

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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HELD AT: Committee Room
City Hall

B E F O R E:

BILL DE BLASIO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Helen D. Foster
Annabel Palma
Jessica S. Lappin
James Vacca
Thomas White, Jr.
Letitia James
John C. Liu

A P P E A R A N C E S

Robert Doar
Commissioner
HRA

Raymond Singleton
Assistant Deputy Commissioner
HRA

Annika Holder
Chief of Parks Opportunity Program
Department of Parks and Recreation

Lillian Roberts
Executive Director
District Council 37

Henry Garrido
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Jose Sierra
Director of Blue Collar Division
District Council 37
On Behalf of:
Jacqueline Estrada

Susan Harper
Former JTP Worker

Gladys Perez
Assistant Gardener
Department of Parks and Recreation

Janet D. Rivera
Board Member
Community Voices Heard

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

Wanda Imasuen
Lead Organizer
FUREE

Nova Strachan
Housing Organizer
Mothers on the Move

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: This hearing of the General Welfare Committee is called to order. My apologies to everyone. The hearing before us went over a little bit. And of course, that led me to go and deal with other matters for a few minutes and then I took too long. I apologize for the late state. I want to thank the commissioner and his team for being with us today. We look forward to discussion. We look forward to all the panels. Other members of the General Welfare Committee will be coming in shortly. I want to thank the staff who put together this hearing: Molly Murphy, Migna Taveras, and Christal Coston. I want to note for the record today is Wednesday and so I think Migna Taveras has three more days left as a single woman. She's getting married this weekend. Please give her a round of applause to congratulate her. There she is, in the back. I keep telling her to enjoy her last few days being single, but it's the wrong message. She doesn't want to hear it. We're here today to examine how to help Job Training Participants find permanent employment. I dare say this is a moment for everyone who cares about the city, everyone

1 who's looking at matters of policy and the
2 economy, we're all reexamining our approach and
3 we're wondering what's going to work for people in
4 this environment. I think we can all agree that
5 the level of competition for jobs will be much
6 higher in the next few years than it's ever been
7 before. The issue is not to simply give folks
8 some abstract training or some possibilities of
9 finding a job, but to help as much as possible, to
10 create a clear and tangible path for those who
11 need to get to permanent employment to have that
12 opportunity. That's what we want to focus on
13 today. Our city is undoubtedly in a time of
14 serious fiscal and economic crisis. Those at the
15 lowest income levels are hit by far the hardest.
16 The National Center for Budget and Priorities
17 estimates that a startling 7 to 10 million
18 additional people will reach the poverty level
19 across the country over the course of this
20 recession. Obviously, disproportionately that
21 will hurt us and affect us. According to the
22 mayor's preliminary budget and the assumptions
23 going into it, we are as a nation expected to lose
24 five million jobs by December 2009. New York

City's share is expected to be almost 300,000 through the second quarter of 2010. These are very, very sobering numbers. As more and more people lose their jobs, it's increasingly important to look at how well the city currently helps low-income individuals become self-sufficient and how we can do better. Transitional jobs are a good model. They are time-limited jobs that combine work, vocational education, training and support services. But they only truly work when people find permanent employment after the program ends. The transitional jobs model has been utilized successfully in several other cities and states including Baltimore, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle. New York City has the largest paid transitional jobs program in the nation with the Parks Opportunity Program. For years as chair of this committee, I have heard how much people like the Parks Opportunity Program because they actually get a paycheck for the work they're engaged, unlike Work Fair Programs. But it's a major problem when people go through the program and then can't find a job. Many end up in a tough situation. Many

end up back on public assistance. We understand that HRA has moved in the right direction on a small scale. I always try to give Commissioner Doar credit where credit is due because he's an honorable man and he listens and he tries to work with us. So I want to give credit for some of the movement in the right direction. I do understand that HRA plans on filling some vacancies in the agency with JTPs. I know we'll hear about more of that today. But we want to look for larger plans and larger solutions. DC 37 has presented a proposal to help JTPs find permanent employment. Under the proposal, the city would not renew existing contracts which are currently contracted out to private vendors, and would put JTPs in these positions. These contracts are due to expire over the new few years. Now, according to DC 37, this would save the city over \$14 million over the next two years. In this economic climate we should be looking at ways for the city to save money, especially if it helps move people into permanent jobs at the same time. This is exactly the kind of innovative approach that deserves a real debate and a real hard look because it may

offer us a much better model for helping those in need. Today, we'll hear what HRA is doing on this front and whether a larger plan like DC 37's could be implemented and could be part of helping us to solve our problems going forward. Before I welcome the commissioner's testimony, I'd like to welcome my colleagues Annabel Palma and Jessica Lappin. Thank you both for joining us.

Commissioner, we look forward to your testimony.

ROBERT DOAR: I'm very pleased to be here today to discuss the Job Training Participant model and some of our more recent efforts to expand and build upon it. With me today is HRA's Employment Services Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Raymond Singleton. Also, as the JTP program is a true partnership, our partner agencies are here with us as well. Annika Holder, Chief of the Parks Opportunity Program with the Parks Department is here in the front row. And Lorenzo Cipollina, Deputy Commissioner for Administration from the Department of Sanitation is also here with me. This hearing is well timed with recognition in all levels of government that we must focus our attention on supporting

employment. Employment-focused programs are a key component of Mayor Bloomberg's economic recovery plan, announced in his State of the City Address. HRA has a proven track record in these programs. Even in this economic downturn, we have increased the number of cash-assistance applicants and recipients moving into employment. In 2008, we had more than 80,500 job placements, increasing our total when compared with 2007, with a three-month retention rate of 88% and a six-month retention rate of 80%. Within this figure, more than 6,600 were in subsidized jobs predominately through out JTP programs. My goal is to further improve upon these job placement figures. But I know it will be difficult if unemployment levels continue to grow. However, we are hopeful that the recently passed federal economic stimulus legislation will direct needed resources to the city. Our successful JTP program is one model that if additional resources are available, it could be expanded to provide employment for low-income New Yorkers and to assist city government in meeting the needs of those we serve. The JTP is a temporary employment program where a cash-

assistant recipient is hired into city employment on a temporary basis. Under our current model, the weekly schedule involves four days at a work site and the remaining day dedicated to training, career or other education advancement activities. During the time in the program, cash-assistance recipients are hired as city staff under the Job Training Participant title and are paid for five days of work at an hourly rate, after the recently approved union increases are implemented in March, of \$9.22. The goal is to provide recipients with real work experience that will ultimately assist them to find unsubsidized jobs in the private sector. Presently, HRA has partnerships with the Department of Parks and Recreation, since March 2003, and Sanitation since 2007, to operate these job training programs. In addition, we are committed to creating an additional program within our own agency. The Department of Parks and Recreation Parks Opportunity Program, or POP is a six-month program aimed at cash-assistance recipients who have been on assistance for more than 12 months. This program serves approximately 2,500 trainees at one time who are referred

through HRA's job centers. Participants perform valuable work for Parks, increasing civic pride and greening city neighborhoods while pursuing sustainable employment and financial self-sufficiency. They work four days each week and receive one day for paid job search training and education services offered through Parks Department in-house staff, as well as in cooperation with outside providers, such as CUNY and the City and State Departments of Education. Individual training account vouchers are also utilized for specialized training in many areas, including building maintenance, security, food service and office administration. In addition to the main POP program, three specialized pilots were recently developed to serve more targeted populations. POP Plus is a one-year program created for younger adults, between 18 and 25 years of age. The mission for this pilot is to help trainees establish self-sufficiency through a combination of employment, education and professional mentoring. Trainees work in small, closely-supervised crews for three days of work experience and are provided two days of employment

readiness workshops, counseling developed specifically for youth and education and training experience. They also have the opportunity to earn their regular and/or commercial drivers license to increase their job marketability. POP Education Horticulture Program, or POP Ed, is a one-year program that targets recipients with an expressed interest in horticulture. It involves four days at work and one day focused on counseling, education, driver training and training with Parks, the New York Botanical Garden or TreesNY. In addition to the primary objective of obtaining sustainable employment in horticulture, goals also include education, certification and earning other credentials. The Parks Department uses its relationship with entities in the horticulture field to help place those who complete this program. Finally, POP Works is a one-year pilot program that began in January 2008 for non-custodial parents with an open cash assistance case. The program is geared towards helping fathers become a more active participant in their children's lives both financially and emotionally. In addition to

transitional employment and job training, this program also includes intensive parenting classes and child support services through HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement to help navigate and participate in that system. Some of the issues participants are dealing with are suspended drivers license, mediation with the mother of the child, and dealing with a smaller paycheck due to child support deductions. The Department of Sanitation's program is similar, but not identical to the POP program. It is only a little over a year old and is much smaller in scale.

Participants are recruited from those performing well in the Work Experience Program, or WEP Program, at the Department of Sanitation. Up to 70 participants can be placed in cleaning assignments at the Department of Sanitation garages and field offices. Training and employment placement services were initially provided through HRA's Begin Program, but with the recent growth in the numbers enrolled, we now will be shifting to HRA's Back to Work Program. Now I'll turn to the Human Resources Administration's Job Training Program. As you know, I believe in

1 this model and would like to see it expanded to
2 other city agencies. However, this model requires
3 both a large financial and time commitment. While
4 the city uses grant diversion, a method to pay the
5 employer a portion of the cash grant that went
6 before being hired to the cash-assistance
7 recipient, funding is needed for the balance of
8 the wages. In these difficult times, this type of
9 funding is not easy to identify. I am hopeful
10 that the JTP pilot we are now in the process of
11 developing at HRA will show that even on a small
12 scale a program can assist city agencies in
13 completing their missions and they will consider
14 developing their own similar programs. This pilot
15 will focus on 75 cash-assistance recipients who
16 will be identified through our WEB program.
17 Participants will interview for positions
18 throughout the agency. While we use a small
19 number of JTPs in cleaning tasks, HRA will offer a
20 number of clerical assignments, adding some
21 greater opportunities to a program that has, until
22 now, focused mostly on cleaning, maintenance and
23 security work. While at HRA, individuals will be
24 assigned a supervisor to also act in a mentoring
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capacity and the trainee, for the most part, will work as an administrative support to that office. One day a week participates will attend a specialized training program that will include a strong emphasis on preparing people to find jobs once their work at HRA is complete. This effort, which is presently being designed, will include a financial literacy component coordinated with the City's Office of Financial Empowerment and using HRA's resources to provide appropriate education, training and job search services. We will also include an evaluation component into the pilot from the very beginning. Our Office of Evaluation and Research will conduct a process and an outcome evaluation including a preliminary process evaluation to provide timely feedback to program staff. The process evaluation will help us better understand what works and does not work in implement of the program and will involve interviews with supervisors and participants of the program. The outcome evaluation will examine the effectiveness of the program in achieving participant outcomes such as employment and at least six-month job retention, as well as the

1 associated program costs. The HRA pilot will be
2 self-funded by HRA. The annualized cost of wages
3 for the 75 positions at full utilization is
4 estimated to be \$1.258 million, which will be
5 offset by \$249,000 in grant diversion funds, for a
6 net annual cost to HRA of more than \$1 million.
7 As indicated earlier, HRA will use its existing
8 resources to develop and implement a specialized
9 one day a week training program and will use its
10 existing Back to Work vendor contracts of
11 employment placement services. As we move forward
12 with this initiative, we will be investigating
13 other funding mechanisms. Thank you and I'm happy
14 to take any questions.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you
17 very much, Commissioner. I'll start with some
18 questions and see if my distinguished colleague
19 from the Bronx wants to join in. Yes, that means
20 you. Commissioner, I have often given you extra
21 credit for being straightforward in your
22 responses, so I'm going to expect that same kind
23 of honest dialogue today. We've been having long
24 discussion over a couple of years now about how to
25 actually get people situated, how to get people to

self-sufficiency and not to short-term employment experiences and how to truly figure out the best path. In a different vein, you could talk about WeCare trying to make sure that someone who needs SSI gets that. Whatever the particular outcome that is appropriate and available that we perfect the process of getting it to them as much as humanely possible. I give you credit for some of the progress you've made, but I think there's been an underlying tension about the permanence of what we're able to achieve for people. I know this economy doesn't help and I know this is never easy. My fundamental philosophy about this is that government is only scratching the surface of where we could go in terms of getting people to long-term stability and self-sufficiency. I'm not here to criticize you. I'm here to say I think we can do a lot more. I think we can do better. I think we can be more creative. If ever there was a moment where everything was up for grabs, where everything could be reexamined, that's this moment. The foundations of how we govern this country were created in the 1930s in the biggest crisis we ever had economically. A lot of that

1 might have appeared to be temporary at the time,
2 or might have been even acts of desperation. But
3 a lot of it proved to be very lasting and very
4 effective. It made possible tremendous progress
5 for millions and millions of Americans. So, to
6 me, we've got another one of those moments. The
7 interesting question for all of us in public life
8 is that I doubt we'll reach the level of
9 inspiration that Franklin Roosevelt did, but we
10 can sure try and look at that moment and say what
11 lasting impact do we want to make here at each
12 level of government to help people in need now but
13 also to change the model going forward. It seems
14 to me that the City of New York, with its
15 incredible resources underplays its hand on a
16 regular basis. Whether it's our purchasing power
17 or whether it's the employment opportunities the
18 city has, I don't know if we're getting as much
19 impact as we might as a city. I'm not talking
20 about when we provide a social service, I'm
21 talking about the actual city apparatus and all
22 that can be done with it to help people as a city
23 per se. This proposal begs the question for me.
24 It suggests that we could help a lot of folks to a
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2 permanent positive solution because they've gone
3 through very good transitional program. You get
4 a lot of credit for that program. But that
5 doesn't guarantee the next step. Your pilot is
6 looking in the right direction and so are some of
7 the other examples you've given. Why shouldn't
8 this become the broader policy of the city that we
9 want to make sure folks have the option of getting
10 to permanent city employment?

11 ROBERT DOAR: First of all, I want
12 to say that I also appreciate the dialogue that
13 you and I have at these hearings and appreciate
14 your input and I listen to it. We like the JTP
15 model. We've expanded it now in the Sanitation
16 Department and now in our own agency. We are
17 happy to undertake conversations with other city
18 agencies about further expansion. I also want to
19 say that I'm sometimes a little embarrassed by
20 even the tone of my testimony which indicate that
21 we did it all. The fundamental person who
22 achieves that permanent placement in a job after a
23 successful record at Parks or Sanitation or in
24 some other transitional, the fundament driver of
25 that success is the individual themselves. I

1 think we're doing a lot helping them get there.
2 But we need that ingredient as well, and we get
3 it. So I would just say that I don't disagree.
4 That's why we're expanding this model. We will
5 undertake conversations with other city agencies.
6 But I don't run those other city agencies and
7 they, in some respects, need to come to this idea
8 themselves.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: That's an
11 open door and I always appreciate an open door.
12 So let me just take you a little bit farther here.
13 I guarantee you we will take you up on the idea of
14 having some formal discussions to see where we can
15 take this. First of all, I personally have
16 problems with the whole notion of contracting out
17 to begin with. I want to just put this on the
18 table. I think there are times when it works, and
19 there's times when there's no other choice, but in
20 general I think there are costs associated with
21 contracting out that add to the taxpayer's burden.
22 I think there are quality questions. I think
23 there's huge questions about how responsible the
24 contractors are. I don't think and by the way
25 this is true, when the city pays for construction

and unfortunately the contractors pay an inappropriate wage and don't follow the rules in that vein or don't have a safe construction site, I think in general that we have this massive power as a city and we need to use it to force a different set of standards into everything we do. I would argue that contracting out gets us, in many cases, a lesser product, a more expensive product, or a product that runs through an irresponsible contractor. That's, to me, bad public policy. We shouldn't be bucking up and supporting people who are not playing by the rules and are not trying to help their own workers progress. Conversely, a path to a city unionized job by definition means there is a range of promotional opportunities, there's a potential of stability, a potential of good benefits and pension down the line and obviously a decent pay scale. So that's when we're talking about people actually being able to get their lives together and keep their lives together for themselves and their families. If you even say that's some fair points in there, then shouldn't we review the city's contracting out policies, not from always

1 the perspective of what appears to be the lowest
2 dollar figure, but the whole picture and the
3 social impact of contracting out? Since we have a
4 number of contracts finishing over the next couple
5 of years, shouldn't we have real examination of
6 whether we want to renew those or not and whether,
7 in fact, it might be more effective to have that
8 work done in-house explicitly so that we can have
9 another tool for you? I want to empower you.
10 Here's another tool in your arsenal to get people
11 to a better option. Is that not the kind of top
12 to bottom review that we should undertake right
13 away before we renew these contracts?

14 ROBERT DOAR: I think it depends on
15 the contract and depends on the agency. To the
16 extent that the contract is aligned with or
17 related to tasks that are part of the core mission
18 of the contract, that's something that might be
19 considered. But in the program that we've
20 described here, it is our hope and our envision
21 that by hiring the people that are in the JTP
22 program within HRA, we may be able to diminish the
23 use of the temporary clerical contracts, which we
24 do have, both in the first instance as we hire
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2 them as JTPs and additionally as we hire them at
3 the conclusion of their time in the JTP program.
4 So we are looking at that as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Have you
6 had an opportunity to look at the DC 37 proposal
7 and specifically the assumptions that there is a
8 potential savings of up to \$14 million by not
9 going forward with the contracting out?

10 ROBERT DOAR: No, I have not had an
11 opportunity to review those numbers or to see it.
12 The very nice looking report that just came out
13 that I received yesterday is much broader than
14 just JTPs. Mrs. Roberts sent it to me and I just
15 got it yesterday.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: We'll do a
17 follow-up letter. We would like a formal answer
18 about your first analysis. Again, the possibility
19 of savings up to \$14 million over two years and
20 the possibility of up to 1,500 jobs being
21 available for JTPs; I'd like to hear when you're
22 able in the short-term, your response there. I
23 just have a couple more questions and then I'll
24 turn to Annabel Palma. I want to welcome Tish
25 James by the way to our hearing. Tish will sit

1 quietly. I'm sure she'll have no questions and
2 nothing to say. I just wanted to tell you that
3 that's what you can expect. I set him up for you,
4 Tish. He doesn't see it coming. You are the
5 person in this city government who I think more
6 than anyone else, and it's not just you as a
7 personality but you as a title, looks out for low-
8 income folks. There's a lot of agencies,
9 including the other ones that this committee
10 provides oversight for who help and are supposed
11 to help a lot of low-income people, but I think
12 the most central element of where that policy
13 needs to come from is housed at HRA. So if you
14 believe that this proposal was essentially right,
15 wouldn't it be appropriate for you to, in effect,
16 proselytize throughout the administration that
17 this is the way we need to go? If you're the guy
18 looking most at poverty and trying to end poverty
19 in this city, isn't it fair, even though I
20 understand each agency sort of has its silo, isn't
21 it fair for you to be the guy to say you all need
22 to look at this direction to go in because this
23 would help us get people to a better path?

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25 ROBERT DOAR: I have taken what

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2 little role I have to say repeatedly within the
3 city government that we have to do everything we
4 can to improve job opportunities and increase job
5 opportunities, especially at the entry-level end
6 of the economic sphere. I've said that to the
7 mayor. I've said that to the deputy mayor. I've
8 said that to other commissioners. In order to be
9 successful, HRA is extremely dependent on a supply
10 of jobs in the City of New York. So I don't
11 disagree that we at HRA should take that role
12 seriously. I've talked to Deputy Mayor Lieber
13 about it. I don't disagree with that.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: In the same
15 vein, you would agree that if your pilot continues
16 to show successful results, the whole notion then
17 is to expand. So in other words, what DC 37 is
18 proposing on a large scale is very kindred to some
19 of what you're doing with your pilot on a smaller
20 scale. If your pilot shows great results then
21 that's a further argument inside the
22 administration to go in this direction. Would you
23 agree with that?

24 ROBERT DOAR: It does. I just want
25 to be careful because I don't know all of the

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2 elements of what is in the DC 37 paper,
3 particularly those related to contracts or
4 contracts outside of our agency. But if our pilot
5 shows, and I feel confident it will and I know
6 it's happened in the Parks Department that folks
7 can transition into permanent employment if the
8 thing is run well, then we would want to spread
9 that news around to other city agencies.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: On the flip
11 side of this that as good as the JTP approach is,
12 I think there's still a nagging question that
13 absent this type of direct link to jobs that the
14 city controls, we're still not seeing the kind of
15 permanent opportunities we'd like to. In other
16 words, I am sure someone that has gone through
17 this experience is better positioned than someone
18 who has not.

19 ROBERT DOAR: If they've gone
20 through it successfully and seen it through
21 themselves, then they are in a better position
22 than someone who has not. That is correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Again,
24 we've seen data from the city that said Fiscal 07,
25 42% of JTPs in the Parks program found permanent

employment.

ROBERT DOAR: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: But there's always the problem that seasonal jobs get included and again, permanent is often calibrated to a standard that means a certain number of months, not real permanence. So even at that higher level, even if you accept that 42% represents something, it's not as pure as 42% got to self-sufficiency. It's 42% made progress. Some continued on and some didn't. This is the gold standard program. Again, we know that programs not as intensive or supportive as the JTP approach don't have even as good results. So, again, because I know this administration loves numbers and I respect that, if this is the best we have and it's getting us somewhere but not by any means far enough, it begs the question again, isn't there a higher level we need to take it to and shouldn't we try and find a way to link it up to the vast potential array of city jobs that could be available and even more so as the economy improves. If we put this platform in place now, if it proves to be successful, that there would be

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2 actually more opportunity as the program improves
3 on the city level. What do you say to that?

4 ROBERT DOAR: I would say that we
5 owe it to the city to take a look at what happens
6 to the other portion of that statistic that are
7 not apparently placed in permanent employment and
8 find out what led to that result and see if we can
9 do things to address that. I think that's a
10 reasonable thing to do.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Let me turn
12 now to my colleagues. I want to welcome Council
13 Member Gale Brewer. I'd like to turn for
14 questions to Council Member Annabel Palma.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you.
16 Commissioner, I know Parks has always been sort of
17 the first agency to embrace the JTP and that has
18 worked successfully. And Sanitation is also now
19 working with the JTP. I'm curious to know what
20 has been the resistance for the rest of the city
21 agencies? Why haven't they done it?

22 ROBERT DOAR: It's a big investment
23 of time and effort. The extent to which the Parks
24 Department, for instance, pays attention to this
25 program at a very high level, right through their

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2 entire bureaucracy and the talent and abilities
3 that they bring to it are very big. It's not
4 small. So for an agency to take it on at that
5 level, it would be something that the commissioner
6 might be having to pay attention to once a week
7 and others would have to be very intensely
8 involved in it. I think for some other agencies
9 that are interested in other things, helping HRA
10 find people those kinds of employment
11 opportunities isn't necessarily their first
12 priority. We thankfully found another partner in
13 Sanitation where they have been willing to take on
14 that commitment. It's not as big as Parks, but
15 still something. I think what happens with other
16 city agencies is they are besieged by the day-to-
17 day demands of their own agency and they don't see
18 what immediately it does for them. I think that
19 honestly, I could do a little better salesmanship
20 job and I will work on that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Do you think
22 now that your agency has recognized that maybe
23 taking part in this will open up the doors to the
24 other agencies to entertain this?

25 ROBERT DOAR: When I came here we

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2 didn't have Sanitation and we did Sanitation. Now
3 we have HRA. We've done our own. I think we want
4 to build on that and do better in getting
5 additional partners. That's what I would like.
6 It's a strain on us as well. But we think it's a
7 good way to help people get into employment.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: So your
9 agency is now looking to create or expand this
10 program by creating some positions within HRA?

11 ROBERT DOAR: Yes. As part of our
12 budget proposal that we submitted, although we're
13 going to go ahead and do it, we have a commitment
14 to do 75 JTP jobs in HRA. We're starting it up.
15 We're designing it now. I think the start will be
16 in the early summer. We'll be able to report back
17 to you on the success of that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: So then the
19 other agencies will see you leading by example in
20 doing it.

21 ROBERT DOAR: That's the hope.
22 Thank you very much, Council Member, nice of you
23 to say that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: In terms of
25 the training, I noticed it's four days of work and

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2 then the one day training. Do the participants
3 get to choose what type of training they want to
4 do, or is it assigned to them in order for them to
5 get benefits?

6 ROBERT DOAR: We have different
7 choices. Can I bring Annika Holder from the Parks
8 Department up? She can give you the best
9 description of what the choices are.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Yes.

11 ANNIKA HOLDER: Good afternoon. At
12 the Parks Department, everyone is included in
13 employment readiness skills. We're teaching the
14 basics from looking through the newspaper and
15 actually identifying an ad, filling out
16 applications, and learning how to do online
17 applications. Everyone is required to do that
18 because that's the basics of job search. We also
19 provide adult basic education for those who may
20 need a GED class. A few years ago the Parks
21 Department became a GED proctor site. So we're
22 not only providing the GED classes, we're also
23 proctoring the exam every few weeks. We're doing
24 that in collaboration with both the Department of
25 Education and with our own paid instructors on

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2 staff. Through the individual training account
3 vouchers that Commissioner Doar mentioned earlier,
4 we have partnered with several CUNY colleges
5 around New York City and a couple of private
6 vendors to provide trainings in areas of food
7 service, pharmacy technician, office
8 administration, and security. These are at the
9 choice of the participants, assuming that they
10 meet all of the criteria for it. Because we're
11 not going to train someone in the area of security
12 if you have a criminal background because the fact
13 is that you're just not going to connect to a job.
14 So we do career planning with them and try to
15 connect to those options and training.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Given the
17 economic times that we're in, those participants
18 that have had the fortune to find jobs, that have
19 been placed in jobs, do we have a number or a
20 sense of how many of them are still working?

21 ANNIKA HOLDER: We're doing that
22 right now. We're really looking very closely at
23 those individuals that we've connected to jobs,
24 more so than ever because of the stories that
25 you're hearing every day. Although just through

1
2 our contract we are required to follow our
3 trainees for six months, we do have lifelong
4 services, but right now we're really focusing on
5 looking at what happened to those people that we
6 found jobs for the last fiscal year because of
7 course, some of them may have lost their jobs due
8 to no circumstance of their own.

9 ROBERT DOAR: In Fiscal Year 08,
10 the Parks Department reported 800 private
11 placements and 604 placements in Parks. We would
12 hope that those folks and the jobs they're in are
13 still eligible for public assistance benefits
14 available at HRA that we would see that either
15 public health insurance, although in Parks you
16 probably get health insurance as a city job. But
17 there might be an opportunity for other kinds of
18 public benefits. But we do follow placements.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you,
22 Council Member. Now, Commissioner, I'm shocked to
23 report that Tish James does have a question after
24 all. She's finally come out of her shell and
25 she's going to speak about her feelings.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You know,
3 actually, Bill, I was going to be quiet. I really
4 was. I wasn't feeling well. Commissioner, good
5 afternoon. Of the JTPs who've finished the six-
6 month program and cannot find a job, how many of
7 them revert to welfare?

8 ROBERT DOAR: I don't know if I
9 have the number on an independent basis either in
10 Parks or in Sanitation. I don't know if we do
11 have a number exactly, but I'd be happy to look
12 and see if we can do a tracking or do a sample
13 study. Some do come back to public assistance and
14 some do not.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Is it more
16 than 50% or less than 50%?

17 ROBERT DOAR: I don't want to
18 speculate. I would very happy to follow-up with
19 you by doing a sample and seeing what we find. To
20 the extent that folks have not found and still
21 need assistance, they're going to come back to
22 cash assistance, that's true.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: What
24 percentage of participants in the POP program find
25 a permanent job?

1
2 ROBERT DOAR: The number for
3 placements in permanent jobs is right now about
4 40%.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I want to
6 talk a little bit about privatization. There's
7 been reports that the city contracts with private
8 vendors to provide services for cleaning and
9 maintenance and that it costs the City of New York
10 about \$79-\$80 million. Is that a true statement?

11 ROBERT DOAR: I don't manage all of
12 the agencies, so I don't know what the number is.
13 We at HRA do have custodial services contracts for
14 some of our facilities. I know that we do have
15 contracts with entities that provide those
16 services.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
18 Commissioner, I don't know if you know, but what's
19 the rationale for contracting out as opposed to
20 allowing city employees to do maintenance and
21 sanitation? What's the thought process?

22 ROBERT DOAR: Again, I came in two
23 years ago and these are contracts that I
24 inherited. I think that one of the rationales may
25 be that the agency that needs that service does

1
2 not do that particular discipline as part of their
3 core mission. So they want to go to experts in
4 the field, or people that know that business and
5 can provide it in the most efficient and effective
6 way. So I think that's probably the rationale for
7 some choices.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Is that
9 decision agency by agency? Or is that a
10 systematic decision? Who makes that decision?

11 ROBERT DOAR: My experience would
12 be that the agency would evaluate it to decide
13 what choice they want to do, either through a
14 contractor or in-house, and they would present
15 that to the various oversight agencies, whether
16 it's OMB or the Mayor's Office of Contract
17 Services and then either get the go-ahead or not.
18 If it was a relatively small engagement, it
19 probably wouldn't require approval at City Hall.
20 But if it was larger and significant it would
21 require review by the other agencies.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Do you know
23 if there is any agency in the City of New York
24 that does a cost benefit analysis?

25 ROBERT DOAR: The answer is I do

1
2 not know. There might be a cost benefit analysis
3 overall or in a particular discipline, but I don't
4 know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: In terms of
6 the average salary of a city employee for
7 custodial is about \$25,00, would that be fair to
8 say? Just based on the numbers when you compare
9 it to these private contractors, I think we would
10 achieve some savings if in fact we were to rely
11 upon city employees as opposed to contracting out.
12 Has that sentiment, has that argument, as far as
13 you know, has that been put forth at this time?

14 ROBERT DOAR: Right now we're
15 looking at everything to see that we can make sure
16 that we're spending city dollars as carefully as
17 possible. I assure you that contracts that are
18 under my review at HRA that we're looking at the
19 entire picture, including costs and evaluating
20 that based on those factors.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So just to
22 paraphrase, they are reviewing these contracts to
23 determine whether or not they should be terminated
24 and/or renewed?

25 ROBERT DOAR: In every case, in

1
2 HRA, we look at our contracts and we decide when
3 they come up if we should renew, set out a new
4 RFP, or change the approach. We do go through
5 that. The tendency of the bureaucracy, as you
6 know, is to keep doing what you're doing because
7 change is tough. But I'll try to ask our people
8 to think creatively about ways of doing things
9 better.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

11 Commissioner, I'm sure you've heard this phrase
12 before, "The time for change is now."

13 ROBERT DOAR: I've heard that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You've heard
15 that, right? I picked it up somewhere. Given
16 these austere times, I really think that we need
17 to reconsider. When are the maintenance contracts
18 and the custodial contracts end?

19 ROBERT DOAR: They vary. They vary
20 by location and by contractor. I'd be happy to
21 put together a listing of what our custodial
22 contract timeframes are.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: That would
24 greatly appreciated. Again, we are trying to find
25 revenues wherever possible and I really think that

1
2 we have got to look at all of these private
3 contracts that the City of New York has entered
4 into over the years and realize some savings. It
5 would go a long way in addressing the proposed
6 layoffs, particularly in social services, which as
7 you know is near and dear to my heart. I would
8 urge that you would work with the chair and the
9 chair would probably bring me along since I tend
10 to be shy and reserved.

11 ROBERT DOAR: Okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you,
13 Commissioner.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO:

15 Commissioner, do you have a new program to help
16 the shy and the reserved find employment because
17 Tish James would certainly benefit from that. I
18 want to welcome Council Member Jimmy Vacca. We
19 have a question from Council Member Gale Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
21 very much. Regarding the stimulus package,
22 obviously we don't know exactly what would be the
23 benefits, but my understanding that to a large
24 extent, the stimulus package is about what we've
25 been talking about today. So what are your

1
2 projections. How fast can you ramp up? I know
3 you talked about it a little bit. How are we
4 preparing?

5 ROBERT DOAR: The stimulus package
6 was only signed a week ago, but we do think at the
7 city level that there is opportunity for funding
8 in the various pots of money in the stimulus
9 package to provide funding for these kinds of
10 activities. There's no question about that.
11 There's a lot of competing agencies and deputy
12 mayors and everybody has got to talk it through
13 and see what's best. But I'm hopeful that one of
14 the good things about the stimulus package is that
15 it will bring money that we can use to this kind
16 of thing.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How would
18 you be ready to ramp up to do that? I know there
19 are three agencies working on this now.

20 ROBERT DOAR: Let me give you an
21 example. We have another smaller program that's
22 not exactly the same thing, but it involves
23 neighborhood maintenance crews in an area that are
24 having trouble with foreclosures. It's a pilot
25 program that's just in one area right now. We

1
2 believe at HRA that if given an opportunity for
3 additional funding, we can find different ways to
4 grow a program.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The
6 nonprofit world, which I guess is through the
7 employment coalition, is it a part of these
8 discussions if there is a stimulus?

9 ROBERT DOAR: Yes, there's money in
10 WEA and Commissioner Walsh I know is talking about
11 it and I know my colleague Commissioner Mullgrav
12 is very interested in seeing how to best use the
13 stimulus package.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know DFTA
15 has employment and nutrition possibilities too.

16 ROBERT DOAR: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How does
18 SBS play a role in terms of information about
19 jobs? I know HRA has your centers. SBS has their
20 centers. How do you work together? I know it's
21 an issue.

22 ROBERT DOAR: We use SBS like
23 anybody else looking to help people find jobs. We
24 might go to them for a listing. We might refer a
25 client to go to one of their one-stop centers.

But we also have our own listings. Ray, do you want to add anything more to that?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you guys coordinate and collaborate even more?

RAYMOND SINGLETON: Sure, yes, we absolutely could.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How?

RAYMOND SINGLETON: Right now what happens and the way that we collaborate with Small Business Services is part of their structure and their system is they send out email blasts about job openings that they have at their career centers, their Workforce One centers. If people within our Back to Work infrastructure are appropriate for those jobs, then those programs and those employment services vendors will refer and then follow up with Small Business Services after people go.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: There's a lot of discussion in the council about merging them. I just wanted to make you aware. What are your total numbers of people whom you think could fit into programs such as the ones that you've outlined today? Do you have some ballpark number

of all of your customers? I know some are not job ready.

ROBERT DOAR: I don't have that. First of all, it changes if our caseload rises.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I understand.

ROBERT DOAR: I don't want to just throw out a number without thinking about it. I would have to look at my charts and see who is in WeCare and who is on SSI and then tell you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Maybe you could share that with the committee.

ROBERT DOAR: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you, Council Member. Commissioner, in terms of agencies that would make sense to be a part of a dialogue or how we might be able to change this model, are there other city agencies besides HRA, Parks and Sanitation that would be obvious that we should be talking to as we expand this discussion?

ROBERT DOAR: The Department of Education.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: A rather large one.

ROBERT DOAR: My view is that there are certainly functions in many, many agencies that with the proper setup that our recipients could be referred to. I don't want to single out one.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: In other words, DEO is a fine example, but there could be many others as well. As we explore this together we should be looking for the way it could fit to numerous agencies. In terms of expanding the current JTP program, have you had any substantive conversations with any other agencies besides Parks and Sanitation?

ROBERT DOAR: I personally have not. But at the request of some folks who have asked me, we have had staff talk to the Department of Education and also HHC. So we went over and we engaged at a staff level. I think I raised it at a higher level, but again, there's a lot of things going on at these agencies.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Those are two obviously very large agencies. I am always

careful about speaking for Tish James, but in this instance, I think our Contracts Chair would agree that a broader reexamination of when contracting out might be the wrong approach or the less productive approach when getting jobs in city government might be the better approach is something this committee wants to do and the Contracts Committee wants to do. In terms of next steps, we'll send you a letter requesting your detailed written response to the initial DC 37 proposal. We'd like to then figure out a path going forward for some real discussion. No one is saying this is a snap your fingers kind of thing. There's a lot of issues and a lot of detail. I think as a statement of the goodwill you're bringing to this discussion it would be good to have an actual process for looking at this. Once you've looked at the proposal and thought about it and had your folks think about it, could we put together a meeting with people from our two committees and whoever makes sense from your agency to talk about how we could actually model this? It would be an opportunity to see what we think the cost savings might be, what it would

1
2 allow you to do in terms of placing people and
3 have an actual process. I'm assuming it now being
4 the end of February, is that something we could
5 start at some point during March, in your view?

6 ROBERT DOAR: Sure. Yes, we could
7 talk in two or three weeks.

8 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Good, we'd
9 like to do that.

10 ROBERT DOAR: If after reviewing
11 and thinking about it and looking at the budget
12 circumstances and talking to you that we can't do
13 it, I want it to be clear that I'm not committing
14 to doing it, I'm committing to talking about it.

15 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: I agree.
16 We think it's doable, but you have to look at it.
17 I just want to make sure because I think sometimes
18 there have been opportunities lost through lack of
19 dialogue. I think in this instance, even if you
20 think on first blush there's complications, let's
21 still have a dialogue about what it would take to
22 make it work and then relate it. The mayor's
23 budget proposal, the January plan, specifically
24 notes that DCAS is ending two contracts that would
25 be pertinent here. I think it's important as we

1
2 proceed with this that you open up a dialogue with
3 DCAS about the fact that this is a possibility so
4 that there's some coordination. I'm just pulling
5 this out of the that. For example, if they have a
6 contract ending at the end of the fiscal year and
7 there's a period of time before they would renew,
8 and this dialogue is happening, which to your
9 great credit, you've already indicated some of the
10 ways this dialogue could be productive for the
11 mission of your agency. Let's get everyone in
12 coordination. DCAS should know that there might
13 be something to look at here rather than going
14 through the same traditional procedure. While
15 they have a little time, they should evaluate and
16 see where this goes. I think that would make a
17 lot of sense and make this a more tangible step
18 forward. I want to thank you very much,
19 Commissioner. I appreciate the spirit you brought
20 to this. Again, I think it's a moment like we've
21 never seen before to look for new options to
22 reevaluate. I appreciate your willingness to do
23 that.

24 ROBERT DOAR: Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you.

For our next panel I'd like to bring up the executive director of DC 37, Lillian Roberts. We welcome you. I'd also like to bring up Henry Garrido from DC 37. I feel like it was only this morning when I last saw you.

LILLIAN ROBERTS: It was.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: We thank you very much for this proposal and the other important ideas that you unveiled earlier today at the press conference. This is exactly the kind of discussion we should be having in this city about ways to help our people and go in some new directions. We appreciate you sparking that debate and we welcome your testimony.

LILLIAN ROBERTS: I want to thank you very much for inviting us to share with you what we feel about the Job Training Participants. I'm going to do a little preliminary so that everybody understands what that really means. My name is Lillian Roberts. I'm the Executive Director of District Council 37. It is the largest public sector municipal labor union in New York City, representing 125,000 members and 50,000 retirees. In 1996, the Clinton administration

passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The intent of the legislation was to end welfare as we know it. In addition to the policy change, the legislation placed a five-year time limit on individuals receiving benefits and a requirement that a significant portion of the case load be employed or in training for employment as a condition of the continuation of their welfare benefits. Today the Transitional Jobs Program, which is JTPs, provides us with an opportunity to implement a new policy that will increase the number of entry-level jobs available in the public sector for the Job Training Participants and will create savings for the taxpayers in our time of need. Six years ago District Council 37 won a court decision awarding the union the right of representation for the Job Training Participants throughout the city, which was approximately 2,500 to 3,000. Since then DC 37 has created a new association with the sole mission of representing the interests of the JTPs. We have negotiated an agreement with the Office of Labor Relations awarding the same wage patterns reached in DC 37 general economic

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2 agreement and negotiated a working conditions
3 contract with a grievance procedure. We have
4 assigned an administrator for the JTPs local
5 association and hired staff to service the needs
6 of the JTPs. We have worked in partnership with
7 the Health and Hospital Corporation to create
8 hiring halls for the JTPs, which has resulted in
9 the placement of hundreds of positions in the area
10 of dietary and environmental services. We have
11 reached out to other agencies, including the
12 Department of Education, the Department of
13 Environmental Protection, the Human Resource
14 Administration and the Department of Citywide
15 Administrative Services, in order to increase the
16 number of entry-level positions and non-
17 competitive positions when vacancies occur. In my
18 capacity as the Vice President of the Central
19 Labor Council, I have worked with Ed Ott,
20 Executive Director of the New York City Central
21 Labor Council to increase the availability of
22 apprenticeship for the JTPs in the building
23 trades. Despite all of our efforts of working
24 with the public sector and the efforts of the
25 Department of Parks and Recreation in working with

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2 the private sector, the rate of placement for the
3 JTPs according to our figures have remained at
4 about 15%. In addition, several research studies
5 have found that the majority of individuals who
6 did not receive placement return back to welfare,
7 perpetuating a vicious cycle with no end in sight.
8 That's why we're proposing a different approach.
9 I'm going to ask Henry to start with the approach.
10 I certainly will be here for other questions.

11 HENRY GARRIDO: Good afternoon. I
12 want to take an opportunity to go over our
13 proposal.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Please
15 formally introduce yourself for the record.

16 HENRY GARRIDO: My name is Henry
17 Garrido. I'm the Assistant Associate Director of
18 District Council 37. From July of 2006 to June of
19 2007, the city spent approximately \$79 million for
20 the procurement of custodian and cleaning services
21 contracts at city agencies. The bulk of these
22 contracts, about \$60 million, were found in five
23 city agencies, which were the Human Resources
24 Administration, the Administration for Children'
25 Services, the New York City Fire Department, the

Department of Sanitation and the Department of Environmental Protection. HRA procured about one-quarter of all the contracts for a total of about \$17.5 million. As indicated with the temporary clerical contracts, the living wage law establishes comparable hourly wage and statutory benefits for cleaning, janitorial and custodian services, making its cost ineffective for the city to continue contracting out these services, particularly since the need for these services are likely to increase over time. Since the cost of the wages and the benefit JTPs is about a 50/50 share between the city and the state, with food stamps paid by the federal government, District Council 37 believes that if the city agencies were to terminate the custodian and cleaning contracts and replace the workers with city employees, the city could save our taxpayers money. The entry-level positions could be made available for JTP graduating from the six-month training program on a priority basis, which would improve the annual income of the participants of the Transitional Jobs Program. The savings would be achieved in two ways. First, there would be a direct savings

by not having to continue to pay wages to JTPs in the Transitional Jobs Program that are placed into permanent jobs. Second, the city would save by eliminating the 15% profit margin given to the contracts that supply the contract workers. We offer as evidence of the potential savings in our proposal, Mayor Bloomberg's own November modification plan for FY09. The Department of Citywide Administrative Services indicated that by eliminating the building management contracts for 100 Church Street and 80 Center Street and hiring staff to clean and maintain the facilities, the city will save \$364,000 in FY 2010, \$682,000 in 2011 and \$570,000 in 2012. The proposed changes involve 80 positions covered by custodian and cleaning contracts. In addition, the Human Resources Administration proposed in the same document a year savings of about \$150,000 by placing cash assistance recipients into entry-level temporary and clerical positions and utilize the recipient's cash grant to offset a portion of the personnel costs. Imagine the savings we could achieve if we could expand the same ideas to all the city agencies. For instance, the New York

City Fire Department utilizes a contractor named Urban Building Maintenance, Inc. for cleaning and custodian services for its firehouses. The hourly rate paid to the contractors for cleaners and custodians is over \$30 per hour. The hourly rate, including fringes paid to the custodian assistants, a comparable title represented by DC 37 reaches only \$21 per hour. Since the contract requires at least 34,000 custodian and cleaning hours a year, the city could realize savings of over \$300,000 a year. Converting these contract positions to entry-level jobs for Job Training Participants would increase the savings even further since the city is spending about \$11,000 per JTP in wages and income tax credit. As you can see by our enclosed analysis, which was in our white papers, our cost estimate illustrates how the city could save more \$40 million in total by terminating the custodian and cleaning contracts. More importantly, the yearly family income for the families in the Job Training Participants program will substantially increase between \$6,000 and \$12,000 a year. In addition, the placement of the JTPs into permanent city jobs would help to end

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2 the viscous cycle of welfare to work to welfare
3 which has been pervasive throughout the system.
4 Thank you and I'm available for any questions that
5 you might have.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you
7 both very, very much. I appreciated, Henry, the
8 last point of welfare to work to welfare. I think
9 this is obviously a greater concern at this moment
10 in history that there's just not as much give in
11 the job market, so it is natural that if someone
12 slips, we know where they're going back to.
13 That's a huge challenge. I think you're pointing
14 out that at this moment it's even more important
15 to find a clearer path for folks going forward.
16 There is also a potential big cost savings for the
17 taxpayer and this is a moment we're trying to grab
18 every dollar. By the way, we had a fight with the
19 mayor the last few weeks over the question of food
20 stamps for able-bodied individuals. The New York
21 Times, to their credit, weighed in today. I
22 thought they used a very low figure. In this case
23 it was \$750,000 and I think it's actually many
24 millions more. But the point they made, even at
25 \$750,000 is the taxpayer is worried about that.

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2 They want to save that. They need that put back
3 to a more productive use. You're talking about
4 something that could total as much as \$14 million.
5 That should put you on the front page of The New
6 York Times right there if you have a plan that
7 could save us that kind of money and obviously
8 benefit people long term. First of all, I think
9 it's crucial, as I mentioned with Commissioner
10 Doar, that all of us appeal to DCAS and to the
11 mayor's office to add this into the discussion
12 before renewing any of these contracts. There
13 should be a pause while we look at this
14 possibility. Obviously if they renew the
15 contracts prematurely we don't get to have this
16 full discussion. I'm certainly going to make that
17 point and I would ask you to as well. I am
18 concerned another negative of contracting out is
19 irresponsible contractors. And I'm not saying
20 everyone is. I think this is something else that
21 needs to be a part of the debate. That I don't
22 think there is a clear enough standard in the city
23 as to who gets those contracts. I think the
24 public would be very interested in that and
25 knowing that unfortunately again we're backing up

here some employers who are not doing the right thing by their workers. That's another reason to reevaluate the process of contracting out.

There's a logical question, so I'm going to be the devil's advocate and I'd be interested in your response. Say we start to make this move, what happens to the folks who had those contracted out jobs, many of whom were low income themselves and struggling? How do we take care of their needs? I'm concerned about the taxpayer and I'm certainly concerned about getting people to self-sufficiency. I don't want to leave someone else in the lurch if there's a way to serve them too. How would you handle that?

LILLIAN ROBERTS: Some of them would probably go on welfare. Many of them are from out of town. I don't know if you know that. They're not all New York City residents. Some of them would probably go the same route as those on the JTP. I really don't know. The other thing that's very, very important is that the contracting out and the numbers in all of the contracts we've been looking at undermines a union. We're here and there's no necessity for

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2 it. What is the meaning of it, particularly when
3 you're paying more? It has undermined our wages
4 and we have asked for a review of about 130 of our
5 titles because we have 1,000 titles and some of
6 them are not paid properly. Nobody looks at that
7 and that's one of the things we have on the table.
8 I don't see that it serves any good at all. It
9 pits the community against the union for no reason
10 at all. Every one of them want a job.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: I agree. I
12 think this is an area where there needs to be a
13 different kind of public debate as well. A lot of
14 administrations we've seen, city and state,
15 embrace the notion that union jobs are part of
16 changing our society for the better. The famous
17 phrase is, "The best economic tool is a union
18 job." I think this is a good moment in history to
19 have that discussion. I think a lot of people in
20 the general public get that and would agree that
21 should be public policy. I'm interested in the
22 notion that some of the folks who are getting the
23 contracted out jobs now are not city residents.
24 That would be important information to understand.
25 I'm obviously interested in whether these

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2 contractors are being responsible. Is it also
3 true that we could create a structure that if we
4 move forward that folks who might be displaced
5 would have an opportunity to have priority for
6 other city jobs as they develop?

7 HENRY GARRIDO: In 2003, when the
8 city was analyzing a lot of the proposals that we
9 made back then when we released our paper, the
10 city went, in addition to reducing the number of
11 offsite contractors, went through the process of
12 reviewing how many of those temporary clerical
13 custodian jobs were there. They went through the
14 process of converting them into city jobs. When
15 we analyze the contracts we estimate there are
16 about 1,200 temporary clerical positions
17 throughout the city. We also estimate that
18 there's an additional 1,000 custodian clerical
19 positions. The total of that is going to be about
20 2,200 positions that we estimate should be
21 converted into city lines. So even with the
22 conversion of the JTPs who graduate from the
23 program, or the remaining 60% if you take HRA
24 figures, there will be enough positions to be
25 given for the people that are currently there to

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2 be converted to permanent city lines. I think you
3 mentioned this before, but one of the travesties
4 of this is that the City Council passed a living
5 wage law years ago. The idea was to provide
6 people comparable wages for comparable work. A
7 lot of the contractors that we have reviewed are
8 getting that from the city as part of the contract
9 but are not necessarily paying the workers that.
10 I think that this would also be a help to a lot of
11 those workers who are being cheated out of the
12 wages that the contractors are receiving from the
13 city. We have seen the statistical data that the
14 Department of Labor has done on the
15 misclassification of workers. We have also
16 highlighted to the New York City Comptroller,
17 areas where living wage law violations are taking
18 place. Unfortunately, that complaint has to come
19 from the workers in order for them to get
20 retroactive pay and wages that they are being
21 cheated as a result of the contracting out.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: This just
23 drives me crazy. Again, I use the construction
24 example too, because I hear this all the time from
25 the construction unions. This is where New York

City is a little too big for its own good. A \$60 billion budget and all of this activity doesn't get any oversight. The notion that we're paying taxpayers' money to support an irresponsible contractor that then would, for example, undermine the appropriate wages that that worker gets or provide an unsafe working environment or any other kind of negative and on the construction side you can only imagine the games that happen with people not getting the wages they deserve. This is sort of a broader area that I think we need to attack very aggressively. Again, this is the right moment in history to do it and I'm sure our Contracts chair would agree that people are getting ripped off before our very eyes, but we merrily keep writing the checks as a city. That's unacceptable. So I think in this atmosphere of crisis, it should not have to be that the individual worker is putting forward the complaint because that puts the onus on the worker. In many cases in this economy the worker is going to feel too threatened to do that. They might lose their job in the process because they're not unionized. I mean talk about catch-22. You need a complaint

1
2 from the worker but the worker is not willing to
3 make the complaint because they might lose their
4 job because they're not in a union. We should
5 actually shine a light on this whole area and
6 understand where we can avoid contracting out so
7 that we can create a much better path for the
8 folks we're trying to help to self-sufficiency.
9 To the extent we even do contracting out, let's
10 have a higher set of standards and more scrutiny.
11 Anytime we identify an irresponsible contractor,
12 they should be disqualified and not continue to be
13 fed. It's like there's no accountability or
14 consequences if they do something wrong. That's
15 not acceptable. I know a few colleagues have
16 questions. I want to welcome Council Member Helen
17 Diane Foster. I want to welcome Council Member
18 John Liu. We have questions from Council Member
19 Brewer and Council Member James.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Just to
21 pick up on the earlier question on the stimulus
22 bill, is that something that you have looked at
23 also? I know you have wonderful researchers
24 looking at economic issues.

25 LILLIAN ROBERTS: We have gone as

1
2 far as to go to Washington to make sure that we
3 support it. I'm very concerned that when the
4 monies come into New York that you will have the
5 teachers and the fireman and the police and
6 they'll forget about the supportive services that
7 each one of them need. For instance, in
8 education, they need to have their libraries.
9 They need to have their cultural roots. Now,
10 whether that's going to happen or not, we have to
11 depend on you. It's very important, because the
12 layoffs as they stand are not necessary with a \$9
13 billion contract.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

15 I agree. I remember your white paper. I don't
16 have it and I haven't read it and I apologize.
17 It's with the staff. But unless I'm wrong, some
18 city agencies are cleaned and supported by city
19 workers. Is that correct? So in other words, the
20 obvious question is why can't all offices and all
21 buildings do the same? Am I right that some
22 offices are done that way? I mean obviously the
23 schools are the cleanest, at least in my
24 neighborhood, which are your workers and Bob
25 Troller's [phonetic] workers. I'm just wondering

1
2 if there are other agencies that are also the
3 recipient of your workers' great work in terms of
4 the services that are in-house?

5 LILLIAN ROBERTS: Yes. I would say
6 most of them are. But you have Sanitation that's
7 not. You have the Fire Department that's not.
8 These are all city agencies. In some cases you
9 have some of our workers working side by side with
10 some of the contract workers. That doesn't make
11 sense and I don't know how that happens. We're
12 here to talk about it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's why
14 I'm just trying to make it clear to the public
15 that there are many agencies that are already
16 doing what you would like to have done.

17 LILLIAN ROBERTS: Absolutely.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's what
19 I'm trying to say.

20 HENRY GARRIDO: We identify this as
21 a parallel workforce. A good case and point you
22 mentioned is that in the Department of
23 Transportation there's several transportation
24 facilities where contractors are doing the work
25 parallel to the functions of many of our other

city custodian assistants throughout other city agencies and yet contractors are doing the work. Our position is that if there are jobs available for contractors, why don't you link that to the Parks Opportunity Program or the JTP programs at the same time that you're creating that. We heard from the commissioner earlier that there has been some thinking about expanding the program. The Department of Education we think presents a perfect example. You have over 200 clerical temporary positions in the Department of Education. You have hundreds of WEP workers in the Department of Education. Their work schedule is very conducive to single mothers who are part of the JTP make up of the individuals that are there. We felt that would be a perfect example of where you would use entry-level positions to eliminate the contracts and at the same time save money. The Department of Education has had a tremendous amount of problems with the issue of transparency and accountability. In 2005, there was a big investigation of the number of people that were clerical positions, many of which had been terminated from city jobs and then had come

1
2 back in the back door through temporary clerical
3 agencies. But they're there every single day
4 providing the service. The question of savings is
5 good. I think it makes perfect sense for the
6 participants. There's also the question of
7 accountability and transparency. Who is providing
8 the services for our government? I think that's
9 also a big issue.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
11 very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you.
13 Council Member James?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Madame
15 President and to your council, we're a little
16 sluggish because we had a wonderful breakfast this
17 morning. I thank you for the pancakes. I'm
18 moving a little slow, but I really appreciate it.
19 I know that it's your position that these
20 temporary workers are in fact not really
21 temporary. They're in fact permanent. Has there
22 been a challenge to the Labor Relations Board or
23 anything like that? Is this in violation of
24 collective bargaining? Is there anything legally
25 that we can do to challenge their status?

LILLIAN ROBERTS: We have a couple of legal cases pending now on the community workers in NYCHA with them bringing in other workers to take their place. I think we've got two different cases. We need to have the City Council come down with something very firmly as well. We're going to be here. We've got members that have been around 50 years and many of our elected officials don't get as much information as we're giving you. We feel that you people of goodwill can do something to make it better for those who seek employment, obtain employment and can't get promotions and all the other problems that they have. It's our job to point that out to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: My position has been that this is really an attempt to engage in union busting.

LILLIAN ROBERTS: It is.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: That's my position. I join you in that and will continue to join you. Have we asked IBO to analyze or conduct or engage in a cost benefit analysis with regards to this privatization? If not, can we together?

HENRY GARRIDO: One of the proposals that we have was that the IBO did an analysis on the Department of Homeless Services for instance. Their findings supported what we are maintaining. If I just for a moment go back to the issue you raised. I think part of the problem we have is in 2000 there was a case which analyzed the issue of these temp workers who up until now were classified as independent contractors. At that time the National Labor Relations Board ruled that these workers should in fact be workers, not independent contractors. But in 2000, the newly appointed Bush administration majority on the NLRB reversed that decision and classified those workers as independent contractors and therefore not subject to collective bargaining. In New York City, part of the requirements under the contract is they calculate the number of hours for the contract based on 249 days a years, 7 hours a day, which is the definition of full time employee. Yet somehow they're placed on 1099s as independent contractors by the request of the city. Therefore, we believe that misclassification of these workers is not

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2 only depriving those individuals but is depriving
3 the city from tax revenue that would be derived
4 from those agencies as a result of the placement
5 on a permanent basis to those individuals that are
6 on the 1099s.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Can the new
8 administration under the leadership of President
9 Barack Obama revisit the issue of
10 misclassification?

11 HENRY GARRIDO: I know there's been
12 a lot of discussions at the national level. There
13 have been even proposals sent regarding this. As
14 you know, there's a big push for the Employee Free
15 Choice Act which is one of the legislations that
16 he's looking at. But there has been a lot of
17 discussions from the AFL-CIO to also review
18 existing law as it applies to the category of
19 temporary workers or independent contractors
20 because we believe the misclassification is there.
21 Even the New York Department of State has looked
22 at this issue and it's costing millions and
23 millions of dollars in tax revenue that the city
24 would be entitled to by agencies who are
25 responsible to pay for these individuals who when

1
2 they no longer have a job go back to unemployment
3 and all of the sudden we have to pay for services
4 that we never got any money for. We're running
5 out of money for unemployment and workers
6 compensation benefits and we're not getting any
7 revenue from the agencies.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Whatever I
9 can do in my capacity as Chair of Contracts, I
10 will join with Council Member Bill de Blasio to
11 investigate this issue further. I thank you for
12 all the work that you are doing in the City of New
13 York.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: We want to
15 thank this panel. We very much appreciate the
16 report that you have put together today and the
17 ideas you're raising. I think we had an open
18 response from the commissioner and we are going to
19 proceed as we went through the timeline with him
20 to get a response to your specific proposal
21 initially and then to have a meeting to follow up
22 and see how we can make this real. I think you've
23 started an important dialogue here. Again, let's
24 all make sure DCAS is aware to pay attention to
25 this and not move forward precipitously with

contracts in the meantime. We look forward to working with you to see this through. Thank you very much.

LILLIAN ROBERTS: I want to thank you. I want you to know that I've just hired a Mr. David Moog, along with Henry and their job is going to be watching contracts and watching the city's money. So thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Very much appreciated. Our next panel is Jose Sierra, Susan Harper, and Gladys Perez. We welcome you. Who would like to go first? Ladies first? Please introduce yourself before you give your comments.

SUSAN HARPER: Good afternoon. My name is Susan Harper. Good afternoon to Chairman de Blasio and fellow Council Members. I am a former JTP worker. Prior to becoming a JTP worker, I worked at Old Navy, the retail store, for six years. I decided to leave my job after the company did not provide me with constant work hours. They reduced my hours and stopped raising my salary for the last three years. I was unemployed in July of 2007. When I filled out an application for unemployment I was denied

unemployment benefits because Old Navy said I left my job willingly. In August of 2007 I decided to file for public assistance. While I was applying for public assistance I was required to participate in programs such as the Work Experience Program, WEP, and Business Link. I also participated in several job fairs. In August of 2008, I became a JTP at the Department of Sanitation, working a 40-hour week doing routine maintenance work, including mopping, cleaning and sweeping of the facilities. Due to the six-month time limit of the JTP program, I am no longer working with the Department of Sanitation. Unfortunately, I do not have any other opportunities and am left with no choice but to go back on public assistance. I would have liked the opportunity to obtain a full time job that would help me provide for my seven children. Currently I receive Section 8 housing subsidy but do not have a stable residence since the landlords choose not to renew my leases. I took a civil service exam for a clerical aide title in 2005 and I'm still waiting to be called off the list. I'm eager to work and would like to provide a stable

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2 living environment for my children. I would like
3 to see the JTP program evolve into more full time
4 opportunities for people who want to get off of
5 public assistance and become self-sufficient.
6 Without your assistance, many JTPs will end up
7 returning to public assistance without any real
8 employment opportunities. I am urging you to
9 provide more job opportunities to former JTPs like
10 me. This will result in a savings to the city
11 since this will allow people to provide for
12 themselves and remain off of public assistance. I
13 would like to thank Chairman de Blasio for holding
14 this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to
15 share my story. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Did you say
17 that someone turned away Section 8?

18 SUSAN HARPER: I'm on Section 8.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Did you say
20 a landlord turned it away or not?

21 SUSAN HARPER: No. They don't
22 commit the landlords to more than a one-year
23 lease. So every two years we're moving.

24 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: I wanted to
25 make sure because we just passed a law to protect

Section 8 holders so that they were not discriminated against. I wanted to make sure you were not experiencing that.

SUSAN HARPER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it. Who would like to go next?

GLADYS PEREZ: Good afternoon, Council de Blasio and fellow members of the Committee on General Welfare. My name is Gladys Perez. I am an assistant gardener in the Department of Parks for the City of New York. I am also a single mother raising seven children, of which four are my own and three are adopted. Before becoming a JTP, I worked at a book factory in the Bronx for three years. Unfortunately, the factory closed down and moved elsewhere. This led to my being unemployed and then becoming a Job Training Participant with the Parks Department for six months. I was then fortunate enough to be hired as a City Park worker for the Parks Department, which led to my current position. My story is one of the positive outcomes of being a JTP. There are others who are not as fortunate in

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2 obtaining full time employment after participating
3 in the JTP program. I enjoy working as an
4 assistant gardener, planting, pruning, watering
5 and caring for the plants. The job gives me
6 satisfaction and I am able to support my family on
7 my salary of \$33,000 per year. The JTP program
8 provided me the opportunity to be independent and
9 self-sufficient. Unfortunately, my experience is
10 not the norm. I applaud you for holding this
11 hearing and hopefully of this hearing and its
12 findings will fine tune this program so that
13 others may experience the positive result that I
14 and my family have enjoyed. Thank you for the
15 opportunity to appear before you today.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you
17 very much, Ms. Perez. It's nice to hear a good
18 example. It's nice to hear of a story where
19 someone really moved forward. This is exactly
20 what we want to keep telling the administration,
21 that there is an opportunity here. So thank you
22 for telling us your story. Sir, we welcome your
23 testimony.

24 JOSE SIERRA: My name is Jose
25 Sierra. I'm the Director of the Blue Collar

Division for DC 37. I am also the administrator of the Job Training Participants Association.

Today I will be reading the testimony of Jacqueline Estrada, a former JTP who could not be here this afternoon due to childcare issues.

Jacqueline Estrada is a former JTP for the Department of Sanitation. Prior to becoming a JTP, Jacqueline worked as a college assistant for the City University of New York City for six years. Jacqueline was let go from that position due to a disagreement with her supervisor. Within her first year of being unemployed, Jacqueline filed for unemployment and received six months of benefits. In May of 2008, Jacqueline applied for and received public assistance. In August 2008, Jacqueline became eligible to be a Job Training Participant at the Department of Sanitation, working 40 hours per week doing routine maintenance work, including mopping, cleaning and sweeping. As is the case with most JTPs, Jacqueline became unemployed after the six month timeframe. With no other employment opportunities in site, Jacqueline had no other choice but to apply for public assistance again. By returning

1
2 to the public assistance, this is a costly expense
3 to the taxpayers. Jacqueline is an able-bodied
4 person who is willing to work but unable to find
5 opportunities. It is not easy for Jacqueline to
6 be a single mother of two children under the age
7 of 10. Jacqueline has taken civil service exams
8 for clerical aide and police administrative aide
9 titles but has not been called off the list.

10 Jacqueline would like the opportunity to work for
11 the city again in a civil service title.

12 Jacqueline enjoyed working at the Department of
13 Sanitation and earning a livable wage.

14 Jacqueline's goal is to return to college to
15 obtain a masters degree in social work and to
16 provide a better and more stable life for her
17 children. All that Jacqueline is asking for is an
18 opportunity to gain steady full time employment
19 again. Jacqueline is urging the City Council to
20 look into ways that can be used to help JTPs
21 transition from this program into full time
22 employment with the city. Many people have become
23 involved in the JTP program due to various
24 circumstances, but many who are like Jacqueline
25 just want the chance to work at a stable job that

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2 pays a decent wage. As the administrator of the
3 JTPs I want to thank the committee for holding
4 this hearing and giving the JTPs a chance to share
5 their stories.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you
7 very much and thank you for your good work
8 supporting folks who are in the program. These
9 personal examples, again, they're always helpful
10 to us to show very vividly where we need to go.
11 They show what's not working and what, in your
12 case is, thank god. And we want that to be the
13 case for everyone. Thank you very much. Gale
14 Brewer has a question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Ms. Harper,
16 I think you could run the world. I can tell.
17 Most helpful would be if Sanitation didn't work
18 out because they don't have jobs to have a JTP
19 program in another agency that you could move to.
20 Maybe DC 37 could answer that also. In other
21 words, all these different agencies could have the
22 kind of training that Sanitation or Parks or HRA
23 has and then we could have other agencies that
24 could make that transition. Is that kind of what
25 we're looking for? Because it does seem to me

1
2 with somebody with your qualifications certainly
3 fabulously good that you should be employed. It
4 would be a great addition to the City of New York.

5 SUSAN HARPER: My response to that
6 is the day that I finished my six-month with
7 Sanitation, I would have gladly started the next
8 day someplace else.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In other
10 words, you're ready?

11 SUSAN HARPER: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's what
13 I think we're all trying to say is that there are
14 obviously many, many people just like you. Maybe
15 not as terrific as you. But the issue is that
16 that's what we're looking for. I just want to be
17 clear. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you,
19 Council Member Brewer. Thank you to this panel.
20 We appreciate very much your time and the insight
21 you've given us. We have one more panel. I'd
22 like to call up Sandra Youdelman of Community
23 Voices Heard, Janet Rivera of CVH, Wanda Imasuen
24 from FUREE and Nova Strachan of Mothers on the
25 Move. I called four names. Am I missing someone?

1
2 Janet's going to do it? Janet, would you like to
3 begin?

4 JANET D. RIVERA: Good afternoon.
5 My name is Janet Rivera. I am a public assistance
6 recipient and a board member at Community Voices
7 Heard. Since the founding of CVH in 1994, we have
8 been working to end the injustices of the Work
9 Experience Program, WEP, and replace it with paid
10 transitional job programs and quality education
11 and training. CVH is here today in support of DC
12 37's proposal because while we fought for and won
13 the creation of the program in the Parks and know
14 that it is far better than WEP, the program still
15 needs improvement. I am a single mother with
16 three kids trying to make ends meet. As you know,
17 HRA's Welfare to Work programs require PA
18 recipients like me to work for their benefits in
19 unpaid WEP assignments. I receive only \$87.50 in
20 cash assistance every two weeks. In exchange, I
21 am often sent to a WEP assignment three days a
22 week, seven hours each day, which averages to
23 about \$2 an hour. I am expected to work for
24 benefits that amount to less than a living wage.
25 WEP should be eliminated because it is

unsatisfying and unproductive work. I have worked two WEP assignments. My first assignment was at Welfare Job Center 23. I was supposed to do clerical and administrative work. All they had me do was sit in a chair all day. I waited on the fourth floor of the building for a basket to fill up with slips filled out by caseworkers for welfare clients and applicant's car fare. When the basket got full, I brought it down to the first floor to a woman behind a window who collected the slips. I returned to my chair on the fourth floor to repeat this process all over again until I was allowed to leave. Basically I sat around all day. I would have preferred to do real work and learn skills that could help me work in an office. But there was nothing for me to do. My other WEP assignment was as a Sanitation worker for MTA subway stations. I had to change trash liners, wipe off trashcans and clean turnstiles. Again, I was working this assignment in exchange for my meager benefits. Other workers who were not in WEP, union workers, were being paid at least \$20 an hour to do the same work as me. My coworker was getting paid ten times more than I

was for doing the same job. This is unfair and insulting. Fortunately, I had a chance to participate in a paid transitional job program as a Job Training Participant, a JTP, through the Parks Department, known as POP, which is the Parks Opportunity Program. I was a JTP maintenance worker for six months and during that time I did a training program as well. As a JTP maintenance worker, I cleaned and swept playground areas in parks, collected and disposed of trash, painted over graffiti and park benches and cleaned the restrooms and gyms in the recreation centers. When I was not working in the park, the JTP program paid for me to receive training and certification to become a security guard. I would not have been able to afford the training on my public assistance benefits alone. I like the JTP program because I was a paid worker making six times more than I was getting through public assistance benefits. The JTP program allowed me to purchase more food per month to feed me and my three kids, as well as pay for car fare. Not only was I financially better off, but JTP gave me what WEP did not, the dignity of work and an

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2 opportunity to learn a skill that could lead to a
3 good paying job. JTP is better than WEP because
4 you can get paid, develop skills, get training and
5 education and build your resume with valuable work
6 experiences. The JTP program should replace WEP.
7 What I did not like about the JTP program was that
8 I did not have immediate job placement after
9 completing the program. Because of limited job
10 placement I had to go back on public assistance
11 and report to a second unpaid WEP assignment,
12 which is the WEP assignment I described earlier.
13 The JTP program should be improved by assisting
14 JTP workers to better search for and connect to
15 permanent job opportunities. Also, I agree with
16 DC 37's proposal to eliminate temporary workers
17 and instead allow JTP workers to access those
18 jobs. I appreciate the POPs program. It is much
19 better than WEP. For people that want to go into
20 maintenance work, it prepares them well. However,
21 I personally was not interested in becoming a
22 maintenance worker. I would have preferred to
23 work in an office or in a health care setting.
24 The JTP program should be expanded to other city
25 agencies and job types to allow people to get work

1
2 experience in career paths of their choice. That
3 improvement would help people like me prepare
4 themselves for and then access jobs in addition to
5 maintenance positions. I am here to ask for three
6 things. Replace the WEP program with the JTP
7 program. Expand the JTP program to more job types
8 and city agencies, such as the Health and
9 Hospitals Corporation for those interested in
10 health care and the Department of Citywide
11 Administrative Services for those who are
12 interested in clerical work. And create access to
13 permanent job opportunities for JTP workers once
14 they have completed the program and allow JTP
15 workers to access the jobs that are currently
16 given to temp workers. Thank you for your time.
17 I'd be happy to answer any questions.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you
19 very much. I really appreciate it. It was a
20 very, very clear and helpful explanation of what
21 you went through and how obviously make work it
22 was instead of meaningful in your WEP assignment
23 versus how positive your other assignment was and
24 how the JTP program did so much. It's a very,
25 very helpful example. Thank you for your

testimony. Who would like to go next?

NOVA STRACHAN: Good afternoon, Council. Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. My name is Nova Strachan. I am a housing organizer at Mothers on the Move. Fortunately, I was afforded the opportunity through WEP. This would be like one of the first positive outcomes is that I was afforded the opportunity to work with Mothers on the Move. They saw something in me and they gave me that empowerment, leadership and development. I'm in debt to Mothers on the Move, a community member led organization that helps the people in the community. I'm here today to talk about my experience as a JTP worker working for the Parks and Recreation Department for a period of six months. Unfortunately, due to lack of work at the time I was in need of assistance in order to maintain the roof over my head and the food in my stomach. So I applied for public assistance and food stamps. I was sent to FEGG/Goodwill Industries during the 30-day waiting period for my case to be approved. It was while I was there that I was called in by a case manager and I was told that my name came up in a lottery

1 to work at the Parks. I was told it wasn't
2 permanent but there was a great chance if I did
3 what I was told and came in to work on time and
4 every day. That I could indeed land a job working
5 for the city. I wanted to be able to take care of
6 myself and my own bills and my well being, so I
7 jumped at the opportunity headfirst, ready to take
8 on any task that was asked of me in order to show
9 my willingness to learn and to help out in any way
10 I could. It was the ending of a cold winter. So
11 for our first week of training we had to pick ice
12 to clear walkways. At a park located by Yankee
13 Stadium they had us rake old leaves that had not
14 been touched in years. I could see that this job
15 wasn't going to be easy. We were somewhat like
16 cattle and less like employees. My impression was
17 that the jobs that folks would get paid top dollar
18 to do were the tasks that were given to us while
19 we would get paid a measly \$8 per hour, working 40
20 hours a week. Although I was thankful for that,
21 it still made a wonder. There was all kinds of
22 dust and dirt that we breathed in from the debris.
23 It was not long before I suffered a sinus
24 infection. Soon we were sent out to sites that we
25

would have to stay for the remaining months.

There you are chosen to either work on the park grounds or to be sent out in a van to go to different locations throughout the city to maintain parkways, greenways and sidewalks, et cetera. As part of a job readiness program, we all would have to attend a session once a week where we prepared our resume and had mock job interview to test our skills in obtaining a job. We had to take more assessment tests and also our job developers would line us up with interviews and places that we could go just to fill out applications. None of which would bring promise in employment. So at that time you're still optimistic that you will land a job with the Parks. They determine through a scoring system who will be offered further employment with the Parks Department. Knowing this, I tried as hard as I could to be noticed as a good worker that treated people with respect and took pride in what I did, as much as I hated it. It was the scoring system that if you scored a 15 or less, you could just forget about future employment, according to different accounts that I've heard. As the months

went by, I still held on to the prospect of me working there since I thought I had built good relationships with supervisors. I did what I was told and I didn't complain much. But what I did notice was the high level of sexual harassment and indecent behavior that was demonstrated by some supervisors, especially when it comes to female JTP workers. Some girls I had befriended would tell me many stories or you would just happen to hear this and that. This kind of environment is a breeding ground for fights, gossip and many other unwanted encounters. In these situations, sex is used as a tool or as an allure into securing ongoing employment. These men know the deplorable situations of some of these women. Most are single mothers and once we accept this job placement, our food stamps are decreased to \$10 a month and in my case, since I'm single, I didn't get anything at all. Buying Metro cards are very troublesome, especially when you have to choose between carfare and lunch. Being in the FEGG program and then getting a job is supposed to offer us a weekly Metro card for six months exactly. But we are denied Metro cards from them

1 since we have gotten this employment through HRA,
2 which really doesn't make any sense. With these
3 men knowing this, they prey on our unfortunate
4 circumstances. So nearing the end of the six
5 months, I really started to pose the question of
6 whether there was any future in working for the
7 Parks and why is it that they would hire
8 contractors to do work that we can very well be
9 trained to do. What is the percentage of hire
10 within the JTP workers? What is the real concept
11 of giving someone a job for six months to only
12 take the position away from them? Telling you
13 that the hiring is done based on a scoring system
14 and not on what you have learned and accomplished
15 while you were there. Based on the many different
16 duties that I have done, what line of work can I
17 really utilize these skills if I'm not hired by
18 the Parks? The only thing that comes to my mind
19 in modern day slavery. Although we receive
20 payment for our work, the job that we did was
21 always bigger than our paychecks. So it just
22 doesn't add up to me. It is even harder for
23 women. If you had a problem when it came to
24 something you didn't agree to do, the supervisor
25

wouldn't waste any time writing you up, which will automatically bring your score down. If they really feel this is creating promising jobs for many folks that are in need and would really appreciate employment, then I can understand the concept. But why train folks to do a job that they most likely will never get hired to do?

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Thank you very much. I think you have a very powerful case you make here. I'm sorry that you experienced what you did. It's something we all need to fight because, again, there should not be anything sponsored by the city that's harming people. We need to hold a higher standard. I think the way you ended your testimony about needing a clearer path forward for people is exactly why we're holding this hearing. Thank you for giving us your story.

NOVA STRACHAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Last of the day, but not least at all, Wanda, welcome.

WANDA IMASUEN: Good afternoon, Council. I'm emotional and definitely I'm mad as

1
2 hell listening to these stories. My name is Wanda
3 Imasuen. I'd like to thank you giving me the
4 opportunity to speak on behalf of WEP workers that
5 can't speak out for fear of retaliation from the
6 Department of Social Service or their job site
7 supervisor. I was formerly on welfare and I too
8 was exploited by the very welfare system that's
9 supposed to give you a helping hand to get back on
10 your feet, but instead they put their foot on my
11 neck. Before 9/11 I had three jobs. When 9/11
12 happened, due to travel restriction for the Canal
13 and Holland Tunnel, I was forced to resign. I
14 then filed for unemployment. When unemployment
15 ran out, I was forced once again to apply for
16 public assistance. What an educational lesson I
17 was to learn with how the welfare system treats
18 its clients. I thought things had changed, but I
19 would soon realize that the only that changed was
20 that this was a different time and place.

21 Oppression and exploitation of individuals and
22 families was done a regular basis. My day
23 consisted of coming to the so-called job site
24 where they'd give you a newspaper and instructed
25 you to look for and find a job. I told them I've

1
2 worked all my life. I know how to search for
3 jobs. I also have a computer and a resume that I
4 post online. All I wanted was a job. The worker
5 asked if we were there to be a career welfare
6 recipient. There was a woman speaking to the
7 clients about the treatments the clients were
8 receiving by the social workers. I must say, the
9 families with children were treated better than
10 individuals like myself, who was made to feel that
11 it was our fault that we did not have a job. The
12 woman, she was a FUREE organizer and she was
13 talking about the injustice of people not given
14 the opportunity to choose education and training
15 to obtain the skills to exit poverty. Being
16 forced into WEB is where you give employers free
17 labor under the guise of employment. When your
18 job assignment cycle is up, clients go back on the
19 welfare rolls and this cycle continues. This is
20 modern day slavery. First we make policies and
21 put laws in place that make it a requirement to
22 get benefits. These are racist policies that
23 allow for the exploitation of marginalized
24 communities. With the Parks Department using free
25 labor, are their workers' jobs in jeopardy? Is

1 this how a just and fair society works. Because
2 of me being on public assistance and me being in
3 my 50s and I refuse to work. I worked all my
4 life. For me to go after working and paying my
5 taxes and you tell me to work for \$64 in benefits,
6 I can do that. Everything in my soul told me not
7 to. I was faced with eviction. I had just bought
8 a car and I had to put it in someone else's name
9 and give the note to someone because I couldn't
10 pay it. Welfare gives you \$215 for a single
11 person for rent. My rent was \$700. My landlord,
12 from knowing me and knowing that I paid all those
13 years before, said I will take \$215 until you get
14 a job that you can pay me the rest. This woman
15 that was there speaking invited me to a meeting
16 and I went. When I went to FUREE, the first thing
17 I heard, if you had a magic wand and you were at
18 the welfare center, what would you make the
19 workers do? Something washed over me. I would
20 have them see me as a human being, to respect me,
21 to see that I didn't come here to be a welfare
22 recipient. I wanted a helping hand. How could
23 you give a person an opportunity to gain the
24 skills and the training to exit poverty. If
25

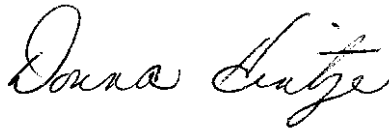
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2 you're going to give a person a job and you're not
3 going to give them a job where they're going to
4 make a livable wage where they don't have to rely
5 on the city, then you're still not helping that
6 person exit poverty. Because of FUREE and
7 organizations like CVS being in a coalition and
8 they passed a law with the City Council, Local Law
9 23, which our dearly beloved mayor sued the
10 Council and threw it out. But he did implement
11 some of those pieces in that bill. When families
12 go to apply for public assistance, they steer them
13 to the Work Experience Program. They don't give
14 them the opportunity to say what training they
15 want. They have a book there that they can look
16 through and say what training they want to
17 receive. I have a member in our organization that
18 I told her that this is what she needed to do.
19 They lost her papers. She had got cut off of
20 welfare. They said she didn't comply. She wanted
21 to go to school and they're doing everything to
22 prevent her from going to school. But finally now
23 she is going to go to school. I don't know what
24 you guys can do. We talk about our experience.
25 The Parks Department talks about theirs. Everyone

1
2 can talk but is there any way that some type of
3 undercover investigation can be done where they
4 can go to these job sites and see what's really
5 going to get the true story?

6 CHAIRPERSON DE BLASIO: Yes, of
7 course. I mean the whole point of having the
8 hearing was to start to talk about a different way
9 to do things and a better way and obviously to try
10 to get people to actual long term opportunity. So
11 that's part of what we talked about today. We
12 have a commitment from the commissioner to begin
13 that process. You're also right and the examples
14 we heard about today pointed it out. We have to
15 look at what's wrong with WEP on top of that and
16 we will certainly do that. With that, I want to
17 thank this panel very, very much for their
18 testimony. I want to thank everyone for being
19 here today. This hearing of the General Welfare
20 Committee is adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Donna Hintze certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature_____

Date March 15, 2009