

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEES ON PARKS & RECREATION AND CULTURAL
AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES & INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP
RELATIONS

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April 23, 2009
Start: 10:19am
Recess: 12:11pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

DOMENIC M. RECCHIA, JR.
Chairperson

HELEN D. FOSTER
Co-Chairperson

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Aaron Boshka
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Francisca Coelho
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Carrie Laney
Vice President of Government and Community Relations
New York Botanical Garden

John Calvelli
Executive Vice President for Public Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society

Dr. Bob Cook
Executive Vice President and General Director of
Living Institutions
Wildlife Conservation Society

Jon Dohlin
Director
New York Aquarium

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2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We have the
3 students here this morning from Rachel Carson
4 School of Coastal Studies. I want to welcome you
5 here to the Chambers. Give a round of applause to
6 these high school students. And, what I'm going
7 to do is after we hear from the Administration
8 testify, I'm going to have the students testify.
9 And, I would ask if the Administration could stay
10 to hear the students testify 'cause they prepared
11 some remarks and I think it'd be worthwhile to
12 hear from our students in the Rachel Carson School
13 for Coastal Studies, who works with the Aquarium,
14 very closely and WCS and it's a joint venture.

15 And, WCS does a great job in
16 working with our schools, all our schools, but
17 especially the Rachel Carson School. I just want
18 to thank the Aquarium. I see Mr. Dohlin here this
19 morning. Of course, we have to always thank the
20 ladies at the forefront of the Aquarium, the one
21 who's loved by Brooklyn and that is Cynthia Rice
22 [phonetic]. And, I do not see her here this
23 morning, unfortunately 'cause she is the one who
24 is really at the forefront. And, she should have
25 been here this morning.

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2 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
3 Thank you for being here today to express your
4 ideas and concerns for the Living Collections of
5 New York City. My name is Domenic Recchia. I'm
6 the Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
7 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations.
8 Our Committee is pleased to be joined by Council
9 Member Helen Foster, Chair of the Committee on
10 Parks and Recreation. Unfortunately, she's
11 running late. She got a flat tire. But, she'll
12 be joining us shortly. She called in to that she
13 gave permission to start the hearing.

14 There could be no better time to do
15 a hearing addressing the needs of these essential
16 institutions than during the month of April,
17 especially yesterday was Earth Day. And,
18 yesterday, we had a great day. And, I was proud
19 to join the Mayor and the Speaker in announcing
20 environmental legislations packaged to reduce
21 greenhouse gas emissions from existing government,
22 commercial and residential buildings. And, I was
23 the author of one of those pieces of legislation.

24 While we do our part as lawmakers
25 to bring cleaner air and a healthier environment

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2 to the people of New York City, the Living
3 Collection act as a conservation parks and are
4 developing into environmental resources centers,
5 promoting the conservation of ecosystems and the
6 survival of species. Zoos and Botanical Gardens
7 have changed the look and quality of life
8 throughout New York City. Neighborhoods, without
9 trees, wildlife, fields and greenery, have been
10 transformed. Today, every New Yorker can have
11 exposure to plants, animals and natural beauty.

12 Living museums not only provide
13 recreation, but they educate New Yorkers on
14 pressing environmental matters. Schoolchildren
15 and adults visit these institutions each year to
16 learn about science and nature. They also explore
17 ways to protect our environment. Living museums
18 breed environmentalist and innovators of the
19 future.

20 In addition to their role as
21 educators, living museums are part of the economic
22 cultural engine that drives New York City. They
23 contribute millions of dollars and, plus, millions
24 of tourists come to New York State for our
25 wonderful living museums. More than four million

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2 guests visit the Wildlife Conservation Society
3 facility each year. New York City's 311 customer
4 service center received close to 8,000 cultural-
5 related inquiries from July through October 2008.
6 Of those inquiries, over 50% related to finding a
7 Zoo, Aquarium or Botanical Garden visit.

8 The arts industry, which includes
9 living museums, have been deeply affected by the
10 slow economy and the cuts that are devastating to
11 these institutions. However, zoos, Botanical
12 Gardens and Aquariums face unique challenges
13 because their Living Collections need to be fed,
14 watered, bathed, groomed and treated for medical
15 care. Their facilities must remain sanitary and
16 safe to survive. The closing of a wing or a
17 particular exhibit becomes extremely problematic
18 when that exhibit includes plants and animals that
19 need round-the-clock care.

20 Despite 50 million in Federal
21 stimulus funding for arts jobs nationwide, zoos
22 and aquariums are excluded from such funding. The
23 New York State Legislature and Governor Paterson
24 proposed to eliminate all the funding for zoos,
25 Botanical Gardens and aquarium programs 2010. New

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2 York City's living museums currently face budget
3 cuts at the local level and significantly fewer
4 endowments.

5 Today, we are interested in
6 brainstorming, coming up with solutions for our
7 Living Collections to survive this fiscal crisis
8 and remain the valuable assets they are for our
9 City and our planet. So, I welcome everyone here
10 today. And, I ask our guest to please identify
11 yourself, from the Administration. And, who would
12 like to go first? Miss Morton, would you like to
13 go first?

14 MARGARET MORTON: Yes, I would.

15 Thank you, Chairman.

16 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Bob Garafola,
17 Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Recreation.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Welcome.

19 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Thank you.

20 MARGARET MORTON: Yes. Good
21 morning, Chairman Recchia. My name is Margaret
22 Morton. I'm the Deputy Commissioner of the New
23 York City Department of Cultural Affairs. I'm
24 here on behalf of Commissioner Levin and along
25 with my colleagues, Jamie Bennett, the Chief of

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2 Staff, Kay deRosset, our Director of External
3 Affairs, Susan Chin, our Assistant Commissioner
4 for Capital, Tim Thayer, our Assistant
5 Commissioner for Institutions, Tracey Knuckles,
6 our general counsel, and Phillipa Shao, our
7 Director of Finance. We're delighted to be here
8 to testify regarding the challenges that we face
9 in preserving New York City's living collections.
10 And, I appreciate, also, being joined by my
11 colleague from Parks. And, I'd like to testify
12 and then, following him, I'm open to answering any
13 questions. Thank you.

14 The living collections in DCA's
15 portfolio include zoos, aquaria, Botanical Gardens
16 and horticultural organizations that curate and
17 maintain plant and animal collections as the
18 central part of their mission. In addition, there
19 are many other organizations, including the Isamu
20 Noguchi Museum, American Museum of Natural
21 History, Brooklyn Children's Museum, who also care
22 for certain living collections as part of their
23 public service.

24 Cultural Affairs is acutely aware
25 of the challenges that face every cultural

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2 discipline. In the case of living collections,
3 these include the ongoing need to care for living
4 animals and plants, even when exhibits are closed;
5 overhead and security costs for large areas of
6 outdoor property; seasonal visitation patterns and
7 heavy dependence on City and State support. These
8 kinds of challenges come into play when
9 organizations have to cut costs, as well as when
10 they are expanding.

11 In addition to the annual
12 operating, energy and programs funding that we
13 provide, DCA works closely with organizations to
14 determine the needs and challenges particular to
15 each group's facility and programs. Through our
16 capital budget, we service the unique physical
17 needs of living collections. Let me offer a few
18 examples of how we are meeting those needs. The
19 \$14.1 million DCA-funded Animal Hospital at the
20 New York Aquarium was customized for the unique
21 needs of aquatic animals. The Hospital included
22 fully-quarantined wet and dry holding areas,
23 specialized air filtration, wastewater treatment,
24 and salt and freshwater systems, the likes of
25 which are rarely found in other municipal building

1 projects. We are currently working on a \$17
2 million electric capacity upgrade for the
3 Aquarium's entire campus, to accommodate future
4 growth and new exhibits, as well as major
5 renovations to the Main Hall.
6

7 The City has made major investments
8 over the years to help organizations with seasonal
9 visitorship build capacity to attract audiences
10 even when the weather turns chilly. For example,
11 we are currently looking forward to the
12 groundbreaking on a 22,000 square foot green
13 Visitor Center at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.
14 The City has allocated 28.1 million for this
15 project, which will help make BBG a year-round
16 destination for orientation, education and
17 discovery. At Wave Hill, we invested 4.9 million
18 in a Visitor and Horticultural Center to provide a
19 climate controlled orientation point and gift shop
20 for visitors.

21 While all areas of our portfolio
22 lead in terms of green technology, organizations
23 with living collections are at the forefront. I
24 encourage you all to visit the Queens Botanical
25 Garden administration building and landscapes,

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2 which won the City's first Green Building Design
3 Award in 2004, as was the City's first LEED
4 Platinum facility. This \$24 million project
5 incorporates a planted green roof, storm water
6 recycling, and composting toilets, sustainable
7 design features that reinforce the Garden's core
8 mission.

9 The Bronx Zoo Lion House, which
10 houses both the new Madagascar exhibit and a
11 catering facility, is the first landmark building
12 in New York City to be LEED certified by the US
13 Green Building Council. I'd like to point out
14 that the Lion House renovation posed some unique
15 design challenges, including the question of,
16 literally, how to keep the hissing cockroaches out
17 of the kitchen.

18 Every nonprofit organization is
19 feeling the impact of the economic downturn in
20 different ways, but there are some common threads.
21 All of them are seeing reduced funding from both
22 public and private sources. Endowments are down
23 on average of 24%, and almost every CIG has
24 implemented a hiring freeze. Many are saving
25 further on operating costs by implementing staff

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2 furloughs, reducing hours open to the public,
3 extending current exhibitions and scaling back or
4 canceling new exhibits and education programs for
5 next year. Every organization is working hard to
6 make the most of its available resources. And, we
7 are committed to providing the maximum strategic
8 and financial support possible, given the City's
9 fiscal realities.

10 The good news for most of our
11 organizations with living collections is that
12 attendance is up, and at some venues, membership
13 is up, as well. After September 11th, attendance
14 dropped dramatically due to travel restrictions,
15 and it took many groups five years to rebuild
16 audience. This time, while strong audience hasn't
17 translated to higher earned income, more people
18 are taking advantage of discount and free
19 admission and concession sales are down, the fact
20 that organizations are sustaining and even growing
21 audience means that they will be well-poised to
22 take advantage of the economic recovery when it
23 happens.

24 The Mayor recently announced a
25 sweeping set of initiatives to help stabilize

1 nonprofit organizations during the downturn,
2 including the Greater New York program, which is a
3 strategic partnership that pairs business
4 executives with nonprofit executive directors in
5 an effort to build stronger, even more effective
6 nonprofits; the EDC Capital Access Revolving Loan
7 Guaranty Program, which the Commissioner mentioned
8 at last month's hearing. This program provides
9 easier access to nonprofits and small business who
10 need loans to help bridge cash flow; expansion of
11 New York City's Returnable Grant Fund by 150% for
12 the next two fiscal years, to help organizations
13 obtain bridge loan financing for City expense
14 contracts.
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16 Earlier this week, Mayor Bloomberg
17 also announced the New York City Service
18 Initiative to answer President Obama's nationwide
19 call to service. This initiative will not only
20 increase volunteer resources for organizations, as
21 needed, but will also raise awareness among New
22 Yorkers about the value of the nonprofit field.

23 In the meantime, we are continuing
24 and expanding our advocacy on behalf of the field,
25 encouraging New Yorkers to attend cultural events

1 through our online cultural calendar and
2 partnership with NYC and Company. If you haven't
3 already, please visit the NYCulture Calendar on
4 our website and nycgo.com, and encourage the
5 nonprofit cultural groups in your districts to
6 submit their events so that they can be featured.
7 NYC and Company also features CultureSpot on
8 nycgo.com, which this month features the Cherry
9 Blossom Festival at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.
10 CultureFinder and CultureSpot brochures also
11 available at Bloomingdale's and the NYC and
12 Company visitor information kiosks.

14 Finally, speaking of advocacy, I'd
15 like to remind everyone that next Thursday, we
16 celebrate the seventh annual Poem In Your Pocket
17 Day, which will give us a chance to promote the
18 numerous spoken word and poetry programs taking
19 place across the five boroughs. The Department of
20 Education is encouraging schools to reach out to
21 their local elected officials that day, and I hope
22 that every one of you will consider reading a poem
23 at a school in your district.

24 In conclusion, DCA is always here
25 to work with and advocate for our constituents. I

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2 would like to thank Chairman Recchia, Chairman
3 Foster, and all the members of these Committees
4 for inviting me to testify today. During this
5 time, your strong advocacy is especially
6 important. And, we look forward to responding to
7 questions after the Deputy Commissioner of Parks
8 testifies. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Before you
10 go, Deputy Commissioner, I'd just like to
11 recognize all my colleagues who are here today.
12 To my right we have David Weprin from Queens. We
13 have Vincent Gentile from Brooklyn, Inez Dickens
14 from Manhattan. I welcome you all to joining us
15 this morning. And now, Deputy Commissioner
16 Garafola from the Parks Department.

17 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Thank you,
18 Chairman. Good morning, Chair Recchia and members
19 of the Cultural Affairs and Parks Committees. I
20 am Robert Garafola, Deputy Commissioner for
21 Management and Budget for the New York City Parks
22 and Recreation Department. On behalf of Mayor
23 Bloomberg, First Deputy Mayor Harris and Parks
24 Commissioner Adrian Benepe, we want to thank you
25 for the opportunity to discuss our living

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2 collections at the Central Park, Prospect Park and
3 Queens Zoos.

4 As you might know, Parks and
5 Recreation is the steward of more than 29,000
6 acres of land. That's 14% of the land in New York
7 City, including more than 5,000 individual
8 properties ranging from Central Park to community
9 gardens and green streets. We operate more than
10 800 athletic fields, nearly 1,000 playgrounds, 550
11 tennis courts, 66 public pools, 48 rec centers, 17
12 nature centers and 13 golf courses, and 14 miles
13 of beaches. We care for 1,200 monuments and 22
14 historic house museums. And, we look after more
15 than 600,000 street trees, and two million park
16 trees. We are also New York City's principal
17 providers for recreation and athletic facilities
18 and programs. And, we are home to free concerts,
19 world-class sports events and cultural festivals.
20 We also have three zoos, which are operated by the
21 Wildlife Conservation Society under agreement with
22 Parks, which I'd like to discuss today.

23 First, before I discuss the zoos,
24 I'd like to recognize the primary living
25 collections in our parks; our trees and wildlife.

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2 Trees are invaluable parts of our natural
3 surroundings. They beautify our streets and
4 provide us with shade and clean air. Living in
5 tandem with our trees are countless wildlife
6 species that make their home in our wonderful
7 diverse city. But today, I'm going to focus on
8 our three zoos and the collections they tend to.

9 In fiscal year 2008, the Central
10 Park, Queens Zoo and Prospect Park Zoos drew in
11 almost 1.5 million people. This fiscal year to
12 date, and that's from July 2008 to February 2009,
13 we increased our attendance by 4.5% since last
14 year at this time. And just last week, all three
15 zoos were crowded and packed with happy school
16 kids off on spring break. Clearly, New Yorkers
17 value their zoos and Parks is proud to be
18 partnering with the Wildlife Conservation Society
19 in offering these state-of-the-art facilities to
20 the public.

21 As you are all aware, Parks, as
22 with most City agencies, has been required to make
23 a number of budget reductions or revenue
24 enhancements over the past few months. In March
25 2009, for the first time since 2006, we

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2 implemented admission fee increases at the three
3 zoos. The revenue from the fee increases at all
4 three zoos will ensure that, at this time, their
5 financial conditions will be sound. As in the
6 past, we remain committed to supporting and
7 enhancing our zoo and living collections.

8 Additionally, I am pleased to
9 report that, as of right now, the Capital
10 Commitment plan for all three zoos will remain at
11 its current level. Currently, Parks has over \$25
12 million in capital improvements allocated for its
13 zoos. These projects are either in construction,
14 pending registration, or in design and planning.

15 We are also pleased with the
16 upcoming opening of the snow leopard exhibit in
17 June of this year. We expect this to be a real
18 boost and to be the already-- work with the
19 already attractive and diverse collection at the
20 Central Park Zoo. Also, we expect construction to
21 begin in fiscal year 2010 on the spectacular
22 jaguar exhibit at the Queens Zoo. In addition, we
23 are in the design phase of our Amur leopard
24 exhibit at Prospect Park Zoo and hope to go into
25 construction next year.

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2 As you can see, these three zoos
3 are dynamic, thriving and changing. They will
4 continue to serve as a place for all our children
5 and New Yorkers of all ages to expand their
6 horizons and dream of far-off places. Most
7 importantly, the zoos and animals will teach New
8 Yorkers the important lessons in conservation and
9 caring for the environment and nature.

10 We believe that with our current
11 expense, revenue budget and capital plan, our zoos
12 and their living collections are well situated and
13 cared for in these difficult times. And, we thank
14 you for the opportunity to talk about the zoos and
15 the special relationship we have with the Wildlife
16 Conservation Society. And, we look to a very
17 successful spring and summer season at our parks
18 and our zoos. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.
20 Okay. So, I heard what both of you have to say.
21 It's very interesting. In my opening remarks, I
22 talked about that the zoos, Botanical Gardens and
23 aquariums face unique challenges because their
24 living collections need to be fed, cared for and
25 their employees are selectively picked to work

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2 there because of their talent, their creativity
3 and their knowledge. And, you know, during these
4 tough economic times, like we've never seen
5 before, you know, these institutions are facing
6 drastic cuts, like they've never seen before.

7 And, you know, I see your
8 testimony, you know, about, you know, everything
9 that we're doing here in the City, which is great,
10 you know. But, what concerns me is that how can
11 we implement furloughs, reduce hours, you know,
12 scaling back, canceling, you know, these exhibits
13 because, no matter what you do there, these
14 animals have to be cared for. So, what is the
15 City, what is the Parks and the City, what do you
16 plan to do to help these institutions in the
17 months to come? What is the plan to give them
18 extra funding 'cause this is not like the museums
19 that do not have living, okay, institutions? This
20 is something that's very, very-- it's great
21 concern to me. It's a great concern to a lot of
22 advocates because there's only so many people you
23 can lay off. What are you going to do? Stop
24 buying the food for the fish to eat at the
25 Aquarium? Or, stop feeding the animals? I mean,

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2 where are they supposed to cut? So, what is your
3 game plan? And, how are we going to get funding
4 to these institutions?

5 MARGARET MORTON: Well, I can say--

6 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: - -

7 MARGARET MORTON: I can say,
8 Chairman, that I can't say that we can identify
9 additional dollars now. But, we do have dollars
10 that are allocated to the living collections, both
11 operating support and capital support; that we are
12 working with them to make sure that they use--
13 capital, in particular, is an area that we've
14 really invested heavily because we recognize that
15 infrastructure is really important and key to the
16 collections. And, our capital budget, we have
17 approximately 200, just over I think 200 million
18 that is dedicated toward living collection
19 organizations, eight or nine. And, we are, you
20 know, again, continuing to work, even more
21 vigilantly, in helping them to move through design
22 and construction for those.

23 All of the living collection
24 organizations that I identified are CIGs, who get
25 operating support from the City. We recognize

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2 that we've gone through reductions over the last
3 year and a half. But, there is operating support
4 that we continue to dedicate toward those
5 organizations that we are, you know, fighting to
6 preserve. I will say that marketing is an area
7 that I think is also very important to them during
8 this time. Audience development; the
9 organizations really have been ingenious in being
10 able to be creative in holding on to that audience
11 and, indeed, building it in certain circumstances.
12 We have the New York City Cultural calendar, as
13 you know, that we, you know, will look to help
14 support them through marketing. And, again, for
15 us, it's continuing to be vigilant about how we
16 get money to them, getting money to them faster
17 and better and particularly working on the capital
18 projects.

19 ROBERT GARAFOLA: In terms of the
20 zoos, I think there's a number of things that
21 we're working with the Wildlife Conservation
22 Society on. First of all, obviously, the capital
23 program that we have in place, we think the ten-
24 year plan, which is over \$19.5 million including
25 other, if you add on all the other capital that is

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2 going on as planned, we are, you know, thinking
3 that we have a lot of, you know, we have new
4 exhibits that are actually going to be coming
5 online. So, in terms of what we're talking about,
6 also building on the infrastructure, you know, we
7 think we're really pretty well placed on that.

8 Also, in terms of marketing and
9 what my colleague also said, we are working
10 closely with the zoo in terms of trying to
11 improving marketing techniques, getting more
12 people to the zoo. And, we are getting more
13 peoples at the zoo. In fact, with this last year
14 so far, 4.5%, which increases the revenue, as
15 well. Also, working with the zoo in terms of, you
16 know, finding efficiencies that are not going to
17 compromise the zoo experience, the quality of
18 life, the animal, the living institutions in any
19 way, or the exhibits in any way. We're working
20 very closely with that.

21 In addition, with the revenue
22 enhancements that we've worked very closely with
23 the zoo in starting this year, we think we will be
24 able to hold the budget at a very similar level.
25 We don't see drastic drops, at least, and I'm only

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2 talking here really in terms of the Prospect Park,
3 the Central Park and the Queens Zoo. So, I think
4 we're, in regarding to the financial condition
5 there, I think we are in, you know, I'm not going
6 to say great shape, but we're, you know, we're
7 holding our own. And, they're holding their own.
8 Obviously, if there were other issues that are,
9 you know, come up, we'll be working very closely
10 with the zoo on an ongoing basis. We meet with
11 them constantly to go over any issues they have
12 and working on those things.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah. You
14 talked about the, you brought up the fee. Okay.
15 What was it? And, what did you increase it to?

16 ROBERT GARAFOLA: The fee increases
17 were at Queens Zoo and the Prospect Park Zoo, we
18 increased those for children, from \$2 to \$3; for
19 seniors, from \$2.25 to \$4 and for adults, from \$6
20 to \$7. And, for the Central Park Zoo, children
21 from 3 to \$5, and, I'll just add that that's
22 really two zoos that includes. It includes the
23 Children's Zoo, admission to the Children's Zoo
24 and also, to the Central Park Zoo, as well. For
25 seniors, it went from \$4 to \$7 and for adults,

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from \$8 to \$10.

This was something we worked very closely with the Wildlife Conservation Society. We looked at a lot of different models. We looked at other organizations. We looked at what other zoos were charging; what other entertainment-type institutions were charging. We even looked at what people were charging for movie theater tickets, for baseball games, for museums, etcetera. And, we felt we were, you know, like under the prices of those particular things. So, we felt, you know, combined with the Wildlife Conservation, we thought this was-- we hadn't raised the fee for three years. And, we felt this was a compromise that, you know, we could do.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, when you made these increases, when did they go-- when did you make them? When did they go into effect?

ROBERT GARAFOLA: They went into effect, I believe, March of this year. And, we will, you know, that's what's going on now.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, when was the decision made to increase it?

ROBERT GARAFOLA: I believe it was

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made either January-- around January of this year.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, did you consult the Department of Cultural Affairs?

ROBERT GARAFOLA: We did not consult with the Department of Cultural Affairs on these three zoos. We worked very closely with the Wildlife Conservation Society on these three zoos.

MARGARET MORTON: Yeah. I would just correct you here, Bob. The Mayor's office oversees both Parks Department and Cultural Affairs. And, the Mayor's office did consult with Cultural Affairs when this decision was being made.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. And, when you say with Cultural Affairs, would that be Deputy Mayor Patty Harris?

MARGARET MORTON: It was Deputy Mayor Patty Harris' office.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, it went into effect in March 2009?

ROBERT GARAFOLA: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. And, what course did you take in getting this message out to the community?

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2 ROBERT GARAFOLA: You know, the
3 Wildlife Conservation Society posted those fees.
4 And, you know, I really don't know what other
5 types of messages that they got. And, that would
6 be something you could ask them.

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: What?

8 ROBERT GARAFOLA: That would be
9 something I would ask them. Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And so, in
11 January, you started to do a study. Let me just
12 see if I understand this. In January, you did a
13 study and you started talking about raising the
14 fee. In March 2009, you raised the fee. Correct?

15 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yes. But, in
16 March in 2009, we raised the fee. Prior to the
17 study, I mean, this was going on, discussions were
18 going on prior to January.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, today is
20 April 23rd, and I'm hearing, for the first time,
21 that you raised the fee. Do you realize that this
22 City Council is a partner? Department of Cultural
23 Affairs, we revamped the whole budget for
24 Department of Cultural Affairs, 'cause we're
25 supposed to be a partner. And, you come before

1
2 this Committee today and say you raised the fee
3 without consulting, without contacting, without
4 speaking. We're not a rubber stamp. And, you
5 come into this Chamber and, for the first time, my
6 colleagues and I are just hearing about this. It
7 affects my constituents. It affects everyone's
8 constituents. Don't we have a voice?

9 ROBERT GARAFOLA: This was put in
10 the preliminary budget. And, it was in the
11 preliminary budget that we submitted.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: But, I'm just
13 hearing it for the first time. And, we've been
14 joined by my colleague, Helen Foster. Welcome.

15 So, I don't think it's right. And,
16 I would ask that next time you decide to raise a
17 fee, that we be consulted. I mean, 'cause we do
18 have constituents and we do have ways of seeing
19 what could be done. And, you know, let me just
20 clarify. The preliminary budget that comes out is
21 the preliminary budget for next year. This fee
22 was raised in this year. So, I think that, you
23 know, everybody wants the City Council to work
24 with them and be partners. But, when it comes
25 time to discussing and working together, you know,

1
2 in something like this and see, in fact, you
3 resolve it or take another recourse or take
4 another course, it's, you know, it's done
5 automatic. And, I just think it's just not right.

6 At those zoos that you charge now,
7 do you have a free day in the Queens, Central Park
8 and Prospect Park Zoo?

9 ROBERT GARAFOLA: No, we do not.

10 [Pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right.
12 Get my notes here. In fiscal year 2008, you said
13 that the Central Park, Queens and Prospect Park
14 Zoos, they drew in 1.5 million people, right?

15 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Do you have
17 the breakdown on each zoo?

18 ROBERT GARAFOLA: In terms of the
19 breakdown, let me see if I do have... [Pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Of course,
21 you say, overall, your attendance has increased by
22 4.5%.

23 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Right. Hold on a
24 second.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, I'm just

1 interested in, you know, was that in Queens?

2 Prospect? Or, was it even, you know?

3 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That would be
5 something of great concern to me. If you don't
6 have it, then we could--

7 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yeah, I'll get it
8 to you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If you could
10 just get that--

11 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- to myself
13 and to Miss Foster, 'cause that is-- we'd like to
14 look at that.

15 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: 'Cause that
17 could really help us out. And--

18 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Actually, I do
19 have it here.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh.

21 ROBERT GARAFOLA: It increased by,
22 Central Park, 5.1%; Queens--

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Five point
24 one?
25

1
2 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yeah. Queens
3 Zoo, 5.6% and Prospect Park, .6%.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: How come we
5 have such an increase in other two boroughs and
6 not Brooklyn?

7 ROBERT GARAFOLA: I don't know.
8 I'm going to go out there and find out right now.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, no, no,
10 no. I'm just-- is there, you know...

11 ROBERT GARAFOLA: I don't know.
12 Well, hopefully, with the new exhibit that we'll
13 be putting in there--

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: The leopard,
15 right.

16 ROBERT GARAFOLA: -- that should
17 help, yeah. I think that would help a lot.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: It just, you
19 know, it's, you know, I could see-- that's a big
20 discrepancy, you know.

21 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Well, actually,
22 I'm looking at something and from '07 to '08, it
23 went up by 13,000 people. So, there was a fairly
24 big increase between '07 and '08 for that zoo.
25 So, that could have been one of the reasons.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, does the
3 Central Park-- well, now, you said Central Park
4 has two zoos, the Children's Zoo..

5 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Children's Zoo
6 and then, also the Central Park Zoo. And, it's
7 all one admission. And, you can go to both zoos.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. What
9 is the total budget for Central Park Zoo?

10 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Just a second.
11 Yeah, for Central Park Zoo-- no, that's not the
12 budget. And, I want all three budgets. I don't
13 have it by borough. Can I give it to you in one
14 second? I know I have--

15 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Sure.

16 ROBERT GARAFOLA: -- it here.
17 Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Sure.

19 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: While he's
21 looking for that, Miss Morton, I'll ask you a
22 question in the interests of some time. The
23 Commissioner and the Administration, you know, you
24 keep on doing these cuts across the board. Okay.
25 Wouldn't you say that this year it might be a good

1
2 time not to do the same cuts across the board, but
3 rather, look at each institution separately and to
4 see what maybe the cut should be, instead of doing
5 a straight cut across a board cut for, you know,
6 make every institution pay the same price? Maybe,
7 do you think, you know, what's your opinion about
8 it? You for it? Against it? 'Cause if you do
9 not do across the cut board equal to every
10 institution, we might be able to help these living
11 institutions, Botanical Gardens and the zoos. You
12 want to comment on that and just...

13 MARGARET MORTON: I would just say,
14 Chairman, that I haven't thought about that
15 before. Thinking about it very briefly, I would
16 say it would be so difficult for us. It would be
17 difficult for us, as it would be difficult for
18 you, you know, who is our partner in really--

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Interposing]
20 Oh, now, we're the partner.

21 MARGARET MORTON: Yes. Yes, you
22 are, whether you like it or not.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: When it
24 comes to the cuts.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: When it comes

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to the cuts.

MARGARET MORTON: Because we do, you know, we obviously represent and advocate for the entire field. And, we value the entire field. I think it would be very, very difficult to look at organizations, organizations that are unique and really try to identify what are the priorities among organizations themselves that are somewhat unique. So, I guess I would say that's my initial thought. But, certainly, we could get back to you, you know--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah. I really--

MARGARET MORTON: -- with a more thoughtful response because you're right in trying to identify ways to be creative in looking at--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah.

MARGARET MORTON: -- budgeting.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, I'd just like to-- if you take word back to the Commissioner that I'd really think that'd be-- we have regular meetings. And, I think maybe our next meeting, we should discuss something like this 'cause this is great concern to the City

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Council.

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ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yeah. The

4

subsidy--

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CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Deputy

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Commissioner Garafola.

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ROBERT GARAFOLA: Yeah, I have the

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answers here. The subsidy, the total subsidy for

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fiscal year '08 was \$9.7 million. And, the

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Central Park, you asked about the Central Park,

11

and we spent \$1.3 million at Central Park. The

12

rest of it, the rest of it was revenue that we

13

received from the zoo.

14

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, how

15

about Queens?

16

ROBERT GARAFOLA: Queens, we spent

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\$3.9 million and, in Prospect Park, \$4.4 million.

18

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, I'm

19

going to turn it over to Miss Foster. But, I just

20

have one question. Do you give discounts for

21

schoolchildren? Are they, you know, for schools

22

if they come to your zoo, what is the procedure?

23

ROBERT GARAFOLA: The children get

24

discounts. The Board of Ed, you know, contacts

25

the Wildlife Conservation Society and they do give

1
2 discounts. We also, in terms of marketing,
3 occasionally some of the zoos will, you know, have
4 some kind of a marketing thing, where they will--
5 if you go, like, to a museum or you go to a
6 baseballs game or something like that, they try to
7 work out some kind of arrangement where you can
8 get a discount price to come to the zoo, as well.
9 So, they're trying to get as much membership-- or,
10 not membership, but as much usage and people
11 coming to the zoo, as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Did you ever
13 think about doing a family package; all three zoos
14 for one price or something like that?

15 ROBERT GARAFOLA: There is a
16 membership package that the Wildlife Conservation
17 Society does do.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, I know.
19 I understand the Wildlife has the membership. I'm
20 a member of that. But, I just thought of, you
21 know, let's say a tourist--

22 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- 'cause a
24 lot of tourists, this is a group, see, this is
25 where we have to think outside the box. A lot of

1
2 tourists go to the Central Park Zoo. So, if you
3 give them a package to go to visit all three zoos,
4 we could get them. All right. And then, in
5 there, if we throw in the Botanical Gardens, then,
6 for sure, we could get them to the outer boroughs.
7 So, I think this is something that we should
8 definitely talk--

9 ROBERT GARAFOLA: [Interposing] I
10 think we'll-- that's a really good idea and we'll
11 [crosstalk]--

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I mean,
13 especially, these economic times, we're going to
14 see more people in New York City than we ever did
15 before. Many families can't afford to go away for
16 the whole summers, can't afford to send their
17 children to camp, can't afford to just, you know,
18 even go away for one night. So, more people are
19 going to be staying in New York and doing day
20 trips to different museums and different, you
21 know, Botanical Gardens, different zoos. So, I
22 really think that we should definitely look at
23 that and see what we could do and, especially,
24 trying to get those tourists to the outer boroughs
25 to help those institutions also. Okay.

1
2 At this time, I turn it over to my
3 colleague, Chairman Miss Helen Foster. And, I see
4 we have Cynthia Rice here from the Aquarium. It's
5 great to see you. I'm glad you're here with us.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.
7 I apologize for being late. My tire didn't
8 cooperate with me. A couple of quick questions.
9 Have you looked at the-- and good morning.

10 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Good morning.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: That should
12 start it off. Since the increase in March '09,
13 have you looked at the numbers to see if
14 attendance has fallen off?

15 ROBERT GARAFOLA: We haven't gotten
16 the numbers yet. But, we will be studying them
17 very closely.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: When you
19 get those numbers, if there's any change, up,
20 down, the same, could you please let the Committee
21 know?

22 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Absolutely.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And, do you
24 have any other proposed fare increases that the
25 Committees don't know about?

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ROBERT GARAFOLA: No, we don't.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Lastly, and this may be a question that everybody knows the answer to. But, I don't. When we look at cutting funding, I would assume, like, with the living, like the zoos, the animals, the Aquarium, it's kind of like a family. They have to eat. They have to have medical care. Where do you, or, how do you determine those cuts? And, I think maybe that's the question in terms of across the board, maybe it's like us sitting in the budget negotiating team where we understand nothing is sacred. But, some things are more important than others. You can't, you know, tell the dolphin you only get one fish today because we're in a budget crisis.

ROBERT GARAFOLA: Um, hm.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And, they're used to, you know, and I'm being funny. But--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I love it. I love it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: -- how do you make those decisions?

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'm not the
3 only one talking about the sharks and the whales
4 and the-- it's great.

5 MARGARET MORTON: Yes. The living
6 collections that Cultural Affairs oversees,
7 different from Parks--

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

9 MARGARET MORTON: -- there are
10 approximately eight zoos and gardens,
11 predominantly, are part of the CIG group. Those
12 are a group of 34 among the cultural institutions
13 in the City that are on City property, that are
14 owned by the City. City has a special
15 relationship. We provide operating and energy
16 support on an annual basis to those organizations.
17 So, when the Chairman referenced cutting those,
18 that support is ongoing and is annual. And, we do
19 cut that group when we do reductions on an across
20 the board basis. So, you know, we don't look and
21 distinguish between what the organization is doing
22 or providing, even though that's a very good
23 point. Living collections obviously are caring
24 for, you know, living collections.

25 And, I will say that these

1
2 organizations have shown incredible ingenuity in
3 being very, very strategic about the, you know,
4 exhibits that, you know, have to be compromised in
5 some way and, obviously, keeping animals and the
6 needs of, you know, those in their care as
7 priority. So, I mean, I would say that they've
8 had to be very, very creative in dealing both with
9 public cuts and also cuts and reductions that
10 they're experiencing, unfortunately, from the
11 private sector in terms of giving.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: I
13 understand that. I don't know how creative, and
14 this is out of my realm, but I don't know how
15 creative you can be when it comes to feeding or
16 medical care. Do you close an exhibit and then,
17 you know, send the dolphins-- I don't understand.

18 MARGARET MORTON: Um, hm.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And, maybe,
20 at some point, we need to, or you need to, not
21 look at it as across the board and see, you know,
22 fair is giving everyone what they need. Fair
23 isn't giving everyone the same amount equally.
24 That's not fair.

25 MARGARET MORTON: Um, hm. And, I

1
2 think that idea is what Chairman Recchia suggested
3 we consider. And, it's something that we haven't
4 done. And, you know, certainly something that we
5 will take under advisement and look at going
6 forward. I would say that, you know, I would
7 certainly defer the question about how you really
8 do approach being responsible for exhibits, where
9 you have living beings to the organizations that I
10 know we are going to hear from. I wouldn't
11 presume to speak to--

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

13 MARGARET MORTON: -- how they do it
14 and how they--

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And,
16 neither would I.

17 MARGARET MORTON: -- strategize.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Now, help
19 me understand. The Bronx Zoo is in the CIGs.

20 MARGARET MORTON: Yes. That's the
21 Wildlife--

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: But, it--

23 MARGARET MORTON: -- Conservation--

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

25 MARGARET MORTON: -- Society, as

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well as--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: But, wait,

wait--

MARGARET MORTON: --the Aquarium.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: -- wait,

wait, wait. Let me-- 'cause I'm from the Bronx

and--

MARGARET MORTON: Okay.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: -- the

Aquarium's not in the Bronx. So, let me think

Bronx. The Bronx Zoo is in the CIGs, but does not

fall under the Parks Department, correct?

ROBERT GARAFOLA: That's correct,

yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.

That's what I thought. And, the Bronx Zoo and the

Aquarium are under the Wildlife--

MARGARET MORTON: Conservation

Society, yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay. I

see all my Bronx Zoo people. And, I assume we're

going to hear from all the groups.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay. So,

1
2 maybe--

3 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Right after
4 they testify. But, we have children here from the
5 Rachel Carson High School of--

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Where?

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- Coastal
8 Studies. Right here.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, they're
11 going to testify. So, I was--

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Where are
13 they? I mean, where is the high school?

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Where do you
15 think? In Councilman Recchia's district.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: I didn't
17 know this was like bring our constituents to City
18 Hall Day.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: They're under
20 18. They can't vote yet. No, but...

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh, yeah.
22 Okay. I'm done. So, we'll hear from them. And
23 then, I'll ask the rest of my questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right.
25 Does anybody have any questions? I just have one

1
2 quick question. The money that you collect from
3 the zoo from the fees, does that money go into the
4 general operating budget? Does it go back to the
5 Parks Department? Or, does it go to the WCS?

6 ROBERT GARAFOLA: It goes to the
7 WCS. And, that's what's used to run the zoos,
8 along with any subsidy that we have in our budget
9 that pays for them. So, that's how it's done.
10 It's a combination, you know, the money that's
11 gotten-- and it's based on, you know, anything in
12 terms of ticket, you know, tickets that they get,
13 also in terms of the restaurant they run, the gift
14 shop that they run, as well. And then, we take
15 all that and then, we add in the subsidy to make
16 them whole.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. No one
18 has any further questions? I've been joined by
19 Helen Sears. Helen, welcome. Since, no one has
20 any further questions, I want to thank you.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, if you
23 could just stay just to listen to the children, I
24 would greatly appreciate that. Thank you very
25 much.

1
2 ROBERT GARAFOLA: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We'll get
4 back to the Commissioner, 'cause we, I think, my
5 colleague and I would like to sit down and talk
6 about that. Thank you very much.

7 Next, we have the students from
8 Rachel Carson School of Coastal Studies. Please
9 come on up. Come sit at the table. This is a
10 hearing. Don't be bashful. Leroy, come on up.
11 You're just in time to hear these wonderful
12 students testify from the Rachel Carson School of
13 Coastal Studies. It's a high school, deals with
14 coastal studies. And, they are working with the
15 Aquarium. That's their partner. It's one of the
16 new high schools in South Brooklyn. I'm proud to
17 say in my district. Okay. Okay. Press the
18 button, identify yourself, say where you're from
19 and then, you can read your prepared statements.

20 Is the light-- okay. Try it. It's
21 on. It's on. You're good.

22 CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN: Hi. My name
23 is Christopher Baldwin. I'm from Rachel Carson.

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.
25 Christopher.

1
2 CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN: Why the New
3 York Aquarium is important to me. The Aquarium is
4 very important. I'd like to go into a future in
5 marine biology. The Aquarium is the only place in
6 Brooklyn that houses various aquatic animals; from
7 fish to jellyfish and from otters to walruses,
8 even a shark tank. The Aquarium has a whole
9 spectrum of things for me and people in the
10 community to learn about aquatic life. It's been
11 one of my favorite places to go ever since I was
12 little. I want to be able to visit the New York
13 Aquarium when I get older and I would like to be
14 able to take my kids there, too. Okay.

15 I felt really good to be part of
16 this to help, like, get the money back for the
17 Aquarium and hopefully, to get future funding
18 back. And, what I actually did to help was I
19 helped get petitions signed. I went to the
20 Governor's office and I've helped get the petition
21 signing for the Boardwalk. But, sadly, I couldn't
22 make it that day. I was sick.

23 I'm very excited that I'm-- I'm
24 kind of nervous, I'm sorry.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Don't

1
2 be nervous.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Don't be
4 nervous. We're cool. Or, at least, we like to
5 think we are. Anytime, you know, I've turned into
6 what I hated. Anytime you have to say you're
7 cool, you know you're not. So, take your time,
8 Christopher.

9 CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN: All right.
10 So, I'm very excited to be able to help. I'm more
11 eager now to be mobilized on the city level and do
12 everything I can to protect the beautiful places.
13 That's it.

14 FRED MILUS: Hello.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Good
16 morning.

17 FRED MILUS: My name is Fred Milus.
18 My peers at Rachel Carson and I have been very
19 concerned about the new budget cuts. Our concerns
20 have led to us to signing hundreds of petitions
21 and even going to the Governor's office. Our
22 efforts have fortunately caused a positive
23 reaction out of the Governor and will hopefully go
24 further than that. We plan on doing the same on a
25 City level as well. The New York Aquarium, Bronx

1
2 Zoo and Botanical Garden all play an important
3 role in the lives of many children such as I.
4 Conserving these institutions are critical for the
5 environment and the world. We have dedicated
6 countless hours during and after school and also
7 on Saturdays to ensure that that my childhood
8 memories don't die and the future generations can
9 create their own memories.

10 I remember as a child going on
11 school trips to the zoo and Botanical Garden.
12 These places have exposed me to nature and have
13 shown me how beautiful the world can be if we
14 treat it right. After I found out that these
15 places might close down, it almost broke my heart.
16 That is why I am proud to be a part of this
17 movement and will continue to support it with all
18 my heart.

19 EMILIA JEREZ: Hi. I'm Emilia
20 [phonetic]. And, I love the New York Aquarium.
21 And, it is an important part of my life. Ever
22 since the first time I entered--

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER:
24 [Interposing] I'm sorry. Tell me your name,
25 again.

EMILIA JEREZ: Emilia.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Emilia.

Thank you.

EMILIA JEREZ: Jerez. Ever since I came there, I felt at ease with my surroundings. And, it offers a place that, not just for me, but for millions of people that enter, to view aquatic animals that are non-natives to the State. The setting is a caring place for the animals, whose setup is made up to allow the tourists to see the animals at a different light. It is a beautiful place. And, that, and the Botanical Gardens, which I also enjoy visiting.

Another reason the New York Aquarium is an important part of my life is because my high school, Rachel Carson, has a close partnership with its faculty. As students, we are used to field trips that provide us with a different-- sorry-- with a behind the scene and hands-on experience that few high school students are able to enjoy the way we have. The New York Aquarium offers education, fun events and a sanctuary.

It is my love for nature and my

1
2 close everyday contact that motivates me to
3 advocate against the budget cuts. I believe that,
4 as humans, we have so much energy and power and
5 numbers that we are able to change something from
6 how it is right now to great for us and the
7 environment. Without it, we would not live
8 adequately.

9 A small group of students and I
10 received petition packets before the winter break
11 to fill out with signatures. I gathered my
12 friends, family and acquaintance to fill out the
13 packet. A friend and I spent the weekend for the
14 break stationed by the exit of a - - in my
15 neighborhood to demonstrate our opposition against
16 towards the budget cuts. For two hours on two
17 days, we obtained 292 signatures. Afterwards, I
18 continued to collect signatures from strangers on
19 the bus, on my library faculty and other kids in
20 school, totaling up to 370 signatures.

21 A month later, in March, is
22 another-- the same group of students from my
23 school were invited to meet with the Governor
24 Paterson. Even though we were not able to speak
25 with him, we were greeted by his represenator and

1
2 secretary. Valuable advice we received from them
3 and other people we met at the meeting motivate us
4 to continue our fight. After the conference, we
5 lobbied outside the building. It was exhilarating
6 to see people on the streets look and react to our
7 signs.

8 The aftermath landed us an
9 interview with Channel-- by Local 12 local news
10 for Brooklyn about two weeks later. The publicity
11 only motivated us more. And, we continued to
12 collect signatures on Coney Island Boardwalk, two
13 weeks after, from walkers, joggers and bikers.
14 The featured interview caused more people to be
15 aware of the situation and they supported us and
16 gave us - - .

17 We received the notice just
18 yesterday that we were able to receive 100% of the
19 State-level funding back into the New York
20 Aquarium, Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens. And, I
21 still stay hopeful, enthusiastic and optimistic
22 through the whole cause and I continue to believe
23 that we will be able to gain City-level money. We
24 will continue to do what we have done until we
25 receive recognition for our cause because New York

1
2 Aquarium is too precious not to fund and to let
3 go.

4 Yeah, I believe we can influence
5 our government, a change in our government as we
6 are right now sitting here in front of you. And,
7 okay. I won't say the rest.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: That was
9 great. Can I ask, Christopher, Fred and Emilia,
10 how old are each of you and what grade?

11 EMILIA JEREZ: We're--

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Go ahead,
13 everybody can answer.

14 CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN: I'm 17, in
15 the 11th grade.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Seventeen
17 in 11th.

18 FRED MILUS: I'm 17 and I'm a
19 junior, 11th.

20 EMILIA JEREZ: Seventeen and in the
21 11th grade.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh, cool.
23 And, all three of you go to Rachel Carson...

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: School for
25 Coastal Studies.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: School for
3 Coastal Studies. Well, that's cool.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: They're right
5 down the block from the Aquarium. Come visit.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Will you
7 give me directions? You know, people from the
8 Bronx don't know how to get to Brooklyn.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: - - I want to
10 thank you for coming today and reading your
11 testimony 'cause, as you heard, we had two Deputy
12 Commissioners testify on budget cuts, you know,
13 and what they're doing and, you know, how City
14 government-- they make a proposal for budget cuts.
15 We examine them and we discuss on how to restore
16 them. And, by you coming here today, you really
17 explain why it's important. And, you're involved
18 with the program at Rachel Carson and so, part of
19 this is for the living species and the Aquarium.
20 And so, you're learning, you know, exactly how
21 funding, 'cause funding's very important to these
22 institutions.

23 But, I want to thank you for coming
24 here today. And, also, introduce you to
25 Miss Crowley from Queens, Council Member from

1
2 Queens. And, we have our Majority Leader, Leroy
3 Comrie and also, we have Eric Gioia, who brought
4 his beautiful daughter. Eric, you want to
5 introduce us to your beautiful daughter?

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: She can
7 tell you her name.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Thank you.
9 I'm Councilman Eric Gioia from Queens. And, today
10 is bring your child to work day. And, this is my
11 daughter, Amelia. Would you like to say hello to
12 everybody? No? It's okay. She doesn't want to
13 say hello just yet. But, I want to thank you for
14 coming down to testify. It's very important to
15 hear from young people and, especially, to set the
16 example that all of us could be a change in our
17 neighborhood. So, thank you very much for coming
18 down to testify today.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And, thank
20 you for having the courage, 'cause it can be a
21 little nervous. When does everyone turn 18?

22 EMILIA JEREZ: Ten months.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Ten months,
24 okay.

25 EMILIA JEREZ: It's a while.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: You got a
3 little while. Fred, when do you--

4 FRED MILUS: Eleven months.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh. Okay.
6 Christopher?

7 EMILIA JEREZ: Just say your
8 birthday. He turns in about like two weeks.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh, good.
10 So, you can register to vote and make sure, you
11 know, the way you testified, you get to make your
12 voice heard by voting. So, do your thing,
13 Christopher.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just wanted
15 to say. Are any of you involved in the Docent
16 program or...

17 EMILIA JEREZ: No. I applied for
18 it - - . I don't remember. But, I've been really
19 busy. The Docent program is where we are able to
20 go-- Rachel Carson students able to go and
21 volunteer, learn, feed--

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Right.

23 EMILIA JEREZ: -- and just work at
24 the Aquarium. But, I will apply there, just try
25 to - -

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, because
3 that's a program that's in our living
4 institutions. And, unfortunately, with these
5 budget cuts, they're facing-- these programs could
6 be wiped out. And, that's very important for our
7 young people. But, I just want to thank you.
8 Keep up volunteering. Keep up what you're doing
9 for our community. And, it's greatly appreciated.
10 Let's give them a round of applause.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just want
13 you to know something. Mr. Wolenski [phonetic]
14 came from John Dewey High School. That's where I
15 went to high school. Your principal, he's a good
16 guy. Okay. Next, who's our next panel? Call the
17 next panel.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: I know.

19 FEMALE VOICE: Brooklyn Botanical
20 Gardens [pause] and Wave Hill.

21 AARON BOSHKA: Good morning. I am
22 not, obviously, Scot Medbury, President of
23 Brooklyn Botanic Garden. He sends his apologies.
24 He has a interview today. Our cherry blossoms are
25 opening up as we speak with the sunshine and

1
2 really anticipating some great news coverage out
3 of it.

4 My name is Aaron Boshka [phonetic].
5 And, I'm the privileged to serve as the Director
6 of Government Affairs for Brooklyn Botanic Garden.
7 Thank you, Chairman Recchia for holding this
8 hearing, and especially for your Council
9 Resolution supporting living collections during
10 the especially difficult and challenging New York
11 State budget negotiations that just happened. On
12 behalf of the Garden's trustees, talented staff
13 and more than 600 volunteers, I am very pleased to
14 offer the following testimony on the challenges of
15 preserving living collections, a subject very
16 close and dear to all of us at the Botanic Garden.

17 Brooklyn Botanic Garden is, of
18 course, an essential natural sanctuary and
19 environmental education center in New York City,
20 with programs that welcome nearly 750,000 visitors
21 and serve 150,000 schoolchildren each year. Our
22 leadership role among North American botanic
23 gardens recognized for youth gardening and
24 community horticulture, as well as recognized
25 internationally, and reflected in two recent

1
2 handbooks that I passed up to you recently,
3 "Gardening with Children," and "Community
4 Gardening," which I am pleased to show to you.

5 The beauty of the Brooklyn Botanic
6 Garden and its role in inspiring generations of
7 New Yorkers to become environmentally literate
8 stewards of the earth is widely celebrated. Less
9 well understood is the fundamental role played by
10 the Garden's diverse living collections of plants.
11 Brooklyn Botanic Garden's gorgeous, human-scaled
12 garden spaces are comprised of plant collections
13 that are as every bit complex as the more static
14 object collections curated at art or natural
15 history museums. It may be a novel idea for some
16 people to think of a garden as a living museum,
17 but that is most certainly what Brooklyn Botanic
18 Garden is. And, we are involved daily in
19 museological activities, such as tracking the
20 source, identity, condition, and treatment of more
21 than 12,000 species and genres of plants. To that
22 list I would add that our science department
23 tracks something called phenology, which concerns
24 such things as the timing of flowering and
25 fruiting, data that over time has provided clear

1
2 evidence of global warming.

3 Before me today is a plant specimen
4 that is perhaps most emblematic of the challenges
5 of preserving living collections. This is one of
6 the 500 bonsai that we care for at Brooklyn
7 Botanic Garden on behalf of all New Yorkers.

8 BBG's bonsai collection is the largest and oldest
9 public collection in North America, and includes
10 specimens that are nearly 400 years old. This
11 Siberian elm is relatively young, however. It's
12 only been trained for about fifty years now. But,
13 it still requires the same consistent, expert care
14 as all the specimens in our larger collection.

15 Its finicky preferences for light, temperature,
16 moisture, humidity, airflow and fertility must be
17 carefully gauged and provided every single day by
18 a skilled curator who has apprenticed rigorously
19 to the complexities of bonsai care. Caring for
20 venerable and venerated plant collections, like
21 BBG's bonsai collection, is obviously not mere
22 yard work, but involves collections maintenance
23 and preservation activities every bit as
24 challenging as those involved in preserving
25 objects from antiquity. You can't simply banish

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2 the bonsai to the basement.

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I often say that you cannot step in the same garden twice, for gardens and plants in them are always changing and evolving and, therefore, always different. As anyone who has inadvertently killed a houseplant, as I do very often, plants need the same kind of constant, consistent and sensitive care that animals and people require.

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These are obviously challenging times, we will all agree, but for those of us charged with caring for living collection, there is very little discretion as to what we will or won't do. My colleagues and I are deeply committed to expertly preserving our portion of New York City's valuable living heritage, but we are increasingly challenged in this effort by the proposed municipal funding reductions for FY '10, which come on top of deep cuts already instituted this past year.

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This year we have already been forced to reduce the Garden's staff by 10% through layoffs and attrition, and have instituted an institute-wide salary cut and sharply reduced a

1
2 broad range of other expenses. Any further cut to
3 our collections-care budget will seriously
4 compromise the health and integrity of the
5 Garden's living collections and compromise the
6 environmental literacy work that is so crucial to
7 our future.

8 I thank you, Chairman and your
9 colleagues for providing us the opportunity to
10 highlight the importance of protecting our
11 collections and look forward to working with the
12 Council and our partners from Department of
13 Cultural Affairs and Parks to preserve New York's
14 essential living collections. Thank you.

15 KATHRYN HEINTZ: Before I begin, I
16 want to remind you all not to forget that in an
17 era of stay vacations, intracity tourism is very
18 important. And, I encourage you all to join me in
19 taking an occasional vacation to Brooklyn or
20 Staten Island, some of those faraway places.
21 Councilman Foster, I live in the Bronx and I take
22 my kids on a day vacation to Brooklyn or Staten
23 Island, specifically around cultural institutions.
24 And, it's fantastic. And, there's huge potential
25 within our own City just for that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Before you
3 get started, I just want to recognize we've been
4 joined by Dan Garodnick from Manhattan.

5 KATHRYN HEINTZ: Good morning. I'm
6 Kathryn Heintz. I'm the Development Director of
7 Wave Hill, the very beautiful 28-acre public
8 garden and cultural center located in the
9 northwest corner of the Bronx. With cultivated
10 gardens, an urban woodland, conservatory, historic
11 houses and spectacular Hudson River vistas, we are
12 the City's public, private oasis. And, on behalf
13 of the many members, visitors and staff of Wave
14 Hill, thank you for welcoming us all this morning.
15 We've had the pleasure of meeting with many of you
16 individually and it's truly an honor to address
17 you as a Committee.

18 Our great City's extraordinary
19 living collections, its zoos, its botanical
20 gardens, its public parks, are world renowned.
21 They are a reason people come to visit and they
22 are a reason people stay here to live. They
23 factor in our quality of life and satisfaction.
24 They provide open-air environments for peace,
25 solitude and inspiration as well as for recreation

1
2 and relaxation. Most important, New York City's
3 green spaces allow everyone, all ages and all
4 walks of life, to connect with the natural world.
5 And connecting to nature is a basic human need.

6 Our message this morning is a
7 simple one. We need, and want, you to know how
8 devastating additional cuts in City funding in
9 2010 will be to our organizations, to the New York
10 City community and to cultural tourism. We
11 recognize that every organization and agency needs
12 to work with realistic cuts in operations.
13 However, we believe that cuts made to our cultural
14 institutions, and to living collections in
15 particular, have been disproportionate and deeper
16 than our fair share. We must maintain a baseline
17 level of support to remain open and operating for
18 the public benefit. And, considering the
19 population of New York City, the public we serve
20 is enormous. And, we want to operate for that
21 public.

22 Of the more than 130,000 visitors
23 that Wave Hill serves annually, 50% live in the
24 Bronx; 25% more come from our City's four other
25 boroughs, with a large contingent from nearby

1
2 Northern Manhattan. Our school and teen programs
3 focus on Bronx schools. We served close to 25,000
4 students this past year, in addition to helping
5 train over 430 teachers. We do this in an
6 environment of serenity and beauty that provides
7 solace during this tumultuous time in our economic
8 lives. In short, Wave Hill enriches the lives of
9 all who visit its grounds and attend its programs.
10 And, we, and all our colleagues here, contribute
11 to why living in New York City is so great.

12 So, what do we need to do now to
13 strengthen our institution so we can continue to
14 serve our City when it needs us most? We must be
15 more relevant than ever to our visitors and our
16 community at large. We, at Wave Hill, are taking
17 this challenge to heart and we want to make sure
18 that we continue to play a vital role in our
19 community. More people than ever are visiting
20 Wave Hill. They come because we are a beautiful
21 outdoor place to be, because we're an affordable
22 venue, because our excellent and activities and
23 programs are free or very low cost. And, this
24 includes our celebrated multi-generational and
25 free family art project every weekend from one to

1
2 four, Saturday and Sunday that celebrates its 20th
3 anniversary in 2010.

4 This fiscal year, Wave Hill saw
5 cuts in City and State funding of 24%, as well as
6 a decline in private revenue of 18%. As a result,
7 we furloughed all fulltime staff for 10 days. We
8 reduced arts and education programming by 14%. We
9 eliminated summer evening hours. And, we reduced
10 the overall budget by \$800,000 mid-year. We are
11 further endeavoring to contract our operations
12 prudently with as little impact on the public as
13 possible. But, I can tell you that we're
14 developing a budget for 2010 that is yet 20%
15 lower. Clearly, we're doing our part to reduce
16 expenses and maximize resources.

17 But, a further cut of 20% in City
18 funding next year will mean a damaging budget
19 reduction to Wave Hill. That would mean five
20 fulltime jobs eliminated on July 1. And, if the
21 overall financial climate does not improve, at
22 least three more staff positions cut by December.
23 This is 25% of the Wave Hill fulltime workforce,
24 of which 60% are New York City residents.
25 Programming will be scaled back so as to preserve

1
2 our core mission and remain open to the public,
3 but free days and low admission price will have to
4 be reevaluated.

5 As municipal representatives and
6 stewards of New York City, you fight for us in the
7 City Council. I believe, with you as our
8 champions, we can not only persevere but become
9 stronger institutions. And, we ask finally, to
10 leave no New Yorker, no New York City child and no
11 New York City tourist indoors. Thank you.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.
13 Don't move yet. Can Francisca, or is it
14 Francisco? New York-- Francisca, can you come up
15 and join this panel. We should have called you.
16 And, Francisca, how do I say your last name?
17 'Quello.' No, no, you stay.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, you stay
19 up there. We're going to ask you questions.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yeah, we'll
21 pull up a chair. Okay. Thank you. Do you have a
22 written statement?

23 FRANCISCO COELHO: I certainly do.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.
25 Thank you.

FRANCISCA COELHO: Good morning.

My name is Francisca Coelho, Vivian and Edward Merrin, Associate Vice President for Glasshouses and Exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden.

I am pleased to offer testimony today on the challenges preserving New York's living collections. Thank you, Chairman Domenic Recchia, and Chairwoman Helen Foster of the Parks and Recreation Committee, along with your colleagues on this Committee, for holding this hearing and for affording us the opportunity to testify.

My institution, the New York Botanical Garden, is one of the greatest botanical gardens in the world and the largest in any city in the United States, distinguished by the beauty of its diverse landscape and extensive collections and gardens, as well as by the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education and science.

The Garden maintains our living collections, not only for their beauty and their appeal to visitors from both near and far, but for their value to teach and inspire. These teaching collections are the best way to convey the

1
2 importance of conservation, biology, ecology,
3 gardening and nature.

4 In my capacity at the Garden, I am
5 responsible for curating, developing and
6 maintaining collections of palms, orchids, ferns,
7 cycads and other tropical plants in the Enid A.
8 Haupt Conservatory that have been assembled over
9 more than a century to serve the Garden's research
10 and education programs. These collections consist
11 of over 6,000 different types of plants, many of
12 them rare and endangered and all of them requiring
13 specialized care.

14 The Enid A. Haupt Conservatory was
15 constructed between 1899 and 1902. It is a New
16 York City Landmark and offers unparalleled
17 opportunities to experience the beauty of nature
18 and to discover the ecology and diversity of
19 tropical plants. A staff of eight is dedicated to
20 just the Conservatory, to care for these plants
21 and maintain the historic structure that houses
22 them. Without this skilled staff we simply could
23 not meet our stewardship responsibilities.

24 Seven days a week and 365 days a
25 year, the plants in the collection need to be

1
2 watered, pruned, staked, fed or tended in some
3 way. Some of these plants were grown from seeds
4 collected in the wild by Garden scientists working
5 to document and preserve biodiversity in the
6 Amazon basin, the cloud forests of Ecuador, and
7 other locations. They are irreplaceable and
8 require constant care, even in times of economic
9 hardship. It takes more than a few green thumbs
10 to maintain one of the greatest collections in the
11 world.

12 Of course, the Enid A. Haupt
13 Conservatory is only one acre. The plant
14 collections that spread across the Garden's
15 remaining 249 acres also need constant attention
16 from skilled horticulturists in order to
17 effectively serve the Garden's mission as a museum
18 of plants. These outdoor collections feature
19 thousands of trees a century old or older, native
20 wildflowers, alpine plants, heirloom roses, and
21 countless other historic and irreplaceable plants
22 that are studied by students of all ages and
23 appreciated by hundreds of thousands of visitors
24 from around the world. Exposed to drought,
25 deluge, pests and diseases, and a variety of

1
2 environmental stresses inherent in the Garden's
3 urban location, these plants depend on regular
4 professional maintenance for their survival.

5 I can tell you first-hand that our
6 living collections require constant and continuous
7 skilled care that cannot be deferred. We are an
8 institution of living plants, and not the garden
9 variety type on sale in plastic trays by the dozen
10 at Home Depot. Our collections are just that, an
11 array of species found and collected from around
12 the world from places that most of us will never
13 visit. It is not an easy or inexpensive task to
14 recreate a breath-taking Caribbean tropical
15 paradise in the middle of a New York winter. No
16 wonder our visitation is up.

17 As a protector and advocate for
18 plant life, the Garden is at the forefront of
19 sustainability issues, including understanding and
20 documenting climate change, promoting
21 environmental conservation and identifying and
22 mitigating the spread of invasive species and the
23 decline of endangered species. We are a leader in
24 hands-on plant science education for students of
25 all ages. Over the years we have educated and

1
2 inspired thousands of teachers and millions of
3 children, growing new generations of conservation
4 stewards and motivating them to pursue the new
5 green jobs of tomorrow. The Garden contributes to
6 the public good and the quality of human life
7 through plant science and education, around the
8 world and at home in the Bronx.

9 We bring the native plant life
10 associated with cultures from around the world
11 here to the Bronx. Children can experience the
12 far away gardens of their parents and
13 grandparents, a small piece of their heritage
14 right here at home. I myself grew up on the
15 island of Trinidad, where I discovered my love for
16 growing plants, especially edible plants as my
17 father loved to garden. I remember getting
18 extremely excited as I dug up sweet potatoes or
19 hunted every morning for fallen avocados in my
20 backyard. This summer I will be installing an
21 Edible Garden exhibit using tropical plants from
22 throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.
23 Families in the Bronx, and surrounding areas, will
24 have a wonderful opportunity to see and learn
25 about the plants that produce their food; fruits

1
2 and vegetables that they eat daily but often only
3 buy in supermarkets.

4 The Garden, like many institutions
5 across the City, is forced to face some
6 challenging fiscal realities. The cuts we have
7 experienced in municipal and philanthropic support
8 have already required us to cut programs,
9 institute a hiring freeze and eliminate dozens of
10 staff positions. The combined effect is 51 job
11 opportunities lost. On top of this, it was
12 recently announced all employees at the Garden
13 would be required to take one week of unpaid
14 leave. While funding decreases from public and
15 private sources, our responsibilities to our
16 living collections remain constant.

17 It is the world-class nature of our
18 offerings that make the City's cultural
19 institutions world-class organizations. Together,
20 we are the foundation of what makes New York a
21 world-class city to be proud of. Like the
22 magnificent living collections in the Garden's
23 Conservatory, we must preserve and protect what
24 makes us a vibrant place to learn, live and visit.
25 The City's funding support for cultural

1
2 institutions is more important than ever. We are
3 asking that the City maintain adequate funding
4 support of our City-owned facilities, as has been
5 budgeted in years past.

6 It is my fear, and the fear of my
7 colleagues at The New York Botanical Garden, that
8 there is nowhere else to cut. The Garden, holding
9 true to its mission, has fought hard to hold our
10 living collections harmless from the harsh
11 realities of this economic climate. Much like our
12 greenhouses, we have sheltered our precious and
13 fragile specimens thus far. The cuts that we have
14 sustained are hindering our ability to stage
15 exhibits and the public access to our collections
16 we would like to provide. The need for continued
17 cuts at the Garden will come at the expense of my
18 staff and my work.

19 I hope you will agree that living
20 museums play an important and unique role in the
21 education of our youth and the health of New York
22 City's environment and economy. We look forward
23 to working with you to protect these vital
24 resources. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you for

1
2 your testimony. And, by listening to all three of
3 you, in your testimony, is that with the budget
4 cuts that we are facing, is that we could be in
5 danger of losing many different plants, trees,
6 gardens because, just that the staffing might not
7 be there to care for them. Is that possible? Is
8 it that drastic what could happen? You want to
9 address that, you know?

10 AARON BOSHKA: Council Member, I
11 dare not speculate on that because I think so many
12 of us, at least at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, this
13 past year, have done reductions to areas that are
14 not collections care first. So, for example, we
15 have a Gardener's Resource Center that we limited
16 the hours amount because that does not directly
17 impact the care.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Um, hm.

19 AARON BOSHKA: Once we have to
20 start looking at care and hours at that, I think
21 there is, of course, first a sort of quality,
22 perhaps there'll be a few more weeds. There won't
23 be as-- mowing, for example. I'm just sort of
24 spinning off the top of my head.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, but,

1
2 that's why we want to try to get an idea how
3 drastic these cuts are. Are we at the point where
4 we could start losing our collections, you know,
5 because the staffing's not there? The money's not
6 there to get the right materials that we need, you
7 know?

8 AARON BOSHKA: I think should, for
9 example, we're close to a million dollars in City
10 operating support that's on the line for Brooklyn
11 Botanic Garden, that those sort of things would
12 have to be considered in some of our collection
13 areas, yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Wave hill?

15 KATHRYN HEINTZ: We've taken
16 drastic reductions in program areas. We know that
17 with the cuts that are proposed for the next year,
18 we're already looking at positions. And, some of
19 those positions would be in the horticulture area.
20 Yes, you will see more weeds. The grass won't be
21 cut. And, we do allow the public to walk on, sit
22 on and enjoy the grass at Wave Hill. So, that the
23 comfort level the public has, how safe they feel,
24 is also related to how it appears. If it looks
25 dangerous and overgrown, people aren't going to

1
2 partake of the woodland. People aren't going to
3 wander into areas, corner areas of the garden.

4 If the gardening staff is reduced,
5 which for us, the largest expense is the staff who
6 care for those plants, they can't propagate new
7 plant material. They can't care for the full
8 collection that we have. And, you risk a
9 situation where, if you're not able to prune trees
10 and you have a storm, limbs fall. You know, it
11 becomes dangerous, too. I mean, the environments
12 that we have in Wave Hill is relatively small at
13 28 acres. I mean, how do you possibly maintain
14 200 acres, with an enormous woodland and prune
15 trees and keep the environment safe for the
16 public? And, you face, possibly, closing off
17 sections of your facility the public would, then,
18 be unable to use.

19 FRANCISCA COELHO: Yes, I fully
20 agree. Once the quality of your collections drop
21 and even the overall look of the garden,
22 visitation, I think, will drop because you're no
23 longer offering a very beautiful place for people
24 to actually come and visit. So, that visual
25 effect is of major importance. So, the upkeep of

1
2 all the plant material is something we really need
3 to make sure happens.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: How
5 realistic do you think is, you know, I'll say the
6 people on the frontline, the Mayor's notion of
7 calling on New York City residents to be
8 volunteers? How realistic do you think that is in
9 assisting you, if at all, in what you need to do?

10 KATHRYN HEINTZ: I think volunteers
11 are very realistic and we maintain an avid
12 volunteer program. Volunteerism can only go so
13 far. Occasionally it happens that a very skilled
14 person will come in terms of horticulture care or
15 tree care. You wouldn't want just anybody lobbing
16 off branches of a tree. It's also dangerous.

17 The other concern we have is you
18 can't eliminate jobs, especially DC 37 jobs and
19 replace them with volunteers. And, that you'll
20 hear anger from another quarter if that begins to
21 happen.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Crosstalk]
23 yeah.

24 KATHRYN HEINTZ: So--

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yeah, we're

1
2 familiar with--

3 KATHRYN HEINTZ: Yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, we're
5 familiar with that. Kelly's in the back shaking
6 his head already--

7 KATHRYN HEINTZ: I mean, there--

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- having a
9 heart attack.

10 KATHRYN HEINTZ: I have to tell
11 you, there are a lot of people out there who
12 fundraise for their PTAs and their schools and I'm
13 sure they would love to help me do my job. And, I
14 could go away. But, I'm not sure it will be done
15 with the same level of professionalism that a
16 City-supported and City-owned facility deserves.
17 I mean, we do represent, at a very high level, the
18 best of New York City. So, at every level, we do
19 need to maintain integrity. And, that includes
20 the integrity of the collections.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: I agree,
22 yeah. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Miss Dickens
24 from Manhattan, you have a question?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Yeah,

1
2 thank you so much and, good morning. Thank you
3 for your testimony. For the New York Botanical
4 Gardens, I want just to follow up a little bit on
5 my colleague, the Chair of Parks, Council Member
6 Diane Foster, not to take the replacement of jobs,
7 but do you currently have a program in place where
8 schools, particularly, for instance, Frederick
9 Douglas in my district, has a program that
10 educates the young people. Do you have any
11 program with DOE that brings schools in that not
12 only would they be able to volunteer, but it would
13 be a learning curve for the young adults to learn
14 how to maintain and to understand the importance
15 of maintaining our gardens?

16 FRANCISCA COELHO: I know that
17 there-- I'm not as familiar. It's not my area.
18 But, I know that many, many school groups come to
19 the garden. We have probably more than 250,000
20 children that come to learn at the garden and also
21 utilize the Conservatory and its collections, just
22 learning about the plants there and the
23 environment. So, they are there almost every day
24 in the Conservatory touring. And, we do offer,
25 and my staff, a lot of information to those groups

1
2 and their teachers, who are not as familiar with
3 the plant material in the Conservatory, to educate
4 them into what, you know, the plant life is about.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: No, I
6 didn't mean just touring. I meant, you know, an
7 actual program--

8 FRANCISCA COELHO: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: -- a
10 curriculum because, for instance--

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER:

12 [Interposing] Do you want to come up and ask?

13 FRANCISCA COELHO: - -

14 CARRIE LANEY: Yeah.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Introduce
16 yourself and--

17 CARRIE LANEY: [Crosstalk] I'm
18 sorry.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: -- she has
20 the answer.

21 FRANCISCA COELHO: [Crosstalk]
22 Sorry. - -

23 CARRIE LANEY: No, that's okay.

24 FRANCISCA COELHO: Yeah.

25 CARRIE LANEY: I'm going to share

1
2 with Fran, here.

3 FRANCISCA COEHLO: Yeah.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.

5 CARRIE LANEY: Thank you,
6 Councilwoman Foster--

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Oh, that is
8 so nice.

9 FRANCISCA COEHLO: Yeah.

10 CARRIE LANEY: My name is Carrie
11 Laney [phonetic]. I'm the Vice President for
12 Government and Community Relations at the New York
13 Botanical Garden. We asked Fran to testify 'cause
14 she knows first hand on the care. But, I'm happy
15 to answer your question.

16 We directly have over 75,000 New
17 York City school kids at the garden every year.
18 We have programs in our Family Garden, where
19 children learn hands-on what it means to grow and
20 care for vegetable gardening. In fact, we're
21 going to be kicking off our vegetable gardening
22 programming this year and expand it in the Edible
23 Garden exhibition that Fran mentioned. We also
24 have wonderful programs in our Children's
25 Adventure Garden, also Green School.

1
2 And, we have some great-- there was
3 a question about volunteerism. We have over a
4 thousand volunteers at the garden. And, some of
5 them, in the Explainer program, work with young
6 children to do little science experiments. And,
7 they're also involved in a lot of hands-on
8 activities at the garden. So, yes, we have a
9 very, you know, for decades and decades. We've
10 had hands-on plant science for school kids.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: All right.
12 Thank you very much. I just wanted to know--

13 CARRIE LANEY: [Interposing] No,
14 that's okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: -- what is
16 your current admission fees now for the children
17 and under what age and for the adults? And, do
18 you have a tier for family, a family rate?

19 CARRIE LANEY: Sure. I would like
20 to first point out that on Wednesdays, all day,
21 our grounds admissions are free, as are they
22 Saturday mornings, from ten to noon. In fact,
23 that equals almost 25% of the time that we're open
24 is free grounds admission. Children-- our adult
25 grounds admission is \$6. I believe, our

1
2 children's is two. I want to double check that,
3 though. I know it's on our website.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Under what
5 age? What is the age?

6 CARRIE LANEY: I think that's under
7 12.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And, do
9 you have a tier for family rates?

10 CARRIE LANEY: I don't believe we
11 have a family rate.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And, if
13 these cuts were to be maintained, what percentage
14 would you have to raise these fees in order to
15 maintain our gardens?

16 CARRIE LANEY: That is a very good
17 question. We are forced to look at numerous
18 things right now, including expense-side cuts.
19 And, we've reduced 50 positions and we're putting
20 our staff on furlough, which includes all staff,
21 including DC 37.

22 We have considered fee increases.
23 It's something we don't want to do. But, it's on
24 the table because our visitation is up. And,
25 that's wonderful. And, you have to look, you have

1
2 to consider, you know, at what point you might
3 lose a little. So, it's really something that
4 we've had to-- we are considering. But, we don't
5 want to have to pursue. You know, it could be in
6 the range of a couple dollars per, you know, fee
7 structure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you,
9 because a couple of dollars can mean an awful lot,
10 not only during these times, but at any time.

11 CARRIE LANEY: Absolutely agree.
12 And, our free visitation is up double digits.
13 And, I think for that very reason. And, I would
14 also, if you don't mind, like to add, that while
15 our visitation is up, it is a very small part of
16 our overall revenue picture. We are suffering
17 from charitable giving through corporations and
18 foundations is down, including the municipal
19 issues that we're speaking about today. So,
20 that's why we're looking at it. But, it wouldn't
21 solve anything. It would just be a small part.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: All right.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right.

24 Thank you, Miss Dickens. Thank you. We thank the
25 panel for coming. And, we'll call up next panel,

1
2 the WCS and its whole family. Bring all your
3 people who want to speak, Mr. Calvelli. You
4 better keep that bonsai on your desk. There might
5 not be nobody to take care of it.

6 JOHN CALVELLI: Thank you. Good
7 morning.

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good morning.
9 It's not afternoon yet. You got ten minutes.

10 JOHN CALVELLI: Yeah, we got ten
11 minutes.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You know, we
13 have pizza for the children in the room next door.

14 JOHN CALVELLI: Oh, excellent.

15 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So, go ahead.

16 JOHN CALVELLI: Okay. Thank you.

17 My name is John Calvelli. I'm the Executive Vice
18 President for Public Affairs for the Wildlife
19 Conservation Society. And, thank the Chairman for
20 the pizza. But, more importantly, I want to thank
21 all the members of the Committee for holding this
22 special hearing on challenges preserving New
23 York's living collections. The operation of zoos
24 and aquariums is unique and there are two members
25 here with me on the panel that will be speaking

1
2 about what it takes to actually run world-class
3 institutions.

4 To my right is Jon Dohlin, who's
5 the Director of the New York Aquarium and has been
6 with WCS since 1997. He was appointed Director in
7 January of 2008. Jon was involved in the design
8 and planning of many of our award-winning exhibits
9 at the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium.

10 To his right is Dr. Bob Cook, who's
11 the Executive Vice President and General Director
12 of Living Institutions of the Wildlife
13 Conservation Society. Before that, he was our
14 Chief Veterinarian and VP of Wildlife Health
15 Sciences Division for 17 years. In his role, he
16 coordinates the operations of WCS' five New York
17 facilities. And, in addition, he oversees the
18 administration of programs and education, exhibit
19 design and global health.

20 Like other cultural centers, our
21 living institutions aim to educate and inspire the
22 public. Even in times of economic hardship, our
23 wildlife requires constant intensive care. Living
24 collections throughout the City help breed
25 endangered species, address the impacts of global

1
2 climate change, educate and inspire thousands of
3 teachers and millions of children. I wanted to
4 make one point for Chairman Foster. The children
5 of our other school, we actually sponsor two
6 schools; one in Brooklyn and one in the Bronx,
7 which is the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife
8 Conservation. They were unable to come today
9 because of programming with the teachers. But,
10 they would have been here and hopefully, in the
11 future, if there's another opportunity--

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER:

13 [Interposing] No, that was for Domenic. I didn't
14 know it was show-off day because I said I could
15 have gotten all of the Bronx here. But, he really
16 does it up. I don't know if I would have had
17 pizza.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I would have
19 supplied the pizza for all the children.

20 JOHN CALVELLI: That's beautiful.
21 Thank you. Watch what you say. It's a big
22 borough.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: She going to
24 have the whole borough here.

25 JOHN CALVELLI: It's a big borough.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: [Off mic]

JOHN CALVELLI: Well, to speak to that, in terms of the role of the Wildlife Conservation Society, we actually pump more than \$400 million into the City's local economy. We are core to stabilizing our local communities by providing good paying jobs and supporting local businesses and we are the largest youth employer in the Bronx, hiring more than 800 teens each year.

Due to the ongoing economic crisis and the continuing fiscal austerity facing New York City, we're looking at having to cut \$15 million from our budget.

In the Mayor's preliminary budget, the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium face a proposed cut of \$1.7 million. Over the last two fiscal years our facilities have lost a total \$3.3 million dollars, which would be a reduction of 33%. According to a 2008 national public opinion survey, 79% of Americans believe that zoos and aquariums are good for their local economy, and an impressive 80% believe that zoos and aquariums are important enough for local communities to be

1 supported by government funding. As many of you
2 know, and I think Chairman Recchia mentioned it,
3 we are not eligible for Federal funding, as well.
4 So, that opportunity has been eliminated. We
5 recognize that the City faces challenging fiscal
6 realities and we only ask that the Administration
7 use a scalpel, and not an ax, to make targeted
8 reductions that will allow our institutions to
9 weather the financial storm. We ask you, the City
10 Council, to continue your support, and you've been
11 really our stalwarts, to protect and preserve the
12 environment, education, jobs and ensuring the
13 viability of our tourism industry during these
14 difficult budgetary decision-making times.

15
16 At this point, I'd like to ask
17 Dr. Cook to make some comments and then,
18 Mr. Dohlin to make some comments.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, in your
20 comments to--

21 JOHN CALVELLI: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- to Mr.
23 Dohlin, to Mr. Cook. If you could just tell us, in
24 your comments, how--

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Real.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yeah, the
3 real, not like-- what are you facing with these
4 budget cuts; how bad it is; what you plan to cut;
5 how it's going to affect the animals; how it's
6 going to affect your institutions and 'cause
7 that's what we really need to hear, you know.
8 What are we faced with, you know? Not what the
9 Administration tells us. We want to hear it from
10 you.

11 JOHN CALVELLI: Got it.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: And, you
13 can probably answer the fish, dolphin gets one
14 fish or, you know, when you're dealing with--

15 JOHN CALVELLI: [Interposing] And,
16 can I-- just a point of clarity, Chairwoman,
17 because you did raise one question before. It's,
18 of course, we have five facilities in New York.
19 It's a very kind of complicated only New York type
20 of situation.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

22 JOHN CALVELLI: The three
23 facilities, the Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park
24 Zoo and the Queens Zoo, those we have a management
25 agreement with the City of New York. Those are

1
2 Parks Department facilities that we manage for
3 the--

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.

5 JOHN CALVELLI: -- City of New
6 York.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

8 JOHN CALVELLI: And, we can go into
9 why that happened 30 years ago. But, there was
10 difficult situation there and we were called in to
11 operate those. The two facilities that are
12 represented here and that we'll talk about are the
13 other--

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Right.

15 JOHN CALVELLI: -- are the--

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Okay.

17 JOHN CALVELLI: -- Central, I'm
18 sorry, Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium, which
19 are under the auspices of the Department of
20 Cultural Affairs. So--

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yeah.

22 JOHN CALVELLI: -- it gets a little
23 wacky. But, welcome to New York.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yeah.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'm being

1
2 joined by Council Member Tish James from Brooklyn.
3 Welcome.

4 BOB COOK: Thank you, Chairman
5 Recchia and thank you to the members of the
6 Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak
7 today.

8 The Bronx Zoo, the New York
9 Aquarium, the Central Park, Queens and Prospect
10 Park Zoos. The Wildlife Conservation Society
11 manages the world's largest system of urban
12 wildlife parks. Our keepers, aquarists, curators
13 and veterinarians care for some 13,000 animals of
14 1,600 species. We're visited by over four million
15 guests per year. Our parks provide green jobs to
16 over 1,000 New York area fulltime employees and
17 another 1,000 seasonal employees coming from
18 primarily underserved communities within the City.
19 In an increasingly urbanized world where most
20 people in New York will never visit the native
21 lands of gorillas, birds of paradise, walruses or
22 Nile crocodiles, our zoos and aquarium provide a
23 tangible connection with wild nature and by so
24 doing create a respect and appreciation for the
25 environment around us.

1
2 The Bronx Zoo is the largest urban
3 zoo in the United States and headquarters to all
4 that we do in the City of New York and around the
5 world. Its 265 acres are home to over 6,000
6 animals. A walk through the zoo provides a
7 soothing respite from the frenzied pace of
8 everyday life in our City. Our new Madagascar
9 exhibit, housed in the historic Lion House, serves
10 as a state-of-the-art model for immersion
11 exhibitry, excellence in animal care and the
12 application of green technologies. It's
13 anticipated to be the first LEED certified New
14 York City landmark.

15 Working with the Bronx River
16 Alliance, we've taken a leadership role in
17 restoring the Bronx River. And, at the Central
18 Park Zoo, we will soon open a fantastic new Snow
19 Leopard Exhibit. And, next spring, at the New
20 York Aquarium, we plan to open an exciting series
21 of new aquatic exhibits in our Main Hall.

22 Our scientists and professional
23 staff are recognized internationally as leaders in
24 the field. They provide unique skills to the City
25 of New York. When a tiger was found to be living

1
2 in an apartment in Harlem, we assisted the New
3 York City Police Department in safely removing the
4 tiger--

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'm glad Miss
6 Dickens is here.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I remember
8 that.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I didn't see
10 you that day, though. She's running late.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: [Off mic]
12 down here trying to fight to make sure that the
13 cuts are not implemented.

14 BOB COOK: I'll tell you, working
15 with the NYPD on that, that is some class group.
16 And, we were able to safely remove that tiger and
17 no people were hurt. The animal wasn't hurt. It
18 was a successful day all in all. Also, when an
19 errant coyote was captured in Central Park, it was
20 the Queens Zoo that became its new home.

21 Our wildlife health programs
22 consist of specialists in wildlife medicine and
23 pathology. It was the WCS veterinary
24 pathologists, working with the Department of
25 Health, that were integral to the discovery of

1
2 West Nile Virus. When the world was panicked by
3 the specter of Avian Influenza, it was our team
4 that developed a global wildlife surveillance
5 strategy that's been implemented around the world.
6 And, what we learn over there helps us better
7 prepare at home. WCS was pleased to be invited to
8 participate as a member of the New York City
9 Animal Working Group and to chair the Bushmeat
10 Trade Health Committee to examine the threats of
11 emerging diseases to New York City from the
12 illegal wildlife trade.

13 In education, we provide
14 environmental science education to more than
15 50,000 New York City school children every year.
16 Overall, some 550,000 students from public
17 schools, camps and youth groups visit the Aquarium
18 and Bronx Zoo annually and this number includes
19 free admission to all New York City school
20 children. Each year we train some 2,000 public
21 school teachers from grades K through 12. We have
22 online continuing education programs, both in New
23 York and around the world, and distance learning
24 that reaches some 9,000 students. Last year we
25 began a partnership with Fordham University and

1
2 offer a graduate degree in environmental science
3 education.

4 And in September 2007, WCS
5 partnered with the Urban Assembly and the New York
6 City Department of Education to open the School
7 for Wildlife Conservation. It is a public school
8 for grades 6 through 12 focused on environmental
9 science and conservation in an underserved
10 community just minutes from the Bronx Zoo, which
11 they use as their living classroom. In Brooklyn,
12 as we all know, we have an equally important
13 engagement with the Rachel Carson School for
14 Coastal Studies. And, my thanks to Chris and Fred
15 and Emilia for making that so apparent.

16 In closing, the Living Institutions
17 of the Wildlife Conservation Society are a unique
18 treasure for the City of New York. Truly every
19 dollar invested returns many fold, not only in
20 monetary ways, but more importantly to the health,
21 security and vibrancy of our great City.

22 Chairman, you asked specifically
23 about the impacts. And, I'll let Jon Dohlin speak
24 to the Aquarium. For the Bronx Zoo, we plan to
25 close four exhibits, four areas of the Zoo. Some

1
2 of them are off exhibit. And, we will have to
3 reduce our collections in order to handle the cuts
4 that we already know about.

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Will you be
6 shipping out any animals?

7 BOB COOK: Yes, we would be to
8 other AZA. That's Association of Zoos and
9 Aquariums. It's a national group of all the 200
10 best zoos in the U.S. And, we would only move
11 animals to other qualified institutions.

12 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And, that's
13 on a temporary basis?

14 BOB COOK: No, it would not be.

15 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You mean, we
16 would lose those animals?

17 BOB COOK: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh. How many
19 animals are we thinking about losing?

20 BOB COOK: I can't give you an
21 exact number, but in the hundreds.

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So, we're
23 going to be losing hundreds of animal. Could we
24 have an exact number how many animals we face
25 losing?

1

2

BOB COOK: Well, what we're trying-

3

-

4

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Interposing]

5

'Cause I thought we shipped them out, but we could get them back.

6

7

BOB COOK: Well--

8

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You know,

9

it's like, you know, on a temporary basis.

10

BOB COOK: What we do is that we

11

bring in collections based on our exhibitry and

12

also our commitments to Species Survival program

13

and the future of different species. So, this is

14

not done serendipitously. We will hold on to

15

animals that are the most important for their

16

species. And, others we would move because they

17

are less important to our programs. But, we're

18

planning to close the World of Darkness, for

19

instance, at the Bronx Zoo, which is one of our

20

older, but very fine, exhibits. And so, there are

21

a variety of different types of animals in there.

22

It would be hard to give you an exact number.

23

JOHN CALVELLI: Just to flesh that

24

out just a little bit more, we've been going

25

through a whole transformation process at the

1
2 Wildlife Conservation Society and looking at our
3 master plan and identifying places where we want
4 to grow. And, frankly, kind of that master plan
5 process with a facilities condition assessment
6 that we've been doing, just to see the age of some
7 of these exhibits, have come together with the
8 fiscal reality that we're in right now. And, it's
9 kind of a perfect storm, for lack of a better
10 word.

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Mr. Dohlin,
12 you want to just tell us what's going on with the
13 Aquarium?

14 JON DOHLIN: Thank you, Chairman
15 Recchia, Chairwoman Foster and Committee members.
16 I am Jon Dohlin. I am the Director of the New
17 York Aquarium. The testimony that I'll give,
18 obviously, is the best that I can do. But, I
19 think it was most eloquently put by Fred, Chris
20 and Emilia earlier as to what the New York
21 Aquarium means to the City. We need your
22 continued support.

23 As a living museum, the New York
24 Aquarium plays a unique role amongst the City's
25 Cultural Institutions. In a world coming to terms

1
2 with a multitude of environmental problems, in a
3 City that has made resource and energy
4 conservation a cornerstone of policy and in a
5 neighborhood surrounded by the ocean but lacking
6 in green space, through our living ambassadors and
7 world renowned science, the New York Aquarium
8 inspires the next generation of conservationists,
9 scientists and citizens, who will take action to
10 protect the natural environment.

11 We welcome over 750,000 visitors
12 annually. And, our education and teacher training
13 programs extend our message to thousands more.
14 The children we inspire today will be the
15 environmental stewards of tomorrow.

16 Visitors of every age, religion and
17 ethnicity come to Brooklyn's number one tourist
18 destination to marvel at our beautiful animals and
19 our powerful exhibits. This visceral experience
20 of nature, the pure unmediated moment of
21 connection with these emblems of the wilderness,
22 is available to everyone regardless of language,
23 culture or educational background. We present an
24 opportunity to find nature in an increasingly
25 urban environment; a trip to exotic worlds for the

1
2 cost of a subway ride and a chance to be educated
3 while being entertained. And, we do it all for
4 about the price of a movie. In quality and value,
5 we represent the best of New York.

6 However, as living institutions and
7 as a living museum, the New York Aquarium faces
8 challenges that are unique amongst the Cultural
9 Institutions. Our costs are largely fixed. The
10 animals entrusted to our care receive the best in
11 medical and husbandry care, and they eat
12 specialized diets that can't be changed. The
13 staff attending to these animals are highly
14 trained and can't simply do more with less and
15 still maintain proper standards of care.

16 Even our infrastructure is
17 critical. The failure of mechanical systems at
18 another institution represents an inconvenience.
19 But, at our facility, these systems are literally
20 life support systems. The welfare and well-being
21 of our collection relies on the proper function of
22 pumps, filters, lights, heating, cooling and
23 disinfecting systems and the structures that house
24 these systems. These critical life support
25 systems need skilled staff and they need constant

1
2 attention. Our collection relies on us. And, we
3 rely on you.

4 Your support over the years has
5 helped the Wildlife Conservation Society create
6 the world's best urban wildlife parks. And, we
7 need that support to continue. The unique
8 challenges that face WCS and the New York Aquarium
9 are greater than ever, and with your help, we
10 stand ready to meet them. So, I thank you.

11 JOHN CALVELLI: Thank you.

12 Mr. Chairman, I just want to raise two quick
13 points before questioning to highlight the role
14 that Fred, Chris and Emilia played. They
15 referenced the State. We were facing complete
16 elimination of our funding at the State level.
17 Governor Paterson had proposed a complete
18 elimination, which would have been significantly
19 devastating, and also taking monies that we had
20 already budgeted. They helped spearhead an
21 activity on the local level, in terms of reaching
22 out to communities. And, we generated about
23 85,000 messages to Albany and really, thanks to
24 the children, to a large extent to these students
25 that went out and did it. And, it was very

1
2 impressive and, frankly, they were such a lynchpin
3 to this process, number one.

4 Number two, both referenced it, but
5 you should know that, from a business model
6 perspective, we have a free day. We have a policy
7 to allow students to come for free. We believe
8 that's core to our mission. But, when you look at
9 it from a business perspective, it's probably not
10 that core to, if you're looking at it just from
11 that perspective. But, it's important for all of
12 you to know that because we are, in the end,
13 educational cultural institutions for the City of
14 New York and not all the answers are going to come
15 from the business community, unfortunately for us.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I have just a
17 few questions. One being the Prospect Park Zoo,
18 the Queens Zoo and the Central Park Zoo, the next
19 time you decide to raise the rates, I don't know
20 if that's your-- I'm not saying it's your
21 responsibility--

22 JOHN CALVELLI: Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- but, I
24 think it'd be nice if you could, since they are
25 Park facilities, if you could contact Miss Foster

1
2 and myself because we're just finding out about
3 this today. And, I don't think it's right.

4 JOHN CALVELLI: I want to really
5 make it clear. We manage those properties for the
6 Parks Department. The Parks Department decides
7 and we provide them with information. They make
8 those decisions and then, they inform us.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh, so, you
10 don't have a say. Okay. I just wanted to make it
11 clear.

12 JOHN CALVELLI: They make that
13 decision.

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just want
15 to make it clear so we know--

16 JOHN CALVELLI: [Interposing] But,
17 we'll work--

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- what we
19 have to do.

20 JOHN CALVELLI: -- with them to
21 improve communication. But, just, I want to be
22 really clear on that point.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. And,
24 why is it that our attendance at the Prospect Park
25 Zoo, compared to the Central Park Zoo and the

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Queens Zoo, is down so much?

JOHN CALVELLI: It's not.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: It's not,
yeah. No, no, no, just-- no, no.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: [Off mic]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, no. The
Parks Department testified before--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: They lie.

BOB COOK: I think they might have
been looking at last year's numbers. And, I'm not
sure what they were comparing it to. It might
have been year-over-year. But, we've seen a surge
in the last really two years at Prospect Park,
most especially over the last six months or so.

JOHN CALVELLI: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: - - the - -
tank?

JOHN CALVELLI: Bob has been, Bob
Garafola has been great to work with. And, I want
to say that publicly. I think he just didn't have
all the data for this year. But, once we get it
to him--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Interposing]
All right. So, could we ask--

1
2 JOHN CALVELLI: -- the numbers are
3 good.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: --
5 Mr. Garafola--

6 JOHN CALVELLI: We can get that
7 [crosstalk]

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- since
9 you're still here. First of all, I want thank you
10 for staying here throughout this whole hearing.
11 Rarely ever see a Deputy Commissioner, I want to
12 just thank you for staying here. I mean--

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER:
14 [Interposing] The Parks Department are very good
15 with doing that.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: [Off mic]
18 data on Prospect Park.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If we could
20 have, if you could go back and just check out
21 those numbers for us. And, you know, get a little
22 memo to my colleague and myself and we'll pass it
23 on to everyone else. We really appreciate that.
24 Okay. And, no one has any questions?

25 JOHN CALVELLI: Can I invite all of

1
2 you to the Bronx this Saturday? We're looking at-
3 -

4 FEMALE VOICE: [Off mic] For the
5 save the gorilla walk thing.

6 JOHN CALVELLI: We're looking at
7 out of the box ways to raise money. And, we're
8 having our first Run for the Wild. And, we have a
9 5K run through the Park. Hold up, before you say
10 anything, I know where you're going to go with
11 that. And, we have 3,000 people running through
12 the Bronx Zoo. And, I'm going to be speaking with
13 Mr. Dohlin. Maybe we could do a Swim for the Wild
14 in the future. If this works, then we'd like to
15 see you swimming through the Coney Island.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Is there a
17 new tiger at the Bronx Zoo?

18 JOHN CALVELLI: The lion cub.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: A lion cub.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I saw it
22 this morning.

23 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Moxie
24 [phonetic].

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Moxie. Oh,

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he's adorable.

BOB COOK: The first cub we've had borne at the zoo for 31 years.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I know. He's so cute.

JOHN CALVELLI: Very.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Don't try to take him home.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.

JOHN CALVELLI: He's an only child.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No, we would like--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Be careful, she's going to steal him to the Bronx-- the Prospect Park.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No, Brooklyn.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: She's [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yeah, at Prospect Park. We want--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We want to

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thank everyone for coming today.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you
very much.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank--

JOHN CALVELLI: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- the
students from Rachel Carson--

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Yes, thank
you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: -- there's
pizza next door for you. If anybody would like to
have some pizza, it's next door.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FOSTER: Thank you.
That was [off mic] you.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DeeDee E. Tataseo 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 DeeDee E. Tataseo

Date May 4, 2009