

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

Committee on Finance Jointly with the Committee on  
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International  
Intergroup Relations and the Subcommittee on  
Libraries

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February 24, 2015  
Start: 10:15 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

JULISSA FERRERAS  
Chairperson

James G. Van Bramer  
Majority Leader

COSTA G. CONSTANTINIDES  
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

COREY D. JOHNSON  
HELEN K. ROSETHAL  
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YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ  
KARE KOSLOWITZ  
RORY I. LANCMAN  
COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)  
VINCENT GENTILE

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Good morning and  
welcome to today's hearing on the, on the support  
of public libraries in the administration's  
preliminary 10 year capital plan. I am Julissa  
Ferrerias and I am the chair of the Finance  
Committee. This hearing is being jointly held with  
the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
International Intergroup Relations chaired by  
Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer as well as the  
Subcommittee on Libraries chaired by Costa  
Constantinides. I want to thank everyone for  
joining us today. We've been joined by Council  
Member Constantinides, Rosenthal, Cornegy, and  
Majority Leader Van Bramer. Today we will examine  
the capital need of New York City's public  
libraries and discuss whether the administration  
recently released preliminary 10 year plan for  
fiscal year 2016 through 2025 adequately addresses  
those needs. First I'd like to thank the staff of  
the Finance Division and the Legislative Division  
for working hard to prepare for this hearing.  
Specifically I'd like to thank my Chief Council  
Tanisha Edwards, Assistant Council Rebecca Chasten,

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and Finance Analyst Alijah Ali and Council to the  
Cultural Affairs Committee Eric Bernstein and  
Policy Analyst Tanya Cyrus. By way of the brief,  
brief background the city's public library services  
are provided through three independent systems, the  
Brooklyn Public Library, the Queens Borough Public  
Library and the New York Public Library which  
serves the boroughs of Manhattan, Staten Island,  
and the Bronx. Cumulatively the three library  
systems operate 207 local library branches  
throughout the city and four research library  
centers in Manhattan. Three library systems are  
independent non-profit corporations. However a  
substantial portion of their funding comes from the  
city in the form of tax levy funds for operational  
support and capital funds for maintenance and the  
creation of new branches. On February 9<sup>th</sup> the mayor  
released his preliminary 10 year capital plan for  
fiscal year 2016 through 2025 for the entire city  
including the library systems. Over the course of  
those 10 years the administration has committed to  
a total of 62.3 million dollars. This amount is in  
addition to the 534 million dollars committed in  
fiscal year 2015 which is not included in the ten

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year plan. While I understand that the amount  
committed in 2016 and beyond is likely to increase  
since a significant portion of the funds per fiscal  
2015 are assumed to roll over into fiscal year 2016  
it is my belief that the amount allocated to the  
libraries in this plan is inadequately low. As  
everyone may recall in December the Committee on  
Cultural Affairs and the Subcommittee on Libraries  
held a hearing focused on the capital needs of the  
libraries. The three library system testified about  
their pressing capital needs and the hearing also  
focused on a report issued by the center of Urban  
Future which documented a staggering 1.1 billion  
dollar in capital needs. With the 534 million  
dollars committed to fiscal 2025 and the 62.3  
million dollars committed in the preliminary 10  
year plan only about half of the library's capital  
needs are currently being funded. I look forward to  
hearing from testimony from the administration as  
to how they plan to address this gap in necessary  
funding as well as from the libraries to better  
explain their library needs. During last year's  
budget season the council urged the administration  
to increase funding to the three library systems.

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Ultimately the funding increased slightly between  
the preliminary and the executive budgets however  
the libraries did not receive as much as the  
council had hoped they would. It is our hope that  
this year after this hearing after the preliminary  
budget hearing and after the council's budget  
response funding for the three library systems in  
the executive budget will be satisfactorily  
reflected in their capital needs. Before I turn the  
mic over to my co-chairs I just want to make it  
clear that the council is mindful that the  
preliminary budget plan was released two weeks ago  
and the administration did not expect to testify on  
the plan prior to the libraries preliminary budget  
hearing which will be held on March, next, will,  
the... sorry... our preliminary budget hearing which  
will be held next on March 20<sup>th</sup>. As a result we  
will, we are sensitive to the fact that not all the  
questions asked by the committee today will receive  
deliberative answers. However it is my hope that  
most of our questions will either be addressed  
today or in response to a follow-up letter sent to  
the administration and definitely by the executive  
budget. I will now turn the mic over to the

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Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer and then Council  
Member Costa Constantinides to make statements. And  
then we will hear testimony from the administration  
and representatives of each of the library systems.  
Majority Leader Van Bramer.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Chair Ferreras for jointly holding this  
very important hearing and to our other chair Costa  
Constantinides who also cares passionately about  
libraries and to all the members and also to all  
the library advocates who are here. This hearing is  
about getting some answers on the 10 year capital  
plan for libraries but also about demonstrating our  
collective support for libraries. And if you  
believe that libraries should get more funding you  
can raise your hands like this right now. If  
everybody in this crowd believes that... I want to  
thank all of you for being here. Look there's  
something I think that everybody here knows which  
is libraries are indispensable. They are essential  
in every single neighborhood in New York City. And  
the truth is they're only getting more essential  
every single day. For generations libraries have  
helped new immigrants, new Americans to find the

American dream here. Today libraries are doing  
that, playing an indispensable role in the new  
municipal IDNYC card launch which has been so  
widely successful, libraries serving as where, as  
the place where folks can register to get their  
card. Libraries are the place where entrepreneurs  
go, where seniors go, where everyone goes to learn,  
to read, to grow. And this administration has been  
so right in tackling inequality in all of its forms  
and supporting institutions and places that support  
that war on inequality. That war on inequality must  
include libraries because libraries are the front  
line troops in making sure that people can live  
better lives. And we all need to win this epic  
battle against inequality and poverty. And  
libraries must be included in that battle in a very  
meaningful way. That involves the expense budget  
which Chair Ferreras alluded to but it also  
includes the capital plan because the physical  
plant of these libraries is so critically important  
to fulfilling that mission where a child today in  
Cambria Heights will go to read and a senior in  
Brooklyn Heights will go to read the paper. That is  
so essential that we take care of these libraries.



We know that the plan as released preliminary  
includes a disappointingly low figure for  
libraries. It is not what we need. It does not get  
us to the place where we need to be. Now I'm  
hopeful that through this process we will come to a  
better place. And somewhere bridge the gap that  
exists today between 1.1 billion dollars in need  
and the amount of money that is currently in the 10  
year capital plan for libraries. We have got to get  
to a place where libraries, which are city owned  
buildings, these are city owned buildings like any  
other, are taken care of, are invested in just like  
any other city owned property. This is not a  
handout to libraries. This is an investment in city  
owned property that is absolutely essential to the  
wellbeing of every neighborhood in New York City.  
This is an investment we have to make. This is an  
investment that the administration needs to make  
clear because a plan, a budget, is more than just a  
series of numbers. It's about a vision, it's about  
values, it's about strategy. And there is no way  
that we can have budgets or capital plans that do  
not address the needs of libraries because  
libraries are an essential part of the vision of

the city. They are an essential part of what we value and what, what our values mean and how they are demonstrated. So I look forward to hearing from the administration today. And I know we may not have all of the answers but I hope that we can have meaningful discussion about how we get to where we need to go. We're not there today with 62 million dollars. We know what the need is and we have to start addressing this in a very public way that speaks to what we know the vast majority of New Yorkers want and need in their neighborhoods. We know that if you poll libraries and library services and the value of libraries that the people of the city of New York speak very loudly with one very clear voice and that is that they support their neighborhood libraries, they want their libraries invested in, their tax dollars which they work very hard to pay must be invested in libraries and this capital plan must address that. So I want to thank all of the folks who helped make this possible. I look forward to asking some challenging questions to the administration before we hear from our three terrific library systems. But we've got to do this now. We have to do this no, now. There

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is no more punting or kicking the can down the  
road. Libraries need to be funded appropriately  
today. With that I want to call on our Co-Chair  
Council Member Costa Constantinides to say a few  
words.

CO-CHAIR CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you  
Chair Ferreras and Chair Van Bramer for your strong  
leadership for libraries and all that you do for  
the people of the city of New York. Good morning. I  
am Costa Constantinides, Chair of the Subcommittee  
on Libraries. Thank you all for coming to this  
hearing... look at the city's 10 year capital plan  
for libraries. New York's three library system  
provide essential programs and services to  
communities throughout New York City. Yet as we  
heard in December they have significant long term  
capital needs that remain unaddressed. The center  
for Urban Futures, September 2014 report  
reenvisioning New York's branch libraries did an  
important job in highlighting just how critical  
these needs are. It found an estimated 1.1 billion  
in capital needs across 178 branches or 86 percent  
of all locations in New York City. While usage of  
the city's three library systems had increased the

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library systems are struggling to keep many of the  
older branches in a good state of repair. At the  
December hearing we heard from the libraries as the  
number of difficulties that resulted from  
insufficient capital funding including damaged  
infrastructure and closings due to aging systems.  
Each cited the need for hundreds of millions of  
dollars in capital funding over the next 10 years  
to bring their libraries into proper state. The  
administration's recently released a preliminary 10  
year capital plan. It's an important step in a  
conversation on how we will ensure as Chair Van  
Bramer talked about we will have a long term  
strategy which prioritized libraries and recognizes  
essential role they play in our communities.  
Providing libraries with sufficient capital funding  
for them to maintain and improve their facilities  
is essential for allowing them to continue to serve  
their communities in the most meaningful way  
possible. As the Chair of Subcommittee on Libraries  
it is extremely important to me and to everyone I  
think here that this city have a clear and  
effective long term strategy for supporting our  
library systems. Today I look forward to hearing

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from the administration about its goals for the  
future of our libraries and our city, from the  
library systems on whether the proposed plan  
reflects their concern of priorities and for the  
advocates on how the city can greater, provide  
greater support to libraries to meet their needs.  
And finally I'll throw in that as we look to a  
greener future, as we, an environmental future  
making sure that our libraries are part of that and  
ensuring that our children are learning about being  
green but also the libraries they're learning in  
can be part of that green future. But when we have,  
when we struggle to have capital needs to keep the  
lights on and, and the, the roofs from leaking  
asking them to be part of that green future is, is  
extremely complicated. And I think together we have  
to find that path. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you Chair.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Fingers fingers,  
we have do this.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you. Thank  
you. We, we are very motivated when you do that but

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we just have to be a little quieter. I think it's  
because it doesn't translate into the, into the  
transcript. Okay so we're going to hear from the  
administration fired, followed by the three library  
systems and you may begin your testimony? I'm,  
we're going to have our council swear you in.

COUNCIL: Would you raise your right  
hand please? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
whole truth and nothing but the truth in your  
testimony before this committee and to respond  
honestly to council member questions?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I do.

COUNCIL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you and  
we've been joined by Council Member Johnson. You  
may begin.

Good morning Chairperson Ferreras,  
Chairperson Van Bramer, Chairperson Constantinides  
and members of the council. I'm Larian Angelo. I'm  
a Deputy Director at the Office of Management and  
Budget. On behalf of Dean Fuleihan I would like to  
thank the committee chairs for holding a joint  
hearing on this important issue and thank you for  
inviting OMB to testify. Libraries are an important

part of the fabric of the community and will  
continue to play a crucial role in addressing some  
of the city's most pressing issues in areas such as  
but not limited to education and workforce  
development. With the launch of the city's new  
municipal ID card last month IDNYC even more New  
Yorkers will have easier access to the resources at  
all three library systems. Just one of the many  
benefits of the IDNYC program. With over 200  
buildings and 36 million visitors annually it is  
not surprising that the three library systems have  
substantial capital needs. In the preliminary  
financial plan that was just published the capital  
commitment plan lists the three library system as  
having combined authorized city capital commitments  
of over four, 500 million dollars for fiscal year  
2015. This ranks the libraries 8<sup>th</sup> out of 24  
agencies in general obligation, GO funding in the  
current fiscal year placing them in the top one-  
third of capital funding for this year. As is the  
case with most agencies the three library systems  
tend to frontload funding for capital projects. And  
there's a little over 60 million as the chairs  
pointed out in GO funding in the preliminary 10

1 year capital strategy for fiscal years 2016 through  
2 2025. For fiscal year 2015 mayoral funding accounts  
3 for 223 million city council funding accounts for  
4 193 million and borough president funding accounts  
5 for 87 million. To conclude I would urge the  
6 council to keep in mind that we're talking about  
7 the preliminary 10 year capital strategy and I'm  
8 happy to hear all of the council members note that.  
9 It is the beginning not the end of a budget  
10 conversation that will involve the administration,  
11 the council, the borough presidents during the  
12 executive budget and budget adoption. Thank you for  
13 your time and attention during this testimony and  
14 I'm happy to take questions at this time. But I  
15 will say that with all of the library systems here  
16 I'm sure they will have much more cogent answers  
17 than I will.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay. Well thank  
20 you and, and as I said in my testimony I do  
21 acknowledge that this was just released and as you  
22 stated this is the beginning of the end. But I got  
23 to say I think this is the shortest statement I've  
24 ever gotten from an administration's side of the  
25 table ever. So I'm hoping that this will allow for



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the much needed dialogue. And that although the  
opening statement was short that our conversations  
can continue as we go through this process.

LARIAN ANGELO: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Because at the  
end of the day, we are here today because I think  
the three library systems want to do the  
responsible thing. They want to plan. They want to  
have a capital plan that's reflective of their  
needs. And if we, if any of us were executive  
directors, if any of us were running any of these  
systems it's what we would, it's what our community  
wants, it's what our employees expect, it's what  
our users demand. So I think it's only right and  
has been said by the co-chairs that we have the  
dollar amount to be able to help them plan out the  
years. Now in your testimony you stated that there  
is, they're the 8<sup>th</sup> out of the 24 city agencies...  
would you know who are the first seven? Would you...  
[cross-talk] So that we know who we have to beat  
out.

[laughter]

LARIAN ANGELO: Yeah I, I was assuming  
that was what you were saying. Education... this is

2015 only, Education, Parks and Recreation,  
Transportation, Economic Development, Citywide  
Computer Purchases which may have some library  
money in there, Cultural Affairs, and Housing, and  
then Libraries. City funding only.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay. Thank you.  
This helps us so that when we have our preliminary  
budget hearings we're able to, to reference those  
numbers. So thank you. I know that we talked about  
briefly about rollovers in some of our statements  
but while rollovers in the capital spending is  
assumed and expected by providing the libraries  
with almost no capital funding in the out years of  
the plan the administration does not allow the  
libraries to do any cyclical replacements of  
building systems and provides little or no  
incentive for strategic planning for the future.  
What portion of FY15's capital commitment do you  
expect to rollover to FY16 for the Brooklyn,  
Queens, and New York libraries?

LARIAN ANGELO: I, as an estimate I  
would say about 400 million. But I'm sure the  
library systems can give you a more accurate  
understanding of that.

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CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay well we'll  
follow-up with them. So we say on average there's  
like a 10 percent that is actually spent in the, in  
the fiscal year?

LARIAN ANGELO: No, about 20 percent.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay. And  
additionally most of the funds I the plan are for  
essential reconstruction of facilities will the  
funds that are likely rolled over be rolled over  
for a similar purpose?

LARIAN ANGELO: That, that can be hard  
to say. I mean every capital project is different,  
some are more complex than others. My assumption  
would be, and again the libraries can probably give  
you a better answer than I would, the, some of the  
renovation projects may be easier to undertake than  
the more fundamental building of buildings. So as  
you did your visioning for, for the ten year  
capital plan a lot of this is about reconstruction,  
is there a portion of your visioning that you  
actually just say we need additional buildings.  
These libraries are, are, they just have a lot of  
usage. Where, where in your preliminary, or where  
in your strategic plan when you're talking about

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the 10 year capital plan when it talk, when we're  
talking about in reference to libraries do you put  
expansion or just, not even just doing the  
emergency repairs but how do we build for the  
future?

LARIAN ANGELO: We asked the systems to  
tell us their priorities and not unexpectedly  
Queens has the most need for expansion. Because  
Queens has the most need for expansion in virtually  
everything. The population is bursting at the seams  
and we see it in education, etcetera. So for Queens  
there was a priority to expand, the other library  
systems, less so.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I think they  
probably will testify a little differently as soon  
as you're...

[laughter]

LARIAN ANGELO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: But I hope that  
there's someone from the administration that will  
stay because I think it's important that you also  
hear directly from the libraries what they're  
experience is. Because I believe the expansion is  
probably more necessary. But if you say what's

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urgent you, of course you're going to want to do  
repairs before you build a new building because the  
roof is coming in so that becomes urgent.

LARIAN ANGELO: If I may...

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Yes.

LARIAN ANGELO: I understand that the,  
the infrastructure of the libraries is overall  
middle aged if not elderly.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Right.

LARIAN ANGELO: I mean it's somewhere...  
you know there are many buildings over 40 years  
old, some of them over 85 years old.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Exactly.

LARIAN ANGELO: So it's a, it's an aging  
infrastructure and it needs a lot of repair. And  
it, it's always hard to say when is it better to  
just knock the old thing down and put up a new  
building. I think that the issue with Queens though  
may be that the expanding population is requiring  
more library buildings not just repair of the older  
ones, although I'm sure they have both needs.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: And I think we,  
we get that, especially since all three of the  
chairs are from Queens.

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LARIAN ANGELO: Right.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: And we're all in  
neighboring districts so we all understand the  
expansion because it's all rolling over from one  
district to another. In the rollover do you see,  
can you speak of any projects that you may know  
that will have an impact that we would, that you'll  
see that there're projects that are going to have  
to be rolled over, that we can expect to have them  
be rolled over?

LARIAN ANGELO: Unfortunately I think  
the council will need to ask the Department of  
Design and Construction since they're the  
fundamental construction managers for the...

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay.

LARIAN ANGELO: ...libraries projects.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Well we have  
oversight in this committee of DDC. Now if you  
could just speak to the actual 62.3 million  
dollars. I'm sure the library systems did not ask  
for 62.3. You, that's the number that you gave. How  
did you get to this number and what portion of that  
did you think, or do you see that's even going to  
be spent...

LARIAN ANGELO: I think that once again  
this is the beginning of the conversation, not the  
end of a conversation. And without a doubt as you  
state correctly the libraries did not ask for 62  
million dollars. But there will be you know more of  
a conversation with the council, with the borough  
presidents and with the libraries themselves. And  
the assumption is between now and the executive  
budget and now and adoption that will change.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: My only concern  
and, and you know we're going to continue the  
negotiations but it's just we're so far off in the  
starting of this. So it would be one thing, and  
I've been part of several negotiations, several  
executive budgets, several opportunities where  
we're able to debate different numbers. If you're  
telling me we're off by a couple of million  
understood. But we are so far off from 62.3 to 1.1  
billion. I'm very concerned as to what you may  
think is a middle ground because I am not, you know  
I have a, we have a very hard time understanding to  
even begin to negotiate at 62.3 because that's just  
not even where we wanted to be in the start of this  
whole negotiation. And, and that is very concerning

to us. So I mean I would almost say, and while,  
while I respect of course that the administration  
put this money in we're not zeroed out which I  
think would have been awful but it's almost as if  
we are is what I'm saying. So as we move forward  
with these conversations that number isn't anywhere  
near... I think it might meet the need of one  
emergency library system, one. And where do we  
leave with the other three. But I want to give  
opening up questionings to my colleagues so then  
we'll come back for a second round for Majority  
Leader Van Bramer. We've been joined by Council  
Members Crowley and Koo.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Madam Chair and I'd like to continue  
along that line. I'm sure you're familiar with this  
in... for Urban Future's report of 1.1 billion...

LARIAN ANGELO: Somewhat familiar yes.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Do you in  
any way dispute the, the needs of libraries in  
terms of the capital that's been laid out in that  
report?

LARIAN ANGELO: I have no major... I mean  
this is not a tremendous area of expertise for e



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but I read the report. It seemed cogent and to the  
point and I don't think at this point I would raise  
a major criticism of the report.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: So if, if  
we could all agree that there's probably at least a  
1.1 billion dollar need for libraries which again  
with, with a few exceptions are city owned  
buildings and city owned properties. Then as Chair  
Ferrerias said we are a grand canyon away in terms  
of 1.1 billion in need and the 62 million that is  
in the 10 year plan. You mentioned before that  
libraries didn't ask for 62 million dollars. I know  
that there's been some discussion between the  
libraries and the administration about just what is  
the need. How much have libraries asked you for and  
how far short are you with the 62 million dollars?

LARIAN ANGELO: My understanding is the  
libraries asked for 1.4 billion in addition to the  
500 million or so, probably 400 million that will  
rollover from 15 to 16. So it would appear that as  
a whole package for the 10 year plan as it would  
turn out they're a bit above what the Center for  
Urban Future recommended.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: And given  
that you don't dispute the, the CUF report and  
you've worked with the three library systems as  
well we could probably also agree that the 1.4  
billion that's being asked are a legitimate  
projects that are necessary and, and could be  
funded.

LARIAN ANGELO: I haven't reviewed every  
project but my assumption would be most of them are  
necessary, probably almost all of them are  
legitimate in terms of being eligible for capital  
funding although that's a, as you know a very  
complex review process.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Do you  
think that the 10 year capital plan at this point  
addresses the needs of our public library systems.  
I think the 10 year capital, the preliminary 10  
year capital strategy is just that. It is  
preliminary. And many agencies will also come  
before you as the budget process moves on and talk  
about the needs that they have as well. So I think  
as I said it's the beginning of a process, not the  
end. The other, the other issue I would raise and  
having spoken with Chairman Constan [phonetic],

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Constan, I'm sorry, Constantinides is we also have  
a Plan NYC process going on. And the assumption is  
that at a certain point the recommendations of Plan  
NYC will be meshed with the 10 year capital plan  
and some of the priorities in Plan NYC have been  
energy efficiency, the greenness resiliency, and  
equality. So my assumption would be at least part  
of the libraries... the discussion of the libraries'  
needs will find its way into Plan NYC.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: I hear  
that. But with every plan that you release, even if  
it's preliminary you have an opportunity to make a  
statement. You have an opportunity to make a  
statement about this particular area. We all agree  
I think the importance of libraries. So if we know  
if the need is somewhere between 1.1 and 1.4  
billion dollars why not is this administration  
taking the opportunity to meaningfully include  
libraries in the capital plan. Even at the  
preliminary stage we are so far apart. It seems to  
me like a lost opportunity for this administration  
to make a very clear statement about how you feel  
about libraries.

LARAIN ANGELO: Again I think the  
administration would be happy to work with the  
council, the borough presidents, and the libraries  
to actualize their needs in the plan.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Well we, I  
look forward to having that discussion. But along  
those lines of the 503 million dollars that, that  
you talk about the roughly 504 million dollars, 280  
of that is either from the city council or the  
borough presidents, 223 million from the  
administration. Of the 24 agencies or even in the  
seven that are above libraries in the plan are the  
breakouts similar where, where the city council and  
the borough presidents are providing more funding  
than the administration of the entire city of New  
York.

LARAIN ANGELO: I suspect not. In some  
agencies it may be close but in many agencies it  
would not be.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: So I just  
want to, I, I don't think so right? I think we kind  
of agree that that's not usual. This is a rare  
circumstance where again city owned buildings,  
we're investing in our city's infrastructure. The

city council and the borough presidents are actually picking up the majority of funding that is going into these buildings, not the administration. That is a fundamental imbalance that should be corrected. The administration should be putting in far more dollars than the city council and borough presidents are able to given your budget and our budgets. And, and that inequity really needs to be addressed. I don't believe that that is a typical or customary situation at all. So if this is a preliminary strategy and we're all going to keep talking and, and working on this do we have a commitment from this administration that this is the year when we are going to make sure that capital needs of libraries are met and, and if not when are we going to this, when are we going to do what I think all of us agree needs to be done right? I don't think that you or, or anyone in the administration doubts this need or, or wants to fulfil this need. But at the end of the day the question is when are we going to fulfil this need?

LARAIN ANGELO: If I can just swing back a little bit to your statement immediately prior to this there's really, there's really only one budget

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in the city of New York and it's a budget we all  
share. And just because an amount, an amount of  
funding appears in the preliminary budget doesn't  
really make it administration funding. And just  
because an amount of funding appears at exact or at  
adoption doesn't really make it city council  
funding. There's really only one budget. And there  
are many times especially now that the budget dance  
is winding down where items will appear in the  
preliminary budget and that are at the request or  
at the urging of the council. So there really is  
only one budget.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: I hear what  
you're saying Larian and I know you've been doing  
this for a very long time and I, and I respect your  
knowledge of the process. The bottom line is that  
the administration can and should be putting more  
money for capital into libraries. That can be done.  
Where there's the will there's the way. And we, we  
just simply have to do it for all of these folks  
here and for everybody in the city of New York the  
eight million plus folks who are behind these  
folks, right, who aren't here today but who if you  
asked them should my library be improved or

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expanded, should it get new windows and doors,  
should it have an HVAC system that works they would  
say absolutely yes right? This is...

[applause]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
for your enthusiasm but we'll try and keep the, the  
hands and the fingers up and, and you know I, I'll  
end, end this round there. But I, I just want to  
say again you know this administration has done  
amazing things in terms of focusing on inequality  
in the city of New York. That is a progressive and  
bold agenda that I share incredibly so. And, and  
you know I ran for office because I believe in  
libraries and, and have experience in libraries and  
I know the power of libraries. And in terms of  
addressing inequality no one does it in my  
estimation more comprehensively and better than  
libraries and all for free as, as you know. So we  
have to make sure that libraries are at the top of  
the list when it comes to waging war on inequality  
in the city of New York. Right now there is a,  
there is a disconnect between that war and knowing,  
and knowing in a dollars in, way that connection to  
libraries and, and, and tackling inequality.

Because the three library systems and all these  
folks who are here will testify to that. And, and  
the budget has to reflect that as a value  
statement, as a value statement about who we are  
and what we, where, where we want to be. So with  
that I'll hand it over to our third Co-Chair  
Constantinides for his questions but, but I, I, I  
think you hear me and I, I know you a long time  
and, and I know we all care about libraries, we  
just have to get this done.

LARIAN ANGELO: Yeah I certainly hear  
you Councilman.

CO-CHAIR CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you  
Chair Van Bramer and Chair Ferreras. So as the  
third co-chair I don't have as, as, I think they've  
covered a lot of the territory I wanted to cover.  
But this isn't a new phenomenon with this, with  
the, if you look at the 5.4 million dollars... for a  
long time the city council as through the CUF  
report sort of outlined that for a long time the  
city council and the borough presidents have been  
the primary funders of libraries and that the  
mayor's office traditionally has lagged behind. So,  
but, and when, you look at other agencies, you look



at the DEP and when there's a water main you have  
the commissioner there in the government, in,  
saying I need to get this done and it gets done...  
What is holding us back? What, what is making this  
such a complicated process that from administration  
to administration, from council to council that  
they, they, we're holding up our end and the,  
we're, we're struggling to see an expense side  
though the mayor, I, I appreciate what they, you  
know last past year base lining library funding was  
a huge step forward. I don't want to belittle that.  
It was a, a monumental step forward for libraries.  
But as we look to, we're still not there at six day  
service on the expense side. And then on the  
capital side we're not near where we need to be. So  
what can we do to get where we want to go?

LARIAN ANGELO: Well the, the capital  
budget... I mean part of, part of the problem in  
having a discussion like this about one agency is  
that there is no doubt that the library has needs  
and they have capital needs and, and they do a  
phenomenal job in their communities, in some  
communities they are the face of the government as  
it were. They do a wonderful job and have capital

needs. But if we were to sit here and, and talk  
about cultural or talk about DEP or talk about  
Corrections you would see much of the same  
conversation. It, the city itself has a large aging  
infrastructure that has to be kept up. And that  
always absorbs a huge amount of the capital budget.  
And I'm sure that is the case for the libraries as  
well and they have an aging infrastructure has to  
be kept up. Education, aging infrastructure, 15  
hundred buildings, has to be kept up. It absorbs a  
lot of the room we have in our, our, our debt limit  
and our bonding ability not leaving enough for  
expansion or for the things that libraries are  
going to have to do. I know libraries are changing.  
They're not what they were. I was a, I worked in a  
community college for a few years and I walked in  
the library and I said this is like no library I  
ever saw. So libraries are going to have to change  
and it's going to be difficult to find the funding  
for the libraries to accomplish all they need to  
accomplish and should accomplish. But that isn't  
very different than what you would hear in most  
other agencies.

CO-CHAIR CONSTANTINIDES: ...as Chairman

Van Bramer pointed out it just seems that this,  
seems to be much more of a, a different phenomenon  
where the council and the borough presidents are  
putting in when we have much less capital dollars  
to put in that the, the mayor's office is putting  
in less. It's not the case in many other agencies.  
So I don't want to belabor that point but I do want  
to re-point that out that we need to find a way to  
get where, from where we are to where we want to go  
and I think the people on this side are very  
committed as you, as are you to getting to that,  
that magic number. So I appreciate that and as I  
raise, and then you've touched upon it already as  
we look to Build to Last, reducing city emissions  
by 80 percent by 2050 there was a commitment made  
that every city owned building was going to be part  
of that. How do we reconcile asking the libraries,  
because they are city owned buildings to be part of  
this Build to Last program, to reduce their energy  
consumption either through solar panels or some  
sort of other environmental actions when they're...  
that's going to take capital, it's going to take  
money. And I think we had a conversation before and

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we have to find the money somehow. But where is  
that money going to come from when they can't do  
the basic needs that they have. And hopefully in  
the Plan NYC process the, those issues will be  
raised and they will be raised hopefully for the  
libraries as well as for other city owned  
buildings.

CO-CHAIR CONSTANTINIDES: Okay.

LARIAN ANGELO: Because again those two  
plans will have to mesh.

CO-CHAIR CONSTANTINIDES: Absolutely. I  
think that we have to have that discussion if we  
want to... you know libraries are in... you know  
integral part of our neighborhoods and they're,  
where they're going to be, can be leaders, they can  
be opportunities for us to demonstrate how we can  
you know do these types of projects in our  
communities and how they can be emulated so it's  
important for us to figure that out sooner rather  
than later and mesh these two plans and figure out  
how we do that. And lastly just talk about the  
digital divide. You know libraries and, and I'm,  
they, system I know are chomping at the bit to  
testify... don't want to stay too long... But they'll

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talk about how they helped close the digital divide  
in our communities and just want to reinforce the  
effect that libraries have on opportunities for  
people to, to be involved in 21<sup>st</sup> century  
infrastructure and we've already started that  
conversation but how can we do better. And I think  
part of that is the capital and allowing to make  
sure that libraries are open and they're able to be  
utilized so I'll put that out there as well.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you and I,  
I just want to, I can't be remiss without saying  
that your point is validly taken and you're right,  
it is one budget, and this council what they're,  
what we're saying today is that as we negotiate in  
this budget this is very important to us. And we  
have to vote this out in this very chamber where  
you're all sitting. All members will sit here and  
we will vote on a budget together. And we are just  
reminding you, reiterating we will be here again,  
you will hear this from now until June... but I'm  
really hoping this will all be resolved in May in  
the executive, when you release your executive  
plan. But just letting you know how important this  
is to us and this council will, will not waver at

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all in the support to our libraries. Now you very  
clearly said that libraries fall 8<sup>th</sup> in, when it  
comes to our capital spending... [cross-talk]

LARIAN ANGELO: In, in this, in this  
fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: In this fiscal  
year. I can only imagine the daunting task that it  
is to be able to prioritize this processes and the  
amount of dollars where you have to put from your  
perspective where this city should be investing.  
Can you walk me through how you prioritize and what  
percentage of the citywide total of the 10 year  
capital plan where, what percentages do the  
libraries fall in?

LARIAN ANGELO: I don't have that for  
the 10 year plan but they would fall fairly close  
to the bottom without a doubt.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Shh. Right.

LARIAN ANGELO: Because the large amount  
in this year and the assumption that it would roll  
over yes it would probably fall fairly, fairly low  
down but I can, I can do that calculation...[cross-  
talk]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Yeah if you can  
do that calculation and get it back to this  
committee. Some of my questions are more technical  
because from the budget perspective we have to get  
the testimony on numbers and, and not necessarily...  
but at the end of the day that's how we're able,  
how I'm able to effectively negotiate on this  
budget. So I need to be able to speak to that. And  
can you speak to the prioritizing. How do you, how  
do you divide all this up? How do you decide what  
goes to the first seven and what goes to the rest  
of the 40 after the eight?

LARIAN ANGELO: Well the, I mean it's  
not... The priority doesn't come in terms of the  
ranking. We sort of, it, people get funded as they  
get funded and then you know I happen to look at  
the ranking. I think that one, one of the issues  
would, would be... You know the libraries and as, as  
you pointed out all of the agencies are looking at  
each other and looking at the city as a whole and  
the capital budget as a whole to deal with their  
aging infrastructure problems. So education tends  
to be generally speaking pretty high up on city  
funded and all funds in the capital budget. And

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that's also a function to some extent of the  
overcrowding that you guys all know about in Queens  
and trying to take care of an aging infrastructure.  
Some of the, or much of the work done in DEP is  
often done by federal decree, by federal mandate.  
Now I mean there aren't any mandates for the  
libraries except that they're, you know they're  
good agencies but they, they don't have that  
federal or state pressure. So there's a variety of  
things that end up going into where an agency falls  
at any particular moment and that will change I'm  
sure year to year.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay. So we've,  
I'm, we've been joined by Council Members Mark  
Levine, Council Member Cumbo, and Council Member  
Levin. And we have a council member who would like  
to ask some questions. I just wanted to... Well I'm  
going let my, the council member ask his question  
and then we'll come back. Council Member Levin.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you Madam  
Chair. Thank you Ms. Angelo for your testimony. And  
I just wanted to ask... So I represent downtown  
Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights area where there's a, a  
plan underway to do a development scenario where



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the Brooklyn Heights Library currently stands and  
allow for development and then, and then fund a, a  
new library branch at the base of that building.

And it, it, the scenario... it's been awarded in an  
RFP through BPL and it's going to go through a  
ULERP process and there's going to be an  
opportunity for public input at the community board  
level, borough president level, at the city council  
level. So I, I'm, I don't want to kind of put the  
cart before the horse if you will but I want to ask  
you know at what... This is a, a fairly aggressive or  
unorthodox way at looking at maintaining our  
infrastructure. If we're talking about our aging  
infrastructure this is one instance where we're you  
know essentially monetizing the development rights  
on, on a particular parcel. Can you alpine on you  
know where that's appropriate, where that's not  
appropriate. How does, how does OMB look at this  
issue of... You know we have a lot of city owned  
land, a lot of city owned buildings in New York  
City. A lot of them are aging. A lot of them have  
development rights on top of them right. I mean you  
know we could look at, there's probably development

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rights on top of city hall you know. I mean you  
know...

LARIAN ANGELO: Would you like to sell  
them?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Sorry.

LARIAN ANGELO: Would you like to sell  
them?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: No, no I just...  
I, I think, you know I think that that's, but  
that's, that's the question that I have is you know  
where is it, is it a question of whether it's  
landmarked, whether it's not landmarked, whether  
this, you know whether it's, there's an adjacent  
property where you can sell the air rights, or  
whether you could build on top of it or you know...  
This, this is one where it's, it's... the Brooklyn  
Public Library has decided that they want to  
proceed on this. And I've heard a lot of people  
against it. I've heard some people in favor of it.  
But I'm just wondering as the city looks at this,  
as the, as the administration looks at this where's  
the line here and why would this be appropriate but  
you know any number of city owned buildings

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throughout the city might not be appropriate. Can  
you... on it?

LARIAN ANGELO: And this is the Brooklyn  
Heights redevelopment project?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Correct.

LARIAN ANGELO: Okay the Hudson  
companies. I think that and I, I don't want to  
speak for the entire administration on, on this  
because this is obviously way beyond something that  
a Deputy Director at OMB should... public place. But  
you, you understand that the, the use of public  
private partnerships in many ways helps get the job  
done without putting additional burden on a capital  
budget. And again the aging infrastructure and, and  
it helps. Sometimes they work out very well.  
Sometimes they work out less well. Private  
developers are private developers and they  
generally are not doing a project because they are  
moved by, by...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Philanthropic.

LARIAN ANGELO: ...by good will.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: A Philanthropic  
endeavor right?

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LARIAN ANGELO: Yeah. So they're usually  
getting something out of it. And, and on a project  
by project basis it depends on how much the private  
developer is getting as opposed to how much the  
library the other institution and then have the  
community views it as a whole. So I don't, I don't,  
I certainly don't have any overarching position on  
this. And I'm not entirely sure that the  
administration does either. But I, I mean I think  
that's how you would look at the, on a, on a  
project by project basis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you very  
much I might come back for, for another round of  
questions.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I just wanted to  
follow up... I know that you had mentioned, we've  
been joined by Council Member Andy King, well you  
kind of, well not kind of, you pivoted a little  
when we were talking about capital needs to Plan  
NYC. This is the first that I'm hearing of this and  
I think I was just speaking to Majority Leader Van  
Bramer. Can you delve more into that and, and why

you, why and how you feel that Plan NYC would  
address some of the capital needs and, to explain  
why some of this is not in the 10 year, if that's  
how I understood it. So can you just clarify that?

LARIAN ANGELO: Yeah I think that the  
Plan NYC issue is you know periodically there's a  
revision of Plan NYC. And that's been going on now,  
people are thinking about that and they're taking  
up topics of energy efficiency, resiliency, and  
equality. And so those two plans, what Plan NYC  
needs to get done will have to go through the 10  
year capital plan. And for projects that deal  
certainly with things like resiliency and, and,  
energy efficiency that is certainly a place to have  
that, one of the places to have that discussion.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay it was the  
resiliency piece that I didn't get clear. So thank  
you. And then I know that you answer to my question  
that when we talk about the 10 year capital plan  
on, on the priority scale or basis the libraries  
faired pretty low. And I just wanted to make sure  
that I, that I was clear when you said that so  
that, that I understood what you were responding  
to. So if you can just, when you're talking about

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your priorities if you can just respond to that  
again.

LARIAN ANGELO: I think that...

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: On the  
percentage.

LARIAN ANGELO: Yeah I think that if you  
looked at the, the total funding in the 10 year  
capital plan libraries would probably be closer to  
the bottom than they would be to the top.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay.

LARIAN ANGELO: But again that's not a,  
that's not, as I said we don't, we don't rank the  
agencies in importance... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Right, no it's  
just the amount of dollars that you're assigning to  
this agency puts them closer to the bottom compared  
to the entire city of New York. And clearly in this  
hearing specific and I understand I have oversight  
of the entire budget in all the agencies and I'm  
sure if we're talking to NYCHA or we're talking to  
other needs everyone wants to be priority. However  
you can understand what a challenge that is because  
we have so many opportunities to work with our  
libraries and they become priority and engagement

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on so many other things. So if we're asking and  
demanding this much of them then we should also  
have that reflected on their capital needs. So I'm  
hoping that by the time we get to our final  
executive budget and we're voting all this on, out,  
that we understand and are, and that we're no  
longer in the bottom of this, of, of your  
priorities because this, it is a challenge. It's a  
challenge for us as members to turn to our  
community and let them know this, it's a challenge  
to hear from OMB that that's the fact. But it also  
helps us to understand where we need to go. So I  
guess we can't go any further down... right? Like we  
can't get any worse than this. So I'm challenging..

LARIAN ANGELO: ...never say never.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I know. Well  
that's true. But I'm saying never. I'm going to say  
never in this case because we can't get any lower  
than this and we have a huge, huge gap to fill and  
priorities that are very important to the city and  
to the residents of the city of New York. And I'm  
going to give the mic over to Majority, Chair Van  
Bramer.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Chair Ferreras. I just want to say  
libraries should never be at the bottom of any  
list. They are doing too much for too many  
everywhere and we have an opportunity to correct  
this inequity. I believe that there is an inequity  
in this strategy or plan if, if libraries are at  
the very bottom of the list. And I might add  
because I'm looking at the list that it's, it's not  
just by a little. It's, it's, it's too far and wide  
a gap when it comes to our public libraries, city  
owned properties. And the city of New York should  
not ever leave any of its properties to be  
neglected or to fall into a state of disrepair.  
And, and again we are urging and, and demanding  
that libraries get what they need. And we started  
this conversation off maybe an hour ago by stating  
and agreeing fundamentally I believe, both the  
administration and the council, that the needs are  
at least 1.1 billion, legitimate capital needs for  
our public libraries, at least 1.1 billion,  
probably closer to 1.4 billion. And if we don't  
invest now that number just continues to rise all  
the time. That number continues to go up to a place



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that we, we don't and cannot let it go to. So I, I  
just want to say that this hearing is about  
shedding light onto this issue which for too long  
we weren't talking about openly and publically and  
getting the information that, that you've shared  
with us knowing where we're at and where we have to  
go and then getting the commitment that we're going  
to get there. But I think everyone agrees and if  
you do you can raise your hands and your fingers  
that libraries should never be at the bottom of  
anyone's list in city government. They are too, too  
valuable. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you very  
much and thank you for coming today to testify. I  
know that we are in this together and this  
administration believes very much in the same  
things that we believe in, we just need to make  
sure that the numbers reflect our priorities. And  
I, I'm really looking forward to continuing this  
dialogue with both the administration and our, our  
side here. But understanding again, and this is for  
everyone, there's only one budget, and that is our  
budget with all of our tax dollars. So we just need  
to sometimes remind the other side of city hall

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okay? So let's remind them. Thank you very much for  
coming today, for your testimony. We're going to  
hear now from the libraries to get clearer answers.  
Please leave several people behind so that they can  
hear the testimony of the libraries. Thank you.

LARIAN ANGELO: Thank you very much for  
inviting us today.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you. Today  
we will... sorry... Thank you for your testimony. I'm  
going to start things off with a few questions.  
Then we're going to make sure that we have, give  
opportunities to our library systems. And is  
everyone here? Linda? Okay, oh there you are. And  
now we can hear... Now Chair Van Bramer... I'm sorry.  
You may begin your testimony in the order that you  
decide. Thank you.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Good morning. It  
is still morning? Yes, okay good. I'm Bridget  
Quinn-Carey. I'm the interim President and CEO of  
the Queens Library. And I want to thank Speaker  
Mark Viverito, Council of Finance Chair Ferreras,  
Majority Leader Van Bramer, Library Subcommittee  
Chair Constantinides, Queens Delegation Leader  
Weprin, and the entire city council for its

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consistent support of the mission and programs of  
the Queens Library. Your support which is critical  
is much appreciated. I'm here today to speak to you  
about the capital needs of the Queens Library and  
the 10 year capital plan that we recently submitted  
to the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. My  
colleagues and I come before you representing the  
great equalizer, our city's libraries. Together we  
open doors to provide the broadest range of  
services to the broadest range of New Yorkers.

Whether it's teaching English to our new immigrant  
population, providing after school services every  
day or providing job assistance to under and  
unemployed New Yorkers there's a free program at  
the public library. And we've had the most  
significant impact in helping to close the great  
digital divide by opening the wonders of the  
internet to more New Yorkers than any other  
institution. But right now our libraries are not  
able to give New Yorkers the full benefit of what  
we have to offer. The lack of reliable capital  
budget support has limited our ability to provide  
the level of services we know is needed and could  
deliver if our basic capital needs were met in a

way that allows us to plan effectively. We all know  
that emergency repairs cost more than planned  
repairs. We are all, we are able to give taxpayers  
the best value for their investment when we have  
the resources to make capital needs and upgrades  
strategically. The average branch library across  
the city is 61 years old with a quarter of the  
branches built over a century ago. They are heavily  
used. Collectively more than 35 million people  
visited their public library last year and that  
creates a great deal of wear and tear. The vast  
majority of libraries are poorly configured to meet  
the demands of the digital age with too far  
electrical, too few electrical outlets, too little  
space for classes, group work, or space for  
individuals working on laptops. The Center for an  
Urban Future's re-envisioning New York's branch  
libraries which has been referred to a number of  
times today is an excellent report and it details  
the stifling effects of long term disinvestment and  
capital funding for branch libraries. In the five  
boroughs we have more than 1.1 billion dollars in  
unmet capital needs. And that's a big number. I  
know we've talked about it a lot, it's a big

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number. In Queens alone that figure exceeds 400  
million dollars. So currently our piecemeal year to  
year funding requests must compete for local  
support against a broad range of unique needs  
within each council district and borough. And this  
approach does not allow us to effectively plan  
restoration projects, to replace aging systems on a  
routine basis and to ensure continued public  
service. Members of the council have noted that  
they do not have the allocations available to fund  
high cost projects including total building  
renovations, expansions, or new facilities. And  
that piecemeal approach can sometimes take years  
for us to have enough funding to be able to  
complete a larger project which leaves the funding  
in our budget that just rolls over year to year  
instead of getting used. Those projects should be  
within the purview of a comprehensive capital  
strategic plan. We're very encouraged that the  
mayor is taking libraries' capital needs seriously  
and included us in the 10 year capital budget  
strategy planning process. Our plan if funded will  
bring our libraries into a state of good repair,  
create the necessary spaces to provide full service

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library programs and support the goals of equality,  
sustainability, resiliency, and growth. Mayor de  
Blasio's preliminary plan does not however include  
any new funding for projects included in our 10  
year plan leaving us literally and figuratively in  
an unsustainable position. Library buildings in  
Queens are about providing the programs, services,  
and spaces that people need to enrich their lives  
and be inspired. How they look and perform  
certainly makes a world of difference. You'll be  
hearing today from the friends of the Cambria  
Heights Library. This past year thanks to the  
support of the council we opened a dedicated 4,000  
square foot teen space with a tech lab, homework  
area, recording booth, and gaming lounge. More than  
100 young people use it, use it daily for school  
work and for a safe place to gather and relax. And  
in fact we're going to be launching the new CD that  
was produced by the, by the kids in that recording  
studio in April which is an exciting thing. We  
can't think of a better place for teens to  
congregate than in the library but it would not be  
possible without the capital investment in that  
space and in them. You'll also be hearing about an

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expansion to our adult learning center in Rochdale  
Village. Adult education services in Queens are a,  
are in tremendous demand but we simply do not have  
the capacity to serve one more person. There's an  
overwhelming need for ESOL services. Unfortunately  
last year we had to turn away more than a thousand  
potential students because we did not have one more  
chair to put someone in. There is a simple cost  
effective expedient solution. We need your support  
to fund our capital needs so we can build and  
adequately maintain libraries that house these and  
so many other important community services. Key  
projects underway include a brand new Elmhurst  
Library, expansion of the Kew Garden Hills Library,  
the full renovation of the Central Library,  
expansion of Rochdale Village Adult Learning  
Center, and new buildings in Hunters Point and Far  
Rockaway which is now in design. Upcoming projects  
include the full renovation at Glendale, the  
expansion and renovation of the East Elmhurst  
Library and interior renovations of Richmond Hill  
and Woodhaven Libraries. So those are the ones  
underway but there's so many more needs and  
communities that many of you represent that we do

not have funding for. Despite our progress many  
unmet capital improvement and maintenance needs  
remain across the borough. These include critical  
infrastructure such as roof replacements, elevator,  
and ADA upgrades as well as expansions, renovations  
in new facilities which many communities have long  
sought. What does it say to a community when they  
walk into a library and see buckets on the floor  
catching rain water? It means nobody cares about  
them. And that couldn't be further from the truth.  
We care and I know you care very much about the  
people in your communities. As you know many of the  
city's libraries are simply too small. In Queens 41  
of our 65 service locations are less than 10  
thousand square feet. And with the growth in Queens  
this is just not adequate to meet the growing needs  
and demands of our communities. And it's impossible  
to squeeze full service library programming classes  
and collections into these spaces. The city  
projects that the population of Queens will  
increase by more than 300 thousand people by the  
year 2030. Areas, and areas in Queens that have  
traditionally been industrial spaces are now  
becoming newly residential with new developments



being discussed every day. And where there are no  
libraries there will need to be so we have to serve  
these new communities. Over a 10 year period from  
2016 to 2025 Queens Library seeks to enhance and  
enrich its library infrastructure by making capital  
improvements to 60 of our library locations  
allocating over 418 million to the course of the  
plan. This will require approximately 41 million in  
capital funding per year. It will allow us to  
fortify our existing buildings and build new ones  
with modern enhancements, include energy efficient  
materials and green architecture to reduce  
operating costs and to preserve our environment.  
The plan includes two brand new libraries in  
emerging communities, six replacement buildings,  
four building expansions, indoor and outdoor  
renovations, new heating and cooling systems and  
other environmental friendly innovations, and  
expanded technology service for our customers. An  
average of 24 million a year will be spent on the  
development of building expansions for placements  
in new facilities. And 17 million will be spent on  
necessary reconstruction and ensuring a state of  
good repair. And 25 million over 10 years for

technology. But it's much less about the windows  
and the air conditioners and more about the people  
who will be using these buildings. Millions and  
millions of New Yorkers will come to the library  
for lifetime, lifelong education, and cultural  
enrichment in an attractive and safe environment  
which we can all be proud. Each capital improvement  
reflects the mayor's policy priorities of equity,  
growth, resiliency, and sustainability and the  
values that have been repeatedly and eloquently  
expressed by the members of the city council. Our  
accomplishments have been many and that is thanks  
to your investment over the years. But so too are  
our needs. Today the three library systems have the  
opportunity to join with the mayor and the city  
council to create a new model that addresses this  
legacy of unmet needs and ensures a capital program  
that will be sustainable. We can only do that if  
the plan's funded. And that is our plea to the  
administration and to the city council. Thank you  
for the opportunity to testify and I look forward  
to our continued work together.

LINDA JOHNSON: Good morning. I'm Linda  
Johnson. I'm President and CEO of Brooklyn Public

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Library and I too want to thank all of you for your  
continued support and the administration as well.

But I thought that we, since we're talking just  
about the capital plan this morning might do a  
little show and tell. It's easy to talk about these  
problems but I think that actually seeing what some  
of the issues look like to patrons as they walk  
into a library might be useful. So earlier this  
month Brooklyn Public Libraries, Arlington Branch,  
reopened after a five month renovation which was  
exciting. It's a Carnegie library. It's quite  
beautiful. It has served the residents of Cyprus  
Hills for more than 100 years and it is now safer  
and brighter and more inviting with its new roof,  
energy efficient lighting, and other critical  
infrastructure improvements. Yet despite the 1.2  
million dollar investment that we made in Arlington  
the branch still requires more than five million  
dollars in upgrades to restore it to a state of  
good repair. Arlington Library's condition is  
emblematic of the challenges we faced throughout  
the entire system. Without city support for our  
comprehensive capital improvement plan New York  
City's libraries have been forced to apply

piecemeal solutions to potentially crippling  
deficiencies. This approach has failed the more  
than one million Brooklynites who depend on the  
library's programs, collections, and services. In  
short if we don't make further investments in  
Arlington some of the great things that we've done  
will actually be undone by problems that exist  
elsewhere in the building that we didn't have the  
funds to address at the time that we did this major  
intervention. And we are of course, and want to  
reiterate, very grateful for the 18 million dollars  
in capital funding that we received last year from  
council, the administration, and the borough  
president. We know that the city supports our  
libraries in principal yet the current level of  
capital funding is not adequate given the enormous  
challenges we confront. Consider that 70 percent of  
Brooklyn Public Library's branches are more than 50  
years old. Nearly a third of our buildings are over  
100 years old. And nearly every one of our 59  
locations require more than a million dollars in  
capital repairs, a quarter of which require more  
than five million dollars in repairs. Last year  
Brooklyn neighborhoods lost more than 1,000 hours

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of library service as a result of unplanned branch  
closures due to emergency building maintenance  
issues. In fact this morning while members of OMB  
were test, testifying I received a fairly routine  
email that I get in the mornings advising that the  
Saratoga Library was closed today because the  
heating system could not maintain temperatures,  
adequate temperatures given the cold weather. In  
fact last week we were forced to close four  
branches; Park Slope, Saratoga, Brownsville, and  
Rugby because we could not keep them warm. Our  
physical plant is deteriorating. Our branches are  
in many cases crumbling. Our library system faces  
more than 300 million dollars in unfunded capital  
needs including nearly 80 million dollars in  
emergency repairs. Without your support the day  
will soon come when we can no longer provide the  
level of service that you and your constituents  
expect and deserve much less the excellence we  
strive to achieve. This year we have submitted a 10  
year capital plan to the administration outlining  
the, outlining the extent of our infrastructure  
needs and proposing a way forward. Brooklyn Public  
Library's 400 million dollar capital plan will

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modernize our library and ensure that there  
continued service to New Yorkers who value and  
depend upon them. Though we were disappointed that  
a long term capital commitment to libraries was not  
included in the mayor's preliminary budget proposal  
we look forward to working with the administration  
and city council to develop a final budget that  
reflects New Yorker's support for their libraries.  
But no single approach will solve the problem. We  
must think creatively, manage projects effectively,  
and enlist the support of public and private  
partners to meet our expensive capital challenges.  
Tomorrow we will send scores of advocates to Albany  
to ask the state legislature and the governor to do  
their part to support libraries but we will not  
stop there. We recognize that our sustainable  
comprehensive capital plan requires more public  
investment than libraries have received in the  
past. And we ask for your support of the plan. But  
we also commit to you that we will do our part to  
engineer solutions for our aging physical plant. As  
I have testified in the past Brooklyn Public  
Library is pursuing several partnerships to  
generate much needed funds for our neighborhood

branches. Today we are joined by neighborhood  
library specialist Roxanne Abenivites [sp?] who  
will testify about ongoing challenges at Sunset  
Park Library, one of our, one of the system's  
busiest branches. As you will hear from Roxanna  
Sunset Park is in desperate need of repair and  
their pictures right now of the libraries current  
HVAC system. The, the central system has clearly  
failed. The roof and the boiler are in urgent need  
of replacement. And just, and at, at just over 12  
thousand square feet the space is much too small to  
meet the neighborhood's demand for library  
services. Sunset park is a diverse, growing  
community. While our collections and programs have  
evolved to meet the needs of our patrons Sunset  
Park Library's current facility is no able to, is  
no longer able to serve the neighborhood. And I  
want to pause here and talk about the amazing job  
that those librarians are doing in that facility  
and the partnerships that they forged with  
companies like Google to provide technology to the  
community to allow them to translate and to  
communicate with neighbors even though they might  
not speak the same languages as their neighbors. So

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in Sunset Park we're proposing to build a new  
library for the community by partnering with the  
Department of Housing Preservation and Development  
and the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue committee, a not for profit  
housing developer. We and our partners will  
redevelop the property with a new multi-story 20  
thousand square foot library topped by 50 units of  
affordable housing. We will solicit input and  
feedback from neighborhood stakeholders throughout  
the design process. In December I testified that  
Brooklyn Public Library was one of 13 finalists  
under consideration for grants from the Green Point  
Community Environmental Fund, a joint program of  
the New York State Office of the Attorney General  
and the Department of Environmental Conservation.  
I'm very pleased to report that Brooklyn Public  
Library has been awarded five million dollars for a  
new 65 hundred square foot addition to Green Point  
Library that will compliment planned capital  
repairs to the branch. With more than 16 thousand  
registered barrowers and many more visitors who  
attend programs and access technology at that  
branch Green Point is quickly becoming one of the  
busiest libraries in our system. Treasured for its



early childhood literacy programs and its polish  
language collections Green Point Library has  
outgrown its current configuration. The existing  
layout which includes only one small reading room,  
a meeting room, limits the range of programs we can  
offer to a neighborhood that has demonstrated its  
need for more robust services. The renovation will  
create new community program and event spaces that  
will accommodate a much greater number of users.

The Green Point Environmental Education Center  
scheduled to open in 2018 will add a second floor  
to the library increasing public space by more than  
80 percent. The library will become a neighborhood  
hub for free environmental programs and resources  
including information about the history of the  
neighborhood and its ongoing environmental  
challenges. The center will offer a centrally  
located space where community groups dedicated to  
addressing environmental issues will be able to  
hold meetings and post, and host programs. Another  
strategy we have employed is the pursuit of city  
dollars for energy efficiency projects at our  
branches including most recently the lighting  
upgrades at the Arlington Library. Projects like

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these reduce the city's carbon footprint and extend  
the useful lives of upgraded systems. We intend to  
pursue the strategy during upcoming repairs at  
Brighton Beach and Ulmer Park. Additionally we will  
be installing the first green roof in our system at  
the Windsor Terrace Branch with funds made  
available through participatory budgeting. As I  
have previously testified we have pursued other  
partnerships that will generate funds for branches  
including the redevelopment of Brooklyn Heights  
Library and the Space Works Project at the  
Williamsburg Branch. However solutions like these  
are not available for the vast majority of our  
branches including many of, including many in the  
most dire need of repair. New Lots Library tallied  
nearly 13 thousand branch visits in January. The  
library bustles with activity and hosts many well  
attended programs for children and adults. New Lots  
boasts an adult literacy center and a large active  
volunteer base. Unfortunately New Lots Library is  
plagued by 5.3 million dollars in outstanding  
repairs. I have to say I hesitated before I even  
showed this picture because it's embarrassing  
frankly that, that we actually operate a business

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out of branch that is in this kind of condition.

The branch's adult literacy center was closed of  
force for near, was forced to close for nearly two  
weeks because of a failing boiler. The roof,  
elevator, and drainage systems must be replaced and  
the interior of the library requires a full  
renovation and reconfiguration to provide more  
usable, flexible, and inspiring spaces for patrons.

Today we are joined by New Lots' library staff  
members, Edwin Maxwell and Larissa Laria [phonetic]  
Larier [sp?]. Their testimony will highlight their  
branches' challenges with Brooklyn Public Library  
hopes to resolve with city support as outlined in  
our 10 year capital plan. The time has come to  
fully fund Brooklyn Public Library. We cannot  
continue to sustain the expensive cost of repairs  
that inevitably result from long term neglect of  
our facilities. And we must meet the expectations  
of our patrons as they seek more collaborative  
learning spaces and grow more reliant on our  
digital and technology resources. Brooklyn Public  
Library's capital plan is built around two  
fundamental goals bringing all facilities into a  
state of good repair by addressing critical capital

needs and where we need to overhauling branches  
like New Lots Library to create comfortable modern  
spaces for patrons to enjoy. Of course ultimately  
our goal is to make every one of our branches  
attractive and inspiring. Other branches that we  
propose to revamp include Brownsville, Canarsie,  
New Utrecht [sp?], and Eastern Parkway. We have  
requested 400 million dollars in capital support  
over a period of 10 years of which 200 million  
would be used for full, 10 full library overhauls,  
175 million dollars for systems based renovations,  
and 25 million dollars technology upgrades. We urge  
the city to approach our libraries' needs as it  
does the infrastructure needs of other publically  
owned assets with consistent reliable funding  
around which long term capital plans can be  
developed. Your support of Brooklyn Public  
Libraries 10 year capital plan will allow us to  
repair our aging branches, reconfigure back office  
library space to public use and provide patrons  
with inviting and inspiring facilities. Our plan  
will prove far more cost effective for the city  
over the long term as we brake the current cycle of  
chronic neglect the constant, that consistently

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results in expensive emergency repairs. A reliable  
capital plan will reduce service disruption to  
patrons and visitors who turn to our branches for  
help finding jobs, starting businesses, preparing  
for college, or earning United States Citizenship  
or yes just for reading a book. No civic  
institution in our borough serves more people I  
more neighborhoods than Brooklyn Public Library. We  
ask the city's support of our 10 year capital plan  
so that we may provide the 2.5 million residents of  
Brooklyn with the safe welcoming libraries they  
deserve. Thank you for your support of Brooklyn  
Public Library. We look forward to continuing to  
work together.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you. And  
just... thank you. I just wanted to say that you  
should never think twice about showing the needs.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Oh we do.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Yeah.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: We do.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I think it's... I  
know that often times we want to highlight the  
great things...

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: ...but those  
visuals are very important for our members to see  
from the council. And I, I'm glad that you have  
brought them both, everyone. Because I can't urge  
you on how important it is that we see the, the,  
the need and the disregard for capital investments.  
Those are important.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: No I appreciate  
your saying that. We, we are embarrassed about it.  
We do great work despite the physical conditions  
that we challenge and somehow you know even though  
the lack of funds are there we feel that it's  
incumbent upon us to sort of make it all work and  
to hold it all together. And in some cases we just  
have not you know been able to do that. And so  
thank you for making it a, a safe place to show  
what things really look like.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I'm sorry we've  
been joined by Council Member Lander, Minority  
Leader Ignizio, and you may begin.

ANTHONY MARX: Thank you. And let me  
start again as my colleagues did to thank the, the  
great leadership of the city council, in particular  
the speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the chair of

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Finance Julissa Ferreras, Jimmy Van, other chairs  
here Jimmy Van Bramer, Costa Constantinides, and  
the other leadership and members of the city  
council I can't help but say as a lifelong New  
Yorker I find the images that we've just seen and  
the images you're going to see to be shocking. This  
is New York City in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I really not  
sure what else to say. I've, I've, I've submitted  
my written testimony to you. I'd like you to, urge  
you to read it. I'm not going to read it to you. I  
hope you'll allow me to summarize. Partly because I  
agree with what my distinguished colleagues have  
said, we work so closely together, I'm mindful of  
the time of this council and, and openness for  
questions and for everyone else to have a, a chance  
at this. We are here for a simple purpose. We are  
here to join with the city council and with our  
colleagues and supporters on the mayor's side of  
this building to advocate for what should not need  
to be advocated for. The libraries need to be in  
the 10 year capital plan. I can't believe I have to  
make that argument. For decades, for decades the  
libraries have never received commitments of  
capital funding that is more than the current year

and what is rolled over from that current year. It is unimaginable that we oversee millions of square feet more used by more New Yorkers and we cannot begin to plan in a rational way to maximize the taxpayers benefits and returns on their own capital investments. It's just incredible. It is also incredible because we know that if we are given the capacity to plan ahead like any agency or any private person or institution would expect we can deliver to New Yorkers to the city council, to the administration projects done in half the time for half the money. Don't we all want to get this work done and get more bang for our buck, twice as much? And it's not about the capital per say though that's what we're here to talk about today. The buildings are only important for what they make possible for us to deliver. Just in the last year the libraries of New York have demonstrated our ability to deliver on the agenda that we share with the city council and with the mayor and his leadership of this city. When we want to address the digital divide it's the libraries that have been doing so in the branches and now we're doing so by lending Wi-Fi at home. When the city council



leadership and the mayor said it's time for New  
Yorkers to be able to identify themselves and not  
hide in the shadows it's the libraries that have  
been the leading place where New Yorkers have come  
to meet that need. When we all agree on Pre-K and  
after school needs, on providing job skills,  
English language, coding, computers, it's the  
libraries where more New Yorkers come. The very  
fact that we get 36 million physical visits a year  
between the, the, across the five systems more than  
all the cultural institutions and professional  
sporting teams combined and that we are where we  
are on the list of capital commitments is  
incredible. I'm sorry to say the dance is not yet  
dead. So let's talk about an alternative. With our  
sister institutions and systems we are proposing in  
the 10 year capital proposal not going crazy, we're  
proposing what we need based on independent  
analysis from CUF and the best analysis that we can  
provide. 200 million dollars would allow us over 10  
years to do 10 complete renovations sorely needed  
as you will see. 300 million dollars over 10 years  
allows us to get to the critical maintenance that  
has been discussed. 89 million dollars to meet

essential technology upgrades. Let's start with the  
good news because we like to enjoy the good news  
and we love to have the city council and the mayor  
come and cut ribbons at these fantastic facilities  
that so many New Yorkers love. In Kingsbridge in  
2011 we replaced, completely replaced an outdated  
branch, program attendance is up 90 percent, visits  
up 80 percent, circulation up 76 percent. In  
Washington Heights my neighborhood where I grew up  
we renovated in 2014. Program attendance is already  
up 105 percent, visits 47 percent. As library user  
tells us Batiaya Iyobe Serete [phonetic] talks  
about how this makes a difference for her daughters  
to come and read and attend story time. As a result  
of the renovations we have now been able to open  
afterschool programs in this branch which are  
helping New York's kids learn how to read.  
Stapleton and Staten Island major addition added in  
2013. Program attendance up 177 percent. Mariners  
Harbor in Staten Island opened new branch 2013.  
Again just remarkable outcomes here. The simple  
fact is you build it and they will come. Let's talk  
about the work ahead. The major renovations  
necessary and I apologize these pictures are too

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small but we'll send you copies. All five proposed  
for the first five years of major full renovations  
are Carnegie Libraries and they're more than 100  
years old. They serve neighborhoods in which 41  
percent of the households earn less than 25  
thousand dollars a year households in which there  
are 144 thousand people who speak languages other  
than English at home. These are our core  
constituents. At Hunts Point in the Bronx we have a  
custodian's apartment, an entire floor that is  
unusable and has been for decades. In Melrose in  
the Bronx we have mechanical failures and  
absolutely no accessibility for the handicapped who  
need to be able to use these facilities. On 125<sup>th</sup>  
Street we know this is a location where literally  
the folks coming off of Riker's Island, get on the  
bus Riker's and they get off the bus at 125<sup>th</sup>  
Street. It's their first stop. We have an entire  
floor that is unusable that should be an education  
center for job skills and English language. In Fort  
Washington and Manhattan again an entirely long  
vacant third floor in Port Richmond and Staten  
Island, a neighborhood that is largely Spanish  
speaking and struggles with gang violence. We don't

have the space to provide what that neighborhood  
needs. That was just phase one. In phase two  
there's Soundview and Throggs Neck, Hamilton Fish  
Park, and Bloomingdale, Bloomingdale which I walk  
by with my kids and my kids make fun of me for it.  
It's amazing work that's going on there. The  
neighborhood loves it. The librarians are doing  
this incredible job and my kids say I can't believe  
that that library looks like that in New York. St.  
George's Library... we're talking based on these, on  
past projects these 10 renovations will have an  
impact on their communities. We expect to see an  
increase in visits across them of 615 thousand  
people. Program attendance will go up at least 60  
percent. Then there's the critical maintenance, the  
average age of our branches is 67 years old. Again  
many more than 100 years old. Our needs here from  
Throggs Neck and 115<sup>th</sup> Street Richmond Town, the  
damage here like the pictures you saw at, in  
Brooklyn it, this is just shocking. So let me be  
clear. We agree with the priorities of the city  
council and of this mayor. We are all in agreement.  
New York must address the equity issues and the  
growth and prosperity issues. We need capital

projects that are resilient and add to our sustainability. For 100 years New York's public libraries have been the most used and beloved of institutions and they have been taken for granted for way too long. We read in the newspaper this morning that studies show that America city's, this city in the lead are again the place where everyone wants to live. They want to live here because of the diversity that, that is brought here. Because of the opportunities that New York stands for. The libraries have always been the essential space between home and work for those who have homes and who have work. And for those who don't to come to be respected, to be able to read and to learn and gain access to information, to gain the skills they need to be active citizens and active members of our society to be able to prepare themselves for the jobs that thankfully are now growing in numbers in this city. The most needy of New York... what this city council and this mayor agree need to be priorities depend on the libraries more than any place else across all differences; race, ethnicity, geography... New Yorkers deserve physical spaces that work, are inspiring, and are not insulting. That is

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what we are here to work with you, with the mayor  
to achieve and then to fill those spaces with the  
great learning work of New York and that drives our  
future where it needs to be. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much all three of you and Tony for that  
passionate delivery. Chair Ferreras and I were both  
commenting on, on the power of, of the statements  
and the photos. And you know and I just, I want to,  
I was struck by the beauty of the Garretson and  
Kensington locations and thinking every single New  
Yorker should walk into a library that looks like  
that. And you know we talk about dignity a lot. And  
Tony you used different words but along the same  
lines. We talk about dignity in terms of housing  
and so many other things. But libraries also by the  
way they look can confer dignity but they can also  
take it away. And some of those other pictures you  
showed which you need to show are devastating to  
look at and to know that there are communities who  
are going to those libraries. And make no mistake...  
because Tony you said if, if you build it they will  
come and that's true. But it's also true that the  
folks in those libraries that have leaky roofs and

1 have façades that look like that, they're still  
2 coming to those libraries because they need those  
3 libraries. And, and, and you know I love library  
4 patrons because the truth is they will find their  
5 way to their library. Regardless of the weather  
6 outside or, or what it looks like because the  
7 information and the tools that are there are so  
8 necessary and so powerful that they have to go  
9 even, even if there's a library in a horrible state  
10 of disrepair. But it is, it is so important and I'm  
11 so glad we did this hearing even if it is difficult  
12 it is necessary to face and to have the rest of the  
13 city see what we see and to join in the fight that  
14 we've all been engaged in for years. And together  
15 all of us agreeing that every branch should look  
16 like Garrets and Kensington will get us to that  
17 place. But what we saw today in some of those  
18 locations were, were simply devastating to me and  
19 horrifying. Chair Ferreras.

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you Chair  
22 Van Bramer. I want to get some answers for the  
23 record. I know that we've had many conversations.  
24 And in many ways this is in our, our opportunity to  
25 use these building blocks to get to where we want

to get to in the executive budget. So you may have  
to repeat yourself. And I know that you all had  
very poignant testimony but I just want to get this  
clear on, clearer on the record. How does the, how  
does the lack of funding in the 10 year capital  
plan... we heard what the priorities are, we heard  
all that you know what is really shocking but  
something that we knew unfortunately because this  
is part of the history of what these, what the  
different administrations have done. But what is  
the lack of funding, how does it affect how you  
strategically plan. And if you can all speak to  
that to answer those very specific, how do you, how  
does this affect your strategic plan at the, in the  
long run.

LINDA JOHNSON: First of all I'll say  
it's a lot more startling to hear that you're at  
the bottom of the list than it is to just kind of  
know it because of years of you know you know  
action but that was quite a moment. So it affects  
us deeply. I showed the pictures of Arlington  
because the library looks so great right now. But  
if I had showed pictures of Walt Whitman, also a  
Carnegie Library, also a library providing services



in a challenged neighborhood. A lot of money was  
put into that branch to fix a roof but not enough  
capital funding was provide so that we could  
actually do everything that was necessary in that  
branch to make it watertight. And as a result there  
are now leaks in that library that are between sort  
of the spaces that were not repaired and the, and  
the roof which was and so there're buckets in that  
library collecting water right now which is really  
a sin given how much money has been sent there. The  
problem is the piecemeal approach that this current  
plan or this current sort of circumstance requires  
us, requires us to achieve, I don't want to use the  
word achieve because it doesn't feel like much of  
one. So you know we, we have a project, it's  
funded, we get going on it but it's not a  
comprehensive enough look at what a particular  
building might need and it's you know the joke  
about when, if you're house is large enough you're  
painting it and when you finish you have to start  
all over again at the other end. It's, it's kind of  
like that. We, we are not ever finished because  
we're never actually doing a comprehensive look at  
a building.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: And I think you'll hear a similar you know story from, from all three of us but it doesn't... it, it eliminates our ability to really be thoughtful in our planning and, and to do the kinds of maintenance that we need to do strategically and I'll give our employees a huge you know shout out because this, this season we have not, knock on wood, I hope I'm not jinxing us, we haven't had to close because of cold or weather or boiler failures thank goodness this season. Because even those aging systems. I mean we've got, we've got boilers and HVAC systems that are all 50 years old. So it's a real testament to our staff that they're able to keep them running. But that's, we know those are the next to go. And so we've got to be able to say okay we're going to replace this then because otherwise we don't have the ability to say what other ones are coming due. Let's address those before they brake completely or before the roof starts to leak. And we all know too that the longer we put those off the more costly they become. So it, it compromises our ability to be energy efficient and to save money overall for the

reduced cost that it would enable us to see and the  
city would be able to see with new systems rather  
than you know the, the legacy systems that we have.  
So it's we're, I feel like we're always putting out  
fires and we're addressing you know what's, what's  
wrong today rather than being able to go across the  
system and say here's our planned replacement. We  
know we're going to have this money here and it  
frees up our ability to address the other things  
that we want which is energy efficiency,  
expansions, those kinds of things.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Before you begin  
I just want to acknowledge that in your testimony  
you spoke of if we continue the funding at the  
level that it is it addresses three percent or less  
of your needs. So there's 97 percent of your  
capital need that is not addressed at all. So if  
you can just... I know that you didn't say it but it  
was in your testimony... if you can just speak to  
that so that we can get into the, into the  
statement but also so that you can speak to the  
challenges that you have in planning.

ANTHONY MARX: Thank you Madam Chair.  
The... Look I, I take the administration at their

word. I think they, they care deeply about these  
issues and certainly about the most needy New  
Yorkers. I think we all agree on that and that this  
is the beginning of a process though it does, it's  
a process I guess I still don't fully understand.  
But you know I, I think that three percent is a  
pretty good indication of where we're starting in  
this process and you all have spoken eloquently to  
the gap and how troubling that is because then if  
you end up compromising somewhere between there  
you're still far away from what you need to be  
doing. The simple fact is you know the city  
council, its members have been sort of consistently  
supportive, powerfully so of the libraries  
including of capital needs, district by district.  
The city as a whole has been incredibly supportive.  
You know we have something in the area of 250  
million dollars of capital projects happening at  
the moment so... And many of the are fantastic and  
you saw images across the three systems. So it's  
not like nothing has happened here if you put that  
up against the needs of 205 odd libraries across  
the city and what hasn't happened you get a whole  
different perspective. And just to reiterate

1 imagine trying to think about what is best for your  
2 children. If you could only think one year at a  
3 time. You can't think about how do you get them on  
4 a trajectory to, from elementary school to middle  
5 school, to high school, god bless to college, to  
6 jobs, to happy lives... you're not allowed to think  
7 about that. You can only think one year at a time.  
8 You would say that was criminal in raising your  
9 children. We're being asked to to oversee millions  
10 of incredibly well used and loved public square  
11 feet of space without any capacity or commitment  
12 beyond one year at a time. And the result is not  
13 only can we not get jobs done at half the time half  
14 the money because we can't plan on it jobs are not  
15 getting done and as has been described by my  
16 colleagues and by you all you know things happen  
17 that end up costing more. Just this week we had to  
18 close... or maybe it was last week Chatom Square  
19 Branch [sp?] for I think three days because of the  
20 extreme temperatures and that our infrastructure  
21 was not prepared for it. For those of you who  
22 haven't visited Chatom Square come. It's you know  
23 the heart of one of New York's, and we have so many  
24 of these, great immigrant communities. It's chalk a  
25

block every day with kids and families eager to  
learn and they're being sent away because we can't  
invest in a coherent way. And, and it's not just,  
it, it isn't even the amount of money, it's the  
commitment of the amount of money that makes it so  
much more powerful and that's why we're here as  
well, for the planning purposes.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you. I just  
wanted to acknowledge that we've been joined by  
PS242 4<sup>th</sup> graders from Manhattan. Thank you for  
being here. And this hearing is very important to  
you. This is about your libraries. How many of you  
love your libraries back there? Very good. Good. So  
we're trying to do this for you to ensure that you  
have great wonderful libraries to continue to  
visit. So thank you for coming to city hall. This  
is your house and welcome to the city council's  
hearing on oversight on our 10 year capital plan. I  
just wanted to follow up on some of the, when we're  
talking about specifically about your, when we had  
our, our break down on city council, city council  
versus borough president versus the administration  
dollars and how we want to correct that formula.  
But can you speak to other funding opportunities

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that you may have on the federal state, federal and  
state level and what those dollar breakdowns look  
like when it comes to capital?

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: I can speak to at  
least the, the state portion that we get. And in  
fact as, as Linda mentioned we're going up to many  
library supporters are going up to Albany, going up  
today for advocacy day tomorrow. And part of what  
we're asking for is increased capital investment  
from the state level as well. We currently get  
about 1.7 million each year for capital in our  
library system which is much appreciated. But it's  
only a small amount compared to obviously the need  
that we have. There is public library construction  
aid funding that's available for systems across...  
[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I'm sorry can you  
clarify that's one point...

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Seven.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Seven million  
for...

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Public library  
construction.

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CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: For your, not one  
library, not...

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: The whole system.  
Per year.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Per year 1.7.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: 1.7 per year.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: That's from the  
state... [cross-talk]

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Yeah. So we are up  
there advocating for more because that is money  
that you know obviously is well invested in, in  
their districts back home. So that is one area...  
typically with our, the way that the Queens Library  
has operated in the past has not been to look to  
private investment for capital but that is  
something we are really looking at for the future  
particularly with our new buildings and  
rennovations and we look forward to opening up the  
possibilities there as well for the future.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah I don't have much  
to add to that. On the federal side we, we  
generally don't get money. There was an exception  
under the recovery act and the three library  
systems benefited from technology investments and



neighborhoods where a person, a majority of the  
population was living below the poverty level. It  
was very very powerful, the money that we got. But  
it was finite. So we're all the recipients of a  
very small amount of state money for capital and  
virtually no money for, from the federal  
government. We all have various experiences in  
terms of using private dollars and some of the more  
innovative approaches that Brooklyn's now sort of  
investigating and actually beginning to deploy to  
sort of do our own part and we figure if we're  
asking for this much money from the city that we  
also should be rolling up our sleeves and  
identifying resources where we can to make a  
difference in certain neighborhoods.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Just as a follow-  
up can you speak to what message that sends to your  
private donors when you have a government partner  
that's willing to step up. So what, what an that do  
on the private fundraising side?

LINDA JOHNSON: So one of the biggest  
challenges of raising money for the public  
libraries is the notion that for every dollar,  
every private dollar philanthropy that goes into

the library it's a dollar less that the city needs  
to support the library. And, and we all know that's  
not the case but it's the argument that we need to  
overcome. And I think that the, the current  
environment that we're trying to create in Brooklyn  
shows that we're being, we're being innovative,  
that we're looking at ways that we can leverage our  
assets to take care of the and that we are in fact  
deserving of the private dollars that, that some of  
our neighbors can afford to donate.

ANTHONY MARX: So we also get about 1.7  
million from the, the state that's done by formula  
that's why we go to Albany to try to change that  
formula. We don't get a huge amount from the  
federal government though we are hopeful  
particularly as we can now increase, if we can  
increase our services, particularly educational  
programs that that might open other opportunities  
from the feds but you have to have a, you have to  
have facilities to be able to do that in and they  
have to be credible facilities. To answer your  
question Madam Chair so for instance if you just  
look at our branches roughly 75 percent of that  
funding comes from the city but actually 23 percent

comes from private sources for the branches.

Obviously in the research libraries which we run  
for the entire city and for anyone who comes  
anywhere in the world the vast majority of that is  
privately funded, both capital or particularly on  
the operating side. You asked about private donors  
and, and the New York Public Library is obviously  
in a particular situation here. The good news is we  
get great private support and we are grateful for  
that. Something in the area of 65 million dollars  
of private support this year we had a all-time time  
high of cash in close to 100 million dollars the  
year before that. And that enables us particularly  
to partner with the city in terms of the research  
libraries and we're proud to do that. Let me be  
very clear. Every donor that I talk to and I spend  
a lot of time talking to potential donors make it  
very clear to me that they have no interest in  
being used to replace what the public has a  
responsibility to support. And they draw my  
attention to the original deal with Andrew Carnegie  
a hundred years ago in which Mr. Carnegie paid to  
build many of the branches we are now talking about  
signing a contract with the city about the city's

responsibility to pay for operating at hours way  
beyond what we are now able to do and to maintain  
those facilities for that use. And those donors,  
their generosity is put at risk when we cannot say  
that you know the city is fulfilling its side of  
that bargain. And we'll continue to do so going  
forward. So that means not only are we vulnerable  
in terms of public funding but we are vulnerable in  
terms of losing the public private partnership that  
we are such a great example of, no one benefits  
from that.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you very  
much. I'm going to have my co-chair Jimmy Van  
Bramer, Chair Van Bramer ask his questions followed  
by Chair Costa Constantinides.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: So I think  
we've actually said an awful lot here. I only have  
one question. That is librarians and folks who work  
at libraries I think do the work because they love  
people and they want to help people, children, new  
immigrants, seniors. And I wanted to ask whenever  
there's a leak or a broken door or a broken window  
or something falls apart staff are taken away from  
the work of helping patrons and assisting children

after school and, and forced to spend some time  
figuring out what to do with the leak or the, the  
other problem that's presented itself. So I wanted  
to see if all three of you would talk about the  
effect on staff. The, the capital issue is about  
buildings but everything comes back to people. And,  
and how does that affect the ability, the time  
commitment, the morale, all of those things that  
are so important to keeping our front line staff  
motivated and doing the work that they got into  
this field to do.

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Councilman for  
that question because when you spoke earlier you  
said something about the fact that people will find  
their way to a library regardless of the condition  
that it might be in. And that is true and it  
reminded me of an anecdote that, that I heard from  
a woman at the Midwood Branch who was taking a 45  
minute bus ride because she had moved to a  
different neighborhood but there was a library in,  
in her old branch that she had this relationship  
with and no other library and you know understood  
what she like to read better than that person and  
she clearly had built a family in that library. And

so the fact that she had moved away as she had  
gotten older did not deter her from getting back to  
the, the community that she loved and the library  
that she felt so welcomed in. And that library is a  
postage stamp at, that does an extraordinary amount  
of work but, but needs to be bigger and it's not  
even on our list. But I, I think that the point is  
really not the time that a librarian takes to you  
know figure out that you need to put a bucket  
under, under a leak but it's the, it's the morale  
frankly and it's discouraging to, to get to work  
and find that the building is too cold to open. It,  
it, we all know that we don't work just for our  
salaries, that we work because we care about the  
work that we do and we care about the people that  
we serve. That couldn't be truer of any group, more  
true than you know librarians. That, that is why  
they, they love what they do and it's why they're  
so great at what they do. And, and one of the great  
principals..

[laughter]

LINDA JOHNSON: One of the great  
principals of librarianship is consistency. We've  
talked a lot about, about the problems of not, not

providing a warm enough climate in weather like  
this because of you know the kids and the parents  
and everybody else. And there's also homeless  
people you know who are lined up every morning and  
frankly in the summer we're cooling, we're, we're,  
we're noted as the city's cooling station and if we  
have to close because the air conditioners aren't  
doing their job it's counterproductive to the  
message that the city is getting out there that  
people are supposed to go to their libraries if  
they don't have air conditioning at home. So these  
are all sort of ancillary things that people don't  
talk much about when they talk about the services  
that libraries provide. And yeah it's freezing in  
here right. So am I.

[laughter]

LINDA JOHNSON: Absolutely. It's the  
blue fingernails. But, but, I mean all joking aside  
all of these things go into the environment and the  
morale and the sort of sense of accomplishment that  
people feel about their work and frankly as far as  
I'm concerned as a leader of a great organization  
there's nothing more important than that.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: So I talked about  
the fact that we were, we were able to keep our  
buildings warm this winter thank goodness but that  
it's not the same as over the summer when we  
weren't able to keep them as cooled as they needed  
to be which is one thing for somebody that comes in  
and is there for maybe a half an hour an hour it is  
certainly a different story for the, the people  
that are there for eight nine hours during the day.  
And that's not the kind of environment we want to  
have our employees be, be there. And they are great  
and they are wonderful and they put up with that.  
And but it's, it's not something that engenders a  
lot of long term you know feel good and morale if  
we can't give them a good environment from which to  
work. And library spaces should be inspiring. They  
should be inspiring not only for the people that  
come in to use them but also for the people that  
work there and the libraries that we have been able  
to renovate, the staff there definitely have a new  
attitude towards the work that they do. They feel  
that they've been valued and that that community is  
better able to be served in those new facilities.  
So we you know often encourage our employees to go



library to library and see how other ones operate  
which is wonderful. And when somebody that's in a  
building that's too small or isn't configured  
properly or isn't ADA accessible and they see the  
other ones you know of course they want that too  
and we want to be able to offer it not only as I  
said to our community but to, to our employees  
because they do amazing work. And some of our  
libraries... and it's not just about the aesthetics  
but it truly is about the capacity. I think I've  
got some Corona folks here because there's always  
Corona folks that come. They are bursting,  
literally, I know we all say that but they are  
literally bursting at the seams. And there is just  
not enough, there's, you can't even see the floor  
because there's so many people in that library  
after school. They need to be able to welcome more  
people into those, into that library. And that  
really, of course it takes a toll because they hate  
turning people away. And you know they have to then  
manage everything that goes on in those facilities  
because of the overcrowding. So it does, it takes a  
toll on the community and on the staff on, on their

1 morale as well as their ability to inspire and to  
2 be able to offer what we know the communities need.

3  
4 ANTHONY MARKX: So I'll also thank you  
5 for that question. The, so I grew up in New York,  
6 used, the Inwood Library was my branch. I think  
7 probably like most New Yorkers loved it, depended  
8 on it, took it for granted. Came back to the  
9 library world in a different way still relatively  
10 recently. Let me just say I'm blown away by my  
11 colleagues and by what they do and how welcoming  
12 and, and sort of educators on the front line of  
13 civil society in every neighborhood including our  
14 roughest. It's just, it's amazing and I'm, I'm  
15 inspired by them and grateful to them. I've  
16 probably somewhere between two to three hundred  
17 branch visits that I've done and every time I go  
18 into a branch I ask my colleagues, I say what do  
19 you need? What can I do for you right? Some,  
20 knowing that maybe I can maybe I can't but at least  
21 I should find out. And it breaks my heart how often  
22 the answer is help me unclog the drains, help me  
23 get the roof not to leak, help me make sure that  
24 there's heating or air conditioning, or that there  
25 isn't water on the floor. And all I can help, all I

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can think is these are librarians. They should not  
be needing to ask me for the basics of  
infrastructure that keep them from doing their  
great work as librarians. Something is broken here.  
And it is our collective responsibility, ours, city  
council, the mayor working together as I know we  
all want to do to fix that.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
all for that answer and, and I know we have been  
talking a lot about librarians. And I know all  
three of you know this and feel this deep in your  
soul it's, it's, it's every library worker who is  
equally committed to the children and the people of  
our communities from the custodian who has to do  
that work sometimes to the clerks, to those folks  
who have the title of librarian. But thank you all  
for that and I'm going to ask our Co-Chair  
Constantinides to say a few, few words.

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank  
you Chair Van Bramer and Chair Ferreras. These  
pictures were, it's devastating to look at that.  
And it's really sort of a poor reflection on our  
city and, and, and not where we want to be. But  
there are other pictures we could show. I know that

both the branches in my district have ADA compliance issues. And so if someone needs to use the second floor the, and gain access, entrance to the library they're locked out of these amazing places and amazing spaces. And that's really quickly what percentage of your branches would you say are not meeting ADA compliance? I don't mean to ask this question to, I'll give you time, I'll, I'll sort of fill the space but... I don't mean to ask this question but these are part of the essential needs that we talk about for critical maintenance and that we need to address as part of this 10 year capital plan. So I just want to make sure we're, we're talking about those as well.

LINDA JOHNSON: No thank you it's a great question. I, I unfortunately can't answer it in terms of percentages but I will tell you that I know that of our capital needs we, we need to spend about 14 million dollars around the, around the system to make our branches 100 percent ADA compliant. And there're certain branches that have more challenging issues than others for sure. But there are many that need elevators to second floors and, and, and those kind of repairs.

ANTHONY MARX: So we're at about 19  
million dollars system wide of ADA needs. We think  
something in the area of 45 percent of our, of our  
facilities are not ADA compliant. Again shocking  
number.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: About 10 percent  
of our libraries are not ADA compliant so about six  
libraries.

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So about  
10 percent. So we're, we're still talking about  
some major numbers in addition to these pictures  
that we're showing today there's a larger picture  
that needs to be shown throughout our city when it  
comes to ADA compliance. Ensuring that everyone can  
utilize their libraries in the same way as everyone  
else and ensuring that we take care of each and  
every patron in the same way. So that's an  
important part of this conversation. And resiliency  
as we sort of look to the future at you know the  
Times Article earlier this week, talking about the  
rising sea levels, many of our libraries being in  
places where if we don't address climate change  
that there could be a possibility of another storm  
very similar to Superstorm Sandy. What are you, and

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how do we... when we talk about resiliency how do we  
get there when we're having enough trouble keeping  
on the lights?

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah the question makes  
me smile because our capital plan is so, is, is to  
fund such basic needs that you know thinking about  
things like resiliency almost feels like a luxury  
and we all had significant issues after the  
hurricane in Brooklyn's case you know we had two  
libraries that are fully renovated as a result of  
the storm. And I might say it's the silver lining  
because those two libraries now are in much better  
condition than they were before they were flooded.  
But...

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: That's,  
that's a really sort of...

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah exactly.

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: It's a  
very sobering statement to have to make that it  
took a storm to... [cross-talk]

LINDA JOHNSON: Storm to, exactly.

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: ...to get  
a, a library in that...

LINDA JOHNSON: Hey we'll do whatever it takes right? But, but not the issue of building to sustain, to, to build sustainable buildings is of course additional expense, additional time to plan. And so it can't happen just in emergency conditions. It needs to be a thoughtful part of what we're doing but we need to see a commitment for funding just to take care of the fundamentals before we can actually start to really think about resiliency in a meaningful way.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: You know like Brooklyn Queens had substantial damage after Hurricane Sandy so those affected libraries were able to make improvements to make sure that we are more resilient if that does happen again. And that included things like relocating the HVAC systems to the roof rather than the basement or ground floor. And that seems like a simple fix but it costs a lot you know and, and it's more engineering to do that. Water resistant flooring rather than carpet, to have things that can actually be cleaned quickly so that we can reopen you know and get service back restored more quickly. Back flow valves and relocating electrical outlets. So Howard Beach

1 didn't receive a lot of damage, it got some water  
2 but because of where the electrical outlets were  
3 located those all got wet, we had to replace those.  
4 So putting them up a little higher ensures that you  
5 know depending on where, you know another  
6 catastrophic flood would, would still affect them.  
7 But we can plan better to have those up higher so  
8 that ideally next time, if there is a next time, we  
9 could recover more quickly. So we did learn a lot  
10 of lessons and we're building those into the  
11 planning that we have for any of our new facilities  
12 moving forward.

14 ANTHONY MARX: So the New York Public  
15 Library because of our fiscal locations was not as  
16 adversely affect as our, as our sister institutions  
17 though take this very seriously. In midtown we had  
18 many branches that were of course without  
19 electricity and, and other services and had to be  
20 closed for, that we were able to open even faster  
21 than the public schools were I, I, and we've, we've  
22 now rethought all of our systems. We are relocating  
23 where our servers are. We're thinking about where  
24 our electric comes. We don't do anything without  
25 looking at what the sea level is so that we're



mindful of that. Obviously we weren't doing that  
even before the day after tomorrow came out we  
still weren't doing that until, until Sandy. The,  
just to vignettes if I may. I remember coming in to  
midtown and while the main building with the lions  
was, was off the electric grid across the street  
the mid-Manhattan, our old workhorse which is you  
know our most used branch library of people coming  
from all over the city was at double the capacity.  
And again it was you know was a reminder of even  
though this happens every day of, of in a storm  
people come to the library to be together, to plug  
in their computers, to continue to work, to bring  
New York back together when it feels like it's  
coming apart. And that's what happens every day in  
our libraries but certainly after Sandy we saw that  
dramatically. Let me just close by after we open,  
reopened the main building the following week the  
head of our maps collection, we have one of the  
world's great maps collection so I think you should  
come down here. So I went down and he showed me 400  
years of New York City maps and basically was able  
to outline on those maps that every area of New  
York City that had flooded was not physically

existent at the beginning of the city. It was where  
we had humans had built that nature had come back  
at us. That tells me two things. One, I said to him  
every, every school kid in New York should see  
these maps right. This is, let's, and, and we're  
increasingly agile at doing that. But second in a  
sense we've created this problem. Not just in a  
sense, we have created this problem and we have to  
solve it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I, I  
agree with you. I mean post Sandy we see, we saw a  
city that needed libraries more than ever. And  
people were showing up at the libraries to help get  
the information they needed to put their lives back  
together. And now with the new flood zones now we...  
reevaluate our city resiliency has to be part of  
the conversation. We can't just say as part of our  
capital we have to include resiliency. And it feels  
like a luxury and I understand that and that's,  
that's part of the gravity of what we understand  
today as part of this hearing that just talking  
about the basic needs has to be a larger  
conversation and we have to do, all of us have to  
do our fair share and lastly I'll, I'll just touch

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on technology because I always, we always do that  
but I sought 89 million dollars for NYPL. As we  
training our student, and if we're making sure our  
kids and our, our workforce are able to compete in  
a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy you're talking about 89  
million dollars and only three percent of that is  
funded I'm assuming because based on three percent  
total. We're all not, we need to be technology wise  
we're looking to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.  
We need to ensure we have the infrastructure in  
place. And the libraries does an amazing job so we3  
have librarians that are, are working that every  
single day and making it happen and those  
partnerships are, are, been fantastic but as we  
look to the future as we need to stay ahead of the  
curve, the amount of funding we currently have  
isn't there. That, that's a fair assessment  
correct?

ANTHONY MARX: So as you know Mr. Chair  
the, the bottom third of New York depends on its  
public libraries for any computer access that they  
cannot afford. They're lining up in our branches to  
use our computers. The basics that we take for  
granted of research or homework or applying for

1 jobs or learning about jobs or skilling for jobs  
2 we're the place right. And now again the three  
3 systems we're, we recognize that again the bottom  
4 third of New York doesn't have internet at home,  
5 what so many of us take for granted as an essential  
6 tool and we've started to move because we heard the  
7 mayor's call. We heard the city council's concern  
8 about the digital divide and we said we can move,  
9 we can actually address these needs. But there is  
10 so much more that is needed. Our, our electronic  
11 facilities go out of date. They are so used that  
12 they don't, you know they, if we're lucky they last  
13 for five or six years if we're lucky and the needs  
14 are so much greater. And yes we're talking about a,  
15 a technology request over 10 years. You know that,  
16 that, that was a relatively modest request given  
17 the needs of, of New Yorkers.

19 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: And I think too  
20 that, the, the nexus of the technology and the  
21 capital comes you know here because we cannot offer  
22 as many computers as there's demand for. So with  
23 bigger space, more technology. But we also want to  
24 be able to ensure that things like mobile  
25 technology that we're all taking advantage of more

1 is something that's also capital eligible and that  
2 is very frustrating when we look to be able to  
3 provide laptops even for in house use. They're not  
4 capital eligible. So looking at bringing our back  
5 office policies and procedures up to meeting the  
6 current needs would be a huge help so that we could  
7 allocate some of that capital funding to laptops to  
8 mobile devices. New York public was, you know you  
9 spearheaded that program of lending mobile devices  
10 which has been a huge hit and our, our customers  
11 really appreciate it. We want to be able to do more  
12 of that and would like to be able to use capital  
13 funding to do that. So directive 10 we would love  
14 if we can revisit that and perhaps have some more  
15 flexibility in that to provide enhanced technology  
16 services.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: I just like to chime in  
19 you know libraries are in an, an unbelievable  
20 transition which makes our life interesting and  
21 challenging at the same time. The transition that  
22 we're going through is driven largely by the  
23 transition that the publishing industry at large is  
24 experiencing as people begin to receive more and  
25 more information electronically. I know that there

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are many people and myself included who feel the  
book is, is vital and important but it will, the,  
the amount of service that we provide will it  
become increasingly digital. The technology numbers  
that we have in our request are modest. And the,  
it's hard for any of us today to project even five  
years out what we'll actually be needing in terms  
of funds to support emerging technology that we  
haven't even started to contemplate. So I think  
that the, the work that we've been doing, the, the  
mi-fi devices that, that my colleague from Queens  
just mentioned are terrific but the impact that  
we're able to have in these programs are small.  
They're, we need to be able to do things more  
broadly and in order to do that we need more  
funding.

ANTHONY MARX: Sorry Mr. Chairman could  
I just say two other things listening to my  
colleagues. One, it's a little like the lack of  
having a 10 year capital commitment and being able  
to plan. The simple fact is in this day and age  
this city, we altogether need to think about how to  
bring our process of allocating for tech, for  
technology into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We're lagging

1 behind whether it's laptops, software, cloud, you  
2 know we have to, we have to get ahead of this  
3 curve. Again this is the capital of the information  
4 age and we need to be there. Second unlike when we  
5 put in technology or information technology capital  
6 request unlike almost any other agency that you're  
7 going to see, maybe unlike all other agencies  
8 you're going to see 80 percent of that is for the  
9 public's use, not for our back office technology  
10 needs. It's the, it's the lifeline of technology  
11 for the public. And that makes it very different  
12 and pressing our view. It's not simply that we're  
13 looking for our computers for our own offices much,  
14 very little of that. It's really to make them  
15 available to the public.  
16

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And I  
18 appreciate that. And, and as we look forward...  
19 talked about this in different hearings but we have  
20 a library in my district that, and it's, it's a  
21 common theme. It's not just my district but  
22 throughout the city where there's a NYCHA housing  
23 development down the block. And only 41 percent of  
24 the residents there have access to the internet.  
25 And the library can, is a special place. It gives

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them access to the internet where more than three  
out of five families do not have access. So how do  
we upkeep, keep updating especially when technology  
goes you buy a laptop today and three years from  
now those systems you buy a server today those,  
those systems are obsolete almost from the time you  
buy them. Like how do we keep up with that when  
we're not funding it the right way? So I can see  
that the, the deep concern and libraries as my co-  
chairs have eloquently stated they are very special  
places and I think we're all committed to ensuring  
that our buildings are in good repair, our  
technology's in good repair, we have good  
resiliency, and we can start thinking about the  
21<sup>st</sup> century needs of a library and not just what,  
you know if, if, are we going to be able to open up  
a third floor because it's in such disrepair so we  
need to start thinking bigger by getting the money  
there to allow that so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you Chair  
Constantinides. We have Council Member Andy King  
for question.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Madam  
Chair and Mr. Chairs. And President Marx the



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library I want to say has been an intricate part of  
my community. We have five libraries in use all the  
time. I don't think anyone that's on this  
community, on this committee would dispute the  
testimony here today. I think that Marx your 10,  
ask of a 10 year capital plan does make sense. I  
could say as a dad I would probably be stressing  
out if I had to figure out year to year how I got  
through school for with my children. With that all  
being said libraries I want to say to all the  
librarians that are here; thank you. To everyone  
who makes a child's life a little better because we  
know our libraries are not only safe havens there  
our hubs. They also let people go back home with  
jet blue. They can't afford jet blue then go to a  
library read a book take themselves back home. So  
it's real. But I, I know you're asking for a 10  
year capital plan and I just want to know, I just  
have one question god forbid that we don't get to a  
place that we're able to fund a 10 year capital  
plan, what is an alternative plan. Do, how do we  
adjust this? How, what do we do if we, if this year  
we can't get to that type of agreement.

LINDA JOHNSON: We don't want to negotiate against ourselves. We really, we really, I mean I'm, I don't mean to be flip about it, there are, there's no alternative. And we talk about the fact that it's not long before we'll get to a place where the branches will not be able to be open enough to deliver the service that they, that, that they're supposed to deliver. It's not hyperbole. It's not a, just a story that we're telling for purposes of testimony. This is a reality and there is no alternative.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: If you can just, and we've had several conversations, if you can just clearly state why there's no alternative because there is no extra fat. There's no cushioning. You're not doing anything that's you know fancy or extra. Because I think often times when we're negotiating and, and just from our perspective Council Member King is also the Chair of the Black and Latino and Asian Caucus we always see budget requests that you always figure out okay they really want, they can take five but they're asking for 15 so we could get to five.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yah we're not...

2 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: But in...

3 LINDA JOHNSON: ...this is...

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: ...this case...

5 LINDA JOHNSON: This is not a game. We  
6 didn't put a number out there because we really  
7 want to achieve half that number and we thought if  
8 we doubled it that somehow we would be okay if we  
9 got 50 percent of what we request, requested. The,  
10 the reason that we showed the pictures today that  
11 we chose to put on the screen is to demonstrate  
12 that there really are dire conditions. That in many  
13 cases like this we all put our best foot forward  
14 and we do, and we show all of the feel good you  
15 know stories. But for every, for, for every one of  
16 the feel good there's three stories that are  
17 embarrassing, that, that really are, you know show  
18 deplorable conditions in a, in a, in an environment  
19 that is well as, as Tony said just unthinkable in  
20 New York City in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well I thank you  
22 and I thank you and you can count our support yes.

23 ANTHONY MARX: Thank you for your  
24 support and great to partner with you as always.  
25 The, look again we are all proud to be here

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representing all of the library staff as, as, as  
Councilmember Van Bramer said librarians, clerks,  
custodians, all of whom are totally committed to  
what the library can provide and to those millions  
and millions of New Yorkers who depend on the  
library. We are here today to say we can do  
business together in a different way that will  
provide what New Yorkers need with the possibility  
of planning. And in keeping with that because we  
represent libraries we're not playing the games.  
We're not saying we need ridiculous amounts in the  
hope you'll give us half of that or a quarter of  
that. Maybe we'll be criticized for not playing  
that game but we want to, it seems fitting for  
libraries given who we are that we should say no  
there's a different more reasonable way for us to  
be. And that's what we're trying to do also in  
being reasonable in talking about what different  
way would work better for all of us that we know  
the city council and the mayor are as eager in  
finding as we are.

BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: And I, I can't  
really add too much to that but I want to just  
point out to that in the preparation of this ten

year plan these were actual costs. Many of the,  
many of the things that we have in there are based  
on actual estimates and from our experience with  
what we've already done to renovate or build new,  
new libraries. And in the grand scheme of things we  
actually I thought were pretty conservative in our,  
in, in our approach because we, we were trying to  
just make sure that we had a reasonable request.  
And so this is based on reality. This isn't  
building Taj Mahals. New boilers aren't glamorous  
it's, but it's really really necessary and I guess  
the alternative, there isn't one except that we'll  
have to continue to make these incredibly difficult  
choices between who gets a new roof, which one is  
leaking more, who's colder, and that's not a good  
place that we want to, that's not a place we want  
to be in.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay.

LINDA JOHNSON: And I, I would just add  
one point. And now I forget what that is but...

ANTHONY MARX: ...to say... I've all... I do  
appreciate the fact that when we reopened the  
Washington Heights Library recently and the speaker  
came to visit she want to see the new boiler so I,

I see, I see that, that there is an appreciation of  
the glamour of our, of our basic infrastructure.

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you for the  
filler. The point though, the point that I want to  
make is that with every day that we delay the  
number grows. That with every day that we don't  
address an emergency it gets more expensive to, to  
make the repair. And, and we, so we have in, in  
essence created the, the situation that we have.  
And the sooner we act the sooner we'll start to  
contain costs.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So that leads me  
to my final question. When it comes to the number  
that you've provided us I know that we have had  
challenges. We get one quote and by the time the  
money hits the account it's escalated 200 percent.  
I will like to know is there a mechanism in place  
that you all have that if a contractor who is doing  
the work, is there a, a time period that you lock  
in a cost that you've, someone says it's going to  
cost 2 million to do something. This, this quote is  
good for a year or two, so when we come back  
they're not saying no that two million is now four  
million?

LINDA JOHNSON: We could have a whole  
another hearing about...

[laughter]

LINDA JOHNSON: About the woes of, of  
construction and the you know and doing business  
with the agencies that do that work for us.  
Unfortunately we've all been in situations where  
the process has taken so long that by the time  
we're actually ready to do the work the work costs  
significantly more than the amount that was  
allocated to do that particular project. We have  
guaranteed maximum costs but we all know that  
actually the way contractors work it doesn't, it  
doesn't play out that way. So they're, they're  
really, we're really sort of at the whim of way too  
many parties. We'd love to, we'd love to get our  
arms around that so that we could work more  
efficiently.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Madam Chair and  
Ms. Johnson maybe we can figure out in the council  
how do we come up with some legislation... because  
I've gone through the same thing with DOE where I  
give them money at one, and by the time we get the  
work it's escalating and it doesn't make sense. So

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if you give me a quote on April 1<sup>st</sup> it can't change  
on June 1<sup>st</sup> when the product hasn't changed so...

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Well I'm glad  
that you're joining the effort of issues that we've  
highlighted on very and numerous occasions. Thank  
you Council Member King and we'll...

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: ...include you on  
those conversations that we're having. Obviously  
there's a DDC issue, there's a whole host of issues  
but let's just get the money and then...

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yeah yeah.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: ...the overruns  
we'll figure out later. Majority Leader Van Bramer.

LINDA JOHNSON: I'm with you on that.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

Tony has never waved his hands more furiously than  
right now. So before we say thank you to this panel  
I just want to say almost in response to Council  
Member King's question the, the, you know the, the,  
the only alternative is allowing these buildings to  
fail. If you neglect any structure long enough it  
starts to fall down. And there's a fundamental  
obligation to fund this and to get it done. And the



only alternative is to allow these buildings to  
fail and ultimately close and that is not an  
acceptable alternative for anybody here. So there's  
one thing to do here and that's to fund this need  
and to get it done for libraries. So with that I  
think this has been a very very interesting and  
illuminating hearing so far. And we have a lot more  
yet to come. So thank you to our three library  
directors and CEOs and we're going to call the next  
panel. And we are going to, because we have upwards  
of 30 or so folks who have signed on to testify  
going to go to a, a clock. So we're going to ask  
everyone to be as succinct as possible and maybe in  
some instances do a summary of, of your testimony  
if you think it's longer than a couple of minutes.  
And... two to be exact. And we will start with David  
Jiles the Center for an Urban Future, it's Center  
for an Urban Future's report that has been talked  
about so much here today which started us off at  
1.1 billion. Also joining this panel because we're  
going to fill the five seats for every panel is  
Maria Mark-Antonio from the Charles H Revson  
Foundation. And then we have some library  
advocates, a woman who I know and admire a great

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deal, Emily Banks from the Queens Library at  
Rushdale Village, if Emily, Ms. Emily Banks is  
still with us, yes she is. Roxanna Benevities [sp?]  
whose name was called before from the Brooklyn  
Public Library Sunset Park Branch. Is Roxanna here?  
There she is. And is Philip Hogarth is Philip  
Hogarth yes still with us from Cambria Heights. We  
love Cambria Heights. And I remember working with  
both Ms. Banks and Mr. Hogarth to form the friends  
chapters at those two libraries many years ago. So  
with that why don't we start with you David. And I  
know you have a lot to say and your report has been  
referenced about 80 million times already but if  
you would start us off. Philip you can... right there  
would be great. And again if, if folks could  
summarize to the best of their ability because we  
have so many folks in the room we want to testify  
and we want to get to everybody, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: And we've been  
joined by Council Member Miller.

DAVID JILES: So good afternoon. It is  
afternoon now so I will try to be brief. And in  
fact before I start into my testimony if it's okay  
with you I would like to respond to the city's

testimony earlier. With, with all due respect to  
the Deputy Commissioner ranking agencies on the  
size of their capital commitment plan in any given  
year is not a terribly insightful exercise. And  
that's because funds move out of the capital  
commitment plan at highly variable rates depending  
on the agencies and depending on the year. It turns  
out that libraries funds move out of the  
commitment plan and into action for the libraries  
at a much slower rate than most city agencies, it's  
about 20 percent. And as Councilman Van Bramer  
pointed out a majority of those funds actually come  
through the discretionary process from City Council  
and Borough Presidents. And that is a very unique  
situation. So taking the 500 million and the  
current capital commitment plan for fiscal year  
2015 that includes appropriations over a five or  
six or even seven year period. The vast majority of  
that will not be spent in fiscal year 2015. In fact  
a majority, at the current rate a majority won't be  
spent before fiscal year 2017. Very little if any  
of the 500 million is going toward the 1.1 billion  
that we identified in our report. So really you  
have the 62 million in the plan that was recently

released and that's, what is that about six percent  
of the needs that we identify. It's also worth I  
think considering in a little more detail what  
people mean by the piecemeal funding process.  
Because it's, it is truly unique I think to the  
libraries. And what I think is meant by that is the  
libraries, the three systems every year fan out and  
try to raise funds from individual city council  
members and borough presidents for specific  
projects on a year by year basis. Once they start  
getting funds coming in for specific projects and  
needs that they have they then go to the  
administration. And the administration tends to, to  
top off funds on a project by project basis. They  
very rarely get lump sum appropriations that they  
can spend systematically on system wide needs which  
is something a lot of agencies are able to do and  
depend on. Year by year they do not have a proper  
capital budget that they can depend on. So a  
majority of their resources is really spent toward  
fundraising from city, the city rather than  
planning for...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: David I  
know this is excruciating for you because you have

done so much on this and you're an expert and you  
could probably talk to us all for a very long time  
about this but before I ask you to wrap up I just  
want to say thank you for the work you've done  
because this hearing and your report are  
interwoven. And the, the success that we're going  
to have in, in many ways is linked to your report.  
So with that I just want to ask you to wrap up if  
you can, summarize, so we can get to the others and  
there are lots of other folks in the audience who  
need to testify.

DAVID JILES: Good then I, I have a, a  
longish testimony here that I won't even read. But  
I will say that I was glad to hear that the city is  
looking to mesh the capital plan with Plan NYC. I  
hope that includes looking at the 3.2 billion  
dollars that has already been earmarked for Sandy  
recovery efforts. That has, that's 3.2 billion  
dollars that has already been approved by HUD. It's  
already at the city's disposal. And although most  
of that funding is going towards housing and  
businesses that were affected by Sandy there is  
about 800 million dollars for city services, much  
of that, a lot of that will be used for resiliency

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planning and the libraries I think really deserve  
to be a part of that discussion. There are about  
149 libraries that are within or very close to  
evacuation zones. And I think that could play a  
very big role in the city's resilience plan.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMEER: We, we  
agree and I know Chair Constantinides agrees on  
multiple levels. Maria do you want to go next?

MARIA MARK-ANTONIO: Yeah that'd be  
great. Hi, I'm Maria Mark-Antonio. I'm from the  
Charles H. Revson Foundation. I'm here to represent  
the foundation who we invest significantly in New  
York City's public libraries because we think  
they're so important and serve New Yorkers more  
than any other institution. I just want to read  
actually a few quotes that we've received from New  
Yorkers telling us how much they love their  
libraries and what the current state of their  
libraries are. We run the New York City  
neighborhood library awards and we've received over  
13 thousand nominations from New Yorkers this year  
submitting how much they love their libraries. So  
I'm just going to read a few. A parent from the  
Marcy Library in Bed-Stuy wrote; Children's

programming has been amazing for my family and lots  
of neighborhood kids use the space for homework.  
The libraries in the neighborhood with high needs  
for many things and the HVAC system is a disaster.  
Having no AC meant less library service for us this  
summer. Clair in the Bronx explained how her  
children go to the library every day after school  
to do their homework but quote when it rains the  
library gets flooded, especially in the children's  
section. Arriving families are turned away. A  
patron in Flatbush, Brooklyn wrote although there  
are dozens of people like me who come in daily to  
use their laptops there's only one station with  
three seats and a single old power strip. The  
floors, the wall, and the lightings are like books  
that haven't been returned. An overhaul is long  
overdue. The physical plant is sagging and updated  
resources are needed. The community deserves a  
better facility. And finally Miguel, a 20, 20 year  
old student from the Bronx I think put it best...  
writing the libraries resources are imperative to  
me because they level the playing field for most,  
most of us in the community. It provides us with  
study books for city exams, internet to fill out

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job applications, classes to navigate Microsoft  
Office, health care seminars, and more. If it  
wasn't for our local library a lot of us would be  
stuck in a slump that we can't even begin to  
imagine. Calling this library a second home is an  
understatement. It's more like an inspiration gem  
to further ourselves. It gives us the change to  
evolve and dream. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
for doing that amazingly right on time. And I want  
to next go to Ms. Emily Banks from Rochdale Village  
who I met in 1999. So thank you so much MS. Emily  
Banks for being here today.

EMILY BANKS: Good afternoon everyone. I  
am Emily Banks of the friends of the Rochdale  
Village adult Learning Center. I've been teaching  
basic education to adults at the library for  
approximately 20 years. Thank you for the  
opportunity to speak with you today. The adult  
learning center is located in Rochdale, Rochdale  
village Community Library in the south, in  
Southeast Queens. Now it serves more than 250 adult  
students every year who come to the library to gain  
a basic education in literacy, math, English as a



second language, and some to prepare for the high school equivalency exam. It is very difficult for these learners to become motivated and stay with the program. But it is life changing for them. The job market is so competitive under the best of circumstances imagine what It's like for someone who cannot read adequately and who has no computer skills. But let me tell you about Fabiola Olsier [sp?], a woman who came to us from Haiti. She started a Queens Library as an ESOL student. She earned her high school equivalency diploma. And she is now working as a home health aide while she attends college to further her education to become a nurse. The demand for adult learning services at Queens Library was far behind what we could provide because the space within the library that house the adult learning program was too small by a half. In the afternoons or evening there wasn't a spare chair or quiet corner for those adults to work or study. No one would try to educate a child under these conditions and expect him or her to achieve. There wasn't enough computers. Students were literally sitting cheek by jowl. Okay I'm going to sum this up okay.

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MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: I, I, I'm  
reading along with you and, and their, I see  
there's not much left so why don't you go ahead and  
just...

EMILY BANKS: Oh yeah okay fine.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: ...finish it  
up Ms. Banks. Thank you.

EMILY BANKS: Okay. We could have been  
teaching twice as many people if only we had more  
space. In 2002 we began talking to our elected  
officials about an expansion onto property adjacent  
to the library. It took years to obtain funding.  
But thanks to the Queens Borough President, New  
York State Assembly Member Vivian Cook, the late  
Council Member Thomas White and his successor Ruben  
Wills and the Queens delegation to the council the  
funding was secured. The project has been an active  
constriction for the past three years since March  
2000, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012. And it is scheduled to  
finally be completed later this spring. We've been  
limping along as best we can in the meantime when  
the expanded adult learning center reopens our  
learners can look forward to an adult learning  
environment that treats them with dignity. They

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will have more study space, more computers, more  
classroom space and we will have the resources to  
teach twice as many adults the basic skills they  
need to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We ask  
the council to understand how important it is for  
libraries to have needed capital funds to build and  
maintain adequate facilities. And we ask the city  
council to help the libraries streamline the  
process so it does not take such an extended time  
to build. In the three years since the building  
began we have helped 750 adults to learn to read  
and write but we have missed many more. That is too  
high a price to pay. Thank you for your attention.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMMER: Thank you  
very much. Wow look at that response Ms. Banks.

[laughter]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Sorry about  
that. Yes no laughing otherwise. Roxanna Benavidez  
we heard from you President/CEO that this  
testimony's going to the best two minutes of our  
lives so look forward to hearing from you. Thank  
you.

ROXANNA BENIVITES: Good afternoon. I  
want to thank the Chairs, Chairs James Van Bramer,

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Julissa Ferreras, and Costa Constantinides, and the  
members of the city council for the opportunity to  
testify and advocate for the inclusion of public  
libraries in the city's 10 year capital plan. And  
after hearing the administration I want to  
emphasize that this inclusion should be meaningful  
and, and realistic to the needs of the libraries,  
the three library systems. My name is Roxanna  
Benavidez. I began a rewarding career at the  
Brooklyn Public Library 21 years ago as a library  
trainee at the Williamsburg branch. For the past 10  
years I have been working at the Sunset Park  
Library where I am currently the Neighborhood  
Library Supervisor. I am a proud Brooklynite who  
lives in Kensington and works in Sunset Park. I am  
also an immigrant and an ESOL speaker, two  
characteristics that I have in common with a large  
segment of the diverse community in Sunset Park.  
Our branch serves the... with the some of the largest  
percentage of ESOL speakers in Brooklyn. In my  
testimony I want to highlight and I'm saying just  
highlight the... programming and library services  
offered at the Sunset Park Library from early  
literacy programs including those for children's

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with a special needs, multilingual technology  
information literacy, bilingual story hours,  
English as a second language classes and  
conversation groups including ESOL for business...  
tween and teen time, chess club, family movies,  
after school... reading coach, etcetera. The Sunset  
Park branch is one of the busiest branches of the  
Brooklyn Public Library system located in one of  
the most densely populated and diverse  
neighborhoods in Brooklyn. Originally open in 1905,  
1905... is a one story building in the earliest  
1970s. Despite ranking I'm on the top, top 10  
branches, exactly number eighth branch... circulation  
in the system... 20, 12 thousand and square feet is  
not an adequate a space to meet the needs of the  
active and growing community in Sunset Park. The  
branch has long been in need of expansion and  
renovation for the installation of a new boiler and  
roof and of the self-check machines and the removal  
of the circulation desk. In addition the air  
condition system it stop working last summer and  
four portable cooling units that you saw in the  
presentation up, by our CEO were installed.  
Although they already presented a temporary

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solution to combatting the summer high, summer high  
temperatures at the same time they had exacerbated  
all the the critical challenges we are facing in  
many fronts; the inadequate seating as well as the  
already limited public area in... space. The branch  
layout is outdated and needs to be modernized.  
Accessing traffic... for wheelchairs and strollers to  
the down stair program room in, in the work force  
ones office are hindered by the inefficient  
operation of our outdated elevator.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Ms.  
Benavidez can you summarize that, that last  
paragraph I see.

ROXANNA BENIVIDES: Sure.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Because I  
know it's a complex issue in your neck of the  
woods.

ROXANNA BENIVIDES: And as you already  
know the Brooklyn Public Library is looking to  
partner with the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Committee for, to build  
a new Sunset Park Library building within the mix  
used building of the site of the existing library.  
That would represent for us a state of the art new  
library, a 20 thousand a square feet library that

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will allow us to improve our service... and increase  
programs targeted specifically to the Sunset Park  
community.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Great.

ROXANNA BENIVIDES: Inequity of access  
often result from inequities in the allocation of  
public funding. Please help us ensure physical and  
economic access to library buildings that I are  
welcoming...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

ROXANNA BENIVIDES: ...safe, and relevant  
to the communities we serve.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. And Linda Johnson was correct. And now  
our last on this panel, Philip Hogarth from Cambria  
Heights. I know that Council Member Miller is a big  
fan of that library and Philip we, we go way back  
as well from the founding of the friends of the  
Cambria Heights Library. Mr. Hogarth.

PHILIP HOGARTH: Yes thank you very  
much. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with  
you today. My name is Philip Hogarth and I am the  
president of the Friends of the Cambria Heights  
Library. I don't work for the library. I am a

volunteer. Friends of the Library are the, say the  
bridge between the community and the library.

Whichever issues that the library needs we are  
there for them and whatever issue the community  
needs we are there for them. So I'm here on behalf  
of not just the library but the patrons as well.

While Cambria Heights had a gorgeous new library  
there's no dedicate, there was no dedicated place  
for teens in the library and not real good space.

The community advocated to turn the lower level  
into a dedicated teen space. Thanks to support from  
the city council and then Council Member Leroy

Comrie their lower level storage space was turned  
into a 4,000 square foot teen center. It features a  
separate cyber center, a lounge, and a gaming area,

a sound recording booth, a meeting room, a casual  
reading room, as well as all the books referenced  
in school work resources teens want and expect from

heir library. Nearly 100 teens use it just about  
every day. Some of the examples of the teen center

is that there's a newly formed teen advisory board  
and it's comprised of all of the teens, of the

basic teen patrons that come to the library. And

they've had elections and I guess the best man and



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woman won. The teen advisory board is in charge of  
the teen center along with the youth counselors and  
they've been able to have several programs provided  
for them. And there's an organization known as the  
Haitian American United for Progress. And what they  
do is they provide programs for the, some of the  
programs for self-esteem programs, financial aid  
counselling, healthy relations, college  
application, and there are many talks about  
domestic violence. I guess I have a lot I could  
say...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Mr.  
Hogarth...

PHILIP HOGARTH: Yes sir.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: ...I do not  
have a copy of your testimony so I, so I don't know  
how much more you have to go but...

PHILIP HOGARTH: I'm not going to say  
too much but I just want to say that I've been  
listening, I've been here early and I've been  
listening to the administration as well as the  
council and I've heard testimony from all of the  
library advocates and I, I don't think there's  
anyone in here who's never been inside a New York

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City public library. And I guess it speaks for  
itself, the library I think is the most important  
asset that we have as New Yorkers. And if you give  
that up I guarantee you nobody's going to want to  
come into New York City. So I want to thank you so  
much.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. Overwhelming applause. And Mr. Hogarth I  
know your council member has some questions or some  
comments. Council Member Miller.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Actually Mr.  
Hogarth I want to thank you for your advocacy and  
what you do. And we do have a phenomenal teen  
center but we also have phenomenal teens inside of  
that center there. And I've had the opportunity to  
meet with their advisory council and we're looking  
to do some really great things in the very near  
future which, which is a microcosm of the Queen  
system in general and that we have been supportive  
during my short tenor who will continue to be and  
again I just wanted to reiterate the great job that  
we're doing in Southeast Queens with our young  
people, seniors, and just the services that the  
public library provides and that we're here to be

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as supportive as we possibly can be. Thank you  
again for your... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you Council  
Member Miller. We've been joined by Council Member  
Gibson of the Bronx. And also I just wanted to say  
before Chair Van Bramer calls up the next panel the  
two minute time clock really is, I know it's very  
hard but it's because we want to hear all of your  
testimony. So even, I know that when you hear the  
bell it doesn't mean read one more paragraph. We  
got to really wrap it up so that we can let the  
people right behind you come up and, and we can  
acknowledge them. So let's be respectful of not  
only you when you're on the panel but also the  
people that are just right behind you, okay? Thank  
you.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Two hands  
up for that. First of all thank you everybody for  
your testimony and your advocacy for libraries and  
good to see you all. Our next panel Edwin Maxwell  
from Brooklyn. Is Edwin Maxwell here? He is.  
Larissa Larier also from Brooklyn. Mathew Carling  
is it or Carlino? Carlino. Alright and this is a  
Brooklyn panel, Virginia Cantone, Virginia Cantone,

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is Virginia here. Oh alright is that four or five,  
four yep. And it looks like Malika Shariava? Great.  
Alright. So why don't we start with Edwin.

EDWIN MAXWELL: Sure.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Alright.

EDWIN MAXWELL: Good afternoon.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Two  
minutes.

EDWIN MAXWELL: Sure. Good afternoon my  
name is Edwin Maxwell and I'm the neighborhood  
library supervisor for the New Lots Library which  
we saw some images of today. Thank you to the  
Finance, Cultural Affairs, and, and the Finance  
Committees for allowing me to speak on the behalf  
of the New Lot Library, the Brooklyn Public  
Library, and the New Lots community. I won't spend  
any time talking about libraries because we've been  
talking about libraries all day long and I know how  
passionate you all are for them. But I do want to  
take some time to commend the city council because  
every time that we were faced with being closed or  
our hours being cut the city council stepped up to  
keep the libraries' doors open. So I want to do  
this for you guys. I worked at Brooklyn Public

Library for over 10 years, mostly in high needs  
areas like the New Lots community. I particularly  
like working in these communities because this is  
where we see the real value of libraries. This is  
how you see that, how libraries are really life  
transformative. I've only been in New Lots for  
three months but I can personally attest to this  
and what the statistics show that New Lots is one  
of the busiest branches in Brooklyn. Every morning  
we open at 10:00 a.m. and there is a line outside  
and it never slows down. And we're usually open to  
8:00 at night. Again thanks to the council for  
keeping us oh, the extra hours that we're open. For  
many other community members of east New York our  
libraries are a safe place for teens, for kids to  
learn to read and where adults can work on their  
GED, prepare for citizenship exams, learn English  
as a second language. To them libraries are their  
colleges. The community of New Lots love their  
library however keeping the doors open are no  
longer enough. We just, we do not have the... sorry.  
Well in short the demand for our libraries, our  
facility can no longer accommodate that. Our  
bathrooms are deplorable sometimes. There's,

there's holes in our roof. A lot of the problem  
that we've talked about all day and that we've seen  
pictures of.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

EDWIN MAXWELL: So we would like your  
help again.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Well I just  
want to say thank you for doing the work that you  
do in that library. Obviously we saw some photos  
earlier. And no need to apologize. We apologize  
that we can't go longer with this. And I want to  
give everyone who's going to testify permission to  
skip that intro paragraph where you thank all of  
us. It, it'll, it'll... [cross-talk] make this go a  
little bit faster. And I say this as someone who  
used to write the testimony at, at library  
hearings. So we've been thanked enough. This is our  
job to fight for libraries. So feel free to skip  
that paragraph and then it'll give you more time to  
say what you want to say. And next we'll go to  
Larissa who has a brief testimony so you probably  
wouldn't need that rule but, but we'll go to you  
next but thank you very much.

LARISSA LARIER: ...microphone...

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MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Oh then you  
should, you should get up here. I called your name.  
Yeah yeah. Yep, go sit in that, that last seat over  
there to the right next to Edwin, he's a very nice  
man. And Larissa...

LARISSA LARIER: Good afternoon  
everyone. My name's Larissa Larier. I am currently  
the Library Information Supervisor at the New Lots  
Library. I've been there, I've been working for  
Brooklyn Public Library for about 14 years in  
different communities. And I've been at the New  
Lots branch since March, last March. And a lot of  
time have been dedicated by myself, passion, effort  
into effectively serving the community over the  
last 14 years working with Brooklyn Public Library.  
You know I've lead story times, visited classes at  
schools, and conducted resume workshops just to  
name a few of the programs. But in order for these  
programs to be successful part of it, the space  
needs to be inviting for the people that are coming  
into the spaces. And at the New Lots Library we  
have several uninviting places. We have lighting  
that's very dull and just kind of shines a terrible  
light on what the library is all about. We have

1 huge shells in our children section that blocks off  
2 a big part of the library which you're not able to  
3 see what's going on in the rest of the part of the  
4 library. There needs to be paint that's cohesive  
5 throughout the entire building where we don't have  
6 green on one side of the wall and blue on the  
7 other. So we just need uniformity for the most  
8 part. We have a stair case that is leaking with  
9 plaster and paint from the windows that are  
10 outdated. We also have windows that aren't able to  
11 be open and we have weeds growing through them. So  
12 just things like this is, it's very unfortunate and  
13 as much as our public still come. It's not a  
14 comfortable, excuse me, environment for them to say  
15 the least. And as much as I can try to do my job to  
16 maintain the day to day operations we still needed  
17 support. We need the funding so that the  
18 expectations are met on a level that should be met.  
19 We have too many people utilizing the libraries not  
20 to. So hopefully we can work together to get some  
21 money.  
22

23 MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
24 Larissa for your service, for the work that you do  
25 for the people of Brooklyn and for your on-time



testimony. Looks like the mic is travelling to  
Virginia.

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: So we'll do  
you and then Mathew we'll go right to you after  
that okay?

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Alright.

VIRGINIA CANTONE: I'm not going to say  
thank you. Okay. My name is Virginia Cantone and I  
have been using the Brooklyn Public Libraries for  
40 years. Three years ago I had a major stroke. I  
was paralyzed on the entire left side of my body.  
We need every public library to be wheelchair  
accessible, every single one. And I do want to  
apologize for disrupting for my clapping and my  
gasps. I can't help it, I'm Italian and I was a  
cheerleader in high school. It's just built in, I,  
I just can't, I just can't shut it off I'm sorry.  
Okay so I also want to tell you that Bill de Blasio  
has done a phenomenal job. I think he's done  
amazing job with opening up new pre-Ks and  
Kindergartens and he's just done a great great job.  
I think he's done a phenomenal job. And I think

1 that the fact that he puts education right up there  
2 is excellence. But New York City public library  
3 equals education for immigrant children and for  
4 children everywhere and for people who aren't  
5 immigrants for us, I mean I'm not an immigrant. My  
6 parents were immigrants. However I lost my job  
7 after I had my stroke okay. And my bills were, I  
8 mean I don't have to tell you. My bills were crazy.  
9 And thank god I had enough savings and thank god I  
10 had a wonderful and loving and supportive family  
11 and a fantastic church environment that I belonged  
12 to. I am thankful to God and Jesus Christ that I  
13 can walk today and that I can hug my son and I can  
14 see my son and I could speak to him. So I just want  
15 to tell you that everybody has money problems. I  
16 mean, I don't care what bracket you're in. And the  
17 New York City public library is the only place that  
18 many people can often go to just for air  
19 conditioning sometimes. And that's what it was like  
20 for me in the 70s. My, my, my parents were  
21 immigrant parents. My, my father had his own  
22 business in woodworking. And he never made a lot of  
23 money he just loved his craft. He loved his Italian  
24 woodcraft. He was phenomenal but nobody paid him.  
25

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So what did that mean we had air conditioners but  
we never turned them on. Why? Because you don't  
spend daddy's hard earned money on air  
conditioning.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Virginia.  
And I mean this when I say I would really like for  
you to go on for another half hour...

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Okay I'm done. Okay  
alright, alright, let's just, let's just say...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: ...because  
you're just too much fun really. Got to say that.  
But, but we do, we do have to... [cross-talk]

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Okay I, I'm, I'm  
going to get up now. I just want to tell you I...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: No don't  
get up just... yeah.

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Okay, okay. My, in  
summary my name is Virginia Cantone and I've been  
using the Brooklyn public libraries for 40 years  
and thank you for doing a phenomenal job with the  
Brooklyn public libraries. They're awesome. The  
people who work there are also. And I also want to  
say one thing that, no matter what library I've

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ever gone too, everyone no matter how packed that  
library is everybody helps you out.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Librarians are  
phenomenal. Thank you very much.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. No no you can stay there you, you...

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Oh I can stay here.  
Oh okay.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: You can  
applaud your own testimony yes, you can applaud  
your own testimony. I'm not sure that's ever been  
done in the history of the New York City Council  
but it just got done right now.

VIRGINIA CANTONE: Okay.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Mathew you  
are up next. And Brooklyn Public Library should  
take you on everywhere Virginia everywhere. Mathew.

MATHEW CARLINO: Oh okay alright thanks.  
Thank you very much. I took a, a 15, a 15 month art  
class and at the end of the art class we displayed  
our artwork in a room and someone come up to me  
after, after the display and they asked me what I

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thought about the library. And this is what I said  
and it became a blog on, on, on some computer...

[laughter]

MATHEW CARLINO: And this is what I  
said. And the only reason why I'm here before is to  
say this. You're all looking at a happy man. I'm in  
a good mood. I'm not depressed. I'm looking forward  
to life because of this experience. A library to me  
is the center of the universe. And that's it, I'm  
gone.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
so much.

[laughter]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
for your honesty and brevity Mr.... this hearing got  
really fun all of a sudden didn't it? It's because  
Brooklyn's in the house huh?

VIRGINIA CANTONE: That's right baby.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: So I think  
Malika is it...

MALIKA SHARIAVA: It's too complicated.

[laughter]

MALIKA SHAIIVA: Just keep it.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Alright  
you're up, yeah.

MALIKA SHAIIVA: Good afternoon  
everyone. I am immigrant and my first computer I  
was able to use it was a library computer. And I  
was able to learn English in library. I'm educate  
skilled person but my job was in here home health  
aide. I'm psychologist and I was able to get  
professional job through Brooklyn Public Library.  
And I'm so proud and privileged to advocate to  
stand up for the Brooklyn Public Library. Today I  
think it's time to pay back. And I feel I must do  
personal something. I pay taxes first of all to  
support libraries. I brought couple people  
personally. One woman she's selling books. I  
brought another person he gives a check. And I feel  
and I learn today is a government of the people by  
the people for the people, Abraham Lincoln.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Wow. Thank  
you all so much. And I want to thank Linda Johnson  
and everyone from the Brooklyn Public Library who  
brought some of the most outstanding New Yorkers to  
be here today to talk about libraries. All of you  
in your own very unique ways told very powerful

stories and shared some very powerful things. So  
thank you all so very much. And Virginia you are  
just amazing. Any time you want to come to Queens  
you let us know. You'll have to let us know in  
advance though because we got to prepare for the  
situation but it's great. So with that I'll thank  
this panel and, and you're free to, to go. And call  
the next panel of five. So if the other other five  
will come up. I think we have Isludmilla Vagen  
[phonetic] Isludmilla? Yes Ludmilla [phonetic] is  
here? Jesse Henshaw, is Jesse Henshaw... Paul Ness,  
is Paul Ness here? Paul Ness. It looks like Patty  
Kettles, is Patty Kettles here? Yep. And one more  
Leanna Aaivado [phonetic] Is Leanna Asivado here?  
Yes. You five and Ludmilla do you want to start?  
And we have two minutes again and thank you all so  
much for being here and for participating.

LUDMILLA VAGEN: Hi, my name is Ludmilla  
Vagen. I came to United States 37 years ago from  
former Soviet Union. And 25 years I was working all  
the time. 25 years I get retired and I get very  
bored and I was very depressed. And all my sadness  
start to write short funny stories believe it or  
not. And I find out in my neighborhood it was a

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Russian literature, literature club who...  
kid...branch. So I met with Lana Inigrimorski  
[phonetic]. She was the supervisor of the branch.  
She warmly welcomed me, she introduced me to so  
many free programs offering in the library. I was  
impressed with the all hard work she and library  
staff do for the community. Then they, I become  
friend of the library. Working 25 years in  
government center I decided I can do something for,  
for people. And I, so I decide, I, I know design  
and I know sewing so I decided to make a group art  
of the sewing. So now I volunteer for and teach  
people how to sew and make unique art project from  
fabric. Some of the, my art sewing club students  
are homeless. And despite living in the shelter  
they come to my club every Friday. So the only  
problem with the library I probably repeat  
everybody it's air conditioning, it's leaking roof,  
it's drainage, drainage system, drainage system  
need to be fixed so everybody know that. And thank  
you for your time and we hope you help us. And I  
feel like library's my second home.

MAJORITY LEAER VAN BRAMER: That's very  
beautiful, thank you so much Ludmilla. And it



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sounds like you write some very funny stories so...

[cross-talk]

LUDMILLA VAGEN: Yes.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: ...maybe you  
can send us one of those stories and I can read  
them.

LUDMILLA VAGEN: Okay.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: That would  
be a great treat.

LUDMILLA VAGEN: Okay.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Jesse  
Henshaw and then we'll keep going down the line.

JESSE HENSHAW: Yeah hi. Yeah I'm a, a  
natural system scientist. Basically I studied long  
term ecological and economic change as, as well as  
the, the mechanisms of it. And I've been working  
with the UN for a couple years consulting with the  
NGOs and, and, on what to do with the earth you  
know good, because that's the, the main subject  
over there. And it's not going very well. But we  
are going to need the libraries for a long time.  
And I would like to encourage you to not do any  
patchwork. Do complete renovations. Use stainless  
steel flashing, etcetera. We're going to need them

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for a long time partly because New York City makes  
its money ripping up the world, taking it apart, and  
consuming it. And we're going to reverse that at  
some point and we're going to need a new job of  
putting it back together. Conceptually speaking  
that we need to be experts at making the world work  
rather than ripping it up as we did for the last  
couple centuries. So that's a new kind of learning  
for our business community, and then we also will  
have new kinds of learning for the guests who come  
in late. Oh you're listening okay. For the  
communities because we won't be getting funding  
for, for a lot of things and there'll be much more  
do it yourself, you know the peer to peer phase  
that, that is loosely tossed around is going to  
become very real. So the library's going to have  
bigger roles in our lives over the next half  
century. And I guess that's all you have..

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Jesse. Paul.

PAUL NESS: My name is Paul Ness. My, I  
have a little bit of a different perspective on,  
on, on libraries actually that has been talked  
about here today. Their library, my neighborhood

library's under threat of being closed and being  
sold. There's been letters exchanged between Tony  
Marx and Gale Brewer on, on October 2014 that say  
that they're still thinking about selling off SIBL  
the Science Industry Business Library. And  
unfortunately I think there's one thing that's been  
maybe overlooked even though this is in the very  
you know fancy neighborhood in Manhattan that the  
neighborhood around it is being developed really  
rapidly. There's like 21 different identifiable  
construction projects that are going up. They're  
building towers. And they've been building actually  
for over five years and so we're having a huge  
influx of people so I think the closing a library  
and selling it off is probably obviously maybe not  
well thought through especially because only, well  
20 years ago Mayor Julianne spent 100 million  
dollars on that library to renovate it. And it's  
beautiful. I mean it looks like you're inside a  
piece of Dana's furniture when you're inside it.  
That couldn't be more beautiful and it's very well  
equipped with computers and, and space. And if you  
go on yelp and you, there's a website actually that  
people do reviews of libraries. And this particular

library is, is, scores really highly. Everybody  
says it's a great place to go to work and to read  
and you know it's a, it's a fantastic space. And  
not only that to do, but also to do research and  
with all the computers and everything there's an  
excellent library. But I mean to close it and to  
lose it I think would be a tremendous disservice,  
especially with all the people that are moving in.  
I mean I've got pages from Curb dot com, I don't  
know if anybody's been on NY Curb dot com where  
you, where you can see where all the different  
projects are being built and there's towers going  
up all over the place. I got 21 of them just within  
like a few block area, within two blocks of, of  
civil. So I think you know that would be a  
tremendous disaster if that happened.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. And to his credit Tony is here and  
listening to the public. So thank you for your,  
your, your thoughts on the matter. Patty Kettles  
and then Leanna Asivado.

PATTY KETTLES: Hi my name is Patty  
Kettles and I run the Port Richmond Branch of the  
New York Public Library. As you know the library

offers many programs. I'll be quick about it. We do  
programing from infancy to toddlers to adults to  
non-English speakers, to an out of school time  
programs in the branch. My branch, there is not one  
single room in my library that does not have some  
kind of building issue including the closets. It  
may be mold, crumbling walls, a bubbling wall,  
leaking water throughout the building, exposed  
pipes, falling ceilings just, that's just to name a  
few. On top of that it is actually, complete shame  
that the front of my building when you walk in the  
front is exposed pipes and mud and dirt that, that  
there's a piping issue that the run off clears out  
the front lawn so there is nothing that we can do  
other than the whole infrastructure has to be  
changed. There are pillars in my building that are,  
that are patchwork of little repairs that the  
library has done over the years. My building is a  
Carnegie building. It will be 110 years old on  
March 18<sup>th</sup> of this year. I also have a WPA theatre  
downstairs that is 76 years old. My, the outside of  
my building is full of cracks. There are  
structural, they're, they're, they're supposedly  
structural sound where the building is not going to

collapse but that's just a matter of time because  
there is cracks along the buildings, there's cracks  
in my stairs. My building's basically falling  
apart. And if I'm able to get a renovation, a full  
renovation not just patchwork I'd be able to  
provide tremendous things to our community that I'm  
at a higher risk community with low income. I would  
be able to have a teen zone. My, my teens are, have  
no place to go as of right now. And I also would  
love to have an adult learning center to be able to  
teach adults how to use computers on, on more  
consistent basis as well as teaching them how to  
read and write in English. Because I'm, I'm also a  
large immigrant, immigrant community.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Patty Kettles. You've been here before,  
testified. And speaking from experience I agree,  
closets are a problem. They can be a problem. Not  
everyone got that but I appreciate those who did.  
And we will... hear from Leanna Asivado to finish out  
this panel and then we have two more full panels to  
go.

LEANNA ASIVADO: Hi my name is Leanna  
Asivado. I'm hear from the Hunts Point Branch of

the New York Public Library. Like many of the  
branches we have issues. We, so just to take you  
through a day. So I'm helping a patron who is  
formerly incarcerated and they're seeking help and  
I'm able to show them connections. And we're  
speaking through this process when I'm pulled away  
because it's too hot and a patron is asking if we  
could open the windows which I have to explain that  
we cannot because the windows do not work. I'm  
helping a child look for a book for a science  
project that they have when I'm pulled away because  
upstairs there's a leak from the roof. Or I'm  
helping someone who is inquiring about ESOL classes  
which are highly attended where in a large  
immigrant population and I'm pulled away because of  
some, the HVAC system isn't working. So all of  
these issues pull us away from what we are  
dedicated to which is our patrons and making sure  
that they receive the services that we offer. So we  
have, as Patty said we have Toddler Time, we have  
ESOL classes, we have one on one computer classes.  
And so all of these things that we are offering are  
being offered in buildings that are literally  
falling apart around us. So if we could have

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buildings that are not falling apart at Hunts Point  
per say we have a third floor that's completely  
being unused, it's an old custodial apartment that  
in a high need community that we have we can  
actually open that floor up and have it for career  
and education services which is a high need in that  
community. So if we had the money that's what we  
would want to do.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
so much Leanna. Thank you very much to this panel  
and all of you for all of your work and advocacy on  
behalf of libraries. We're going to move to the  
next panel. Is Christian Zebriskie [phonetic] still  
in the room? I saw him earlier, yes he is. Caroline  
Macintyre. Siddique Atkinson, Velma Morton, and  
Lyman Clayborn. That, and it's this panel and then  
we have three folks speaking on the last panel  
including you Veronica I see you looking there. So  
Christian why don't you begin and we'll go down the  
line in this panel.

CHRISTIAN ZEBRISKIE: I'd like to thank  
you very much for your invitation to speak today.  
My name is Christian Zebriskie and I'm the, and I'm  
the Executive Director of Urban Librarians Unite.



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We're a 501C3 that focus on, focuses on libraries  
and librarianship in Urban Centers. We've been  
involved in Library Education networking and  
advocacy in New York City since 2007. Folks here we  
are again. We've had these conversations before  
right? So here we are again. And this is now an  
immediate issue. This is not in the forefront  
issue. This is, there, there were four community  
libraries closed in New York City on Friday due to  
the cold. The heating systems couldn't keep up in  
these spaces which should be community warming  
stations were closed. Now we can discuss hardship  
of staff who are working in cold buildings. I've  
actually worked myself days where I've got a  
sweater under a sweater under a jacket right. So  
that's, and that's in my children's room,  
interesting right. So those of us who work for,  
speak up for libraries are very excited to, that  
capital... are starting to be discussed. We're eager  
to see what you guys come up with. The current  
state of repairs for libraries in New York City is  
pervasive. It is corrosive. And it has been allowed  
to fester for far too long. Now while I know we are  
not siren services I have to draw the connection.

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You don't send out fire trucks with half full tanks  
and hoses that leak. You don't send NYPD out in  
broken down cruisers and just hope for the best.

These buildings are what we have to work with.

They're where we do all the programming and  
education and public good that you've been hearing  
about more and more. If they are dilapidated or

broken down then we literally cannot provide the  
services that you and our public require of us.

This can keeps getting kicked down the line for the  
next set of leaders to deal with. It has left the  
library scrambling, looking for often controversial

solutions at a handful of branches which then

dominate the discussion while the real issues

continue to be left unaddressed. Libraries are not  
the kind of quiet places that people go to read

romances and mysteries and check their email. We do  
serious social involvement every day. And we can't

do our work if we are in broken down rotting

buildings and we can't get on top of that damage if  
we do patch, piecemeal patchwork efforts. I implore

you to find true solutions to the capital funding

needs of the library in the city's 10 year capital

plan. I have one of my great library anecdotes

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that's in here. I'll let you guys read it at your  
leisure. Thank you very much.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
Christian. Like any great Sunnysider delivering on  
time. Caroline do you want to go next?

CAROLINE MACINTYRE: Thank you. Yeah I,  
my heart goes out to all the librarians who work in  
some of these buildings in some of the conditions.  
And my heart goes out to all the library patrons  
who are here taking their time. I'm not paid to be  
here and those of us who are here not being paid to  
be are doing this because we care about the  
libraries. And we really do understand the amazing  
value. I'm with Suzan's Defending Libraries. We  
have a petition with over 20 thousand petition  
signatures and lots of comments online about what  
libraries mean to people. I'm here because, to  
offer your, my honesty about our assessment about  
the direction that the leadership is going which  
seems to be very focused on real estate right now.  
It seems to be very focused on making real estate  
deals, selling public assets to private groups and  
allowing libraries to be shrunk, not grown. In the  
case of Brooklyn Heights they are planning to sell

the Brooklyn Heights Library and shrink it to one-  
third its size. This is one of the very few  
libraries that is truly handicap accessible and  
allow the private developer to build a luxury high-  
rise like what happened to Denel Library, Denel is  
still not open after being closed in 2008. There's  
a Baccalaureate hotel and condo where they,  
penthouse apartment is selling for 60 million  
dollars. They sold the entire library for 59  
million dollars. And every time they want to sell a  
library magically the air conditioner or HVAC  
system stops working six months before they  
announce the plan to sell the Brooklyn Heights  
Library the air conditioner stopped working. In the  
case of Red Hook they wanted to give off part of  
the space to space works and they started to extort  
or bribe the community into going along with  
shrinking their library by telling them they would  
get a new air conditioner if they went along with  
the plan. The Red Hook community did not go along  
with the plan. I'm also here to talk about what is  
happening with the books... [off mic] There is a  
quote from a BPLs person. I would like you all to  
see these empty bookshelves in the Brooklyn Heights

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Library. This is something that is not being talked  
about is what is happening to all the books. There...  
use of misinformation this BPL person is saying  
that the Brooklyn Heights Library, children's  
library is stocked full of books.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Caroline I  
think we're going to ask you to...

CAROLINE MACINTYRE: ...full of books.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: ...wrap up.

CAROLINE MACINTYRE: Does this look like  
a library that's stocked full of books? What is  
happening to the books?

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
Caroline.

CARONLINE MACINTYRE: [off mic] This is  
public property.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

CAROLINE MACINTYRE: [off mic] Thank  
you.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Siddique  
Atkinson.

SIDDIQUE ATKINSON: Thank you. Hi, my  
name is Siddique Atkinson and I'm the library  
manager for the Melrose Branch of the New York

Public Library. I'd like to tell you a quick story.

In early October, nice day, I'm heading to lunch,  
and I walk past an older woman who was slowly  
making her way down the street. She had a cane and  
she looked like she needed a little help. I went on  
to lunch and on my way back I met her in front of  
the Melrose Library. She was on her way up the  
first two set of stairs so I opened the door and  
helped her inside. I also helped her inside past  
the second set of doors. But once she got inside  
she was in shock because to get into our building,  
to ask a question, to see a book there are 13 steps  
to get there. In order to go down into the  
children's room there are another seven set of  
stairs. The Melrose Library is not ADA compliant at  
all. We need a major major renovation. The  
potential for me to reach my community is huge. I  
can do so much more if we were ADA compliant. And  
I'm not talking to you as just the library manager  
of the Melrose Branch but also a resident of the  
Melrose community. I live in the Melrose section of  
the Bronx. I have, I take my two sons to this  
branch. And so it's very very important for us to  
realize the potential of the libraries in the area.

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I am not too far away from the Bronx courthouse.  
I'm only a few blocks away from Yankee Stadium and  
yet and still the Melrose branch does not look up  
to par to some of the surrounding community based  
organizations that we have. So we do, I do offer  
all types of programs that was mentioned before;  
tech programs, toddler story times, programs for  
adults. But I'm not able to reach my seniors. My  
seniors I cannot have come into the building  
because again there are 13 steps before you can  
reach anybody. And so I implore that you please  
renovate, provide the Melrose branch with a full  
renovation. Thank you.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
so much for all of the work that you do on behalf  
of the community of Melrose. Velma Morton.

VELMA MORTON: Hi. Good afternoon. My  
name is Velma Morton and I'm the interim library  
manager at the 125<sup>th</sup> Street branch on the east side  
of Harlem. The 125<sup>th</sup> Street was gifted by Andrew  
Carnegie and has served the East Harlem community  
since 1904. Currently we're facing challenges when  
it comes to meeting the needs of our community. We  
currently need to be more ADA compliant as well. We

have a temporary medal ramp outside our location  
that is hard to access when it's wet or from a  
snow. We're limited in our services to our special  
needs patrons with a wheelchair lift that only  
access our first floor. Patrons are unable to  
access our community room which is in our basement  
and especially these children cannot access our,  
any of our books on the second floor which is our  
children room. We also currently do not have an  
elevator. So none of those patrons that are elderly  
or disabled can't go down stairs or upstairs. We  
have no public restroom. We're, have a third floor  
space that is unused and if we haved we can, we can  
use it for out of school time, English as a second  
language, or even a computer lab. With all of these  
issues addressed we can better serve our diverse  
community and patrons with formerly, which are  
formerly incarcerated Wards Island patrons who are  
homeless or mentally disturbed, our elementary and  
middle schoolers who are coming every day, non-  
English speakers, and also provide them with our  
tale for tots programs, resume building workshops,  
our movie night, our teen tech time, and computer



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classes. We deserve a branch that is ADA compliant  
and has the basic services as a public facility.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. And just listing all the services and  
the programs that are going on at that library took  
almost all of your two minutes which is very  
impressive that you've got so much going on there  
at 125<sup>th</sup> Street. Last speaker on this panel and  
then we have only three other folks to testify,  
Lyman Clayborn.

LYMAN CLAYBORN: Hey I'm Lyman Clayborn.  
I'm the manager at Fort Washington Public Library  
at 179<sup>th</sup> and St. Nicholas. As the council can  
probably tell I'm not from here. I'm originally  
from the south, North Carolina specifically. It was  
my dream job to work for New York Public Library.  
It's still my dream job. However when I came to New  
York Public, Public Library it was a bit revealing  
to me, sometimes appalling how the condition of  
even just my branch the outside is in such  
disrepair I have patrons who have lived in the  
heights all their lives and they say they never  
noticed the library. Just over the weekend we had a  
block of marble just fall off of a column by the

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main circulation desk. In the basement I have a  
MacGyver rigged tarp of rope and buckets to keep  
water from the brain of the library which is the  
computer system. What else... as Tony mentioned we do  
have a third floor custodial apartment that would  
be perfect for our teens. Right now the teens have  
to mill about in the adult section and there is no  
teen center for the heights in my neighborhood. So  
the main thing just as Melrose and 125<sup>th</sup> we are not  
ADA compliant. So I basically spend my Wednesdays  
and Fridays without an elevator helping mothers  
with strollers up and down the stairs and then  
helping the elderly up and down to the community  
room. And by the way the community room is about  
the size of one-third of your desk. And so we could  
really use our third floor renovation to have a  
community room for our patrons. So I have 13  
seconds and I'll just say thank you for your time  
and we look forward to getting any money you can  
even for someone from North Carolina.

[laughter]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much. I think we love people from North  
Carolina. And you must be from southern North

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Carolina though huh, that is a deep accent. So  
thank you to all of you. And I know four of you  
work at a library and, and I just want to say thank  
you because you are really the front lines and  
doing amazing work despite these challenging  
conditions. So thank you very much. Our very last  
panel and our last three speakers; Veronica Conant,  
Maria Rocca from the Friends of Sunset Park, and  
Michael D.D. White.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: And while  
everyone gets settle it, I was speaking to Majority  
Leader Van Bramer that it speaks to the importance  
of, and the value... I mean some of these institution  
had actual apartment available on site. So it shows  
the original commitment that was there for the  
maintenance and the upkeep where you actually had  
someone that lived there to be able to keep up  
these buildings. So jussupposed [phonetic] to where  
we are today it speaks volumes to the original idea  
of how, the conditions we were supposed to have,  
keep our libraries in to where we are today.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Veronica do  
you want to start and then we'll go to Maria and  
then Michael.

VERONICA CONANT: Yes. So thank you for  
today. That much I want to say. I'm Veronica  
Conant. ...library and a member of the Committee to  
Save the New York Public Library. I am very  
strongly in support of having the 1.1 billion  
capital funding for all library systems. So thank  
you for that. I have two comments, one I second  
what Paul Ness said earlier about SIBL. And I  
actually have a hand out for you about the... SIBL.  
Because that's a perfect library which is in an  
excellent location in perfect condition with  
everything as best as possible and is functioning  
extremely well. The librarians are so knowledgeable  
and good. It's a crying shame to allow its sale and  
I hope that New York Public Library will change its  
mind and they'll keep it. So it's written up in the  
case of the SIBL I want to, don't want to say more  
about it. So the second part that I want to talk  
about is again you know public library. The city  
has already allocated capital funding to the New  
York Public Library, 151 million as you all know  
and 155 million from the mayor, 25 million from  
city council, and one million from the former  
borough, borough president. According to the

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Independent Budget Office NYPL has spent already  
14.25 million dollars of it and not yet budgeted by  
the city council are five million additional funds  
for the next two years. So we would like to know  
what that money was used for before NYPL spends any  
more money on renovations at 42<sup>nd</sup> street and at  
mid-Manhattan. Why is an additional five million  
dollar being budgeted for a project which has not  
been publically presented or described. The Landon  
building on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street belong to the public. The  
budget comes from taxpayer money. We have a right  
to know about the plans for these funds are before  
any additional allocations for future capital  
renovations on this... transparency, accountability,  
and oversight are essential. And that's as much as  
I have... have another... [cross-talk]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMEER: Thank you...  
Yeah I, there's several pages, I got them all.  
Thank you Veronica and obviously we've, we've met  
many times before. Perfect, thank you. Maria.

MARIA ROCCO: Good afternoon. I am Maria  
Rocco with the Friends of Sunset Park and 20 years  
ago we started to advocate just for the park which  
is named just like our neighborhood and over the

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years we find ourselves advocating for so much  
because we have been... as many other working class  
neighborhoods in this city have been so neglected  
and I dare say abandoned by so many. But here we  
are to, speaking of the library. And I want to  
start with a 1960 and 70s in two minutes. Then I  
was living in Sunset Park. I had just arrived in  
the mid-60s and we were told that our elegant  
architecturally appropriate two story Carnegie  
library had to be turned down because of a  
disappearing tax base due to middle class flight.  
Flash forward to 10 years ago. When the previous  
administration drastically reduced library funding  
despite a quote unquote booming economy that  
previous mayor wen around the world telling  
everybody how well he was managing our city. New  
York's library systems were left ripe for ravaging  
by real estate investors and monies from  
questionable sources. And we are all living that  
today. Flash forward again, I hope you have your  
seat belts on, to today and yet there's no money  
and yet we are told that the middle class has come  
back to New York City. That every middle class  
person in the, the united states wants to be in New

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York. I ask where is the money. I ask when you  
bring it back to Sunset Park, forget the city for  
the moment, forget the state which Governor Cuomo  
also tells us is wonderful because he has been such  
a good governor and the money is flowing. The  
commercial streets in Sunset Park are elbow to  
elbow people on any given day. Where is that tax  
money that is coming through sales taxes. Our real  
estate values in the last 20 years, even 15 years  
are six seven fold from where they were. Where is  
that tax money from all those... [cross-talk]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
Maria.

MARIA ROCCO: ...real estate taxes.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: I, I  
appreciate you took us through 50 years of history  
and you took on Mike Bloomberg and Andrew Cuomo in  
the same two minutes. Amazing.

[laughter]

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Brooklyn  
has a lot of character, nothing else.

MARIA ROCCO: But no money.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: And our  
last speaker of the hearing Michael White.

MICHAEL WHITE: Michael White Citizens

Defending Libraries. Since March 2013 Citizens  
defending libraries has been testifying at council  
hearings raising issues about proposed library  
sales, shrinkages, the elimination of books and  
librarians, and the underfunding of libraries as an  
excuse for plans to benefit the private real estate  
industry but not the public. We have raised many  
still unanswered and important questions. I think  
in multiple ways we've proved ourselves right about  
the facts as, they got disclosed... the Denel sale,  
the Central Library... turned out the cost of more  
than 200 million that was previously publicized. I  
don't think we've ever been off the mark. In  
connection with the June hearings of this committee  
we furnished the city council member and made  
publically available questions that need to be  
asked about these matters. Yet aside from a few  
questions answered, asked by the public advocate  
they remain unasked. There's a serious lack of  
transparency on the part of the library  
administration officials and the city real estate  
officials were directing the sell offs. We've  
requested a great deal of information by FOIL but



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we don't have it. And the book, and we're getting  
rid of the books. Now there was a June study by the  
Center for an Urban Future and the Architectural  
League about re-envisioning New York's branch  
libraries. And it was promoted... or good ideas mixed  
into it but we couldn't help but hear during the  
presentation about how libraries were to be  
considered tools for development with the public  
playacting told that they would be able to have  
better libraries if consent were given to increase  
density and development and up zonings that were  
otherwise likely to be rejected. We also heard  
about how what books shouldn't be in the libraries  
on the advice of librarians who said that they  
scold children if they come up looking for books on  
black history during black history month and  
women's history. It's exceedingly troubling that we  
have not yet restored library funding to deprive  
Lindbergh levels. In Austin Texas, a tech city, one  
of the, they are doing what voters want. They are  
properly funding libraries. That means enlarging  
them, increasing the number of books and it's a  
shame...

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

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MICHAEL WHITE: ...that we're not doing  
the same in New York.

MAJORITY LEADER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
very much Michael. I want to thank everyone who has  
come today to testify and support libraries. This  
was a very very illuminating hearing. I want to  
thank our Co-Chair Council Member Costa  
Constantinides and, and then hand it over to Chair  
Ferrereras to close out the hearing. But thank you  
all so much.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERERAS: Thank you Chairs  
Constantinides and Van Bramer. Again it's been a  
pleasure. I just want to urge you and invite you  
all our budget hearings, our, our preliminary  
budget hearings will begin with OMB March 4<sup>th</sup> so  
you're all welcome to come. Public testimony is  
held after and our libraries, Cultural Affairs  
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations  
how many times do you have a hearing on  
International Intergroup Relation, great, it will  
be held on March 20<sup>th</sup>. So if you could just  
document that. Looking forward to seeing you all  
here on the fourth. Thank you again for your  
testimony and I'm calling this hearing to a close.

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[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date February 27, 2015