

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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October 27, 2021  
Start: 11:30 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 3

B E F O R E: Robert F. Holden  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Robert F. Holden  
Brad S. Lander  
Eric A. Ulrich  
Paul Vallone  
Kalman Yeger  
Peter A. Koo  
Daniel Dromm

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

Joseph Morrisroe  
Executive Director  
Department of Information Technology and  
Telecommunications

Noel Hidalgo

1

2

SERGEANT AT ARMS: PC recording good.

3

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Cloud started.

4

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Backup is rolling.

5

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and

6

welcome to today's remote New York City Council

7

hearing of the Committee on Technology. At this time

8

would council staff please turn on their video.

9

Please place electronic devices on vibrant or silent.

10

If you wish to submit testimony you may do so at

11

testimony@council.nyc.gov. That is

12

testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. Chair, we are

13

ready to begin.

14

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you [gavel].

15

Good morning. I am Council Member Robert Holden,

16

chair of the New York City Council's Committee on

17

Technology. And I want to welcome you all, ah, ah,

18

to our hearing this morning. New York City's 311

19

service, otherwise known as NYC 311, is a vital

20

resource for New Yorkers. 311 is where many

21

residents form a critical link with our city

22

government, and of course 311 was first launched in

23

2003 as a call center, ah, built on technology from

24

2002. It is, it is one of the first 311 systems and

25

is the largest in the nation. Since its inception it

1 has evolved to provide services through text  
2 messages, mobile applications, and even social media.  
3 We are very proud of its progress, especially under  
4 DoITT commissioner, Jessie Tisch. However, the  
5 service, especially in its mobile application, is far  
6 from perfect. Ah, many service and press types still  
7 do not have the option to attach, ah, photos and  
8 videos, a feature that has long been present in  
9 [inaudible] and applications in other cities, like  
10 San Francisco and Chicago. Moreover, the process of  
11 submitting service requests is often overly long and  
12 complicated. In some instances, submitting a service  
13 request itself is impossible, as the 311 app  
14 redirects to its own web page or any agency web page  
15 that does not accept service requests due to  
16 technical problems, among other issues. And we're  
17 going to get into that today. There are still  
18 difficulties with geolocation, ah, that needs to be  
19 addressed. Ah, beyond accuracy, people may not their  
20 exact address location or their problem may occur  
21 within a few miles' radius with no specific address.  
22 So in those circumstances New Yorkers are left with  
23 either abandoning their attempts to submit a service  
24 request or providing inaccurate information. Ah, the  
25

1 City Council recently passed my legislation, Intro  
2 1755 of 2019, ah, now known as Local Law 66 of 2021,  
3 to improve the location accuracy of the 311 intake  
4 map. I look forward to working with Commissioner  
5 Tisch to enhance this aspect of the 311 system and  
6 many others. To improve the function of 311 service,  
7 the following bills are being considered today.

8 Intro 101, sponsored by, ah, my colleague, Council  
9 Member Koo, would require 311 to accept image and  
10 video data during the intake of certain service  
11 requests or complaints and then supply that data to  
12 the relevant agencies for use by their appropriate,  
13 ah, by their appropriate persons. Um, Intro 2303,  
14 sponsored by my good friend, Council Member Dromm,  
15 would require DoITT to update and, ah, the complaint  
16 types, notify its call takers of such complaint  
17 types, and semiannually report on the updating of the  
18 311 complaint types to the mayor and speaker of the  
19 City Council. And finally, two bills that I  
20 sponsored, Intros 2077 and 1356. Ah, Intro 2077  
21 would require 311 to provide mobile app and website  
22 users the ability to submit a request or a complaint,  
23 ah, in no more than four steps. Right now, sometimes  
24 it gets quite, you know, you know, there's so many  
25

1 steps that people get frustrated. Ah, Intro 1356  
2 would require the DoITT, would require DoITT to  
3 create a new complaint function on 311's platform to  
4 report tow trucks tow trucks illegally towing  
5 vehicles, and that's a problem that we've had in the  
6 city for quite some time. 311 has been and continues  
7 to be a valuable, crucial touch point between New  
8 York City and its residents. We look forward to  
9 discussing the benefits and concerns surrounding 311  
10 and anticipate valuable testimonies from the  
11 administration, experts, and community advocates, ah,  
12 on this important issue. I'd like to recommend, ah,  
13 I'd like to recognize, sorry. I'd like to recognize,  
14 ah, committee members, um, Council Member Vallone,  
15 and we also have with us, like I said before, Peter  
16 Koo, um, and Danny Dromm. Peter Koo would like to  
17 make a statement about his bill now and then followed  
18 by Council Member Dromm. Ah, Council Member Koo?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Hello [inaudible]  
21 good morning. Thank you, Chair Holden. Ah, hello  
22 everyone. I'm City Council Member Peter Koo. I'm  
23 gonna talk about the bill, ah, being introduced, um,  
24 a few years ago. Ah, so when reporting complaints  
25 through the 311 website there should always be an

1  
2 option to submit pictures or videos in the  
3 [inaudible] category. Thankfully, since introduction  
4 311 has increased the number of complaint categories,  
5 they accept videos and files. But we should codify  
6 this service into law so that the entire system is  
7 capable of receiving and storing image and video  
8 files. We should also ensure that both audio and  
9 video files are able to be accepted across all 311  
10 platforms, including mobile apps. By making this  
11 upload feature standard across the entire system, it  
12 will streamline the complaint process and give  
13 agencies visual aids to help them more effectively  
14 and efficiently address response to the complaint.  
15 This is the digital age and the picture is worth a  
16 thousand words. Codifying this service will also  
17 have the added benefit of allowing limited English  
18 speakers submit complaints without worry about their  
19 translation, which is not always accurate. Thank  
20 you, Chair Holden. And thank you, Commissioner.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council  
22 Member Koo, for your hard work on technology issues  
23 in this, ah, council and the city. And, ah, I want  
24 to turn it over to Council Member Danny Dromm for a  
25 statement on his bill.

1                   COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very  
2 much, Chair Holden, and thank you for hearing this  
3 legislation today. 311, the city's clearinghouse for  
4 complaints, among other functions, can be a wonderful  
5 tool, but only if it is regularly updated. Over the  
6 past 12 years I have seen the council pass much  
7 legislation, including my own. Many of these bills  
8 create new complaint categories and various agencies.  
9 However, 311 is not always updated to reflect such  
10 service requests. When my legislation requiring all  
11 gender signage on single-occupancy rest rooms was  
12 enacted in 2016 I was thrilled. This seemed like an  
13 easy way for the city to be responsive to  
14 transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming New  
15 Yorkers, among others. However, it has become clear  
16 that many establishments are not complying, despite  
17 the minimal involved. Even after my office launched  
18 our own outreach campaign to businesses in my  
19 district, many have refused to comply. When  
20 individuals, organizations, and my office tried to  
21 submit our complaints via phone, app, and website, we  
22 found that such complaints could not be taken. The  
23 311 system had not been updated, even well after the  
24 law's enactment. After much effort, I was able to  
25



1 convince the Department of Buildings to work with the  
2 Department of Information Technology and  
3 Telecommunications to update 311. Having 311  
4 complaint numbers was critical to discovering that,  
5 that in fact DOB was lax in enforcing the law,  
6 prompting the passage of another bill to address this  
7 unfortunate situation. The bill being heard today,  
8 Intro 2303, would require DoITT to update complaint  
9 types in the 311 system by the effective date of a  
10 local law that involves a request for service and the  
11 report on such updates. New Yorkers need to know  
12 that their government is responsive. 311 is helpful  
13 to routing complaints to the right agency, but also  
14 is a wonderful data tool to help policymakers keep  
15 track of concerns, but only if the system is updated  
16 to reflect changes in the law. Thank you again,  
17 Chair Holden, for hearing this bill. I appreciate  
18 all of your efforts to make technology work for all  
19 New Yorkers. Thank you again.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And, ah, thank you,  
22 Council Member Dromm, for your statement. And now  
23 I'll turn it over to our committee counsel, Irene  
24 Byhovsky, to go over some procedural items.

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 10

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair

3 Holden. I'm Irene Byhovsky, the, the counsel to the

4 Committee on Technology, and I will be moderating

5 this hearing today. Before we begin, I would like to

6 remind everyone that you will be on mute until you

7 are called on testify. After you are called on I

8 will, will be, you will be unmuted by the host.

9 Please listen for your name to be called as I

10 announce the panelists. We will first be hearing

11 testimony from the administration, followed by

12 testimony from members of the public. During the

13 hearing if council members would like to ask

14 questions, please use the Zoom hand raise function

15 and I will call on you. We will be limiting council

16 member questions to five minutes, which includes both

17 questions and answers. All public testimony will

18 also be limited to five minutes. After I call your

19 name, please wait for a brief moment for the Sergeant

20 at Arms to announce that you may begin before

21 starting your testimony. I will now call

22 representatives of the administration to testify. We

23 will be hearing testimony from the Commissioner of

24 the Department of Information Technology and

25 Telecommunications, Jessica Tisch. At this time I

1 will administer the affirmation. Commissioner,  
2 please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell  
3 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but, but the  
4 truth before this committee and to respond honestly  
5 to council member questions?  
6

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I do, Irene.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you,  
9 commissioner. You may begin when ready.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you, Irene.

11 Good afternoon Chair Holden and members of the City  
12 Council Committee on Technology. My name is Jessica  
13 Tisch and I am the commissioner of the Department of  
14 Information Technology and Telecommunications, also  
15 known as DoITT, and New York City's chief information  
16 officer. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss  
17 our work on 311 and the legislation on the  
18 committee's docket today. As I have stated to the  
19 committee earlier this year, I have really enjoyed  
20 leading 311 over the past year plus, because the call  
21 center representatives who work there are so  
22 committed to serving New Yorkers. To give you an  
23 idea of the scope of the operation, 311 services are  
24 available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365  
25 days a year. It is the one-stop-shop for fast and

1  
2 easy access to government services and information  
3 via fully staffed call center, even during a  
4 pandemic, web portal, mobile application, social  
5 media, text messaging, and video relay service. The  
6 311 staff has done extraordinary work through the  
7 year and throughout this pandemic. By the end of  
8 2020 311 handled a record 23.5 million calls, which  
9 was highest volume in 311's history. That's the  
10 equivalent of almost three calls for every New  
11 Yorker. The increased volume was driven in part by  
12 COVID-related inquiries, including vaccines,  
13 reopening, and meals assistance. Higher demand has  
14 not slowed us down. We have handled over 50 million  
15 calls year to date, 2021, which is an average of  
16 approximately 52,000 calls a day. Even with this  
17 volume, we are averaging 28 second wait times during  
18 peak hours and 10 second wait times at off peak.  
19 This excellent performance was supported by recent  
20 enhancements to the 311 system, many of which had  
21 been driven by the council. As super users of the  
22 platform you provide invaluable feedback. I want to  
23 continue to work with you to make 311 the best it can  
24 be. With that, I will walk through each of today's  
25 introductions. Intro 0101 of 2018, sponsored by

1 Council Member Koo, would require 311 to accept image  
2 and video data during the intake of service requests.

3 I am pleased to report that over the past year we  
4 have made great strides in enabling image and video  
5 submission for 311 service requests, including  
6 blocked driveways, park maintenance, illegal parking  
7 activity, um, dirty sidewalks, and building graffiti.

8 To date we have pictures and videos enable for over  
9 50% of all service requests, and that is largely due  
10 to the advocacy of Council Member Koo and Chair

11 Holden. There are some notable exceptions, which I'd  
12 like to walk you through today, ah, because I believe

13 there are some valid reasons why certain service  
14 request types do not accept picture messages. For

15 instance, the Department of Finance does not accept  
16 photo and video attachments because the inquiries

17 that they handle typically relate to payment issues  
18 or rent exemption programs, where pictures just

19 wouldn't be applicable. HRA does not support photo  
20 or video messaging for service requests related to

21 EBT card replacements, because these pictures would  
22 show personal information that would be inappropriate  
23 for 311 to collect. And the Department of Homeless

24 Services, for example, has privacy concerns with the  
25

1 public submitting photos associated with service  
2 requests for homeless persons in need of assistance.  
3 I am pleased to report that the Department of Health  
4 and Mental Hygiene just notified us as we were  
5 preparing for this hearing that they will be  
6 accepting photo and video attachments on some of  
7 their service requests, where useful and appropriate,  
8 for things like rodent complaints and unsanitary  
9 animals. We are aiming to enable that functionality  
10 for them, by the end of the year certainly. The  
11 point is, we have aggressively enabled photo and  
12 video submissions on all service request types where  
13 the functionality would be both useful and  
14 appropriately. Intro 1356 of 2019, sponsored by Chair  
15 Holden, would require DoITT to create a new service  
16 request category to report tow trucks illegally  
17 towing vehicles immobilized due to an accident.  
18 Here, too, I am pleased to report that 311 currently  
19 accepts complaints about tow truck companies and  
20 these complaints are addressed by the Department of  
21 Consumer and Worker Protection. I'd like to hear  
22 more from the chair about the open issues that this  
23 legislation aims to solve so that we may work in  
24 partnership with you, Chair Holden, and DCWP to  
25

1 address your feedback. If there is a way for us to  
2 make these complaints easier to file, that is  
3 something I definitely want to explore. Intro 2077  
4 of 2020, which is Chair Holden's other bill on the  
5 docket today, would require that the 311 system allow  
6 mobile or website users to submit a service request  
7 in no more than four steps. Today all service  
8 requests taken in the 311 system itself following a  
9 four-step process or less, format - what, where, who,  
10 and review. The issue arises when an agency has a  
11 service request that is not taken in the 311 system  
12 itself, but in an agency's system of record. These  
13 service requests do not always follow the standard  
14 311 four-step process. A good example of a service  
15 type that doesn't follow the standard four-step  
16 process is Notify NYC registration, which  
17 understandably requires user access setup. The  
18 agencies with the bulk of nonstandard service request  
19 types are the Department of Transportation and the  
20 Department of Finance. The reason is generally that  
21 taking complaints through their source systems  
22 promotes tighter integration of these complaints with  
23 their operation. For DOT, for example, 311 takes  
24 service requests on traffic or pedestrian signals  
25

1 through DOT's signaling system. And for DOF, 311  
2 takes service requests for property tax complaints  
3 through DOF's property tax system. If there are  
4 specific complaint types that require more than four  
5 steps I would be happy to take that back to our team  
6 to discuss with the agency in charge of addressing  
7 those service requests. Finally, Intro 2303 of 2021,  
8 sponsored by Council Member Dromm, would require  
9 DoITT to add a new complaint type to 311 by the new  
10 local law's effective date. It also requests DoITT  
11 to semiannually report the list of local laws that  
12 require new service requests, the number of new  
13 complaint types added, and any challenges faced in  
14 timely updating those complaint types. Our current  
15 process for creating new service requests on 311 is,  
16 as you can imagine, highly collaborative with the  
17 agency actioning those complaints to ensure that the  
18 service requests sync up with the agency's internal  
19 systems, operations, and work flows. If a new  
20 service request is needed to comply with a local law  
21 we work with the agency to prioritize it and ensure  
22 it is implemented within the effective date  
23 prescribed. We do not, however, create service  
24 requests unilaterally. Individual agencies are  
25



1 involved in the legislative process, resulting in  
2 local laws that impact their operations and, in my  
3 opinion, would be best equipped to determine what  
4 steps need to be taken in order to comply, which in  
5 some cases includes the creation of a new service  
6 request. However, this is not always explicit in the  
7 legislation, in the legislative text, and there could  
8 be cases where the agency needs to put in place  
9 staffing or other resources before they can determine  
10 the best course of action. 311's expertise is  
11 limited to technology and the intake portion of the  
12 operation. If there are instances where service  
13 requests missed the mark I want to know about it and  
14 we'll certainly bring it back to the specific agency  
15 to fix. Thank you so much for the opportunity to  
16 testify today, and I look forward to our discussion.  
17 I will now take council members' questions.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner. I will now turn it over to the chair  
20 for questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you,  
22 Commissioner, ah, and, ah, we're gonna get in some  
23 questions. Ah, I'm gonna have a few questions and  
24 I'll turn it over my colleagues who are, ah, who have  
25

1 bills being, ah, heard today that they may have  
2 questions, and then I'll come back, you know, and ask  
3 some more questions. But, you know, we heard,  
4 Commissioner, we heard over two years ago that all  
5 reporting categories, you know, other than the ones  
6 you mentioned, obviously to upload, ah, an option to  
7 upload a picture, but this is still not the case.  
8 For example, ah, requesting assistance with rodent  
9 condition. You, you cannot upload a photo, even  
10 where a picture of a, of a dumpster would be helpful.  
11 Um, but even like street issues don't allow for  
12 pictures. Um, so, you know, is that, is that  
13 intentional or what's, or, you know, can you explain  
14 why there's a delay in development of this ability  
15 on, on certain, ah, complaints?

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, absolutely.  
18 Um, and I will speak directly to rodents and street  
19 lights and, but first I'll start more broadly. So,  
20 in the new 311 system, which launched in 2019, it is  
21 really easy for me to turn on picture messaging. Um,  
22 meaning it, it's basically part of the 311 platform.  
23 It's not a huge amount of technical complexity to be  
24 able to accept picture, pictures and videos. The  
25 part that was complicated was the security part that

1 we did a year ago. We started turning the picture  
2 messaging on just to make sure we weren't, um, um,  
3 accepting attachments that could cause a cyber issue  
4 for us. But that's behind us. So you, you talked  
5 about rodents and street light, rodent and street  
6 lights. And I think those are two perfect examples  
7 of the two different types of reasons why we don't  
8 accept picture messaging on certain types of SRs. So  
9 rodents is an example of a policy call on the part of  
10 the agency. In this case the agency accepting the  
11 rodent complaints was the Department of Health, and  
12 the Department of Health just told us that they are  
13 now ready to accept picture messaging specifically  
14 for calls or service requests related to rodents. So  
15 I expect rodents, the rodent service requests, to  
16 have picture messaging certainly by the end of the  
17 year. As I said, it's pretty easy for me to enable  
18 and we [inaudible] to make sure that, um, the picture  
19 messages get over to the receiving agency. OK, so  
20 the rodents is really a policy call. Street lights,  
21 what I was referring to in my testimony as the  
22 signaling, those service requests are actually not  
23 built into the 311 system. I could build them into  
24 the 311 system very easily. It's not hard to build a

1 new service request. We frankly do it all the time.  
2 But certain agencies for certain, um, service request  
3 types have told us that it is easier and better and  
4 more efficient for them to accept, um, service  
5 requests in their systems of record rather than  
6 through 311. So if you call 311 to report, ah, an  
7 issue with a signal, either a pedestrian or traffic  
8 signal or street light, the 311 agent will go into  
9 DOT's signaling system and put the service request  
10 directly into DOT's signaling system rather than  
11 entering it into the 311 [inaudible]. Does that make  
12 sense?  
13

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK, yeah, all right.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And so those are  
16 among the reasons why on certain service requests  
17 picture messaging hasn't been enabled. For us, um,  
18 our default now is we create new services requests is  
19 to enable picture messaging unless there is a valid  
20 reason, either an operational reason or a privacy  
21 reason on the agency's part why they don't want it.  
22 But picture messaging has become the default.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Um, Commissioner,  
24 you mentioned about some agencies not, it's, it's not  
25 really, you know, convenient for them to handle it,

1 ah, the photos. You know, so I, I just think taking  
2 the, the complaint or the 311 person, you know, ah,  
3 to another route, to another website, um, I think, I  
4 think that could be solved. I think we have to work  
5 with the agencies a little further on this possibly.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I agree with you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, I, I just  
9 don't think that making it inconvenient for the user  
10 is, is the right way. I think the agency has to  
11 adapt, so, um, when, when do you think we can, be  
12 able to upload videos, especially I got noise  
13 complaints that would be great to upload a video so,  
14 so the operator or, you know, the agency could hear  
15 it, um, let's say the police could...

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I have great news,  
17 which is that you can upload a video today.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Today?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: That's my  
20 understanding.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I, I couldn't do it  
22 the other day.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: All right, well,  
24 we'll, I'll look, we'll look into that one, um, but  
25 when I've used the 311, on, on the 311 website I

1 certainly have uploaded videos. But we'll look into  
2 that specific use case in question.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right, yeah, because  
5 there, there are certain things that we could,  
6 it'd...

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: OK, sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...be great if  
9 [inaudible] could do a video. Um, but let, let me  
10 talk about, 'cause we, you know, I use the app a lot  
11 and I try to get residents to, to use it and everyone  
12 I ask seems to not use it. Ah, so I, I try to tell  
13 them, look, you could do it much quicker, faster,  
14 it'd be, and you can send photos and it's better.  
15 And in most cases you can send photos. But, you  
16 know, in calling it and, um, I haven't called 311  
17 but, you know, in preparation for this hearing I had  
18 my staff and we worked, ah, I called this morning and  
19 I want to give you my observation, all right, and  
20 this is, this is from somebody who probably goes on  
21 the 311 app every day 'cause I walk around the  
22 neighborhood and I, as, my wife companies because she  
23 says we walk for, you know, we want to keep up a good  
24 pace, you're always stopping to do 311 complaints  
25 and, ah, we never get our heart rate up. So, so

1 let's say, you know, I, I believe, and I think our  
2 precinct, the 104 precinct, I was told by the  
3 commanding officer we lead the world in 311  
4 complaints. So, um, but in calling it takes far too  
5 long to give a live operator on a 311 request. It  
6 took over eight minutes for my staff to get a person  
7 on the phone to make a complaint about a street  
8 light. So we should be able to hit zero, like we do  
9 on most, ah, calls, to give a live operator to forego  
10 some of the, all the messages, that, I mean, it's  
11 like, there's a lot of messages and people get  
12 frustrated, you know, and that's what talking to my  
13 constituents and that's why I tell them go to the  
14 app, right, but they said the app doesn't always  
15 cover things, and it doesn't. So currently you have  
16 to wait for the automated system to go through the  
17 different options.

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Everything. Based  
21 on your, on, on the issue that you're call about.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Um, so could, could  
24 we talk about that a little bit?

25 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, we sure can.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right.

COMMISSIONER TISCH: Um, and acutely over the past year and a half and dealing with the spikes in 311 volume I have become more of an expert than I ever could have imagined in IVR systems, which are the systems that you hear in the beginning when you call 311. It's the system that makes all of, all of the announcements. Um, so let me say, the eight minutes, most of that time has got to be the IVR because I manage our wait times very closely, twice a day, and even at peak we're averaging only 28 seconds after the IVR, like 28 seconds in queue to, um, reach a call taker. So that begs the question why the IVR. And I think the answer is 311 got 23-1/2 million calls, ah, in 2020. The vast majority of those calls do not have to go to a specific, to an agent, meaning they can be handled just by a recorded message that everyone hears, like for example alternate side of the street parking. That is our single largest call driver. And if I sense all of those, like I don't know how many million alternate side of the street parking calls to a live agent rather than having our recorded message up front that everyone hears, it would make your wait time when you're call to report



1 a signal problem much longer than eight minutes. So  
2 we use the IVR at its first instance to get calls out  
3 of queue that can be handled with a recording so that  
4 when you get into line it's only 28 seconds and not  
5 40 minutes. Second is we use the IVR, oh, are you  
6 speaking? I can't hear. I think you're on mute.  
7 Oh, maybe not.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You'd think I'd get  
10 the hang of this already.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: OK.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, just, ah,  
13 Commissioner, the question here that I, I think, you  
14 know, I understand all that.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: OK.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Most people  
17 understand that we have to go through a litany of,  
18 of, of a, you know, just information. However, if I  
19 want to get to the, I don't want to hear all this. I  
20 want the option of just getting zero. Could I do  
21 that? Why can't I do it, press zero to get to my, to  
22 get a live operator? Because sometimes you're  
23 sitting through five to eight minutes and you get  
24 frustrated and that's what I'm hearing.

1  
2           COMMISSIONER TISCH: So we can look at  
3 the option of putting in a press zero to get straight  
4 to a call taker. We can look at that. And in fact  
5 the new 311 phone system, the new digital 311 phone  
6 system that's replacing the old analog system, is  
7 going live in, ah, the first or second quarter of  
8 next year and that is something that we can look to  
9 put in there.

10           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Good, good, you  
11 know, because, um, and as you know another, but, ah,  
12 we, we can meet and talk about, um, but why isn't Joe  
13 Morrisroe on, on this call, on our...

14           COMMISSIONER TISCH: He's sitting right  
15 here with me in my office listening to [inaudible].

16           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I didn't see him. I  
17 didn't see him.

18           COMMISSIONER TISCH: Come, Joe. Come,  
19 Joe. Let's, let's have you sworn in. You know, when  
20 I took over 311 I promised Joe that in exchange for  
21 him doing all of the work I was gonna handle all the  
22 council hearings. But he's definitely here. Joe.

23           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, because I, I  
24 have to meet with Joe also, because I have some, all  
25

1 right, go ahead, there's, there's Joe. You want to  
2 swear him in, ah, Counsel?

3  
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Absolutely. Mr.  
5 Morrisroe, I see your hand up, thank you. Do you  
6 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
7 nothing but the truth and answer honestly to council  
8 member questions?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, thank,  
12 thank you. Um, all right. Just a, hi Joe, ah, I, I,  
13 I just want to, we've been joined by Council Member  
14 Ulrich and Council Member Yeger, and, ah, I also just  
15 wanted, just one more question, then we'll get to the  
16 council members' questions on their particular bill,  
17 ah their, is being heard today. Um, now this you,  
18 you might, might have mentioned to me, but for the  
19 record, um, noise from illegal car meet-ups is a  
20 major issue in many communities around, ah, the city  
21 and certainly my community. When reporting a  
22 complaint on 311 you must provide an exact address,  
23 which is not possible, um, for this type of, many  
24 times for this type of request. Can you build in a  
25 general location feature? I think we talked about it

1  
2 privately, but such, such like as cross streets or  
3 ZIP codes to identify the noise complaints. Many  
4 times it moves around, too.

5           COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, absolutely. I  
6 think the 311 geolocation system really needs  
7 updating and you were the first to bring that to my  
8 attention early on. At our last hearing we discussed  
9 that we are completely ripping out the old GIS system  
10 and replacing it with a new normal state-of-the-art  
11 GIS system on the Esri platform that allows for  
12 things that you would come to expect from using any  
13 other app like Cross Streets or pin on a map or  
14 things, things like that. We've gotten the  
15 beginnings of that system up and running for, just  
16 for service requests related to open streets, and now  
17 that that's, you know, that prototype is done, we're  
18 gonna expand it out and replace the 311 GIS  
19 [inaudible].

20           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: That's, that's, ah,  
21 that's good now. OK, I, I just want to bring in my  
22 colleague, ah, Council Member Koo, who I believe has  
23 his raised for a question on his legislation.

24           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Hi, ah,  
3 Commissioner. Thank you for coming to speak to us.  
4 So my questions are related to my bill, um, Intro  
5 101, 2018. So is there a file size limit, and what  
6 are the limits on the current photo or video of  
7 those?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Council Member Koo,  
9 I am so sorry. I don't know what the limit is, but  
10 it will take me less than five minutes after this  
11 hearing to get the answer, and I will get that over  
12 to you and your office. But if there...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: OK.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...to expand, like if  
15 you have feedback that we should expand the file size  
16 if you've run into problems or limitations, I will  
17 definitely take that feedback and see if it's  
18 possible to do. I'm sure it is, but I want to just  
19 understand from my team, like if there is a limit,  
20 what the limitation is and why, and I'm sure we can  
21 work to increase it if necessary.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: OK. So you'll get  
23 back to me on that, right?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: [inaudible]  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, so is, is  
3 every category on the website and mobile app capable  
4 of uploading photos and videos? When I, I only see  
5 illegal parking as a photo upload option.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, Council Member  
7 Koo, there's like a thousand-plus service request  
8 types, um, in the, in the 311 system, and I would say  
9 about 50% of them have been enabled for photo and  
10 video messaging. So generally, as I was saying in my  
11 testimony there are a few different types of reasons  
12 why we wouldn't have photo or video messaging enabled  
13 on a service request type. One would be, um, I gave  
14 the example of the Department of Homeless Services,  
15 which doesn't want to take, and I, I agree with them,  
16 photos, um, from, ah, for their service requests  
17 related to homeless people in need of assistance.  
18 Um, there are other examples where, um, it's not so  
19 much about privacy but, um, a photo just wouldn't be  
20 useful. So, for example, for the Department of, ah,  
21 Finance, a lot of theirs are about property taxes and  
22 it's just, there's no use to having, having a  
23 picture, so those are the general reasons why we  
24 wouldn't have photo or video enabled. I will say  
25

1  
2 that our default position now is to enable photos  
3 and, and videos.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: You mentioned about  
5 the Department of Finance. I think when  
6 constructions have complained it is easier for them  
7 to take a picture of the application and submit it,  
8 you know, because this is not a tax document, it's  
9 not a, so it's easier for, for people [inaudible]  
10 strain to, to whoever answers the phone or about the  
11 line, what, what's happening with the application.

12 So I think it helps the Department of Finance to  
13 solve problems, too, with a picture of a note.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: OK, I will  
15 definitely bring that..

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: It had to be a  
17 picture, yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I will certainly  
19 bring that feedback back and, um, I actually just got  
20 from the time the size constraints on the attachments  
21 is you can submit three attachments of any service  
22 request and each of them can be 5 megabytes, which  
23 for like 15 max per each service request, which  
24 probably is pretty good.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Ah, I forgot all  
3 those, ah, ah, things. So how long a video can you  
4 submit, a couple, one minute, or?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I, I don't know.  
6 Yeah, probably, definitely in minutes, not longer.  
7 But I can look. I think it really depends on the  
8 type of video you're submitting. But we can work  
9 offline, like if there's a problem, if you've had  
10 problems in the past submitting videos, happy to work  
11 with you to understand what they are to see if we can  
12 address it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, no, I, I happen  
14 to, ah, like the [inaudible] a lot. I think this is  
15 one of the greatest invention the city provide to  
16 common citizens, no? But I, I think it's not, even  
17 though a lot of people know about, but it's still not  
18 well advertised, you know, for average citizens to  
19 use it, because when I'm on the streets I always run  
20 into people, they always complain to me about certain  
21 things, about [inaudible], about traffic lights, I  
22 say why do you [inaudible] instead of telling me?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, thank you  
24 for...



2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: They were telling me  
3 I had to go back to the office.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you so much  
5 for...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, I get second-  
7 hand information, yeah. So I think we need to do  
8 more promotions of encouraging citizens, ah, when  
9 they see something wrong, ah, they can call 311  
10 direct.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, I would just  
14 say one, one thing to that, if it's OK, Chair, which  
15 is my sense is that during the pandemic 311 pivoted  
16 from being just, you know, a general clearinghouse of  
17 information to a lifeline for a lot of New Yorkers,  
18 and you can see that with our call volumes where we  
19 took like 24 million calls. I said in my testimony  
20 that's, that comes out to like three calls for every  
21 New Yorker. Um, so I think, my sense is that during  
22 the pandemic people, even people who were less  
23 familiar with 311 really became more familiar with it  
24 just because of the breadth of services and  
25

1 information it, um, contained related to the  
2 pandemic. But I agree with you, 311 is a gem.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, Commissioner,  
5 just if I may jump in, 'cause what you mentioned  
6 about the pandemic, ah, my, ah, staffer called today  
7 to 311 to, you know, to ask a question on the vaccine  
8 mandate you had to use our voice, you know, you had  
9 to speak in, ah, what's your question and it's on the  
10 vaccine mandate. It wouldn't accept that. Um, 311  
11 would not accept that at all, to the point where he  
12 couldn't get, he couldn't move forward so you might  
13 want to check on that.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: But you already  
15 spoke to the, um, I wrote the service request for the  
16 vaccine mandate myself, so when your staffer spoke to  
17 the call center representative I'm very confident  
18 that he or she got a lot of information about the  
19 vaccine mandate.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, that, no, this  
21 was on the, where you had to speak into the phone  
22 about your problem, what's your problem.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.  
24  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And he said vaccine  
3 mandate, and he kept saying it and it wouldn't accept  
4 it.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: But then did he  
6 speak to a call center representative?

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, no.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: We were just trying  
10 to come up with like some of the bugs in the system.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So that's all I, I'm  
13 just saying we didn't go that far, it just wouldn't  
14 accept it. So, ah, we...

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I will definitely, I  
16 will definitely look at that.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Just look at that,  
18 just look at that...

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It's a really good  
20 knowledge article, so you if you have time...

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...speak to a  
23 representative about it.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And by the way, just  
25 to Peter, um, I've been using the, um, I've been

1  
2 sending photos of illegally parked cars and they  
3 usually get the attention faster when I send the  
4 police the photo. Um, so that's, that's been, I  
5 don't know if it's me, if it's just me because I'm  
6 actually identifying myself, but it, it gets it, I,  
7 I, I just think the, the calls, on the one case it  
8 was like within a minute I got the police car with,  
9 ah, you know, the light on and they were, they had  
10 come to the location. So it was amazing. But, ah, I  
11 just want to, ah, ah, call on my, Council Member  
12 Danny Dromm, talk about or ask questions on his  
13 particular legislation.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very  
16 much, Chair Holden. Ah, good morning, Commissioner.  
17 Ah, it's good to see you. Um, I, I, I, I think I  
18 heard from your testimony that you are opposed to,  
19 ah, the Intro that I have, um, and I'm just curious,  
20 what is the procedure now that you have regarding,  
21 um, adding, um, the ability to be able to make  
22 complaints over 311 to legislation that is enacted by  
23 the council?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I wouldn't say  
25 opposed. I would say that there's nuances to it. I

1  
2 agree with you, ah, fully in concept that when a  
3 local law is enacted that requires the city to  
4 deliver a service or take a complaint that the 311  
5 which is point of contact for residents, should be  
6 ready on the date of the local law as part of  
7 customer service. My concern with the bill is that  
8 oftentimes, for 311 to create a service request it's  
9 so easy, right, if I can just come up with the  
10 content it's really easy, easy to do. But the  
11 service requests have to take into account the  
12 responding agency's info and business process. And  
13 so the 311 stuff, that portion which is really  
14 important because that's where the residents' point  
15 of contact is, needs to wait for all of those  
16 decisions to be made and handled. Basically, it  
17 needs to wait for the agency's operation. So I'm not  
18 opposed to requiring 311 service requests on the date  
19 of, on the effective date. I'm concerned that the  
20 reporting stuff, where, like there are oftentimes  
21 when 311 won't even know that a piece of legislation  
22 requires a service request. It's the agency that  
23 generally comes to 311 and we have a team of business  
24 analysts that work with them, to be like, hey,  
25 there's this local law. It requires us to do this.

1  
2 We're setting up a team of inspectors. We need to  
3 collect this type of information from the public.  
4 You wouldn't, 311 wouldn't know that from reading  
5 legislation. Does that make sense?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Well, not really.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Ah, the reason  
9 being that, um, you know, you follow the council. I  
10 know that the agencies always look at every stated  
11 meeting to see what's being introduced, ah, and it's  
12 easy to follow, ah, what legislation has passed and  
13 for you to contact the agencies to see if in fact  
14 they need to work with you on implementing a, the  
15 ability to be able to, ah, take a service call or a  
16 request. Now, I don't know, you probably did hear  
17 my, um, opening remarks. But, you know, I had a very  
18 big problem with the Department of Buildings, for  
19 example, who I think, I mean, I don't know the  
20 internal politics of what goes within the  
21 administration, but I don't think that they were too  
22 interested in my bill on, ah, transgender bathrooms  
23 and, and nongender bathrooms, ah, and they didn't,  
24 um, bother to reach out to anybody. They would not  
25 take, ah, you would not take 311 calls on it, there

1  
2 is no ability to do that, and then even when, ah, we  
3 approached your office, it might have been before you  
4 were the commissioner, um, that, um, you know, there  
5 was a hesitancy or, or an unwillingness to, um, to  
6 change that situation. And so what we had to do was  
7 to write additional legislation to require, um, that  
8 the DOB and DoITT comply with, um, the ability to be  
9 able to take those complaints. So my point is that,  
10 it's just what you're outlining would be maybe  
11 wonderful in a perfect world. But the agencies don't  
12 always agree with the legislation, which is passed at  
13 the will of the council, ah, and then therefore, um,  
14 will not come to 311 or to, to you to, to want to set  
15 up that system. So that's why I, I believe that my  
16 legislation is so needed because it would require,  
17 um, and, and, and as I've said from examples before  
18 it's not happening right now. I mean, do you meet  
19 regularly with agencies on legislation...

20           COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, yes, there's a  
21 whole team of analysts at 311 who do this. Like  
22 during the pandemic when we added so many different  
23 service requests, like you would not believe, well, I  
24 was, maybe you would believe, but I was really  
25

1  
2 impressed with the thought that goes into what pieces  
3 of information need to be collected...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...in a collaborative  
6 process with the agencies.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Just, just to wrap  
8 up because my time has expired. You know, um, if  
9 you're already doing that why can't we codify that to  
10 ensure that with future legislation it happens? Um,  
11 I just don't understand why we can't do that.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I think you can do  
13 that. Obviously, you can do that. Um, but you're  
14 putting the onus here on an office in city government  
15 that, it's, it's pretty easy for us to do our part.  
16 And we would have no way reading the legislation,  
17 reading a lot of legislation to know is this one  
18 gonna require our service request, yes or and no.  
19 And oftentimes like it's the agencies that tell us,  
20 yeah, we, we require a service request for this.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: But they don't do  
22 it. Anyway, we're talking in circles here at this  
23 point. Um, I, I do appreciate the extra time and we  
24 look forward to passing the legislation and, um, I, I  
25 appreciate your time.



2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you, Council  
3 Member.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council  
5 Member Dromm. I want to call on, ah, my colleague,  
6 Council Member Yeger, who has a question. I see his  
7 hand raised.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you very  
10 much, um, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Commissioner,  
11 it's good to see you. Before I ask my question, I  
12 just want to say something I've said in these  
13 hearings before when you testified, um, and, ah,  
14 along with some of my colleagues here having sat  
15 through many other agencies' testimonies, you are  
16 surely the straight of straight shooters. Um, ah,  
17 really a breath of fresh air in, in terms of, ah,  
18 administration testimony to this council. I'm very,  
19 very grateful. Ah, I just want to bring up something  
20 that was, ah, mentioned yesterday in the hearing, ah,  
21 that I attended, um, as a member of the oversight  
22 investigations committee, which was join with, ah,  
23 ah, the Transportation Committee, and the DOT and the  
24 police department were represented there. Um, a  
25 number of issues came up with regard to 311, many of

1  
2 which are not really, ah, ah, under your purview,  
3 your responsibility, or, frankly, just to be straight  
4 shooting, your fault at all. Um, ah, really the  
5 issue in many respects has to do with closing out  
6 complaints without resolution. And that really falls  
7 on the agencies and the people who are closing out  
8 those complaints. It's not a 311 things. It's not a  
9 DoITT thing. But I'm wondering, ah, and, and I asked  
10 this question yesterday, um, when a department, um,  
11 you know, let's pick, for example, the police  
12 department, closes out a complaint that, that, you  
13 know, for the, for the reason of not under police  
14 department jurisdiction. Is there some way that that  
15 complaint could instead of dying end up back in the  
16 311 hopper to somehow be sent somewhere else, or, or  
17 is rejiggered or just, you know, not to end. And the  
18 point I made yesterday, I guess, you know, not to be  
19 hyperbolic, but sometimes that happens with me, um,  
20 you know, we're a hundred billion dollar corporation  
21 and no complaint has no resolution, I mean, there is  
22 a resolution somewhere. So it ought to be in my view  
23 some way that the city can not let these complaints  
24 just die with an agency, one guy typing in not under  
25 my jurisdiction, have a great day, go away. What do

1 think about that, and is, is it something that you  
2 can do or is something that agencies have to do?  
3 Where does that happen?  
4

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So from a technology  
6 perspective yes, I know how to do that. What, what  
7 you're asking for is based on a certain resolution  
8 type, out of jurisdiction, if, if it's gone, if it's  
9 marked as out of jurisdiction can that be, can those  
10 be sent somewhere else, and the answer from a  
11 technology perspective is yes, in fact we do  
12 something very similar to that with other types of  
13 service requests. So like that is definitely a  
14 capability that exists from a tech perspective in the  
15 311 system. The question is where. And so I think  
16 that is more a policy and apps question and not a  
17 tech question. The tech exists. It can be made to  
18 do exactly what you've said. The policy and app  
19 stuff obviously is not, um, the role of 311 to make  
20 those decisions.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: So, ah, you know,  
22 in the, in the spirit of the straight shooting that  
23 we engage in here, ah, this committee, where would an  
24 enterprising council member go to get that question  
25 resolved? Because it's not PD 'cause PD wants to

1  
2 kill the complaint. Um, it's not the, and, and it  
3 may be that in many cases it, it is a different  
4 jurisdiction. So, for example, you know, if, if the  
5 complaint is about a car, a derelict car, ah, and PD  
6 goes and it's done its job. They see if there are  
7 tickets on the car. Well, it's not its job to remove  
8 it necessarily. That may be Sanitation's job. If  
9 Sanitation's not gonna, the commissioner is a fine  
10 gentleman, to be sure, but he's not gonna come to  
11 this council and say, well, I'm happy to take more  
12 responsibility, send it my way. Um, so is it, is  
13 this just to City Hall and talk to the mayor's people  
14 and that's the problem, talk to a deputy mayor, you  
15 know, what, what do we do? Because we, we've been  
16 talking about this for not just since yesterday.  
17 This has been something that's been going on, ah,  
18 predating you, ah, joining, ah, DoITT.

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Um, I'd like to  
20 think about that question and get back to you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: No problem. All  
22 right. I'm done. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
23 Thank you, Commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.  
25

1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, Commissioner,  
3 and, and what my colleague was talking about  
4 yesterday, ah, we had a hearing and, um, some of the,  
5 and, and I've experienced this where, ah, especially  
6 an NYPD complaint was closed within minutes, um, of  
7 the service request being entered. And I, I know the  
8 police, I like to, you know, the police have a couple  
9 of categories that they could use. It looks like it  
10 needs to be expanded. So almost like can we build  
11 out a feature that allows police officers or whoever  
12 the responding agency is, to indicate that the  
13 problem is not yet resolved but is being addressed.  
14 Because the police officers closed it out. They said  
15 took corrective action, or police officer, um, you  
16 know, um, it was not a problem, whatever they have.  
17 But they just, it looks like they have, they're,  
18 they're too limited in their response and sometimes  
19 it just cannot be handled or they don't have the  
20 personnel at the time, and, and so they'll make up  
21 that, that the issue was closed and, and that's what  
22 we're seeing. So is that possible we could give the  
23 police officers or whatever agency more options?

24                   COMMISSIONER TISCH: In terms of final  
25 dispositions?

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CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Final, yeah.

COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Because it looks, it looks like the police officer, you know, police officer, some officers, and we've caught them, by the way, and I called the CO of the precinct. He said, yeah, they're gonna be reprimanded. We're gonna have to have, you know, some retraining or discipline for them, 'cause they closed it out without even going to the location. And that's because I think they're short staffed, I, I guess.

COMMISSIONER TISCH: So, yes, we can add final dispositions and my office will work with the NYPD to get a sense of what additional final dispositions might be useful to them. But you both, um, touch on a, I think, really good point about service request types that require a multiagency response. Because there are certain types of things that it's not just one agency that does, and, um, building the capabilities that allow for accommodate that type of multiagency response I do, um, agree and acknowledge, as I'm thinking about it, is an important gap that needs to be filled.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right, OK.  
3 Thank you, Council Member Yeger. Thank you for your  
4 questions. Um, ah, and just I, I want to ask a few  
5 more questions on, um, and this one is important  
6 which, ah, I think is really kind of relevant now.  
7 Ah, Local Law 70 of 2017 requires DoITT to create a  
8 notification system whereby business owners choose to  
9 be notified of any 311 complaints lodged against  
10 them. Um, how does, how does the system work?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't know and I  
12 need to get back to you on that. I think that there  
13 is an SBS portal for that, but I, I need to find out  
14 and get you the full information [inaudible]...

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Because I, I have  
16 some other questions which you can get back to me,  
17 like how many businesses have signed up to receive  
18 such alerts and is this data available on the open  
19 data website, so...

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So we will get all  
21 of that, um, information about that program to you.  
22 Um, there is a lot of 311 data available on the open  
23 data portal, including now I think one of your pieces  
24 of legislation, the service level agreement...

25 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah.

1                   COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...are live on open  
2  
3 data.

4                   CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right. Um, you  
5 know, let me just, ah, um, for, you know, for  
6 illegal, I have a couple more questions on, um, for  
7 illegal parking, ah, complaint types, the app, ah,  
8 includes different violations, including, and, and I  
9 brought this up to you a few years ago, I think it  
10 was a few years ago, blocking bike lanes, blocking  
11 hydrants, fire hydrants, etcetera. However, it does  
12 not have an option, and this is a sore point with me,  
13 blocking crosswalks. You even have a bus layover,  
14 well, I don't even know what that is, but a bus  
15 layover complaint on the pull-down menu. But I  
16 don't, I still, you know, I have to put, and here's  
17 the, here's the, my issue. On blocking crosswalks,  
18 which is all over the city, a car is parked in the  
19 crosswalk, I have to put in blocking sidewalk, and I  
20 would say about 50% of the time the police close it  
21 out as unfounded because I couldn't put in blocking  
22 the crosswalk, I put in blocking [inaudible].

23                   COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, I have good  
24 news. There, we have parked in crosswalk now.  
25 Describe the parking violation. We have blocking



1  
2 driveway, double parked, parked at bus stop, parked  
3 in bike lane, parked in bus lane...

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I don't, I don't  
5 have it.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...parked in  
7 crosswalk, parked in crosswalk.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Where? I don't have  
9 it on my app.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It's in alphabetical  
11 order, parked in crosswalk [inaudible].

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I have, here's what  
13 I have. Commissioner, here's what I have. I did it  
14 yesterday, too. I couldn't do it. I had blocking  
15 bike lane, blocking hydrant, blocking sidewalk,  
16 commercial overnight, double parked, posted rules,  
17 bus layover. Are we, are we looking at the same app?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, you know what.  
19 I, we added to city vehicle permit violation.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Ahah.

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Not the general  
22 parking violations. You were right. I was wrong.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK.

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We added it in the  
3 wrong place, but we're gonna put it in the parking  
4 violations.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. OK.

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You were right.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: We're getting  
8 somewhere.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: But I heard you. I  
10 just put it in the wrong one.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right, OK. So,  
12 um, you know, I'm getting a lot, I have, ah, due to  
13 numerous complaints related to film, filming  
14 industries, ah, when they take over a block and, um,  
15 do you plan to designate that as a separate category  
16 for such complaints, 'cause I'm getting a lot of  
17 those, too?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Joe?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: It's not a  
20 separate item on the app. It's not one of the app  
21 items. But, of course, because the app is mobile  
22 optimized you could go to 311 online. So we could  
23 take a look at it further but, ah, it's definitely  
24 not a distinct item on the app.

1  
2           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, so it's a lot  
3 of, there's a lot of film shoots and I get a lot of  
4 complaints and I'm sure of my colleagues the same  
5 thing, and there's, there's no way to, it's hard to  
6 complain about it, you know, especially, ah,  
7 something on the app, yeah, so if you could, ah, um,  
8 if you could look at that. Also, ah, Joe, maybe you  
9 could look at the illegal dumping complaint type was  
10 removed from both the app and the website. Why was  
11 that changed, 'cause it's a huge problem in many  
12 districts throughout the city.

13           EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: I'll have  
14 to look into that and get back to you on that as  
15 well. I'm not sure off the top of my head.

16           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah. So, you know,  
17 a lot of my constituents are complaining that if you  
18 file a missing garbage pickup complaint it'll take  
19 you almost like five minutes to do so. Um, and  
20 that's something, again, not only on the app but just  
21 the complaint itself, it's frustrating. You need to,  
22 you know, you have to, see, here's what happens. You  
23 have, you need to answer about 10 questions then  
24 provide personal information again, despite the fact

25

1 that it was provided when the person registered to  
2 use the app, so...

3  
4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: OK.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...before you're able  
6 to submit a complaint.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We're, we're redoing  
8 the app. The app needs some updating and we are,  
9 just launched a project to totally redo the 311 app.  
10 Right now on the app you only see the most popular  
11 service request types, and it's certainly not every  
12 service request type. I completely agree that the  
13 app needs to support more service request types and  
14 it will, and that has...

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, I mean,  
16 there's a lot more room, I mean, you...

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...could be able to  
19 scroll down and under.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes. Like, I think  
21 it makes sense that you can't do everything that you  
22 can do on the website from the app, but it definitely  
23 need to be a lot more than what exists today. Um,  
24 and...

25 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right.

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...I heard that  
3 feedback and we're gonna work on it.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, 'cause, um, I,  
5 you know, I love the app. I just wish it could do  
6 more.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It needs to do more.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, and, but, it,  
9 it's really and, and what, what Council Member Koo  
10 mentioned, that we have to get the word out, I'd, I'd  
11 like to get the word out on the app. I mean, I think  
12 that's what we need to tell people. You have a smart  
13 phone, you should have the app, the 311 app. It  
14 would save, ah, you know, a lot of, ah, headaches  
15 with people hanging on the line and being frustrated.

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Agree.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You know, can, can  
18 we sit down at one point and discuss some of the  
19 suggestions you're hearing?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, without a  
21 doubt. I have a bunch of them written here, but I  
22 would love to.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Ah, a few more  
24 questions. In February 2019 Speaker Johnson  
25 expressed frustration with agencies', ah, differing

1 approaches to reporting their responses to 311  
2 complaints and suggested an interagency working group  
3 to improve such reporting. Have any agencies  
4 followed the speaker's suggestion that they convene  
5 such a working group, ah, um, group to, um, a uniform  
6 agency in reporting how 311 resolves 311 complaints?  
7

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So that was from  
9 before my time, unfortunately, which I know is not  
10 the answer that you want to hear. The Mayor's Office  
11 of Operations has historically done a lot of, um, the  
12 business coordination with agencies, but I'll look at  
13 that specific legislation and find out what's  
14 happened.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. The, the  
16 app is, ah, currently only available in English,  
17 right?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. Do you  
20 plan to expand?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Without a doubt,  
24 reason number one, two, and three why we need to  
25 replace the app.

1                   CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I know I'm giving  
2  
3 you a lot of [inaudible]. All right, all right. Um,  
4 let's talk about customer satisfaction.

5                   COMMISSIONER TISCH: Great.

6                   CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, ah, what type of  
7 user testing does DoITT and 311 do, ah, on the app,  
8 ah, and, and web service? How do you get feedback to  
9 make, ah, the end user reporting more seamless?

10                  COMMISSIONER TISCH: Joe, can you just go  
11 through the results of our, or the type of customer  
12 service feedback we ask for, how we get it, and what  
13 the results have been?

14                  EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: Sure.  
15 I'll speak to the, the public feedback first and then  
16 we can talk a little bit about the work that's done  
17 on the development side, under Commissioner Tisch's  
18 development team when it comes to user testing and  
19 user design. On the public feedback, I'm very  
20 pleased to share we have multiple service, multiple  
21 customer satisfaction surveys for each channel. For  
22 example, for the phone channel, for your online, for  
23 your text, for your mobile. Um, we do those  
24 following some of the basic standards for surveys,  
25

1  
2 you know, using Likert scale, so you basically use  
3 the data to compare time over time.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We [inaudible].

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: Yeah, and  
6 we also have introduced this year, thanks to Council  
7 Member Koo, um, the survey in 10 designated languages  
8 for customers who call 311. So we're very excited  
9 about that and something we have wanted to do,  
10 something the council member, ah, the team at 311 was  
11 able to get that in place this year. So we'll be  
12 continuing that going forward. I'm also pleased to  
13 say, I'll take a moment here, the biggest survey we  
14 do every year we just concluded, it's the customer  
15 satisfaction survey. We actually contract with a  
16 vendor called CFI, Inc. They're based out of  
17 Michigan. They're the actual leader in what they  
18 call the American Customer Satisfaction Survey Index.  
19 Forgive my geekiness for a moment, but I'm very  
20 pleased with this one. Um, that gauges customer  
21 satisfaction. It's a very robust survey, 790-plus  
22 customers were surveyed, 25 [inaudible] their  
23 experience with 311. I'll give you the headlines.  
24 The assessment that this firm makes is that 311  
25 satisfaction is on par with the best in the



1 private sector in the world and across the country.  
2 Further, you drill down to how the customer service  
3 agents handle the calls and they get a score of 92.  
4 That's, you know, about again 700-plus customers. I  
5 don't know of anything in New York City where someone  
6 gets a score of 92. Um, but it speaks to the quality  
7 of the agents handling the calls, but also all the  
8 work that goes on behind the scenes from the  
9 technology teams that do, you know, fit the work and  
10 the development to the [inaudible]. So that's the  
11 public side. Ah, again, trying to keep this a little  
12 bit short, but on the user testing side there's  
13 extensive work that goes on. Ah, we very much used,  
14 ah, you know, the current models on the technology  
15 side to see our end team, as we call it, and they  
16 will go through, ah, iterations to make sure that  
17 this is working from a user perspective and as well  
18 as meeting the technical requirements. And that's  
19 for the online, ah, application as well as for the  
20 mobile app.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, I don't know  
23 if you heard my comments with my staff testing the,  
24 um, when they called 311. Like I said, I do, I use  
25 the app. But, um, I did use the, I did call in

1 today, this morning and I, I was frustrated. I  
2 couldn't get an operator for over five minutes and I,  
3 I stopped. And that's what I think we need to, to  
4 look. Um, also the, just, just an observation. Um,  
5 when we got a live operator she gave, well, let's say  
6 her name was Nora. She goes, hi, this is Nora. She  
7 doesn't give an, an ID number like 911 operators do.  
8 Is there a reason for that?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: They, they  
11 will give one if asked, because, again, we do want to  
12 make sure we were tracking that. But we also have a,  
13 more of, you know, it's, it's a customer service  
14 orientation, you want that customer to feel  
15 comfortable that they're talking to a person.  
16 They're talking to someone who lives in the city.  
17 Ah, so, you know, we, we start off with the name and  
18 how may I help you, you called 311. But if asked tal  
19 provide a, an agent ID.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, when I speak  
21 to constituents and I'll, I'll just give you a little  
22 feedback, um, they'll say I got an operator that was  
23 rude, and if they said their name is Nora there could  
24 be a hundred Noras in, you know, in, in the 311  
25 system. So I think they need to give, you know,

1 operator 1652, or, you know, something like that.  
2 They, they need to write it down or at least, I'm  
3 sorry, so like a customer could write it down, so  
4 you're operator 1652, you know, something like that  
5 where rather than just a, a person's name. I, I,  
6 that's his feedback.  
7

8 COMMISSIONER TORRES-SPRINGER: Joe, talk  
9 about your quality assurance program and our call  
10 listening?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: Sure. So  
12 I, I appreciate what you're sharing there, Council  
13 Member, and, again, ah, it is available if someone  
14 were to ask. Um, but as the Commissioner said, we  
15 surround the 311 experience with a quality assurance  
16 program, ah, the team that does that. We do call  
17 listening on a number of levels. How well does the  
18 agent handle the call? Do they follow protocol? Do  
19 they, do they provide polite, professional service?  
20 We're also gauging it to make sure the content is  
21 working, right, for the customer. It shouldn't be  
22 jargon. It shouldn't be too bureaucratic, etcetera.  
23 So we're able to evaluate that. On a proactive basis  
24 we have a whole methodology that we follow, but also  
25 on a responsive basis. So if you or your staff have

1  
2 a situation, if a customer has a situation, and we do  
3 take customers, ah, who do call us or submit through  
4 correspondence a request, you know, for, for customer  
5 complaints, I am pleased to say we actually get more  
6 customer compliments than we actually get formal  
7 complaints. But that quality assurance department  
8 can do that resource. We can go back and look at  
9 calls, evaluate what happened, and then not only work  
10 with, you know, answer the question, but also work  
11 with that agent and work with the broader program, if  
12 need be.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. How many  
14 people were in that customer satisfaction survey?  
15 How many people participated?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: I believe  
17 the number was 790.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: On the one.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: On the, on  
20 the one, yeah, sorry, on the one, yes. On the  
21 [inaudible].

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But that, that  
23 survey only covers the call center, right?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: Correct,  
25 that was the call center.

2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So would you be  
3 willing to extend a similar customer satisfaction  
4 survey to those submitting requests through like a  
5 mobile app or website?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We have that.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: We do.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Go ahead.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: Yeah,  
10 that, that currently exists. That's a separate  
11 survey from, from the one I just spoke to. But we do  
12 that, ah, through, for the different channels, for,  
13 for online, for mobile app, etcetera.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So beyond service  
15 satisfaction surveys, do you do them for all app, you  
16 know, ah, itself, for all the apps, um, for the app  
17 itself. Like, um, are the regular, are regular New  
18 Yorkers in that testing room? Um, who actually does  
19 the user testing?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Again, we had this,  
21 we had this user testing discussion, ah, when we were  
22 talking about the vaccines, and no, we do not pick  
23 random people off the street and say, hey, do you  
24 want to come and test our app. We have a team of  
25

1 professionals who are professional testers who do the  
2 testing of our applications, including 311.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. So where  
5 are they, are there any surveys done for people with  
6 disabilities?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE:  
8 [inaudible] specific to someone, a person with  
9 disabilities, but surveys are available to everyone.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But you don't, you  
11 don't, but I, so I think we need to, to identify  
12 people who may have a problem using it. Um, so I, I  
13 think that, that might, you know, if we want to  
14 improve I think we may want to survey people with  
15 disabilities in the near future.

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, I, I will just  
17 say I agree with you and we will do that. We work  
18 very closely with the Mayor's Office of People with  
19 Disabilities, ah, and they have, there's someone who  
20 works there who is actually a part of, of DoITT, but  
21 assigned there, who does all of the ADA testing on  
22 all of our applications, and we're actually building  
23 out his team now because he's so busy.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Um, one second,  
25 one second. OK. Um, I think my team is saying that,

1  
2 ah, we have no more questions. Let me look. Hold  
3 on, one second. I, I think you talked about some of  
4 the, um, issues, ah, on the, on the bills, which I  
5 think we could, we could look it. I think some of  
6 this we can do offline. But, um, anyway, I thank  
7 you, Commissioner, I thank you for your testimony.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thanks for having  
9 me.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Joe, and  
11 hopefully we can meet soon and talk about some other  
12 issues.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yep, absolutely.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MORRISROE: I agree.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I, I really would  
16 like to cut down 'cause I think people are hanging  
17 up, and here's what's happening. I'll just  
18 summarize. Here's what's happening, and, and, ah,  
19 like I, I, you know, I'd like to get a number of 311  
20 calls, um, related to my district someday where we  
21 could, 'cause I know I get a lot. I urge people to  
22 call 311 'cause quality of life is very, very  
23 important, ah, in my district and maintaining it is  
24 important. Um, so, you know, we get to a point, um,  
25 and again, I got too many people calling, you know,

1 calling rather than using the app, and I'd like to  
2 get more people using the app. So, you know,  
3 advertising that, pushing it is important, if we can  
4 get some graphics to send out, you know, whether on  
5 email and so forth. But, ah, I'd like that option.  
6 It's very, very important to me to skip all the, um,  
7 the announcements, which, ah, many of my constituents  
8 don't, you know, don't need. They just want to get  
9 to, you know, the issue and, and speak to a live  
10 person. So if we can get the operator, the zero  
11 option on the phone at one point, I know you want  
12 them to listen to some messages, that's fine, but I  
13 think rather than six, seven minutes, ah, eight  
14 minutes in some cases, um, ah, that, ah, you know,  
15 that we can get to that point where, um, we can speed  
16 things up.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah. I, I don't  
19 think we can ever promise to get rid of it all,  
20 altogether, just because call management and making  
21 sure we don't have big queues and making sure the  
22 calls go to the right places, it's like really  
23 complicated and I invite you one day to join one of  
24 our calls on this so you can hear the ridiculous  
25 complexity that goes into it.



1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 65  
2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, I get it. It's  
3 a hard [inaudible]. I understand it, yeah.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: But I do agree with  
5 the sentiment that we, less is more and we could cut  
6 it down.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Great.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And there's probably  
9 room to chop.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, at least at  
11 some point so we don't, 'cause people get frustrated  
12 and they hang up. And here's what happens,  
13 especially on police calls. They call the precinct  
14 and you know what happens when they call the  
15 precinct.

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I do.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Nobody picks up.  
18 And, and that's what happens in a lot of precincts,  
19 ah, nobody picks up the phone, and now there's this,  
20 the cops are not even there, that kind of thing,  
21 where, you know, again, they're, they're frustrated.  
22 So that's why we, we don't want them to call the  
23 precinct because it is, they are, ah, short staffed,  
24 obviously, and answering calls especially. So I  
25 don't want people to call the precinct. So if we can

1 speed things up in reporting on 311, um, that's it.

2 Well, thank you, Commissioner. But before you leave

3 there's a, I'd like to ask, ah, Counsel Irene

4 Byhovsky, does any other council members have

5 questions?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member

7 Holden, I do not see anyone, um, with, um, a hand up

8 for questions right now.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. All right,

10 thank you, Commissioner. Thanks so much.

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Joe.

13 I'll turn it back to the counsel.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank

15 you, Chair Holden. And thank you, Commissioner, for

16 your testimony. We will now turn to public

17 testimony. Once your name has been called a member

18 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms

19 will give you the go-ahead to begin, after setting

20 the timer. We will be limiting testimony to five

21 minutes. Council members will have an opportunity to

22 ask questions after each panel has completed

23 testimony. I would like now to welcome our first

24 panelist to testify. Noel Hidalgo from BetaNYC.

1

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2

NOEL HIDALGO: Great, can you hear me?

3

Oh, I have the wrong camera. Um, hi, my name is Noel

4

Hidalgo. I am the executive director of BetaNYC.

5

Ah, we're a nonprofit organization here in New York

6

City, um, that's dedicated to civic technology. Ah,

7

we are, ah, very, very thankful for all the 311

8

operators and the staff, ah, for being our municipal

9

heroes during the pandemic. Um, they helped my

10

neighbors through the toughest times, and I wanted to

11

make sure that you know that our civic tech community

12

appreciates your dedication to serving all of our

13

communities. We also want to thank the 311 team for

14

making a successful platform migration, as the

15

commissioner, ah, spoke about. Over the last year

16

we've seen better open data and automatic geocoding,

17

even though that is gonna be updated. Um, ah, we

18

have seen better data being produced to the general

19

public, which has been helpful for community boards

20

and community-based organizations to have a better

21

understanding of what are the specific issues that

22

are happening within their neighborhood. We

23

absolutely appreciate that. Um, lastly I want to

24

just say we're very disappointed that New York City's

25

1 website and digital tools are so convoluted that my  
2 friends and neighbors have to be resorting to calling  
3 311, therefore increasing those call volumes.

4 Throughout the pandemic and the vaccine roll out my  
5 family, friends, and neighbors ended up calling 311's  
6 website, ah, because the city's websites were not  
7 accessible in their languages, they were not  
8 accessible via screen readers, and we've really  
9 wished that the city's website tools and 311 did have  
10 the voice of everyday New Yorkers in the room so that  
11 way they could specifically talk about the problems  
12 that they're experiencing in the tool. We

13 fundamentally believe that 311 is connecting city  
14 government with New Yorkers and we just need to  
15 finally tie that last little knot between New Yorkers  
16 giving their feedback exactly on how these tools and  
17 services work. It doesn't take City Council members  
18 to point it out inside of a commission, ah, um, a  
19 committee hearing, ah, to bring this up. That  
20 conversation should be happening ongoing daily. Um,  
21 that is the agile process that is at the core of why  
22 311 redesigned its system. We need to make sure that  
23 we close that agile loop. Um, concerns about the  
24 legislation, um, Council Member Dromm. I really  
25

1  
2 enjoy your proposed legislation. There happens to be  
3 a dataset up on the open data portal that alludes to,  
4 ah, service requests and descriptors. That service  
5 request database hasn't been updated since, ah, June  
6 27 of 2019. Ah, we really enjoy hearing council  
7 members asking for better features, um, inside of  
8 311. Once again, we don't believe that user  
9 interfaces should be legislated, um, but that they  
10 should be included in a constant conversation, um,  
11 and so, um, we really think that the user, ah,  
12 interface for 311 should be simpler than four steps.  
13 Um, and so we look forward to having a detailed  
14 conversation of those specific pieces of legislation.  
15 Um, I kind of want to spend the remaining balance of  
16 my, ah, testimony focused on the usability of the  
17 app. Um, we have done some in-house user testing and  
18 have been perplexed of, yes we have the mobile app,  
19 but then the mobile app sends us to a website, ah, on  
20 our mobile device, that that website, that form is  
21 not, ah, um, mobile friendly, ah, particularly some  
22 of the DOT tools. Ah, we want to see all agencies  
23 integrated into the 311 system. Um, there's this  
24 tool, or there's this service that's called an API,  
25 application protocol interface. It essentially

1 allows for different computers to talk to each other.  
2 In the redesign of 311 the most, ah, um, kind of the  
3 digitally savvy 311 users, um, ah, were brought into  
4 the room and we were asked what would we do with this  
5 API? We were promised with an API. We went through  
6 a whole conversation talking about, um, how the  
7 public would benefit from using an API. Sadly, we've  
8 been told that this API has been, um, deprioritized,  
9 um, and is not anywhere on the, the, kind of like the  
10 product listing or the feature set. Um, and we  
11 really need this API because it helps make other  
12 tools simpler. I use this app called Reporting to  
13 help do the exact same thing that you were talking  
14 about, Council Member Holden, Holden, reporting cars  
15 in bike lanes and in cross walks. Ah, this tool  
16 would be made much simpler if there was an API. I  
17 currently have to keep my own personal database to  
18 track what 311 service requests I do through  
19 Reported, which ones I submit via the phone, which  
20 ones I submit via the web, and which ones I submit  
21 via the mobile app, because there is not a consistent  
22 user experience across all of these different  
23 services. So we would hope that 311 is able to  
24 include New Yorkers in the room to specifically talk  
25

1  
2 about the inconsistent user experience on all of  
3 these, ah, interfaces, so that way we can really make  
4 311 what it, what it is, which is the single best  
5 conduit to New York City government. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Ah, thank you, Noel.  
7 What I, you know, like, um, I'd like to hear more  
8 about, you know, your critiques of the app, because,  
9 um, mine has been, I've, I've been frustrated because  
10 we talked about some of these things for two years  
11 now and they still haven't been corrected. I think  
12 we need some kind of seminar and meetings with, um,  
13 with, ah, DoITT possibly, ah, because you are, I  
14 mean, I think you're, you certainly use the app a  
15 lot and your frustrations, um, are evident, and we  
16 could make it better. Ah, have you looked other  
17 apps, ah, from other cities at all on how they do it?

18 NOEL HIDALGO: Um, I don't dial 311  
19 service requests in other cities, um, so I haven't  
20 done an in-depth user testing of their tools. I can  
21 just tell you what works and what would be better on  
22 our end. Um, in the platforms change, um, to using  
23 this new database, ah, um, user profiles were  
24 introduced on the website and so if I file a service  
25 request through the website I actually have kind of,

1 um, a clipboard of all of the various service  
2 requests. Um, the app does this inherently but  
3 without a login capability so I actually have to use  
4 my inbox and a spreadsheet to kind of combine these  
5 two, um, ah, platforms so that way I know all of the  
6 various service requests that I have that are out  
7 there. Um, and so like the user testing is something  
8 that we should be doing across all of our digital  
9 properties. My main frustration with the convoluted  
10 nature of the city government websites is that, um,  
11 is that they've become complicated or they're not in  
12 accessible format, whether it's language or platform,  
13 um, or, or, um, you know, capability, like screen  
14 reader. Um, so therefore I have to call 311 to find  
15 where do I get this other piece of information. And  
16 the practice of listening to the user is already  
17 baked into 311. It is great to hear the surveys  
18 that, ah, 311 is constantly ranked high on. Ah, but  
19 when we start thinking about platforms for the 21st  
20 century it is about doing that user testing. Yes,  
21 there are professionals and those professionals do  
22 see things that the coders don't see, but the  
23 everyday New Yorker sees things that the  
24 professionals don't see. Um, and this is what will  
25



1 help us really kind of complete that loop, close that  
2 agile loop. Um, so I can't point you to other  
3 cities, but I can tell you how we can be better.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK, great. Um,  
5 because, ah, obviously, ah, I don't know if you had,  
6 you had to call 311, some issues, ah, that we  
7 mentioned today about the length of the call and, and  
8 the frustration with calling the, the call center.  
9 But the app itself I think could be so much better,  
10 um, where you could upload videos and you, ah, um,  
11 really get some, some feedback, ah, in real time to,  
12 to your issue, ah, and I mentioned a few today. Do  
13 you have any other, you know, suggestions on the app  
14 itself, what, ah, other than what you mentioned  
15 already, and particular complaints that you've  
16 logged, ah, over the, over the years.

17 NOEL HIDALGO: Yeah. Um, well, ah, I  
18 know that DOT, um, actually let me start off with  
19 Parks. Um, Parks Department has a pretty robust, um,  
20 urban forestry database and, and for right now I  
21 have, ah, residual, um, um, trees in roadway service  
22 requests that are still open from, um, storms that  
23 happened two to three years ago, um, and so maybe  
24 this was part of the site migration process, but I,  
25

1  
2 there are, are service requests that are still out  
3 there that are indicated as open, which then  
4 deteriorate the, um, kind of like the service level  
5 agreements when we look at the data. So how can 311  
6 go through and work with the agencies to make sure  
7 that, ah, service requests that have been addressed  
8 prior to the migration are truly, um, reflected in  
9 the data? Um, you know, there were pretty big trees  
10 that came down over the last few storms in Greenpoint  
11 and the data still shows that those trees are still  
12 down in the street, and that just reflects poorly on  
13 the agency that has done a great job to respond to  
14 those particular service requests. Um, another  
15 example is, um, the street lamps. Um, you know,  
16 we've gone through a mad dash over the last, ah, I  
17 would say eight years to replace all of our street  
18 lamps, ah, to be LED street lamps. When DOT came  
19 through and replaced the street lamp that is directly  
20 across the street from my house the hood on it got  
21 bent up and so I have the street lamp literally  
22 pouring into my apartment, um, and it is, um, when  
23 the sun goes down and that street lamp goes on it is  
24 pretty much daylight inside of my apartment. Um, we  
25 have to use blackout shades, um, and I've filed the

1  
2 request. I've used the DOT system. The DOT system  
3 isn't integrated into 311 and so I wish that agencies  
4 would understand the investment that has been made in  
5 311 to make a seamless loop so that way these service  
6 requests can actually be accounted for and tracked.

7           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, that, that  
8 one, um, ah, we could talk offline on that one, but  
9 that is, that would be annoying to me, ah, to have a  
10 light shining in, into your house. You shouldn't  
11 have to do an investment. But I agree, and you heard  
12 the commissioner saying that some agencies are not  
13 cooperating. Well, they should be made to cooperate,  
14 ah, hopefully under the new mayor they'll, they'll do  
15 that. And then we shouldn't have to go to, you know,  
16 and I still don't, I still can't get stumps removed,  
17 tree stumps removed, ah, in my district on a timely  
18 basis and took exception with, um, the commissioner,  
19 um, in, in a Parks, ah, committee hearing, ah, a few  
20 weeks ago when they say it takes two years and that's  
21 a long time, but I, I have some that are 10 years  
22 outstanding. We never get updates. We don't, we  
23 have no idea of the service request, ah, so that's,  
24 Parks is a, is a sore point with, with me. Um, and  
25 you mentioned DOT, of course, it's a huge sore point

1  
2 with, it just goes into some vast black hole of, of  
3 service requests. Like you and your street light.  
4 Um, we don't know what is going on with that. But  
5 I'll, I'll try to, you know, handle that complaint of  
6 yours personally if we could see if we could get some  
7 resolution. You shouldn't have to deal with that.  
8 Um, anything else you'd like add, because I really,  
9 we really rely on your organization to, to tell us,  
10 ah, and give us feedback on obviously this, this  
11 topic and many others. But I thank you. Thank you,  
12 Noel.

13 NOEL HIDALGO: Yep. Thank, thank you for  
14 giving me the opportunity. Um, I want to commend  
15 really 311. I think, ah, Joe and, and the team at  
16 311 have done a great job, you know, for the decade  
17 that they have been out there listening to New  
18 Yorkers complain about everything under the sun. Um,  
19 I just think that, you know, as we really have  
20 identified a build with not for mentality across  
21 public interest technology and particularly over the  
22 last decade inside of the gov tech ecosystem that  
23 it's imperative that we, we really just connect the  
24 values that were expressed in redoing 311's app, um,  
25 and really connect that to, to where we should be,

1  
2 ah, in New Yorkers and, you know, to, just to over-  
3 emphasize this point, yes, there are professional  
4 testers who are useful to testing out the app, but  
5 the average everyday New Yorker needs to be included  
6 into the conversation on how to make this particular  
7 tool, which is so critical to so many government, ah,  
8 ah, ah, services as useful as possible. And, and  
9 then let's also make sure that we're looking at all  
10 of the web properties that exist across New York City  
11 government, because there is a direct link. When you  
12 can't find something on nyc.gov or an agency website  
13 and there's poor information management there, or if  
14 that tool doesn't work for you, it's gonna lead  
15 directly to a 311 call. And so let's figure out how  
16 to minimize, ah, that work, and that is an investment  
17 inside of a digital services unit inside of New York  
18 City government, um, and the time has come for that.  
19 So, ah, thank you for this time.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And just one other  
21 thing. I just, just for my own, um, information,  
22 'cause I'm gonna be talking to the NYPD, on your, you  
23 know, your complaints of let's say blocking a, a bike  
24 line or whatever, what have you gotten? What's the  
25 percentage of satisfaction you've gotten from, you

1 know, like the result of the complaint, that the  
2 action was taken? I know it varies, but?

3  
4 NOEL HIDALGO: It absolutely varies  
5 depending upon what precinct I'm in. Ah, you know,  
6 some precincts, yesterday's hearing was very  
7 illuminating and thank you for, for, you know, being  
8 vocal about your frustrations, and my frustrations  
9 and, and my friends' frustrations in north Brooklyn  
10 have been very similar. Um, you know, the fact that  
11 we, we could file a service request, um, and it stays  
12 open for hours, or is immediately addressed within  
13 minutes, ah, depending upon what location it is. Um,  
14 I commute over the Williamsburg Bridge down Clinton  
15 Street. Um, routinely I'm coming across a  
16 bidirectional bike lane, um, ah, that is consistently  
17 blocked, um, with vehicles. I've gotten to the point  
18 that I don't even file service requests for Clinton  
19 Street because, um, it's just like that's, it's just  
20 gonna be blocked. Like there doesn't seem to be an  
21 appropriate level of response from the, from the NYPD  
22 to actually address the, the things that cause those  
23 blocked bike lanes. There are other times where I  
24 have gotten telephone calls at 2 o'clock in the  
25 morning from unknown numbers that I'm like who is

1 this like and they, it's like, oh, we've come out to  
2 address your blocked bike line, um, and, and nobody's  
3 around. You're not around. There's been  
4 construction material in the bike lane, no way to  
5 divert, and the NYPD will say, well, that's not our  
6 problem. Council Member Rivera ended up creating  
7 legislation so that way there has to be, you know, a,  
8 a protected temporary bike lane. All of these issues  
9 are frustrating and they don't, they speak to a  
10 specific issue about a non-agile government and a  
11 nonresponsive government. When you see that data  
12 point, um, and you see that data point and you see  
13 the service request closed out within five minutes,  
14 that is a massive red flag, ah, that should be  
15 brought up inside the City Council and, you know,  
16 summons should be done, like that's criminal  
17 activity, right? Like how can you respond to...

19 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Let me assure you,  
20 though, and, and tell any of your members, um, or  
21 anybody that if they experience situations where  
22 something was closed out without actually addressing  
23 the problem, my committee, I would love to hear about  
24 this, so that we could address this. And you heard  
25 my comments with the commissioner that we can give

1  
2 the officers that respond some other choices rather  
3 than just closing it out because they couldn't get to  
4 it, or they're short staffed, or there's, you know,  
5 'cause I do listen to my local precinct scanner from  
6 time to time and I'll hear each particular, ah,  
7 patrol holding four or five 911 jobs. So getting to  
8 311 I could see is, is difficult on certain hours,  
9 but they're not allowed to report honesty, ah,  
10 apparently, um, in, in some, some regards with the,  
11 ah, precinct. So, um, but I need to know complaints  
12 that you feel are suspect, that something was not  
13 reported or there, there's a coverup, or there's  
14 special consideration, ah, which I have reported, and  
15 I continue to report to the local precinct for, you  
16 know, sometimes action is taken. They'll discipline  
17 the officers for not responding, um, but, again, we  
18 need to get, bring more of this out. So I thank you,  
19 Noel, for, for, ah, you know, your testimony today  
20 and for answering my questions. Ah, Irene, are there  
21 any questions for this panelist? Any other  
22 questions?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, I do not see  
24 any questions. And I want to thank Mr. Hidalgo for  
25 his testimony. And Chair, it looks like we do not



1  
2 have any more witnesses right now, and if we have  
3 missed anyone who has registered to testify today and  
4 had yet been called please use the Zoom raise hand  
5 function and you will be called in order that you  
6 have raised the hand. I see no hands right now, and  
7 now I turn it over to Chair for the closing remarks  
8 and to adjourn the hearing.

9           CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, thank, ah, thank  
10 you, thank you, ah, to my committee counsel for a job  
11 well done again. Irene Byhovsky has done a terrific  
12 job, along with, ah, um, Charles Kim of the  
13 technology committee, and I want to thank everyone  
14 and sergeants, thank you all for your great work  
15 today, ah, and I think we accomplished a lot, um, and  
16 we have a lot more work to do and hopefully working  
17 with, ah, Commissioner Tisch and DoITT, um, we can  
18 fix some of the problems that were mentioned today  
19 and make the, not only the 311 experience better but  
20 the, ah, certainly, um, ah, streamline some of the  
21 complaints and make sure that the complaints are  
22 being, ah, addressed by all the city agencies and  
23 have all the city agencies cooperate. So I want to  
24 thank you all again and, um, thank you, ah, council  
25

members who have attended this hearing. This hearing  
is now adjourned. [gavel]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Ending live stream.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank  
you, everyone.

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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 November 16, 2021