



City of New York Parks & Recreation



**Hearing before the
New York City Council
Committee on Parks & Recreation**

**on the
Fiscal Year 2010 Preliminary Budget**

March 31, 2009

**Testimony by
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner
Department of Parks & Recreation**

INTRODUCTION

We're here today to talk about the budget for our City's parks, recreation centers, and other facilities. Like some of you, I remember our parks in the 1970s. During that fiscal crisis, our parks were being victimized by vandalism and neglect and our buildings abandoned or shut down. This administration understands that safe, clean parks and facilities are anchors for neighborhoods and communities in every borough, and that even in a difficult fiscal climate, we cannot let our parks slip. Fortunately, we are going into a time of fiscal austerity following a period of unparalleled expansion of our expense and capital budgets. I compare to this to a healthy person who gets the flu—you feel lousy for a while but you get better. We will not repeat the mistakes of the 1970s, and to that end, we have learned to do more with less. While we will have to cut back in some areas, we will still be able to maintain our parks, facilities, beaches, pools, street trees, and natural areas.

As with every agency, we are facing significant cuts to our capital and expense budgets. The good news from our point of view is that we are not being cut disproportionately and our headcount is at a record high. We have achieved our target for 12 percent savings through our agency's revenue and expense budgets. Our approach to the cuts will reduce service impacts to the public by maximizing new technology and leveraging the help of volunteers and interns to keep our parks clean and safe, and this team will carry us through the lean times. That said, it will be challenging for us. To meet our cuts, we are in full attrition, and we expect to see the result of that decrease in staff in the coming years. We will reduce our six-month seasonal staff by 370 positions, and we will lose 303 full-time staff members through attrition. The \$2.5 million reduction in tree pruning contracts will result in approximately 38,000 fewer street trees being pruned.

Over the past two decades, Parks has built a sophisticated network to maintain our park system. This includes over 3,000 Job Training Participants who work in the parks year round and our

network of 800 civic groups and 55,000 volunteers who provide donated labor to their parks, along with a dozen major non-profit organization, who together raise about \$90 million to help care for parks or deliver sports and cultural across the city, such as City Parks Foundation, Bronx River Alliance, Greenbelt Conservancy, Open Space Alliance, and Forest Park Trust. Aside from these alternate workforces, we are also doing more with less through new technologies that boost our operational efficiency and keep our environment more sustainable.

Although times are tough, we are focused on our agency's core mission. We are still maintaining our 29,000 acres of parkland, planting new trees, building for the future, greening our city, keeping our children and all New Yorkers healthy, and bringing New Yorkers to the waterfront. I'd like to share with you some ways that we are working to continue to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

MAINTENANCE

Technology

In the field, we are equipping our more than 650 comfort stations with light sensors and compact fluorescent lights, and replacing paper towels with automatic hand dryers. Not only will these changes reduce the time our staff needs to clean the public toilets, it is also better for our environment. And we are providing additional direct-connect phones to facilitate more efficient communication among managers, supervisors and field staff in daily operations. With this investment, we will be better able to respond to local conditions as they emerge.

Green Fleet

Last year, we were presented the National "Greenest Fleet Award" from the National Fleet Manager's Association, or NAFA. Parks uses 20 percent biodiesel fuel for all 850 of our diesel trucks and other equipment, and approximately two-thirds of the fleet uses some type of alternative fuel.

We are not resting on our laurels, either. In 2008, we successfully piloted a more aggressive use of biodiesel at Orchard Beach in the Bronx. We will expand this pilot to over 100 vehicles for this summer. In addition to using alternative fuel vehicles, Parks is also going smaller where it can, by exchanging over 100 SUVs for hybrid sedans over the last three years.

Energy Efficiency

With the help of the New York Power Authority, or NYPA, we are also making our park facilities more energy efficient. We are collaborating with NYPA and DCAS' Office of Energy Conservation to implement the ENCORE plan for Energy Cost Reduction in parks. ENCORE projects conserve energy, reduce energy costs, and improve the environment.

We are even managing our power usage better. We installed a variable transformer on Randall's Island for \$6,000 to stabilize our power supply, and the investment has already paid for itself,

and continues to save \$3,000 a year in electricity costs. In the same vein, we are in the process of completing a 12,000 square foot green roof on a major facility on Randall's Island, experimenting with 12 distinct green roof system technologies. When complete, it will be the largest municipal green roof in the five boroughs and will provide myriad noise, heating, and energy-related benefits. This roof will serve as a working laboratory for green roof design and construction, and lessons learned here will be applied to future installations at other Parks facilities.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Canine Waste

Our mission is to ensure a high quality of life for our park users. For the last several rounds of our Parks Inspection Program reviews, Canine Waste left behind by inconsiderate dog owners has been identified as a major problem as we try to maintain park facilities at the safest and cleanest levels.

In effort to combat a growing problem caused by people's failure to clean up after their dogs in parks and on city streets, we have joined forces with the Department of Sanitation to step up enforcement against people who don't "stoop to scoop," to re-educate the public on the law, and to encourage New Yorkers to use the City's 3-1-1 information line as a means to alert our agencies about patterns of violation.

In the month of March alone, our Parks Enforcement Patrol officers have issued 71 summonses for Failure to Remove Canine Waste. Considering how difficult it can be to catch a violator in the act, and with only about 200 officers to enforce conditions in all five boroughs, issuing more than one summons each day shows that we are getting tough on people who refuse to pick up after their dogs.

Graffiti

Also, we are continuing to partner with NYPD's Citywide Vandals Task Force to combat graffiti in our parks. Members of our senior staff attend GraffitiStat meetings each week, and we have relationships with precincts in every borough. We are forwarding conditions with dates and pictures for the NYPD to review for recurring violations. We are also training our field staff on how to remove graffiti from delicate public monuments, and we are experimenting with cameras in our parks to discourage vandals. We have also established a Parks Enforcement Patrol Special Operations Unit to address vandalism, as well as other late-night illegal activities. Last year, our PEP officers made 14 vandalism-related arrests, more than four times the year before.

Recently, the arcade in Bethesda Terrace was severely vandalized, causing an estimated \$50,000 worth of damage. Fortunately, in this case, the Central Park Police Precinct was able to apprehend several suspects and charge them with felony criminal mischief.

At Highbridge Park, in an area with little pedestrian traffic that has been riddled with ongoing homeless and vandalism problems, we installed a motion-sensitive flashcam and announcement

for a two-month pilot period. During that time, we had zero incidents of graffiti and vandalism. It enabled us to deploy our staff to other locations, reduced vehicle emissions, reduced supply costs, and improved the perception of the park. Because of its effectiveness, we are now looking to use this technology at other, highly problematic locations.

Homelessness

We also continue to monitor the issue of homeless people who seek shelter in our parks. We work closely with the Department of Homeless Services Outreach Units and the NYPD Homeless Outreach Unit to ensure that our parks remain safe and the homeless individuals receive needed attention. We established a Parks Enforcement Patrol Nighthawk Unit to address issues with homeless individuals and encampments, and also monitor curfew violators in our parks.

During the cold weather months when the low temperatures or precipitation make conditions unhealthy to be outside, our units check targeted sites and can force individuals to accept services or be arrested. In 2008, our unit transported 264 homeless individuals to nearby shelters.

PLANYC

Even as we are becoming more efficient and stay on top of our quality-of-life concerns, we cannot lose sight of our priorities. We still plan to fulfill our part of the Mayor's PlaNYC initiative. We have pledged to ensure that all New Yorkers live within a 10 minute walk of a park or playground by 2030, and that they have more and better places for active recreation. We also are making the future of the City greener and more sustainable; and part of that task involves getting one million additional trees planted, an initiative that we call MillionTreesNYC. Especially in this economy, we need to think about investing in trees that will pay us back with many long-term benefits, ranging from environmental management, to raising property values, to preventing climate change.

MillionTreesNYC

MillionTreesNYC is ahead of schedule to plant an unprecedented one million trees in New York City by 2017—our first year planting goal was originally set at 93,397 trees, and we exceeded that goal by 17,714 trees. Since MillionTreesNYC was launched in October 2007, we have planted 173,229 trees. Bette Midler, who was a key figure in bringing this idea to New York, and her New York Restoration Project, a non-profit founded in 1995 to reclaim green space in underserved neighborhoods, have been terrific partners in this effort.

Tomorrow is the start of Million Trees Month, and I'd like each of you to help us by getting involved. You can start by getting the word out. We'll be planting 20,000 trees as a part of New York Cares' 15th Annual *Hands On New York Day* on Saturday, April 25. There are also tree plantings, free tree giveaways, and stewardship events all month in many of your districts and throughout the five boroughs.

Stewardship

Even after Million Trees Month ends, we will continue to conduct free tree stewardship seminars throughout the summer. New Yorkers will learn about how to take care of all of these new trees, but they will also help us relieve the part of the maintenance burden by learning how to keep trees healthy. Tree stewardship programs are a wonderful example of a low-cost investment that will benefit New York financially and environmentally in the long run. You and your constituents can always visit www.milliontreesnyc.org for the latest news and events, or simply call 3-1-1 for more information.

Regional Parks

We're also moving forward on other parts of Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC initiatives. This year, we will expand our active recreational opportunities by breaking ground on two of the eight regional park projects: Ocean Breeze Park in Staten Island and the McCarren Pool in Brooklyn. The construction of Staten Island's Ocean Breeze Park will feature the city's premiere indoor track and field facility, the largest of its kind in New York City, and one of the best in the northeast.

McCarren Pool in Brooklyn is a lesson for us not to give up on City parks when facing fiscal challenges. The pool was closed in the 1980s due to deteriorating conditions. After being closed for more than 25 years, it will finally be rebuilt this summer as an outdoor pool and year-round recreation center.

RECREATION

One thing we have learned from the fiscal crisis in the 1970s is that we should make our best efforts to keep as many facilities open as we can, and even to open new facilities in the lean times. We must work together to improve the health and physical fitness for all New Yorkers. New facilities help improve a community's health, fending off the dangers of diabetes and other obesity-related illnesses, lowering health care costs, and providing opportunities for gifted student-athletes to achieve excellence.

Parks operates 37 recreation centers across the five boroughs, and we very recently opened the Al Oerter Recreation Center in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, a truly state-of-the-art recreational facility, as well as the nearby indoor World Ice Rink, in the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Natatorium and Ice Rink building. These new complexes are already drawing thousands of new users in just the last three months, with over 15,000 registered users signed up at Al Oerter, and 34,675 memberships purchased at the pool over the past year. Overall, recreation center membership is up by 55 percent citywide from 2007 numbers.

Swim Programs

It is an unfortunate fact that across the country, death by drowning is the second largest cause of death for children, and rates are even higher in minority communities. Many of Parks' indoor and outdoor pools are located in minority neighborhoods, providing us the means and opportunity to help address swimming skills among minority children.

Last year alone, we taught more than 10,000 people, many of them children, to swim through our free Learn-to-Swim program. And since 2005, we have also partnered with the New York City Department of Education to offer "Swim to Safety," another free instructional program for public school students. Based out of Parks' recreation centers, this free program helps children develop a level of comfort in the water and teaches the essentials necessary to keep children safe from drowning.

We are currently seeking funding, whether through the City Council or elsewhere, to create Advanced Swim, a new program that would develop a cadre of strong youth swimmers who can swim competitively through Parks swim teams, and perhaps even more important, train to become a New York City lifeguard and help save lives. Any help you can provide to get this program underway will be appreciated.

Lifeguards

As you know, we need lifeguards to protect and defend our beaches and pools from unsafe conditions. Our goals are to keep our 14 miles of City beaches and 54 outdoor pools safe and open each and every day from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Ideally, we would like 1,200 lifeguards to fully operate our beaches and pools. While we have recruited more lifeguards in recent years, we have not yet been able to reach that goal. We have, however, set a record number of lifeguards in each of the past three years: 1,060 in 2006, 1,092 in 2007, and 1,148 in 2008. I'm happy to report that as of March 20, 429 out of 1,034 eligible candidates have passed the qualifying test, and are either in training or scheduled to begin their training soon. On the same date last year, 330 of 842 candidates have passed the test.

Typically, 75 percent of lifeguards from the previous year return, so we hope to start with a base of around 850 returning guards. We are optimistic that a silver lining to this tough economy is that more people will take advantage of this terrific, well-paying summer job, and we will have a strong recruiting year. We welcome your help in telling your constituents who are looking for employment about this great opportunity; the enrollment period will be coming to a close on Friday, so we encourage interested candidates to take the qualifying test as soon as possible.

WATERFRONT

Beyond beaches and pools, this administration wants to bring people back to the waterfront. New York has a long and proud history as one of the great harbor cities of the world. Especially this year, 400 years after Henry Hudson sailed into New York Bay, we must continue to transform our formerly industrial waterfront, and make it a green destination. We can accomplish this by continuing to build great new waterfront parks and connecting our 21st century greenway system. We can also do more with what we have, and develop innovative new strategies to bring people to the waterfront.

Water Trail

One of our substantive efforts to reconnect the public with the City's waterfront is through our NYC Water Trail. With 28 locations (and counting) for canoers and kayakers to gain access to the water, this project is a result of a team effort between Queens Borough Commissioner Dorothy Lewandowski, Going Coastal, and the canoe and kayak communities.

Last March, Commissioner Lewandowski, a water sports enthusiast and accomplished kayaker, led the mostly volunteer effort to develop New York City's water trails. In partnership with Going Coastal, Parks developed a Water Trail Map & Guide identifying where New Yorkers can legally canoe and kayak. The Parks website includes an interactive map of the citywide water trail system.

If you have never kayaked or canoed, you should try it. Let us know and we'll be happy to take a group of Council Members and staff out on the water to enjoy the remarkable waterfront we have in this city. I promise you won't tip over, and if you do we will be there to fish out anyone who has committed capital or expense funding.

CONCLUSION

In fact, on Saturday, May 16, we will be celebrating the reclamation of our waterfront for It's My Park! Day, our semi-annual volunteer event in partnership with our significant citywide associate, the City Parks Foundation. We will celebrate the day with shore clean-ups, free paddling and rowing, and other fun water-based activities at sites throughout the city. I'd like to call on everyone here to come out to your neighborhood park and take the day to volunteer.

As we have said, in an era with a reduced expense budget, we will rely even more on the efforts of volunteers. Fortunately, New Yorkers have a tremendous civic spirit. I have seen it, and I know each of you have as well. To that end, we have identified two parks in each borough that we have targeted for "community development." We will encourage new friends' groups, local businesses, and institutions to get more involved in these neighborhood parks. With their support, and yours, we will be developing programs and events at these locations that suit the surrounding community's interests and capitalize on local resources.

We have great things to look forward to in 2009. In addition to all of the PlaNYC projects, we have many important projects in construction that will be opening this year. We will be opening the first sections of the High Line in Lower Manhattan, a new section of the Harlem River Bikeway, and Concrete Plant Park, a crucial link in the Bronx River Greenway. Also, we are beginning work on a new recreation complex in College Point Park in Queens including ballfields and sports lighting, reconstruction of the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Boathouse and a new gateway to Midland Beach in Staten Island.

And was announced yesterday, Parks received funding for several key projects from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that will augment our municipal budget. Most notably, we have been given \$30 million in displaced funding to finally make long-needed repairs to the boardwalks at Coney Island and Rockaway beaches. For a while, we have had to make piecemeal repairs to the most structurally unsound areas of the boardwalks. Now, we will be able to repair entire sections, using the most sustainable materials. We have also received \$3.7 million in funding for the Trees and Sidewalks program to continue to repair sidewalks that have been damaged by curbside trees. The transportation stimulus package also calls for the repair of several pedestrian bridges connecting to parkland, such as the Ward's Island Pedestrian Bridge, as well as the construction of a greenway through Hunts Point and Port Morris in the Bronx, with waterfront access at Hunts Point Landing.

We want to make sure that parks are the host for people in tough times who want to go for a walk or just relax. Parks are not only backyards, but also just a subway ride away from an adventure or a "stay-cation," and we anticipate a big increase in visitation to our parks and recreational facilities. City parks will always be there for New Yorkers and visitors who want to get healthy, enjoy a respite, or just maintain a good quality of life. I thank you for your time, and for continuing to support our park system.

READ INTO RECORD



**New York City Council
Helen D. Foster, Chair
Parks and Recreation**

March 30th, 2009

RE: Preliminary Budget Hearing - Parks and Recreation

Dear Chair Helen Foster,

I am here to speak in favor of needed funding and continued support for Parks and Recreation.

In 1996 **Allied Productions** became founders/stewards of **Le Petit Versailles** a New York City **GreenThumb** garden park. We are a place for plants and people. As the arts community and neighborhood we represent has become involved we continue to flourish, presenting free public events during our garden season May- November.

All of this would not be possible without various programs available to us provided by Parks and GreenThumb including tree planting & pruning, soil/ compost, lumber & tools, printing & mailing public event invites.

Without continued support for Parks and Recreation these and other services will be cut back if not entirely eliminated. Such a prospect would be counter productive given the Mayor's and the City Councils embrace of an informed plan (PLANYC) reassessing the environmental needs of New York City.

WE urge you to fund to the maximum Parks and Recreation for Budget 2009/2010.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,


Peter Cramer

Project Director Le Petit Versailles



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March 31, 2009

The Honorable Christine C. Quinn
Council Speaker
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Quinn,

The New York Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects strongly encourages the City Council to both match Mayoral funding for the Department of Parks and Recreation Capital Budget and also allocate additional resources maintenance of neighborhood parks in the coming fiscal year.

Funding for major open space initiatives including McCarren Pool and Recreation Center in Greenpoint, Fort Washington Park and the High Bridge adjoining Washington Heights, Soundview Park in the South Bronx and Ocean Breeze in Staten Island among many others should not be reduced. Historically the City Council has funded PEP officers to make parks safe and recreation staff to coach sports and help kids in needy communities become more active and we commend you for these actions. The third prong holding the emerald is allocating resources for maintaining and replacing plants. Gardening is one of the least expensive means for making a neighborhood look great, be safer, act as more ecologically productive agent in the ecology of the city.

Landscapes are like children. They need to be nurtured and cared for to realize their full potential. The results of this kind of attention is evident in Prospect, Central, Riverside and other parks in the city where trained horticulturists engaged with careful maintenance and stewardship regimens have enabled the spaces to become undying landmarks for residents and visitors alike. This attention should extend to the neighborhood level. Continued efforts to enhance, preserve and maintain the 29,000 acres of open space and over 140 miles of waterfront park land should not be undervalued in the budget. Deferred maintenance can lead to long term loss of value.

In these challenging economic times, it is critical that we do not lose sight of the important visionary thinking that went in to PlaNYC. Continuing to fund projects such as the Million Trees Project and the School Yard to Community Park initiative are important aspects of this vision that reach broadly to all corners of our metropolis. Many references have been made lately to WPA public works projects. Perhaps the blueprint that the Mayor's plan provides, along with the aligned efforts by the DRP to develop new sustainability standards can create the same kind of lasting legacy that our grandchildren look back to as precedent.

The next generation will be forever grateful that we held the line on budget cuts at this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Susannah C. Drake RLA, ASLA
President
New York Chapter

CC Helen Foster, Chair Parks & Recreation Committee



City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing
Fiscal Year 2010

New Yorkers for Parks Testimony
March 31, 2009

Hello. My name is Cheryl Huber and I am Director of Research & Planning for New Yorkers for Parks, the only independent watchdog and advocate for New York City parks, beaches and playgrounds. NY4P is committed to ensuring that every neighborhood in every borough receives green, clean, and safe parks.

Overview

Overall we have seen great improvement in funding for the Parks Department over the last 7 years thanks to strong support from the City Council and the Mayor. Unfortunately, largely due to the dismal economy, we are now observing a reversal of this trend with cuts to the Parks operating budget, particularly affecting maintenance staffing.

Last year's adopted expense budget provided \$270 million in City funds for the Department of Parks and Recreation – a reduction of \$10 million from the high point the year before. Now, in the Preliminary Budget for FY 2010, the Mayor has proposed further cuts to parks, with only \$255 million allotted for the Parks Department. If the budget is passed as it stands, **that's \$25 million cut from parks in the last two years.**

Community Boards were recently asked to rate the most important city services for their district as part of the City Budget process. Similar to last year, "parks maintenance" came in second, only behind "services for the elderly." Clearly, park maintenance is consistently considered a top priority by many community boards, and yet the City is proposing to cut essential funding for maintenance and operations.

As NY4P's *Report Card on Parks* and *Report Card on Beaches* have shown, damaged play equipment, weedy lawns, and littered beaches are too common. Decreases in maintenance funding for the agency will only serve to worsen these conditions.

Furthermore, on the capital budget side, Governor Paterson is proposing painful budget cuts that will particularly affect the Environmental Protection Fund, the principal NYS funding source for parks. This dedicated source of long term funding has helped the city to reclaim the waterfront for the public, like Hudson River Park, and to protect some of its last vestiges of natural and open spaces.

With fewer dollars from New York State, it is essential that the City steps up and funds our parks and open spaces.

Restorations

We ask the City Council to restore the \$15 million in proposed cuts to the parks budget.

Tree Pruning Contracts: The DPR plans to reduce their pruning contract by 53% in FY 2010 and beyond. Considering the city's goal to plant one million trees through PlaNYC and the ongoing concern of street tree maintenance, this is a particularly harmful loss. We are grateful that the Council has historically restored cuts to tree pruning and hope that this year will be no different.

Staffing: The Department has proposed to reduce funding for seasonal staffing in FY 2010 by \$5.6 million. This would eliminate 10% of our seasonal staff. These summer positions are vital to providing sufficient maintenance and programming during the busiest season for parks. Furthermore, 109 full time positions will be lost through attrition, further reducing park services for New Yorkers.

Recommendations

Federal Stimulus Bill

In February, NY4P met with several members of Congress and the Senate in Washington, D.C. to secure a commitment for parks in the stimulus bill. After ensuring that parks would receive funding from the bill, we've continued to encourage our elected officials in Albany to work cooperatively to allocate these funds towards priority "shovel ready" projects such as the Brooklyn Bridge and Hudson River parks.

Improved Accounting

In 2007, New Yorkers for Parks commissioned The Citizens Budget Commission report, "Making the Most of Our Parks." The report states a concern that the Department of Parks and Recreation relies too heavily on capital funding to cover the expense budget because it's easier to obtain.

We encourage DPR to counter this practice by including maintenance costs within their capital budget requests. A multiyear program for shifting funds from the capital to the operating budget would ensure that some of the borrowed funds will go towards maintenance and operations. This would encourage preventive maintenance and provide sustainable financial support for park infrastructure.

Concession Reform

New Yorkers for Parks also suggests that the Parks Department explore diversified funding sources such as keeping a portion of concession revenues for long term maintenance funding. Currently, 100% of revenues from concessions in most parks go back to the City General Operating Fund. Allowing the Parks Department to keep a portion of the \$50 million they earn annually from concessions would provide a steady stream of revenue.

On behalf of all the New Yorkers who depend on public parkland, New Yorkers for Parks calls on the City Council to advocate for these budget restorations and initiatives.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY
Tuesday, March 31, 2009
New York City Council Parks Dept

BAD CONTRACTORS AND THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM

Thank you Chair Helen Foster and members of the City Council Parks Committee for the opportunity to testify and bring a matter of concern to your attention.

Under the current system of contracting in the New York Department of Parks and Recreation, most capital sidewalk repair and tree planting projects are separated out in small and medium bid packages ranging from under \$1 million to \$1.9 million bid packages. The budgets for these projects contain the same scope of work overall, yet they are dissected into smaller contracts.

The City Parks Capital Projects Division claims this is promoting competition and bringing down cost. While the price per foot on concrete construction and landscaping may seem to have gone down on the surface, based on the low bid results, the primary reason behind the statistic is the attraction to undercut wages, benefits and the insurance law has become more lucrative. Contractors that cheat have identified Parks projects as the easiest target for reaping ill-gotten tax-free gains. The actual cost to our city and its workers needs to be looked at comprehensively. The cost of labor law investigations and the litigation that follows must be taken into account. The cost of taxpayer funded projects that goes to off-the-books workers is huge. The cost of workman's compensation, insurance premiums and payroll tax drains our city. Good contractors costs goes up and cannot win jobs based on the practices of the current system. Bad contractors avoid costs as a source of profit. Non-compliance by design has become a factor in bid proposals to secure work.

The primary targets of these corrupt contractors are recent immigrants of African, Hispanic or Middle Eastern descent who have recently immigrated to this country. My investigations show that these workers make up 95% of all wage claims brought to the attention of the relevant city agencies. Many of the contractors are certified as a MBE or WMBE. With the large overall success of affirmative action in NYC it is a shame that these contractors would exploit the system put in place to promote equal opportunity.

I respectfully ask the City Council to look into this urgent matter and hold hearings on this issue. Thank you again for your time and consideration to this issue.

To address this problem in a cost effective manner would be quite simple. Combine or bundle the Agencies bid packages to over 3 million dollars. The bond requirements would weed out bad contractors that have no prior bonding and/or checkered work histories. Other safeguards and overall cost savings include:

- * Mandatory Apprenticeship language, A highly trained workforce
- * Reduced cost of Consultants, Inspectors and Engineering
- * Less Paperwork, Bid Documents, less Bid and Pre-bid Meetings
- * Proven Better Labor Law Compliance
- * The cost of litigation in the NYC legal system
- * Elimination of defaulting contactors leaving jobs unfinished
- * Workers with Heath Care Plans (overall society savings)
- * Less Workman's Compensation Insurance Fraud (overall society savings)
- * Contract performance, better quality and quantity of work built faster
- * Unemployment Insurance compliance
- * Safer working conditions, safety of the public & the cost of lawsuits
- * The cost of social humanity taken on with the exploitation of immigrant workers

The Tree planting and Side walk repair contracts in DPR are perfect examples of large Capital project allowance dissected into small contracts under the premise of overall cost savings. A project Labor Agreement on these Bundled jobs should always be considered for additional savings and residency requirements as well. And just as important the MBE and WMBE goals can be met on these jobs with the added protection of responsible General contractors and Union oversight to prevent the exploitation of immigrant workers and the fleecing of our taxpayer dollars at work.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Parks Dept Budget
hearing

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: David River (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: New York City Parks Foundation

Address: The Arsenal, New York, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Mar. 31, 2009

Name: Linda Eskenas (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1674 Richmond Terrace

I represent: The North Shore Waterfront Greenbelt

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Jane Cooke (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 42 Broadway Suite 1827 10004

I represent: New York Chapter American Society of

Address: Landscape Architects

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lowel Barton

Address: _____

I represent: NY State Laborers

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cheryl Huber

Address: New Yorkers for Parks

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms