

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, PUBLIC SAFETY,
AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

-----X

December 10, 2009

Start: 1:10 pm

Recess: 4:44 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

JAMES VACCA
PETER F. VALLONE, JR.
GALE A. BREWER
Chairpersons

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Daniel R. Garodnick
Elizabeth Crowley
Vincent J. Gentile
Tony Avella
Letitia James
Alan J. Gerson
Mathieu Eugene
Bill de Blasio
Eric Ulrich
Albert Vann
John C. Liu
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.

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

Ed Skyler
Deputy Mayor
NYC

Salvatore Cassano
Chief of Department
NYC Fire Department

Charles Dowd
Commanding Officer
NYC Police Department Communications Division

Paul Cosgrave
Commissioner
Department of Information Technology

Stephen Cassidy
President
Uniformed Firefighters Association

David Rosenzweig
President
Fire Alarm Dispatchers Benevolent Association,

Alexander Hagan
President
Uniformed Fire Officers Association

Lillian Roberts
Executive Director
DC 37

Henry Garrido
Assistant Associate Director
DC 37

Alma Roper
First Executive Vice President
Local 1549, DC 37

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

Dominick DeRubbio

Paul Casali

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Good afternoon everyone and thank you for coming, and my name is James Vacca, I'm the Chair of the Fire and Criminal Justice Committee of the New York City Council, and today we're holding a joint hearing with Committee on Public Safety, chaired by Council Member Peter Vallone, and the Committee on Technology in Government, chaired by Council Member Gale Brewer. I'd like to thank my co-chairs for joining me at this hearing today.

When we speak about emergency services, we have to use the word perfection. Residents are entitled to as perfect a response as possible when they pick up the phone and report a fire. Anything less than that, must immediately raise a red flag. Emergency services are the most critical services provided by our city. So when you change the manner in which a vital service is delivered, you have to do so with the greatest planning and care.

I am happy to hear from the Administration today, and I fully recognize that they share the same goal, but after extensive discussions and analysis, it appears to me that

when the UCT call system, Unified Call Taker system, was implemented, it did not adequately train police call takers regarding the unique nature of fire calls and response. And when it became obvious to many that UCT was in need of major adjustment, it took the city too long to take corrective action.

During this time period many of us were concerned that public safety was at risk. The initial implementation of UCT led to an unacceptable level of call taking errors, including the reporting of incorrect addresses for the location of fire emergencies. Although response times are important and every second counts when responding to a fire, it doesn't matter how fast you respond when you respond to the wrong location.

[Pause]

--months, the city recognized flaws in UCT and modified the call taking system on a temporary basis last month by including conferencing in fire dispatchers to assist police call takers. The city conferenced in fire dispatchers to assist those call takers as they

gathered information, and that change took place last month in recognition that the system needed correction. While this step was a welcome recognition that we had a system needing modification, the fact that we had to institute this measure raises the issue as to whether UCT should have been implemented in the first place.

Although the city continues to tout a reduction in response times as a result of UCT, it is not clear to me whether firefighters are actually getting to fire locations any quicker than they did before. It is also not clear why, now that the prerelease system allows police call takers to begin the dispatching process after only a few questions are asked, why fire dispatchers who have more training and more experience cannot take over calls at that point to gather additional information.

At the end of the day, New Yorkers have a right to ask, are we safer today than we were before UCT--that is the bottom line, that is the question that guides our hearing today, and we will be looking for testimony and answers to questions from Deputy Mayor Skyler, the fire

department, police department, and the
Administration, I thank them for coming.

I'd now like to turn over the
microphone to my co-chairs. First, the Chair of
the Public Safety Committee, Peter Vallone.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you,
Chair Vacca, also it's a pleasure to work with you
and Gale Brewer. And may I say this is the first
time in my eight years here that three Chairs were
sitting here before the Administration got into
the room, I don't think that's ever been the case.

I think that shows how important
this is--three Committees, room full of press,
many unions sitting here, Ed Skyler, shows how
important it is to the Administration, Chief
Cassano--all of us in one room with one goal:
improve this system, make it work.

And I just want to do a little bit
of a public service for some of our press friends
and people in the room to explain what you're
going to hear because it's very confusing. Three
years ago, system was that a 911 operator would
take the call, get some preliminary information,
send it to a dispatcher, who would take some

relatively detailed information, and then there would be a dispatch.

Over a year ago, something called emergency or expedited dispatch was implemented, that's not UCT, that's something different. That meant that, again, a 911 operator would take it, transfer it to the fire dispatcher, who would take some very minimal information--where is the fire--send out the truck--dispatch, then get more information. And the unions had some problems with that that have been addressed over the last year, but that resulted in a decrease, substantial decrease in response time.

Then that was changed in May, that's the UCT system we're discussing here where the 911 operator would take the call, the dispatcher was completely eliminated. There would still be emergency dispatch, you would send it out with some basic information, but it will be the 911 operator who would take the more detailed information that was necessary. That was modified in November.

Now the 911 operator is taking the call, emergency dispatch, but a fire dispatcher is

on the line monitoring the call and providing assistance if necessary.

Just as a little basic background, I'm sure I've screwed up a few things there, but just so people understand exactly what we're talking about today, that's the timeline of what happened.

So today, we wanted to provide a forum for the Administration to explain why this system is an improvement and for others, for many others to come in here and provide a forum for their criticisms so those criticisms can be heard and addressed. This is not a situation where we can allow the kinks to be worked out as we go when the kinks are people's lives. That's why we're having this hearing today--all of us, one room, one goal, let's make this work.

Again, an honor to be working with these co-chairs and I'm going to turn it over to Gale Brewer.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much, and I too share my admiration for my colleagues.

In the Technology Committee, we've

2 had, as you know, several hearings on the larger
3 issue, and I know we're more limited in what we're
4 talking about today, but the ECTP, as has been
5 discussed, was designed to bring together the
6 first responders of P.D., fire, EMS and to reduce
7 emergency response times, as we talked about.

8 As I understand it, the ECTP on the
9 larger scale has four initiatives, one is a public
10 service answering center known as PSAC I in
11 Brooklyn at MetroTech; two, the construction of a
12 backup 911 call taking and dispatch center known
13 as PSAC II in the Bronx; three is a unifying 911
14 call taking functions in a single call taking
15 operation at I and II, that's PSAC I and II; and
16 then the integration of these systems known as a
17 CAD or, in non-lingo, Computer-Aided Dispatch
18 system. And the Unified Call Taking known as UCT,
19 which was referred to earlier, is a component of
20 this larger ECTP, and, as Chair Vallone mentioned,
21 was implemented on May 2009, quite recently, to
22 streamline.

23 And before the system as I
24 understand it, the approximately 200 fire
25 department dispatchers were stationed in each of

2 the five boroughs, and now the ones from
3 Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island are at PSAC
4 I, I think on the first--the two floors or first,
5 and one and three for the two different systems,
6 police and fire.

7 Prior to UCT, when an emergency
8 caller phoned 911, the call was answered by a
9 police call taker who then conferenced in a fire
10 dispatcher, if it was an emergency. And of course
11 the system that we're talking about today was
12 intended to improve technology and training to
13 allow the police call taker to collect both fire
14 and police, and then electronically share and
15 coordinate the appropriate emergency response with
16 dispatches from both agencies, and that's
17 something that we'll talk about today. And of
18 course the allegations that we'll hear about,
19 whether they're true or not, and what the problems
20 are will be discussed.

21 And I think that under this
22 modified procedure, the police call taker is
23 supposed to conference in the fire department call
24 taker who will listen to the call and ask
25 additional calls. Obviously, from my perspective,

2 how does this get done technologically and how can
3 it be improved technologically is something that
4 we're very curious about.

5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
7 Chair Brewer and Chair Vallone. I would now call
8 upon Deputy Mayor Skyler to speak for the
9 Administration and give his testimony. Deputy
10 Mayor.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Good
12 afternoon, Chairman Vacca, Chairman Vallone, and
13 Chairwoman Brewer, and thank you for providing me
14 with an opportunity to testify about ECTP, and
15 specifically the implementation of Unified Call
16 Taking. We welcome the opportunity to set the
17 facts straight about this very important public
18 safety program. I am joined today by Sal Cassano,
19 Chief of Department for the Fire Department, and
20 Deputy Chief Charles Dowd, Commanding Officer of
21 police department's Communications Division.

22 [Pause]

23 --first launched 911 in July of
24 1968 during the Lindsay Administration, and for
25 the first time in the state's history, the public

2 was able to dial 911 for emergency police response
3 instead of calling the main number for the police
4 department. 911 services were expanded for fire
5 and EMS five years later.

6 What's truly remarkable though is
7 that little else has changed since then. In
8 recent years, this outdated system has been
9 strained by increased call volumes and obsolescent
10 technologies. 911, the backbone of the City's
11 emergency response infrastructure, was in danger
12 of becoming a relic, outdated to the point that
13 maintaining the existing systems had become
14 increasingly difficult.

15 The 9/11 attacks raised call taking
16 volumes to previously unseen levels. Although the
17 systems remained functional during that time, a
18 high percentage of the calls received in the
19 immediate aftermath of the attacks were lost,
20 never reaching an operator. The 2002 McKinsey
21 report, which assessed the city's emergency
22 response to the 9/11 attacks, attributed most of
23 the losses to congestion on wired and wireless
24 communication networks throughout the city, but
25 also recommended specific upgrades to the fire

2 department systems and technologies that would
3 enhance centerizations and the ability of the
4 police and fire departments to further integrate
5 their response capabilities.

6 The blackout in 2003 that affected
7 large parts of the Northeastern United States also
8 revealed serious operational and technical
9 vulnerabilities in the 911 system and the Verizon
10 network on which it relies. The failure of core
11 operating systems and network congestion
12 throughout the city left some people unable to
13 reach 911 operators for hours. And even after
14 congestion issues abated, the overall system
15 continued to fail as Verizon's service and backup
16 power resources failed to support call switching
17 activities at their central offices.

18 After the blackout, the Mayor
19 convened a task force to conduct in-depth analysis
20 of the city's response to the event. The task
21 force complete findings were detailed in the
22 public report to the Mayor on October of '03, but
23 they reached several serious conclusions about the
24 city's police, fire, and the EMS 911 operations.
25 Among them, an overall lack of efficiency and

2 collaboration illustrated by the silo-based manner
3 in which each agency managed its operations
4 through the use of separate facilities, telephony
5 systems, and supporting technologies. Verizon-
6 related services at three central offices in the
7 police department's Brooklyn call taking center
8 lacked resiliency. Backup power resources failed
9 and call taking capacity was inadequate for the
10 unprecedented call volumes during the early hours
11 of the event. Archaic technologies and
12 deteriorating infrastructure lead to fragmented
13 accountability among city agencies.

14 Serious outage occurred in March
15 2004 when a Verizon technician was making repairs
16 to the switch, which is a call routing device
17 which processes not only 911 calls for the police
18 department's primary facility, but also the calls
19 of residential and commercial tenants in the same
20 area. As a result of one mistake, all 911 calls
21 from Brooklyn and Queens and Staten Island were
22 rerouted to other customers on the same switch for
23 a two hour period. This experience reaffirmed the
24 need to put 911 services on a dedicated
25 telecommunications infrastructure.

2 ECTP began to take shape in 2004
3 and was designed to address these and other
4 shortcomings in the city's emergency public call
5 taking dispatch operations by overhauling the way
6 operations are managed and supported. The simple
7 fact is that New York City has been behind the
8 times and certainly well behind the efforts of
9 other major cities--Chicago, Houston, Nashville,
10 San Francisco, Washington, DC, are just a few of
11 the cities that have already made commitments to
12 pursue similar changes to 911 operations. The
13 goal of ECTP is to save lives by reducing call
14 times and improving the reliability and redundancy
15 of 911 operations.

16 Since 2005, the police and fire
17 departments have worked on an integrated project
18 management team that includes specialists from the
19 City's Department of Information Technology and
20 Telecommunications agency, DoITT. Together, they
21 have pursued four key objectives through ECTP:
22 co-locate the police, fire, and emergency medical
23 call taking dispatch operations through two new
24 load-sharing facilities, Public Safety Answering
25 Centers I and II; create new layers of redundancy

2 and resiliency in all areas of 911 operation
3 through new technology and operational
4 efficiencies; support the centerization of
5 relevant technologies across agency lines,
6 including systems for Computer-Aided Dispatch,
7 otherwise known as CAD, and telephony; introduce
8 Unified Call Taking, known as UCT, to reduce call
9 times, enhance the quality of decision dispatching
10 and ultimately save lives.

11 The city's project management team,
12 supported by more than a dozen primary vendors for
13 distinct facility and technology related
14 components of the project, has already made
15 significant progress towards these objectives,
16 including construction of PSAC I in Brooklyn's
17 MetroTech Center is complete and three previously
18 borough-based fire department communications
19 offices for Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island
20 have moved in and begun dispatching on the new
21 telephony software and dedicated Verizon switches.
22 The remaining two fire department communications
23 offices in the Bronx and Queens have been upgraded
24 to serve as dual-purpose backup facilities until
25 PSAC II is complete. Police call taking and

3 dispatch will move into PSAC I in the spring. One
4 Police Plaza has been upgraded to serve as a fully
5 redundant backup call center for police department
6 operations until PSAC II is completed. When EMS
7 moves into PSAC I, leaving its former space
8 available as a standby site, all three components
9 of 911 will have fully operational backup capacity
10 for the first time in city history.

11 Site acquisition designed for PSAC
12 II with the Hutchison Metro Center in the Bronx
13 are now complete. Preconstruction work has begun
14 and the facility will become operational in 2013.

15 Fire and EMS CAD systems have been
16 upgraded and the new NYPD CAD system is under
17 development and will be deployed by 2012. A data
18 link has been established between police and fire
19 emergencies dispatch systems, a critical compound
20 of UCT, which allows 911 operators to send and
21 share information in real time with dispatchers.

22 Automatic Vehicle Locator
23 technology, otherwise known as AVL, has been
24 installed in 600 EMS ambulances and 500 department
25 vehicles, reducing ambulance response times by an
average of 16 seconds. Failing radio towers of

2 Staten Island, Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn
3 communications offices, as well as the FDNY Long
4 Island city facility, were replaced with new
5 communications equipment.

6 The following fire department
7 technologies have been upgraded: Logging recording
8 system, emergency response system, and box alarm
9 receiving systems, and the voice alarm system.

10 And 911 and 311 can now receive photos and videos
11 from callers.

12 The overall budget for ECTP is
13 substantial, over \$1.8 billion once PSAC II is
14 completed in 2013. Keep in mind though that this
15 investment is spread over more than 10 years and
16 includes dozens of projects that will, taken
17 together, ensure that the backbone of our
18 emergency response infrastructure can reliably and
19 safely serve New York City's New Yorkers well into
20 the 21st century.

21 In addition to achieving
22 centerization and redundancy, ECTP includes
23 operations-related initiatives to reduce call
24 times and the quality of each response. One of
25 the most effective initiatives being pursued is

2 Unified Call Taking, which lowers response times
3 in an effort to save lives.

4 The first operational phase of UCT,
5 which has cost \$19 million to date, was introduced
6 in early May to handle fire calls and any other
7 situation that would require an FDNY response.
8 Prior to the introduction of UCT, 911 calls for
9 structural fires were answered by an NYPD call
10 taker, who collected caller and incident
11 information. The police call taker would then
12 initiate a conference call with an FDNY call taker
13 and repeat the same information gathering process.
14 The FDNY call taker would collect similar
15 information from the caller and forward that
16 information to an FDNY dispatcher, then and only
17 then would a response begin.

18 Under Unified Call Taking, improved
19 technology and training allow the police call
20 taker to collect both NYPD and FDNY incident
21 information and then electronically send the
22 information to dispatchers at both agencies to
23 send the appropriate emergency response. This
24 means the caller only has to give the information
25 one time to one call taker. Elimination of this

2 redundant step for fire calls saves time in
3 processing the caller's critical information and
4 accordingly, the overall response time for each
5 call.

6 This reduction in call time was
7 immediately apparent after the beginning of UCT in
8 May. In the seven months that have elapsed since
9 that time, response times to structural fires have
10 averaged 3 minutes and 57 seconds in duration, a
11 reduction of 10 seconds from the pre-UCT average
12 for the same seven months in 2008, and 30 seconds
13 lower than in 2007 before a change in dispatch
14 procedure was made, known as prerelease.

15 Since UCT went live in May, we've
16 closely monitored the new system, including
17 instances of units being dispatched to wrong
18 addresses and when callers gave wrong or
19 incomplete addresses. Before UCT, these
20 occurrence were not systematically tracked and we
21 are now collecting better information than ever
22 before and using it to improve the system.

23 That led us to do a six-month
24 review in October and we found that, although the
25 overall majority of UCT calls are handled

2 appropriately and lead to real reductions in
3 response time, there was, as with any new system,
4 a need for improvement. We used this review to
5 design additional training, which all police call
6 takers should receive by the end of the year. In
7 addition to trying to prevent cases of human
8 error, we've identified ways for police call
9 takers to improve the quality of information sent
10 to fire dispatchers.

11 Also, on November 24th, we
12 introduced a slightly modified UCT procedure.
13 That modification, which will be in place until no
14 longer necessary, provides additional assurance
15 that the correct information is being taken and
16 transmitted to fire dispatchers, who make sure
17 that local fire companies get to the right place
18 as quickly as possible. And although possible
19 human error may always be a factor, we will do
20 everything we can to prevent them. Simply put,
21 our goal is to get it right every time.

22 I will now ask Chief Dowd from the
23 police department and then Chief Cassano to
24 provide additional details about this initiative.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, can I

2 please interrupt for one minute? I just want to
3 recognize my colleagues that have joined us,
4 Council Member Dan Garodnick, Council Member
5 Elizabeth Crowley, Council Member Vincent Gentile,
6 Council Member Tony Avella, and Letitia James.
7 Please proceed, I'm sorry.

8 CHARLES DOWD: Good afternoon,
9 Committee members. I would like to discuss with
10 you the police department's participation in the
11 development and implementation of the Unified Call
12 Taking program.

13 Prior to introduction of Unified
14 Call Taking, emergency calls to 911 were received
15 by NYPD call takers who ascertained the location
16 and nature of the emergency. If the call was
17 reporting a fire, the NYPD call taker then used a
18 one touch link to conference in an FDNY dispatcher
19 who would essentially ask the same questions and
20 obtain the same information from the caller, and
21 relay that information to the FDNY dispatchers.
22 This usually meant that a caller would have to
23 provide information to two different call takers,
24 using extra time in situations where every second
25 is vital. Instead, Unified Call Taking reduces

time it takes to initiate a response by giving the NYPD call taker the responsibility of obtaining the relevant information and electronically relaying it directly to an FDNY dispatcher.

Because of the critical nature of this new role for NYPD call takers, it was imperative that the program be designed and implemented with great care by the FDNY and NYPD. Together, both agencies, with the help of DoITT, collaborated closely in designing the program mission, system requirements, and functional specifications over the course of many months. They devised new codes and new procedures to enable NYPD call takers using the police department's SPRINT CAD system to seamlessly and electronically communicate with the FDNY's STARFIRE CAD system.

Especially important, the agencies jointly developed a training program so that the 1,300 NYPD call takers, dispatchers, and supervisors would be capable of implementing Unified Call Taking citywide. Among other topics, the eight-hour training course instructed NYPD personnel regarding the new codes they were to

2 use, the way calls were to be routed to the FDNY,
3 the importance of providing vital information
4 using the structure of the STARFIRE system, the
5 correct way to question callers to obtain critical
6 information quickly, how best to identify and
7 communicate special locations in situations, such
8 as fires on bridges or trapped callers, and how to
9 handle calls if one of the computer systems is
10 temporary malfunctioning or during maintenance
11 periods.

12 As Unified Call Taking went live,
13 the FDNY and NYPD continued their close
14 collaboration with structured weekly meetings, as
15 well as daily contact to discuss issues and
16 problems, share feedback, and learn from the
17 developing experience. That feedback and
18 experience is used to provide continuing in-
19 service training for NYPD personnel. In fact, a
20 new training initiative was developed in October
21 of this year and is in the process of being
22 conducted by both NYPD and FDNY trainers to
23 provide greater insight for call takers into how
24 the information they provide is used in the field.

25 While this training is proceeding,

2 however, we have temporarily introduced a new
3 procedure for UCT in order to minimize the
4 possibility of inaccurate information being
5 transmitted. NYPD call takers continue to receive
6 the calls and electronically transmit them to the
7 FDNY dispatchers, but then they also conference in
8 an FDNY call taker as soon as they know the call
9 concerns a fire, so that a second caller is on the
10 line in real-time, able to ask pertinent questions
11 or verify the caller's information. In this way,
12 both agencies are continuing to lower response
13 time while increasing the accuracy of the
14 information obtained and transmitted as NYPD call
15 takers become more familiar with their new role.

16 Our agencies are committed to
17 continuing to work together to make steady
18 improvement to the Unified Call Taking program in
19 the strong belief that UCT will serve to quicken
20 emergency response in the city of New York.

21 Thank you.

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: Good afternoon,
23 Chairpersons Brewer, Vacca, and Vallone, and
24 Members of the Committee. My name is Salvatore
25 Cassano, I am the Chief of Department of the New

2 York City Fire Department. I am pleased to have
3 this opportunity to discuss with you the
4 improvements in emergency call taking and dispatch
5 operations at the FDNY.

6 As Deputy Mayor Skyler testified,
7 New York City operates the world's largest 911
8 emergency communications system, handling more
9 than 12 million calls per year. New York City 911
10 is currently supported by a diverse set of
11 services, systems, and operations provided by the
12 NYPD, the FDNY, FDNY emergency services. To
13 better serve New Yorkers, the FDNY has been
14 working closely with the NYPD and the Department
15 of Information Technology and Telecommunications,
16 or DoITT, over the last several years to undertake
17 a comprehensive review and redesign of the city's
18 911 operations on an initiative called Emergency
19 Communications Transformation Program or ECTP.

20 The ECPT initiative is obviously a
21 high priority of the Bloomberg Administration and
22 grew out of the October 2003 mayoral task force
23 report following the blackout. ECTP is comprised
24 of a number of different subprojects, some of
25 which include modernization and strengthening of

2 the 911 network to improve the public's access to
3 911 during emergencies, greater backup systems for
4 the NYPD, FDNY, and EMS operations through
5 enhanced redundancy and improved failover
6 capabilities, upgrade and new construction of
7 radio towers, modernization of the agency
8 Computer-Aided Dispatch, or CAD systems, and
9 installation of Automatic Vehicle Locator
10 technology in emergency response vehicles, and
11 integration with modernized CAD systems. These
12 projects are based upon the best practice of
13 across emergency call taking industry and will
14 streamline and integrate our emergency call taking
15 and dispatch operations.

16 Benefits of ECTP include improved
17 data sharing among agencies, including immediate
18 availability of emergency data to the NYPD, FDNY,
19 and EMS, and better coordination of resources
20 directed to the scene of emergencies. With modern
21 state-of-the-art voice communication equipment,
22 calls went to the 911 system faster than before
23 and critical information will be more immediately
24 available, leading to decreased response times.
25 Upgrades to our telephone and radio networks are

2 also strengthening our emergency communications
3 infrastructure and will provide failover
4 capabilities that we never had before.

5 ECTP also includes the design,
6 renovation, and implementation of the first Public
7 Safety Answering Center, PSAC I, in downtown
8 Brooklyn and plans for PSAC II in the Bronx, which
9 will allow enhanced coordination among first
10 responder agencies and their respective dispatch
11 operations. Integration and co-location of
12 emergency response agency operations eliminates a
13 step in handling 911 calls, saving precious time.

14 Since it began, ECTP project has
15 included careful consideration of, and worked
16 toward, improved backup capabilities. To that
17 end, we have increased the capacity and redundancy
18 of FDNY's remaining communications offices in the
19 Bronx and Queens, allowing us to use these centers
20 as backup facilities until PSAC II is completed.
21 Accordingly, these facilities now contain
22 sufficient failover capacity for the three borough
23 operations--Manhattan, Staten Island, and
24 Brooklyn--that have moved into Brooklyn's PSAC I,
25 this provides borough to borough redundancy for

the first time in the city's history. Conversely, PSAC I by itself will also have sufficient backup to support the call operations from all five boroughs in the event the city needs to relocate the Bronx and the Queens' COs. And ultimately, when PSAC II is completed, we will have a fully redundant load balance backup site to PSAC I, providing sufficient capacity for all the city's emergency operations.

Unified Call Taking. These many [off mic] initiatives have enabled the state to streamline and optimize the emergency call taking and dispatch process. Under the new system called Unified Call Taking program, police call takers in Brooklyn PSAC relay critical fire information via computer directly to the FDNY dispatchers assigned to the specific boroughs. Since the new 911 system automatically recognizes the location of a caller, this data can also be instantaneously relayed along with all the incident information to the FDNY dispatcher with borough-based knowledge to determine where to assign the appropriate units to the scene, as was the case under the previous system.

2 Under the previous process, all 911
3 calls were routed to a police call taker who would
4 either assign an NYPD unit or, if needed,
5 conference in an FDNY or EMS call taker in the
6 appropriate borough. FDNY EMS call takers will
7 then have to relay the same information to FDNY
8 EMS dispatchers. This usually meant that a caller
9 would have to provide information to two different
10 call takers--expending valuable time, therefore,
11 the UCT process reduces the time it takes to
12 initiate a response.

13 It is important to note that on the
14 UCT, dispatchers with borough specific knowledge,
15 the very same dispatchers who fielded calls under
16 the previous system, are still going to handle 911
17 calls as they always did.

18 In late October, based on a review
19 of the first six months of UCT and to minimize the
20 possibility of inaccurate information being
21 transmitted, the NYPD and the FDNY launched a new
22 training program for police call takers. In
23 addition, on November 20th, 2009, City Hall
24 announced that the City would temporarily modify
25 the process by which 911 calls reporting fires are

2 handled. Under the modified procedure, a police
3 call taker will now also conference in an FDNY
4 dispatcher who will listen to the call, have the
5 opportunity to ask additional questions of the
6 caller if necessary, and verify the accuracy of
7 the information that the police call taker
8 transmits to the fire dispatchers. This
9 modification is intended to help further train
10 police call takers and as they take on their new
11 responsibility. This new procedure began November
12 24th, 2009, and will last until both agencies deem
13 it no longer necessary.

14 At a Council hearing a few weeks
15 ago, the Fire Commissioner was asked to respond to
16 questions about a number of incidents where UCT
17 was blamed for causing a delayed FDNY response.
18 We need to set the record straight about those
19 incidents. The facts are, as stated in these
20 instances, there were no issue with the UCC
21 system. A 911 caller providing an incorrect
22 address or a vague address is not a UCT system
23 problem. A 911 call that is cut off before an
24 address is given because cell phone services
25 dropped is not a UCT system issue. In these cases

2 which have been highlighted in the media, the
3 wrong address or no address was provided in the
4 initial call to 911 or the wrong address was
5 inputted. This could have happened before UCT was
6 initiated. Training for call takers is critically
7 important but wrong information is provided to 911
8 every day. The fact of life cannot [off mic]
9 attribute it to UCT. We are confident that
10 enhanced emergency dispatch from approved response
11 of what we already have in the premier major
12 response agencies in the world.

13 Thank you for your opportunity to
14 speak with you today and I'd be happy to answer
15 any questions you have.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.
17 Just had some questions. I first want to thank
18 you--oh, I'm sorry, Councilman Gerson was here but
19 he had to leave and Council Member Eugene is here.

20 I know you're addressing a very
21 detailed, complicated, technical process and I
22 appreciate that and I thank you for trying to add
23 clarity, but it seems to me that, although now
24 there is training and there has been training as
25 the Chief indicated, how do you answer those who

2 say that the fire dispatchers have, not only more
3 training, but more experience than a 911 operator
4 would have and actual knowledge of information
5 needed to fight a fire? How do you answer the
6 claim that fire dispatchers have that longevity
7 and career of knowledge and then the additional
8 training of course, as opposed to a 911 operator
9 who, I understand, has been given 10 hours of
10 training, but is more apt to deal with police
11 calls?

12 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I want to
13 hand it over to my colleagues to handle respect to
14 parts of it, but I think you have to back up, you
15 know, for a second. Of course, a fire call taker
16 or a fire dispatcher that's been doing it their
17 whole career is going to have more experience than
18 a call taker that just, you know, has been handed
19 a new responsibility.

20 I think the question that we should
21 be asking and the answer when we've asked the
22 question is yes, is can a police call taker do
23 just as good a job as a fire call taker, and we
24 believe the answer is yes. And this is part of a
25 initiative and an approach where, if you want

2 emergency response to be efficient in this city,
3 we have to break down the barriers between
4 different agencies and break down responsibilities
5 that were before seen as in one camp or the other,
6 that's the philosophy that's behind a lot of this
7 program. And if you look at why we're co-locating
8 police, EMS, and fire in the same facility for the
9 first time, that's a part of it. And I don't
10 think anybody disagrees that if you were going to
11 build the system from scratch, if you were going
12 to, which some cities have done, you wouldn't have
13 call takers and dispatchers working for different
14 agencies--an emergency is an emergency and there's
15 no reason that human beings can't learn how to
16 deal with different types of emergencies.

17 And, you know, I'll turn it over to
18 Chief Dowd to discuss, you know, training of
19 police call takers in general because it's not as
20 if they've never been trained before, and Chief
21 Cassano can add anything.

22 CHARLES DOWD: Regarding the issue
23 of training, you know, if you look at the way we
24 developed the program, it was done in conjunction
25 with the fire department, so every step of the

1 training was vetted from them. You know, we're
2 not expert in fire fighting operations, so, you
3 know, we had to take our lead from them and that's
4 what we did. So the program was developed, you
5 know, with their approval, first of all.

6
7 Secondly, the other thing you have
8 to keep in mind is they're not going into this
9 cold. We've been taking 911 calls for 40 years,
10 which means that the 911 operators which happen to
11 be police department employees have been handling
12 fire calls from the perspective of listening to
13 them and gathering information on them for the
14 last 40 years, so it's not like they just started
15 doing this or listening to this stuff in May, so
16 that there was an inherent advantage as far as
17 knowledge was concerned there. They've been
18 listening to those calls that entire time. 'Cause
19 when they conference in, they don't hang up, they
20 stay on the call until the call is over.

21 If you look at it as a training
22 issue or on how you train, you know, you try to
23 anticipate all the eventualities and you establish
24 a program. And to your point, Councilman Vacca,
25 you know, this is emergency operations, you can't

go into an experimental mode, this has to work well from day one. That being said, this process of education and training never ends, it's constantly ongoing, and not just on the fire side, but on the police side. As you gain more experience or new situations or types of situations develop, for example, like handling cellular calls which never existed before several years ago, you learn new things and new ways of handling those calls. So that process never ends, it's a constant ongoing process.

SALVATORE CASSANO: Councilman Vacca, as Deputy Mayor Skyler said, there's no doubt in anybody's mind that our fire department dispatchers have historical knowledge of fire calls and handling calls that have been coming in for many years, but over time, the 911 UCT call takers will learn that experience. Our very own dispatchers have trained them in the past, they continue to train them, they're explaining the language that we speak, and that's why the training that we're doing now is going to continue. And the very dispatchers that handle those calls are doing the training, so I'm

2 confident enough to believe that the 911 call
3 takers will eventually get that experience needed.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But this
5 training has occurred since May 6th for the 911
6 operators.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: This was not
8 sling that just started out of the blue in May.
9 In 2007, the Mayor authorized the first stage of
10 Unified Call Taking and fire department responses
11 are the first stage of it which we're discussing,
12 you know, there are visions for EMS as well, but
13 we're concentrating on fire, not just fire calls,
14 but fire response.

15 The areas that needed to be
16 addressed before it could launch were the
17 technology and the training. So before it
18 launched in May, the police department, with the
19 fire department, developed a training curriculum
20 which was implemented so that all of the police
21 call takers had been through, I believe, eight
22 hours of training just on fire response, in
23 addition to the fact that they have eight weeks of
24 training on 911 and, in many cases, years of
25 experience.

2 As I said in my testimony, after we
3 looked at all the information from the first six
4 months, where, by the way, the vast majority, I
5 think around 99%, are handled without incident, we
6 did see areas that we thought enhanced extra
7 training could address and the police department
8 and the fire department set up additional training
9 which is ongoing and I believe will be done around
10 the end of the year.

11 Now I'm obviously not an emergency
12 response expert nor do I pretend to be, but I've
13 spent a lot of time, you know, with the senior
14 management of both agencies and one of them told
15 me a couple--I think it was right around
16 Thanksgiving, I said what do we think we could
17 have done differently here because we want to [off
18 mic], where did we make, you know, were the
19 mistakes, etc., and he said to me, listen, I've
20 been this for 39 years and whenever you try
21 something new, you can test it, you can train it
22 however you want, but until you actually do it and
23 have the people doing it, you don't know how it's
24 going to work. So that is just an unknown in any
25 time you try new technology.

2 Here, we were, I think, very
3 intelligent about it, we monitored it closely and
4 when we had six months of information, we designed
5 new training and when we felt that there were
6 several incidents where there was human error,
7 that's not a training issue, it's human error,
8 which is obviously unfortunate and something we
9 have to try to eliminate if at all possible, we
10 decided we would modify the procedure to make sure
11 the fire call takers could hear the call, have an
12 opportunity to ask any questions, confirm the
13 address if they so choose as an insurance policy.
14 So we have been monitoring and addressing the
15 program as it's gone up, we didn't--so my two
16 points are we spent time before 2009 working on
17 this, developing it appropriately and then we've
18 spent time since it's started trying to find areas
19 where we need improvement, 'cause we do strive to
20 be right 100% of the time.

21 SALVATORE CASSANO: And eight hours
22 [pause] originally [off mic] dispatchers, so...

23 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Okay. Do you
24 want to add--sure.

25 SALVATORE CASSANO: The original

2 eight hours of training for the police call takers
3 was done by FDNY dispatchers to answer your
4 question.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Just quickly
6 with some questions, Mr. Deputy--

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
8 I think the Chief might want to--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, Chief, I'm
11 sorry.

12 CHARLES DOWD: If I could, just
13 and, you know, this isn't something that was
14 stagnant for that six month period, we were making
15 changes during that six month period to the
16 process. So for example, just to give you one
17 example, one of the things that we identified
18 through our monitoring program with the FDNY and
19 the NYPD is we realized that both agencies had a
20 different way of cross street verifications for an
21 address. So for example, the way we used to do it
22 was whenever you enter into the Computer-Aided
23 Dispatch system an address, it will automatically
24 show you what it believes the cross streets are.
25 What we would do typically, you know, before July

2 is we would prompt the caller, are you between,
3 for example hypothetically, Smith and Jones
4 streets and what we found was in looking at the
5 way the fire department did it, that it was
6 probably a better way. What they do is, they
7 don't prompt with streets, what they would ask is
8 what streets are you between, and what we did in
9 evaluating is realize is that that would force
10 that person, that caller, into a situation where
11 they would have to tell you the cross streets
12 before you supplied the cross streets to them.
13 And by doing that we think we, again, improved
14 accuracy of information for location information
15 simply by changing that process. And we didn't
16 just change it for fire calls, we changed it for
17 police calls.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But, Chief, I
19 have to relay something to you and even defer my
20 other questions for a second. September 29th,
21 there was a fire on City Island in my district,
22 the lady--the first call was lost because of--

23 CHARLES DOWD: Disconnect.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --and that was
25 explained to me and I'm not going to get into a

debate. Another caller, who I think was the second caller, is a lady who was in the building at 451 City Island Avenue that burned--thank God no one was hurt. But when she called, she said three times this is 451 City Island Avenue--three times--and this is September 29th and then after she said three times it's 451 City Island Avenue, a gentleman on the phone, who I assume was the 911 caller, but I do not know for a fact, but I assume, that gentleman said, after three times, what is the cross street, she was in the back of the building that was burning, she finally--they engaged her too long in conversation, she had to hang up because the fire was progressing. So I know we're concerned about length of time, but I thought that that was an indication of what we have to correct. There was no reason, it was clear, it was clear on each occasion that the address was 451 City Island Avenue, or 415 City Island Avenue, and that's what sparked my interest or my concern--not my interest, but my concern about UCT because I went to the scene of the fire. I was active in this Council in getting Ladder 53 kept open because a budget cut was proposed, so I

2 went to the scene of the fire saying thank God we
3 have Ladder 53, but I found out that Ladder 53 did
4 not arrive as quickly as it should have because of
5 a dropped call, but then when I even hear the call
6 that registered, I said to myself, something is
7 seriously wrong.

8 So I bring that to you to light--
9 I'm sure that there are other incidents which my
10 colleagues will refer to and I'm pleased that in
11 the future you're making corrections because
12 corrections had to be made. But my bottom line
13 is, before May when this system was implemented,
14 was there a level of co-training with the fire
15 dispatchers and the 911 people and what is the
16 level of co-training now? Are we intermingling
17 their knowledge and did we do it before, are we
18 doing it now? Because knowing how frantic people
19 get when there is a fire, I would get frantic
20 myself, I felt what I heard was just so
21 unacceptable. And I think that this training
22 component--all the time I've spent on this topic
23 now for weeks indicates to me the training is key.
24 We are not giving calls and authority to the most
25 experienced person.

2 [Off mic]

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And I want you
4 to respond.

5 CHARLES DOWD: Well in reference to
6 the call you're citing, I don't know that
7 particular call, my recollection of that incident
8 is is that the woman that was disconnected was the
9 first woman to call back to give the correct
10 address, all right? So I can't comment on the
11 other one, but I can comment as to the need for
12 verifying cross streets.

13 There are times, even when people
14 think--and this is the experience that we've
15 learned over many, many years of doing this--is
16 that one of the ways that you make sure that
17 they're sure of where they are is to get the cross
18 streets because sometimes, even in their
19 excitement, they will--and we've seen it happen
20 since these things have been under the microscope--
21 -is that they will repeatedly give wrong address
22 information. So there are things that you can do,
23 both from a technology side and from a questioning
24 side, that help you to verify that what they're
25 telling you is accurate.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And the other
3 point I want to make is that you indicated that
4 redundancy was reduced or I think Deputy Mayor or
5 Chief Cassano indicated that this is reducing
6 redundancy--

7 MALE VOICE 1: Increasing.

8 MALE VOICE 2: Increasing.

9 MALE VOICE 3: Increasing.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Increasing
11 redundancy--no, the new system.

12 MALE VOICE 1: Same with having a
13 back up system.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: The back up
15 system.

16 [Off mic]

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Explain there
18 was redundancy.

19 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Oh okay,
20 we're--

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And you
22 indicated that this was correcting it.

23 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right,
24 there's a couple points, just to go to your
25 earlier statement. As far as correcting

2 addresses, we have to be careful, you know, we
3 can't have it both ways here, we want the
4 information to be right, so the 911 call taker
5 confirming the address is an important part of the
6 process and nobody wants to see somebody
7 dispatched to the wrong address. So I haven't
8 [off mic] the call that you reference, but I think
9 we just have to keep that in mind.

10 Second to your point about
11 commingling, I think you're absolutely right.
12 That's one of the reasons that PSAC I and PSAC II
13 are designed to have all three branches working on
14 the same [off mic], as opposed to now you had the
15 police department and MetroTech, you have the EMS
16 in a separate part of MetroTech, not in the same
17 building, but part of the same campus, but no one
18 suggests they work together, and then you had five
19 separate communications offices in the fire
20 department for one 911 system.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Deputy Mayor,
22 you in 2008 implemented--before this, you
23 implemented the prerelease system. Now, if the
24 prerelease system was in effect when this fire
25 took place that I'm alluding to, then once that

2 prerelease system transmitted the address of the
3 fire, the person getting the prerelease notice of
4 the fire could have found out the cross street.
5 Why is the person at the other end of the phone,
6 presumably a 911 operator, asking three times for
7 the address and then saying where's the cross
8 street? If there was a prerelease system, which
9 there was supposedly, why is it that that
10 happened? We lost valuable time, yet we have a
11 system in place which you call prerelease where
12 the--

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
14 Well prerelease is a separate issue and if we want
15 to have a discussion, I think, you know, maybe we
16 need Chief Cassano to describe exactly what it is.
17 But let's not forget here that when we're talking
18 about Unified Call Taking, we are preventing this
19 from happening, and I know, 'cause I've called in
20 fires, so I've experienced it firsthand like a lot
21 of people and this is the experience: you call in,
22 you get 911 emergency, talk to the police call
23 taker, they ask where are you, you give the
24 information, and they ask follow-up questions, and
25 then they say, you know, please hold for the fire

department and then the phone starts ringing.

[Pause] Okay? Maybe it's still ringing, I don't know how long, you know, that can take, if they're very busy, it can be several rings. So now you're in an emergency and you're now waiting to talk before there was fire dispatch, anything happening to respond to the fire, you've basically been on the phone for some amount of time and you have yet to talk to the fire department, the fire department doesn't even know this is happening.

Okay, a fire call taker gets on the phone, now you have to go through the same information and additional, you know, a lot of redundant information, where are you, etc., confirm that, and then their follow-up questions. So that is what Unified Call Taking is preventing is one person calling in an emergency, talking to two people as opposed to one. So from an outset, it saves time, valuable time because seconds count because you only have to talk to one person, not two, that is just the basic premise. And anybody that disagrees with that, I can't explain it any clearer, talking to one person is just faster than talking to two people. So I'm not going to

2 belabor the point.

3 Prerelease, I can have Chief
4 Cassano talk about it, is a system within the
5 second call that used to happen to the fire call
6 taker where, after a certain amount of time, the
7 fire call taker decided that they had enough
8 information to send the information to dispatch so
9 that generally meant an address and some sense of
10 whether it was a fire or a hazmat job or smell of
11 gas, whatever it was, so that the dispatch could
12 begin even if there were additional questions
13 being asked. So that saves time, Unified Call
14 Taking save time. How much does one save than the
15 other? I would explain it this way, in 2007, the
16 average response time to a structural fire was 4
17 minutes and 27 seconds, a year later over the same
18 amount of time, from May to November, it went down
19 to 4 minutes and 7 seconds, and I would attribute
20 most of that 20 seconds to the prerelease
21 protocol.

22 The next year, when UCT began, it
23 went down for under four minutes for every month,
24 an average of 3 minutes and 57 seconds--another 10
25 seconds. So the way I would describe it is that

2 the fire response time between the two programs
3 has cut a half a minute off response and that is
4 unassailable in my opinion. Now, I understand the
5 questions about training, it's something that
6 we're working hard, you know, to improve and we
7 want to root out every possible error.

8 I would also make another point
9 that the system that has been designed with DoITT,
10 the City, NYPD and FD with an outside vendor,
11 works. What I mean by that is the technology is
12 working the way we expected it to work, so it's
13 been a success in that end, and there have been a
14 150,000 handled by Unified Call Taking since it
15 began--150,000 since May.

16 And I said the--and the complaint
17 rate, calls that generated from the fire
18 department response requests to be looked into
19 what happened is about 1%, so 99% of them went
20 without a hitch. And of that universe, of the
21 other percent, some of those, everything worked
22 correctly.

23 So I just think we need to put it
24 in a little bit of context of what we're trying to
25 accomplish, what has been accomplished, and the

2 modifications we're trying to make to make it
3 100%.

4 So your point of redundancy, yes,
5 the systems are designed to be redundant, and we
6 didn't have that redundancy before. Regarding the
7 modification, what we decided to do temporarily,
8 concurrent with the extra training that we're
9 doing, is give the--as soon as the police call
10 taker would hear that it's a fire response,
11 conference in the police call taker--excuse me,
12 the fire call taker, the fire call taker can then
13 hear the call. This does two things: This allows
14 the fire call taker to ask additional questions if
15 necessary, if they're questions that are useful,
16 it also allows another set of ears to hear the
17 address and confirm the address as an insurance
18 policy and we'll do that, as I said, until we
19 don't think it's necessary. And, Chief, do you
20 want to go into prerelease?

21 [Off mic]

22 [Pause]

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'm sorry, when
24 you talk about response, do you include the 911
25 call taker time in the response, the call taker--

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]

3 Neither police response time, nor fire response
4 time has ever included the 911 call. That is a
5 fact.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How long do you
7 think is the 911 caller involved in the call?
8 What time period do you estimate would be average?

9 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well Chief
10 Dowd oversees that operation, I'll defer to him,
11 and I understand the misinformation that's being
12 put out on this point, so let us be 100% clear,
13 the 911 call time has never been included in
14 either fire response time or police response time.
15 Why? Because response time measures the time of
16 the response. The reporting of the incident is
17 not been included. The redundant fire call that
18 we've cut out was included because it was part of
19 the time that was measured once the call was sent
20 to the fire department. We've eliminated that
21 call which I believe accounts for approximately 10
22 seconds that have been saved overall. But the 911
23 call which you're referring to has never been
24 included, not only in the fire response time
25 tabulation, but the police response time

2 tabulation.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So your
4 response times begins once the early release
5 transmission takes place? When does the response
6 time begin?

7 SALVATORE CASSANO: Once the call
8 comes to the fire department, response--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing] -
11 -early release.

12 SALVATORE CASSANO: Whether it's
13 early release, whether it's a phone call to the
14 fire department, and that's the way it's been for--
15 -

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]
17 It's not when you have a--it's not when you get
18 the fire dispatchers in on the call. It's not
19 when you get the fire dispatcher in on the call?
20 Right now, the fire dispatcher--you called it a
21 different name, but the fire--

22 [Crosstalk]

23 SALVATORE CASSANO: --call taker--

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --the fire call
25 taker--

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: --the fire call
3 taker, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --gets in on
5 the call--

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --at a certain
8 point.

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So that's not
11 when response time starts. You're saying it
12 starts when there is an early release
13 communication from the 911 operator.

14 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes, you're
15 correct. The call has been prereleased and our
16 fire operator is being conferenced in, it's almost
17 simultaneous.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now, the 30
19 seconds in response time that the Deputy Mayor
20 indicated has been improved on, there's been 30
21 seconds quicker response to fires, all right? Now
22 does that mean that the fire company is getting to
23 the scene 30 seconds sooner, is that what you mean
24 by a quicker response, that the fire company is
25 getting to the fire 30 seconds quicker than

2 before?

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes, and my
6 understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, is the
7 fire department response time starts when the
8 dispatcher gets the information. and response
9 time is the sum of two components, it is dispatch
10 time which means how long the fire dispatcher
11 takes to decide who he's going to dispatch or who
12 he or she is going to dispatch, plus the time it
13 takes the engines to--excuse, I guess three
14 things--the engine or the ladder to get on the rig
15 and leave the facility, and then the travel time.
16 So those are the three components. And the 911
17 call, as I said, never was part of that.

18 [Pause]

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So in essence,
20 since May when you implemented UCT, you state that
21 there has been a 30 second improvement in fire
22 response.

23 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I've said
24 that the 30 seconds is attributable to two things
25 and it's compared to 2007.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Two thousand
3 seven.

4 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: UCT and
5 prerelease, I believe, and the numbers show, that
6 prerelease accounts for about 20 seconds and UCT
7 accounts for about 10 seconds.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I want to go to
9 Council Member Vallone.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Just right we
11 were. So if the 911 call taker did the
12 prerelease, which has never happened, but if they
13 took the information, did the prerelease, and then
14 sent it to a dispatcher the way we did before
15 November, you would still save that 10 seconds.

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Not sure I
17 get the question.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: If the 911
19 call taker took the initial information, did the
20 prerelease and then, rather than have somebody
21 monitor as they got more information, send it to a
22 dispatcher--

23 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --you would
25 still save the 10 seconds--

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]

3 We were still saving the 10 seconds, what we have
4 accomplished is time after the dispatcher gets the
5 information to reconfirm the address and it's so
6 it can be corrected en route if necessary, and
7 also if there are questions that fire call taker
8 wants to ask and refer to dispatch so dispatch can
9 send it out, then they have that opportunity. So
10 we believe that the modification has allowed as an
11 insurance policy without costing some of the
12 decrease in response time.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I think we're
14 on the same page, but I'm not sure. What I just
15 said is we could eliminate--we could get the same
16 response time elimination which is our goal and
17 also have kept the experienced dispatcher in the
18 loop, which I think you agree with, but you have
19 other reasons other than the 10 seconds for
20 believing that it's better to have the 911 call
21 taker without the dispatcher all having to pick
22 up. Because you could have got the same benefit
23 by having the 911 dispatcher do the prerelease,
24 then send it to the fire dispatch.

25 SALVATORE CASSANO: We believe with

2 one call taker handling the call, as opposed to
3 two people trying to question the caller, that
4 would be less confusing to the caller and more
5 efficient. In other words, with the 911 call
6 taker asking questions and then our dispatcher
7 jumping in and asking questions all the time when
8 not needed, that will be confusing.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I understand
10 your position completely, but there is also good
11 arguments on the other side about having a
12 dispatcher and that's why we're having this
13 hearing. You mentioned pre-training before
14 November, Ed Skyler said eight inches--eight
15 hours, but I believe you said you believe eight
16 hours. The unions have told me that they received
17 two to six hours, why the discrepancy?

18 CHARLES DOWD: I don't know where
19 you're getting the information but it was an
20 eight-hour, one-day block of training for 911
21 personnel, police personnel, in order to be able
22 handle fire calls.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: They'll
24 testify later and we'll hear why there's a
25 discrepancy. And you believed at the time that

2 eight hours was enough for a 911 call taker to
3 become completely versed on fire codes and what is
4 necessary to handle fire emergencies?

5 CHARLES DOWD: And again, the
6 answer to that is, you know, this was something
7 that we didn't decide, this was a collaborative
8 effort between both agencies that went on for
9 months that established what the training would
10 be, what the criteria was, what would be involved
11 in the training, how you would ensure that the
12 folks understood the training, that was all part
13 of that process. And the fire department was
14 involved with that and their training group was
15 involved with that every step of the way.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I'm not
17 saying you could have or should have known better,
18 but I think the fact that we're now monitoring
19 these calls indicates that it wasn't as much as we
20 needed.

21 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: But the
22 monitoring began--and don't forget there is a
23 second round of training that's ongoing and
24 something Chief Dowd has always reminded me is
25 training is an ongoing issue, police department

2 does training through its call takers regarded to
3 fire calls and non-fire calls, correct?

4 CHARLES DOWD: It's monthly--yeah,
5 there's monthly in-service training, every month
6 there's new training, whether it's a fire issue,
7 police issue.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We mentioned
9 redundancy, one of the reasons this was explained
10 to us that this was a great thing is because
11 everybody's in one room, I believe the fire
12 dispatcher, the police dispatcher are 20 feet away
13 from each other, is that correct?

14 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yeah, when
15 the police move into PSAC I, which we believe will
16 be in the spring of next year, that'll be the
17 case. Right now, they are separated by two
18 floors.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: By what?

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: By two
21 floors--

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay.

23 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --they're now
24 in the same building, but the police are occupying
25 the 911 facility that they've been occupying,

what, 20 years or so?

MALE VOICE 1: Yes.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Twenty, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay, that makes sense, but what about the fact that Queens and the Bronx are not going into PSAC I, or they're not there now, so they're nowhere near--

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well it's a good question, the reason that the Queens and Bronx are not going to move into PSAC I is because if something were to happen to PSAC I, Queens and Bronx would take over their responsibilities. So what we want is to have a fully functioning PSAC I, but if PSAC I goes down for any reason, we want 911 to be able to continue, that means 1 Police Plaza gets activated as the backup, that means Queens and the Bronx do the whole city's fire calls, that's centrally--

[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
I can't tell you how happy I am to hear that because I've looking for redundancy since 2002 and waiting for PSAC II 'til today and I want to ask some questions about that, but great goal. So

2 when PSAC II opens up, do they stay in where they
3 are or--

4 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: No--

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --what
6 happens then?

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --the police
8 call backups team at 1 Police Plaza will move up
9 to PSAC II in the Bronx. The Bronx and Queens
10 fire will move up to the Bronx, essentially. And
11 they'll be what we call two load balance
12 facilities which means if one goes down, the other
13 one picks up the slack and it also means we need
14 to transport people from Brooklyn to the Bronx
15 which, you know, there will be contingency plans
16 for.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So you will
18 actually--it's news to me, you'll actually be
19 using PSAC II then as a fully functioning--

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
21 Yes, PSAC II will--

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --center as
23 opposed to a--

24 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --not be, you
25 know--

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Just a back
3 up.

4 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --collecting
5 cobwebs, etc.--

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Right.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --it'll be
8 used once it becomes operational.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay, that's
10 good news. The EMS has not included in this UCT.
11 Now if the system is appropriate for fire, why
12 haven't we started using these calls for EMS and
13 do you intend to use them for EMS?

14 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: The vision is
15 to get to a place where we have one call taker for
16 any type of emergency. We are doing this in
17 phases and as you can see with the UCT
18 implementation that it's important not to bite off
19 more than you can chew. So even with the fire
20 experience, and we're going to use that to inform
21 emergency medical dispatch.

22 The emergency medical call takers,
23 EMS call takers, also are I believe paramedics
24 and--

25 MALE VOICE 1: EMTs.

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --EMTs and
3 actually are trained to do triage over the phone,
4 that is not a training that the police call takers
5 have. At some point we will move towards that,
6 but at this point, we are looking to take segments
7 of medical calls--

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
9 Do you think it's actually possible to train 911
10 operators, as good as they are, to start triaging
11 people over the phone?

12 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I believe
13 we're all God's children and there's no reason
14 that a 911 call taker can't be trained to do the
15 same thing that an EMT can be trained, it would
16 mean that they'd have to become EMTs, but I don't
17 believe there's any reason that they can't do it.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Is that done
19 elsewhere?

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Sure, if you
21 go into, you know, as I've done and the Mayor has
22 done, if you go to Chicago and go to their
23 dispatch facility, you will walk around that room
24 and you will have no idea where police is, where
25 fire is, and where EMS is by looking around.

2 Unless you know how the operation works, you will
3 not know because the call takers and dispatchers
4 are essentially all unified. We don't have that
5 system here, we have three separate systems that
6 start independently that we're trying to fuse
7 together as opposed to starting from scratch.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Got a lot of
9 questions, but I'm going to end because we have a
10 lot of Council Members who need to ask. So in
11 bridging over to Gale Brewer who's going to ask
12 about the technological aspects of this,
13 originally this PSAC I and II were contracted for
14 380 million, I'm told that it's now 306 million
15 for PSAC I alone and PSAC II is being re-bid and a
16 lot of that has to do with problems with Hewlett-
17 Packard. What's your explanation of that?

18 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Which
19 explanation? On PSAC--

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
21 The true one I would--

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: You know, it
23 depends which part you're talking about and
24 they're all intermingled. There are technology
25 contracts that the city is using and then there

2 are construction contracts to actually build the
3 facilities.

4 Part of the challenge on the
5 construction side as we've seen in recent history
6 is that construction costs have skyrocketed by
7 about 40% since PSAC II was envisioned. So, yes,
8 PSAC II is more expensive than we thought, but at
9 the same time, when we first envisioned it we
10 didn't realize we were going to have spend 30 to
11 \$40 million--or excuse me, \$50 million to actually
12 buy the site. We thought we were going to do a
13 city--we were hoping to find city-owned property,
14 we couldn't find city-owned property that had the
15 sufficient standoff and security capabilities that
16 also had the--you know, there's antennas have to
17 be on top of the building so you need a facility
18 that can receive those antennas and that can work
19 from a technology standpoint. We spent a lot of
20 time looking for city-owned site, we couldn't find
21 one that fit that capability so we decided we were
22 going to buy a location. So you've seen
23 escalations in that.

24 We also have had challenges with
25 the vendors. For example, the reason that police

2 and EMS have not moved into PSAC I, although the
3 facility is ready, is we're not satisfied with the
4 software and we're not going to move people in to
5 hit a schedule when we don't believe it's a safe
6 environment for them to operate the software in.
7 So until that Verizon software meets all our
8 specifications, the police and EMS functions won't
9 move in there. We believe that'll be satisfied by
10 early next year, but until it is, that is not
11 going to--we're not going to put people in there.

12 So, as I said, the \$1.8 billion
13 price tag for this 10 or so year project is
14 expensive and every dollar is important and we
15 don't want to waste any of it.

16 In the context of other massive
17 infrastructure projects, and I see this as a
18 massive in technology but still infrastructure, if
19 you look at the third water tunnel, that's a \$6
20 billion project; if you look at the new courthouse
21 in Brooklyn, we spent \$700 million on that; we're
22 spending 2 to \$3 billion on a new water filtration
23 plant in the Bronx is being mandated by the
24 federal government. So I'm not going to disagree
25 with you that it's expensive, I think there are

2 reasons for it and I think it's our responsibility
3 to drive down the price wherever we can and hold
4 our vendors accountable, which we've tried to do.

5 We defaulted Hewlett-Packard in
6 late 2007 or early 2008 because they failed to
7 deliver the police department Computer-Aided
8 Dispatch system software. We gave them every
9 chance to fulfill their obligation, they basically
10 were unable to do it, we recovered the full cost
11 of the contract, you know, \$20 million more even
12 than we had paid out, and we used that money to
13 devote to a contract with the new vendor that we--
14 you know, but we will have the new software. So
15 this is it's technology and we got to get it right
16 and if we don't think a vendor is pulling their
17 weight, we'll make a change.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay. I'm
19 going to let--

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]
21 I'm sorry, before I give the mic to--I want to
22 thank Council Member Vallone and go to--oh, you
23 have more, oh, I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Off mic]
25 Sorry.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I just want to
3 introduce my colleagues who have arrived.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Councilman de
6 Blasio, Councilman Ulrich, Councilman Vann, and
7 Councilman Liu. Sorry.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I'm just
9 finishing up. Thanks for that, I'm going to let
10 Gale Brewer, our technological expert, follow-up
11 on with Hewlett-Packard and Verizon and the rest.
12 One question I neglected to ask you when we spoke
13 about EMS, do you have a timetable in mind for
14 turning our 911 call takers into paramedics?
15 Because they may start--

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
17 We haven't--

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --taking some
19 courses and things.

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --we have not
21 made that decision. The vision is that you would
22 have one call taker. What we have decided to do
23 is, as we have done--as we phased it in with the
24 fire responses, is that we are going to pick one
25 question that a police call taker could ask

2 somebody that's calling in for a medical
3 emergency. It could be is the person conscious,
4 it could be is the person breathing, you know, the
5 fire department's medical office and the police
6 department and DoITT are trying to figure out
7 what's the right question, and in that case we
8 would be able to dispatch an ambulance, I think
9 it's a 7-1 response? So and those responses
10 average I think is AVL about 15 seconds less than
11 they used to, but about 6 1/2 minutes. So in that
12 case, we can cut out that call taking time because
13 if the person is unconscious, there's not a lot of
14 triage you can do with them obviously. So in
15 those cases, we're going to want to get that
16 dispatch function going.

17 Overall, if you were going to do
18 one call taker for every type of emergency, you
19 would need to make sure that those call takers are
20 no less qualified to do it. The EMS call takers
21 are paramedics, so if you were going to go in that
22 direction, you would have to figure out a way to
23 have medical training for the police call takers.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: No, I mean,
25 there's 1,000 questions just based on that alone,

2 but people are waiting patiently, so I'm going to
3 move over to Gale Brewer and then other Council
4 Members. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
6 much. I know we're all God's children, but I
7 still need to be trained. So my question is, how
8 much training for this system that you're talking
9 about has been done either since October or
10 November and will you be able to train everybody
11 by the end of the year or early next year? 'Cause
12 I know that you can only train maybe 10 or 15
13 people, I don't know, per session or something.

14 CHARLES DOWD: I'm sorry,
15 Councilwoman--

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]
17 But I'm trying to understand how many people have
18 actually been trained--

19 CHARLES DOWD: [Interposing] On
20 what system?

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --on this
22 system where the new sort of way of doing things
23 that was instituted in October or November. The
24 way of having the fire and the police department
25 talk at the same time if in fact there is a fire

2 situation. In other words, just a basic training
3 that I know you've reinstituted and modified.

4 CHARLES DOWD: Well to your
5 question, it's more of an operational training
6 procedure, it's less of a systems or a software
7 training issue. The software that connects the
8 police department's CAD system to the fire CAD
9 system is in the background, you know, the
10 operators don't see it, it's a linked system.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I understand.

12 CHARLES DOWD: So it's really the
13 training that's ongoing right now is really more
14 operational.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So has
16 everybody, every one of the operators been trained
17 in this operational...?

18 CHARLES DOWD: Did you want to [off
19 mic].

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well I could
21 start from--

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing]
23 Right, I think we have--Chairperson Brewer, I
24 think we have two different things going on.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Correct.

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: In October
3 29th, we started to train the police call takers
4 with fire dispatchers--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: --and that was
7 all just retraining, reinstituting some of the
8 things that we did beforehand and that was good in
9 the respect that the police call takers heard from
10 the dispatchers what information they needed, what
11 they needed to hear.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Has everyone
13 who needs to have that training had it?

14 SALVATORE CASSANO: That will be
15 done by the end of the year.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: By the end of
17 this year.

18 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes, the
19 modified procedure has been in place since day one
20 as far as conferencing in. If a person is
21 trapped, the police call taker automatically,
22 immediately conferences in a fire dispatcher, so
23 that's already in place, that's nothing new.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. So the
25 other training, though, the first one you

2 discussed, you feel it will be done by the end of
3 this year.

4 SALVATORE CASSANO: It will be done
5 by the end of the--

6 [Crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. The two
8 systems, though, SPRINT and STARFIRE, one is
9 police and one is fire, do they talk to each other
10 technologically, do you find there are problems?
11 That's my question.

12 CHARLES DOWD: The answer is they
13 do talk to each other, there was a software built
14 and instituted before we started this process in
15 May and fully tested that functions fine. We have
16 had no major issues with that interface software.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And if
18 the situation was addressed, as I think was
19 discussed earlier and how you're trying to resolve
20 that problem, but is there a situation when
21 there's a new job that gets entered from the
22 computer because of an address problem? In other
23 words, is that something that you find needs to be
24 addressed? When you put in an address and there
25 may be some concern that the fire department

2 system and the police department system which will
3 eventually be worked out have two different
4 addresses, does it then have to be jumped to a new
5 job in terms of the computer and is that a time
6 issue?

7 CHARLES DOWD: The answer to that
8 is that when you enter an address in the police
9 department's CAD system, the SPRINT system, that
10 link that was created to connect it to STARFIRE
11 automatically populates the appropriate fields on
12 the fire department's STARFIRE system. So as far
13 as a wrong or correct or incorrect addresses,
14 whatever address you entered, that's the address
15 it's going to deliver to the STARFIRE system. Now
16 if you discover a mistake, they can immediately
17 make a change in SPRINT which the system will then
18 automatically also change on the STARFIRE side.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So you don't
20 need to have a new call in a sense pop out--

21 CHARLES DOWD: [Interposing] Not
22 necessarily.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --another
24 computer--

25 CHARLES DOWD: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: --program.

3 CHARLES DOWD: No.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. 'Cause
5 that's not my understanding. The other question I
6 have is you have, as you suggested, eventually
7 you'll have everybody on one floor at MetroTech,
8 but now you have different floors, I understand
9 that. Can people go between floors if they have
10 questions or is there cross-fertilization in terms
11 of discussion or training? How does that work?

12 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I think the--

13 SALVATORE CASSANO: That's with the
14 train--

15 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --yeah, the
16 police and fire managers that are in charge of
17 day-to-day operations talk all the time, and I
18 don't know which office they do it in or they meet
19 in the middle, but they're talking all the time,
20 so that isn't so much the issue. I believe that
21 once in they're in the new facility, it'll seem
22 more like one operation as opposed to different
23 important, disparate functions.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, so
25 right now, the operators don't talk to each other

2 but the managers can--in terms of going from floor
3 to floor.

4 SALVATORE CASSANO: Can I answer
5 that--

6 [Off mic]

7 SALVATORE CASSANO: We had some of-
8 -the police call takers have been up to look at
9 our dispatcher operations, to go through it, to
10 talk to the dispatchers, to try to get a little
11 familiar with what they need to send.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. In
13 terms of the contracts, I know that you have been
14 very honest about stating that there have been
15 issues in terms of Verizon and the challenges
16 'cause it's a very complicated system and I think
17 this--I haven't read it all, but this is the
18 Hewlett-Packard contract, I just got it, it's a
19 very large document. So is there some mechanism
20 for discussing any dispute, some resolution
21 possibility that is--if there is a contract or
22 performance issue, has the City exercised any
23 dispute resolution opportunities under this
24 contract? Under the HP, which I know is always
25 difficult to deal with contractors, but I want to

2 know how you deal with that, because in my
3 experience, with any complicated technology, you
4 do need outside contractors to work with you, you
5 have, I guess, a lot working on this project, and
6 I'm just wondering how do they--when you have a
7 dispute, how do you work with them? 'Cause it's
8 an expensive project and there's a lot of money
9 involved.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well I would
11 take two examples in regards to HP and every
12 situation is different. With the overall system's
13 integration contract with HP that goes through
14 DoITT, we had issues with their performance in
15 2007. I called the head of the company to discuss
16 it with him, Mark Hurd, and reaffirmed how
17 important this was, they sent top people from HP
18 in and they made changes and we were satisfied
19 that things improved from that point.

20 Regarding the same company in the
21 course of the same conversation, I said we are
22 getting--you know, we're not making any progress
23 because they also had the contract for the police
24 dispatch program, the police CAD program, a
25 separate contract, we weren't making any progress

2 there, we gave them every opportunity to remedy
3 that and correct it, it did not happen to our
4 satisfaction and they were defaulted.

5 So every situation is different, we
6 obviously, once we enter into a contract with
7 somebody, we want to see that to its successful
8 resolution. But if it's not successful and we
9 need to terminate our relationship, then we
10 terminate the relationship. Paul, is there
11 anything you want to add?

12 PAUL COSGRAVE: Hi, I'm Paul
13 Cosgrave, the Commissioner for the Department of
14 Information Technology. We have overall
15 administrative responsibility for managing the
16 ECTP contract, which is separate from the CAD
17 contract.

18 What Deputy Mayor Skyler said is
19 exactly right, we've handled the performance
20 issues that we've encountered with, not only HP,
21 but with other vendors on a case-by-case basis
22 and, as he pointed out, we handled these two
23 situations very differently.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I think
25 a few times the 911 system has been down early in

2 the morning, late at night, and I'm just wondering
3 if you can tell us how many times its been down
4 and how you're going to make sure it doesn't go
5 down again.

6 CHARLES DOWD: And it's an
7 important clarification that has to happen here,
8 the 911 system has not gone down. What has gone
9 down at different times is either the SPRINT CAD
10 system for the police department or the STARFIRE
11 CAD system for the fire department. Whether they
12 went down because there was a failure or whether
13 they go down for routine maintenance, which
14 happens regularly for short periods of time, but
15 that did not prevent us from taking 911 calls and
16 continuing to dispatch emergency help.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But do you
18 envision that those two systems would be such
19 that, except for regular maintenance, that they
20 should not be going down?

21 CHARLES DOWD: Well, you know,
22 there were redundancies built into them to ensure
23 that, but, again, because--and for example in the
24 situation of SPRINT, it is a relatively old
25 system, you aren't at times I guess susceptible to

2 some failures, although they are infrequent.

3 Again, our goal is on this new CAD contract to put
4 in a system that is state of the art and will have
5 virtually zero downtime.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So you're
7 thinking that there hasn't been a big problem with
8 those two systems and that the SPRINT and STARFIRE
9 systems, you feel that they are totally integrated
10 to your satisfaction.

11 CHARLES DOWD: As far as their
12 ability to send information from SPRINT to
13 STARFIRE, absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. My
15 final question is, I think that there have been
16 several situations, like a report that Gartner did
17 in 2009 just talking about money that the city--is
18 just a challenge to make this project work in
19 terms of the funding 'cause it's very expensive.
20 Are there some ways that you're looking toward to
21 the future to be sure that it doesn't run over any
22 more than it already has? What are some examples
23 of ways that you think any possible cost
24 containment? I'm one of these people, unlike
25 Council Member Vallone, who's not sure that the

2 redundancy in the Bronx or this vast cost is
3 necessary, I believe in redundancy. So leaving
4 that aside, using the great God-given talents of
5 city workers, as well as other opportunities, are
6 there some ways of cutting back costs in the
7 future, particularly on the tech front?

8 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: There are and
9 we are pursuing those aggressively, I'll just give
10 you a few examples.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah.

12 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: One is the
13 actual facility that we're building in the Bronx
14 at some point was, when after we took the
15 requirements and those requirements got converted
16 into a possible design, the price tag for the
17 building was about \$900 million and we said back
18 to the drawing board and we compressed that to get
19 it close to the same functionality, although not
20 the same, but an acceptable level for about \$550
21 million. Even after that happened, because of
22 project labor agreements we are able to reach with
23 the construction trades in the city, we are able,
24 we believe, to save about \$30 million off of the
25 cost of the building.

2 On systems integration, which is
3 obviously an important component, we are re-
4 bidding that whole contract and we will take the
5 best bid and obviously price is a factor, not the
6 only factor, but a factor, and without getting
7 into specifics, I mentioned HP, but areas where
8 vendors do not perform according to our
9 expectation, we will seek a monetary reimbursement
10 and obviously the HP example is one of those and
11 there are other areas where that is ongoing.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. So, I'm
13 sorry, which contract are you re-bidding for SI?
14 I'm sorry.

15 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: We are re-
16 bidding--

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]
18 The whole--

19 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --the systems
20 integration contract, which HP has now--

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Correct.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --but we are
23 re-bidding for PSAC II.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. For
25 PSAC II.

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All right.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair, we all have more questions,
5 but others do, too.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I just want
7 to clarify it, and maybe you misunderstood me, but
8 there's been no greater proponent of PSAC II, nor
9 nudge the Administration to get it done than me.
10 I'm concerned about the cost obviously--

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]
12 I don't like it.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --we need it.
14 Oh, you don't like it, well then I misunderstood
15 you, okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I don't--

17 [Crosstalk]

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We're all--

19 [Pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank
21 you. I'd like to mention my colleague Domenic
22 Recchia who's joined us. I'd like to call on
23 Council Member Gentile for a question.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman, and to all the Chairmen.

2 Chief Cassano, wouldn't you agree
3 with me that 911 calls that come in as fires are
4 of a different nature than 911 calls coming in as
5 police calls in that fires are usually occurring
6 as the call is being made, as opposed to police
7 calls where, for the most part, the incident has
8 already happened, would you agree with me on that?

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: I am not versed
10 in the police department's call taking. I know a
11 fire's in real time, I don't know the percentage
12 of calls that are for in progress or for [off mic]
13 P.D., that would be--Chief Dowd would have to
14 answer that one for...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. So
16 let's just then talk about the calls that come in
17 as fires that you said they most of them come in
18 as real-time incidents, correct?

19 SALVATORE CASSANO: Sure.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So it is
21 really critical if it's real-time incidents that
22 accurate information is gathered as that call is
23 being made. Accurate information that's critical
24 to save lives, that's critical to fire fighter
25 safety, wouldn't you agree that that's critical--

2 those are critical issues?

3 SALVATORE CASSANO: That's
4 critical, sure.

5 [Crosstalk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Those are
7 critical issues, right. And so this issue of
8 accurate information should be an issue that takes
9 priority today as opposed to having this accurate
10 information sometime in the future when everybody
11 gets trained, when the P.D. operators get trained.
12 It appears to me that, in a sense, and you can
13 answer this, you've acknowledged that much by your
14 new procedure following November 24th by patching
15 in the fire department dispatchers, in effect,
16 you're acknowledging the fact that you need the
17 knowledge of the fire department dispatchers.

18 SALVATORE CASSANO: We patched in
19 dispatchers on November 24th--

20 MALE VOICE: Call takers.

21 SALVATORE CASSANO: --our call
22 takers because there were some errors that were
23 being picked up and we thought it would help to
24 have those call takers listen as a training. In
25 the meantime, that was modified for that reason.

2 They would listen to see how the call taker on the
3 police side was taking it and that would be a
4 training, if they didn't think they were taking
5 the call the way it would be beneficial to us, we
6 would go back and explain to them what they didn't
7 do correctly if they didn't do it correctly. So
8 it was a training process and we would also be
9 able to pick up incorrect addresses while we were
10 doing their training and that's why we've said we
11 would continue that until we felt it wasn't
12 necessary anymore. It's only a modification,
13 temporary change.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. And
15 I correct myself, it's call takers, correct, okay.
16 Well let me ask you this then, how does the number
17 of call taker errors under the post-May 4th system
18 compare to the number of call taker errors under
19 the pre-May 4th system?

20 SALVATORE CASSANO: We didn't have
21 a tracking system pre-UCT. We--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:
23 [Interposing] So you have no way of knowing, or
24 telling this Committee how many call taker errors
25 happened prior--

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: No.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: --to UCT.

4 SALVATORE CASSANO: No.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: At all.

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: Nope.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well I

8 think you're going to hear testimony here today

9 later on that at least 3 to 4,000 call taker

10 errors have been tracked since May 4th under UCT.

11 Does that seem acceptable to the department to

12 have 3 to 4,000 call taker errors since UCT took

13 effect?

14 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well I think

15 we've had 3 or 4,000 and I don't think it's that

16 high, it's not that high--

17 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: It's half of

18 that.

19 SALVATORE CASSANO: --it's about

20 half of that and those are inquiries or

21 complaints, those aren't verified errors or

22 mistakes. And that's the reason why we put that

23 form into place so we would have a way of tracking

24 it in a database to see how it was going. We

25 didn't have that in place before UCT, so I don't

2 have any way of knowing how many mistakes or
3 possible mistakes were made pre-UCT.

4 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: But, Council
5 Member, if I--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:
7 [Interposing] Yes, go ahead, yes.

8 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --if I may,
9 obviously we want to reduce the error rate to
10 zero, I don't know if it's possible, but that's
11 the Mayor's goal and everybody's doing everything
12 they can to reach it. But we also need to
13 recognize that both departments have investigated,
14 are investigating the complaints that come in, and
15 I think some of the experiences that have come in
16 regarding those are very instructive. So I think
17 you can--and from what we've seen, a lot of those
18 complaints are unfounded and I can give you
19 examples and the gentleman beside me can give you
20 examples. For example, the day before
21 Thanksgiving, there was a call that came in from a
22 newspaper that said they had heard from somebody
23 on the response side--

24 [Crosstalk]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

2 [Interposing] Can you speak up a little bit?

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --that they'd
4 heard somebody from the response side about a UCT
5 error and that had led to a dispatch delay because
6 the address wasn't given and when we looked at the
7 call, it had nothing to do with UCT, it was an EMS
8 call, and, by the way, it was an EMS call that was
9 handled 100% right. Now the result was tragic
10 because the person was not able to be saved, but
11 there was nothing that was handled incorrectly by
12 the police call taker and it was not even a
13 Unified Call Taking call because it was a type of
14 call that's not being handled by the police call
15 taker, it's a call that's handled by EMS.

16 So there has been a lot of
17 misinformation and a lot of anecdotes that simply
18 were unfounded. There have been real errors that
19 we want to correct, but there are also cases where
20 there haven't been mistakes and some have sought
21 to portray them as mistakes. For example, a
22 caller who does not give an address, but only
23 gives a general location is not, as the Chief said
24 in his testimony, is not a problem with the police
25 call taker or the UCT system, that is simply a

2 case where the person doesn't know the address,
3 and that is a situation that has gone on before
4 UCT and that's a situation that will go on
5 probably after UCT, that is just what happens when
6 somebody sees smoke and doesn't necessarily know
7 where the smoke is coming from.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well--

9 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: So there are
10 just--you know, the analysis of the amount of
11 complaints that were sent from the fire department
12 to the police department and every one there's a
13 form that the Chief instituted because we take the
14 complaints seriously. [Pause] Hold on, if I
15 could--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Oh, I'm
17 sorry, go ahead, I'm sorry.

18 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --the forms--
19 the fire department looks, things that they
20 believe require police investigation, the police
21 department takes them, there about 500 of those
22 that were forwarded to the police department. Of
23 those, 175 were founded, out of those 500 that
24 went to the police department, and they listened
25 to the tapes and they decide which ones are

2 mistakes, which ones everything went right, but
3 there was some misunderstanding out in the field,
4 which is possible. And I would just ask you to
5 keep in mind one of the figures I used before
6 which is that UCT, Unified Call Taking, has
7 handled 153 and a half thousand calls since it
8 launched in May. And, as I said, the 500 that
9 went to the police department, about 170 they
10 detected problems with and that's why we're doing
11 the training, that's why we have the modification,
12 but these allegations that there are thousands and
13 thousands of mistakes being made are wildly
14 inaccurate.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Well
16 obviously I'm going to let them speak for
17 themselves, but there will be testimony about the
18 number of calls that are in error. I understand
19 there's a UCT 1 form that you've generated as of
20 July to document what I guess are considered
21 errors, can you share those forms with this
22 Committee?

23 MALE VOICE: Sure, and we'll check-

24 -

25 [Crosstalk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

3 [Interposing] I don't mean the form in and of
4 itself, the ones that have been reported, the UCT-
5 -

6 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
7 We will have to check with the counsel for the
8 Committees, the departments whether there's any
9 issue with that, but I have no problem with it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.
11 Well I'll speak to our Chairman on that issue.
12 Let's get back to, I think, both Deputy Mayor
13 Skyler and Chief Cassano mentioned this issue of a
14 caller giving a vague address and that's not
15 really a problem of the UCT system. If we look at
16 the St. Marks Avenue fire that happened in
17 Councilman Vann's district, the caller was at
18 Prospect and Rogers and when they made the call,
19 and the fire was actually on St. Marks Avenue, but
20 the call was made from Prospect and Rogers and the
21 caller spoke to the 911 call taker and apparently
22 said, I'm at Prospect and Rogers, but I think the
23 fire's somewhere on St. Marks Avenue, fifth or
24 sixth floor of the building in the rear of the
25 building. Now that's all critical information,

2 but what was transmitted, my understanding is,
3 that the location was Prospect and Rogers, and
4 that's where the unit was dispatched to Prospect
5 and Rogers, and in fact it was not until the unit
6 arrived and talked to residents to find out that
7 the fire was actually on St. Marks Avenue. Now,
8 I'm also told that, had a dispatcher or had a fire
9 call taker been on that call, he would have known
10 that the only five or six story building on St.
11 Marks Avenue was the one that was on fire.

12 MALE VOICE 1: Wow.

13 SALVATORE CASSANO: Wow, that's
14 pretty good, 'cause I don't know that myself,
15 okay? So that's the first thing. Second thing--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

17 [Interposing] Well this is based on training and
18 I'm getting information on that.

19 SALVATORE CASSANO: First of all--

20 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
21 Council Member, are you really suggesting that
22 dispatchers off the top of their head have block
23 by block knowledge about how--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

25 [Interposing] That's where I--

2 [Crosstalk]

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --how many
4 stories each--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:
6 [Interposing] That's what I understand.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --that is
8 amazing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: That's
10 what I understand.

11 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well the call
12 that you're referring to was the second call that
13 came in, that came in about 3 1/2 minutes after
14 the first call and our units were dispatched to
15 the cross street location prior to that call. I
16 mean it's on our website, you can go listen to
17 both calls, listen to the first call and you'll
18 see that the cross street was given as Rogers and
19 Prospect and it wasn't given about--the St. Marks
20 information didn't come up 'til the second call,
21 which was about three minutes after the first
22 call. It's on our website, you can go listen to
23 it and then you can listen for yourself.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member,
25 I'm just going to ask you to finish with one last

2 question and we've got at least four more Council
3 Members to go and a lot of unions to hear from, so
4 all the subsequent Council Members, please keep
5 your questionings to about five minutes, no
6 speeches, just questions, please. Council Member,
7 finish up, thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER: Can I interject
9 for a second? Wasn't the school number given in
10 the Brooklyn case? Wasn't there a school number
11 that was given that automatically would have come
12 up whether or not a location was in dispute or how
13 tall a building was, wasn't there a school--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: The school is
16 around the corner.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER: Yeah, so--

18 SALVATORE CASSANO: It wasn't on
19 the same block.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER: But wouldn't that
21 help--the caller was trying to give you as much
22 information as they could and I thought that that
23 would plug into your system right away.

24 SALVATORE CASSANO: If you listen
25 to the call, the caller was not giving us as much

2 information, the second caller said she thinks
3 it's on, but the first call that came in, it was
4 sent to the cross street where they gave them the
5 location. If you listen to the call, you'll hear
6 it, you should listen for yourself.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER: But the lady was
8 in the school, so somebody who came there would
9 have responded as a fire dispatcher would have, I
10 think, knowing where the school was and knowing
11 the general area. I know that specifics may not
12 be known, but wouldn't they know the general area
13 where the school is--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing]
16 Well they went to the general area, that's what
17 they did, they're not going to go to the school,
18 the knew the fire wasn't in the school.

19 [Crosstalk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER: --block behind, it
21 was one block behind.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Let's
23 remember what happened, people that called did not
24 know exactly where the fire was, the fire
25 department was dispatched to the locations, not

2 addresses 'cause they didn't have address, to the
3 locations where callers said they believed there
4 was a fire. The callers said they weren't sure
5 where the fire was, but they knew it was
6 somewhere, they saw smoke. They dispatched--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

8 [Interposing] They didn't mention St. Marks
9 Avenue, one caller mentioned St. Marks Avenue.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --they
11 dispatched--there's different streams of
12 information, dispatchers sent units to that
13 location, they identified the fire, there's a lot
14 of--you know, I can't speak to somebody who said
15 that they would have known by that call exactly
16 where that building was, that seems to me to be a
17 stretch, but there was nothing about that
18 incident--and this incident was investigated
19 thoroughly by both the fire department and the
20 police department--that indicated any problem with
21 the UCT system.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Let me
23 just finish up by asking about this database that--
24 --am I correct that individual units put together a
25 database of critical information known as CIDS,

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 100
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 Chief Cassano?

3 SALVATORE CASSANO: That's correct,
4 yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And this
6 critical information involves hazardous material
7 or specific instances on individual locations
8 within a unit's coverage, am I correct?

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: That's correct.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And based
11 on that critical information, if they respond to
12 that location, they may change their tactics based
13 on what is available to them on the CIDS database,
14 am I correct?

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes, you are.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. So
17 then it follows that, unless address is correctly
18 specified to a unit, they cannot access any of
19 that critical information, am I correct?

20 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes, you are.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So it is
22 really even more so for the safety of the firemen
23 and any of those in the building that accurate
24 address information is given.

25 SALVATORE CASSANO: Nobody here is

2 disputing that the accurate address is not
3 important, it certainly is, and that's what we're
4 striving to do.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And
6 without it, CIDS is useless.

7 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well, yeah, if
8 you don't have an address, you can't get the CIDS
9 on that building, yes.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right, let's
11 remember, no matter how good the call taker is,
12 they're limited by the information that the caller
13 can provide. So the job of the call taker is to
14 find out as much as he or she can and send that
15 information to dispatch for the appropriate
16 response. If the person doesn't have an address--
17 and by the way, there are instances and both
18 Chiefs can describe other ones, where people had
19 given the wrong address. Why? Because they're in
20 an emergency situation, they're panicked, they're
21 scared, it might not be their home, they might not
22 exactly know where they are, that happens also,
23 and then you dispatch to the wrong address--

24 [Crosstalk]

25 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Hold on, hold

on, I'm sorry, sir--

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --just give
me a second--

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay, go
ahead.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --and then
sometimes there have been complaints generated,
you know, on the form that said we went to the
address. They're absolutely right, they did, they
went to the address that was provided to the call
taker and then the dispatcher sent. We're trying
to prevent that.

One of the things in PSAC I when
the police move in is that there will be
automatically a map that pops up on the right side
of the console and the map will show, using GPS
technology if it's a cell phone or even a landline
'cause they can figure out where the call is
emanating from, where the person is. So if the
person is in a panic, thinks they're on 40th
Street, but is actually on 38th Street, the call
taker can say wait a second, I'm showing you on
40th Street, are you sure you're on 30th--oh,

2 yeah, no, you're right, you're right. So those
3 types of things happen also. When we're here
4 talking about it a little more removed, we forget
5 that these are emergencies where people are
6 calling 911, they might be frantic, excited, or
7 scared, and the call taker who's got a very
8 challenging job in order to get the right
9 information from them.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Let me
11 just ask one quick question, if I were to push a
12 button on the call boxes on the street, a fire
13 button, would I get a fire call dispatcher--

14 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes, you would.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: --a fire
16 call taker? I would get a fire call taker if I
17 pushed the button on the street--

18 [Crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: --but if I
20 called, if I called, I would get a P.D. call
21 taker.

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: If you called
23 911, you would get a P.D. call taker.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Amazing.
25 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
4 Councilman. Quickly, is there a problem that we
5 don't have the Google Map technology that we
6 should have at this point or is that a technology
7 issue that we should be concerned about? It would
8 appear to me that if we had better technology and
9 the fire dispatchers having the knowledge that
10 they have, could that be an answer to Councilman
11 Gentile's instance?

12 CHARLES DOWD: Well to Deputy Mayor
13 Skyler's point, with cellular calls now, we have
14 the ability to map locations, except that on the
15 old system, they have to bring it up on the same
16 screen that they have their CAD system on. So in
17 the new system they'll be able to display both at
18 the same time, so there's an inherent advantage to
19 that. But currently right now we have the ability
20 to map locations for cell calls.

21 [Pause]

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Use that
23 technology right now?

24 CHARLES DOWD: We are using it.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We are.

CHARLES DOWD: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So there is
3 Google Map technology in place?

4 CHARLES DOWD: You described
5 exactly as Google Map technology, but it's
6 mapping--

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Type.

8 CHARLES DOWD: --it's mapping
9 technology that gives us location data from
10 cellular calls.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can you use the
12 GPS triangulation at this point?

13 CHARLES DOWD: Well GPS and
14 triangulation are really two different
15 technologies, but all the major phone carriers
16 right now are using GPS technology on their cell
17 phones.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Their more--

19 CHARLES DOWD: Which is more
20 accurate, by the way, than the triangulation.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But again,
22 we've had several cases where fire companies were
23 dispatched to cell phone towers--

24 CHARLES DOWD: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --and if that

2 was the case, relate that to what you just
3 indicated to me.

4 CHARLES DOWD: Okay. Yeah, 'cause
5 and it's a good point and let me clarify it. When
6 you get a cellular call, in order to get the
7 latitude and longitude information, the GPS
8 information in order to map it, the call has to be
9 connected for 10 to 15 seconds. In the instance
10 in City Island, that call disconnected prior to
11 the GPS information. So the next best information
12 you would have in that instance is cell site
13 sector information. Each cell site is divided
14 into three sectors so you would get for--and I
15 don't know which one it was in that--southeast
16 sector cell site address location, so that was the
17 best information that we had in that instance,
18 simply because the call was not connected long
19 enough to give us GPS data.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Quickly, with a
21 cell phone like that, how long do you need for you
22 to have that number from the cell phone pop up so
23 you can call that person back, is there a length
24 of time issue, 10, 15 seconds or is there a
25 capability at all to get that number off the cell

2 phone?

3 CHARLES DOWD: If you're getting
4 the call and you're connected to the caller,
5 you're going to have the phone information.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What happened
7 in that case then? Why didn't you have it--

8 [Crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --even though
10 it was only 10 seconds, why didn't you have the
11 phone number?

12 CHARLES DOWD: We did have the
13 phone number.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Did you call
15 them back?

16 CHARLES DOWD: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What happened?

18 CHARLES DOWD: Didn't connect.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Didn't connect.

20 CHARLES DOWD: She was inside--

21 MALE VOICE: Cell phone service.

22 CHARLES DOWD: You don't always get
23 a connect on a cell phone.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Off mic]. Is
25 that an issue that we can--a large percentage of

2 people are going to be using cell phones or are
3 using cell phones--

4 CHARLES DOWD: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --is that an
6 issue that we're trying to--

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [Interposing]
8 We need broadband.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --address?
10 Gale?

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We need
12 broadband, we--

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You could keep
15 going [off mic].

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I
17 think it's a question, but I'll come back to it.
18 Council Member James?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just briefly
20 because I know other colleagues have questions.
21 In the instance of the case on St. Marks place,
22 was the caller on the phone for longer than the
23 requisite 15 seconds for the GPS system to work?

24 CHARLES DOWD: I think that was a
25 landline. I believe that--I don't know if that

2 was a cellular call--

3 [Crosstalk]

4 CHARLES DOWD: --I think it was a
5 landline call.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So if it was
7 a landline call, are there any mechanisms in place
8 or technologies in place for an--

9 CHARLES DOWD: [Interposing] Well
10 if the phone company's database is correct, it
11 would tell you that that phone was in the school.
12 I'm not certain, I'd have to go back, I believe it
13 was a landline call, it may have been a cell call,
14 but I have to check.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: My
16 understanding it was a landline call from P.S.
17 138--

18 MALE VOICE 1: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --which is
20 on Prospect Place and the fire was--you could see--
21 -

22 [Crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --the fire
24 in the back of the building on the sixth floor,
25 the fire truck showed up at the intersection and

2 then was diverted to another location by someone
3 who said the fire is up the block, you're in the
4 wrong location, is that your understanding?

5 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yeah, and they
6 went around the corner--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
8 [Interposing] And then they went around the--

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yeah.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --corner,
11 that's my understanding. So if in fact the
12 operator at the time did not have the location,
13 but in fact had an intersection based on the first
14 call, why did the operator not wait until the GPS
15 system kicked into play so that they would get an
16 accurate location?

17 CHARLES DOWD: Well you wouldn't
18 get GPS from a landline phone, the location
19 information comes from--

20 [Crosstalk]

21 CHARLES DOWD: --a database, an
22 NELE database that's maintained by the phone
23 company.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Is there any
25 technology as far as you know that you are working

2 on where landline phones--where there's technology
3 where you can get a location of a fire from a
4 landline phone?

5 CHARLES DOWD: You mean in
6 relationship to a GPS location?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Correct.

8 CHARLES DOWD: Not to my knowledge.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. And
10 next question, why didn't the operator not ask the
11 caller for landmarks or other geographic markers
12 in the area?

13 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well if you
14 listen to the first call--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

16 SALVATORE CASSANO: --the caller
17 says I'm not familiar with the area, specifically
18 says I am not familiar with the area, you have to
19 listen to the call.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And so how
21 come this individual who was--trained for how many
22 hours, allegedly trained for how many hours?

23 SALVATORE CASSANO: The--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
25 [Interposing] On average, they're trained eight

hours I was told, is that true?

SALVATORE CASSANO: Well they're
trained on a lot more than eight hours--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

SALVATORE CASSANO: --I don't know
what the--but eight hours on fire call.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: On fire, so
in this particular case, this individual was
trained for eight hours, why did that person not
ask the caller, do you actually see the fire? And
if they were able to see the fire, why was the
fire company dispatched to that location?

SALVATORE CASSANO: She gave, and
again, not [off mic] call all the way, she says
I'm not familiar with the area, she did give a
Rogers and Prospect--Rogers and Lefitts--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No.

SALVATORE CASSANO: --Rogers and
Prospect--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Mm-hmm.

SALVATORE CASSANO: --she gave that
and they were trying to get more information, she
says I'm not familiar with the area. And the call
is on our website and you can listen to it--

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 113
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

3 [Interposing] No, I've listened to it. So let me
4 just understand this system. So prior to the
5 implementation of UCT, there was an emergency
6 caller to 911 and then the call taker would
7 initiate a conference call with FDNY. That is not
8 the system currently, yes?

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: I'm sorry.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes?

11 CHARLES DOWD: If I could, Chief, I
12 was--

13 [Crosstalk]

14 CHARLES DOWD: --yeah, yeah, no,
15 now the 911 call taker is handling the call as if
16 it's their direct responsibility to gather the
17 information for the response and they prerelease
18 the job per the fire department's requirements to
19 the fire dispatcher.

20 MALE VOICE 1: Right, yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So the--

22 CHARLES DOWD: Now on the
23 modification that was made at the end of November,
24 they are still conferencing in the fire call taker
25 as we continue to evaluate the process, but

2 they're still pre-releasing the assignment per the
3 original process.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And their
5 role right now, the fire dispatcher is to monitor
6 the call?

7 [Crosstalk]

8 MALE VOICE 1: --came three minutes
9 later.

10 CHARLES DOWD: The fire call taker-
11 -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

13 CHARLES DOWD: --role is once
14 they're connected onto the telephone call is to
15 monitor, to ask any questions that they deem
16 appropriate, and to re-verify any information they
17 feel they need to re-verify.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Now how many
19 [pause] how many fire dispatch--in January of
20 2009, there were approximately 1,100 police
21 communication technicians who process 911 calls.
22 How many are on the job today?

23 SALVATORE CASSANO: At 911?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

25 SALVATORE CASSANO: Approximately

2 the same amount.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Same amount.

4 And as of that date, there were also 200 FDNY
5 dispatchers who were stationed in each of the five
6 boroughs. How many are stationed in each of the
7 five boroughs as of today?

8 [Pause]

9 [Off mic]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Five?

11 SALVATORE CASSANO: No, no, we have
12 approximately 150 dispatchers throughout the five
13 boroughs?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So it's 150
15 since--so 50 have been either laid off or--

16 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing]
17 No, no, nobody's been laid off--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

19 SALVATORE CASSANO: --nobody's been
20 laid off.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So as of
22 February 2009, there were 200, you indicate that
23 there are now 150, what happened to the other 50?

24 MALE VOICE: Right.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Or are my

2 numbers wrong?

3 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yeah, I'll get
4 you the right numbers, there's not a reduction of
5 50 in head count.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

7 SALVATORE CASSANO: Councilwoman
8 James, just--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

10 SALVATORE CASSANO: --some of the
11 things in the improvements in your area--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

13 SALVATORE CASSANO: --I believe
14 your area, 1015 Washington Avenue?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

16 SALVATORE CASSANO: All right,
17 there was a fire--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yep.

19 SALVATORE CASSANO: --last week,
20 1015--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Last week.

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: --Washington
23 Avenue, we got it as a complaint that the units
24 were sent to the wrong address.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: We listened to
3 the call, the caller says I'm at 975 Washington
4 Avenue, that's the caller, the units are
5 dispatched to 975 Washington Avenue, the police
6 call taker sees as Chief Dowd described, the NELE
7 and the location comes up at 1015 Washington
8 Avenue, she immediately conferences in the fire
9 call taker and says I dispatched units to 975,
10 that's the address they gave me, but the NELE is
11 coming up 1015 Washington Avenue. He immediately
12 calls back, gets the right address, and the units
13 are--another units are dispatched to 1015
14 Washington Avenue. So the system that we've put
15 in place is working.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Now was that
17 call a landline or a cell phone?

18 SALVATORE CASSANO: Landline.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. And
20 you were able to, at that point, you were able to
21 ascertain the address of the fire, correct?

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So why
24 didn't that--

25 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --not happen
3 with this--

4 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing] -
5 -we ascertained the location of the call, well the
6 call happened to be the address of the fire.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And why was
8 that not--why were you not able to ascertain the
9 address of the caller related to the St. Marks
10 fire?

11 SALVATORE CASSANO: There wasn't--
12 we would have been out to the school, we knew that
13 they were in the school, they gave a--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
15 [Interposing] But you could see the fire from the
16 school.

17 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well they went
18 to that corner.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Well
20 actually that's not true, they went to the
21 intersection.

22 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well the
23 intersection.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right, the
25 intersection, the school in fact is on Prospect

2 facing the building where you could actually see
3 the fire, it was in back of the fire. So had they
4 had the location of the school, you could've
5 witnessed and seen the fire from that location.

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: They were
7 transmitted, they were dispatched to the corner,
8 which they would have if there was a pull box on
9 that corner and somebody had pulled the box for
10 the fire at that location, that's where they were
11 dispatched.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
13 [Interposing] Speaking of the call boxes, do they
14 all work?

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: No, there are
16 some that are out of service that we're working to
17 repair.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So if you
19 have a call box in parts of the city that are not
20 working, then what good is it? [Pause] Anyway.

21 SALVATORE CASSANO: They're in the
22 process of being repaired.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. So
24 another fire in my district where a firefighter
25 was sent to the wrong location, on May 19th,

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 120
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 firefighters were sent to 149 St. John Street,
3 when in fact the address as 1249 St. John's Place.
4 Human error or an error in transmission?

5 SALVATORE CASSANO: I don't know
6 that particular incident, I'll have to get back to
7 you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

9 [Off mic]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Can we go to
11 the contract? As Chair of Contracts, I want to
12 talk a little bit about the Hewlett-Packard
13 contract? My understanding is that contract was
14 priced at 380 million for both PSAC and PSAC II,
15 is that correct?

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: No.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No?

18 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: The 380 is
19 the--it's registered for 380, we now believe we're
20 going to be spending 380 million and it is the
21 purpose of that contract is for PSAC I and we will
22 be doing a separate contract for PSAC II.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Was there
24 ever a time where you contracted for HP to do both
25 PSAC I and PSAC II?

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I believe
3 there was the possibility that it is the city's
4 choice, we would have been able to use that
5 contract for--if we had been satisfied with it for
6 PSAC I and PSAC II. We decided that we don't want
7 to do that. I don't have the contract in front of
8 me, I'm not sure exactly what the language was,
9 but as far as that contract, we could have decided
10 we wanted use it to do both, we have decided that
11 in effect we want to re-bid it. Paul, is there
12 anything you want to add?

13 PAUL COSGRAVE: No, that's--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

16 [Interposing] Is it true that now you are re-
17 bidding PSAC II--

18 [Crosstalk]

19 PAUL COSGRAVE: --UCT.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --at a cost
21 of \$200 million and for PSAC I alone, the contract
22 is at 306 which, when you total the two, would
23 mean we're paying \$506 million--

24 [Crosstalk]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --for a

2 contract which originally cost 306?

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well I don't
4 believe that that's an apples to apples
5 comparison. The total is for both facilities and
6 the HP contract is not going to cover both
7 facilities, it's going to cover only one facility.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And what's
9 the cost of that contract?

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Of which we
11 haven't finalized--it's in procurement, so I can't
12 say exactly, I can tell--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
14 [Interposing] Can I ask you a question, why--

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]
16 Yeah, well excuse me, I--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I'm sorry.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --I'd like to
19 limit the--I have to move on, I want to--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
21 [Interposing] So just my very--

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --limit the
23 questions to you--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --my very
25 last question--

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 123
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --I want--
3 excuse me?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I want to limit
6 the questions to UCT, this is the purpose of the
7 hearing.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So if it's a
10 UCT question, I'll allow that to conclude this
11 round--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
13 [Interposing] So let's go back--

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --this round of
15 questioning.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman. Let's go--

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --back to
20 response time since I don't really understand
21 response time. We will have a contracts committee
22 with a hearing with respect to the HP contract,
23 which I believe has ballooned similar to the
24 CityTime contract, which has ballooned. Let's go
25 back to response time, it's my understanding that

2 the way that you commute or compute response time
3 is in question. In the past, response time for a
4 police dispatch operator was not included in
5 response time, yes? It was never included.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: The police
7 911 call taking time has never been included in
8 response time either for police or fire.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Now and FDNY
10 dispatch operator was previously included.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And now that
13 we have removed FDNY dispatch from the process,
14 that would result in a less reduction in response
15 time--

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --which is
18 why you have now indicated that your response time
19 has improved because you removed one element of
20 that equation, yes?

21 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: That that
23 does not mean that fire engines and fire trucks
24 are getting to fires more quickly, it's just that
25 you removed a city employee, yes?

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: No, it is
3 exactly--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --what it
6 means.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

8 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Because if
9 you look at the time it takes to respond, if the
10 response time is being held up for a second
11 conversation and you eliminate that second
12 conversation, then it reduces the amount of time
13 it takes to dispatch and respond, so it
14 absolutely--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
16 [Interposing] Is there any report or data as far
17 as you know or information with regards to taking
18 away the FDNY dispatcher or the police dispatcher,
19 the exact time from the time that the call is
20 released and a fire truck is dispatched to a fire,
21 that exact time, is there an analysis of that?

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Which exact
23 time? I think we're talking about the same thing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. When
25 a fire engine actually leaves their house--

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]

3 Yes, it's--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --to a fire.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --called
6 travel time.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Travel time.
8 Can we analyze just the travel time alone and
9 when--

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
11 Well right, we're not--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --you
13 examine travel time alone, does that indicate that
14 in fact response time has decreased?

15 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Travel time
16 is different, so travel time wouldn't decrease
17 because of this because we're not suggesting that
18 changing the call taking procedure reduces the
19 amount of time it takes for a truck to get from
20 the firehouse to the fire.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: What we are
23 saying is that removing that extra call--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes?

25 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --reduces the

amount of time that it takes overall, not the travel time, but the response time. Remember the response time is the sum of the travel time plus the dispatch time, and before that included the fire call taking time, so by eliminating that redundant call, that time is eliminated and thus the reduction.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: But by removing that additional element, there is some level of confusion with respect to those calls where the address is vague.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I'm sorry?

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Where you have calls where the address of a fire or a fire is unknown or vague--

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You're with me? In that particular case, for instance, the case of St. Marks, there was really no reduction in response time, in fact, there is an increase in response time because it should have required some additional inquiry on the part of the dispatcher, yes?

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well the

2 Chief can make an assessment as to whether a
3 different call taking function or [off mic] would
4 have changed that outcome?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: So far
7 everything he's told me is that that's not the
8 case. And he can go into further detail about
9 that. The response time is an average, it is an
10 average response time, that means there are times
11 where it's below 3 minutes and 57 seconds, and
12 there are times where it's above 3 minutes and 57
13 seconds. So that time has clearly gone down over
14 the last several years, partly 'cause of UCT,
15 partly 'cause of prerelease.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.
17 There's other Council Members and so I'll defer my
18 series of questions and come back, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
20 de Blasio?

21 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well actually
22 can I clear up one thing?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Sure.

24 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I'm thinking
25 as you're asking questions, regarding the HP--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Contract?

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --contract, I
4 know that the chairman doesn't want to get into
5 it, but--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --because we
8 are at a public record, I cannot remember exactly,
9 and I don't have it in front of me, the contract,
10 as to whether it was anticipated that the original
11 budgeted amount for that contract was going to
12 handle both--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

14 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --PSAC I and
15 PSAC II. So I just wanted to make sure I don't
16 give you a misleading answer.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You--

18 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I can tell
19 you that--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

21 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --for now
22 they are going to be separate contracts.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. And--

24 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: And I don't
25 know how much the second one is going to cost--

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 130
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --because we
4 haven't finished negotiations and I would also say
5 part of that is personnel and part of that is
6 equipment.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: When you
8 follow-up with the--when you find out the answer,
9 you can get back to me?

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, please--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: The only
12 other, just--

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes, Council
14 Member.

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --just get
17 back to me and just--

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --get back
20 to me as to why city employees were not good
21 enough and we had to go to a private contractor.

22 [Crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: He will get
24 back to your committee. Council Member de Blasio.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Thank

2 you, Mr. Chairman. Deputy Mayor, I have heard in
3 your testimony your desire to create a system that
4 you think will be more efficient, I appreciate
5 that goal. I think there has been a concern over
6 the years, whether it's on this issue or on the
7 issue of whether firehouses should be kept open or
8 should be closed, I think there's been a running
9 concern a lot of us have had about the human
10 element in this, about how much personnel you need
11 and what level of training, what level of
12 experience. So I just want to say there may be
13 some philosophical differences, I want to address
14 them respectfully, but there may be some
15 philosophical differences, 'cause I think
16 underlying this whole discussion is a question of
17 whether you don't in fact need people who have
18 done this work for a long time to be effective,
19 rather than people who are newly trained.

20 Now specifically I just want to do
21 one thing in terms of background information and
22 then a quick question. The background information
23 as you said earlier, people should listen to the
24 actual transmission of the call related to the
25 fire November 18th of this year, 654 St. Marks

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 132
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 Avenue, so the staff had called that up a moment
3 ago, I just listened to it, I want to see if we
4 can play just a brief segment from that 'cause I
5 want to ask you a question based on that since you
6 referred to it earlier. But let's see if this
7 will work, technologically if we can get this to
8 be heard.

9 911 OPERATOR: 911 operator, [off
10 mic] or police emergency?

11 [Off mic]

12 FEMALE VOICE 1: Yes, hi, I am [off
13 mic]--

14 911 OPERATOR: Hello?

15 FEMALE VOICE 1: --I'm calling to
16 report a fire?

17 911 OPERATOR: What borough, ma'am?

18 FEMALE VOICE 1: Brooklyn.

19 911 OPERATOR: What's the location?

20 [Pause] Hello?

21 FEMALE VOICE 1: I'm in a building,
22 I'm in a school, school it is right [off mic]--

23 911 OPERATOR: [Interposing] Okay,
24 you're breaking up, what's the location?

25 [Off mic]

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 133
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 911 OPERATOR: Ma'am?

3 FEMALE VOICE 1: Yes.

4 911 OPERATOR: What's the location
5 of the fire?

6 FEMALE VOICE 1: It's a fire on the
7 top building, two windows, there's a--there's a
8 lot of smoke.

9 911 OPERATOR: What street or an
10 address?

11 FEMALE VOICE 1: I do not know the
12 address, I'm inside a building, I'm [off mic]
13 window, there's a fire at the window. [Off mic]
14 Brooklyn.

15 911 OPERATOR: Rogers and what?

16 FEMALE VOICE 1: And Prospect.

17 911 OPERATOR: Is it an apartment
18 building?

19 FEMALE VOICE 1: I'm sorry?

20 911 OPERATOR: Is it in an
21 apartment building?

22 FEMALE VOICE 1: It's in an
23 apartment building.

24 911 OPERATOR: How many stories?

25 FEMALE VOICE 1: It looks like

maybe eight stories, one, two, three, four, five,
six, seven, eight stories.

911 OPERATOR: And what floor is
the smoke coming from?

FEMALE VOICE 1: The top floor.

911 OPERATOR: So you can see it
from the building that you're in?

FEMALE VOICE 1: Yes, I'm at P.S.
138. [Pause] Okay, I said everyone get out, yes.

911 OPERATOR: All right, ma'am,
the call is already [off mic]--

FEMALE VOICE 1: All right, thank
you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Thank
you. Thank you. Deputy Mayor, I say to you and
your colleagues, so you could hear obviously there
was some difficulty in communication to say the
least and it was a difficult situation, but what's
striking me and I'd like just clarification, at
the end of the conversation after some
miscommunication, it becomes clear I thought that
the 911 operator was specifically hearing that the
caller was in a school and looking out at an
apartment building that was eight stories high, in

2 other words, a fairly specific amount of
3 information that could have been very helpful.
4 I'm trying to understand from what I heard of the
5 discussion earlier, did that result in better
6 ability to get to the fire? 'Cause obviously
7 there was a long delay here or did something break
8 down at that particular moment, that in fact
9 someone did hear it was near the school and that
10 would have been helpful, but somehow that didn't
11 get out to the field. Could you just clarify
12 that?

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I'll let the
14 Chief answer.

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: If the caller
16 gave the cross street as Rogers and Prospect and
17 that's where the units were dispatched, they knew
18 the fire was not in the school and they were
19 dispatched to the corner of Rogers and Prospect.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: I'm
21 asking this respectfully because I think we all
22 have the same goal here--

23 SALVATORE CASSANO: Sure, we do.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: --and
25 we're talking about human beings and that's always

2 a tough reality in the middle of a crisis, but,
3 again, what I heard and you referred us all to
4 this tape--

5 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: --on
7 your website and I just heard with my own ears is
8 it sounds like the operator heard loud and clear
9 that the caller was in the school and that that
10 would have been additionally helpful information
11 besides just what cross street. Do you believe
12 that information was heard, do you believe it was
13 helpful or not?

14 SALVATORE CASSANO: I believe it
15 was heard and I believe the information that was
16 helpful was is that she gave a location of Rogers
17 and Prospect. Now if they had gone to the school,
18 they would have had to locate the caller and try
19 to track that caller down. Meanwhile, they were
20 at the corner in 3 minutes and 9 seconds, that's
21 when they were at that location, the first two
22 unit, they were directed around the corner by--
23 we're not sure if it was a person that was living
24 in a back yard or something, and they directed
25 them around the corner. They went around the

corner and started to operate. We had a battalion chief that was on the scene in 6 minutes and 11 seconds. The units were already in the building and operating when the battalion chief got on the scene, so we don't know when they got into the fire building, but the battalion chief was there in 6 minutes and 11 seconds, they were already in the building and operating.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: I guess what I'm still missing a bit here is it sounds like, as I understand it, there was a substantial delay after they arrived at the intersection of Rogers and Prospect, there was effectively a hold time before they were able to then proceed. And I'm simply asking this, when the fact that the school was where the caller was, when that was received by the operator, did that get passed along and was that information that helped in the further honing of where the actual fire was? Because clearly it meant something if the caller could see the fire out the window of the school, that must have meant something.

SALVATORE CASSANO: Well when the units got to the cross street of Rogers and

2 Prospect, they were looking and they were directed
3 around the corner and that's where they went,
4 around the corner.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Okay.

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: If they had
7 gone to the school and tried to track down the
8 caller, I think they might have wasted valuable
9 time.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Look, I mean,
11 this is one incident, we have a hearing today on
12 the entire Unified--this entire system now--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO:
14 [Interposing] Right, I'm finished on that point,
15 and here's the broader--

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I'm not
17 blaming, it's just that this has gone into by
18 Council Member Vacca, Council Member James, and
19 now you, it's one incident, maybe a mistake was
20 made, maybe it wasn't, it's not really going to
21 help us in our quest today, so--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO:
23 [Interposing] Mr. Chair, I appreciate your view,
24 I'm trying to understand basically if the changes
25 were made in this system and then it was changed

back not long ago, what does it mean, and I just would say respectfully that, again, knowing everyone is trying to do their best, it sounds like in the decision to go back to the previous system, there's some understanding that you need more than just a theoretical system that you need experienced people who have the greatest opportunity of understanding where things might be.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right, Mr. de Blasio, I don't know if you were here for part of the hearing where we went over this, we're not going back to the old system. The old system costs time and time costs lives. What we are doing is modifying temporarily the existing procedure so the fire call taker can listen in and ask questions if that would be helpful and also provide a verification process as far as making sure everybody's hearing the same address. By the way, all that is happening after the information is sent electronically to the fire dispatcher for dispatch.

So what you have here is an ability to make sure everything's correct and the fire

2 department can change the location once it's
3 submitted to dispatch, that happens and then the
4 fire call taker can also ask additional questions
5 after the information gets sent to the fire
6 department, and the police call taker can better
7 learn how to ask the questions that are relevant
8 to the fire. So I just want to make sure--

9 MALE VOICE: Well--

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --this isn't
11 miscategorized, we are moving forward with this
12 program, the program is working. We've had
13 155,000 calls and I know we're not going to sit
14 here in the committee and play all 155,000 calls,
15 but our information is that over 99%, over 99%
16 were handled without incident. Do we want to make
17 it 100%? Yes, that's--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: So--

19 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --excuse me
20 for a second, that's why--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Yeah.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --we're doing
23 the additional training and that's why we have the
24 temporary modification because that is our goal,
25 but you're--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO:

3 [Interposing] You're--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --going back
6 to the previous system.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: --your
8 temporary modification is what I'm referring to,
9 so I'm--

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: --sorry
12 there was a semantic issue there. Since this
13 incident, since recent incidences have gone to
14 what I would say is a hybrid attempting, at least
15 for now, to integrate the value of people who are
16 experienced in this work with the value of less
17 time on the phone. I'm not saying, hey, more time
18 on the phone is great, I appreciate your desire to
19 have the quickest possible call. So what I'm
20 going to ask you is this, and this gets back to
21 you said there were 175 complaints that were
22 founded, again, I understand your overall numbers,
23 that that is a small number in the overall pool of
24 course, but unfortunately, we're talking about a
25 subject matter where we're trying to reduce the

2 error rate to zero because of how serious it is.

3 Of the 175 that were founded, have we learned
4 anything about what level of wrong addresses we've
5 had and how to guard against that?

6 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I don't have
7 the specific number of the 175 the police
8 department investigated and then found that were--

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: Those are
10 address errors.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Those are all
12 address errors?

13 SALVATORE CASSANO: Yeah.

14 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Okay.
15 Remember, and the fire department can speak to
16 this, and I know what people's view now as we sit
17 here in November of 2009, but it would be
18 inaccurate, and I'm saying it mildly, to suggest
19 that there were never errors before UCT started.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: And I'm
21 not suggesting that. I--

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
23 I wish we had tracked it before.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Right,
25 that's the problem for all of us.

2 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I wish we
3 could go back and measure from when we started 911
4 how many times--and I'm not casting dispersions
5 here 'cause it's not my point--but since the
6 errors are the issue, I think it is important to
7 recognize that human beings make errors whether
8 they are wearing the police department uniform or
9 the fire department uniform. And I understand
10 there's a new dynamic in that allegations of
11 errors are from now one agency to another as
12 opposed to from within an agency and kept within
13 that agency about another part, but we're all New
14 Yorkers, we understand institutional rivalries, so
15 let's not pretend that that's not part of this
16 dynamic. That doesn't mean for one second that we
17 don't want to root out every mistake and that's
18 why there have been the weekly meetings and the
19 six-month review and the additional training and
20 the temporary modification.

21 We do not for a second wish to give
22 you the impression that there is an acceptable
23 level, there isn't an acceptable level and the
24 people I've been working with on this system, I've
25 been working with for some time design and

2 implement it, don't think there's an acceptable
3 level. And all the work that's been done has been
4 to reduce it to zero. Will it get better over
5 time? Since the temporary modification, the
6 information appears that it's improved, but that's
7 also 'cause there's been training, it's also
8 'cause people have been--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --doing it
11 longer.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Okay.
13 So just I will conclude and say I think you hit
14 the nail on the head when you said we are not able
15 to compare apples to apples here because we don't
16 have the data from the past. I think it is
17 crucial we all understand what those 175
18 complaints tell us, so I would say and I'm sure
19 the Chairs feel the same way, it would be helpful
20 to see a breakout of that and particularly since
21 we are focused on the issue of accurate addresses,
22 how much there was an incidence of that. And I
23 appreciate your honesty and the point that there
24 are institutional differences, etc., rivalries,
25 but I think underlying all this is the question is

when you blend different work styles, different approaches, different levels of experience, there are real managerial challenges too, and so I would say I think it goes beyond just institutional rivalry to the question of what ultimately is the best combination.

Again, God bless you for trying to reduce the amount of time someone's on the phone, but I also think we have to ask the question what level of expertise, what level of sort of natural experience helps make this move better and I think we could get analysis of those complaints, it would be very important for us in our oversight role to understand.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right, and I totally agree with--I think as the Chairman said in the beginning, we have the same goals. I have a fundamental belief and most people don't accuse me of being an optimist, but I have a fundamental belief that a police call taker with the right training is just as qualified to respond to calls, whether they're fire calls or gas leaks or the other type of calls. Now remember, of the 153,000 number, less than 10,000 of those were for actual

2 structural fires, so the vast majority of these
3 calls, 94% of them, are actually not even for
4 fires or for structural fires, they're for other
5 situations, emergencies that the fire department
6 responds to. So we absolutely want to get to the
7 same place here.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DE BLASIO: Thank
10 you, Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you,
12 Mr. Council Member, appreciate your brevity. And
13 to the extent that the mistake would maybe not
14 have happened under a prior system, it is relevant
15 absolutely, I just didn't want to spend too much
16 time on one incident.

17 The final Council Member--we're not
18 taking any more questions from Council Members--
19 for questions is Al Vann and then we're going to
20 get to our next--

21 [Off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --Crowley.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Liz Crowley
24 still here?

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes.

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 147
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Oh I'm sorry,
3 I didn't see you, Liz. Some reason we went out of
4 order.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Liz Crowley and
6 Al Vann. Okay, Liz?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you,
8 Chairman Vacca. My question, Deputy Mayor, you
9 stated, and correct me if I misunderstood, that in
10 the past six months roughly since you started
11 implementing this new call taking system that
12 you've had 175 wrong addresses, is that--that you
13 have sent out fire engines and fire companies to
14 the wrong address at least 175 times that you know
15 of?

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Of the
17 154,000 UCT calls, our analysis, based on
18 information that was received up the chain of the
19 command from the fire department, sent over to the
20 police department for investigation, is there are
21 170 cases where there are wrong addresses.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right, but
23 you also said of your 150,000 some odd calls, that
24 only about 10,000 are fire-related emergencies.

25 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: That's right

2 and the 170--

3 [Crosstalk]

4 MALE VOICE: --fires.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --are not of-
6 -excuse me, not less than 10,000 are for
7 structural fires, but of that 173, that's out of
8 the 150,000, it is not out of the 10,000
9 structural fires. Those reports can come in, it
10 could be any type of fire response, it doesn't
11 necessarily have to be a fire.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Now I know
13 you spoke in depth about response time, I still do
14 not think it's clear that you're actually saving
15 time, I think you're just measuring time
16 differently. When you have a 911 call taker
17 getting information that a fire call taker was
18 once getting, that amount of time is not counted
19 in your response time, and that could be 20
20 seconds, it could be 30 seconds, is that correct,
21 it could be?

22 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I guess I
23 just--I don't want to belabor it, but just to go
24 through the system again, two phone calls being
25 reduced to one phone call, I believe saves time.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But--

3 sorry.

4 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Hold on one
5 second, if I could just finish. The fire
6 department which measures response time shows a 10
7 second drop. There is no change in the way it is
8 calculated. By the way, response time is measured
9 also in cases where it comes from a automatic fire
10 alarm, say a building has a smoke detector, smoke
11 detector triggers an automatic fire alarm, that
12 information goes to fire dispatch, not to a fire
13 department call taker. So they measure the
14 response time from fire dispatch. So we haven't
15 had an issue with measuring fire response in those
16 situations, so I don't understand why some are
17 alleging that we're changing the calculation now.
18 All we've done is we did in that situation is use
19 technology to cut out a middle man. Before, the
20 middle man was the person probably making the
21 phone call, now technology makes the phone call.
22 So response time went down. Here, you're cutting
23 out a redundant phone call so response time goes
24 down.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But a lot

of what we've discussed today is situations where firefighters were sent out to the wrong address and many of them are concerned today if they're going into the right area. For example, just a few weeks ago in Woodside, Queens, we had a situation where a fire was happening at 42-40 65th Street, less than two blocks away from the fire engine company that was first due. Engine company 292 and Rescue 4 were only a block and a half away, yet they were not first responders because they were given the wrong address and that the first responders, it took them over four minutes, closer to five minutes, 4 minutes and 55 seconds. How long would you estimate the response time should be for a fire company that's only a block and a half away to get--and mind you, three lives were lost in this fire.

DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well, yeah, we have acknowledged going back to the morning of that tragedy that there was a keystroke error there, so I don't have an argument with you that there was a mistake. I would also--and the Fire Chief can go into more details--there were a lot of factors in that fire that contributed to those

fatalities, so to--I think it is very unfortunate that some have tried to blame those fatalities on somebody that works for the city, who works really hard and made an unfortunate mistake. And there were a lot of factors and the Fire Marshalls will do the report, the Chief can speak to exactly what the fire department was up against in that situation as far as an illegal occupancy, as far as no smoke detectors, as far as bars on the windows, and the other challenges. So we know there was a mistake there, we acknowledge there was a mistake there, they're doing extra training and new modifications to prevent those types of mistakes. I just would ask that we do not lay those fatalities at the feet of a call taker who made an unfortunate error in a very, very [off mic] situation. Chief?

SALVATORE CASSANO: Well I think Deputy Mayor Skyler outlined the problems that we faced there with an illegal occupancy, no secondary means of egress, the windows were blocked with window bars, and no smoke detectors, you know.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right, but

2 clearly it wouldn't take the fire company--

3 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing]

4 And we acknowledge that there was a key stroke
5 error.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --a block
7 and a half away five minutes to get to a fire.

8 SALVATORE CASSANO: Nobody's
9 disagreeing.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right,
11 okay. So those lives could have been saved if the
12 system is the way it was that day, if it was the
13 way that it is today, but you're not interested in
14 keeping the system as what you call a temporary
15 fix in place, you want to go back to the way it
16 was that day.

17 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: I can't sit
18 here and tell you that those lives could have been
19 saved, and anybody who can tell you that is just
20 speculating. We have a program--you know how
21 we're going to save those lives in the future?
22 We're going to save those lives by doing what the
23 Buildings Department is doing with a public
24 information campaign in different languages
25 teaching people that they should not live in

2 illegal occupancies, that they are fire traps, and
3 that having no secondary means of egress and other
4 violations of the Fire Code and no smoke detectors
5 are disasters waiting to happen. So if you want
6 to make that statement, you can, the City will
7 not.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: When you
9 have an EMS emergency, you have your EMS
10 dispatchers speak to the civilian that's calling
11 in the emergency, is that correct? They get more
12 information than--

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --the 911
15 call taking?

16 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Wouldn't
18 you agree that there's critical information that a
19 fire dispatcher could gather out of speaking to a
20 civilian? Rather than the way it is with the
21 system of the 911 call taker only able to give 40
22 characters through their electronic transfer?

23 SALVATORE CASSANO: No, the 40
24 characters is what they're entering on the ticket
25 that gets dispatched to the files, they can

2 continue to talk, that's not changed.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But that
4 vital information is not given to the fire
5 dispatcher.

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: It's being--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: As the
8 civilian continues--

9 SALVATORE CASSANO: --it's being
10 sent over to--40 characters doesn't go to the
11 dispatcher, the dispatcher continues to get the
12 information, only 40 characters can go to the
13 firehouses, 'cause that's all that it's allowed in
14 that first line. If we wanted more characters to
15 go to the firehouses, it would slow down our
16 computer system, it will take longer to process
17 the call. But our dispatchers continue to get
18 information from the 911 operator on their
19 printout.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But you do
21 have a system put in place because EMS emergencies
22 are held to a different accountability and you
23 need somebody who is very experienced and
24 knowledgeable, unlike--

25 [Crosstalk]

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: [Interposing] I
3 disagree that they're held to a different
4 accountability.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --weeks
6 or--

7 SALVATORE CASSANO: Everybody's
8 held to an accountability standard, there's not
9 any difference between EMS and fire.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But you
11 have a different situation, you have a 911 call
12 taker that transfers the call to the EMS
13 dispatcher or call taker, and you don't have that
14 system with the fire--well you--

15 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: [Interposing]
16 Well and that's--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --don't
18 want to have that system.

19 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well no,
20 actually, we want to have the same system we have
21 with police and fire with EMS. The difference is,
22 and I think we went over this earlier in the
23 hearing, is that the EMS call takers are actually
24 trained paramedics or EMTs, so they are
25 essentially health care professionals and we're

2 not suggesting that the police call takers, as
3 skilled as they are, are health care
4 professionals.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: There's a
7 difference between training somebody to be a
8 police call taker or a fire call taker which are
9 very similar, than--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I agree.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --training
12 somebody to become a health care professional and
13 actually do triage over the phone, that is a step
14 that we envision, but is not going to be something
15 that we're doing in the near term. What we are
16 trying to do is find out is there a question that
17 a police call taker can ask--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right.

19 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --regarding
20 somebody being unconscious or not breathing that
21 could trigger an EMS dispatch, and reduce response
22 time, but we have not taken the leap to making one
23 call taker for everything that other cities have
24 done. In my testimony I talk about other cities
25 like Chicago--

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes.

3 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: --where
4 that's exactly what they have.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Can I ask
6 that we move on, Deputy Mayor?

7 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well I'm just
8 answering the question.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, okay,
10 sometimes your answers are elaborate, but--

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, we were
12 just told unfortunately and--

13 [Crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Well we have to
15 be out.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: It's like a
17 comedy show, all right, you go.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'm sorry--

19 [Crosstalk]

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So we have to
21 be out of this room by 4:30, so I would really
22 like to get to hear the other side of this story
23 as quick as possible. So not to be unfair to
24 Council Member, but I don't want to go over areas
25 that we've gone over, so please ask questions that

2 we have not gone into and then I'm going to end
3 with Al Vann and then get straight to the next
4 panel of unions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY:

6 [Interposing] I want to ask one last question, if-
7 -

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --that's
10 okay?

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --thank you,
12 Council Member.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Okay. I
14 want to know why is the fire department spending
15 so much money on this system if there's rumors
16 that there's a danger of closing fire companies,
17 that we cannot afford to keep fire companies open.
18 Isn't it more important to use vital resources to
19 maintain our infrastructure and make sure that we
20 could have firefighters fighting fires?

21 SALVATORE CASSANO: The ECTP is a
22 citywide project, it's not coming out of the fire
23 department budget.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: But you
25 did give a number specifically as it relates to

2 the system that you're changing that relates
3 specifically to fire emergencies. Didn't you give
4 a number earlier? Like in this fiscal year,
5 wasn't it like \$20 billion?

6 SALVATORE CASSANO: No, that did
7 not come out of the fire department budget, that
8 came out of the ECTP project.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Overall
10 city budget.

11 SALVATORE CASSANO: Overall city
12 budget.

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Right, we are
14 investing in technology that is going to serve the
15 city in the 21st century. The 911 system was
16 designed or went into operation in 1968, it is
17 sorely in need of an update, that is what this
18 whole project is about, it's about redundancy and
19 it's about finding efficiencies to speed emergency
20 response. Firehouse and engine companies and
21 locations and staffing is a separate issue and we
22 have not sought to link them. We are always going
23 to find ways, as we did through prerelease and now
24 with UCT, to reduce response, that should not be
25 threatening to anybody. I understand that some

don't want to see that happen because they're
afraid it's going to be used for decisions
regarding companies. We are trying to reduce
response time for the simple reason that it saves
lives and, although I find and the Chiefs beside
me find any errors to be completely unacceptable,
you have to keep in mind that even with those
mistakes, and as intolerable as they are, response
time is still down since the implementation of
this initiative.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --Mr. Deputy
Mayor. Thank you, Council Member Crowley.
Council Member Al Vann.

COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: Thank you,
Mr. Chairman. Mr. Deputy Mayor, gentlemen, it's
been long and arduous and let me be very, very
brief, I really only have one concern and one
question. I came specifically--I'm not on either
committee and I appreciate what they have to do
and I know that they will pursue it and get it
right. I came specifically because I represent
the district where three people died in a fire on
St. Marks Avenue and the mother, Ms. Etienne,

2 needs to know, wants to know, I want to know, and
3 the community want to know, because it was
4 reported that there was a delay of four minutes or
5 more and when I came--I came specifically to find
6 out was that delay caused by how it was reported
7 or was there a failure in this system or what--not
8 looking for blame, looking for clarity so that
9 this could perhaps could be avoided in the future.

10 In listening to the tape, it became
11 clear to me anyway that there never was a clear
12 understanding between the person making the call
13 and the person receiving the call, it was never
14 clear where the fire was. What was communicated
15 is where the caller was at, where she was calling
16 from and it was not elicited--hindsight is 20/20--
17 it was not elicited and I don't know what the
18 answer is there, but listening to the tape, when
19 she said Prospect and Rogers, those are not cross
20 streets by the way, that's an intersection.

21 MALE VOICE 1: Intersection.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: She was not
23 at the intersection, she was at a school on
24 Prospect Place, but because of the questioning,
25 she was giving--and she says I don't know the

2 area, she was giving two streets that she knew,
3 all right?

4 [Off mic]

5 MALE VOICE 2: --the second one.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: She said she
7 could see the smoke from where she was in the
8 school on Prospect Place.

9 MALE VOICE 2: The first one was
10 more vague--

11 [Crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: And again,
13 not being critical and, again, we sitting in the
14 calmness of a hearing and that's--

15 [Crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: --is not
17 going on at that time, but clearly when the
18 dispatch was made to Rogers and Prospect, the
19 recipient, the person who received the call could
20 not know or did not know that the fire was there,
21 she was giving the location of streets that she
22 heard. And all I'm saying is it seems to me from
23 that--if that's correct, that had there been a
24 drawing out of more information, it would seem to
25 me that we could have gotten a more definitive

3 direction for the fire being dispatched. Do you
4 agree or disagree with that?

5 SALVATORE CASSANO: Well when you
6 listen to the call they were trying to ask how
7 tall is the building, what do you see, and, again,
8 she said--you know, she was counting the stories,
9 but she didn't know the area, she wasn't familiar
10 with it, and when she gives a location of Rogers
11 and Prospect, we're going. That was sent out, the
12 unit was there in three minutes and nine seconds,
13 they get to that intersection in three minutes and
14 nine seconds. They are met or greeted, from what
15 we're told, by somebody that said they--they
16 believed they lived in the back yard and directed
17 them around the corner. They go around the corner
18 and they're operating in the building in less than
19 six minutes.

20 [Off mic]

21 SALVATORE CASSANO: So I don't know
22 where the four minute delay came from. They're
23 sent out on that first call.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: I understand
25 and I guess we have the benefit, it's after the
fact and nothing we can say is going to bring

these people back, which means if it takes more time just to--seems like we're beating a dead horse, perhaps it's worth it. And I'll just say this again and I'm through, and maybe it's unfair, but if the person who received the call had asked the caller, well where are you, what street are you on, is the fire on your street, where is the fire that you see. And, again, this may be unfair, but it doesn't matter now 'cause the people are dead--

MALE VOICE 2: Yeah, both calls gave the same--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: --it would seem to me that the person who was taking the calls would have had more direction in sending--I guess what I'm saying is that I agree that training is key and it would appear to me that a more trained person receiving that kind of call would have known how to get that information, whatever that person--there was more information that that person had that could have been helpful if it had been drawn from them. This my belief listening to the call.

2 SALVATORE CASSANO: I don't know
3 that for sure, but the two calls came, both gave
4 the location of the school, that they were inside
5 the school and it was correct the dispatch to the
6 intersection that that person gave 'cause at least
7 they gave an intersection and by the units getting
8 to that intersection and getting closer to the
9 fire, they were there sooner than if they had
10 waited to try to elicit more information.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: Thank you,
12 thank you, thank you.

13 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Chief, is
14 there anything you want to add?

15 SALVATORE CASSANO: Oh sorry.

16 CHARLES DOWD: No.

17 DEPUTY MAYOR SKYLER: Well I mean,
18 you know, you guys--

19 [Crosstalk]

20 CHARLES DOWD: To your issue is
21 you're right, but if you listen carefully to that
22 call, there was a slight hesitation by the
23 operator, the 911 operator when the cross street
24 was given, the intersection was given and what she
25 was doing was releasing the job at that point. So

the issue becomes one of how long do you wait if you've got an intersection, she knew she had a working fire in a multi-story building, and Chief Cassano can speak to this from a fire operations perspective, but I think she made at that point the decision that it was better to release the job and get units on the way than to spend another two or three or four minutes trying to get the specific building address.

SALVATORE CASSANO: And I agree--

CHARLES DOWD: And that's always--

SALVATORE CASSANO: For sure.

CHARLES DOWD: --the balancing act that you're faced with.

[Off mic]

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council Member.

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: --that and I think, again, the more experienced the person taking the call reduces the time to get enough information to dispatch. I think experience is the key and being well trained is a key.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you

2 Council Member Vann. I'd like to thank
3 Commissioner, Chief, and Chief, and Deputy Mayor
4 Skyler for testifying, thank you--

5 SALVATORE CASSANO: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --Mr. Deputy
7 Mayor. Our next panel will be Stephen Cassidy,
8 President of the UFA; Captain Al Hagan, UFOA
9 President; David Rosenzweig; and then the panel
10 after that will be Lillian Roberts, President of
11 DC 37, Henry Garrido of DC 37, Associate Director,
12 and Alma Roper, First Executive Vice President.

13 [Off mic]

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you,
15 appreciate it.

16 [Pause]

17 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Thank you. Dave,
18 I'm going to go first, all right?

19 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Yeah, yeah,
20 yeah.

21 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Everyone,
23 please take your seats.

24 [Off mic]

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Cassidy,
4 would you please start off for us?

5 [Pause]

6 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Okay. Thank you,
7 Chairman Vacca. Let me start--I'm going to brief,
8 okay, it's been a long day, I'm going to be brief,
9 a lot was said. Let me start by saying something
10 that may surprise people: I agree with Ed Skyler
11 completely: we are all God's children. Right
12 after that I think we part ways. The truth of the
13 matter is that it seems clear the Administration
14 believes, in my opinion, wrongly, and I don't
15 represent fire alarm dispatchers, that somehow 911
16 dispatchers who have no real experience in fire
17 can be trained to the same level, and he's
18 entitled to that opinion, I think he's really
19 wrong. And Dave Rosenzweig will talk about that.

20 But I will say this, what is
21 absolutely clear and he admitted is that they do
22 not count the time for a response that a caller is
23 on with a 911 operator, and their answer is, well
24 we've never done that, we've never counted that.
25 Well pre-UCT, that amount of time was somewhere in
the neighborhood of four or five seconds. The 911

operator would answer the call and say what
borough are you calling from, you'd say Manhattan,
what's your emergency, I want to report a fire,
hold on, boom, you are now at the Manhattan fire
alarm dispatchers, five seconds, the clock starts.
Okay? Now I would argue they should have counted
that five seconds because in the end if I'm
trapped in a burning building, the amount of time
that it takes from when I reach a city employee to
ask for help to when you get there, really is the
real response. But for whatever reason, they've
never calculated it. And when it was miniscule,
so be it.

Now it's not miniscule, now they've
changed responsibilities, now the 911 callers are
taking down critical information, they can take
30, 40, 50 seconds, even with a prerelease. And
the fire department and the City say we never
counted it before, we're not going to count it
now. So when Ed Skyler sits here and says we
saved 20 seconds, the bottom line is, I think
response times are up. I think they're higher
than they were from the time you reach a 911
caller, but of course with their Enron-style

2 accounting and their excuse that we've always done
3 it this way, they're allowed to get away with it.

4 And I would use the simple analogy
5 that if you take a major corporation that at their
6 annual budget review, they've never included petty
7 cash because it was so miniscule, but then one day
8 they said, you know what, we never included petty
9 cash, why don't we slide a couple million dollars
10 in there because, hey, we didn't count it last
11 year, why do we have to count it this year.

12 This is a sham on response times.
13 Others will address the real issue that I think is
14 real also about the service that is being
15 provided, about firefighters getting updated
16 information, and I'll just address that in a
17 minute, but remember this: Ed Skyler and Sal
18 Cassano admitted today that they do not calculate
19 911 time, that time used to be five seconds, now
20 it's significantly longer and yet they claim
21 response times are down. Well I'll tell you what,
22 you change the rules on accounting, we can make
23 anything work out. So that's one issue, a real
24 issue, and I think the key issue because their
25 argument has been from day one, this is about

2 getting firefighters there quicker. Well the
3 truth is, they're not getting there quicker, we
4 don't know how really where they are in the
5 sequence--

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
7 Steve, can I jump in a second--

8 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --on the
10 response times 'cause I'm confused. Didn't he
11 say--and I could be wrong--that response time has
12 always been--I agree with you, maybe it should
13 come from the second the call comes in, it makes
14 more sense--but response time was calculated from
15 the time that it went from the call taker, whoever
16 it was, to the fire department. So--

17 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --if that's
19 happening now from the 911 call taker, it used to
20 happen from the fire dispatcher, they're still
21 measuring it from the time it went to the house.
22 So someone has to get that information and I guess
23 he's saying that you're eliminating that transfer
24 and the very shortage you said that story I
25 understand, am I mistaken in that? Or was he

2 mistaken in that?

3 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Yeah, he's
4 mistaken. His argument is if we take somebody out
5 of the equation, response times are going to be
6 faster, and I guess you could argue, all things
7 being equal, maybe that's true. But what took
8 five seconds to transfer a call to fire
9 dispatchers who were trained professionals, who
10 could extract information better than anybody else
11 and quickly get units out, has now gone to non-
12 trained 911 operators who are--

13 [Crosstalk]

14 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --who are
15 extracting information--

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
17 So you're arguing that it's taking longer--it was
18 never checked, the amount of time that's being
19 taken, but you think the time now is longer to get
20 that information 'cause it's an untrained person.

21 STEPHEN CASSIDY: I know it's--hold
22 it--

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah.

24 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --I know that
25 they're not counting a period of time that is

2 significant. You can argue that they should have
3 counted when it was insignificant. So let's say
4 it was four or five seconds, right? The 911
5 operator's pre-UCT said what borough are you
6 calling from, Manhattan; what's your emergency,
7 fire; hold on, boom, now you're with the Dave
8 Rosenzweig's fire alarm dispatchers. Maybe we
9 should have counted that five seconds, but now
10 under the new system, a 911 call taker is going to
11 spend 30, 40 seconds gathering information that
12 the City of New York says doesn't count.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: But that same
14 30, 40 seconds would have been taken by the
15 dispatcher and still not counted under that
16 system.

17 STEPHEN CASSIDY: No, no, no, no,
18 no, no, no, Chair, you are wrong.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You just told
20 me that it wasn't counted until it went to the
21 firehouse from the dispatcher--

22 STEPHEN CASSIDY: [Interposing] No,
23 no, no--

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --or maybe I
25 misunderstood.

2 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --okay, the fire
3 department says as soon as it gets to an FD
4 dispatcher, the clock starts. So under the
5 current system--under the old system, I'll do old
6 and new, five seconds with a 911 caller, transfer
7 to a FD dispatcher, clock starts, could take the
8 FD dispatcher 30, 40, 45 seconds I think was the
9 average to get the information and get them out
10 the door. Now we're looking at a 911 call taker
11 taking 30, 40, 50 or more, there are reports of
12 well over a minute before they punch it into a
13 terminal and send it to an FD dispatcher, and the
14 clock starts.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So I think
16 we're using different terms of dispatcher--

17 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --right now
19 there's no dispatcher in new--

20 STEPHEN CASSIDY: FD call taker, an
21 FD call taker at a computer terminal--so that 30
22 or 40 or 50 seconds doesn't count according to New
23 York City, it does count if you're in a burning
24 building, it absolutely counts. So now when it
25 gets to the fire department, their job is to read

2 a computer terminal and send out the appropriate
3 units, and the City, with their new accounting
4 mechanism is saying response times are down. And
5 what I'm telling you is a fact that they're not
6 counting Part A, which used to be five seconds--
7 three parts, A, B, and C: A, 911; B, FD call
8 taker; C, travel time. A used to be five seconds,
9 now it's 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and they're not
10 counting it. How can response times be down?
11 They're not down, they're just down in their shell
12 game and it's a disgrace.

13 And Part 2 and let me just quickly-
14 -and they didn't even dispute it, they admitted
15 it, but they wouldn't admit what the times were,
16 but they admitted that they never counted it. And
17 Part 2 of this, which is outrageous, is that
18 firefighters from around the city if they were
19 here would tell you, while responding to a report
20 of a fire when travel time is in the neighborhood
21 of 3 1/2 minutes, almost always if they actually
22 ended up at a fire, they would get a verbal update
23 from a fire alarm dispatcher, that fire alarm
24 dispatcher actually spoke to the caller and got
25 that information and relayed it immediately. Not

a computer printout that tells them what somebody else said. And my analogy would be there would be if a reporter interviewed Mike Bloomberg and then handed his notes to somebody else and said go ahead and write the story. It doesn't work, it's not supposed to work, it's not effective. What they're doing is not effective. I don't blame them for trying to revamp 911, I don't blame them for spending a tremendous amount of money to make a system better, but this component of it does not work, and with all due respect, they are misleading the public, I'll say they're lying, but they are misleading the public about response times. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Rosenzweig, would you want to go next?

DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Thank you, Councilman Vacca, Councilman Vallone, rest of the Council Members. I handed out--I'm not even going to go through that considering the time, most of the information that you need is in there. There are one page that I want to go over, but the issues that I'd like to discuss first is response time.

3 If you go back in the Mayor's
4 Management Reports, back into '95, before pre-
5 Howard Safir, you will find there is a line item
6 called Central Office Processing Time and we are
7 the fastest in the country and I'm proud of that,
8 and they don't even acknowledge the fact because
9 they won't let us take the calls. And the answer
10 that you were questioning about well how long did
11 it take for PD to process that calls, back in '95?
12 Go back and look and you'll see the City Council
13 hearings. The City Council had requested from the
14 PD 100, if not 1,000 times, how many times does
15 the phone ring, how many calls got a recording,
16 how long did the call take to process. And we're
17 not talking about fires, we're talking about 911
18 calls, actual amount of time that it takes to
19 process. We'd still be waiting here for an
20 answer. That's the reason you don't have the
21 answer, because they don't know what it is. Okay?
22 They don't want to know what it is, as I think
23 would be more appropriate, okay?

24 So in reality, the response time is
25 spewed in a way that we're looking like the fire
department is doing better, but the companies are

getting there a lot longer.

But the point that I want to make, which is even much more drastic than that, is the following: We are micro-managed by a tenth of a second. There aren't too many people that go to work every day and are managed by a tenth of a second. My people every single day are managed by a tenth of a second because when somebody asked the question about, well how many wrong addresses or how much do the fire alarm dispatchers have, we have discipline, we have conferences, we have two minute reports. The fire department manages us very well, any one of my people can tell you they're on their back all the time, they're breathing hot breath down their back, okay? So we are managed by a tenth of a second, we know exactly who got the wrong address, their conference, we ask them why. I've been doing this for 40 years and I can tell you nobody ever slips through, when they make a mistake, they get caught. So that part really wasn't true.

But the thing that concerns me even more in regard to response time is now my people have to call the caller. So think about how

difficult the job is and now we're making the job that much more difficult. When we get the initial call, we have to calm people down, we have to elicit the information, and we try to do it as best as we can.

Now the companies are getting to the location where the 911 system sent them, we haven't spoke to the party at all, they find nothing. Now we go in and we call the calling party back. Now you've got somebody that has a serious emergency, doesn't have to be a fire, it could be a medical emergency, it could be any type of an emergency where people need help, and our people are confronted with a screaming, yelling citizen, okay, who thinks somebody's on the way, and they're finding out now, we don't even know where they are, so take that into consideration.

Now what happened to that time? That's the time that concerns me. Yes, we can argue about the 10 seconds or the 43 seconds and the minute, how about the two, three, four, five, eight minutes which we have documented in these UCT forms that you got where we had to send them a half a mile away ala St. John's Place, okay? 174

and 1274, that was a half a mile away, they got there eight minutes later, how does that fit into the response time? Do they count that eight minutes as the fire company arrived eight minutes later, it's in the average?

No, that's why I'm so upset is because I know they're lying, they're intentionally lying about response times and they won't acknowledge that fact because they'll have to acknowledge that we do a better job. And the reason we do a better job has nothing to do with 911 operators, they do an excellent job, we're skilled professionals, we do fires; they do 911 calls, they do primarily police calls. Pat's people does primarily EMS calls, we're all good at what we do, that's what it's all about. You don't want somebody that doesn't know 100% of his job doing something that could possibly lose a life.

So let us take back--if you want to know, before the 911 system came in, the best system we had was dial operator and anybody that ever used that system will tell you, okay, we never had a problem, they always went to the right borough, we always spoke to the party first, and

2 we never had a problem at all.

3 Nine-one-one, again, I've been here
4 before, people have heard me talk, it's
5 overburdened. They continuously have a tremendous
6 amount of calls and they do an excellent job and
7 that's not the issue, but it's too diversified,
8 they got too many different kinds of things going
9 on at the same time and they don't increase the
10 staffing.

11 Pre-PSAC, they had 105 positions,
12 108 call taking positions, they got 105, 108 call
13 taking positions today. We spent \$1.3 billion to
14 build some sort of a communication [off mic] that
15 doesn't work at all and we still have the same
16 number of call takers who are now interrogating
17 people calling in fires. So that exasperates the
18 problem in that it takes longer to do that, which
19 means you're now listening to recordings longer
20 'cause no matter how you look at, you can only
21 answer 108 calls at the max. So the more calls
22 they get, the longer they're on the phone, taking
23 do our job or taking phone calls, that's how many
24 more recordings you get. So somebody with their
25 house on fire is now listening to a recording

telling you to please hold on.

We tell you, call the fire department and get out of the house, the police department is telling you, listen in, eventually somebody will answer you. When your house is on fire, the one thing you don't want to do is have to wait for the recording to stop ringing, okay? So that is the part that annoys me the most in regard to the response times.

The other part, and Councilman Vann was 100% correct, in the central office configuration, our people work in a team network, they don't work as individuals, they are all fire alarm dispatchers. Today, you're a fire alarm dispatcher you answer the phone. Tomorrow you're a fire alarm dispatcher, you operate the radio. That gives the experience that they need to round them off, okay?

Had that happened in the old configuration, in the Brooklyn CO on Empire Boulevard that I worked for almost 25 or 30 years, when I got that call and I knew that first thing I would've done--and I was a trainer, okay, and I can tell you, my people were taught the way that I

took the calls 'cause I was successful. First thing that person would've done was ask, are you looking towards Atlantic Avenue or are you looking towards Eastern Parkway, and hopefully they would have known, if they do that, they would've known they were on St. Mark's Avenue, that's what you're paying us for. We don't need a map, our job is to know the borough, and we do. Is there a learning curve? Absolutely, somebody coming in the job with two or three years wouldn't necessarily know that it was Eastern Parkway, but you know what he would've done? He would've said, hey, Dave, what's around the corner from Eastern Parkway towards Atlantic Avenue, I would say St. Marks, okay?

So the point is because of that teamwork, we were able to get the firefighters to the front of these buildings with a lot less information than normally you could possibly get. So that failed, and that's failed because of the PSAC configuration, we have three boroughs together and we're not even talking to the caller, so we wouldn't even be able to do that. God forbid, they had other information that we needed

2 to know, we would never be able to find it out.

3 And let me just cover just a couple
4 more things and then I'm going to get out of your
5 hair.

6 [Off mic]

7 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Yeah. I'd like
8 to go just to my list because it needs to be
9 defined, okay?

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We do have
11 another whole panel coming up after this--

12 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: We're talking
13 about--

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --I just want
15 to make sure you sum up--

16 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: --I'm sorry?

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --and we have
18 to listen to Captain Hagan, and another whole
19 panel in a half-hour, so I want to make sure you--

20 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Okay, I'm sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --get to--

22 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Anyway--

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --the good
24 points.

25 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: --read my list,

2 obviously anybody whose constituent's house is on
3 fire or their apartment, they don't want, okay, to
4 have these dismal, dismal, bad figures, okay? If
5 we had one, we would be embarrassed, my people are
6 professionals, okay? But to have 650 wrong
7 locations just means, okay, they're not prepared,
8 they don't have the proper training, if they had
9 the proper training, they probably could have done
10 a better job. Okay? Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Captain Hagan?

12 [Pause]

13 ALEXANDER HAGAN: Chairpersons
14 Vacca, Vallone, and Brewer and the Members of the
15 Fire Criminal Justice Services Committee, the
16 Public Safety Committee, and the Technology in
17 Government Committee, thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today on this life or death
19 issue and rapid response to more than 50,000 fires
20 annually in New York City.

21 My name is Alexander Hagan and I'm
22 a Captain in the New York City Fire Department. I
23 also serve as the President of the Uniform Fire
24 Officers Association, a union of approximately
25 2,500 fire officers. We have no dog in this fight

in terms of jobs or anything that pertains to us as a bargaining unit, our dog in this fight is more as the customer, the end user of the information.

Last month, three people died in a fire in Woodside, Queens; several days later, three more people, including two toddlers died in a fire in Brooklyn. In both instances, the first responding fire companies were sent to wrong addresses by a fatally flawed response system. It took seven civilian deaths to move the city to action for a temporary adjustment. This adjustment was instituted unilaterally with no input requested from anybody on this panel-- anybody that either is involved in gathering the information and sending the information, or the customers, the end user of the information. Trust me when I tell you this temporary solution is by no means a final answer.

Prior to the adjustment, calls for help were being handled by police call operators, police call takers who, in my opinion, are the greatest PCTs on the face of the earth, they handle the greatest amount of police emergency

calls. At what they do, they're the greatest you could ever want to find. It's kind of like, let's say they're brain surgeons, let's say their orthopedic surgeons, they're the best orthopedic surgeons you could ever find. Okay, but with the UCT in operation since May, they repeatedly sent fire units careening through the city streets, often with little more information than an address and too many times it turned out to be the wrong address.

Now, an FDNY dispatcher, the best fire call takers of all time, based on their tremendous fire--the amount of fire calls and their experience--and it was referred to earlier I think by Councilperson James, that police emergencies tend to be historic, I was robbed, I saw somebody being mugged earlier; whereas fire calls are active incidents taking place dealing with panicky individuals. So anyway, now the best dispatchers for fire, they were treated as clerks for the UCP operators, they're conferenced in, but they're not given what they need, they're not given the access to the caller that they really need.

2 Now, before I go any further with
3 two positive proposals, I want to set the record
4 straight on some claims made by the
5 Administration--that response times are at low
6 levels, record low levels. I believe that we have
7 provided copies everybody on the panel with a
8 study that we asked the International Association
9 of Firefighters to conduct, and in that study,
10 they talk about standards for dispatching. Yes,
11 believe it or not, there are standards, it's not
12 just a police chief making up something off the
13 top of his head. We believe that they're in
14 violation of the standards in many different ways,
15 which we don't have time to go into, but the
16 problem with it is that we're concerned that this
17 conflict with NIMS, which is the National Incident
18 Management System, may in fact jeopardize federal
19 aid to New York City, and that's something you
20 really got to be careful of.

21 Okay. With UCT, the people were
22 not getting a faster response, they were getting a
23 snow job. From May right through October, we can
24 only hope that November's statistics are fairer
25 and not manipulated.

2 With that said, the UFOA wishes to
3 offer two positive suggestions, a short range
4 suggestion and a long range suggestion. The short
5 range suggestion is for the UCT caller to fast-
6 track any emergency handled by the FDNY to a fire
7 department dispatcher without delay. What
8 President Cassidy had referred to: What borough,
9 what's your emergency, fire, send it right to the
10 fire. Go back, turn the clock back to what it
11 was.

12 Now before I go into the long range
13 solution, let me just tell you something, fire
14 officers are no different than anyone else, they
15 hate paperwork, they abhor paperwork. And the
16 Administration, when the UCT was instituted back
17 in May, the Administration requested letterhead
18 reports of fire officers to report any problem
19 with the system. Fire officers are fairly
20 compliant, but they really don't like paperwork
21 and the letterhead report, as you might imagine,
22 is a fairly onerous piece of administration, but
23 they were coming in in droves. The fire
24 department, in good faith--and I applaud them for
25 this--instituted a separate form, something that

2 would be far easier for a fire officer to report
3 the problem. We began sending them in. The
4 uniformed fire officers requested that these forms
5 be faxed to us, but the same guys that don't want
6 to do the letterhead don't want to press that
7 onerous telephone number in their fax machine, we
8 don't have them all.

9 But let me just tell you, that pile
10 right there represents a pretty decent amount of
11 problems, and what I'm telling you is that,
12 although there were seven bodies, every one of
13 those piece of papers, but for the luck of the
14 draw, represents a body or bodies, and I ask you,
15 how many bodies will it take for this system to be
16 rectified? How many of your constituents, how
17 many mothers, how many fathers, how many of our
18 children must die before something is done? Thank
19 you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
21 Captain, thank you. I'd like to thank our panel
22 very much for your testimony. Are there any
23 questions in the Council Members? Yes, Council
24 Member--oh, Vinnie Gentile? Okay.

25 [Off mic]

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 191
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, the Chair?

3 I didn't--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Oh, Chair,
6 I'm sorry.

7 [Off mic]

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Gale Brewer.

9 [Pause]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I think
11 some of you said this, but President Cassidy, I'm
12 just confused, now post-November 24th, am I
13 correct that they testified that fire dispatchers
14 are now patched in as soon as the call comes in?

15 STEPHEN CASSIDY: That was their
16 testimony, I don't know if that's happening every
17 case, it doesn't change how they're calculating
18 the response times. Three components: 911 call
19 taker, when it gets transferred to FD, they start
20 the clock. They admitted here today that even
21 when the FD dispatcher or the FD call taker is
22 conferenced in, they're still not starting the
23 clock. They're not starting the clock until the
24 911 call taker hits a button and sends an e-mail
25 in effect to an FD call taker, who then reads it,

2 the clock starts, he or she reads it, and then
3 sends it out to the appropriate units.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: But if
5 someone is patched in, if a call taker is patched
6 in, fire department--

7 [Off mic]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: --the
9 clock doesn't start at that point once you're
10 patched in?

11 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: As soon as the
12 fire alarm dispatcher answers the phone, the fire
13 department clock starts ticking at that particular
14 moment because we're already processing the call,
15 but the problem with the transferring of the call
16 the way it's being done now since November 24th is
17 the messages are truncated because they've already
18 done the initial inquiry--

19 [Off mic]

20 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: --and now we
21 pick up the phone after it's sent to the fire
22 department and they're already talking.

23 [Off mic]

24 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: We don't know if
25 we missed the address, we don't know what address

2 they actually got until they send us the job which
3 is coming over at the same time we're listening.
4 Then we see it and we know that the address that I
5 heard is different than the address that was
6 entered.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So
8 information is being taken as you're answering the
9 patch-in, right? As that's happening.

10 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: They give some
11 of the information before they transfer it.

12 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Yeah, but
13 Councilman, I listened to the testimony from both
14 Chief Cassano and the Deputy Chief from the police
15 department and when this topic came up, it was
16 clear that they are not starting the clock--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

18 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --just when they
19 conference in an FD call taker, they're not
20 starting the clock. So Part A, three parts: 911
21 call--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:
23 [Interposing] I hear you on, yeah, yeah.

24 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Okay. But Part
25 A, five seconds now, 30, 40, 50 seconds, they're

2 not counting. So that's the myth about saved
3 response times. I mean it really--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

6 [Interposing] And, Steve, when did they start it a
7 year ago with the expedited system? When did it
8 start? When it went from the 911 person picking
9 up or to the 911 call taker or to the FDNY call
10 taker or when the dispatch happened?

11 STEPHEN CASSIDY: The clock,
12 according to the City and the fire department, the
13 clock is always started only when it gets to an FD
14 call taker, okay? And that's what Deputy Mayor
15 Skyler said today, he said, we've always done it
16 this way, we never counted that component of the
17 911 caller, but when it was five seconds, you
18 could argue you should have counted it, but it's
19 five seconds. Now when it's 30, 40, 50 seconds or
20 over a minute and they still don't count it and
21 you're in that burning building, I know one thing,
22 you want to know how long it takes from the time
23 you reach somebody.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Yeah, no,
25 I hear what you're saying, but I'm wondering post-

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 195
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 November 24th--

3 STEPHEN CASSIDY: [Interposing]

4 Nothing's changed--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: --when--

6 [Crosstalk]

7 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --in the way they
8 calculate response times, nothing, zero.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Nothing.

10 STEPHEN CASSIDY: When the 911
11 dispatcher who has a FD call taker--a 911 call
12 taker has an FD call taker listening in, when the
13 911 call taker hits a button and pre-releases that
14 information on a computer terminal, the clock
15 starts, not one second before then.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Even
17 though the FDNY caller's on there, okay.

18 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Not one second
19 sooner.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay,
21 okay.

22 STEPHEN CASSIDY: And that was
23 their testimony today. I listened intently to--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.

25 STEPHEN CASSIDY: --see if there

2 had been a change.

3 [Off mic]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Yeah, they
5 said that, but that's what's happening now. Prior
6 to now, six months ago, seven months ago when the
7 911 call taker gave it to the FDNY call taker,
8 before the button was pressed with the e-mail, did
9 it start when it transferred from the 911 call
10 taker to the FDNY call taker or when the FDNY call
11 taker hit the button?

12 STEPHEN CASSIDY: As soon as the
13 FDNY call taker got the call, the clock starts.
14 It has nothing to do with them releasing the
15 information to the units to the field.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Eight
17 months ago that happened.

18 STEPHEN CASSIDY: Yes, always,
19 forever, forever, the clock start--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:
21 [Interposing] Not now, now it's starting when the
22 e-mail is being sent.

23 STEPHEN CASSIDY: That's right,
24 when the--well let's be clear, the City--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 197
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 [Interposing] That's a different way of measuring
3 things--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 STEPHEN CASSIDY: [Interposing] No,
6 no, but the City contends that it's the same, that
7 when they send the e-mail to an FD call taker, the
8 clock starts, that's the same as pre-UCT when they
9 used to transfer the call. I know it's not, I
10 know it's not, it's a disgrace. The bottom line
11 is what they've done is they figured out a way to
12 take the information down by somebody who they say
13 doesn't count, it does count. And it's 30, 40, 50
14 seconds or a minute. And Ed Skyler sat here and
15 said the following: We never counted it before and
16 we're not counting it now. What he didn't say is
17 there's a difference between five seconds and a
18 minute and five seconds, and everybody in the city
19 of New York who pays taxes should know that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'll be quick,
21 the issue is we hear it earlier, you were here,
22 that the SPRINT and the STARFIRE system are
23 completely compatible and there are no problems
24 whatsoever, that's not what I've heard. So my
25 question to you is can you just quickly tell us if

2 you have heard about problems regarding this
3 system? And also the issue is we also heard that
4 there have been breakdowns when there has been no
5 system, we heard today that that's not true. So
6 I'm just wondering from your experience, you may
7 not like this technology, but what are you hearing
8 about it?

9 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: The answer is I
10 was working on one of those project which was the
11 street file irregular and [off mic] in regard to
12 SPRINT and the fire department. We have lots of
13 streets in both systems that either system cannot
14 identify, we designed the screen that will allow
15 us, okay, to send that bad information to a
16 dispatcher to try and correct before we ever, ever
17 send it out to the firehouse, which is additional
18 time which is also not being calculated, and we
19 still have address problems and we still have name
20 places.

21 Our name place files, there are a
22 tremendous amount of name place files that do not
23 match. The transit system, we put in a subway
24 station one way, PD puts in a subway station
25 another way, when they put it in first, that has

2 to go to a dispatcher just to be interpreted so
3 that we can identify so we know what companies to
4 send where it is. So we have a lot of street file
5 problems.

6 We do bring the systems down on a
7 continual basis to upgrade, okay, or to correct
8 some networking problems that need to be done.
9 It's not down that often, it's not down that long,
10 but we do have outages, and they happen almost
11 every day. I mean if we go down for 10 seconds,
12 for us, that's still an outage, it's a reportable
13 incident, okay? If something doesn't come back
14 up, it doesn't start, we have a problem, we have
15 to bring the system down to restart it.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And thank you
17 for all your service, David.

18 DAVID ROSENZWEIG: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I too cannot
20 end this section without thanking all of you for
21 the technical assistance you've provided this
22 committee over the course of the past several
23 weeks, and I know you're genuinely concerned about
24 our city and I thank you so much.

25 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And we have a

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 200
PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT

2 lot more that we'd like to learn from you today,
3 but we just can't, so we will be working with you.
4 Thank you.

5 ALEXANDER HAGAN: Thank you for
6 your hard work, appreciate it.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you
8 everyone. Lillian Roberts, Executive Director of
9 DC 37; Henry Garrido, Assistant Associate
10 Director, DC 37; Alma Roper, First Executive Vice
11 President of Local 1549, DC 37.

12 [Pause]

13 LILLIAN ROBERTS: --can you hear
14 me?

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, Ms.
16 Roberts.

17 LILLIAN ROBERTS: I was saying good
18 afternoon and--

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Good afternoon.

20 LILLIAN ROBERTS: --I'd like to
21 take this opportunity to thank the Chairs of all
22 three committees and its members for holding this
23 important hearing concerning the 911 emergency
24 response system.

25 I could through all of the

different problems we have, but I think one of the workers and the Executive Vice President of 1549 can probably explain to you a little more about what they do, and we have our technician over here, my assistant who will deal with any technical things.

But my concern is that we have a system that don't work and we might as well face that and stop trying to fix something that's not compatible. It doesn't work within the system itself and therefore the workers are unable to give the kind of service that they'd like to give and they have been blamed for that.

And I'd like to make suggestions as to what I think should be done. And that is that billions in funding from different sources went into this new system. The City should always spend wisely in order to get the most for the taxpayers' dollars. I request that the City Council demand that an audit of the spending for this program. I further request that an investigation committee be created to look into the whole 911 process and see where city government and its highly paid private contractors

2 screwed up on this new system. I also request a
3 federal investigation since Homeland Security
4 funds were used to create this new system.

5 Now having said that, I'm going to
6 ask that Mr. Garrido give you a lot more details,
7 but those are my suggestions and I think really
8 think they'd be a very important because we're
9 going to go around in circles and get nowhere, so
10 I think you should be intimately involved. Go
11 ahead.

12 HENRY GARRIDO: Good afternoon, we
13 submitted written testimony, but in the interest
14 of time I want to address two issues that were
15 raised today in the testimony by the
16 Administration.

17 I would like to hear that the issue
18 of procuring is going to be addressed, possibly at
19 a later hearing. We absolutely believe that the
20 failure of HP to deliver an integrated system has
21 had a tremendous effect on this issue. So we'd
22 like to hear that that's going to be discussed
23 later.

24 But on the issue of training, I
25 think that it's fair to say that what was

presented here by the Administration on the training of the 911 operators has been unclear and disingenuous, and I'll tell you why. There are two different types of trainings that we're talking about, critical training. One training, which is the eight hour training that was discussed here, was in the difference between the two codes between the two systems, there are about 487 codes in the PD system and there are about 20 to 30 fire codes. That training was done in an eight hour training previously done.

The second training that we're discussing that we have not and our members have not fully received is the training on the fire dispatcher functions. That is, on the interview process and the questions that are raised, that training was first done after the news report came out on the failure of the system as it regards to the fire in Queens. And I think that one of the questions that has to be raised here is whether the Administration has done that.

Now I have here an arbitration decision of a grievance that we filed where the arbitrator ruled earlier this year that the City

2 failed to negotiate and discuss with us the
3 improper implementation of a training for the 911
4 operators. We will submit that to you for your
5 review, but the arbitrator could not have been
6 clearer that when they designed this whole
7 transformation, that training component never did
8 take place.

9 I also want to address the issue of
10 the reporting system because I think it goes to
11 the center of this. It doesn't matter how much
12 information a 911 call taker takes in terms of the
13 call, the fact is that our 911 operators have to
14 do that report within 40 characters. So when you
15 hear different instances here about whether the
16 school was involved or additional information
17 about the floor and the fire, if it's not within
18 that first 40 characters, it's not going to be in
19 the first fire dispatch that is given to the
20 trucks, and I think that's a critical issue
21 because that information may be critical in the
22 end.

23 And I'm sure you're going to hear--
24 we did an investigation of this fire in Woodside
25 that Council Member Crowley mentioned and it was

discussed that there was a delay of about five minutes between the time that our 911 operator in keyed the error and the time when the fire was dispatched. I want to set the record straight, we did investigate and found out that within 35 seconds of the first report, our operator attempted to make a change on the address and the system would not allow her to do that. When in fact what he did is generated a second report where a second fire truck was sent out. And I think that's a critical information because what you heard from the Administration here is that there were errors here and there, there were human errors done, when in fact this UCTP system is great. The truth is, there is a computer problem and we need to stop blaming our members for doing what a lot of these computer problems are creating. Thank you.

ALMA ROPER: Bear with me, I'm a little hoarse. Good afternoon, Chair Vacca, Brewer, and Vallone, and members of the Fire and Criminal Justice, Technology in Government, and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Unified

Call Taking system. My name is Alma Roper and I am the Executive Vice President of Local 1549 of District Council 37.

Local 1549 represents more than 18,000 clerical administrative employees in almost all city agency, and more than 1,200 police communication technician and supervising police communication technician to the city's 911 system. Today I am speaking on behalf of the 1,200 members, colleagues, and friends who staff the 911 call centers.

Police communication technicians are the first responders for thousand and thousands of our city residents and visitors. Seven days a week, 365 days a year, my members are there, receiving approximately 13 million calls for assistance annually. Prior to holding this office, I devoted 20 years of service to the citizens of New York as a 911 call taker, dispatcher, and a supervisor.

When hired, a 911 operator goes through an extensive eight weeks of training. This training consists of six weeks of classroom training where operators learn policy, procedures,

and approximately 477 emergency codes, and now 20 to 30 fire codes. The other part of the training is two weeks of hands-on training where new operator, they take the calls while the experienced operators are sitting right next to them, listening in on the calls. Upon the completion of training, the operator goes solo. That means that they are now on their own handling emergency calls.

Nine-one-one personnel have proven, they have proven time and time again--this was certainly displayed during the tragic events on September 11th, 2001. They also rise to the occasion during blackouts, snowstorms, and all major events in the city of New York.

Prior to the Unified Call Taking system implementation on May 4th, 2009, a 911 operator will receive a fire call, immediately transfer that call to a fire call taker, the 911 operator will stay on the line as the fire call taker questioned the caller and the 911 operator would input into the system all pertinent information supplied by the caller.

On May 4th, 2009, the City changed

over to the Unified Call Taking system which meant that the 911 operators will handle all fire calls, in addition to all other emergency calls. In recent weeks, a rash of incidents involving delay response time have resulted in a misleading forum on human error, when in fact the focus should be on a Unified Call Taking system that is unified in name only.

The fire department and the New York City Police Department recently made modification to that system, yet the problems today are the same ones that become apparent in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, that sparked efforts to facilitate communications between New York's premier emergency response agencies. Unfortunately, the city still has to work do--I'm sorry, the City still has work to do in that department.

With the design and implementation of any system of this magnitude, there are issues that need to be resolved and problems that need to be corrected. The Unified Call Taking System is no different. There is no doubt that the police department and the fire department want to

optimize emergency service in this city. A major stumbling block to accomplishing that goal is due to the fact that the police department SPRINT system, and the fire department STARFIRE system are incompatible.

Another major stumbling block could be the failure to tap the firsthand experience, knowledge, and expertise of the men and women who use the system rather than allowing them to become the targets of misleading attacks. Local 1549 members who work as 911 call takers, dispatchers, and supervisors have years of experience under the collective belt, yet many are afraid to speak out about the system, even though they are being blamed for its flaws. Nine-one-one call takers, dispatchers, and supervisors are dedicated civil servants who take their jobs as New York safety net and the lifeline of the city very serious. These attacks have added additional level of stress to a job that is already highly stressful and demanding. It is time to stop placing the blame and to get down to business of reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Unified Call Taking system with input and assistance from those

operators that work this system.

In the interest of the public safety, improving public awareness, and improving the system are critical. When it comes to emergency, especially fire calls, seconds count, lives are at risk.

I'm a little upset because I've heard so much about 911 not being able to do this and do that. The job and I must really focus on the job on Woodside, Queens. That job, the 911 operator did make a mistake on the address, but immediately, when she saw that she had made that mistake, she did a I.C., which is an address correction, in seconds she change that job and she routed it to the police dispatcher, as well as the fire dispatcher. I don't know if anyone here had the opportunity to look at that job, if you look at that job, the exact same cross streets that was on the incorrect job was on the correct job. So by the fire department responding to the incorrect address, they would have came to the right address because it was on the exact same block. The 911 operator did not cause anyone to die in that fire. She did her job immediately, she changed that

2 address.

3 This system, the Unified Call
4 Taking system that we have do not allow when the
5 police dispatcher transfer or input a call and it
6 goes to the police dispatcher, we have a way of
7 changing whatever we have to do in our system and
8 it goes right to our dispatcher. It was told to
9 me that when we change codes or add additional
10 information to send to fire, it's a little delayed
11 so we have to physically pick up the phone and
12 call. Now I don't know if that is incorrect, but
13 this is what someone has brought to my attention.

14 Not only that, the Unified Call
15 systems are all antiquated. These systems has
16 been in effect we have the same system at 911 that
17 we have had for over 40 years, all they add was to
18 identify where the caller is coming from. We have
19 a line of questioning that 911 operators must ask
20 the callers in order to get the information or the
21 correct information for the police officer as well
22 as now the firefighters. We are doing our job
23 with what we have. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I
25 thank you, I thank you very much for your

2 testimony.

3 ALMA ROPER: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And is there a
5 question? I'm sorry.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yeah, I have a
7 question.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
9 Brewer.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I agree with
11 you, thank you tremendously for your testimony and
12 all your work.

13 Can you just--I know time is of the
14 essence, I think there's another event here, but
15 my question is, with these two systems, can you be
16 a little bit more specific because we obviously
17 heard between on the technology front from the
18 Administration, and you heard it also, that there
19 are no problems, and I know that's not true, so
20 I'm just wondering if you or Henry can be
21 specific.

22 HENRY GARRIDO: Yeah, one of the
23 things that is critical is that there are about
24 20,000 addresses in the STARFIRE system that the
25 fire department that are not recognized in the

police department address. And I think that's a critical piece because let's say, for instance, if you have a fire on a highway, right? Our SPRINT system has the ability to identify mile markers, specific north and south, addresses where the fire is taking place on a car, for instance. Our understanding is that because there was no need to do that before, the STARFIRE system doesn't have the same capability, so now we're asking our people to input an address where one system would not recognize for the other, so now we have to pick up the phone and call the dispatcher. And I think that's only the beginning of a number of incompatibility issues that we have and that needs to be addressed before all the corrections in the address are taking place.

The second part is what we talked about: the inability of our workers to make corrections even as they're doing the reporting. You know, the fire truck is dispatched within the first 10 seconds, critical time is needed in order to make the change. If our workers cannot make the change into that system, then we have a problem because a new report is being done. Thank

2 you.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, and
4 I want to thank Executive Director Lillian Roberts
5 of course, and I want to thank Henry and I want to
6 thank Alma for their technical assistance in the
7 process that the Committee undertook prior to the
8 hearing, thank you.

9 ALMA ROPER: You're welcome.

10 LILLIAN ROBERTS: I want to thank
11 you and in the process of investigate this and I
12 hope you will, that you will include the
13 discussion with the people who are doing the work.
14 I think that's been the whole element left out of
15 it and therefore nobody can find out what the
16 problems are. They've been left out of the
17 discussions and the process.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We certainly
19 want to include you and we thank you. Our last
20 two panelists are Paul Casali, Staten Island, New
21 Dominick DeRubbio, Dominick DeRubbio, right.

22 [Pause]

23 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: --first? Is
24 this on? First I would like to thank the City
25 Council for having this hearing today.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

3 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: My name is
4 Dominick DeRubbio, I'm a public safety advocate
5 and I have been very vocal against this 911
6 system. Surprisingly, I am going to speak about a
7 lot of things that the union didn't touch on today
8 and City Council Members.

9 A few things I'd like to go over
10 are communication, accountability, and
11 contingency. We learned as, at the events of
12 September 11th, that communication is very
13 important. Three hundred and forty three
14 firefighters were killed on September 11th as a
15 result of communication. One of them was my
16 uncle, firefighter David DeRubbio. The writings
17 has been on the wall--

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [Interposing]
19 Can we talk all conversations out into the hall,
20 please? And just obviously, you've been very
21 patient, we waited all day to hear your testimony,
22 but it's going to have to be limited to three or
23 five minutes 'cause we do need to leave.

24 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: Absolutely.

25 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

2 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: The writing has
3 been on the wall. In May of 2009 I wrote a
4 detailed editorial in the Chief and it went over
5 everything that we are seeing, all the issues that
6 we are seeing today with the 911 system. Some of
7 the issues that the unions didn't go over, okay,
8 and if the Sergeant-at-Arms could distribute these
9 reports to the Council Members?

10 [Pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --keep the
12 back of the room quiet for you.

13 [Pause]

14 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: If you turn to
15 page five of the report, it shows a layout of
16 MetroTech Center in downtown Brooklyn, okay? It
17 shows the proximity of 11 MetroTech, also known as
18 PSAC I, okay? You have fire department
19 headquarters 20 feet away from 11 MetroTech.
20 Located within FDNY headquarters is the FDOC, Fire
21 Department Operations Center. In the event of a
22 major emergency within New York City, top brass
23 within the FDNY will be running operations out of
24 the FDOC. Number three, Verizon communications
25 hub. Central communication hub in the city. And

1
2 lastly, number two, the New York City Office of
3 Emergency Management--all within five block radius
4 of each other. This is a disaster waiting to
5 happen.

6 PSAC II. What's happening with
7 PSAC II? We need a backup. If we're going to
8 establish unified command in PSAC I, meaning FDNY,
9 NYPD, and EMS, why has there not been a unified
10 backup established yet?

11 One of the last things that I would
12 like to touch on that the unions did not go over
13 and that anyone else did not go over today was the
14 borough mess, the borough screw-ups. We are
15 seeing with the new system firefighters being sent
16 to non-existent fires in different boroughs. When
17 the fires in actuality are in another borough. I
18 think that's something that needs to be addressed,
19 that's very, very important. Okay, that's also
20 detailed in my report.

21 Proposed actions, just to keep it
22 short, I'm asking for an investigation to be
23 launched into all the fires, okay, where there was
24 loss of life or injury. I am asking that the fire
25 calls be given back to FDNY dispatchers. They are

2 trained to handle them, they have the training,
3 they should go back to the FDNY dispatchers.

4 Lastly, Council Member Kenneth
5 Mitchell introduced an Introduction 0905 of 2008,
6 I ask that that--that went to committee, I ask
7 that it be brought to the floor and voted on and
8 that would establish a fire department
9 communications office in all five boroughs. Okay?

10 Thank you for your time, I really
11 appreciate it.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.
13 Sir?

14 PAUL CASALI: Good afternoon, Mr.
15 Chair, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you. My name
16 is Paul Casali, I am here today, I'll speak very
17 briefly 'cause I know it's been quite a long day
18 for everyone. I'm here today basically as a
19 concerned citizen and a community activist of
20 sorts, I live out on Staten Island along with
21 Dominick DeRubbio. And I've sat and listened to
22 everybody's testimony today, the questions and
23 answers and there's one glaring question that I
24 have: I'm not sure if there was any kind of pilot
25 or test program of this new system before it was

done. Now I have been a business consultant for several years for Fortune 500 companies and every major project that I've worked on on the private sector, there has been some sort of pilot or some sort of test program done before a major launch of a new product, new technology, that sort of thing. It seems to me as though if we're going to be trying to improve response times for the fire department or for EMT or the police department, anything that involves somebody's life, their life being at stake, there should at least be a dry run before all this technology is incorporated, before processes are changed that depend on life and death. I don't seem to see to know of any type of pilot project that was done when Mayor Bloomberg went to Chicago and got this idea to put together this system. I think it's disgraceful and a huge failure.

Although there's nothing that could be done about it now, I would like for this lesson to be learned to make sure that, going forward, if we're going to have this kind of procedural change on such an important matter in this city, that we at least have the ability to test it, learn the

2 lessons from it on a pilot testing basis and not
3 in real time where lives are lost. Thank you very
4 much.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you very
6 much.

7 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: [Interposing]
8 Can I just jump in one last thing?

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, yes, sir.

10 DOMINICK DERUBBIO: On November
11 24th, the FDNY implemented new protocol, we're all
12 aware of that, correct? On November 26th, two
13 days after the new protocol was implemented, fire
14 units responded to a reported fire in Queens at
15 535 Seneca Avenue. The fire was actually in a
16 completely different borough, the fire was in
17 Brooklyn at 535 Snediker Avenue, okay? So the
18 protocol that they implemented, it's not working.
19 Okay? Just wanted to get that out there, thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I
22 would like to note for the record, we have a
23 statement from Comptroller William Thompson that
24 was submitted relative to the Unified Call Taking
25 system and it will be entered into the record as

2 well.

3 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And thank you
4 all in the back for staying for four hours,
5 whatever it's been, to hear this testimony, it's
6 very impressive.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
8 thank you. I want to thank all those who spoke,
9 and I want to thank Chair Vallone and Chair Brewer
10 and this meeting is now adjourned.

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.

Signature Tammy Wittman

Date December 23, 2009