives SBA loan not to be counted  
14 against them, that we have to change at the federal  
15 level?

16 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Right now that would  
17 require a change in federal guidance.

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

19 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I just wanna mention  
20 that for those that did decline the loan, and there  
21 are about 3,000 of our... sorry, 3,000 of our  
22 applicants who have SBA loans, about half of those  
23 did decline the loan...

24 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.  
25

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: for those applicants  
3 we can not count that as assistance received; under  
4 HUD's guidance however, we have to do something of an  
5 underwriting process to ensure that, you know,  
6 certify, essentially, that they had a legitimate  
7 reason for declining the loan, so it's a bit  
8 cumbersome but it's better than the situation that  
9 existed before.

10 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. I have a bunch  
11 more questions, but I wanna make sure other people  
12 get a chance; I'm gonna ask the last one. Are there  
13 any plan... I mean it seems to me... obviously  
14 everybody's new, but it seems to me there was a whole  
15 bunch of stuff that went wrong; are there any plans  
16 to reopen the applicant process to grab the folks  
17 that either weren't outreached or otherwise had no  
18 idea how to do this or were given wrong information?

19 AMY PETERSON: Yeah. So that's a  
20 question that I would like to figure out the answer  
21 to, working in partnership with you. What I've heard  
22 is that the number of applicants increased  
23 dramatically once we started to get some community-  
24 based organizations involved in the outreach prior to  
25 the end of October; it went from about 17,000 to

1  
2 26,000, although that doesn't work with my 20,000, so  
3 I don't know exactly how that works, in that period  
4 of time when we got those groups involved, so I'd  
5 like to get a better sense from you of the pockets of  
6 people that you think are missing so we can see if  
7 that makes sense to do. [crosstalk]

8 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay, but...

9 AMY PETERSON: At this point there's no  
10 plans to do it, but I'd like to... yeah.

11 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: But you have the  
12 authority and ability to do it if you wanted to?

13 AMY PETERSON: Well I think the city does  
14 if they make the decision that there's a group of  
15 people. We've also put in place a program with LISC,  
16 so people who aren't eligible or potentially haven't  
17 applied could go there and I know they're looking for  
18 people. So those are all things that I'd like to  
19 talk about with... [crosstalk]

20 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Alright.

21 AMY PETERSON: when I go out.

22 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you. I mean  
23 with the storm finished I... thankfully most of my  
24 district was not hit much and the part of Canarsie I  
25 had then was not hit much, so I went to the

1  
2 neighboring district which was then Council Member  
3 Fidler; now Council Member Maisel, and although for  
4 some strange reason Canarsie was always ignored; even  
5 now it's never really listed, but there were some  
6 people really, really affected by that; I went and  
7 was shocked at what I saw. I got a call from my  
8 cousin the night before tellin' me there was water in  
9 his house; I thought he was exaggerating about it and  
10 I went there and he was not. So this really... and I  
11 went over to Coney Island as well with Council  
12 Member... so this really, really affects me; although I  
13 am the Chair, thankfully I don't have any affected  
14 areas, but I have friends and families who were  
15 looking for me to help them and we couldn't and we  
16 sent them to wherever they needed to go and they  
17 could find no assistance. So this is really  
18 something I wanna make sure moves forward. And I  
19 have some more questions; will ask them later, but I  
20 will try to pass it on. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
22 Williams. Just to be clear, Miss Peterson; does the  
23 Mayor have the power, the authority to reopen the  
24 program? Just so we're clear.

25 AMY PETERSON: Sorry. Yes. Yah.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. Because  
3 we've heard, and I think you've acknowledged that  
4 there were a lot of problems last year [background  
5 comment] and first of all, there were problems with  
6 communicating with those who did apply; just imagine  
7 those who had never... had any clue to apply, so I  
8 think it's incumbent upon us, number one, to  
9 recognize that and to, first all, process better  
10 those who have applied, but to reopen the program,  
11 and I could tell you that... I'm happy you said that,  
12 that when you worked with local groups the numbers  
13 increased; that's what should've happened in the  
14 first place, [background comment] because the groups  
15 know the people; they could reach the diverse areas  
16 of our city. I mean it is inexplicable to me how  
17 under 900 people in Coney Island and Seagate applied  
18 for Build it Back when thousands were impacted and  
19 there's a major disconnect here.

20 Now you mentioned that checks for  
21 reimbursements, three checks went out, \$80,000; when  
22 will construction begin on new repairs?

23 AMY PETERSON: So construction has begun  
24 on six homes for repairs.  
25

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Six homes for repairs.

AMY PETERSON: And 75 have completed design for repairs and 77 are in the elevation design process, so the elevation.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And when you say design for repairs; who's in on that meeting for design for repairs?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: In addition to the homeowner, it's the contractor, either one of the city contractors or if the applicant chose their own contractor, then that contractor. So the homeowner, the contractor and a scoping architect that's part of our program to work with the contractor in identifying the repairs that remain in the structure.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So in that meeting, is there anyone that is familiar with current city codes; is there anyone in that meeting who can best advise, who's looking out for the interest of the property owner when making these decisions, or it's simply just the homeowner, the contractor and... who is in that meeting to protect the interest of the property owner?

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's the  
3 architect, our scope... excuse me, our scoper, who  
4 determines, based on the building code requirements  
5 and the damage that's seen in the home, specifically  
6 what repairs would be required to bring the structure  
7 up to meet code compliance.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: The architect's  
9 intention is to build, is to do something, but I'm  
10 saying; who is there to advise the property owner, to  
11 advise them on their best options and their best  
12 decision-making, because these are very important  
13 decisions that have to be made; who is looking out  
14 for their interest?

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Right. So just to  
16 be clear, the architect who does the scoping isn't  
17 involved with the construction in any other way, so  
18 they essentially act as a counter-balance to the  
19 contractor to develop the scope for the home, so in  
20 many ways the role that you're describing is one  
21 that's held by that... [interpose]

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah. I just wanna  
23 point out to you and then I'll move to Chair Donovan  
24 Richards, that really, the feedback that we're  
25 getting and that you heard is that people are not



1  
2 informed, they don't know what's going on and no one  
3 is advocating for their interests and someone really  
4 should. And I'll turn it over now to Chair Richards.  
5 Thank you.

6 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Great, thank you  
7 Chairman; I will try to be brief. So the first  
8 question I have is; have you... thank you Miss Peterson  
9 for being here and welcome aboard... have you guys  
10 considered having regional directors that we can hold  
11 accountable for your Build it Back offices; it seems  
12 that accountability is something that obviously all  
13 of us are looking for in areas that are damaged, so  
14 have you guys considered having someone that... whether  
15 they're based in Queens, for Queens offices that we  
16 can work with or Brooklyn or Staten Island; are you  
17 guys considering that?

18 AMY PETERSON: So again, I just started  
19 today and spent a lot of time preparing for this and  
20 so haven't had a chance to really look at the  
21 organizational structure as it exists, but feel very  
22 strongly that community-based representation, both on  
23 our staff and with the contractors we work with is  
24 important, so would certainly consider it, if we  
25

1  
2 don't already have it in place, and I need take a  
3 look at that, how that's structured.

4 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay, I would suggest  
5 that we do that, because you know we have, as elected  
6 officials, if I was to think of a person that I  
7 should be able to contact in the, for instance, the  
8 Far Rockaways...

9 AMY PETERSON: Right.

10 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Build it Back office,  
11 I can't think of anyone...

12 AMY PETERSON: Okay.

13 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: locally that we  
14 should go to that is assigned to work specifically  
15 with elected officials...

16 AMY PETERSON: Right.

17 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: in hard-hit areas, so  
18 if I can suggest that. Just wanted to touch on TDAP.  
19 So I know that TDAP will expire after two years; are  
20 you guys considerin' expanding it after two years  
21 possibly, you know, when the money runs out, because  
22 we don't want the, you know, our constituents to  
23 obviously end up in the shelter system, you know  
24 after two years of getting into a place that they  
25 finally can call home.

1  
2 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Good morning,  
3 sir; Anne-Marie Hendrickson, HPD. In terms of this  
4 two-year subsidy, what we're putting in place are  
5 independent living planners; I'm hiring staff that  
6 will work with the individual and see if we can  
7 develop a transition plan; we don't want them to come  
8 back to shelter, so either we're gonna try to work  
9 with the landlords to see if they can get some sort  
10 of preferential rent or work with them to see if we  
11 can transition them before the two years, into  
12 something that's more affordable.

13 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay, got you. And  
14 that'll come with a subsidy, I'm assuming?

15 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Well the TDAP  
16 has a subsidy...

17 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Right.

18 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: okay, and again,  
19 the idea is to try to ensure that we get 'em into an  
20 apartment that's affordable that they can pay without  
21 a subsidy.

22 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay. Thank you. I  
23 wanna go into land acquisition; I am concerned about,  
24 you know obviously land acquisition happening in low-  
25 income areas, such as Far Rockaway. What is

1  
2 contained in the MOU between the state and the city  
3 regarding acquisition for redevelopment and will the  
4 document be publicly released? And part of the  
5 reason I'm saying this is because we've sort of seen  
6 this before in communities where obviously after  
7 something catastrophic happens land is redeveloped  
8 and we lose affordability and the stability of  
9 neighborhoods obviously challenged and you know, we  
10 are very concerned about keeping our neighborhood  
11 affordable after land acquisition happens and wanted  
12 to know... we're hearing... I mean I just heard from a  
13 constituent I met with last week that her rent has  
14 risen dramatically over the last month or so, so I'm  
15 just very concerned about making sure that we  
16 maintain affordable housing, you know, through land  
17 acquisition.

18 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yeah. So we can  
19 certainly make the MOU with the state available;  
20 essentially it outlines the mechanics of the  
21 acquisition for redevelopment program, that the city  
22 is responsible for the case work on the front end and  
23 determining preliminary eligibility for the  
24 acquisition program, at which point the case is then  
25 turned over to the state for the state to complete

1  
2 environmental reviews and ultimately make the offer  
3 to the applicant; if the applicant accepts the offer,  
4 the property is acquired by the state, then  
5 transferred back to the city or an agent of the city  
6 working with the city for redevelopment. It does not  
7 go into specif... the MOU does not go into specifics  
8 about what then is done with the property or exactly  
9 how that gets developed.

10 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay. That brings me  
11 to the Sandy tracker bill; it's a bill that I passed  
12 last year; is one of Mayor Bloomberg's final bills  
13 that he signed in and my colleague Brad Lander co-  
14 sponsored it and today it actually goes into effect,  
15 the law actually goes into effect. So I'm very  
16 interested, I know that you guys are gonna update the  
17 website; can you take me through what has been  
18 updated thus far or what do you plan to update. I  
19 just wanna get into... the area I'm specifically  
20 interested in is employment and contractors; I want  
21 to know what job standards are monitoring of workers'  
22 safety is happening to ensure that local hiring is  
23 fulfilled and how and where will local hire Section 3  
24 reports be released to the public and I'm hoping that  
25 that's going to go into the tracker. One of the

1  
2 things we fought for very hard in the Council last  
3 years was to ensure that local hirees would be on the  
4 website by zip code, so I wanna know by zip code, you  
5 know, how many local hires are happening, especially  
6 in terms of now we have the boardwalk reconstruction  
7 happening and I'm very concerned that you know,  
8 people who don't necessarily live in these  
9 communities that have been devastated are gonna  
10 benefit the most from our jobs. So I'm hoping that  
11 even our communities can hold the flag and make some  
12 money and redevelop their communities and wanna make  
13 sure that that opportunity is there for our  
14 communities to rebuild.

15           AMY PETERSON: Okay. [clapping] Yeah.  
16 So you know, prior to today, as of last Friday, I ran  
17 on traditional employment for women and that's what  
18 we're all about, is getting the people in the  
19 communities into these jobs and I think it's one of  
20 the reasons I'm sitting here today, is 'cause Mayor  
21 de Blasio is committed to that and wants me to really  
22 make that happen. It is not in the Sandy tracker  
23 yet, as far as I know, but it's something that I take  
24 very seriously and we're gonna look at and it's good  
25 to hear that it needs to be both the Housing Recovery

Office, but also the broader infrastructure projects; it's a big part of what we need to do, so.

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay. And what has been updated on the tracker, if... [crosstalk]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So...

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: you guys can speak to that.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Sure.

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: And I know, just before you do that, only \$9.6 million has been spent, according to the latest data on the tracker website, so can you guys speak to that and how do you plan to update it and when?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So for this release, the data on the Sandy tracker website... I can speak to this a bit; HRO is part of the group that is helping with the Sandy tracker, we're providing a lot of the data; the overall Sandy tracker project includes assistance from OMB, the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics and others. So I'm telling you what I know based on what I've heard from them. So for this most recent release, the data is as of the end of the year, 12-31-13, and it includes for both FEMA funds and the CDBGDR funds and CDBG broken down by program,

1  
2 business housing... sorry, business, housing,  
3 infrastructure and other City services, resiliency  
4 and citywide administration of planning; it includes  
5 the funding amounts that have been allocated, funding  
6 identified by HUD is available for each of those  
7 activities, it includes the amount spent as of the  
8 end of the year, and it includes the amount of funds  
9 that have been finalized; that means that have  
10 actually been reimbursed back to the city by HUD. So  
11 my understanding is that there is a planned release  
12 about a month from now which will bring that data up  
13 to March 31st...

14 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay.

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: and the team is  
16 currently working on, first of all, linking to our  
17 Section 3 reporting and also there are other elements  
18 of the Sandy tracker law about jobs; the team is  
19 currently determining how best to gather that  
20 information; some of it isn't readily available, but  
21 there are different ways to provide it, so those will  
22 be in future releases.

23 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: So the end of April  
24 you think you'll be able to give a more comprehensive  
25 update?



1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: There will be a more  
3 comprehensive update...

4 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay.

5 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: at the end of April;  
6 as to exactly what will be in that update I'm not  
7 entirely sure; I don't know if Mr. Johnson knows more  
8 about that.

9 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay. I will speak...  
10 just two last questions, because I know there are a  
11 lot of people who wanna testify and my colleagues  
12 wanna ask questions as well. Are there any plans... if  
13 the federal government comes up short on, obviously,  
14 CDBG money to make homeowners whole through the Build  
15 it Back program, are there any plans or are you guys  
16 thinking of an alternative way to fund homeowners who  
17 won't be made whole because we will fall short from  
18 the feds?

19 AMY PETERSON: I mean I think what I  
20 heard on... [crosstalk]

21 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: And... and I'll be  
22 looking for it.

23 AMY PETERSON: I think what I heard on  
24 Saturday from the senator is that he's gonna work  
25 with us to get the federal funding that we need.

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: But at the worst case scenario, if that does not come through... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer to that at this point; I think...

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: will you guys...

AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer to that, but... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay.

AMY PETERSON: we're committed to work with the federal government to get the funding we need and... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Alrighty. My last question and... and I just wanna... [crosstalk]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: And... sorry...

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: I just wanna make sure that, you know, that we think of a plan b, let's not get boxed into... in the box, let's think out of the box, if this does not happen, what are we prepared to do to make sure homeowners are back in their homes? I'm very concerned about that and I think this... I just want to, obviously raise the question to have you guys thinkin' that way, at the worst case scenario, and then the last question I have is on tax lien sales; obviously there are a

1  
2 lot'a homeowners who are still railing and waiting  
3 for Build it Back money; will these homeowners be  
4 exempt from tax liens, the tax lien sales that the  
5 city is putting forth this year, especially if they  
6 were substantially damaged? People who were  
7 substantially damaged should not be in the city's tax  
8 lien sale this year.

9 AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer to  
10 that, but I'll get back to you.

11 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Okay. Well thank  
12 you; I know we have a lot more work to do and I  
13 welcome you guys aboard; I will take it gently on you  
14 guys today, but we're expecting to hear very good  
15 things as we move forward. Thank you for coming  
16 today.

17 Thank you, Chairman.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
19 Richards and we have questions from the Public  
20 Advocate, Tish James, I believe.

21 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you. So  
22 thank you chairs and I'll be brief, 'cause I know  
23 other members have other questions. First let me  
24 begin with Seagate. The gentleman from Seagate who  
25 testified talked about issues not related to housing,

1  
2 but related to overall public safety -- sewer system,  
3 the bulkheads, 170 lights that are out on Seagate,  
4 300 street lights, the police headquarters that has  
5 been damaged -- who is addressing the issues related  
6 to the Seagate Association, or the residents of  
7 Seagate I should say?

8           AMY PETERSON: So in the announcement on  
9 Saturday, the discussion was about both the Housing  
10 Recovery Office, but also the appointment of Bill  
11 Goldstein, who's responsible for overall pieces,  
12 which includes infrastructure, so I'm sure that  
13 that's one of the things he's gonna focus on when he  
14 gets here. [crosstalk]

15           PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: What is his name;  
16 I'm sorry?

17           AMY PETERSON: Bill Goldstein...  
18 [crosstalk]

19           PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay.

20           AMY PETERSON: and he's got a vast amount  
21 of experience in capital construction. [crosstalk]

22           PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Is he here today?

23           AMY PETERSON: I don't believe so; he  
24 hasn't started yet. [crosstalk]

25

1  
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay. He hasn't  
3 started yet?

4 AMY PETERSON: No. No. But he's got  
5 vast amount of experience in capital construction and  
6 moving it forward and so all of those things in the  
7 city capital budget and other things that impact the  
8 city he'll be focusing on moving forward.

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: When is his start  
10 date?

11 AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer to  
12 that.

13 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay. But he's  
14 responsible for capital construction and you are of  
15 the opinion that he can address all of the issues  
16 related to public safety affecting residents of  
17 Seagate?

18 AMY PETERSON: That is my understand,  
19 yes.

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay. I'll  
21 follow up with Mr. Goldstein. Prior to Mr.  
22 Goldstein, who was responsible for issues related to  
23 public safety other than beyond housing?

24 CALVIN JOHNSON: Calvin Johnson,  
25 Assistant Director at OMB. Good morning. There are

1  
2 a variety of roles addressing those concerns; most of  
3 the concerns were addressed on an agency by agency  
4 basis, but with oversight from City Hall and with  
5 oversight from OMB, but there was no particular  
6 individual or senior advisor to the Mayor, which Mr.  
7 Goldstein is proposed to... [crosstalk]

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: So prior to Mr.  
9 Goldstein's appointment, you're telling me that there  
10 was no coordination of one individual responsible for  
11 public safety issues in the aftermath of Sandy?

12 CALVIN JOHNSON: There was a coordinated  
13 effort, but not one single individual person to hold  
14 accountable.

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay. I'll move  
16 on; I'll wait for Mr. Goldstein. It appears that  
17 there are restrictions, based upon your testimony,  
18 the Rapid Repairs program is restricted to  
19 individuals of a certain income; the Build it Back  
20 program has certain restrictions and the Temporary  
21 Disaster Assistance Program has restrictions. Based  
22 upon what you said earlier, have all of these  
23 restrictions been lifted -- income restrictions,  
24 environmental standards and issues...

1  
2           AMY PETERSON: No; I mean the federal law  
3 still exists and the things that we have to do to  
4 ensure that we're spending the public's funds,  
5 really, in the way possible for federal law. So the  
6 things that exist are still impacting the process;  
7 we're working as hard as possible to limit their  
8 impact on both the timeliness and the number of  
9 people who can get services and we're gonna continue  
10 to work through that, but there's still environmental  
11 requirements, there's still income eligibility issues  
12 and there's still certainly duplication of benefits  
13 things that we need to deal with.

14           PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: I'm trying to  
15 understand why the delay; what's responsible for the  
16 delay? Can you in one word or two or in a sentence  
17 just sum it up? Is it because of all these  
18 restrictions and standards, lack of communication,  
19 lack of funding?

20           AMY PETERSON: Well so, one; I am here  
21 for my first day and looking forward, but my  
22 understanding is that the administration set up a  
23 program that wouldn't have some of the issues that I  
24 think everyone saw after Hurricane Katrina and was  
25 really trying to protect the interests and when... and

1  
2 it was not implemented as well as it could be and  
3 we're here to continue to protect the interests and  
4 to implement it as quickly as possible and to really  
5 just get the funds out the door; these people need to  
6 be helped, they've been... [crosstalk]

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Sure, I agree  
8 with you.

9 AMY PETERSON: they've been stopped for  
10 so long.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Is it because  
12 there's not enough staff within the department; is it  
13 because you... the not-for-profits or vendors that you  
14 work with were not qualified and/or experienced?

15 AMY PETERSON: I wasn't here, so I can't  
16 answer that, but I think it's... it takes a lot to get  
17 a program started and we're gonna learn from the  
18 issues that have occurred and we're gonna make sure  
19 the money gets out to the people.

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Can you tell me  
21 how much the contract was for those two entities that  
22 you mentioned, UP... [background comment] UPRS...  
23 [background comments]

24 AMY PETERSON: URS.  
25



1  
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: URS and PFM;  
3 what's the value of their contracts?

4 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can speak to that.  
5 So URS is a subcontractor to PFM; PFM holds the case  
6 management contract; that contract value is currently  
7 \$50,200,000, approximately.

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And I guess PFM  
9 received their money?

10 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So, so far  
11 approximately \$9 million has been spent on that  
12 contract. [crosstalk]

13 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And how much was  
14 subcontracted to URS?

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I don't have the  
16 numbers of how the money was distributed to the  
17 various subcontractors; we may be able to get that  
18 for you.

19 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And are there any  
20 issues or problems as far as you know with these two  
21 entities, either in this jurisdiction or in any other  
22 jurisdiction?

23 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: As far as... So no, we  
24 have been working with them from the beginning and  
25

1  
2 I've heard that URS specifically is also a contractor  
3 in New Jersey; I'm not certain... [crosstalk]

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And what is the  
5 status of that contract?

6 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I'm not certain as  
7 to what the status of that contract is, but...  
8 [crosstalk]

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: As far as you  
10 know, they're still in place?

11 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: As far as I know,  
12 yes, but... [crosstalk]

13 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And... Okay. And  
14 any issues with respect to PFM?

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Nothing in other  
16 jurisdictions, no.

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And as far as you  
18 know, they're still in place in New Jersey and/or in  
19 other jurisdictions?

20 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I don't know that  
21 they are working in other jurisdictions.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay. I've heard  
23 that in fact they are no longer in place in other  
24 jurisdictions.

25 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: PFM?

1  
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Yes. If you... and  
3 UFS; if you could investigate, particularly in the  
4 state of New Jersey, it's my understanding that  
5 they've been removed; I would greatly appreciate  
6 confirmation of that rumor.

7 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: We can look to that.

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you. With  
9 regards to the young lady who testified with respect  
10 to asthma, what are we doing to house individuals  
11 with respiratory problems in temporary housing?

12 AMY PETERSON: I'll get back to you on  
13 that.

14 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And is there...  
15 there has been a lot of talk about tracking money;  
16 what about the tracking of particular applications as  
17 it relates to the individuals who applied for Build  
18 it Back so they can track their application?

19 AMY PETERSON: [background comment] I  
20 don't know if that's something that's currently  
21 available, but I'll definitely look into that.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: If it's possible.  
23 Is this basic process still in place or is this a  
24 joke?

25

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That basic process  
3 is still in place and we're also working on processes  
4 to keep applicants informed of where they are in the  
5 process, including emails generated monthly to send  
6 out, informing applicants of where they stand...

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: I would prefer if  
8 they could track it online their application and if  
9 we could give them a timeline... (CROSS-TALK)

10 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yeah.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: on this basic  
12 process.

13 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: And we can provide a  
14 timeline on this, but the program is also building a  
15 portal for customers to log in so that they can see  
16 their progress that way as well... [crosstalk]

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Okay.

18 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: we can give you a  
19 timeframe on that.

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you. And  
21 I'm going to see whether or not we could pursue that  
22 legislatively or perhaps through your office if you  
23 can do it voluntarily, an ability for individuals to  
24 track their application online. And an individual  
25 testified that forms were lost; it sounds eerily

1  
2 similar to individuals who were applying for mortgage  
3 modifications and mortgage assistance during the  
4 banking crisis, it sounds so similar, that all of  
5 their applications went into a hole. Someone talked  
6 about a disc or perhaps a... a disc, if you will; do  
7 you know where these discs are, these flash drives?

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So there is no  
9 actual disc; the case management system that we use  
10 is an online system, so when customers come to a  
11 center and provide documents, those documents are  
12 scanned and uploaded into the applicant's case file  
13 within that case management system, so you know,  
14 there's a server somewhere with that information, but  
15 there's not a CD-ROM or anything like that...

16 [crosstalk]

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And for those  
18 individuals where the information was lost; they have  
19 to reapply?

20 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So without knowing  
21 the specifics of the case, it's difficult to speak  
22 to. In some cases it may be that the documentation  
23 was uploaded into the system, but the subsequent  
24 reviewer was unable to find it because of the way  
25

1  
2 that it was uploaded; it was named something  
3 incorrectly.

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Council Member  
5 Ignizio just handed to me, on his very smart phone,  
6 [laughter] an article; it said amid criticism, New  
7 Jersey quietly fired the Sandy contractor; the  
8 contractor in question is URS. We, Council Member  
9 Ignizio and I had heard about this and in fact it  
10 looks like it's true, it's not a rumor. Since they  
11 were fired in New Jersey, it seriously calls into  
12 question their ability to handle all the applications  
13 and sort of explains the backlog. And clearly,  
14 moving forward, what we should do as opposed to  
15 retaining companies outside of our comfort zone and  
16 outside of the neighborhoods that affected, we should  
17 hire locally and on the ground, the organization that  
18 organized a lot of the individuals who I am familiar  
19 with is an organization that represents faith-based  
20 organizations who were the first on the ground after  
21 Sandy -- churches, mosques, synagogues, individuals  
22 -- they were probably the most effective means of  
23 information and getting assistance to people. As  
24 opposed to using these big corporations, and I know  
25 you're not responsible, it's the previous

1  
2 administration that thought that big corporations  
3 were better than small and that they were too big to  
4 fail, they failed. They were fired in New Jersey;  
5 they should be fired in New York; we should go local,  
6 we should go on the ground; we should hire people who  
7 we know and [applause] people that work. Thank you,  
8 Mr. Chair; I don't wanna take anymore time.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Mr. Chairman,  
10 it's a point of information, for the record, I just  
11 wanted to know that I was made aware of this through...  
12 this was a WNYC article; I have friends who serve in  
13 the New Jersey governmental world who advised me of  
14 this and just the article we're referring to is from  
15 WNYC of February 13, 2014. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just so I'm clear...  
17 by the way, we've been joined by Council Member Helen  
18 Rosenthal; I just wanna acknowledge that as well.  
19 Just I'm clear, so over \$9 million has already been  
20 spent to the consultant group URS; is that correct?

21 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Under the PFM  
22 contracts; there are other subcontractors to PFM,  
23 including the Center for New York City Neighborhoods,  
24 a company called Solix, who does our eligibility  
25 reviews.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So how much money has so far been spent on consultants or groups, just... is there a total number you have?

AMY PETERSON: We can get that for you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because when you compare over \$9 million to \$80,000 to three homeowners, [applause] I think that number speaks for itself and I really applaud and I thank the Public Advocate and Minority Leader Ignizio for bringing to light the situation in New Jersey, because clearly this has been my frustration, that information is not being shared and there was, previous to now, no coordination whatsoever, in my opinion, and I recognize that you're new and we will work with you, but we'll work with you as far as we see results on the ground and that the recovery is felt by all people here, and clearly I would hope that you agree with me that the fact that consultants are getting paid faster than property owners and residents is really acceptable. Just a quick question about coordination, about... we heard sewers, by the way; what coordination exists right now between the Housing Recovery Office and DEP for example, because



1  
2 some of the sewers were severely damaged, so even if  
3 you rebuild a home, what are you attaching it to?

4 AMY PETERSON: So I mean I'll speak to  
5 moving forward and that's a big part of it. You  
6 know, my beginning of my career in city government  
7 was about creating the Department of Design and  
8 Construction and just ensuring that projects were  
9 coordinated across communities, so that's something  
10 that I think this mayor feels very strongly about and  
11 that's why he not only appointed me, but Bill  
12 Goldstein and Dan Zirilli and I think it'll be a  
13 priority for us to work together to make sure that,  
14 one, we're not gonna... tearing up the street in front  
15 of your house every two weeks and that if you get  
16 your house repaired that you can actually live in it  
17 and have the services that you need from the city.  
18 So that's a priority for this administration.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I mean it's gotta  
20 be a priority because you can't rebuild if there's no  
21 sewers to attach to...

22 AMY PETERSON: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and that's just a  
24 fact and I would, you know really make sure that  
25 we're on the same page about this, because that is a

1  
2 part of the recovery process. If someone is told  
3 that their home will be rebuilt or elevated, are  
4 there plans to provide assistance to those residents  
5 who will be forced to be displaced again?

6 AMY PETERSON: So that's what we've been  
7 talking about; we're hoping to have them be able to  
8 use their transfer amount, and so I just learned what  
9 the transfer amount this morning is; that's where  
10 they've gotten some other benefits to use towards the  
11 rebuilding; before they would've had to given that to  
12 us to contribute with the CDBG funds to pay for the  
13 rebuilding; now they'll be able to use a portion of  
14 that to relocate and that's something that this  
15 administration has pushed through just recently.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just have to be  
17 clear that it's enough to cover their costs, if  
18 they're being forced to be displaced again.

19 AMY PETERSON: That's something we're  
20 looking at.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I'd like to now  
22 acknowledge Councilman Steve Matteo, who... and we'll  
23 put the clock at four minutes, however, I would like  
24 to point out that he'd like to read an opening email  
25 he received from an impacted resident in his district

1  
2 that wanted to express their frustrations and issues  
3 with the program. So let's just allow Councilman  
4 Matteo to read his opening statement and then we'll  
5 after start him on the clock.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you Mr.  
7 Chairman, I appreciate it. The first panel was so  
8 powerful [background comments] I just wanted to make  
9 sure I read a brief message from Staten Island; make  
10 sure that the administration hears their voice.

11 "A 17-month fight for what is right has  
12 been exhausting, our time is precious; these memories  
13 are nightmares [background comment] we need the  
14 solutions to manifest themselves. Going from  
15 homeowner to homeless is devastating and the red tape  
16 is suffocating. We want our homes back or the  
17 opportunity to move on. No monetary amount can  
18 replace the last 17 months of my life, wasted, purely  
19 wasted. I hope they get the sense of this; I think  
20 they need more recovery people who actually have  
21 lived through a natural disaster like this. When I  
22 speak to them, they simply can't grasp the sense of  
23 urgency; they see a frustrated, hopeless person  
24 begging for help when they look at us and that is  
25 certainly not who we are."

1  
2           So Chair, I appreciate you lettin' me... I  
3 just wanted to make sure a Staten Island voice was  
4 added to the mix for the administration, and a very  
5 emotional statement at that. I just wanna buttress  
6 the Chairman's point about sewers in my district, in  
7 Midland Beach and others, you can't put sewers 'cause  
8 we're under sea level, so I just... before I ask my  
9 question, just make sure that we work with DEP on  
10 Bluebelt as well, because that's gonna be big when we  
11 look to rebuild.

12           I just wanna start off with a quick... how  
13 many staff, for a little background, Staten Island;  
14 are we looking to add more staff?

15           AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer to  
16 that, but I'll... [crosstalk]

17           COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And...

18           AMY PETERSON: personally call you on  
19 that.

20           COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Could you?  
21 Because more staff would certainly help the process  
22 along. You also mentioned unmet housing needs grew  
23 to \$1 billion; Councilman Ignizio and I and the  
24 borough president have been told for a while now that  
25

the unmet need was \$600 million for the next tranche.

Can you explain why we're up to a billion now?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can.

AMY PETERSON: Yeah, please.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So the reason that these numbers have changed is because ultimately all along they've been estimates; as we get more information coming out of the specific scoping that's done at the design consultation we are refining our model for predicting the level of damage in all homes throughout the City.

COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. I just ask that you keep communication open to us and please let us know as the amount seems to be growing. For acquisitions for redevelopment, in my district I have two neighborhoods that have been bought out through the state buyout; another one may be pending, we're not sure yet, but a lot of neighborhoods have submitted requests for acquisition for redevelopment; my concern is during the options meetings in the past this wasn't brought to their attention, they seem confused; I think it's a big problem, obviously we'd like to see some acquisition for redevelopment, but we need cooperation from Build it Back and so it's

bee a problem just communicating the program. So can you just explain and how we're gonna move forward on that?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can tell you that one of the issues that's been troublesome about that particular program option is it took some time to negotiate the program with the state, so it wasn't an available option at the time of many of the option review meetings, it was an option that we anticipated would be forthcoming, but we were unable to provide any specific details about it at that time. Since then, now at the options review meeting there's more information available and my understanding is we're going back to the folks who had option review meetings prior to... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay, good.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: there being sufficient information to tell them more about that program.

COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Good, I appreciate that, 'cause that's extremely important. Do you know how many were sent to the state, if any?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I'm sorry?

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: How many were  
3 sent to the state? [background comment]

4 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Oh.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Do we have any  
6 that said they wanted it and we were gonna move  
7 forward on it? [crosstalk]

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes. There are at  
9 this time I believe 39 that are in the pipeline..  
10 [crosstalk] state.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: 39 in the  
12 pipeline, and you're gonna go back and speak to  
13 everyone who had the options meeting already?  
14 [background comment] Please work with my office and  
15 Councilman Ignizio, [background comments] you can  
16 work with them. So my time is running out; I just... I  
17 wanna talk about the city had extended a public  
18 engagement period, including public hearings on the  
19 most recent Action Plan, Amendment 5; it ended March  
20 5th; have you addressed the public comments; if so,  
21 when will this be made to the public? The elected  
22 officials, my colleagues and I, we're very concerned  
23 about Staten Island University Hospital, it's located  
24 in the flood plain; [background comment] we've asked  
25 for money to be allocated to Staten Island UH; none...

1  
2 they haven't received any money, we only have two  
3 hospitals on Staten Island; we don't have an HHC  
4 [bell] acute care facility; an extremely poor; an  
5 issue I ask that you address.

6 CALVIN JOHNSON: Very briefly. During  
7 the period of public comment on the city's CDBGDR  
8 Action Plan we received 210 comments from the public;  
9 that included at public hearings, both recorded  
10 verbally and written, we also received comments  
11 through the city's website and through emails and the  
12 311 system. In terms of details, we're working to  
13 make that information that was sent to HUD on I guess  
14 last Friday, the 21st, available on the city's  
15 website; in the meantime, the city's Action Plan is  
16 available online at NYC.gov/CDBG; in terms of  
17 prioritizing Staten Island University Hospital,  
18 recognize the critical function that that facility  
19 played in the impacted communities and are taking an  
20 approach of trying to work with FEMA primarily on  
21 potential rebuilding resources for that organization.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you. Just  
23 one last point. You know, during the hurricane, when  
24 Staten Island University shuts down, we send  
25 everybody to Rumsey; it overburdens that hospital; my



1  
2 district and Vinny's district becomes burdened; we  
3 have to make sure that Staten Island University's a  
4 priority and receives money. So I appreciate it.  
5 Thank you Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you... thank  
7 you very much Council Member Matteo. I'd just like  
8 to also recognize that we received testimony today  
9 from Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder who represents the  
10 Rockaways and Howard Beach and Queens and he's in  
11 Albany today, but we will receive his testimony and  
12 have it in the record here today. I know that  
13 Council Member Alan Maisel has to leave shortly and  
14 he represents Canarsie, Bergen Beach, Mill Basin,  
15 areas that were also very hit hard by... Gerritsen  
16 Beach... areas that were hit hard by Superstorm Sandy  
17 and not are often talked about and his advocacy on  
18 behalf of his neighborhoods has been exemplary; I'd  
19 like to acknowledge Council Member Alan Maisel.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you  
21 Chairmen for this hearing, extremely important, I'm  
22 very glad to be here to participate with you. I have  
23 two quick questions. One, since Rapid Repair is part  
24 of the city's response and it's covered under HRO, so  
25 Rapid Repair comes in, they fix whatever they fixed

1  
2 and then six months later, a year later the Buildings  
3 Department is not coming into these places that were  
4 fixed by city-hired contractors and getting  
5 violations. So this is insane. So the city of New  
6 York hires people to fix the problems to get people  
7 into their homes, the heating, whatever, the  
8 electrical, and then the Buildings Department is  
9 giving the homeowners violations, even though the  
10 homeowners really had nothing to do with hiring the  
11 contractor. Do you agree that the city should be  
12 responsible for the work that Rapid Repair did?

13 AMY PETERSON: So this is the first I'm  
14 hearing of this issue; I'll get back to you on where...  
15 what the status is of this. I'll reach out to the  
16 [cross-talk] talk to them about that. [crosstalk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Alright; I know  
18 that these six people in my district who have  
19 complained about it... [crosstalk]

20 AMY PETERSON: Great, if you could give  
21 me their information...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: I am sure... I am  
23 sure that there are many more...

24 AMY PETERSON: If you can give me their  
25 information, I'll call them... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yeah, well I mean I think you really should be in touch with the Buildings Department... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: to find out...

AMY PETERSON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: this is particularly true in Gerritsen Beach...

AMY PETERSON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: but it's true throughout my district.

AMY PETERSON: Great.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Now who is handling the resiliency part of this effort?

AMY PETERSON: Dan Zirilli.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Alright. So is he available... because I have... I have a ques... to testify... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: the question basically is... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: He was here but he had to leave.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: yeah, the  
3 question is that there's a lot of talk about, you  
4 know, repairing houses, whatever; I'm concerned about  
5 the long term; I'm more concerned about what happens  
6 if next year, the year after, the year after that  
7 there is another such storm. I sent out  
8 questionnaires in Canarsie in particular, 'cause  
9 Canarsie has been unrepresented in this whole thing...  
10 Canarsie was damaged tremendously, but for some  
11 reason the city has not paid attention to Canarsie  
12 and we couldn't get emergency food stamps in  
13 Canarsie; the previous administration thought that  
14 they didn't deserve emergency food stamps, but in  
15 general, so I did a questionnaire; I'm getting  
16 results now; we sent our 12,000 surveys and what I'm  
17 getting back now is that of the people who responded,  
18 a majority of them did not get water in their homes  
19 from the street; it was a plumbing issue, the sewer  
20 issue because of the pressure on the sewers, so the  
21 water came up through the, basically through the  
22 basements; it was quite disgusting for those people  
23 who had to deal with it. So a resiliency question  
24 would be; would the city consider paying for one-way  
25 valves so that should we have another situation

1  
2 people could have some assurance, unless the water  
3 comes from the outside, we have no control of that,  
4 but certainly if the sewers are under pressure that  
5 the water's not gonna come into their homes and start  
6 the whole process all over again?

7 AMY PETERSON: I'll forward that to Dan  
8 and get back to you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Okay, you... so I'd  
10 appreciate if you get back to me on that. Thank you  
11 very much, Chairman, Chairman and Chairman.

12 [laughter]

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council  
14 Member Alan Maisel, and I think that's just further  
15 evidence that there has not been coordination with  
16 all of the agencies. How many, by the way, agencies  
17 are involved in this recovery effort; is there any  
18 indication, any numbers, figures that you can give us  
19 that... how many agencies and which are they?

20 [background comment]

21 CALVIN JOHNSON: We can follow up with  
22 more detail, but I believe there are 54 different  
23 agencies which are receiving assistance from FEMA and  
24 of those agencies, we're working to see what are  
25 portions of the cost that FEMA won't cover that are

1  
2 CDBGDR eligible so that alignment between FEMA  
3 agencies and CDBGDR agencies are still being  
4 determined, but I believe there's about two dozen  
5 city agencies that are flagged for potential CDBGDR  
6 funding for infrastructure.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Whether it's two  
8 dozen or 54, the bottom line is we need to make sure  
9 that we're all on the same page and information is  
10 being shared, because he just raised an issue that,  
11 you know, obviously you're new, but that's a very  
12 important issue; if people are receiving violations  
13 for improper city work, that's unacceptable. I'd  
14 like to now recognize the Minority Leader, as well, I  
15 mean this has been incredible effort by those members  
16 who represent impacted districts and I'd like to  
17 recognize the work and Minority Leader, Vincent  
18 Ignizio.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Thank you Mr.  
20 Chairman and kudos to you as well for leading this  
21 committee; we have a lot of work to do. You know my  
22 comments, my conversations with you all is in the  
23 spirit of how to build a better mousetrap,  
24 [background comment] but what's occurred can't be  
25 ignored either, so with regards to Staten Island

1  
2 University Hospital; picked it up where my colleague  
3 Matteo was left off, it was already declined for FEMA  
4 monies and you know, that should be noted and should  
5 be known by you all and that's the reason why we came  
6 to you and said we need... I mean I spoke to Emma Wolfe  
7 about it, I've spoken to the Mayor himself about it,  
8 I've spoken to the City of Legislative Affairs about  
9 it; it is a really pressing issue, we only have two  
10 hospitals; the city is not building a new one,  
11 notwithstanding some people's desires to have a  
12 public hospital on Staten Island, so with that comes  
13 great responsibility and I think we need to ensure  
14 that critical infrastructure that's afforded to every  
15 other city hospital that's being done also occurs on  
16 the island of Staten and that we can make that  
17 happen. So I just wanna be clear with you on that.  
18 I... you know my trip to New Orleans, I don't know if  
19 you've taken one, but if you haven't you ought to,  
20 because me and Jimmy Oddo, Deputy Mayor at the time,  
21 did... and Ramon Martinez in the Council, learned a  
22 whole lot of what went right; what went wrong and how  
23 to replicate that; I encourage that. In terms of  
24 the... I have to go fast because of my time; that's  
25 why... [laughter] I talked fast as a New Yorker, but I

1  
2 talk really fast when I'm on a clock... in terms of the  
3 acquisition for redevelopment, how many have been  
4 sent to the state already?

5 AMY PETERSON: That was the 39?

6 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yeah, that's the...  
7 [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: That's actually  
9 sent up to them and now it's in their shop?

10 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I can't speak to  
11 exactly where they are with implementing the process;  
12 I don't know if anything has happened with those 39  
13 since... [interpose]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: But I mean have  
15 left your shop is what I mean.

16 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes.

17 AMY PETERSON: Yeah... [crosstalk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Okay.

19 AMY PETERSON: and we... we can find out.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Fine. I just  
21 wanna speak to also the SBA loan and from my  
22 colleagues who do not know, the SBA loans, it didn't  
23 matter how much you took, because my father-in-law is  
24 in this situation; you are charged for the full  
25 amount, even if you took \$10,000. If you had



1  
2 \$100,000 approved SBA loan and only took \$10,000, you  
3 are charged for that full \$100,000; that's the big  
4 problem for a lot of people, because we all were told  
5 we should encourage people to take SBA loans; we all  
6 did that and now people are being... I almost said  
7 screwed... now people are being shafted because they  
8 did. So you know, people tried to do the right thing  
9 and ended up getting caught in this legislative  
10 quagmire that Washington basically thrust upon us,  
11 and I'm not blaming, but that's where we have to work  
12 with the Senator and everybody to get... to get  
13 through. [crosstalk]

14 AMY PETERSON: Yeah and I think they're  
15 willing to do that and they've already taken steps  
16 and I look forward to trying to solve that problem,  
17 'cause it should be solved.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Okay. And  
19 overall, we need to identify where the gaps are,  
20 because during the budget negotiating process,  
21 perhaps the city wants to supersede or help people  
22 aren't helped because of these strict guidelines and  
23 we need to find out what that number is so if perhaps  
24 the Council wants to make an important initiative to  
25 add funds for X, Y or Z, so I think that's important

1  
2 to keep this committee informed on that as well. The  
3 program, Miss Peterson, has a credibility gap and it  
4 cannot be solved... I don't know if you saw my quotes  
5 in the Staten Island Advance... and thank you also; I  
6 want the world to know that she also called me on  
7 Saturday to speak to the importance of our districts  
8 and her wanting to help, but a huge credibility gap  
9 that only is gonna be allayed when we start hearing  
10 hammers in the communities... [crosstalk]

11 AMY PETERSON: Okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: and I'm happy  
13 to see that people are being kept in touch with, but  
14 I think that is something that is the prime focus. I  
15 like the idea; I don't know who brought it up, about  
16 regional folks that somebody has to... that people can  
17 answer to; on Staten Island I don't think, you know,  
18 people know where to go at this point; they call our  
19 offices all the time and we call your staff who've  
20 been tryin' to help. So on a final note and I think  
21 I have 50 seconds left, we have a ticking time bomb  
22 that I have spoken to the Mayor about and this is  
23 property tax bills. Now the reason being is because  
24 when you guys go in and you build somebody a brand  
25 new home, you are no longer subject to the 5 percent

1  
2 a year mandate, so for those who don't know what I'm  
3 talking about, the property taxes can only go up X  
4 amount of percentage a year, 5-10 a year or I think  
5 it's 20 percent over six years, if I'm counting that  
6 correctly; that's not the case when you rebuild a  
7 home, so somebody who gets their home rebuilt by  
8 Build it Back, now they have a brand new... I don't  
9 know, \$250... \$350,000 increase; that gets assessed on  
10 day one, so the property taxes can go for those  
11 people from \$2,000... \$2,500 to upwards of \$5,000;  
12 that's a problem. We have a solution; the solution  
13 is in Albany; [bell] I think the Mayor is onboard  
14 with it, but we're waiting to talk to some of our  
15 state legislators to just ensure that that increase  
16 in property taxes gets held on the same trajectory  
17 that the current increases can; we need your support,  
18 the Mayor's support; this Council's support and  
19 hopefully if we do that we can ensure that affordable  
20 housing is really kept affordable and we're not  
21 building new houses for people and then pricing them  
22 out with a property tax bill. Thank you very much; I  
23 look forward to continue to work with you and  
24 welcome; I'm sorry that it's your first day  
25

1  
2 [laughter] and you had to deal with this on the first  
3 day, but thank you and welcome.

4 AMY PETERSON: Thanks.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Minority  
6 Leader Ignizio. And next I'd like to recognize  
7 another council member who represents a heavily  
8 impacted district that was hurt by Sandy and his  
9 efforts are also, it's very noteworthy, he's been a  
10 very vocal advocate, both publicly and privately; I'd  
11 like to recognize Council Member Eric Ulrich.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you Mr.  
13 Chairman and thank you for your leadership on this  
14 issue. You know it really is unfair for us to give  
15 you the brunt of the criticism because you have in  
16 fact only been on the job for two days, but in my  
17 opinion your job should've been filled two months  
18 ago. You know the fact that the administration  
19 prioritized the needs of Sandy-affected homeowners on  
20 March 29th by appointing a new director, when we've  
21 been complaining for months, even before he took  
22 office, to people that were on his transition team  
23 and some of this closest aides, I think that is a big  
24 problem. I wanna get back to your testimony; I asked  
25 my constituents in the two weeks leading up to this

1  
2 hearing what questions they might've had; they had  
3 very, very good questions, because they are the  
4 people that are dealing with this program on a day to  
5 day basis. You mentioned, in talking about the CDBG  
6 money, that funds are also being dedicated to  
7 covering the city's post-storm administrative costs,  
8 and one of the main questions that I received from my  
9 constituents was, how much money has the city spent  
10 on administrative costs? You got \$3.2 billion in  
11 CDBGDR funds, \$1.4 billion of which was dedicated to  
12 Build it Back; how much have we spent so far on  
13 administrative costs?

14 [background comments]

15 AMY PETERSON: Well the... I was checking  
16 with OMB to see if we had that answer right here.  
17 I'll get back to you on that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, so... but we  
19 don't... when will we be able to get that answer; by  
20 the end of the hearing, by the end of the day, by the  
21 end of the week? I just... you know like the track  
22 record with people from Build it Back in my district  
23 is not that good; when they say we'll get back to  
24 you, some of them are still waiting for people to get  
25 back to them, so I understand that, you know you say

1  
2 that to me, but I have to go back to them and they  
3 don't get to talk to you, I do, you know and that's  
4 why I'm asking these questions. So I'd like to know  
5 how much money has the city spent on administrative  
6 costs? You have a staff you said of 75 program... what  
7 do you call them; I'm sorry? Uh what... [interpose]

8 AMY PETERSON: We have 70 people in the  
9 Housing Recovery Office and we're increasing...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: You have 70...

12 AMY PETERSON: that to 135.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: 70 people on  
14 staff; you will get back to me with how much money  
15 you're spending on the overhead and the  
16 administrative costs. The level of my frustration is  
17 only because I have the highest number of applicants,  
18 according to your own case management report as of  
19 this morning, my district, 32, 6,305 people  
20 registered for Build it Back; you have 70 people on  
21 the staff; because you're new and fairness to you,  
22 you can't tell me how much money you're spending on  
23 overhead; as of today, only one building permit in my  
24 district has been issued and one home is under  
25 construction using the CDBG money that you received.

1  
2 So \$3.2 billion in federal money, \$1.4 billion going  
3 to Build it Back, 70 people on staff, March 31st, two  
4 days on the job; one house being rebuilt in the  
5 Rockaways, completely unacceptable. [applause,  
6 cheers] Now, my second question; [background  
7 comment] who is accountable; are you accountable; is  
8 there a clear line of decision-making with  
9 transparency and accountability; who is in charge;  
10 who is the boss?

11 AMY PETERSON: So I am accountable; I am  
12 here; I was appointed, I am responsible for the  
13 Housing Recovery Office and the Build it Back  
14 program.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay. That's  
16 very reassuring and I'm gonna work very closely with  
17 you... [crosstalk]

18 AMY PETERSON: Great.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: in a very  
20 productive, respectful way, but this is the first  
21 chance that I've had to speak on behalf of those  
22 6,305 constituents who signed up for the program.  
23 Now, another question that my constituents asked; why  
24 has the state been able to draw down the money more  
25 quickly; the HUD money that the state got; why were

1  
2 they able to spend it, to do it, to put it to good  
3 use as opposed to the city? What did the state do  
4 differently that the city did not?

5 [background comments]

6 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So one of the  
7 reasons is that the state program is fundamentally  
8 different from the Build it Back program. The Build  
9 it Back program takes on the construction management  
10 role, which is especially important, as our director  
11 said during the testimony here in New York City. The  
12 other reason is that the [background comment] state  
13 started its reimbursement program before the city  
14 did, so they could issue checks [bell] earlier than  
15 we did; the reason that our reimbursement option  
16 wasn't activated until later is because under the  
17 previous administration the idea had been that  
18 reimbursements would sort of be the final payments  
19 that were made; that those with construction needs  
20 would all come first, regardless of priority. So  
21 they got a bit of a head start on reimbursement  
22 checks and as far as construction checks, the  
23 differences are largely because of the differences in  
24 the design of the program.  
25



1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: So I understand  
3 the complexities, the federal HUD requirements, all  
4 of the regulatory things that go into that, but I  
5 think the state really did something right in that  
6 regard and that they front-loaded the process for  
7 reimbursing money and getting direct aid to people  
8 who needed it and who qualified, according to the  
9 regulations, whereas the city, you know, put that on  
10 the back end. So that's an important lesson I think  
11 we should learn and hopefully never repeat.

12 My last question; I know there's so many;  
13 I'm gonna ask you the number one question, and it's  
14 not rhetorical, it's not meant to be esoteric; the  
15 number one question that I get [background comment]  
16 in Rockaway, in Breezy, in Broad Channel, in Howard  
17 Beach and Hamilton Beach and every other neighborhood  
18 that I represent, [background comment] they say; when  
19 can I go back home? And when I go back to the senior  
20 centers, when I go back to the schools, when I go  
21 back to the civic meetings or when I'm at the street,  
22 in the supermarket, at the pizzeria and people ask me  
23 that question, I don't wanna lie to them, I wanna be  
24 honest with them. So what can you tell me today that  
25 I can tell them, not a definitive date, it's not that

1  
2 type of question, but how do I reassure those people,  
3 look them in the eye and tell them truthfully, you'll  
4 be back soon? Tell me how I answer those people.  
5 How would you advise that I answer those people?  
6 What reassurances can I give those people? Please  
7 tell me.

8           AMY PETERSON: So I think the  
9 reassurances you can give, and I know it's hard for  
10 them to hear after the delays that they've had, is  
11 that this Mayor takes it very seriously, he's  
12 appointed a team; before I got here he's made serious  
13 steps and the money is starting to flow and it's my  
14 job to make sure that it doesn't trickle out, but it  
15 comes out fast and that these people get back in  
16 their homes and right now that's all I can say, but  
17 hopefully I'll be able to say more shortly.

18           COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Finally, last  
19 request, promised the chairman and I thank him for  
20 his indulgence and my colleagues; I would like you,  
21 at some point, not next week or tomorrow, but at some  
22 point when we do have more information, I would like  
23 you to come to my district, [background comments] and  
24 at a public meeting please help me answer the  
25

1  
2 questions that I don't know the answer to,  
3 [background comment] that's all I ask.

4 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, and I would be happy  
5 to do that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you very  
7 much. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council  
9 Member. And we would like to next call up Council  
10 Member Helen Rosenthal.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you for  
12 having this hearing; thank you for coming here on day  
13 two. I'm gonna ask you just a few questions with my  
14 hat on as chair of the Contracts Committee. I found  
15 the information that was... I found what Public  
16 Advocate Tish James was asking about a little  
17 disturbing, [background comment] so can we just  
18 start... I wanna use my time just to get some basic  
19 information and then let you know that I'm looking  
20 into having a hearing about these contracts.

21 So the PFM contract for \$50 million; what  
22 was the original intent... or do I have the... correct me  
23 if I have numbers wrong.

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: No... That's right, so  
25 that contract, it's original value was \$50 million;

1  
2 it was a negotiated acquisition that was procured by  
3 HRA, bids went out to over 1,600 organizations; we  
4 received, HRA received three proposals that were  
5 deemed responsive, one proposal withdrew, and then  
6 after the evaluation committee considered the  
7 remaining bids, it was PFM, Public Financial  
8 Management that was selected as the winning bidder.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And what are  
10 they supposed be doing?

11 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So their scope is  
12 essentially all of the case management work, so  
13 stretching from initial intake for the customers all  
14 the way through grant signing, right before the  
15 customer is passed off to a contractor for their  
16 repair work or to the state for acquisition.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And you had  
18 said \$9 million had been spent to date?

19 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's the best  
20 information that I have.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That's fine.  
22 And so would it be possible for you to send to me or  
23 to the three council members who are chairing this  
24 committee the RFP... [interpose]

25 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Absolutely. Yes.

1

2

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: that went out...

3

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes.

4

5

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: and the  
proposal that was signed? And do you believe... is  
there any reason to believe that the size of the  
contract will grow?

8

9

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12

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16

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can't speak to  
that in much detail, but I can say that we're in the  
process of negotiating some increased scope. The way  
that the program was originally designed, there have  
been more frequent customer interactions than had  
been anticipated, so it's quite possible that the  
contract value will grow; that of course will need to  
go through all of the approval steps that are  
necessary for that to happen.

17

18

19

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So now that  
you've had experience, you're seeing that there will  
be increased scope of work.

20

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's right.

21

22

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Can you send  
that along to me as well?

23

24

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can send you a  
description of that, sure.

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That would be  
3 great. And so they subcontracted with URS  
4 [background comment] to do a piece of that case work  
5 or what is it that URS is supposed to do?

6 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So URS is, I guess  
7 you could say, primarily responsible for the  
8 customer-facing interactions, so those are the  
9 meetings, the collection of documents, the scheduling  
10 phone calls, you know the meetings for option review,  
11 for grant signing. The other larger subcontractor is  
12 Solix; they do sort of the back end eligibility work,  
13 you know reviewing the documents that were provided  
14 by the customer and determining eligibility, the  
15 duplication of benefits analysis, determining of  
16 award amounts; things like that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So do you know  
18 the... [bell] so of the \$50 million, can you just break  
19 down for me how much is going to which subcontractors  
20 to do what work, just as a start?

21 AMY PETERSON: We can get that to you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You can?

23 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, we can.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay. Is that  
25 something that's hard that'll take a week or is that

1  
2 something that you think you can zip over today --  
3 all the things that I'm talking about, actually -- so  
4 the RFP, the proposal that was accepted, the scope of  
5 work for the new thing and how the \$50 million is  
6 subcontracted... [crosstalk]

7 AMY PETERSON: Yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: who's getting  
9 it and what they're getting?

10 AMY PETERSON: Yeah. So I think the  
11 scope of work for the new thing is something that...  
12 you know, I just started today... [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That's the  
14 only piece... [crosstalk]

15 AMY PETERSON: and so I would... let's set  
16 that aside... [crosstalk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, but the  
18 other pieces...

19 AMY PETERSON: 'cause I'd like to look at  
20 the whole contract.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: The other  
22 pieces, is that something that you have in your  
23 office that you can just click forward?

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: The other pieces we  
25 can get to you today.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So  
3 HRosenthal@Council.nyc.gov. So just to be clear, I  
4 don't want this to go to my chief of staff, I want  
5 this really to come to me today...

6 AMY PETERSON: Right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: and I would  
8 like to prepare for a hearing about this [background  
9 comment] contract in particular. [background  
10 comment] Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure. Thank you,  
12 Council Member Rosenthal. And just to... [interpose,  
13 background comment] Yeah, we'd like that information,  
14 by the way, to our committees and I would like to  
15 also request... thank you... to request that this  
16 information should be made public as well on the  
17 Sandy tracker [background comment] site as well;  
18 these are things that are pertinent for public  
19 information. My question is... [background comment] My  
20 concern that I'm getting is that, when we're hearing  
21 that there are meetings conducted at the option stage  
22 and assessments and so forth, that we're not just  
23 checking this off on a list saying that it's done,  
24 because I'm questioning whether the satisfaction of  
25 the residents, whether or not they left the meeting



1 informed, and we heard powerful testimony so far and  
2 we're gonna hear from everyone after this panel  
3 leaves, that they leave confused, they leave  
4 frustrated; they're not sure, they're not clear. So  
5 who is gauging... who is monitoring whether or not  
6 these meetings are productive and constructive on  
7 behalf of the impacted residents; not just checking  
8 off on a list that we did this? Could someone speak  
9 to that?

11 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, so first of all I'd  
12 like to say that one of the things I did on Saturday  
13 on the way to the press conference was visit one of  
14 these offices and there was a team of people who are  
15 kind of the leaders as part of this contract really  
16 talking about some changes they were making and  
17 implementing some of the changes that the de Blasio  
18 administration has put through, and they certainly  
19 all kind of seemed committed to this, but I think  
20 we've talked about wanting to make sure there's more  
21 community people involved in that process; I would  
22 like to know the answer to some extent to the  
23 question that you just asked, as to, you know, what  
24 happens for the... you know, why aren't the 3,000  
25 people getting to the 676 stage; meaning 3,000 option

1  
2 meetings have happened? So I think I'll get back to  
3 you after I look at kind of what the process is and  
4 who follows through at the end of those meetings to  
5 make sure that they've got all the information that  
6 they need and they're ready to make an option  
7 selection, and I'll find that out for you and we  
8 might make some changes there.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because I think the  
10 data speaks for itself; if there's a large number of  
11 people are at the option stage and they can't decide,  
12 obviously that...

13 AMY PETERSON: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: that informs us...

15 AMY PETERSON: Right.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: that they don't  
17 have adequate information to make the best decisions  
18 on behalf of their... [interpose]

19 AMY PETERSON: Right. And part of that  
20 was the transfer amount issue, which was that they  
21 would have to pay that at end of the option selection  
22 meeting and that's been changed, so there's been some  
23 changes that I think will make people feel more  
24 comfortable moving onto the next stage, which is  
25 design, and so I'm hoping we're gonna see an impact

and I think we already have with the 676 meetings  
options selected, but I'll get back to you to...

[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah and...

AMY PETERSON: to dive into that more;  
it's really important. That's how we get people  
through the process.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And just so I'm  
clear, so you are the director of both the Housing  
Recovery Office and Build it Back?

AMY PETERSON: Well Build it Back's  
within the Housing Recovery Office. [interpose]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, so you are  
now the new dir... because the previous director had  
stepped down, so you are now the director of the  
Build it Back program and the Housing Recovery  
Office, just so I'm clear on titles and positions,  
and I would really also appreciate... I know Bill  
Goldstein is not here today, [background comment] but  
if they can put together for us, for our committee,  
an organization chart so we could see who's who,  
their positions, their responsibilities and that  
chain of command; I think Council Member Ulrich made  
that point, it's very important we know where that

1  
2 chain of command goes up and so forth. I know we  
3 have another question from Chair Jumaane Williams.

4 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you. We have  
5 several questions. So earlier someone testified  
6 about issues of doing work below the flood line and I  
7 think it now had to be gutted out, so in general, a  
8 case like that, how will this money, will he be  
9 reimbursed for the that was done to build out the  
10 first floor and how in general are we handling money  
11 for work that was done below the flood line?

12 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I obviously don't  
13 right now know the specifics of that case, but from  
14 the way that it sounds, it sounds as though the home  
15 was substantially damaged, which means that in order  
16 to meet code the home must be raised above base flood  
17 elevation. If it's an attached structure and there's  
18 no other way of raising the home, then one method of  
19 bringing the home above base flood elevation is to  
20 eliminate the use of the first floor and essentially  
21 make what is now the second floor the first floor of  
22 the home so that with the addition on top the home  
23 has essential been raised. Right now our  
24 reimbursement program is covering only homes that  
25 have not been substantially damaged, so from it

that's accuracy and that home needs to be raised...

[interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So that part again,  
I'm sorry.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So right now the  
reimbursement program, the option is available only  
to those who do not have substantially damaged homes  
so homes that are not in need of elevation the idea  
being that the program is providing a significant  
benefit in the form of the elevation whereas a  
homeowner whose home does not need to be raise...

[interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I'm sorry, I just  
wanna be clear, the money that's available is only  
for people who do not have substantial damage?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: For reimbursement  
it's for those... right now and this could change,  
right now it's for those homeowners who have not been  
substantially damaged. In other words, their home  
does not need to be raised.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So if your home has  
been substantially damaged... [interpose]

AMY PETERSON: No...

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: there's no money for you...

AMY PETERSON: so he's just talking about reimbursement. So there's and I'm just learning this but there's reimbursement which is where we'll pay the homeowner for work that they've done

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

AMY PETERSON: right now, and tell me if I'm wrong, you can only get the reimbursement if your home wasn't substantially damaged. There's also a question of whose home we elevate and based on building code issues we have plans to elevate anyone's home who was over 50 percent damaged, but not currently plans to elevate people's homes who were less than 50 percent damaged, so I think that speaks to the... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: But uh

AMY PETERSON: you know two houses on one street that have to...

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So if you were substantially damaged you cannot get reimbursement funds?

AMY PETERSON: You cannot get reimbursement funds at this point.

1

2

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Right now...

3

4

AMY PETERSON: But you can have your home rebuilt or repaired.

5

6

7

8

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So there's a pot of money for reimbursement, there's a pot of money to rebuild; where is the money that causes the elevation of the home?

9

10

11

AMY PETERSON: Anybody who had over 50 percent damage will have their house elevated as part of the repair and rebuild. Yeah.

12

13

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So that's... that's in the rebuild part.

14

AMY PETERSON: Yeah. Yeah.

15

16

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So if your home was 49 percent damaged, where do you go? Which pot?

17

18

19

20

AMY PETERSON: You can get a reimbursement or you can get money to have your home repaired, but you currently won't get the home elevated as part of the repair.

21

22

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So they're 49 percent you can't get elevation...

23

AMY PETERSON: Correct.

24

25

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: but you can get rebuilding; that what you said?

1  
2           AMY PETERSON: You can get reimbursed... so  
3 you can actually get... [crosstalk]

4           CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Oh you can get  
5 reimbursed...

6           AMY PETERSON: money for work that you  
7 did yourselves already. [background comment] And  
8 you can...

9           CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So...

10          AMY PETERSON: and you can be part of the  
11 repair program where a contractor will do the work.

12          CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So the gentleman who  
13 did his house on the first floor, what happens to  
14 him?

15          AMY PETERSON: So we can come in with a  
16 contractor or he select a contractor to do the new  
17 work to make the first floor... [crosstalk]

18          CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Elevate.

19          AMY PETERSON: the carport and add the  
20 additional floor. Yes.

21          CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What about the money  
22 that he spent to rebuild the first floor?

23          THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I think we need  
24 to look into this particular case a bit more and we  
25 can get back to you on it; there are issues about you



1  
2 know doing work on a lower floor when the home is  
3 required by code to be raised.

4 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So I wanna be on the  
5 record and I want us to follow up on that particular  
6 case because I know that he is not the only one I'm  
7 sure, because it sounds like that one came from  
8 miscommunication between the very people who  
9 should've been talking to make sure that something  
10 like that didn't happen. So I'm concerned that there  
11 are other people who have done work already and will  
12 now have to elevate their home and may just lose  
13 money completely. So I'd like to know what happens  
14 with that particular case, how many other cases like  
15 that there are and then how we're following up with  
16 them.

17 AMY PETERSON: Great.

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: You also mentioned  
19 that there were different priority levels and there  
20 is a batch of unknowns which is about 9,000. How do  
21 you know how much... you said you think you have enough  
22 money to get the lowest priority needs; how do you  
23 know how much money you'll need if you have 9,000  
24 unknowns and don't know which batch they belong to?  
25

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So I'm not sure I  
3 know [background comment] about the 9,000 number  
4 specifically, but the program has the self-reported  
5 income from registration so although the priority has  
6 not been verified by our eligibility specialists we  
7 have their self-reported essentially priority so we  
8 can estimate using that number.

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: There was a report  
10 sent to most of us, NYC Build it Back, Council  
11 District Case Management Report, and I believe there  
12 it said that there was about 9,000 unknowns. So  
13 you're saying those 9,000 have self-reported income  
14 that is not one of those priorities? Is that right?

15 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So, and correct me  
16 if I'm wrong, but those 9,000 have not been verified,  
17 so when we verify income we're required to get  
18 documentation of the household income; we look at  
19 that documentation and assign an income priority  
20 based on that documentation, so for those folks who  
21 have not yet been through that verification process  
22 either because we don't... either because we don't have  
23 the income documentation to verify or there's some  
24 other issue with it. The projections are based on  
25 assumptions of how many of those unverified would be

1  
2 priority 1, 2 or 3 based on the self-reported...  
3 [interpose]

4 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What are the  
5 projections for the 9,000?

6 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I don't know that I  
7 have that specific number, but it's something we can  
8 get to you and I'm just noting here that of the  
9 9,000; 4,800 of those are applicants who are  
10 unresponsive, so the reason we haven't verified  
11 income for those folks is because we've not yet been  
12 able to reach them to bring them in for an intake  
13 appointment where they would provide that  
14 information.

15 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And there's 4,200; is  
16 that right?

17 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Right, so that  
18 leave... yeah, about 4,200.

19 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And so what are the  
20 reasons for those?

21 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yeah, I don't know  
22 that I could answer that specifically, but we're  
23 still waiting essentially for income documentation  
24 from those... [interpose]  
25

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: How long do they have  
3 to provide the income documentation?

4 [background comments]

5 AMY PETERSON: There currently isn't a  
6 timeline for that and that's one of the things we  
7 wanna really put in place and have started to make  
8 sure that we... you know, if people have a deadline  
9 they're typically going to accelerate it, but it also  
10 sounds like maybe there's some questions about what  
11 they owe in terms of documentation, so that's part of  
12 the kind of tightening up the process we're gonna  
13 work on.

14 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I just wanna make  
15 sure we're calculating properly if we're saying that  
16 we have enough particularly for the low-income. Now  
17 the Mayor, thankfully, said he put \$100 million going  
18 to the Build it Back; where did that come from; did  
19 we have to cut it from someplace else?

20 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That will be part of  
21 the future CDBGDR Action Plan submitted to HUD once  
22 they approve the current amendment which is pending  
23 their approval. So the details of that \$100 million  
24 are still to be determined, [crosstalk]

25 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So where...

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: but it's enough that the program can begin working on all rebuilds regardless of priority level.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So we basically asked for advance money before we know we have it?

[background comments]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: It's moving unsubscribed customers, so it's...

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: It's what?

[background comment]

AMY PETERSON: So there are other elements to the whole community development block grant outside of the Housing Recovery program, so the city has... [interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Are we talking about the DR part now or just CDBG in general?

AMY PETERSON: CDBGDR... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

AMY PETERSON: out of the \$3.2. So the city has identified some places where maybe... and I don't know what they are, actually, but some programs where it's been under-subscribed. So the city feels confident that they have \$100 million to move into

1  
2 this, to cover this; the way that the Action Plan is  
3 currently written we can move forward with that  
4 immediately; the actual moving of the funds and  
5 decreasing that amount in the programs that currently  
6 exist will be part of the next action plan.

7 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Alright. Can we find  
8 out where they got the money from?

9 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, I don't know if it's  
10 all been decided yet, but we feel confident that the  
11 \$100 million exists, so.

12 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Wouldn't it have to  
13 be decided before you can figure out if you can get  
14 the money?

15 AMY PETERSON: It's within the current  
16 grant program and so it's reallocating funds, but I  
17 can... [interpose]

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay.

19 AMY PETERSON: I can find out the answer  
20 for you.

21 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: HUD says you have to  
22 have... help 51 percent... the money has to go to 51  
23 percent of the lowest income; is that 51 percent of  
24 the HUD money or 51 percent of all of Build it Back?

25

1  
2 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I believe it's 50  
3 percent, 50 or 51 percent of the entire CDBGDR  
4 allocation, so including money for business recovery  
5 programs, infrastructure programs... [interpose]

6 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And it's \$3.44  
7 billion is what it is?

8 CALVIN JOHNSON: \$3.22 billion.

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Is that all from  
10 federal funds?

11 AMY PETERSON: Yes.

12 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Are there any  
13 applicants that have gone into foreclosure since  
14 Sandy?

15 AMY PETERSON: I don't know the answer... I  
16 don't know the answer to that.

17 [background comments]

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Does 50 percent of  
19 the Build it Back money have to go to low-income  
20 residents?

21 AMY PETERSON: So 50 percent of the  
22 overall community development block grant disaster  
23 recovery, the 3.2, but certainly Build it Back is  
24 somewhere that we're able to get a large percentage  
25 of that.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What's the budget for Build it Back?

[background comments]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: It's \$1.5 billion.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: \$1.5 billion.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: 1.55.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And what is the rest of the money for, just... [interpose]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: For business recovery programs, for city infrastructure and other city services and for resilience programming... [crosstalk]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So 1.5 for Build it Back and 1.5 for everything else?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Approximately.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Does 50 percent of everything else have to go to low-income?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So in aggregate, across all programs, 50 percent... at least 50 percent of the \$3.22 billion needs to be spent on low to moderate income individuals or low to moderate income job holders. You could say that each program is carrying its own share in terms of targeting 50



percent low to moderate income individuals...

[interpose]

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So technically you could spend all of Build it Back, 100 percent and then you'd still hit that 50 percent mark, or you could spend... [interpose]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: 100 percent of the other...

AMY PETERSON: Correct.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: How are you figuring out where to go with that?

AMY PETERSON: Well so the Build it Back is one of the only things that's directly to the homeowners and certainly the low-income homeowners in New York City have been affected and so I think that in the planning so far that's been certainly a clear way to meet both the federal mandate and to serve the city's residents who've been impacted.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: But you think you have all the money you need to get to the lowest income?

AMY PETERSON: Yes.

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Is there a mechanism  
3 which homeowners can report concerns and complaints  
4 regarding the work that's been done?

5 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes. So there's a  
6 customer service line that has dedicated staff for  
7 complaints or issues regarding the program as a  
8 whole. Once a contractor begins work in a home,  
9 there's a phone number that's specifically for  
10 complaints related to the contractor so it can go to  
11 the right people and not the case management customer  
12 service representatives. And then there are... you  
13 know, depending on what the issue is there are other  
14 ways of report it, so if there are claims of waste,  
15 fraud or abuse, there's a specific DOI hotline for  
16 that as well.

17 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Has the city been  
18 okay in drawing down money from HUD? Wait... how well  
19 has the city done in rebuilding and drawing down  
20 money from HUD for this program versus other parts of  
21 the state?

22 CALVIN JOHNSON: The bulk of the  
23 drawdowns from HUD so far have been for the city's  
24 infrastructure and other city services programs and  
25 we heard very loud and clear from HUD as most

recently as last week is we need to be aggressive about getting our drawdowns to align with our city expenditures.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Now back to outreach, has there been any money spent on advertising specifically in the culturally centered media that has been in the area?

AMY PETERSON: Yes, definitely; I got briefed on that this morning and I can send you what's been done.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. And can I get how much and to which media outlet?

AMY PETERSON: Yes.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: You have that?

AMY PETERSON: I hope so.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Yes? No? We do have it... [crosstalk]

CALVIN JOHNSON: We can definitely provide it; I don't know that we have it... [crosstalk]

AMY PETERSON: I don't have it right here, but we can get that.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: We do have a breakdown of the amount of money spent and to which media outlet?

1  
2 AMY PETERSON: Yes.

3 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Okay... let me  
4 make sure... Oh, I think I was going to ask what a  
5 transfer payment was. I'm trying to find that in  
6 your testimony. Yeah, it says the city's pro... it  
7 says in your testimony, the city's program was also  
8 designed before we gained a full understanding of the  
9 impact of transfer payments on our customers. For  
10 example, our policy was to request transfer payments  
11 from our customers... I didn't understand what that  
12 meant.

13 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, so I just kind of  
14 learned that this morning, so I'll give you what I've  
15 learned and then people can add if that doesn't  
16 actually clarify it for you. So when the decision is  
17 made to rebuild the home or repair the home and CDBG  
18 funds are used for it, there's a pot of money that  
19 includes money that the homeowner may have gotten  
20 from other resources like insurance; that amount of  
21 money that they're gonna put towards the home rebuild  
22 that we're going to give to the contractor that's  
23 doing the work is called the transfer amount and so  
24 two major things have happened with the transfer  
25 amount; first, I think one of the reasons,

1 intuitively and certainly just from what I've heard,  
2 one of the reasons that the option selection meetings  
3 didn't end with a selection is because at that point  
4 you had to give up the transfer money even before you  
5 could move to the design process and so you weren't  
6 really sure what you were getting, that step has been  
7 delayed, so now you can start the design process  
8 without turning over that transfer amount; in  
9 addition there's been a decision to use that to help  
10 people who need to relocate when their home is being  
11 rebuilt, to use those funds for that point also.

12  
13 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Immigration  
14 status; does that make a difference when it comes to  
15 Build it Back?

16 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Yes, it does. So  
17 operating under HUD's guidance, the Build it Back  
18 program requires under, because of federal law, that  
19 the main applicant be either a citizen or have  
20 qualified alien status.

21 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: And there's no  
22 funding from the city available to assist immigrants  
23 whose status may not be legal?

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Do you wanna speak  
25 to that?

1  
2 AMY PETERSON: Yeah, so we're... there's...  
3 [background comments] the Mayor's Fund to Advance New  
4 York City has funded LISC to try to help these people  
5 who cannot be helped through the HUD CDBG program.

6 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. Do we know how  
7 many people that is?

8 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: We don't yet know  
9 exactly how many it is; I can tell you that LISC has  
10 the capacity for approximately 600 homes and they are  
11 not fully subscribed yet, so they're still looking  
12 for folks. So if there are folks out there who don't  
13 have citizenship or qualified alien status and are  
14 looking for that help, LISC is still looking for  
15 folks.

16 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Is there a contact  
17 number or information that we could say... there's a  
18 bunch of people that'll watch this... [crosstalk]

19 AMY PETERSON: Yeah and we'll give you  
20 something that you can actually send out and share  
21 with people about this option.

22 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Is there anything  
23 that we could say now?

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I don't know if we  
25 can... [background comments]

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I see.

3 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Council Member,  
4 I just want to answer for HPD and for TDAP. Okay,  
5 there is... we cannot use the CD money, but we are  
6 working for another philanthropic organization to get  
7 some money from them in order to issue TDAP coupons  
8 for the undocumented families.

9 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So right now they  
10 can't but we're hoping they will?

11 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: The CD money  
12 cannot be used, but we are actively talking with a  
13 philanthropic organization and hoping to sign an MOU  
14 shortly where we can service the undocumented  
15 households.

16 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So homeowners can  
17 now, if they're undocumented, go to LISC and you'll  
18 get contact information. Renters have no place to go  
19 now, but we're hoping shortly that we will?

20 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Yes.

21 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. And now,  
22 should people make repairs and then come... like what...  
23 because I know some people started making repairs,  
24 but now there might be a question about with a  
25 license contractor, did they do it to code. What

1  
2 happens at that point when they've already done the  
3 repairs and maybe they weren't up to code, maybe they  
4 weren't a license contractor and if I'm at this stage  
5 now and I held off, should I start and then come;  
6 what's the deal with that?

7           THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So there are two  
8 issues. First, for those who have completed repairs  
9 but the repairs may not be up to code, they may still  
10 be eligible for our repair program and part of what  
11 our program will do then is to bring those repairs up  
12 to code to make sure that the home is left in a  
13 decent, safe and sanitary condition, so for those who  
14 have already done repairs but are concerned that they  
15 may not meet code, they should definitely see the  
16 process through because those issues can be addressed  
17 by our program. To answer the second question, HUD  
18 has implemented a cutoff date after which HUD money  
19 can no longer be used to reimburse homeowners for  
20 repairs; that date was October 29th of last year, so  
21 at this point unless HUD changes that guidance, if  
22 homeowners incur costs to complete repairs, they're  
23 not currently going to be eligible for reimbursement  
24 for those expenses.



1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So it's only for  
3 repairs done before October 29th of 2013?

4 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: That's right.

5 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Wait, is it contracts  
6 signed before or is it any repairs done before?

7 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Expenses incurred.  
8 So if the contract was signed before October 29th but  
9 the work continued, that would still be an eligible  
10 expense.

11 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: What if there was  
12 work done with no contract?

13 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Then it would depend  
14 essentially on when the expense was incurred. So I  
15 mean what it boils down to it would be essentially  
16 the date of the invoice.

17 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Okay. And what about  
18 work done by people who are not licensed?

19 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So for example,  
20 homeowners may have completed repairs on their own;  
21 those repairs are eligible so long as, again, the  
22 expenses were incurred prior to October 29th, so the  
23 materials were purchased you know at the home...

24 [crosstalk]  
25

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Well homeowner may also just have hired somebody who may not have a license because they need the work done... [crosstalk]

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Right.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: what happens with that work?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So the program doesn't review the licensing status of the contractors who've already done work in the home; of course there are requirements for the program repairs, that the contractors are licensed for our repairs, but for completed repairs, it's not something the program is asking about. So if the applicant has repairs that were completed by a contractor, regardless of whether that was a licensed contractor or not, those expenses would still be eligible for reimbursement, so long as the other requirements were met for eligibility.

CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Alright, thank you. There are obviously, as you know, a lot of people who are rightfully upset, who have been waiting for a very long time, who have been sent through circles, who have been sent through loops; they've been sent through squares, trapezoids, a bunch of stuff, and

1 have not been able to get their money.

2 Unfortunately, I cannot be as aggressive as I would  
3 like to be with you because you are new; I will say  
4 that is it three months; some of this stuff could  
5 have been done beforehand, but still it's three  
6 months. I would like to request that we have another  
7 hearing in six months; eight months or so to follow  
8 up to see if the great things that you have assured  
9 will happen actually do happen so that they will not  
10 have to go through those shapes and those things that  
11 they are currently going through, because there are  
12 people's lives who are literally in upheaval now and  
13 it is not right that that was because of our city  
14 government's inability to get its act together. But  
15 thank you for being here today and thank you for the  
16 testimony.

17  
18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Chair  
19 Williams and believe me, we will hold as many  
20 hearings as necessary until the recovery is felt and  
21 people are satisfied and back in their homes. Just  
22 to point out to you, I mentioned earlier that there  
23 was the Sandy impact and there was the impact of  
24 inaction. There's a co-op in Coney Island and I know  
25 Andrew Olson has spoke to me about this, we've done

1  
2 some... they were really damaged... it's called Sandberg  
3 and they were severely damaged by the storm and  
4 because they waited a long time for any type of  
5 assistance, they had to go about themselves to hire  
6 people to do work and they were in financially a  
7 tight spot, they had damage done in common spaces,  
8 boilers, apartments, you name it and the person who  
9 did the work didn't put in insulation and did not  
10 wrap the pipes and during this past winter the pipes  
11 exploded and people's apartments exploded and so  
12 people who were displaced by Sandy are displaced  
13 again. So are we factoring those type of situations  
14 in for reimbursements, because they had to do repairs  
15 and the repairs, they were done quickly and they had  
16 to find someone affordable and obviously the work was  
17 not done right. Is that being considered by your  
18 office?

19 [background comments]

20 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Council Member,  
21 Anne-Marie Hendrickson, and I actually run the  
22 Mitchell-Lama program at HPD, so I'm familiar with  
23 Sandberg Houses. We have to look into that and see;  
24 I'm not quite sure what contractor was used that  
25 didn't do the work properly; that sounds like a shame

1  
2 that people are now displaced again, so let us take a  
3 look into that and we'll get back to you on that,  
4 sir.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I definitely  
6 appreciate and I will follow up with your office,  
7 because some folks are displaced again. And I also  
8 will point out that Warbasse, which is a major  
9 Mitchell-Lama co-op, the president of the board had  
10 no idea that they were eligible for Build it Back  
11 [background comment]; they were told initially last  
12 year that it was just a single-family home repair  
13 program, so they never even applied and many, many  
14 people in Warbasse were really hurt hard by  
15 Superstorm Sandy, so I'll follow up with you about  
16 that as well. A word about the contractors that are  
17 doing the work actually; who are the contractors; how  
18 are they selected and what training is underway to  
19 provide local residents an opportunity be a part of  
20 the rebuilding for their neighborhoods?

21 AMY PETERSON: You know so this is  
22 something again that is something that is very  
23 important to me; my understanding and this is  
24 something I'm gonna look into in-depth this week, is  
25 that there are three contractors that were selected I

1  
2 think through the Department of Environmental  
3 Protection under their job order contracting and I  
4 won't be able to recite the three names, although may  
5 I could, and they have a huge number of  
6 subcontractors that are working with them, so one of  
7 the things I'm gonna do is look at those contracts  
8 and look at the requirements for local hiring and  
9 also their capacity to be able to do the amount of  
10 work that we need to do. In addition there's three  
11 developers who are doing the rebuilds across the city  
12 and I don't know how they were selected.

13 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Again, Anne-  
14 Marie Hendrickson. For the rebuilds, the contractors  
15 were selected, I believe there was a mini RFQ issued  
16 and the three developers that were selected, in  
17 Staten Island it's the Bluestone Organization, in  
18 Queens it's Arverne by the Sea, LLC and for Brooklyn,  
19 Bronx, Manhattan it's Galaxy General Contracting, and  
20 these developers all have extensive experience in  
21 rebuilding homes and have very good track records  
22 with HPD.

23 [background comments] [crosstalk]

24 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: But... and just to...

25 [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Please.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: Just to let you know, the three contractors under DEP's job order contract for repair and repair with elevation, are Volmar, Fitzgerald and Rockaway Beach Boulevard.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So Miss Peterson, you mentioned that you will look into this selection, because one of the things I heard in your testimony today was that you will work with us to ensure that local residents are a part... and the thing is, I don't wanna be told that, oh, the local residents don't have their OSHA 10 cards; oh, they don't have this; what are we doing right now as we speak to make sure that they are equipped with the skills and licenses that they need to be a part of that recovery effort?

AMY PETERSON: So with my kind of old hat on, I know that the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City had funding from the philanthropic world to contract with four groups to train local residents for nonprofits for just this and those groups have been connected with the Build it Back contractors and again that's kind of my old hat. You know this is... we're gonna take the steps to make sure that local residents have the training that they need to be put

1  
2 into these jobs; I think the question is to make sure  
3 that the contractors have these jobs available and  
4 how they have these jobs available, that they have  
5 the capacity to do the work that we need them to do  
6 and who they're hiring to do that work and how we  
7 make sure that local residents get in; that's a whole  
8 piece that I have a lot of familiarity with but need  
9 to dive into the details for this group.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And your office  
11 will be keeping data on these things...

12 AMY PETERSON: Yes, definitely.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: because we'll be  
14 very interested in that? Hopefully Sandy tracker as  
15 well and data to our committee. I'd like to now  
16 recognize a colleague of mine in the council who has  
17 also been very passionate, very active on Sandy  
18 recovery in his district, Council Member Carlos  
19 Menchaca.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you  
21 Chairs for your time and thank you for the panel.  
22 What I wanted to do is ask a little bit about HUD and  
23 the HUD requirements and what can we affirmatively do  
24 as a city to reach low-income households; is there  
25 any effort to redistribute money to make



improvements, to NYCHA housing or expanding TDAP?

What's the flexibility there?

[background comments]

CALVIN JOHNSON: Good question. In terms of looking at how we assign funding from the CDBGDR grant to constituents, the city performs an unmet needs analysis to look at really what are the projected populations... what are the populations that are impacted and what are the type of need they are from a dollar perspective. We recognize the funding that we've gotten from the federal government, while substantial doesn't address all of the remaining unmet needs, so there's a prioritization process in place to make sure that we're able to target single-family homeowners and tenants, we're able to target multi-family units and for public housing. In terms of public housing, there's \$308 million in the combined first and second allocations of the CDBGDR grant going towards that program; in terms of TDAP there's \$19 million of CDBGDR funding going towards that program; currently, based on enrollment in TDAP, those funds look to be sufficient, but there are remaining unmet needs which is also one reason why

1  
2 we're working with the federal government for an  
3 allocation to the city from the third allocation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So there is  
5 flexibility and you're looking at that?

6 CALVIN JOHNSON: Yeah, the flexibility  
7 occurs through the action plan process, so basically  
8 we have one amendment which is pending HUD approval  
9 right now which was submitted to them on March 21st  
10 that made changes to some programs that were funded  
11 out of the first allocation but really was the  
12 amendment proposing how the second allocation of  
13 \$1.44 billion was to be used; the city has the  
14 ability to do additional action plan amendments  
15 really reallocating funding based on where the need  
16 is to target those most in need.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. I think  
18 we'll be able to follow up more on that and how we  
19 see as a council and from those that are gonna be  
20 testifying soon how we can better address all the  
21 needs of the different populations. I wanna also ask  
22 next about something that I brought up in previous  
23 conversations with the administration and our council  
24 members really making sure that TDAP reaches our  
25 undocumented populations; this a voucher paid

1  
2 directly to landlords, so it seems odd that  
3 undocumented renters would be barred from these  
4 particular benefits. We've heard that these are  
5 restrictions based on hard lines set by HUD that we  
6 just talked about. Can you explain this a little bit  
7 more in detail what specific regulation is limiting  
8 the city here and if there's any way we can begin to  
9 use more of this federal disaster funding for  
10 undocumented populations?

11 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: I can speak to the  
12 legal requirement, which is PRWORA, it's the Welfare  
13 Reform Act; it specifically prohibits any assistance  
14 to be paid to anyone who is not a citizen or a  
15 qualified alien; the qualified alien status being  
16 somewhat restrictive, including... [interpose]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

18 THADDEUS HACKWORTH: refugees and some  
19 other categories. But it's that restriction that  
20 keeps us from being able to provide cash assistance  
21 directly to homeowners or renters who are not  
22 citizens or qualified aliens.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And does your  
24 legal understanding of this address the fact that  
25

these are going directly to landlords and not the renters?

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: So this is something that we specifically [bell] went to HUD to request some guidance as to our flexibility in that regard... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay.

THADDEUS HACKWORTH: and the answer that we were given back was that they could not find a way for us to provide the temporary assistance benefit to that population while remaining in compliance with that law.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay. And...

ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Council Member, good morning. I just want to at least add that as I spoke about, we are dealing with philanthropic organizations about what we call TDAP private, because we did try to appeal to HUD, 'cause as an HPD Section 8 program, we are allowed to prorate subsidy based on documentation and whether people are legal. So TDAP private right now, it's with the Law Department; we're hoping to get it signed shortly and hopefully it's expected to serve at least 200 households.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay. And  
3 then, I think I only have one more question, but  
4 there are more we're gonna follow up on. The  
5 administration, are they working on specific  
6 proposals or ideas with banks to stop foreclosures in  
7 homes impacted by Sandy; what are some of the  
8 strategies for addressing this particular  
9 abandonment, there are many homes that have been  
10 abandoned, so wanna kinda hear a little bit about  
11 that piece? I know we're trying to get folks that  
12 are engaged and that have not lost hope, but there  
13 are folks that have simply moved or absentee  
14 landlords; not just in Red Hook, but in Canarsie and  
15 Sheepshead Bay and Gerritsen Beach and other place  
16 sin Brooklyn; can you address that?

17 AMY PETERSON: AMY PETERSON: Yeah. So  
18 while I can answer that we have contracted with the  
19 Center... [crosstalk]

20 CALVIN JOHNSON: for New York City  
21 Neighbor...

22 AMY PETERSON: City Neighborhoods to work  
23 directly with each of the homeowners, I don't know  
24 the answer to what the administration is doing, but  
25 we can get back to you on that.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. Okay.  
3 Thank you so much and we'll be following up with more  
4 questions then.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you and I  
6 think Council Member Menchaca raises a very important  
7 point; if somebody was damaged by the storm, their  
8 property was really damaged and they didn't get any  
9 assistance, they had to take out their life savings,  
10 they had to empty out their kids' college accounts to  
11 make those repairs, they should not be in a position  
12 where they're gonna lose their home and I think that  
13 we have an obligation to make sure that they get  
14 reimbursed every penny of that money and to make sure  
15 that they're financially secure, 'cause that to me...  
16 people ask what does the recovery look at the end; I  
17 think when we return a sense of normalcy, safety and  
18 financial security to all impacted residents. And I  
19 think that Chair Richards has some comments as well.

20 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: I just will close  
21 out, because most of my questions were raised. Just  
22 wanted to thank you once again for coming and we look  
23 forward to working with you and in this spirit I was  
24 hoping that obviously as we move forward in  
25 partnership, because this is going to be a very, very

1  
2 long process, as we know, and I'm hoping that we're  
3 really gonna engage community leader, civic  
4 associations, the community boards, and just to make  
5 a final recommendation, I would think and hope as we  
6 move along that the administration would be willing  
7 to partner and possibly come up with some sort of  
8 task force where we can sit around once a month and  
9 speak of progress that is being made with community  
10 leaders, community boards; I know ALIGN is here,  
11 who's done a lot of work with us and I think that  
12 would be good as we move along working together so we  
13 can gauge progress in partnership, not just  
14 adversarial. So I look forward to working with you  
15 and welcome aboard. Thank you.

16 [background comment]

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
18 Richards. And I think we heard today a number of  
19 very sound proposals, the proposals to have maybe  
20 regional directors to cover different parts of our  
21 city that were impacted by Sandy; we heard to work  
22 with local nonprofits to be the case managers, to be  
23 the voice for the impacted residents, and to  
24 definitely have... and it would be so helpful; I asked  
25 this before, but to have an organizational chart of

1  
2 your office and of the entire Sandy team, from Bill  
3 Goldstein and below, to know who's who, who's working  
4 on what, to hold the administration accountable and  
5 for us to improve communication because this is the  
6 key, if we're on the same page we can turn key better  
7 information to the public because that was not  
8 happening under the previous administration and that  
9 must really improve now. I would ask if the  
10 panelists will stay to listen to more of the impacted  
11 residents and their stories and what they're going  
12 through right now; that would be very meaningful to  
13 the committee and to them, so I would... Is there any  
14 additional questions; I think we will call the next  
15 panel and we thank you for testifying.

16 AMY PETERSON: So I'll just say thank you  
17 very much and we do wanna stay and hear from the  
18 residents.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
20 much. [background comments] Okay. The next panel  
21 we're call... and again folks, understand that we will  
22 hear from all; we're just trying to get four or five  
23 at a time, but we will listen to every person's  
24 testimony here today; we take them extremely,  
25 extremely serious and we just heard that the director



1  
2 will stay to listen to everyone, as will this  
3 committee. I'd like to call up next Daniel Mundy,  
4 Jonathan Gaska, Nancy, I think Pacedo [phonetic],  
5 Roland Gorton, and Louis Coletti from the Building  
6 Trades Employers' Association. [background comments]  
7 Okay, if I could ask everyone please to raise your  
8 right hands. Do you swear or affirm to the truth,  
9 the whole truth and nothing but the truth before our  
10 committees today? [collective affirmations] Thank  
11 you. Yes, we'll begin now.

12 JONATHAN GASKA: Good afternoon, my  
13 name's Jonathan Gaska; I'm the District Manager of  
14 Community Board 14; I've been the District Manager  
15 for 25 years, and this June will be my 30th year in  
16 city government; in fact I was on Harrison Golden's  
17 staff at the Board of Estimate when that was around.  
18 The reason I say that is because I've been in  
19 government a long time; I know how things work, but  
20 more importantly I know how things don't work in  
21 government and I have to say that what has happened  
22 or I should say, what hasn't happened with Build it  
23 Back is inexplicable. I've never seen government  
24 failure on this level, and again, I've been around 30  
25 years, okay, I'm on my fifth mayor. The Mayor

1  
2 announced Build it Back with great fanfare, people  
3 were so happy in Rockaway and Broad Channel you  
4 couldn't believe it, oh my god, we're gonna get our  
5 lives back, we're gonna get our homes; people were  
6 calling the community board, two, three dozen a day,  
7 how do we sign up; this is great, there was just such  
8 joy in their voice because of what has happened from  
9 Sandy.

10           For the last four or five months I've  
11 been getting calls from people, grown men and women  
12 in tears, they're losing everything; how could  
13 government do this to me. We have families that have  
14 basically liquidated their children's college  
15 accounts, their IRAs, they've taken out pension  
16 loans, they've lost everything they saved for and  
17 they've got nothing to show for it right now. We  
18 just had the folks here and again, we can't  
19 necessarily blame them 'cause there are some new  
20 faces, but government's clearly to blame here,  
21 clearly. Really, three checks, six houses? I mean  
22 Rome wasn't built in a day, but this is ridiculous,  
23 this is just failure on an epic level. I don't even  
24 know what to tell people anymore. You know I  
25 understand government moves at a glacial pace, I

1 understand that, you know, it's not a direct line..  
2 but ultimately the thing I've always told people is  
3 trust me, I've been around a long time; it'll get  
4 solved, right? I can't say that with any level of  
5 confidence that that's gonna happen. We're going on  
6 almost two years since the storm, three checks?  
7 Right, three checks, six houses; one in Rockaway?  
8 It's... I don't... I don't know how government could do  
9 any worse. Quite frankly it's shameful; I'm  
10 embarrassed to work for the city and that's the first  
11 time... and there have been a lot of occasions where  
12 that may have been the case, but these people have  
13 suffered so. I hope that with the new administration  
14 they listen to the community; that is one that I can  
15 clearly say that the Bloomberg administration did  
16 not; I could probably give you two hours of testimony  
17 or problems we've had with not getting agencies to  
18 listen to us. We know the community better than  
19 anyone and they just would not listen to us, would  
20 not let them tell 'em what the problems are, what the  
21 exceptions are, what our experiences are, and I hope  
22 that that, quite frankly is something that's done  
23 now. But there are people who are just very, very,  
24 very disappointed and angry in their government, and  
25

1  
2 these are people... these are cops, these are firemen,  
3 these are teachers, these are nurses, these are  
4 sanitation works; these are the people who live in  
5 Rockaway. People in Rockaway aren't crybabies. You  
6 know every meeting I go to you hear the word  
7 resiliency; when you look up the word resiliency, it  
8 says see the people of Rockaway -- 9/11, we lost 70  
9 people, more than any community in the Tri-State  
10 area; almost a month to the day Flight 587 crashed  
11 into the same neighborhood that by the way burnt down  
12 because of Sandy, okay; we've had two hurricanes; no  
13 one's a crybaby in Rockaway, no one is, but to have  
14 grown men and women who I've known for 25 years just  
15 have lost everything and government lost their  
16 papers; how many times do I have to go down and fill  
17 something out; how many times? It's... I don't know  
18 what to say and I hope you on the City Council can  
19 help. [bell]

20 [applause]

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I hear you 100  
22 percent. Next please.

23 DAN MUNDY: Thank you. Thank you for the  
24 opportunity to come here and testify, which is  
25 something I've done in the past 25 years dozens of

1  
2 times and before the City Council. Once again, it is  
3 a voice for the people and we thank you for giving us  
4 that voice.

5 Hurricane Sandy brought unprecedented  
6 damage loss to the coastal communities. As resident  
7 of Broad Channel for over 76 years, I can testify  
8 that this was indeed an unprecedented storm event. I  
9 will provide this commission feedback as a resident  
10 of Broad Channel, a trustee of the Broad Channel  
11 Civic Association, co-chair of the Jamaica Bay Task  
12 Force, Vice President, Environmental Chair of  
13 Community Board 14. A year-and-a-half after the  
14 storm we still have residents awaiting help and I  
15 hope the unique perspective that is provided here  
16 will help the committee to better understand what has  
17 been transpiring to date and to make changes that  
18 will allow the needed aid to begin to flow.

19 In the immediate aftermath there was no  
20 official relief or help from any of the city, state  
21 or federal agencies, residents of Broad Channel set  
22 up the local American Legion Post 1404 as a relief  
23 center. This center was opened two nights after the  
24 storm, it was the first resource set up in the area  
25 assisting residents from Broad Channel, Howard Beach,

1  
2 Far Rockaway, Rockaway Park, Arverne, Belle Harbor  
3 and Breezy Point. The residents manned the center  
4 and help came from other communities across the area.  
5 Individuals and small volunteer groups worked  
6 together to gather goods and to transport them across  
7 the area to help those in need. Similar volunteers  
8 centers sprang up in adjacent neighborhoods likewise  
9 manned and run by the volunteers from the affected  
10 communities; it was an amazing effort and one that  
11 filled the void that should have been and would've  
12 been assumed that would've been addressed by the  
13 formal government agencies, but it was not. While  
14 FEMA, OEM and the Red Cross were all missing in the  
15 immediate aftermath of the storm, it was assumed by  
16 the residents that as time went by the formal  
17 government agencies would take charge and help would  
18 arrive; the help that we expected would have come  
19 from congress and everyone in the storm damaged area  
20 closely watched how the issue played out in both  
21 houses. While the Sandy aid bill made its way  
22 through congress, many residents called and emailed  
23 their various representatives and all waited with  
24 bated breath to see if it would pass. When it did  
25 pass, everyone was relieved, as now, with \$60 billion

1  
2 in aid help would come, help would come to rebuild  
3 the destroyed homes, help would come for some to  
4 elevate their homes and get 'em out of harms way,  
5 help would come for those who wiped out their life  
6 savings and pensions to rebuild and were in dire need  
7 of reimbursement. Yes, now the funds were allocated,  
8 help would come, or so we were told, which it never  
9 happened. In Broad Channel, through our civic  
10 meetings we led the efforts to get the word out about  
11 the way the funding would flow down through the CDBG  
12 grants and then through a program called Build it  
13 Back. We hosted the first Build it Back meeting in  
14 the city with the then director Brad Gair. Residents  
15 from all around packed into this same American Legion  
16 hall to understand how this could work; this was on  
17 April 30th and after that comment period had opened  
18 and the program protocols were announced, much of  
19 what was initially promised by the director never  
20 materialized, including timeframes as well as  
21 application mythology [sic]. Since that time the  
22 program seemed to slowly fall apart over the summer  
23 months; in October 2013 a new director was brought in  
24 an attempt to fix what is now known as a major  
25 disaster; she was a welcome addition at the time, but

1  
2 just talk about making major changes in communication  
3 lines to the community leaders, she suddenly departed  
4 from the program. Since her departure the program  
5 unexpectedly had no director and has floundered along  
6 with little progress.

7           Here are just a few problems that the  
8 residents have accounted, which already have been  
9 addressed here today, which I'll only tell you of  
10 briefly with a first sentence of each one, but the  
11 rest of my testimony will be here for the committee.  
12 The application process, as we said, has been an  
13 administrative disaster; it rolled out too soon with  
14 staff that was unrestrained, resulted in every single  
15 applicant experience a lost document. Uninformed  
16 staff; they failed to understand the program and  
17 often held up the applications [bell] for the wrong  
18 reasons. The SBA loan program is another one that  
19 must be addressed. The structural assessment issue,  
20 again, is something that has to be talked about. The  
21 failure to release the funds again was talked about  
22 today and it's something that has to be done. This  
23 program needs a strong director and we hope that we  
24 have that person sittin' here in front of us today  
25



1  
2 and we wish you a welcome; we look forward to working  
3 with you in the future.

4 I'll sum it up by saying that this  
5 program, this city, has let these devastated families  
6 down, it has failed to provide the relief that has  
7 been sent down by the federal government in the  
8 aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. We are receiving phone  
9 calls and emails on a daily basis of families that  
10 are in danger of losing their properties; of course  
11 they are now in possession of empty lots and are  
12 facing foreclosures. As they try and struggle to pay  
13 the mortgages, the taxes and insurances, while also  
14 payin' rent in an interim apartment while they wait  
15 for the city to release the funds they are in  
16 possession of. It's hard to imagine what could be a  
17 higher priority for this administration than helping  
18 those families that have lost everything; they need  
19 help and they need it now. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Next.

21 [applause]

22 [background comment]

23 ROLAND GORTON: Hello... okay. My name's  
24 Roland Gorton and yes, I was devastated by the storm.  
25 Rapid Repair had come to my house and said we can't

1  
2 help you until you rip the floors up. I said the  
3 walls are out, I had five feet of water in the house,  
4 something that I saved for my whole life and now it  
5 went out the window on me. I was in compliance with  
6 insurance and everything else, but I still need help  
7 to raise the house; it's gonna cost a lot of money, I  
8 don't have that. Build it Back wouldn't give me hot  
9 water or anything because they wanted the floors up  
10 first. Once I got the floors up they said you have  
11 put floors down because we have to be able to walk  
12 around the house. I couldn't afford to do that yet,  
13 because the house has to be raised; I'm gonna put a  
14 floor down and then take the floor back out again?  
15 So then when I called them up and I said well listen,  
16 is there any way we could do something with this just  
17 so that I could get started again? Well that  
18 program's ended now. Okay, so that's great. I filed  
19 for New York Rising 4-18-2013; I got a registration  
20 number, they told me, well you don't qualify for that  
21 because it's a state program; you have to wait for  
22 Build it Back which will be a five-borough city  
23 program. I filed for that; I got that; I gave them  
24 all the information they needed; I put it onto a  
25 computer that I had gotten from a family member.

1  
2 Then I got called to go to Fort Tilden to the Build  
3 it Back specialist; I give her all my paperwork, she  
4 scans in all the same information; this is why I like  
5 most of the questions that I was gonna ask were  
6 already asked and I have to commend the council, you  
7 seem to be doing a very good job and you seem to be  
8 on our side, the people, the people. No, there it  
9 is, over here. Then I had an adjuster come to the  
10 house, the adjuster said yes, your house is damaged;  
11 this was on February 7th, okay a good, good long time  
12 after the flood. I get another specialist callin' me  
13 up that works in New Jersey, lives in New Jersey;  
14 doesn't New Jersey have their own Build it Back  
15 program? Why is our money going to support people  
16 that are in Jersey, I don't understand that. She  
17 wanted the same paperwork that I had put in almost a  
18 year before that and which I had to give to another  
19 specialist when I first went to Fort Tilden; I have  
20 had to give her all of this information all over  
21 again and then when she finally received the  
22 information she said, you'll be hearing from us  
23 again. So I said, thank you. Other than I don't  
24 know what to say; I'd like to go into a lot of  
25 things, but I think everybody can hear it from the

1  
2 tone of my voice, I'm disgusted with this Build it  
3 Back program and they put an IG to supervise the  
4 police department where they have enough supervision,  
5 maybe the Build it Back needs an IG to go look at  
6 them, call DOI to go in there and check them out.  
7 Have a nice day and Happy Easter to those that  
8 celebrate it.

9 MALE VOICE: Hello... [interpose]

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I could tell you  
11 that... thank you and Council Member Ulrich and I are  
12 actually working on doing just that. [background  
13 comments] Just... yes, next. [background comments]

14 LOUIS COLETTI: Good afternoon. My name  
15 is Louis Coletti; I represent the Building Trade  
16 Employers' Association, which is an association of  
17 union contractors in New York City; first of all I'd  
18 like to thank you for the chance and the opportunity  
19 this morning to be here and to commend you because  
20 you're asking all the right questions and it's very,  
21 very impressive. My organization has been involved  
22 in the cleanup of 9//11, we were involved in the  
23 Rapid Repair program and many of the questions you're  
24 asking I think are things that I know Amy Peterson  
25 will take, because I've had the opportunity work with

her for 20 years and if anybody can get it done it's Amy Peterson. [background comment] Okay. I'm very confident of that. But I'd like to share with you some of the things that happened; we're in a crisis in this city, because we don't have systems and we don't have answers, I can tell you that the contractors I represent, and it's not something I relish saying, we won't respond to any emergency anymore. There are too many opportunities for us to go bankrupt; we're just not doing it; we don't get paid; it's not going to happen. People ran... in Rapid Repairs program, my contractors ran away from being involved because we knew it. I was called by the administration, we came down and with FEMA, with all due respect, they're part of the problem and you've heard it here; the paperwork that they impose on the city to then impose on the residents and then the city itself in terms of getting contractors onboard is ridiculous, ridiculous and I would urge you to call for a hearing with our federal officials, because with FEMA, the object is the audit, not providing assistance to anybody here; it's the audit -- do they have all the paperwork right -- and for the smaller contractors that are gonna be doing this

1  
2 work, they don't have the business systems to begin  
3 to break down by square foot, well room by room how  
4 much is the sheetrock gonna cost and if the homeowner  
5 takes that burden on themselves they'll find  
6 themselves not getting reimbursed; it's ridiculous.  
7 But there are things that we can do locally, okay.  
8 We lost a week in the Rapid Repair program because we  
9 had to put together an RFP to put on the street to  
10 see who was gonna respond to it; there's no reason  
11 for that. There should be a standard contract off  
12 the shelf that handles emergency... prequalified  
13 contracts, you know what the terms and conditions  
14 are, you know how you're gonna get paid, you know  
15 when you're gonna get paid. One of the things we did  
16 with Rapid Repairs, which I would recommend to Amy,  
17 was, there were 311 calls coming to my office when I  
18 helped the city... No, what really did was, to identify  
19 those local contractors who were interested in the  
20 program, they were referred to my office, we sat up a  
21 website, five basic questions, did a councilman Far  
22 Rockaways question your right, we broke the area up  
23 into geographic regions, there were six or seven  
24 prime construction managers responsible for a  
25 particular district, homeowners knew if they had a

1  
2 question where their work order was, they went to  
3 that trailer, but more importantly, that construction  
4 manager was responsible for a geographic region and  
5 making sure that those subcontractors were performing  
6 that work, and we were able, working with Small  
7 Business Services, to get a list of small minority-  
8 owned contractors, neighborhood by neighborhood, give  
9 those lists to the six major contractors to the point  
10 where I think that we ended up with 22 or 25 percent  
11 MWBE involvement in the Rapid Repairs program. So I  
12 think there are systems that we can help Miss  
13 Peterson with, but they have to be institutionalized  
14 so that when the next emergency comes up you're not  
15 having a hearing on the same thing. We tried to have  
16 discussions about this with the administration after  
17 9/11, the Office of Emergency Management yessed us to  
18 death and we did nothing and Sandy came and you're  
19 hearing the responsibilities of Sandy. [bell] We're  
20 prepared to offer Amy and anybody any assistance that  
21 we can in order to move this process forward. You  
22 heard... I'll finish up in a minute if you don't mind...  
23 you heard the response of her staff -- 1600 companies  
24 were contacted and they got three that responded;  
25 there's a reason for that. I can tell you that when

1  
2 I met with many of the small MWBE firms on Rapid  
3 Repair who wanted to a piece of the action, you know  
4 what my recommendation was; stay away from it, it'll  
5 bankrupt you. And then we had someone who had the  
6 experience in Katrina and said, you know what, he's  
7 right. But if we put these institutional mechanisms  
8 in place we can respond better and faster, and for  
9 the city to say that they're not checking the  
10 licensing requirements of the contractors that are  
11 building this, that's not acceptable; this city has  
12 licensee requirements, either coming out of Consumer  
13 Affairs; there's gotta be a system set up where any  
14 homeowner may unknowingly hire somebody from New  
15 Jersey that doesn't have New York license, DOB comes  
16 in and says the work's not performed well; who gets  
17 stuck, that homeowner, that doesn't work. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you; I mean  
19 quite frankly, the problems that were raised and some  
20 of these solutions that you raised today are very  
21 important because I've heard them across the board in  
22 other aspects of this recovery. For example, the  
23 Parks Department, which has almost a third of our  
24 shoreline hasn't been reimbursed a dime from FEMA for  
25 any capital monies; the schools sustained over \$400



1 million in damage, only \$90 million has been spent.

2 So this is across the board we're hearing the same

3 things and I... also, houses of worship, for example

4 that were pretty hit hard by Sandy, many of them

5 became like the go-to places to get assistance

6 immediately right after the storm and they provided

7 services to the community to get them food and

8 blankets and they haven't been reimbursed for those

9 services. So I think that there is definitely now an

10 impetus for us to have a serious discussion with the

11 administration about these prequalified groups and

12 contractors that... heaven for bid we never have to use

13 them again... but if we have to we know who to go to

14 and they've been prequalified, prechecked, they have

15 a record of giving good service and helping people

16 and to move forward immediately and not wait a year-

17 and-a-half to figure all this stuff out.

18  
19 LOUIS COLETTI: And if I may councilman...

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

21 LOUIS COLETTI: the issue of

22 indemnification and good Samaritan languages is

23 critical. During the early stages of Sandy I got

24 calls from a number of city council people saying you

25 have a lot of volunteers out there, community

1  
2 organizations are looking to help, can you get us a  
3 large trash dump? Well I called my contractors, we'd  
4 identified 10 or 12 and guess what; we couldn't give  
5 'em to those organizations because there was no  
6 insurance coverage and nobody wanted to be liable.  
7 So you had a whole volunteer mechanism who were all  
8 geared up to do that and my contractors are sayin' I  
9 can't take a chance, somethin' happens, I'm gonna get  
10 sued. So there's a whole process of things that I  
11 think have come up... you've identified today we really  
12 need to move forward to be prepared for if and when -  
13 - we hope it never happens -- the next disaster or  
14 weather tragedy comes forward.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. If I  
16 could ask any of the residents just to briefly  
17 describe the experience you had at these meetings  
18 with Build it Back officials with regards... did you  
19 leave the meeting informed; did you feel that your  
20 questions were answered; did you leave... you know,  
21 just summarize the experience you had in those  
22 meetings whether they're assessment of your home or  
23 meetings just to summarize the correspondence and the  
24 quality information you received back. Thank you.  
25

1  
2 DAN MUNDY: Well I think, like you say,  
3 we were given false assurances. At the meetings some  
4 controversial things come up about the elevation  
5 maps, we saw the discrepancies in it, we were the  
6 first ones to put in a petition against 'em saying  
7 they were faulted. But on other things we were told  
8 don't worry, we've got that \$1.77 billion. My  
9 brother, a WW II vet who has since passed away, his  
10 house was completely under water and he was almost  
11 cryin' there, 86 years old, and when he was told at  
12 one desk that they had nothin' for him; when I took  
13 him over to Matt Gear, Matt Gear says don't worry  
14 about that program, I got a new program comin' in  
15 with more money, we're not only gonna fix your house,  
16 we're gonna elevate it. He immediately went all  
17 smiles -- never happened, passed away last month,  
18 never to see it. So this is what's happening, this  
19 is a common occurrence; we've been raised up and  
20 given false hopes over and over again; I've got  
21 people sittin' over here, this lady without a home  
22 right there who's gonna testify later on, the same  
23 thing; she's told to do one thing, she does it, then  
24 it works against here, all these hopes that come by.  
25 I've been part of it, I've been tellin' her, I come

1  
2 from a meeting, I go to a city meeting, I go to our  
3 elected officials, I come back with good information,  
4 I tell 'em, this is gonna work, don't worry about it,  
5 we're gonna do it. I feel bad because I've been  
6 givin' them information that hasn't come to be and  
7 I'm very sorry for that.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: That's not for you  
9 to be sorry about, your civic activism should be  
10 celebrated and applauded that you care enough to help  
11 people. I'm just curious to know, was there anyone  
12 at the table looking out for you in addition to you,  
13 was there anyone that you felt that was helpful to  
14 you to get you the right information; has there been  
15 someone advocating on your interest and informing you  
16 with accurate information, and this is to anybody  
17 here, I'm just curious... [crosstalk]

18 DAN MUNDY: From my point of view, it was  
19 my elected officials, they were at the table with us,  
20 they sat with us, they got us answers, they made us  
21 get answers, they got the meetings, they put together  
22 the meeting. I'd call to have a meeting, I don't get  
23 past the receptions that's with a phone call. Phil  
24 Goldfeder, Eric, Councilman Donovan, they'd make the  
25 phone calls, would get the meetings; that was the

1  
2 first step to get things done. We got in that  
3 meeting, we feed the information in, it goes up a  
4 little bit and then it stops dead. They become  
5 frustrated; we become frustrated; that was the  
6 problem there. We hope that that's not gonna happen  
7 in the future, I think we can move this along with  
8 Amy and her new crew.

9 JONATHAN GASKA: Yeah, one of the... the  
10 biggest problem was the story kept on changing, it  
11 just kept on changing and I will tell you, 30 years  
12 in city government, I'll tell you that federal  
13 government makes city government look like a well-  
14 oiled machine; they didn't know what to do -- very  
15 nice, very well-meaning people, they couldn't even  
16 order pencils without getting the okay from  
17 Washington and things change on the ground and there  
18 were so many levels to get things changed so you can  
19 get an answer that most people went around it or just  
20 did it on their own, there was so much confusion, the  
21 levels of government... it was like this is the first  
22 hurricane that ever happened. Then the coordination  
23 from the government side, there was no coordination,  
24 OEM was absent and if you give truth serum to most of  
25 the agency people, they'll tell you they were part of

1  
2 the problem and not part of the solution. I will  
3 tell you right now that in the last two-and-a-half  
4 years we've had a nor'easter, two hurricanes and I've  
5 yet to speak to someone from OEM, no one called the  
6 community board a couple days before a storm and said  
7 this is what we're planning to do, what do you need,  
8 no one called us after the storm, we didn't have any  
9 contact with OEM during, right after the hurricane; I  
10 still haven't spoken to someone about Sandy from OEM,  
11 they have absolutely no interest in dealing with the  
12 community and I will tell you, the frustration on the  
13 level of the different city agencies with OEM was...  
14 people were so frustrated. City agencies quite  
15 frankly did very well, police, fire, sanitation  
16 department were the heroes in Rockaway. But OEM  
17 really was part of the problem and not part of the  
18 solution and just the confusion in the different  
19 answers, just people just threw up their hands, some  
20 people just walked away, they walked away, they gave  
21 up their homes.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well I will tell  
23 you that this committee and others will be having... I  
24 will be having an oversight hearing over OEM and  
25 their evaluation plan and emergency preparedness,

1  
2 definitely. I think Chairman Richards had a...  
3 [interpose]

4 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Thank you John and I  
5 thank you Dan; I wanna just echo what Jonathan just  
6 said and I'm hoping that this new administration,  
7 which I have faith in, is going to certainly hold  
8 fire to OEM. I remember days before Sandy... I think  
9 we did a meeting and we invited OEM to give  
10 information to the community to the elected  
11 officials; we're not emergency management people, we  
12 needed information and they did not show up at all  
13 and called with some excuse and you know, it left the  
14 community totally alone days before Hurricane Sandy  
15 and these are the stories that are not told, but we  
16 were forced to labor and give supplies out to the  
17 community; we didn't have a generator... a city council  
18 office could not get a generator to have elec... we  
19 were forced to work without candles in a dark hallway  
20 where the fire department even came in and said it  
21 was a safety hazard and we had to get those candles  
22 out; thank god some guy from Pennsylvania drove in a  
23 generator, we didn't know him from Adam's Eve and  
24 it's a shame that OEM did not respond appropriately  
25 and to the way that us taxpayers and elected

1  
2 officials would wish they would so I'm hoping that  
3 we're really gonna hold OEM's feet to the fire; they  
4 have to be more responsive to communities and even  
5 after the storm I can say... what are we in now; I've  
6 been elected for over a year... I haven't heard from  
7 OEM still to this day, so if another storm comes,  
8 there's no preparation, there's no plan in place.  
9 Thank you Jonathan.

10 MALE VOICE: I'd just like to add one  
11 more thing. Our next biggest hurdle, both for Amy  
12 and for everybody sittin' here, is gonna be the  
13 Department of Buildings as we move forward. We're  
14 already experiencing it, we get variances, we move on  
15 the variance and then another examiner comes in and  
16 he says no, that ain't so. We need a liaison with  
17 the Department of Buildings for these storm-damaged  
18 homes with their permit process to be expedited and  
19 to move forward fast.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And that's an  
21 excellent point because one of the things that we did  
22 call for, we sent a letter, I sent a letter signed by  
23 many council members asking for the administration to  
24 first of all hire a Sandy czar which they have, have  
25 a director of Build it Back, which they have, and



1  
2 we're also asking them to designate staff in the  
3 relevant agencies to create in effect a Sandy task  
4 force so we know who the go-to person is in each of  
5 the agencies and that's why I asked the question  
6 before about how many agencies are involved; my  
7 goodness, dozens. What we wanna know in a  
8 organizational chart, who's who and who's accountable  
9 from where so we know who to go to and that's been a  
10 frustration for the elected officials; I'm sure it's  
11 been equally frustrating, even more for those who are  
12 impacted directly by Superstorm Sandy. We have a  
13 question from Council Member Carlos Menchaca.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Mr. Coletti, I  
15 think you are the one that talked about the  
16 contractors... [crosstalk]

17 LOUIS COLETTI: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I just wanna  
19 get a good sense. Can you get us data on any  
20 contractors that went bankrupt due to any kind of  
21 relationship with some of the programs that happened  
22 post-Sandy and just get that to the committee...  
23 [crosstalk]

24

25

1  
2 LOUIS COLETTI: I don't think that  
3 they've gone bank... I was only involved remember in  
4 Rapid Repairs; I could get you... [crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: 'Kay.

6 LOUIS COLETTI: I could get you  
7 information to tell you how long it took them to get  
8 paid, but remember... [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Any data that  
10 would be helpful...

11 LOUIS COLETTI: those are the larger  
12 contractors.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay. So  
14 that'd be good, we may wanna follow up on your...  
15 [crosstalk]

16 LOUIS COLETTI: Okay? So they could  
17 sustain the cash flow, but when you're talking about  
18 this program, the smaller contractors in the  
19 neighborhood, they can't wait 30... 60 days to get  
20 paid.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah. We'd  
22 like to get a sense on... [crosstalk]

23 LOUIS COLETTI: Okay, I will do that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: whatever you  
25 have on what those issues were...

1

2

LOUIS COLETTI: Okay.

3

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: the lag time...

4

[crosstalk]

5

LOUIS COLETTI: Okay.

6

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: it'd be good.

7

Thank you.

8

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much

9

and I thank the panel very much for testifying and

10

your patience here today. Next I'd like to call up

11

Alison Galderisi [phonetic], uh not bad... Tammy

12

Karakedi [phonetic], Mario Tapia, Eileen Cologne

13

[phonetic]. [background comments] There's Uliana

14

Owenek [phonetic] and also Vladimir Visnovsky

15

[phonetic]. Okay. If you could all please raise

16

your right hand. Do you swear or affirm to the

17

truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth

18

before our committees today? [collective

19

affirmative] Thank you. [background comments]

20

VLADIMIR VISNOVSKY: Good afternoon. My

21

name is Vladimir Visnovsky; I'm the Immigrant

22

Services Director at Aging and Karl Marx Jewish

23

Community House of Bensonhurst. I would like to

24

thank the Chairs for your leadership and for the

25

opportunity to testify today. My agency opened our

hurricane center within days of the disaster and we have **served** 400 clients, half of them are homeowners and have been greatly affected and renters had to get new apartments and are struggling to pay high rents. The Build it Back program urge every persons that suffered after Hurricane Sandy to sign up; there were posters, emails, mail and information on TV and radio. People were encouraged to register as soon as possible because the program promised a smooth transition and lots of support to all the victims. People signed up online, in person and with case manager at our agency. There was a lot of hope since people knew that the promised money the city was awaiting finally arrived, but many of our clients, I would say all of our clients, started questioning the program and possible outcome because they were constantly bombarded with more and requests for information to supply, including receipts, other documents and loads of finance city paperwork. Eventually people became frustrated and upset. There were no phone calls, no follow ups and no useful information was provided. Give that case managers that were assigned to clients were not helpful. There was no communication between the clients and

1  
2 case managers. People that are still struggling with  
3 unresolved problems are looking for financial  
4 assistance because FEMA and insurance agencies did  
5 not cover full losses. They are looking to receive  
6 reimbursement after renovations have been completed,  
7 help with completing renovations, help rebuilding  
8 their houses, and thanking and getting case managers  
9 to review their cases and address their issues in a  
10 timely manner. At this point none of the clients  
11 from the Hurricane Assistance Center had a positive  
12 experience with Build it Back, not a single person  
13 received any compensation or the attention they  
14 deserved. And I would like to add here that we are  
15 very thankful for your leadership and as a community  
16 center, we will be more than happy to corroborate  
17 with the City Council and the Build it Back to help  
18 to move the things forward in a cultural and  
19 logistical, sensitive manner with all of our  
20 resources because we have many, we really have to  
21 change it and thank you very much being candidates  
22 for change.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
24 much. Uliana.

1  
2                   ULIANA OWENEK: Hi, my name is Uliana  
3                   Owenek and I was there... [interpose]

4                   CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uliana, if you  
5                   could speak into the mic very close. Thank you.

6                   ULIANA OWENEK: Sure. Hi. I would like  
7                   to start by expressing my gratitude to the  
8                   Bensonhurst GCH; it if wouldn't be for them we would  
9                   have nothing to eat, nowhere to stay. At this point  
10                  I would like to stress the fact that we were helped  
11                  absolutely in no way by the government. I'm sorry.  
12                  I would like to discuss two main problems that at  
13                  least I could relate to. One is the incredible lack  
14                  of information. First time I heard about Build it  
15                  Back was from Mark Treyger when he came into the GCH  
16                  to speak in regards to all of this. We went from a  
17                  happy, successful family of three to an evicted  
18                  family of four with no home and no hopes of ever  
19                  rebuilding our business, no hopes of ever owning a  
20                  house and now I've been knocking on doors, such as  
21                  HRA. Today... I've tried to apply since Sandy and  
22                  today only my case became active; I received \$665...  
23                  the worst part about it is that the delays that  
24                  happened prevented me from applying for other  
25                  programs, such as for example FEPS [phonetic], the

1  
2 last time I applied for HRA was on February 18th  
3 within the 30 days they're supposed to approve your  
4 case, as of now I lost the apartment that I found  
5 that would accept HRA vouchers as well as FEPS  
6 program and I have nowhere to go. I have a 2-month-  
7 old daughter at my aunts and I have nowhere to go.  
8 You know and I think the most importantly is it is  
9 our communities, you know after two hours after the  
10 hurricane when we had nowhere to go we came to GCH,  
11 that's where we got blankets, that's where we had  
12 food, those were the people who helped us put the  
13 money together to rent some kind of an apartment for  
14 a short term and as of now I have no idea where to  
15 go; we can't apply for Build it Back, all the  
16 programs are closed, HRA is also doing some changes  
17 within their system, they keep losing your documents,  
18 you have to reapply. The best part of it is I worked  
19 until I gave birth, I worked all the way up until May  
20 of 2013, I made very good money, I was able to  
21 support my family and they consider that when  
22 assessing my situation now, so because I received a  
23 tax return of \$5,000 which we lost everything, from  
24 cribs to everything that I'm wearing now does not  
25 belong to me, I did not buy, it was graciously given

1  
2 to me by my friends. So at this point they took into  
3 consideration that we received \$5,000; what is \$5,000  
4 with three little kids, between food, formula,  
5 diapers, some kind of sheltering and clothing; they  
6 took that into consideration and as I said, up to  
7 date I was able to get \$656. As far as FEMA goes,  
8 they gave you two months rent which was \$2400. I  
9 don't know of any area in Brooklyn where that would  
10 be sufficient enough to move into a new home or  
11 [bell] apartment, one-bedroom or two-bedroom.  
12 That'll be it.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Uliana  
14 and I just wanna tell you that you have a city  
15 council here that has your back; we will aggressively  
16 make sure that your case is followed up with. Next.

17 [background comments]

18 TAMMY KARAKEDI: Hello. Okay. My name  
19 is Tammy Karakedi and I lived in Gerritsen Beach; my  
20 house was destroyed in Hurricane Sandy on October  
21 29th, 2012 and I'm still not home. I'm currently  
22 living with my two special needs children at my  
23 mother's house while my husband of almost 20 years is  
24 living at his parents' house. I had to take a leave  
25 of absence from my city job in order to be able to



1  
2 get my kids to and from school and now that leave of  
3 absence is almost over and I can't get an extension,  
4 so come September I will have no choice but to resign  
5 my position of 16-and-a-half years with the Board of  
6 Education. I never dreamed that it would take this  
7 long; I haven't even begun to rebuild or heal for  
8 that matter. I'm still paying a mortgage and  
9 insurance on a house that I can't live in while many  
10 of my other bills have increased and my income has  
11 decreased. The longer it takes the harder and more  
12 costly it's become. I applied for Build it Back at  
13 10:02 in the morning on June 1st, the day that it  
14 opened; I did it through 311. A week later they had  
15 a meeting at the school in my neighborhood, I went  
16 there to make sure that they had my registration and  
17 they did. I did get a phone call telling me... giving  
18 me like a list of documents that I needed to bring in  
19 to the meeting and I went to the meeting in July. At  
20 that meeting I gave them all my documents, they  
21 scanned everything and they handed me more paperwork  
22 and told me that I needed to have it filled out and  
23 return it. By August I had submitted all the  
24 required documents at which point I was told I would  
25 be contacted within 30 days to set up an inspection.

1  
2 Three months later, in November of 2013, I heard  
3 nothing. I called customer service only to be told  
4 that my paperwork was incomplete and that some  
5 documents were missing. Why if things were missing  
6 did nobody call me? If I hadn't called them that day  
7 I might still be waiting today. That night I went  
8 home and I cried, I made phone calls to some  
9 nonprofit organizations that I had dealt with to see  
10 if they knew anything that could help me. On  
11 November 13th my husband and I appeared on New York 1  
12 and they had contacted Build it Back who told them  
13 the same thing that they told me, that my documents  
14 were incomplete and missing. I knew that they  
15 weren't because I had copies of everything in my  
16 house. I went home, I reprinted every single  
17 document from the computer, I resigned everything, I  
18 went in, I handed them all my paperwork and the lady  
19 told me, I don't know why you're saying that things  
20 are missing, everything was right there in a file on  
21 the desk, never scanned into the computer. Now  
22 that's just mismanagement; what is she getting paid  
23 to do if she's sitting there not scanning my  
24 paperwork? It doesn't make any sense. Sorry. At  
25 that time I asked that both my original and the new

1  
2 set of documents were scanned and they were and I got  
3 a notarized receipt stating that I had everything  
4 that they needed, 'cause I wouldn't leave without it.  
5 But just to give you an example of the mismanagement,  
6 one of the forms that they said I was missing was a  
7 form that's called the One and the Same and that  
8 document states that if your name was different when  
9 you bought your house than to what it is now, you  
10 need to sign affirmation that you are that same  
11 person. When I bought my house my name was Karakedi  
12 and my name is still Karakedi, so I never needed that  
13 document in the first place, but yet that was holding  
14 up my case, because they don't know what they're  
15 doing. I mean I'm not trying to be rude but you  
16 know, probably they don't know what they're doing  
17 because they're not informed properly, because  
18 they're really only people that sit at a desk and  
19 enter [bell] information. That being said, at that  
20 time of the meeting they told me that I was a  
21 priority 2; when I asked how I could be a priority 2,  
22 I was told that it was based on income and damage, to  
23 which I replied, "My insurance company has my damage  
24 at far over 50 percent, 79.3 percent." That's  
25 considered substantially damaged 'cause you only need

1  
2 to be 50 percent to be considered substantially  
3 damaged. But no one from the Build it Back program  
4 at that time had seen my house, so how could a  
5 determination be made on damage that they never  
6 looked at? I didn't get any answers because nobody  
7 has any answers and I went home again feeling like a  
8 failure. On December 16th I received a generic email  
9 from Build it Back telling me that priority 2 can  
10 expect to be assessed in the summer of 2014; that's  
11 almost two years after the storm occurred, absolutely  
12 unacceptable. The next day I attended a town hall  
13 meeting and I've been to every single one of those  
14 meetings since the storm in my neighborhood. I spoke  
15 to a Build it Back representative who told me that I  
16 needed to appeal the decision to have my house looked  
17 at now. I did that and I did get an inspection on  
18 January 9th. I got the report of that inspection on  
19 February 13th still stating I was a priority 2.  
20 Nobody went underneath my house to check the  
21 foundation at that inspection to which the day of the  
22 inspection I called to let them know that I didn't  
23 think it was a good inspection to begin with. The  
24 city of New York is just not doing the right thing as  
25 far as getting the people the help that they need and

1  
2 deserve. The program is not being run properly from  
3 the start, customer service is nonexistent. How do  
4 you not call people to tell them that you need more  
5 information? It's taking way too long to get people  
6 the help that they need and making them jump through  
7 hoops to get it. It feels like the rules keep  
8 changing as you go and people get frustrated and just  
9 give up and you get to a point where you feel like  
10 that's what the government wants you to do, they want  
11 you to give up your place of that money so that they  
12 can use the money for something else. At the start  
13 of the program people were told very clearly that  
14 income would not play a factor in whether you were  
15 eligible for this grant and this help, but it does  
16 play a factor, it's the only thing that plays a  
17 factor. So basically what the government is telling  
18 me and my family is that because my husband works  
19 hard and because we pay taxes we're gonna wait, we're  
20 gonna be at the bottom of the barrel living out of  
21 our house for over two years or three years or four  
22 years till ever they get around to it, while my kids  
23 are miserable, they're not anywhere near their  
24 friends, I have a 13-year-old and a 6-year-old, they  
25 have special needs, I made a decision as a mother not

1  
2 to take them out of their school where they were  
3 comfortable and graduating and put them in a school  
4 where I now am relocated to, and because of that I  
5 have no job, I have no income, my husband works day  
6 and night, he leaves the house 4:00 in the morning,  
7 comes home 11:00, he never sees us because he can't  
8 get to work from where I'm staying so he stays by his  
9 mom. He sees my kids once a week. We're married 20  
10 years, that's not a way to have to live when you work  
11 every day and you pay your taxes. Where is my tax  
12 money going, to give money to the people that are not  
13 working? I don't see how that's fair. I just don't  
14 see the fairness in that. Basically I'm being told  
15 that because I work I don't have the high income but  
16 I'm not quite low enough so I'm gonna sit around and  
17 I'm gonna wait till everybody that makes less money  
18 than me is helped and everybody who makes more money  
19 than me but only needed repair is being helped if  
20 they didn't need elevation. You know, my house is  
21 two-and-a-half feet below the street, my house needs  
22 to be elevated, my entire house is destroyed, I lost  
23 everything in it and now I'm just sitting here  
24 waiting. I have no money. We have no money left.  
25 And the best is, FEMA at the time paid us for a

1  
2 vehicle, I had two vehicles, okay, I wrote them a  
3 letter stating that I needed two cars because my  
4 husband and I are not staying together, he has to go  
5 to work and I have to take my children to school.  
6 They approved me. They paid me to fix my husband's  
7 car, they now, a year and six months later sent me a  
8 letter stating that they're going to take that money  
9 back because they want more documentation.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for that  
11 very, very... and I'll make very clear that it is every  
12 all impacted Sandy residents deserve the same  
13 attention and aggressive follow up and  
14 correspondence, so...

15 TAMMY KARAKEDI: It makes you get very  
16 discouraged and it makes you feel like well maybe if  
17 I quit my job then they'll help me faster.

18 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I just wanna... both  
19 their testimonies are actually more heart-wrenching,  
20 thank you for that; I did wanna just to make clear  
21 that I don't think... well two things, one, I wanna  
22 make sure we're not pitting against each other, I  
23 know that there are a lot of people who work two or  
24 three jobs and also are low-income are going through  
25 the same struggle, but either if that wasn't true, I

1  
2 think no one is getting the responses that they need  
3 at this moment in time and that's why we're having  
4 this hearing to that everyone, as Chairman Treyger  
5 said... [interpose]

6 TAMMY KARAKEDI: The reason I made that  
7 statement is because I was just told that the money  
8 that was just talked about on Saturday is going to  
9 help priority 3 people that did not need elevation  
10 but needed repair and currently priority 3 people are  
11 over 181 percent AMI.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just to... so...

13 TAMMY KARAKEDI: That are living in their  
14 house.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. It was my  
16 understanding, and we'll follow up on this, is that  
17 they are reallocating \$100 million to begin work on  
18 priority 2 and 3. It was my understanding that the  
19 administration claimed that they had enough money to  
20 process and move forward with priority 1, which is 80  
21 percent below AMI and that they were waiting on  
22 tranche 3 to work on priority 2 and 3, but if there's  
23 one thing that I heard clearly from that press  
24 conference was from Senator Schumer and from the  
25 Mayor that they claimed that there will be money for



1  
2 all of the priorities regardless of income because  
3 the point is, you know these are teachers, I was a  
4 teacher myself, so I understand, there were  
5 firefighters, there were... and from all income levels,  
6 whatever you were doing, working three jobs and still  
7 at the poverty level, which is true; regardless of  
8 your income level, everyone has to be helped and  
9 you're right, it cannot be at a timetable that is  
10 bureaucratic, it has to be real time, right now,  
11 moving forward and again, this recovery, to me, will  
12 end only when people have a sense of safety, normalcy  
13 and financial security, those are the three things  
14 that we'll measure this recovery by. Thank you.  
15 Yeah.

16 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Just... I'm sorry, just  
17 two things. One, I just wanna just make clear again,  
18 I know folks that work two and three jobs and still  
19 at the lower income of AMI, so I just wanna make that  
20 clear and also, obviously if government were telling  
21 people that income would not play a factor, then they  
22 need to back that up and make sure that income  
23 doesn't play a factor and if you were affected by the  
24 storm by no fault of your own, you should be  
25 serviced.

1  
2 TAMMY KARAKEDI: The other... I'm sorry, I  
3 just have one other thing. The other big issue that  
4 a lot of people are facing is the insurance. When I  
5 bought my house my bank required that I take out  
6 flood insurance because of where I lived and I  
7 complied; they told me I had to take out the maximum  
8 policy which I did and I paid for it the entire eight  
9 years I lived in the house. Why am I not covered  
10 then? According to my flood insurance company, they  
11 gave me a paper stating that I have \$220,000 in  
12 damage just on my first floor and they only gave me  
13 \$160. Why am I paying if I'm not covered?

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Those are questions  
15 that we're also gonna... you know this committee will  
16 also investigate and that is why I'll repeat my call  
17 to the administration that you should not be  
18 advocating only for yourself alone that you need  
19 skilled, experienced, qualified people to be  
20 advocating for you so you can try to get your life  
21 back to go back into the classroom and to do your job  
22 to support your family; this is my frustration; I  
23 have residents in my district who are full-time  
24 advocating for themselves and they cannot return to a  
25 sense of normalcy and safety. So I fully agree with

1  
2 you and I hear your concerns 100 percent. I'd like  
3 [background comment] to hear from the last panelist  
4 please.

5 ALISON GALDERISI: Hi, my name's Alison  
6 Galderisi from New Dorp Beach, Staten Island, the  
7 forgotten borough. Thank you council members for  
8 listening to us. Let me start by saying that my wife  
9 and I closed on our first house on December 23rd,  
10 2009, a bright day for us. A year-and-a-half later  
11 we were flooded by Hurricane Irene. We fought our  
12 flood insurance company for the money we deserved and  
13 to get an SBA loan to mitigate. We followed the  
14 rules set out for us and we thought we did the right  
15 thing. We were home only seven-and-a-half months  
16 when Hurricane Sandy chased us out of our home again  
17 and we've been homeless ever since. Our one-story  
18 beach bungalow took on five to seven feet of water  
19 and we lost almost everything. We joined our fellow  
20 citizens and fought for the \$60 billion Sandy bill  
21 that was passed 14 months ago of which homeowners  
22 have seen, what, \$80,000 or three homeowners. We  
23 signed up for Build it Back in June, our info intake  
24 was July 20th and we were told we'd hear back from  
25 them in about seven weeks. Seven weeks passed, eight

1 weeks, nine weeks passed and all I heard from them  
2 when I went to the Build it Back office in Staten  
3 Island was please be patient. Only after speaking to  
4 Congressman Grimm's office, who called on my behalf,  
5 did we get a call from them telling us we needed to  
6 sign the F2 and F3 forms, which I had originally  
7 signed on July 20th, but they changed it, they added  
8 a line that added the property address to it. But of  
9 course they didn't tell us, so we had an open status.  
10 Our review was completed October 4th, but like I  
11 said, we had an open status. November 1st I hand-  
12 delivered the signed forms to the Staten Island Build  
13 it Back office and watched Alicia upload them to my  
14 file. I confirmed again that they had all my  
15 paperwork at another Build it Back town hall meeting.  
16 I finally received my first written correspondence  
17 from Build it Back dated November 26th thanking me  
18 for registering but I was missing forms F2 and F3. I  
19 returned to the Build it Back office and again all I  
20 heard was, please be patient. I was patient. So on  
21 December 23rd, 2013, four years after purchasing our  
22 first home, I went to the office again only to find  
23 that they dropped our status from priority 1 to  
24 priority 2; they did this without even our house  
25

1  
2 assessment. We filed a request for review; our  
3 second official notice from them was the  
4 acknowledgement of receipt of our request of review  
5 and then only more silence. Build it Back is the  
6 only opportunity we have to comply with DOB and FEMA  
7 requirements of rebuilding and meeting codes. As the  
8 DOB confirmed, we were substantially damaged and FEMA  
9 declared us as an SRL, severe repetitive loss. We  
10 were told by Richard Lord, Chief of Mitigation  
11 Programs and Agency Preservation Officer at the New  
12 York State Division of Homeland Security and  
13 Emergency Services that Build it Back would be our  
14 only recourse. The SRL programs being offered do not  
15 include Richmond County. It's been another three  
16 months and we still haven't received official  
17 notification of why we are still priority 2. I urge  
18 you to have Build it Back consider those of us SRL  
19 properties who were substantially damaged as priority  
20 1. We need action from Build it Back, not more talk  
21 of action; I'm tired of being told please be patient.  
22 I am out of patience and we want to go home. With  
23 FEMA rental assistance ending next month we can't  
24 afford to continue to pay our mortgage, [bell] SBA  
25 loan, homeowners insurance, flood insurance, disaster

1 insurance, real estate taxes, water and sewer taxes;  
2 utilities on a house we're not living in, plus rent,  
3 renter's insurance and utilities. Thank you. And  
4 one question I... a few questions I have is; who has  
5 access to my personal information? Who are these  
6 companies, these W... well, whoever they are, the  
7 letters, the alphabet letter soup; who are they; were  
8 they screened; they have my... copies of my deed, my  
9 social security number; they have my passport; how is  
10 my information being safeguarded? Regards to the  
11 DOB, New Dorp Beach, our house itself and our  
12 neighborhood of New Dorp Beach, there is many levels  
13 of nonconformity; is Build it Back working with the  
14 DOB to streamline the access, to streamline the  
15 process of being approved or is gonna take another  
16 10, 12 months to go through the BSA to be approved to  
17 rebuild a house on my 20 x 100 lot? And does Build  
18 it Back even have the... I had heard they don't even  
19 have an escrow account open to receive the transfer  
20 money; do they have that; is that even in place yet;  
21 are they ready to accept our transfer money?

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: These are all  
23 actually very powerful and important points that  
24 you're raising and questions that you're raising and  
25

1  
2 we will definitely be following up with Miss Peterson  
3 afterwards to discuss particularly the privacy and  
4 sensitive information that has been given to these  
5 groups and sadly, some information has been lost and  
6 making sure that it's not in the hands of people to  
7 compromise your [background comment] identify and  
8 financial information; that's an excellent, excellent  
9 point and I thank you for raising that. And I just  
10 wanna ask... and again, other colleagues could feel  
11 free to ask as well after my round of questioning.  
12 Uliana, so you... can you explain where were you... so  
13 what happened to you during Superstorm Sandy and what  
14 happened as a result to you, just so I'm clear, just  
15 because I... we see the emotion and we appreciate that,  
16 just so we have a fact... you know, just a little  
17 timeline here; what happened to you during Sandy and  
18 what happened afterwards and you claim that you had  
19 no knowledge of the assistance that was eligible for  
20 you?

21                   ULIANA OWENEK: We were in Zone A in  
22 Sheepshead Bay... [background comment] Sheepshead Bay,  
23 Brooklyn, in Zone A; we were right on Emmons Avenue  
24 and Batchelder; that's right by water, we had to  
25 actually swim out of our condo, we were renting, I

1  
2 apologize, we were renting the condo; we lost  
3 everything that was in it. At the time we were, you  
4 know, pretty successful, small business owners, so  
5 immediately after the storm we applied for FEMA  
6 assistance, FEMA gave us the \$2400, the rental  
7 allowance, the two rents to move somewhere and they  
8 referred us to the SBA to get a loan. You know, we  
9 provided all the paperwork and naturally our request  
10 was denied because the business wasn't running, we  
11 had Nationwide Trucking Company with two trucks that  
12 completely flooded because of Sandy, obviously, so  
13 we're still paying out for those trucks, 'cause each  
14 one of them is over \$60,000. So that was declined.  
15 At this point, you know, I've tried to work, you know  
16 we have little kids, we're with... we had some family  
17 issues because of Sandy, because we were, you know,  
18 for a while we were living in a small room that we  
19 were renting, we actually had an article that was  
20 featured about our family in the New York Times, we  
21 had the JCH, you know, come and see the situation we  
22 were in, in the little room, so they helped us and  
23 they found a couple of grants where we were able to  
24 rent a new apartment. Once we were in the new  
25 apartment, because of all the financial hardship it



1 just became unreal to pay for everything, for all the  
2 business expenses that were still piling up and our  
3 family as well. At this point I'm home with the  
4 kids, I've tried to apply, applied many times with  
5 the HRA for the rent assistance. As I said, up to  
6 date today only my case became active; at this point  
7 we're living in my friend's house; she graciously  
8 allows us to rent a room from her, so this is me and  
9 three kids, a 2-year-old, a 1-year-old and a 2-month-  
10 old. I don't know if we'll ever be back together  
11 with the father of the kids because as I said because  
12 of the financial hardships we had some falling out  
13 and the only help that we actually received  
14 financially, mentally, was the JCH of Bensonhurst.  
15 You know, currently we're in Staten Island in the  
16 room, but I still go back every day to Brooklyn to  
17 the JCH because those are the only people that  
18 helped. So at this point, as I said, we can't...  
19 there's nothing that we can do as far as the  
20 business, we're still paying for those trucks, we've  
21 been trying to do a business over, you know over the  
22 internet out of the house; I can't get any loan  
23 because I haven't, you know worked since May of 2013,  
24 so I have nothing to show for any loan, neither does  
25

1  
2 the father of the kids, so at this point just every  
3 month it just becomes worse and worse and worse and  
4 worse. At this point we're you know, considering  
5 leaving the country because this... it just seems like  
6 we're getting no help; the only family that we have  
7 is in this room and believe it or not, it seems like  
8 a good idea to go live in Israel with three little  
9 kids, well there's bombs flying and you never know  
10 whether you're gonna survive or not. So I have no  
11 idea what to do.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So Uliana again,  
13 and I appreciate the powerful testimony that you're...  
14 I know it takes a lot of courage to share these very  
15 powerful stories and so you... you were not aware of...

16 ULIANA OWENEK: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Build it Back or  
18 temporary disaster assistant? [crosstalk]

19 ULIANA OWENEK: FEMA just referred you to  
20 SBA and if you didn't get a loan you didn't get a  
21 loan, that's the only reference we ever got.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And you were able  
23 to get most of any information through the JCH of  
24 Bensonhurst?

25

1  
2           ULIANA OWENEK: Well that's... yes, that's  
3 the place that we kept in touch with and obviously  
4 all the information, that's where I had the pleasure  
5 of meeting you, that's... that's the only place that  
6 helped, that's the only information that was  
7 available, that's it.

8           CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I... it was a  
9 very powerful meeting that we had at the JCH when we  
10 uncovered more stories of people who had no knowledge  
11 of the program, people who lived in co-ops in the  
12 Rockaways who had no knowledge of the program.  
13 Someone who was displaced, a renter who was displaced  
14 had no knowledge of TDAP and the fact is, the JCH is  
15 a local organization that knows the people, but even  
16 though they're called Bensonhurst, they serve people  
17 all throughout Southern Brooklyn and they understand  
18 the realities on the ground and they have outreach in  
19 the diverse communities of our city and that's what  
20 pains me, that we didn't turn to groups like the JCH  
21 from the beginning when they knew the people and they  
22 would've gotten the information out much faster and  
23 sooner and become the de facto case managers. That  
24 is what we should now move towards and I will get you  
25 in touch, Uliana with Miss Peterson and her staff

1  
2 afterwards to discuss what programs you're eligible  
3 for and I think that your case highlights the urgency  
4 to not only process your application, but to reopen  
5 the program to many more people who had no knowledge  
6 of the program. I would like to ask a question to  
7 Alison; is that correct? Alison, can you describe  
8 for me the quality of the meeting sessions that you  
9 had with Build it Back officials; did you leave the  
10 meetings informed; did you feel that you had enough  
11 adequate information; did you feel that there was  
12 anyone in the room that was advocating on your behalf  
13 and the interests of you and your family?

14 ALISON GALDERISI: No. [laugh] Whenever  
15 I'd go to a Build it Back, the office on Highland  
16 Boulevard in Staten Island, the manager would come  
17 over and talk to me; I would get upset, Michelle of  
18 customer service, she was always very helpful, she  
19 was good at her job, 'cause she was able to calm me  
20 down, and then call the manager over and he would  
21 tell me, we don't know anything because the people in  
22 New York, Build it Back, don't give us information,  
23 so all I can do is tell you to please be patient,  
24 they're workin' on it, please be patient. So all  
25 I've been doing is waiting.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But...

ALISON GALDERISI: there's no meetings... I haven't had an options meeting, I haven't had anything. They came... July 20th was my intake, January was just my house assessment, after they dropped us to priority 2. I have a DOB stating that I'm substantially damaged. FEMA, well it took them almost a year to tell me that I'm a severe repetitive loss, which puts us, you know... our flood insurance is skyrocketing, the new bill, the new flood insurance bill doesn't affect me, so. And like I said, the SRL programs aren't takin' place in Richmond County and Staten Island, so like I said, Richard Lord told us that Build it Back is our only chance for recourse. My question though... I have another question then; they said I was priority 2 because of, again, because of our income, because we're a two working... [background comment] a two-adult... [laugh] [background comments] two-income family, that we were five to seven feet of water, over \$120-150,000 worth of damage, substantially damaged, but we were considered major/moderate damage, but with our income we're over the 80 percent or 50 percent, 80 percent AMI; that put us in priority 2. Now if there is no more... if

1  
2 income is no barrier now, is there a need for  
3 priority 1, 2 and 3, or will I be helped, and will I  
4 be helped before all the money gets sent out to  
5 reimbursements? Because I need to go back home, I  
6 can't afford to pay all my bills for a house that I'm  
7 not living in, which FEMA requires me to elevate or  
8 rebuild to the BFE, because I'm a SRL, a severe  
9 repetitive loss, and they don't wanna keep paying out  
10 'cause they're anticipating that I am going to get  
11 flooded again, which the house had not been flooded  
12 before I bought the house, you know, [background  
13 comment] not to that extent. But Build it Back is  
14 saying, oh, you were only major/moderate, you weren't  
15 severely damage, you're just major/moderate damage.  
16 But everyone... but the DOB says I was substantially  
17 damaged.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But each time you  
19 got this information, was there a result where  
20 someone from Build it Back called you to say be  
21 aware, there's been a change in your application...  
22 [crosstalk]

23 ALISON GALDERISI: Absolutely not, I went  
24 to the office...  
25

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: or was it your word?

ALISON GALDERISI: I went to the office, I don't know how many times, I should've marked it in my calendar every time I went, but at least five to seven times I walked into that office, the woman Michelle recognized me every time I came in, we chatted and then, please be patient, please be patient, please be patient. And not until Congressman... when I put a call into Congressman Grimm's office did he call, that we got a call back saying that we needed the F2 and the F3 forms, because they changed it, they added the line for the property address, that we needed to sign that. Otherwise our status was open and I would not have known that I had an open status if not for that call.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright.

ALISON GALDERISI: So it's all been us being proactive and makin' the calls and showing up at the office, Build it Back office. [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I... I... I... I fully hear you and I... many of the elected officials and some local groups have become the de facto case managers to follow up on these matters and that's the

1  
2 frustration that we're hearing and we're sensing, so  
3 I definitely... I hear you 100 percent. I think Tammy  
4 had a... I'm sorry.

5 TAMMY KARAKEDI: I mean I have... it's  
6 really very similar... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just speak into the  
8 mic.

9 TAMMY KARAKEDI: I'm sorry. It's really  
10 a very similar experience, the only contact that I  
11 have ever had with Build it Back, I'll be honest, is  
12 with Andrew Olson or Greg. Other than that, other  
13 than that I get generic Build it Back newsletters  
14 that... [background comment] have nothing to do with  
15 me... because I registered online... [background comment]  
16 and any time I've asked a question, no matter who I  
17 ask the question to, I cannot get an answer. Nobody  
18 knows... nobody knows the answer. You know a very good  
19 question I... like, I would like to know if someone can  
20 explain to me why... all of these agencies are  
21 government agencies, Build it Back, FEMA, right, so  
22 and so forth, so if I verify my information and I  
23 give all of my information to organization 1, right,  
24 and they know that I'm a citizen, they verified that  
25 I'm a citizen and that my income and my address and



1  
2 they have all of that information verified, why do I  
3 have to waste my time and energy and the salary to  
4 pay another person in the next agency to verify the  
5 same information?

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well...

7 TAMMY KARAKEDI: We all know...

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah.

9 TAMMY KARAKEDI: that the storm really  
10 happened, okay; they know when they look at my  
11 address that my house was affected by the storm...

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Oh I think, Tammy,  
13 I think the point that was very hit home hard today  
14 and I thank you for re-enforcing the points, is that  
15 you have been left as the de facto case manager  
16 constantly to do your own follow-up work...

17 TAMMY KARAKEDI: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and no one has been  
19 advocating on your interest and your behalf to follow  
20 up, and that's a point that my committee, I could  
21 tell you for a 100 percent sure, has heard that loud  
22 and clear. I've been hearing this before today's  
23 hearing; today you crystallized that for us, and  
24 those will be a part of our ongoing discussions with  
25 the administration to make sure that case management

1  
2 gets improved and it gets improved very quickly. I  
3 wanna thank the first panel... this panel, I'm sorry,  
4 for your very powerful, emotional testimony here  
5 today. Thank you very much.

6 ALISON GALDERISI: Just one other thing.  
7 If they can actually maybe call the secondary person  
8 on the Build it Back application, 'cause my wife  
9 works in New Jersey, so I'm the one... I'm self-  
10 employed on Staten Island, so I'm the one who can  
11 take the time to go to the Build it Back office every  
12 time, so I'm the one that's been dealing with Build  
13 it Back; meanwhile, they don't call me. Well they  
14 don't call us at all, except when we request a call,  
15 and they always call her. I'm on there too; they  
16 have my email address, my phone number, my cell  
17 number; they could give me a call.

18 TAMMY KARAKEDI: I just have to say that  
19 the only time that I ever got any response or any  
20 feeling of justice is when I went to the town hall  
21 meeting, lost my mind, totally broke down; I mean I  
22 really did, I lost my mind, I flipped out; you could  
23 speak to Andrew Olson and Greg and they'll tell you,  
24 my kids are miserable, my son... my... my... I have a 6-  
25 year-old son who every time it rains and he sees the

1  
2 news, he takes all of his toys and sits in the bed  
3 and tells me, they're not getting my stuff again.  
4 That's not a normal way to live; they just wanna go  
5 home, they don't see their friends, you know I go  
6 pick them up at school and I sit in a park like a  
7 moron for hours just so that they could be outside  
8 with the people that they're used to being with, you  
9 know, and it's just... it's such an unfair situation to  
10 be in to feel like your government is not trying to  
11 help you and you know it's like you're damned if you  
12 do and you're damned if you don't and the only  
13 recourse that I've ever gotten through the whole  
14 process is from Andrew Olson and Greg Schwartz from  
15 Build it Back.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well I wanna tell  
17 you that this city council and this committee will be  
18 aggressively investigating and following up on all of  
19 these cases to make sure that you and the thousands  
20 of other people start seeing progress immediately and  
21 I will say that in fairness to Miss Peterson, she's a  
22 few days on this job, she contacted me immediately on  
23 Saturday when she got the appointment and believe me,  
24 we will get to work on this ASAP. [crosstalk]  
25

1  
2 TAMMY KARAKEDI: And I think you should  
3 have more hearings, not in six months, but in...  
4 [crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolute...

6 TAMMY KARAKEDI: two months.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: oh, absolutely.

8 This committee is here to stay and we will be having  
9 ongoing follow-up discussions and open public  
10 hearings as well, because I will not rely on the  
11 administration to tell me if progress is happening,  
12 I'm gonna rely on you, the average everyday New  
13 Yorkers, to tell me if progress is happening in the  
14 neighborhood. So again, I wanna thank this panel  
15 very much. Thank you. [background comment]  
16 [applause]

17 Next I'd like to call up Michael Taylor,  
18 Matt Dunbar, Neil Reilly, Geralyn [phonetic] Perrine.  
19 [background comments] Neil Reilly is here, Matt  
20 Dunbar is here, Michael Taylor is here. 'Kay. Maybe  
21 two more. [background comments] Is there a David  
22 Lewis who's here? David, why don't you join.  
23 [background comments] And Tim Gillman, right? Okay.  
24 And we'll begin... by the way, just make sure we get  
25 everyone sworn in. If you could please raise your

1  
2 right hand. Do you swear or affirm to the truth, the  
3 whole truth and nothing but the truth before our  
4 committees today? [collective affirmation] Thank  
5 you. [background comment]

6           MICHAEL TAYLOR: Hi, thank you for giving  
7 me the opportunity to speak today, my name is Michael  
8 Taylor; I'm a victim of Hurricane Sandy and also a  
9 volunteer that was active 17 years prior to Hurricane  
10 Sandy. Being an active volunteer and helping  
11 organize thousands of people over the years, was very  
12 beneficial to the community of Gerritsen Beach and  
13 some of the other communities that were able to  
14 support with relief efforts and operations in all  
15 different ways. The one thing that is common is that  
16 all the programs that have been out there are way too  
17 complicated, they are almost intentionally  
18 dysfunctional so that people get frustrated and move  
19 on, whether it be FEMA, whether it be Build it Back  
20 or Rapid Repair. This has been a problem that I've  
21 noticed ever since the storm, people were  
22 overwhelmed, and even people with college educations  
23 had a very, very difficult time navigating FEMA,  
24 navigating all these other systems and to see that  
25 happen and know how many senior citizens, know how

1 many people that have mental disabilities that were  
2 basically left on their own; if they didn't have  
3 families and friends that took care of them, they're  
4 still living in it now. In Gerritsen Beach I'm  
5 familiar with some families, of hoarders and other  
6 individuals that have never cleaned out, they haven't  
7 done anything, they didn't get the support, but our  
8 city did do one thing quickly; all of a sudden we had  
9 a new evacuation zone map, but that didn't help the  
10 people that were scrambling. What would've helped  
11 the people that were scrambling is to know to sign up  
12 for Build it Back and you know, the LISC program for  
13 the mold remediation, but no, what we did was we got  
14 a new evacuation plan that was mailed to everyone's  
15 house that only takes into account of 20 percent of  
16 the people that would be evacuated. So that means  
17 that 80 percent of the people would either have to  
18 find somewhere to go and that's all that the city's  
19 plan really accounts for and it's very, very sad. I  
20 just wanna add one more point to that, is that I  
21 believe that will be changing, but there is no  
22 support to help the seniors, to help people with  
23 disabilities during an evacuation, okay, and it's a  
24 horrible thing. But it was more important for our  
25

1  
2 previous administration to tell everybody, oh well we  
3 fixed it, your evacuation zone has changed, than it  
4 was to give people the information that they needed  
5 to properly rebuild and recover. Although Rapid  
6 Repair did help people shelter in place, I still to  
7 this day believe it was a big mistake not bringing in  
8 the temporary shelters from FEMA. FEMA lied to our  
9 elected officials and lied in public by saying that  
10 they weren't available. I was lucky to be a part of  
11 a group of volunteers where we found hundreds of FEMA  
12 trailers and we put it on the news and said why can't  
13 we have these? There would still be thousands of  
14 families living in these trailers, but there was all  
15 excuses that were used as reasons not to bring 'em in  
16 from they cost \$200,000 per trailer to we don't want  
17 it to be like it is in the other flood states with  
18 people still living in these homes. Well maybe we  
19 should have learned something from these other states  
20 where people are still living in these temporary  
21 trailers, but this is a bigger problem and people  
22 need a place to live. It's very, very sad to know  
23 that even before the storm so many families were  
24 doubled up and even tripled up in these homes. The  
25 storm basically damaged and destroyed everything for

1  
2 a lot of rental people, the people of the lower-  
3 income, because they were living in the basements,  
4 they were living in the older homes. And that  
5 support really is still not there. The social  
6 service support now to supplement now that there's  
7 more people that are struggling day by day, I haven't  
8 seen any increase in those types of services and all  
9 of those [bell] services are horribly, horribly  
10 complicated and again, it frustrates people. So I  
11 ask if one thing can, you can hear today is to  
12 understand that compassion has to be really pushed  
13 with all these agencies and all these programs and  
14 people should be able to apply for these programs  
15 without giving up their dignity and without begging  
16 and it's horrible that right now that's what you have  
17 to do. But thank you for your time and I really look  
18 forward to the programs getting better in the future.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

20 Absolutely.

21 NEIL REILLY: My name is Neil Reilly and  
22 I am a policy analyst at the Citizens Housing and  
23 Planning Council. We believe that there are concrete  
24 steps the city can take now to help homeowners  
25 restore their homes and rebuild their neighborhoods.



1  
2 As we just heard in the last panel, homeowners are  
3 guarding for huge insurance rate jumps which not only  
4 require unaffordable premiums, but also damage the  
5 resale value of their properties. Senator Schumer  
6 and various House Representatives worked on reducing  
7 this burden by delaying implementation of the  
8 Biggert-Waters Act of 2012, but because this delay is  
9 not sustainable for the National Insurance Program,  
10 questions remain regarding just when the waive of  
11 insurance rate increases will come.

12 Too many affected homeowners are also  
13 facing foreclosures; comparing the year before the  
14 storm to the year after, notices of foreclosure have  
15 increased about 32 percent in zip codes affected by  
16 the storm compared to 22 percent citywide. Staten  
17 Island has borne the brunt of this effect;  
18 foreclosure notices after the storm have been roughly  
19 183 per month compared to 113 per month before the  
20 storm.

21 The sale of homes at prices well below  
22 the median of their borough has also increased.  
23 While Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island overall saw  
24 a 33 percent decline in these sales, there was one  
25 percent increase in storm-effected zip codes. In

1  
2 some cases these sales have jumped by as much as 120  
3 percent, which was in New Dorp Beach. This  
4 phenomenon as well has been particularly strong in  
5 Staten Island where these sales jumped by 60 percent  
6 in waterfront dips compared to 33 percent borough-  
7 wide. Queens also saw an increase of 4 percent  
8 compared to a borough-wide decrease of 4 percent.

9           These figures capture the financial  
10 pressure that residents are facing, but on top of the  
11 visible costs, like repairing and rebuilding, there  
12 are invisible costs such as when an owner rented part  
13 of his or her home. Many of these units cannot be  
14 replaced, as they are typically illegal, either  
15 because of zoning restrictions or because of their  
16 configuration. The loss of these units has had a  
17 devastating impact both to the owners and renters of  
18 these units. So the city must take several steps to  
19 solve the multi-headed problems that remain. First  
20 and foremost we believe that the city's housing  
21 recovery operation should be transferred under HPD  
22 and that the analytical and land use planning tasks  
23 should be focused in Department of City Planning.  
24 Second, the neighborhood planning efforts by city and  
25 state need to be better coordinated. The city's

1 acquisition program should support the state system  
2 because it sets out clear planning criteria,  
3 collaboration with residents and it sets the  
4 acquisition price of pre-storm value. Homeowner who  
5 are not eligible for funds to raise their homes  
6 because they were not substantially damaged should be  
7 prioritized for acquisition. In addition, city  
8 assistance to subsidize the cost of elevation should  
9 be extended to homeowners in order to lower their  
10 insurance costs. Third, the city and state need to  
11 work together to provide real tax relief for  
12 homeowners subject to new insurance costs. An  
13 exemption could be created to provide a five-year  
14 exemption followed by a five-year phase-out, a phase-  
15 in abatement to assist homeowners to retain the value  
16 of their homes. Criteria for the exemption could  
17 mirror the criteria set for in the new Flood  
18 Insurance Affordability Act. An additional cap based  
19 on pre-storm assessed value could also be applied to  
20 ensure that the exemption goes to the most in need.  
21 Fourth, to protect those most threatened by  
22 foreclosure, Build it Back should emphasize its  
23 original goal of providing top to bottom customer  
24 service by means of a case manager who would handle  
25

1  
2 all relevant issues and we heard several testimonies  
3 to that effect. And finally, the city must address  
4 zoning issues that inhibit adequate repair and  
5 rebuilding. The Department of City Planning recently  
6 went through a successful zoning text change to  
7 reform land use rules that made it impossible for  
8 homeowners [bell] to rebuild to meet the requirements  
9 for a flood zone, like elevating their home. But  
10 there are still many zoning obstacles that prevent  
11 vulnerable homeowners from responding to their needs;  
12 these neighborhoods need relief from onerous lot  
13 coverage and front and side yard requirement or  
14 owners should be permitted to build under their  
15 previous three-dimension building envelope rather  
16 than under current rules.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

18 MATT DUNBAR: Good afternoon, my name is  
19 Matt Dunbar, I'm the Associate Director of Government  
20 Relations and Advocacy at Habitat for Humanity in New  
21 York City and I just wanna summarize our testimony,  
22 as I'm visually impaired, so I'm gonna go in that  
23 direction. I would first like to thank Chairs  
24 Treyger, Richards and Williams for this opportunity  
25 to talk about the scenarios that have been going on

1  
2 post-Hurricane Sandy and you've heard plenty of  
3 testimony about the need from the residents about the  
4 issues that they're facing, so I just wanted to talk  
5 a little bit about what Habitat has been doing to try  
6 to serve families affected by Hurricane Sandy.

7           Habitat for Humanity has been in New York  
8 City for 30 years, our specialty has been in new  
9 construction of condominiums and rehabilitation of  
10 single-family homes and multi-family buildings, but  
11 when Hurricane Sandy hit we knew that we had to  
12 develop a program that would help serve the families  
13 that were suffering post the storm. So over the  
14 course of a few months we were able to raise funds  
15 and with a limited budget we were able to hire a  
16 fantastic project manager who created a critical home  
17 repair program that we put forward and launched in  
18 May of 2013, primarily focusing on New Dorp Beach.  
19 And since then, with two additional support staff, a  
20 handful of AmeriCorps and over 2,000 volunteers we've  
21 been able to serve over 93 families in Staten Island,  
22 68 through muck-out and gut-outs and then 25 critical  
23 home repairs in which we've been able to get families  
24 back in their homes, doing repairs from anywhere  
25 between \$5,000 to \$50,000 worth of material support

1  
2 after their FEMA and insurance funds were exhausted.  
3 This includes getting five families out of motels and  
4 back in their homes. We're currently working on  
5 about six homes right now in New Dorp Beach and we're  
6 looking to expand those that we serve actually into  
7 Southeast Brooklyn, which we hope to be able to do  
8 within the next couple months.

9           This is all to say that we are one of  
10 many groups, nonprofit, volunteer, mission-driven  
11 organizations that have been working hard to mobilize  
12 volunteers and to serve families that have been in  
13 great need and we've been doing that... we were one of  
14 16 organizations that originally were looking to form  
15 a consortium of organizations that would be able to  
16 serve those families that were in the unmet needs  
17 category, those that would be rejected by the Build  
18 it Back program but could get back on their feet  
19 through our services; due to time elapsing and the  
20 lack of funds, that number is down to I believe four  
21 organizations. So our recommendations are really  
22 twofold. One is that nonprofit organizations like  
23 ours and those that we have partnered with that have  
24 shown the ability to be good stewards of our funds,  
25 to mobilize volunteers and to do critical home repair

1  
2 programs to get families back in their homes should  
3 be a part of these rebuilding efforts and that funds  
4 should be set aside to support those critical home  
5 repair programs that have shown themselves to be  
6 effective. And the other is that... one of the biggest  
7 problems, as obviously we've already heard is, people  
8 being in bureaucratic limbo. You know, we're part of  
9 a group that will be serving the families that will  
10 be rejected from the Build it Back program but as of  
11 right now we've only received one to two  
12 recommendations from that because so many families  
13 have been in limbo and haven't received final  
14 notification on where their status lies from the  
15 Build it Back program. So our ask is really that  
16 families actually get the specific acceptances,  
17 rejections so that they really know where to stand  
18 and they can approach organizations like ours and our  
19 partner organizations to help get them back in their  
20 homes to rebuild their houses and to critically  
21 repair those programs. So I thank you for the  
22 opportunity to speak today and we look forward to  
23 being a part of the solution moving forward and to  
24 serve more families in need. Thank you so much.

25 [bell]

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. Next.

TIM GILLMAN: Hello, my name is Tim Gillman; I'm, I believe, the first person to speak from the neighborhood of Red Hook, another neighborhood that was hit very hard, both in the public housing and private homeowners suffered a lot'a damage. I am very sympathetic to especially the parents here because all of us have seen that our children have joined the first generation of climate-change refugees, that we are outside of our homes; my family lives Upstate now, I go there on the weekends, it's a four-hour commute; I don't get to see my family; I had promised them that they would be back in school in Brooklyn in September; I don't know if I can keep the promise. The idea that the transfer money would be available to use for rent is the first hope that I've had that I can keep that promise. One of the, and one of the factors of having the local advisors to be a part of the process is extremely important, one of the things that we're facing is that all of our possessions were put into a local storage unit, which is called Treasure Island, so my kids say all their toys are on Treasure Island,



1  
2 because we couldn't keep it in our house, our house  
3 has been completely gutted [music]. The element of  
4 local conditions is that the Build it Back program  
5 told me that none of my storage cost can be  
6 reimbursed because the storage unit has to actually  
7 happen on the property and they said, you know you  
8 can put a trailer in your yard, on your driveway... I  
9 live in Brooklyn; put it on my sidewalk, like I don't  
10 understand, you know how that can be... so I'm looking  
11 at over \$10,000 in storage costs that will not be  
12 reimbursed. In addition, the initial part of our  
13 problem started way before Build it Back with the  
14 Department of Buildings. No one ever entered my  
15 building after the storm. One of the... I'm in an  
16 attached row house, masonry building, one of the  
17 supporting walls collapsed up to the second floor,  
18 the building would've been condemned, there's no  
19 question in my mind. But the Department of Buildings  
20 never entered it. We have not been classified as  
21 substantially damaged. I have had two options  
22 meetings, unlike probably anybody else in this room,  
23 I've had, tremendous help from the Office of Nydia  
24 Velazquez to get some attention; I believe I'm the  
25 only priority 2 status that got that kind of

1  
2 attention, but the options meetings are amazing  
3 frustrating, they have not acknowledged anywhere near  
4 the degree of damage that happened on my property or  
5 on any of these people's properties, I believe. The  
6 site assessor was very sympathetic, I told him  
7 everything that had been paid for already, that had  
8 been done, that had to yet be done based on the  
9 engineer's assessment, even the insurance company's  
10 assessment of damage was more than double what the  
11 Build it Back program assessed. The amount of  
12 repairs that we had incurred is triple to what Build  
13 it Back has acknowledged and that is documented with  
14 receipts, with paperwork that I have supplied to them  
15 three times. So the failure on their part not just  
16 to actually act, but also to actually recognize the  
17 condition that people are in and what they've spent,  
18 even if it's proven to them with paperwork somehow  
19 fails to register. So I am in the second appeals  
20 process to get my damage assessment revised and I'm  
21 also very concerned about how it's going to move  
22 going forward when we're actually going into the  
23 building process, because we do not have an advocate.  
24 Working with a contractor, as I have had to do  
25 before, is very difficult to do, the architectural

1  
2 services which have not been outlined with us and  
3 I've been specifically requesting to know what it is  
4 that we're going to expect, I do not believe will  
5 shepherd us through the process in the way that an  
6 architect that works for you would actually do. So I  
7 would advise that we consider having the costs of  
8 architectural services which have been partially  
9 reimbursed under the Build it Back program continue  
10 to be reimbursed to people can [bell] maintain an  
11 architect. I do have a couple of other suggestions  
12 that I would say coming out of this meeting -- the  
13 Rapid Repair program unfortunately did not take any  
14 resiliency into account, so everything that was done,  
15 \$680 million worth of repairs, every single one of  
16 those, with the exception of very few people who were  
17 able to fight them to get them to put things higher  
18 up on the walls, will have to be repaired again the  
19 next time a storm like this hits. A plan must be put  
20 in place working with the union people so that when  
21 these people come in to do these repairs next time it  
22 happens and on my street it will happen, it will  
23 happen again in Red Hook, I guarantee it, it's  
24 happened too many times, that the resiliency is  
25 priority 1, not just putting people back into place,

1  
2 but making sure that it's done smart so we don't  
3 spend that money again, 'cause the money will not  
4 keep coming, I understand that. Site assessments  
5 being accurate -- this idea of closing 50 cases by  
6 June is just mind boggling, there's no way that  
7 number can be sufficient; hopefully that will be  
8 changed tremendously. And the time bombs of the  
9 property tax and the flood insurance has to be  
10 considered and I think that was all my points. Sorry  
11 to take over time.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for  
13 repping Red Hook very effectively. Thank you very  
14 much.

15 TIM GILLMAN: Yeah.

16 DAVID LEWIS: Good afternoon; I'd like to  
17 thank all the council members for giving us this  
18 opportunity to provide an insight about what's going  
19 on, the real things that are going on in our  
20 community. My name is David Lewis; I'm Project  
21 Director for the Canarsie Recovery Coalition. We  
22 were established in response to Superstorm Sandy and  
23 our main mission has been to help Canarsie residents  
24 with their unmet needs, help them address these needs  
25 that still have not been met.

Canarsie, I wanna give you an idea of what our community consists of. We're surrounded by three bodies of water and we were devastated by Sandy, but unfortunately we were heavily ignored in Canarsie. A lot of our residents were able to gather together and to help their neighbors, especially after the storm. One of the major issues that we had, based on the information that I received from a deputy chief from the Cert team that is in Canarsie, is that when Canarsie was in trouble, when Sandy hit, OEM activated Canarsie, but activated Canarsie Cert team to leave the community and help another community, when in fact we needed assistance, so it was very tragic. In regards to Build it Back, our residents have been discouraged, annoyed and frustrated, and based on my interaction with residents, the attrition rates are strongly correlated with their ill sentiments for Build it Back. They've been frustrated with the multiple requests to resend forms, income statements and verification documents. Other residents have discovered that they also have multiple profiles with Build it Back; they have received calls from different Build it Back representatives asking them

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2 to provide information but then they're realizing  
3 that these representatives are asking for either the  
4 same thing or different forms and so one of the  
5 residents actually that I had a conversation with  
6 informed me that she was actually told that she had  
7 multiple profiles, and so she had asked, when she was  
8 asked to provide documents, she told them that they  
9 should check her other profile to make sure that they  
10 had the information and indeed, when they checked  
11 that profile they did have the information that they  
12 were looking for.

13 All of our residents are contributing  
14 members of our community, whether they speak English,  
15 Haitian, Creole, Spanish, Chinese or any other  
16 language, they do deserve better. And in addition,  
17 we have a huge undocumented population in Canarsie  
18 and although they are undocumented, it wasn't their  
19 fault that Sandy hit and they do need assistance and  
20 they need a place to live. Many flyers for Build it  
21 Back are used and are distributed in different  
22 languages; unfortunately though, since the onset of  
23 these application forms, many of them did not have  
24 the application forms in the languages that were  
25 needed for our community. So because of this, many

1  
2 of them could not apply and many of them did not even  
3 know about Build it Back.

4           Many of residents were eligible for SBA  
5 loans but they declined to accept it because they  
6 could not afford to pay it. Now we do not believe  
7 that they are to be at fault for taking good judgment  
8 and not taking a loan that they couldn't pay back,  
9 but unfortunately as a result of this decision they  
10 find themselves ineligible for Build it Back or Build  
11 it Back support. We have homeowner who have been  
12 advised to elevator their homes, but if anybody is  
13 aware of the home structure in Canarsie, most of our  
14 homes actually are either attached or semi-attached  
15 and because of this it becomes increasingly difficult  
16 to create a strategy to elevate the homes. Housing  
17 stock has decreased in Canarsie; homeowners that  
18 heavily relied on rental income to pay their  
19 mortgages, because their basements or first-floor  
20 apartments were impacted, they are no longer able to  
21 rent out these properties and because of this they're  
22 unable to take care of their mortgage.

23           According to one of our housing partners,  
24 NHS, foreclosures prior to Sandy in Canarsie was  
25 about 1600 [bell] and after Sandy it went up to about

1  
2 3,000 and that's the highest rate in all of New York  
3 City. So this could help you imagine what kind of  
4 issue that Canarsie is facing with and when it comes  
5 to making sure that their homes are repaired or  
6 paying their mortgage, these residents are really  
7 facing difficult challenges.

8 Major issues that we're finding is that  
9 there are a lot of sinkholes in Canarsie, sewer  
10 issues and we also have a lot of backup. When the  
11 water came into Canarsie, a lot of the water did not  
12 come from only the basins, but there was a contraflow  
13 of water that came through the sewer system into the  
14 homes which caused a lot of damage. A lot of our  
15 residents are also facing mental health issues and  
16 physical ailments because of the mold, a lot of them..  
17 we've seen an increase of asthma in Canarsie and  
18 there's also stress induced by the disaster,  
19 especially in our youth. We would like to see that  
20 when Build it Back starts rolling out funding that  
21 homes that are being repaired, especially for those  
22 accessible and functional needs are made accessible  
23 to them and that they're not going to be facing  
24 consequences or having difficulty finding funding to  
25



1  
2 make sure that these homes can be accessible for  
3 them.

4 Our suggestions would be to one, expedite  
5 the process; I'd also like to echo Councilman  
6 Treyger's suggestion in that working with community  
7 organizations to make sure that residents will be  
8 informed as to what's going on with the Build it Back  
9 process, but to also help with the promotion.

10 Because of our collaboration with Andrew Olson, we  
11 helped see a huge increase for Build it Back  
12 applications in Canarsie, but even though covering  
13 90,000 residents we definitely need a lot more  
14 support from the Build it Back team. We'd like to  
15 also see the reopening of the program, giving  
16 homeowners an opportunity to apply, we'd like to see  
17 this outreach in different languages based on the  
18 demographics of our community. And the last thing  
19 that I would like to say is that perhaps, Miss  
20 Peterson, you can think about perhaps having a  
21 recovery coordinator in each borough to make sure  
22 that somebody can implement what your strategies are  
23 going to be for Build it Back. Thank you so much for  
24 the opportunity.  
25

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for very informative, powerful testimony. I think Chair Richards had a comment to make.

CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Yeah. Just wanted to... oh as the Chair of Environmental Protection, I'm certainly going to be working very closely with DEP and actually holding hearings on the sinkhole situation and infrastructure in general; I know it's something Jumaane and Mark will certainly be working with me on as we move forward. Just a comment, I just wanted to make a statement to Miss Peterson who's here. Matthew Dunbar comes from Habitat for Humanity, who's done some great work, I actually had fun trying to assimilate [sic] a house with him this summer and you know, I don't think I was as successful as they were, but just wanna put out there that, you know I think I mentioned something earlier, in terms of if the city does not get the FEMA money that we believe will make families whole, certainly working with groups like Habitat is certainly something we should keep on the table, and especially, and Carlos Menchaca may agree with this, as the immigration chair, for people who don't have legal status, and I think that's something we can do

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2 with the philanthropic community, certainly we should  
3 be working with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York  
4 or whatever it's called, to work with Habitat,  
5 because that may be one way to cut around the  
6 bureaucracy that, you know obviously the bureaucracy  
7 we face from FEMA on federal funds, so just a  
8 suggestion in terms of immigrant communities and also  
9 to those priorities 2 and 3's who may not see help,  
10 you know if we don't receive the other tranche of  
11 money or if we run out, I think is something that we  
12 should look at.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Chair  
14 Richards. Chair Williams.

15 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you for all the  
16 testimony. In particular I get more disgusted every  
17 time I hear about Canarsie. I didn't realize that  
18 the Cert team was activated to go to another  
19 neighborhood and Miss Peterson, this is one of the  
20 communities that have been thoroughly ignored, as far  
21 as I'm concerned, as far as Sandy recovery; when I  
22 was there weeks and months after there just was no  
23 government folks besides the elected officials in the  
24 area, working with them. And I hope, if you don't  
25 have his information, you get his information after

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2 so we can make sure that connection is done. He  
3 seems to have some numbers about foreclosures; if you  
4 do, can you provide that to Miss Peterson, and if you  
5 can provide that to the committee, 'cause I'm very  
6 interested in any foreclosures that came about  
7 because of Sandy? Also, I think what I was told in a  
8 hearing was that if someone's SBA loan was declined  
9 that they are in fact able to get Build it Back  
10 money, so I think that's a recent change, so you may  
11 wanna let people know that if they're declined... it  
12 was... if they're declined... it doesn't matter who  
13 declined it, SBA or the person, so if the person  
14 declined it, they can still apply for Build it Back.  
15 This is, as I said, is not my district, but it's a  
16 neighborhood and a lot of people were concerned and  
17 it was abhorrent that they were just left off of  
18 everything and so they were fending for themselves;  
19 hopefully that will stop. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Chair  
21 Williams. Council Member Carlos Menchaca has a  
22 question.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yes, thank you  
24 Chairs and thanks Tim for coming and representing Red  
25 Hook and I know there are a lot of folks that are

1  
2 still struggling out there and your case is I think  
3 indicative of some of the bigger issues. I wanted to  
4 just get a better sense on two pieces, one of 'em was  
5 the appeal process and I know we along with Nydia  
6 Velazquez' office have been working with you, but  
7 really trying to understand, this is now your second  
8 appeal process and if you have any insight as to what  
9 we'd like to hear on how to improve that appeal  
10 process would be great specifically from someone  
11 that's gone through that.

12 TIM GILLMAN: Right. Well I was actually  
13 directed, following my first options meeting, to work  
14 with the New York Legal Assistance Group which was to  
15 provide help, one, with the removal of the SBA loan,  
16 which we were told not to take, and two, was to work  
17 with my insurance settlement to find out how much of  
18 the... because the insurance settlement... I was given  
19 the maximum benefit, but my damage like far, far  
20 exceeded what the insurance would cover, so all of  
21 the other expenses that the insurance company was  
22 supposed to be covering, such as our contents, our  
23 loss of rent; we had a rental unit that was  
24 destroyed, our... all of the other expenses, they were  
25 able to actually take down that amount so that we

1  
2 could have some compensation from the insurance to go  
3 to that and not all of it to go to the Build it Back  
4 program; this is extremely important for people who  
5 got insurance settlements that had taken into  
6 consideration all of the expenses that the insurance  
7 is supposed to cover, not just the rebuilding of  
8 their homes, because the insurance is also supposed  
9 to help you replace all the stuff that you lost. So  
10 that's very important as well.

11           The appeals process, unfortunately they  
12 told me that they would also get us a new inspection  
13 of the house, the New York Legal Assistance Group;  
14 that did not happen, so I had waited for them to do  
15 it and I now am appealing in order to have a new site  
16 assessment. However, I'm not optimistic about the  
17 value of the damage that they will assess because  
18 they got it so wrong before and I haven't had any  
19 luck with them realizing that we are substantially  
20 damaged property.

21           The forms I know have been improved for  
22 the appeal process, the request for review forms  
23 which people were filling out before were incomplete,  
24 the F13 form, which has also been improved; I think  
25 both of these will help with the appeals process.

1  
2 And I don't know if there are other factor, other  
3 questions that I can clarify on that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Well is there  
5 anything that we can learn that can change the appeal  
6 process after going through it; is there anything  
7 that you can be in particular... [crosstalk]

8 TIM GILLMAN: Yeah, there... a couple of  
9 things. One, I think that for sure the site assessor  
10 should be informed about the work that has been done  
11 by the homeowner and the work that needs to be done  
12 and a lot of that has been assessed by the  
13 professionals that we've engaged -- engineers, the  
14 architects -- we were not told to have these people  
15 present at the assessment; they were not familiar  
16 with our paperwork, they looked at work that was  
17 completed and they never recorded it as work that had  
18 been done or work that needed to be done, and I spoke  
19 to them at the time, so I think that the... and I don't  
20 know who was actually employing the site assessors,  
21 but it seemed to me that the site assessors were not  
22 working even as beneficially on our behalf as our  
23 insurance assessors were, which is completely  
24 counter-logical, because the insurance people have a  
25 vested interest in not giving you a settlement and

1  
2 their estimates were way, way, way beyond what the  
3 Build it Back assessors are, so I think that there's  
4 some kind of issue there. And one additional point  
5 that I had thought of during the course of today is  
6 that the transfer money, the money that we are being  
7 asked to commit to the program, we have not been  
8 allowed to touch our buildings since the end of  
9 October, because if we do, any money that we spend  
10 will not be reimbursed and any improvements that we  
11 made will be actually counted off against the award  
12 from Build it Back, so we've been told to stop work,  
13 so it's been five months of no work. If the transfer  
14 money is acknowledged when we complete our options  
15 meeting, maybe we could use some of that money to  
16 start to make some repairs, because we know that the  
17 timeline is extremely long. We have an open building  
18 permit right now that allowed us to do a lot of the  
19 masonry work in our house, but we cannot... we're  
20 supposed to close those permits and not do any work  
21 and I know that the process to start building with  
22 Build it Back is gonna be very long and drawn out  
23 with the Department of Buildings, so if we have  
24 allocated money that we're supposed to be  
25 transferring into the program, maybe we could use



1  
2 that to make repairs until the full Build it Back  
3 process starts.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: How much were  
5 they asking for the... [crosstalk]

6 TIM GILLMAN: \$100,000, which I'll have  
7 to borrow.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Wow. Okay.  
9 And can you further define a little bit more what  
10 this transfer money is that they're requiring you to...

11 TIM GILLMAN: The transfer money is  
12 essentially, when they look at what you got from your  
13 insurance company or from any other source, and I  
14 don't know what other sources that would be; possibly  
15 people got FEMA money; we didn't, that money is the  
16 money that you're expected to contribute to the  
17 overall budget that Build it Back will be paying out.  
18 It used to be that you had to give it at the time of  
19 the options meeting, which to me meant I was gonna  
20 have to give them \$100,000 that I was borrowing and  
21 then wait an indeterminate amount of time until I  
22 would actually start to have that money, which would  
23 then be paid back to the contractors. So that was  
24 one of the things that I couldn't agree with at the  
25 end of my options meeting. So that money, when we do

1  
2 agree on what the final amount is, we were told  
3 today, we'd be able to use it to offset some housing  
4 costs, because we're going to have a place to live  
5 when the house is being rebuilt or elevated or  
6 whatever it is that's going to be done, but also  
7 there might be additional money that could be used to  
8 do some repairs to continue the repairs that we  
9 started and can't complete now because we're past the  
10 deadline of the HUD cutoff date for reimbursement.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. Thank  
12 you so much for lighting up a really, I think... at the  
13 granule level, [background comment] but also I think  
14 what might be impacting a lot more families too.

15 TIM GILLMAN: And I would hope that our  
16 case would help other people as well.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. Thank  
18 you, Tim.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think, Mr.  
20 Gillman, you further crystallized the point about not  
21 just a case manager for the people going through the  
22 application hardships, but certainly once work does  
23 begin happening to have an ongoing advocate working  
24 for you, making sure that things are happening on a  
25 timely manner, things are happening to the

1  
2 satisfaction of you, your family and that everything  
3 is in compliance with codes so there's no surprises  
4 afterwards, so you're not hit with a violation in the  
5 future saying well this wasn't up to code. That is  
6 the concern that I've been... you know right now, this  
7 hearing mostly dealt with people who are frustrated  
8 with the application process; I imagine some months  
9 from now we'll be dealing with issues with regards to  
10 the building issues or... so I really thank you for  
11 hammering home that point, that we need an ongoing  
12 advocate to deal with not just the application  
13 process but also once building work starts and I  
14 really thank you for that.

15 TIM GILLMAN: And the question is I think  
16 with... people's houses that are not going to be  
17 elevated are still going to want to make the houses  
18 as resilient as possible. Right now NFIP is not  
19 giving us discounts on our insurance rate if we're  
20 not elevated, but just from a recovery standpoint, if  
21 we don't move our systems upstairs, up into the  
22 second floor, for example, way above the DFE, we're  
23 going to be hit all over again. To do that with just  
24 a contractor, without somebody, you're basically  
25 going to be living with your boiler, your water

1  
2 heater, your meters up in your living space, and so  
3 that's a consideration that we need to have design  
4 professionals that are gonna take these changes, this  
5 new code and put it into effect; the contractors are  
6 not gonna know this stuff.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. And I...  
8 definitely there are some parts of the city where I  
9 question how they'll elevate.

10 TIM GILLMAN: Well put an additional  
11 story on is what they're talking about.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

13 TIM GILLMAN: And in my neighborhood,  
14 structurally that is going to be very difficult.  
15 Since we've had to rebuild most our house because of  
16 the wall collapses, our engineer is telling us  
17 there's a good chance we can put a fourth story on,  
18 but a lot of houses in the neighborhood are not going  
19 to be able to do that.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

21 TIM GILLMAN: One of the things that we  
22 said is if we are not going to be given the option to  
23 elevate we are actually going to move... I'll move my  
24 family down to the ground floor and move the rental  
25 unit up to the top floor, because then if we are

1  
2 flooded, at least... I'm gonna have to deal with the  
3 problem regardless, but I can't go through losing my  
4 rental income for another two years if this happens  
5 again. Some of the considerations that people have  
6 to take in when they're doing the rebuilding.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Wow. Alright.  
8 Thank you for sharing, that's very... I mean that's  
9 financial resiliency that... [crosstalk]

10 TIM GILLMAN: Long-term.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: long-term,  
12 absolutely. Thank you. And I think Chair Williams  
13 has a question.

14 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Sure, thank you.  
15 Just a couple more... I wanna make sure to point out  
16 with Canarsie, there's definitely a language issue,  
17 so if anything is not put out, particularly in Creole  
18 is one of the languages there, may not be able to get  
19 there properly. There also is a lot of undocumented  
20 I think was mentioned, so I think LISC will be good,  
21 if they're not out there already. But I did want to...  
22 oh the storage was an issue for me and I think you  
23 said that storage wasn't covered; that to me seemed  
24 to be a problem, if he's being forced to keep storage  
25 on a place that he can't keep storage, I don't know

1  
2 the truth of that, if we could find out, that will be  
3 something I wanna know about. And also... somebody  
4 mentioned something about work; I'm trying to  
5 remember what it was... I can't remember. Okay. Thank  
6 you. Thank you so much for your stories and I know  
7 that we... I mean I'm just... if we're gonna say that  
8 everybody needs to get help, I'm just concerned that  
9 we don't have the money to give everyone help and I  
10 know we said that I believe we should prioritize the  
11 people for the lowest income, but we have to make  
12 sure those other tranches are available as well and I  
13 don't know that it's there and so I don't know what  
14 we're telling the people who don't meet that first  
15 priority if we're telling them we're gonna find the  
16 money or are we gonna tell 'em... the government  
17 shouldn't be in the process of lying to folks, but  
18 thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I mean I took  
20 Saturday's press conference where the Senator and  
21 other officials mentioned that they will cut all the  
22 red tape necessary to get monies for all properties  
23 regardless of income level and to definitely move up  
24 the homes that were substantially or completely wiped  
25 away regardless of income level. There is supposed

1  
2 to be a third tranche, a third bucket of money that's  
3 on the way; it's unclear what that amount will be,  
4 but that's why we need to get clarity from the  
5 administration to know what are the needs and if we  
6 hopefully reopen the program, first of all expedite  
7 those who applied, but if we reopen the program, do a  
8 much better job of outreach to the diverse  
9 communities of our city. And I definitely wanna be a  
10 part of the outreach plan because to work... obviously  
11 if you heard one thing today over and over again, the  
12 local officials are the ones who really become the de  
13 factor case managers, our offices become the  
14 makeshift case management offices, to work with us on  
15 that outreach plan and we'll get you to the right  
16 groups and right local ethnic media and so forth. So  
17 I think that this will require unprecedented  
18 cooperation that you will have from the council level  
19 that we need commitment from the administration  
20 level.

21 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: I'm sorry, I remember  
22 the... Someone said something about not being able to...  
23 if you start... they wanted you to stop work?

24 TIM GILLMAN: Yes, we were...  
25

1  
2 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: which is something I  
3 was trying to get at through one of my lines of  
4 questioning, if work was already done. I'm concerned  
5 if people are being told not to do any work and  
6 they're not getting work, so I know that Miss  
7 Peterson's no longer here, but Mr. Chair, I'd like to  
8 find out because my line of questioning was trying to  
9 get at that, if they're doing work are they gonna get  
10 reimbursed. I thought I was hearing that yes, as  
11 long as the work are started... [interpose]

12 TIM GILLMAN: No.

13 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: before the 29th.

14 TIM GILLMAN: No.

15 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So that sounds like  
16 to be a complete contradiction to what's being said  
17 here, so I... [crosstalk]

18 TIM GILLMAN: When I submitted my F13  
19 form, during my second options meeting the F13 form  
20 is the new form that accounts for everything that you  
21 have spent, it didn't even matter if you'd done the  
22 work before, if somebody had invoiced you after the  
23 29th of October, those costs were taken off.

24 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: So...  
25



1  
2 TIM GILLMAN: So I had, literally, late  
3 bills from contractors that I paid in good faith to  
4 the contractors after the 29th of October; I was  
5 penalized for that.

6 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: We need to find out  
7 about that.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolutely. In  
9 addition, are we dealing with these arbitrary  
10 deadlines that... [interpose]

11 TIM GILLMAN: These are HUD deadlines.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah and you know,  
13 but HUD needs to be flexible here, because number  
14 one, they have to recognize that we didn't have our  
15 act in order in the city last year and because there  
16 was a problem in the information-gathering stage,  
17 these arbitrary deadlines ignored the realities on  
18 the ground and many people were just not well-  
19 informed or prepared to deal with this level of  
20 bureaucracy.

21 TIM GILLMAN: Many people would continue  
22 to be doing work right now if this weren't the case,  
23 if they knew that they could continue to document  
24 their expenses they would be working on their houses  
25 and they've stopped. Another thing that several of

1  
2 the homeowners have brought up here that's extremely  
3 important is that all of us are paying all of our  
4 utility bills, our insurance and our mortgages on our  
5 homes; DEP will not stop billing you for water; my  
6 house is empty, I'm on minimal usage; I'm still  
7 getting a bill for \$800 a year that I have to pay on  
8 my water bill. I'm still getting my ConEd bills;  
9 it's \$60 a month and there's nobody in the house,  
10 it's empty. My tax bill is going up and again, the  
11 house is empty, I'm not occupying it. Doesn't seem  
12 fair that the city should be expecting us to maintain  
13 all of our utilities at the same amount when they're  
14 empty houses and we don't know how much longer  
15 they're going to be empty.

16 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you. The last  
17 thing I wanna mention, particularly in Canarsie, but  
18 anyway, I know there's people who may not have  
19 applied who didn't know; if you can get a list of  
20 those names, because I know we spoke about it  
21 earlier, but my assessment is we probably do need to  
22 reopen this and I'd love to know how many people out  
23 there would benefit because they did not know,  
24 perhaps it wasn't translated, perhaps it wasn't  
25 communicated properly, so any information for anybody

1  
2 would please just... to my office or to the chair or to  
3 whomever in the city council so we can have a good  
4 list of folks who would benefit from this.

5           DAVID LEWIS: Definitely. And we've been  
6 Councilman Maisel on that post-Sandy survey and so  
7 that will be instrumental and in fact I'm getting  
8 that information out to you and we're also holding a  
9 huge resource event next Monday, inviting all  
10 Canarsie residents to inform them about all the  
11 resources that is out there. I think if I can touch  
12 on one thing, I think the major issue that our  
13 residents are not gaining access is because they  
14 don't have a connection to a disaster case manager.  
15 A lot of them don't know what a disaster case manager  
16 is and a disaster case manager is a person that will  
17 connect them to the resources that they need, whether  
18 it be rental assistance, whether it be just getting  
19 furniture, maybe they need some mental health  
20 assistance, whatever issue that they're going  
21 through, that disaster case manager will be the  
22 person to help triage those issues and get them in  
23 the direction that they need. I know we've all been  
24 working in this disaster recovery and we've become  
25 somewhat of an expert because of what Sandy forced us

1  
2 to learn, but we wanna make sure that we have the  
3 right connections, that we're collaborating with each  
4 other, we're inclusive and we're as transparent as  
5 possible as we can be. Thank you.

6 CO-CHAIR WILLIAMS: Thank you. Council  
7 Member Maisel did mention that. I have to step out,  
8 I apologize. I wanna thank Council Member Richards  
9 and particularly Council Member Treyger who's given  
10 such leadership to this issue working with us to have  
11 this hearing.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Chair  
13 Williams, this is great, this is a partnership; we're  
14 in this together, we have some great leaders here in  
15 the council who have been really very vocal and  
16 active on this. And I think again, you just further  
17 reinforced the point. There is so much information  
18 here that was just not shared and turn keyed and  
19 unfortunately it was not turn keyed in a timely  
20 manner and people are paying the price of that right  
21 now. But I would like to recognize the volunteer  
22 groups, the organizations, the houses or worship, the  
23 local groups that really were... they were the first  
24 responders, along with, of course, the police  
25 department, the fire department, emergency personnel,

1  
2 no question, but many of the volunteer groups, they  
3 were out there first and foremost and I just wanna  
4 public thank you and commend you... [interpose]  
5 [background comment] sure.

6           MICHAEL TAYLOR: Sure, I just wanted to  
7 just bring up one point, there's a lot of these  
8 groups and like some of the council members pointed  
9 out, they were on the ground, they're connected,  
10 they're networked in, but most of them did not  
11 receive any type of grants or any type of funding to  
12 help them not only deal with their own issues of  
13 rebuilding or to really even deal with the issues of  
14 helping the people and I've seen that in many, many  
15 communities, from Coney Island to Sheepshead Bay,  
16 Gerritsen Beach, also in the Rockaways, and it really  
17 is a shame and it's something that I hope somewhere  
18 in the future they have those mini macro grants to  
19 help these different organizations that are normally  
20 out there helping people. And thank you again for  
21 giving us the opportunity to speak today.

22           CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, absolutely.  
23 And I think that that goes to the issue of  
24 prequalifying and precontracting these groups so in  
25 the event of emergency again we know who to turn to

1  
2 immediately and they can get reimbursed for their  
3 services, which they provide. That's a very, very  
4 good point, well taken. And I thank the panel very  
5 much for your powerful testimony today. Thank you  
6 very much.

7               Next we'll call up Susannah Dyen, Andrea  
8 Samson, Lorianne [phonetic] Dechio [phonetic], John  
9 Douglas and Roger Gendrum [phonetic].

10              MALE VOICE: He left, Roger left.

11              CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Roger left.

12 [background comments] Okay. If you could please  
13 raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm to the  
14 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
15 before our committees today? Thank you. Begin this  
16 way, please. Oh just make sure the mic's on and  
17 you're speaking into the mic.

18              ANDREA SAMSON: My name is Andrea Samson;  
19 I live in Red Hook. I have a prepared statement, but  
20 I'm not gonna read it. You guys have been asking all  
21 the right questions and this was long in coming, but  
22 we're so grateful that it's finally happening.

23              Yes, in terms of advocacy, the advocacy  
24 piece, that is the missing link; had we had that  
25 functioning throughout, thing would've been very

1  
2 different. Also, if FEMA had paid out the \$250,000  
3 full payout, so everything kinda starts with FEMA and  
4 NFIP and the insurance companies and the mortgagings,  
5 but. Regarding the prioritization piece, I think  
6 we've heard a fair amount of testimony that we were  
7 told originally it was either income or amount of  
8 damage, right, but now we've been told otherwise and  
9 now we're being told that the prioritization system  
10 is going to be revamped somehow. What folks will  
11 need to know... first of all, it was as though that was  
12 a fail to complete. I asked over and over again  
13 about prioritization... sorry, there's nothing we can  
14 do about it, it's just the way it is. So that amount  
15 of complacency with something that was so very wrong,  
16 it was so glaringly wrong, but nobody wanted to touch  
17 it.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sorry, your last  
19 name again, just so I'm clear.

20 ANDREA SAMSON: Samson.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Samson.

22 ANDREA SAMSON: S a m s o n .

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you; I  
24 appreciate it.  
25

1  
2           ANDREA SAMSON: So my question is then  
3 regarding the prioritization categorization, if it's  
4 gonna be fixed, when is it gonna be fixed, because  
5 there are 2 and 3's who need this information now.  
6 They've been given absolutely no information and we  
7 need a real sense of what the differences are. Is it  
8 gonna take another action plan; do we have to like go  
9 through that whole process again or is there gonna be  
10 some kinda fast tracking, because people really need  
11 better information?

12           The reimbursement piece, if somehow that  
13 can be addressed, 'cause it's insane to expect people  
14 to not continue to work on their homes... many people  
15 were not told that there was this arbitrary deadline  
16 so they have continued to work on their homes, so  
17 that's hugely significant because in effect, people  
18 have been incentivized to not fix their houses.

19           I had five headings, so we've covered the  
20 prioritization one, the lack of counsel one I think  
21 has been pretty much testified to. The assessment  
22 piece is huge, Tim Gillman covered that beautifully.  
23 Work in progress, reimbursement stipulations... yeah,  
24 you guys have covered that. You've done a really  
25 great job.



1  
2 I wanna focus if I can on the Department  
3 of Buildings. The Department of Buildings is not  
4 educated regarding the Appendix G, they get cursory  
5 training, they often times are not familiar with...  
6 it's just on paper, it's very abstract to them. I  
7 have learned that there are recent amendments to the  
8 Appendix G that are gonna be put in place but they're  
9 delaying the Department of Buildings training, so  
10 they're gonna be flying by the seat of their pants  
11 yet again. The Department of Buildings is... there was  
12 also the free Sandy consult post damage and we were  
13 led to believe that that consultation would kind of  
14 shepherd us through the process of filing, but it  
15 didn't; there needs to be a continuation [bell] of  
16 the free Sandy consult. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
18 much.

19 JOHN DOUGLAS: Good afternoon. My name  
20 is John Douglas, I am President of Gerritsen Beach  
21 Cares, an organization, nonprofit 505(c)(3) that's  
22 based in Gerritsen Beach. I'd like to thank the  
23 chairs for the opportunity to speak today, thank you  
24 so much for giving voice to so many people that  
25

1  
2 haven't had a voice and need to have a voice and tell  
3 you what's really going on.

4           We have approximately 1800 homes in  
5 Gerritsen Beach, of those 1800 homes, 800 were  
6 severely impacted; we are currently working, we have  
7 a database of 800 homes that we're working with right  
8 now that we're case managing; we've been able through  
9 grants from BCF and Robin Hood and other foundations  
10 that have given us grant money and it hasn't been a  
11 lot, when you consider the money that's out there,  
12 we've received substantially under \$1 million, I  
13 think somewhere in the area of \$700,000, but with  
14 that money we've been able to partner with other  
15 groups, we've been partnering with Stephen Siller  
16 Foundation, Tunnel to Towers, who instigated a,  
17 started a mold remediation program, mold was a very,  
18 very big problem in Gerritsen Beach, because not only  
19 of mold incursion, but you also had sewage and all  
20 other kinds of contaminants and there was a lot of  
21 things for mold to grow on, once you have those  
22 contaminants in the house, so they went house to  
23 house that had people that needed mold remediation;  
24 it was done for free, it was a great program, very  
25 thorough, they were great partners. We partnered

1  
2 with Newark Cares, who did demolition of a house,  
3 ripping out what needed to be ripped out before it  
4 needed to be replaced. They also did some mold  
5 remediation. H.E.A.R.T. 9/11, who came and did some  
6 rebuilding for us were able to secure building  
7 supplies, 2 x 4's, plywood, insulation, sheetrock,  
8 and they were able to go into the homes and do those  
9 basic repairs to kinda shelter people in place and  
10 get them back so that the house would be somewhat  
11 functional. We had an appliance program, we were  
12 able to get some donations and discounted appliances  
13 to help those people that lost their kitchens, nobody  
14 had kitchens, they couldn't cook, so we were able to  
15 help them. But there's still a lot of need down  
16 there. I don't think that the Build it Back program  
17 is really looking at each case individually in a  
18 holistic and in a heartfelt manner that, you know  
19 these are real people here that really need help.  
20 Have many families that are being moved from priority  
21 1 to priority 2 simply because they're getting  
22 overtime and it has put them over the AMI. Now  
23 overtime can be removed at any time at the company's  
24 discretion, it's not income, it's temporary money  
25 that's there, so I don't believe that overtime money

1  
2 should be counted as money towards their AMI. So I'm  
3 afraid that these people are not gonna get the help,  
4 they were promised the help that they were number 1  
5 priority, now they're number 2 because of that. Like  
6 I say, the temporary overtime that folks are earning  
7 right now actually is going to help to pay for... we  
8 have instances of people that are paying rent, in  
9 addition to that they're still paying a mortgage,  
10 they're still paying water, they're still paying  
11 election, they're still paying insurance on homes 17  
12 months later that they can't live in and I don't  
13 think they should be penalized for that. So that's  
14 something I think that really needs to be revisited  
15 how they qualify for this program, and the money that  
16 they're making and how that applies to how that  
17 program is gonna help them. So that's some of the  
18 questions you know and the other question is, we're a  
19 501(c)(3) organization, we have one full-time  
20 employee who's our executive director and the rest of  
21 us are all volunteers and part-time volunteers,  
22 'cause most of us have full-time jobs or part-time  
23 jobs. We're able to create a database, we're able to  
24 work with all these people, work with all these  
25 organizations to help and yet here's an organization

1  
2 that has taken in \$3.2 billion, has 70 employees  
3 already [bell] and zero has been done. Where is the  
4 organization?

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: That's the  
6 question. Thank you very much. Yes.

7 LORIANNE DECIONE: Good morning and thank  
8 you for inviting me to speak about my experience with  
9 the Build it Back program thus far. My name is  
10 Lorianne DeCione; I live in Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn  
11 with my husband and daughter. On October 29th, 2012  
12 our livelihood was severely impacted by Superstorm  
13 Sandy. At approximately 7:00 p.m. that night the  
14 storm surge flooded and destroyed the basement and  
15 first floor of our home which contained our kitchen  
16 and living room. As the water breached the first  
17 floor we grabbed our pets and anything else we could  
18 and ran up to the second floor to wait it out. It  
19 was without a doubt the scariest night of our lives,  
20 even today, 17 months after the storm, our basement  
21 and first floor remain unusable, completely gutted  
22 with no heat, insulation or appliances. We are  
23 living out of two bedrooms and a bathroom on the  
24 second floor and have been for 17 months. We have  
25 flood insurance, but did not receive nearly enough to

1  
2 fix everything. We applied for FEMA but were denied  
3 because we have flood insurance, except for the two  
4 months rent that they gave everyone standard.

5 We first met with Build it Back on August  
6 2nd, 2013, we had applied on the first date, June  
7 1st, when it first opened up at the center in Breezy  
8 Point. We brought all the paperwork we were asked to  
9 bring and filled everything out accordingly. We  
10 brought copies of our passports the following morning  
11 and was told that our file was complete and we should  
12 be contacted in six to eight weeks to schedule an  
13 assessment. In mid October 2013 I attended a town  
14 hall meeting hosted by Senator Marty Golden who  
15 represents Gerritsen Beach. At that time we were  
16 told about the priority levels within the Build it  
17 Back program. I inquired as to what priority level  
18 we were assigned; a few days later I received a call  
19 informing me that I was priority 3, the lowest level.  
20 When I asked why I was told it was due to our income.  
21 My husband is a police officer, I'm a mid-level  
22 manager at a law firm. Our daughter is in college  
23 full-time and we live paycheck to paycheck. Given  
24 that we have been told we have to elevate our house  
25 six to seven feet or face exorbitant insurance bills,

1  
2 we hired a contractor to elevate, paying \$20,000 as a  
3 down payment, the full contract is for almost  
4 \$65,000. To date nothing has been done because the  
5 contractor is still having trouble securing the  
6 permits from the Department of Buildings.

7           In early December 2013 we received a call  
8 that further paperwork and signatures were required  
9 and we needed to go back to the Build it Back center,  
10 which we did on December 7th. We again signed and  
11 completed everything given to us. I asked at that  
12 time if our priority level had changed and was told  
13 we were now in priority 1. I told my husband to put  
14 the contractor on hold because if we were priority 1  
15 we should wait for Build it Back to do the work. On  
16 January 20th, 2014 I received a voicemail from Build  
17 it Back requesting I call to schedule the assessment.  
18 I called back every day for two weeks, at least once  
19 to two times a day, sometimes three and left  
20 voicemails each time; I never received a call back.  
21 Approximately two weeks later I received a letter in  
22 the mail dated January 22nd, 2014 stating we needed  
23 to provide several documents that we had already  
24 provided, most twice before. I called Senator  
25 Golden's office and explained the situation. Build

1  
2 it Back called me three days later stating I  
3 understand you have a question about your priority.  
4 I explained I didn't have a question about priority,  
5 we are priority 1, the issue is I was left a message  
6 to schedule the assessment but no one has returned my  
7 calls and now I've received a letter saying they need  
8 more information that we already provided. The  
9 person I spoke with informed me we were now back to  
10 priority 3, again due to our income, and that  
11 priority levels can change and the call was likely a  
12 mistake. I asked my husband to engage the contractor  
13 again because at priority 3 our understanding is we  
14 will never get any help. After all this time we  
15 cannot keep living like this, however we cannot  
16 afford to pay mortgage and insurance and utilities on  
17 a house we can't live in while paying rent for an  
18 apartment. We are stuck between the preverbal rock  
19 and hard place.

20           On March 12th I received a call from  
21 Build it Back to schedule my assessment which was  
22 done on March 19th. I was told the assessment would  
23 take anywhere from two to three hours so I took a day  
24 off from work. They arrived at 8:00 a.m. and were  
25 done by 8:25 a.m. [bell] I had been told that they



1  
2 would have to walk around the entire property, but  
3 when I offered to open the side gates that lead to  
4 the back so they could check, I was told it wasn't  
5 necessary. I think the assessment was not thorough  
6 and I believe there should be more communication as  
7 to when we reasonably can expect an options review  
8 meeting to see what if any options we have.

9           We had accepted a \$50,000 loan from the  
10 SBA prior to the Build it Back program being instated  
11 because it looked like the only assistance we would  
12 get. We now understand that this will be deducted  
13 from any funds Build it Back may deem we should  
14 receive. This doesn't seem fair, it's a loan, not a  
15 grant. We have to pay it back with interest. Based  
16 on what I have heard from speaking with Build it Back  
17 representatives and from the website, Build it Back  
18 cannot guarantee funding for priority 2 or 3  
19 applicants, construction completed after the damage  
20 assessment may put eligibility at risk and if we use  
21 our own contractor, to whom we have already given a  
22 down payment, while he secures the elevation permits,  
23 it will automatically render us ineligible for the  
24 program.  
25

1  
2 My husband and I are hard working,  
3 responsible individuals, we carry both homeowners and  
4 flood insurance for our property that we thought  
5 would protect us in the event of a flood like this,  
6 but it feels like we are being penalized for this  
7 everywhere we turn. We pay our mortgage and bills on  
8 time and have good credit, so we get denied for  
9 additional assistance, instead it seems that we are  
10 supposed to throw away everything we worked so hard  
11 for all these years, use our credit cards or 401(k)  
12 retirements plans to pay for everything. At this  
13 rate we will never be able to retire or get our heads  
14 back above water. We're a middle class family; my  
15 husband has served at the city with the NYPD almost  
16 19 years and it looks like he will have put off  
17 retirement for at least another 11 so we can try and  
18 pay for this. Don't get me wrong, everyone I have  
19 dealt with at Build it Back has been very nice,  
20 professional and compassionate, however, the people I  
21 speak with are not the decision-makers. Every time  
22 we provide something a few months later we are asked  
23 for something else or the same things we provided. I  
24 simply don't understand how someone can determine we  
25 are priority 3 before even coming and assessing our

1  
2 situation, nor our living in a house where the first  
3 two floors are gutted and we are living in the  
4 bedrooms could be considered a priority 3. Although  
5 I fully understand the magnitude of devastation to  
6 the area and of the undertaking of this project, the  
7 bureaucracy and red tape is ridiculous. It seems  
8 that the program is made intentionally difficult so  
9 people will give up, move on and bury themselves in  
10 debt so that bank or government can eventually come  
11 and take the house anyway and we'll still be left  
12 with nothing. Never in a million years did we think  
13 after all the precautions we had taken that we would  
14 be in this position. Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

16 [applause]

17 SUSANNAH DYEN: Good afternoon. Thank  
18 you Chairperson Treyger and Chairperson Richards and  
19 the rest of the Recovery and Resiliency Committee,  
20 Housing and Buildings Committee and Environmental  
21 Protection Committee for this opportunity to give  
22 testimony today on this important topic. My name is  
23 Susannah Dyen and I am the Policy Coordinator for the  
24 Alliance for a Just Rebuilding. The Alliance for a  
25 Just Rebuilding is a coalition of over 40

1  
2 organizations, labor unions, worker centers,  
3 community, faith-based, environmental, and policy  
4 organization and advocates for a just and equitable  
5 short-term recovery and long-term rebuilding in the  
6 wake of Superstorm Sandy. Our member organizations  
7 collectively represent some of the most vulnerable  
8 New Yorkers in areas most affected by Superstorm  
9 Sandy across the five boroughs: low-income homeowners  
10 and renters, public housing residents, day laborers  
11 and undocumented immigrants.

12 As we've heard today, Build it Back has a  
13 host of problems, but we believe that there are  
14 solutions that can really get aid out in a timely  
15 manner.

16 We are strongly encouraged by the recent  
17 announcement of new leadership for the Build it Back  
18 program my Mayor de Blasio. All the new appointments  
19 have strong backgrounds in moving projects forward  
20 with commitments to creating good local jobs. We  
21 look forward to working with them in the future to  
22 improve recovery and ensure long-term resiliency and  
23 equitability for generations to come. There were  
24 five points that I was gonna make today, but I'm  
25 gonna focus most on one, which is renters, which has

1  
2 been not talked about very much today. The other  
3 points, just to get them out there: I agree that we  
4 should reopen Build it Back, we believe having a  
5 strong outreach strategy with community-based  
6 organizations that have deep roots in the community  
7 is the way to go to get folks into this program and  
8 it's so vital that they do. We think that they  
9 should change the scale of Build it Back; instead of  
10 doing a one to one -- one house per one house -- to  
11 really think about blocks, particularly for semi-  
12 attached row homes, the courts in Sheepshead Bay  
13 which are sort of neighborhood that you couldn't  
14 possibly elevate one home and not the other and that  
15 really needs a more comprehensive community planning.  
16 And then, also that the funding should be used to  
17 create good local family-sustaining jobs; we've been  
18 playing... the section 3 requirement generally results  
19 in very few jobs and we've been advocating for the  
20 city to implement a higher standard so instead of  
21 saying 30 percent of new hires to say 30 percent of  
22 wages paid, which over the lifetime of a project  
23 would encourage not only hiring more local folks but  
24 also into higher positions within the project.  
25

1  
2 But that all said, going to renters. So  
3 we had a number of members who had to unfortunately  
4 leave who were gonna talk about their experience as a  
5 renter, most of the housing recovery programs are for  
6 homeowners, most of the people that are impacted by  
7 Sandy were renters. The program TDAP, Temporary  
8 Disaster Assistance Program, there's supposed to be  
9 about 600 vouchers, this grossly undercounts the  
10 need, this was based on how many households were  
11 living in hotels at a certain period of time, there  
12 was a whole rash when the hotels... people were  
13 displaced into hotels for a while after Sandy and  
14 they were fairly routinely kicked out and pushed out  
15 and shoved out in all these ways and ended up in  
16 shelter system, ended up at, you know, three or four  
17 households in a single apartment; we have members  
18 that are living in people's sofas in living rooms  
19 because where else are they gonna go.

20 So we think when reopening Build it Back  
21 that also more money should be put into TDAP to  
22 really get at the need that renters have.  
23 Additionally, Councilperson Menchaca mentioned this  
24 about undocumented immigrants and their access to  
25 TDAP. We believe actually that TDAP can be accessed

1  
2 by undocumented immigrants because of the personal  
3 responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation  
4 act of 1996, it guarantees undocumented immigrants  
5 access to short-term in kind non-cash emergency  
6 disaster relief. TDAP represents exactly this, it is  
7 two years, it is short-term that is legally allowed,  
8 it is in kind not cash, the money gets paid directly  
9 to the landlord and it is because of a disaster, so  
10 we strongly encourage the city council to work with  
11 the administration to get that interpretation used;  
12 it would not only help New Yorkers who don't have  
13 clear immigration status, but it would be precedent-  
14 setting for the rest of the nation and is [bell]  
15 really the direction that the nation should be  
16 moving.

17           Very quickly, also currently landlords if  
18 they accept disaster aid to fix a rental unit there's  
19 no requirement that they keep those units affordable.  
20 We feel that that's inadvertently going to cause  
21 widespread rent gauging. As a landlord there's  
22 nothing stopping me from fixing it up and charging  
23 way more money, we've already see widespread rent  
24 gauging and we really are concerned that these  
25 neighborhoods which are some of the last affordable

1  
2 neighborhoods in New York will just disappear and  
3 become not affordable for working New Yorkers. Thank  
4 you for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No, sure. Thank  
6 you and I will say that we had the young lady,  
7 Uliana, speak before who was a renter but the problem  
8 that I saw was that she had no knowledge of TDAP...

9 SUSANNAH DYEN: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and that has been  
11 my biggest frustration with is that many people had  
12 no clue that that program applied to them. So  
13 renters... believe me that is a very, very big  
14 priority. In addition to the fact co-ops; I know  
15 it's not renters, but FEMA denied them assistance  
16 because they see them as corporations [background  
17 comment] because they don't understand how New York  
18 City, you know works differently from everywhere else  
19 in the country, but they were denied assistance and  
20 many co-ops had no knowledge that or they were  
21 misinformed that they were in fact eligible through  
22 HPD to receive assistance. So renters, cooperative  
23 shareholders, many of these people and that to me is  
24 the urgency to reopen the program and to really do a  
25 much better job of outreach and reaching all these



1  
2 diverse income levels and diverse communities in  
3 general. I absolutely share your frustration and  
4 your concern about that and I think Chair Richards  
5 had a comment to make.

6 CO-CHAIR RICHARDS: Just wanted to say  
7 thank you guys, you guys have been amazing through...  
8 from day one when I was elected you guys came in, you  
9 worked with us on the tracker and that bill passed,  
10 so we just wanna certainly thank you for all your  
11 hard work and also your work on recovery and  
12 certainly echo the importance of local hiring and you  
13 know, once again we are very interested as you know  
14 and the tracker reflecting by zip code who's being  
15 hired locally and that the city obviously works  
16 closer to coordinate with NYCHA and other community-  
17 based organizations to really get the word out there  
18 about local hiring opportunities because one thing  
19 Sandy has provided us is an opportunity to obviously  
20 work in communities and with communities who've had  
21 unemployment issues in the past, so we look forward  
22 to continuing the conversation and work with you.  
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes and I  
25 definitely... I fully appreciate your organization's

1  
2 work and advocacy and again, it's a group like yours  
3 that should've been involved from the government's  
4 end from day one and had we done that, many of these  
5 folks here today would've been informed and cases  
6 would've been followed up on an ongoing basis. And  
7 just to summarize the points I'm hearing here again  
8 today from this panel is that there is a lack of  
9 clarity as far as how they moved your priority  
10 statuses around and again there is no advocate  
11 looking out for your interest, looking out for your  
12 bottom line and that has been again further  
13 reinforced and we now have a question I know from  
14 Council Member Carlos Menchaca.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you  
16 chairs again. And I just wanna first make a comment  
17 about this panel, it's really indicative of so much  
18 of what we've heard today, starting with Andrea, as  
19 someone who's on the ground in Red Hook, but not just  
20 on the ground in Red Hook but dealing with cases and  
21 friends from all over the borough to our coalition,  
22 Susannah's representing ALIGN and all the folks that  
23 are part of the coalition specifically with the  
24 Alliance for a Just Rebuilding. But what I keep on  
25 hearing more and more is that we are recognizing the

1  
2 dedication and the role of the folks on the ground  
3 doing this work, you know we've been here what now,  
4 six, seven hours listening to you, you've been out  
5 thee for 17 months doing this work and for us to not  
6 do that over and over again we really do recognize  
7 that dedication and that spirit that we see in Red  
8 Hook for example and other neighborhoods that we've  
9 heard about needs to stay alive and if any one of  
10 these families and if we lose these families we lose  
11 these communities, these are gonna be different  
12 communities and this is how important and why this is  
13 so important for us to rebuild in these locations and  
14 to get this right.

15           So Andrea really, the question I have for  
16 you is, is understanding the kind of counseling that  
17 you were talking about and I know you sped through  
18 that testimony of yours. Tell me a little bit more  
19 about... if we had the opportunity to give you  
20 counseling of some sort, what would it look like,  
21 what would it have to be?

22           ANDREA SAMSON: Well Council Member  
23 Treyger, is it Treyger? Okay. What you've been  
24 focusing on, and thank you for asking that question  
25 Carlos, is every step of the way it's been an

1  
2 incredible learning curve, right from day one. We  
3 have a business out of our home; obviously our  
4 business was stalled, but I had to fight the  
5 insurance so that was the first battle; that in  
6 itself was an incredible learning curve. I did it  
7 alone and in a vacuum. If we had had someone there  
8 to guide us through the process collectively, we  
9 would've all not learned in a vacuum, we would've  
10 learned faster, that's one example. Because I've had  
11 time I've had the opportunity to help other people  
12 and because, as you say Carlos, if they go there goes  
13 the community, so what Build it Back has actually  
14 basically been on a path toward creating is two  
15 things: increased vulnerability and gentrification  
16 simultaneously. Houses are not getting rebuilt,  
17 people will lose their homes, wealthier people will  
18 come and get them. That's the road map that Build it  
19 Back has put in place thus far. It's unbelievable  
20 and that's why I've been so active, because I've been  
21 seeing that in very obvious and not so obvious ways  
22 because it's been winter and we've been pretty  
23 isolated, but that's what's happening; in a very  
24 concrete way we are losing, our communities are being  
25 eaten away at and the mandate is resiliency, but the

1  
2 Department of Buildings, you know, you would think  
3 that the Department of Buildings would actually  
4 facilitate this process. At every step of the way we  
5 need guidance, we need a dedicated Department of  
6 Buildings liaison, we need... you know there's been a  
7 remarkable woman at the OETPS, Catherine Gregg, not  
8 everyone can talk to her and bother her all the time,  
9 right, but we need that kind of interface, so that's  
10 been me and I try to leave her alone, but we've  
11 needed that information. And so I've been making a  
12 pest of myself, but I had to exist, I didn't wanna do  
13 this but the role was not there. So you need people  
14 like us everywhere constantly and it's gonna be an  
15 ongoing thing and if I can just make one other point,  
16 the either or of elevating or not elevating, you  
17 know, for an attached row house it can't be done,  
18 right? It's creating a lot of panic and it might be  
19 a more nuanced solution, there might be other  
20 engineering solutions out there. FEMA came out with  
21 a series of, what are they called, recovery  
22 advisories, the FEMA building sciences are trying to  
23 come up with alternative to just this either or of  
24 elevating or not and we needed more community  
25 dialogue, we all... all of the different boroughs, we

1  
2 need to talk about what our situations are with  
3 rebuilding and how we can slowly but surely come up  
4 with solutions rather than just being terrified that  
5 our flood insurance premiums are gonna bankrupt us or  
6 we're not gonna be able to go to our houses or we  
7 have to elevate, but we can't physically elevate,  
8 etc., etc. So it has to be kind of more methodical  
9 process where we have more opportunities for  
10 dialogue. We've been disenfranchised, we've had tons  
11 of meetings, but nobody asks us and we're the ones  
12 with the answers, 'cause we've had to come up with  
13 the solutions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So thank you  
15 for that and my final real comment is: I know we've  
16 heard a name over and over again, Andrew Olson, and I  
17 just wanna echo that name of course in the chambers,  
18 'cause I think he's gonna help a lot of folks out  
19 there. But one name I keep on hearing over and over  
20 again from the Build it Back teams is your name,  
21 Andrea, so know that it's getting through and so it's  
22 a good sign that you continue to bring... and really, I  
23 think a lot of the folks that have testified today,  
24 great ideas. So thank you for being here today.  
25

1  
2                   ANDREA SAMSON: Thank you, thank you for  
3 having me.

4                   CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes and I'm gonna  
5 echo Andrew Olson, he's been the go-to person, so we  
6 need to somehow duplicate Andrew Olsons around...  
7 [crosstalk]

8                   ANDREA SAMSON: Exactly. Yeah.

9                   CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, I would  
10 absolutely agree; I mean every case that's who I work  
11 with, with Andrew and he can't do it alone  
12 physically. And I thank you all for your very  
13 powerful testimony today. Thank you. Any other... I  
14 think we're... So the next panel we'll call up... thank  
15 you again... John Corey, I think we have here A New  
16 World Contracting Company, Joseph Agrest, [background  
17 comment] Roland Gorton and Michael Harbin. And just  
18 to advise the panel in advance, time... this hearing  
19 has been running some hours, but it's important  
20 because we have to hear this in order to make better  
21 decisions moving forward; if we could just try to  
22 keep at the time limit in order to let the rest of  
23 the panels speak and I truly appreciate everyone's  
24 patience here today, it's been remarkable and I do  
25 acknowledge that Miss Peterson is still here with her

1 team and I appreciate that as well. Thank you. Oh,  
2 I'm sorry. So we have two people that are not here.  
3 So John Corey is here, is A New World Contracting  
4 here? Okay. Joseph Argrest. He's not here. Roland  
5 Gorton is not here. Michael Harbin. So I'll call  
6 two more names. [background comments] I'm gonna  
7 look for it right now. Yes, Michael Delpino, you can  
8 come up and do we have an Ilya Geller? Ilya's here?  
9 These are done. Alright, let's do a sixth. Let's do  
10 a sixth person, Jean Ferrara Rodriguez; is Jean here?  
11 Jean is not here? [background comments] Sophia  
12 Lakis, please, yes. And forgive me; these slips were  
13 given to me in no particular order, so I... [background  
14 comment] Right... one, two, three... five names left.  
15 [background comment] Reverend Jackson is here, Young  
16 Lee is here, Meg Becker is here, Vladimir... Vladimir  
17 already I think spoke, and Felix Fuller. Did you  
18 sign up, sir? [background comments] Okay. So he'll  
19 be a part of the next panel, don't worry, we're gonna  
20 hear from everybody. Again, if we could just really  
21 keep the time at a... to keep to the limit. If you  
22 could please raise your right hands. Do you swear or  
23 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
24  
25



1  
2 but the truth before our committees today? Thank you  
3 very much. And we'll begin with you.

4 SOPHIA VILAKASTEYAGULIO: Okay, my name  
5 is Sophia Vilakastevagulio [phonetic] I live in Broad  
6 Channel, I also am part of the West 12th Road Block  
7 Association, but I'm here to tell my story which I'm  
8 sure represents other people who couldn't make it.  
9 And I'm just gonna read off a timeline.

10 My husband, who's 63, he's a high school  
11 phys ed teacher for 34 years, he's a handball and  
12 swimming coach, he was diagnosed with liver cancer in  
13 April of 2012, he was admitted to NYU's ER three  
14 times in September of 2012 for e. coli; he had an  
15 angiogram that confirmed the lesion on his liver was  
16 cancer in September of 2012, in-between ER visits.  
17 On the third visit to the ER my husband was admitted  
18 for six days for e. coli because it wouldn't respond  
19 to antibiotics, he was released on October 3rd, 2012.  
20 October 29th Sandy displaced our whole family, my  
21 husband, stepson, daughter; myself, we stayed with my  
22 sister-in-law and her family for six weeks, we  
23 doubled their household. November 2012 my then 10-  
24 year-old daughter began school at a different  
25 borough. November 2012 cancer on my husband's liver

1  
2 was ablated. November 2012 my husband began  
3 chemotherapy to treat his liver cancer. November  
4 2012 a contractor friend of my husband contacted us  
5 offering assistance post-Sandy and we decided to hire  
6 him -- one less headache, we thought. December 2012  
7 we moved to a one-bedroom apartment with FEMA housing  
8 assistance. January 2013 my husband had surgery on  
9 his prostate. February 2013 I had abdominal surgery.  
10 March or so of 2013 we learned FEMA housing  
11 assistance was terminated because we make too much  
12 money. April 2013 I returned to work. April 2013 my  
13 husband signs for an SBA loan and the first check  
14 they gave us was to pay back the FEMA grant for our  
15 uninsured contents, before any other money was  
16 released. So we have the privilege now of paying  
17 that back for the next 30 or so years. Spring 2013  
18 my husband decides to put off retiring for at least  
19 one more year and mind you, he still has issues with  
20 his liver. Spring-summer 2013 my husband begins  
21 withdrawing money from his teacher retirement account  
22 to pay for a new contractor, architect, engineer.  
23 June 2013 scrap metal thieves assault one of our  
24 neighbors who was keeping an eye on our uninhabited  
25 or uninhabitable house with pipes stolen from our

1  
2 house. June 2013 we finally are able to look at the  
3 work done by our contractor only to discover that for  
4 \$53,000 our house was packed up, gutted and shored up  
5 which should've generously cost between \$10-11,000,  
6 not \$53,000. July 2013 we confront the contractor  
7 and discovered the license number he showed my  
8 husband was a vendor's license, not a contractors'  
9 license, which I believe he has since not renewed.  
10 His response that while he did our job his family  
11 went without; there are pictures of him on Facebook,  
12 on his wife's Facebook page having taken a cruise in  
13 April of 2013, while he was doing work on our house  
14 or was under contract we thought with us. August  
15 2013 we leave our one-bedroom apartment to join  
16 friends who have been able to return to their home  
17 and who have five bedrooms because paying a rent and  
18 a mortgage and utilities for two residences was  
19 unsustainable. Fall 2013 my husband is placed on the  
20 transplant list for a new liver. September 2013 New  
21 York State Attorney General was contact... I contacted  
22 him about the rogue contractor and they contacted the  
23 rogue contractor without any resolution for us.  
24 September, October, November, December 2013 we  
25 contacted media, different legal assistance

1 organizations; our story was run in local  
2 publications and aired on WPIX Channel 11 to help me  
3 out, but no resolution for the contractor.  
4  
5 September, October, November, December 2013, January,  
6 February, March 2014 still working on getting permits  
7 so SBA can release more money for us to rebuild our  
8 house, DOB permits that is. Winter 2013-2014 we  
9 signed agreement with a public adjuster to fight  
10 [bell] flood and homeowners insurance and agree to  
11 pay the public adjuster 40 percent of what they  
12 recover because we are out of our depth against these  
13 big companies and FEMA in fighting for what we should  
14 have gotten. February, March 2014 we paid \$34,000 to  
15 a home manufacturer and are working on getting final  
16 blueprints so we can get permits and begin  
17 construction on our house to move back home. By the  
18 way, our house was substantially damaged, it was  
19 green tagged twice by DOB; I called them to have them  
20 come back a second time; they still green tagged it,  
21 yet three architects, even the rogue contractor  
22 although he was a rogue and everything else, but he  
23 did know what he was talking about in some respects,  
24 all of them told us that that house should come down;  
25 it did, and so now we're trying to get something else

1  
2 built there. We hired an attorney just this month to  
3 pursue the contractor who was paid with NFIP/FEMA  
4 flood insurance money and it turns out, he has 38  
5 existing judgments against him because no government  
6 agency can or will assist us in trying to go after  
7 him for money that was ultimately came from the  
8 government. We need money to start construction  
9 process, we are fighting insurance, a rogue  
10 contractor, Biggert-Waters, we're being forced to  
11 take out an unconscionable amount of additional debt  
12 so we can get back into our home which has to be,  
13 once again, under water or upside down and you know,  
14 this time we're not under water with the tide. If  
15 liver cancer doesn't kill my husband, not being able  
16 to retire, not getting home and being forced further  
17 into debt will. This battle has been for our very  
18 survival and it's draining every ounce of strength  
19 and money we have, worked so hard to get and we're  
20 getting it from all ends including gotcha government,  
21 excuse me, but that's what it seems like. Why did we  
22 pay for insurance? Why do we pay taxes? Why are we  
23 being forced to beg for help? We try not to live  
24 beyond our means and have found that instead of help  
25 we are punished for playing by the rules, so now my

1  
2 family expects our SBA loan to be held against us;  
3 remember, it's a loan that we will be paying back.  
4 Last week, before learning that Mayor de Blasio was  
5 announcing a plan to help FEMA homes... I had other  
6 things to say, but I'll hold those off because you  
7 want others... [interpose]

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No, I appreciate,  
9 and actually, Miss Peterson's staff is here as well  
10 and they'll follow up, hopefully, with many of these  
11 cases that we're hearing today and thank you and  
12 again, if we could just try to keep within the time  
13 limit in the interest of having everyone here testify  
14 here today. Thank you very much. Next.

15 MALE VOICE: Thank you for having us  
16 today and the councilman that I know, thank you so  
17 much, the new one I have met today, it's amazing you  
18 guys are really listening to us. Ms. Peterson, I  
19 hope you really absorb all this and bring it home,  
20 you know and study it really hard, because everything  
21 I wanna say has been in this nice little essay I  
22 wrote last night, like everybody. But there's one  
23 subject that wasn't brought up and I'll just tap on  
24 that quickly.  
25

1  
2 According to Build it Back I make  
3 \$156,000, but I don't, I'm a local 3 construction  
4 electrician, I make about \$80,000 which is wonderful,  
5 but because I took a distribution to work on my home  
6 from the 401(k) and now they've set... you know like  
7 talk about those extra papers they throw at you, you  
8 know I was ready to go to review, someone was  
9 supposed to come look at my house, but they never  
10 came; I asked why. Well they said because you have a  
11 tenant. I rent to a surfer. I get \$500 a month,  
12 \$6,000 a year, if my math is okay. But it increased  
13 my salary in Build it Back by \$40,000, the amount of  
14 money that he makes. I don't understand; that needs  
15 to be rectified and taken away. And like imagine,  
16 you know, an elderly person whose husband died and  
17 you know, you talk about the people of low-income,  
18 but because she rents to a film maker who's a multi-  
19 millionaire, suddenly she's a multi-millionaire.  
20 It's insanity. Someone has to question how that ever  
21 got into the laws, that... big review needs to go  
22 backwards as well; this is great goin' forward. I  
23 mean my recommendation would be to fire every single  
24 person that existed in this program, start from  
25 scratch, you know, that's the best way to go, 'cause

1  
2 you're gonna spend months repairing it; you're better  
3 off to start from scratch, I hate to say it; that's  
4 my opinion. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Next  
6 please.

7 SIMONE S. PEELE: Hi, my name is Simone  
8 S. Peele; I'm a woman-owned minority business  
9 enterprise; the name of my company is New World  
10 Contracting Company and hopefully we're going to  
11 build a new world with this new administration, this  
12 new agenda for the city and the state and we're going  
13 to help Amy Peterson, who I know is gonna do a good  
14 job, because I started out at NEW, Nontraditional  
15 Employment for Women, 25 years ago and I've seen how  
16 she works and how she's dedicated to whatever she's  
17 put into. I'm here to represent the women in  
18 construction and also the African-American and Latino  
19 men who never had a chance to get into the doors of  
20 construction. Maybe with this new administration we  
21 can fix all that with the fixing of the units,  
22 houses, you know the buildings that were devastated  
23 by Sandy. I have a office in the Far Rockaways and  
24 I'm also here to represent the Rockaways that were  
25 basically left behind after the storm. Now it's



1  
2 coming back, it's starting to come back. I'd just  
3 like to say that I'm the Vice President of the  
4 National Action Network in the Rockaways and no  
5 justice, no peace. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Next  
7 please. Thank you.

8 MIKE DELPINO: Good afternoon, my name's  
9 Mike Delpino; I live in Broad Channel and I'd like to  
10 thank the members of the council, particularly  
11 Councilman Ulrich from my district, for this  
12 opportunity to speak about recovery. I'm gonna  
13 probably scale down my testimony. But I was  
14 encouraged Saturday to see that the city's finally  
15 prioritizing recovery efforts for families trying to  
16 return to their homes, that the Mayor has recognized  
17 the need to address priority 3 families, those homes  
18 who were completely destroyed is a major signal that  
19 his administration has heard us and recognizes that  
20 working middle class families can no longer pay  
21 mortgages in addition to rent and desperately need  
22 assistance with recovery as soon as possible. I  
23 tried to think maybe coming here to offer some  
24 suggestions, things that I've been thinking about  
25 over the past 17 months, maybe to be a little bit

1  
2 more productive and one of the things that, something  
3 that's built on my experience, one of the things that  
4 I think we need to is make sure that we're doing  
5 proper damage assessments in the program, ensure that  
6 Build it Back is making proper determination on their  
7 feasibility determination reports and have a  
8 streamlined and fair process by which stakeholders  
9 are able to appeal them. In my particular case, the  
10 report classifies my house as a major rehabilitation,  
11 but a licensed engineer and architect and even  
12 several builders have contradicted the city's  
13 assessment and stated that my house, which is  
14 declared substantially damaged by DOB, should be  
15 demolished and I plan on submitting those independent  
16 reports to Build it Back and DOB. This is not just  
17 me wanting to just build a new house, I wanna build a  
18 safe house, something that can withstand being  
19 raised, wind blows and other considerations and an  
20 80-year-old bungalow might not meet that criteria at  
21 this point. I'm a big proponent of an advocate; I  
22 actually wrote to Morgan Jones in your office months  
23 ago about this, so I think there should be some type  
24 of community stakeholder involvement program without  
25 adding additional bureaucracy. While there's too

1 many cooks in the kitchen can spoil the pot, we  
2 should figure out a way to foster more communication  
3 between Build it Back and homeowners looking to  
4 rebuild. One of the things that I was just thinking,  
5 perhaps asking civic association leaders to have more  
6 of a direct role with Build it Back. I've heard from  
7 my civic that they tend to deal with people lower in  
8 the program, but not the leadership and have had road  
9 blocks. And why I think this is a good approach,  
10 because we need an advocate to bring concerns to,  
11 it's not... we can call the councilman's office and we  
12 can call Build it Back, but the local civic leaders,  
13 they're well-known people usually in the community,  
14 they're trusted, they're accessible to us, they're  
15 able to observe reports and report trends that they  
16 see on the ground in the neighborhoods and may be  
17 able to bring that to Build it Back. And I think it  
18 eases the burden a little bit on Build it Back  
19 because it allows civic leaders to take, I was gonna  
20 say the brunt of the complaints, but they can gather  
21 and collect information and just submit it in batch  
22 to Build it Back for consideration. And who knows  
23 the local communities more than the civic leaders.  
24 I'm also asking that we bring back the notion of  
25

urgency, as a person paying mortgage and rent, I can assure you that I desperately need to reduce my housing payment to a single payment. I work for the city my wife works for the city; on paper we are just above the 165 percent AMI; it's devastating for us to have been in priority 3; I understand that's hopefully going away, but you know we still need to get this urgency of building moving forward. I'd like to also advocate for the streamlining of building permit process, particularly with the state's DEC office [bell] I've tried to reach out to them several times it often takes about a week to get in touch with them, they're indicating that there may be a backlog or some time for them to review plans and stuff and it's a little scary 'cause I'd like to be able to hit the ground rolling when I do start rebuilding. And in closing, last November I became so frustrated with the Build it Back program that I don't know if any of you have seen it, you may have on the way to the presser, but on Crossbay Boulevard I turned my house into a billboard and it read New York City Build it Back FEMA, HUD and flood insurance equals failure and I asked the city to make us all a priority, and I have repeatedly invited Mayor de

1  
2 Blasio over Twitter to come to the house to see what  
3 a priority 3 looks like. I'd like to remove that  
4 sign and I'd like to do that when I see that things  
5 are happening and developing and I invite the Mayor  
6 and you guys too to come tear down that sign and  
7 maybe put up a thank you sign or something more  
8 positive in the community and I'd love to do that and  
9 I look forward to making a stronger and more  
10 resilient New York City and hope I... [crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank... thank you  
12 very much.

13 MIKE DELPINO: I've helped. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate that.  
15 Thank you so much. Next please. Thank you.

16 MICHAEL HARBIN: My name's Michael  
17 Harbin; I live in Ocean View section of Staten Island  
18 and I've been there for 17 years, been in  
19 construction 35 years, have a degree in architecture  
20 of things and because of FEMA, SBA and all of this  
21 was so discouraging I decided let me try to take this  
22 on and get a permit and rebuild the house myself. I  
23 retained an architect back in January of 13, we  
24 actually sat in on a lot of the committees with the  
25 state and city at the time and I figured we were in a

1  
2 good position. We got to a certain block where we  
3 said let's wait for the CDBG grants to come out to  
4 help assist with the cost of rebuilding the home. In  
5 the meantime I laid out \$12,000 for the architect,  
6 updated surveys, asbestos reports, DOT approvals, DEC  
7 approvals, DEP constructural soil borings, everything  
8 short of approved plans to build, because we're  
9 waiting on the grant. Then Build it Back came out,  
10 they came out to look at the house, and then they  
11 took in all the information from the house survey, I  
12 go in to look at the forms and a printout I got, they  
13 can't get the square footage of the house right,  
14 information that was given to them wasn't entered in,  
15 two and three meetings goin' back again, they still  
16 can't get the flood insurance into the system, the  
17 answers I get... it's always a different person and the  
18 answers that I get is don't worry, it's an estimate,  
19 but we don't have an answer for you, I talked to the  
20 supervisor in Staten Island, he's like, that's a very  
21 good question; I don't have an answer for you. I go  
22 for appointments, I show up, we don't have it on the  
23 record that there's an appointment scheduled so I  
24 gotta come back again. When I go there I'm the only  
25 person in the room, there's a dozen people sittin'

1  
2 around talking about how they're doing so much  
3 overtime it's killin' 'em that they gotta take days  
4 off. I'm like, but you can't find my file to talk to  
5 me, but you're all running around complaining how  
6 you're exhausted. I go to meeting after meeting,  
7 then they tell me some of the costs and things that I  
8 incurred here with the architect they say if the put  
9 it in it could be credit against the transfer money,  
10 but they can't explain to me how the credit applies  
11 and how it works and do I get this money back or what  
12 goes on. Then they tell me go and look at bluestone  
13 which is a contract for Staten Island they build a  
14 model actually and look at the floor plans and see  
15 what we're gonna get, 'cause they keep calling these  
16 option meetings but there's never an option put on  
17 the table 'cause they say that the forms, we changed  
18 the wording in the form, you gotta resign it, we  
19 lost the paperwork. So I go in and I look at the  
20 plans, not one of the plans will fit the lot that I  
21 have, the houses are too long, too big, they don't  
22 meet the zoning and the codes. What also troubled me  
23 I'm looking, there's nowhere for the mechanical  
24 equipment anywhere in the floor plan, so how is this  
25 gonna adapt? Then they sit there, everybody's

1  
2 talking about flood, flood, flood; in talking with  
3 the architect, he brought up a very interesting  
4 point, which is something I knew too, New York City  
5 code does not require a house to be bolted to the  
6 foundation, it doesn't require the hurricane straps  
7 or widlows and things; this flood was very unusual,  
8 most hurricanes come with high winds that blow your  
9 house apart. Homestead, Florida was a perfect  
10 example, the whole town disappeared. We're so  
11 tunnel-visioned on flood and when the house is lifted  
12 the wind blows the house are even greater. You know,  
13 'cause everything's about resiliency, but then what  
14 about resiliency for the wind not just the water? I  
15 wanna hire my own contractor. Then I sat there and  
16 said well how much are you budgeting for it so I know  
17 what to say to bring them in. Well it's an estimate,  
18 we don't know. Then I sit there and say, well why is  
19 your construction costs three times the goin' rate?  
20 You're saying the house is 900 feet, you're tellin'  
21 me \$280,000, the cost is \$125 a foot to build, you're  
22 at three times that rate. Where is this extra money  
23 going? No answers. But I wanna hire my own  
24 contractor, bring him into the program, they told me  
25 they got a list of contractors I could choose from,



1  
2 that have been prequalified, they can't find the list  
3 to give it to me. So I don't know where to go, I'm  
4 just sitting here stalled at the moment and I wanna  
5 proceed forward [bell] and just get this process  
6 goin' and nobody can give me an answer.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Well  
8 the director's sitting right there and her staff is  
9 still here and hopefully your case will be followed  
10 up with right after this hearing. Thank you. Next  
11 please. Thank you.

12 ILYA GELLER: Good evening Chairperson  
13 Treyger, Chairperson Richards, Council Member  
14 Menchaca and Council Member Ulrich, I'd like to thank  
15 Amy Peterson for sticking around till these wee  
16 hours. My name is Ilya Geller, I'm a resident of  
17 Midland Beach, Staten Island, I'll be speaking today  
18 in the role of voluntary coordinator of Occupy Sandy  
19 Staten Island. I'd like to start by saying that 17  
20 months ago while we were giving out a never-ending  
21 stream of generous donations from basic needs to  
22 rebuild supplies, we posed a question amongst  
23 ourselves: why doesn't the government just give  
24 people money they need to recover? I think that the  
25 process as it stands right now is complex and is more

1 concerned with preventing devastated people from  
2 committing fraud than providing aid. We are  
3 currently on track to setting a precedent of doing  
4 nothing to prevent homeowner gentrification while  
5 doing nothing to help the 55,000 plus renters that  
6 are known to have lived in these areas. 155,297  
7 households registered for FEMA in New York City while  
8 only 25,699 registered for Build it Back. At the  
9 time the registration had closed, the Deputy Mayor of  
10 Health and Human Services, Linda Gibbs, had reported  
11 that 20,000 households were likely to be still  
12 displaced; though there were no shortage of flyers at  
13 the time of outreach, there was specifically no  
14 mention of aide to renters. Many homeowners were  
15 wrongly led to believe that they would not qualify  
16 while renters failed to register because they were  
17 never informed that there was aid out there for them  
18 to apply for. The city should reopen Build it Back  
19 registration with rolling registration. As a point  
20 of reference, New York State New York Rising CDBG has  
21 been open from April 2013 due to end April 11th. In  
22 Long Island, while registrations remain open they  
23 were able to release \$280 million to 6,000  
24 households. Along with that we should reform Build  
25

1  
2 it Back to coordinate blocks of neighbors. Currently  
3 Build it Back treats individual households in a  
4 vacuum instead of contingent [sic] surrounding  
5 structures. Many household structures share interior  
6 walls and lots are bunched together so close that any  
7 alteration to one would inevitably affect another  
8 such as in the cases of semi-attached and row houses  
9 as well as the courts in Sheepshead Bay. Rather than  
10 they impede a recovery of one household because its  
11 neighbor has not registered for Build it Back or  
12 falls in a different priority, the city should work  
13 with both affected property owners and potentially  
14 entire neighborhoods to put together comprehensive  
15 plans for recovery and to sequence construction. The  
16 elevation should also be offered to every single  
17 household that is registered, every single homeowner  
18 that is registered with Build it Back. Although the  
19 Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014  
20 delays their exorbitant rates of unsubsidized flood  
21 insurance a study released 20 years ago said that  
22 500,000 households would have premiums above \$6,800,  
23 a grandfather premium of \$700 today would top \$3600  
24 in a decade. With ever-increasing frequency of  
25 climate events, the days of subsidized flood

1 insurance is over, in the wakes then, entire  
2 communities that need to be lifted to new base flood  
3 elevations or run the risk of homeowners foreclosing...  
4 pardon... [bell] or run the risk of the home become  
5 unaffordable and unmarketable, risking foreclosure  
6 and more abandoned homes. There are about eight more  
7 points that I would like to make, but...

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you and I  
10 will gladly take your testimony for the record here  
11 as well, so you could please submit whatever remarks  
12 you have, we'll take; we'll process them as well. So  
13 I definitely appreciate this panel for being here and  
14 I truly appreciate your patience and really, not just  
15 for this hearing, but for 16, 17 very long months and  
16 now we will hold this administration accountable to  
17 make sure that recovery and progress is felt by each  
18 and every one of these cases we've heard about today.  
19 Thank you very much as well for being here. I'd like  
20 to call up now the next panel, which I think will be  
21 the final panel and we'll begin Daniel Marzano, Felix  
22 Filler, if he's here, Reverend Jackson, Young Lee,  
23 and Meg Becker. [background comments] Thank you  
24 all, if you could please your right hands. Do you  
25 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth

1  
2 and nothing but the truth before our committees  
3 today? Thank you and I absolutely applaud all of you  
4 for sticking out and your patience today and we made  
5 a commitment to hear every single one of the people  
6 here today and we're keeping that. In addition to  
7 testimony we've received in advance, so I thank you  
8 all for your patience and please begin. Just  
9 announce your name and please begin your testimony.

10 MARGARET BECKER: Hi, my name is Margaret  
11 Becker; I'm the Director of the Disaster Recovery  
12 Unit at Staten Island Legal Services which is an  
13 office of Legal Service NYC, I'm sure you're all  
14 familiar with our work, since Sandy so far. Our  
15 offices in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island have  
16 helped over 4400 storm-affected homeowners and  
17 tenants. And to go to your point that you've been  
18 making continuously throughout the day about the need  
19 for advocates, Staten Island Legal Services is one of  
20 the organizations, nonprofits that Build it Back has  
21 recently brought in to try to fill that role and we  
22 have learned that it is an absolutely vital role but  
23 at the same time I wish that we were not needed and  
24 that can be accomplished by better training the front  
25 line Build it Back workers so that less confusion is

1  
2 created. But nonetheless, these are critical  
3 decisions that people are making that are very  
4 complex involving future affordability on a number of  
5 factors, so having advocates available I think is  
6 important. I've submitted 10 pages of testimony; I'm  
7 not gonna cover everything, I just wanted to hit a  
8 few issues that haven't been addressed so far; one of  
9 them is so simple, it is to remove the Sandy-affected  
10 properties from the tax and water lien sale that's  
11 gonna happen in May; we need to do that now, it's a  
12 no-brainer, it's simple, it just has to be done. The  
13 other... one of the other issues I wanted to address  
14 has to do with foreclosure; now Councilman Richards  
15 has raised the question of foreclosures stemming from  
16 Sandy, you're right that those are beginning, they  
17 have not hit yet in huge numbers, but they're coming,  
18 there are things we can do about that and I've talked  
19 about that in my testimony. The foreclosure... in my  
20 written testimony... the foreclosure issue I wanted to  
21 touch on to highlight today is another foreclosure  
22 issue and that is the effect of a foreclosure filing  
23 on your Build it Back eligibility. So right now if  
24 there is a lis pendens, an notice of pendency file on  
25 your property, your Build it Back application stalls.

Now the lease penance is the very first filing in a foreclosure case and to block all of those people from any recovery because there has been a foreclosure filing is not only vastly over-inclusive but it is a waste of resources. Now a lot of these filings are obsolete, so a huge number of the lis pendens that are hitting people's property and we know this as advocates for homeowners are from years ago when maybe that homeowner or a previous homeowner was in foreclosure the banks never removed those lis pendens after the foreclosure settled, so this is causing tremendous waste of resources both for nonprofits for also for Build it Back staff in clearing these foreclosures. But even if it is a still-active live foreclosure, a study by the Fuhrman Center has demonstrated that less than 20 percent of initial foreclosure filings result in the homeowner losing the home either to bank repossession or an auction. So we should not be basically preordaining those foreclosures to happen by preventing those people from getting any assistance at all, so I recommend that that lis pendens bar, that foreclosure bar, be entirely done away with, we cannot predict at this point who's gonna lose their home and who isn't.

1  
2 If that's unpalatable, it's possible to further  
3 narrow the category so that only those people who are  
4 at the end of foreclosure rather than the beginning  
5 are subject to that bar and you can do that by  
6 checking whether there's a judgment of foreclosure in  
7 sale entering. But this lis pendens bar really needs  
8 to be addressed quickly [bell]. The second issue is  
9 the one that Ilya mentioned before, is the need for  
10 elevation; we know that the Biggert-Waters 2012 Act  
11 was partially repealed; that's a temporary solution;  
12 these homes that are unelevated are gonna be  
13 unaffordable, leading to foreclosures and also  
14 unmarketable if we don't do something and so far  
15 Build it Back has not addressed this problem.  
16 Probably no more than 30 percent of current  
17 registrants are even gonna be eligible for elevation.  
18 We need to do that, we need more money to do that and  
19 there's ways for us to get more money to do that and  
20 I've listed these recommendations in my written  
21 testimony, but first of all, the stage allocated 51  
22 percent of the CDBGDR grant to home recovery, the  
23 city allocated 36.5 percent; if we match the state's  
24 allocation we get over \$900 million into the program.  
25



1  
2 We need more money for elevation and we can't  
3 continue to ignore that problem.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
5 much. And by the way, the council will be  
6 aggressively looking at ways to protect any property  
7 owners facing foreclosure as a result of Superstorm  
8 Sandy damage and we're looking at whether the city,  
9 state regs and banking regs and so forth, we will be  
10 aggressively looking at that and I thank you for your  
11 advocacy on that issue. Yes, please.

12 REV. JACKSON: Good afternoon. Thank you  
13 so much for your patience and for this opportunity to  
14 provide a testimony on behalf of some of the houses  
15 of worship and community-based organizations on  
16 Staten Island. My name is Rev. Karen Jackson, I am  
17 the Disaster Recovery Coordinator for the Staten  
18 Island Long Term Recovery Organization; it is a  
19 coalition of over 90 disaster recovery organizations  
20 active on Staten Island with 14 working committees  
21 and it is our mission to see that everyone impacted  
22 by Sandy on Staten Island finds stable housing,  
23 whether that's returning home or finding a rental  
24 that they can afford. So in addition to the  
25 recommendations that Margaret has made, the LTRO

1 would like to offer, very quickly, six additional  
2 suggestions. First we would ask that the city public  
3 release general needs assessment data and conduct  
4 additional needs assessments. For example, we'd like  
5 to know how the city determined that only 600  
6 households would be in need of TDAP assistance.  
7 Second, we ask that the city would allocate  
8 additional funding to the temporary disaster  
9 assistance program and improve access to TDAP. This  
10 is such an important point and it's one that I truly  
11 hope you will take with you today. Most of the  
12 people impacted by Sandy were renters, yet so many of  
13 our conversations are focused on homeowners and we  
14 believe that the \$19 million allocated for TDAP  
15 rental vouchers for those under 50 percent of the AMI  
16 doesn't come close to meeting the needs of Sandy-  
17 impacted renters. On Staten Island we found through  
18 a survey that people are paying on average \$200 more  
19 a month in rent and living in smaller spaces and what  
20 we've heard from our clients is that working with the  
21 TDAP system is just as frustrating with the amount of  
22 red tape required as it has been for homeowners  
23 dealing with Build it Back and my agency, Project  
24 Hospitality, has put out a lot of money to keep money  
25

1  
2 in hotels so that they don't become homeless as  
3 they're waiting for their TDAP vouchers. Third, we  
4 strongly believe that undocumented immigrants should  
5 and can be included in TDAP, we're encouraged to hear  
6 that private funds are being raised, but like  
7 Susannah said, we believe that New York City has the  
8 opportunity to set a precedent for using federal  
9 funds for undocumented people because it is short-  
10 term, no cash, in kind emergency disaster relief.  
11 Most importantly, the LTR urges the city of New York  
12 to use this moment in time to replace and develop  
13 affordable housing stock in New York City, housing  
14 that is affordable to the people already living and  
15 working in Sandy-impacted areas is the key to helping  
16 both individuals recover from this storm and to  
17 fostering resiliency in the face of future disasters.  
18 And then our final ask is that the city would engage  
19 community members, long-term recovery groups and  
20 other CBOs involved in disaster recovery more deeply  
21 in decision-making processes; I've heard that this is  
22 something everyone values and it is something that  
23 Mayor de Blasio, in his role as the public advocate  
24 said we needed to focus on and yet it still remains  
25 to be seen what those partnerships might look like in

1  
2 a more formalized way. Our LTRO members have rebuilt  
3 over 1,000 homes on Staten Island, over 1,000 homes;  
4 we are the boots on the ground and we know the people  
5 in need, we see their disillusionment with the Build  
6 it Back program, so please don't neglect to use our  
7 local knowledge, because we all wanna get people back  
8 home. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Excellent. Thank  
10 you very much. Thank you.

11 YOUNG LEE: My name is Young Lee and I'm  
12 an attorney with the Legal Aid Society; I'd like to  
13 thank Chairperson Treyger and Chairperson Richards  
14 and all the other members of the committees here for  
15 giving us an opportunity to give testimony today. In  
16 my testimony I have identified problems that I think  
17 have been talked about all day, so I'm not gonna go  
18 over that; I'm just gonna talk very briefly  
19 specifically about one client that we have that I  
20 think really illustrates what the problems are. He  
21 is a 70-year-old retired New York City public teacher  
22 who owns an HDFC low-income co-op in the Rockaways.  
23 After Sandy his home, along with 12 other ground  
24 floor apartments or co-ops were just completely  
25 destroyed and he has been displaced ever since. So

1 the problems that he is going through at this point  
2 is, shortly after the storm he found out that his co-  
3 op board did not properly insure the building, so no  
4 repairs could be made at that point. Unfortunately  
5 him homeowners couldn't pay him because he's a  
6 shareholder in a co-op, so that wasn't a route to go  
7 to. He individually could not apply for Build it  
8 Back and had to go through the co-op board, so he is  
9 now facing foreclosure, which actually a couple of  
10 other units on that floor, a couple of his neighbors  
11 have already gone through 'cause he can't pay a  
12 mortgage, rent, increased co-op assessment,  
13 maintenance, so on and so forth. And so he is  
14 exactly the type of person that I think the Build it  
15 Back program... unfortunately he doesn't fit in  
16 anywhere nicely, co-ops are unique to New York City,  
17 and particularly in HDFCs which are low-income co-ops  
18 that are run, sometimes not as well as maybe other  
19 co-ops, 'cause they don't have the expertise; this  
20 has been a big problem and he is thinking that he's  
21 gonna have to leave New York City, which would be  
22 unfortunate for a lifelong New Yorker and a public  
23 servant, a lifelong public servant of New York City.  
24 So we have some recommendations that we think that  
25

1  
2 can increase the efficacy of the program: One is to  
3 reopen registration, we've all talked about that, two  
4 is to create a provision that landlords maintain  
5 affordable housing if they're gonna use funds to  
6 repair housing, for at least 15 years, so it can't  
7 just be a one and done thing, it should be something  
8 can sustain affordable housing in these communities.  
9 Number three is to streamline administration; we've  
10 talked about that a lot, about setting up individual  
11 directors in boroughs; it would be ideal if there was  
12 a team that could only take a limited number of Build  
13 it Back registrants and could actually work with that  
14 individual person from beginning to end so they're  
15 not handed off to a different person on each step of  
16 the way. Four is just to release the funds, we need  
17 to get some money flowing. Number five is to provide  
18 temporary rental assistance to homeowners during the  
19 repair process and that's been talked about here.  
20 Number six is to provide temporary rental assistance  
21 to low-income renters immediately; I think as we've  
22 talked about on this panel, we are just concerned  
23 about the fact that it does seem like the number of  
24 TDAP vouchers that have been issued is just not  
25 sufficient enough to meet the need; we don't know

1  
2 where the numbers came from, we don't know why only  
3 really right now only a handful of these vouchers  
4 have been used 'cause there is a need out there. And  
5 lastly is to... for Build it Back to think about  
6 creating some kind of appeals process. In our  
7 experience at the Legal Aid Society, when we were  
8 dealing with hundreds of Sandy victims who were  
9 placed into the city's hotel shelter program many of  
10 those people were being denied TDAP and there was no  
11 adequate or defined appeals process for those  
12 denials, which led to weeks of working things out;  
13 eventually there was actually a lawsuit involved and  
14 to sort of stem this problem at the beginning where  
15 we could have it define appeals process, I think we  
16 can help everybody move things along smoothly.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
18 much, I truly appreciate that. Next. Thank you very  
19 much.

20 DAN MARZANO: Good afternoon, my name is  
21 Dan Marzano; I'm a resident of Belle Harbor, single-  
22 family house owner. I just wanted to bring up a few  
23 points; a lot of my points were brought up today by  
24 other previous people from Gerritsen Beach and Broad  
25 Channel and the surrounding areas, Red Hook. I just

1  
2 wanna give you my quick story with my dealings with  
3 Build it Back.

4 I made the application 8-13-2013, did it  
5 in Fort Tilden, I applied, I was told somebody would  
6 get in touch with me; I was told by my... a lot of  
7 information has been good in our local newspaper,  
8 which is the Wave out of Rockaways, Mr. Richards and  
9 Mr. Ulrich, both of my council members in my  
10 district, are very good with gettin' the information  
11 out, the editor's been very good. In December there  
12 was a blurb in there about, go check out your  
13 information, see if it's updated. I didn't here... get  
14 a call from Build it Back, nothin' like that, I went  
15 on my own to Arverne, the intake person was very  
16 nice, she said, we need this form updated, this form  
17 updated, some forms have changed. Find. On the F13  
18 there were some things highlighted, as you can all  
19 see here, Vernella [phonetic] Jones was the intake  
20 person, she said, have this ready for when they come  
21 for the assessment, have it filled out and we'll go  
22 from there, receipts, everything else. They scanned  
23 and did everything from the beginning, scanned  
24 everything again and one of the things on the  
25 application is: are you or any member of your



1 household an employee of New York City? I checked  
2 off yes, I am a New York City firefighter, still  
3 active 27 years. So they have my information. So  
4 what happened December of 2013 in Arverne, I thought  
5 my information was good. I go to a meeting, which  
6 was called by the local homeowner's association,  
7 Build it Back came back, PS 114 in Belle Harbor. The  
8 form is new now, F13, it's consolidated, which is  
9 probably easier, I didn't know I had to update the  
10 form; I found out at a meeting again. I'm getting no  
11 emails; I mean this... I'm in the system, I'm an  
12 employee of the New York City Fire Department, I'm  
13 not going anywhere. So it just seems like the  
14 scrutiny of everything and the money, it's just  
15 absurd, as Jonathan Gaska said earlier from my  
16 community board. I'm still waiting for a damage  
17 assessment visit; I am in priority 3, my wife and I  
18 work full-time, we make too much money. I do not  
19 agree that this program should be about your  
20 household income. The next thing was, Rapid Repair,  
21 I chose not to have Rapid Repair come into my house,  
22 I needed my house up and running, to preserve it with  
23 heat and everything else, so I wouldn't have broken  
24 pipes, with the mold and everything else goin', I  
25

1  
2 didn't want Build it Back in my house... I'm sorry,  
3 Rapid Repair and I'm glad I did not have them in my  
4 house. I laid out money in the beginning for Rapid  
5 Repair for the utilities: gas, boiler, hot water  
6 heater and electrical. I didn't get reimburse from a  
7 lot of that money; I had flood insurance and I have  
8 homeowners insurance; what I'm asking here today and  
9 I've asked... Mr. Richards knows this and Eric knows  
10 this, at other meetings I brought up... I brought it up  
11 to Miss Mallon at the other meeting and Morgan Jones:  
12 I'm in priority 3, it's probably not gonna change,  
13 but I don't know what's gonna happen till the  
14 assessor comes out to my house. I can't make a  
15 decision from that. I wanna know is, can I get a  
16 special reimbursement for not using Rapid Repair and  
17 get that money without having to wait in priority 3?  
18 I've been askin' this before and a lot of people in  
19 the audience have yelled and cheered, fine. The next  
20 thing is on the... I just lost my place here for one  
21 second, just bear with me... I thought my family and I  
22 have done the right thing; I'm there 25 years in  
23 Belle Harbor in the Rockaways, we love the community  
24 from Far Rock to Breezy Point to Broad Channel. We  
25 did the right thing -- flood insurance, homeowners

1 insurance, this and that -- I didn't take... I had two  
2 months... I had only seven months of FEMA money, I  
3 couldn't get more 'cause all this documentation,  
4 blah, blah, blah, this and that. We did the right  
5 thing, I didn't take a FEMA loan [bell] I didn't want  
6 any other loans. People got money that did not have  
7 flood insurance, they got FEMA grant money and they  
8 got the HUD grant money; this is HUD money now, maybe  
9 the money should be even distrib... or give everybody a  
10 piece, give everybody \$10,000 right now, maybe, I  
11 don't think that's gonna happen, but why this long  
12 wait and it seems like the wait is gonna get longer  
13 'cause I'm in priority 3; I understand you have to  
14 accept new people, put the word out there and have  
15 more... I just hope all the people that are in the  
16 system right now can be taken care of before we put  
17 it out again and start getting the people that we  
18 missed, fine, whatever reason they missed it for --  
19 language problems, you know the media and everything  
20 like that. And in finishing up, I appreciate the  
21 council, Mr. Donovan who's my next door councilman,  
22 Mr. Ulrich, Amy for coming by. Amy, you've got a big  
23 job ahead of you, please fix this, 'cause I have no  
24 other options. I'm relying on Build it Back money  
25

1  
2 'cause I forgo and not taken out any other loans; I  
3 would like this money. It's not as much as a lot of  
4 those people who have structural damage, I may have  
5 structural damage, they threw me in priority 3 'cause  
6 of reimbursement and salary; you guys have to change  
7 this, it has to be changed, I know you're listening  
8 to us, I know that the guys up here, the board,  
9 ladies and gentlemen are listenin' to us up here,  
10 please don't forget us, forget anybody in this por...  
11 let's start the money comin', when Rapid Repair came,  
12 that money was quick to be given out and given to  
13 everybody, it should work the same now for Build it  
14 Back. Thank you for listening to me; everybody have  
15 a great day. [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I absolutely... very,  
17 very effective and thank you for your testimony and  
18 for the recognition of the council members who have  
19 put in a lot of time and effort and stayed here all  
20 day, but also have been the de facto case managers  
21 for many of these families for over 16, 17 months and  
22 we will... by the way, this committee, I could tell you  
23 that we will be looking at how other parts of the  
24 state faired after the disaster. We keep hearing  
25 reports how communities in Long Island and other

1 parts were moving a little bit faster, well what are  
2 they doing; are we communicating with them; are we  
3 turn keying best practices to cut through red tape to  
4 provide assistance immediately as fast as possible to  
5 all impacted families and I agree with you sir, that  
6 we need to make sure that those who have applied  
7 first get expedited and get services and of course,  
8 to those who we've missed and we missed them... I mean  
9 we heard testimony from a young lady before that  
10 she's still homeless, she's still displaced and she  
11 had no knowledge of this program. So I agree, this  
12 is a monumental effort. This committee will be  
13 continuously having oversight hearings over the  
14 status of Build it Back, this is not the last time  
15 we'll be having a hearing over Build it Back program  
16 and other parts to it because I think again, there  
17 are so many parts to this recovery, as mentioned,  
18 there are parts in my district that even if you  
19 rebuild a home, what sewer are you gonna attach it to  
20 when the sewers have been destroyed? So there's a  
21 lot of pieces here and that's why I appreciate that  
22 the administration now has a Sandy point person, Mr.  
23 Goldstein, who I expect will be in future hearings  
24 here and I wanna publicly thank Amy Peterson for  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date        May 1, 2014