

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

Jointly with

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

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March 27, 2018
Start: 1:12 p.m.
Recess: 4:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Barry Grodenchik
Chairperson

Vanessa Gibson
Chairperson

Benjamin Kallos
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joseph C. Borelli
Justin L. Brannan
Andrew Cohen
Costa G. Constantinides
Mark Gjonaj
Andy L. King
Peter A. Koo
Francisco P. Moya
Eric A. Ulrich

James G. Van Bramer
Steven Matteo
Mark Levine

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

Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner of New York City Department of Parks
and Recreation

Liam Kavanagh
First Deputy Commissioner of New York City
Department of Parks and Recreation

Therese Braddick
Deputy Commissioner of New York City Department
of Parks and Recreation

Roxanne Delgado
Friends of Pelham Parkway

Heather Lubov
Executive Director at the City Parks Foundation

Michael Schnall
Vice President of Youth and Community Relations
for New York City Road Runners

Lynn Kelly
Executive Director at New Yorkers for Parks

Christina Taylor
Executive Director for Friends of Van Cortlandt
Park

Karen Argenti

Laura Spalter

Loretta Watson
Member, Friends of Mosholu Parkland

Paulette Spencer
Community Engagement and Policy Analyst for The
Bronx Community Health Network

Brett Dakin
Volunteer, Jacob Schiff Playground Neighborhood
Association

Rosalind Barbour
Administrative Chief of Staff for The Public
Theater

Dilsy Ben
President of Local 1505 District Council 37

Joseph Puleo
President of Local 983 District Council 37

2
3 UNIDENTIFIED: Test, test. This is a test.
4 Today's date is March 27, 2018. This is a committee
5 hearing on Parks and Recreation joined with Capitol
6 Budget. Being by recorded by Sergeant at Arms, Devon
7 Lopez.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon.
9 And welcome, everybody to our oversight hearing. I'm
10 happy to be co-chairing this hearing. My name is
11 Barry Grodenchik. I have the honor of being the Chair
12 of the Parks and Recreation Committee for this term
13 of the City Council. I have been joined by my co-
14 Chair for today. And I want a full disclosure, I'm
15 also a member of your subcommittee so I have to be
16 careful here. Yes, Miss Vanessa Gibson from The Bronx
17 who is the Chair of the Subcommittee on Capitol
18 Budget. We've also been joined by my colleague from
19 Queens, Peter Koo. Mr. Andrew Cohen from The Bronx.
20 Andrew King, Andy King from The Bronx. Justin Brannan
21 from the great borough of Brooklyn. And we will
22 introduce, oh and Mr. Matteo, Steve Matteo from
23 Staten Island. This afternoon, we are going to learn
24 more about the Parks and Recreation budget, and how
25 it addresses the needs of all New Yorkers. First, the

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2 Committee will review the Parks Department proposed
3 budget for fiscal year 19. And it's 2018 to 2022
4 Capitol Commitment Plan and the relevant section of
5 the Mayor's Preliminary Management Report for
6 fiscal year 18. We will also, of course, hear from
7 our Commissioner today. I'm so happy that
8 Commissioner Silver with us. The Departments fiscal
9 2019 Preliminary Budget totals \$502 million with
10 4,321 positions. This is an increase of 46 positions
11 when compared to the same period last year. The
12 budget includes a very modest new needs package of
13 \$6.2 million for fiscal year 2019. Most of which is
14 baselined for headcount positions to support the
15 agency. These positions are mostly stationary
16 engineers and phase one staffing for the Community
17 Parks Initiative. The agencies budget is mostly
18 supported by City funds, but also relies on intra
19 city funding for its maintenance program, as well as
20 capitol IFA funding for the Capital Division. Even
21 though the agency receives a small amount of federal
22 funding, the Committee is interested in the agencies
23 contingency plans for potential federal funding cuts.
24 As the City experiences substantial increase in parks
25 usage, the Department has unfortunately not been able

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2 to keep pace. There are now nearly 9 million New
3 Yorkers. I guess it's about 8.6 million now, who rely
4 on our City parks and the Committee would like to
5 know what the Department plans to do to address these
6 issues. As well as an update on the Committees new
7 needs that were added to the FY 19 preliminary
8 budget. Currently, the Parks budget, as proposed by
9 the Administration is down to just .58 a percent of
10 the total City Budget. With a drop in dollar terms of
11 \$30 million. For a fourth year in a row, the Mayor's
12 budget fails to baseline \$9.7 million for critical
13 maintenance workers which would lead to a loss of 50
14 gardeners, and 100 City Parks workers who would be
15 laid off as of June 30th. Depriving our parks of
16 sorely needed staffing, and depriving 150 hardworking
17 New Yorkers of their livelihoods. Over to the Capitol
18 side, under Commissioner Silver, the Department has
19 launched three vital new Capital Initiatives that
20 have done much to advance equity and access in our
21 park system. I am interested in learning more about
22 the work that was done in regards to anchor parks,
23 the Community Parks Initiative which we heard last
24 month. And Parks Without Borders, which I saw a
25 beautiful example of at Lyons Square Park this past

2 week when Commissioner Silver and I, along with
3 Rafael Salamanca, cut the ribbon on that park. In
4 addition to that, the Department has had some success
5 with regard to their Capital Commitment rate and I'm
6 sure that my colleague, Miss Gibson, is going to be
7 asking a lot of questions about that. I would like to
8 welcome, again, and thank Commissioner Silver and his
9 team for their work that they are doing here and
10 around the City of New York. I will now turn it over
11 to my colleague, Council Member Vanessa Gibson, the
12 Chair of the Capital Subcommittee. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you, so much to
14 Chair Council Member Barry Grodenchik. And
15 congratulations on becoming our Chair of the Parks
16 Committee and welcome to your first hearing in this
17 new capacity, budget. And good afternoon
18 Commissioner, it's good to see everyone. I am Council
19 Member Vanessa Gibson and I am proud to serve as the
20 Chair of the new formed, Subcommittee on Capital
21 Budget. I am grateful to the Speaker for the honor
22 and privilege to serve in this capacity. And I want
23 to thank my co-chair and the members of the Committee
24 on Parks and Recreation for holding this hearing
25 today, this afternoon, on the last day of our fiscal

2 2019 preliminary budget. We started earlier this
3 month, but we saved the best for last. We will be
4 hearing from the Department of Parks and Recreation.
5 I want to thank Commissioner Mitchell Silver for
6 being here and I look forward to your testimony this
7 afternoon. The Parks Preliminary Capital Budget
8 totals \$1.9 billion in fiscal 2019 through fiscal
9 2022. Representing about 4% of the City's total
10 Capital budget. Parks fiscal 2019 Preliminary Capital
11 Commitment Plan includes \$4.1 billion in fiscal 2018
12 through 2022 which is 21% more than the \$3.4 billion
13 scheduled in the adopted Capital Commitment Plan. The
14 majority of the Capital Projects span multiple fiscal
15 years, and it is therefore, common practice for many
16 agencies to roll unspent Capital funds into future
17 fiscal years. In fiscal 2017, the Department of Parks
18 and Recreation commitment \$586 million which is about
19 60% of its annual Capital Plan. Therefore, it is
20 assume that a significant portion of the agencies
21 fiscal 2018 Capital Plan will be rolled into fiscal
22 2019. Thus increasing the size of the fiscal 2019
23 through 2022 Capital Plan. Through the work of our
24 subcommittee, even though we're in our infancy, but
25 beginning with today's hearing I certainly want to

2 focus on the timely and efficient delivery of Parks
3 Capital Projects for all New Yorkers. Our Parks are
4 the corner stones, and the hubs of our communities.
5 And our constituents depends on them for recreation
6 for fresh air, health and wellness, exercise,
7 everything you can think of. Just to get a break from
8 life. Unfortunately it has been a practice over the
9 years that many of the Parks Capital Projects have
10 been notoriously slow and very expensive. I do
11 recognize a lot of progress has been made. And I want
12 to commend our Commissioner for his commitment to
13 that. Part of the reason that I am here this
14 afternoon is because I am confident that we can, and
15 will work together to come up with creative and
16 innovative solutions to improve this process. We're
17 going to speed things along and provide New Yorkers
18 with a higher level of service because that's what
19 they deserve. So I look forward to hearing from our
20 Commission about these and other issues. And I
21 certainly want to recognize the finance staff who
22 helped prepare today's hearing. Our Finance Director,
23 Latonia McKinney. Our Deputy Directors Nathan Toth
24 and Regina Poreda Ryan. Our Unit Head Chima Obichere.
25 Our Analyst Kenny Grace and our Council Rebecca

2 Chassin. And the members of my subcommittee, our
3 minority leader Steve Matteo, and our Chair Barry
4 Grodenchik. And personally as I close, Commissioner,
5 I want to thank you and of course I have to
6 acknowledge my amazing Bronx Borough Commissioner,
7 Iris Rodriguez Rosa who have been amazing. We've
8 opened so many parks and I am so thankful for that.
9 Almost three years ago we opened the High Bridge, the
10 oldest standing bridge in the entire City of New York
11 to thousands of residents. And if anyone has not had
12 an opportunity, the High Bridge connects High Bridge
13 Bronx to Northern Manhattan in Northern Manhattan. And
14 it's 1400 steps and it's a beautiful bridge, and I
15 look at it every day because it's in my district. And
16 I'm so thankful. It was closed for 50 years, but this
17 administration reopened it so I personally want to
18 thank you for that. And also have to acknowledge that
19 last Thursday, all of my wonderful colleagues
20 unanimously voted on the Jerome Neighborhood rezoning
21 plan which is about \$189 million of Capital
22 Investments and within that, \$60 million for you, for
23 parks. And that includes Grant Park, that includes
24 Corporal Fischer, Aqueduct Walk, Bridge Playground.
25 It includes Morton Playground, and I could not be

2 more proud. And now what I want to make sure I can do
3 is get these project started before I leave office so
4 that I want to make sure that we all take collective
5 credit for opening these beautiful parks. But once
6 again I thank you for your work and look forward to
7 today's hearing. And now I'll turn this back over to
8 my colleague and Chair, Barry Grodenchik.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Madame
10 Chair. Born in The Bronx, full disclosure. And before
11 Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa was the wonderful Parks
12 Commissioner of The Bronx. She was the wonderful
13 Director of Recreation in the Borough of Queens, so.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: She came home.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, we gave her
16 and education and we sent her to The Bronx, so, I'm
17 in trouble, I'm in trouble. I do want to acknowledge
18 a few more people. My Legislatvie Council Christopher
19 Sartori, Patrick Mulvihill the Policy Analyst. My own
20 team, my Chief of Staff Ari Gershman. My Council
21 Steve Behar and my Deputy Chief of Staff and more
22 importantly, my budget guy, Dev Awasthi who will be
23 leaving me at the end of June to go to law school at
24 the University of Connecticut. So he's going to study
25 parks law, right? If there such a thing. Now, Mr.

2 Council if you would swear in the panel, we can
3 begin.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Do you affirm to tell the
5 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
6 your testimony before this committee today?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I do.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Commissioner, the
10 floor is yours.

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, I heard you
12 say that today was the last day of the budget
13 hearings, I didn't know that. We could have scheduled
14 this for tomorrow, but since I'm here today I will
15 continue. Good afternoon, Chair Grodenchik and
16 members of the Parks Committee, Chair Gibson and
17 members of the subcommittee on the Capital Budget.
18 And other members of the City Council. I am Mitchell
19 Silver, Commissioner of the New York City Department
20 of Parks and Recreation and I'm joined here today by
21 a number of senior staff including, First Deputy
22 Commissioner Liam Kavanagh. Deputy Commissioner for
23 Capital Projects to Therese Braddick, and Matt Drury
24 our Directory of Government Relations. Thank you for
25 allowing me the opportunity to discuss the agencies

2 preliminary budget for fiscal year 2019. In 2014 on
3 my 16 day at the job, I had an opportunity to testify
4 before the City Council for the first time. At that
5 hearing to discuss the executive budget for fiscal
6 year 2015. I pledged to the City Council then, and I
7 would work tirelessly to build a 21 Century parks
8 system for New York City. With a strong commitment to
9 transparency, innovation and equity. And I'm
10 extraordinarily proud that New York City Parks has
11 made great strides towards those goals over the past
12 four years and continues to fill that commitment. I'd
13 like to begin by outlining some key facts and figures
14 that help illustrate the scale and diversity of what
15 we do at New York City Parks. We are the steward of
16 over 30,000 acres. 14% of New York City's landmass
17 including 10,000 acres of natural areas. We oversee
18 nearly 45 individual properties ranging from
19 playgrounds and parks, to community gardens and green
20 streets. At Parks, we like to call ourselves the
21 agency of fun, health and happiness. But, we take our
22 work seriously because parks are vital to the quality
23 of life for New Yorkers. Whether it's a child playing
24 at Imagination Playground in Brooklyn, seniors
25 enjoying tai chi class at Green Point Greenbelt

2 Recreation Center of Staten Island. Sun worshipers
3 soaking in the sights and sounds of Orchard Beach in
4 The Bronx, or nature buffs relishing the quite peace
5 that they can find in the natural areas of Alley Pond
6 Park in Queens. Our city's green and open spaces help
7 New Yorkers lead happier, healthier lives. For many
8 of us, our parks serve as our front yard, our back
9 yard, our vacation destination. So, it's our
10 responsibility to create and sustain thriving parks
11 and public spaces for New Yorkers of all ages and all
12 walks of life. I'm pleased to be here today to report
13 on the progress we have made in the first term of
14 this administration and our goals for the years
15 ahead. I have it made it my number one priority as
16 Parks Commissioner to look closely at the agencies
17 process for delivering Capital Improvements. Through
18 careful review of our internal procedures, we have
19 shaved months off of the Capital design process.
20 Increased timely public design commission approval
21 from 20% to 80%. And reduced average construction
22 time by two and a half months. These improvements are
23 especially notable in light of the tremendous volume
24 of projects being managed by the agency. In the
25 administrations first term, we completed 374 Capital

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2 Projects worth \$1.29 billion. In FY 17, 87% of our
3 projects completed construction on time and 85% of
4 our projects were completed with construction within
5 budget. We currently have 577 Capital Projects, 76%
6 from FY 14, of which about 163 are in design, 211 of
7 procurement and 203 in construction. Many of you may
8 be familiar with the individual projects that have
9 been plagued with complications and delays for years.
10 Through most of the projects predate my arrival here
11 at the agency, I am pleased to announce that we have
12 made tremendous progress in clearing this back log of
13 troubled projects before my tenure. With 70 of these
14 98 projects now in construction, we will continue to
15 work with you and your colleagues to resolve the
16 projects that have been stalled. At the same time, I
17 am extremely proud of our efforts to bring
18 transparency and accountability into the process that
19 many consider confusing, and unwieldy. We want New
20 Yorkers to know about the progress these projects are
21 making. So we've made sure the public can access
22 detailed and robust information about all of our
23 ongoing Capital Projects. The Capital Project
24 Tracker, launched under my tenure in 2014, is a
25 online, searchable tool updated daily that allows

2 anyone to look up a specific park and learn more
3 about the Capital Projects status. I am proud to
4 update the Council that to date, the tracker has
5 received 428,000 website visits giving you and other
6 New Yorkers the information they need about park
7 improvements in their community and in real time.
8 We've made substantial progress with our internal
9 improvements, but we recognize we have further to go.
10 There are significant portions of the Capital Process
11 that lie outside our agencies control, but we look
12 forward to continuing our participation in the City
13 wide conversation about the Capital process, and
14 partnering with the Council, especially the newly
15 created Capital Subcommittee to explore the topic.
16 The guiding principles of this administration and our
17 agency has been, and will continue to be equity.
18 Which to us simply means fairness. For many years,
19 the benefits of our park system, so vital for our
20 City's health and happiness, were not enjoyed equally
21 by all New Yorkers. Thanks to the leadership of Mayor
22 de Blasio and through the strong partnership with
23 City Council and borough presidents, we've made
24 tremendous progress over the past four years in
25 fulfilling our commitment to a more inclusive parks

2 system. We have demonstrated this commitment to
3 equity through a data driven, strategic frame work
4 that has shaped our community investment and major
5 Capital Initiatives known as the frame work for an
6 equitable future. The corner stone of this frame
7 work, the Community Parks Initiative also known as
8 CPI, has allocated more than \$318 million in Mayoral
9 funding since it's launched in the fall of 2014. CPI
10 is dedicated to delivering Capital Improvements,
11 enhancing programming, maintenance and community
12 partnership development in a way that is inclusive
13 and equitable. To 67 neighborhood parks and play
14 grounds that have been ignored for decades. The first
15 CPI playground to be fully reconstructed and reopened
16 was Van Alst Playground in Astoria which was
17 completed ahead of schedule in June of 2017. After an
18 investment of \$3.5 million it is now a major amenity
19 for the community and kids at the neighboring school,
20 PS171. CPI continues to deliver these results and
21 just last week, on the first day of spring as the
22 Chair mentioned, we held a ribbon cutting relay.
23 Holding five ribbon cutting ceremonies in five CPI
24 playgrounds across the City, one in each borough.
25 During an exciting all day spring across the City. We

2 anticipate more ribbon cuttings to take place at CPI
3 sites throughout the City in 2018 as these projects
4 continue moving forward. Given the needs of a fast
5 growing City, a commitment to equity means we need to
6 continue improving parks and playgrounds in all
7 neighborhoods by providing a diverse set of
8 recreational resources. Especially those mid-size,
9 larger parks acting as anchors to the surrounding
10 communities. In August 2016, Mayor de Blasio and NYC
11 Parks announced the Anchor Parks Initiative. An
12 investment of \$150 million for major improvement at
13 five large parks. One in each borough. Through Anchor
14 Parks we invest in new resources like soccer fields,
15 comfort stations, running tracks and walking paths,
16 transforming these parks for the 750,000 New Yorkers
17 who live in the neighborhoods that surround them. And
18 making these older parks feel new again. The first
19 Anchor Parks projects each slated to receive \$30
20 million in major improvements are on schedule and
21 significant work is already underway. Our desire to
22 innovate and find way to maximize the impact and
23 utility of our parks, led us to focus on portions of
24 properties that were being underutilized. Mainly the
25 entrances, edges and adjacent park spaces that

2 surround them. In 2015, we launched the Parks without
3 Border Initiative. Reflecting a new approach to park
4 design with the entire public realm in mind. This
5 initiative included \$50 million in mayoral funding,
6 \$10 million of which was applied towards projects
7 already underway. And \$40 million of which was
8 dedicated towards eight showcase projects receiving
9 large scale Capital redesigns. At this time, all
10 eight showcase projects have their design finalized
11 and approval by either Public Design Commission or
12 the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Three are
13 undergoing procurement to identify construction
14 contractor and the remaining five will enter
15 procurement this spring. Penning a successful bidding
16 process, we expect all eight sites will be in
17 construction by early 2019 and completed in 2020.

18 Equity means a lot to New Yorkers and they should
19 have access to quality, green, and open space. A
20 major goal of NYC Parks and the Mayor's OneNYC plan
21 is to have 85% of New Yorkers living within a walk to
22 a park by 2030. We've made real progress toward that
23 goal since 2014. Increasing our park system, Walk to
24 a Park score to 81.5%. Our expanded Schoolyards to
25 Playgrounds Partnership with New York City Department

2 of Education, has opened more schoolyards to the
3 public. We're adding new parkland from Development of
4 Chelsea Green. A new park in Manhattan that will
5 bring 3000 more New Yorkers closer to a local park to
6 the acquisition of City Storage Site in Brooklyn
7 which will become part of the Bushwick Inlet Park.

8 And the conversion of Brookfield Landfill of
9 Brookfield Park in Staten Island which put our City's
10 portfolio of parkland over the 30,000 mark for the
11 first time. Further, our Green Thumb Community team
12 added 40 new gardens to the network over the previous
13 term. Including the permanent preservation of 34
14 gardens transferred to us by our agency partners at
15 HPD. Allowing more New Yorkers to connect with their
16 neighbors through community gardening. And our
17 recreation centers saw a participation grow by 146%
18 with over 700,000 new participants. We reduced our
19 recreation center membership fee for military
20 veterans and people with disabilities. And we slashed
21 our tennis permit fees in half. Allowing more New
22 Yorkers to take advantage of recreational and
23 wellness opportunities available to them. To deliver
24 an equitable park system, all of our parks must be
25 maintained in the highest quality. So I created a new

2 commission level position, a Chief Operating Officer
3 to standardize our maintenance efforts across the
4 City and to improve our management practices to
5 provide a more enjoyable park experience to all New
6 Yorkers. For example, we all know our parks and
7 playgrounds are used seven days a week, but in
8 previous years they were at times only being cleaned
9 five days a week. Resulting in over flowing garbage
10 bins and litter strewn throughout the park come
11 Monday morning. In this administration we have
12 reconfigured staffing patterns to provide additional
13 maintenance on the weekends. And the Mayor has
14 provided expanding baseline funding for increased
15 seasonal maintenance staffing ensuring that our parks
16 and playgrounds stay clean and welcoming even
17 throughout a busy weekend. We were pleased to share
18 in the preliminary Mayors report, that the percent of
19 parks rated acceptable for overall condition, and for
20 cleanliness in fiscal year 18 was 85%. An increase
21 from the same period in fiscal year 17. Throughout
22 this first term, we have placed a major focus on the
23 engagement with park users and community residents to
24 really get them involved in the local parks. Through
25 the work of our Public Programs Division, we have

2 provided 2.5 million children and recreational
3 opportunities through our Kids in Motion Initiative
4 largely serving communities in need. Our urban park
5 rangers provided a quarter of a million New Yorkers
6 with an incredible educational experience in the
7 great outdoors through programs such as The Natural
8 Classroom. Over 100,000 New Yorkers enjoyed movie
9 going experience in the park through Movies Under the
10 Stars, our partnership with the Mayor's Office of
11 Media and Entertainment. And over the past four
12 years, Partnership with Parks, our joint program with
13 the City Parks Foundation, supported over 1,300
14 community park groups and helped over 98,000
15 volunteers get involved and help their parks to meet
16 their full potential. We all worked hard to include a
17 broad public input in park design. Simply put, we're
18 listening to the voices that need to be heard. The
19 local community members and parks users that rely on
20 these parks so they can tell us how these reimagined
21 parks can best meet their needs. In the past, public
22 meeting session for park projects were often held
23 during the day resulting in very few attendees.
24 Leaving most local residents feeling that weren't
25 included in the conversation about their parks. So we

2 moved the sessions to the evening when most people
3 could attend, especially children and Our Partnership
4 for Parks Outreach Coordinators actively engage
5 community organizations to help get the word out and
6 encourage local park users to attention. For the
7 first time in the agencies history, the showcase
8 projects for our Parks without Borders Initiative,
9 were selected using direct public input chosen from
10 thousands of park nominations received via our
11 information session and our agency website. This new
12 approach to engagement isn't just reconnecting New
13 Yorkers to the local parks, its strengthening
14 connections with our broader communities. NYC Parks
15 is also committed to resiliency and sustainability.
16 In this administrations first term, we planted over
17 620,000 trees completed our Million Trees Initiative
18 two years ahead of schedule. And planted over 5
19 million flowers. We engaged over 2,000 volunteers to
20 complete our tree census count to catalog all New
21 York City street trees. And we have imported that
22 data into an online resource, the NYC Street Tree
23 Map. Allowing the public to learn about the trees in
24 their neighborhood, record and share stewardship
25 activities and see the ecological benefits of trees

2 in the front of their home, in their neighborhood and
3 across the City. Our parks and open spaces,
4 especially those located in vulnerable areas, need to
5 have the ability to withstand and recover from
6 destructive weather events such as coastal storms and
7 catastrophic flooding's. As well as more gradual
8 threats such as sea level rise and tidal inundation
9 associated with climate change. To that end, we've
10 updated our design guidelines to incorporate best
11 practices in our parks design. The recently
12 reconstructed 5.5 mile Rockaway Boardwalk is a
13 perfect example of how a park asset can serve as both
14 a recreational amenity attracting millions of
15 visitors every summer as well as a resiliency measure
16 and our first line of defense in the event of an
17 extreme weather event. Our sustainability and
18 greening efforts also includes the restoration of 163
19 acres of wetlands and forest by our Natural Resource
20 Group and our Forestry Division. It is helping
21 protect neighborhood that are vulnerable to the urban
22 heat island effect, by planting additional street
23 trees, and trees with funding made available through
24 the Mayor's Cool Neighborhood Initiative. Our City
25 wide services staff are making important improvements

2 to the parks operative buildings. Adding green
3 roofing, installed more efficient boilers and
4 decreasing our use of fuel oil by 41%. All of these
5 efforts allow us to plan the long term resiliency and
6 sustainability of our open spaces and facilities. We
7 are proud of the achievements over the past four
8 years and we look forward to continuing this work.
9 The Mayor's FY 19 preliminary budget reflects our
10 agencies ongoing priorities, providing for an
11 operating expenses of \$501.9 million. The preliminary
12 budget includes several important additions to the
13 agencies expense budget including baseline funding
14 for pay increases for our city seasonal aides, as
15 well as 4,500 seasonal aide participants in our Parks
16 Opportunity Program. It also provides for new hires
17 to address maintenance and operational needs at parks
18 and playgrounds for reopening to the public as part
19 of the first phase of CPI. To account for every user
20 ship of these reimagined and revitalized parks.
21 Additionally, it includes fundings for new hires and
22 staff, staff overtime to increase late day cleaning
23 and collection service in parks and the rat
24 mitigation zones in The Bronx, Brooklyn, and
25 Manhattan. As well as the purchase of Big Belly trash

2 compactors and steel trash cans. The preliminary five
3 year Capital Budget including the current fiscal year
4 provides total parks Capital Budget of \$4.1 billion
5 with \$92 million in Mayoral funding for improved, new
6 capital projects. This preliminary budget is
7 relatively cautious and conservative in light of the
8 economic impacts faced by the City in relation to the
9 decisions made at the state and federal level. But,
10 it still gives our agency the resources we need to
11 get the job done. With tremendous support from Mayor
12 de Blasio and in partnership with the City Council,
13 parks will continue to find innovative ways to
14 improve maintenance and operations, programs and
15 services to improve the experiences in parks and
16 public spaces. We will continue to focus on working
17 smarter and more efficiently, streamlining the
18 Capital process and will continue to be the
19 Department of fun, health and happiness. Improving
20 the quality of life for New Yorkers all over this
21 great City. Thank you for allowing us to testify
22 before you today. And for your dedication to
23 providing great parks and open spaces for all New
24 Yorkers. We look forward to continuing to work with
25 the Mayor and the City Council to create a bright,

2 bright, green future and a more equitable and
3 innovative parks system. We value your participation
4 and thank you for your support of our agency. And we
5 are now happy to answer your questions that you may
6 have.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm glad you're
8 happy to answer our questions. I just want to thank
9 all of the people who are sitting behind you. Whether
10 they're parks people or employees, or advocates for
11 parks. It's good to see such a large crowd of
12 interested New Yorkers here today. If you would like
13 to testify you need to register with the Sergeant at
14 Arms so if you haven't done so already, please do
15 that. We have been joined since the Commissioner
16 began his testimony by Council Members Costa
17 Constantinides who has Van Alst Playground in his
18 district. He also has an anchor park and I'm jealous.
19 Ben Calos (sp?), Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer,
20 Councilman Francisco Moya and Councilman Mark Gjonaj.
21 Commissioner, since this is a hearing on the budget
22 why don't we start with that. And I have to we are a
23 bit disappointed that the preliminary budget has, the
24 budget of the Department of Parks and Recreation
25 going down. And if things hold the way they are would

2 be at only .58 of 1% of the City budget. Still \$501
3 million which is a lot of money, but there are a lot
4 more New Yorkers now and my colleagues and I are very
5 concerned about that and I hope you can shed some
6 light on that today.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, as you know if
8 you compare it to last year, it's about a little more
9 before the budget process started. If you compare the
10 ones (sic) that were added to the budget, yes, it's
11 now down to \$501. As you know, moving into the
12 season, there is some concern and uncertainty, what's
13 happening at the federal and state level. And so when
14 we work with both the Mayor's office and OMB, we're
15 providing a budget that we believe can address the
16 needs in New York City. You also know this is the
17 beginning of the budget processes so as we have this
18 hearing and ongoing conversations, I am confident
19 that both OMB and the Mayor's Office will hear your
20 concerns to see how the budget process will unfold.
21 But we're preparing a budget that we are very
22 confident we can maintain the incredible assets here
23 in New York City. We have a new Chief Operating
24 Officer and we're changing our approach about how we
25 maintain and care for our parks. So, I understand

2 your concern about the budget. It is starting higher
3 than where we started about a year ago when we
4 started the budget process. So we are just optimistic
5 as the process continues, we'll be able to address
6 some of the councilmembers concern.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I hope
8 we'll see your optimism develop and when we see the
9 executive budget when we hold the next hearing in May
10 on that. I hope that we will see increases as I
11 mentioned in my opening statement, and as you
12 mentioned today, we're up to nearly 8.6 million New
13 Yorkers. I think when I was about 10 there was 7
14 million New Yorkers in 1970 so that is an immense
15 increase. And as I've known for a long time, but has
16 reinforced to me since I became Chair of this
17 wonderful committee, people depend upon their parks
18 in so many different ways. All right, we hope to get
19 back to at least .62, .63 would be better.

20 Communications from your agency, in this current
21 fiscal year the Council has provided \$16 million in
22 expense funding to assist the Department with their
23 overall operating budget with regard to the Parks
24 Equity Initiative and park maintenance. In addition
25 to individual council members designated allocations

2 for programming on their parks property in their
3 respective districts. It is the Councils
4 responsibility to track these dollars, which I'm sure
5 you appreciate and to ensure that the funding is
6 being put to work for the correct purpose and with an
7 appropriate time frame. Upon accepting these
8 allocations from the Council, the Department accepts
9 and agrees to hold itself accountable to the Council
10 staff and the members by providing updates to each
11 project in a transparent and timely manner. It has
12 come to my attention that this is not currently the
13 case in all cases. So, my first question with regard
14 to this is whether the current internal policies and
15 procedures with regard to responding to project
16 update requests from the City Council.

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, I'm surprised
18 to hear that that is not the case. All of the borough
19 commissioners are instructed to keep all
20 councilmembers up to date. We have an open door
21 policy. Any councilmember can call for an update, but
22 we proactively reach out to all the councilmembers to
23 give them an update on Capital Projects as well as
24 any other special programs. We also make it a special
25 point, should there be any significant delay in the

2 capital process, that we contact the councilmember
3 first before we even put it in our Capital Tracker so
4 that they have the courtesy of understanding if
5 there's a significant delay. So this is our
6 commitment and I make that commitment to you now
7 going forward. So our policy is we encourage all of
8 our borough commissioners which have direct contact
9 with the councilmembers to update as often as
10 possible so that they know the status of our Capital
11 Projects as well as other funding for other programs
12 they may have.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, I appreciate
14 the Capital side and you touched a little on the
15 expense side, but I've heard, even today, because
16 they know there's a hearing, about the expense side.
17 Because there are significant resources that we have
18 dedicated the Parks Equity Initiative and the M&O
19 money, so I appreciate your illuminating us a little
20 more on that.

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: My commitment again,
22 and I'll have a meeting after this meeting, to
23 reinforce the staff that it is our desire to update
24 council members as many times as they want to. On not
25

2 just the Capital, but the other expense side
3 programs.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Would you
5 commit to a certain time frame? We get sometimes, and
6 I appreciate this, we'll ask questions that you just
7 can't answer. And I'd like to know if you could
8 commit today to a certain time frame that your staff
9 could get back to my colleagues or their staff
10 members. Because it can get a little frustrating
11 because we're, after all, we're all answering to our
12 constituents.

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: If there's a phone
14 call and we can respond, we will. So, I'm not sure I
15 understand the question. I do know I encourage our
16 borough commissioners and all of our staff to give
17 the highest priority to elected officials and
18 communicate back if there's an update for
19 information. I will speak to them to find out what
20 concern there is. This is the first time I'm hearing
21 about it, but our goal, from my point of view, is
22 that it is critically important we maintain a close
23 working relationship with the Council whether its
24 Capital or programming, or any other concern they may
25 have.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate
3 that. And I thank you for your response. On the Parks
4 Equity Initiative, at the past budget adoption, the
5 Council provided \$4.5 million to support the City
6 Parks Foundation and other local community groups to
7 do programming in smaller neighborhood parks. And I
8 would like at this time, if you can provide a status
9 update on the initiative itself?

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: In terms of the
11 initiative, there was one \$1.4 million allocated
12 directly to NYC Parks. Of that, \$1.1 was allocated to
13 the City Parks Foundation. Additional parks
14 foundation and that \$1.9 was allocated to other
15 organizations with NYC Parks and so in terms of the
16 status, most of the work will start to take place
17 here in the spring. But that work right now is
18 ongoing.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. And do you
20 have any suggestions in how we might, working over,
21 we're hoping obviously to continue to fund these
22 programs, how they might work better from your point
23 of view or from any of your staffs points of view?

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm certainly
25 willing to have the person who heads this up, Casey

2 (sic) Mehlman, follow up with any member or someone
3 from your office in particular to take any ideas if
4 there is any concerns if these are not moving quick
5 enough. We are certainly willing to have a meeting
6 afterwards to discuss any specific issues you may
7 have about this fund.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And have you,
9 just for our edification, have you identified
10 anything that's particularly glaring in terms of
11 parks performing under these monies?

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: No, not in
13 particular, but it's something I can get back to you
14 on.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I
16 appreciate that. Parks maintenance, the FY 19
17 preliminary budget does not include \$9.6 million in
18 funding provided by the Council the fiscal 2018
19 adopted budget for city parks workers. The loss of
20 this funding will affect at least 150 gardeners, and
21 I was happy to join you this morning, Commissioner,
22 at the city wide conference on horticulture. I was
23 very impressed and I know some of the people who are
24 here today sitting behind you were there as well. We
25 had about 300 people there and I am certainly

2 committed to that and I know you are. But the
3 preliminary budget does not include funding for that,
4 and the loss of that funding would greatly affect the
5 Department. If the Council for any reason could pick
6 up this funding this year, is there a plan by the
7 administration to pick it up?

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, as you know
9 this is really the beginning of the process. Those
10 conversations will occur as we start moving toward
11 the executive. So I do know this is an issue that has
12 come up year after year so I'm very confident and I'm
13 certain that the conversation about those 150
14 positions will be a topic of conversation as the
15 budget process continues.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate that
17 because it's a top priority for us here in the
18 Council with regard to parks. I will skip the last
19 question because I, I'm going to skip that one. Okay,
20 something that affects my neighborhood and many
21 neighborhoods throughout the City of New York, is
22 stump removal. And I would say I'm stumped, but that
23 would be, I think that'd be a little too much. So, we
24 get a tree cut down, it's dead, I want to thank
25 particularly Queens parks. I didn't get to visit

2 every neighborhood, but Queens, Eastern Queens all
3 the way down, Board 7, Board 11, and Board 13 were
4 particularly hard hit for the first nor'easter that
5 took down over 1,000 trees. Many of them in my
6 district and I want to publicly thank Queens Parks
7 Committee. You and the Queens Parks Commissioner
8 Lewandowski, for their speedy responses to those
9 downed trees. Question A, what is the overall budget
10 for tree pruning and stump removal? I know we have
11 made progress in this area over the last few years?

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm going to refer
13 that to First Deputy Commissioner Kavanagh.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Good
15 afternoon, Commissioner.

16 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Good afternoon.
17 The current fiscal year budget for both tree pruning
18 and stump removal is \$8.7 million for pruning, \$3
19 million for stump removal. \$2 million of which was
20 baselined mayoral funding and \$1 million was added by
21 the Council at adoption last year. The proposed
22 budget for FY 19 continues the \$8.7 million for tree
23 pruning and the \$2 million baseline for stump
24 removal.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. And this is
3 a question that's on a lot of people's minds and I
4 hear it and I'm going to ask you today since you're
5 under oath. Why can't we take out the stump at the
6 same time we take out the tree because it can sit
7 there, and I'm not telling you anything you don't
8 know. But it some cases for years. And I know
9 occasionally Parks will do a blitz where they'll
10 remove many, many stumps in a particular
11 neighborhood, but it really is frustrating to
12 homeowners and to apartment dwellers where we remove
13 trees and then the stump just sits there, and sits
14 there, and sits there. And for every wild forest
15 that's fine, we let Mother Nature take its course,
16 but on Bell Boulevard and Springfield Boulevard it's
17 not so fine. So I'd love to know if there's some
18 impediment to you doing it? Is it different
19 contractors? Can we work on this so that we could get
20 it, you know what would really be ideal is we take
21 the dead tree down, take the stump and plant a new
22 tree all in one hour. And I know you have the
23 capability to do that, but it just doesn't seem to
24 happen.

2 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We do have the
3 capacity to do that. We don't have the capacity to do
4 it all of the time. And the tree removal operation is
5 very different from the stump removal. It requires
6 completely different equipment and different kinds of
7 support than you need when you're removing a tree.
8 And having it all at one place at the same time can
9 be very inefficient.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: How about in the
11 same day, Commissioner?

12 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I understand, but
13 it can be very inefficient and you know frankly we
14 focus the work of our tree workers, the climbers and
15 pruners who are excellent and highly skilled on the
16 most serious hazardous conditions like the almost
17 5,000 tree emergencies that occurred just during this
18 month. And when you focus on that it's hard to get
19 back to doing routine work like stump removal. Which
20 I understand completely is a nuisance and an eyesore.
21 But it doesn't, in most cases, pose the same danger
22 as a tree that is damaged or dead and needs to be
23 removed. So we have found that contracting out with
24 private companies to do the work is much more cost
25 effective and efficient. Thanks to the money that

2 both the Mayor and the Council has provided over the
3 last few years, we've made significant inroads into
4 the back log of stumps, but we generate more every
5 day and as you noted in the recent storms...

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes]
7 we've got a lot more now...

8 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: [interposes] When
9 you have a thousand more that we weren't planning on
10 having. So then we have to work them into our work
11 streams as well. So, we are focusing on removing that
12 back log, getting rid of the older ones first,
13 whenever we can. Using our tree planting contracts as
14 well as our stump removal contracts to eliminate the
15 stumps, but right now there will always be some lag
16 between removing a dead tree and removing a stump.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Are you, I just
18 want to make sure I understand this totally. I think
19 you were fairly clear, but so it's parks employees
20 that are removing the trees because we see them in
21 their bright orange trucks and the place where they
22 dump the trees and have to grind them is in my
23 district in Cunningham Park. So I see a lot of them
24 because they're going to and fro. The stump removal
25 itself are private contractors? For the most part or?

2 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Primarily yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We can remove
5 stumps with our own staff. We do have some of the
6 equipment, but again our staff is focused on the dead
7 tree removal, on the hazardous tree conditions which
8 take priority over stump removal.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. All right,
10 I appreciate that. Last question, would it help if we
11 bought you some new equipment?

12 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's not really a
13 question of equipment. We do have some equipment for
14 that work, but if we were to use that we wouldn't be
15 doing the hazardous trees and the dead trees.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: That's the
18 tradeoff we have to make.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: All right.
20 Changing topics a little bit. Crime in parks and in
21 regards to the most recent preliminary Mayor's
22 management report, there were 670 major felonies
23 reported on parks properties and 547 crimes against
24 properties in all parks excluding Central Park. That
25 is a significant jump from the previous year and it

2 looks like it could be even higher when the fiscal
3 2018 numbers come out if all things were to remain
4 the same. I am certain that you work with the NYPD on
5 this issue, but can you talk about that a little
6 commissioner?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, I do want to
8 put things in context. When you look at the City's
9 footprint, parks represents 14%. Crime in parks is
10 less than 1% and while there seems to be a slight
11 increase, we're having more people using our parks
12 and so with that we are seeing people enjoying all of
13 our parks across the board. We get an estimated 130
14 million visits, just visits, not visitors to our
15 parks every year. We are working closely with NYPD,
16 we watch the numbers carefully. We do know, for
17 example, if the cell phone is left down and someone
18 takes it, that it's considered grand larceny. So we
19 look very carefully into the crimes itself. Yes, it's
20 called apple picking and it does happen in our parks.
21 Well, that's if you have an iPhone. But this is
22 something we take very seriously, every single crime.
23 So we do have our Urban Parks Service working closely
24 with the NYPD as well as the borough commissioners to
25 not just look at the large parks where it's taking

2 place, but the location within those parks so we can
3 do a better job. Both NYPD, as well as parks
4 enforcement patrol, seeing what we can do to improve
5 what is happening within the park. It could be
6 lighting or it could be an obstacle, so we're doing
7 further investigation, but it's something we take
8 very seriously and we are in fact working with NYPD
9 to address it.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Any reason
11 that the NYPD has been able to, I know that the
12 population is going up in general, and I don't want
13 to nitpick on statistics, but it does seem that the
14 crime rate is going up a little faster. Crime rate in
15 the City is going down and it is troubling. Or maybe
16 it's just because there are more people in parks.

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We do believe there
18 are more people in parks. We've seen an increase. We
19 do our user counts and we are noticing more people
20 using our parks. Again, we're going to work with NYPD
21 to pinpoint the location. Right now we get data per
22 park. Not per location within the park so that's the
23 other level. But that requires one on one meetings.
24 Our borough commissioners as well as our assistant
25 commissioner for urban parks service, is working

2 directly with the precinct where those parks are
3 located to pinpoint where they're occurring. So we
4 can do better, proper intervention. Should it be
5 design, or patrols, that's now the next level we're
6 moving into.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And do you have a
8 breakdown and a number of PEP officers assigned to
9 each of the majors parks that saw increases in crimes
10 against persons and...

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] we do.
12 I could either share that with you now or I could
13 submit it to you after the hearing, but we do have
14 the numbers of both our stationary posts as well as
15 our mobile. But we can either share that with you
16 now, but we do have it.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, if you
18 could send it to Mr. Grace, he'll share it with me. I
19 would greatly appreciate that. And before I turn this
20 over to my colleague, Miss Gibson, I want to talk a
21 little bit about the number of summonses that have
22 been issues in parks. In the first four months of
23 fiscal year 18, the Department issued 10,209
24 summonses which is an alarming increase compared to
25 6,722 during the same period in fiscal year 2017. If

2 the current pace is kept up we will come close to
3 30,000 summonses which would be 10,000 more than we
4 issued in the previous two fiscal years. Both years
5 were about 20,000. For the benefit of the committee
6 and those listening, could you tell us why there have
7 been or why you believe there have been so many more
8 summonses written in the past...

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] well
10 responding to community and City Council concerns
11 about quality of life in parks. These violations are
12 given to canine related incidents. Illegal vending,
13 illegal parking. So it's addressing the quality of
14 life issues in the park. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol
15 first educate the public, and then if there's
16 noncompliance they will issue a violation. So these
17 summonses, the amount does not mean that bad things
18 are happening in parks, it's just that we are
19 addressing community concerns about some of the
20 issues we're hearing. In terms of the canine related
21 incidents, I don't have to be specific, but that's
22 when let's just say dog walkers leave gifts in the
23 park. And we want to make sure there's a nice
24 experience for park users and families, and children.
25 So we are seeing an increase in those summonses.

2 Again, illegal vending, a common complaint from both
3 councilmembers and the community. And also bike
4 riding in the wrong locations, illegal parked cars or
5 just parking, auto related violations. So these are
6 the type of issues you're seeing. And again, our goal
7 is to improve the quality of life in our parks, so
8 you're just seeing more enforcement on those levels.
9 To ensure all New Yorkers have a good park
10 experience.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I thank you for
12 that answer. Just requested, if you could, if you
13 could give us a breakdown and the numbers by
14 borough...

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And by community
17 board, and by major parks that would be greatly
18 appreciated. You can send that information to Mr.
19 Grace as well. At this time, are you ready young
20 lady?

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: I'm ready.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I'm older
23 thank you so I can you, yes I will acknowledge our
24 colleagues that have joined us. Mr. Keith Powers from
25 the borough of Manhattan. Also from the borough of

2 Manhattan Mr. Mark Levine, the former Chair of this
3 committee. And from Staten Island, Mr. Joseph
4 Borelli. So thank you all for being here today and
5 now I'm happy to turn this over to my Chair Gibson.

6 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very much.

7 Thank you Chair, and good afternoon again,

8 Commissioner. I'm going to through just a series of

9 questions and then I'll turn it back over to my

10 colleague. But, first I wanted to again thank you for

11 all of the work you have done. I have a question

12 about the federal budget. Always a topic we love to

13 discuss. The fiscal 2019 preliminary plan includes a

14 little over \$3 million in federal CDBG funding and

15 I'm sure that you're aware there is a potential loss

16 of that funding. So, I wanted to ask, there are

17 larger agencies that do receive a significant amount

18 of federal funding, but certainly parks in the past

19 has received about \$11 million. So I wanted to

20 understand what those funds are used for and

21 certainly in light of the climate in which we're

22 working, if there is the potential of losing that

23 funding for CDBG, are you able to absorb that

24 particular cut?

25

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, first we're
3 having these conversations with OMB. There were one
4 shots of about 8 million and then three million,
5 that's year to year.

6 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We expect five
8 million to carry over.

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But of course, we
11 are very concerned about this. Not just for the parks
12 budget, but the administrations concern of this for
13 the entire budget. So, we're going to have ongoing
14 conversations as the reality of the federal budget
15 comes to pass. But our goal, of course, is to not see
16 a decrease in the level of service, to keep
17 maintaining those areas that rely on some federal
18 funding. So I appreciate the question. There's still
19 ongoing conversations we're having with the
20 administration, but we have identified what is going
21 to carry over. We believe that's about five million.
22 Three million is what affects us directly in terms of
23 green thumb programs and some other projects we have.
24 But we appreciate it, but I don't have an answer
25 now...

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: As we work through
4 these issues.

5 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] And
6 that's all expense money? In addition to green thumb?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] It's
8 all, yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Other
10 programs?

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: That is all expense
12 money, correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, okay. I
14 certainly want to commit joining my colleague in
15 working with you. We've been working on so many
16 fronts fighting against an administration that has
17 not been favorable to the City of New York. So I
18 guess this is just one more battle that we have to
19 entertain.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, fortunately,
21 although every dollar counts, for parks its small
22 compared to some other agencies. But this is
23 something that we are starting to talk and plan for,
24 a contingency of what do we do should this be a
25 reality.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH SUBCOMMITTEE
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2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, great. Your 10
3 year Capital Budget, that's delineated by category,
4 we recognize that there are other agencies that
5 manage about 26% of Parks Capital Projects. That's
6 about \$1.2 billion. So I wanted to understand the
7 School Construction Authority and Department of
8 Design and Construction. Are those the two agency
9 authorities that manage some of parks projects? Are
10 there agencies? And what is the relationship that you
11 have with both CSA and DDC as it related to capital?

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, they do, but
13 the amounts are quite small. So, School Construction
14 Authority...

15 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Will bill some, and
17 then DDC the other. But it is quite, in terms of DDC,
18 \$270 million and in terms of EDC, \$170 million. And
19 DOT close to \$700 million. We have nothing from SCA.

20 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So, just DDC,
21 EDC and DOT?

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And generally,
24 at what stage does the Parks Department recognize
25 that another agency has to come in? So, DDC as an

2 example, I've been working very closely with them in
3 my new capacity and they have a number of agency
4 clients that they work with and depending on the
5 agency, DDC comes in during the design, during other
6 phases of a project. So what is the relationship that
7 Parks has with DDC, when do they come in, and how is
8 that relationship to date?

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We do it at the very
10 beginning. So that's something where we bring them in
11 and varies sometimes about who designs the project,
12 but at the very beginning we have a conversation
13 depending on the nature of the project itself. If
14 it's more engineer driven, if it's a bridge
15 reconstruction per se...

16 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Then DDC will play
18 the role at designing that project. But it does, in
19 some cases, we'll design it, procure it, and then
20 hand it to DDC. So it does vary, but we start those
21 conversations at the predesign phase so we know
22 exactly, for that specific project, how's it going to
23 unfold.

24 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And speaking of
25 predesign, I wanted to ask as an example, about the

2 wonderful comfort stations that love so much and I'm
3 going to tie that into project cost and timeline.

4 Because recognizing that DDC oversees a lot of
5 projects, we've been working with them on the front
6 end planning unit. Which I know has been very helpful
7 to the Parks Department in terms of more design staff
8 for your agency. Which I'm sure has been very
9 helpful. About \$5 million. But just in general, at
10 what point does the Parks Department recognize that
11 cost controls dictate the overall specific project?

12 So, many of us attribute comfort stations, we used to
13 believe they were 2 million. And now I know that
14 there are times when it can get to 3.8 million, or 4
15 million. So is there some sort of a standard design
16 or standard practice that Parks has or is looking to
17 adopt to try to bring some standardization to this
18 process so that we can have a better idea moving
19 forward?

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So, when I came on
23 board, the message to staff, there was some that were
24 already in design and went through PDC approval.
25 Anything new, we now came up for new comfort station,

2 a standardized design that is across our entire
3 parks. So that is something we now put in place so we
4 can now compare project to project. So that's
5 something that has already been implemented and
6 you're starting to see some of those new comfort
7 stations come online. Just to give you a sense about
8 what's happening with some of the new comfort
9 stations, this is new, from 2011 to 2016, the price
10 of our comfort stations have increased by 175%. Now
11 that's coming from the market. We have a choice of
12 not accepting that bid and putting out to bid again.
13 That delay will take us five to six months. Or we
14 accept the actual price from the contractor and
15 proceed. So, we are looking at innovative ways,
16 through using in house crews to do some
17 reconstructions, not new construction, even those
18 that we just do a renovation and reconstruct an
19 existing comfort station. That between 2009 and 2016,
20 went up by 33%. So right now, for reconstructed
21 comfort station, 28 x 20, is about \$8.5 million. For
22 a brand new comfort station, as you stated, bids are
23 coming in about \$3.5. So this is something that we
24 are concerned about. We've standardized our design to
25 bring costs down...

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: And we are
4 continually looking for other options to see how we
5 can control the cost of new comfort stations.

6 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Wow, those
7 numbers are painful to hear. And I think many of us,
8 after we're termed out we have found a new career,
9 we're going to build comfort stations.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: More contractors are
11 better. We want it to be competitive so we can bring
12 prices down.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: That brings me to my
14 next question and I usually ask this of many
15 agencies, we are very ambitious on MWBE requirements
16 and goals.

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Minority and women
19 owned business.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: And really for the
22 Parks Department and your portfolio, opening the
23 arena for more bidders, for more diversity. I'm
24 grateful that your staff gave me the longest and most
25 detailed summary of every process you have to go

2 through. So I do have, while I don't agree the
3 comfort stations should cost nowhere near \$4 million,
4 but I understand, right, and I think many of my
5 colleagues and I, after we get that briefing,
6 understand a lot more. That doesn't mean we accept
7 the practice. It means that we're even more committed
8 to change it. And so what are we doing as a
9 Department to try to open up the arena for more
10 bidders and really look in that diversity across the
11 board so we're not working with a small few of
12 bidders?

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, first, it is
14 in our best interest to increase as many qualified
15 contractors as possible. We don't want to limit the
16 pool. If you're qualified and you can do the work, we
17 want you to bid on a project. For MWBE in particular,
18 you should know that we are ranked, our agency is
19 second in the city and in terms of awards. In the
20 first two quarters of FY 18, we awarded 49.6 million
21 in contracts and 31% of that went to MWBE firms. And
22 we rank second in the City. We have a whole team
23 committed to whether it's outreach sessions, to
24 various contractors including MWBE. We want as many
25 qualified contractors as possible to bid on our

2 projects. So that is within our interest to make sure
3 we do that outreach.

4 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Wow, so that means
5 you're aiming to be number one?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We always aim to be
7 number one.

8 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: You're always aiming,
9 oh okay understand.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm getting tired of
11 being number two, we are shooting for number one.

12 CHAIRPERSON SILVER: Okay. Good, good. I
13 wanted to ask about the number of construction
14 projects that have been completed. In fiscal 2017,
15 the Parks Department completed 104 construction
16 projects. And that was more than the goal of 100 in
17 fiscal 2018. Currently there are 2,200 projects in
18 the Capital Commitment Plan which has increased
19 incredibly. So I wanted to ask, since the Department
20 surpassed your goal of 85 projects last year and 100
21 this year, has there been any discussion about
22 raising that goal to a higher number? Is that a
23 discussion now?

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well first a
25 clarification on the 2,200.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Those are budget
4 lines. Those...

5 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] 2,200
6 budget lines?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right. So it comes
8 out to 577 projects. So those budget lines...

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Got it.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Come from different
11 funding. So, Mayor, Council, borough president, et
12 cetera.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Got it.

14 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But if you combine
15 that together there are...

16 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] 577,
17 okay.

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: 577 projects. In
19 terms of the target, we forecast year by year. It
20 looks at how many projects we will receive in total
21 and then we establish a target. So, it changes from
22 year to year, but certainly our expectation is to set
23 a reasonable target so that we can get as many
24 projects completed as possible. So I just want to
25 clarify the 2,200 it was...

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So you
3 mentioned in your testimony that you were working to
4 lower the backlog of projects. So do you still have a
5 backlog and if so, what does that look like today?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, let me say
7 that there are two back logs. The one I was referring
8 to was, well actually you talked about both. The one
9 we're referring to is that most of the Councilmembers
10 were upset about projects delayed. The vast majority
11 of projects that were stalled before I started in
12 2014.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER SILVER: That list was well
15 into the hundreds. Under 200, but over 100-150. We
16 got those stalled projects that preceded my tenure,
17 now down to 98. Of those 98, 70 are in construction.
18 Which means in the next year or year and a half, this
19 plague of delayed projects will be behind us and now
20 we'll focus on the current projects post 2014 when I
21 arrived to minimize those delays. On any given year,
22 depending on how many new projects we receive,
23 between 10 and 20 projects for that fiscal year is in
24 our back log that have to move to the following year.
25 So our commitment is to get that number down each

2 year. It all depends on how many new projects we
3 receive. We if get 100, in some years we get 140
4 projects for that year so we have to make sure we
5 move forward on all those projects. But when it's
6 that high usually there is a backlog of between 10
7 and 20.

8 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So, in addition
9 to addressing the backlog of projects, which I
10 appreciate all of the effort to reduce that,
11 certainly a lot of that before your tenure. Coupled
12 with the current projects and then potentially new
13 projects. Each of us, we meet with our parks staff
14 almost monthly to talk about new wish lists. You wish
15 that everything could be funded on the list, and so
16 what I'm asking is in terms of capacity, the
17 staffing, the design team, the capital team. All of
18 the processes that you have to go through as well as
19 some state oversight as well with state agencies I
20 learned about, historical landmarks and preservation.
21 Are you at a point where you feel comfortable with
22 the existing staff and you have to deal with capital
23 projects, and if not, what does that request
24 potentially look like?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We are comfortable,
3 we do have some vacancies that we need to fil, but we
4 are comfortable. So you know, compared to the stalled
5 pre 14 projects, as I stated in my testimony. We've
6 now cut design and construction through the entire
7 process down for about five months. So that's showing
8 the change of the pre 14 versus post 14. We do have
9 some vacancies, about 38 in capital. As we bring
10 those on board, there are of course very specialized
11 skills of either being licensed either in engineering
12 or architecture. So our goal is once we get these
13 folks on board we'll continue to go on the good path
14 in terms of moving more quickly in the capital
15 process.

16 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. I'm going to
17 divert the rest of my time, my Chair, I'm on his
18 committee too, has to convene a hearing across the
19 street so I'm going to turn it over to Council Member
20 Ben Kallos.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you to the
22 Parks Committee Chair Grodenchik and Vanessa Gibson,
23 Capital Committee Chair and thank you for my
24 colleagues who deferred so I can questions then run
25 over. So, I just need to touch base on three big

2 items. First is just capital in my district. There is
3 concern around repairs that turn out to be band aids
4 versus long term repairs that we need. And then the
5 last is privatizing park land. In 2014, Mayor de
6 Blasio provided \$35 million in capital to begin
7 rebuilding the crumbling East River Esplanade. In
8 2017 they Esplanade in front of Gracie Mansion
9 actually fell into the river. Now I'm grateful that
10 work began in the summer. I'd like to know why it
11 took three years to get shovels in the ground and why
12 I had to learn from Our Town, the local paper in the
13 district, that the project has actually been pushed
14 back from a completion date of this spring to this
15 winter. So that is question one.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We don't believe
17 it's delayed. We're trying to understand the
18 question. We don't believe there was a delay so it's
19 something we can address after the meeting because...

20 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: [interposes] That is
21 great news and then just why did it take three years
22 to get shovels in the ground until after the
23 Esplanade had already collapsed?

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm told by Deputy
25 Commissioner we didn't have money in the budget.

2 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: It was budgeted in
3 2014.

4 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: We did, the area
5 right around Gracie Mansion, what we did do is we
6 decided instead of procuring a brand new contract to
7 do that we used an existing retaining wall contract
8 to start that project. So the retaining wall
9 contract, I'm sorry if I'm getting into too much
10 detail, we had to start off with a change order
11 because the items were not in that contract right
12 away to start that project. But we're happy to say
13 that we've been able to figure that out, and work
14 that out, and we're actually now in construction.

15 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Okay. And along the
16 same lines.

17 THERESE BRADDICK: Sorry, Therese
18 Braddick.

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Sure. And then along
20 those lines, so my understanding is that Parks has
21 budgeted \$15.4 million on repairs that will according
22 to Parks, only last five to 10 years before
23 additional work is required versus \$56.9 million
24 which would prevent work for another 25 to 30 years.
25 So, for instance at the location where there was a

2 collapse, there is budgeted \$7.9 million. Which is a
3 five to 10 year band aid versus \$18.9 which would
4 keep it in good repair for 25 years. Will the City
5 allocate the remaining \$41.5 million to do this
6 properly?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, as you know
8 the Mayor was very clear on having a green way around
9 the entire island of Manhattan. There is \$56 million
10 to do critical repairs on the Esplanade basically
11 between 60th and 125th. So that is one commitment.
12 Number two, you're already aware the Mayor had us
13 dedicate \$100 million to rebuild a new portion of the
14 Esplanade between 53rd and 61st Street and then his
15 ongoing commitment to the East Harlem rezoning to do
16 another portion. So, there is a commitment to move
17 forward. We are proceeding with that step by step,
18 but all totaling that up there is really hundreds of
19 millions of dollars going into the Esplanade over
20 time to improve it. I understand your concern, but
21 clearly there is a commitment by this administration
22 to address the deficiencies on the East River
23 Esplanade.

24 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: My understanding is
25 that there's still a short fall of \$169 million to

2 cover from 60th to 125th if work is to continue into
3 phase three. Will that be allocated?

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, right now we
5 want to, EDC is doing another waterfront inspection.
6 As we look at any future estimates we want to
7 understand exactly what is needed. But as I stated
8 the Mayor is committed to the East River Esplanade by
9 clearly stating that he wants to see continuous
10 Esplanade and green way around the island of
11 Manhattan. And to show this \$56 million to \$100
12 million in additional resources to East Harlem is a
13 strong commitment that the Mayor is serious about
14 making sure that a resource on the East Side will be
15 implemented as well as on the West Side.

16 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: But we are looking
17 for that extra \$169 million to show that the, put his
18 money where his mouth is for this problem.

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Dually noted
20 Councilmember.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: And then I think
22 last, but not least, in your testimony you stated,
23 "for many years the benefits of our Parks Systems so
24 vital for our Cities health and happiness were not
25 enjoyed equally by all New Yorkers." I couldn't agree

2 more. There is a playground in my district who was
3 opened in 1901. Since the 1970's this park has been
4 closed to the public for free during the year. The
5 current cost per hour is a whopping \$180 on Saturdays
6 and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Chair of the
7 Parks Committee, his father used to play tennis in
8 our public parks and I've learned that his father did
9 not have to pay \$180 and perhaps may have been
10 prohibited from doing so. This is actually the most
11 expensive tennis bubble concession in the City of New
12 York with almost every other one at almost half the
13 cost or less. So, I guess the first thing is, do you
14 believe that a Parks facility charging \$180 has an
15 impact on the economic status or race of its users?
16 And after the Parks Department offered multiple
17 designs options that were approved by the community
18 boards and local elected, why Parks reissued the same
19 contract at \$180 an hour last summer and why it's
20 reissued the same RFP?

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, let me answer
22 the first one. We didn't reissue the same RFP and as
23 you know throughout the entire process I've been
24 straightforward, clear and transparent about the
25 entire process. First and foremost, it is a

2 Department of Transportation property. It is not a
3 Park and has not been a Park, it has been
4 concessioned. DOT has allowed the Parks Department to
5 use it for a concession and so that has been what it
6 has been used for. I'm told as long as anyone could
7 remember. We did go through a process. We were very
8 clear and transparent with the community about the
9 options that were ahead of us. We had a pilot program
10 this summer to see how that would unfold. Based on
11 public input, which helped frame elements of the RFP,
12 the RFP was issued and we contacted the electeds and
13 the community board before that RFP was released.
14 We're now in a process of evaluating that RFP, that's
15 looking for a minimum of three months of free
16 programming in that facility. So, that's about all I
17 can say. I do know that staff had talked to you and
18 your staff about this further, but this is something
19 that we felt we had been fully transparent throughout
20 the process and now we are optimistic there will be a
21 continued public use on Department of Transportation
22 property.

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Every other bubble in
24 this City is Columbus Day to April. At this location
25 you put out an RFP from September to June. It feels

2 wrong to me to charge a New Yorker \$180 to use a Park
3 that's been a Park since 1909, according to the Board
4 of Alderman. Does it feel wrong to you to charge \$180
5 to use a park?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We evaluate, there
7 is always a combination of Capital invested as well
8 as what the concessionaire needs to do. We always
9 look for Capital improvement and they have to go out
10 and get loan to upkeep and improve a space. We look
11 at both the Capital cost as well as the fees to make
12 a successful, the Parks is not in the money making
13 business. This goes into general fund. Our goal is to
14 offer an experience on a City property. In this case
15 it is the Department of Transportation, it is not
16 Parks which means that that park can close at any
17 time should DOT need to do repairs on the Queensboro
18 Bridge. I hear your concern, but this is something
19 that I felt we had been entirely transparent, the RFP
20 process as well as the decision making process, but
21 as you know, I'm certainly willing to sit down with
22 you and have conversations.

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you to the
24 Chairs for their indulgences.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes]...
3 move this along. Thank you very much, good luck with
4 your hearing. We will go back now to Chair Gibson.

5 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you. Thank you
6 again. And I just wanted to just touch on the
7 Commitment Plan. It's also another topic I've been
8 learning more and more about. And typically the
9 Commitment Plan front loads a lot of Plan Commitments
10 for Capital Projects in the first year as well as
11 year two of the Plan. And not all of the agencies
12 really meet these targets. The Department of Parks,
13 your Commitment Plan shows 60% of all of your
14 commitments were completed in fiscal 2017. Which is,
15 and I give you credit, an improvement from the prior
16 year's history of Commitments. So, given the
17 performance history and what we typically see within
18 City agencies, it appears that the Parks Department
19 will end the year with unmet Commitment targets as
20 well as the significant appropriations that are
21 available that could be rolled over into fiscal 2019
22 as well as the outer years. So you indicated in your
23 testimony that in the administrations first term,
24 there were 374 Capital Projects completed worth over
25 \$1.29 billion. So I wanted to ask, does the Parks

2 Department have a plan to raise that Commitment level
3 to meet the actual Commitment Plan that you have put
4 forth?

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, we're meeting
6 with OMB. It varies from year to year.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It's something we're
9 not exploring. Whether we can take a harder look at
10 that Commitment rate and what we need to roll over
11 year to year. But it changes year to year. We'll be
12 working with OMB to see what that will be going
13 forward. You are correct, this year it is 60%, but we
14 want to make sure that we stabilize it over time. So
15 there's greater expectation for the Council, for the
16 Public and for the administration. So those
17 conversations right now are ongoing with OMB.

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And it would be
19 helpful if you could just share with us, some of
20 those conversations to the extent that the Council
21 can be helpful. We approve the budget with the budget
22 appropriations every year and our Speaker has been
23 very passionate about agencies, contingency plans at
24 a certain rate. Many agencies finish the year with
25

2 excess appropriations and their Commitment rate
3 doesn't always match the Commitment Plan.

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: And just to clarify,
5 that commitment includes also acquisition and each...

6 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Right,
7 of course.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Project is different
9 so that's why we really need to sit down with OMB to
10 get that realistic Commitment number so that is clear
11 and transparent to everyone.

12 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. You talked
13 about the Community Parks Initiative which I'm a fan
14 of. My district has certainly benefitted from that.
15 The total number of parks 67 through 2020, can you
16 give us an update on the progress of the Initiative
17 and where are we? Are we in phase two or are we still
18 in phase one?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, there was
20 phase one and then we had three parts of phase two.
21 We started off with 30...

22 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Like 2a,
23 2b, and 2c?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, you could say
3 that. We started off with 35 and we found out it's
4 somewhat, it was a lot to do in one sweep for...

5 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Contractors and so
7 we did them in three tranches. In terms of phase one,
8 if there's 35, I'm proud to say we've finished 14. We
9 have really 15 finished, but we're growing grass on
10 one and we want to make sure that it's ready for
11 public use. So we've completed 15. The rest of the 20
12 will be finished really by the end of 2018. So all 35
13 will be done by this year.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: In terms of the next
16 round, we have about another 13 that are in active
17 design and then the rest are in procurement. So we're
18 on schedule on our CPA projects.

19 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So there will
20 not be a phase three? We're staying in phase two,
21 right? Part A, part B and part C?

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well if I give you
23 the numbers, I'll give you the numbers from phase...

24 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: You said 13 are in
25 design and the others are in procurement?

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2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, yes so it was
3 35 in phase one. 32 in phase two...

4 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But it was broken
6 down. So 2a is 12, 2b is nine, and 2c is 11.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, got it. This is
8 Parks Department talk, okay, 12, 9, and 11.

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I would prefer phase
10 one, two and three, but that's okay. It's the same
11 thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. The Mayor and
13 also the City Council, and I'm pretty sure when we
14 put together our office budget response to the Mayors
15 preliminary plan we will continue to call for City
16 wide savings. And I know every agency has been given
17 that task by the Mayor. Has the Department started to
18 talk about where you can find areas of savings?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, we have. Just
20 give me one second.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So we identified
23 about \$7 million. It was mostly revenue driven.

24 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Is there
25 others? Is that it so far?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Primarily that's
3 been it...

4 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Okay.
5 Okay, got it.

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: at 7 million.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: And then my final two
8 questions that I wanted to ask and this is a very
9 important Bronx project to me. It abuts my community,
10 is Crotona Park, one the largest parks we have in The
11 Bronx. That services South Bronx, West Bronx, Central
12 Bronx. Major renovations over the next few years that
13 are happening at Crotona Park. We're reconstructing
14 the Nature Center, the pool perimeter, fencing, pool
15 towers, additional lighting. I talked to the NYPD,
16 we've installed cameras. Is there an update that you
17 could provide us on where we are with the
18 renovations?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: In terms of Crotona
20 Ball Field, it's scheduled to be completed in
21 February of 2019. That's ball field number 5. The
22 procurement is scheduled to be completed in 2018
23 which means that too will be done, the ball field in
24 2019. The Crotona Park Nature Center is currently in
25 construction and that should be completed in

2 September 2019. The pool, park perimeter and fence is
3 scheduled to complete procurement by July 2018 which
4 means it takes about a year for construction also
5 July 2019, the Crotona Bathhouse mezzanine and that's
6 also supposed to be completed... it looks like 2019
7 is going to be a magical year for you, Councilmember.

8 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: All right.

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: And then the Crotona
10 Park comfort station that one we're having some
11 challenges. We had rebid that three times
12 unsuccessfully. Each time its unsuccessful there's
13 about a four to five month delay. So that we'll keep
14 working on to deal with how we can address the
15 engineers estimate. So all are proceeding, 2019 seems
16 to be the year all will be done, but for the Crotona
17 Park comfort station.

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. I remember a
19 conversation late last year that my colleagues in the
20 Southeast, in Soundview, had with the Parks
21 Department about some sort of emergency lighting
22 similar to what college campuses have in terms of any
23 park always being able to access emergency 911
24 services. But generally speaking, I wanted to ask
25 about lighting. DOT is going through a massive

2 replacement of all of its street poles in the City
3 which I think is great. Lighting in parks, is there a
4 plan, and I don't want to, again, not park to park to
5 park, and project to project, but universal
6 portfolio. Are we looking at enhancing our lighting
7 in parks to a higher level of lighting where we can
8 say that our parks are much more well lit?

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So the project
10 you're referring to was a pilot that was initiated.

11 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, yes. In
12 Soundview, right?

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But in terms of
16 lighting, we look at lighting when we do a major
17 reconstruction of a park, we look at lighting at that
18 point. We also have to include that into the budget
19 estimate. If not they can be very expensive. So when
20 we give an estimate, we don't always anticipate
21 redoing all the lighting, but this is something look
22 at when we do a park renovation and lighting is
23 needed. So, that is the answer for that one. I don't
24 think it was anticipated for Crotona, if there are
25 exiting light poles. We have to work with DOT and

2 meet their lighting standards, but it's something we
3 can certainly take a look at closer going forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And I
5 understand that you have an opportunity through
6 reconstruction and brand new construction to really
7 put in the design that meets...

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] For new
9 lights.

10 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right, for new
11 lights.

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Existing lights, DOT
13 is now converting all lights in parks to LED, but to
14 add new light poles in parks, that's something that
15 we look at when we have a Major Capital Project in a
16 park.

17 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So, DOT is
18 going to replace the existing light poles inside
19 parks to be reflective of the ones that are on the
20 street?

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Not the poles, the
22 bulbs.

23 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: The bulbs, okay.

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So that's on
3 going, what is the timeframe and how do you work with
4 DOT to make sure that that happens?

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I don't know, we can
6 find out the timeframe.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I've seen them
9 already being done in a variety of parks.

10 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But we can find out
12 the time frame and communicate that back to you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, great. And
14 again, the reason I asked is because the larger
15 parks, so Crotona, Claremont, Orchard Beach, Pelham
16 Bay Park. Those parks will always be taken care of. I
17 guess I worry about the smaller playgrounds. Like in
18 my area, Mullaly Park that isn't as heavily used, but
19 it is, because it's available for all of the local
20 residents and during the summertime. I just want to
21 make sure that the work certainly that I'm doing with
22 Fernando Cabrera on Jerome, this is all a part of the
23 same conversation. So I can't take care of certain
24 parks and not look at all the others to make sure
25 that they get equal attention as well, but I'm glad

2 to hear that. I wasn't aware that DOT was actually
3 doing the installation. I thought it was the Parks
4 Department, but I'm grateful for that so thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, DOT oversees
6 all of the lights in our parks and throughout the
7 City so that's why we have a relationship with them.
8 We'll find out their plan for how they're rolling out
9 converting to LED in parks.

10 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, great. Thank
11 you so much. I'll turn it back over to our Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Chair
13 Gibson. We are going to get to the members in a
14 second, but before we do I have one question for the
15 Commissioner. In fiscal 19, Commissioner, DPRs
16 expense budget for Capital Division is just over \$50
17 million. And most of this budget is funding through
18 the Capital Inter-funding Agreement. Could you tell
19 me, and the members of this committee, what
20 percentage of a typical Parks Capital Project overall
21 budget goes to the Department for design, scoping and
22 procurement costs?

23 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Ten percent.
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Ten percent?

3 Because I have heard anecdotal evidence it's much
4 higher so I'm believe you...

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Ten percent.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: But that number
7 seems... is low compared to what I've heard. And is
8 there a difference between, I assume, that the
9 percentage rate of IFA costs would be higher
10 percentage wise for a smaller project as opposed to a
11 larger project or?

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Ten percent.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Ten percent,
14 you're going to stick with that number?

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Ten percent.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: All right. All
17 right, first up, my colleague from Flushing, Mr. Koo,
18 we have five minutes on the clock. If you go to six
19 minutes I won't yell.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, Chair and
21 thank you, Commissioner. I have a follow up question,
22 Councilmember Gibson asked you, is it true that it
23 takes \$4 million to make a new bathroom in the parks?
24
25

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: \$3.5 is the number
3 for new construction. \$1.8 for renovated conversation
4 (sic)

5 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: 1.8 to renovate
6 conversion. I'm really sad to hear that because that
7 means our money is not worth anything now because
8 \$1.8 million just to renovate a bathroom and almost
9 \$4 million to build a new bathroom. Our money used to
10 be the benchmark of currency in the whole world. Now
11 people will laugh at us.

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Councilmember, I
13 share your concern. The Parks does not set the price,
14 it comes from the industry. We had a competitive
15 bidding process and we put it out there, and it
16 concerns us as well. We are very concerned about
17 escalating prices. We're going whatever we can to
18 keep prices down. But that is the state of affairs
19 right now. That as I shared with you, for new comfort
20 stations, in the last seven years we've seen an
21 increase in price of 175 percent. My only option is
22 to reject the bid, delay the project for six months,
23 but my concern is by waiting, prices will only go
24 higher. So we are discussing what we can do to figure
25 out other alternatives and bring cost down. But we

2 put out to bid and the contractors are telling us
3 that it'll cost, for a new comfort station, 3.5 and
4 that's an average. It can go higher, it can lower.

5 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: All right. I'm not
6 going to argue that with you, but we should ask more,
7 open up the bidding process so more, the small
8 contractors can.

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We are. We're doing
10 that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: Yeah, can do the job.
12 It should be much cheaper than that, that price. So
13 and to also follow up with Councilmember Grodenchik's
14 question that crime is up in the Parks. So what
15 happened if somebody gets mugged in the park? Do we
16 have cellular phone service in all the parks?

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: No.

18 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: I mean can they call
19 some police right away if somebody gets mugged?

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: With cell service? I
21 believe we do. I don't know if there are spots where
22 you cannot get great cell service.

23 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: Yeah.

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There probably are
25 spots, I don't know of any. But typically people do

2 have cell service. There are cell towers throughout
3 the City. A very dense metropolitan environment. I
4 don't know of any places where someone does not have
5 cell service, but I'm not saying it's impossible.

6 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: So in line of that,
7 have you ever considered providing Wi-Fi service in
8 the parks?

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: In some of our parks
10 we do have Wi-Fi service. It's not it all parks, in
11 all locations, but we have. To do the Wi-Fi you have
12 to affix it to a certain location, but we do work
13 with some vendors to provide Wi-Fi service. And so we
14 have that in some, not all of our parks.

15 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: So have you ever
16 considered asking LinkNYC because they are the Wi-Fi
17 station, to put some of those LinkNYC in the parks?
18 Especially in remote areas?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well we have to
20 work, it's something we can explore. I don't know if
21 it's as simple as LinkNYC, but we have certain
22 providers. AT&T, Spectrum offer some Wi-Fi in our
23 parks. We want to expand our span of Wi-Fi service,
24 we just have to find the best method to do that, but

2 it's something that we're certainly open to providing
3 more Wi-Fi in our parks.

4 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: I think you should
5 make that as one of your goals, to make Wi-Fi
6 available to all New York City Park areas. And my
7 next question is when you go to a playground or park,
8 usually there's a sign outside saying Maybrook
9 Playground or whatever. I want to make a suggestion
10 that on that sign you put the person's name there in
11 charge of the playground. So in case you want to
12 call, warn about the playground or park, call this
13 person. Put the phone number or email in there so
14 they can call this person in charge of this park.
15 Because a lot of times, I walk to the parks and the
16 park is dirty and my constituents complain to me, who
17 do I call? I say call 311, but I think...

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] That's
19 the right answer.

20 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: You ought to put the
21 pressure on you guys, you should have a name whoever
22 is in charge of the Parks Department...

23 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.
24
25

2 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: Or particular
3 playground or park, put his name or her name there to
4 make her responsible. Not 311.

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, first, 311 is
6 the right answer. Secondly, in terms of our
7 cleanliness, we exceed the Mayor's targets for
8 cleanliness. If that park is not clean at the moment,
9 staff comes by several times a week. All of our parks
10 are clean and so it's just a matter of time before
11 somebody comes by. But 311 is the right number to
12 call. We rotate staff all the time, to put a number
13 probably would not be the most efficient way. By
14 having 311, it gets to us very quickly and staff can
15 respond. So that is the appropriate number to call is
16 311.

17 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: But if you have a name
18 there it's much better to be than...

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] Well
20 actually it may delay things. 311 would be much
21 better because that way it's routed to the agency and
22 we have an entire borough of operations that can
23 respond. So 311 for us is the best mechanism to
24 communicate a complaint.

2 COUNCILMEMBER KOO: I disagree with you,
3 but it's okay, yeah.

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: All right.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We can't have
6 agreement on everything. Thank you, Councilman Koo.
7 Next up, Andrew Cohen is not here. If he comes back
8 we will, Costa Constantinides from the great borough
9 of Queens, go ahead.

10 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair. To say my name kind of messed it all up. I
12 lost almost my whole time. All right, so just kind of
13 looking at, great to see you again, Commissioner, by
14 the way and all the team. So looking at the
15 resiliency and sustainability sector. When we decide
16 to renovate a park either through CPI or for funding
17 from the Councilmembers, what triggers a review for
18 resiliency and sustainability measures in that park?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We have design
20 guidelines. If there's funding in place to actually
21 do a waterfront project, you've now increased the
22 level of complexity. It could involve DEP, DEC, other
23 agencies. So, if it is within the scope of the
24 project and its funding we can look at it. So that's
25 the approach that we take. If you take, for example,

2 the anchor parks for Astoria, that was limited to the
3 footprint of the park and not the shoreline per se.

4 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So that is something
6 that would then have to be a future phase of
7 dedicated dollars to fix that element. So it has to
8 be scoped up front so we can get an estimate to
9 figure out how much it will cost to restore that
10 project.

11 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: What about
12 things like permeable pavement or things, those types
13 of resiliency, sustainability pieces that maybe
14 aren't, their inside the scope of a park...

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.

16 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: What do we
17 do there?

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: That is now
19 standard. If you want, we can share with you our new
20 design guidelines. If there is a project in a flood
21 prone area, staff has to look at those guidelines and
22 design accordingly and it's very specific on what the
23 location is, and you would enjoy, actually it's a
24 well done document that is very specific in terms of
25 how staff will design given location of that park.

2 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: So how do
3 we look at things like solar panels to run the
4 bathrooms more effectively so they have their own,
5 without having to use electricity or oil. You talked
6 a little bit about that in your testimony.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.

8 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: But when do
9 we sort of click on those thought processes when
10 doing renovations?

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We're doing that
12 now. Right now it's project specific. We're looking
13 to put panels, for example, in a parking lot in
14 Brooklyn. We have green rooves on many of our
15 projects. So we're looking more and more to use those
16 options. So we're open to it, we're definitely open.
17 If you have a suggestion on where you'd like to have
18 that we'll certainly take a look at it.

19 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: All right,
20 great. Let me take a look at my time, all right I
21 still have more. I won't say my last name again. So
22 looking at Astoria Park, we are very excited about
23 the phases of the Anchor Park Program and it's always
24 great to see Astoria park on the screen there as part
25 of the Anchor Park, but looking at the pool in the

2 long term. And I was interested in putting Capital
3 into it and so we're trying to get a sense of how we
4 look at these projects? These sort of larger projects
5 that aren't park of Anchor Park, that are way larger
6 than someone that a Councilmember could do themselves
7 or even a borough president can do. Talking about in
8 the tens of millions of dollars. How do we even get
9 to a figure, if we don't know where the end of the
10 map is, you know don't where you're going. So how do
11 we even start thinking about those larger projects?

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Internally we always
13 look at our Capital needs. We have a very, very long
14 list, its pages. And each year we sit down with OMB
15 and the Mayor's Office and we have to prioritize
16 these against all the Capital Improvements City wide.
17 We recognize there's a need and Astoria Pool is an
18 item on our list. I think we did some pre-scoping
19 with OMB. So it's something we recognize needs to be
20 addressed, we just don't have the Capital dollars at
21 this point. But it doesn't mean that at one point in
22 the future it won't get funded. So we know some of
23 the big Capital items, it's just that there is no
24 Capital dollars...

2 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES:

3 [interposes] So we have hard dollars, we know how
4 much it would cost to do some of the building, to do
5 the basin, we have those numbers?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I don't know if we
7 have those numbers, we can get back to you. But I do
8 know we did a pre-scoping with OMB just to get a
9 sense of what is needed at Astoria Pool.

10 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Because
11 once you know how much something is you can say okay,
12 we have to start putting together the pieces...

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] Well
14 it's going to be a large number that...

15 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: That much I
16 know. It may be something where if I were to pull \$1
17 million a year in for every, and my successor after
18 that, right?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So the pool and
20 filtration system alone...

21 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Is \$18 million.

23 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: The
24 filtration system alone?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Just the pool and
3 filtration is 18 million. That's putting aside
4 repairs to the building itself or the pool.

5 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay. I'm
6 very concerned also about the bathrooms and the
7 locker rooms which are not in good condition. But I'm
8 worried that even if I were to put dollars up, these
9 other challenges within the building would preclude
10 me from ever even getting to fix those bathrooms and
11 locker rooms. So I'd love to sort of talk with you
12 and see if we can figure out how we can carve that up
13 to make it into maybe manageable chunks. To get
14 things done that would have a real impact for the
15 residents.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We'll have our staff
17 circle back with you to talk a little bit more about
18 Astoria Pool and the surround area.

19 COUNCILMEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Great.
20 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Your timing was
22 almost perfect, you get an A minus. Mr. Gjonaj?

23 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chairs.
24 Because I represent New York City's largest park, I
25

2 hope I get a little overtime. The borough of The
3 Bronx is known as the Borough of Parks.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: If you ask the
5 right questions you get more time.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: There you go. So,
7 let me begin, Commissioner, with while I go through
8 my other questions, if we can start looking at the
9 headcount by borough on maintenance and I'm going to
10 ask you a few other questions. In particular, the
11 \$8.7 million for tree pruning. What is the process,
12 please just walk me through this quickly because I
13 understand there's a seven year wait period. This
14 recent storm which took out power to homes for days
15 on end if not over a week, has been pretty much the
16 blame of trees that have toppled over or pulled down
17 power lines? Please walk me through this.

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well first the seven
19 year is the pruning cycle which is the industry
20 standard on how you should prune a tree. So your
21 tree, every seven years should be pruned. Prior to
22 Mayo de Blasio coming on board, that pruning cycle
23 was 10 years. With additional funding we brought it
24 down to seven. So that's just the pruning primarily
25

2 for branches. The stump removal is something else and
3 if there is other...

4 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: [interposes] No
5 stump, we're talking about...

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes. So this is
7 pruning cycle that your tree should be inspected and
8 pruned every seven years. That is the current
9 industry standard and that's what we're doing now in
10 Parks.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: This last storm was
12 a tragedy. It impacted so many homes.

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It did.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Thousands were left
15 without power. And it was solely because of trees. So
16 the definition for insanity is doing the same thing
17 over and over again and expecting a different result.
18 Obviously 10 years, bringing it to seven is a
19 tremendous accomplishment, but we're not doing enough
20 to trim these trees down before they take down our
21 powerlines. They jeopardize the health and safety of
22 our residents, personal property, and private
23 property. From the date that a complaint comes in of
24 a tree that's a dangerous condition, what is the
25

2 period of time before that tree is either, steps are
3 taken or an inspection, or the grating?

4 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Our goal is to
5 inspect every service request we receive within 30
6 days. Of course if a tree is identified as being
7 potentially hazardous we expedite those reviews. Our
8 response is based on the assessment that's made by
9 the forester. But to answer your question about trees
10 and powerlines, our staff does not work around
11 powerlines. Con Edison is required to remove any
12 branches that interfere or grow into their
13 powerlines. They have contractors who do that work
14 throughout the year. And when a windstorm occurs and
15 the tree is damaged, and it causes damage to the
16 powerlines, Con Edison has the responsibility for
17 either addressing the hazard in the wires or shutting
18 down the power so our staff can safely address the
19 emergency.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: What is the wait
21 period from a point where a tree is assessed to be
22 hazardous before it is actually cut down or removed
23 or?

24 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: If a tree is
25 judged to be a hazard, and that's based on an

2 inspection by a qualified forester, our goal is to
3 address the hazard, whether it's removing the tree or
4 cutting down the damaged portion of the tree, within
5 seven days.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: That's your goal.

7 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: That's our goal.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: But I understand
9 that there are trees that wait for years on end to be
10 addressed.

11 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There are trees
12 that are not addressed immediately, but if that's the
13 case it is because a qualified forester has assessed
14 the condition and had judged it not to be hazardous.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: So if a score was
16 driven to a tree almost 20 years ago, that score
17 would progressively get worse but yet no action has
18 been taken to address the hazardous condition of this
19 tree.

20 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I wouldn't say
21 that's the case. We will re-inspect the tree if the
22 conditions changes. Or if we ourselves, when we
23 evaluate trees we sometimes decide that we need to
24 look at the tree again within a year. But if someone
25 has a service request or they think the condition has

2 changed, because it does. There were trees that were
3 damaged in the recent storm that were fine a month
4 ago that now have some damage. We will go out and
5 inspect it within that 30 day period. And again, if
6 it is an extreme hazard we will address it within
7 seven days.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Let me ask these
9 questions quickly. What about the damage to sidewalks
10 and concrete due to tree roots?

11 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There are two sort
12 of aspects to that. We have whats called the Trees
13 and Sidewalk Program through which we repair sidewalk
14 damage that's caused by trees for tax class 1
15 properties. That's a one, two and three family, owner
16 occupied homes. That's been going on for well over...

17 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: [interposes] What
18 is the wait time for a replacement or correction of a
19 cracked sidewalk due to tree roots?

20 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: That can vary
21 greatly because due to the severity of the damage
22 because we do rate each sidewalk. We deal with the
23 most severely damaged sidewalks first and then we've
24 had difficulty finding the right contractors to do
25 this work.

2 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: We certainly have a
3 problem there. We need to address it. I'm going to
4 take my colleagues time if you don't mind, he has no
5 questions. One of the \$501.9 million that was
6 referred to for rat mitigation zones and at Bigbelly
7 trash cans. What is the price that we are currently
8 paying for Bigbelly trashcans and steel trashcans?

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm not aware of the
10 unit cost. We can get back to you on a unit cost
11 unless you know, Commissioner.

12 COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: The Bigbelly's,
13 with a service contract included between four and \$5
14 thousand. And the steel trash receptacles cost about
15 \$600.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Very good. So with
17 considering the priorities that we have the limited
18 resources that we have, why in God's name are we
19 spending \$5 thousand on a garbage can when a steel
20 garbage serves the same purpose?

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There are some
22 areas, through various studies, where there are rat
23 reservoirs and it's a significant problem. This is
24 from the experts found out that the Bigbelly's which
25 contain the trash is one of the ways of cutting off

2 this food source for rats. The City is committed to
3 finding resources and approaches that are most
4 effective and the Bigbelly's are one of them.
5 including the steel cans that, we don't see a lot of
6 theft of our steel cans but we want to make sure we
7 cut off the food supply of rats where there are very
8 prominent rat reservoirs in our City, that's a big
9 problem.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
11 Commissioner, but in my home, my grandmother says a
12 steel can with a lid works just as fine. But I'll
13 leave that to you and your better judgement.

14 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We have a very smart
15 breed of rats.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: The million dollar
17 plan and as my grandmother would say, it's easier to
18 buy than to hold onto, you've reached 620,000 trees
19 that are planted. We have the problem with the tree
20 pruning and sidewalk repair. You are taking away
21 valuable open space. Pullen Parkway, our Central
22 Park, the open space that was once used for fields
23 and sports, and what not is no longer available. It
24 is a disservice to those residents that have been
25 using that Parkway for decades. And I'm just going to

2 go through this really quickly. Thirty Point Park,
3 lack of investment, a tremendous park. There is some
4 incredible scenery there on the water, lack of
5 investment. I hope that you're going to pay a
6 priority to it as well as Pelham Parkway. The
7 preserving of our trees and that beautiful landscape
8 that has been written about, and stories have been
9 told, and books have been written about. We need to
10 preserve those trees. We are doing a massive
11 renovation there and reconstruction of the Parkways.
12 It has become a concern for all of my constituents
13 and I want to be mindful that we don't cut any
14 unnecessary trees down there. And the last part of my
15 question was the headcount by borough. This impacts
16 all of us...

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes]
18 Gjonaj, is there an Albanian word chutzpah?

19 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Yes. I took my
20 colleague, in Riverdale they don't need parks, we're
21 okay. Headcount by borough?

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We can share the
23 numbers with you, but very quickly we work very
24 closely with First Deputy and our Chief Operating
25 Officer to make sure there's proper headcount and

2 maintenance, and I'll do the high number not the low.
3 In Bronx, 158. Brooklyn, 1455. Manhattan, 1240.
4 Queens, 1325. And Staten Island, 464. That's the high
5 end number. There's a low number but that's on our
6 peak.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: I'm not sure where
8 those numbers are coming from. The numbers I have
9 here considering the borough of The Bronx just one
10 park is 2,700 acres. Three times larger than Central
11 Park and the number of full time employees that I was
12 given were 363 for the borough of The Bronx. 445 for
13 the borough of Manhattan, I'm sorry, Brooklyn.
14 Manhattan, 410. Queens, 512 and Staten Island 230.
15 Again, we're at the lowest, and this is full time
16 employees. Then you have season...

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: Then they have
19 total. And the numbers that I have show only 799
20 employees for the entire borough of The Bronx. And we
21 have...

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] We'll
23 show you our numbers...

24 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: [interposes] more
25 parkland than any other borough.

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We include seasonals
3 and then we also include our POP workers will share
4 the numbers with you. Please keep in mind we assess
5 the user ship and the type of park assets an acre to
6 an acre is not comparable. They're very different
7 borough to borough. And so we make sure we make sure
8 we right size and have the staff to take care of the
9 type of park on a per acre basis. So it's not a part
10 acre by acre, it's the park type acre by acre. But
11 we'll share you the new numbers.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: I'm trying to, it's
13 him, he takes too long to answer the questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's certainly
15 fascinating Mr. Gjonaj and I appreciate...

16 COUNCILMEMBER GJONAJ: [interposes] Thank
17 you, Commissioner and we'll continue this.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHI: I thank you for
19 your brevity today. Mr. Cohen?

20 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: I have traditional
21 Jewish chutzpah, but I'll try to be brief. I had to
22 laugh though when you were testifying because I do
23 remember your first hearing and we've traveled a long
24 way together. And I do want to acknowledge a lot of
25 the good work, the back log. I've had at least one

2 bag logged project that you and I worked closely
3 together to keep alive and get back on track. So I'm
4 appreciate of that. And you know what a big fan I am
5 of my borough Commissioner. She has been a tremendous
6 partner and we've worked together so closely on a
7 number of issues. But you also know that I've had
8 enormous frustration around the Capital Process and I
9 know that progress has been made and I would be
10 remiss if I didn't acknowledge that. But, in your
11 testimony, and I quote, "there are significant
12 portions of the Capital Process that lie outside of
13 our agencies control". But that has been your
14 testimony for I guess this is the fifth year. What
15 are we doing about trying to do something about the
16 things, and we're not completely powerless. The Mayor
17 goes to Albany, we need to make some changes here in
18 the Capital Process. And I think that you've done
19 everything in your power. So I want to know what is
20 our plan, and what have you done to try to get help?

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, with the
22 administration we now have new Deputy Mayors. There
23 is now a new focus on an operations side. We want to
24 work with now the Capital Subcommittee as well. MOCs
25 (sic) did make some innovations creating Passport. So

2 on a procurement side, some things have been done.
3 There is more to do. And both our staff as well as
4 the Administration with the support of Council, we'll
5 start looking at those other items we gave the
6 Chairs, both Chairs of the Subcommittee Capital and
7 Parks. And inside about the issues and procurement
8 that need to be addressed. That's where the focus
9 needs to be on procurement. I think you understand
10 that as well. And so we are determined to keep moving
11 forward to improve the procurement process so we can
12 move the projects a lot quicker.

13 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: But there are things,
14 again, these external factors. I hear design build
15 talked about for NYCHA, I hear design build talked
16 about for DOT. I don't hear anybody talking about it
17 for parks.

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Design build really
19 works for larger projects, it would not work for
20 Parks. Plus, right now we're enjoying a lot of
21 community participation. Design build will take the
22 community, for the most part, out of that process.
23 Something that we don't really think would be a good
24 thing to do. But there are other ways that we can
25

2 expedite the process, but a lot of that focus on
3 procurement.

4 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: I was watching New
5 York One I think last week and the Mayor was talking
6 about the Capital Process and he was talking
7 specifically about SCA and holding it up as a model
8 of an agency that seems to do well Capital Projects.
9 And I know I've asked you in the past and I know
10 theoretically you think it's an interesting idea, but
11 in terms of a Parks Construction Authority. Could you
12 just talk about if you think that there is
13 application for that at Parks? Freeing you up from,
14 as an example, Lorraine Grillo talked about freedom
15 from "wicks" and other things?

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: As you know, you and
17 I had conversation about this. We remain open to have
18 this conversation. I do know it's something
19 introduced and want to continue having a dialogue.
20 I'm interested in having that dialogue with you.
21 There are certainly pros and cons about that
22 approach, but I look forward to that conversation. I
23 hear your frustration and I think I've shared some of
24 my concerns with you and so it would be a good
25

2 conversation to have going forward about what would
3 be the best to expedite our projects moving forward.

4 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: I have one last
5 question. In this vein, I know that my borough
6 president cares deeply about Orchard Beach. And when
7 I have conversations sort of privately with people
8 about the idea of a PCA, I believe that there are
9 landmark issues at Orchard Beach. Am I correct on
10 that?

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: The answer is yes.

12 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: I would imagine that
13 we could do a design or a plan that would be
14 sensitive to the architecture and design...

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] Yeah we
16 will.

17 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: Without having to
18 subject, if you were not subject to the landmarks I
19 would imagine save a significant amount of money.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, going to
21 landmarks, it is about a one or two month process. It
22 wouldn't be onerous, but certainly any project that
23 is landmarked, we use extreme sensitivity and to make
24 sure we consult with them before. And this is in the
25 case of the EDC. And their designer before, if they

2 go too far, our guess is not to alter this Robert
3 Moses gem.

4 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: No, and again I
5 would not advocate altering it, but in my council
6 district there are landmark districts and I know the
7 owners talk about their significant additional
8 expense even on the private sector to trying to
9 comply with landmarks.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I see, I see, okay.

11 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: And I am concerned
12 about, again, if SCA does not have to comply with
13 landmarks. And I'm not saying that we should
14 disregard, and I think Orchard Beach has the
15 potential to be beautiful again. I think it is an
16 iconic design and one that should be protected. But I
17 wonder if we could work around landmarks. If it's
18 just one more opportunity to get the job done faster
19 and more cost efficiently. So that something, again,
20 a plug on this front. Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Wow. That was
23 great timing. I was born in The Bronx, I had a little
24 benefit. We will be holding, just for your
25 information, I plan to be holding, along with Chair

2 Gibson, Chair Torres of Oversight and Guidance and
3 probably Mr. Brannon of Contracts, hearings later
4 this year on procurement and how we can all work
5 together. I've been meeting toward that goal with
6 many, many people. Some of whom are in this room.
7 I've met with Deputy Commissioner Braddick and I will
8 be holding more meetings before I get ready to hold
9 these hearings. So I appreciate your input on that.

10 COUNCILMEMBER COHEN: I do sincerely
11 believe that they are doing the best they can, but
12 there are severe limitations to improving the
13 process.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think in many
15 respects we are victims of the rules that we put in
16 place to protect ourselves.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Hear, hear.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Hear, hear. You
19 can do that. I think we all agree on that. And I
20 think what we do want, we all want the best for our
21 parks users and I think this will spill over into
22 other areas of Capital Construction as well. That
23 being said I am now happy to introduce the former
24 Chair of the Parks Committee, my friend Mark Levine.

2 But you don't get extra time for being a friend so
3 I'm just warning you now.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: Darn. I'll try and
5 follow the example set by Councilmember Cohen. Thank
6 you, Mr. Chair. Wonderful to be back and wonderful to
7 see all of you. The Chair and I, and the Commissioner
8 spoke at a conference this morning to the incredible
9 men and women who maintain our parks. The gardeners
10 particularly, who are so important to the health of
11 the system. We can spend billions on Capital, but if
12 we walk away without adequate maintenance it's all
13 for not. So that leads into my question about the
14 fate of 150 gardeners and maintenance workers. This
15 is an issue that we've gone back and forth on now for
16 three budget cycles in a row. They are so critical to
17 maintenance of, particularly Parks in the CPI
18 portfolio. This is not an example of a pet project of
19 the Council which is a goal that the administration
20 doesn't share. I think this is a goal that you share
21 as deeply as we do. Am I right that there was no
22 funding for these 150 men and women in the Mayor's
23 preliminary budget and if not...

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] In the
25 preliminary budget, you are correct.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: Why not?

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: This budget

4 basically did not include any of the baselines from
5 previous years which is why it went down to 501. And
6 as you know, as we've had discussions in years past,
7 this is the beginning of the budget process. At this
8 point those positions were not put in. I'm optimistic
9 as it goes forward that we'll continue, both the City
10 and OMB to work with Council to see what we can do to
11 address these positions. But the time being, they are
12 currently not in the preliminary budget.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: I implore you to do
14 everything you can to get them into the executive
15 budget. And that you not assume that the Council
16 continue to pick up what is a very, very heavy load
17 considering the total pot of funding that we have in
18 a year where things are a little bit tighter. And
19 there's a lot competing. None of us can assume that
20 the Council will, for the fourth year in a row, come
21 in and save the day. This really is by rights, is the
22 kind of thing that the Parks Department should fund,
23 the Administration should fund. So I really implore
24 you to do everything you can to fight internally,
25 whatever battles you have to fight to make sure that

2 these men and women continue in employment come July
3 1st. For their good and for the good of the Parks
4 System. Shifting gears to a Capital related question.
5 The topic of the Parks Capital Tracker which you
6 justifiably should feel proud of, bringing some light
7 and transparency to the Capital Process by creating a
8 website for every single ongoing Parks Capital
9 Project. I noticed, very curiously I think, a step
10 backwards in transparency on the way we list the cost
11 of projects. That used to list the amount of the
12 cost, and now gives a range. I was just looking a few
13 minutes ago to Bloomingdale Playground in my district
14 which now the cost is listed from \$3 million to 5
15 million.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm told by our
17 Deputy Commissioner that we give a range because we
18 don't want to tell the exact price of the contractor.
19 So we're giving a range of what it could be. That way
20 it allows it to be competitively responded to. So
21 that's the reason why it's giving a range and not an
22 exact figure.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: So, once you've
24 accepted a bid from the contractor then you post?
25

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Then, yes, I'm told
3 the answer is yes.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: Is it not public
5 information or without this website, what the
6 budgeted amount for the project is? I mean it's in
7 budget documents?

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Once it's reported
9 (sic) we can list the price.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: But we pass our
11 budget in late June and I believe that there is
12 detail in that document that would lay out the amount
13 budgeted for every discreet project, no?

14 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'm sorry, if you'll
15 repeat the question. I apologize, we can, okay 53. If
16 you could repeat the question?

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: I understand not
18 wanting to tip our hand to people who are bidding
19 about what our bottom line is, I get that. But the
20 Parks Tracker is kind of an afterthought when we've
21 already published that in budget documents have we
22 not?

23 COMMISSIONER SILVER: If someone wants to
24 go into the budget and try to figure things out, they
25 can. But from our purpose, we do prefer on the

2 Capital Tracker to put that range until it's awarded
3 than to put in that figure.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: But were you
5 anecdotally getting reports of contractors who
6 weren't savvy enough to go to the budget documents
7 than just going to the Parks Capital Tracker, okay. I
8 have only a few seconds left. I want to ask you about
9 a pet issue of mine which is how we understand the
10 start Date of Capital Projects and how that's
11 reflected on the Parks Capital Tracker which would
12 appear calls the initiation of design as the start
13 date for the Project. Why not just tell the world
14 when we funded it, when it was fully funded? I mean
15 that's what the public...

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] We do
17 say when it's fully funded in terms of how we start,
18 what we do the official start date is when we hold
19 the public meeting. As I've said in the past, you
20 can't have all the plans fly at one time. It's very
21 difficult. So we look at staff availability by
22 borough and then assign them a part project until we
23 complete our queue for that year. So, we do know what
24 year it was funded, it's on every project. We give
25 the year date, but the start date is when we have

2 that first public meeting. And that's when the design
3 clock starts ticking.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: You're starting the
5 clock at the first public meeting?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Correct.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: So not even when
8 you assign staff internally to the work, to the
9 project? But that would be the obvious moment right,
10 you have a Capital staffer who's assigned to the
11 project.

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It's almost done
13 simultaneously, but our goal is when the first public
14 meeting is the kickoff is when the project actually
15 starts. No work has been done, we set up the public
16 meeting and then we get the public input to influence
17 the conceptual design. So the first public meeting,
18 which we hold for all Capital Projects is the kickoff
19 start date for the Project.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: Okay. I'm now in
21 chutzpah territory so I will wrap up.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Okay.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: And just say that
24 we continue to struggle with a mismatch between the
25 way the Department accounts for timing and the way

2 the public, which is who we serve, understands
3 timing. And as soon as we fund a Park Renovation
4 Project its going to be in the newspaper. It's going
5 to be in our email blasts. The public at that point
6 becomes excited and in their minds they're starting
7 the stopwatch.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We understand. And
9 if you recall I made a commitment that in the years
10 past, we had some 30-40 projects from that fiscal
11 year that we couldn't even assign. We're now dropping
12 that number in half. In some cases to 10. And so our
13 goal is for that fiscal year to get all those
14 projects assigned, but it does take time between the
15 fiscal year...

16 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: [interposes] Sorry,
17 so that was 30 projects that didn't start within a
18 year of the funding?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Over to the next
20 year.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: Right, well.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We're not bringing
23 that number down because we can move the projects and
24 assign them quicker. But we understand, the
25 Councilmember said I've funded it, it may be October,

2 November, December before it officially starts, but
3 our commitment is to get it started that fiscal year
4 and to keep that number down to those that have to be
5 carried to the next year to a minimum.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: All right. Thank
7 you, Commissioner and thank you Mr. Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
9 Councilmember. We are now to the furthest reaches of
10 the City of New York. The southern border of the
11 State of New York, Mr. Borelli.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Thank you, Barry.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Give him five and
14 a half minutes please.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: It's a nice borough.

16 COUCILMEMBER BORELLI: I need it, I need
17 the head start. And thank you Commissioner and I just
18 want to point out our borough commissioner and our
19 chief of staff and our wonderful Staten Island team
20 are here. And the things I asked you last year was to
21 get some of the projects that were in the queue going
22 and I think they've actually done a really good job
23 this year. And my issue has always been sidewalks.

24 And when we're having some scuttlebutt with people on
25 the other side of the building and some people around

2 various agencies, the response I always got was that
3 the cost of labor has gone up. The cost of nearly
4 everything has gone up. So I actually spoke to some
5 people in labor and together we picked a random
6 project from the Parks Department. And we looked at
7 some of the costs. And the one we picked was the
8 Morris-Jumel Mansion Streetscape. And I have
9 actually, I have to confess, I have no idea where it
10 is. I've never been there.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEVINE: I live three blocks
12 from there.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Oh great, so you
14 got a new sidewalk and a new wall according to what
15 the Parks Department said was the scope of the
16 project. And some ADA accessible ramps. And the
17 budgeted amount was \$1.35 million and if we take the
18 10% off we get to 1.25 let's say. And then we pulled
19 the labor records, all the payroll and we found that
20 the labor cost was \$290 thousand. That's how much was
21 actually paid to workers from that project. So the
22 question, I guess I want to ask, and it's along the
23 same lines as what Councilmember Cohen and some
24 others have asked is where does that extra, in this
25 case \$950 thousand. And that's about 65-70% of the

2 total money allocated. Is it going to, is there a
3 profit, obviously is a percentage of that. Is there
4 materials, et cetera. Where does the rest of that go?

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, we did our own
6 calculation based on your inquiry and it turns out
7 that we calculated that 40% of the cost is going to
8 labor. We're going to do a further study in general
9 to see how much of our projects is labor and
10 materials, but for that one, and our staff can meet
11 with you to go over our numbers. But in fact for that
12 specific project, 40% of that project was labor, not
13 the 21%.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Is that a change
15 of work orders along the way? Is that why the cost
16 went up?

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We'll sit down with
18 you to go in more detail, but now this had triggered
19 me, which I'd asked for before, but is looking at on
20 average, what is the split on our projects. Getting
21 to the concern about cost between labor and
22 materials. This one because it was a specific
23 question I looked into and found out that it was 40%.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: When its things
25 like cement that we are buying whether it's this

2 project or a multitude of projects, is that something
3 that the contractor bids and purchases on his or her
4 own? Or is that something we buy in bulk and then
5 they use?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Let me, Commissioner
7 Braddick is head of Capital Projects so I'll defer
8 that question to her.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: Sorry. Could you
11 repeat the question?

12 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: So, in other
13 words, if we have a project that Jumel Mansion
14 Streetscape Project in Councilmember Levine's
15 district, and we have another project that's doing
16 sidewalks in Queens. Does each individual contractor
17 still bid and in their bidding documents they provide
18 the cost that they estimate for the cement, et
19 cetera. In other words are they purchasing each bunch
20 of cement separately?

21 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: Yes.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: So that fact that
23 we are the biggest purchaser of cement maybe in the
24 City at times, doesn't impact the cost we get on the
25 price?

2 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: On the individual,
3 that's absolutely correct because they're doing it on
4 an individual project by project basis.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Have you guys ever
6 looked at sort of expanding, I guess maybe
7 requirements contracts to be suppliers to cut the
8 cost?

9 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: Often times what
10 we'll do is in a borough by borough basis, if you're
11 doing a similar project where you're doing just
12 sidewalks, or just paving, you bundle those sites
13 together so that you can get a greater cost
14 efficiency. So, the answer to that question is yes.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Okay, good. We
16 have some top lots (sic) that are bundled together,
17 that's good. When contractors bid on a project are
18 they including the cost of insurance for their
19 workers in the bid?

20 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: Yes. Those things
21 are required as part of the contract in order to do
22 business with the City of New York.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: So the start date
24 on the contract was July 2014 and the completion date
25 was 2016, but the payrolls for the project only go

2 from the end of July to mid-August. Leaving almost a
3 six-seven month gap between when the contractor was
4 saying no one was actually working and when the
5 project was signed off. Does the contractor factor in
6 the cost of the insurance on those employees for that
7 period of time?

8 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: They have to carry
9 the insurance for the duration of the contract.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: So just in theory
11 we're reimbursing a contractor to pay insurance on
12 individuals who are not employed at the job site?

13 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: They have to carry
14 it, again, the answer would be yes because they have
15 to carry the insurance all the way through until
16 there is what's called the final inspection.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Right.

18 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: And it's turned
19 over to the City.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: I don't want to be
21 too specific with the project because I don't expect
22 you to have the answer to everything, but is this a
23 normal thing where work ends and then it's not until
24 seven months later where there's a final sign off?

2 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: No. That is not
3 normal at all. There were definitely issues with this
4 particular contractor at this site.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: That caused that
7 gap. Which we're happy to explain to you in a
8 different setting.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: Did we pick a bad
10 project?

11 COMMISSIONER BRADDICK: You picked a bad
12 contractor.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BORELLI: All right. Well
14 thank you very much. Appreciate it.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Mr.
16 Borelli. I hope Miss Rosenthal is on her way back,
17 she had to be across the street. Miss Gibson, where
18 would you like me to go? Following up Mr.
19 Commissioner, I almost got your salary there.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: That's all right.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Mr. Koo is
22 worried about availability of cell phone signal in
23 parks and I'm wondering right now, can you provide us
24 with a figure, the Parks Revenue figures and if you
25 don't have them today I would appreciate if you could

2 forward them to us for mobile pole top
3 telecommunications franchisees what they pay the City
4 of New York to the Department of Parks. Does that
5 revenue come to your agency or?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Our revenue
7 division. I could certainly respond to that. I do
8 know AT&T, I forgot what the other company was
9 called, I think now its Spectrum. We could certainly
10 reply with that information. There are different
11 arrangements per park, but we could certainly supply
12 you with that data.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And do you think
14 there's an opportunity reasonably to grow revenue for
15 Parks within Parks providing the cell phone
16 providers, we obviously don't want to over run our
17 parks with cell phone towers, but...

18 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] I
19 think, yes, each arrangement is different and so I
20 don't want to speak out of turn. We would like to
21 follow up to share with you the agreement between
22 AT&T and through Spectrum. I believe, for example,
23 AT&T it is free for the user. Those that use
24 Spectrum, if you are a customer I think the first
25 amount of time is free and then it will charge you.

2 Compared to other free Wi-Fi that may penetrate into
3 a park. I'd rather sit down with staff and get you
4 the information to know what parks are covered and
5 what the arrangement is for each franchise.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. And have
7 you, I'm told, I've met with people and you advanced
8 my curiosity, have there been problems in procuring
9 these or securing these kind of contracts with
10 different companies? Or just case by case?

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: This is something
12 exclusive with our Revenue Division and probably also
13 with the Law Department at the City. So I would like
14 a chance to follow up with our Revenue Division.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: To get back to you
17 on those...

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes] I
19 would appreciate that information. This morning we
20 were at the horticulture conference and it was
21 wonderful. And so that provoked a question from me
22 and I spoke about it this morning, but I'd like to
23 ask you on the record now. The Green Streets with
24 Commissioner Stern started, they're wonderful and
25 they really are a tremendous help not only in

2 greening up our City, but certainly reducing the heat
3 islands around the City because we've taken tens of
4 thousands, hundreds of thousands of square feet of
5 concrete and turned them into parks. Passive parks,
6 but still parks and they're havens for some wildlife
7 and insects. Can we see additional dollars for that?
8 We'd love to expand it in certain parts of Queens.
9 We'd like to add additional, but I'm told that the
10 funding just isn't there for Parks to do it
11 correctly.

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: The money is there.
13 Again, these are a unique size for our gardeners and
14 staff to maintain. Some DOT has to maintain on
15 certain thoroughfares. Right now it's not in the
16 budget to expand the program. If there are some ideas
17 about where you'd like to expand it, let us know. But
18 for the time being, we just want to make sure the
19 ones that we have, because as you know these are very
20 discreet areas and parcels. The staff has to go in
21 and clean and maintain. But if you have some ideas
22 and locations, let us know. But right now there is no
23 budget to expand the Green Streets...

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes]
25 Locations I certainly have I understand the funding

2 challenges. One thing I was wondering is if maybe if
3 we did some of the larger ones, I have some sites
4 near Hillside Avenue that are large, close to an
5 acre. All that water is currently going into our City
6 sewer system. So I'm wondering maybe you could look
7 at, the Greenwood DEP we would take some of the water
8 off their hands and maybe they could help with
9 funding. So just a thought that I had today.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Okay. So I will
11 definitely follow up with Commissioner Lewandowsky
12 and then...

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We'll sit down and
15 see what is possible.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very,
17 very much. Chair Gibson?

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Just to close this
19 out.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes] I
21 wasn't done yet, but all right.

22 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Commissioner, in your
23 testimony you talked about the Anchor Parks
24 Initiative. I'm very excited about that. The \$150
25 million and focusing on the larger parks in each

2 borough. So our park in The Bronx, it's not in my
3 district, but I'm still taking credit, it's St.
4 Mary's Parks, it's fine. Because my constituents go
5 all over the place. So you said that the projects are
6 on time in terms of design and other...

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes]

8 Correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Parts of the process?

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There's two phases.

11 Phase one right now, should be completed by 2020.

12 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: 2020?

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: No phase, 1a, right?

15 Just one?

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Phase 1 and phase 2.

17 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Phase 1 and

18 phase 2, okay. Just making sure.

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It's a large park so
20 we wanted to get something in the ground quickly.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right. Okay, so I
22 guess my question is looking, big picture, if this is
23 a successful initiative that we anticipate it to be,
24 once we get to 2020, do you think that there is a
25 potential to look at other, larger scale parks for a

2 continuation? Or expansion of the initiative? Is that
3 any talk just yet?

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There is always a
5 desire.

6 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We have to look at
8 the financial situation of the City at that time. The
9 Community Parks Initiative is very successful. Parks
10 Without Borders, very successful. And Anchor Parks,
11 we had record number of people coming out to the
12 community meetings. And so the answer is the desire
13 is yes to expand this. We have many parks. The goal
14 of Anchor Parks is to make old parks new again. And
15 so that is a goal of mine and I'm sure the Council
16 shares that goal as well. But we'll have to look at
17 the Capital Budget situation at that time. But it's
18 certainly something that's on the table. We would
19 like to expand if its priority that we have funds to
20 actually expand that program.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Earlier when we
22 talked about standardizing the design for comfort
23 stations, I wanted to ask if Parks is looking at any
24 other part of the design phase that you want to
25 streamline a little bit better. So I do understand,

2 and I'm one of those community folks as well. We ask
3 for everything. When you come to us can you say we
4 have this amount of money, you have ideas on what
5 type of park you want to see. There are many, many
6 ideas people come up with.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: What I've appreciated
9 about what Parks has done in my district is with the
10 acreage we have and with the land we have in Parks,
11 we're able to achieve different amenities for
12 different age ranges. The playground equipment for
13 the babies, the basketball equipment for teenagers
14 and the new addition which I really love is the
15 fitness equipment. I have it at Cedar Park that we
16 opened a year ago, and that's a great example. So
17 what I'm seeing moving forward is that has been the
18 typical model of most of my Parks in The Bronx.
19 However, and I ask this question because there are
20 instances where when we start with scoping and we get
21 the ideas, that Parks has an idea of what that
22 project is going to cost, but when you get back to
23 the community the design is usually done and there
24 could be a change in the design that will change the
25 cost of the project. So is there any talk about

2 looking at streamlining any other part of the design
3 of Parks?

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, a couple of
5 things. One, we now have moved away from customized
6 design.

7 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We have
9 manufacturers, if we can't purchase it from a
10 manufacturer we're not going to have something
11 customized and built. It's hard to maintain and the
12 cost goes up. So if you notice right now, to move
13 these project forward, we have manufacturers for play
14 units, for adult fitness equipment, safety surface.
15 That that is what we now prefer. When we look at the
16 budget, very often if it goes over budget we have two
17 choices. We don't like to go back to the
18 Councilmember. That's not popular to do.

19 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Unless you have to.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We see whether we
21 have funds that we can put to the budget or we have
22 to do value engineering that takes certain elements
23 out. So those are the choices. We try to design for
24 the budget, but then when we go out to bid that's
25 when we find out...

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right.

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Once the contractors
4 respond, what we thought would be 3.1 is now 3.4 and
5 we have to make a decision what we do to proceed. We
6 go back to the Councilmember, we see if it's
7 something we can do, but that is in almost every
8 project. But first and foremost, no more custom
9 design. We purchase what the manufacturer has and
10 that helps us streamline the process on the design
11 side. And also bring down cost because we know how
12 much the units cost. The labor is the x-factor, but
13 at least we know how much the unit costs.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right, okay. I
15 appreciate that. I think I've experienced that when
16 the Parks Department has come back to me a couple of
17 times, but again, I really do appreciate it and it's
18 because we have so many advocates and residents that
19 love Parks and we're all trying to accomplish
20 everything. So I've been asked to look at therapeutic
21 services for our Parks and how we can incorporate
22 other sorts of innovative approaches that really
23 address seniors, those with disabilities, children
24 with special needs, to make sure that essentially
25 everyone is accommodated in one location.

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Right.

3 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: So, I understand the
4 challenge and I appreciate the efforts that have been
5 undertaken to try to improve the process. So,
6 Councilmember Cohen asked a very specific question
7 about Orchard Beach and I did want to get your take
8 on where we are. We had a briefing with Park Staff
9 about a year ago. The Bronx elected officials, the
10 borough president has been very, very passionate
11 about Orchard Beach. And not only has he been
12 passionate, but he has put his own money into Orchard
13 Beach and assembled our friends in the state
14 legislature as well. So I do know the commitment of
15 \$40 million that we have to date are City dollars.

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] Common
17 (sic) yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Yes? All City
19 dollars? Okay, good. But does that include the total
20 amount for phase one because I understood that
21 Orchard Beach has a massive series of renovations.
22 Probably 1a, 1b, and 1c, but \$40 million I don't
23 believe is enough. So do you have an idea of what the
24 phase 1 cost will be?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There is a lot of
3 work. I think we estimated...

4 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] For it
5 to be done right.

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: between either 70 or
7 100. It is definitely more than 40 million.

8 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. I thought it
9 was.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: EDC is now in charge
11 of the project. They expect design this summer. We
12 will, our focus primarily is on the Pavilion and ADA
13 access.

14 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right.

15 COMMISSIONER SILVER: As a designer comes
16 on board we'll get a better picture about what we
17 could afford for the 40 million. This is an historic
18 structure that requires significant re-stabilization,
19 as well as stairs that will go down with ramps that
20 will now, rather than going up steps you can now
21 enter at the grade level on the promenade of the Park
22 itself. So design will be starting this summer. EDC
23 will be the lead, and we're certainly open to as many
24 meetings as possible for the elected's to understand
25 this project.

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER SILVER: But if you're saying
4 in terms of the totality, it is a big Park, with a
5 lot of needs, and a beach with a lot of needs. Phase
6 one really is 40 million and I know the borough
7 president is interested in doing future phases to
8 improve other assets on both sides of the pavilion.

9 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. I agree. I
10 think when we talked to him he prioritized the
11 pavilion and ADA accessibility. It's very frequently
12 used. There is salsa concerts, there's all sorts of
13 things happening in Orchard Beach every year. Which I
14 appreciate because we want to continue to talk
15 positively about the beauty and the treasure that we
16 have in The Bronx that a lot of people don't know
17 about. So I'm happy to work with my colleagues and
18 the borough president to continue to support that.
19 And just ask that you keep us posted as design is
20 completed and we move to next phases, and working
21 with EDC that will be helpful. Okay, thank you very
22 much. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Madame
24 Chair and I want to add my voice. You mentioned both
25 of my parents parks today, Crotona Park and Orchard

2 Beach. My mother used to take the bus up Pelham
3 Parkway in the 1930s to get to the beach. And it is a
4 gem and it needs to be polished. I think with that,
5 Mr. Commissioner, and your staff, I would ask you one
6 last thing. If you could introduce the borough
7 commissioners that are here. I certainly know...

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposes] I'll
9 just say their names and hopefully all five are here.
10 If they're not I'm sure they have a good reason.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know Miss
12 Lewandowski is not here.

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So first, oh, thank
14 you for that tip. So from Staten Island, we have
15 Borough Commissioner Linda Ricciardone. From The
16 Bronx, we have Iris Rodriguez-Rosa. Manhattan, Bill
17 Castro. From Brooklyn, Marty Marr. And of course
18 Dorothy Lewandowsky.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. I do have
20 one more question though and this is at the behest of
21 a Councilmember who couldn't be here. The freight
22 elevator, and this is going to Brooklyn, we didn't
23 get any Brooklyn questions so we need Brooklyn
24 question. The freight elevator at the Coney Island
25 Headquarters which is on 25th Street has been out for

2 several years. And I am told that FEMA and Capital
3 Funding have been requesting but have not been
4 allocated. And I would wonder if you could, if you
5 have any information on that today?

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I am told that we do
7 not have Capital Funding to repair it. Staff is aware
8 and we will make note of it to continue to, at least
9 I'll follow up to find out more about it. But right
10 now there is no Capital Funding to repair the freight
11 elevator.

12 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. We've been
13 joined by my colleague Miss Barron, do you have any
14 questions today Miss Barron? No, okay. With that,
15 Commissioner I want to thank you for being here today
16 and we certainly look forward to working with you on
17 the many issues. You happen to be Commissioner of
18 what is probably the most popular agency in the City
19 of New York.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I've been told.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And you will
22 henceforth be known as the Commissioner of Parks and
23 Recreation, Fun, Health and Happiness. That's all for
24 the good and we look forward to seeing you again in
25 May. I will see some of your staff probably in April,

2 but that's another few weeks away. So thank you and
3 with that we will get to the panels now. If anybody
4 has arrived after we started this hearing and they
5 would like to testify please see the Sergeant at Arms
6 and fill out a form. We're going to take a two minute
7 break to let Parks. We can have fun, but we can't
8 have that much fun. The first panel, Roxanne Delgado
9 from Friends of Pelham Parkway. Heather Lubov from
10 The City Parks Foundation and Michael Schnall from
11 the New York Roadrunners. And Lynn Kelly, New Yorkers
12 for Parks. We have set the clock for three minutes.
13 Since I'm the only member left here I don't really
14 care if you go a little over, but the people
15 following you may care. But that's okay. So let me
16 thank you for being here today and if we can go in
17 the order I called you so Miss Delgado?

18 ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello, Chair. My name is
19 Roxanne Delgado. I am here on behalf of Pelham
20 Parkway located in the Northeast of The Bronx.

21 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: I know it well.

22 ROXANNE DELGADO: Okay. And in the 13
23 district of the City Council. Our Parkway is over 108
24 acres which is less than one half of 1% of the City
25 Parks total parkland. Yet the Parkways makes a huge

2 impact on the property value of neighborhood, as well
3 as it improves our quality of life. Friends of Pelham
4 Parkway was formed last year in June and we have done
5 clean ups every month since then. We do tabling
6 alongside our clean ups. We have meaningful
7 conversations with our neighbors, residents and users
8 of the Parkway. And we can't help but note the heavy
9 use of the Parkway by both residents and visitors.
10 Due to the heavy use, there is lots of litter and
11 there is lots of wear and tear on our Parkway. This
12 is why I was so disappointed that Parks overall
13 budget was decreased by over 10%. I was also
14 disappointed that over 1.2% was decreased for
15 maintenance and operation. Much of the decrease was
16 due to 90 plus seasonal jobs eliminated. During the
17 late spring and summer is when we have lots of people
18 on the Parkway and we need Park Enforcement and Park
19 Rangers to interact with the users on following the
20 Park rules including not barbequing or littering on
21 our Parkway. The City is spending millions to upgrade
22 neglected parks, but the City should be more
23 proactive and maintain the Parks before they become
24 neglected and need to be overhauled. Last year
25 maintenance operations was 309 million and the City,

2 Parkland is over 3,000 acreage. Which means that the
3 City spends a little over 10,000 per acreage. Per the
4 Public Trust Land Report parkland that's over 25,000
5 per acreage. But I don't need data to prove my point.
6 I've lived near the Parkway for over 10 years and I
7 have witnessed the decreation (sic) of our Parkland
8 and the lack of maintenance and enforcement. And my
9 neighbors and users also relay those same sentiments
10 during our interaction during our tabling. So I would
11 even suggest that we slow down the Capital Projects
12 and divert more funding to maintain our existing
13 parkland. Thank you so much, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I thank you. Just
15 so you know the Capital Money comes from a different
16 pot. So the expense money is used eventually to pay
17 off Capital Projects, but they are two different
18 tracks of money that we do track here at the Council
19 and is spent by the Parks Department. We have the
20 oversight there. I love Pelham Parkway. It's one of
21 the most beautiful places in the City and I actually
22 played there as a little boy visiting my relatives.
23 But I'm old.

24 ROXANNE DELGADO: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
3 being here today and thank you for being a supporter
4 of Parks. Heather and I have become good friends over
5 the last couple of months. Heather Lubov.

6 HEATHER LUBOV: Good afternoon. I am
7 Heather Lubov, Executive Director of City Parks
8 Foundation. A nonprofit organization that using
9 performing arts, sports, environmental education and
10 community building programs to bring people into
11 parks. We believe that thriving, active parks play an
12 essential role in creating vibrant and healthy
13 communities. Thanks in part to the Councils support,
14 this year we offered free sports instruction to
15 13,000 youth and seniors. Developed nearly 3,000
16 future park stewards through K through 12
17 environmental education programs and celebrated New
18 York's diverse cultures through our Summer Stage
19 Festival and the Traveling Puppet Mobile. Reaching
20 more than 280,000 audience members. We are proud to
21 partner with NYC Parks on Partnerships for Parks. Our
22 community building program that supports a network of
23 volunteer leaders who care and advocate for their
24 local neighborhood parks. Partnerships for Parks
25 supports more than 670 volunteer friends groups who

2 help care for nearly 400 parks in all 51 council
3 districts. To support these groups, Partnerships
4 hosts more than 35 workshops attended by 450
5 volunteers. Supports groups through community
6 visioning projects, provides graphic design
7 assistance, distributes thousands of dollars in small
8 capacity building grants and serves as a fiscal
9 sponsor for more than 50 groups. These resources give
10 volunteer park groups the tools and information they
11 need to transform public spaces into dynamic
12 community assets that strengthen the social fabric of
13 our neighborhoods. The vast majority of these
14 technical assistance resources are available because
15 of funding from the City Councils Parks Equity
16 Initiative. We thank the Council for making this work
17 possible and respectfully request that you continue
18 to support this work through the Parks Equity
19 Initiative in fiscal 19. In exchange, Partnerships
20 for Parks bring significant value to our City's green
21 spaces. Supporting and activating enormous volunteer
22 resources. As you know, although volunteer time is
23 technically donated...

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes.

2 HEATHER LUBOV: It still has an important
3 economic value. And it is that value that Partnership
4 for Parks helps unlock. By calculating the volunteer
5 hours spent during Its My Park Service Projects, and
6 the equivalent value of time spent planning programs
7 in neighborhood parks including movie nights or
8 family festivals. We estimate that volunteers are
9 contributing almost \$16 million worth of their own
10 time and effort to help support and improve their
11 local parks. Partnerships for Parks helps those
12 volunteers reach their full potential thanks to the
13 Councils Parks Equity Initiative. Thank you for the
14 opportunity to testify today and thank you for your
15 support for City Parks Foundation.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And just refresh
17 my memory, how much money do you get from the Parks
18 Initiative and from local members generally?

19 HEATHER LUBOV: We receive \$500 thousand
20 directly for our technical assistance support. And
21 then through Councilmember Initiatives we received
22 \$609 thousand and change.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So that's just
24 over \$1.1 million, but you're leveraging almost on a
25 16 to 1 basis which is really wonderful.

2 HEATHER LUBOV: Yeah.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And I've seen the
4 work that they've done in some of my Parks including
5 Cunningham so I really appreciate that. Thank you for
6 getting those figures to us. Mr. Schnall? I hope I
7 got that pronunciation right.

8 MICHAEL SCHNALL: Correct. Thank you. Good
9 afternoon. My name is Mike Schnall and I serve as
10 Vice President of Youth and Community relations at
11 New York Road Runners. As a former Council staffer
12 and Parky (sic) it's an honor to testify before the
13 Committee on Parks and Recreation on the FY 19
14 Preliminary Budget. New York Road Runners mission is
15 to help and inspire people through running. We
16 achieve our mission by creating running and fitness
17 opportunities, and programming for people of all ages
18 and ability. NYRR demonstrates its commitment to
19 keeping New York City's five boroughs healthy through
20 races, community events, youth initiatives, school
21 programs, and training resources that provide
22 hundreds of thousands of people each year with the
23 motivation, knowhow and opportunity to run for life.
24 We engage over 25,000 volunteers annually providing
25 free time, talent and energy to keep our events safe.

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2 And Parks and communities clean and beautiful. Our
3 free community running and walking initiative, NYRR
4 Open Run, is getting thousands of New Yorkers out
5 running and walking weekly in 13 local New York City
6 Parks in all five boroughs. With three more park
7 sites set to open very shortly. NYRR walks with over
8 2,300 seniors as part of our Striders Walking Program
9 and we serve as a resource and partner to public
10 officials, community boards, business improvement
11 districts, hospitals, community health organizations
12 and grass roots community groups. I'm sure you've
13 heard that New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell
14 Silver, sitting behind us, will be running the 2018
15 TCS New York City Marathon this coming November. I
16 hope that the New York City Council and this
17 Committee will join us in this annual celebration of
18 our great City, and our Parks and the five boroughs,
19 by cheering on the Commissioner on November 4th. For
20 fiscal year 2019, New York Road Runners especially
21 asks the New York City Council to consider a request
22 of \$75 thousand to support our free community running
23 programs, Open Runs that presently serves in 13 Parks
24 with three more on the way. With this 2019 request we
25 are hoping to continue to provide, at no cost, the

2 organized and supportive environment that helps our
3 weekly open run participants across New York City
4 take the steps necessary to make fitness and wellness
5 part of their daily life right in their own
6 neighborhood parks. Thank you for allowing me to
7 testify. I'm happy to take any questions. And thank
8 you for your support.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Just a quick
10 question. Your request for \$75 thousand. Are you
11 currently receiving funding from the Council?

12 MICHAEL SCHNALL: Last year we received
13 about \$90 thousand in total, spread across 11
14 different Councilmembers and their discretionary
15 budgets. But nothing on the order of central funding
16 requests in the past. The last time we received any
17 money was fiscal year 2017 and after that the Obesity
18 Initiative that we were funded under was cut.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Okay.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Barry?

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes. Go ahead?

22 UNIDENTIFIED: I was just thinking with
23 the Parks Capital Tracker, if the Commissioner is
24 going to run we can put a Commissioner Tracker on him
25 over the course of the 26 miles.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's assuming
3 he gets over the Verrazano Bridge, yes.

4 MICHAEL SCHNALL: Yeah, if you look at his
5 Fitbit progression, I introduced him to the folks at
6 Fitbit and they were shocked at how much of a
7 hardcore user he was. I think they had to go back and
8 recalibrate their software to accommodate him.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's always
10 good to see. I might have to put you up against the
11 Queens Library Director, Mr. Walcott who is, yeah
12 he's pretty good. Last person, and thank you Mr.
13 Schnall, Lynn Kelly, New Yorkers for Parks. Good to
14 see you again.

15 LYNN KELLY: Hi. Good afternoon, yes it's
16 nice to see you again.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I started the
18 day, I'm not quite ending the day with you.

19 LYNN KELLY: Well thank you for having me
20 again. And thank you to the Committee for the moment
21 to testify. I am the Executive Director of New
22 Yorkers for Parks. We are an independent advocacy
23 organization for over 100 years, advocating for parks
24 and open space in New York City. Our advocacy is
25 based on sound research and data, and community

2 input. Last year, with the collective feedback
3 gathered at our annual borough and City wide
4 meetings, we created the Public Realm Bill of Rights.
5 I've provided a copy to you today. This document has
6 become the bedrock of our advocacy work and simply
7 put, we believe that Parks are critical City
8 infrastructure and thus, should be maintained, funded
9 programmed and planned for accordingly. To that end,
10 we're very pleased to see the City has added 21 new
11 full time baseline positions for fiscal year 2019.
12 This will certainly help greatly with maintenance
13 staff and our Community Parks Initiative sites. We
14 believe fixed maintenance staff is really one of the
15 optimum staffing models when it's available. Provides
16 increased security within a Park, extra eyes and
17 frankly a familiar face to residents. In tandem with
18 these positions, we believe that baselining of \$9.6
19 million by the City to retain the 150 workers and
20 gardeners throughout the City is critical addition.
21 This is the fourth time in a row that my organization
22 is here, not just thanking the Council for the
23 replacement of these positions in a funding line, but
24 urging the administration again to make this job line
25 permanent.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Hear, hear.

3 LYNN KELLY: Creating a pipeline, exactly,
4 is clearly important. To that end, we actually
5 support a planned increase in hours and salaries for
6 PEP Officers, Parks Enforcement Patrol, and Urban
7 Park Rangers. We're not sure if you know, but they
8 create great paths for careers in the Parks
9 Department.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I do know. I know
11 that one of our former Commissioner and Mr. Benepe
12 and our Queens Commissioner Miss Lewandowski both
13 started together.

14 LYNN KELLY: moving along...

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes] that
16 was quite a class.

17 LYNN KELLY: Moving along, yes, and so we
18 really feel that creating our Urban Park Rangers and
19 creating a pipeline for Parks Department jobs is
20 really important. We are pleased to see the renewed
21 allocation of approximately \$2 and half million
22 committed towards tree care, tree pruning and stump
23 removal. Particularly in the wake of so many recent
24 storms. On the Capital sides, one of the strongest
25 statements the Parks Department has made is this

2 ongoing investment in Community Parks and Anchor
3 Parks Initiative and we continue to urge the Council
4 to support the Administration and this effort in
5 allocating money towards this. However, we do remain
6 concerned about the increasing time delays and
7 mounting aggravation that all sides are feeling with
8 respect to the Capital Projects Process. It's not
9 just the public, it's not just the Council. I would
10 say that the Parks Department themselves are also
11 frustrated. And I want to say, and respectfully
12 Councilmember Cohen, after listening to your comments
13 earlier, I think the Parks Department has really gone
14 a long way in trying to address a lot of the Capital
15 Projects process. But we would encourage the Council
16 to look very carefully with the same zeal and vigor
17 that you're looking at the Parks Department and their
18 Capital Process, you should also look at the things
19 that are outside of Parks control that contribute to
20 time delays. Such as the Law Department, MOCS, OMB
21 and frankly the procurement process. And we would
22 encourage you not just to look at it, but have a
23 dialogue about it as well.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I can tell you
25 that I have had conversations with Speaker Johnson

2 and he is gung-ho about holding hearings on these,
3 many of the issues that you raise. We realize that
4 many of the problems are well outside of the purview
5 of the Parks Department as I said before, before the
6 Commissioner was done testifying. Many of the things
7 we put in place to help ourselves are now hurting us.
8 So, with an eye to the future, I want to also thank
9 you, and Miss Lubov, we've met. And I thank you for
10 your input on these issues and I have, I'm still
11 meeting with people and getting their input, but
12 those initial round of meetings are coming to an end.
13 And then I'm going to decide what our next steps will
14 be and I hope that all of you will be involved
15 because it really is unfortunate, to be polite, how
16 long it takes us to get things done. And we have so
17 many different uses in our Parks, we could be here
18 all day just talking about one or two of them, but
19 it's just incredible. In my flagship park, Cunningham
20 Park, we have everything from bocce to mountain
21 biking and it's amazing. It really is amazing what
22 goes on in the New York City Parks Department. So, I
23 want to thank you for being here today and I look
24 forward to working with all of you going forward and

2 I will probably not be running in the marathon, but I
3 will think about it.

4 MICHAEL SCHNALL: You have an open run in
5 Cunningham so come one out.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Maybe. So I can
7 lose some weight.

8 LYNN KELLY: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
10 much. The next panel, Christina Taylor Friends of Van
11 Cortlandt Park home of the oldest municipal golf
12 course. I had to get golf in there somewhere today,
13 oldest golf course in the country. Karen Argenti and
14 Laura Spader, am I pronouncing that, Spalter, I'm
15 sorry. I believe that they're all from The Bronx,
16 correct?

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You all know this
19 gentleman?

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Very well.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. He's a good
22 guy. Miss Taylor if you could begin I would be very
23 happy to hear your testimony today.

24 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Thank you. Good
25 afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to testify

2 today. I'm Christina Taylor Executive Director for
3 the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park and I do need to
4 start by thanking our Councilman Andrew Cohen has
5 been very supportive of Van Cortlandt Park and all of
6 the parks in his district. We all know that New York
7 City Parks is underfunded. They have been for many,
8 many years and this needs to change. The Friends
9 would happy join you to urge the Mayor to increase
10 funding for New York City Parks. A few years ago, New
11 York City Parks approved a comprehensive master plan
12 for the first time in Van Cortlandt Parks history.
13 However, that plan will never be accomplished in the
14 20 years with the current rate in which projects are
15 funded and implemented. Currently in Van Cortlandt
16 Park we have several Capital Projects there in
17 critical parts of the master plan in the works that
18 are delayed for various reasons. Including
19 significant increases in cost since funding was
20 originally secured. We also have several projects
21 that are needed, but the estimates are so incredibly
22 high that finding money for them will be nearly
23 impossible. For example, we have a small wooden
24 bridge on the popular John Kieran Trail which is
25 shared with the golf course. Its' closed to

2 pedestrians for safety reasons. Parks has estimated
3 this to be a \$2.5 million Capital Project and that's
4 just ridiculous. A project like this should not cost
5 nearly this much or take three to five years to
6 implement. The Capital Process is broken. In addition
7 to increasing Parks budget, we need to improve the
8 system so our dollars are better spent. The Friends
9 are willing to work with you to make this happen. In
10 the meantime, for this upcoming fiscal year, we would
11 like to make the following requests. We need an
12 increase in Capital Funding. New York City Parks
13 needs a much larger Capital Budget to implement
14 infrastructure improvements as needed. Parks
15 shouldn't have to beg elected officials for funding
16 of basic infrastructure projects. They should have
17 their own dedicated Capital Budget to implement these
18 projects like every other City agency does. Elected
19 Officials should only have to provide support for
20 projects that are above and beyond a Parks basic
21 needs. Maintenance funding, we strongly believe the
22 New York City Parks is not funded at a level for the
23 agency to properly maintain and care for all its
24 Parks. Each year we see funding allocated for Capital
25 Projects, but we don't see an increase in maintenance

2 funding to keep these new facilities in good shape.

3 Instead, after a few years they fall into disrepair
4 and need a new Capital Funding to restore them. It

5 can be avoided with ongoing maintenance. The Budget

6 should allocate more money for dedicated maintenance

7 staff, PEP Officers and other staff for the Park. And

8 then specifically for our Park, I do have to say this

9 every time, Daylighting Tibbetts Brook. We need

10 funding for phase one of the project which involves

11 wetland restoration within Van Cortlandt Park to

12 begin decreasing the amount of brook water entering

13 the City's sewer system. Funding is also needed to

14 purchase the CSX property and implement phase two,

15 true daylighting. Daylighting Tibbetts Brook has been

16 a potential project for 20 years and its time to make

17 it happen. This project shouldn't only involve New

18 York City Parks, but we need New York City DEP to

19 participate as they will directly benefit from

20 Daylighting Tibbetts Brook. The Friends of Van

21 Cortlandt Park fully support New York City Parks in

22 its efforts to maintain and improve all Parks in New

23 York City. It's important to the future of our

24 borough that we fund our Parks. Thank you.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. And it
3 would be my pleasure, with Councilman Cohen and
4 yourself, to take a tour. I've toured the golf course
5 many times there but I know it's...

6 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: I'll show you the rest
7 of the Park.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's a very, no
9 mulligans. It's a very large park and I would love to
10 see it. I have some plans already, but...

11 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Sure.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We will have a
13 Bronx day or days as is necessary so I look forward
14 to seeing you there.

15 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: That you be great. We'd
16 love to have you there.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Miss Argenti?

18 KAREN ARGENTI: Hi. I'm going to speak in
19 general about Parks and Budget. Budgets are not just
20 numbers, good budgeting involves good planning and
21 managing. The idea of management by budget requires
22 identifying a policy looking for funds and balancing
23 the match. The City Council has the responsibility to
24 review the entire Budget, not just the Parks
25 Department. What do we want for our City? What would

2 make it a safe and happy place? Fully staffed and
3 funded Parks Programs and facilities. I have
4 researched very quickly a whole bunch of different
5 things that Parks are good for. They help increase
6 your health, your social connection. Aid in the
7 environment, they give you a positive impact on the
8 local economy. They take care of the storm water
9 collection, they reduce the heat island effect. They
10 are the center of your community. They help mental
11 health boost, they are a place for kids to be
12 outside. A place for physical activity, natural
13 systems. We could just go on. There is a great
14 webpage called Healthy Parks, Healthy People and they
15 talk about how open spaces and parks is associated
16 with perceived general health, reducing stress
17 levels. Reducing depression and more. People who use
18 public open spaces are three times more likely to
19 achieve recommended levels of physical activity than
20 those who do not use the spaces. Urban parks also
21 contribute to environmental benefits and obviously
22 those kinds of things would have to be paid for not
23 by Parks Department, through the general budget.
24 Parks also help create human and energy efficient
25 cities that can help slow global warming. Every tree

2 helps fight global warming and helps cool cities. In
3 the United States, an evaluation of the largest 85
4 cities in the country, about 57 million people, found
5 that the health savings from parks was an estimated
6 \$3 billion. The environmental savings are significant
7 as well. Trees and vegetation in urban parks often
8 lower costs. Natural solutions for addressing storm
9 water runoff and air pollution. In Philadelphia
10 alone, they save \$16 million as a result of storm
11 water management. Which by the way we're not doing in
12 our City. Then finally, this is a very nice quote
13 that I found, successful public places around the
14 world are successful not just because of the design,
15 but because of the management. That's not just
16 cutting the grass and picking up the garbage. The
17 bigger part of management is how to involve the
18 community in the Parks. We need to think to think of
19 Parks more as outdoor community centers where we need
20 to invest in and uses, and activities so they can
21 fulfill their potential. When we improve parks, we
22 really are improving quality of life. To sum up,
23 giving more money to Parks and in particular
24 maintenance and operations, can work towards lowering
25 costs in expense budget areas such as the

2 Administration of Justice, Public Health, Social
3 Services. You can do it, the City Council could do
4 that.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're working on
6 that. And I thank you for being here today to
7 encourage us. It's critical. Our Parks are so many
8 different things to so many different people. And
9 thank you for your testimony. Miss Spalter?

10 LAURA SPALTER: Thank you for this
11 opportunity to comment on the Parks Budget. I begin
12 my testimony with what I learned at last month's
13 Bronx Parks Speak up from guest speaker Charles
14 McKinney. Principle Urban Designer for New York City
15 Parks, from 2010 to 2016, he offered simple ways the
16 New York City Council and Mayoral offices could fix
17 the system to speed up projects, lower cost and avert
18 major Capital Projects. I have attached his bio and
19 speech aptly named, We Can Fix That. Here are some
20 suggestions. One, replace the \$400 million Capital
21 Budget that Parks forfeited in the 1990 budget
22 crisis. This was used to fund state of good repair
23 projects such as rooves, boilers, retaining walls and
24 playgrounds. They required commissioner approval and
25 not design commission approval. The department had

2 the funding to cover change orders without asking
3 elected officials to do it. Number two, bring back
4 the modest expense budget that funded dedicated in
5 house maintenance crews to avert large Capital
6 Projects. By way of example he used St. Nicholas Park
7 in Northern Manhattan, the stairs that were restored
8 in early 2000 are shifting due to the lack of masonry
9 pointing. Yet two people and a couple of helpers, to
10 point and reset, would avert deterioration resulting
11 in yet another expensive Capital Project. Three,
12 reinstate the requirement that all Capital Project
13 contractors obtain a completion bond. Changes have
14 made it possible for undercapitalized contractors to
15 take on projects and fail. Such as the skate park in
16 Van Cortlandt Park. Now the mess is left for Parks to
17 fix. To obtain OMB and corporation council approval,
18 rebid and register a new contractor with the
19 Comptroller and on and on delays. In addition, I have
20 submitted a report commissioned in 2015 by New
21 Yorkers for Parks done for members of the City
22 Council. It provides 15 clear, actionable steps to
23 improve the on time and on budget performance of DPRs
24 Capital Project. We all agree with the premise that
25 steps must be taken to reduce bureaucracy and improve

2 the on time and cost of Park Capital Projects.

3 However, it is shocking that Resolution 0038218 to
4 amend the City Charter in order to create the Parks
5 Construction Authority has been introduced in the
6 Council without exploring better alternatives.

7 Clearly there are far better, less expensive
8 alternatives to creating a new, totally unaccountable
9 public benefit corporation. I urge you to explore all
10 of them. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for
12 your testimony. I'm going to be looking at that
13 resolution. I'm not sure it's a bad idea, I'm not
14 sure it's a good idea, but we need to do something.
15 And we will be holding hearings and I invite you all
16 to come back at that time to discuss the Capital
17 Budget.

18 LAURA SPALTER: Excellent.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We will be happy
20 to hear any suggestions you may have. I thank you for
21 your testimony and I'm going to call the next panel.
22 We have Loretta Watson friends of Mosholu Parkland.
23 Paulette Spencer, The Bronx Community Health Network
24 and Brett Dakin, Jacob Schiff Playground. Miss
25 Watson?

2 LORETTA WATSON: Good afternoon.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon.

4 LORETTA WATSON: [inaudible 02:53:21-
5 02:54:24] cannot make trails safer to walk on. We
6 cannot put up a yellow flashing light for mid
7 crossing. We cannot fix park sidewalk or broken
8 pathways. We cannot control the flooding. As a
9 volunteer friends group, we can share with you why we
10 need an increase in Parks funding. We can share with
11 you, our frustration. We can share with you that our
12 community has been rezoned so that affordable housing
13 can be developed. And guess what, they have built,
14 keep building, and will continue to build. We can
15 share with you that we are here asking for that
16 increase in funding so that parkland like ours
17 continue to serve those that are already here and
18 those that are coming. I leave you today with the
19 folder handout, the left side of the folder being the
20 issues of Mosholu Parkland and the right side are all
21 the great presented ideas to the public shared in the
22 many community meetings. But how can we vote on
23 something when there is no money for it. So I thank
24 you for allowing me to testify and...

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposes]

3 Thank you for your testimony. It is important. Every
4 voice that we have and obviously the Friends group is
5 a large voice, and important and it does not go
6 unheard. I have the honor of being Chair of this
7 Parks Committee, but I can assure you that every
8 single member of the Council is very interested in
9 what goes on in not only their individual parks, but
10 parks throughout the City of New York so thank you
11 for being with us today.

12 LORETTA WATSON: Yes. Okay, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Miss Spencer?

14 PAULETTE SPENCER: Good afternoon. My name
15 is Paulette Spencer. I am the Community Engagement
16 and Policy Analyst for The Bronx Community Health
17 Network. Which is a federally funded health center
18 and nonprofit community based organization that
19 assures access to quality, affordable, primary
20 preventive medical care and support for social
21 services to residents regardless of their ability to
22 pay or immigration status. My program, which is
23 called The Bronx Racial and Ethnic Approaches to
24 Community Health, CHAPS, is funded by the Center for
25 Disease Control and Prevention. REACH's goal is to

2 reduce obesity in communities like the Northeast
3 Bronx where obesity rates are disproportionately high
4 through initiatives supporting health nutrition and
5 increased physical activity. Over the past there
6 years our Bronx REACH CHAPS 34 member coalition of
7 individual, local community groups and Parks Friends
8 organizations and agencies including the New York
9 City Parks Department, policy makers, all committed
10 to making our parks safe, welcoming and accessible
11 for community use. Through walking, running and other
12 fitness services in seven central and Northeast Bronx
13 Parks. To date, our coalition and community led parks
14 based activities have become available to more than
15 300,000 community residents. One coalition partner,
16 New Yorkers for Parks, created a set of seven park
17 visitor guides in both English and Spanish that have
18 been widely distributed to community residents. These
19 guides have also received high praise from the CDC.
20 New York District Parks has also created a research
21 tool called Soul (sp?) Park, that measures park usage
22 and whose data can be used to enhance parks
23 programming. And so therefore with enhance Parks
24 Programming and increased access to parks, our
25 coalition can eventually measure the long term change

2 in the health statistics in the surrounding
3 communities. And examine the extent to which park
4 usage and improved access to parks are related to
5 improving a community's health. We would appreciate
6 learning how BCHN and the City Council Committee can
7 work together to support and sustain expansion of
8 this work. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you so
10 much for your work. Mr. Dakin? I hope I'm pronouncing
11 your name correctly.

12 BRETT DAKIN: That's right, thanks. Good
13 afternoon Chairman and members of the New York City
14 Council Committee on Parks and Recreation. I'm Brett
15 Dakin, a volunteer with the Jacob Schiff Playground
16 Neighborhood Association. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to speak today. The association is a
18 group of volunteers supporting Jacob Schiff
19 Playground. A park of about four acres in Hamilton
20 Heights Manhattan. We are located in district 7 and
21 we thank Councilmember Mark Levine for his support
22 for our efforts to improve our park and enhance the
23 quality of life in the neighborhood. We work closely
24 with the Department of Parks and Recreation and
25 Partnerships for Parks to help bring sorely needed

2 maintenance, horticulture and programming to the
3 playground and the surrounding blocks. The last
4 Capital Investment of any kind in our park occurred
5 nearly 20 years ago. We strongly support the Parks
6 Equity Initiative. We have benefitted from the City
7 Parks Foundations programming in smaller neighborhood
8 parks like ours, as well as its technical assistance
9 through Partnerships for Parks. Increased funding for
10 these efforts is required to help historically
11 underserved parks like ours. We also strongly support
12 the Community Parks Initiative or CPI. While the City
13 Parks System may have improved in recent years, these
14 improvements are yet to be felt equally throughout
15 the City. As you know, parks in low and moderate
16 income neighborhoods like ours, are generally less
17 well maintained than parks in wealthier
18 neighborhoods. CPI funds are needed to help parks
19 like ours that have seen limited Capital Investment
20 and maintenance over the past 20 years. As supporters
21 of Jacob Schiff Playground, a park that last saw
22 Capital Investment in the year 2000, we strongly
23 support CPI and efforts to achieve equity across all
24 of the City's Parks. Thank you so much for your work
25 in support of our parks and for your attention today.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
3 much for testifying. Every park is important to us
4 and I appreciate your efforts for the people that Use
5 Jacob Schiff Playground. Thank you very much.

6 Drumroll, we have our last panel and that is Rosalind
7 Barbour, am I pronouncing it correctly? Barbour? Oh
8 please come up, from the Public Theater. We have
9 Daisy Ben who is the President of Local 1501 District
10 Council 37.

11 DILSEY BEN: It's Dilsey (sp?).

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Dilsey, I'm
13 sorry. I should have taken my glasses off earlier.
14 And Joe Puleo who is the President of Local 983 if
15 District Council 37. The representative of the Public
16 Theater, before I mangle your name again, why don't
17 you start.

18 ROSALIND BARBOUR: Hi. I'm Rosalind
19 Barbour. I'm the Administrative Chief of Staff at the
20 Public Theater. Thank you so much to Councilmember
21 Grodenchik and Councilmember Gibson, sorry, thank
22 you, for holding today's hearing. Conceived nearly 60
23 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit
24 theaters, the Public engages in one of the largest
25 and most diverse audiences in New York City in a

2 variety of venues. Including the Delacorte Theater
3 and its landmark downtown home which houses five
4 theaters and Joe's Pub. Last year through all of our
5 programs we offered more than 1,600 performances and
6 welcomed over 350,000 people. Many of whom acquired
7 tickets through our free and low cost ticket
8 initiatives including free Shakespeare in the Park
9 access through the Line and Central Park, our online
10 lottery and distribution sites in all five boroughs.
11 As well as our free mobile unit performances in all
12 five boroughs and at The Public, IDNYC and Free First
13 previews. Since 1962 the Delacorte Theater, a City
14 owned structure in Central Park has been home to free
15 Shakespeare in the Park. The Public Theater is very
16 proud to steward this facility through a license
17 agreement with the Parks Department which was renewed
18 in 2013. Since 1962 over 5 million people have
19 attended performances for free at the Delacorte
20 Theater. Each year we welcome about 100,000 attendees
21 and in 2017 we welcomed audience members from every
22 zip code in New York City. Productions have ranged
23 from Shakespeare to a revival of Hair The American
24 Love Rock Musical. Each summer we produce two, five
25 week productions and a 200 person public works civic

2 pageant with community participants performing an
3 original musical adaption of Shakespeare. Access and
4 equity are key values of free Shakespeare in the Park
5 and in each year we partner across the City with
6 borough leaders, community centers, libraries and
7 service organizations to ensure we offer free tickets
8 as broadly, diversely and equitably throughout the
9 City as possible. This year we are seeking City
10 Council funding to support a Capital Request to
11 address the Delacorte Theaters crumbling
12 infrastructure and many years of deferred
13 maintenance. The facility is in need of significant
14 renovations in order to serve the next generation of
15 New Yorkers and continue to provide the highest
16 quality cultural experiences for free to the public.
17 Which is why we've proposed a public/private
18 partnership to address the facilities Capital Needs.
19 In addition to our work in Central Park, our mobile
20 unit towards Shakespearean productions for
21 underserved audiences throughout the New York City's
22 five boroughs, twice per year. In all, we visit 18 to
23 20 venues per tour including five New York City parks
24 venues, 7 correctional facilities, two facilities
25 that provide services for the homeless and three

2 community based organizations with whom we partner
3 through our public works program. We are proud to
4 partner with the New York City Department of Parks
5 and Recreation in selecting our performance sites and
6 partner organizations. This spring we are bringing
7 our mobile unit production of Henry V to five New
8 York City parks venues. Including the Roy Wilkins
9 Recreation Center, Brownsville Recreation Center, The
10 Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center and Pelham
11 Fritz Recreation Center as well as the Faber field
12 house. We are particularly excited that in this
13 production, Henry will be played by a woman of color,
14 Zenzi (sp?) Williams. Thank you so much for your time
15 and for letting us talk a little bit about how much
16 we enjoy partnering with the Parks Department and
17 serving all five boroughs.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know you've told
19 me, I'm scared to ask how much it's going to cost to
20 rebuild the Delacorte Theater but I...

21 ROSALIND BARBOUR: So we are still in the
22 process of selecting an architect and I should
23 mention that the Commissioners, Commissioner Silver
24 and Commissioner Finkelparl have decided to take on
25 the project jointly and have it go through the DCLA,

2 CCG funding process. But we expect that the project
3 may cost as much as \$100 million given the site of
4 the project being in Manhattan and in Central Park.
5 It's an expensive project, but the building hasn't
6 seen a significant renovation since 1962 and it was
7 built then for about \$370 thousand. So we expect it
8 was not intended to last 55 years without any
9 significant Capital Investment and we expect that
10 this renovation will set us up for the next 50 years
11 of New Yorkers to enjoy it.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I've been in
13 Roman amphitheaters in Egypt and Israel and other
14 parts of the world. They lasted 2,000 years and I'm
15 sure they got their monies worth.

16 ROSALIND BARBOUR: Yes, that's pretty
17 good.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well I, that's a
19 lot of money, but this is New York.

20 ROSALIND BARBOUR: And I think we
21 recognize that which is why we've offered to make
22 this a public/private partnership despite the fact
23 that we operate it through a license agreement with
24 the City.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: My understanding
3 is that you're not asking the City for the whole \$100
4 million?

5 ROSALIND BARBOUR: Correct. We are
6 actually asking for less than half.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Less than half.

8 ROSALIND BARBOUR: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: All right. I
10 thank you for your testimony.

11 ROSALIND BARBOUR: Sure.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And look forward
13 to working with you.

14 ROSALING BARBOUR: Yeah, you too.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think the next
16 two people don't need \$100 million, but that remains
17 to be seen. Miss Ben, President of local 1505 if
18 you'd...

19 DILSY BEN: Hi. Good afternoon.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: You guys are the workforce.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes. A good way
22 to end the program.

23 DILSY BEN: Good afternoon Mr. Chairman
24 and fellow parks Committee Members. My name is Dilsy
25 Ben I'm the President of Local 1505. Representing

2 City Park workers in the New York City Parks and
3 Recreation Department. My members work in all five
4 boroughs conducting maintenance and operation in all
5 the City parks. I want to start out by thanking the
6 Council for additional funding in the fiscal year
7 2018 for the Parks Department. This funding was used
8 to maintain the City funded lines for 100 City Park
9 workers and 50 gardeners. Parks has over 3,900 acres
10 of land, meaning that one gardener is responsible for
11 maintaining an average of 254 acres of parkland. The
12 Department of Parks and Recreation is woefully
13 underfunded and we request your support in making our
14 communities and those underserved parks in our
15 communities more beautiful. Since the 2018,
16 additional funding has not been baselined for fiscal
17 year 19. I am urging the Council to restore and
18 increase the funding. If this funding is not restored
19 these workers will be laid off resulting in not
20 having enough workers in the City Park workers and
21 gardener titles to perform the duties I stated above.
22 Furthermore, the maintenance and upkeep of the Park
23 will suffer, leading to blight and neighborhood
24 decay. As the minimum wage in the New York City State
25 increases to \$15 an hour this year and my members

2 make \$15.48 to start. It's becoming increasingly
3 difficult to live in the City. The City must take a
4 long hard, wholesome look at how it can take better
5 care of this workforce. As we approach the start of
6 the spring season in the next several weeks, there is
7 a lot of work to be done. To fit our parks for the
8 thousands of New Yorkers who will be taking strolls
9 and enjoying the warmer weather in the Parks. The
10 beautification of Parks is very important to all New
11 Yorkers as well as the thousands of tourist who visit
12 these areas each year. Once again, I'm urging the
13 Council to restore the additional funding in fiscal
14 year 19 for the City Park Workers and the Garden
15 Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
16 before your today and I will be happy to take any
17 questions you may have.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to thank
19 you for being here today and I certainly, as far as
20 I'm concerned, when it comes to the expense budget,
21 this is our top priority for the Council that we
22 restore funding for these 150 workers. And they're
23 certainly not paid enough for sure and I know the
24 work that they do. I see them out there every day. I
25 have large parks near my house, the Depot for

2 Cunningham Park is less than a mile away from my
3 home.

4 DILSEY BEN: Yeah, it's a very big park.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I pass it quite
6 often and I know the work that your members do and
7 how well they performed in the recent emergency that
8 we had in our parks when many, many trees came down.
9 Some of which will never be cut up because they're in
10 the forever wild sections, but we suffered greatly in
11 Queens, especially in my district so thank you for
12 your work. And with that, we have our last testifier
13 of the day. Mr. Puleo who is the President of Local
14 983.

15 JOE PULEO: Correct. Good afternoon
16 Chairmen Grodenchik. Am I pronouncing it correctly?
17 Grodenchik. Congratulations by the way...

18 [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHI: The spell it
20 correctly on my paycheck...

21 [cross-talk]

22 JOSEPH PULEO: And congratulations on your
23 new position. And fellow Park Committee members. My
24 name is Joseph Puleo I am the President of Local 983
25 representing Urban Park Rangers and Associate Urban

2 Park Rangers. Collectively referred to as PEP
3 Officers. In addition I also represent City Seasonal
4 aides and associate park service workers who are
5 responsible for providing skilled work and
6 supervising City Park workers and City seasonal aides
7 within New York City's Parks and Recreation. My
8 members work in all five boroughs conducting
9 enforcement and maintaining in all New York City
10 Parks, playgrounds, beaches and pools. I want to
11 start off by thanking the City Council for the
12 additional funding in FY 2018 for the Parks
13 Department. This funding was used to maintain the CSA
14 PEP funding lines and increase in parks security.
15 This allowed for additional allocation of Parks
16 Police and increase activity in New York City in over
17 39,000 acres of parkland. The Department of Parks and
18 Recreation has been woefully underfunded as it comes
19 to Parks Enforcement. With only around 290 Park
20 Officers. And APR, and indeed our shift is
21 responsible for securing and maintaining safety for
22 45 acres of parkland. We need additional funding to
23 increase man power of PEP Officers so we can maintain
24 our safety in Parks like Flushing Meadow Park,
25 Juniper Valley, Forest Hills and others throughout

2 the City of New York. Local 983 requests our support
3 in making our communities and those underserved parks
4 in our communities safe and beautiful by providing
5 adequate funding for our CSA, APSW, and PEP lines. I
6 am urging City Council to restore and increase
7 funding by adding new lines in our Park Enforcement
8 Officers, CSAs and continue to provide funding
9 necessary to reduce inequity in our parks resources
10 in all five boroughs as it comes to both security and
11 maintenance. As we approach the start of spring in
12 the next several weeks, there is a lot of work to be
13 done to prepare for parks for thousands of New
14 Yorkers. And actually I think its millions that will
15 be taking strolls and enjoying the warmer weather in
16 parks. The beautification of parks in important to
17 all New Yorkers as well as the thousands, I say
18 millions, of tourists who visit these areas. Once
19 again, I am urging City Council to look seriously
20 into increasing funding so that we can continue to
21 maintain security for our residents and for those who
22 visit our fair City. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 testify before you today. And I will be happy to
24 answer any questions that you have.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: The answer is
3 probably 100 million people. I don't know what the
4 real answer is, but in Central Park alone we have 40
5 million visitors.

6 JOSEPH PULEO: Yeah. I just want to
7 further state that I think we're on the right track.
8 I think this administration has been doing the right
9 thing. I just feel that we haven't met our goals yet.
10 At one time, for example, in the early 90s we had 450
11 PEP Officers. We're not quite there yet, but we're up
12 to almost 300. Those numbers obviously have to
13 increase if you want provide the level of safety that
14 people are required, at minimum. We need more City
15 Seasonal Aides, a lot of them come through the
16 Welfare to Work program. We want to see that they get
17 real jobs and not go through the cycle again. Go back
18 on Welfare and go through the program. So
19 respectfully, we need hundreds of those and we need
20 Urban Park Rangers like we once had and teach
21 children about the ecology in parks. A lot of what
22 they do is preventive. It's hard to measure what they
23 do, but ultimately they make the parks a pleasurable
24 place and they respect others that are in the parks.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, after we
3 wrestle the Capital thing to the ground, my next
4 number one priority, so I have two number one
5 priorities if you can have that, is to increase
6 funding overall for our parks. And there was a time,
7 a long time ago, when the funding for Parks was
8 closer to 1% of the City budget. If that were true
9 today it would be about \$880 million which would be a
10 very, very substantial increase in Parks funding. We
11 probably won't get to that point any time soon to be
12 quite blunt, but we could ramp things up over the
13 years. It takes time. Even if I wrote a check today
14 for \$100 million it would take time to hire people
15 and to do the things that we need to do because we
16 want to do them correctly. But that will continue to
17 be my goal over the next four years as Parks Chair. I
18 know Miss Gibson and all of my colleagues share that
19 goal because we know that our constituents, ourselves
20 included, we love our Parks. I'm in them all the
21 time. I'm a user and we just love them. There's a
22 focus on Parks more than anything else because
23 probably, along with our libraries, although I'll say
24 this, they're sexier than our libraries, and because
25 they have more uses. There's no question. And they

2 mean different things to different people and it's
3 somebody who might be 90 plays bocce every day when
4 its warm enough and even when it's not warm enough he
5 goes to his local park. I can see those guys in
6 Juniper Valley Park or in Moore Park, or Corona or in
7 Cunningham Park or in so many other Parks in the City
8 of New York. I can see the young kids running around
9 in the spray showers. I can remember my youth playing
10 baseball, and softball, and football and now it's so
11 many different things. And now I have to play golf
12 because I'm old. But I thank you for your work. I
13 thank you for testifying today. And I think everybody
14 who attending this hearing. Miss Gibson, anything
15 else.

16 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: No, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. So with
18 that I...

19 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: [interposes] Thank
20 you all for coming. And I do want to take the
21 opportunity since she's still here, to acknowledge
22 The Bronx Parks Commissioner thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: she got a lot of
24 shout outs today.

2 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you so much.
3 You got a lot of kudos. And really to the workforce.
4 You are the ones that maintain and keep our Parks
5 going and you are the bread and butter of our Parks.
6 And we have to do more work to support the workforce
7 there so I thank you all. Thank you all for coming
8 today.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you to my
11 Chair for convening today's hearing. And we look
12 forward to working with all of you as we get to the
13 Executive budget. Thank you.

14 COLLECTIVE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: With that, we are
16 adjourned.

17 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH SUBCOMMITTEE
ON CAPITAL BUDGET

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH SUBCOMMITTEE
ON CAPITAL BUDGET 180

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COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION WITH SUBCOMMITTEE
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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 30, 2018