

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

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March 13, 2026
Start: 9:40 a.m.
Recess: 1:50 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Virginia Maloney
Vickie Paladino
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Phil Wong

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Tiffany Cabán
Linda Lee

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lillian Bonsignore, Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department

Daniel Flynn, First Deputy Commissioner of New York City Fire Department

John Esposito, Chief of Department of the New York City Fire Department

Paul Miano, Chief of EMS of the New York City Fire Department

Lizette Christoff, Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget of the New York City Fire Department

Kevin Woods, Chief of Fire Operations of the New York City Fire Department

Thomas Currao, Chief of Fire Prevention of the New York City Fire Department

Nafeesah Noonan, Associate Commissioner of Workforce Development of the New York City Fire Department

Christina Farrell, Commissioner of the New York City Emergency Management Department

Christopher Blanco, Chief Financial Officer of the New York City Emergency Management

Andrew Ansbro, President of Uniformed Firefighter Association of Greater New York

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

Jim Brosi, President of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association

Oren Barzilay, President of FDNY EMS Local 2507, Uniform EMTs, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors of the Fire Department of New York

Vincent Variale, EMS Lieutenant and President of the Uniformed EMS Officers Union

Maleia Sheflin, self

Susanne Duque, FDNY EMS B-HEARD Lieutenant

Andrew Farina, self

Christian Bahr-Lopez, self

Michelle Fleurantin, Environmental Justice Attorney at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

William Juhn, Disability Justice Attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Vanessa Gibson, Bronx Borough President

David Besprozvany, self

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Mic check, mic check.

3 This is a mic check for the Committee on Fire and
4 Emergency Management. Today's date is March 13, 2026,
5 recorded by Walter Lewis in the Chambers.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, good
7 morning. Welcome to the New York City Council hearing
8 on the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management.

9 At this time, please silence all
10 electronics and do not approach the dais. I repeat,
11 please do not approach the dais.

12 If you are testifying today, make sure
13 you have filled out a slip at the back of the room.

14 Any other questions or concerns, please
15 reach a Sergeant-at-Arms.

16 Thank you for your cooperation.

17 Chair, you may begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [GAVEL] (NO AUDIO)
19 today we will review the Fire Department's and New
20 York (NO AUDIO) just to understand how they address
21 the needs of all New Yorkers.

I would like to begin by welcoming Fire
Commissioner Lillian Bonsignoree. Commissioner
Bonsignoree is the first woman to lead the Fire
Department of New York City, and we look forward to

1 working with her as she takes on this important role.
2 Yeah, you guys are wrong. She's the second woman, but
3 the first, I guess, that worked as an FDNY member. I
4 would also like to thank the members of the Fire
5 Department for their sacrifices over the past year
6 and the frontline responses of EMTs, paramedics, and
7 firefighters on their display every day and because
8 of their direct life-saving actions, our city is a
9 safer place. The Fire Department's EMS members and
10 firefighters are known as New York's bravest and
11 best, and I believe those nicknames are aptly given.

12 I would also like to thank the members of
13 the NYC Emergency Management Team. They have been
14 working incredibly long hours to assist in the City's
15 response, performing a job that often does not get
16 the recognition it deserves.

17 The Fire Department's Fiscal 2027
18 Preliminary Budget totals 2.8 billion dollars with
19 funding for 17,602 positions. The Department's Fiscal
20 2027 Budget has undergone moderate changes in the
21 Preliminary Financial Plan. The Department's Capital
Commitment Plan includes funding for hundreds of
distinct projects across the five-year plan. During
our hearing today, the Committee would like to

1 discuss the Department's new needs in the current
2 financial plan. This includes additional funding for
3 personnel, service costs, including overtime
4 expenses, and various OTPS adjustments. The Committee
5 would like to revisit these items, such as EMS pay
6 parity, fire and ambulance response times, and the
7 Department's increasing reliance on overtime. I would
8 also like to discuss the diminishing conditions of
9 our firehouses, recruitment, and retention, and the
FDNY's fleet maintenance.

10 Over the past year, this Committee has
11 held a number of oversight hearings on a wide range
12 of topics, including a hearing on Local Law 6 of
13 2025, fire and safety and permitting approval for
14 community energy storage facilities, and continued
15 oversight of the Department's preparedness for
16 emerging hazards. While these hearings are not
necessarily budget hearings, as we all know, you
often need to spend money to get results.

17 I would like to thank our Committee Staff
18 for their hard work, but first I'd like to recognize
19 that we are joined by Council Members Schulman and
20 Maloney, and Council Member Wong.

2 I would like to thank our Committee Staff
3 for their hard work, Financial Analyst Tanveer Singh,
4 Assistant Director Jack Storey, Committee Counsel
5 Josh Kingsley, Political Analyst Will Hongach, and my
6 incredible Chief-of-Staff, Phyllis Inzerillo.

7 I'd like to welcome and thank
8 Commissioner Bonsignoree and our firefighters and
9 EMTs, paramedics, and the Department's civilian staff
10 for the work that they do. I'm looking forward to
11 hearing from the Commissioner.

12 The Committee Counsel will now swear you
13 in.

14 If you would just raise your right hand,
15 Commissioner Lillian Bonsignoree, John Esposito, Paul
16 Miano, Lizette Christoff, Nafeesah Noonan, Daniel
17 Flynn, Kevin Woods, Thomas Currao.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Thank you,
19 everyone.

20 Do you just affirm to tell the truth, the
21 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and to answer
honestly to Council Member questions?

ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Seeing you
3 all recognize you do, you may go ahead with your
4 testimony. Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNOREE: Thank you. Good
6 morning, and thank you. Please excuse my cracky
7 voice. I was full whisper two days ago.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I know. I heard you.

9 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNOREE: This is much
10 better.

11 Good morning, Chair Ariola and Members of
12 the Fire and Emergency Management Committee. My name
13 is Lillian Bonsignore, and I'm pleased to appear
14 before you today to discuss the preliminary budget
15 for the Fire Department. I am joined by First Deputy
16 Commissioner Daniel Flynn, Chief of Department John
17 Esposito, Chief of EMS Paul Miano, Deputy
18 Commissioner of Management and Budget Lizette
19 Christoff, Chief of Fire Operations Kevin Woods,
20 Chief of Fire Prevention Thomas Currao, and Associate
21 Commissioner of Workforce Development Nafeesah
Noonan.

This is my first budget hearing as Fire
Commissioner, so I'd like to begin by telling you a
little bit about my background. In 2022, I retired

1 after 31 years as a member of EMS, including serving
2 as Chief of EMS during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is
3 an extraordinary honor for me to serve as
4 Commissioner of this Department. I say that not just
5 because it's the greatest fire department in the
6 world, and it is, but because serving this Department
7 as Commissioner gives me a chance to pay it back for
8 the tremendous opportunities that I've experienced
9 over more than three decades. Joining EMS saved my
10 life. As a teenager, I was directionless. I didn't
11 know what to do for a career, and I wasn't certain
12 how I would overcome the challenges of my life. I
13 found EMS, and it quickly became part of my identity.
14 Public service is a calling for me. I am proud to be
15 the Commissioner of this agency because I know that
16 public service is a calling for thousands of members
17 of the FDNY. It takes a massive team effort to keep
18 this city safe, and I thank the Members of this
19 Committee for your support, your interest, and your
20 attention to our issues. I know that you see our
21 members the same way I see them, as heroes. They are
heroes in every EMS station, every firehouse. There
are heroes sitting behind the dispatch computers and
out conducting inspections and investigations. They

1 are undertaking complicated plan reviews and
2 analyzing finances and working to repair our
3 facilities and keep our fleet on the road. They are
4 on trucks and in ambulances and on boats and sitting
5 at desks, and when the city experiences brutal heat
6 waves or a long stretch of code blue conditions, many
7 FDNY personnel are outside in the conditions making
8 sure the job gets done.

9 This September, the FDNY will mark the
10 25th anniversary of the darkest date in our history.
11 September 11th was a day of immense loss for the
12 department. Three hundred and forty-three members
13 made the ultimate sacrifice while working to rescue
14 their fellow New Yorkers. As this committee knows
15 well, that sacrifice has continued in a decade since.
16 We have now lost 431 individuals to 9/11 illnesses
17 and countless more struggle with diseases as a result
18 of the time spent at that site. On the 25th
19 anniversary, we will solemnly honor the sacrifice of
20 those members and the sacrifice of their families as
21 we do every single day. I responded to the World
Trade Center on September 11th. I know how difficult
it can be to look back. Each anniversary tugs at old
wounds that never quite healed, but it also serves as

1 a reminder of the duty and the mission that we
2 carried 25 years ago and we still carry out each day.
3 We honor the memory of those who we've lost by laying
4 the foundation to those who come. In 2026, we are
5 stronger, better prepared, and more resilient than we
6 were 25 years ago.

7 My focus as Fire Commissioner is
8 continuing to drive the agency forward, strengthening
9 our resources and improving our ability to serve the
10 people of New York. I am committed to making sure
11 that we have the best equipment and the best
12 infrastructure, to training, education, and preparing
13 our members, to modernizing our approach to
14 operations on the fire ground and medical responses,
15 and in all the myriad ways that members of the FDNY
16 interact with our fellow citizens.

17 One of the ways I'd like to set the
18 agency on a successful course for the future is by
19 addressing the enormous challenge of EMS pay. This
20 year marks the 30th anniversary of the merger of EMS
21 with the Fire Department. Those three decades have
been marked by bravery, heroism, and countless lives
saved, and the city has always counted on EMS during
times of great need. FDNY EMTs and paramedics

1
2 shepherded the city through a global pandemic, and
3 they face a skyrocketing call volume and a need for
4 their skills like never before. It is time to pay
5 them a living wage, a salary that allows them to do
6 their incredible life-saving work and provide for
7 their families. As this Committee knows, the
8 authority to collectively bargain wages for City
9 employees, including EMTs and paramedics, lie with
10 the Office of Labor Relations, not the Fire
11 Department. As the Fire Commissioner, I believe in
12 parity, and I will tirelessly advocate for their pay
13 increases to the very best of my ability.

14
15 2025 was a busy year for the Department.
16 We responded to more than 25,000 structural fires and
17 more than 14,000 non-structural fires. We responded
18 to more than 1.6 million emergency medical incidents.
19 Of those, more than 600,000 were life-threatening
20 emergencies. We also performed nearly 1 million
21 patient transports to hospitals. I am happy to report
that fire fatalities were down. 2022 and 2023 were
years with the greatest number of fire deaths in
decades, with 97 and 104 deaths respectively. In
2024, that number decreased to 77, and last year it
decreased again to 62. One component of the drop in

1 fire deaths is that deaths resulting from fires that
2 were caused by lithium-ion batteries decreased from a
3 high of 18 in 2023 to only one death last year. We
4 attribute that positive development to changes in the
5 laws regarding lithium-ion batteries, including bills
6 passed by this Committee, and to our extensive
7 outreach and education campaigns. In 2024, the
8 Department's campaign to raise awareness of the
9 dangers of lithium-ion batteries produced 83 million
10 impressions across social media and targeted ads. In
11 2025, the campaign reached another 36 million
12 impressions. The public has heard our messaging about
13 safe use of these devices and, where possible, is
14 storing and charging them outside.

15 2025 was also a busy year for the FDNY
16 recruitment and retention team. Firefighter Exam 4044
17 was established in February. It produced a diverse
18 list of more than 20,000 candidates who passed,
19 including 22 percent Black, 28 percent Hispanic, 40
20 percent White, and 6 percent Asian. 7 percent of the
21 candidates who passed the exam were women. We are
eager to begin the processing, and we anticipate the
first group from this class to enter the Fire Academy
in the fall.

1
2 Across the country, it is an incredibly
3 difficult environment right now for EMS recruiting,
4 and New York City is no exception. Our two most
5 recent EMS recruitment campaigns produced a high
6 number of applicants, but not as many viable
7 candidates as we have hoped. We continue to work on
8 enhancing our communication and programming efforts
9 to assist applicants with the process and reduce
10 attrition within the applicant pool, and we have
11 adjusted our recruitment campaign schedule to begin
12 in June of this year. In this way, we hope to
13 maintain an active talent pool that will translate to
14 more EMTs being hired by the Department. I am on
15 record about how much I loved working as a member of
16 EMS. When you have the opportunity, please encourage
17 your constituents to consider a career with our team.

18 It was also one of the busiest years ever
19 for educational outreach to the community. FDNY
20 members made 3,245 safety presentations to audiences
21 totaling more than half a million New Yorkers. That
included more than 1,400 events in schools to more
than 218,000 students. The mobile CPR team trained
more than 116,000 people on how to conduct
compression-only CPR, including more than 38,000 high

1 school students. And in late 2025, we launched FDNY's
2 new Control the Bleed campaign, teaching people
3 life-saving skills to ensure that everyday citizens
4 can respond with confidence when faced with critical
5 situations involving life-threatening bleeding. First
6 responders get to the scene as quickly as possible.
7 But through these trainings, we're equipping
8 communities with tools to act even before the help
9 arrives. We also continued our partnership with the
10 American Red Cross to install smoke alarms and work
11 with members of the community to develop plans to
12 stay safe during a fire. In 2025, this partnership
13 installed more than 12,000 smoke alarms, bringing the
14 total number of alarms installed since the beginning
15 of this program in 2015 to more than 300,000 smoke
16 alarms. With the generous support of the FDNY
17 Foundation and its partners, we continue to expand
18 outreach, reaching New Yorkers where they live, work,
19 and attend school, arming them with the information
20 and training to keep themselves and their neighbors
21 safe.

Another first for the Department in last
year is that we issued our first ever criminal
summons following a fatal fire in which a fire

1 hydrant was blocked by a vehicle. The Department's
2 Bureau of Fire Prevention continues to use this tool
3 at fatal and multiple alarm fires. We appreciate the
4 Council Members on this Committee who remind their
5 constituents, if you block a hydrant, you may delay
6 fire operations. If the possibility of endangering
7 your neighbors isn't reason enough to avoid this, now
8 you may be fined up to 5,000 dollars.

9 After experiencing a historic spike in
10 brush fires in 2024, last year we installed for the
11 first time brush fire detection cameras in select
12 City parks. The solar-powered cameras are positioned
13 high above the ground like traffic cameras. They use
14 artificial intelligence to detect smoke and flame
15 activity, providing live video feeds to the Fire
16 Department Operations Command Center.

17 In the Mayor's Preliminary Fiscal Year
18 '27 budget, the Department's budget is approximately
19 2.6 billion. This budget is aimed at rectifying
20 historical shortfalls. It includes 62 million in FY26
21 to fund the projected OTPS, other than personnel
spending, shortfall in the current year. It also
includes 120 million in FY26, 57 million in FY27, and
additional amounts in the outyears to make up for

2 existing personnel funding deficits. By making up
3 these shortfalls, this budget puts the agency on a
4 stronger financial footing moving forward.

5 I'm thrilled to be your Fire Commissioner
6 and I'm excited about the work we're going to do
7 together to help improve the lives of our members and
8 the people of New York. With your help, we can ensure
9 the Fire Department is set up for success and
10 continues providing the best possible level of
11 service to our city. My team and I would be happy to
12 answer your questions at this time. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,
14 Commissioner.

15 I just would like to note that we've been
16 joined via Zoom by Council Members Paladino and
17 Cabán, and I will yield my questioning to our Finance
18 Chair, Council Member Linda Lee.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you. Sorry. I
20 didn't realize I was going first. Thank you, Chair.

21 It's great to see you, Commissioner, and
I just want to commend you on all the work that you
do because our office in Eastern Queens District 23
have been partnering with you for our health fairs,
which is great, because we do the CPR trainings with

1 you, as well as the fire smoke alarm detectors. And
2 really quickly, I have to say, as someone who comes
3 from the non-profit sector, I've always been about
4 pay parity and trying to make sure that we're giving
5 folks the pay that they deserve, especially for the
6 work that you all are doing, so I just appreciate
7 your efforts in that. Actually, last year, I had
8 norovirus and my husband was freaking out because I
9 was literally on the floor with my body frozen like
10 this. So, EMS came, and while I'm trying not to drool
11 on myself in the middle of it, they're trying to get
12 me to breathe, and I said, pay parity. We need to
13 fight for pay parity. They're like, okay, okay, thank
14 you, but you need to just, like, calm down and
15 breathe, and we've got to get you physically well.
16 So, I appreciate, again, all the efforts of the EMS,
17 as well as Fire Department, so thank you.

18 Just going really quickly, I just have a
19 couple budget questions. So, regarding the triaging
20 protocols, what percentage of EMS calls are
21 successfully triaged to alternative care pathways,
whether it be telehealth, urgent care referrals,
rather than ambulance transport?

2 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: You know, these
3 are things that we're taking on right now, trying to
4 embrace these new technologies. I don't have a
5 percentage for you, per se, but these are efforts
6 that are continuing, and I think as we continue to
7 embrace technology moving forward, we'll see more and
8 more transfer of calls to nontraditional EMS
9 transports. You know, these are changes in behaviors
10 that we have to get the public used to, so I'm sure
11 in the future we'll be coming to you asking for your
12 help in messaging these types of messages.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEE: No. Definitely. And I
14 know there's a lot of community groups ready and
15 willing to help make those connections with you,
16 also.

17 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I appreciate it.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Well, this is all stuff
19 I'm sure that if you could get to us as you continue
20 this, that would be great.

21 What percentage cost savings does
successful triaging represent compared to the
traditional ambulance transport and emergency
department visits, because we know those are more
expensive, so.

2 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Right. For these
3 type of questions, Councilwoman, I'll invite
4 Commissioner Christoff to jump in here. I'm not sure
5 she has more of the information than I do, but
6 certainly this is her wheelhouse.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yeah. I
9 mean, I would say right now, given the volume that's
10 going through alternative methods, I don't know that
11 we're looking necessarily to save costs on the Fire
12 Department end, but more to improve services to
13 everyone else. So, having some of those calls go to
14 alternative methods will enable faster response times
15 to folks that actually need a physical transport to
16 the emergency room.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEE: And then lastly, similar
18 question is what percentage of EMS personnel have
19 been trained in enhanced triaging protocols so that
20 things are passed on more efficiently, if need be,
21 and not, you know, something that maybe something a
community group can handle or a referral out versus,
yeah.

COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: All of our EMS
members that are working at communications, that's

2 where we do our dispatching, are trained in
3 computerized triage, all of them. So, as we start to
4 move forward in different modalities, they will
5 continue to be trained to operate. They need to be
6 able to move in and out of certain positions so they
7 are certainly kept educated in there.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Perfect. That's
9 good to hear.

10 In terms of hospital turnaround time,
11 what is the current average hospital turnaround time
12 for FY26 and what percentage of an ambulance's daily
13 operational capacity does that consume?

14 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: The turnaround
15 times are a bigger conversation. You know, this is
16 part of a healthcare system. So, I just want to
17 define, if you don't mind, I'll define the turnaround
18 times. And they are currently about 40 minutes, the
19 turnaround times for the ER, for the emergency rooms.
20 So, in EMS, when we pick up a patient, we have to be
21 able to take them to an emergency room. Depending on
the level of acuity for that patient, the wait can be
shorter, the wait can be longer. If it's a more
critical patient, the nursing staff will address
those patients before a noncritical patient.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right.

3 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: So, it does
4 fluctuate, you know, depending on the severity. It
5 also fluctuates on the ability for the emergency room
6 to accept the patient. So, depending on the volume
7 for the day, it could get quite backed up. But
8 consistently, we're turning around from getting into
9 the emergency room, transferring the patient to the
10 nursing staff, and back out in the 40-minute range.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And then do you
12 know which hospitals tend to have the most delays?

13 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I'm sorry?

14 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Which hospitals tend to
15 have the most delays?

16 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I wouldn't say
17 there is any particular hospital that has more delays
18 without, you know, looking at all the stats. But what
19 I can tell you is that it really is dependent on the
20 day, you know, and the call volume for that
21 particular area. On one day, you may have a higher
call volume in the Bronx than you do in Queens. The
next day, you may have a higher call volume in Queens
than you do in the Bronx. And those hospitals will be
more inundated. I can tell you when I started this

1 job in 1991, which was like four or five years ago,
2 1991, there were more than 20 additional hospitals
3 that existed within our five boroughs than there are
4 today. I believe we're closer to 30 now. So, you
5 know, when we had more hospitals, people were able to
6 go to different places and certainly the nursing
7 staff was able to, you know, sign for those patients
8 and we were able to get out quicker. As hospitals
9 start to close down, as hospitals start to struggle,
10 EMS feels the pinch of that because we have to go
11 further to a hospital. We have to wait longer because
12 more patients are going to a specific hospital than
13 being distributed across many hospitals. So, we
14 continue to see that type of movement and we always
15 hope for the well-being of our hospitals. We
16 certainly don't want to lose any more, but it is very
17 flexible.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEE: No. Definitely we don't
19 want to lose any more and we know how that impacts
20 the local neighborhoods and the communities, and so
21 hopefully that won't happen. And I know that our
22 Health Chair, Chair Schulman, as well as a Health and
23 Hospitals Chair, Mercedes Narcisse, are very attuned
24 to this issue as well.

1
2 And I know that you had announced pilots
3 at certain H and H ER locations to improve the
4 turnaround times, and so do you have any updates on
5 that and is that something you're looking to expand?

6 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah. So, that
7 was called the Hospital Liaison Officer Pilot, and
8 that pilot is still ongoing. We're going to be
9 exploring lots of different things, I would say, over
10 the next few years. We have to continue to also have
11 these conversations within the hospitals themselves
12 and work with our partners in the emergency room, the
13 administrators, to come up with creative ways to
14 transfer a patient from the EMS crew to the hospital
15 themselves so that we can expedite our exit from the
16 hospital. So as of right now, those programs are
17 still ongoing and they are, you know, they're not in
18 all hospitals. They're in certain hospitals.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEE: And if you could remind
20 me, when did it start, the pilot program, and how
21 long is it for?

COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I believe it was
2024. Chief Miano?

CHIEF MIANO: (INAUDIBLE)

COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: November 2024.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Thank you.

3 And in terms of the Chief Savings
4 Officers, have you designated a Chief Savings Officer
5 or equivalent position as proposed by the Mayor to
6 identify some of the cost savings?

7 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes, I have.
8 I've identified a very awesome Chief Savings Officer,
9 and this is Commissioner Christoff sitting right next
10 to me.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great.

12 And what percentage of your time is sort
13 of dedicated to looking, taking a deeper dive and
14 looking into the savings initiatives versus other
15 administrative duties, and what budgetary authority
16 does the officer have to implement in terms of cost
17 reduction measures without requiring approval from
18 OMB or other external entities?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yeah. I
20 mean, it is certainly taking up a lot of my time as
21 we're moving towards the submission of the Chief
Savings Officer reports. It's something me and my
team are very focused on. You know, because I am also
the Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget, I

2 do have the authority within the Department to
3 implement savings measures as we identify them.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. That's great.

5 And what specific cost saving targets or
6 benchmarks have been established for FY27 and what
7 percentage reduction in operating expenses or
8 improvement in operational efficiency do these
9 targets represent?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
11 targets are one and a half percent in the current
12 year and two and a half percent in the outyears.
13 Those percentages are off of our City tax levy
14 budget. So, for us, the sort of annual going forward
15 is around 54 million.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And what sort of,
17 just out of curiosity, what type of cost savings are,
18 you know, if you could give us buckets. I mean,
19 obviously, I know the reports are not due yet, but
20 what are some of the things that you all are looking
21 at?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, we're
23 still in the process of finalizing what the
24 recommendations will be, and they will have to be,
25 you know, internally vetted as we move forward with

1 the process. We do anticipate that the savings will
2 be reflected in the executive budget. And certainly,
3 you know, we're looking for efficiencies and things
4 that don't impact emergency services.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Exactly. I think that's
6 key too.

7 And what is, you know, and I know this is
8 ongoing, but if you, for future reference, if you
9 could note, if you could report back what the
10 projected annual savings from each of the initiatives
11 expressed are in terms of dollar amount as well as
12 percentage of the total agency's budget, that would
13 be great.

14 And if you are able to answer, have any
15 of these savings been realized in reduced budget
16 requests, or have they been redirected to address
17 other agency priorities?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, there
19 certainly are, you know, simpler components of our
20 savings as we're identifying them, you know, assuming
21 they're non-controversial, there are no negative
repercussions to doing so. We are moving forward and
locking in those savings as soon as we possibly can,

1 but the intent is for them to go towards the
2 executive budget savings.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Got it. Okay.

4 And lastly, how does FDNY ensure the cost
5 savings measures pursued by yourself do not
6 compromise service quality, public safety, as you
7 mentioned, or regulatory compliance, and what
8 percentage of proposed saving initiatives have been
9 rejected due to potential negative impacts on
10 operations as well? Because as you mentioned, I think
11 that's important to look at, because we want to make
12 sure that you're still able to do all the things that
13 you need to do. And so if you could speak a little
14 bit to that, that would be great.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yeah, the
16 savings process isn't being done, you know,
17 unilaterally by myself. So, there have been lots of
18 conversations with bureau heads throughout the
19 Department and our senior leadership team to make
20 sure that our savings proposals won't negatively
21 impact operations. Ultimately, our final submission
will get signed off on by the Fire Commissioner and
will be reviewed by City Hall and OMB as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Thank you. That's
3 it. Thank you so much again for being here. And thank
4 you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

5 I just want to do a couple of follow-ups
6 with the Chief Savings Officer. I know that the
7 position is to go in and see where there can be, you
8 know, monies that can be better spent or perhaps
9 taken from. The Fire Department hasn't received any
10 new money in the four years that I've been the Chair,
11 and not before. It's always been flatlined. And you
12 made references to initiatives. What kind of
13 initiatives? Would you, could you describe them
14 better, more, explain them? What type of initiatives
15 you think money can be taken from?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, we're
15 certainly looking at everything. I mean, I think the
16 actual final initiatives won't be ready until later
17 this month, and we anticipate talking through them in
18 detail as part of the executive budget process. But
19 our north star in this whole process is making sure
20 we're not negatively impacting emergency operations.
21 So, we're looking for, you know, efficiencies that

1 don't do that, that don't negatively impact on our
2 first responders.

3 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Because in the last
4 three budget cycles that I've been Chair, we've asked
5 for 1 billion dollars for the Fire Department, not
6 for any money to be taken from the Fire Department.
7 They've been working on a baseline. And in fact, when
8 I had a conversation with the First Deputy Mayor and
9 the Director of OMB, I asked that the Fire Department
10 be exempt from any type of, any type of removal of
11 any of their funding and exempt from having a Chief
12 Savings Officer. But I guess that fell on deaf ears.
13 But, okay.

14 So, the FY27 preliminary budget totals
15 2.646 billion, an increase of 24.6 million from the
16 FY26 adopted budget. The headcount includes, as I
17 said in my statement, 17,566 positions. Key increases
18 include fire extinguishment, emergency response, fire
19 prevention, and fire investigation. The FY27 budget
20 totals 2.46 billion, up 24.6 million from FY26. What
21 percentage has the FDNY's budget grown over the past
10 fiscal years adjusted for inflation?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
comparison point for that would be the preliminary

1 budget for FY17, which was released in January of
2 2016. That was 1.9 billion dollars. If you adjust
3 that for inflation using CPI, that would be 2.62
4 billion today. That's actually very close to the
5 budget for FY27, which is about 26 million above that
6 inflation adjusted number. So, our budget has gone up
7 by about 1 percent above inflation.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right. So, you're
9 agreeing that the Fire Department hasn't really gone
10 over their budget. They actually are operating,
11 they're operating with a budget that's never been
12 increased. They're continuing to operate, continuing
13 to put out fires, continuing to send their EMS trucks
14 out, continuing to do the job to keep the people of
15 this city safe without receiving one extra penny from
16 the City of New York. So, I'm glad we agree about
17 that.

18 What percentage of the FDNY's budget is
19 allocated to personal services versus OTPS, other
20 than personal services?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, our PS
budget is approximately 90 percent of our overall
budget. So, in FY27, PS is 2.396 billion, and OTPS is
249.8 million.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

3 And fire extinguishment, emergency
4 responses, they represent 1.844 billion, or 69.7
5 percent of the budget. And that's, according to what
6 we saw, that's up 21.5 million. What drove the
7 increase, and what percentage is for salary increases
8 versus operational enhancements?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, none
10 of the increase is tied to operational enhancements.
11 It's related to the PS adjustment that was provided
12 for in the preliminary budget that included, you
13 know, Department-wide 57 million in FY27. The purpose
14 of that was really to align the budget with
15 anticipated spending, and that's what that is.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I didn't catch the
17 last, to align the budget with?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: With
19 anticipated spending.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: With anticipated
21 spending, okay.

And fire prevention increased 6.9
million, 13.8 percent, to 56.7 million. What
percentage of this increase is for additional

1 inspector positions versus other fire prevention
2 initiatives?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, that
4 increase is also primarily related to the PS
5 adjustment that was provided for in the preliminary
6 budget. So, that 57 million that was given
7 Department-wide includes 6.5 million that went into
8 (INAUDIBLE) for fire prevention.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And the emergency
10 medical services is budgeted for 416.8 million, down
11 2.9 million. Given worsening EMS response times, why
12 was the EMS budget decreased, and what operational
13 impacts did this have?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, that
15 decrease is primarily driven by the transfer of
16 B-HEARD funding to H and H that was done as part of
17 the November plan under the former administration. We
18 anticipate that that funding will be transferred back
19 in a future plan.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'm just going to
21 hold for a moment because Council Member Paladino has
another place to go, and she just has two questions
that she'd like to ask. So, I'm going to just yield

2 to Council Member Paladino for questions, and then
3 I'll come back to my questioning.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good morning.

5 Can you hear me?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yes? Okay.

8 I'm interested to know, you know, my
9 office, since Fiscal Year '23, we funded 1.2 million
10 for generators for one firehouse; in '24, another 1.2
11 million for another generator; in '25, we fully
12 funded an ambulance simulator at 300,000 dollars; and
13 in '26, we just did an EMS 53 vehicle for another
14 323,000 dollars. It's over 3 million. My question is,
15 how, and is it true that after 9/11, the State
16 required these firehouses to have these new updated
17 generators, and how do we go about getting this work
18 done? I mean, this has been going on since 2023. My
19 firehouses need them. They are truly in need.

20 Also, another question, the firehouses
21 are in, I visit all the time, and my firehouses, of
which I have four, are, really need renovation
terribly. Is there any way we're going to be able to
get you guys what you need, most importantly with
your ambulances and your EMS vehicles and your

2 generators? The renovation is like the topping on a
3 cupcake, but still just the same. These guys
4 practically live there. So, and they're in dire need.
5 Can you help me out with that?

6 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes. And thank
7 you for the support that you've given us. Very much
8 appreciated.

9 As we start to move forward, you know,
10 it's important, I'll just level set us here, and then
11 I'll tell you where we're at with some of the
12 repairs. This Fire Department is the most recognized
13 fire department in the world. This patch will be
14 recognized anywhere in the world, and it's primarily
15 because we've been around 160 years. We're a staple
16 of New York City and the greatest Fire Department in
17 the world. But a lot of our buildings are about a
18 century old now. We've been around 160 years, and a
19 lot of our buildings are about 100 years or more. So,
20 yes, these buildings are in states of needing repair,
21 and we certainly appreciate all the assistance that
we get from the Committee and the Council Members.

22 So, when we're taking this into account,
23 and we have many, many facilities, they all need some
24 sort of repair at some point. So, the way we manage

1 this generally is we'll take a look at the order,
2 right, the actual complaint, what it is that needs
3 repair, and we prioritize them. The most urgent or
4 the most dangerous ones we address first. As a
5 complaint comes in, we'll send our fleet team out to
6 do an assessment and to prioritize whether this is
7 something that is urgent or dangerous, or if it's
8 something that we can handle in-house. If it's
9 something that is dangerous or urgent we can handle
10 in-house, we do right away. We get our facilities
11 team over there to fix it. If it's something we can't
12 handle, we'll vendor that out. But we do have to work
13 in order of urgency, because there are so many
14 repairs that need to be done.

15 The capital budget that we have, about
16 half of our capital budget is for facility repair. If
17 we were able to get unlimited money for these
18 repairs, we still would not be able to handle all the
19 repairs at once. Part of the issue that exists is as
20 we start to repair some of these houses, and we will,
21 we certainly will continue to do that work, we have
to relocate the resource that is housed in that area,
in that particular firehouse or EMS station, and we
can't move too many of them, because that ends up

1 leaving areas of our city that don't have coverage
2 and response coverage so we're limited by the amount
3 of resources that we can move out at one time, and
4 we're certainly limited by the number of people who
5 can do the repairs. So, I think that's where we are.
6 We're just as interested in making these repairs as
7 quickly as possible, and I do believe that we're in a
8 place where we're doing that. And should anybody have
9 anything urgent, they should be sure to put that
10 order in so that we could get our facilities team out
there to take a look at it.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Commissioner, I know
12 what the Council Member is asking also, because we
13 will go much deeper, Council Member, as the hearing
14 goes along into the condition of our firehouses. But
15 I mean, we all get very frustrated, because the money
16 that we do appropriate, taxpayer dollars to give
17 generators, bathrooms, kitchens, locker rooms, you
18 know, oftentimes gets clogged up in procurement. So,
19 you know, what we would really, if anyone can answer
20 the question, is why there is always a backup that
21 money from '21 or '20, I'm sorry, 2022, '23, and '24
and '25. Now we're into '27, and we're still not

2 seeing generators that were paid for in previous
3 years.

4 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes. I
5 understand the frustration. And do you want to speak?
6 I think Jeremy Brooks? So, our facilities -- do you
7 want to come up and address some of these questions
8 about generators and repairs? Just introduce
9 yourself.

10 Hello. Sorry. So --

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Can we swear
12 you in for a second, right?

13 Can you just state your name for the
14 record and I could swear you in.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Sorry. Jeremy
16 Brooks.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Can you
18 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
19 nothing but the truth and to answer honestly to
20 Council Member questions.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: You may go
ahead. Thank you so much.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Thanks. So,
in regards to generators, approximately 70 percent of

1 our locations currently have emergency generator
2 backup. It's one of our priorities to have every one
3 of our locations to have a generator backup. We've
4 been doing this program, like you said, probably
5 since around 2001. So about 70 percent of our
6 locations do have a generator. When we do get the
7 money from City Council for various projects, and we
8 are greatly thankful because that helps us out
9 tremendously for a lot of our work, for a generator,
10 it usually takes about 18 months to get the project
11 completed, from once we get the money to doing
12 design, construction so it does take a little time to
13 actually get a project from start to finish. It is a
14 slow process. I wish there were some things we could
15 do to expedite, but it's just permitting, funding.
16 But again, we greatly appreciate everything that
17 everyone has given us throughout the years.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what kind of
19 program do you use? And do you find that after you go
20 through the 18 months of what you need to do, are you
21 finding that there's a problem at OMB with releasing
the money for these items?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I don't think
it's a problem with funding. I think just sometimes

2 there's a lot of permitting process. There's a lot of
3 sign-offs from different agencies, Landmarks, Public
4 Design Commission that have to go through Department
5 of Buildings. That is just unfortunately to do a lot
6 of work on any City building or even public building,
it's a slow process.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right. But once it
8 reaches OMB, do you have an issue with OMB releasing
9 the funds after all those permits and all the
processes are in place? Is there a problem with OMB?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I think we
11 have a pretty good relationship with OMB. They know
12 what our initiatives are and what our priorities are,
13 and we have continuous meetings with them weekly
about projects.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Would you mind
15 checking on the, and I can have them written out for
16 you, just Council Member Paladino, because she
17 brought up her initiatives and see where they are in
18 the pipeline and if they are at OMB, then possibly we
can be helpful --

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Of course.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: -- in helping that
21 get out. We'll get that information to you both.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Sure. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

5 I just want to come back to Chief Savings
6 Officer.

7 Has the FDNY designated, well, obviously
8 they have. Is there an equivalent position as
9 proposed by Mayor Mamdani to identify operational
10 efficiencies and cost-saving opportunities and what
11 percentage of the position's time is dedicated solely
12 to savings initiatives versus other administrative
13 duties? And what budgetary authority do you have to
14 implement cost-reduction measures without requiring
15 approval from OMB or external entities?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yes. So,
17 certainly a high percentage of my time has been
18 focused on working on the savings proposals since the
19 announcement was made and now through the development
20 of my final recommendations. You know, as the Deputy
21 Commissioner for Management and Budget within the
Department, I do already have authority internally to
execute on these savings proposals.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: As you can see, we're
very concerned that you're going to take money from

2 the FDNY and we cannot have that happen. We really
3 can't.

4 Okay. Well, let's talk about headcount.
5 So, in FY27, budget included 17,566 positions, 11,294
6 were uniformed, 6,272 were civilian. By what
7 percentage has FDNY's total headcount changed over
8 the past five fiscal years?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
10 January 2021 budget for FY22, which is the comparison
11 point from five years ago, was 17,288 positions. That
12 breaks down as 10,945 uniform and 6,343 civilian.
13 That includes EMS, which is 278 more than the FY27
14 budget.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And we have
16 civilian positions decreased by 44 from FY26. So, you
17 don't agree with that?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, that
19 44 for civilian positions, so EMS is reflected as
20 civilian in all the published budget documents, and
21 that 44 is the decrease tied to the B-HEARD transfer,
which we do anticipate will be reversed in a future
plan.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: This is just me
23 thinking out loud, but it's interesting that EMS

2 would be considered civilian when they are recognized
3 by law as a member of emergency service so that's
4 interesting. We're going to have to look into that.

5 What is the current vacancy rate for
6 uniformed versus civilian positions? Would you say
7 they're up, right?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yes. So,
9 on the uniform side, so this is like firefighter and,
10 you know, fire officers. Our current budgeted number
11 of positions is 11,294, and our actuals are 11,092 so
12 we have 202 vacancies. That's a 1.8 percent vacancy
13 rate. On the EMS side, our budgeted number is 4,499,
14 and our actuals are 4,174 so that's 325 vacancies,
15 which is a 7.2 percent vacancy rate. I will note that
16 that's comparing actuals on payroll. The number of
17 people in the field is obviously less than that,
18 because the payroll actuals include folks who are
19 still in training.

20 And then on the civilian, non-EMS side,
21 our budget is 1,784, and our actuals are 1,795. We're
22 actually 11 above budgeted headcount.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. What is the
24 total cost impact of recent collective bargaining
25 agreements of FDNY's FY27 budget expressed, and

2 please express, as a dollar amount and percentage of
3 the budget growth?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, I
5 don't actually believe that any of our major unions
6 have collective bargaining increases that have been
7 agreed to yet that impact FY27.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, my next question
9 would have been, what percentage of FDNY's budget
10 growth over the next three years is driven by
11 contractual wage increases versus new programs?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: None of it
13 yet. So, the City budgets for anticipated collective
14 bargaining increases centrally in the labor reserve,
15 so that's where you would see that funding, which OMB
16 can speak to and, as the agreements get settled, that
17 funding is transferred into agency budgets.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. I had asked
19 earlier about what other initiatives you could take
20 from to give to the Fire Department, and you could
21 take money from other initiatives. I really would
just like one initiative, what have you, in the time
you've spent, what have you come up with that can be
utilized to better fund the FDNY?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, those
3 are still being worked through, but, you know, as
4 directed by the Mayor, one area we're certainly
5 looking at is, you know, payments that we make to
6 vendors, also just looking for efficiencies and
7 potential rate reductions.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you think that the
9 FDNY would benefit from a design-build approach to
10 capital improvements?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Sure. Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Let's talk
13 about overtime. I'm going to talk about overtime, and
14 then I'm going to yield to my Colleagues who are
15 here, and I see we've been joined by Pierina Sanchez,
16 Council Member Sanchez.

17 What is the total budgeted overtime for
18 FDNY in '27, and what percentage of the total budget
19 does this represent?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
21 total budgeted overtime in FY27 is 472.5 million
dollars. That's about 18 percent of our budget.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How does this compare
to '26 and '25 budgeted overtime expressed as
percentage changes?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, FY26
3 budgeted overtime is 546.9 million, so that's about
4 16 percent higher than the '27 amount. In FY25,
5 actual overtime spending is 569.1 million, about 20
6 percent above '27 levels.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what is the
8 actual overtime spending year-to-date, and what
9 percentage of the budgeted overtime does that
10 represent?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So,
12 year-to-date through February '26, we spent about 380
13 million. That is about 69 percent of the FY26
14 budgeted overtime.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And in
16 firefighter overtime, what is the budgeted
17 firefighter overtime? It was 381 million in FY25. And
18 what percentage of the total FDNY overtime does this
19 present?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, we
21 don't budget overtime by title. But if you're looking
at uniformed overtime, and you are looking for FY25
actuals, we spent 477.8 million in uniformed
overtime.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And for EMS overtime,
3 what is the budgeted EMS overtime, and what
4 percentage of the total EMS budget does this
5 represent?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, FY26
7 budgeted EMS overtime is 68.6 million. And that is
8 about 17 percent of the total EMS PS budget.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

10 I will now yield to Council Member Wong.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair.
12 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for being here
13 today. District 30 is proud to be a district with one
14 of the largest populations of active and retired FDNY
15 members in the city, including firefighters, EMTs,
16 and civilian employees. Many families in our
17 community have deep ties to the Department and have
18 served the people of New York for generations. As we
19 approach the 25th anniversary of September 11th, this
20 September, it is especially important that we ensure
21 our firehouses are properly supported, that our
firefighters and EMS members have the resources they
need to do their jobs, and that the legacy of those
who have made the ultimate sacrifice is honored
appropriately. One firehouse in my District, Squad

1 288 and Hazmat 1 in Maspeth, lost 19 firefighters on
2 September 11th, and is the greatest loss from any
3 single FDNY firehouse that day. My office has also
4 been discussing an idea related to the upcoming
5 anniversary about recognizing FDNY and NYPD members
6 who died on September 11th through updated street
7 sign designations, and I will be asking about that
8 shortly.

9 With that in mind, I want to ask a few
10 questions about firehouse capital planning and EMS
11 staffing and several initiatives that are important
12 to both to my District and to the City. My first
13 question is a firehouse capital funding. In the past,
14 many firehouse capital projects across the city have
15 appeared in the capital plan at roughly 1.2 million,
16 regardless of the scope of work, whether the project
17 involves a kitchen renovation, bathroom upgrade,
18 generator or installation, or other infrastructure
19 improvements, the amount is always 1.2 million. Can
20 you explain why these projects have historically
21 appeared with the same funding amount? And then I
have a follow-up.

 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: I mean,
obviously the costs per location and per project do

1 differ. I mean, averages are used when coming up with
2 some of those estimates. I think it's just
3 coincidence that the totals tend to be similar.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I was the former
5 Council Member Robert Holden's Budget Director, so I
6 see 1.2 million everywhere we do capital projects,
7 and I always wanted to ask that.

8 Okay. My next question. Is that figure
9 based on a detailed engineering estimate, or is it
10 being used as a placeholder until the scope of work
is finalized?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, it
12 depends on what stage of the process that we are.
13 Certainly, at the very beginning, it's based on
14 average historical costs, and, you know, it gets
refined as the project moves forward.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

16 All right. My next question is regarding
17 landmarking the Maspeth Firehouse at Squad 288 Hazmat
18 1. My predecessor, Council Member Robert Holden, had
19 been advocating for years to landmark the Squad 288
20 and Hazmat 1 Firehouse in Maspeth. As I mentioned
earlier, that firehouse lost 19 firefighters on
21 September 11th, the greatest loss from any single

2 FDNY firehouse that day. Given the historic
3 significance of the facility and the sacrifice
4 associated with it, we need the FDNY to step in and
5 support landmark designation of that firehouse. Would
6 the Department work with the Landmark Preservation
7 Commission and the City Council to ensure this site
8 receives the recognition and the protection it
9 deserves?

10 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Thank you for
11 that. You know, September 11th was a very difficult
12 day for our Department. We remember and mourn the
13 loss every day of the people that we lost down there.
14 I know how incredibly important that is. We were
15 certainly engaged in a conversation regarding this
16 topic.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you,
18 thank you.

19 My next question is regarding the 25th
20 anniversary of 9/11 Memorial Street Sign Initiative.
21 This September marks the 25th anniversary of
September 11th, and my office recently met with the
Department of Transportation to discuss an idea that
many families and first responders believe would be
meaningful. In the immediate aftermath of September

1 11th, hundreds of streets across the city were
2 co-named for those who died in attacks. At the time,
3 all of those honorary street signs were installed in
4 green, regardless of whether the (TIMER CHIME)
5 individual was a firefighter, police officer, or
6 civilian. Today, however, the city uses a different
7 system. Red signs are used for FDNY, blue signs are
8 used for NYPD. Okay, can I have more time? I'm almost
9 done, yeah. Green signs are used for civilians. Our
10 idea is simple. For the FDNY and NYPD members who
11 died in September 11th, we believe those existing
12 green signs should be replaced with the appropriate
13 red or blue sign so that it is immediately clear to
14 residents and visitors that the individual honor was
15 a firefighter or police officers who died in the line
16 of duty. Would FDNY support working with the Council
17 and the Department of Transportation to help advance
18 this initiative ahead of the 25th anniversary? Thank
19 you.

17 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes. Thank you.

19 That's it. I'm done with my questions. Thank you.

20 Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And Commissioner,
2 just for clarity, because it really kind of stuck in
3 my craw about EMS being considered civilian, and I
4 know what my opinion is about EMS, and I know how I
5 view them, and I know how the law views them as
6 members of uniformed service, and I also know how you
7 view them, but I'd just like that to be said for the
8 record.

9 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah. So, you
10 know, this particular issue is an issue between OLR
11 and the unions, but I can tell you that in the Fire
12 Department, they're all uniformed workers, and when
13 9-1-1 is called, the question you get is police,
14 fire, or EMS. You don't get police, fire, or the
15 civilians that hang out with us. So, you know, I
16 would love to see this topic work itself out between
17 the unions, OLR, and the City.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

19 Council Member Schulman.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very
21 much, Chair. And, yeah, I was going to ask you the
same thing about uniform and civilian, because I
consider EMS uniform as well, and just for the
record, I used to work at the Emergency Medical

1 Service, and the Commissioner and I know each other a
2 very long time, and I actually worked there during
3 the merger. I was in the leadership of the
4 administration there, so I have a few questions.

5 One is about, I just want to delve a
6 little bit deeper on the questions asked by the Chair
7 around the overtime. Do you have, because in previous
8 years you've overspent your overtime funds, so is
9 there a plan in place to rein in overtime because
that's also a place for savings as well.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yes. So,
11 we monitor overtime very closely, and we actually
12 have regular monthly meetings with OMB and City Hall
13 to talk about our overtime spending and our overtime
14 projections. You know, there were several Mayoral
15 Directives on overtime in the former Administration,
16 and we have been working towards making progress on
17 reducing overtime. It gets a little complicated when
18 you're looking at dollars because collective
19 bargaining increases and just changes in where folks
20 are in their tenure do impact those? But if you look
21 at overtime hours from FY23 to FY25, we actually did
see a 2 percent decrease, which is showing the impact
of the various measures we've put into place. When

1 you're looking at our overtime, the overwhelming
2 majority of it is tied to staffing fire companies.
3 So, we operate on a fixed post system, which means
4 that at the start of every tour, we need to make sure
5 we have the right number of fire personnel available.
6 Otherwise, the company can't be in service, and
7 overtime is used to fill those gaps. And as we were
8 talking about earlier, when we were talking about our
9 headcount, we're still under budgeted headcount on
10 the fire operation side. So, the single most
11 impactful thing that we can do to control overtime
12 spending is to continue to work to get back up to
13 headcount by hiring additional firefighters.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Whatever we can
15 do to be helpful there. And one of the things that
16 the Council was looking at maybe is like an overtime
17 reduction plan. I mean, the NYPD has similar issues
18 as a uniformed service.

19 And also, what are your headcount targets
20 for '27, for Fiscal Year '27.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, I
mean, we are continuing to process firefighter
classes. I'm not sure if you want the class
information or the overall headcount.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Overall
3 headcount target.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yes. So,
5 our authorized headcount on the uniform side is
6 11,294. We're actually at 11,092. So, we're 202
7 under.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Is that on both
9 sides, the EMS and the FDNY or just FDNY?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So that's
11 fire.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: On the EMS
14 side, our authorized headcount is 4,499, and we are
15 actually at 4,174. So, we're 325 under budgeted
16 headcount. And as I mentioned before, it is an even
17 greater deficit in the field because that payroll
18 headcount does count folks who are still in training.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. The other
20 thing, too, I know we've spent a little bit of time
21 on the response times. Particularly, I'm focused on
EMS. I know it's gone up to some degree. When I was
in EMS many, many years ago, the targeted response
time was eight minutes, and so I just want to know

2 where we, you know, what the thinking is in terms of
3 moving ahead in terms of lowering the response time.

4 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah, eight
5 minutes, huh? What? Eight minutes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: It was eight
7 minutes. And we met it pretty much, and that was
8 during -- there was a lot going on then. Go ahead.

9 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes. I remember.
10 So, I just would like to talk a little bit about
11 response times and what that means. And then we'll
12 talk about some solutions, hopefully. So, one of the
13 things that happen in response times is that there
14 are lots of different things that lead into these
15 response times. And when we talk about response
16 times, we talk about picking up the call from 9-1-1
17 and actually getting to the patient. And there are
18 lots of factors in between that lead to higher (TIMER
19 CHIME) response times. Staffing most certainly is one
20 of the priority concerns here. The fewer ambulances
21 you run, the longer it takes to get an ambulance to
an assignment so staffing is a priority, which is why
I've come out so strongly in support of parity. This
is not just about being fair, but this is about
stabilizing an EMS system for New York so we do want

1 to increase our staff. We want to create an
2 environment where people could come and stay, be a
3 destination itself. They can come and have a long
4 career, help us run ambulances so that we can
5 continue to serve the public.

6 The other thing to note here is one third
7 of the EMS system is made up of our voluntary
8 hospital partners. So, these are private EMS,
9 hospital-based EMS system, right? So, they provide
10 one third of New York City service. The Fire
11 Department provides two thirds. There have been,
12 across the last several years, several places where
13 ambulances were taken out of the 9-1-1 system, right?
14 So, that's fewer ambulances in the system to help us
15 get to those calls. We've had an increase of call
16 volume. So, while our resources are static for the
17 most part, our staffing is low, the call volume has
18 increased, and we've seen a significant increase in
19 call volume. From 2022 to 2025, we've seen about an
20 18 percent increase in call volume and a 4 percent
21 increase in fire incidents during that period of
time. So, we have resources that are either
diminishing based on participation, staffing that is
much lower than it was, and increasing call volume,

1 and hospitals that are closing, meaning that we have
2 to go further and we have to wait longer because the
3 hospitals are also in this triage circle where
4 they're going to take the most urgent patient first
5 and make us wait basically until they can triage out
6 our ambulance crew. So, there are a lot of different
7 things that contribute to this.

8 We also, I will note, are in a promotion
9 cycle in EMS. So, over the next year to year and a
10 half, two years, we expect to lose up to 25 percent
11 of the EMS workforce moving from EMS to fire. Again,
12 parity is something that is critical here so that
13 people who love medicine can stay and still be able
14 to afford their lives. So, we're in this cycle right
15 now where things are working against each other,
16 leading to higher response times.

17 There's also congestion in the street,
18 you know, that slows things down, and it slows us
19 down as well. And that is by design. And we know when
20 you slow traffic down, you also save lives so I'm not
21 against that. It is just a fact that it slows us all
down.

So, things we can do to try to help.
Well, we have tried several pilots. I think you

1 mentioned one earlier and that pilot is still going
2 on. We've tried the paramedic response unit right
3 now. So, what we've done is take paramedics and put
4 them in essence in a fly car so that they can make
5 themselves available if that particular assignment
6 doesn't require ALS care, they can make themselves
7 available and go on to another assignment. We're
8 talking with our partners in the hospitals to try to
9 expedite at the hospital level to get the units out
10 and get the triage process a little bit quicker,
11 right, so we can get those people out. We're also
12 exploring ways to keep our ambulances better stocked
13 so that they don't have to go off service after every
14 assignment to restock their ambulance. So, these are
15 things that we're going to continue to explore. We'll
16 continue to explore ways of, you know, restocking
17 ambulances, cleaning ambulance, preparing ambulance,
18 get them out quicker, having those conversations and
19 relationships with our hospitals to try to get them
20 out quicker. And the staffing, you know, is something
21 I really hope we can solve while I'm still here in my
tenure because it is one of the key things to fixing
our response time problem.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Chair, do you
3 mind if I ask a couple of other questions?

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I just want to
5 interject because it carries on to yours. But how are
6 the negotiations for EMS and paramedic contracts
7 proceeding? How are they going?

8 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I think they're
9 in process.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: They're in process.
11 Okay. We can go right back.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. No, and I
13 appreciate it. First of all, I also want to say that
14 I'm very proud of having you as the Commissioner and
15 the City is going to be much better for that so
16 congratulations on that.

17 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Thank you very
18 much. I appreciate it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I also want
20 to ask you in terms of just two quick questions. One
21 is the turnaround time. They used to have light-duty
supervisors in the EDs. Do you still do that?

COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: No. We don't
have light-duty supervisors. We did have the hospital
liaison officer, but that was a separate pilot. We

2 don't have, we used to refer to, if you remember, as
3 Baywatch. We don't have that now, primarily due to
4 staffing and call volume has, you know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And then a
6 totally separate question. Do you have a database of
7 where all the fire hydrants are in New York City? Is
8 there a database?

9 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Chief Esposito
10 could talk about fire hydrants for you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Hi, Chief.

12 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Hi. Good morning. We have
13 on one of our maps that we're able to access the
14 location of all the fire hydrants. The City is
15 divided up among all the fire companies by
16 administrative districts.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

18 JOSEPH JEAN-BAPTISTE: And each fire
19 hydrant is inspected twice a year by our firefighters
20 to ensure that it's operational. And if it's not, we
21 have the ability to report it to Department of
Environmental Protection. They're the ones that
actually own the fire hydrants. They're in charge of
repairing the fire hydrants.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Is there a
3 master list? I know you said administrative -- is
4 there a master list of all that? I'm asking for the
5 purposes of when we had the big snow and everything
6 else. I'm trying to figure out ways to make sure that
7 those hydrants are kept clean. So that's where my
8 head is going.

9 JOSEPH JEAN-BAPTISTE: Each company has
10 their list and we can see them all on a map.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

12 JOSEPH JEAN-BAPTISTE: Maybe we could work
13 to figure out how to get the Council Members mapping
14 of hydrants.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: That would be
16 really helpful, I think. So, thank you so much to
17 everybody. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. We're going to
19 switch to Zoom now since we have quorum, and just go
20 over to Council Member Cabán so she can ask her
21 questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you, Chair
Ariola. Apologies for not being able to be on screen.
Can y'all hear me? I just want to confirm that.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Beautiful. Like has
3 been said before, Commissioner, congratulations. Also
4 very proud and excited to see you in this leadership
5 role.

6 I want to ask you about B-HEARD, and I
7 sort of want to approach it from like a past,
8 present, and future. Could you talk a little bit
9 about B-HEARD funding? Specifically, you know, did
10 FDNY receive dedicated funding for B-HEARD in the
11 past? Is funding being reallocated or removed or
12 shifted in this year's budget? Like I am curious
13 about, you know, what funding is left in the agency
14 for B-HEARD? Is there anything left for the program?
15 Is it all going to H and H? Like what's the state of
16 B-HEARD funding?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yeah. So
18 as part of the November plan that was released under
19 the Adams Administration, there was a transfer of the
20 B-HEARD funding that was associated with the
21 dedicated units. So, it was about 4 million dollars
annually that was part of the transfer to H and H.
There had been an announcement about the program
itself transferring to H and H. And so that funding
had been moved.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Has that happened?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
4 program continues to operate as status quo. The Fire
5 Department is still operating it, and we anticipate
6 that the funding will be moved back in a future
7 financial plan.

8 The other part of funding associated with
9 B-HEARD is there is a differential that folks in EMS
10 receive once they've completed the appropriate mental
11 health response training, and that funding was never
12 moved so that continues to be in our budget.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: So, is it your
14 understanding, I know obviously that the previous
15 Mayor, you know, made the decision to move B-HEARD
16 from FDNY to H and H. Based on what you're saying, if
17 the funding is going to come back to you guys, do you
18 anticipate it staying under FDNY for the foreseeable
19 future? And also how does this relate to, if you can
20 speak on it at all, to, you know, a developing
21 department of community safety?

COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes. This
program, as you know, is a pilot that started in
2021. It was between the Fire Department and H and H,
where the Fire Department and H and H got together

1 and sent a unit that was responding to mental illness
2 crisis assignments, low acuity, nonviolent
3 assignments, together so that law enforcement would
4 not have to go there, and that the patient would get
5 the help they need from the social worker and from
6 the EMTs, and we've been running this program as a
7 pilot in partnership with H and H since then. We've
8 not stopped running this program. We've continued to
9 run this program in conjunction with our partners.

10 And this Administration, I can say, is very
11 interested in providing different opportunities for
12 those with mental illness to get the help that they
13 need, the appropriate help that they need. And this
14 program is important to that mission. The fact that
15 the funding is being transferred back to FDNY at some
16 point indicates that it will likely stay with FDNY,
17 but it is still being negotiated and discussed at
18 this point. So, up until something changes, we're
19 going to continue to run it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And I know I have
21 limited time, so that's why I'm just cutting in here.

And I'm happy to hear that also because
the EMS union obviously made it known that they would
prefer it stay under FDNY. And also, we know that in

1 terms of federal reimbursement and eligibility, where
2 it lives determines sort of like what funds are
3 available to the program.

4 Another question I have too is that, I
5 mean, if it's being moved back, is it, you know, we
6 had heard information about EMTs being taken off of
7 the B-HEARD calls and not being part of that core
8 team. What's the status of that?

9 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: So, it has never
10 moved so it's not moving back. We've maintained it
11 the entire time. So, if the program continues to
12 expand, we will restaff it with the appropriate
13 staff.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Great. Thank you.

15 The last thing I'll say on this, and I'll
16 hand it back to the Chair, is like, I just, I'm
17 obsessed with this model. I have gone to several
18 cities to visit their alternative responders and so
19 just would love to continue to be a partner on
20 strengthening it and talking about what (TIMER CHIME)
21 resources are needed to also strengthen the outcomes.
I know this has been said by the Chair and others,
but EMTs need to be paid a whole lot more. Y'all are
training folks and then losing them to all of these

2 other first responder, you know, cohorts. So, I just
3 thank you again for your work, and I'm looking
4 forward to staying in touch. And thank you, Chair.

5 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Thank you for
6 your support.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, I'd like to talk
8 about unit availability data. What is the percentage
9 of ambulances, engines, and trucks available at any
10 given time by borough? And for fire operations, why
11 is it that they determine response time to be when
12 the fire truck arrives on the scene and not when the
13 water is on the fire?

14 CHIEF ESPOSITO: On the fire side, the
15 water on the fire would be a different time,
16 obviously, than when we arrive on the scene. We have
17 historically counted our response time for when we
18 pull up in front of the building. To be able to
19 accurately determine and capture when we have water
20 on the fire would be significantly more difficult
21 because the firefighters operating don't have contact
with the dispatcher. That would have to be relayed.
It would be another step. We acknowledge that it's
generally several minutes from the time they arrive
on the scene to have water on the fire. And

2 obviously, the further vertically from the ground,
3 the longer time that would take as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And then the
5 first part of my question was what percentage of
6 ambulances, engines, and trucks are available at any
7 given time by borough?

8 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I'll talk about
9 EMS and then Chief Esposito can talk about fire.

10 It's not really easy to give you a number
11 because it really depends on the actual day. There
12 are some days that availability is extremely low.
13 There are some days that we're holding assignments
14 for quite some time waiting for ambulances so it
15 really does depend on the volume of the day.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay.

17 CHIEF ESPOSITO: And then on the fire
18 availability, generally, we are available at least 50
19 percent of the time and generally higher. If we have
20 below 50 percent availability in any borough, we
21 would be relocating companies to ensure coverage.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Because I
passed intro 1229, which is now Local Law 30 in 2026,
and it requires the Fire Department to report monthly
on the average number of emergency medical service

2 vehicles available each day and to respond to the
3 emergency so hopefully we'll have a better counting
4 on that.

5 And just my final question before we go
6 to Council Member Maloney is how is the production of
7 the new EMS CAD system proceeding?

8 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: We're moving
9 forward and we're all very, very excited about it.
10 The system we have right now is 35 years old so we're
11 excited about moving forward with new refresh in
12 technology. We've had a contract awarded, and they're
13 beginning the collection of information that it's
14 going to take to get this thing done so we expect to
15 have a new EMS CAD in place in about two years.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Council
17 Member Maloney.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you so
19 much, Chair, and thank you for being here,
20 Commissioner, and for the really thoughtful and
21 helpful testimony earlier.

I wanted to come back to the ambulance
response times questions that Council Member Schulman
brought up. Thank you for outlining clearly some of

1 the causes and the ideas and solutions that you've
2 proposed.

3 One question I had, a follow-up, was that
4 fire engines supplement EMS response times and is
5 increasingly putting pressure on engine companies.
6 So, just wondering how frequently are engine
7 companies being dispatched to EMS calls due to
8 ambulance shortages?

9 CHIEF ESPOSITO: Well, going on about 30
10 years, fire engine companies, the CFR, certified
11 first responder companies, have been responding to
12 the most serious life-threatening incident segment
13 one, two, and three calls, and that is not
14 necessarily because there may be a shortage or a
15 delay in an ambulance. The ambulance and the fire
16 company are dispatched simultaneously. And about half
17 the time, the ambulance arrives on the scene first,
18 and about half the time, the engine company arrives
19 on the scene first, and those engines would perform
20 the patient assessment and provide life-saving care
21 until the ambulance responds.

CHIEF MIANO: I'm sorry. I'm Paul Miano,
Chief of EMS. I know we're focusing a lot on response
time and the amount of time it actually takes to get

1 to the patient, and that is just one metric, but it
2 doesn't tell the whole picture and the story of what
3 my members do. So far this year, since January 1st,
4 we have resuscitated over 200 people who were in
5 cardiac arrest and delivered over 25 babies into this
6 world. Last year, we provided over 2,000 times
7 life-saving epinephrine to people who were in
8 anaphylactic shock. Countless amount of times, we've
9 provided albuterol to patients who couldn't breathe
10 and were having severe asthma attacks. So, while I
11 understand that we put a lot of emphasis on the
12 amount of time it takes to get there, what I really
13 want everybody to focus on is the medicine that we
14 provide when we get there and the ability of my
15 members to stop people from dying. And the men and
16 women of EMS, while response time is a really,
17 really, really important metric, the men and women of
18 EMS, the job that they do, that's the most important
19 metric that we should look at.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you for
18 that. And again, thank you for all the hard work of
19 the men and women of EMS.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: One of the
21 things, I know the Bronx has a bit of an outsized

2 increase in ambulance delays and there was a pilot
3 program looking at increasing engine company staffing
4 to address the demand. And just curious, are you
5 planning to implement that program? Any updates on
6 how you'll measure success of that pilot program?

7 CHIEF ESPOSITO: So, we are aware of the
8 proposal and we are currently reviewing the staffing
9 proposal.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you.

11 Shifting gears, I wanted to talk about
12 firehouse conditions. In your testimony,
13 Commissioner, you talked about how the Department is
14 committed to the best equipment and the best
15 infrastructure. And some of the firefighters in my
16 community have raised concerns around structural
17 conditions in the firehouses, roofs, and mold. How
18 many firehouses currently have outstanding structural
19 maintenance issues like that that you're aware of?
20 And what are the timelines for addressing some of
21 those challenges?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, if
there are structural issues, we assess them
immediately to make sure there's no health or safety
risks associated with them. If there are, we get

2 scaffolding up or whatever needs to be done and then
3 we work on allocating proper funding to ensure that
4 nothing major occurs.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: And since this is
6 a budget hearing, does the FDNY currently have
7 sufficient capital funding to maintain firehouse
8 facilities in a safe condition for firefighters?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, while
10 we would always welcome additional funding, we do
11 have a significant amount of funding for firehouse
12 renovations and reconstructions. So, the capital plan
13 more broadly includes 970 million DOLLARS going from
14 FY26 to FY35. It's about 52 percent of our capital
15 budget. That includes 141 million that's tied to kind
16 of wholesale new facilities, includes things like
17 Engine 287, Engine 268, EMS stations such as EMS 17
18 and EMS 7. Also includes 310 million dollars for very
19 large rehab programs. 84 million dollars that's
20 assigned for like smaller or single component repairs
21 at firehouses and EMS stations. And about 434 million
in lump sum funding which gets broken out into
specific projects as that prioritization process
occurs.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you. I'm
3 going to yield back to the Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All good? Okay.

5 I just want to piggyback on Council
6 Member Cabán, what she was talking about. You
7 mentioned previously in the November plan that
8 B-HEARD program was shifted from FDNY to H and H and
9 the funding being moved out of the Fire Department.
10 Then you stated that FDNY has continued running
11 B-HEARD with the assumption that the program funding
12 will return to FDNY. What funding streams has FDNY
13 been running this program with? And the preliminary
14 budget included 72 million in PS adjustments. Does
15 any of the new funding include an increased overtime
16 budget for the B-HEARD program?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, none
18 of the PS adjustment in this plan was tied to
19 B-HEARD. We anticipate that the B-HEARD adjustment
20 will be part of a future plan, likely the executive
21 budget. But we continue to operate B-HEARD using City
funds.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I have to say I'm
really disappointed in the answers. I'm disappointed
in the non-answers. I'm disappointed in the

1 non-definite absolute answers considering this should
2 have been much more preparation.

3 We'll stay on EMS. Can you provide data
4 for assaults to our EMS members, our uniformed
5 members of the EMS?

6 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yes. I have that
7 information here. In 2025, as of 10/15, that's
8 October, there were a total of 161 physical assaults
9 by patients and 23 assaults by civilians. There were
10 seven patient verbal assaults and 11 verbal assaults
11 from civilians. Aggressive behavior, there were six
12 from patients, that's not assault, that's
13 behavior-wise, and there were six from civilians. And
14 we have a total there of 161 assaults from patients.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member Feliz
16 had asked that question.

17 Okay. So, now let's go on to maintenance.
18 So, we spoke about the Council Member aptly brought
19 up the condition of the firehouses, and there was
20 quite a bit of capital money that you mentioned that
21 we have for fixing that so I'm going to go to the
apparatus. What is the current total number of fire
apparatus in the fleet?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, for fire
3 apparatus, we have roughly about 500 fire apparatus.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: 500, okay. And what
5 is the average age of the fire engines and what
6 percentage are beyond the 11-year, 364-day
7 replacement standard?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, the
9 average age of our fire apparatus for pumpers and
10 ladders are about six years.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what are the
12 average age of ladder trucks and what percentage are
13 beyond the 10-year, 364-day replacement standard?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, ladder
15 trucks is also a six-year, and there's probably
16 roughly about 43 that are beyond replacement.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what percentage
18 of fire apparatus are out of service on any given day
19 due to maintenance or repairs?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: On average,
21 it's about 20 percent, but we have spare apparatus so
there's never a company that does not have apparatus.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. What is the
annual maintenance cost per fire engine and per

2 ladder truck? And what percentage of the fleet
3 maintenance budget does this represent?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, the
5 annual maintenance cost for a fire apparatus engine
6 or ladder is roughly about 80,000 dollars.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, the apparatus
8 downtime that we're hearing, is that due to
9 mechanics? Is that directly impacted because the
10 FDNY's ability to respond to emergencies is because
11 historically the mechanics portion of the FDNY has
12 had its fleet workforce at inadequate staffing
13 levels? Or are they at adequate staffing levels now?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: We could
15 always use more. I would never say we cannot use
16 more.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'm sorry?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I would say
19 we could always use more.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: You could say we
21 could always use more.

22 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: And we have 167
23 fleet auto mechanics, and that staffing level has
24 remained effectively flat --

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How many openings do
3 you have?

4 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: -- over the last
5 several years.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How many lines do you
7 have that are not filled?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, we're
9 actually above budget for our civilian headcount so
10 we don't technically have any vacancies.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. On your spare
12 apparatuses, what is the average age?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I'll have to
14 get back to you with that number.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. Now we're
16 going to switch if everybody can take a look at the
17 board, the screen. So, we spoke earlier about the
18 capital money, and I wanted Council Member Maloney,
19 especially because she asked the question, because it
20 doesn't track with what we're seeing. So, the
21 following photos show water damage at Engine Company
59, Ladder 30 in Manhattan. These pictures show water
damage that has corroded the ceilings, the walls of
the firehouse. There is a pipe that is clearly
showing that water has been leaking out of. The water

1 has damaged the steps inside the firehouse from the
2 constant leak, and we see steps with stain and
3 buildup. Would you consider these safe or healthy
4 conditions for members to work in?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, the
6 safety and health of our members is always the utmost
7 importance. When we see water infiltration, we
8 immediately dispatch staff to survey to see if it's
9 something they could patch or if it's something that
10 needs a total roof repair. For something like this,
11 this location needs to be repointed, which is a
12 larger capital program. So, we will do what we can to
13 ensure that there is minor infiltration until we can
14 get to the larger roof repair.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what is the 970
16 million that you have appropriated to, if not
17 cleaning these up? We can answer that later.

18 Next, we have the roof leak at Engine 262
19 in Astoria, Queens, that has at least five work
20 orders reported on 1/25 of '23, 4/29 of '23, 11/25 of
21 '25, 1/7 of '26, 2/15 of '26. In the photo, you will
see a drop ceiling that is missing tiles from what
looks like a leak. The tiles are filled with heavy
water stains. There is another picture of the ceiling

2 covered where tiles seem to be missing. There is a
3 picture of a blue wall surrounding a window air
4 conditioning unit with what appears to be the outlet
5 of the unit to the left of the unit. What is the
6 timeline for repairs of this nature?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, this
7 location, we actually are in the process of doing a
8 lot of the sampling around the and we are working on
9 submitting this work.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How much are safety
10 conditions like water dripping into air conditioning
11 units and outlets taken into consideration? This was
12 first reported over three years ago. When did
13 facilities start to do the work that you're referring
14 to?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I'd have to
15 go back and check my notes to see when this was first
16 reported.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I told you it was
17 first reported on 1/25 of '23.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, I have
19 to double check with my staff on when they received
20 the request.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you have the
3 information of when you began the work? You said it's
4 currently being worked on.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Yes. So,
6 they've did some of these testings in the past two
7 weeks.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: In the last two
9 weeks.

10 Okay. Next we have pictures of the first
11 floor at Engine Four Ladder 15. The first picture
12 shows the crumbled support wall of the firehouse
13 between the two apparatus doors. Next, we have a
14 picture of the rear wall of the apparatus floor,
15 which we also see crumbling. There are so many areas
16 with ceiling missing tiles around light fixtures,
17 with either water-stained tiles surrounding the
18 missing tiles, so we can assume the tiles are missing
19 due to water damage from the leak. How dangerous
20 would you say the crumbling support wall between the
21 two apparatus doors is to the integrity of the
building?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, there
were no work orders called in for this.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I can't hear you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: There was no work orders called in for this work, so if there is, I would like them to be forwarded.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah. We're going to forward you those work orders. We do have them.

This is the roof of Engine 229 Ladder 146 in Brooklyn. The photo shows ceiling damage and the roof has sunk from its proper place. The roof should be in line with the metal rail on the exterior wall. The picture shows the roof about one foot below the metal rail. The next picture shows the water damage happening inside the firehouse above the cooling heating unit. Work orders for this were submitted on 10-5-21 for the section of the ceiling collapse on the third floor; 10-22-25 of the roof line sagging, water pooling on the roof and leaking to the third floor; 1-29-26, no heat; 2-11-26, the Nederman system out of service, and the Nederman system is the vacuum, for those who don't know, that the Fire Department attaches to their apparatus exhaust system to capture noxious exhaust and diesel fumes; 2-18-26, Nederman system still out of service; 2-26-26, no heat, Nederman system still out of service.

2 So, I'm going to ask you four questions
3 and then Council Member Maloney has a follow-up. What
4 was the delay in repair of this roof cave-in? What is
5 the function of the Nederman system beyond what I
6 described? And how does having it out of service for
over a month affect the firehouse and its members?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, in
8 regards to the roof, I will have to do look into more
9 information about this specific roof issue here.

10 In regards to the Nederman, the Nederman
11 system, like you said, it attaches to the exhaust of
12 all the apparatus and pulls all the fumes from the
13 apparatus outside the building. We have staff on call
14 that repairs the Nederman. For this specific issue, I
15 would have to find out what it was. Were they waiting
16 on a part? Not sure what it is, but I will find out
17 about that. But when a Nederman issue occurs, we have
18 in-house staff that immediately responds to correct
19 the issue.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Just one moment.
21 We're out of respect for time for my Colleague,
Pierina Sanchez. She has a couple of questions, and
then we can get back to the slideshow.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Amazing. Thank
3 you. Thank you so much, Chair. And good morning,
4 Commissioner. Good morning, Chief. Good morning,
5 everyone.

6 First, I also want to join in the
7 congratulations. It's exciting to have an EMS expert
8 at the helm. You know, we always see different
9 expertise reflected in leadership, and this is great.

10 My first question is around the split
11 between FDNY EMS responses and private systems, as
12 you mentioned. You mentioned it's about a third
13 that's going to private systems. Sorry. I have five
14 questions and five minutes, so we're going to try to
15 keep the answers brief as well. So, the first
16 question is, when are those units dispatched versus
17 FDNY units, AND they are better paid. Do they have a
18 different workload?

19 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: They're
20 dispatched as part of our dispatch system so they're
21 dispatched based on who's the closest. So, they work
in particular areas. They have higher rates of pay
because they work directly for the hospital. We're
not paying them as City employees. They have

2 different packages, different benefit packages, you
3 know, because they're private employees.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Second
5 question is, I'm really happy to hear the statistics
6 regarding the declining number of fatalities. You
7 mentioned 2022 was a high at 97, and then it went
8 down to 62 in FY25. Could you share this information
9 with the Committee in terms of, say, by battalion? I
10 know I have Battalion 19 in District 14. It's about
11 90 percent of my District, and I'd just be very
12 curious to see what the numbers have been there,
13 especially, as you know, and we discussed last week,
14 thank you for the conversation, that we've had a
15 number of fatal fires just in the last couple of
16 months.

17 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Sure. We can get
18 together and talk about the information that you
19 need.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. And in
21 particular, I just want to highlight as Chair of
Housing and Buildings, it'd be particularly important
to see when the cause of a fire is something like
electrical wiring, something related to the building
condition. So, as you share information with us about

1 fires, causes of fires across the city, very
2 interested in seeing that.

3 Chief Esposito, you answered Council
4 Member Maloney's question regarding the Bronx
5 delegation reaching out to you about a fifth
6 firefighter. We understand that deploying three- to
7 four-person teams takes longer than sending two
8 five-person engines. So, in addition to, I know you
9 said you were reviewing, but I'm curious your
10 response to some of the ideas that we raised in the
11 letter, if you agree or disagree with anything as
12 stated.

13 CHIEF ESPOSITO: You know, on the
14 operational front, an engine staffed with five
15 firefighters, we know will stretch an operator hose
16 line quicker than an engine staffed with four
17 firefighters, and we are continuing to review the
18 proposal. It would result in a reduction of the
19 number of engines sent on the initial call for a fire
20 from three to two, and the theory is that that would
21 free up some availability to respond and reduce
response times for other emergencies.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, exactly.
Thank you. We look forward to your response on that.

1 And, you know, as my colleague, no relation, Council
2 Member Justin Sanchez said in the letter, we do, you
3 know, want to be mindful of reducing response times
4 and anything that can be done there.

5 My last question, I mean, I have like
6 three more, but I don't think I have time so I'm
7 going to focus it on the conversation that we had
8 last week. It feels like three years ago, but that
9 was just a week ago, regarding the agency's
10 coordination with additional agencies after a fire,
11 right? I will be the first to admit, you know, I try
12 to go to as many fires in my District. FDNY is almost
13 always gone by the time that I get there, unless it's
14 one of the major ones, because, you know, thankful
15 for all of the work, you know, they put out the fire,
16 they do their thing, and then I'm really working with
17 my constituents to make sure people know where
18 they're going to go for the evening, you know, what
19 happens next, right? There's big questions. So, we've
20 had this, you know, I want to sort of emphasize, we
21 are having a non-legislative conversation about
improvements, right? We don't have to legislate
everything. But on the occasion when FDNY is
responding to fires with less than three alarms, I

1 have noticed, and I know other Colleagues have also
2 noticed, a gap in FDNY's, I don't know if it's the
3 communication or the way that the agencies are
4 working together to make sure that vacates are issued
5 appropriately, because those vacates then trigger the
6 more, you know, call it human side, the American Red
7 Cross, you know, hotel for the night response.

[GAVEL] So, I just am requesting an update right now
8 on those conversations. Are any protocols going to be
9 changing, or when can I expect a response? Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: We're definitely
11 having those conversations, and thank you for
12 bringing that up. We're working with our partner
13 agencies to make sure any gaps that exist will be
14 closed. It's going to take a couple more
15 conversations, as you can imagine. Every agency has
16 their own protocol, and we have to see how those
17 protocols align and where we can close some of those
18 gaps. I think you're probably getting emails about
19 fires now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yes. Thank you.
21 So excited.

2 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: So, we've made
3 some progress on that front, and I expect we'll
4 continue to make progress there.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

6 Madam Chair, can I ask one more quick
7 question?

8 You talked about the criminal summons
9 issued for a vehicle that was blocking a fire
10 hydrant. Can you tell us where that was, first? And
11 second, how often are trucks getting stuck behind
12 double-parked vehicles, right, so they're not getting
13 to their sites. Do you keep that information, and
14 what can we do to improve that? Thank you, Madam
15 Chair.

16 CHIEF ESPOSITO: So, this year, we have
17 issued several criminal court summonses for vehicles
18 parked on hydrants. Two of them were for the fifth
19 alarm on Finley in early January. One of those
20 resulted in a 3,500-dollar fine. The second one is
21 still being adjudicated. You know, we do get stuck in
times behind cars and traffic, double-parked vehicles
or vehicles blocking the road. Sometimes we're able
to squeeze by or have to wait for the driver, and
other times we have to back out of the block and go

2 around, and it does lead to a delay. And with the
3 snow that we had this year and how long it stayed
4 around, I think we all saw it, that cars were now
5 parked further off the curb into traffic, and if
6 there was going to be somebody double-parked or
7 delivery trucks, it's just all of that congestion
8 that slows us down.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chief.
10 Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member
12 Maloney.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you, Chair.

14 My next question continues in the theme
15 around replacements and maintenance. The City has a
16 commitment to replace the engine and ladder apparatus
17 every 10 years, and reports of supply chain
18 disruptions and issues with manufacturing have meant
19 there's a bit of a delay. So how many apparatuses
20 were delivered in the last year? And then the
21 follow-up question to that? What is the gap between
what was ordered and delivered?

CHIEF ESPOSITO: While Commissioner Brooks
looks at that information, in the fall I was able to
visit the factory that makes our fire trucks out in

1
2 Wisconsin and had a discussion with the CEO of the
3 company. And initially, all of our apparatus had been
4 ordered on time, and initially the delay was what
5 everybody referred to as the global supply chain
6 shortage. But what Seagrave had to do during the
7 pandemic was lay off some of their workers. And as
8 the supply chain caught up and started to deliver the
9 parts, as they went to hire their workers back, many
10 of them did not come back. So, the supply chain
11 shortage has been rectified. They now have a skilled
12 workforce issue. They would love to be working double
13 shifts. They're just not able to at this point. They
14 are prioritizing FDNY apparatus. We are getting
15 consistent deliveries, and it's considerably better
16 than it was this time last year.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: And then in
15 regards of what's being received, we're in the
16 process of receiving eight squads, 41 pumpers, 11
17 tower ladders, and 22 rear mount aerials.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: And what was the
18 gap between ordered and what was actually delivered?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: What do you
20 mean, like the turnaround time? Is that what you're?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Sure.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: It's about
3 900 days from when we submit the purchase order until
4 we receive the vehicle.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you.

6 And my last question is around the number
7 of women serving in FDNY continuing to grow. And many
8 firehouses only have one locker or a single shower
9 designated for the female firefighters and wondering
10 if you have any comment on that regarding steps to
11 take to make sure we have adequate facilities to
12 accommodate more female firefighters entering.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, like you
14 mentioned, all our facilities have a female locker
15 room. We are in the process of our new design specs
16 is that we are building gender neutrality for our
17 locations. We have already done that at a location in
18 Brooklyn, and all our new design specs will include
19 that. So going forward, we will have gender
20 neutrality locker rooms for all our locations.

21 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: So, obviously,
that's a big undertaking, right? We have 100-year-old
buildings, and we're trying to retrofit that with new
bathrooms and locker rooms so the truth of the matter
is we still have space issues. Though every firehouse

1 has a bathroom for females, there still may be some
2 space issues that we continue to work through. And
3 moving forward, it's not just these firehouses and
4 EMS system, EMS houses, stations that we have to
5 maintain, and some of them being very old. But also
6 moving forward, as we put new housing in, you know,
7 we'd like to be considered for new firehouses, EMS
8 stations, and new resources to accommodate the people
9 in those growing areas. And that's just part of our
10 modernizing the Fire Department and preparing our
11 infrastructure to go for the next 50 years and handle
12 the calls that are going to be happening all over our
13 city.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I agree. And please
15 understand that these issues that we're bringing up
16 is not a knock to the Fire Department or to
17 facilities. It is because we have a new
18 Administration, and they need to know what's
19 happening on the ground. And they need to know why
20 we've asked for 1 billion dollars to be infused into
21 the Fire Department and why we cannot afford to have
any money taken out.

So, how many Nederman systems are an
operable ballpark, or if you know exactly.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: I don't have
3 that information in front of me.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you think that
5 possibly one of your team members can get that
6 information, maybe call over to Metro Tech? I see
7 people putting notes on your thing. Maybe they could
8 find that out and then find out how long you wait
9 when you learn something is expired for an order to
10 be put in, you know, or when you know it in advance.
11 Because it's very important that we know that. We
12 have to know that there is a constant chain and flow
13 of communication when an order is called in that it
14 is looked at immediately.

15 So, before we get back, so does the Fire
16 Department have a platform that tracks the priority
17 work orders, requests, assests, and a resolution? Do
18 you have that program or policy?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Yeah. We have
20 a database that has all the information when a work
21 order is called in, trades people who assess it,
project managers who assess it.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right. And are you able
to get the information on the Nederman system for me?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Of course.

1 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. And then
2 right now what you've seen up here, I just have a
3 question. If you were in these firehouses that you've
4 seen thus far, and there are a couple more to come,
5 would you feel safe working in that firehouse?

6 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: I'll answer
7 that. You know, to your point, Madam Chair, the men
8 and women that work in these houses are heroes, and
9 they would put their life on the line and have put
10 their life on the line for their fellow New Yorkers.
11 They don't deserve to be in facilities like that.
12 They don't deserve to be in the presence of mold or
13 water infiltration. They absolutely don't. They
14 deserve better. And we'll work with what we have to
15 make those repairs as quickly as possible and attract
16 those repairs. We have to move forward in a different
17 way because these houses are getting older by the day
18 and one repair will lead to another repair. So, we
19 have to do a better job and I can commit to that,
20 that we will do our part to make sure that we're on
21 top of this, whether it be a better tracking system
or, you know, certainly better communication about
what our needs are for these facilities. There's a
lot of facilities. So, we expect that there's going

1 to be these situations. But, you know, to your
2 original question, should they be living like that?
3 The answer is no. They should not.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Bravo. You're right.

5 No.

6 Okay. We're ready to go to the next
7 slide. Okay. The next slide is Ladder 78, and they
8 put in for an unstable front parapet wall of the
9 firehouse numerous times. In June of 2023, the
10 buildings unit subcontracted out a company to put a
11 protective netting over the unstable parapet wall. No
12 repairs have been done since the netting was put on.
13 Previous work orders were submitted on 6/21 of '22
14 3/11 of '22, 12/6 of '21, and 1/25 of 2020. We're
15 here today on March 13th of 2026, and that netting is
16 still on. What is the cause for the delay here?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, this
18 particular firehouse, we had contractors out there
19 about two weeks ago and they're in the process of
20 coming up with a revised proposal on the cost for
21 that. Once we receive the cost proposal, we start to
work on submitting it.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. Do you see
a pattern though? First, it takes a very long time to

1 get out there. Then they put up a scaffold or
2 netting. Then they have a contractor go out. Then,
3 what is it, six years later, contractor goes out
4 again and because things are more expensive now, they
5 have to do a new cost proposal for what it'll cost.
6 Why is there such a gap from what the time that you
7 have? Because if the money is there and you have to
8 maintain these houses, why is there such a gap in the
9 timeframe from when you first get a very dangerous
10 condition reported to the time that it gets fixed?
Six years is a ridiculous amount of time.

11 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: So, you have no
12 answer? Okay, okay, no answer.

13 Let's go to the next picture.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: I just
15 wanted to add to that to give a partial response. So,
16 we have had our civilian headcount reduced over the
17 years and so that certainly contributes. If you look
18 at actual staff in facilities pre-pandemic to now,
19 they've lost about 20 actual people, like not just
20 vacancies, but comparing payroll headcount to payroll
21 headcount, and that's about 18 percent of their
staff, which certainly contributes to a longer time.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Is there a reason for
3 those vacancies?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, they
5 were part of previous financial plan savings
6 initiatives in order to contribute towards filling
7 the budget gap without impacting fire and EMS, where
8 we have taken reductions, generally speaking, has
9 been on the civilian support staff side.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Since 2020? Since the
11 COVID shutdown?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. The next
14 pictures are from Squad 288. That's in Maspeth. I
15 want to make sure it's up so that, well, you got it?
16 Okay. The apparatus floor is buckling, patched with
17 concrete. The following picture shows how it is being
18 held up by hoists that are installed in 2001, which
19 are also now buckling and unsteady. The apparatus
20 floor holds rigs that weigh several tons. There is
21 sometimes flooding in the basement, which also
compromises the hoists. Why has this project been
delayed 25 years?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, this
project actually is going to be started shortly. We

2 have funding in place. The jacks are correct. Those
3 have been there about 20 years. But we will be
4 starting this project shortly. We have funding in
5 place for it.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Is it fully funded to
7 be reconstructed?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: It took 25 years to
10 do that? 25 years. Is everyone listening to that? 25
11 years.

12 So, in the 25 years, I don't think you
13 have a look back that far, but I would imagine that
14 the staffing wasn't as low as it is now so the
15 Commissioner makes a valid point. The reason why
16 they're allowed to get away with 25 years, six years,
17 10 years of firehouses being in a shambles, if the
18 Department of Buildings, I don't know how the
19 Department of Buildings doesn't go in and mark it
20 that it should not be inhabited because it looks like
21 it's going to fall down, a lot of them. It's because
22 firefighters go out every single day. Ambulance,
23 EMTs, paramedics go out every day, and no matter what
24 the conditions are, they do their job and they do
25 their job without any squeaking. There's no

1 squeaking. They just do their job. Doesn't matter how
2 old their rig is. Doesn't matter how hot their rig is
3 in the summertime. And they still go out and do their
4 job. But does that make it right? That does not make
5 it right. They deserve the best. They deserve
6 equipment that they're not, that is probably
7 sometimes as hot, if not hotter than the fire that
8 they're about to go into when they're going to a
9 summer fire. They deserve a house that's not falling
10 on them. And what we have here is the reason why we
11 cannot take any money from the Fire Department. We
12 must put more money into the Fire Department for
13 facilities, if we need to get new firehouses, fine.
14 That's great. We'll do it. We need to make sure that
15 all of the money that is being spent gets spent at
16 the firehouses that we put forth right now. That when
17 I look in two years, that these are fixed, but you
18 don't have any idea because you know that it won't be
19 fixed. It won't be fixed. And maybe you are sending
20 people out, but they'll go out and put another
21 band-aid and then it will be another 25 years.
Somebody else will be sitting here with Council
Members Maloney and Schulman and Sanchez and Council
Member Wong, Council Member Cabán, anybody else who's

1 on this panel, there'll be new Members 25 years from
2 now, and they'll be in the same condition. It's
3 pitiful. And this Administration has got to see that.
4 Has got to see that firefighters, EMS and our
5 paramedics deserve better. And that's what this
6 Committee is committed to. To get you more money. So
7 don't take the knife out. Commissioner, don't take
8 the knife out. We need to take a bucket and pour into
9 the Fire Department on many different levels, aAll
10 the way from staffing to facilities. But quite
11 honestly, facilities -- what is your first name?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Jeremy.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Jeremy. And my name
14 is Joanne. Jeremy, it's appalling that you don't have
15 any answers or you have standard answers or you have
16 just placating answers as to why these facilities are
17 in this condition. Because if I were the head of
18 facilities, you bet your bottom dollar I would get
19 the money from the Administration to fix it so that
20 nobody gets hurt inside the firehouse before they
21 exit the firehouse to save someone's lives. That's on
22 you. So, whether you have full staffing or you're
23 decreased in staffing, this has been going on well
24 before the staffing was cut and it continues to go

1 on. But through our dedication to the Fire Department
2 and the entire agency, we're going to make sure that
3 it ends because we're going to make sure that the
4 public is aware, and the Administration across the
5 hall had best be paying attention because the Fire
6 Department is where there needs to be attention paid.
7 And if there are people within not doing their job,
8 they need to be replaced, Commissioner, and that's
9 your job, to figure out who's doing their job and
10 who's dogging it, who's dragging their heels. And you
11 are a Commissioner who wants to make sure that your
12 Department shines because you are a member of this
13 Department, and that's why I am so excited to have
14 you as a Commissioner because I know you want the
15 best. And as I said before, the things that are
16 brought up here are not because we want to, the Fire
17 Department has, there's no culpability at all,
18 because you're doing your job. This is about dollars
19 and cents, OMB, the office of the Mayor, and making
20 sure that you have the money that you need to make
21 sure that these conditions are fixed, that the rigs
are upgraded, that there's proper staffing, that
there is an equitable fair wage given to members of

2 EMS so that we can maintain EMS members and that they
3 don't leave and this city can be a lot safer.

4 Okay. We're going to wrap up very soon.
5 You've been very patient, but these are things that
6 have to get out.

7 Okay. So, according to the law that I
8 mentioned before, the next inspection report for
9 Engine 266 in my District, when would we get the next
10 item that is the inspection report for Engine 266 in
11 my District? If you look up here. But I can't see it
12 from here. Okay. So, Engine 266 has exterior
13 condition -- the MSA rubrics award broad ratings
14 across 10 categories, and we're talking about 266.
15 They received a 92 percent overall score despite 11
16 documented deficiencies including raw sewage,
17 backflow, collapsing ceilings, and a firefighter
18 struck by a falling plaster the day before the visit.
19 Does the FDNY believe the current methodology
20 produces meaningful assessments of facility
21 conditions? So, if 266 got what, a 94 was it?

UNIDENTIFIED: 92.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: 92, AND it is in
desperate condition. What does an engine company that
has a 72? What does that one look like?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: So, we don't
3 use the MSA scores as a basis. We go exactly by what
4 is being reported from the surveyors. So, while it
5 mentions 92, we don't look at, we go right to the
6 photos and what the issues are, and that's what we
7 immediately try to respond to if there's any safety
8 and health issues.

9 For 266, we sent staff out immediately to
10 assess and see what can be done right away. But we
11 don't look at the rating. We go right to the report,
12 read the report.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, you're telling me
14 that you're going to fix that right away? Is that
15 what you're telling me?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, there's
17 a lot of things on here that have already been fixed.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I understand. Because
19 it's from 2024.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, yes,
21 yes. A lot of these items have been corrected
already. There are some things that we do have a
large-scale capital project that we'll be starting
shortly there, but a lot of the other things we had
already --

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What was corrected?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: Well, the
4 issues with the sewage backup was corrected. We had
5 some of the plaster was fixed, but there's a larger
6 issue with the roof leak that will be taken care of.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. That's not what
8 I'm seeing when I go in because this is in my
9 District so I don't see where anything has been
10 corrected. I'm hoping the raw sewage backflow has
11 been corrected, but I will certainly check back at
12 that firehouse to make sure what's been corrected and
13 what hasn't. I'll check.

14 Okay. Unless any of the Members have any
15 other questions? Council Member Wong, did you have a
16 question?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I'd like a
18 follow-up.

19 Thank you, Chair.

20 I would like to know where do you recruit
21 the EMTs? I know high schools or colleges that offer
like advanced first aid, first aid classes, and quite
many of them want to be EMTs, but do you ever reach
out to them or you go to other places for
recruitment? Because I know people that want to be

2 EMTs and they're taking AFA right now, just don't
3 know where to go. Can you talk about it?

4 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah. That's
5 great. Thanks for bringing that up because we want as
6 many people as we can get to be EMTs, and they can
7 always go to joinfdny.com. Commissioner Noonan could
8 talk about our recruitment efforts.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: Sure.
10 Happy to.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: Thank you.
13 Actually, we have a recruitment campaign for EMTs
14 upcoming in June so your timing is perfect. If you
15 are interested in partnering with our recruitment
16 unit, you can absolutely reach out or we can reach
17 out to your team to see where we can help assist and
18 partner with various schools or community programs
19 that are interested in helping their members.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And I understand, is
21 pay the reason why you are having recruitment
22 problems or there's something else that I'm missing
23 here?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: I would
25 say pay is definitely one of the reasons. You know,

1
2 it puts us in comparators of some other positions
3 that maybe are not heroic positions where we think we
4 shouldn't have to compare with, with Starbucks or
5 Uber or Lyft and things like that. But really, we are
6 doing a lot of recruiting for members that don't even
7 know that they want to be EMTs, right? This is a
8 career that can touch people that don't even know
9 that this would be so inspiring to them and their
10 families and their communities so we're looking for
11 those people that don't necessarily know that the
12 Fire Department has an entry-level position where in,
13 you know, very short, you can apply for an exam, go
14 through an academy and have a very fulfilling career.
15 So, a lot of the work that we do is focused on
16 inspiring young people or really not just people,
17 right, our civilians, there is no age range for
18 members that want to become EMTs to, you know, to
19 come in and learn about what an EMT actually does,
20 how to get involved, how to prepare, and we do a lot
21 of that engagement and work with our initiatives in
preparing people for becoming an EMT. So whether it's
a detailed information session, whether it's physical
requirements and, you know, making sure that you're
physically prepared to pass the physical exam to

1 become an EMT, whether it's making sure that we have
2 content on our website so that you can start studying
3 some of the medical terminologies that you're going
4 to have to learn once you go into the EMS academy to
5 be successful. These are all, you know, very
6 important initiatives that we spend a lot of time on
7 and pursue and make sure that we're not, we're doing
8 more than just recruiting you, we are helping you all
9 the way up until the moment that you go into the
academy.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Yes.

11 CHIEF MIANO: So, being an EMT and
12 paramedic is extremely fulfilling, right? There are
13 not many careers where you can save lives and bring
14 lives into this world. The problem with our job is
15 there is not a lot of exposure about exactly what an
16 EMT and paramedic, what they do. The Fire Department
17 through our social media consistently pushes forward
18 stories of heroism and acts and life-saving moments
19 that our members do, but we need your help. I would
20 love to partner with you and have an event where I
21 can bring some of these members out and young
children or young adults who are looking for careers
can actually speak with them, learn their stories,

1 hear where they started from. I was a restaurant
2 manager. I had a customer who was a paramedic. He
3 talked me into coming out and checking out what being
4 a paramedic was and here I am 27 years later in a
5 position I never thought I would be in. But had it
6 not been for a chance meeting with a customer at my
7 restaurant, I don't know if I would have ever
8 realized what goes on in the back of that ambulance
9 so I would love to partner with you, be able to bring
10 some of my members out and have them speak to the
11 people in your community.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

13 I'll reach out at our next community events.

14 My final question is, I had to step out
15 for a Zoom with my civic organization, so I missed
16 about 20 minutes of the hearing. My question is if
17 you are EMT, there is a path to become a firefighter.
18 So, what is the percentage of that compared to those
19 that graduated from the academy? As I see it, you
20 have firefighters from the academy and you have
21 firefighters from EMT so how many of those people are
you pulling?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: Well,
specifically for 2025, we saw about 35 percent of our

2 firefighters that graduated came from our EMS
3 command.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Earlier I mentioned
5 about the law that was passed. I have to go back to
6 the question. I had asked who in the Department is in
7 charge of tracking the emergency medical service
8 vehicles that are available each day to respond to
9 emergencies? I don't believe that portion was
10 answered. Who was in charge of that tracking?

11 CHIEF MIANO: Me.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I feel better now.

13 CHIEF MIANO: But just recently within the
14 last two weeks, we deployed a new vehicle tracking
15 system that was actually built in-house by our own
16 tech department along with some of our members who
17 weighed in on how this should be built. And over the
18 last two weeks, we've deployed this out into the
19 field and our tracking between what we know we have
20 in the field and what fleet has, has reconciled
21 almost 100 percent.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And then who's in
23 charge of sending it to the community boards, which
24 is by law now needed?

2 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: That's our
3 intergovernmental.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Intergovernmental?

5 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah. So, we can
6 certainly make sure -- we're usually pretty good
7 about sending that stuff out.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Maybe we can
9 get PR to start putting some EMS stuff up too.

10 COMMISSIONER BONSIGNORE: Yeah. They've
11 actually have increased it quite a bit. I don't know
12 if you heard that their Commissioner is an EMS
13 person.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I know, I know.

15 So, let's go back to academy classes
16 because that was a great question by Council Member
17 Wong. So, how many firefighter academy classes
18 graduated in FY25? What was the total number of
19 graduates and what percentage of the budgeted hiring
20 targets were achieved?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, in
22 FY25, we had three classes of firefighters that
23 graduated with 895 total graduates.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And how many are
25 planned for FY27?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, the
3 class that started in early March will graduate in
4 the summer. That should be about 240. We expect to
5 start two additional classes in FY27 with an
6 estimated 530 across the two classes.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what is the
8 average firefighter academy class size and what
9 percentage of completion rate do the classes have?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, a
11 normal full class is about 320. Some of our classes
12 have differed from that number recently as we're
13 working through the promotional list and the number
14 of folks that have reached the four years that they
15 need. But as we approach the open competitive, we
16 should be getting back to that normal class size. The
17 dropout rate is generally eight to 10 percent.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And what
19 percentage of firefighters are promoted to
20 lieutenant, captain, or higher ranks annually?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So, in
22 FY25, we promoted 287 lieutenants, 145 captains, 48
23 battalion chiefs, 25 deputy chiefs, and 10 staff
24 chiefs.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: You gave me the
3 current level.

4 All right. I do not have any further
5 questions.

6 Council Member Wong?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah. I'm just a
8 little concerned about how do EMTs get trained to be
9 firefighters if they become firefighters without
10 going through the academy?

11 CHIEF MIANO: Thank you. When you get
12 promoted from EMS to firefighter, you go through the
13 same fire academy, you do the same program as those
14 that did not work for EMS or get hired off the
15 promotional list. It's the same training.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

17 CHIEF MIANO: And thank you for
18 mentioning, you know, Squad 288 and Hazmat Company 1.
19 I knew and worked with many of those guys and
20 appreciate you keeping that memory alive.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good. Okay.

Jeremy, I just wondered if you were able
to get that number for me about how many Nederman
systems are inoperable now.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: (INAUDIBLE)

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'm sorry. I can't
3 hear you. Please come to the table.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: There are 30
5 open Nederman work orders and about 90 percent of
6 those will be closed by early next week.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: 30? How long were
8 they open? Do you know how long they were open?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROOKS: That I don't
10 know.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That would be the
12 interesting part.

13 Okay. We'll check back to make sure
14 they're closed.

15 All right. I have no further questions.
16 Council Member?

17 Okay. Then thank you so very much for
18 your testimony. Commissioner, you made it through
19 your first budget hearing and it'll be one of many,
20 many, many hearings that we'll have together, and
21 thank you so much for everything that you do. You are
dismissed.

Thank you.

Okay. We have now begun again the
hearing, the budget hearing for the Fire and

2 Emergency Management Committee, and now we are now
3 joined by the leadership team of New York City Office
4 of Emergency Management with Commissioner Christina
5 Farrell and also Chris Blanco. Thank you so much for
6 joining us today.

7 If you raise your right hand, our Counsel
8 will swear you in.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Thank you.

10 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth and answer
12 honestly to Council Member questions.

13 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Seeing you
15 acknowledge that, you may go ahead. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Are we good? Great.

17 Good afternoon, Chair Ariola, Member
18 Schulman, other Members of the City Council. I'm
19 Christina Farrell, and it is my pleasure to be here
20 today at my first hearing as Commissioner of the New
21 York City Emergency Management Department to testify
on the preliminary budget. I'm joined today by our
Chief Financial Officer, Christopher Blanco. I'm very
honored to be here, newly appointed as the
Commissioner of the agency and the first Commissioner

1 appointed internally with decades of experience as an
2 emergency manager for the City of New York. We are
3 standing at a moment of change as the city, state and
4 federal landscapes are in their own moments of
5 transition, and I am excited to be here to meet this
6 moment. I greatly look forward to leading the agency
7 through these transitions and to continuing my work
8 in partnership with the City Council. I have always
9 greatly valued our friendship and collaboration. As
10 you all know, whole community is necessary for
11 successful management of emergencies, and that will
12 remain a core focus of mine as Commissioner.

13 New York City Emergency Management has a
14 big mission. We lead the development of the City's
15 emergency plans and the coordination of multi-agency
16 responses to emergencies, educate the public about
17 preparedness, and advance long-term initiatives that
18 reduce risk and increase the resiliency of New York
19 City. Today, New York City faces more frequent and
20 complex emergencies and disasters due to climate
21 change, social and economic inequity, aging
infrastructure, reliance on technology, cyber
threats, domestic terrorism, and more.

Emergency Management is the City's go-to leader for solving complex problems, issues that cannot be solved easily or quickly and that cannot be solved by one entity alone such as COVID-19 or the recent influx of asylum seekers. Our planners write and maintain dozens of plans for varied emergencies, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards, coastal storms, transit strikes, power disruptions, flash floods, and winter weather among other hazards. Our public warning specialists issue thousands of public safety messages and emergency alerts in multiple languages every year to keep New Yorkers informed. Our logisticians manage the City's resource request process to source and strategically allocate critical supplies like generators. This work saves lives, protects neighborhoods and reduces disaster costs to New Yorkers and to the City.

Over the past five years, Emergency Management's roles and responsibilities have expanded. Since January 2022, the agency has managed 68 emergency operation center activations, 38 of which were simultaneous with other incidents. This trend towards the city experiencing more emergency incidents with a greater need for consequence

1 management continues to accelerate. In the first
2 eight weeks of 2026 alone, Emergency Management
3 managed five large-scale emergency activations. This
4 included a January snowstorm, a February blizzard,
5 which was the largest snowfall in the city in the
6 past decade, prolonged extreme cold, a weeks-long New
7 York State Nurses Association strike, an emergency
8 fuel task force activation, and multiple major fires,
9 all with overlapping timelines. Summer 2026 will
10 bring an unprecedented convergence of global and
11 national events to the New York City region,
12 including eight FIFA World Cup matches alongside
13 major celebrations such as America 250, Fleet Week,
14 and the International Naval Review. These
15 high-profile activities expected to draw over 1.6
16 million visitors coincide with annual events like
17 Pride and the National Puerto Rico Day Parade and
18 heightened seasonal risk such as heat, flash
19 flooding, and power disruptions. Emergency
20 Management's role is coordination across multiple
21 partners, fostering collaboration to minimize
disruptions, strengthening community engagement, and
maximizing resources.

Emergency Management is staffed by more than 250 dedicated professionals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. Nearly everyone at Emergency Management has two roles, their day-to-day and their emergency activation role. The duality of roles is unique in City government, and the model allows the agency to respond rapidly to citywide emergencies while maintaining continuity of operations, minimizing overtime, and reducing reliance on consultants or surge staffing contracts. Since emergencies always take precedence, thousands of staff hours normally dedicated to key preparedness work like managing the City's emergency supply stockpile and updating emergency plans were diverted to the response activities in the last year alone.

With that, let me now provide a snapshot of our budget for the next fiscal year. Our projected total Fiscal Year 2027 City tax levy expense budget is 39.6 million dollars. We rely on our City tax levy expense budget to support the agency's administrative, technological, and operational costs. The projected Fiscal Year 2027 City tax levy personnel services budget is 13.9 million, which supports the 93 personnel lines paid directly through

2 our tax levy funds. This includes 1.2 million in
3 funding for 16 staff members dedicated to working on
4 increasing communication and services to people with
5 disabilities, access, and functional needs as well as
6 funding for personnel overtime to support the
7 upcoming World Cup preparation and response
8 activities. Our projected Fiscal Year 2027 City tax
9 levy other than personnel services budget is 25.7
10 million which covers all agency operating and
11 administrative costs. This budget includes a
12 significant portion of non-discretionary funding.
13 These funds are designed to cover our warehouse
14 lease, utilities, and telecommunication costs
15 including the maintenance and operations of our
16 emergency operations center and backup facilities.
17 This money also supports our fleet and all additional
18 equipment, supplies, and materials needed to run the
19 agency. This also includes funding for World Cup
20 support for public information and language access.

21 The agency receives grant funding to
support many of our core programs. In the past year,
we secured 36.2 million in federal funding, primarily
through Homeland Security funding. This funding is
vital to our ability to run many of our initiatives

2 including the Ready New York public education
3 campaign, community emergency response team program,
4 continuity of operations program, geographic
5 information systems, technology and exercises, watch
6 command and response, and citywide incident
7 management system planning as well as the emergency
8 supply stockpile. The impacts of cuts to federal
9 spending and the federal workforce especially at FEMA
10 and other federal agencies we depend upon should not
11 be underestimated. Federal grants make up the
12 majority of our agency's personnel services budget
13 with 62 percent of our agency's budgeted headcount
14 supported by federal funds.

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21
New York City has yet to receive this
year's Homeland Security grant funding awards from
FEMA. Despite commitments from the president on
social media and reporting in the press that the
City's award would be fully restored to prior year
levels, the federal government has not followed
through on this commitment. The award as it currently
stands totals 133 million, which represents an
87-million-dollar or 40 percent cut to the program
for New York State. New York City Emergency
Management anticipates a reduction of upwards of 8

1 million though the final award has not yet been
2 awarded. This would result in significant impacts to
3 critical programs during a time we are coordinating
4 the World Cup, America 250, the 25th anniversary of
5 9/11, and at an increasing time of rising global
6 tensions and negativity towards the United States. We
7 will continue to work with City Hall, OMB, the City's
8 congressional delegation, and our partner agencies to
9 push for full funding.

10 I would like to close by expressing my
11 admiration for our dedicated emergency managers. They
12 accomplished their roles with exemplary
13 professionalism and service to their city. I am
14 honored to be leading this agency, and I know that
15 the expert team at New York City Emergency Management
16 will continue to set the model for what Emergency
17 Management should be. Thank you for the opportunity
18 to testify today. Chris and I look forward to working
19 with the Council, and we're happy to answer your
20 questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,
Commissioner. And I have to say if there was one
person that deserved to be promoted from within, it
was you. You have done this job for many, many years

1 and we have enjoyed working with you, this Committee
2 and myself. One thing is with New York City Office of
3 Emergency Management constantly in contact with the
4 Council Members' offices, community boards, and no
5 matter what's going on and having a District that is
6 the recipient of lots of climate issues, whether it
7 be snow or flooding, I really appreciate your
8 partnership with us. So, thank you so very much.

9 Let's see, I have a few questions, and
10 then I want to toss to the Council Member Shulman
11 because she has another hearing unless you want to go
12 first, Lynn.

13 Okay. All right.

14 So, the PMMR shows EOC activations
15 plummeted 90 percent from 123 days in the first four
16 months of 25 to 12 days in 26. NYCEM states it has
17 ended the perpetual EOC model, that's the Emergency
18 Operations Center, and will now primarily activate
19 for weather-related emergencies returning to
20 traditional activation patterns for specific events.
21 That's done, and also EOC activations have decreased
and that would be a good reason why you would
deactivate it. But as a question, what percentage of
NYCEM staff are assigned to the EOC operations when

1 activated, and does the staffing scale differentiate
2 between when it was activated and when it isn't
3 activated?

4 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, I will say the
5 second quarter or the third quarter, whatever quarter
6 we're in for FY27, those numbers went right back up
7 because people know the January and the February we
8 had. The last few years, we were activated 365, first
9 for COVID and then for the asylum seeker operations.
10 Thankfully, both of those are all but closed out, and
11 so our activations have been more focused on, you
12 know, our more traditional hazards, the summer, you
13 know, severe heats. Luckily, no coastal storms
14 recently, you know, all of that. And then, like I
15 said, we've been activated for winter weather a lot
16 so far this year. Hopefully, we're closing that out
17 as well. We have three teams at Emergency Management,
18 red, white, and blue. They're up for three weeks at a
19 time and so at any one moment, about a third of our
20 agency is on call. There were people in the last six
21 weeks that were on call every day for those 21 days,
you know, because of all the weather and everything.
The team that's up right now, they are on call, but
they haven't been as heavily activated, although we

2 might see some flash flooding Monday, so stay tuned.

3 But we have our ongoing, you know, operations, but

4 then we also have this model with our teams where

5 they're activated for a third of the year.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. So, they're
7 always on call.

8 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yep.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And for the Community
10 Emergency Response Team or CERT, the PMMR shows
11 strong growth in the CERT program. Volunteer hours
12 increasing 35 percent from 3,766 to 5,084,
13 deployments increased 48 percent from 61 to 90, and
14 NYCEM recruited 44 new members versus zero in 2025.
15 After restructuring the curriculum in late 2024,
16 NYCEM emphasized the local-driven community
17 engagement rather than NYCEM-initiated requests, and
18 you do an excellent job on community engagement. I
19 cannot say that enough times. So, the CERT volunteers
20 hours increased 35 percent. What do you think are the
21 specific changes to CERT that drove the growth, and
what are the targets for annual volunteer hours and
deployments in '27?

COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, last December,
we had our 50th cycle of CERT graduation, which I

1 have to say for me was, you know, really a personal
2 milestone because I started in 2003, the same year
3 that we started with CERT, and so to have the program
4 go all those years and, you know, through COVID,
5 through a lot of other challenges to have 50 cycles
6 really, you know, really, really made me proud, I
7 have to say, and that was also the biggest class that
8 we had had in, like, six or seven years. So, you
9 know, there were challenges, especially during the
10 years when most of the work was remote, you know,
11 CERT is not set up to be a remote program. It's set
12 up to be a program where people are in neighborhoods,
13 are working. So, you know, I think we've really
14 rebounded from some leaner years. We have a new
15 director who came up. He started as a Civic Corps
16 five or six years ago, worked his way up, and now he
17 is the director. He's an Army veteran, and he is
18 super fantastic and has more energy than all of us
19 combined so he's really doing a great job. And, you
20 know, I think that over time with support, such as
21 yourselves and, you know, other partners, people
really see the value in CERT, see their flexibility,
see their dedication. One thing we're working towards
in the spring and the summer, which I'm really

2 excited about, is we are looking to do a class in the
3 Rockaways, because as we know, the classes are hybrid
4 now. We can do some of the textbook learning online,
5 and then obviously the drills and things are in
6 person. But, you know, asking people after their
7 workday or taking care of their kids or whatever
8 they're doing all day, asking them to spend maybe two
9 hours to get to our headquarters, to train for three
10 hours and then get home is a really tall order for
11 anyone, but especially for volunteers. So, we're
12 working to recruit a class that will be trained in
13 the Rockaways, which I'm really excited about.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No. That's excellent.

15 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: If you know anyone,
16 let them know.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Oh, for sure. Well,
18 if you send me something, we'll pump that right out.
19 Rockaways is part of my District.

20 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yep.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what is the
annual budget for the CERT program? And what is the
cost per volunteer hour? How does the value of CERT
volunteer contributions compare to the program cost?

1
2 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You know, I think
3 it's an incredibly efficient program. You know,
4 they're volunteers, so obviously, you know, they get
5 a go bag, they get a uniform, some food now and then,
6 and profuse gratitude, but, you know, the cost per
7 volunteer is very low. The overall division that they
8 are out of, Community Engagement, which I used to
9 lead back in the day, the whole program, Ready New
10 York, Strengthening Communities, all the staff, all
11 our CERT members, it's about 4 million dollars in
12 federal funding so, a very low cost, if you think
13 about the mission of community engagement across the
14 city.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right.

16 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We're very lucky
17 through this whole, you know, now we're getting rid
18 of our 51st cycle. The model is that we use
19 instructors from the Police Department, Fire
20 Department, EMS, and our staff who come at the end of
21 their day and do this for a little bit of overtime,
and I think that model of having the three agencies
together has really been key to the success of the
program.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's good. And if you need any help getting a location for the training, just feel free to contact our office. We can work with you on that.

COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And then let's talk about emergency preparedness, education, and outreach. Emergency preparedness participants increased 23 percent to 20,367 in the first four months of 2026, projecting approximately 81,000 annually. What is the target for annual participants? And by what percentage does the current trajectory fall short or exceed this target?

COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I think, you know, our goal is to prepare every single New Yorker. Obviously, we need to do that in waves. But one of our mandates for all of our staff, in addition to their blue sky role and their gray sky role, is that every staff member who comes in, and they're told this through the recruitment and when they meet with me before they get the job offer, is that they need to do at least three Ready New York presentations each year. There are all different ways that you can accomplish that. But, you know, we really practice

1 what we preach. We also have our volunteers doing it.

2 As you know, we do a lot of work with the Council,

3 with other partners. We do a lot of work in schools,

4 senior centers, houses of worship, businesses. So,

5 you know, our goal is to be out there in every

6 community, meeting people where they are. You know, I

7 think we're doing a very good job of that. We can

8 always do more. We can look to see, you know, what

9 ways we can do it more effectively, do it with

10 technology. But we also don't want to miss, you know,

11 seniors probably don't want to, maybe, but they

12 probably don't want to scan a QR code and go through

13 that. They probably want someone to show up and talk

14 to them and work it through with them, maybe in a

15 language other than English. So, you know, there is

16 the quantity, for sure, of getting the message out as

17 widely as we can. But there's also, you know, this is

18 really important work. And, you know, we need to,

19 person by person, group by group, we need to make

20 sure that people understand the message, that they

21 have the supplies, they are keyed in to Notify NYC in

some place. So, you know, we will continue to push

and to work with that across the city and across

partners such as yourselves.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah. For sure.

3 The Emergency Management training and
4 learning management system, that's an online course?

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: It's both. The
6 management system is online. It's a portal. But we do
7 a lot of in-person training and then we also do
8 online training.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And the
10 exercises, drills and training, how does that roll
11 out? A full-scale functional exercise, it shows a
12 decrease from seven to three, but, you know, what is
13 the average staff cost per exercise, specific
14 staffing constraints? Is that, you know, what are the
15 things that could enhance those numbers?

16 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we're actually
17 doing an exercise tonight in Sunnyside. It's
18 important to do exercises at night since there are
19 different challenges. It's with the Police
20 Department, the Fire Department, Amtrak, our agency
21 and others. So, I might take a nap in between this
and going over there.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Deserved.

COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You know, but we do
lots of different exercises. You know, sometimes the

1 MMR is a point in time, but we are gearing up. We're
2 doing a lot of exercises for FIFA, the World Cup. We
3 always do a lot of coastal storm exercises. And
4 obviously, we have a new Administration. There are
5 new Commissioners, there are new Council Members,
6 making sure that everybody that is new to this
7 process understands, you know, it's a really great
8 environment where you can ask questions, you can test
9 assumptions. And so like all of our units, the staff
10 is pretty small. It's about three staff people and a
11 director, but they love their exercises and they are
12 out there as often as they can training people.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And certainly we're
13 going to need that because we have so many things
14 that are going to be happening in this city in this
15 year and next.

16 So, you know, I always refer to NYCEM as
17 the little agency that could because you guys get the
18 job done. You really do. And you're out there in
19 person, in boots and with snow shovels. So, I get
20 concerned because you don't have a line on the
21 federal funding yet because I know you rely quite a
bit on it. So, what is the total federal funding in
FY27's budget and what percentage of it is NYCEM's

1 44.9 budget? I know you answered earlier in your
2 testimony, but if that money does not come to you,
3 how could it negatively impact you? Where would you
4 see decreases in your ability to do your job?

5 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I can talk about
6 the program and then if you want to talk about

7 (INAUDIBLE)

8 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Sure.

9 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You can go.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Okay,
11 yeah. So, you know, I think when we're talking about
12 federal funding and NYCEM, you know, as we mentioned,
13 it's about 48 percent of our overall budget when you
14 remove sort of like one-time funding for things like
15 asylum seekers. So, when we're talking about really
16 impacting every single program that the agency does.
17 So, I think we are in constant contact with City
18 Hall, with OMB and with our federal partners. And as
19 mentioned in the testimony, just some of the programs
20 that are impacted. We talked about CERT, continuity
21 of operations, geographic information systems,
training exercises, watch command, citywide incident
management systems, our emergency stockpile, our
staffing, and just all the great programs that we

2 sort of talked about as part of the testimony, but
3 I'll defer to Christina on the individuals.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And do you have any
5 reason to believe that that federal funding will not
6 come through?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: So until
8 we have it, there's always a chance something could
9 happen. As mentioned, the President had made a
10 commitment on social media to fully restore that
11 funding. Obviously, we also know that the federal
12 government is currently shut down. So, you know,
13 they're not able to actually even click the button,
14 even if they wanted to give us the money today. So,
15 we continue to really closely monitor that with City
16 Hall and OMB and remain optimistic that, you know,
17 the commitments that the President had made will come
18 through.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, I want to turn,
20 Lynn, do you have anything?

21 Okay, great. Go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Hello,
Commissioner. It's very nice to call you
Commissioner. I want to echo the sentiments of the
Chair, and we are so excited to have you be the

1 Commissioner for NYCEM, and you've done a great job
2 and we've worked together when I was staff, you were
3 staff, and now here we are.

4 So, one of the questions I want to ask
5 was, with all the increasing severity and extreme
6 weather events and all of that, there doesn't seem to
7 be extra money in the budget for climate adaptation
8 and resilience, and there's really nothing that we
9 can see in the State budget so I just wanted to get
your response to that.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: Yeah. So,
11 I think as we've talked about federal funding, there
12 has been a lot that has taken place over the last
13 year and continues to take place. I think we've
14 talked mostly about the Homeland Security funds, but
15 NYCEM is involved in working with other agencies on
16 their submissions for climate-related work. I think
17 there's a number of lawsuits that the City's been a
18 party to, and we've recently gotten some pretty
19 positive news as far as winning those lawsuits and
20 seeing that funding restored. So, continuing to work
21 with the existing infrastructure that we have
administratively across the city to make sure that

2 New York City is getting its fair piece of the
3 funding that's out there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. And the
5 preliminary plan includes 230,000 dollars for the
6 FIFA World Cup, but that doesn't seem to be
7 sufficient from my perspective so, I just wanted to
8 ask what more you think you might need and what are
9 the plans for that?

10 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You know, I think
11 that we feel pretty confident. About 50 percent of
12 our staff doesn't earn overtime. So, 50 percent of
13 the people that were just working every day for the
14 last two months, unfortunately for them, were doing
15 it at their base salary. So that amount of money,
16 which Chris has been working with OMB on, I think
17 will actually go a long way. We're a very, you get a
18 lot of bang for your buck with us. But you know,
19 we're always working with OMB and talking through if
20 we have more needs. We were also really excited. We
21 got money specifically for Notify NYC. We know
there's going to be an influx of visitors. We are
working with the FIFA Host Committee and others to
make sure that we have appropriate messaging in
languages, all of it templated and translated. So, we

1 can kind of go into these events feeling prepared and
2 feeling ready to share whatever messaging we need to
3 on whatever platform.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, I know that,
5 and by the way, you should let us know if there's
6 additional monies that are needed. I mean, we're in
7 the, you know, in this budget phase now, early in the
8 process so that's very important. But also with the
9 deconstruction of weather satellites and personnel
10 and everything else in the federal government, is
11 there anything we're doing to beef up the weather
12 forecasting for us?

13 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So we have, and I
14 think that you probably got briefings from her on the
15 multiple elected calls we did during the winter
16 weather, but we have a meteorologist that we
17 recruited from Albany who has a PhD, who is
18 incredibly smart and knows weather, but also knows
19 how to speak to people like us about it so she is
20 fantastic. She's also been training some of our watch
21 commanders to be kind of auxiliary, you know, weather
forecasters as they need it. And we also have a
weather contract through a contracting group because
we let Alex sleep and, you know, see her family once

1 in a while, and so we also can use that contract. And
2 other, you know, when we're doing the larger calls
3 and everything, sanitation has a weather vendor. Con
4 Ed has a weather vendor. So, we get a lot of
5 crowdsourcing and look at different, as we saw with
6 the last blizzard, it started out that it was going
7 to be an inch, it was going to be three inches, and
8 then we ended up with 27 inches in Staten Island,
9 which was a new record. So, you know, the weather
10 forecasting and all of that, we feel very confident
11 that we have multiple layers, you know, just for
12 redundancy, but also to get different forecasts so we
13 can kind of look and see what's the most reasonable
14 so we don't miss something.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: How far out can
14 they forecast?

15 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: It depends on what
16 the hazard is. You know, some of them you can go
17 pretty far out. Others, it's, you know, a lot closer.
18 But, you know, she will give us a heads up. Like I
19 said, we may have some, you know, kind of strong rain
20 on Monday, and then we know that St. Patrick's Day is
21 Tuesday so we're already looking at the beginning of
next week. We're going to do a call with the agencies

2 this afternoon just to give them the early heads up.
3 We would much rather, and I'm sure you've seen with
4 our communications with you, I would much rather, you
5 know, take 20 minutes from people and get them on the
6 phone and say what might happen. And then a couple of
7 days later, say, don't worry about it, as opposed to
8 the other thing that we have experienced from time to
9 time.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No. It's much
11 appreciated.

12 And then if I can ask a couple more
13 questions. Thanks.

14 So, what are the plans? So, as you know,
15 we had this very frigid winter. What are the plans?
16 Are there any additional plans for cooling centers?
17 Because we can always go to the other extreme as
18 well, which might happen.

19 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yeah. For sure. So,
20 you know, one thing we've been doing, we held two hot
21 washes, which is when you, everybody comes in the
room and we talk about what happened, you know, and
what we wish had gone differently, what did go well,
what are some new ideas? So, we did that for winter
weather, for the infrastructure agencies, and then

1 also on the social services side. So, we're looking
2 to build annex for the winter weather plan. As we're
3 doing that, it's the same people that are, you know,
4 working on the heat, and so we're also looking at
5 that. What if we had to have cooling centers open
6 overnight? Usually cooling centers close when the
7 heat advisory goes down, eight, nine o'clock when the
8 sun goes down. But, you know, there is a world where
9 you could have a heat advisory that goes overnight.
10 You know, having people at cooling centers during the
11 day is a much easier thing to manage than having, a
12 cooling center overnight becomes a shelter,
13 basically, which are more complicated, and there's a
14 lot of other things going on. But we are looking to
15 expand the cooling center program, looking at other
16 options. And then what would we have to do? I have to
17 say, you know, that schools who opened up many
18 warming centers, first for unhoused and people that
19 needed that, but then also as we saw some power
20 outages, we saw some heat and hot water complaints.
21 You know, schools really came to the rescue. I don't
think you had any in your District, but I know we had
the power outage, a large power outage with PSE and G
the day of the blizzard, and Chair Ariola was very

1 helpful. Use this school, don't use this. Like it cut
2 through a half hour of us looking at a map and
3 figuring all that out because you guys know your
4 Districts so we really appreciate that, and so we
5 will be doing a campaign to see what else we can
6 bring on as cooling centers. We did a couple misting
7 stations last year, which are, you know, that you can
8 walk through kind of the cool water when you're doing
9 stuff outside. We had one in the Bronx and one in
10 Queens, which worked really well. So we're working
11 with Health to expand that to seven and also talking
12 to FIFA and to the other partners that will be
13 running events and telling them that they have to
14 work with the City and they have to figure out how to
15 keep their participants and their fans cool while
16 this all goes on.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah. And do you
16 and do you have conversations, I'm sure, with Con Ed
17 and the others around the electrical grid, because
18 one is electricity is going up so even if people have
19 air conditioners, they may not want to, the electric
20 rates are going sky high. And then you have AI
21 institutions that are pulling electricity and all of
this so, are you guys keeping on top of that?

2 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yeah. For sure.

3 They were in our office on Wednesday and similar to

4 what we did with the City leaders, we did the same

5 thing with Con Ed. We looked at because there were

6 some longer than we would have liked power outages.

7 There were a lot of challenges with alternate side

8 being canceled, snow, a lot of salt in the system. So

9 we did it on the cold side. And now we're looking to

10 the heat as well. And I will say the City, Con Ed,

11 Emergency Management were much more used to dealing

12 with the heat than we were with the prolonged cold,

13 but there's always more we can do. There's always

14 better partnership, and so we're definitely working

15 closely with them.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you so

17 much. And thank you for... please thank your team. And

18 I also want to say that all my Colleagues that are

19 watching so that they also, NYCEM offers to have the

20 Council Members and their Staff come out to facility

21 and see what goes on, and I think that's a valuable

thing to do, especially for new Staff so that they

know how you operate and we know what needs to be

done in an emergency. And again, I want to thank you

2 guys for everything that you've been doing. Thank
3 you.

4 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Great. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you,
6 Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, just to get back
8 to the federal portion, I have one question. At a
9 previous preliminary budget hearing, your predecessor
10 said that NYCEM was working on a contingency plan for
11 all agencies if federal funding was cut. Do you have
12 a status on that plan?

13 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, we have been
14 working through that. And, you know, we have a lot of
15 continuity of operations plans with different
16 agencies looking at things with FIFA. There are some
17 things. Sometimes, you know, we may get to a place
18 where we have to prioritize, you know, what we're
19 doing and how we're doing it, and so that is some of
20 the work that different agencies are going through.
21 And, you know, if there are specific questions, we
can go back and look at those.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Great.

And I just want to go back to where you
said we had we had that major outage in the

2 Rockaways, and the fact that we did work together and
3 that you were so open to our suggestions that we were
4 making from our office and how quickly you opened the
5 warming centers was really phenomenal. Thank you for
6 that.

7 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: You're welcome. I
8 would give credit to how quickly they opened to the
9 schools. Kevin Moran, if you know him, that was all
10 him.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Well, everybody's got
12 to work together, right? Our office, your office,
13 schools, everybody has to work together. It was
14 unprecedented. 20 feet of snow and no lights. Pretty
15 bad.

16 So, I just want to talk about the coastal
17 storm plan and evacuation zones, you know, near and
18 dear to my heart.

19 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what percentage
21 of NYC's population lives in a hurricane evacuation
22 zone? And what is the estimated timeline to evacuate
23 each zone?

24 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, about 3 million
25 New Yorkers out of the 8.5 live in the zones. There

1 are six zones, as I'm sure you know, because most of
2 your District, I believe, is in Zone One.

3 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah.

4 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, each zone has
5 about 500,000 residents, you know, and really Zones
6 One and Two, those were those zones affected by
7 Sandy, but, you know, it we'd like to plan for, you
8 know, the very worst that could happen. So, it is a
9 very sizable group. You know, I'm sure people that
10 live in coastal districts, they remember Sandy. They
11 have more of an idea that they live in a coastal
12 zone. But there could be people living in especially
13 Zone Five and Six who may be a little bit from the
14 shore, but just the way of topography and different
15 things, you know, they may not be as aware. So, we
16 will, again, do Know Your Zone this summer,
17 partnering with your office and with others.

18 And then the evacuation, you know, we
19 start tracking storms and we would activate our plan
20 120 hours out, which is about five days or when we
21 start seeing impacts off the coast of North Carolina.
So, you know, we look at those. We have, you know,
luckily there are times where we start to activate
with some calls, some preliminary, putting some

1 supplies and things on alert, and then we have been
2 able to pull back from that, but the bulk of the
3 evacuation and things would happen within the 48- to
4 72-hour timeline before zero hour of the storm
5 hitting the city. You know, the challenge with that,
6 which I know you know, is that usually 48 to 72 hours
7 out, it's probably going to be a sunny, nice day. So
8 it is, you know, challenging work to encourage people
9 to leave. But, you know, that's what we're here for.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah. It is very
10 challenging and a lot of people don't want to leave,
11 and I know that firsthand. So, you will work with
12 other agencies, whether it's on a state level like
13 the MTA or PC and G or Con Edison or any of the other
14 like the ferry system, any type of mode of
15 transportation to get people off. We'll use the
16 peninsula broad channel out of out of Hamilton Beach
17 and Old Howard Beach in my District, which are our
18 lowest lying portions of the District, and I've seen
19 you do that. I do wish that we could get better
20 signage up if I had to say one thing, we needed more
21 with better signage. Not that the signage isn't
there, but it's worn so some of it you can't read it.
So, we have to kind of and we can do that, help you

1 with where those worn out signs are so we can get
2 better signage, especially along the peninsula, and
3 that that's important for people to know if they're
4 taking their own means to get off the peninsula.

5 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: So, I'll tell you,
6 our team is actually working. I believe next month
7 they're doing an audit of the coastal storm
8 evacuation signs because obviously they get, you
9 know, wear and tear and everything so yours is one of
10 the major districts, the district next to yours. And,
11 you know, if you have a list or if, you know, places
12 that, you know, we know where the signs are.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right.

12 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: But will always
13 take more information. And then once they get the
14 audit, we will work with Department of Transportation
15 and others to get as much new signage as we can up by
16 June 1st and August 1st.

16 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Great. The one
17 thing about your agency is you're very proactive,
18 which is not something that a lot of us are used to
19 from agencies. So, thank you.

20 And also, you know, Notify NYC has grown
21 exponentially and people following it. And if they

2 don't have Twitter, we always share that on our
3 social media platforms that they may have. Older
4 people tend to go to Facebook --

5 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: We're on Facebook.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: -- more than -- I'm
7 on Facebook.

8 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: They can get Notify
9 NYC on Facebook.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: -- and so we share
11 that because that is really the most up to date,
12 accurate information that can be shared so we
13 appreciate that. And I urge everyone, if you're not
14 following Notify NYC, if you can hear me, please
15 click the button and follow. Effective evacuation
16 depends not only on route planning, but the public's
17 awareness. And that's why I ask you to please click
18 on there and follow your elected officials' social
19 media pages as well, because we also are in constant
20 contact.

21 Council Member Schulman has left. We have
exhausted our questions because a lot of our
questions were answered in your testimony and just we
look forward to a safe season for this city, and I
know that you're a part of it. And with all the

2 things that will be happening, you know, like the
3 soccer and everything else that's going to go on, but
4 I know that you'll be on top of it. So, I want to
5 thank you. I want to congratulate you again.

6 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And you, sir, you
8 have a wonderful woman that you're working with as
9 your Commissioner, who understands every nuance of
10 your agency.

11 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BLANCO: We 100
12 percent agree and we couldn't be happier.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, exactly.
14 You're a keeper.

15 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Chris also has a
16 little six-week baby so, he's --

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Oh, congratulations.

18 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: -- he has his own
19 Emergency Management at home and then he does --

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Exactly.

21 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: -- have to work
here.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Your Emergency
Management training will help you.

2 So, if there are no other questions,
3 we're good. Thank you so much for coming in, and the
4 panel is dismissed and we will go into the public
5 forum.

6 COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank you. I'll
7 talk to you soon.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. We'll just
9 we'll get back to this.

10 I now open the hearing for public
11 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
12 is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be
13 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
14 shall remain silent at all times.

15 The witness table is reserved for people
16 who wish to testify. No video recording or
17 photography is allowed from the witness table.
18 Further, members of the public may not present audio
19 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
20 transcripts of such recordings to the
21 Sergeants-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing
record.

 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
please fill out an appearance card with the
Sergeants-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When

2 recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on
3 today's oversight hearing topic, the Budget of the
4 FDNY and New York City Emergency Management.

5 If you have a written statement or
6 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
7 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
8 to the Sergeants-at-Arms. You may also email written
9 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
10 hours of the close of this hearing. Audio and video
11 recordings will not be accepted.

12 For in-person panelists, please come up
13 to the table once your name has been called.

14 I will now call the first panel. Andrew
15 Ansbro, James Brosey, Vincent Variale, and Oren
16 Barzilay.

17 If we can start with Andrew Ansbro.
18 Welcome.

19 ANDREW ANSBRO: Thank you, Councilwoman
20 Ariola, for having us today.

21 Good morning. My name is Andrew Ansbro.
I'm the President of Uniformed Firefighter
Association of Greater New York. I represent New York
City firefighters. I'm here for the budget hearing to
make a case for an increase in funding to the FDNY

1 for the sake of increasing the staffing capability of
2 the Department, specifically the engine companies in
3 the Bronx. Thirty years ago this week, the FDNY
4 engine companies began responding to medical runs,
5 CFRD as we call them. CFRD as a result has increased
6 our workload. The population of New York City has
7 grown by 1.5 million people since then, but the
8 resource of the FDNY has shrunk. In 1996, the average
9 engine company responded to 2,850 runs. 768 of them
10 were CFRD runs. In 2025, the average engine company
11 now responds to 3,800 runs. 1,780 of them are CFRD
12 runs. That's an increase overall of 32 percent over
13 30 years, but an increase of an additional 132
14 percent in CFRD runs. Currently, one out of six
15 engine companies are taking in more CFRD runs than
16 their entire workload of 1996. In my opinion, the
17 FDNY has been neglected. We have not received the
18 resource to meet the ever-increasing workload being
19 put on our firefighters.

17 In order to fully understand the impact,
18 you need to look at the busiest companies. And in the
19 Bronx, you would see the busiest companies all in one
20 place. There are 197 engine companies in New York
21 City, but only 15 percent of the engines are in the

1
2 Bronx, but 16 of the top 25 busiest companies are in
3 the Bronx. In 1996, two engine companies had over
4 5,000 runs. Now the average in the Bronx is over
5 5,300 runs. There are two companies in the Bronx
6 doing 7,000 runs. 7,000 runs a year is a run every
7 one hour and 10 minutes, 24/7/365. The run total is
8 outrageous. No one could or would question our
9 ability to respond as far as quickly. We do get there
10 on time. But the effects of the increased workload
11 are seen in the CFRD runs, where due to our workload,
12 one out of four CFRD runs in the Bronx doesn't have
13 an engine company assigned because there isn't one
14 available. By (TIMER CHIME) comparison, in Staten
15 Island, one out of 12 CFRD runs goes unanswered by an
16 engine, but an ambulance does respond. Also, as far
17 as response times are concerned, engines and
18 ambulances are approximately one and two minutes
19 faster in Staten Island than in the Bronx. What's
20 more troubling than this is that the discrepancy
21 between engines and ambulances in the Bronx is over
four minutes, four minutes and 12 seconds. If you had
a family member waiting for a defibrillator to get
there, you had a one in four chance of not getting an
engine. That would mean that there's a one in four

1 chance you're getting a 10 minute and 45 second
2 response time, which is likely death. This is not
3 meant any way to shape a form to disparage a workload
4 of EMS. They're overworked, they're underpaid, and
5 they need a huge raise. But this solution will be
6 years in fixing the problem that has taken 30 years
7 to make. At the end of the last Administration, the
8 UFA and the FDNY worked on a pilot program that would
9 increase staffing in the Bronx engine companies with
10 the intention of increasing engine availability and
11 reducing run totals throughout the borough. This
12 reduction and run totals, I feel, would increase
13 engine availability and keep engines more able to
14 respond to both EMS runs and fire runs. Because
15 unfortunately, even in the Bronx, although we can
16 respond to fires quickly, the Bronx also has the
17 largest number of multiple alarm fires and it is
18 necessary to get increased staffing and get water on
19 the fire faster. For example, in December of 2025,
20 the Bronx had nine multiple alarm fires. There were
21 only 29 multiple alarm fires citywide. The Bronx has
15 percent of the engine companies, as I said, but 30
percent of the multiple alarms. This pilot program
would increase availability and also help get hoses

1 in place faster, which is critical in keeping fires
2 smaller and essential for increasing the chance of
3 survival of both firefighters and civilians. I
4 understand the leadership of the FDNY is currently
5 reviewing that pilot program in the Bronx and making
6 adjustments as necessary. I'm asking this Council
7 include funding in the budget of this program so that
8 we can take immediate measures to do something about
9 the lack of equitable fire services in the Bronx.
Thank you very much for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.

11 Mr. Brosi.

12 JIM BROSI: Good morning. I'm Jim Brosi,
13 President of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association.
14 I'd first like to say thank you for holding this
15 hearing and shedding light on the deficiencies in the
16 budget process for the FDNY.

17 I do concur with Andy's proposal in that
18 the life lost, property lost, and the increased
19 workload on the members in the Bronx is a
20 disproportionate impact and a threat to their safety
21 and the safety of the public.

But I'd also like to shed light on a few
other things. I think one of the things that is

1 getting overlooked is the impact of the facilities in
2 the New York City Fire Department. As you heard from
3 their own testimony, their inability to track the
4 most simplistic deficiencies in a timely manner, to
5 prioritize them, to have a shared database in which
6 people can look at their submitted work order, know
7 it was received and what progress of the repair
8 process we were in. Unfortunately, there is no
9 platform that's readily available to us. Having 90
10 percent of the need amends being able to be fixed by
11 the end of the week means they should have been fixed
12 last week. It's an OSHA recommendation and it's a
13 known carcinogen to discharge diesel fumes into the
14 workplace. Not knowing whether or not we have
15 adequate facilities for female firefighters until
16 they're assigned is too late. Not being able to
17 prioritize lockers is too late. Not having adequate
18 storage for second sets of gear for covering offices
19 or lockers for covering offices is unacceptable. When
20 we speak about apparatus, yes, the Department is
21 buying these apparatus as fast as they can and they
were blindsided by the pandemic and the influx of
money as a result of the pandemic to other
municipalities. What the Department never did was

1 prior to the pandemic, buy rigs in advance. What they
2 did was they relied on an outdated fleet service of
3 spare apparatus that were already in disrepair. They
4 had already been set off into the sunset because they
5 were no longer suitable against our collective
6 bargaining agreement. Had they purchased more rigs in
7 advance of those expiration dates, they wouldn't have
8 been hit so hard by the setback. Unfortunately,
9 there's been no energy in making an update to those
10 spare apparatus, to the collapsed rigs, to the ROVs,
11 to the division messenger vans that are not bound by
12 the collective bargaining agreement but are an
13 intricate part of the service provided as the New
14 York City Fire Department freed the moving equipment,
15 moving personnel, or responding to operations beyond
16 the normal use of an engine or a truck. And (TIMER
17 CHIME) so I think what we need to do is start
18 figuring out, one, what the most efficient firehouses
19 are, what their problems are, where there is lead
20 contaminant, where is there asbestos, where is there
21 carcinogens in the air because the Nederman system is
broke. It is inconceivable that we will experience
the contaminants we do in the workplace saving lives
and then we'll return to a firehouse and experience

1 those same contaminants. It is inexcusable that we
2 will get onto apparatus that doors don't close
3 properly, that don't go up, that don't operate in
4 life-saving measures because the City failed to buy
5 apparatus in a timely manner. They have known
6 expiration dates and they have a known life cycle and
7 they have a known amount of time it will take to
8 replace them. It is inexcusable that as we integrate
9 into a more gender-friendly environment, that we did
10 not prioritize and anticipate that not only we have
11 bathrooms for female firefighters, that we would have
12 lockers and locker rooms that didn't exist inside the
13 bathroom. It is okay to start off that way. It is not
14 okay to make that a business model, and it's equally
15 not okay to rely on City Council funding out of
16 discretionary funding to put in things like apparatus
17 doors and generators. Those are part of the budgetary
18 process. They are known requirements for a first
19 responding agency and they should be budgeted for
20 accordingly. City Council discretionary money should
21 be dedicated for the unseen, for the things we
couldn't anticipate, and those should backfill the
budget. They shouldn't stabilize it. And I'm glad
we're bringing attention to this. I am glad that the

1 Fire Department came here and testified that they
2 recognize some of their deficiencies and that they're
3 moving towards a better process of streamlining. But
4 one, we need to get there quicker and two, we need to
5 dedicate more funding on a routine basis for what I
6 would consider mandatory standards and working
7 conditions for the men and women of New York City
8 Fire Department. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I completely align
10 myself with your statement. Thank you so much.

11 Mr. Barzilay.

12 OREN BARZILAY: Good afternoon, Chair. My
13 name is Oren Barzilay. I am the President of FDNY EMS
14 Local 2507, Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Fire
15 Inspectors of the FDNY.

16 I joined New York City EMS in 95. I have
17 served our city for more than 30 years. I represent
18 roughly 4,500 EMTs, paramedics, and inspectors who
19 serve our city proudly as members of FDNY EMS. Every
20 day we put our lives on the line to bring you medical
21 care when your loved one suffers a heart attack or a
stroke, sometimes car accidents or major falls. Our
paramedics and EMTs were at ground zero and beyond.
We worked around the clock during COVID pandemic to

1 provide emergency care and relief at great risk to
2 ourselves. We didn't flinch from our duty. We stepped
3 forward and answered the call to help New Yorkers and
4 keep our city safe, strong and healthy. We are the
5 unsung heroes of New York City, but we aren't treated
6 as heroes. 80 percent of the calls are for medical
7 needs. Medical call volume is already at record high
8 levels and only going up.

9 Our EMS personnel, who are largely people
10 of color and women, are working nonstop around the
11 clock under exhausting conditions. It's hard,
12 physically challenging, often grueling work, lugging
13 heavy equipment up long flights of stairs, working
14 long hours, responding to an endless stream of
15 emergency calls. The strain on our EMS rank is real,
16 and it is made worse by the staggering pay
17 disparities our EMS heroes are forced to endure.
18 Right now, our EMS personnel make far less than other
19 uniformed personnel in the city. Paramedics and EMTs
20 simply can't afford to live in New York City on their
21 current salary. McDonald's, Walmart employees make
more in some cases. Some of our personnel have been
forced to reside in homeless shelters (TIMER CHIME)
because they can't afford housing on EMS salary. Let

1 that sink in. EMS paramedics and EMTs working for the
2 FDNY saving lives in New York City, the greatest city
3 in the world, living in homeless shelters. It is a
4 stain on the honor of New York City to treat our
5 medical emergency heroes in this way. This pay
6 disparity also exacerbates racial and gender pay
7 inequities since the EMS ranks are composed of more
8 women of people of color than the other service
9 agencies. The outrageous pay disparities are forcing
10 personnel to leave the service because they simply
11 cannot survive on the current EMS pay. Roughly 1,500
12 medical first responders, 37 percent of the
13 workforce, is projected to quit the service in 2026.
14 And because EMS is hemorrhaging EMTs, the response
15 times are going up. I'm almost finished. In the
16 Calendar Year 2025, FDNY EMS responded to 1.6 million
17 medical emergencies, and average response times to
18 life-threatening medical emergencies rose from 10
19 minutes and 52 seconds in 2024 to 11 minutes and 21
20 seconds in 2025, further compounding the issue,
21 according to the 2026 Mayoral Preliminary Management
Report. In the first four months of Fiscal Year 2026,
response times for life-threatening emergency have
increased to 12 minutes and five seconds, up two

1 minutes and 31 seconds since 2021. This means New
2 Yorkers face longer waits for critical life-saving
3 care in emergency, putting the lives, health and
4 safety of New Yorkers in peril. New York City Council
5 has been an ally for our fight for pay equity and you
6 understand and recognize the danger New Yorkers who
7 rely on emergency services face when we don't
8 properly resource those services. We must ask you for
9 your help again and to prioritize this issue, which
10 is life and death. We've been without a labor
11 contract for four years, an unconscionable delay, but
12 collective bargaining alone will never fix this
13 problem. We need your help once again to ensure
14 budget includes sufficient resources to address the
15 necessary numbers of EMS, proper pay and proper
16 resources to perform our job, which is to save lives
17 of New Yorkers. We don't believe the service agencies
18 should compete with one another. We are all part of
19 the same mission and all should be treated fairly,
20 but that's not happening with EMS. Without a strong
21 EMS first response, the city will suffer. The entire
system is pushed to the edge, and New York City has a
literal life and death crisis as a result. We are
here today with the hope of partnership. The Mayor is

1 new and the City Council has long supported these
2 efforts. While the Speaker is new, I am sure she too
3 will be an advocate for this right.

4 This crisis has been long in the making
5 and we are now at a breaking point. We can and must
6 do it right by our EMS heroes and best serve the
7 people of New York City by paying our EMS workers a
8 real wage and by budgeting what is necessary to
9 prioritize the resources EMS. I hope you will join me
in that mission.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

11 Sir.

12 VINCENT VARIALE: Good afternoon,
13 Chairwoman. My name is Vincent Variale. I'm an EMS
14 Lieutenant and President of the Uniformed EMS
15 Officers Union representing over 600 EMS sergeants,
16 lieutenants, and captains of the New York City Fire
17 Department. I've been with the Health and Hospitals
18 Corporation and then the New York City Fire
19 Department for 31 years. I'm here once again to
20 report to you about the crisis in the EMS workforce.
21 The same officers and paramedics and EMTs who ushered
the city through COVID, rushed through the burning
towers on 9/11, who saved the lives of New Yorkers

1 many times a day and every day are being driven out
2 of their ranks to outrageously low and unfair pay and
3 benefits. We have EMS members living far outside the
4 city because they can't afford to live in the city
5 they serve and some actually living in homeless
6 shelters and in their cars because they can't afford
7 the rent. It's an outrage and slap in the face of
8 those City workers who serve all of us every day. It
9 does not go unnoticed that EMS is one of the most
10 diverse uniformed services in the city consisting of
11 predominantly non-white and largely female members.
12 The lack of resources and equity for our EMS members
13 jeopardizes the health and safety for every New
14 Yorker. Here's why. EMS operation represents 80
15 percent of the overall 9-1-1 FDNY call volume.
16 However, it only staffs 25 percent of the FDNY and
17 receives 16 percent of the FDNY budget. At the same
18 time, due to high turnover and attrition, we are
19 losing EMS officers, EMTs, and paramedics at an
20 astonishing rate. We are looking at losing anywhere
21 from 900 to 1,500 EMS members in the next year alone.
EMS is staring down the barrel of a stunning 70
percent turnover rate within the next three to five
years. Paramedics simply cannot afford to remain

1 paramedics and feed their families. This is driving
2 up wait times for 9-1-1 call responses to
3 life-threatening levels. The 2026 Mayor's Preliminary
4 Management Report just found that in the first four
5 months of Fiscal Year 2026 response times for
6 life-threatening emergencies (TIMER CHIME) have
7 increased 12 minutes and five seconds, up two minutes
8 and 31 seconds from Fiscal Year 2021. That's an extra
9 two and a half minutes while your spouse is having a
10 stroke, your parents or grandparents fall, suffer
11 from a serious injury, two and a half extra minutes
12 to wait while you're suffering from a heart attack,
13 two and a half extra minutes to wait when someone
14 calls about a person on the street or in the subway
15 having a severe mental or emotional crisis. In a
16 system where minutes matter, we have a system that is
17 completely out of balance and teetering on a brink of
18 collapse. Those are words also from the former
19 Commissioner talking about EMS. Without change, EMS
20 simply can't keep up. New Yorkers must know that it
21 is now more deadly in our city if your loved one
suffers a heart attack life-threatening illness,
serious accident, or fall. Health and emergency care
in our city is in serious jeopardy. The survival rate

1 from a cardiac arrest is at an all-time low at 17
2 percent. This crisis didn't happen overnight. It's
3 been a long time in the making with years of neglect
4 and bad decisions. This Mayor didn't cause the
5 problem and this City Council certainly did not as
6 well. In fact, the City Council has been an advocate
7 for EMS over the years and thank you for that, for
8 your effort and your help. The Mayor states he's
9 committed to equity, affordability, and fairness and
10 pay equity is an affordability issue. We come to you
11 today to ask for help with these issues and go far
12 beyond collective bargaining and it will take more to
13 fix them. It does not help that our three EMS unions
14 have been out of labor contract for over four years.
15 A lot of the issues we have in EMS, and I'm coming
16 off the report, the testimony I wrote here is not
17 only be handled just for a contract with pay, there's
18 a lot of other benefit issues that even contract
19 negotiations can't resolve. So really this needs to
20 be looked at by the Mayor's Office and the City
21 Council to see how we can resolve all these issues to
get these members to what we heard today is the
problem. I mean, the whole thing today besides the
facilities falling down, which EMS has that problem

1 as well, is staffing. No matter how you look at it,
2 recruitment and retention is nonexistent in EMS.
3 People are leaving in droves. Recruitment is hard to
4 get anybody to come on this job and when they do come
5 here, they don't stay very long. They're gone. And
6 we're like the best teaching city in the world. They
7 come here, they move on to another EMS profession,
8 which they respect them because they came from New
9 York City. They think they're great or they move on
10 to a totally different profession altogether. It's
11 not even an EMS issue anymore at this point. It's an
12 operational issue where the people of New York are
13 dying. They're the ones that are suffering. EMS
14 people that don't want to be bothered with the low
15 pay and the inferior benefits, they're leaving. So,
16 the people that are getting hurt by this are the
17 people of New York City, and we really need to fix it
18 and we appreciate your help and your hearings and
19 everything you can do for it. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

21 Ms. Sheflin.

MALEIA SHEFLIN: Good afternoon. My name
is Maleia Sheflin. I'm a concerned citizen of New
York City, and I've done my research using the

1 information readily available on New York City
2 government websites. My following statement consists
3 solely of my views on these issues.

4 New York City EMS members are struggling
5 to survive. Some have a starting salary of just over
6 36,000 dollars, which is barely above the City
7 designation of extremely low income. After five
8 years, it only increases to 59,000. Firefighters make
9 nearly twice that and for reference, our City's
average salary is between 128,000 to 155,000.

10 Meanwhile, all of the Council Members on this
11 Committee, except Mr. Felder, sponsored legislation
12 that would make your own salaries 172,500 dollars,
13 over 17,000 above the City average. Before this
14 proposed increase, your base salary of 148,500
15 dollars hadn't been increased since 2016. Not getting
16 a salary increase for 10 years must be frustrating. I
17 can assure you, the members of EMS feel this far more
18 severely than you do as your previous salary still
19 falls on the higher end of that average range even 10
20 years later while their current salaries are less
21 than firefighters made in 2010. And you have the
audacity to ask for more when EMTs and paramedics are
out working on the streets while being harassed,

1 assaulted, and killed for less than minimum wage? You
2 should all be ashamed for putting yourselves ahead of
3 our City's actual heroes. EMS, unlike the other
4 uniformed services, brings in revenue. In 2025, the
5 City collected at least 500 million dollars from EMS
6 calls. The City also collected an additional 2.1
7 billion dollars in third-party reimbursements for EMS
8 services between 2020 and 2025. This money was earned
9 off the backs of the EMTs and paramedics who are the
10 ones answering those calls, and politicians like you
11 reap the benefits while City residents die waiting
12 for an ambulance. Why? It's easy to follow. EMS
13 response times are increasing because they're
14 severely short-staffed, which is because hundreds
15 leave per year, most to move to fire for a living
16 wage in a secure benefits package, and the rest leave
17 because (TIMER CHIME) they're burned out from a
18 minimum of 60-hour work weeks earning poverty pay.
19 And somehow the preliminary budget for 2027 accounts
20 for 41 fewer EMS staff. How can you justify such
21 inhumanity when Ms. De La Rosa, a Member on this
Committee, has introduced legislation that would
require the Department of Education to pay annual
10,000-dollar workforce stabilization payments to

1 school paraprofessionals? 45 City Council Members,
2 including eight out of nine in this very Committee,
3 sponsored this legislation, which would total 243.9
4 million dollars per year. And since school
5 paraprofessionals don't bring any revenue, that cost
6 would fall solely upon the taxpayers. You could all
7 choose to replicate this for EMS. You could give them
8 annual payments, pulling them out of poverty, until
9 their nearly four-year expired contract gets
10 renegotiated with parity wages, reflecting that of
11 the other uniformed services as both 2001's Local Law
12 19 and 2020's Resolution 1062-A were enacted to do.
13 And the major difference here is that EMS does bring
14 in revenue, which would offset the cost of such a
15 bill. I'm calling on City Council to reprioritize for
16 the sake of all New Yorkers. Getting legislation to
17 the Mayor's desk regarding news rack requirements
18 while EMS crumbles is embarrassing for you. EMS is in
19 a state of emergency, and it is time for the City to
20 provide relief. This all starts with you. Pay EMS
21 now.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for
your testimony.

This panel is dismissed.

We have Susanne Duque, Andrew Farina, William Juhn, Christian Bahr-Lopez, and I think we have one more. Michelle Fleurantin.

Okay. We'll start.

SUSANNE DUQUE: Good afternoon. My name is Susanne Duque. I'm an FDNY EMS B-HEARD Lieutenant. B-HEARD is an interdisciplinary team of licensed clinical social workers, EMTs, and sergeants and lieutenants who are experienced. We're working in the field and on a desk. In the field speaks for itself. On the desk to write reports, notes, and to help out the dispatcher who is sitting in front of boards full of calls that are not being answered, and we assist them in dispatching the calls to us that are appropriate. Why are we having such a big diverse team with people of so many backgrounds? It's because mental health calls are very complex. You can think if I have a panic attack, it is related to my surroundings. We have a licensed clinical social worker who will do a mental health assessment. We have the EMT who will do medical assessments. The sergeants and lieutenants assist with operational guidance and interagency cooperation. What do we do? We have, for example, the nine-year-old who has a

1 crisis in school, issues between school officials,
2 parents, other misunderstandings that we de-escalate.
3 We have the 76-year-old who potentially would be
4 transported for dementia just so we find out that
5 this person has a language barrier and thought he was
6 going to be sent to the nursing home after being
7 evicted in two days. He says, I'd rather stay at
8 home, and we made it happen that this person was able
9 to be (TIMER CHIME) sent to an assisted living place,
10 for example. Altogether, I'm very amazed about the
11 work that our EMTs and social workers are doing in
12 the fields. I see them work very hard, sometimes for
13 hours, to get everything done and B-HEARD make this
14 world a better place.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

16 Sir.

17 ANDREW FARINA: Good afternoon. My name is
18 Andrew Farina. I was an EMT for five years, and then
19 I worked in the emergency department as a PA for
20 three years. If you go on to the end-to-end response
21 times right now, the latest available data in New
York City, you'll see the average response time to a
life-threatening emergency was 18 minutes in the last
week of February. When we were kids in school, they

1 gave us coffee stirrers, the really thin one. Maybe
2 you have some up there with the coffee. I want you to
3 try to breathe through it for 18 minutes. It's very
4 hard to do, and that's how they describe what having
5 an asthma attack is like. The response time in the
6 last week of February for a non-life-threatening
7 emergency was nearly 40 minutes. Now, granted, those
8 are for non-life-threatening, so you can wait a
9 little bit longer. But if any of our grandparents
10 fell and they broke their hip and they're laying
11 there on the ground with a broken femur, you'd want
12 them to get some morphine and some analgesia from the
13 paramedics sooner than 40 minutes. The response time,
14 which, amazingly, the FDNY came up said that they
15 didn't want to harp on that metric, but if you're
16 having a heart attack, we know heart attacks,
17 strokes, sepsis, trauma, the time to blood
18 transfusion, the time to having percutaneous coronary
19 infection, a stent in your heart, the time to getting
20 TPA, these are the things that save lives, not to
21 diminish the work of EMTs and paramedics. That's
obviously important, but the response time is a
crucial metric, and I do want to pay attention to it.
The union President was right. Why would you risk

1 your life coming to work in a blizzard when you can
2 make more money shoveling snow? No disrespect to
3 anyone who did shovel snow. Thank you for cleaning
4 our city, but 450 EMTs is about called out that day,
5 and I get it. Staffing is a crisis. We heard about
6 this again through the FDNY. No disrespect to any of
7 those positions that are making more than EMTs, but
8 we all want them to make more. We talked about parity
9 pay, and they deserve it. We need parity pay. (TIMER
10 CHIME) The last thing I want to say is that it's a
11 2.6-billion-dollar budget. Only about 418 million of
12 that was allocated to EMS in prior years, but EMS
13 generates revenue, and they generated a similar
14 number to the person before, about 400 million, so
15 EMS almost pays for itself, and almost none of the
16 budget is going to EMTs and paramedics, so I don't
17 know where the money needs to come from, and I'm very
18 happy that everyone keeps giving their support, and
19 we love to hear that, but we need the actual money
20 now. We need more than just statements of, yes, pay
21 parity from everyone said. We need to have a hearing
to discuss different solutions to improve the
response time. It doesn't matter whether you send
fire trucks, cops. It doesn't matter what you do. If

1 there's no one to show up, if you're not paying
2 enough, no one's going to show up on that ambulance.
3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I just want to say I
5 completely agree with you, and that's why we changed
6 the entire way we hold this hearing. I've been the
7 Chair of Fire and Emergency Management since 2022. I
8 was elected in 2021. We've been calling out the very
9 same issues, and yet it falls upon deaf ears, so we
10 decided then to change to visuals, and that's why we
11 bring the visuals with us, so this way they can't say
12 that it's not happening, and you're right. Why are we
13 paying a seasonal snow shoveler, 45 dollars per hour,
14 and we're paying our EMTs much less? Why do we have
15 legislation for 30 dollars an hour for a minimum wage
16 when our EMTs are making much less? Why are we
17 worried about increasing the salary for deliveristas
18 but not our EMTs? It's unfathomable why we would do
19 that. Even looking at our own pay, I didn't sign on
20 to that bill to make the commission, because there
21 are so many other people that deserve it, like our
paras, like our EMTs. People who work for this City
for below low income, what's considered low low
income, and it's unfair. They're taking care of our

1 children, taking care of our elderly, taking care of
2 us when we're sick, and as a person who has asthma, I
3 know what it's like to breathe through that little
4 straw, so I agree with you, but you're right. It's
5 time we stop talking about it. This is the fifth year
6 that I'll be the Chair of this Committee, and we're
7 going to do everything possible to make sure that we
8 stop talking about it, and it gets done, so thank you
9 so much.

10 Sir.

11 CHRISTIAN BAHR-LOPEZ: Good afternoon,
12 Chair and Members of the Council. My name is
13 Christian Bahr-Lopez. I'm 24 years old. I'm from
14 Hollis, Queens. I'm a graduate of St. Francis Prep. I
15 attended St. John's University on a merit-based
16 scholarship. Since graduating high school, I've spent
17 over 10,000 hours working EMS across New York City
18 while going through college. I'm a paramedic, and
19 I've worked with private, hospital, and Fire-based
20 systems with agencies such as Senior Care, Northwell,
21 Jamaica Hospital, and Inwood Fire Department in
Nassau County, so I've seen the system from inside.
Let me start with something simple. In FDNY EMS
today, the starting wage to transport sick and

1 injured patients is around 18 dollars an hour.
2
3 Meanwhile, legislation guarantees food delivery
4 workers about 23 dollars an hour starting pay.
5
6 Everyone deserves fair wages, but when someone can
7 make more delivering food rather than delivering a
8 patient, we shouldn't be surprised that EMS has
9 staffing shortages. Seventy percent, this number has
10 been raised in this meeting today, 70 percent of FDNY
11 EMS leaves within three years. People want to help
12 their communities, but many can't afford to stay.
13
14 When EMS providers leave, ambulance coverage drops,
15 and when coverage drops, response times grow. During
16 COVID, ambulances, again, reached life-threatening
17 emergencies in about nine and a half minutes. Today,
18 it's over 12. That's more than two extra minutes
19 before help arrives. Also, there are more FDNY
20 paramedics working on fire trucks today rather than
21 working in FDNY ambulances themselves. That's because
becoming a firefighter is treated as a promotion and
not a lateral career path. And remember, EMS is the
only emergency service that generates reimbursement
revenue through medical billing, and in many ways, it
helps pay for itself unlike police or fire. Yet, FDNY
EMS is often treated like the redheaded stepchild of

1 public safety, and I can say that, I'm a redhead. By
2 the time this speech ends, more than two minutes will
3 have passed, roughly the additional time New Yorkers
4 are now waiting for an ambulance compared to just a
5 few years ago. Across roughly 5,000 EMS calls every
6 day in this city, those extra minutes can add up to
7 over 10,000 minutes of delayed care. In medicine, two
8 minutes without oxygen to the brain can mean the
9 difference between walking out of the hospital or
10 living the rest of your life with permanent brain
11 injury or death. For the greatest city in the world,
12 that's a gap we should be working to close. Thank
13 you, and with that, I yield my time.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so very
15 much.

16 Ma'am.

17 MICHELLE FLEURANTIN: Hi. Thank you so
18 much for having this hearing and for giving me some
19 time to speak. I won't be speaking about this very
20 important issue right now. My name is Michelle
21 Fleurantin. I'm an Environmental Justice Attorney at
the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and I'm
here to just urge the Committee to continue to make
sure that the Fire Department has the funding it

1 needs to continue ensuring battery storage is safely
2 installed and inspected across the city. NYLPI is
3 part of the PEAK Coalition, which I know you may be
4 familiar with. We're a campaign to replace the New
5 York City's most expensive, dirty peaker plants with
6 clean, renewable energy and battery storage. And
7 peakers emit high levels of harmful pollution and
8 impose costs that fall hardest on the communities of
9 color living closest to these facilities. And
10 replacing peakers is not only an environmental
11 necessity, but a public health imperative for these
12 communities and an essential step towards lowering
13 rising household energy bills. BESS is a vital
14 component of any plan in the city right now to shut
15 down these peaker plants and address these issues. At
16 NYLPI, we work directly with residents and
17 environmental justice communities who want community
18 scale BESS because they understand what's at stake.
19 Community scale BESS will help deliver bill savings,
20 improved health outcomes, and more reliable
21 electrical grids. And for example, in places like the
South Bronx, a community long overburdened by
polluting infrastructure, high asthma rates,
blackouts and brownouts, and ever rising utility

1 bills, residents are calling for these projects to
2 shut down peakers, improve their health outcomes,
3 strengthen the grid reliability, and lower their
4 bills. As you know, the City has the strongest codes
5 regulating BESS to make sure that they're safe.
6 They're very comprehensive. FDNY has comprehensive
7 guidance, safety standards, and review processes that
8 make New York City the leader in battery storage
9 safety. We thank the Committee for (TIMER CHIME)
10 supporting the FDNY and carrying out their work. It's
11 just as these projects become more frequent and come
12 down the pipeline, FDNY is going to need additional
13 hiring to keep up their pace of work. So, we just
14 want to make sure that FDNY gets the money that they
15 request for that staffing.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

15 WILLIAM JUHN: Good afternoon. My name is
16 William Juhn. I'm a Disability Justice Attorney at
17 New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Thank you
18 for this opportunity to testify today.

19 I just want to talk about the B-HEARD and
20 the City's mental health crisis response. So first,
21 New York City, you know, is in a mental health
crisis. Nearly one in four of all the adults

1
2 experience mental health disorder. The number goes up
3 for high school students. Nearly 40 percent of public
4 high school students reported feeling sad or
5 hopeless. What is most striking is that close to 10
6 percent of them have attempted suicide. So, we know
7 New York is in trouble.

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Second, we're failing our response to mental health crisis. In the past 10 years alone, more than 23 individuals were killed by police while experiencing mental health crisis, and most of them were people of color. Police are simply not trained to handle mental health crisis. We talked about EMTs today. You know, when someone's having a heart attack, we send EMTs, not police officers, to the scene because they're the ones who are trained to do the job. So why is it that when we have a mental health crisis, we send out police officers instead of professionals who are trained to do the work? So mental health is a health issue. So, we need a health response to this health crisis. Unfortunately, the City's current program, such as the B-HEARD program, do not meet this goal. Despite the City's claims, B-HEARD is not a true non-police model. In Fiscal Year 2025, for example, close to 80 percent of all

1 mental health calls in the B-HEARD pilot areas were
2 not answered by B-HEARD. This means thousands of New
3 Yorkers in crisis encounter police response instead
4 of caring support they needed. What we need is to
5 implement non-police response teams as first
6 responders to mental health crisis calls. We need
7 peers (TIMER CHIME) with lived mental health
8 experiences and EMTs to respond to these mental
9 health crisis calls. We therefore urge the Council to
10 support a truly non-police peer-led system in
11 response to mental health crisis calls. Thank you
12 very much.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much and
12 thank you for coming out and waiting such a long time
13 and sharing your testimony with us. It is completely
14 compelling and we heard each and every one of you.
15 Thank you.

We will now turn to the virtual
16 panelists. For virtual panelists, once your name is
17 called, a Member of our Staff will unmute you and the
18 Sergeant-at-Arms will set the timer and give you the
19 go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to
20 announce that you may begin before delivering your
21 testimony.

I will now call on our first virtual panelist, the Bronx Borough President, Vanessa Gibson.

VANESSA GIBSON: Good afternoon. Hello, Madam Chair. It's good to see you and the Members of the City Council. Thank you so much, Chair Ariola. I appreciate you. Thank you for your leadership and to all the Members of the City Council, my friends and former Colleagues, the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, I thank you all for your incredible leadership on behalf of the Bronx and the City of New York, analyzing the proposed budget for FY 27 for both the FDNY and New York City Emergency Management.

As you all know, these are two critical agencies that my borough works with hand in hand. We show up at scenes of building collapses and fires and explosions, and these men and women of FDNY, firefighters and NYCEM, do tremendous work to protect New Yorkers during emergencies, collapses, and so many other occurrences that we often find ourselves dealing with. I truly understand that our constituents and New Yorkers rely on all of us to ensure that each agency is operating at the highest

1 level of efficiency as well as capacity. So, I am
2 joined virtually testifying this afternoon to
3 particularly advocate for the restoration of the
4 fifth firefighter to fire engines across our city.
5 But of course, I needed to start in the Borough of
6 the Bronx because since the 1980s, our City has moved
7 between four and five firefighters for every engine
8 company that responds to a fire. And we know that
9 over the years, that number has changed. And most
10 recently in 2023, then-Mayor Eric Adams removed that
11 fifth firefighter for the 20 engine companies that
12 had them only to restore them the following year when
13 the budget crisis was relieved and improved. So, I
14 continually understand the important work of both
15 agencies, and I truly join you and other Members of
16 the Council in advocating for sufficient staffing
17 levels, making sure that the City continues to commit
18 to bringing that fifth firefighter to our engine
19 companies across the city. But I know we have to
20 start somewhere. And I'm respectfully recognizing
21 that the Bronx has faced a number of fires. And,
Chair, I want to acknowledge your leadership in
standing with us years ago when we suffered a
horrific fire of five alarm on January 9th, 2022, at

1
2 Twin Parks Northwest when we lost 17 neighbors of the
3 Gambian community after we fought relentlessly to
4 save lives, the FDNY and NYCEM and DOB and HPD. We
5 worked collaboratively, interagency coordination, and
6 we had press conferences with Council Member Oswald
7 Feliz and Council Member Pierina Sanchez, and you
8 stood with us then, and I know you stand with us now
9 in understanding the urgency of this matter of a
10 fifth firefighter. Our firefighter crews are
11 associated with faster response times and more
12 efficient staffing. And as early as 1987, the
13 Department data showed that a team of five was able
14 to stretch a hose and make it up to the fifth floor
15 of a building about four minutes faster than a team
16 of four. And we know that in emergencies, these few
17 minutes can provide crucial response time and saving
18 the lives of civilians, older adults, and children.
19 When fires occur, FDNY protocols often necessitate
20 sending three to four firefighter engines in
21 response, and we know that adding this fifth will
make it even more better. And unfortunately, across
the city, it's the Bronx. We face the highest burden
when it comes to response rates and fires, increasing
demand, and so we know that we're asking for what is

1 necessary for New Yorkers and certainly what's
2 necessary for the Bronx. I believe that adding that
3 fifth firefighter to each engine would save
4 approximately 14,000 runs per year boroughwide at a
5 least expensive price tag than adding additional
6 engines to meet that gap. So, as part of the FY27
7 budget, I am asking the City Council to take the step
8 of restoring a fifth firefighter crews to all of our
9 engines, starting in the Bronx, and helping to
10 protect the lives of our residents and families, as
11 well as our firefighters, the men and women of the
12 Department. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, to the
13 Members of the Committee, to the City Council, to my
14 Bronx delegation, to my Co-Chairs, Amanda Farías and
15 Justin Sanchez. I want to thank Council Member
16 Sanchez for his op-ed recently and Council Member
17 Farías for her leadership, and really to the men and
18 women of the Uniformed Firefighters Association, UFA,
19 UFOA, all of our union officials, thank you for not
20 only making this an important priority, but ensuring
21 that the Bronx Borough President is here to add my
voice to all of you. And I truly know that working
together during this budget crisis that we're in now,
we will make sure that services are increased and not

1 decreased, and do everything we can to work with our
2 Mayor and the Mamdani Administration, as well as the
3 Hochul Administration in Albany as well. Thank you,
4 Madam Chair. I appreciate your leadership. You are
5 excellent. Keep fighting for the FDNY. Keep fighting
6 for New York City Emergency Management and our
7 Commissioner, Christina Farrell, who's a dear friend.
8 I see these leaders all the time. They call me 2
9 a.m., 2 p.m. We show up because that's what we have
10 to do to protect the livelihood of our communities
11 and our constituents. So, I thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify virtually. Sorry I could not
13 join you in person, but my heart and spirit is always
14 there at City Hall, and I thank you again for the
15 opportunity, and I look forward to working with you,
16 Madam Chair, and your team, and your leadership on
17 this budget process for FY27. Gracias.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,
17 Borough President. And thank you so much for always
18 being on the ground, always being first to respond,
19 always being first out on an issue, and I'm so proud
20 to work collaboratively with you since I became a
21 Council Member. You're right. And this is something
that we did not discuss today, which was the fifth

1 firefighter. And I'm glad you brought it up because
2 it is a major need that we have in the next budget,
3 and we do need to do that pilot program in the Bronx.
4 It's needed mostly in the Bronx right now, and then
5 we need it throughout the city. I was proud to sign
6 onto a delegation, Bronx delegation, led by you, with
7 your name at the top, letter to our current Mayor,
8 asking him to fund the 20 firehouses in the Bronx. We
9 were just at a hearing last week, and it was it was
10 Council Member Pierina Sanchez's turn to have her
11 questioning, and she had to yield because there was a
12 fire in her District at the time. We cannot go every
13 day, every week learning about fires in the Bronx
14 that, you know, where people are getting injured,
15 firefighters are getting injured. By adding that
16 fifth firefighter, we can save lives and we can get
17 to fires faster, get water on fires more quickly, and
18 this way fires don't spread. It makes sense, but
19 we're going to make sure it happens. We've been
20 talking about it a long time, but this time we're
21 going to get it done because we are working
collaboratively, and that's what's important. Thank
you so much for your advocacy.

2 VANESSA GIBSON: And thank you as a Queens
3 Council Member and a Chair for the Committee
4 representing all five boroughs, you know, I have love
5 for Queens County. You also have a fair share of your
6 fires as well --

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes.

8 VANESSA GIBSON: -- so, I know, again,
9 this is a shared responsibility. It's a shared agenda
10 and priority because no matter what borough you live
11 in, what zip code, everyone should be safe, and in
12 the event of a fire, we need sufficient staff. And we
13 also need to protect our firefighters as well. So,
14 I'm so glad you agree, and I thank you and let's keep
15 working together.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And you said it
17 right. We got to start somewhere. So, let's start in
18 the Bronx. Thank you so much for coming on. Thank
19 you.

20 VANESSA GIBSON: Thanks again. Thanks,
21 Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Our next
virtual panelist is David Besprozvany.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

1 DAVID BESPROZVANY: Good afternoon, Chair
2 Ariola and Members of the Committee. My name is David
3 Besprozvany, and I'm a New Yorker, a 9-1-1 EMT for
4 the last eight years, and an incoming medical
5 student. I'm here today because the structure of how
6 New York funds emergency medical services is
7 increasingly unsustainable for both patients and
8 providers. The numbers are clear. In the FDNY's
9 Fiscal Year of 2026, the budget was about 2.6
10 billion. Yet the entire EMS Bureau receives roughly
11 418 million, about one sixth of the Department's
12 funding. So we have a system where one sixth of the
13 budget is responsible for about three quarters of the
14 work, because at the same time, 75 to 80 percent of
15 all FDNY calls are medical emergencies. And despite
16 the imbalance, EMS operations generated about 400
17 million in ambulance transport revenue in the Fiscal
18 Year of 2025, nearly equal to the Bureau's operating
19 budget. Recently, we've heard concerns even in this
20 hearing from some in fire suppression and
21 firefighters, that firefighters are being sent to
more medical runs. But the reason for this is not
complicated. There are fewer ambulances available.
The City cannot retain EMS professionals when wages

1 remain dramatically lower to comparable uniform
2 services and, as a result, hundreds of EMTs and
3 paramedics simply leave the EMS Bureau every year,
4 and many of them, you know, are also promoted into
5 fire suppression simply because of a livable wage.
6 This creates a cycle. There's fewer EMS crews, fewer
7 ambulances on the street, longer response times, and
8 more medical calls falling onto firefighters.
9 Meanwhile, New Yorkers are seeing the consequences.
10 The City handles about 1.6 million EMS calls every
11 year, which is roughly about 5,500 calls per day.
12 Average end-to-end response times are now 18 minutes
13 for medical emergencies, and for non-life-threatening
14 calls, it can be a wait of over 45 minutes. So,
15 stabilizing the system will not just require an
16 enormous investment. Estimates suggest bringing EMS
17 pay roughly in line with the firefighter salary
18 scales would cost around only 166 million per year,
19 which is barely a dent in the overall budget.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

18 DAVID BESPROZVANY: (INAUDIBLE) asking EMS
19 to handle the majority of emergencies well.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If you're wrapping
21 up, that's fine.

1 DAVID BESPPOZVANY: No problem. If we want
2 faster response times, better patient outcomes, and a
3 workforce that stays in this profession, the City
4 must finally align EMS funding with the reality of
5 the work. Thank you for your time.

6 Thank you for taking the time to testify.

7 We have now heard from everyone who has
8 signed up to testify.

9 If we inadvertently missed anyone who
10 would like to testify in person, please visit the
11 Sergeants-at-Arms' table and complete a witness slip
12 now. If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like
13 to testify virtually, please use the raise hand
14 function in Zoom and a Member of our Staff will call
15 on you in the order of the hands raised.

16 Seeing no one else, I would like to note
17 again that written testimony, which will be reviewed
18 in full by Committee Staff, may be submitted to the
19 record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing
20 by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. I would
21 also once again like to thank Tanveer Singh, our
Senior Financial Analyst; Jack Storey, our Assistant
Director; Aisha Wright, our Deputy Director; Will
Hongach, Senior Analyst; Josh Kingsley, our Chief

2 Counsel; and of course, the formidable Phyllis
3 Inzerillo, my Chief-of-Staff.

4 At this point, I will now end the
5 hearing. Thank you so much. [GAVEL]

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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 May 5, 2026