CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

     of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

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                  September 24, 2009
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HELD AT: Council Chambers
                  City Hall

B E F O R E:
                  GALE A. BREWER
                  Chairperson

   COUNCIL MEMBERS:
                  Eric Ulrich
                  Bill de Blasio
                  G. Oliver Koppell
                  Letitia James

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

Louisa Chafee
Director for Management Innovation
Health and Human Services

Ron Bergman
First Deputy Commissioner
NYC DoITT

Hayyim Obadyah
Director of 211/311 Initiatives
United Way of New York City

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2   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning,

3   I'm sorry I'm late. I'm Gale Brewer, City Council

4   Member for the west side and Chair of Technology

5   in Government. And I'm embarrassed to say this is

6   the Technology Committee and the technology does

7   not work, the PowerPoint, so I will just read the

8   PowerPoint in the old-fashioned way to do an

9   introduction.

10   We're talking today about the, I

11   guess I call it the 211/311 system, also known as

12   E311. It was launched, 311 itself was launched in

13   early 2003 and it provides information, as we all

14   know, on non-emergency city services in 170

15   languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The

16   311 operators field over 1.3 million calls per

17   month. The system does filter out non-emergency

18   calls, it acts as a gateway to numerous city

19   services, and it gathers information on potential

20   trends evolving throughout the city, obviously

21   things that people are concerned about from noise

22   to housing inspection and so on. The city has

23   upgraded the system by expanding the scope of

24   information and building an online interface.

25   And then of course there's the

1

2 story about the advent of 211 services. In July

3 2000, the Federal Communications Commission, FCC,

4 reserved 211 dialing code for community

5 Information and Referral, I&R services, connecting

6 callers around the country to not-for-profit and

7 social service providers. 211 can do the

8 following: it can help individuals find basic

9 human needs, physical and mental health resources,

10 employment supports, maybe not a job, support for

11 older Americans and persons with disabilities and

12 support for children and families. The 211

13 systems around the country operate in 46 states,

14 plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico, and

15 apparently reach 250 million Americans--it says

16 over 80% of the population. In New York State,

17 there are numerous 211 systems providing support

18 to 14 million people, or 75% of the state's

19 population. There is in Washington a 211 act

20 that's been introduced in Congress and it hopes to

21 direct the Secretary of HHS, Health and Human

22 Services, to award money to states that have a

23 program making 211 available throughout whatever

24 state desires it.

25   Enhanced 311, after many meetings

that I attended, many, many, New York City decided

in 2005 to fold a 211, one that I just described,

211 type service into the 311 system already in

place. I think Dino Mancini was still the

Commissioner at that time. And with many, many

meetings with United Way and others, that was the

compromise. And in 2008, the city, in partnership

with United Way, announced the launch of the

Enhanced, or E311, system that provides

information about social services and offers

referrals to the appropriate city agency or

community-based organization.

And I did call, just because I want

to know, 211 this morning to see what was going to

happen and you do get told to dial six if you want

to speak to an operator, and then I pretended that

I had a domestic violence program problem and to

their credit, after some time, maybe a little bit

longer than you might like, the operator came on

and told us to go to Safe Horizon, which is

exactly what you're supposed to do.

The new system includes 30

specially trained operators for social service

related questions and made accessible almost 1,000

1

2 social services and 1,300 nonprofits with the 311

3 or E311 or 211, whatever you want to call it. But

4 E311, callers to the system, anybody calling E311

5 or 311, can now find information regarding

6 financial counseling, child care, summer youth

7 programs, senior centers, pre-K programs or UPK

8 full-time programs, kindergarten programs, job

9 training and domestic violence counseling.

10   There have been, since its launch

11 to this E311, there have been about a quarter of a

12 million such calls on Health and Human Services

13 each month. And in August 2008, a Health and

14 Human Services online-provided directory--we'll

15 have to learn more about this--was launched and

16 includes 17 Health and Human Services categories.

17   So, with that, we'd love to have

18 DoITT, I think, come up and talk to us or Louisa

19 Chafee from Deputy Mayor Gibbs' office and the

20 great Ron Bergman from DoITT.

21   His mother was district manager of

22 a Community Board, that makes him more special

23 than anybody I can think of. Welcome.

24   MS. LOUISA CHAFEE: Good morning.

25   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning.

2   MS. CHAFEE: Good morning,

3   Chairperson Brewer and Members of the Technology

4   in Government Committee. My name is Louisa Chafee

5   and I am the Director for Management Innovation

6   for the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human

7   Services, Linda Gibbs. Thank you for the

8   opportunity to testify you this morning regarding

9   New York City's Health and Human Service

10   Information and Referral, known as 311, known as

11   211 in other jurisdictions, and referred to in New

12   York City as E311.

13   Working in close conjunction with

14   DoITT and our nonprofit partners, we are

15   responsible for leading the effort to bring 211

16   services to 311. In November of 2005, Mayor

17   Bloomberg made the public commitment to bring

18   telephone-based Information and Referral to New

19   Yorkers through the 311 calling center. Shortly

20   after that announcement, Councilwoman Brewer, you

21   held a hearing and DoITT discussed the many

22   challenges that lay ahead, identifying appropriate

23   call takers, incorporating critical information to

24   the database, adhering to national data standards,

25   obtaining the 211 number, and, perhaps most

2   importantly, engaging the nonprofit community's

3   expertise in designing social service provision.

4   Today 311 provides Health and Human

5   Service Information and Referral services to over

6   8,000 caller a day, 24 hours a day, seven days a

7   week in nearly 180 languages. I'm pleased to

8   testify on how we've achieved the critical

9   building blocks we identified and created a unique

10   blended model, which is the governance structure

11   behind this innovative government nonprofit

12   approach to effective social service information

13   and referral provision.

14   Working with DoITT, we formed a

15   coalition of nonprofits and government agencies to

16   together plan the best approach to delivering this

17   service. With strong leadership from Safe

18   Horizon, LifeNet, Visions Blind Line, the Human

19   Services Council, and of course, the United Way of

20   New York City, these nonprofits, as well as the

21   New York State Alliance of Information and

22   Referral specialists, and over 40 other nonprofits

23   formed an advisory committee that continues to

24   advise DoITT on many aspects of social service

25   implementation. Councilwoman Brewer, we thank you

2   and your staff for participation in this effort

3   since its inception.

4   The workgroup was renamed the

5   Advisory Committee when we formed a nonprofit

6   organization in order to have the right to turn on

7   the 211 number. That entity, the New York City

8   Health and Human Service Information and Referral

9   Corporation, has a board consisting of six city

10   officials and three nonprofit leadership

11   organizations: United Way of New York City, the

12   Human Services Council, and Visions Blind Line.

13   We were granted rights to use the 211 number in

14   March of 2007. We created a unique blended model

15   of 211 and 311, joining DoITT's robust technology

16   with the nonprofit community and New York City

17   government [off mic] social service provision

18   expertise.

19   For data standards and call taker

20   certification, we continue to work with the

21   Alliance of Information and Referral specialists

22   to have the call center accredited, bringing high

23   standards to the call takers and allowing the

24   analysis of data in the AIR's taxonomy so that one

25   can compare call volume and usage across

1

2   jurisdictions.

3   In addition to New York City funds,

4   New York State has issued about $5 million to New

5   York City, over two-thirds of which have been used

6   to develop and enhance the content of 311 by

7   adding social service content and provider

8   information, recognizing the merits of the Height

9   Information System, a database developed by the

10   Greater New York Hospital Corporation to assist

11   caseworkers when discharging patients, we've

12   worked together for over three years to

13   incorporate their content and leverage their

14   excellent nonprofit knowledge. The remainder of

15   the funding has been used by United Way of New

16   York City to build capacity in our nonprofit

17   community to receive referrals from 311. These

18   include trainings and grants such as an actual

19   capacity building grant, such as hardware and

20   phone systems and computers.

21   So thank you again for your

22   invitation to testify. This concludes my prepared

23   remarks and I'd like to introduce you to my

24   colleague at DoITT, First Deputy Commissioner Ron

25   Bergman.

RON BERGMAN: Good morning and thank you, Louisa. Good morning, Chair Brewer, I just wanted to correct the record that my mother was an assistant to a wonderful district manager in Manhattan Community Board 7, Jane Haugh, who we remember fondly.

My name is Ron Bergman and I am the First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, or DoITT.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the city's implementation of the Enhanced 311 initiative. This initiative, which provides the public with round-the-clock access to comprehensive Human Services Information and Referral from both city agencies and nonprofits across the five boroughs. But in many jurisdictions throughout the country is being developed through the 211 abbreviated dialing arrangement, New York City's enhanced 311 leverages the staff, technology, infrastructure, and business processes already in place at the city's 311 customer service center.

As you said, launched in March

2003, 311 is New York City's phone number for all

non-emergency government information and services

operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days

a year, and with translation services in nearly

180 languages.

311 can also be accessed from

anywhere in the world by dialing 212 New York or

via Skype or online at nyc.gov and users can now

follow 311 NYC on Twitter as well.

Now receiving about 16 million

calls per year and more than 87 million since its

inception, 311 has become a model for the non-

emergency government service numbers around the

world, including countries such as Denmark,

Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

Stateside, the cities of Philadelphia, Newark, San

Francisco have all established innovative non-

emergency service numbers based upon our model.

When we last testified before the

committee on this topic in February 2006, Mayor

Bloomberg had recently announced the commitment to

bring Health and Human Services Information and

Referral to 311. Since that time, under the

leadership of Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and with a

consortium of nonprofit organizations across the city, Enhanced 311, or simply E311, has become the nation's largest social service information referral call center.

The transformation began in November 2006 when we partnered with the city's Department for the Aging to handle expanded hours calls regarding the city's aging population. It continued the next year when we partnered with the Human Resources Administration to consolidate the Food and Hunger hotline. Hungry New Yorkers today can call 311 and speak with trained specialist to learn about the location and hours of emergency food programs citywide.

Marking these successes, in April 2008, Mayor Bloomberg announced at E311 was providing access to nearly 1,000 unique social services and 1,300 nonprofit organizations--an event that Chair Brewer attended at the 311 call center. These services included the Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment program, the Department of Corrections inmate lookup capability, and eviction assistance services from the Legal Aid Society, in

conjunction with the Department of Homeless

Services and HRA.

To promote the availability of

these enhanced services to New Yorkers, especially

the working poor, many of whom have limited

English language proficiency, the city also

unveiled a multi-language marketing effort in

English, Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean,

Russian, and Spanish. Ads also appeared in bus

shelters on subways and on new bumper stickers on

taxicabs in city vehicles. The campaign featured

the familiar 311 logo and introduced a new 311

tagline: Your City, Your Needs, Your Number,

informing New Yorkers that they could now simply

get the 311, they get 311 for senior services, 311

food assistance, 311 domestic violence assistance,

etc. for all their human service needs. Through

E311 callers can receive information and referrals

to assist with housing, health care, job training,

daycare, substance abuse programs, workforce

development, and educational opportunities, among

others.

Calls coming in to 311 are first

addressed by a call center representative who

assists the caller in narrowing down his or her

inquiry to a relevant requested service. For more

complex human service inquiries, the caller can

then be transferred to an E311 information or I&R

specialist to determine the underlying needs and

provide referral and related services. These I&R

specialists assist callers, both individual

clients and professionals, in assessing which

services they are seeking, referring callers to

not for profits, community-based, faith-based, and

government Health and Human Services organizations

and programs.

Today, we continue our work with

Deputy Mayor Gibbs and her staff to further

improve, not only the vast array of human services

offered, but in the ways that they can be made

more accessible. For instance, information about

the many E311 services, as well as access NYC, the

web-based portal that prescreens New Yorkers in

nearly 40 city, state, and federal human services

programs are also available via 311 online.

Launched last March, 311 online is

a terrific new website that offers customers

multiple ways to find nearly 4,000 city services

on nyc.gov. Customers can search by keyword,

locate information about specific programs and

initiatives, and create service requests directly

online. Users can browse the full range of city

services and drill down to topics within each of

these categories, as well as look for available

services by specific demographics or service type.

Easy keyword searches allow customers to navigate

directly to the point of service in just a few

clicks. A significant feature of the 311 online

portal is the Health and Human Services provider

directory--a comprehensive online tool to help New

Yorkers connect with community-based organizations

providing human services across the city.

Customers can use the directory to search for

information by ZIP code, borough, service

category, or organization name on everything from

smoking cessation clinics, foot stamp centers,

public hospitals, and green markets, to career

centers, after school programs, libraries, and

much more.

Once users identify specific

providers, they are presented with the

organization's address, phone number, hours of

1

2 operation, and a listing of description of

3 services offered. I am pleased to announce that

4 the 311 online initiative is being recognized

5 today by the Center for Digital Government with

6 the Best of New York award as the project best

7 advancing services to the public.

8   As the city's technology agency,

9 DoITT works to transform the way the city

10 interacts with its customers by leveraging IT to

11 improve services and deliver on the Mayor's

12 promise to increase transparency, accountability,

13 and accessibility. These services span the range

14 of the city's key mission areas, from public

15 safety to economic development to infrastructure

16 services. Among our portfolio of services,

17 however, Enhanced 311 and related initiatives are

18 among the most rewarding because they succeed in

19 helping New Yorkers and their families change

20 their lives for the better. As E311 continues to

21 evolve and grow, we welcome the challenge of

22 improving upon these services even still.

23   Thank you again for your time this

24 morning. We would now be pleased to address any

25 questions you have.

2   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very

3   much. I want to welcome Council Member Eric

4   Ulrich, Bill de Blasio, and Oliver Koppell--I

5   think, is there anybody else? No--to the

6   committee and I also want to say that Sam Wong

7   [phonetic] is here from our office, he is

8   webcasting. The City Council, whatever reason,

9   can't figure out how to do the technology today,

10   but Sam Wong can figure out how to webcast.

11   And I want to point out to

12   everybody right here in front of this camera that

13   it costs nothing to do webcasting, we're trying to

14   webcast--we have a bill that says every city

15   meeting should be webcast in the city of New York.

16   Just so we understand, it costs nothing, just want

17   to point that out.

18   Thank you very much for your

19   testimony, and I have a few questions and my

20   colleagues will jump in if they have any

21   questions. How is all of this funded, would be

22   one question. Obviously, we're waiting for

23   federal right now and city and state, could you

24   describe--you talked a little bit about how United

25   Way participates. How does the funding come from

1

2   the city and the state?

3   MR. BERGMAN: Okay, sure. The

4   funding is mostly city funding with some

5   additional state funding that we've received.

6   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, and

7   you're hoping that there could be some federal in

8   the future.

9   MR. BERGMAN: Yes.

10   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And how would

11   that change if there is federal in the future?

12   What would we do in addition?

13   MR. BERGMAN: I think we would have

14   to look and see what the level would be of federal

15   funding and we'd have to look at the city's

16   overall economic condition to determine if that

17   would replace city funds or be added to city

18   funds.

19   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And how many

20   additional operators? Are they specially trained?

21   Because obviously human services are slightly

22   different.

23   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, we have trained

24   operators who have experience, education in the

25   human services world, they're a wonderful group.

They get trained for four weeks, it's intensive in

the human services area, there are high rates

retention and high rates of job satisfaction among

this group because of the good work that--

[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

So when I called today, it was a pretty easy call

because I just asked for DV and it was referred, I

think as appropriate, to Safe Horizon.

MR. BERGMAN: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What kind of

call would have triggered one of your specialized

operators?

MR. BERGMAN: Sure, the calls that

are more transaction-based, a request for

information--where there's a location, hours of

operation, things like that, would be handled by

the initial call taker. Call takers that have

added levels of complexity, they could be around

issues of aging, for example, to get information

about the SCRIE program or things like that, where

there is more of a dialogue, that those are the

kinds of questions that would be referred to a

tier two specialist who has the training and

1

2 background and experience in human services.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And are those

4 individuals also on 24 hours a day? Because I

5 know you've had some cutbacks.

6 MR. BERGMAN: We have had some

7 cutbacks at 311, and in addition, our call volume

8 has increased. However, we're maintaining the

9 levels of the I&R specialists, it's around 50, and

10 we do operate 24 by 7 and we'll continue to do

11 that.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And the

13 training that is done, is it done by United Way,

14 by the agencies, who actually does the training?

15 MR. BERGMAN: Right, you want to

16 take [off mic]? I believe that the training has

17 been reviewed by our partners, but we are

18 delivering the training through the 311 training

19 work that we do. Our emphasis at 311, as you

20 know, is on excellent customer service and

21 maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction,

22 and on using 311 data to further improve and work

23 with agencies on how we deliver services.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member

25 Ulrich, you have a question?

2   COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Yeah, thank

3   you, Madam Chair. Commissioner, at a recent

4   Community Board hearing in my district, there were

5   some concerns raised that DoITT would be

6   consolidating some of the categories that people,

7   when they call into 311, that some of those

8   categories would be merged or consolidated in any

9   way, could you speak to that? Do you know

10   anything about that? I think it was with respect

11   to noise complaints that there were a number of

12   different categories that the customer service

13   specialists were able to put those into and some

14   of those have actually been merged, is that

15   correct?

16   MR. BERGMAN: I am not aware of

17   that and if I could find out more from your staff

18   offline, we could look into that. We are always

19   looking for ways to improve how we deliver

20   services at 311 and deal with the reductions and

21   call takers and our increasing call volume. But

22   our basic way of operating in terms of ensuring

23   that people can speak to a call taker quickly and

24   that we have high levels of service remains the

25   same. But there's nothing that I'm aware of

specifically--and noise complaints are fairly, we

get a lot of them, number one, especially in

summer and on Fridays and so on when windows are

open and there's people who are outside, so we

handle them very seriously. And I will find out

more for you about any specifics in terms of

recategorizing--

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Are they

differentiated in any way? Noise complaints in

the system? And in terms of your reporting,

obviously, I'm sure that quarterly or semiannually

you're able to throughout the year report on, for

instance, how many calls 311 complaint regarding

loud music or how many noise complaints they

receive regarding dogs barking in the middle of

the night, whatever the case may be.

MR. BERGMAN: Right, we are--

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: They are

differentiated? They're not kind of lumped into

one or...?

MR. BERGMAN: I believe that we do

differentiate them, we use a tool to analyze our

data, we look for trends and we are constantly,

again, trying to improve and tune how we operate.

2   So we can report on a regular basis, that

3   information is available under local law, and we

4   report it in the MMR in the sort of aggregate

5   numbers, but we have some detail on that so--

6   [Crosstalk]

7   COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH:

8   [Interposing] And when you report that data,

9   again, that's not in any consolidated fashion. Is

10   there a specific breakdown that is available?

11   MR. BERGMAN: I really need to go

12   back and take a look, I will be happy to--

13   COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: That's

14   fine.

15   MR. BERGMAN: --meet with you and

16   your staff--

17   COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: That's

18   fine.

19   MR. BERGMAN: --to discuss it in

20   more detail.

21   COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you,

22   Commissioner.

23   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member

24   Koppell. Council Member Koppell.

25   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you.

2   Welcome, I believe--

3   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Push the--

4   [Crosstalk]

5   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --my

6   constituent.

7   MR. BERGMAN: Right.

8   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Am I

9   right?

10   MR. BERGMAN: Yes.

11   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: It was

12   nice to see you not in the bagel shop--

13   [Off mic]

14   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: That's

15   where we usually meet.

16   MR. BERGMAN: That's correct.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Several

18   things, first of all, let me observe that, I think

19   I'm a reasonably aware individual in the community

20   and a representative and I was not aware of the

21   degree of expansion of 311 that you discussed this

22   morning. I think that there needs to be a better

23   job of telling people that these services are

24   available, because as I say, I was not aware of

25   them, I mean of course I'm aware of 311, but not

2   aware that you had this extensive social service

3   referral system.

4   One question I had about it is that

5   how do you evaluate the effectiveness of these

6   organizations that you're referring people to? Is

7   there any--

8   MR. BERGMAN: Take that.

9   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --such

10   evaluation going on?

11   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, I'll ask Louisa

12   to address that, and we will look also at our

13   marketing campaign.

14   Part of our goal in creating

15   Enhanced 311 was to make the service seamless for

16   New Yorkers so that they could call 311 with any

17   type of service request, any type of inquiry and

18   they can get an answer. And so, in one way, we

19   certainly need to do more marketing so that people

20   understand what the services we offer and that was

21   the intent of our marketing campaign a few years

22   ago, to begin to change that message, but we could

23   certainly do more.

24   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Because as

25   I say, I mean, if I'm not aware of this, I would

assume that many people in my district are unaware

because I obviously I'm interested in this sort of

thing and we're well aware of the use of 311 to

contact city agencies and make complaints and

such, but not that this referral service is

available for all the social service agencies.

We're just not aware of it. I think it deserves a

publicity campaign even though I've been critical

of spending too much money on advertising these

days, still I think that public service

announcements of this is something that would be

worthwhile certainly on the various city cable

stations and such.

MS. CHAFEE: Well we certainly a

welcome increased awareness. In fact, working

with United Way of New York City, we've been

thinking about moving forward how to engage new

technologies and how to reach different types of

populations, whether it's print media or just

different options through technology as it

evolves.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: One

suggestion I might make off the top of my head is

that if you could provide maybe provide members of

1

2   the Council who all send out newsletters, I'd be

3   happy to put a notice in my newsletter telling

4   people about the availability of this service if

5   you provided some sort of form notice, maybe

6   through the Speaker's office even, people would

7   put it in their newsletter. I'd be happy to put

8   it in my newsletter because I think it's a very

9   useful--

10   MS. CHAFEE: Great.

11   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --tool.

12   MS. CHAFEE: Yeah, we--

13   [Crosstalk]

14   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: But you

15   wanted to answer the question about--

16   MS. CHAFEE: Right.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --

18   evaluation of the services.

19   MS. CHAFEE: So we have a number of

20   levels of evaluation. For a nonprofit to

21   participate in the 311 system, they need to adhere

22   to the state established regulations, and the

23   state organization is a collaborative of the 211

24   statewide that established credentialing

25   frameworks that determines what they consider to

be parameters of good organizations, and we'd be

happy to share those, it's a fairly extensive list

and it was crafted together with many nonprofits

and providers.

So once a nonprofit has been or

other services has been incorporated into 311, we

have a number of quality assurance sort of loops

to make sure that services are being provided as

we anticipated they would be provided and, of

course, if anyone has an experience that's either

extremely positive--occasionally we get those--or

negative, that we look at those on an individual

level, we have aggregate outreach, and we have the

ongoing quality assurance feedback.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Well, I

mean, how do you do that? I mean, let's assume I

call up, and to talk about an area that I'm

involved in, the mental health and somebody calls

311 and says I'm feeling very anxious, I need to

have some counseling and you refer them to a local

mental health, let's say the Riverdale Mental

Health Service to take one that I know. Let's

assume that person has a bad experience there,

hopefully they wouldn't, but I'm just using it as

2   an example, don't misunderstand, I think they do a

3   very good job, but let's assume someone had a bad

4   experience. How do they report that or do you

5   send out maybe some follow up to that person and

6   say we referred you recently to Riverdale Mental

7   Health, was that a good experience for you, do you

8   do anything like that?

9   MS. CHAFEE: Well first of all,

10   thank you for using the mental health example

11   because it's actually the area that we initially

12   focused on for a number of reasons. Of one calls

13   311 or 211 with a mental health issue, one is

14   transferred to LifeNet and LifeNet is the

15   organization working with the Department of Health

16   and Mental Hygiene that routes on that both offers

17   telephone-based counseling and makes appropriate

18   referrals. And we've been meeting with LifeNet on

19   a regular basis over the course of the last three

20   months to analyze all calls being transferred from

21   311 and to see that both the quality outreach they

22   do and where the transfer is appropriate because,

23   at times, they have questioned why callers were

24   being routed to them. So an example is if a

25   caller calls in a great sense of agitation, an

operator may make a decision that they're dealing

with a mental health issue; in fact, they're just

dealing with an irate New Yorker, sometimes

they're dealing with an irate New Yorker with a

mental health issue. So literally there's been a

call by call analysis making sure that both

LifeNet felt that the right calls were coming in,

that 311 felt the right calls were being

transferred, and fine-tuning the training around

that to improve the quality assurance.

And so to the second part of your

question, 311 is actually doing ongoing outreach

calls, so at the end of certain calls, and

Commissioner Bergman can speak to this more, there

is a certain randomly assigned questionnaires,

would you be interested in doing a follow-up and,

if you are, you need to provide your information

so that the outreach call can happen and later on

a 311 operator calls out and asks according to a

standard protocol how the experience was to just

determine in general how the call experience is

progressing.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Well I

might suggest that one thing you might consider is

1

2   if the people give you their name and address,

3   that some kind of form be sent to them with a

4   questionnaire, was the service--'cause I think

5   that this is a dicey area because sometimes they

6   may not get very good advice and you want to know

7   that. So I think it's very important when you get

8   involved in something like this to have a follow-

9   up.

10   Do you refer people with respect to

11 legal services? If people say they need a lawyer,

12 what do you do about that?

13   MS. CHAFEE: We have limited legal

14 services referrals and we are actually in the

15 process of analyzing what we currently do and

16 thinking about how it could be expanded.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I mean, I

18 think, again, that's an interesting area, but a

19 lot of the Bar Associations have referral

20 services, and then of course there's Legal Aid and

21 Legal Services and so it's complicated, but I

22 think it's probably a worthwhile area to look

23 into.

24   Lastly, something came up at a

25 hearing just the other day and Council Member

2   Ulrich asked about noise complaints. Do you keep

3   separate records with respect to noise complaints

4   about sightseeing buses? We just had a hearing

5   about this.

6   MR. BERGMAN: I will look into

7   that, I don't know the answer.

8   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: It would

9   be interesting if you did, obviously that refers

10   mainly to Manhattan, but the Department of

11   Consumer Affairs was notably, I thought, ignorant

12   of complaints. The people who represent areas, I

13   don't know if Council Member Brewer has this

14   experience, but people living in areas where the

15   sightseeing buses go do complain to my colleagues,

16   I don't represent Manhattan, so I don't have any

17   sightseeing buses. But it would be interesting

18   for me to know based on whether I want to support

19   the legislation or not whether you've gotten many

20   complaints about the noise emanating from

21   sightseeing buses, especially people making

22   announcements on the open air deck as the buses go

23   through residential areas. So if you could get

24   back to me on that. I'm sure that the Chairman of

25   our Consumer Affairs Committee and Transportation

2   Committees will be interested in that information,

3   which as I said, Department of Consumer Affairs

4   couldn't provide and they didn't know whether you

5   could provide it or not. They should have asked

6   you, but they didn't.

7   MR. BERGMAN: We'll do the research

8   and--

9   [Crosstalk]

10   COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you.

11   MR. BERGMAN: --to you, sure.

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

13 We've been joined by Council Member Letitia James,

14 thank you.

15   How does a group get to be part of

16 the referral network? You talked about this a

17 little bit, but obviously in the city one of the

18 issues is the big groups and the small groups and

19 all of us in the neighborhoods like both, but we

20 know that in many cases it's the smallest group

21 that has the most impact in the neighborhood. So

22 how do you make the decision as to who gets to be

23 a part of your network? Obviously, if you're

24 LifeNet, then maybe there's another subsection--

25 and following up Council Member Koppell, one of

2   the questions would be okay, you go to LifeNet,

3   but then LifeNet may refer to Riverdale and that

4   might actually be the service. So how do you

5   figure out this network?

6   MS. CHAFEE: It's a complex

7   process, but I'll try and explain it briefly and

8   we'd be happy to give you former information

9   after, as appropriate.

10   The way we have been doing it is

11   we've looked at nonprofits under contract and

12   nonprofits not under contract with the city, so

13   those are two data sources, and in addition, we've

14   been using or we've been working closely with the

15   Greater New York Hospital Corporation's height

16   tool, which was a database of social services and

17   Health and Human Services developed for

18   caseworkers working with discharging patients and

19   it contains an enormous realm of nonprofit

20   providers and information services.

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You have that

22   whole database.

23   MS. CHAFEE: Yes.

24   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I call it the

25   Lloyd Bishop database.

2   MS. CHAFEE: Yes, exactly. Now

3   with these different data sources, the way we've

4   been working it through is actually by content

5   area. So, for example, right now we're focusing

6   on employment services and literally each service

7   that is incorporated into 311 requires a number of

8   levels of organization to get into the taxonomy we

9   talked about so that we're categorizing the data

10   in two ways, both according to how the 311

11   database works and according to this taxonomy, and

12   adhering to the statewide rules, and then just the

13   basic information so that the 311 and the

14   nonprofit can communicate. They know who to reach

15   if your phone line is down or sort of basic

16   communication.

17   The other way to get into the queue

18   of nonprofits that wish to participate is just to

19   call 311 and 311 literally maintains a list of

20   entities that would like to participate. So if

21   for some reason you're not in the other sources,

22   you get added that way.

23   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So is it true

24   that all contracted agencies with the city could

25   be part of it? In other words they're not all

2   part of it 'cause--

3   [Crosstalk]

4   MS. CHAFEE: [Interposing] They're

5   not all--

6   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --too many.

7   MS. CHAFEE: --part of it.

8   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And the

9   social--

10   [Crosstalk]

11   MS. CHAFEE: And some social

12   service, some nonprofits under contract with the

13   city are under contract with very strict

14   provisions and so 311 shouldn't be routing to

15   them, we route to the agency and then the agency

16   would refer unto them. So for nonprofits under

17   contract, we actually work really closely with the

18   city agency to make sure that, whenever

19   appropriate, they're involved, but that if not

20   appropriate--so, for example, if it's a service

21   where you have to have really strict criteria to

22   receive the slot, it wouldn't be appropriate for

23   311 to make that decision, 311 would route to the

24   appropriate area of the city agency and then the

25   city agency would move the client forward.

2   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then you

3   have the 24-hour issue, obviously then Safe

4   Horizon hotlines are 24-hour, is LifeNet 24-hour?

5   MS. CHAFEE: Yes.

6   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So most of the

7   hotlines that you refer to are 24-hour.

8   MS. CHAFEE: Right, but this is one

9   of the issues or one of the concerns is that we

10   can't expect every nonprofit to be available 24

11   hours and so it's both having accurate information

12   on the hours of service of the nonprofit and

13   making sure that the call taker gives that

14   information appropriately to the caller.

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Picking up on

16   Oliver Koppell's question earlier, just on the

17   other side, I happen to know the nonprofit

18   community very well and worked at it many times in

19   different capacities, and one of the issues is the

20   training that they get. In other words, either

21   Fran Barrett at Community Resource Exchange or at

22   support center and so on and so forth. Are they

23   aware of the working that you're doing? In other

24   words, do you participate in their training so

25   that they understand from the nonprofit sector how

2   to be involved on the backside?

3   MS. CHAFEE: Yes, the short answer

4   is yes, United Way of New York City has been

5   leading trainings and we'll speak to that more.

6   And specifically to Community Resources Exchange,

7   we've actually run a pilot with them for the last

8   six months focused specifically on assisting

9   senior leadership in the nonprofit in the economic

10   downturn. So Community Resources Exchange is

11   extremely aware of the 311 system because they

12   went through all the criteria to be involved.

13   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Also, do you

14   find that, given the recession issues, that the

15   E311 calls are increasing? Is there some--

16   MS. CHAFEE: Yes.

17   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --data from

18   last year versus this year or something like that?

19   MR. BERGMAN: In Fiscal 2008,

20   Health and Human Services type calls were almost

21   30%, 29.7%, and in Fiscal 2009, it's gone up to

22   31%. So it's about almost 3 million calls of all

23   of our calls are related to Health and Human

24   Services type inquiries. It's gone up slightly.

25   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And the

2   database, how does the operator looking at the

3   screen, having been at the call center, how does

4   the operator actually see this? Obviously, if

5   it's domestic violence then she would go to

6   something called domestic violence? It's just

7   such a huge listing, so I'm trying to understand--

8   MR. BERGMAN: Right.

9   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --how it

10   works.

11   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, the operator

12   will type into the system keywords that the caller

13   discusses, and so based on the keyword, the

14   operator will have options that direct them. For

15   example, if it's an issue of around mental health,

16   that there's a sense of crisis, callers will be

17   connected to LifeNet, or domestic violence,

18   callers get connected, as Louisa said, to Safe

19   horizons. If there's something that's more

20   complex, if there are multiple problems or issues

21   that are raised by the caller, they will then be

22   transferred to an I&R specialist, and the nature

23   of that exchange is more of a dialogue, so that

24   the more specially trained I&R specialist can kind

25   of work with the person who's calling to identify

2   the resources and connect that person

3   appropriately.

4   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think I

5   asked at this last hearing, but are there any MSWs

6   on-site as part of this endeavor?

7   MR. BERGMAN: I don't know

8   specifically in terms of the call takers, we have

9   specialists--

10   [Crosstalk]

11   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Supervisors,

12   yeah.

13   MR. BERGMAN: --but I'll check for

14   you and get back to you--

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

16   That was something that I had asked for last time

17   and I just think it's--

18   MR. BERGMAN: We'll follow-up.

19   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --something to

20   think about because if you were going to get more,

21   you get a level of quality that could perhaps be

22   enhanced by somebody with MSW and experience.

23   [Crosstalk]

24   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think I know

25   almost 80,000, all the 80,000 nonprofits in the

city and somebody who has some depth with the

social service, it could be helpful for the--

MR. BERGMAN: Sure, and I can tell

you from being at graduations and speaking to

these specialists that they have a great deal of

experience, I don't know if they specifically have

MSWs, but they do have educational background and

significant professional experience in this world.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The other

question I have is, obviously now we're switching-

-this is back to the senior issues--we are

switching from the Department for the Aging to the

Department of Finance in terms of SCRIE and I'm

nervous about it because the Department for the

Aging, they love seniors and when Mrs. Jones talks

on the phone for half an hour, they listen. And I

worry about Department of Finance 'cause I don't

think they're going to listen for half an hour.

So my question is, how is 311 gearing up for this

change? Because I assume you're going to get more

SCRIE calls. With all due respect to Finance,

they're going to screw it up, at least at the

beginning.

MR. BERGMAN: I believe that our

2   process of 311 will remain exactly the same, we'll

3   handle calls, we'll work with the agency--be it

4   Aging or Finance to ensure that callers are

5   connected and we'll follow up to see if services--

6   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

7   And to check, particularly at this time, as the

8   transition is taking place.

9   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, if I understand

10   correctly, Finance was involved always in

11   processing the ultimate SCRIE because of the work

12   that they need to do.

13   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The seniors

14   used to walk into DFTA--

15   MR. BERGMAN: Right.

16   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --they can't

17   walk to Finance.

18   MR. BERGMAN: Understood.

19   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's going

20   to be a problem, they like to see the person who's

21   working with them.

22   MR. BERGMAN: Sure.

23   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member

24   James?

25   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

2   I can think of no other segment in our population

3   which needs more social services and human

4   services than those of the residents of public

5   housing. To what extent is NYCHA involved in this

6   Enhanced 311? How can we do outreach to the

7   residents of public housing where the need is most

8   critical?

9   MS. CHAFEE: Thank you. NYCHA is

10   one of the city agencies that sits on our advisory

11   committee and so regularly comes together and

12   thinks about, as we look at different challenges

13   [off mic] the system, how to do the outreach most

14   effectively, what special issues may be

15   incorporated, and any other issue that they feel

16   needs to be raised. And so, in that respect, we

17   attempt to have as open a planning dialogue as

18   with any Member of the advisory committee. But

19   certainly we're also extremely sensitive in these

20   trying times to looking at those parts of, are

21   those people in New York most challenged by the

22   financial downturn and thinking about how to

23   strengthen what the city can provide. What is

24   Information and Referral and how to do that as

25   strongly as possible to help as many as possible.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And in terms

3   of complaints related to NYCHA housing units, is

4   that a separate system or is that logged in your

5   system as well?

6   MS. CHAFEE: That would be part of

7   the overall 311 reporting system. All calls get

8   reported through the same system, and so, yes,

9   it's part of a larger system.

10   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And I know

11   that the purpose of 311 is to see if there's a

12   pattern and practice or a trend in the city of New

13   York, is that reported in the management report?

14   Is that reflected in the management report?

15   [Crosstalk]

16   MS. CHAFEE: I cannot speak to the

17   exact details of what is in the NYCHA MMR, but in

18   general the MMR, each agency's MMR does a report

19   on high call volume. So what's being called to

20   311, what the top volume calls are, but I would be

21   happy to look into further detail and get back to

22   you.

23   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

24   [Interposing] Right, I know that the management

25   report reflects the number of calls. I guess, is

1

2 there a segment in the management report which

3 provides indicators as to a possible trend in the

4 city of New York? Rate of foreclosures, things

5 like that? Is there some segment dedicated to

6 that?

7   MR. BERGMAN: [Interposing] Agency

8 in their management reporting discusses the key

9 trends--

10   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I see.

11   MR. BERGMAN: --and data in the MMR

12 and, in addition, we report every month, which is

13 on nyc.gov on Local Law 47 compliance, which is by

14 Council district and has data specific to each

15 agency's performance.

16   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And is there

17 tracking of all complaints and follow-up?

18   MR. BERGMAN: It depends on the

19 type of complaint, and there is follow up in terms

20 of where the systems allow for that. We can get

21 you, if you would like, specific information about

22 types of complaints in your district.

23   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Sure, I'd

24 just like to know what is the system in place for

25 follow-ups.

1

2   MR. BERGMAN: Sure.

3   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: As far as I

4   know there is no system in place for follow-ups--

5   [Crosstalk]

6   MR. BERGMAN: [Interposing] Well

7   are you talking specifically for NYCHA--

8   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

9   [Interposing] Not for NYCHA, in general.

10   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, as you know,

11   the city's information technology systems vary.

12   We've worked a great deal in this administration

13   to modernize those systems, to connect them to

14   311, and we are doing more in that area. But the

15   idea is that there's a customer relationship

16   management system that 311 uses to enter service

17   request. The idea is that that service request

18   then goes to the agency for follow-up--be it a

19   pothole or a traffic signal or whatever--and the

20   goal that we have is for the agency, once that

21   request is completed, to be able to send that

22   information back to the 311 system so that the

23   caller has a service request number, they can

24   either call 311 or go on to nyc.gov and look up

25   their service request online. So if you call 311

1

2 now, you'll get a service request number, it can

3 be e-mailed to you if you would like, and then you

4 have the capability of seeing what the status of

5 that is by looking it up on the service request

6 online. And so that's the goal, we haven't fully

7 realized it, but we've made a great deal of

8 progress in that area.

9   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: In

10 Brownstone Brooklyn and in my district, which I

11 think is representative of a number of issues in

12 downtown Brooklyn, there's a significant number of

13 calls for tree pruning, for speed bumps, and for

14 increased lighting.

15   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, well we can

16 look specifically at those with you and your

17 office. I can tell you that recently a new system

18 was put into the Parks Department that does

19 exactly what I described in terms of tree pruning

20 and tree types of request, and what it does is it

21 enables somebody to request a tree, for example,

22 or maintenance on a tree online and for them to be

23 able to, or at 311, and to be able to get

24 information about when they can expect that

25 request to be fulfilled, what the time frames will

2   be, and then to get status on that through an

3   automated system.

4   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Last two

5   questions.

6   MR. BERGMAN: Sure

7   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Are the not

8   for profits representative of each borough or are

9   they Manhattan-centric?

10   MS. CHAFEE: They are

11   representative of each borough and we're

12   particularly attuned to small community-based

13   organizations that might not have--they might be

14   more focused on their own community and not as

15   focused on sort of citywide efforts. And United

16   Way of New York City has been working really

17   closely and having actually remarkable success

18   with their training and engaging many smaller

19   organizations that don't normally have the

20   capacity to provide training of this type.

21   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I'll reserve

22   my questions for the representative from United

23   Way.

24   My last question is are you hiring?

25   It's an expanded Enhanced 311, are there

2   additional jobs?

3   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, as I mentioned,

4   our ultimate goal is to hire. We have limited

5   numbers of call takers and have had some

6   reductions, we are replacing where we can

7   attrition. So we're hiring in a very limited

8   fashion currently.

9   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And in what

10 job roles are you hiring?

11   MR. BERGMAN: Primarily it's in the

12 call taker position.

13   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And will you

14 be advertising for those positions or--

15   MR. BERGMAN: All of our positions

16 are posted on nyc.gov.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

18   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very

19 much. I know this as an aside, Council Member

20 James mentioned NYCHA and obviously they have

21 their own call center, so I guess one of the

22 issues, which is an ongoing problem, some of my

23 constituents and I'm sure some of hers and others,

24 call 311 and then they're referred to CCC as we

25 call it. And I just say that because with E311

2   somebody may have a DV issue, which actually would

3   be a 311 issue or an E311 and not a maintenance

4   issue. So I think that has to be looked at really

5   carefully 'cause people do tend to still call 311,

6   particularly if they don't get any satisfaction

7   from CCC. So that's an ongoing problem.

8   When one looks online, what are the

9   languages there? Because I know when you call

10   there are many languages, but I don't know if the

11   online version has as many languages.

12   MR. BERGMAN: Right. That's an

13   area for expansion for us and that's something

14   we're looking at in terms of what is the cost,

15   what are the needs, so that we can expand

16   languages online.

17   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So right now

18   it's just English, okay.

19   MR. BERGMAN: There are some areas

20   where translation is possible, but it's not

21   currently on the 311 area.

22   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It shouldn't

23   be too hard to do, it would seem to me [off mic].

24   MR. BERGMAN: There are lots of

25   issues with that, there's lots of automated tools

2   that do these translations and that's what you're

3   referring to in terms of cost, but we have found

4   that the nuances in translation, especially around

5   human services, have to be treated very carefully

6   because the--

7   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

8   Sam Wong can do anything, just so you know. I'm

9   not kidding, it's unbelievable.

10   Can you describe a little bit more

11   the AIR system and how that works and the

12   standards that go into it? The taxonomy.

13   MS. CHAFEE: AIRS, the Alliance of

14   Information Referral Specialists is a national

15   organization that actually has established a

16   national taxonomy so the data is all organized by

17   category, and each 211 organizes their own

18   information into that national standard so as to

19   be able to compare how many calls are coming in

20   across regions. So the data that you referred to

21   in your original PowerPoint, referring to call

22   volume in different jurisdictions because we all

23   adhere to AIRS, we can actually, on a very

24   granular level, compare exactly which area of

25   calls are coming in to. It's also an organization

2   that accredits call centers and 311 has been

3   working with AIRS to complete the accreditation

4   and we're in the process of the site visit.

5   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm sure

6   you'll pass, and that will help you get federal

7   money. I assume you don't get federal money

8   without accreditation or....

9   MS. CHAFEE: Actually, the

10   accreditation is independent of federal money,

11   although I believe in the Calling for 211 Act,

12   they recognize that part of what makes up 211 is

13   adhering to the AIR standards. But many 211s

14   haven't completed it, it's a very rigorous

15   process.

16   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then do

17   you share with California and Texas? In other

18   words, is there a sharing of data that goes on

19   around the country to compare--

20   MS. CHAFEE: So United Way of

21   America is leading an effort to do exactly that,

22   to have call centers be able to effectively

23   compare trends, look at different call volume,

24   share examples, I mean use the data in a way that

25   both tells a story and helps regions learn from

1

2   each other.

3   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So then you

4   can have some best practices as a result--

5   [Crosstalk]

6   MS. CHAFEE: Exactly.

7   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --will be the

8   goal.

9   MS. CHAFEE: And there is an

10   annual--

11   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

12   The best way to handle DV, the best way to handle

13   employment, and so on.

14   MS. CHAFEE: Yes, and there is an

15   annual conference, which we have participated in,

16   although this year, unfortunately, could not, but

17   at that conference part of the primary objective

18   is to bring together providers to share lessons

19   learned.

20   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then also

21   just one of the final questions. The nonprofits,

22   I know for instance, Safe Horizon last year

23   referred from 311 9,784 calls, I don't know if

24   that's up, obviously that's '08 to 09 and I don't

25   know if that's up from '07 to '08, I don't have

2   that data, I assume it is. But the issue is do

3   they get more money? In other words, if LifeNet

4   and if--legal services will have a heart attack if

5   you wish for a whole bunch more calls and don't

6   give them more money, so will I. So my question

7   is these nonprofits that will be taking--'cause I

8   mean the lifeline in this city in my world is that

9   legal services in the generic term, do they get

10   more money as a result of all their efforts?

11   'Cause they will get more call volume, I would

12   assume.

13   MS. CHAFEE: So to--

14   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

15   Everybody wants an attorney before they go to

16   Housing Court.

17   MS. CHAFEE: The overall model of

18   211s is that nonprofits participating are not paid

19   to participate. Now in New York City, our blended

20   model is somewhat different because some of our

21   nonprofits are actually under contract with city

22   agencies to provide their service via the

23   telephone, and in those circumstances our payment

24   structures around them, depending on the specifics

25   of the contract. But in general, we've been

2   extremely clear that if a nonprofit wishes to

3   participate, that the actual call, there is no

4   payment to participate and, in fact, looking at

5   211 call volumes in general, not just New York

6   City, but also other jurisdictions, it seems as if

7   people who look for services via the telephone get

8   to them faster using 211, but that it doesn't

9   necessarily increase the overall, it just makes

10   the call volume, it just makes the customer

11   experience smoother.

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I mean, I'm

13   sure they don't get there faster to get an

14   attorney, that I know for sure. The final

15   question is, obviously when you call 311 from

16   noise to the pothole, it's anonymous, and

17   obviously, I assume when you call the issue of

18   domestic violence is also anonymous, is that

19   correct? In other words--

20   MS. CHAFEE: Yes.

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: -- there is no

22   Social Security or--

23   MS. CHAFEE: No, it's--

24   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --any other

25   number kept unless you want to.

1

2   MS. CHAFEE: It's all completely

3 anonymous and, in fact, in our marketing or the

4 outreach campaign that happened last summer, we

5 really stressed that there would be absolutely no

6 asking of any kind of individual information

7 because we felt that so many of our services need

8 to be offered to anyone calling 311 and that for

9 many reasons, supported by Executive Orders, we

10 the city do not ask people's information when we

11 provide information.

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member

13 James.

14   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Last two

15 questions, I'm not sure whether or not 311 or 211

16 and/or the Enhanced 311 includes these types of

17 complaints: complaints for police misconduct,

18 CCRB, is 311 set up to do that or is there a

19 system for filing a CCRB complaint online, if you

20 know?

21   MR. BERGMAN: I'll have to get back

22 to you, we have capabilities of looking that up

23 very quickly so we'll do that for you this

24 afternoon.

25   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And second

2   issue is I created a public safety task force in

3   my district in response to concern about public

4   safety in downtown Brooklyn and one of the

5   recommendations from the public safety task force

6   is that after a crime is committed. you cannot

7   call 911 to file a complaint, you have to

8   physically go to a precinct and, unfortunately,

9   most people do not go because it takes up time out

10   of their schedule. Are you possibly considering a

11   way to file a complaint system online, perhaps

12   through the 311 or the 211 system? And, if not,

13   if you would consider that, that would be greatly

14   appreciated. A significant number of my

15   constituents just don't have time to sit in a

16   precinct and wait for someone to file a complaint,

17   a system with filing a complaint.

18   MR. BERGMAN: Sure we'll confer

19   with the police department and look into that.

20   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I would like

22   to add to that, that's an issue of the signature

23   to maintain that the complaint was a real one.

24   And even when the tree falls on your car

25   windshield, every car on my block lost their

windshield--drama. So then everybody had to go to

the precinct--more drama. So the question would

be, why we can't do something like that online.

So I'm just saying, but I've had this conversation

and I assume it's the signature problem. I really

wish we could work on it. I mean just to have

that problem dealt with would be helpful. Maybe

you could send something in later, you know, but

if you could immediately, so you can deal with the

insurance or, in this case, the more dramatic and

more personal problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Or some sort

of information online that it's true and penalty

of perjury, something like that.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right,

something to think about. I want to thank you

both very much. I think one of the messages we

come out is that it's certainly going in the right

direction, and it would be great, along with

Council Member Koppell's suggestion, I think to

make sure that more elected officials know what

you're doing because they may have suggestions,

both in terms of the nonprofits, but also in terms

of what feedback they're getting about the

2 services that are being provided. So it might be

3 that while you're having some meetings with

4 agencies, you invite people or think of some other

5 communication, okay.

6   MR. BERGMAN: Sure, we'll do that.

7   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very

8 much.

9   MR. BERGMAN: Thank you.

10   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Our next

11 representative is from United Way of New York and

12 its Hayyim Obadyah. [Pause] Whenever you're

13 ready, go ahead. Thank you for being here.

14   MR. HAYYIM OBADYAH: Good morning,

15 my name is Hayyim Obadyah, I am the Director of

16 211/311 Initiatives at the United Way of New York

17 City.

18   Thank you, Council Member Brewer

19 and Members of the Committee on Technology in

20 Government for this opportunity to testify

21 regarding our collaboration with the city of New

22 York on Health and Human Services Information and

23 Referral.

24   The mission of United Way of New

25 York City is to connect people, resources, and

ideas to create a thriving community characterized

by income stability, educational success, and

healthy people. We believe that everyone has a

role in building a better future for all.

211 at 311 or E311, Enhanced 311,

is a unique partnership of the public and not-for-

profit sectors. It ensures that all those who

live in, work in, or visit New York City have easy

access to the full range of Health and Human

Service programs and services provided throughout

the five boroughs. United Way has collaborated

closely with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for

Health and Human Services with the Department of

Information Technology and Telecommunications, and

with nonprofit stakeholders to develop a system

that takes advantage of the breadth and depth of

essential human services offered by non-for-profit

agencies.

Around the nation, 211 is available

to nearly 80% of the US population, with 236

active call centers in 45 states. Nationwide, 211

received more than 14 million calls in 2008 and

that was 44% higher than in 2007. Volume in 2009

will be dramatically higher, especially in regions

hardest hit by natural disasters and the current

economic crisis. United Way of America,

therefore, has made it a priority to advocate for

the Calling for 211 Act currently pending in

Congress which would authorize federal funds.

Here in New York state, 77% of the

population has access to 211, and by the end of

this calendar year that reach will increase to

93%. In 2008, 211 in New York handled 1.8 million

calls, but calls in the first half of the current

calendar year have already totaled 1.7 million.

In New York City, a close

collaboration between the city and the nonprofit

sector enables 211 services to be provided by 311.

In April of '08, Mayor Bloomberg announced the

expansion of the 311 customer service center to

include human service information and referrals,

providing an additional and critical gateway for

New Yorkers to access vital services and it

represents a cutting edge public not-for-profit

partnership. In the context of this blended 211

and 311 model, United Way of New York City builds

the capacity of not-for-profit organizations to

participate in the Health and Human Services

Information and Referral system by enhancing their

technology and training their staff.

I should take this opportunity to

update some information in your briefing document

that United Way of New York City has long

abandoned the CARES database that it had operated

some years ago, we now regularly referr any calls

for service to 311.

Our training for staff of not-for-

profit agencies builds skills, not only for

information and referral specialists, but also for

other people at agencies who are helping people

identify their needs, determine the services that

can address those needs, and connect them to those

services. I should point out that the trainings

that we are doing for agency staff are based on

the same AIRS principals but are by no means as

comprehensive as the training that specialists

receive at the 311 center.

We currently provide six different

one-day workshops and have offered to-date 63

sessions is 715 registrants. They provide

specific skills such as active listening and

managing difficult calls and also include

2   information on how to use 311 as a resource in

3   helping clients. United Way encourages nonprofit

4   providers to see 311, not only as a service for

5   the public, but also as a professional resource.

6   Evaluations of the trainings have been

7   consistently very positive and it's particularly

8   gratifying that the staff who have participated

9   largely represents small community-based

10   organizations that otherwise would not be able to

11   provide such an opportunity for staff development.

12   United Way has also helped a small

13   group of not-for-profit service providers to

14   enhance their capacity by providing

15   telecommunications and technology enhancements.

16   Throughout the five boroughs, people are reaching

17   out for help and, in the face of increasing

18   demand, nonprofit agencies helped people directly

19   when they can and help people find other resources

20   when they cannot. We want to assure that these

21   agencies can manage the calls that come in,

22   including those that are referred by 311 and can

23   provide necessary information and referral,

24   including, where appropriate, referral to 311.

25   To-date we have incurred capital costs, primarily

2   to upgrade telephone systems and increase computer

3   hardware of over $200,000. The nonprofits that

4   have received technology are primarily small

5   community-based organizations. The enhancements

6   have been used to enable organizations, for

7   example, to transfer phone calls between different

8   program sites, to take referral information into

9   the field, and to expand information centers. We

10   anticipate that we will expand more than $186,000

11   additionally by the end of this calendar year.

12   So in the three years since 211 New

13   York awarded the designation in New York City,

14   there has been tremendous progress, but the work

15   continues. We need to be prepared to take

16   advantage of innovation, to expand the reach of

17   information and referral, we also need to solidify

18   and sustain the progress that has been achieved.

19   We're particularly pleased that 211 and 311 will

20   be focusing as a priority in the coming months

21   when increasing the number of nonprofit services

22   included in the 311 database.

23   New York City is blessed with a

24   multitude of nonprofit human service providers of

25   all sizes addressing a vast range of needs. As

the access to these services is made easy and

convenient by 211 and 311, all New Yorkers will

benefit. United Way of New York City is committed

to working with the Council and the Administration

to ensure effective, efficient, and compassionate

information and referral.

I'd be happy to take any questions

you might have.

[Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just a

question that I asked earlier and that is whether

or not the organizations are representative of the

city of New York, and obviously my concern is the

great borough of Brooklyn. Tell me a little bit

about the organizations that are representative or

that are in the borough of Brooklyn.

MR. OBADYAH: Absolutely. In fact

some months ago, we did an analysis of the

agencies that had received technology and we did

find that all five boroughs were represented, that

it was very representative, Brooklyn in particular

was well represented. We have done work, for

example, with the Bed Stuy Campaign Against

Hunger, and we've done work with a couple of

2   development corporations in Flatbush, Ocean Bay,

3   and other parts of the city.

4   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Would you be

5   so kind as to provide the Chair a list of those

6   organizations, particularly--

7   MR. OBADYAH: Absolutely.

8   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --for the

9   borough of Brooklyn? And last but not least, are

10   you sensitive to the issue of making sure that the

11   organizations reflect the diversity of this great

12   city?

13   MR. OBADYAH: Oh, yes.

14   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: The

15   leadership.

16   MR. OBADYAH: Oh, yes. Yes, we're

17   very much concerned because we know that services

18   are best delivered in neighborhoods.

19   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yep.

20   MR. OBADYAH: That's the bottom

21   line--services are best delivered in neighborhoods

22   and best delivered by the community-based

23   organizations with whom people have a relationship

24   of trust. And those are the organizations that we

25   need to be supporting.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

3   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very

4   much. Maybe the list of groups that you're

5   working with or that E311 is working with, is that

6   on the web? In other words, is that something

7   that is publicly available or it could be on your

8   website?

9   MR. OBADYAH: It's not currently

10   because we haven't completed the work, but we'll

11   be happy to make that available, both what has

12   been done to-date, the agencies that we've

13   provided and also as it comes to the end of the

14   program, we'll submit the full list.

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Because it

16   would be good to also put it up on the web, on

17   your web, that's what I would suggest and then

18   people wouldn't have--I guess it's always best to

19   have as much information as possible and for the

20   public to know it. So when you say the end of the

21   project, in other words, it's obviously going to

22   be ongoing training, because new people, new

23   groups, and so on, so explain--

24   MR. OBADYAH: [Interposing] Right,

25   tech capacity, however, we expect to complete by

2   the end of the calendar year.

3   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And tell me

4   what that means. I mean, to me it would mean, for

5   instance--Tish, what's that great woman who runs

6   the hot spot at Classon [phonetic]? Barbara?

7   [Off mic]

8   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: She's head of

9   the child development.

10   COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes [off

11   mic].

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Wonderful--

13   yes, she's so fabulous. So this director

14   understands technology and so if she was to have

15   technology upgrade, to me that would mean not only

16   internal to the organization, but also some kind

17   of device so that if her staff is in the field,

18   they would also be able to take a 311 call. Is

19   that the kind of technology that you're talking

20   about? Could you be specific? She's--

21   [Crosstalk]

22   MR. OBADYAH: [Interposing] Yes, we

23   would certainly consider that as a possibility.

24   Most of the requests we've had are for improving

25   telephone systems, in some cases completely

1

2   replacing a 20 year old phone system, in many

3   cases, supplementing the phone system that was

4   kind of out of date with greater range of

5   possibilities to use it. But going into the field

6   is something that we would certainly support.

7   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But you

8   haven't done it yet. In other words, when I call-

9   -

10   MR. OBADYAH: [Interposing] We have

11   actually done it in the sense that we approved--

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

13   If you to transfer for phone obviously from home

14   to the field, an easy transfer.

15   MR. OBADYAH: Right, we would

16   certainly support that. What we have done is with

17   a couple of agencies had specifically requested

18   laptops because they wanted to be able to take

19   their information on services into the field and

20   that was something we did support.

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do you know

22   how many agencies in total have gotten a

23   technology upgrade? Approximately?

24   MR. OBADYAH: Eighteen.

25   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Eighteen,

1

2   okay. And the funding that you get is from the

3   city and some from the state, is that correct? In

4   order to work with these nonprofits?

5   MR. OBADYAH: E311 as a whole, the

6   bulk of operation is supported by the city as part

7   of the 311 center. In addition, we've received

8   funding from the state legislature through the

9   United Way of New York State, which allocates

10   monies to the different regions. New York City

11   region has gotten close to $5 million.

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: From the

13   state.

14   MR. OBADYAH: From the state. Of

15   that, 3.7 million has gone to DoITT to make

16   changes that were specifically needed to

17   incorporate health and human service information--

18   database design, staff training, etc. 1.3 million

19   has gone to the United Way and that is what funds

20   these programs.

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And

22   individuals are trained in the nonprofit sector by

23   you and then DoITT trains the actual 30 to 50 call

24   takers that work--

25   MR. OBADYAH: That's correct.

2   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --at the call

3   center.

4   MR. OBADYAH: That's correct.

5   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And is there

6   any discussion between those two groups, the call

7   center operators and the nonprofits? Do they ever

8   talk to each other? Any bringing together those

9   leaders?

10   MR. OBADYAH: We have not brought

11   the actual call takers together--

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

13   The actual call takers, yes.

14   MR. OBADYAH: --no, but we have had

15   discussions about curriculum between the United

16   Way and DoITT--

17   [Crosstalk]

18   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

19   I think at some point--in other words, when one

20   goes to the call center itself, it's a sterile

21   experience, everything is really clean, but it's

22   also a professional looking space and so I thought

23   something to think about to bring some of the

24   nonprofit leaders to the call center, you get a

25   sense of what people are doing and just when you

talk to a call operator, as I have done many

times, you see, you know, it's nice to talk to Ron

Bergman, very nice, and very nice to talk to Paul

Cosgrave, but it's also nice to talk directly to

the operators--

MR. OBADYAH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --and

sometimes they may have issues, 'cause they care,

and sometimes the director might be able--a

nonprofit director to say this is a better way of

handling something. So I would just say to try to

put a little human element into the human

services. Sometimes we forget that part.

MR. OBADYAH: Very good point,

because we have seen that--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]

I'd be glad to organize that--

MR. OBADYAH: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --Tish and I

are very good at organizing things.

MR. OBADYAH: Great, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The other

question, the same one that I asked DoITT, the

nonprofit sector, in addition to United Way, also

2   has community resource exchange, support center

3   and so on. Do you work with them? Because they

4   do a lot of training of nonprofits, so I did hear

5   DoITT indicate that they do work with CRE, there

6   are many others--

7   MR. OBADYAH: That's correct.

8   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --so do you

9   work with some of the other nonprofit umbrella

10   groups, Foundation Center, etc.?

11   MR. OBADYAH: Yes, yes, absolutely.

12   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: How do you do

13   that?

14   MR. OBADYAH: In fact, within the

15   United Way of New York City, in addition to our

16   work in E311, we have an entire group dedicated to

17   strengthening New York City nonprofits. So there

18   are various other activities that the United Way

19   does: convocations, meetings, conferences and

20   trainings to direct technical assistance that has

21   been provided to individual nonprofit

22   organizations, often contracting with

23   organizations like CRE.

24   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Because I just

25   think, maybe this is part of their training, but

for everybody to know that being part of the E311

system is something that they can be part of,

obviously--

MR. OBADYAH: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --it's a

process, but I think there's a little bit more,

not just of elected officials notification, but

also, obviously, those that deal with HRA perhaps

know and some of the direct contracts, but I bet a

lot of the groups that work with DYCD, which is

another whole world, don't know as much about what

you're doing and I think--

MR. OBADYAH: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --that that's

another world that is increasing based on the

need.

MR. OBADYAH: Great, thank you,

we'll do that.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And I think at

some point I'd like to know more about the

employment. My guess is that the people calling

311 for employment is increasing, and I'm just

wondering how do you handle that specifically,

what's the process for that.

1

2 MR. OBADYAH: Right, I cannot tell

3 you about how that gets handled at 311, I can say

4 though that statistics from '08 show that, on a

5 statewide basis, Consumer Affairs is the single

6 largest category of call and that includes credit,

7 counseling, budget assistance, and those kinds of

8 things and that has actually surpassed now basic

9 living needs of food, clothing, and shelter calls.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And so there

11 is enough capacity in terms of the nonprofit

12 community in New York City to try to address some

13 of that need?

14 MR. OBADYAH: I would not make any

15 statement about the capacity of the nonprofit

16 sector as a whole.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: To absorb all

18 that, okay. So in your training to the end of the

19 year, how many more nonprofits do you expect to

20 bring online or are you just training those that

21 are already in the process?

22 MR. OBADYAH: No, we will begin an

23 outreach, a large outreach, in fact, one of the

24 things that's been very successful is, because

25 United Way also manages HPNAP and FEMA Emergency

2   Food and Shelter program funds, we have many

3   contacts with very small groups in communities

4   and, using that mailing list, e-mail list, as well

5   as others at the United Way, we get a very good

6   response.

7   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So you're

8   going to be expanding the numbers of nonprofits

9   that you're going to be working with? Because you

10   said that towards the end of the year, you'll have

11   finished at least the first phase of all the

12   training.

13   MR. OBADYAH: No, we will have

14   finished the technology enhancements.

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Technology,

16   okay. In terms of the--

17   MR. OBADYAH: We expect--

18   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --general

19   training--

20   MR. OBADYAH: Right, we--

21   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --how long

22   does that take or what's the process there? For

23   the general training. In other words, people who

24   are part of the 311 nonprofit system, I assume

25   they get trained by you, that's what you

1

2   indicated, and is that training ongoing? What's

3   the end of the beginning of that?

4   MR. OBADYAH: Right, there are six

5   sessions, all of which are independent. We

6   sometimes recommend that people take the basic

7   training before taking others, but they can take

8   any of those six 1-day workshops, and those are

9   offered throughout the year, beginning in October

10   through June.

11   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And that's

12   also on your website as to when those sessions

13   are?

14   MR. OBADYAH: Yes.

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right, so

16   in other words, once a nonprofit wants to be part

17   of it, they contact 311, that's what we were told

18   earlier, and then I guess they refer to you.

19   MR. OBADYAH: That's true, but on

20   the other hand, to attend trainings, we don't

21   require that they be listed with 311, because we

22   know that in some cases what's important is to get

23   organizations to understand that they can refer

24   people to 311. So even if they're not in the 311

25   system, we want to get the word out to them.

1

2   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I see, okay.

3 So in other words, you don't have to be trained to

4 provide assistance.

5   MR. OBADYAH: Correct.

6   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think that's

7 it. I do want to say that on the technology

8 front, I think 18, those are very lucky, fortunate

9 programs. It would be nice to have more in that

10 front and have it as sophisticated as possible.

11 If there is federal money, I assume that will go

12 national, state, and local, but I assume you have

13 a plan for what you could do with that funding.

14   MR. OBADYAH: That's correct.

15   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right,

16 thank you very much.

17   MR. OBADYAH: Thank you very much.

18   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think that's

19 going to conclude our hearing. I want to thank

20 all the participants who came today, certainly the

21 speakers. I think we learned a bit today about

22 Enhanced 311, but I do think that we would love to

23 hear from anybody in the community regarding the

24 way in which they feel this process helps people

25 individually, how it could be improved, how it's

doing well, and, obviously, I have a direct

interest in how the technology is working, so we
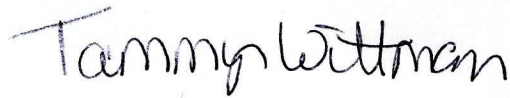
will be following up.

                    And I want to thank my colleagues

for joining us and thank all the participants, and

particularly thank Jeff Baker, who is Counsel to

the committee and Colleen Pagter who's Policy

Analyst and the great Sam Wong, who is managing to

webcast this. I want to repeat the city of New

York, the Speaker's office, everybody who's

listening, we do not need to spend a lot of money

on webcasting, every single city money could be

webcast. Thank you very much. This meeting is

adjourned.

                    [Off mic]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, 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.

Tammy Wittman

Signature_____

Date _October 5, 2009__