

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE

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February 17, 2012
Start: 10:08 a.m.
Recess: 11:05 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - 16th Floor
250 Broadway

B E F O R E:

LETITIA JAMES
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Maria Del Carmen Arroyo
Jessica S. Lappin

A P P E A R A N C E S

Robert Lange
Director - Waste Prevention, Reuse & Recycling
Department of Sanitation

Matthew Bernardo
SVP for Business Enterprise
Housing Works

Harriet Taub
Executive Director
Materials for the Arts

Sean Ragiel
President
CarpetCycle LLC

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2 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Good morning
3 everybody, I've lost my voice, so I apologize.
4 I'm suffering from a really bad cold. Good
5 morning and welcome to this oversight hearing of
6 the New York City Council's Committee on
7 Sanitation and Solid Waste, I'm Letitia James, the
8 Chair. Today we will be hearing about the issue
9 of clothing and textile re-use and recycling.
10 Many recycling advocates have expressed concern
11 over the city's stagnant recycling diversion rate.
12 We as a city have been stuck somewhere around 16%
13 for almost a decade. Bringing our diversion rate
14 up has been the focus of many concerned parties.
15 In 2010, the Council passed legislation
16 establishing recycling diversion goals for the
17 city with the aim to achieve a 30% diversion rate
18 for all recyclable materials in the next eight
19 years. In addition, the Mayor's NYC program
20 established an ambitious goal of diverting 75%
21 waste from landfills by 2030. Setting these goals
22 is one thing, but achieving them is of course the
23 real challenge. As we learned today, textiles
24 represent an important opportunity for achieving
25 our goals for increased waste diversion. Although

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2 they do not seem as common as soda bottles,
3 cardboard boxes or aluminum cans, they are a key
4 component to improve diversion for two primary
5 reasons. First, they comprise a significant
6 portion of our waste stream, more than 5% of the
7 waste disposed of, which is twice as much as
8 designated glass, and about equal to the total
9 amount of leaf and yard waste in the waste stream.
10 In addition, textiles are eminently re-usable or
11 recyclable. Unlike a material such as plastic,
12 from which only 15% of the total plastics waste
13 stream is considered recyclable by the city, about
14 95% of textiles are re-usable or recyclable. Let
15 me repeat that, 95% of textiles are re-usable or
16 recyclable. As a result of such a high re-use and
17 recyclable rate, the market for textiles is
18 stronger than for many other recyclables. This
19 strong market means that rather paying contractors
20 to recycle this material, the city actually gets
21 paid to recycle textiles. With the benefits of
22 textile recycling so clear, the next question is
23 how to construct an effective program. Pursuant
24 to Local Law 38 of 2010, the Department of
25 Sanitation recommended ... recently commenced a

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2 partnership with Housing Works, an HIV AIDS
3 advocacy group which does great work, that runs a
4 number of used clothing and furniture stores
5 throughout the city and elsewhere. And I have
6 purchased from them on many occasions. Throughout
7 the city Housing Works will site bins free of
8 charge in residential buildings throughout the
9 city. Housing Works pays the city a fee for every
10 ton of residential ... excuse me, pays a fee for
11 every ton of material it collects. We will be
12 joined today by representatives both from the
13 Department of Sanitation and Housing Works, and we
14 look forward to hearing more about how the program
15 has fared thus far. In addition to the DOS
16 program, there are a number of other notable
17 options for textile recycling in the city,
18 including a program run by GrowNYC through the
19 city's greenmarkets, as well as programs run by
20 well-known organizations such as the Salvation
21 Army and Goodwill. We look forward to hearing
22 from representatives of those groups as well. In
23 conclusion, textiles represent a great opportunity
24 for the city to achieve the recycling diversion
25 goals we've set for ourselves. I'm hopeful that

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2 we can use today's hearing to better understand
3 how best to go about doing that. Our first panel
4 will consist of the Director of the Department of
5 Sanitation, Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and
6 Recycling -- we have to come up with a better
7 title -- Bob Lange. And he will be joined by
8 Matthew Bernardo, I hope I'm saying your name
9 correctly, from Housing Works at 57 Willoughby
10 Street in Brooklyn. You may begin. I apologize.

11 MR. LANGE: That's okay, I think
12 there's a lot of people who have that right now,
13 fortunately I don't. Good morning, Chairperson
14 James and members of the Committee on Sanitation
15 and Solid Waste, I'm Robert Lange, Director of the
16 Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling,
17 or just Recycling for short, for the Department of
18 Sanitation. I'm pleased to have this opportunity
19 to testify on behalf of the Department's efforts
20 for almost 20 years to capture textiles, or what
21 are more commonly known as clothing, linens,
22 towels, curtains, clean rags, shoes and other
23 apparel, from the residential waste stream for
24 reuse rather than disposal. In 1995 my bureau
25 created the New York City Stuff Exchange, which

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2 you know is 1-877 number for residents to use to
3 access via their home telephone the city's
4 existing and robust charitable and for-profit
5 sector specializing in resale and reuse of the
6 abovementioned unwanted goods. We created the
7 service because it was by far the simplest and
8 most effective means by which to connect residents
9 with the already present and extensive
10 neighborhood-based charitable infrastructure for
11 accepting unwanted goods, as well as those seeking
12 secondhand goods for purchase without creating a
13 redundant second service funded by city taxpayer
14 dollars, that would be both ... which would both
15 compete and possibly undermine the existing not-
16 for-profit infrastructure. When technology and
17 its users began to use the internet more
18 frequently to access information, we developed the
19 New York City Stuff Exchange into an internet-
20 based website that provides the same means for
21 accessing or connecting with local establishments
22 to donate or buy used goods. For a time we
23 maintained both services while residents
24 transitioned from one technology to another. In
25 2000, recognizing the increased use of the

1 internet and smartphones by New York City
2 residents, we terminated the former 1-877 number
3 and further enhanced the services provided by our
4 Stuff Exchange website. In 2010, again
5 recognizing the evolving nature of the way
6 residents access their information, we adapted the
7 New York City Stuff Exchange into a smartphone
8 application. In all of these evolving phases of
9 New York City Stuff Exchange service, our goal has
10 been to connect residents with the most convenient
11 access to parting with their unwanted goods that
12 reduces their personal waste footprint. This
13 brings me now to RefashionNYC program that the
14 Department launched in the spring of 2011, but
15 first allow me to provide you with a few
16 interesting facts, based upon the results of the
17 2004-2005 four-season residential waste
18 characterization study performed by my office.
19 Textiles make up approximately 7% of the
20 residential waste stream, of which carpets and
21 upholstery are about 1.5% of the total, clothing
22 is about 3% of this total, non-clothing textiles
23 make up about 1.6%, and shoes and other leather
24 products are about .8%. The goal of the
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2 RefashionNYC program, a partnership in the public
3 interest, is similar to our goals for the New York
4 City Stuff Exchange program just described, except
5 that the RefashionNYC program is focused entirely
6 upon creating even greater convenience for New
7 York City residents who are interested in donating
8 unwanted textiles by placing donated bins in
9 public spaces within their own apartment
10 buildings. In addition, rather than attempting to
11 create a new infrastructure for capturing these
12 goods, and funded through an already recession-
13 strained city taxpayer base, we chose instead to
14 partner in this endeavor with a local charitable-
15 based organization that could provide the service
16 to New Yorkers without requiring any additional
17 cost. In May of 2010, as a result of a
18 solicitation issued by my office, Housing Works, a
19 well-known and well-respected charitable
20 organization that operates thrift stores in the
21 city, was awarded the contract to be our
22 RefashionNYC partner. The RefashionNYC program
23 operates in the following manner. Existing staff
24 resources in my office manage the portion of the
25 program that is responsible for soliciting

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2 participants into the program, such as apartment
3 buildings, and then evaluating together with the
4 prospective participant's management and our
5 Housing Works partner the viability of the
6 proposed site to accommodate one of the program's
7 collection bins. At the end of this process, if
8 it is mutually decided that the site can
9 accommodate the bin, then the building is placed
10 on a waiting list to receive a bin. Once the bin
11 is delivered to the building and installed, the
12 site monitor, usually the building superintendant,
13 is advised to call the bin in for service as
14 needed. As a side note, because of space
15 constraints in most New York City buildings, the
16 bins are delivered unassembled and assembled
17 onsite by Housing Works staff. When a bin fills
18 up and requires servicing, participants call my
19 office, where our program dispatcher then adds the
20 site to a list with Housing Works as part of the
21 next scheduled pickup day. When a participating
22 building is serviced, members off the Housing
23 Works staff enter the building and remove any
24 clothing from the bin and bring it back to their
25 warehouse for sorting. Some of the items donated,

1 usually the higher-end items, will be sold after
2 sorting in Housing Works shops throughout the
3 city, while other items will be shipped to a
4 Housing Works-affiliated thrift shop in Haiti.
5 Some items will be made available to different
6 non-profit thrift shops for sale in their stores
7 as well. And finally, the rest will be sold to
8 overseas markets. In all instances the profits
9 generated from the sale of donations go to benefit
10 low-income and homeless New Yorkers living with,
11 and affected by, HIV AIDS, as well as to expand
12 the infrastructure of the program further to
13 capture more textiles, and further increase
14 revenues to grow the program and the Housing Works
15 charitable efforts. As I'm sure you are all
16 already aware as residents of the city, last June
17 the Department sent out a citywide mailer to 3.5
18 million New York City households to both announce
19 the start of the textile collection program, and
20 to solicit possible apartment building locations
21 for participation in the program. The mailing
22 detailed how the program would work, who would be
23 eligible, and invited New Yorkers to clean their
24 closets for a good cause in a green city.
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1 Residents and building staff were encouraged to
2 contact my office via a convenient online portal
3 or by regular mail. The initial public notice
4 resulted in well over 1,000 inquiries, most in the
5 first few months after the mailing, and many
6 directly from building residents interested in
7 having their building participate. After a
8 careful review and vetting of the inquiries
9 received, 128 residential buildings and three
10 commercial buildings have been approved to date.
11 The total of 157 bins have been installed in those
12 128 buildings, some with multiple bins. Over
13 100,000 pounds, or 50 tons, were donated in the
14 first six months of the program. Another 600,000
15 pounds, or 300 tons, is expected for the rest of
16 the year. In other words, the program, both
17 through additional sites and increased
18 participation at existing sites, is growing
19 steadily. And as part of Mayor Bloomberg's plan
20 to double the city's diversion rate by 2017, we're
21 looking to expand this program to additional sites
22 in buildings and public spaces throughout the
23 city. To give you a sense of what the public
24 thinks about the program, here is one small
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sample. This is from a building in Manhattan.

"Just a note to let you know that the response to having a collection bin in our apartment building has been overwhelmingly positive. I keep hearing from neighbors what a great convenience it is, and our super is very enthusiastic. A wonderful program and implementation, keep up the good work." Without exception, all of the feedback we have received from the public about the program has been positive to date. And now I'd be happy to answer whatever questions you have.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So is this program available via 311?

MR. LANGE: Yes, if somebody calls 311, they get referred to the website where they can fill out the form and apply for the program.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And how many buildings are outside of Manhattan?

MR. LANGE: I don't know that off the top of my head, but it's primarily ... the major buildings are in Manhattan, there are some in Queens, some in Brooklyn. We do not have any in the Bronx and we do not have any in Staten Island yet, and part of that is, we're trying to grow the

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2 program in such a way that we make up the most
3 efficient routes for the collection of the ... those
4 are the boroughs we received the most overwhelming
5 response from.

6 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And is it
7 limited primarily, this program, to residential
8 buildings?

9 MR. LANGE: At the moment we are
10 focusing on residential buildings, but we will
11 expand beyond that in the future, we're looking to
12 include commercial buildings, possibly public
13 spaces, outdoor areas as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: In schools?

15 MR. LANGE: Public schools are not
16 ... public schools have lots of space constraints,
17 they're not an ideal location for these kinds of
18 bins. We've had some public schools approach us,
19 we've evaluated them and it's been a mutual
20 agreement on the part of all parties that it
21 wasn't an ideal location for a bin.

22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And your
23 expansion, I guess, will be guided by resources,
24 funds?

25 MR. LANGE: Well, this program is

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2 quite unusual, as I explained, it's really self-
3 funding. As we expand the number of sites, we
4 expand the amount of clothing, we expand the
5 amount of revenue being produced, and therefore we
6 have more and more resources to expand further.
7 So it is self-expanding basically.

8 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Since I'm a
9 Council Member from Brooklyn, and I represent part
10 of downtown Brooklyn, and obviously a number of my
11 constituents have contacted me regarding this
12 program, if I wanted to expand it in my district,
13 and provided you some discretionary funds, would
14 you be in a position to do that?

15 MR. LANGE: There is no means that
16 I know of right now for doing that.

17 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

18 MR. LANGE: Because the program
19 really, it requires Housing Works to, out of the
20 revenues produced, buy the bins and whatever other
21 materials are needed as far as the program.

22 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the items
23 that you're collecting are primarily limited to
24 clothing?

25 MR. LANGE: It's, yes, it's

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2 primarily limited to clothing. We've considered
3 as well to expand, possibly including other
4 materials as well. Let me just qualify one thing
5 though, there is a possibility, and we have
6 considered in the future, Housing Works is a not-
7 for-profit organization, of establishing a means,
8 and Housing Works is already working on this,
9 Matthew may want to speak about it, a means by
10 which people can directly donate to the program
11 for its expansion.

12 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

13 MR. LANGE: As a charitable
14 donation.

15 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I see. And if
16 one calls 311, one can get the locations as to
17 where to drop off material?

18 MR. LANGE: No, when we have public
19 locations, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

21 MR. LANGE: Right now these are
22 locations within apartment buildings, and no
23 management company wants people coming with their
24 clothing to a building they don't live in.

25 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Got it. Okay.

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Approximately how much material are you collecting on a weekly or monthly basis?

MR. LANGE: Do you know that off the top of your head?

MR. BERNARDO: We've ... about 58 tons has been collected so far. It really depends on the size of the building, how often ... I think right now we're about once a month, we'll clear out once a month, every four weeks.

MR. LANGE: How things have appeared to work so far is everybody, you know, as we said, clean your closets.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MR. LANGE: Everybody initially cleans their closets, so we have a large amount that we start off with, so we have to service fairly quickly, and then it gets into a regular rhythm after that.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the outreach that you engage in?

MR. LANGE: We, as I said, we did a citywide mailer, we're still working off of the requests that came off of that citywide mailer. We will exhaust those in the next few months.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

MR. LANGE: The process by which we evaluate people, I provided a spreadsheet, as you can see, this is the process. There's a lot of interaction, sometimes the requests come from tenants, so once a tenant makes the request, we have to contact the building, then we have to set up a meeting with the building, we have to evaluate the physical space of the building. Housing Works has to come out and look as well, we have to measure, we have two different kinds of bins that we possibly supply. And so the building space has to be evaluated, and then the building has to agree to it, and once the building agrees to it, then we set up an installation.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what role does the Department of Sanitation play in determining where to site textile collection bins as part of the program?

MR. LANGE: It's mutual between Housing Works, Sanitation and the individual sites that want to be participants in the program.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Would a residential disposal ban be a sensible way to

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expand textile recycling?

MR. LANGE: Well, first I'll answer you as John Doherty would answer you, no. Because the Commissioner does not like bans, because it ties the hands of the Department in the sense that if people mistakenly put something out, we, in many ways, have to pick it up.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MR. LANGE: Because otherwise other parts of the Department have to pick it up as litter. So the only way a ban would really work too, is if you wanted us to then ticket people for putting out clothing, which we don't want to do. We want to encourage people to donate more, definitely.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And would your answer be different if in a few years city-sanctioned and private textile programs are significantly more robust?

MR. LANGE: Well, if they're significantly more robust, that means that people are doing the right thing, so then we wouldn't want to do a ban.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And how have

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the markets for textiles been over the last five to ten years?

MR. LANGE: I would say they're fairly stable, but I'll let Matthew, who's-

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: (Interposing)
Okay.

MR. LANGE: ... directly in the business answer that as well.

MR. BERNARDO: Yeah, I mean, they're very volatile, they'll go from 15 cents a pound to 26 cents a pound, and so there's a big variation, and you have to really do the best shopping around for who's your best partner, as in the salvage business. So it really depends on the quality, and the great thing about the textiles is that we go through so many stages with it. We first sort it for our stores, so that's our best use, that's where we get the most money. And then what we don't ... what doesn't make it into our stores, we then have developed a buy-the-bag program in our warehouse every other month, where we give ... someone buys a bag from us for \$20 and whatever they can stuff in the bag, they take, and that's been very popular. And then, only then, do

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we go to our partners in the salvage industry and send it to them.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Is there any particular city agency that disposes of large amounts of textiles?

MR. LANGE: Not really. The only ... well, the NYPD does through certain laws related to confiscating, you know, fake fashion items, and they're required under the law to basically dispose of those items, they're not really allowed ... that is actually something my office and City Hall and other people have been involved in looking at, to see if there are means for freeing up some of that clothing for bringing it back into the reuse sector. We would look for the Council's support, direct as well as spiritual support, in that, to encourage the NYPD and particularly the fashion industry, because some of it is a choice on the part of the fashion industry. They can make a decision in certain cases that, okay, we'll allow it to go into the reuse sector.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Mr. Lange, in your testimony you basically said that usually the higher-end items will be sold after sorting at

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2 Housing Works throughout the city, while other
3 items will be shipped to Housing Works-affiliated
4 thrift shops in Haiti, and some items will be made
5 available to different not-for-profits. Do we
6 provide any of these clothings to homeless
7 shelters?

8 MR. LANGE: No.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

10 MR. BERNARDO: No, I mean, through
11 our partners in Haiti we started with Haiti with
12 the earthquake relief, so many of that, you know,
13 initially we sent clothing down for that, and then
14 there was the ability that they wanted to try to
15 do a store down there. But no, through our
16 program, and through our clients, our clients have
17 the ability to buy in our stores, you know, as
18 part of getting them on their feet.

19 MR. LANGE: There are other reuse
20 organizations that I believe do that already, and
21 for example, providing clothing to people for
22 interviews and things like that.

23 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Like Dress for
24 Success? Do you work with Dress for Success?

25 MR. LANGE: We have worked with

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2 them, they're not a direct partner as part of
3 this. That is something in the future we would
4 hope to do more, with the other people in the
5 clothing reuse sector, to work more closely with
6 them, because if we are as successful as we think
7 we'll be, in terms of putting bins out there and
8 capturing clothing, at some we may even exceed
9 Housing Works' ability to process all that
10 material.

11 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: What's the
12 percentage of material that is sold as secondhand,
13 and that percentage that's recycled to markets
14 outside of this country?

15 MR. BERNARDO: It can be up to 40%
16 that we can recover initially, by the bag.

17 MR. LANGE: It depends on the
18 quality of what's received. Going back to your
19 question about the commodity value, like any
20 commodity, it goes up and down, but one of the
21 differences with clothing is that Housing Works
22 can add value to it by first selling the highest-
23 end items in their thrift stores and capturing the
24 most revenue for that commodity. The lowest end
25 of the commodity is obviously the rag trade.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And how frequently do you collect the bins? How frequently are they serviced, I guess is the question?

MR. BERNARDO: It's based on demand.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Based on demand. And how do you identify the apartments?

MR. LANGE: As again, we sent out a citywide mailer.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And they respond.

MR. LANGE: And we got thousands, over a thousand requests. And those all have to be processed, we deal with management companies, we send them emails, asking them if they want to participate in the program, we have approached (inaudible), we will be doing other solicitations in the future to capture more people, but right now we're working through the initial requests that we received.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I see. And how much does Housing Works pay to the city per pound?

MR. BERNARDO: It doesn't pay

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anything to the city, it pays to the program.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And how much does it pay to the program?

MR. BERNARDO: Sixty cents a pound, \$1,200 a ton.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And in terms of a timeframe, when do you plan on expanding to the outer boroughs?

MR. LANGE: Well, our expansion takes place every day practically.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

MR. LANGE: As we evaluate more buildings, you know, we determine with Housing Works and the building that they can accommodate a bin, and we install a bin. One of the hardest places that we found so far is Staten Island, because there are a limited number of high rise apartment buildings on Staten Island, so we're looking for public spaces in a place like Staten Island. Bronx and ... the Bronx we believe will be in shortly.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So I'd like, obviously would love to work with you as we expand into public spaces, and also identifying

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2 residential buildings in Brooklyn and beyond, and
3 thank you for your testimony. I don't believe
4 there's any other members of the City Council, but
5 I thank both of you for attending here today and
6 providing your testimony. Thank you.

7 MR. LANGE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Harriet Tubb,
9 Materials for the Arts, Taub?

10 MS. TAUB: Taub.

11 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. I
12 got it right the second time. And Sean Ragiel
13 from CarpetCycle. You're testifying? How are
14 you?

15 MS. TAUB: Hi, good morning, thank
16 you for offering me the opportunity to present
17 testimony to this Committee. It is my pleasure to
18 represent Materials for the Arts, also known as
19 MFTA, a unit of the Department of Cultural
20 Affairs, with additional funding support from DSNY
21 and the DOE and our non-profit partner, Friends of
22 MFTA. My name is Harriet Taub, and I've been the
23 Executive Director of Materials for the Arts since
24 2000. I would just like to give you a little
25 background. Since 1978 MFTA has served as a

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2 creative reuse center and provider of free
3 materials to our non-profit arts community and
4 public schools. As a membership-based program,
5 off-Broadway theaters, dance companies, after-
6 school providers, art therapy departments and
7 since 1998, our public schools are able to benefit
8 from MFTA's services. Our basic operational
9 enterprise consists of a 35,000 square foot
10 warehouse in Long Island City, a pickup trucking
11 service, and an online listing service. Twice a
12 week our warehouse is open to members by
13 appointment only to access our free donated
14 materials. We run a robust education program that
15 provides class trips for students, professional
16 development for teachers and art service
17 providers, and in-school residencies throughout
18 the five boroughs. We are proud to be the largest
19 provider of arts materials to our public schools.
20 Textiles accounted for roughly 26% of all
21 donations to MFTA in 2011, and they are by far the
22 largest donation category to us in both weight and
23 value. Along with paper, textiles are the most
24 sought after items in our warehouse. Out of 58
25 members surveyed recently, 20 counted fabric as

1
2 one of their most sought after materials. We have
3 observed that New York City residents seem to have
4 lots of useful textiles, be it a bag, a box or a
5 roll of fabric, taking up valuable space in their
6 homes and apartments. The textiles that MFTA
7 deals with most are what I call raw fabric, with
8 tablecloths and theatrical curtains following far
9 behind. Useful textiles such as clothing and
10 other assorted linens generally find their way to
11 other reuse programs, such as the Salvation Army,
12 Goodwill and Housing Works. These programs reach
13 an audience that is eager to buy discounted
14 clothing and linens. Our members, on the other
15 hand, are well-equipped and eager to transform raw
16 fabric donations, and our donors are thrilled that
17 their five-yard remnants can be turned into
18 costume sets and arts projects. The people who
19 donate fabric to MFTA know that there is still
20 life in their remnants, for these types of
21 donations there is no need for an extra process to
22 make them useful again, there is only the need for
23 a mechanism to put them into the right hands.
24 Individuals accounted for the majority of all
25 donors to Materials for the Arts in 2011, 46% of

1 individuals donated, versus 40% of businesses.

2 This has been true for the past ten years.

3 Individuals make up the largest number of donors,
4 surpassing businesses, non-profits and other city
5 governmental agencies. While other reuse programs

6 and textile recycling programs serve their purpose
7 in saving textiles from the landfill, Materials

8 for the Arts brings an element of creativity to

9 the user. We do extensive educational and

10 outreach programming to give students, teachers

11 and artists the tools to make best use of the

12 materials they find in our warehouse. Our goal as

13 New York City's premier creative reuse center is

14 to train our members in how to best repurpose and

15 reuse materials, in this case fabric, and see them

16 go back to their own institutions, schools,

17 hospitals, theaters, galleries, and turnkey that

18 information. We are educating generations of New

19 Yorkers to recognize the benefits of both reuse

20 and recycling and how actively participating in

21 both these disciplines can help us build a

22 sustainable city. I've taken the liberty of

23 bringing along some examples from our education

24 program of how these textiles, scraps or pieces,

1
2 have been used, thank you, and I'm happy to answer
3 any questions you have. Show and tell, okay. So
4 when I mentioned that individuals donate to us,
5 you know, those are clearly the people that
6 everybody is concerned about, because we don't
7 pick up in New York City from businesses. So, but
8 we do get business's donations, and it's
9 important, because whether the city is responsible
10 for picking up from businesses or not, that stuff
11 is going into the landfill, and our concern should
12 be landfill, no matter who's responsible for
13 picking it up. So the kinds of things that we
14 would get, let's say, from a business, that would
15 not ever get to any of these other things, you
16 know, stuff like this. This is the kind of stuff
17 that fabric companies are donating, little
18 swatches, but those are the things that can be
19 turned into these puppets, fabric books. I mean,
20 we, you know, fabric is one of the most important
21 things, and I did not bring along, you know,
22 costume samples, but we do workshops on no-sew
23 costumes, because especially in public schools
24 when you want to put on a play, you know, there's
25 not that grandmother any more that's sitting there

1
2 sewing the costumes. So we do a no-sew costume,
3 where you can attach with glue, or wrapping or
4 tying, and you know, fabric is used, you know,
5 consistently throughout, whether it's an off-off-
6 Broadway play, or whether it's in your public
7 schools. Did I answer that question? Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And what
9 schools are part of this program?

10 MS. TAUB: Public schools?

11 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes.

12 MS. TAUB: Oh, probably every ... I
13 brought a list, actually I brought a list for all
14 the Council members, but you're the only one
15 that's here, so I'm going to give you the list of
16 those members ... Materials for the Arts that are in
17 your district.

18 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thanks.

19 MS. TAUB: And I can distribute
20 that, and then I'll give to the others.

21 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Excellent.

22 MS. TAUB: I can get rid of them.
23 But we have over 4,000 member organizations to
24 Materials for the Arts, and we have probably
25 almost every single public school is a member.

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2 Now, that doesn't mean that every single public
3 school comes in, I can bring them to the water,
4 but I can't make them drink.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right, I

understand.

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MS. TAUB: But we, you know,
actively work with schools, and are constantly
reaching out. We do a lot of social media. So,
for example, and this is one of the things that I
think is really important, when we're talking
about how we reach out to other organizations in
New York City, you know, fashion week, hello,
where's all that stuff go? Well, yesterday John
Varvatos, you know, a truckful of fabric. I mean,
he also has props, they have these fabulous hats
that had like little lightbulbs at the top, we got
those too. But you know, fabric, that fabric is
not going to get into this program, that fabric is
not going to get into any ... you know, there's no
other way, where is he, what is he going to do
with that fabric?

23

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: That's a good

question, where is he- -

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MS. TAUB: (Interposing) He's going

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2 to bring it to us. He's going to, I mean, you
3 know, they brought it to us, we have a pickup
4 service, we reached out to fashion week producers
5 months and months ago to talk to them, distributed
6 information to try to get them to be aware. We're
7 clearly not talking about the clothing, they're
8 not donating clothing.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

10 MS. TAUB: We don't want the
11 clothing, we don't take clothing. But what we
12 want is the stuff that they've wrapped around, you
13 know.

14 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Sure.

15 MS. TAUB: And the wool, and
16 everything that's fabric or trim or props, we want
17 that stuff. So we're going to blog about them,
18 because, you know, we're real excited that they
19 donated to us, and when we get donations in, we
20 deal with Coach a lot and Coach gives us leather
21 samples like this big. But we can use ... I mean,
22 this stuff is so valuable, and when we get it in,
23 we'll put it like, we'll tweet, you know, Coach
24 leather is in, you know, make an appointment. So
25 we're very ... we, and we turn around fabric very

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quickly.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And the off-off-off-Broadway shows, they obviously utilize your services as well?

MS. TAUB: Yeah, I mean, anybody who is a not-for-profit, so you know- -

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: (Interposing)
Anyone who is a not-for-profit.

MS. TAUB: ... Signature Theatre, who is not off of Broadway, you know.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: They can come in, you know, they come in and, you know, sometimes they come and sometimes they don't, but we often tell anybody who is in those kinds of creative services, before you set your design, come and see what we have. Because we've got a mechanical bull right now that somebody donated. So, you know, if for some reason you wanted that in your set, and you were dreaming about that, that you thought "I'll never get it", you know, you could get it at Materials for the Arts.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So beyond your blog, what other ... how else do you outreach?

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2 MS. TAUB: Well, we ... first of all,
3 lots of people know about us, I mean we've been
4 around for 33 ... you know, since 1978, but we do,
5 we tweet, we blog, we have a Facebook page. We
6 send out emails, so we target emails. So for
7 example, I mentioned in my testimony that we have
8 an ... we have the warehouse, we have a truck that
9 goes out.

10 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

11 MS. TAUB: Well, we have two
12 trucks, depending upon the driving situation, and
13 we go out every day and pick up from, you know,
14 four to six donations.

15 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

16 MS. TAUB: Businesses and
17 individuals, and bring them back to the warehouse,
18 they get processed, they get entered into a
19 database, so that we know what we have in, and
20 then twice a week we're open for our members for
21 free, they come and they can access our materials.
22 But we also have an online service, so for example
23 if you had something that you wanted, and maybe it
24 was just three bags of really great fabric, I
25 couldn't really send a truck, it just wouldn't

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make sense.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right, of course.

MS. TAUB: So we have an online service called "Direct Donations", where you can list those items, and then our members can go on and they can access that list and they can see what's available. But also if someone has, sometimes things get put onto that listing because of time constraints, someone says, "I'm moving, I need this out by Friday", so we will do a targeted email blast to people in their zip code, and we'll say, "Right in your neighborhood", you know, "there's ten desks, five chairs, this business is moving out", you know, I mean, because it's not just textiles we deal with, you know.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: Thousands of items.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: But would you be willing to send your truck like, for instance, to my district, which is a cultural district?

MS. TAUB: Yes, sure.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And I would notify BAM and Mark Morris, etc., etc., etc., and

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on one day they would come and bring their textiles and their materials from all of the productions.

MS. TAUB: You know, we tried that in the East Village Fourth Arts Block.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: Did a kind of a day.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: And they had a big ... and a big sort of whole-day celebration of the neighborhood.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes.

MS. TAUB: And we had a bin there, and we've tried it, it was kind of ... it was not very successful.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: It wasn't, okay.

MS. TAUB: But we're not averse to, you know, talking to people and neighbors and saying, we'll come and we'll do like a one ... you know, everybody bring it. But generally, if BAM had a donation, they'd probably call us.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: And if it was enough

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stuff, we would go and pick it up.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And museums, do they also patronize your service?

MS. TAUB: They take things, and they also give, so.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: But I love the dolls, I just- -

MS. TAUB: (Interposing) Yeah, I want you ... I'm going to show you this doll.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And Maria is like she wants to touch them immediately.

ANDREA: Andrea.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Andrea, I keep calling her that. So the ... so actually constructing those dolls, you provide that service?

MS. TAUB: We have a very ... when I started Materials for the Arts basically, but I started in 1998 there, we had a service which was basically a warehouse, we picked stuff up, we brought it there, and that was it. And I'm a former art teacher.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: So when I came in, we

1
2 were just starting with the Department of
3 Education to allow teachers to come in. And I
4 would hear teachers say, "Where's the tempera
5 paint?" You know, and I was like, what, what's
6 wrong with these people? Look at all this
7 fabulous raw material. So I started an education
8 program, really small in the beginning, you know.
9 I would like go out with bags of stuff and go
10 teach teachers how to make hats and then over
11 time, I mean, fast forward to 2012, we have ... I
12 would have to invite you to come, we have two art
13 studios, we do class trips, we have class trips
14 almost every day, we have kids come and, you know,
15 get a tour of a reuse facility, you know, talk
16 about reuse and recycling. They do a hands-on art
17 project, we work with the Department of
18 Education's Office of After-school Professional
19 Development, where teachers get, you know, they
20 can come, they take P credit classes, we're
21 certified for three P credit classes. We do
22 outreach, we go into the schools and do
23 residencies, we have a big program. So we're
24 training people how to think about materials, and
25 then actually how would you do this.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MS. TAUB: And then they can go back and they can share with their people.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you for your service, and I'm going to take you up on the trip.

MS. TAUB: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We've been joined by Council Member Jessica Lappin, who sponsored Local Law 38, the textile recycling law, and at this point if you don't mind, sir, I'm going to allow Council Member Lappin to say a few words, if she would like. Thank you. So now we're going to hear from CarpetCycle LLC, Mr. Sean Ragiel.

MR. RAGIEL: Thank you very much, Ms. Chairperson, for the opportunity to testify. I represent CarpetCycle LLC, a carpet-recycling business based in New Jersey since 1999. I'll read my statement. Markets for post-consumer carpets have been evolving for over 15 years. The various polymers used to construct most carpets have a value in the secondary plastics market. We at CarpetCycle ... Sean Ragiel, CarpetCycle. Right,

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2 thank you. So we at CarpetCycle, with over 15
3 years of experience, have collected over 100
4 million pounds of spent carpets from the tri-state
5 area for recycling purposes. We now just opened
6 and are beginning to operate a 50,000 square foot
7 de-manufacturing facility, built specifically for
8 carpet recycling in Newark, New Jersey, just six
9 miles outside the Holland Tunnel. We need further
10 supply of spent carpet feedstock, however, it is
11 challenging to collect the carpets in a manner
12 that retains the secondary market value. Carpets
13 must be kept dry and out of the weather elements.
14 Furthermore, carpet that is mashed together in
15 compacter trucks with other sandy debris cannot be
16 recycled because it becomes too contaminated.
17 Spent carpets from commercial buildings and homes
18 must be collected in a source-separated fashion,
19 the same as acoustical ceiling tiles, which are
20 also recyclable, we collect those as well, for
21 shipment back to Armstrong Ceilings. Harvesting
22 the valuable nylon, polypropylene polyester
23 polymers can then be accomplished when the carpet
24 is collected in this source-separated fashion. We
25 at CarpetCycle have proven that spent carpets and

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2 ceiling tiles can be collected in this fashion at
3 no added cost to the building owners and managers
4 of New York City. We can provide a long list of
5 happy customers and successful recycling projects
6 in the City of New York. Our Newark facility will
7 be able to process up to 2,000 tons per month of
8 spent carpet, where now our current collection
9 rate is about 700 tons per month. We then plan
10 possibly to open an additional pre-sorting, you
11 know, pre-processing collection center, possibly
12 in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. I've been in
13 discussions for over a year and a half now with
14 the Navy Yard as far as their desire to have a
15 green manufacturing center.

16 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Center.

17 MR. RAGIEL: Over there. And then
18 the final step would be actually making
19 sustainable products such as acoustical insulation
20 for use in furniture and/or walls in commercial
21 buildings. So sustainable products such as
22 insulation for use in the commercial building
23 trade in New York, generated by New York City
24 waste, carpet waste, and using New York City jobs,
25 is really a true green jobs story, and I invite

1
2 you to come to a tour of our Newark facility when
3 we have a ribbon cutting, maybe mid to late April
4 of this year as we finish building it out.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So as you know,
6 I represent the Navy Yard, and as you know, I'm
7 going to be funding the green manufacturing center
8 in the Navy Yard, along with Council Member Levin,
9 who represents the one part of it, I represent the
10 other part of it. I look forward to you
11 relocating in downtown Brooklyn and servicing not
12 only my district but all of Brooklyn, the city,
13 and beyond. My question to you is, can you talk a
14 little bit about your collection process? If
15 individuals have carpets that are not, you know,
16 part of, you know, that obviously can be recycled,
17 that are not contaminated.

18 MR. RAGIEL: We allow ... we recycle
19 carpets from residential homes for free if they're
20 brought to us, no charge to recycle. Commercial
21 carpets are a little bit different, we do charge
22 for those ... for the recycling of those materials.
23 We have a fleet of trucks and trailers. For
24 example, the workrooms that install ... sub-
25 contracted workrooms that install carpet for Home

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2 Depot and Lowe's, for example, have a centralized
3 place where the carpet is cut and processed before
4 it goes to be put in the home. A lot of carpet
5 flows back to those places, we put trailers there,
6 enclosed regular 48 foot van trailers, that the
7 mechanics can then load the carpet into to keep it
8 dry, and we charge a fee to come swap out those
9 trailers, but less than landfill rates, so they're
10 being able to recycle and save money, versus
11 landfilling the materials.

12 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So is there a
13 training program or class to educate individuals
14 or contractors on how to maintain carpet so that
15 they can be recycled and reused?

16 MR. RAGIEL: Well, it's not so much
17 a maintenance issue on the floor, it's just that
18 once it's removed, if it's mixed with other waste,
19 gypsum wallboard, ceiling tiles.

20 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

21 MR. RAGIEL: And all mashed in the
22 same packer truck, then it's too contaminated for
23 us to use. Carpet is dirty inherently by being on
24 the floor.

25 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Sure.

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2 MR. RAGIEL: So we get ... that's not
3 a problem to recycling, the regular everyday foot
4 traffic dirt that's on the carpet. It's the fact
5 that additional contamination happens when it's
6 mixed with other debris and/or if it's rained on,
7 soaking-wet carpet is very difficult to recycle
8 and handle.

9 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: But I guess the
10 question is, getting the carpet out first before
11 they do the rest of the demolition.

12 MR. RAGIEL: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: I mean, how,
14 what is the outreach, what is the education?

15 MR. RAGIEL: Well, I personally
16 have, you know, addressed the architects in the
17 city, dozens of them, at lunch-and-learns, and
18 give them brochures from our company.

19 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Lunch-and-
20 learns?

21 MR. RAGIEL: Well, it's a lunch-
22 and-learn type of- -

23 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: (Interposing)
24 No, that's great, I like it.

25 MR. RAGIEL: Yeah, breakfast or a

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lunch-and-learn, you feed them, they come. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: That's true for the City Council as well.

MR. RAGIEL: Okay, well the ribbon cutting will be catered at the CarpetCycle Newark. I do, the architects, if they specify in the plans to recycle the carpet, this is happening at a good rate, it's really been a growth vehicle for our business, and then the general contractors, you know, contact us. And again, the carpet has to be pulled off the floor by laborers, and it has to be trucked typically out of the city to a transfer station.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

MR. RAGIEL: So we're doing those same things, ripping the carpet out with laborers, and trucking it out of the city, I just bring it to a recycling center rather than a landfill or a transfer station. So that's it, we sell it as cost neutrality with traditional demo and landfill, and it's working.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So I'm sure Elizabeth, New Jersey is a really lovely place, I've been there a couple of times. But New York

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2 City, in particular Brooklyn, is better. So I
3 can't wait for you to relocate to the Navy Yard.
4 How are your negotiations going with Andrew
5 Kimball?

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MR. RAGIEL: Well, I'm waiting for
7 a call back from Aisha Glover who's back there
8 doing the marketing, so and I will contact Andrew
9 again this week, so.

10

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: So will I.

11

MR. RAGIEL: Okay.

12

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Okay.

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MR. RAGIEL: And I, I will, I want
14 to locate there, it will be a second location.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: And I want you
16 there. There's good jobs and good jobs that can
17 sustain families, and you provide a great service,
18 and we have a lot of carpet that needs to be
19 recycled and reused.

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MR. RAGIEL: Very much, it's very
21 difficult for us to collect the carpets from
22 Queens and Brooklyn from a New Jersey-based
23 location.

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right, exactly.

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MR. RAGIEL: That's why we want to

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move there.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Exactly.

MR. RAGIEL: We just need to make the numbers work.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right, and we have a lot of contractors and architects, and you and I can sponsor lunch-and-learns together.

MR. RAGIEL: Okay, great.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.

MR. RAGIEL: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Just, I'm sorry, but Council Member Lappin has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: And actually it's a question for Sanitation, and you don't have to answer it now, you could answer it in writing afterwards, because I know I missed your testimony, although I've read it. One, I just wanted to know how long this takes, this process, I'm holding up the flowchart for how a site gets evaluated. And I'd also like to know how long the waiting list is if you pass this whole thing, and you are successful in meeting all of the criteria, if there's a waiting list, how long that is, and sort of what ... because you said

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2 in your testimony you want to grow the program,
3 obviously we'd like to grow the program, but if we
4 kind of hit a bottleneck or if we lack capacity,
5 or how are we going to grow the program? Because
6 I've been going around, even last night I went to
7 a meeting where I encouraged people to go to
8 NYC.gov and put in a request to have their
9 building evaluated, so I want to know when I'm
10 telling people to do that, you know, how long they
11 should expect to wait, or if you can handle the
12 volume.

13 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Andrea, is that
14 something that you could- -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN:
16 (Interposing) And also, I'm sorry, what ... oh, and
17 what percentage of applicants are successfully
18 accepted into the program? I think the Committee
19 staff would like an answer to that as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Is it possible
21 that you can answer any of those questions now or
22 off-line, or you will get back to the Council
23 Member? Okay.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: That would
25 be great, I would appreciate it very much. I

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think it's a very exciting program, so I just want to make sure we're making it as successful as possible.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Yes, thank you, Council Member Lappin, and also expanding it to the outer boroughs would be helpful. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Oh, and to that end, sort of your timeline for public bins. I don't think you really indicated, I know that you're looking at some, but what your timeline is to put them in Brooklyn and Staten Island and other places would be great.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Council Member Maria Del Carmen Arroyo has just arrived. Any other testimony? That's it, that concludes this hearing, thank you all for attending.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Richard A. Ziats, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature _____

Date March 2, 2012