

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

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March 8, 2018
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Justin Brannan
Fernando Cabrera
Chaim Deutsch
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Vanessa Gibson
Alan Maisel

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

Commissioner Nigro
Fire Department of New York

Laura Kavanagh
First Deputy Commissioner
Fire Department of New York

Elizabeth Cascio
Chief of Staff
Fire Department of New York

James Leonard
Chief of Department
Fire Department of New York

James Booth
Chief of EMS
Fire Department of New York

Steven Rush
Assistant Commissioner for Budget and
Finance
Fire Department of New York

Joe Esposito, Commissioner
Department of New York City Emergency
Management

Branch
Department of New York City Emergency
Management

Vincent Variale, President
Uniformed EMS Officers Union

Michael Greco, Vice President
Local 2507

JUAN: Test, test. This is the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. Today's date is March 8, 2018. This recording is being recorded by Juan Doubleday[phonetic].

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: My name is Joe Borelli. I am the chair of the Fire and Emergency Management Committee. I want to thank the speaker for appointing me as Chair of the Committee and I'm excited to learn more about the Fire Department and the New York City Emergency Management's Budgets and how they address the needs of all New Yorkers. First, the Committee will review the Fire Department's proposed budget for FY 2019, its 2018 to 2022 capital commitment plan and relevant sections of the preliminary Mayor's management report for fiscal 2018. Second, we will hear from New York City Emergency Management. The Fire Department's fiscal 2019 preliminary budget totals \$2 billion with 17,170 positions. We've got a lot of work ahead, increasing diversity and the Veterans' headcount at FDNY, assessing the need for additional fire and EMS resources throughout the City and looking into how best to improve EMS operations through expense and capital budgets. I'm disappointed to see that the

budget does not include funding to address the inequity of fire and emergency response resources on Staten Island compared to every other borough all of which have a squad company. However, I'm looking forward to working with you Commissioner Nigro, and your staff and continue the discussion on how the City Council can be a partner with the FDNY to advocate on behalf of these needs. On February 8, 2018, the Committee had a hearing on diversity at the FDNY. I want to once again congratulate First Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh who is here and on the panel and Chief of Staff Elizabeth Cascio who's here too. While the Department continues to make efforts in improving diversity of the FDNY, I'm concerned that there are no real metrics for success. Last month's oversight hearing proved insightful but the Committee would like to learn how the fiscal 2019 preliminary budget supports the Department's ongoing efforts. I am also interested in learning how we can work together to improve operations on Staten Island, how firefighters get stationed in different boroughs and what it costs to operate different companies. As you know and probably have tired of hearing from myself and others like Staten Island borough

president Otto who began asking for a squad company on Staten Island almost two decades ago. Staten Island is the only borough that does not have one. For 1,075 calls on the island, squad 1 is called from Park Slope in Brooklyn and fights traffic for almost nine miles to the foot of Staten Island going over the Verrazano bridge. As the City experiences substantial increases in call volume for medical emergencies from one year to the next, the Department has added additional tours and increased its EMS classes at the academy but has not addressed the capital needs to adequately support the growing demand for EMS service. In fact, the FY 2018 to 2022 capital commitment plan only includes a mere \$1.5 million for renovations at Ft. Taun[phonetic]. Considering the growing demand and need for EMS, the Committee is concerned that the current facility and renovation budget is not sufficient. Additionally, I'm interested in learning more about the EMS promotion path and what it costs to train EMT's and paramedics. The Committee would like to know what the Department plans to do to address these efficiencies as well as an update on the Department's recruitment plan, plans for EMS and new needs that

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2 were added to the FY19 preliminary budget. I also
3 want to thank our Committee staff for their finance,
4 their hard work, excuse me. Finance analyst, Jen
5 Lee, unit head, Eisha[phonetic] Wright, Committee
6 counsel, Brian Crowe and Josh Kingsley, Policy
7 analyst, Will Hognech[phonetic] and my chief of
8 staff, Frank Maschek[phonetic]. I want to thank
9 Commissioner Nigro and his staff, all our
10 firefighters, EMT's and paramedics for the work they
11 do and I am looking forward to hearing from you
12 Commissioner. I'd also like to recognize, before we
13 swear you in, the Council Members who are joining me
14 today, Councilman Diaz, Council Member Gibson, and
15 Council Member, oh my God,

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Fernando

17 Cabrera.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Fernando Cabrera.

19 Fernando, we speak all the time and I drew a blank.
20 I'm sorry. That was embarrassing. So Commissioner
21 Nigro, I would like the Committee counsel to swear
22 you in.

23 COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand

24 and repeat after me. Do you affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in

your testimony before this Committee and respond honestly to Council Member questions?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I do.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Please begin whenever you are ready.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well thank you and good morning, Chair Borelli and all the Council Members present. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2019 for the Fire Department. I'm joined this morning by First Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, Chief of Department, James Leonard, Chief of EMS, James Booth, and Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Finance, Steven Rush. A year ago, I was able to report that fire deaths for the previous year were at an all-time low. In 2017, however, the City saw an increase to 73 fire deaths. In the month of December alone, 26 people died in fires, the worse month for fire deaths in more than a quarter century. Part of the reason that fire deaths increased last year was that three serious fires took the lives of 22 people. We know that every fire death is a tragedy and we mourn for the family and friends of the victims. I want to reassure the Council and the

people of New York that fire trends over the last decade are encouraging and that fires have been decreasing in general. In 2017, New York experienced an 8% decline in serious fires from 2016 and a 15.5% decline from 2015. That's a difference of 400 fewer serious fires in two years. Though it is painful to suffer 73 deaths, we have come a long way since my first full year in the Department 1970 in which the City experienced 310 fire fatalities. Numbers like that are a thing of the past. Medical incidences were up in every borough in calendar year 2017 and the total number of incidents responded to by the Department was over 1.7 million. Despite those increases, City wide response times for ambulances to life threatening medical emergencies were faster by seven seconds including 25 seconds faster in the borough of Queens. In other ways, 2017 was a very positive year for the Department. I've previously detailed for this Committee the tremendous gains that we made in our recent recruitment campaign. Forty-six thousand candidates took the firefighter exam, more than any previous exam. A majority of test takers were people of color which is also something that has never happened before. More than twice as

many women took the exam in 2017 than had taken the previous exam. The number of Asian test takers increased by 55%, black test takers increased by 39%, Latino test takers increased by 29%, native American test takers increased by 35%, and the number of female test takers who took the exam and improved by 115%. We have strengthened our systematic engagement with candidates who have taken the test in order to turn these positive recruiting numbers into positive appointment numbers. 2017 was also a very strong year for the Department's outreach and community engagement. The fire safety education unit held more than 8,000 fire safety events providing and educating 700,000 New Yorkers about fire prevention and life saving strategies. Many of these were seasonal events in advance of celebrations including but limited to Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah, Lunar New Year, Labor Day and the 4th of July. Others were provided at block parties, fairs, and school classrooms and in conjunction with community group events. Some were conducted in response to high profile fire incidents. The unit disseminates a wide variety of information on various fire safety topics including kitchen and cooking safety, planning and

2 escape, the importance of maintaining working smoke
3 and carbon monoxide alarms, information focused on
4 children, candle safety, electrical safety, safety
5 tips for seniors and understanding whether an
6 individual's building is fireproof versus non-
7 fireproof and how to react accordingly during a fire.
8 Our mobile CPR training unit trained 24,000 New
9 Yorkers to perform bystander CPR including more than
10 17,000 high school students. In 2017, we
11 collaborated with several of our fellow City agencies
12 to provide fire safety education including the
13 Department of the Aging, the Department of Education,
14 the Department of Youth and Community Development,
15 the Department of Housing, Preservation and
16 Development and NAICA and we will continue working
17 with those agencies this year. We are also
18 especially excited about our upcoming partnership
19 with New York City Emergency Management which will
20 produce several fire safety Mega events in
21 neighborhood that we are targeting for enhanced fire
22 safety outreach. In addition to aggressively
23 pursuing fire prevention through public outreach, we
24 also continue to improve our risk base approach to
25 inspections, identifying buildings that are at

greatest risk of serious fires so that we can mitigate that risk. I had our analytics team of data scientists undertake a year-long effort to develop and enhance a dynamic approach to modeling fire risk across the 1.1 million buildings in New York City. Our new risk model builds significantly on our original risk base inspection model which was deployed City wide in 2013 but was largely limited to using data from static variables such as building type, age, and number of floors. Our enhanced 2018 version of our risk model incorporated dynamic variables from both the Department's data as well as from outside sources. We evaluated more than 500 different variables and identified 50 that served as reliable indicators to predict risk of a major fire. We identified variables that provided clues about the structural integrity of the building, the number of reports of gas or water leaks, electrical incidents or automatic false alarms. We looked at whether a building had a previous fire history. We looked at our EMS data and found the correlation between buildings with a high number of life threatening medical emergencies and buildings at greater risk of a major fire that could lead to civilian injuries or

deaths and we looked at behavioral factors such as 311 complaints for dirty conditions, noise or heat problems which were good proxies for buildings that were at a higher risk of a major fire. We then utilized modern deep learning software which can recognize patterns in sets of variables and calculate probabilities of outputs. The same software used in predictive applications such as facial recognition. We combined the results into a risk algorithm that narrowed the universe of buildings that we'll put on the top of our list for fire safety outreach to about 8% of all buildings, a number that we can realistically reach. We are confident that this targeted focus will improve our ability to drive down the risk of a major fire with the continued help of all New Yorkers. We'll begin testing this new approach later this month. As we enter the second term under Mayor de Blasio and under my administration at the Fire Department, I want to draw the attention of the Council to the major investments that we have made in the area of emergency medical services. Since 2014, the Department has added 186 ambulance tours either by adding new ones or taking over tours that were previously operated by private

institutions. We've added ambulance units in every borough including a large number of units in areas that were experiencing longer response times such as western Queens and the Bronx. We created tactical response groups deploying roving additional units in Queens and the Bronx based on hourly response data so that we can attack growing needs with increased resources in real time. We piloted and then received ongoing budget funding for the fly car program in the Bronx which moves our highly qualified, advance life support resources into non-transport fly cars. The budget funding enables us to continue to operate these ambulances as additional basic life support units staffed by EMT's. This allows us to send both BLS and an ALS resource to individuals experiencing life threatening emergencies and freeze up the ALS resources faster so they can respond to other emergencies. We added 150 additional dispatchers to support emergency medical dispatch, automated the questions that we asked callers reporting medical emergencies with our state-of-the-art computerized triage program and stationed two ambulance units on Riker's Island dramatically reducing the amount of time it takes to service calls on the island and also

reducing response times in northwest Queens by more than 40 seconds. We also launched a hospital liaison program to reduce turnaround times at hospitals so that we get our ambulance crews back out more quickly to take the next call and we've begun rolling out ASAP vehicles giving us additional flexibility in responding to calls. Through the great support of the de Blasio administration, we've been able to evaluate and improve all facets of how the Department conducts emergency medical services from call processing and dispatching to travel time and ambulance availability. We added EMT's, paramedics, officers and training and support staff and we increased the hardware and apparatus to support all of these programs including acquiring a large number of new ambulances, tablets and other equipment. We will continue making investments in EMS in fiscal year '19. Included in the Mayor's preliminary budget are 15 positions for staffing three basic life support ambulance tours that were previously operated by New York Community Hospital. It also continues base line funding for the fly car program in the Bronx which was initially funded only as a pilot. The Mayor's preliminary budget for fiscal year '19

2 also includes a variety of critical investments in
3 other areas as well, \$1.6 million is allocated for
4 fire prevention programs and \$1.3 million is
5 allocated for Bureau of Technology projects. The
6 budget continues to support our diversity goals by
7 providing funding for an additional equal employment
8 opportunity attorney and an additional staffer to
9 enhance our focus on contracting with minority and
10 women owned business enterprise eligible firms. One
11 aspect of the Mayor's preliminary budget that the
12 Council may be particularly interested in is the
13 funding provided for 36 new positions for a joint
14 operations center at PSAC II, the public safety
15 answering center in the Bronx, where the NYPD and the
16 FDNY take emergency calls. The joint operation
17 center was conceived of in order to improve response
18 times and other performance metrics by enhancing
19 communication and increasing supervisory capacity to
20 strengthen the coordination between fire and EMS
21 during emergency responses. We expect the joint
22 operations center to facilitate better load balancing
23 during periods of increased call volume. It will
24 also provide close monitoring that will allow for
25 better identification and mitigation of calls that

incur longer response times. The effect will be enhanced real time monitoring and improved quality assurance of personnel and processing so that we can provide better service to the public and save more lives which is always our ultimate goal. Later this year, we will be launching the EMT trainee program which will provide an entry level opportunity for New York City residents interested in pursuing careers in emergency medical service. The Department generally hires individuals who have already obtained their EMT certification but in this program we will be hiring individuals and conducting all of the training ourselves. EMT trainees will participate in a 16 week program designed to prepare them to pass the New York State EMT exam and become FDNY EMT's. These trainees will be hired from a Civil Service list and while the first class will not be chosen until this summer, we know that the list itself is diverse including 35% African American candidates and 35% women. Finally, in light of recent school shootings and similar incidents, I want to brief you on the status of our rescue taskforce. Each rescue taskforce team is made up of 29 first responders that have received specialized training to triage, treat

and transport victims during an active shooter incident or mass casualty incident. They are also proactively deployed at high profile events such as New Year's in Times Square and Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The rescue taskforce's job is to work alongside the NYPD who provide force protection to operate in a warm zone to stop the bleeding and to save lives. Each member of the team is outfitted with ballistic protective equipment to protect them during the response. Members have also completed hands on training to apply tourniquets and combat gauze to stop bleeding. They have participated in full-scale exercises with NYPD strategic response group to practice responding to an MCI. More than 17,000 FDNY members have undergone the training to become members of the rescue taskforce. The idea of the taskforce has been in development for a few years but we accelerated its development after the attacks in Paris in 2015. Senior members of the Department studied instances as far back as the Columbine High School shooting to learn the best ways for us to be effective in the field. Recent incidents to which the rescue taskforce has been deployed include the Port Authority bombing, the Chelsea bombing, the

active shooter at Bronx Lebanon Hospital Center and the truck attack that took place in October of last year. The existence of the rescue taskforce is a good reminder that a modern fire department faces a wide range of challenges from the traditional notion of fighting fires to responding to medical calls and to a large variety of other ways that we are called upon to protect members of the community. With the support of Mayor de Blasio and the partnership with the City Council, we take pride in our mission to serve the people of New York City. I would be happy to take your questions at this time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Commissioner and I'll note we've been joined by Council Member Maisel, Deutsch and Brannan. So I guess, and again, thank you for your testimony and thank you for your staff joining us as well and before we get specific, just a basic question. Was there any new needs that the Department requested from OMB but did, did not receive funding in the preliminary budget?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think the fundamental word here is preliminary budget so I think there's some other things we're still in

discussion with but the administration has been very generous and seen the needs of the Fire Department over the last few years and I think we have done quite well and we're confident that we will continue along that path and the administration recognizes the needs of this Department.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Uniform overtime, the total budget of City funded overtime was \$228 million and for FY19, it's \$206 million. Is the overtime control working that's in place now?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think I'll let Commissioner Rush who has a pretty good handle on the numbers here discuss some of that.

STEVEN RUSH: It's working to an extent because we are hiring firefighters and that is the main driver of overtime costs and you'll have vacancies in the fire side so as those vacancies are filled, we have a class of 300 in the Academy right now. When they graduate, they will continue to help reduce overtime. We're also hit by challenges like in the fall we had three hurricanes that we were deployed to. That drove costs to \$5 million in overtime. We will be reimbursed for those costs but those drivers do impact the overtime so while the

2 overtime is challenging, the year's not over yet. We
3 expect to at least come close to target.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yeah, so you're
5 saying that for FY2018, you project being close to
6 the target and what is that target?

7 STEVEN RUSH: The target is as you said,
8 \$228 million.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: \$228

10 STEVEN RUSH: That's City funds.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, when was the
12 last time the Department reviewed firefighting
13 staffing levels. You know, we seem to have been at
14 the same level for a number of years. Is there an
15 estimate on when you foresee the headcount needing to
16 change either more or less?

17 STEVEN RUSH: Well, our numbers are
18 really, we have a static number of units, each unit
19 is staffed in a manner whether it's four firefighters
20 or five firefighters that is contractually agreed
21 upon so the Department really is based on that
22 number. Now if future needs call for additional
23 units, of course, the staffing numbers, the gross
24 number of firefighters, fire officers would have to
25 be increased.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But not every company is staffed at the same level. What are some of the decision why there might be a few extra firefighters other than obviously companies that have a fifth man engine versus non but other than that, why would it be?

STEVEN RUSH: Well, special operations units such as rescues or squads or hazmat units have additional staffing. Ladder companies are staffed with an officer and five firefighters. The vast majority of engine companies are staffed with an officer and four firefighters. There is a contract between the UFA and the City that calls for five firefighters in a set number of units. That number increases by five each year for one more year, I believe.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: How do you determine the needs of where specialized units go, where they're quartered, where they're assigned?

STEVEN RUSH: Well, the Department has five rescue companies, one in each borough. The Department has squad companies in every borough as you said before but Staten Island. Those companies were originally placed based on the fire responses so

2 that the areas with more fires had additional squad
3 companies and Staten Island was not part of that
4 equation.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'm assuming it was
6 because the overall number of fires was less.

7 STEVEN RUSH: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The overall number
9 of fires City wide has dropped but we haven't
10 eliminated squad companies.

11 STEVEN RUSH: We have not.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: That's a good
13 thing. That's positive.

14 STEVEN RUSH: That's a positive.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So what kind of
16 calls outside of the squad's first due area would a
17 squad company respond to?

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, they respond
19 to, they respond first and foremost to serious fires.
20 All hands on deck, there's multiple alarms,
21 additional squads are called. They respond to alarms
22 that require the additional skills of our special
23 operations forces so rescue and squads have higher
24 levels of training than the other members of the
25 Department and they would be special called to

certain incidents that require that level or expertise and equipment.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yesterday during the storm was there a squad located on Staten Island or a squad company formed?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Jim, Jim could answer that? I believe we certainly added resources to Staten Island but I'll let Jim answer.

JIM LEONARD?: We did not add a squad yesterday. We felt that the, we added 14 rapid response vehicles based on the type of storm that we had so determining when we need an additional squad out there or not is sometimes weather driven, if we can get over there and what we're anticipating the issue might be. The other night for the wind driven storm, we had an additional squad out there. For yesterday's storm, we added the additional 14 RRV's which are an officer and three firefighters that can handle trees down, electrical emergencies, those type of emergencies so we look at the situation that we're facing on an individual case and decide whether we want it.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the reason for assigning the company there a couple of times a year, I assume, is that done because of the response time or because you might feel they would be prevented from getting to the Island should they be needed?

JIM LEONARD: Both.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Both, so all hands fires, how many of them were on Staten Island in last year?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I could get you that information certainly. I don't have it.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I mean there, every all hands fire on Staten Island triggers an automatic response where a squad company is assigned.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And that happens in every Borough?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: It happens in every borough.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So we sent a letter over and, you know, certainly I don't expect maybe you don't have the answer now, but how many times was an all hands fire declared on Staten Island and squad 1 would have been assigned there and would have responded anywhere else. Since you can't give me an exact number what's the percentage in your estimate of times they actually provided a service to a fire that they were assigned to show up at?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, all of the times that the squad, squad 1 is called to Staten Island, not all for all hands fires so if they were called there, less than half of the time that they are called to Staten Island, they actually arrive on Staten Island. What percentage of those calls to the Island were actually for all hands fires, don't have but I know that less than half of the times they are dispatched to respond to Staten Island, they do not get to the operation.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is that because that the fire is under control? I mean, so in other words, the call goes out, there's an automatic response from the unit, they mobilize and they move out and then at some later point some decision maker flags them off?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I have the number now for you. There were 125 serious fires on Staten Island, 114 all hands and 11 multiple alarms.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: That's in one year?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: In last year, calendar year 2017. Many of the times the fire is placed under control, probably we'll hold the squad

isn't needed and they're turned around before they get to the fire, that's correct.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a way to determine how much time squad 1 spends out of quarters responding to Staten Island and then not making it to the fire?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I suppose there may be. I don't think we keep track of that number but we could find out.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But they still have responsibilities in their first due area.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: They certainly do.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So would placing an additional squad on Staten Island enhance response times and capabilities in Brooklyn?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I'm sure it would to a certain extent. The calls where squad 1 is responding to Staten Island, they are therefore unavailable for calls in their response area in Brooklyn so that would be a result of that, correct.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there anywhere else in the City where a squad company is as inaccessible and routinely doesn't show up for the fires that they would regularly be assigned?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I would have to say Staten Island would be certainly and especially the western portions would be the furthest trip any of our squad companies would respond on a normal basis, that's correct.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the Department familiar with some of the new development plans, factories, warehousing, power plants, etc. on the west shore of Staten Island?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Absolutely, and that's why we, you know, are looking at the needs of a squad on Staten Island and are certainly in conversation about that and studying that.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And then my final questions and I'll move on to something else, Rescue 5 is our only specialized unit. How often are they responding to battalions in Brooklyn? I mean, I understand Brooklyn is far busier than Staten Island and some of the battalions in Staten Island aren't as

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think Rescue 5 gets about 250 calls a year to leave Staten Island to respond to a certain portion of Brooklyn.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So that's, you know, the same thing holds true. There's spending an

amount of time in traffic on the bridge, not in quarters.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Same amount, yeah, they are spending same amount of time responding from their quarters which is very close to the bridge but nonetheless, attempting to get to alarms in portions of Brooklyn.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But since they're in with an engine company, they don't have their own first due area?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, they have an area of Staten Island that they're responsible for certainly.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, is there, do we have any empty bays in firehouses where a new apparatus could be placed?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Jim, I, I'm, I don't know.

JIM LEONARD: Yes we do.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, would they need any significant modification to house another squad engine?

JIM LEONARD: I'd have to look at that but I, I'd have to look at that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: All right, move on.
3 I think you guys did a great job with taking over the
4 New York Community Hospital tours. Do you, are you
5 familiar with any other private ambulance companies
6 or hospitals that may be facing the same challenges
7 where hospital ambulances may go off line in the next
8 year?

9 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Specifically no but
10 certainly we've had that suddenly happen to us in the
11 past or in the Bronx and we are aware of it. The
12 Department is

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a way to
14 itemize what the cost is though for those specific,
15 that specific change?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: We can itemize, we
17 know the cost of adding a tour to cover but

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But outside of
19 adding the tour there was no capital needs, nothing
20 like that. Do we have to add new ambulances?

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Eventually there is.
22 You know, there is the more ambulances we add, the
23 more places we need to put them. Right now, we don't
24 anticipate, in the near future, any closings. Not
25 that I'm aware of.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So in my previous
3 life in the State legislature, I was on the health
4 committee and remember that when a hospital is
5 closing there's a whole series of public hearings and
6 notifications and it's a lengthy process. Is there
7 any process similar for the closing of ambulance
8 services through a hospital?

9 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Jim?

10 JIM BOOTH: Good morning. When we get
11 notified that a private hospital is going to reduce
12 services for whatever reason, they give us a 90 day
13 notice and we do an assessment of the area and we see
14 what we have already in the area and then we try to
15 backfill the units that the voluntary hospital or
16 private hospital is now taking out of the system
17 which we have done successfully in the past.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And what are some
19 of the reasons they would end service? It's just not
20 profitable? They're not recovering enough money from
21 the insurance companies, Medicaid, etc.

22 JIM BOOTH: All of the above sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: All of the above,
24 okay. What is the cost to train, you mentioned the
25

EMT training program. What is the overall cost to train new EMTs and paramedics, both PS and OTPS?

JIM LEONARD: The Department allocates approximately \$17 million in our budget to the EMS Academy so we have a per student cost of about \$4,000 for an EMT. For a paramedic since the course is, an EMT has to be trained for nine months to be a paramedic. It's much more expensive. It's probably five times that.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the, is the revolving door that a lot of EMTs move on after two or three years? Is that a problem if the length of service or the incentive to stay on the EMS job was greater, would that reduce the cost of training?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I, I think it's both a benefit in that firefighters do respond to approximately 800 medical calls a day bringing people who are already trained as EMTs over to firefighters benefits the Department, benefits the people of the City and, of course, there is the problem of needing to train more EMTs to fill in for the ones that become firefighters so it's a, sort of a balance that we do.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But the EMT training in the EMT Academy doesn't take the place of training in the Fire Academy like there's no, there's no cost savings or anything?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: For the training, negative. No there is none.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: As far as paramedics, is there any plan to reinstate a grant program for the training of paramedics?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I, I'd have to say no. We haven't

STEVEN RUSH: Which grant program? We're not aware

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I don't think we've been asked. I'm not aware of any.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, is there a plan to increase EMS officer levels?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we have been increasing EMS officer levels and we continue to go forward with that. There's no plan to, other than our increase in fly cars, etc. to increase the number of officers in EMS.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, so there's no
3 plan to increase the ratio then, essentially, between
4 EMS officers and EMS.

5 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: No, we are
6 negotiating, in discussion with the Union and OLR
7 about that issue, about the span of control issue
8 that I know is of concern to the Union and we are in
9 discussion with them but that's about it.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And with the rescue
11 taskforce, are EMS officers provided with ballistic
12 vests as well?

13 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Every member of the
14 taskforce is provided with ballistic vests and
15 helmets.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So is there any
17 effort to upgrade some of the EMS ballistic vests
18 that might be old?

19 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That's a separate,
20 the ballistic vests that are provided to the
21 taskforce are military grade ballistic vests and
22 helmets which is a separate vest from that which was
23 at one time provided to all members of EMS.

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And that's no
25 longer the case?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That is no longer the case and we do not have, right now we do not have a plan to replace those vests.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a cost estimate out there for that plan?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yeah, there is.

STEVEN RUSH: The initial cost would be \$1.5 million and then if you had a replacement cycle, it would be in the range of half a million dollars per year that would have to be allocated.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, I'm gonna open it up to some Council Members if you guys are ready. Do we have a list? So first I'll call on Council Member Cabrera for our first round of questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so much Mr. Chair and Commissioner welcome and to all your staff. Thank you for all the hard work and devotion to the City. I wanted to ask you a couple of questions. One was regarding if you could share with us the current plans for firehouse renovations in the Bronx. Are there any particular ones that are going to be renovated?

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I don't have the
3 list of them. Steve, do we know? Well, there
4 certainly is plans for renovation of firehouses
5 throughout the City. It's a long process. Some of
6 them are extensive renovations that take sometimes
7 more than a year. Some of them are minor renovations
8 but I'm sure some of them in the Bronx are slated for
9 renovation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Can you please
11 send us a list?

12 STEVEN RUSH: We can provide you a list.
13 There's a significant amount of capital funds across
14 the facilities budget and they prioritize them based
15 on the state of the conditions of the firehouses.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Does that
17 include special equipment as well? I remember about
18 three years ago one of our firehouses requested
19 special equipment for training like the door one.

20 STEVEN RUSH: Yes, there is funding
21 provided actually by the Council at the end of the
22 year and through the fire foundation provides money
23 for these special equipment that you're talking,
24 discussing.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: The other thing is Commissioner, you mentioned that it was a good thing for EMTs, Fire Department to have, to be able to hire EMTs and I can see the logic if you're on the other side but if you're on the EMT side, do you think that affects morale, historical knowledge, the whole idea of being able to have people who've been there for a long time and provide that legacy knowledge and the context also. Even more important I would think is the sense of being value for the work that they do. Do you think that has an effect on them?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, again, I think that's a mixed bag so to speak that it would increase the morale for some people giving them an additional avenue for employment in which the salary range is higher and amongst others it might not but certainly it is for those who wish to move to become firefighters. It is a great opportunity. For those who think its takes away the experienced members of EMS, they would feel it reduces morale so I guess it's a double edged sword.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Fundamentally, why is there a disparity in pay since they

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, they're
3 different job titles. They have different
4 negotiations. Different Unions represent the members
5 and it has historically been a difference of salary
6 for which the Department is not in charge of changing
7 but the way it exists now, paramedics make more than
8 EMTs, firefighters earn more than EMTs and that's the
9 system.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Hopefully the
11 next negotiation, we could affirm their value through
12 pay and I'm hopefully that we could do that. Thank
13 you, Commissioner.

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Very good.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I ran out of
16 time.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Council
18 Member Brannan.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair
20 Borelli. Thank you, Commissioner. Thanks for all
21 you do. I wanted to just bring up the issue with the
22 fifth man if there was any discussion about bringing
23 that back for good. Didn't see it listed here but
24 hopefully it's part of the conversation. If not, why
25 not? How can we make it part of the conversation?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, the latest iteration of the contract between the UFA and the City calls for an additional five firefighter engine each year. February 1 was to have been 15. Next year would be 20 and then they renegotiate once again with the City but right now that's the plan going forward that, now the other piece of that of the contract says that if medical leave exceeds 7.5%, the Department must reduce the staffing down to four in those five firefighter units and that's the agreement that the UFA made with OLR at the time of the contract signing.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Hearing from a lot of the guys on the job in my district who talk about the need, especially in cold weather, the need for a fifth man whether it's frozen hydrants or that kind of think so if there's anything, any way we could be helpful there.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think no one disputes the fact that, you know, additional firefighters is an advantage but the department has been operating quite successfully for many years with four fighter engines and we have not had issues with that staffing level.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Quick follow up,
4 has the Department determined which firehouses have
5 five men and which have four people? I shouldn't say
6 men, correction.

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think the
8 experts amongst our chiefs and/or statistical folks
9 would look at what companies, I think the level of
10 fire activity and the amount of times an engine would
11 arrive ahead of others and be forced to operate alone
12 comes into play in that equation and they've been
13 very good at accessing the needs and each year
14 selecting the five units that would get an enhanced
15 staffing level.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Council Member
17 Deutsch.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, thank
19 you very much, Chair at this important hearing so
20 first of all I just want to commend you Commissioner
21 for coming into my district and speaking to over 40
22 educators to pass on the fire education to the
23 students of their respective schools and I made sure
24 to make it non-political so no elected officials were
25 invited and I as well did not attend so it was a, I

heard it was a very productive meeting. I also want to commend Laura for always being available and over the last few months, I had over, about eight fire safety events in my district or at my district and your staff has been very responsive and do a really amazing and the people really benefitted from the whole thing. In addition to that, I sent a letter to the administration, to the Mayor's office, as well to the speaker of the City Council to renew the Get Alarmed NYC initiative. We had 45 members signed on to my letter to the administration as well as asked the Mayor's office to reach out to the manufacturer Kidder to see if we could get additional \$3 million which we received back in 2015 so now my question is now, what is your total headcount within the Fire Department that includes the FDNY, EMS and all the personnel?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we're slightly over 17,000 right now, about 17,100 and change.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Now how many, how many of the 17,000 are either veterans or active members of the military?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I don't know if anyone here at the table has that number but we can certainly get that. The Department takes great pride in trying to recruit and successfully recruiting veterans and each and every one of our probationary firefighter class includes a large number of veterans.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: How do you, how do conduct your outreach to veterans?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well we, for the first time in the Department's history we have a veteran's outreach coordinator and which specifically targets active duty military and from all around our area and interests them who become just natural subjects for us people who are used to being in that type of profession and they have been successful in recruiting more and more veterans to the Department. We've always been known to have a large number of veterans and we expect to always be in that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: All right, I appreciate that. As the Chair of the Veterans Committee, I'm looking forward to continuing working with you to ensure that our veterans have a place in the Fire Department.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we have, just got some numbers here, almost 11% of our uniform are veterans. Of our total workforce, it's 8.2% veterans right now which is considering only fewer than 1% of the population of our country serve in the military, it's a very reasonable number.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: All right, we have about 220,000 approximately. Thank you very much, Commissioner, and looking forward to continue working with your office and doing great things in the future and reducing fires and tragedies throughout the City so thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and I'll note we've been joined by Council Member Ampry-Samuel and does she have any questions? No, okay. Anybody have a second round of questions? Oh, Cabrera, no please I implore you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: He's so courteous and, thank you. Thank you so much, thank you so I did have one question in the fiscal 2018 budget added \$30 million to improve EMS operations in the Bronx. Can you provide the Committee on the progress of this?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, progress in so much as the added tours in the Bronx. We were, we were experiencing a real spike in response times in the Bronx and we felt that the population of that borough was certainly suffering from the response times going up, up, up and we asked for increased funding. We added teams to go up there. We put the fly car project in. We added tours to the Bronx and we were able to bring the Bronx back down to not only from the longest response times but to be one of the fastest response times in the City so that the people of that borough were no longer being neglected so to speak. It's a borough that has a great need for our services and we intend to service it as the needs exist.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And my last question which I ask every year, actually the last four years I have asked this question of this Committee, is any new technology that you see on the horizon that you see in other municipalities or internationally and how prepared are we for City wide catastrophes such as an earthquake or any of the sort?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think the Department has made great strides since September 11, 2001, in preparing for any and all types. Certainly, we proved it during Hurricane Sandy, Superstorm Sandy. The Department stands ready to serve the people of the City regardless of the level of disaster that strikes the City. I think as far as technology, we have put an inordinate amount of money and hired an inordinate amount of people in the last few years in that area to bring us up. It was an area we were lagging in, self admittedly, and I believe that to be no longer the case and we have a staff that's second to none in that field and are moving ahead with many technology projects that will bring us into the 21st century very pridefully. I think Laura could be a little more specific on that if you choose to be but Laura's been spearheading that for the Department for the last few years.

LAURA KAVANAGH: Sure, just to expand on that, I think a couple of the places we're really looking. One is conduit project involving getting fiber to every firehouse and EMS station and that will give us a much greater capacity at those stations to utilize some new technology that's out

there so that's one place. The other is I mobile applications and that's really what the Commissioner is referring to. We've staffed up internally so that we have the capacity to build applications that the firefighters and EMTs need in the field and we're currently beta testing a few. They mostly give either situational awareness to the firefighters or in the case of EMTs, additional tools to interact with our patients and we'd actually be happy to demo those if you're interested.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so much and I'm looking forward to one of these days that we have the technology that we'll be able to somehow from a helicopter or another airspace vehicle to be able to shoot some kind of a projectile to, you know, to subdue the fire somehow, you know. I know the scientist fictional, yes it is reality of today so hopefully, we'll get there. Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, staying on technology for a second, right now are all FDNY ambulances equipped with GPS?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Jim, all, I think they are?

JIM BOOTH: Every FDNY ambulance is dispatched using automatic vehicle locator system and that is the ambulance that's determined to be the closest to the assignment and they get sent. That's how we make the recommendation via the computer.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a directional app or a monitor that someone responding has directions to the location?

JIM BOOTH: Yes, there is a mobile mapping project that Commissioner Cavanaugh can speak to with greater authority.

LAURA KAVANAGH: Yeah, I'd have to double check. We had a few ambulances left. They were under repair so they hadn't been updated yet but the vast majority of our ambulances do have that. Like I mentioned, we are piloting mobile applications and we hoped that that would be an additional way to help the EMTs get around. The GPS we're referring to is actually in the ambulance on MDT.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, so just to go back to the fly cars for a second. They seem to be supported by the Department and they seem to be successful. Is there any plan to expand the program to other boroughs? Is there a cost estimate? Is

that something that this Council should be, you know, fighting for?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well what the Department would like to roll this out the way we rolled out CPR years ago which is borough by borough so the plan is to continue expanding in the Bronx. We're in discussions now to do that, to expand it further in the Bronx and to continue to access the value of it and that's the plan for the Department. We do believe it has great value and it has already shown that in the percentage of calls that are answered by advance life support and the enhanced response times.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right and so you mentioned that and I think that's a great thing to highlight that response times have dropped. Is there anything else that the Department is doing to further decrease response times? Is there anything you could be doing frankly to

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think part of it we, comes to the dispatch and I think our triage, triaging is better today. I believe we've added additional tours that decrease response time and those types of things will enhance it so our

response times right now are better than they've ever been thanks to these improvements.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And can you touch upon the recruitment budget for next year. I noted that it included \$181,000 for an agency attorney. What is specifically the function of that attorney and how do they support the recruitment efforts?

LAURA KAVANAGH: I believe the agency attorney is for EEO, not for recruitment.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, stay on diversity then. Can you talk about the overall budget for diversity recruitment next year?

LAURA KAVANAGH: Sure, so I think the important thing to note is that the budget for recruitment is very cyclical. We spend the most money in the test years or the year before the test is given and I think that's the \$11 million budget you've heard us refer to in this past year in 2017. We expect it will be probably at similar levels four years from now. In between, the budget mostly consists of PS cost of staff. I mean, there's a staff of about 15 to 20 permanent employees at FDNY permanent employees at FDNY that does recruitment and diversity and community affairs work.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I remember at the last hearing there was a discussion how there was a number of people of color who had taken the exam, passed the exam and then through self-attrition had removed themselves from the hiring process. Do you think that going to an annual testing or a rolling testing would lessen the likelihood of those people doing that?

LAURA KAVANAGH: From what we've looked at so far it would not. It would not make it worse. It would be about what it is right now so it sort of wouldn't make a difference to recruitment.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Would there be an additional cost? In other words, you said this was cyclical so if we went to an annual test, would the cyclical cost change or would it be the same every year?

LAURA KAVANAGH: It would even out. We probably wouldn't spend quite as much because we'd be recruiting on a more consistent basis rather than having to recruit very intensely every four years but there may be additional costs to DCAS who actually administers the test that I wouldn't be privy to but in terms of the FDNY recruitment budget, it would

probably be similar but it would even out year to year.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I believe DCAS has said in the past they would have additional but you'd have to ask them what that additional cost would be?

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'm not concerned.

LAURA KAVANAGH: [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: We're not concerned about that but you said that you don't think it would, would decrease self-attrition. Wouldn't there, I mean, just on the face of that wouldn't there be a less likelihood that someone removes himself from the hiring process if the hiring process took a year rather than four years, five years?

LAURA KAVANAGH: So it wouldn't actually change the length of the entire hiring process. It would only change the length of time between when we recruit you and when you take the test but the real wait time is actually after that because the Fire Department, you know, luckily has employees who do like to stay with the Department, and we have a very low attrition rate and so the rate of hiring is really affects how quickly we can bring people off the list.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: If you're hiring from one list for almost four years, if there's an annual test, wouldn't you be just hiring from one list for one year?

LAURA KAVANAGH: You would but you'd be consistently taking just, I think about 3% of people come off the list right now. That would drop even further. You'd just be taking a few people before you had to start that again and so for most people, they'd be taking multiple tasks until they had the opportunity to get on the job. Most of the people at the very top of the list would probably have a significant number of additional points like veterans and residency credits even to be able to come off the list so again for the vast majority of candidates, the wait would be the same regardless of how often the test was given.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, and then you spoke to Chaim Deutsch's question about military recruitment but can you go over just how the rest of the recruitment budget is broken down. What is the City getting for their money in that sense?

LAURA KAVANAGH: So the majority of costs are either in terms of the OTPS budget, the majority

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2 of the costs are advertising which is in the case of
3 the last campaign, advertising of all kinds, online,
4 TV, radio, basically any advertising you can do in
5 the City of New York, we did. One of the things that
6 we will be looking at is we are able to track this go
7 round in a way that we couldn't in the past, where
8 successful candidates came from in terms of the
9 advertising streams and so we will be making an
10 adjustment after we get the scores of the candidates
11 in the spring and we see who actually made it through
12 the process and took the test, we will make
13 adjustments to that advertising budget in the future
14 based on which streams were most successful and then
15 the rest of the costs are overtime and the full time
16 staff in recruitment.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, and then just
18 the final topic before I think we're finished is just
19 looking at the Mayor's management report. So it
20 indicates the total number of company runs has
21 decreased by 3% compared to FY17. Is there something
22 you could attribute as to why the number has
23 decreased?

24 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: What number were you
25 discussing now?

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: In FY17, the four month year-to-date was \$396,000 runs. Now there are \$386,000 runs same time, year-to-date. Is there, is there something we can draw from that? Is that normal? Is that cyclical?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think it's too small and short a period to make any, discuss that yet. You know, exactly what we can attribute that to. We can look into it but I think it's a bit of a snapshot right now.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I only asked that because the numbers from between FY15, 16 and 17 are kind of even and I thought maybe there happened to be some reason. The other question from the management report is about the number of inspections. Is there a schedule of when inspections were done and how certain buildings, businesses, etc. get inspected?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, there is and, you know, I discussed it in. There's two different types of inspections, of course. There's, we have a fire prevention inspectors that are not firefighters that go out and do inspections, most of which are commercial, required by different codes and etc. and then there are companies, every fire company that

goes out and inspects buildings in their district. Those buildings that they inspect are selected based on our algorithm that predicts which buildings have the greatest possibility of potential for fire and that's about 11% of the buildings that we're able to of the 1.1 million buildings in the City that we're able to get to so we try to predict where we get the biggest bang for our buck so to speak, and that's how we do it through this very advanced system predicted.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Say if there were, in other words, two restaurants on the same block that one was built in a new non-combustible building, one was built in an old building, there's a more likelihood that the restaurant in the older building would get inspected more often?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, fire prevention inspectors would inspect all of them, you know, the range hoods, etc. The parts that they are responsible for extinguishing systems and the building itself based on that algorithm if it's in a new fireproof building would be less likely for that building to be selected than if it was in old law tenement in an area of the City that experiences higher fire activity.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And I think my final question, unless anyone else has one, according to the report the number of fire investigations has increased over the years but the number of structural and non-structural fires has decreased. Is there a reason for that? Is that something that you've enhanced?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, other than I would say the increased productivity of our Bureau of Fire Prevention, of Fire Investigation, they do these investigations for two reasons. First of all, to see if there was arson involved and to prosecute which they do a very good job on and also to tell us what the cause of fires are so we can pinpoint for fire education what's increasing, what's decreasing, what areas we should concentrate on so they are a great resource to our fire safety education plans in that they will tell us fires from careless smoking are increasing, fires from use of candles are increasing, and this is where we should place our focus with our materials and our visits so they do quite a good job.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a need to to hire more investigators or would that

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we have over the past few years hired more and we do see a benefit to that but I don't think in the immediate future we intend to increase it by too much.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Commissioner, I lied to you. Council Member Cabrera has one more question.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Commissioner, I'm just curious to know, how many chaplains do you have, paid chaplains?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Eight?

LAURA KAVANAGH: I think we have seven or eight, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Seven or eight, is that sufficient for so many of firefighters?

[crosstalk]

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, it's probably the highest number we've ever had in the Department but it has been sufficient, we think, but we're always, we're always evaluating what we have and might that change.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I would encourage you to hire a few more. I know the NYPD's, their numbers went up and also they notice with the

NYPD, they have a new program to have in each precinct a volunteer chaplain. That would be something to look into and maybe the eight chaplains that you have right now will help coordinate that. There's no cost other than time but they will be able to multiply themselves for advice on training. Something to look at.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yes, sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Because, you know, they're dealing with critical incidents and from what I know from critical incidents, debriefing after, you know, such an event is critical.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: And we also have a counseling service unit and with professional and peer counselors, that's fairly substantial but it is as you say, a need in departments that deal with the types of incidents that we do, it's always a need.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I'm very happy to hear you have the counseling piece as well. I think that's critical. One added value that studies have shown is that there is a tendency for people to trust chaplains and people of faith a bit more than counselors. I wear both hats so I know about that so it gets more of a, it will increase the chances I

think of the firefighters to be able to find somebody to talk to.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And I'll also note that the Council Member is a pastor and term limited and looks nice in a uniform in case you're plugging yourself.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I'm sorry, just one more question from Council Member Deutsch.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, so I just, I brought up at a previous hearing and really I didn't follow up, I didn't receive an answer on that but I wanted to see the feasibility, how many, do you know how many fire hydrants there are across the City?

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: 110,000

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: 110,000 so that would mean, that would be like 110,000, probably maybe even doubled parking spots that it takes away because you can't park on either side so from 110,000 I don't see what the feasibility it is to maybe move

some of those hydrants closer to like bus shelters, areas where you already can't park and to do a study to see from the 110,000 of how many hydrants could actually be relocated to free up those parking spots which will not cause a danger to any type of fire that's going on in the block but to see if we could, to move them in areas where it's already restricted, maybe near driveways and bus shelters.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: You know, I don't think our Department would be against those moves if they didn't interfere with our ability to perform but that would be DEPs certainly bailiwick of, we inspect the hydrants but we don't fix them or move them so.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: You know, I understand, so that would be between, would be between DEP and DOT.

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: But then they would need your approval that it won't interfere so we'll probably need those guidelines of

COMMISSIONER NIGRO: You know, our guidelines are how close together they are?

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yes, yes.

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2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Or how far apart,
3 etc., etc. as long as they fall within operational
4 guidelines.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Do you have a
6 specific guideline on how many hydrants are supposed
7 to be in a distance of each other?

8 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: We do.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: There is?

10 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Oh, so they'll
12 be able to check that and

13 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yeah, they know.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Okay, excellent.

15 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: They are certainly
16 aware of.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Great, thank
18 you. Thank you, Commissioner.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, very
20 much. I think that we're done. Appreciate it.

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

22 [pause]

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay so we're gonna
24 start our OEM panel right now. Well, good afternoon.
25 We're now moving into the final phase of the Fire and

2 Emergency Management Committee hearing. We'll hear
3 from the New York City Emergency Management
4 Department. We'll hear about their 2009 preliminary
5 budget and the fiscal 2018 preliminary Mayor's
6 management report. The agency's 2019 preliminary
7 budget totals \$48 million and supports a headcount of
8 188 positions. The budget includes a very modest new
9 needs package of nearly \$4.2 million for FY18 and no
10 new needs for FY19. The agency's budget is also, is
11 supported by City funds but also relies heavily on
12 federal grants that are accounted for on a year by
13 year basis. The Committee is interested in hearing
14 the agency's contingency plan for potential federal
15 funding cuts. Today I hope we hear more about EM
16 communicates, coordinates, plans and prepares other
17 City agencies for emergency situations with other
18 City agencies as well as other programs and
19 initiatives the agency engages in in order to inform
20 and prepare the public. I want to thank Commissioner
21 Esposito and your staff and before we begin, we will
22 swear you in.

23 Counsel: Please raise your right hand if
24 you're gonna testify. Do you affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in

your testimony before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Please begin whenever you're ready Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: All right, thank you very much. Before we get into the budget, I'll give you a little bit of overview what we're about and what we've done last year and then we'll go to if there's any questions but so good afternoon, Councilperson Borelli, Members of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. I'm Joe Esposito. I'm the Commissioner of the Department of New York City Emergency Management and I'm happy to be here today to talk about our fiscal year 2019 budget. First, just a few words about Emergency Management. We had a very busy year in 2017. We activated the Emergency Operations Center fourteen times for a total of 107 days. That includes five winter weather events, two building vacates due to fires, two flash floods, an active shooter at the Bronx Lebanon Hospital, a heat emergency, the Port Authority explosion by the terrorists, and Hurricanes Jose and Maria. During the extreme weather events, we also hold City wide calls with elected officials and

continually sent out notifications for localized incidents in specific districts and hopefully some of the folks here have been on those calls and we gave you the right information. We were activated for 73 days for Hurricane Maria and during that time we helped coordinate the operations of a hurricane reception center at the Julia De Burgos Latino Cultural Center that assisted more than 2,000,000 households that were in need who has been evacuated from the hurricane areas. We deployed 300 City staff to Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands to assist in recovery operations. In addition, the New York State Urban Search and Rescue Teams which we manage out of Emergency Management, deployed 190 members to Texas and Puerto Rico over the course of the hurricanes to assist in water rescues, evacuations, and wellness checks. The teams brought in food, water, medical supplies as well as repaired generators for two hospitals that were in isolated areas in Puerto Rico, very important for the wellbeing of the people in Puerto Rico. In 2017, we monitored over 3,000 incidents and sent our City wide incident coordinators to 759 of those incidents. Notify NYC sent out more than 1,500 messages. In

September, we launched the Notify NYC mobile app which had over 48,000 downloads in just three months. This, in addition with our growth with traditional subscribership, put our numbers at over 700,000 registrants. It's a big number. Our goal is to have everyone that lives and works in the City to sign up for that so we're still working towards that. We held or participated in 91 inter agency exercises to make sure plans are understood and necessary protocols for plans are ready to be implemented as needed. Our community outreach and engagement activities continue to grow, a very important part of Emergency Management, and you have likely seen us in your neighborhood at meetings, town halls, fairs, mobile office hours and other community events. In total, we participated in 932 Ready New York events with more than 110,000 people attending and we distributed more than \$1 million emergency planning packets. We graduated twelve new classes of CERT. CERT is our civilian emergency response teams so we had twelve new classes taking our total to over 13,000 volunteers throughout the City. We hosted a disaster volunteer conference in June and a disabilities access and functional needs symposium in

2 December. We also engaged 40 community partners in
3 creating their own plans using our community
4 emergency plan toolkit and also hosted an immigrant
5 heritage week breakfast with over 80 immigrants
6 community leaders in attendance and we think those
7 plans for local people to do their own planning is
8 very important. They're the folks who know the best
9 about their neighborhoods. We want to engage them as
10 much as we can to make their own plans. We think
11 they're the best at solving their problems. We
12 continue to look ahead to find out new ways to
13 prepare the City and our citizens for the next
14 emergency. With that, let me now provide a snapshot
15 of our budget for the next year. Our projected total
16 fiscal year 2019 City tax levy expense budget is
17 \$26.3 million. We rely on our City tax levy expense
18 to support the majority of the agency's
19 administrative, technical and operational costs. The
20 projected fiscal year 2019 personnel services budget
21 is \$5.7 million which supports the 61 personnel lines
22 paid directly through our tax levy funds. This
23 includes \$1.4 million in funding for eighteen staff
24 members dedicated exclusively for working on
25 increased communication and services to people with

access and functional needs. We think this is again, we were lacking in some areas in that area and we think that this goes a long way in providing the care that they need. Our other staffing is supported through grant funding which I'll talk about in a bit and personnel on assignments for multiple City agencies. We have people from FD, PD, DEP, Building Department, they all chip in, Sanitation. They come in and they work their detail to us from other City agencies, a big help to us. Our projected fiscal year for 2019 other than personal services budget is \$20.6 million which covers all the agency's operating and administrative costs. These funds are designated to cover our warehouse lease, our utilities, our telecommunications cost including the maintenance and operations of our emergency operations center and backup facilities. This money also supports our fleet and all the additional equipment, supplies, and materials needed to run the agency. The agency receives grant funding, very important, to support many of our core programs. In the past year we secured \$25 million in federal funding primarily through the urban area security initiative grant. This funding is vital to our ability to run many of

our finest initiatives including our Ready New York public education program, our community emergency response team program, our continuity of operations program, the geographic information system, our training and exercises, our watch command operations and response and the City wide incident management system planning. Additionally, the grant provides funding for the City's emergency stock pile. We can, still have supplies at our warehouse that can supply \$70,000 for seven days and this is all federally funded, very important. We work with City Hall and OMB in the City's Congressional Delegation and our partner agencies to push for full homeland security funding in future years. This money supports critical operations within ours and several other agency's budgets and is critical to the City so thank you very much. That's a bit of an overview for the agency and my, our budget. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm ready to take any questions.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very much, Commissioner. The question I really want to ask is what's on the menu and all the stockpiles of food but we'll save that for another day.

2 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: You'd be
3 surprised.

4 [Laughter]

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The first question
6 I want to start with is sort of broad. Is there
7 anything that OEM requested from OMB but did not get
8 in the preliminary budget?

9 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, there's
10 always some items but, you know, as far as emergency
11 management is concerned, our budget is just about
12 doubled since I'm there. We went from less than 200
13 people. We're at 260 something people now so we get
14 everything that we need for the most part. If there
15 is some dispute over something, we'll meet with OMB
16 and usually work it out so we're very happy with the
17 way we interact with OMB.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So your agency
19 released its first strategic plan directing your
20 goals through 2021. What specifically in the budget
21 is geared towards meeting those new goals?

22 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, I think
23 we're operating within our budget on the strategic
24 plan. The reason for the plan was we wanted to take
25 a whole look at the whole agency, what we were doing,

how we were doing it and how we could do it better, how we can service the community better. What we felt as an agency was that the people who need us the most don't really know what emergency management is about so we wanted to take a whole top down look, bottom up look at the agency, see how we can better service the people and that's what it's about so the strategic plan is we're really working within our budget for that.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: In regards to Hurricane Maria, can you give us an update on whether we have any units and personnel deployed to this day or has that been scaled back?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: No as of right now we hadn't but we closed the center about a month ago. We were sending teams on a regular basis, two week intervals down to Puerto Rico. That's all finished right now though.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And outside of the federal funding for some of the urban search and rescue teams was there the ability to recover any additional money from the federal money for the expense?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Sure, whatever we expended we'll put in a request and get most of it back. Some of the assets that we sent down, they were on our dime. Particularly the things we sent to San Juan but a lot of the other stuff was under the EMAC request and we got reimbursed for that so that's in the process, we're in the process of doing that now.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And then staying on federal funding, is there any specific FY19 grants that previously had come from the federal government you feel that may be at risk of losing?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, we're always concerned. You know, we've been getting \$20 odd something million every year. It's been going up just about every year. It's sort of leveled off now but, you know, with the current climate in Washington, you know, we're concerned that there could be a cut. We don't think there will be but it's in the back of everybody's mind.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you regularly make contingency plans each physical year for the possibility of a particular line item being not funded?

2 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Sure, we sit down
3 on a weekly basis with physical folks and we go
4 through what the needs are, what we're getting and
5 what would happen if we didn't get it and so far
6 we've been able to adjust. If we don't get something
7 in same area, we're able to divert something if it's
8 a necessary object or item and we usually get it.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Now don't tell to
10 the like congressional hearing times but so if they
11 cut funding, we'd be able to just shift some
12 resources and still provide all most the same level
13 of preparedness.

14 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: No, no, if they
15 were to cut the grant funding, we'd be in serious
16 trouble. That's half of my budget. If they were to
17 cut it fully, half my staff would go and again I
18 talked about the warehouse. That is completely
19 federally funded. At supplies, everything from
20 things to take care of your pets again, after Sandy
21 we looked, we did a lot of searching of the agency
22 and City wide search, what we could do better and one
23 of it was, more items in the warehouse so that people
24 would feel comfortable leaving their house and going
25 to a shelter. Everything from, look a lot of those

folks didn't leave their homes cause they're worried about their pets. We now have pet supplies in the warehouse, things of that nature so that's all federally funded. If we were to lose that, we would lose the ability to provide that service to the public. We think that's a major, major part of what we do in Emergency Management, that and, like I said, 50% of my budget is from federal funding. I would have to lock the door.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And then staying with shelters, how do you determine where to site emergency shelters and are any of the ones that were prepared to use in needs of renovations or repairs to essentially maintain operations.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: We have approximately 450 shelters and that's a moving number. You know, one will come off, one will come on. It depends but the way we pick them, they gotta be outside the zones, the evacuation zones. We try and get them as close to the zones as possible and we've had this discussion with many people where they'll tell us hey why is that center so far away. Well, it's gotta be out of the flood zone. You can't evacuate to a area that's gonna flood. It just

doesn't make sense so we're trying to educate the public on that. There are 450. We have a number that are retrofitted to deal with people with disabilities. We'd like to get them all retrofitted but right now we have about 30 or so. By the season when it starts June 1 we should have 44 that are accessible and by the end of the year, we're hoping to have 60 or so.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So we're still in the 10 to 15% range though?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there a long term cost estimate on how much those 88 retrofits would cost?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Oh they, it costs a lot of money and we're dealing with the Department of Education, school construction is dealt into that and we get the funding for that. It's a very important part of our funding and City Hall has been very good to us with funding that.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Just going to the Emergency Operations Center, we noted how many times it was activated in FY18 so far. What is the dedicated budget and headcount just for the EOC?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, that comes out of our regular budget. We have teams, a red, white and blue team. Our whole staff is split into these three teams. They're on all call for three week periods so if they, if we're activated, like we were just activated with the snow storm, they put aside their normal duties and they work out of the emergency operations center so it's not an additional budget item. What might be an additional budget item is overtime. They usually do 12 hours, 12 hours on, 12 hours off, seven days a week so it will cost us some overtime but that's part of our budget.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And, but the bulk of the EOC workers would still being paid by the other City agency budgets.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Yeah, sure. We pay our people but we get, as you know, we get representatives from all the other City agencies private sector. That is incumbent upon that agency to pay their personnel.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The last question is the number of incidents monitored by watch command has declined slightly. Is there a reason why it's

declined? Is there a change that we should be fighting for or?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: No, we have a protocol. It has to hit a certain level. In other words with a fire, it's got to be a second alarm so if you have 100 one alarms, we probably are not gonna go to them. Once they reach second alarms, we'll go to it. It, just the nature of the job will determine how many we go to.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So less fires, less major incidents, everybody wins, we save some money.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Questions, I think I'll go to Council Member Cabrera first.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so much Mr. Chair. Commissioner, thank you so much. I'm a fan of your work and of your staff. You provide service that when people need it the most, they're very, very desperate. I'm curious to know if you could give us an update on the Hurricane Sandy houses of worship and charitable organizations recovery taskforce that was released, they released this report in April 2017 and that taskforce you know was charged with conducting an analysis of the

damages and losses sustained by community base organizations and houses of worship as well as identifying recovery resources and making recommendation to improve coordination between local, non-profit and faith based sectors in advance of future emergency and the reason why this is particularly your question to me is cause I was very much involved during Sandy, over there at the Kingsbridge Armory. Mayor Bloomberg allowed us to use the Kingsbridge Armory. We were able to funnel through outside help about \$7 million worth of resources that came from out of state especially through religious organizations and one of the biggest problems that those organizations encounter was that they needed a landing place. They wanted to help. They're ready to help. They're prepared. They have large warehouses. I've seen some of them nationwide located strategically but it's either having a connection or a landing place. What do we learn through this taskforce that will help us next time?

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Oh better communication, that's what it's all about. I mean, there are so many people in the City that want to

help in an emergency and the clergy houses of worship is always right in the forefront. We have so many volunteer organizations but the clergy is always right in the forefront so we're meeting with them. We're trying to meet as much as possible. There's been some legislation passed I think to deal with that so we can better encounter them and get some funding actually. You know, we had some issues in Staten Island where one of the, one of the houses of worship along with their location, they're having trouble getting the funding that, getting reimbursed for what they did. I think as a result of Sandy, we've had some legislation, we've had some outreach. We talked to you earlier about meeting with your clergy up there in the Bronx, we don't do enough of that, quite frankly and that's part of what we developed out of the strategic plan. Be out there more with the people that, the volunteer groups, the clergies, the people that want to help and that's sort of our goal going forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And thank you, Commissioner for the help that discussed earlier and you were so open and I'm so eager to, for us to

network because our network is our net worth when it comes to disasters.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: I'm a firm believer that the more people know about what emergency management can do and what they can't do in large part, the better we can serve the people of this City.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And I want to publicly thank you for your leadership in Puerto Rico. I saw firsthand, I stayed there for two weeks helping out and [Inaudible] general throughout the area but we heard of your work over there while we were over there and the need was so great and still a pressing, a pressing need over there but I think it would have been much, much worse if the work that you led had not been there so I want to publicly thank you for that. The other question I was gonna ask you was regarding the CERT program. I love the CERT program. Happy to hear you have about 1,300.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: 1,300, we were at 2,000 at one point but we, we through that. There were some folks that weren't as active as we like so it's right at 1,300 now of dedicated people.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And that's what
3 I was going to ask you about, the activation. When
4 was the last time that you were able to activate and
5 where there was an incident that took place and, how
6 does that work? Do they get phone calls?

7 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: They have the
9 leadership structure?

10 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Yeah, we have
11 teams throughout the City. Every area has a
12 different team. They have to communicate, we
13 communicate with them, emails, things of that nature.
14 They have radios and we'll call them up on a daily
15 basis. If you've got a missing child, a missing
16 elderly, they'll go out and help search. They'll go
17 out to community events, help us with our Ready New
18 York events. They'll go from helping us at a street
19 fair to helping us after a hurricane like Sandy so
20 they've been trained in enough to handle small
21 incidents and big incidents. They're a tremendous
22 asset we have. They do it for nothing at all. We
23 give them a lot of training. We give them some very
24 good training. We give them some golf shirts and
25 golf hats and they are happy to go out there and

help. They're some of the most dedicated people I've met.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay, my last question is in regards to preparation. I know when Hurricane Sandy took place that Mayor Bloomberg did not call upon FEMA to come and help. That's my recollection and to come in early and I remember that we were lacking water in certain instances and my experience in Puerto Rico and Katrina and working in Haiti, one of the things I noticed that is key is preparation, to have those supplies that you were mentioning earlier. How prepared are we if we were to have another Sandy that we could readily mobilize resources that we already have, that no one is trying to acquire and I know we're the main land so it makes it a little easier than if you were in a island but nevertheless, it was still a challenge back then when you are dealing with hundreds of thousands of bottles of water or whatever else is needed. How prepared are we in case of a

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Oh, I think we're a lot better prepared than we were for Sandy. First, just about our connection with FEMA. We have a tremendous with FEMA and the State. The FEMA Region

2 II director now is Tommy Von Essen who was the fire
3 commissioner here at one point in New York City. I
4 have a personal relationship with him, a very good
5 working relationship with him. We meet on a regular
6 basis so he's always calling up, what do you need?
7 Even with the two nor'easters, what do you need, what
8 can we do, how's it going?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: That's great.

10 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: So that's, that's
11 terrific but as far as the supplies, again. That
12 warehouse, we have three warehouses, Long Island,
13 Brooklyn, and Jersey. We had them separated on
14 purpose. In case something hits, we want to make
15 sure we can get supplies in but 70,000 people we can
16 supply seven days of food and water, all different
17 supplies for seven days. We have a contract in place
18 where once we activate the warehouse supplies coming
19 in we have a contract with folks who would start
20 resupplying so we're confident that we gonna get this
21 stuff out as fast as possible and we can restock it
22 as fast as possible.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And do we have
24 funding set aside for the contracting and how much is
25 there? Do you happen to know?

2 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: I don't have that

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: What's our
4 capacity to be able to handle?

5 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Branch?

6 BRANCH: Sure so we do have as the
7 Commissioner said this federally funded, our entire
8 emergency supply stock pile, anything in an emergency
9 situation that would be a conversation with OMB and
10 FEMA on how that would be funded.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay, so it's
12 not like we have a certain amount of funding set
13 aside under your agency, right?

14 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Not to resupply.
15 We have the funds to conduct the operation now.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: But then
18 immediately after an emergency is declared, either
19 federal, state or city, we can turn in the process to
20 request funding from FEMA.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay, fantastic.
22 Again, Commissioner, I'm a fan of the work that you
23 do. Thank you so much and looking forward to getting
24 together in the near future so we could become
25 bigger, better and broader.

2 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Thank you for
3 your kind words for the agency and it's the folks, my
4 260 folks that work at Emergency Management. They
5 are the most dedicated people that I've worked with.
6 They are terrific. An incident happens, they all
7 volunteering to go out that door, come in and work.
8 I have a tremendous staff and we couldn't do it
9 without them so thank you for your kind words.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Most impressive.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And I am a fan of
13 your aforementioned golf shirts and hats.

14 COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Okay, okay great,
15 great. Council Member Deutsch.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,
17 Chair, thank you. Commissioner we just want to let
18 you know that if you feel that the federal funding is
19 in jeopardy, I know someone that is very close with
20 our President so we can always make sure with our
21 Chair but anyway so all I want to say is that I want
22 to commend you for the work that you do and there is
23 nothing that you can do to me to make me mad at you
24 because I remember those days when 3 o'clock in the
25 morning when 24 story building had no heat during the

winter months and all it was, was one phone call to your office or to you personally and we had empty MTA busses outside or that time on Avenue S and Sheepshead Bay when we had a whole building during the heats and there was no electric and everything was done in the front of the building with generators and everything like within, I would say, a few hours and sometimes you even beat me to the scene which was very impressing, impressive and your agency really, you know and when the city and state cannot play together nicely, it's amazing under your leadership how OEM coordinates city agencies, state agencies and get things done, gets the job done so the caring, the sensitivity that you have and that the office has is really impressive and this is something that we shall all be proud of as New Yorkers. I just wanted to say thank you for that and the only request really that I have is once again just to ask if we could still take a look in having in southern Brooklyn, closer evacuation centers in my areas of Manhattan Beach and Brighton Beach cause I mentioned a few times that the nearest place we have to go is not too close and I wanted to hire senior populations in the City and it's very difficult for people to travel too far and

if something does happen, God forbid, then we need to get someone to that place sooner than later and it's very difficult with all the new developments in construction and traffic congestion to evacuate people so if we have something closer than further will really help so I just want to ask if you can look into that again and thank you for everything you do Commissioner and to your entire team.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Well, thank you for your kind words and again, we have a great relationship with Roger Greenl[phonetic] from the state and Tommy Von Essen from the federal government. I think our closest center for you is FDR High School, I think.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Again, it's gotta be out of the zone but if you have some other recommendations, sites you wanted to look up we'll look at them. We have that center in Brighton Beach that is in the flood zone but I think we had talked about once the storm would leave, we would use that location as a possible center, as a service center once the water had gone away but again, the centers have got to be outside the flood zones but we'll take a fresh look at it.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Great, thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I thank that's it. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER ESPOSITO: Great, thank you so much. Look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, we're gonna start with our next panel, Vincent Variale, EMS fire officers and Michael Greco, EMS, EMT, paramedic, and fire inspectors.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So I don't know who wants to go first but okay, take it.

VINCENT VARIALE: Good afternoon, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today. I just want to, I'm Vincent Variale, president of the EMS, officers, you know [Inaudible]. I just want to go over a couple of issues that were mentioned here today. First was the one of the last things that was talked about was this mobile mapping unit for GPS for navigation for the ambulances and and supervisor cars. You know, we first brought that

up I think it was 2011 and they managed to have a GPS system so they can watch everybody in the field but at a time where you basically could buy a Hyundai and it had come standard with a navigation system, ambulances and command cars still do not have them. I don't know why it's taken eight years to get that done but I just want to point that out. We still today do not, none of the vehicles have any navigation systems to get to an emergency which I believe would dramatically reduce response times if that was in place. With the turnover, high turnover rate we have in EMS, many members are put into areas they're not familiar with. Having a navigation system to tell them the fastest way to get to an emergency would significantly help address the response times. That was the first thing I wanted to bring up. The second thing, I wasn't present here for the last hearing. It was about diversity but it was mentioned also in this report briefly, couple of things I have with that. First, the attrition rate I noticed was said to be at 7% in the report. That's incorrect. They don't count the EMS attrition rate when EMS people go from EMS to Fire. They consider that a promotion so they don't add those numbers in

there. The actual attrition rate for EMS is 15%.

They also, and I think part of the reason why we have a big problem is the overall treatment. Compensation is definitely a big problem in EMS. We earn \$40,000 less a year than fire or other uniformed emergency services but it is also the overall treatment. I'll give you an example. In the report, it labels EMS as a civilian workforce, not a uniform workforce. That offends many of our members. Not only do we understand that, uniform services are treated a little better than the City, by the City, but we understand that uniform workforces also have to step up more because they're dependent on more to save lives and respond to emergencies which we do in EMS but yet we're not given the respect or treatment that those uniform services receive. This comes down to what I was originally coming back to is the diversity part. The reason why I believe or from what I've seen the Fire Department has a problem keeping people of black, Hispanic, women to stay long enough when they go take this exam and try out the Fire Department is because the message that's being sent back to them. EMS is the most diverse, largest and most diverse portion of the Fire Department. We have

the most black male, female, Hispanics, all of them, and when they come to EMS and be part of the Fire Department the poor treatment that they receive sends a message to them, sends a message to all the members in EMS workforce. When they go back home to their friends and family, the message is don't work for this company, this place. They don't treat you right. They don't pay you correctly. They pay you less than everybody else. The benefits are less than everybody else and the treatment, overall treatment is not up to par with other uniformed agencies so if you have a desire to become a person who works for Emergency Services, don't go to the Fire Department, go somewhere else and that's why I think you see that there's initial interest but then that drops off because when they hear the message that comes back to them from friends and family who are currently in this FDNY Emergency Service, Emergency Medical Services, they're like oh, maybe it's not a good idea to stay here. Maybe we should leave. Another issue, I saw in the report it said additional supervisors were added to increase, the lines were increased to help with the supervisory. Well PSAC II and EMD currently has no captains available so I don't know

where they're increasing supervisory members but I don't see it in a lot of areas. Fourth, I noticed the EMS workload is 95% of the workload being done by EMS, EMTs and paramedics yet only 16% of the budget goes to EMS. This is a big problem. First, EMS facilities, they're saying they're hiring more EMTs to replace private ambulance companies that are leaving the system which is another problem but they keep adding more EMS, EMTs and paramedics but they're not adding the amount of EMS facilities which is a huge problem. We have, we actually have members who have to use locker rooms in garages where males and females are getting changed in front of each other every single day in the garage because we can't fit any more people in these stations. It's horrendous and yet in the budget I didn't see any money allocated for EMS facilities. The other issue that was brought up was the fly car or PRU program. They said there was baseline money budgeted for it. This program has been in effect for over a year and a half. We still have no rules, no program outline of what we're supposed to be doing as supervisors and officers. We have currently a decision pending from the OCB in regards to the overwhelming workload put

on to the paramedics and EMS lieutenants. They're basically doing triple duty. They're working as lieutenant. They're working as a paramedic performing patient care and they're working as a training officer and there's no rules to guide them on how this is supposed to work a year and a half later and there's no additional compensation offered to them for the additional workload. Again, you have people earning \$40,000 less than everyone else, doing more with less but not being rewarded in any way and they wonder why the message or nobody wants to stay here. Another thing I want to bring up is the, this idea that Fire does medical calls. Yes, they do respond to medical calls but it's not equivalent as EMS responding to medical calls. When members leave the EMS workforce, they are EMTs and paramedics. When they go to Fire, they are certified first responders which is a level below that so even if you're a paramedic if you go work for Fire and you respond to that medical emergency, you are not performing those duties as a paramedic. You're performing duties of a certified first responder so it is not this idea that it's equal or they're still doing medical calls. It's not a fair comparison and

it shouldn't be looked at as such. My final topic or issue is the span of control. They're adding additional units. They're adding personnel. They're not providing the support that's needed that goes with that. Besides the facilities that I brought up, supervisors, Fire according to the federal government, state and city guidelines and standards for span of control, there should be one officer and one supervisor for every seven individuals. One in ten is allowed for law enforcement. In New York City, Fire has a span of control of one in four, one in five. Police has a span of control of one in seven, one in eight. EMS span of control is one in twenty, one in forty and one in sixty. The areas you spoke about, Brooklyn South and Staten Island for example, it's one in sixty, one in forty. I'll give one quick example of where span of control, if it was properly done, would have made a difference. I'll bring up the Eric Garner case. That day when Eric Garner was on the floor dying, the two EMTs that responded from a private hospital were there with 50 cops around them and listen I've in situations like that before. It can be intimidating for an EMT with 50 cops around them and sergeants and lieutenants

telling them come on just quick, get the body out of here. Do what you got to do. Just get off the scene cause they don't want a riot to break out when something is going on like that. The problem is if you notice in that video, medical care wasn't being administered right away. Had an EMS lieutenant been on that scene, that is our job to make sure we are the liaison with the police officers, with the police sergeants and lieutenants. We are there to command and provide direction and manage, coordinate operations on the scene. Had a lieutenant been there, that would have been done. The nearest lieutenant was in Rossville, Staten Island. It took him 23 minutes to get there. By the time he got there, the whole thing was over so Staten Island is grossly understaffed when it comes to officers. There's only two on the whole island and Brooklyn South has two from Sunset Park all the way to Coney Island. They got 30 to 40 ambulances. That means they're responsive for 60 to 80 people spread out through seven different communities. It's absolutely ridiculous and insane, the lack of span of control access to the EMS and we badly need more supervisors

2 to cover more communities. Thank you very much. I'm
3 available for any questions you may have.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Well finish the
5 panel and do questions.

6 MICHAEL GRECO: Thank you everybody,
7 Michael Greco, Vice President, Local 2507. I
8 appreciate you guys and gals giving us the time to
9 point out a couple of things. The first things I
10 wanted to start with, I wanted to highlight our fire
11 inspectors and their role in fire safety. I do feel
12 that our fire inspectors are very undervalued and
13 underappreciated. The buildings that they do
14 inspect, the record of fire deaths that have been
15 brought down due to the fact that they do their
16 inspections is something that really should be noted.
17 I was looking at a bunch of inconsistencies in the
18 budget. He brought it up, the 16% for EMS, 2% for
19 fire inspectors. Looking at the numbers, the cost to
20 run the fire inspectors of \$48 million but yet they
21 bring in \$96 million. Their pay is tremendously low
22 compared to other counterparts in buildings so to
23 watch as I read through this entire budget, the
24 iniquities of how the EMS service is treated from the
25 other services, \$600 million budget. We have a \$200

million income so puts us at a \$400 million net cost, \$1.3 billion to run the rest. They get 68% of the overall budget and we get 16%. It's a problem. It affects the retention rate. It's a direct reflection of our pay compared to uniformed service. If our pay was better, our retention rate would be higher and I don't like to use money income as a reason for why somebody should get paid. I understand that argument but when you are doing a vital service, the money that comes in should offset and then should be used to reinvest into the service that's provided so in short, the EMS calls they dominate FDNY responses. We do almost four times the calls but we receive a quarter of the budget. The money spent on Fire is not misplaced. Don't get me wrong. Everything they do and everything they are about is necessary. I'm not taking away from what a fireman does, what a police officer does, what sanitation does. They are all vital services. If your house is on fire property, a firefighter is there to protect that. Those are memories. A police officer keeps you safe. Sanitation stops the plague. They're all beneficial. It is time that EMS is recognized. Over a hundred years we've seen how these emergency services have

progressed. However, it's time to reanalyze the role EMS and fire protection plays in our City today. The funding must be increased dramatically and I'm not talking a \$10 million increase here. We need a reevaluation of hundreds of millions of dollars, pay, equipment, stations, personnel. They need to be doubled if we really want to provide and protect. The same effort that has been put into fire safety, education, it needs to be adapted in 911 education. The amount of 911 calls that come in, if the Council men and women understood what we do respond to in that 1.2 million calls, that's just FDNY. Obviously our privates respond to the other percentage but we are getting cardiac calls for stubbed toes. We are getting people who are intoxicated coming in as unconscious. Those are the 123 segments that we see. If we educated the public a little better on when to call 911, the same way the close the door initiative, the AD initiative, the money that could be put into that would save in response times. We have a seven and a half minute response time. Fire's response time to their structural fire are four minutes. We need that sort of response times. If you are having a heart attack, that's the response time you want,

not six second less five seconds. You want minutes shaved off and a \$10 million put into a section of Queens or a section here is not gonna do it. We need a reevaluation and a study, something done to reevaluation how to make EMS a vital service in the City that it is and how to recognize them, pay them and treat them and staff them appropriately. Yesterday's storm, our members got forced into overtime. We had to stay. We were short staffed but we did it. Our members are forced on corners in the middle of a blizzard on an ambulance. We're not even allowed to shelter in place at a station because the stations are too far apart. The high winds, trees are falling down, where are our members? In parks, on street corners, we need facilities where we can move and leave from the facility. A fire house, they're strategically located. Again, over a hundred that was placed. He talked about fire hydrant responses and there they have a detailed plan of how far a fire hydrant has to be from one another to create a proper response. Our answer is go sit on a corner. I don't care what the weather is, we don't get breaks, we don't get meals. If you're forced to work another eight hours, if I do an eight hour and

yes, contractually we never got a break. If you force me to work another eight, that's sixteen hours without a meal. We are not treated the way we should be treated as the vital service that we are and it's a budget. That would be a start and paying our members, increasing the budget by two fold would be a start, not the \$10 million. I do appreciate this time. Sorry if I ranted a little bit.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I don't have anything to say, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: You're just there for the ambiance.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He's our conciliary.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yeah, I'm the conciliary.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So the 15%, that was per year that you pointed out?

VINCENT VARIALE: Yes, it's 15%. They don't count the members who leave from EMS to go to Fire.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right, so you're saying that's because of the, they're saying that

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 100

2 essentially 14 uh, 7% of the members are getting
3 promoted.

4 VINCENT VARIALE: Well, see now, that's a
5 tricky turn they use a lot and when we talk in OLR,
6 there's attrition rate and there's turnover rate.
7 Bottom line is EMS loses 15% of their workforce every
8 year.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Per year, right.

10 VINCENT VARIALE: Right, now, where they
11 go, those are numbers I have to look more into detail
12 too but I do know in one of the hearings and even in
13 this report, they keep bringing the attrition rate or
14 the turnover rate or whatever they want to call it
15 down lower to 7%.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: That's what Jen
17 just pointed out, yeah.

18 VINCENT VARIALE: Right, right, I heard
19 5%.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: That's what she
21 just pointed out

22 VINCENT VARIALE: But that's because
23 they're not counting those members who go from EMS to
24 Fire. They say it's a promotion.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: A question on the
3 ambulance GPS, so as you pointed out people might
4 staffed in an area they're not familiar with. How do
5 you find out where to go?

6 VINCENT VARIALE: Well, we're assigned to
7 stations but as my colleague has stated that we're so
8 understaffed sometimes members are put on different
9 units or mandated and put on different units working
10 a different area. Actually it happens very often on
11 a regular basis so if I generally work one area all
12 the time, I may get used to that area and know that
13 area but now if I'm mandated to work another unit and
14 I worked that other area, I may not be as familiar
15 with that area so if you have GPS or navigation on
16 board. There's a difference between navigation and
17 GPS because they keep saying we have GPS. If you
18 have navigation on board, it would certainly help in
19 guiding you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Your guys have a
21 random street if your street comes over the radio,
22 how do you find that?

23 MICHAEL GRECO: I'll answer that
24 question. Procedurally, we are given Hagstrom paper
25 maps. We are to look into our maps and figure out

where we're going because technically we aren't allowed to use electronic devices while working. We're not allowed to use our phones, technically. Realistically, I go to my phone or if I'm in the tech seat, there's a driver seat, tech seat. If I'm in the tech seat, I go to my phone I punch in the address and I use my phone and that's how we go. That's the bottom line.

VINCENT VARIALE: There's two issues with that. First, you're supposed to technically use the Hagstrom paper map. However, if your truck isn't moving within a minute, they immediately want to like talk discipline now because you're taking too long to move. I don't know how long they want you, I mean you have to look at a map. What are you supposed to do? Second, using your own phone just to get directions is a problem because if I do that and now let's say whatever program or software I'm using puts me in another area or a different place and I don't get there, now I'm at fault for not using the proper procedure or following procedures and not using it so it puts again, it put all the problems on the employee's shoulders which cause more stress.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I was wondering who buys all the Hagstroms at the rest stop. You know what I mean.

MICHAEL GRECO: It's us.

VINCENT VARIALE: It's us and the worse part about that discipline is the GPS when you're sitting for a command discipline, if I go seven blocks, even three blocks the wrong direction in Manhattan, lights, and sirens, it could take four minutes if you go the wrong way but I thought it was that way. When you're sitting for discipline, they will print out that their GPS that's on the truck that pings you, they'll print out that GPS and show you, oh look, you moved three blocks and they will discipline you for going the wrong way and they'll even print out a MapQuest type and say this was the proper route so they're telling you which way you should have gone after the fact by discipline and not letting us.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right.

VINCENT VARIALE: Speaking of which, I'm glad you brought that up. I've actually had the discussion because the person was going to be disciplines for using, they were showing the way to

2 get to the job using Google maps but the person used
3 Waze but there was a difference in the timing. I'm
4 like I can't even believe we're having this
5 discussion. You know, you should have navigation on
6 the ambulances.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right.

8 VINCENT VARIALE: It comes standard in
9 the cheapest car available today. I don't understand
10 this. For eight years, they been doing this mobile
11 mapping unit. What, are they mapping the world or
12 are they, this is New York City. I don't get it.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And just one more
14 question that I have, I reread your testimony on the
15 fly cars and I understand but just broader, big
16 picture, are the fly cars good? Is this something
17 that's working?

18 VINCENT VARIALE: That's a great
19 question.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: From a public
21 perspective.

22 VINCENT VARIALE: I don't know how they,
23 I don't know the answer to that question because they
24 started the fly car program the same time they added
25 additional BLS units so they're saying the response

2 times went down. Is it the fly car program that
3 brought response times down or is it the additional
4 BLS units because an argument can be made, hey if you
5 add, I know it's crazy but if you add more
6 ambulances, response times will go down. That's what
7 seems logical to me so I don't know if the PRU
8 program or the fly car program is working.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I feel like one of
10 the first rules of a pilot program is to have a
11 control group and it doesn't sound like they had
12 that.

13 VINCENT VARIALE: Well, one thing they do
14 know and they would agree with is that it exacerbated
15 the supervisory or the lack, there's now a lack of
16 supervision in the Bronx. It's made that worse
17 because, throughout the rest of the City, a
18 lieutenant doesn't work with, partnered up with a
19 paramedic and provide medical care. A lieutenant's
20 sole job duties are to coordinate and manage
21 operations on the field. With the fly car, what it's
22 doing is I'm not only managing and coordinating
23 operations, I'm providing direct patient care and I'm
24 training the paramedic I work with to be my future
25 lieutenant so I'm doing three jobs so when you give

too much, when you overwhelm somebody with that kind of work, it's gonna hinder their ability to perform all the functions to par like the rest of the City.

MICHAEL GRECO: And from our standpoint, Local 2507, it blurts the lines of what is a supervisor and what is a partner when two medics are out together and you're making decisions on somebody's life, you bounce the ideas off of each other.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right.

MICHAEL GRECO: And when you have a supervisor there now, does his opinion medically become more sufficient simply because he outranks you and there has been situations of one partner would order the other partner and it creates for a tension when you're treating a patient that you shouldn't have to deal with. Supervision is necessary. That's two paramedics, I want to work with my paramedic and when my supervisor comes over, you supervise, a liaison between PD, between whoever and if I need to call medical control, if I need to call other police, that's what a supervisor's for. When does the supervisor break free as a partner to make those liaison moves? It blurs the lines between

VINCENT VARIALE: And that goes right back to what I said about the rules. We're a year and a half into this program and the only direction we were given from the Department is use your best judgment. Many people have been disciplined because they used their best judgment, what they thought was the right thing to do and they were disciplined because it didn't conform to what they wanted you to do so you're not going to give me anything in writing. You're gonna say use your best judgment but then you're gonna find me at fault when I do. This is a problem.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you.
Councilman Cabrera, your question?

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Yeah, that sounds to me like you can't make sure, you know, they can move the line in terms of, you know, what you're supposed to do so it makes absolutely no sense.
Mr. Chair, I just wanted to make a comment that maybe my recommendation here, my humble recommendation is that part of the budget, there will be a study regarding what was just brought to our attention.
That way we could properly address all of these issues and we have the data that is needed in order for us

to really support the EMS in every possible level because till you've been someone that went through a heart problem in 2015, you know, when you call, you know, I didn't have to call that time but I have to tell you that it's one of the scariest things you could ever go through in your life but if you have to call, you want somebody to get there ASAP. You know, it's never just too soon so we want to make you as efficient and as effective as possible and break through all of these, you know. I'm baffled. I'm sitting here baffled, to be honest with you. I'm sure you're even more baffled cause you deal with this literally every single day dealing with this and I stand by my comment that I made to the Commissioner earlier. You heard it. To me, it's a issue of value. You pay people what they're worth and I can't think, I still don't understand why you don't have equity paid here.

MICHAEL GRECO: It's our biggest fight. It will be done through multiple avenues. Right now, we have 5,000 members who can't afford to live in the City that they serve. I'm one of them. I just had to move out to Long Island because I just couldn't afford here. We have people who love this job. They

are dedicated to EMS. They are dedicated to being fire inspectors. They are dedicated it's they don't feel at times, they're not appreciated as much as they appreciate the work and that's all we are trying to bring light to.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Well, thank you. Thank you so much for your service. Mr. Chairman, thank you again.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

MICHAEL GRECO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And with that, we are done for the day. Thank you. [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 April 4, 2018