

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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September 30, 2013

Start: 1:12 p.m.

Recess: 6:07 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room,
16th Floor

B E F O R E:

James G. Van Bramer
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Inez E. Dickens
Daniel Dromm
Vincent Gentile
Andy King
Domenic M. Recchia
Brad S. Lander
Letitia James

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

Linda Johnson
President and CEO of Brooklyn Public Library

Anthony Marx
President of New York Public Library

David Offensend
Chief Operating Officer

Mary Lee Kennedy
Chief Library Officer

John Millman
Assemblywoman

Micah Kellner
Assembly Member

Thomas Galante
President and Chief Executive Officer at Queens
Library

Simcha Felder
New York State Senator

Velmanette Montgomery
New York State Senator

Mable Law
Representing Comptroller John Liu

Julie Sandorf

Charles H. Revson Foundation

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

Jonathan Bowles

Executive Director of Center for an Urban Future

Michael Neppel

Director of Government Affairs and General
Counsel for New York Library Association

Eileen Muller

President of District Council 37 Local 1482

Christian Zabriskie

Urban Librarians Unite

John Kaiteris

HANAC

Davis Erin Anderson

Metropolitan New York Library Council

Nadezhda Williams

Historic District Council

Christabel Gough

Society for Architecture of the City

Elliot Hurwitt

Representing Little Italy Neighbors Association

Irene Van Slyke

Save Pacific Library

Jeffery Koessler

Librarian at John Jay College of Criminal
Justice

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

SJ Avery
Co-Chair of Fourth on Fourth Avenue

Shelley Hagan
Brooklyn Resident

Michael D. D. White
Citizens Defending Libraries

Paul Ness
Resident

Patty Hagan
Brooklyn Resident

Carolyn McIntyre

Yuki Anu

Carol Krinsky
Professor at NYU

Veronika Conant
Committee to save New York Public Library

Susan Bernofsky
Professor at Columbia University

Carla Lorde

C. M. Pyle
Founder of Renaissance Program

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: As soon as I get the signal from the Sergeant at Arms, we will begin. Okay. Good afternoon everyone and welcome for being here today for this very important hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup relations jointly with our select Committee on Libraries. My name is Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, and I'm Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and to my left is Council Member Vincent Gentile who is Chair of the Select Committee on Libraries, and we welcome everyone here today. I do want to note that there are several other committee meetings going on, so members will be in and out. In fact, I have to go to the Public Housing Committee at some point myself to check in, but thank you all for joining us. Libraries are at the heart of every neighborhood in New York City, and while there have been those who've questioned their continued relevance in our ever-changing world, the truth is libraries are more relevant today than ever before, and I would hold that one of the reason that they are

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2 more relevant is because they continue to
3 evolve and adapt to changing communities,
4 demographics and technological advancements.
5 The buildings which house libraries are very
6 important, but ultimately, a library is about
7 people and the information and the enrichment
8 they seek and find in those great libraries.
9 In order for libraries to continue to fulfill
10 their missions their physical spaces will need
11 to continue to evolve just as services and
12 programs evolve. Today's hearing is about the
13 future of public libraries in the city of New
14 York. It is about a gaping one billion dollar
15 as yet unmet capital need, and the valiant
16 attempts by our three systems and the City
17 Council and the City to meet those needs.
18 There are some ideas that are being pursued
19 which some find objectionable, but everyone
20 should recognize that without new and
21 innovative approaches, libraries will fall into
22 a state of disrepair that ultimately renders
23 them useless. As we look at different models I
24 want to make certain that we are ultimately
25 expanding library service and the footprint of

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2 libraries in ways that are sustainable and
3 ensure free access to all. While we will talk
4 about capital needs, government and private
5 funding, the selling of library buildings and
6 assets, make no mistake, what this hearing is
7 about is the future of libraries, what we
8 envision them looking like and how we see them
9 meeting the needs of everyone who wants and
10 needs them for the next 100 years and beyond.
11 There are great challenges before us all, and
12 many questions that need to be asked and
13 answered. As someone who worked for the Queens
14 Library for 11 years and who has chaired this
15 committee for the last four, I can assure you
16 that I believe the best days are ahead for
17 libraries and that every library building,
18 including the Schwarzman Building building
19 should maximize their spaces to be used for
20 public service and that every person, whether
21 they are dressed in a Brooks Brothers suit and
22 tie or jeans and Reebok's sneakers, should feel
23 equally welcomed there and at home in all of
24 our over 200 libraries throughout the City. I
25 want to thank everyone who is here today to

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2 speak about our public libraries, from the
3 people who run them, especially the people who
4 I worked alongside for 11 years who worked in
5 them, the people who think about them, who fund
6 them, who build them or simply use them and
7 love them; we all have a vested interest in
8 ensuring that they not only survive because
9 that is too low a bar to set for our libraries,
10 but that they grow in dynamic ways and that
11 they continue to be indispensable to all people
12 everywhere in our City and our nation. With
13 that, I want to ask Council Member Gentile to
14 offer his opening statement before we hear from
15 our three library presidents and CEOs.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman and good afternoon. And we know
18 how busy it is today by just looking at the
19 number of cars in the parking lot. So it's a--
20 it is a very busy day, but thank you for
21 attending today's hearing titled Capital
22 Construction Needs and the Potential Disposal
23 of Libraries in New York City. As we are all
24 aware, libraries play a vital role in this city
25 and provide multiple services to various

1 constituents. More than 40 million people
2 visited a public library in the city which
3 exceeds the number of visits to sporting events
4 and cultural institutions in this city
5 combined. In order to best accommodate visitors
6 libraries require continuous maintenance which
7 can cost millions of dollars. While attendance
8 and circulation are at an all-time high,
9 libraries are reportedly facing a maintenance
10 crisis due to insufficient funds. It's come to
11 the point where some buildings that house
12 libraries are being considered for sale to
13 generate income. There are some who've
14 expressed concerns about the potential outcomes
15 of such sales. For instance, there is concern
16 about the distance that residents would have to
17 travel to reach an alternate library. Library
18 users are also wary of the aesthetic and
19 cultural price inherent in some of the
20 porported [phonetic] plans since some locations
21 are viewed as landmarks, they'll never
22 officially declare it as such. Others have a
23 different point of view. For example, as
24 Mitchell Moss [phonetic], a professor of Urban
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2 Planning at New York University argued, "At a
3 time when people don't want to raise taxes,
4 taking advantage of the value of the property
5 is one of the more intelligent ways to invest
6 in the library system while getting new
7 revenue." So at this hearing, the Committees
8 look forward to hear--the Committees, both
9 Committees look forward to hearing what options
10 are being weighed to meet capital expenses,
11 the impact that selling off property would have
12 on the communities served, and staff and other
13 existing branches, as well as an update on
14 current and future capital projects. Mr.
15 Chairman?

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
17 very much, Mr. Chair, and with that we'll turn
18 to our three CEOs and you can choose for
19 yourselves who would like to go first, second,
20 and third. Thank you.

21 : Good afternoon, and thank you
22 both Councilman Gentile and Van Bramer for
23 giving us the opportunity to talk about some of
24 the more dire conditions that we face in the
25 physical structure that houses our libraries.

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2 I'm Linda Johnson, I'm the President and CEO of
3 Brooklyn Public Library, and it's a pleasure to
4 speak with you today about the potential for
5 new and inspiring library facilities in
6 Brooklyn, and I will also address the library's
7 overwhelming capital construction needs.
8 Earlier this morning I was joined by Brooklyn
9 Public Library staff and community members in
10 Gerritsen Beach where 11 long months after
11 hurricane Sandy, we delivered to that deserving
12 community its newly renovated neighborhood
13 branch library. We are also looking forward to
14 reopening our storm-beaten, but now beautifully
15 renovated Coney Island branch next month.
16 Gerritsen Beach looks absolutely beautiful. We
17 have added additional meeting rooms and created
18 a space much more hospitable to learning than
19 it had been before the storm. We are doing the
20 same at Coney Island. We are grateful to the
21 Federal Emergency Management Agency for
22 providing us the resources with which to
23 rebuild. The question though, that we grapple
24 with every day is what about the other 58
25 branches in Brooklyn that are in dire need of

1 renovation and modernization. How will we
2 secure the resources to create 21st Century
3 learning environments that our communities want
4 and deserve. I've appeared before this
5 committee many times to testify about the
6 impact that budget cuts have had on our
7 institution. I am very grateful to the Council
8 that for the first time in five years, the
9 libraries did not receive a cut to operating
10 budgets this past July. I have also explained
11 many times that we have a 300 million dollar
12 need in deferred capital maintenance across our
13 system. Our buildings are old and they are in
14 crisis. Within the next several years, an
15 environmental event far less onerous than a
16 storm or a hurricane could shut down one or
17 more of our libraries if we continue along the
18 path we have been going down for years. That
19 path essentially involves neglect followed by
20 short term fixes followed by additional
21 neglect. It's a cynical process that needs to
22 change and it needs to change immediately. We
23 have all inherited a difficult situation, but
24 it is our responsibility to change it, not to
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1
2 avoid it. Nearly every one of our branches has
3 maintenance issues. Attached to my testimony
4 is an appendix listing our capital needs broken
5 down by branch with council districts noted.
6 We need to replace HVAC systems, boilers,
7 roofs, make safety and security enhancements,
8 and embark on interior renovations among
9 countless other projects. Last July, we were
10 forced to close our library for a total of 270
11 hours because the air conditioning unit simply
12 could not handle the high temperatures. This
13 amounts to 39 days of lost service. To make
14 matters worse, these closures occurred when
15 many of our libraries are supposed to act as
16 cooling centers for the borough. Clearly, the
17 status quo is unacceptable. As you know, we
18 receive an average of a mere 15 million dollars
19 a year from the city to maintain our buildings.
20 We do receive badly needed assistance from some
21 of you for which we are grateful. We'd like to
22 thank in particular, Council Members Dilan,
23 Gentile, Gonzales, Greenfield, Lander, Levin,
24 Mealy, Recchia, Reyna, and Williams. We are
25 also grateful for the ongoing support of

1
2 borough President Marty Markowitz, but your
3 funding alone cannot solve our 300 million
4 dollar problem. We need additional strategies
5 and we need more capital. We have developed a
6 new approach and we seek your support.
7 Addressing these problems requires creativities
8 and a tool kit of diverse options. In recent
9 years, Brooklyn Public Library has worked to
10 increase private support of the library. In
11 January we opened the Shelby White and Leon
12 Levy Information Commons at our central library
13 on Grand Army Plaza. This innovative and
14 collaborative learning space was funded by a
15 generous grant from the Leon Levy Foundation
16 and is already among the most heavily used
17 spaces in our system. But private fund raising
18 has its limitations. Raising private funds to
19 pay for basic infrastructure needs, especially
20 in city-owned buildings is extremely
21 challenging. For the vast majority of our
22 library branches, BPL will need to continue to
23 rely on funding from the Mayor's Office and
24 elected officials. At the moment, we are
25 managing many capital projects, including

1 upgrading critical infrastructure at our
2 Clinton Hill branch and completely renovating
3 our Rugby Branch. We are looking forward to
4 working with a new mayor and new Brooklyn
5 Borough President to increase the City's
6 capital allocation to the library. At other
7 libraries BPL is working with not for profits
8 to offer new services and improve our
9 buildings. We are currently collaborating with
10 SpaceWorks, a non-profit organization dedicated
11 to expanding the amount of affordable studio
12 space for New York City artists. SpaceWorks
13 will help renovate and create artist work
14 spaces in our Red Hook and Williamsburg
15 branches and provide free arts education
16 programming to our patrons. Brooklyn Public
17 Library is also pursuing a unique opportunity
18 in Brooklyn Heights that will eliminate
19 millions of dollars in unmet capital needs and
20 raise funds for branches across Brooklyn while
21 developing and inspiring relevant and state of
22 the art library facility. Built in 1962,
23 Brooklyn Heights library faces more than 9.2
24 million dollars in capital needs including an
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1
2 estimated three and a half to four and half
3 million dollars to replace a non-functioning
4 HVAC system. The building is poorly designed
5 by everybody's standards and has an inefficient
6 floor plan that hinders public service and more
7 than 50 percent of its space is not and never
8 has been available for public use. Our plan is
9 to sell the Brooklyn Heights library and use
10 part of the proceeds from the sale to develop a
11 majestic new library on site. Over the past
12 several months, BPL has worked with a community
13 advisory committee composed of local elected
14 officials and representatives from five
15 community organizations and tenant groups to
16 create a redevelopment process that will take
17 into account the community's needs and build
18 the best branch possible while generating
19 additional capital dollars that can be
20 reinvested in libraries throughout the borough.
21 By convening the community advisory committee,
22 BPL has sought the community's participation in
23 every phase of the project and we plan to
24 continue to do so. In collaboration with the
25 New York City Economic Development Corporation,

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2 in June we released a request for proposals
3 that will help us select a development partner
4 for Brooklyn Heights. Our RFP requires the
5 selected developer to build and deliver to the
6 City at no cost to the library the core and
7 shell of a new 20,000 square foot library, one
8 of the five largest libraries in Brooklyn. No
9 more than 5,000 square feet of the new library
10 may be below grade and the library must have a
11 separate and distinct entrance from the rest of
12 the building. The library will be conveyed to
13 the city of New York as a condominium unit for
14 no more than one dollar. Our new Brooklyn
15 Heights branch will be city owned public
16 building operated by the library as is the
17 existing branch. BPL has committed to
18 providing interim library service throughout
19 the redevelopment process. We will also be
20 launching a public process to design the new
21 branch. Additionally, the RFP contains a
22 number of safeguards to protect BPL and the
23 public's interest. We will include a right of
24 reacquisition in the contract of sale. This
25 provision will allow the City to reacquire

1 title to the property should a developer fail
2 to deliver the core and shell of the new
3 library to BPL by the specified date. The city
4 will never lose control of the site, and if a
5 development partner defaults or otherwise fails
6 to meet the terms of the contract, the city
7 will reacquire the site and rebuild the library
8 in its current location. Several other terms
9 will protect BPL throughout this process. The
10 selected developer will be required to close on
11 the acquisition of the property simultaneously
12 with the closing on construction financing.
13 BPL will continue operating the library in the
14 existing building up until the moment
15 construction commences. The developer will be
16 required to post a financial security
17 sufficient to fund the construction of the core
18 and shell as a prerequisite for the closing.
19 As part of this process, BPL has negotiated an
20 agreement with the City that will allow us to
21 realize the proceeds generated by selling the
22 city-owned property. BPL will use these
23 proceeds to fit out the new library and will
24 reinvest the remaining proceeds in other
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2 libraries throughout the boroughs. By pursuing
3 this strategy, BPL can deliver a large new
4 library in Brooklyn Heights while generating
5 significant and much needed capital dollars for
6 library branches borough-wide. We are thrilled
7 to receive a sm--we are thrilled, we were
8 thrilled receive a strong set of responses to
9 the RFP and look forward to briefing local
10 communities, stakeholders, and elected
11 officials in the coming weeks. Among our
12 branch libraries, the most pressing and
13 expensive of our capital means are at Pacific
14 Library. Pacific is a Carnegie Library over
15 110 years old and has nearly 10 million in
16 capital needs. Moreover, it is poorly laid out
17 and inaccessible to people with disabilities
18 and anyone with limited mobility, including
19 mothers with strollers. Initially, we had
20 planned to find the fit out--we planned to fund
21 the fit out of the new space at BAM South with
22 the proceeds of the sale of the Pacific
23 Library. However, elected officials and
24 community stakeholders have made it clear that
25 the community greatly values the architecture

1 of the Pacific Building and has concerns about
2 library service moving from that location. We
3 take seriously our responsibility to steward
4 the architectural legacy of the Pacific branch,
5 as well as the 17 other Carnegie Libraries in
6 Brooklyn. We are committed to working with
7 elected officials and community stakeholders to
8 develop an appropriate plan for the Pacific
9 building through an open community process.
10 The plan will take into account the needs of
11 the library as well as those of the community.
12 This plan could include maintaining some or all
13 of the Pacific building and continuing to
14 provide some library service there. At the
15 same time, we recognize the need to engage in
16 further conversations with stakeholders and to
17 continue to explore other options. As we work
18 to solve our issues at Pacific, we also have a
19 unique opportunity at BAM South, a chance to
20 avail ourselves of free space located in a
21 vibrant cultural district atop the borough's
22 busiest transit hub. We are currently in
23 discussion with our cultural partners, BAM, and
24 651 arts to develop a plan for the fit-out and
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1 use of this facility. There is no single
2 answer that will solve our capital problems,
3 from leveraging private spaces to working with
4 community partners, we must pursue a myriad of
5 creative strategies. With a total of more than
6 300 million dollars in deferred maintenance in
7 over one million square feet of space, we need
8 a sustainable path for the future, one that
9 enables us to provide and maintain safe,
10 attractive, and functional library spaces in
11 all of our neighborhoods. I will stress in
12 closing that we have no intention of disposing
13 of our libraries or closing our libraries or
14 shrinking our libraries. We look forward to
15 continuing to collaborate with elected
16 officials and community members to ensure that
17 all Brooklynites have access to the best
18 possible library facilities for generations to
19 come.
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21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
22 very much. Linda, I want to recognize that we
23 have been joined by two other council members,
24 Council Member Steve Levin and Council Member
25 Letitia James, both from Brooklyn. And Tony,

1
2 you up next? Mr. Tony Marx, New York public
3 library.

4 TONY MARX: Good morning, I'm Tony
5 Marks, President of the New York Public
6 Library. Joining me are David Offensend the
7 library's Chief Operating Officer and Mary Lee
8 Kennedy, the Chief Library Officer. The New
9 York Public Library system provides library
10 services to the boroughs of Bronx, Manhattan,
11 and Staten Island as well as the research
12 libraries for the entire city. Want to thank
13 you for the opportunity to testify today.
14 Before I begin, I want to also thank the
15 Committee Chairs, Council Members Jimmy Van
16 Bramer and Vincent Gentile, and all the members
17 of the committee for your amazing support of
18 New York's public libraries. The New York
19 Public Library is the nation's largest public
20 library system, and accordingly it has been and
21 cannot be stagnant. From a facility's
22 perspective, this is especially true. Through
23 the decades we've built buildings, sold
24 buildings, and renovated buildings as needs
25 arise and as modernization becomes necessary

1 and eventually possible. Today's hearing
2 appropriately focuses on the capital and
3 construction needs of this city's three library
4 systems. I hope to highlight for you the work
5 that the NYPL has done and continues to do, to
6 strive to meet the needs of those we serve as
7 best we can within our resources. Today's
8 libraries are about books and far more than
9 just books. We are hubs of education and
10 culture. We serve everyone for free. That
11 means we provide free services and programs for
12 children and teens, immigrants and seniors, New
13 Yorkers who lack access to broadband at home,
14 people who need literary services, New Yorkers
15 who are actively looking for jobs and small
16 business owners. We are also operating
17 libraries amidst a digital revolution. The
18 world of knowledge and information and how
19 people access that information both physically
20 and virtually is rapidly changing. The New
21 York Public Library has undertaken the
22 replacement of all desk tops and laptops at its
23 locations, as well as the upgrading of
24 software, WiFi and technology related
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1
2 electrical infrastructure. This five year
3 project called Next Generation Desktop is
4 currently in its second year. It will cost
5 approximately 15 million dollars with funding
6 coming from the city and Federal Government as
7 well as private sources. Second to longer
8 hours, more computers is the top request of our
9 library users and we are working to meet this
10 challenge. We have also launched three
11 exciting new program expansions over the last
12 year in response to the growing needs of our
13 communities. The first is an expansion of our
14 offering of English for speakers for speakers
15 of other languages, ESL classes, beginning the
16 summer of 2012, NYPL expanded its ESL offerings
17 from 17 to 28 sites and serve 6,400 class seats
18 per year. We've seen a doubling of our ESL
19 classes and we aim to increase those tenfold.
20 The second program, NYPL TechConnect was
21 launched in April and represents a new
22 streamlined technology curriculum. NYPL
23 TechConnect consists of six new technology labs
24 with dedicated instruction space as well as
25 technology training at more than 60 locations.

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2 In other words, we have more than doubled our
3 computer skills training in the last year, and
4 we aim to increase those six-fold, vital for
5 our communities. And finally today, the library
6 is officially launching formal after school
7 programming pilots beginning with 2,000
8 students, and we aim to go up to over 10,000.
9 These are very exciting pilots offering
10 enhances homework help, project based learning
11 focused on Common Core standards and credit
12 bearing courses for high school students to
13 work with younger children on literacy.
14 Additionally, with a generous 15 million dollar
15 gift from the Helen Gurley Brown Trust, the
16 largest gift in the history of the New York
17 Public Library for educational programs. We're
18 launching a new program called NYPL Bridge Op
19 [phonetic] and innovative program which will
20 offer services to 250 kids at risk each year,
21 starting in eighth grade and working through
22 high school and into college. Meanwhile, as
23 we're doing all this, the library is challenged
24 with an aging and in some cases failing
25 infrastructure. Many library locations were

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2 either built in the first half of the 20th
3 century or our newer libraries with deferred
4 maintenance and in desperate need of repair.
5 System wide capital needs aggregate 100's of
6 millions of dollars, we estimate about 450
7 million dollars, and far exceed annual capital
8 allocations making it difficult for the library
9 to provide the visitor experience our users so
10 deserve. Each year the city provides
11 approximately 10 billion dollars in capital
12 funding for thousands of projects for
13 everything from schools to roads to senior
14 centers in parks as well to libraries. These
15 capital appropriations are allocated by the
16 mayor, city council, and borough president in
17 the city's adopted budget. As you are aware,
18 there is no dedicated capital fund to address
19 the ongoing maintenance needs including
20 boilers, roofs, windows, facades, air
21 conditioners and technology of this city's 214
22 public libraries. Every year we come to the
23 Mayor, the Speaker, borough presidents and
24 Council Members and ask for funding. With the
25 generous support of a number of our elected

1 officials we are able to piece together the
2 funds to make much needed capital enhancements.
3 Currently we have about 250 million dollars of
4 capital projects in our branches ongoing.
5 Unfortunately it is never enough to address all
6 of our infrastructure needs. Despite this
7 inefficient capital funding process, over the
8 past decade alone, as I suggested, we have
9 invested over 300 million dollars and dozens of
10 projects in 50 locations throughout our system,
11 and we anticipate investing at least another
12 125 million over the next five years. Most of
13 this spending is to maintain all of our
14 existing facilities, but some is for expansions
15 and new facilities. Let me highlight a few of
16 those, and with your permission, I'm going to
17 summarize. We have recently completed and
18 reopened a beautiful new branch in Stapleton
19 that integrates the historic Carnegie Building
20 and adds and addition 7,000 square foot
21 addition. It is fantastic. In Manhattan we
22 added the Mulberry Street Library in SoHo in
23 2007, the Battery Park City Library in 2010.
24 We completed a major renovation of the Saint
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2 Agnes Branch on the Upper West Side. We opened
3 a brand new Kingsbridge Library in June of
4 2011. We opened the huge and much used Bronx
5 Library Center in January 2006, replacing the
6 crumbling Fordham Library, which was returned
7 to the City, and in May 2010 the High Bridge
8 Library reopened to the public after a major
9 renovation including expanded adult and
10 children's areas. Currently in progress is a
11 the nearing completion, the Mariner's Harbor
12 Branch, a 10,000 square foot library. In
13 Manhattan, the Washington Heights Branch is
14 nearing the end of its major renovation. Also
15 in Manhattan will be a new space for the 53rd
16 Street Library. In 2007, the library agreed to
17 sell the building housing the Donnell Branch so
18 that it could be replaced with a new library in
19 the same location. We are pleased to report
20 that the project is moving forward. A new
21 library is expected to open in 2015. As to why
22 the library sold this building, in addition to
23 operating as a branch library, Donnell
24 contained the library's IT staff plus various
25 collections, world languages, historic

1 children's books, and media collection, and
2 essential children's library and a teen
3 library. The new building will be devoted to
4 being a community library branch as we've
5 relocated those other services and collections
6 to locations where they are being used in much
7 greater numbers. The library for performing
8 arts and the Mid-Manhattan in particular. The
9 amount of public space available for general
10 patron use in the new 53rd Street library will
11 be approximately the same in the Donnell
12 predecessor, 15,200 square feet. Currently in
13 the planning is a Rossville branch. We are in
14 the process of relocating the Roosevelt Island
15 Branch to doubling its size as that community
16 continues to grow and gain dynamism in so many
17 ways. And we are currently in phase two of a
18 major renovation of the Schaumburg Center for
19 Research in Black Culture in Harlem, and we
20 have major renovations in the Bronx and
21 Woodstock, Woodlawn Heights and Westchester
22 Square. However, even with these tremendous
23 improvements, the libraries still continue have
24 significant needs that are not fully met by
25

1 current funding sources. As a result, we have
2 to find ways to be more efficient with less
3 money, to find creative solutions to improve
4 library services for all of our users. Over
5 the past decade the library has been reviewing
6 all of its facilities across the three boroughs
7 we serve to figure out better ways to align our
8 facilities with the best possible service to
9 our users. We discovered that many of our
10 facilities require modernization. Many had far
11 too much space allocated to non-public uses.
12 Some facilities had significantly under-
13 utilized space, and some services were poorly
14 located for optimal access. These finding
15 precipitated a series of changes to improve and
16 enhance spaces that are open to the public and
17 to reduce under-utilized and non-public spaces.
18 For example, for approximately 50 years, the
19 New York Public Library owned a warehouse on
20 West 43rd Street that was used for sorting,
21 processing, distribution and storage.
22 Concluding that this work was much better
23 suited in the state of the art facility in an
24 area with much lower real estate costs, the
25

1 library sold the building to the New York City
2 Department of Education which will be building
3 a new school at that site. From that sale and
4 the significant support from the city, we
5 created the library services center in Long
6 Island City Queens. We have immense pride in
7 this new facility. It provides the library
8 with its first central location for cataloging,
9 processing, digitizing, preserving and
10 distributing our materials. Perhaps most
11 exciting is our partnership at the facility
12 with the Brooklyn Public Library as our two
13 systems are now for the first time combining
14 resources to accomplish our shared needs,
15 saving us millions annually so that we can
16 spend more on books, librarians, and library
17 programs. In addition, I should point out, Mr.
18 Chairman, that the facility in Long Island City
19 makes it possible for us to sort many more
20 books so that we can now in affect augment the
21 efforts of the city schools and become the
22 circulating library providing access to 17
23 million books for the 1.2 million students in
24 the public schools. Another example, the
25

1
2 gorgeous Schwartzman Building, nicknamed The
3 People's Palace, has over the years housed
4 library staff serving important roles, but
5 those jobs do not need to be located in that
6 building. So starting this fall, we're moving
7 the development, legal, web, capital planning,
8 and other teams across the street together for
9 the first time so that we can use that space in
10 our beautiful building for the public. The
11 other side of the coin, importantly, over the
12 past eight years is the amount of public square
13 footage we have provided to patrons has
14 increased by over 91,000 square feet. This
15 number will rise even more as a result of the
16 42nd Street renovation. And the number of open
17 New York public library facilities has
18 increased from 86 to 91. That's more space for
19 reading, learning, convening, allowing the
20 library to do an even better job of serving New
21 Yorkers. I would like to now talk about our
22 largest capital project, the renovation of the
23 Schwartzman Building at 42nd Street. This
24 project will restore the 42nd Street location
25 to its original mission as both a great

1 research facility and a state of the art
2 circulating library while preserving,
3 improving, and increasing public spaces an
4 enhancing research services. It will also
5 allow us to better preserve our historic
6 materials, which is our responsibility. As
7 observers of the library know, the renovation
8 of the 42nd Street library is complex. In
9 terms of building changes the renovation
10 involves, moving out about 100 non-public
11 service staff from the Schwartzman Building so
12 that we can significantly increase the amount
13 of public space in that building, in fact, more
14 than doubling the public space. Building a new
15 Mid-Manhattan library as the circulating
16 library will return to the 42nd Street library
17 building where it resided for the first 72
18 years of the buildings 102 year history. And
19 building a new science, industry and business
20 library as those services will also be
21 returning to the Schwartzman building. At the
22 same time with private funds, we will be
23 expanding the book storage beneath Bryant Park
24 that we can safeguard our collections for all
25

1
2 comers. Again, as I mentioned earlier, this
3 project will result in more public space than
4 three existing mid-town buildings combined,
5 96,000 square feet compared to the current
6 81,000. This will allow us to increase space
7 and services for researchers and writers,
8 expand our children's library, and create a new
9 teen library. Additionally, the heavily used
10 Mid-Manhattan is badly deteriorating. It's
11 patrons must have better space. While the 42nd
12 Street building is magnificent, it has serious
13 inadequacy. The seven floors of book shelves
14 under the Rose Main Reading Room where the
15 research collection were housed in those stacks
16 have suffered without modern temperature and
17 humidity controls. By moving the research
18 collection into proper storage, the library can
19 better preserve those materials for the future,
20 meanwhile freeing up space in the 42nd Street
21 building in which to create a new circulating
22 library to replace the Mid-Manhattan in Cybill
23 [phonetic]. At the same time, all of the
24 historic spaces within the building such as the
25 Rose Main Reading Room will not be altered. It

1 is adding space, not taking any of the existing
2 space away or altering it. With more public
3 spaces, the integration of circulating services
4 and an opportunity to reimagine the library as
5 place, the 42nd Street renovation project opens
6 our ability for every person to use the
7 building, to use even more public space than
8 the three combined, and to leverage the
9 resources in the building for every person
10 throughout New York City and beyond. We're
11 committed to securing third party estimates for
12 the cost of this project and currently are
13 obtaining those. We are also working with the
14 city on an environmental review process. As
15 you can see, these are exciting and challenging
16 times for libraries. Libraries are being
17 challenged to meet the growing demand for their
18 services with less public funding in an aging
19 infrastructure. In addition, we are being
20 forced to rethink our missions in order to stay
21 current in the digital age. We are meeting
22 those challenges head on. What drives me and
23 my colleagues across our library system and all
24 three library systems is providing unmatched
25

1
2 library services to the millions of users who
3 depend on us every day. Our most important
4 metrics are users, circulation and program
5 attendance, all of which are way up and
6 growing. Being strategic in how we use our
7 facilities is an important means for achieving
8 these results. And again, we are proud to
9 share that the library is increasing the amount
10 of square footage available to patrons and is
11 increasing the number of branches in our
12 system. We are proud that we have been accomp-
13 -that we--of what has been accomplished and
14 even more excited about what lies ahead. Thank
15 you again Chairs Van Bramer and Gentile and all
16 of the distinguished members of this committee
17 for holding this hearing and for your ongoing
18 support of the vital library systems of New
19 York.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
21 Tony. Before we hear from Tom Galante, the
22 last speaker on this panel, I want to recognize
23 that in addition to those council members
24 already recognized, we've been joined by
25 Council Member Leroy Comrie from Queens,

1 Council Member Brad Lander from Brooklyn,
2 Council Member Danny Dromm from Queens, and
3 Council Member Andy King from the Bronx. And
4 speaking on the next panel are two elected
5 officials as well, Assemblywoman Joan Millman
6 and Assembly Member Micah Kellner. We may have
7 comptroller John Liu here as well. Tom
8 Galante?

10 TOM GALANTE: Okay. I want to thank
11 everyone here today. You have my testimony.
12 I'm going to skim through it in the interest of
13 time so that we can get into questions and
14 answers, and I just want to point out that I'm
15 excited to be here today, and that public
16 libraries today are more important than ever
17 and it's wonderful to see so many elected
18 officials and member of the community
19 interested in hearing about our facilities
20 planned. There's a lot of great things going
21 on city-wide and this is a great opportunity
22 for us to kind of put it out. I want to make
23 sure I thank Jimmy, Council Member Jimmy Van
24 Bramer for being a great Chair and advocate for
25 libraries, and Vinny Gentile who has been a

1 great Chair for the Library Subcommittee.
2
3 Everybody I see here, you know, Danny has been
4 wonderful in helping us out in his district
5 with capital funding, and Leroy has funded a
6 complete renovation of a central library,
7 Cambria Heights Library that's in the booklet
8 there. You'll see we brought some pictures.
9 You know, we have a lot of text that everyone
10 has, but you know, pictures tell a thousand
11 words, you know? And what you'll see in this
12 booklet--these are not like projects over the
13 last like five years or ten or what have you,
14 this is like now. Bayside just--we just had a
15 grand opening. You'll see pictures of that.
16 Bellerose is going into construction in
17 October. Cambria Heights, we just got done
18 having the kick-off for the construction for
19 that library. East Elmhurst, we renovated that
20 not long ago and it's being expanded pending
21 DDC moving that along, quite frankly, but it's
22 moving along. Elmhurst, we got a new library
23 in construct there that's going to double the
24 size of that library. For our Rockaway, and
25 18,000 square footer that the borough president

1 fully funded that's in the works. Glen Oaks--
2 that we just opened up a few months ago, and
3 I'll talk about that in the testimony briefly.
4 Hunters Point, a beautiful library on the East
5 River in a new community where there's 50,000
6 people that have been added to a community that
7 has no library service right now, and we got
8 funding from many, many sources there including
9 Council Member Van Bramer, who's funded that a
10 lot. Mitchell-Linden, I'm shooting there as
11 soon as this hearing is over; we have a grand
12 opening that starts at three o'clock, so
13 hopefully traffic is light to be--get--I have
14 back up plans in order. Rochdale Village,
15 we've got an expansion going on there right
16 now, in construction. And Woodhaven, we just
17 did a kick-off after our renovation there about
18 two weeks ago. So there's some nice pictures
19 of old and new and some impact of that, but
20 something that I have to say is that on the
21 restoration of expense budget funding in this
22 last budget was critical. You know, to have
23 library buildings that you invest in and try to
24 make sure that they're the best libraries they
25

1
2 can be and to not have them open at least five
3 days a week would be a tragedy. And the
4 Speaker Christine Quinn, and each person who's
5 on the Committee here, and Jimmy leading the
6 charge somewhat as the Chair of the Committee
7 and Leroy as the Chair of the Queens
8 delegation--Domenic Recchia has been great in
9 supporting libraries as Council Finance Chair,
10 and the entire Queens delegation use libraries.
11 I know personally, as a top priority when it
12 comes to expense budget funding. And I know we
13 all look forward to the day when funding can be
14 restored back and we're open six and seven days
15 a week in all these great libraries in the
16 future. In Queens we have about 40,000 people
17 a day that visit us. It's a lot of people.
18 It's a lot of people. We have 62 libraries,
19 seven adult learning centers, the Children's
20 Library Discovery Center, which is a gorgeous
21 new library just for kids. It's the largest
22 children's library, I think, in the state,
23 1,400 square feet just for kids under the ages
24 of 11, really, you know. In fact, at Central
25 Library which Leroy just toured a few weeks

1
2 ago, we have a new teen library in construction
3 there. That's going to be a huge space for
4 teens that we can have them come up, come in
5 even after hours for events and functions, and
6 we're looking forward to that. Ninety-nine
7 percent of people in Queens live within a mile
8 of their local library, so our job is to make
9 sure we invest in that in the infrastructure,
10 but also making sure the libraries are open so
11 people can get the resources that they need.
12 Most of the libraries in Queens, you know, our
13 libraries are quite a bit different. You know,
14 Queens developed differently than the rest of
15 the City, you know. A lot of our libraries are
16 stand alone buildings. We have a lot of 7,500
17 Lindsay-era libraries still. We've been doing
18 a lot of work to replace them with 1,800 square
19 feet, which we view as a minimum standard for
20 any community library really. We've got four
21 community libraries and a teen library that we
22 opened in spaces that are leases, so we do that
23 when we need to as well, and two condominiums
24 that Middle Village and Mitchell-Linden that
25 the library actually bought to deliver service

1
2 there. But we also know that a lot of our
3 libraries are dated and they need repairs and
4 that's something that we continue to work on.
5 Our current needs are over 292 million dollars,
6 and that's actual numbers and lists of projects
7 that every member has received and the Mayor's
8 office and the borough president in a big bound
9 book that we have that we put together each
10 year. Critical infrastructure is about 14
11 million dollars for roofs and HVAC and masonry.
12 Critical meaning we have something falling
13 apart entirely that needs to be done. And the
14 infrastructure is critical to protect our
15 investment in the libraries and so forth. HVAC
16 is an example. Monday, July 15th, remember
17 that heat wave week that we all had in the
18 middle of July, right? We had 54,282 people
19 visit that day, up about 15-20 percent just
20 from the heat wave, and we saw that in that
21 entire week. So libraries are so much to
22 people in many ways, but it can just be a place
23 to kind of go and get out of the heat as well
24 and enjoy yourself. We have 17 roofs that are
25 currently funded in the pipeline. We have six

1 more that need replacement at about five
2 millions dollars. It's about 850,000 dollars
3 per roof. HVAC systems, we've got eight that
4 are currently funded and in the pipeline with
5 DDC. We have six more that we need to do at
6 about 5 million dollars. It's about 800,000
7 dollars a roof. Our building expansion and new
8 construction needs that we have on paper, we
9 could always make it--it could be much bigger
10 quite frankly if we were to really go for like
11 a regional library plan and major, major
12 expansion, but the stuff we have on the board
13 is about 200 million dollars for that. So
14 those--and those numbers are conservative as
15 well. Our current capital plan, I have to say,
16 we currently have about 350 million dollars
17 that we brought in in the last 10 years that is
18 either completed or in the pipeline. And we
19 have huge needs past that, as I just mentioned,
20 but we've made great, great progress in the
21 last 10 years, and I feel that if we could keep
22 the same momentum for another five or 10 years,
23 that we'd be in a place to say this--the new
24 capital money coming in would we be in a
25

1
2 position to do more expansion and less
3 infrastructure, but we need that infrastructure
4 support now in a big way. We've upgraded now
5 in the last eight years two-thirds of our
6 libraries in Queens. We've got self service.
7 Capital funding isn't just for buildings, it's
8 also for technology which is a core need in
9 libraries today. So we've used that funding
10 for self check-in technology and self check-
11 out. All but a handful are completed with the
12 self check-out, and we've got two-thirds of our
13 libraries completed with self check-in
14 technology. This calendar year we're going to
15 outfit our two largest libraries, Central and
16 Flushing, with that technology. In fact,
17 construction's going on as we speak at those
18 libraries to open those up and complete those.
19 And in both cases, with those libraries it's a
20 phased in approach 'cause they're so big and
21 they're so important to those--to really the
22 whole borough that we don't close them down for
23 the renovations. Twenty-five percent of our
24 business is done at those two facilities. Put
25 that in perspective. So the goals of our

1 capital plan is we want to continue to grow our
2 libraries, which really reflects the service
3 models that we all have for today and tomorrow,
4 which is all about the library being a place
5 for the community to come together for life
6 long learning, and to do that you need spaces
7 for that. You need spaces for books and
8 content and digital places, but you also need
9 places for people to get together to continue
10 to grow programs. Programs have become more
11 and more important with people teaching people.
12 Okay. And life-long learning today is a much
13 more important thing in my view than it was a
14 decade ago or 30 years ago. You know, everyone
15 needs their institutionalized learning through
16 public schools or college, and then you got
17 another 50 years or so that you need to learn,
18 adapt, and grow and the libraries are the only
19 place in town for that. A few examples where
20 we've done some expansion and the library, the
21 volumes have grown. Our Corona Library, usage
22 has doubled when that library was expanded
23 about 10 years ago. In fact, it needs more--
24 we're currently looking. We're negotiating

1
2 right now to buy an adjacent property to try
3 and position ourselves for expansion down the
4 road. Elmhurst Library, we've got a new 30,000
5 square foot library that's in construction
6 right now, but we've done that in a way that we
7 can expand it to 50,000 on the same footprint.
8 And the other library, the pictures I
9 mentioned, Far Rockaway and Glen Oaks--Glen
10 Oaks is an example where the current library is
11 double the size of the old one. The city build
12 that; we just reopened it, and circulation, the
13 volumes of people at that library--it used to
14 be number 26 out of 62; it's now number six.
15 Just to give a sense of, if you build the
16 spaces people will come. That's for sure. But
17 we need those spaces, you know. Flexible
18 meeting room spaces are critical. Leveraging
19 outdoor spaces is something we're working on a
20 lot right now that we have plans for the future
21 to create, you know, WiFi places for people to
22 meet and also to deliver programming. Even in
23 a place like Broad Channel where the library is
24 real small, but we have a large property, so
25 we're looking at finding ways that we could

1
2 have community events and community programming
3 outdoors when the weather's good. The
4 importance of having, you know, an 18,000
5 square foot minimum in mind is that you need a
6 separate space for teens, separate space for
7 your cyber center and technology and that's
8 what that affords, and library is really
9 becoming the current community hub. We've been
10 fortunate to have great support from our
11 elected officials in Queens, our borough
12 president in particular. Helen Marshall has
13 provided over 130 million dollars of her
14 capital funding for libraries, and our
15 delegation has been wonderful too. Assembly
16 Member Cathy Nolan at the State Assembly level
17 has helped secured two six million dollar
18 grants for Queens. It gives us an opportunity
19 for us to work ourselves, which has worked very
20 very well for us. So we've done a lot of work
21 to partner with our elected officials and make
22 our needs clear. So to wrap my summary of the
23 testimony, capital allocations have been great,
24 but we need a lot more, that's for sure, for us
25 to grow and move in the directions that we need

1
2 to move to meet the needs of the library
3 service in each community. We're positioned, I
4 think, to be stronger than ever. We've had
5 down economy, obviously, reductions in our
6 operating budget by about 20 percent, but I'd
7 like to think that, you know, as this economy
8 gets better, people like Preston and Jeff and
9 Jimmy and what have you will find a way to
10 restore funding to our budget down the road,
11 and the library facilities will be at a point
12 where we're able to add that capacity, you
13 know, and do it in a very efficient way. So, I
14 want to thank you for the opportunity to
15 testify, and I'll be happy to answer and
16 questions you may have.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
18 very much, Mr. Galante, and thank you for
19 recognizing Jeff Rotas [phonetic] and Preston
20 Niblack [phonetic]. I take full credit for
21 teaching you that you should have done that,
22 many years ago. So I want to put some things
23 in context before I ask a few questions, and
24 then Council Members Levin, James, and Lander
25 all of whom have questions will be back to ask

1
2 their questions. They promised us. But, last
3 year alone the City of New York provided well
4 north of 100 million dollars in capital funding
5 to our libraries, and despite that 140 million
6 dollar or so figure the truth is with a billion
7 dollar need, it is impossible to sustain
8 library service as we currently see it, and
9 more importantly actually envisioned it for the
10 future at that pace. But I do want to
11 recognize our contribution in the area of 140
12 million dollars, and the Council in particular
13 leads the charge for libraries all the time,
14 which is why we had 100 percent restoration of
15 library funding this year. And that gets to my
16 first question because the capital and the
17 operating are actually linked in some pretty
18 important ways, and all of you as a result of
19 deferred maintenance probably spend more in
20 operating funds simply to get by and operate
21 your buildings. So by not fixing certain
22 things or being able to complete all of the
23 work that you need to when you need to do it,
24 you're probably burning through some operating
25 funds in order to get there, and since

1
2 operating funds are such a premium, this speaks
3 to crisis meeting both your capital and
4 operating numbers at the same time and actually
5 chipping away at the value of the operating
6 funds that we are able to restore. So I don't
7 know if you're able to quantify that, but
8 hopefully all three of you can speak to that
9 issue and if you can quantify, I think that
10 would be great.

11 TOM GALANTE: I can give you two
12 quick--

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
14 [interposing] Oh, and Tom, just one second. I
15 want to recognize Council Member Liz Crowley
16 from Queens has joined us as well.

17 TOM GALANTE: I can give you two
18 quick examples, one that I just authorized, I
19 guess, two weeks ago where one of our libraries
20 of Queens Village has a 40 something year old
21 HVAC system and our guys have been trying to
22 keep it going for a long time, and it's gotten
23 to a point where we don't think it's going to
24 last, so we're going to go ahead and do the
25 work ourselves, and the only way to do it is

1 out of operating budget 'cause the capital
2 funding wasn't there for that one. And
3 Laurelton, the same case as well. I think for
4 Queens, I would guess, but I think it's
5 probably fair, probably a half a million
6 dollars a year that goes to expenses that could
7 otherwise we could avoid if it wasn't, you
8 know, if our buildings were all up to snuff
9 with things like, you know, a roof that's--you
10 know, we're waiting on to get completed in two
11 years or three, even if it's funded, but what
12 we're paying to have it repaired in the
13 meantime and repaired consistently. And with
14 masonry repairs. So I would say infrastructure
15 type things with Queens about a half a million
16 dollars I could avoid if our capital budget was
17 up to snuff.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Half a
20 million per year?

21 TOM GALANTE: Per year.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

23 TOM GALANTE: Per year, yep.

24 LINDA JOHNSON: There are many
25 examples of the type that you point out. You

1 know, improved technology would, for example,
2 allow us to have more--give our librarians more
3 time to actually work with patrons so you would
4 have them spending less time with
5 administrative tasks and therefore actually
6 deliver better service. It's hard to quantify
7 that kind of number. For example, when we had
8 to close libraries down because of failed HVAC
9 systems over the summer, we had to negotiate
10 with the union and ended up paying for time
11 when actually they weren't working in order to
12 make sure that they would come in earlier. So
13 again, it's difficult to quantify, but it's
14 clear that it's impacting the quality of the
15 service that we're able to provide and the
16 quantity in that case. So, I think that you're
17 exactly right and I also would point on down on
18 a similar note that because of the inadequacy
19 of the capital money that we've got. When we
20 do address capital needs, we are addressing
21 them when they are at their most expensive
22 point instead of doing preventative
23 maintenance. So we're not only diluting the
24 value of the operating money, we're also
25

1
2 diluting the value of the capital money that
3 you actually so generously give us.

4 TONY MARX: So just to reiterate for
5 my colleagues, so the City Council in
6 particular, you all have been incredibly
7 generous, but here we are with combined
8 something like a billion dollars of deferred
9 needs, which of course is, you know, part of
10 what motivates us to try to think smart about
11 what we have. You're absolutely right, Mr.
12 Chairman, that when we send more staff to do
13 duct tape and to hold things together because
14 we have no other way of keeping our facilities
15 going, that requires us to spend resources I
16 would guess in the one to two million annual
17 range in our systems, but I'll get you the
18 specific number, which is money we can't spend
19 on librarians meeting the needs of the public.
20 And if you add to that the 18 percent or so
21 discretionary reduction of city funding,
22 despite the amazing efforts of restorations of
23 the City Council, we just have less resources
24 to meet the educational library needs of the--

1
2 that, you know, New Yorkers depend on us on
3 for.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So from the
5 sound of it, and I think you're probably
6 providing conservative estimates, all of you,
7 we're looking at probably at least five million
8 city-wide, but probably actually much more that
9 you're deferred maintenance on the capital side
10 is costing you on the operating side, and there
11 is no margin on the operating side as we all
12 know, zero, right? So I think that's important
13 point to stress. And then particularly for
14 Brooklynn and New York, this questions, how
15 much more do you think you will have for
16 libraries as a result of the sale of the
17 various properties that you have in mind? How
18 much more will you gain? What's the net gain
19 in terms of dollars that then you believe you
20 would be able to pour back into those
21 facilities and possibly other facilities?

22 LINDA JOHNSON: At this point, you
23 know, if we were having this hearing in three
24 months, I'd be able to give you a concrete
25 number, but I speculate and I stress that its

1
2 speculation, but it could be from 25 to 30
3 million dollars.

4 TONY MARX: So as we--again, we are
5 also scrubbing the numbers again, because the
6 public deserves that scrub, you know, but we
7 are absolutely accurate and confident, and get
8 third party estimates of everything we can, but
9 our estimate of the Central Library plan is
10 roughly 15 million dollars a year, which is the
11 equivalent to us in our spending rule of about
12 300 million dollar addition to our endowment.
13 And of course, that's money that we want to
14 spend on what we spend our money on, which is
15 more staff at libraries, more collections, and
16 capital needs, though of course the City meets
17 most of those. So plowing that back into the
18 system, that's what we're eager to do.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I have many
20 more questions, but I know Council Member
21 Gentile has some and then Council Members Levin
22 and Lander are back for their questions, and
23 I'm going to check into Public Housing
24 downstairs and be back in a second. So I hand
25 it over to my Co-Chair, Council Member Gentile.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman, and I'll be brief so we can have
4 some of the number of members that we have here
5 ask questions. But from what I can gather in
6 listening to your testimony, the collective
7 approaches that you are taking toward
8 addressing capital needs I guess comes down to
9 private fund raising, eliminating some of the
10 capital needs as you have spoken about, finding
11 programming partners or partners in some
12 fashion, right, and I guess working with the
13 City for capital funding. Is that about the
14 full picture of how--the approach that the
15 three systems have been taking in terms of
16 looking at your needs?

17 TOM GALANTE: Yeah, for Queens,
18 that's sure. I would say like for us, anyone
19 who helps to felt fund the construction or
20 building of the library we'd be happy to talk
21 to them, you know?

22 LINDA JOHNSON: We'll all agree with
23 that.

24 TOM GALANTE: Right? I have to say
25 that private donors tend--and for Queens--do

1
2 not step forward with millions of dollars
3 toward that. I can, you know, name a few that
4 are a couple hundred thousand here and there.
5 We tend to get an endowment that someone will
6 donate that'll fund a program inside a building
7 that's been done, and most all donors really
8 view it as a city responsibility going back to
9 the Carnegie Pact, that the city would provide
10 the facilities for us to operate it.

11 TONY MARX: So the o--I think you
12 summarized it well. Yes, we do aspire to
13 fundraise private funds for the Central Library
14 Plan that can then support the system as a
15 whole, in addition to operating, savings, and
16 real estate proceeds that is together with the
17 City's contribution how we plan to pay for this
18 renovation as well as to have more resources
19 left for the system. The only piece I would
20 add is the--is moving back office from places
21 that are more expensive and should be public
22 space in the case of 42nd Street and 5th,
23 literally across the street, so that can double
24 the public use of this incredible loved

25

1 building that's only 30 percent opened to the
2 public at the moment.

3
4 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, I would echo
5 what my colleagues have said and, you know, the
6 program that Tony spoke about where the
7 processing the books in Long Island City freed
8 up a lot of space for us at the Central Library
9 on Grand Army Plaza, you know, allowing us to
10 think about better and new ways to use that
11 building, and more focused on public use than
12 on library operations.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So one of
14 the aspects is working with the City for
15 capital funding, and you mentioned some--I
16 think one of you at least mentioned that
17 there's no dedicated capital reserve or capital
18 fund that the City has for libraries. I'm just
19 curious, have you ever discussed this with the
20 outgoing administration as to the fact that
21 there is no dedicated fund? And I would
22 imagine you have, right? And we're still where
23 we are.

24 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, we've had many
25 conversations.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.

TONY MARX: We're open to having conversations.

[laughter]

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So, I guess then, when it comes down to master planning, when you have to--as most organizations do have master plans that go into the future, there seems to be a quirk here in terms of your master planning or lack there off, because of the circumstances you face. I suppose, and maybe you can sort of flush that out a little bit on how you go about from a planning perspective asking for capital dollars or laying out plans based on capital dollars.

TONY MARX: So we have focused a lot of our efforts across collaboratively across the three systems in the last year on the operating side of saying, how could we imagine--and we've been having meetings with City Council Members, with the Administration, with candidates for office to say, can we get out of the dance that we've been in, find a way to baseline city funding of the libraries at a

1
2 reasonable level with an inflation increase so
3 that we're not--we can't plan on operating if
4 every six months we aren't sure what we're
5 going to have to plan with, and that in return,
6 the three library systems would increase hours
7 at our facilities, significantly increase
8 educational programs, English language,
9 computer skills, after school, what have you,
10 and raise additional funds from outside the
11 city, whether it's private, state, or federal.
12 I hope that we can also engage in a similar
13 discussion across the three systems and with
14 the city council and the next administration to
15 talk about what a similar alternative vision
16 would like on the capital front. Because,
17 otherwise, we can't meet the needs of New
18 Yorkers and we can't plan for meeting those
19 needs.

20 TOM GALANTE: There's also, just to
21 point out, there's a lot of approaches, I
22 think, that could be considered, you know, as
23 we collaborate on this to solve the need for
24 infrastructure, and it's not just extra money.
25 I think that, you know, we have an ability to

1
2 issue debt. We have an ability to go to Dazney
3 [phonetic] and issue debt, but we need to be
4 able to pay the debt service, you know. So if
5 there were a way that funding on the operating
6 budget side were at a level that we could
7 dedicate funding to pay down debt service.
8 Then we could go issue bonds through
9 construction, but at this point in time given
10 our funding is down 20 percent, that's not
11 something that we would even, you know,
12 consider a good put on the table, but if we got
13 operating funding to a level that all of our
14 libraries were up to snuff in their hours and
15 their books and their collections, then we'd be
16 at a spot where we could actually issue debt,
17 have work done, I think in a more cost
18 effective and quicker way by having us do the
19 work ourselves, and you could see a lot more
20 results. That's another way, too.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So, on the
22 capital side, just to be clear, the amount that
23 you receive from the city on a yearly basis
24 really varies from what the administration give
25 you and what each one of us here, the 51

1
2 members of the City Council decide what or not
3 to give, that's what--that's the pot that you
4 have to work with.

5 TOM GALANTE: Yep, and all capital
6 funding that comes from the city is the
7 construction is managed by the City. Any
8 funding we get for say the State Assembly or
9 private donors, then we manage that
10 construction and those renovations. You know,
11 I mentioned before that we've done interior
12 remodeling now of two thirds of our libraries.
13 Not a single one of those was done by the City.
14 It was all done with us working with state
15 elected officials, 'cause the cost structures
16 are different when we do that. So, on the City
17 end, I think it's something that, you know, our
18 operating budgets, if we weren't facing--like I
19 think we're all facing right now if we add it
20 all up--what is it, 100 and some--105 million
21 dollar cut. July 1 right now--'cause the
22 Council's great work and want it restored in
23 this budget to keep us even is not in the
24 financial plan for next year. So, by our
25 operating budget being in the position, you

1 know, where we're at with that without having
2 funds baseline to have a future really, even
3 for our operating budget, it's really difficult
4 to plan capital. You know, you could be
5 building out a building that's closing in a
6 year. So, it's really important that our
7 funding is stabilized. If the city of New York
8 were to find a way to saying its financial plan
9 that the Mayor's office puts out, that they're
10 going to--that were funded at a level that we
11 could--that we're going to be able to sustain
12 all of our current facilities. Otherwise,
13 what's the point of putting a new roof on if
14 you don't know if it's going to be open in a
15 year. And that's--even though the Council has
16 come through year after year in big ways to
17 restore funding, the reality is as a CEO of a
18 library, I have that on my radar, that I don't
19 know what will really happen next year. I
20 really don't, you know. There'll be a
21 different Speaker, a different Mayor as well.
22 You know, there's all those factors. So that
23 plays into planning, capital planning there as
24 well.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Or lack
3 there of.

4 TOM GALANTE: Yeah, yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right. I
6 wanted to just move on a little bit and talk
7 about the community involvement in the plans
8 that Brooklyn and New York have had or on the
9 table. Could you just flush out a little bit
10 more about the extent of the community
11 involvement in each process?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: The most imminent
13 project that we're working on is the Brooklyn
14 Heights Library and we've been very open about
15 our plans from the first pha--for the first
16 steps, and we've established a Community Action
17 Committee which meets regularly that is
18 comprised of members of community organizations
19 as well as representatives from the elected
20 officials and the elected officials themselves,
21 and the idea really is to get a sense from the
22 community about what the library should be,
23 what it should--how it should function, how it
24 should play a role in the community, and

1
2 ultimately when we get there, what the library
3 should look like.

4 TONY MARX: So the renovation of the
5 42nd Street Library was first announced in 2007
6 or 08 and certainly in the two years that I've
7 been at the library, a huge number of meetings,
8 every, you know, concerned group or even
9 individual that's asked for meeting, we've been
10 happy to have those meetings and discuss. I
11 can re--and I'm sure that will be an ongoing
12 process, and I'm proud of that because it has
13 already improved our plans, and my guess is it
14 will continue to. So the two years ago, the
15 plans had the majority of the books and the
16 research collection going off-site. We have to
17 use off-site. We have for decades. We simply
18 don't have the space. We heard concerns from
19 the community. We altered the plans to--thanks
20 to the generosity also of the Milsteins
21 [phonetic], we could add another million and a
22 half in state of the art preservation under
23 Bryant Park. And we're currently reviewing
24 those plans to see whether we can do even
25 better. Currently 86 percent of books

1
2 requested from the research library are
3 provided on site within half an hour. That
4 should go up to about 90 percent. We're eager
5 to get the Bryant Park facility done so that we
6 can increase that and see whether we can even
7 do better than that. We heard concerns from the
8 public about the architectural plans,
9 particularly about the stack, so we're--we've
10 gone back to the drawing board to say, is there
11 a way to incorporate as much as those historic
12 stacks. They've never been open to the public.
13 They--we want to preserve as many as we can,
14 but we also need to preserve the books, which
15 are not being preserved in those stacks. We
16 heard concerns from the public about the cost
17 of this plan and alternative plans, and so we--
18 we are engaging in finding third party
19 estimates of those, and soon as all that
20 material is available, we'll be putting it out
21 for the public, and I'm sure there'll be more
22 discussion in public.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I just want
24 to interrupt here because I know that Tom
25 Galante of the Queens Library, President CEO,

1
2 is opening that brand new Mitchell-Linden
3 library, and--

4 TONY MARX: [interposing] In theory,
5 in 40 minutes.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: In just a
7 little bit, so he's going to need to go at some
8 point. So if anyone has really burning
9 questions for Tom Galante?

10 TOM GALANTE: I was told I was good
11 until 3:30.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh.

13 TOM GALANTE: I got to, you know--

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

15 [interposing] You're good here until 3:30?

16 TOM GALANTE: They're going to do
17 the parade from one library to the other
18 between 3:00 and 3:30, and then I'll pop in for
19 the whole show.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, if I
21 was still working for you, you'd go to that
22 parade Tom Galante, I'm just letting you know.

23 [laughter] But I don't make those calls
24 anymore. So, when you have to go, we

25 understand that you have to go. I just wanted

1
2 to make that announcement. Tom is not being
3 rude if he happens to get up and walk out at
4 some point, 'cause Mitchell-Linden is waiting.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So I'm just
6 curious, then. The community input had an
7 effect on what happens with specific street
8 branch I would imagine, and also what's
9 happening with the stacks under Bryant Park,
10 right?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, absolutely, on
12 this--on the Pacific Street Library, you know,
13 we've taken to heart the love of the building
14 as well as the placement of the library in the
15 community. We are far from figuring out what
16 the solution is, but we're moving forward and
17 we will continue to work with community to make
18 sure that the plan we developed is one that
19 meets the systems needs as well as the
20 community's needs.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And in that
22 case, you'll have something at Pacific Street
23 and something at BAM South?

24 LINDA JOHNSON: Again, this gets
25 down to capital funding and right now I can't

1
2 make that promise, but I'm certainly working
3 toward it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: As far as
5 the stacks go, the New Jersey plan now is
6 minimized or off the table?

7 TONY MARX: So let me be clear. We,
8 the library has had roughly three million books
9 off-site in a facility we share with Columbia
10 and Princeton in New Jersey. We, if we had all
11 of the research books in the main building,
12 there wouldn't be room for a single human being
13 or something close to that. So we had no--like
14 every major research library, we've had to use
15 off-site. We added more onsite by using Bryant
16 Park and making that state of the art
17 preservation, and we're exploring whether
18 there's even more we can do. You know, in
19 addition, we'll be bringing the circulating
20 collections, roughly half a millions books into
21 the building in this plan. We want researchers
22 to get their books. We want the folks who use
23 the branch libraries. We need our largest
24 circulating collection with the Mid-Manhattan
25 to be readily accessible. We want to do that

1
2 and if we can use the historic stacks, which
3 have been off, out of the reach for the public,
4 in an important way so the public can enjoy
5 them for the first time, that's what we're
6 working on with our architect as well. That is
7 not a finished process. As soon as it is, and
8 as soon as we've gotten cost estimates so that
9 we could be responsible about it, we'll be
10 putting it out as well.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And one of
12 the things I--in the material I read, it
13 indicates, and I think you may have said this
14 that 12 to 15 percent of the users have been
15 Manhattan go back and forth to Schwartzman.

16 TONY MARX: So, we do--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE:

18 [interposing] Or vice versa?

19 TONY MARX: surveys of our users.
20 Something like half of the users of Mid-
21 Manhattan and SIBL come--go across the three
22 buildings at least once in a year, more like 10
23 to 15 percent on a week, say weekly basis.
24 Again, the original idea of the library, and in
25 fact, our charter with the city requires this,

1
2 was to have the circulating library in the main
3 building where it was for the first 75 years,
4 so the people could do everything they want in
5 one fantastic facility. Our plan is to restore
6 that history, but double the public space. So
7 we'll have the same numbers of people in the
8 building as was true in the 1930's, 40's, 50's
9 and 60's. Well that same number, which is
10 twice the number of today, but we'll have
11 double the public space for that same number
12 that they had in the 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's.
13 So we're bringing all of that activity of the
14 library together into this amazing, you know,
15 beautiful building that today is under-
16 utilized. Has rooms, beautiful historic rooms
17 that have been sitting empty for decades.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: One of the
19 other concerns people have mentioned to me is
20 that 42nd Street would get noisier. Is that--

21 TONY MARX: Again, we'll be--we're
22 working with our architects to make sure that
23 acoustics work. The circulating section will
24 be separate from the research library. The
25 research library, its current facilities will

1 not change at all. The only way they will
2 change is we'll be adding more space. So we'll
3 be doubling designated research space for CUNY
4 students or faculty or people who come from out
5 of town. We'll be adding more of that space,
6 but we won't touch the existing space, which is
7 beautiful space that works incredibly well and
8 is incredibly popular as you would imagine.

9
10 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay. Yes,
11 thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
13 very much. I'm going to throw it to our
14 colleagues now, and while we want--I just want
15 to say, while we want our libraries to be quiet
16 enough for folks to study, we want them to be
17 alive enough for all people including young
18 people and teenagers to be using them because
19 that is incredibly important, and to recognize
20 the changing nature in usage of libraries is
21 absolutely fundamental in recognizing and re-
22 envisioning those spaces. So the days of
23 librarians shushing people not as relevant
24 today in our libraries. So I want to first
25 throw it to Council Member Steve Levin and then

1
2 Council Member Brad Lander, both of them have
3 questions.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you
5 very much, Chair Van Bramer and Chair Gentile,
6 and thank you to the respective Presidents and
7 CEOs of the libraries in New York. So, I
8 represent on the Council, the Brooklyn Heights
9 Branch and for the next several months I still
10 continue to represent the Pacific Branch right
11 up until re-districting fully takes effect.
12 And I got to tell you, I ran for re-election
13 this summer and I couldn't go more than 10 feet
14 without having to answer questions about
15 proposed disposition of both the Pacific Branch
16 and the Brooklyn Heights Branch. I mean, it
17 was the number one issue that I confronted in
18 the southern half of my district. Everybody
19 wanted to know about it. I will tell you that
20 if I was to take kind of a rough estimate of
21 the public sentiment, it was probably about 95
22 percent were against the proposed disposition
23 of the property. So that gives me a lot of
24 concern and it--you know, I'm looking very
25 closely and diligently at this issue and it's

1
2 not an easy one to get around. I don't think
3 we'd be in this position right now if this were
4 kind of an easy answer. But there's a couple
5 of things that I want to kind of ask
6 specifically about. First off, with regard to
7 the Brooklyn Heights Branch and the RFP that's
8 gone out, there's an MOU with the city of New
9 York that the proceeds of this sale will go
10 back into the Brooklyn Public Library system,
11 is that correct?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: That is correct.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. Do we
14 have commitments in writing that from Mayoral
15 candidates Lhota and de Blasio that ass mayor
16 they will honor that MOU, because I could tell
17 you, I have seen MOU's come and go, and they
18 are not all honored. They're selectively
19 honored. They're not legally binding. I've
20 seen MOU's signed by the City of New York that
21 are not worth the paper that they're written
22 on. And so, I want to know what commitment,
23 what is--I mean, I'm concerned about this
24 because an MOU is just that. It's not a
25 legally binding document.

1
2 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, our commitment
3 to the community is that in the event the
4 mayor, the future mayor of the city of New
5 York, were not to honor the MOU, then we could
6 not move forward. Because unless the money
7 comes back to the library, it makes no sense
8 for us to go through this process. So, without
9 the funds going back to the library, we will
10 not sell the building.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Is that in
12 the RFP? I mean, is there a line in the RFP or
13 is that--I mean, would that be in the contract
14 between BPL and any particular developer? Is
15 that the--

16 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, look, I mean,
17 we're far from negotiating contracts with
18 developers. We don't have a developer--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
20 Uh-huh.

21 LINDA JOHNSON: at this time, but
22 that--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
24 That's not in the RPF, though, right?
25

1
2 LINDA JOHNSON: That--it has been
3 our position from the very beginning that if
4 the MOU is not honored, that we will not move
5 forward with the project. That has been what
6 we have said since day one.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: That, I mean,
8 I think that's one thing that needs to be
9 clarified and in writing, and in--I mean it's--
10 Again, just I'm very concerned about, you know,
11 teeth that's involved here, and again I've seen
12 it, and I know how OMB is with regard to the
13 proceeds of the sale of land and, you know,
14 they protect the general fund like, you know, a
15 tiger protects its cubs.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: The whole purpose of
17 selling the Brooklyn Heights Branch is not only
18 to deliver a great new library in Brooklyn
19 Heights far better than the one that exists,
20 but also to do much needed work in communities
21 where an opportunity like the one that presents
22 itself in Brooklyn Heights just doesn't exist.
23 So it's about the entire borough and without
24 those proceeds coming back to the library for
25

1
2 the library to use on capital projects, we will
3 not go forward with this.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: With regard
5 to the business library, can you give us an
6 update as to what is going on with the business
7 library. I'm of the mind that downtown Brooklyn
8 is still the heart of activity in Brooklyn.
9 I's where, you know, you have numerous subway
10 lines intersecting. You have multiple
11 colleges. You have more college students than
12 are in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. Galante,
13 if you could hang on for one minute, I'm going
14 to ask you a question just one second, if
15 that's okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Almost got
17 away.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Almost got
19 away. Sorry, I just have one question for you.
20 With re--I am--that seems like the appropriate
21 location for a business branch. The main
22 branch is really only one or two subway lines
23 that go there, and is not near any colleges.
24 It's not near the heart of the business
25 community. You know, any day of the week you

1
2 go and [inaudible 1:23:52] is teaming with
3 people, not so much down by the main branch.
4 And so I still believe that the business branch
5 makes the most sense there and to be honest
6 with you, why not include the business branch
7 in the RFP?

8 LINDA JOHNSON: Spoken like the
9 representative of downtown Brooklyn. The fact
10 is that while there's still of course a lot of
11 business activity in that district, that the
12 people who are using the business and career
13 library are completely different than those
14 people who are using it when it was initially
15 conceived. And so today, businesses downtown
16 have at their fingertips in their offices,
17 access to the web, access to databases that
18 we're providing in the business and career
19 library, and the fact is that we know from
20 information about the people who are using the
21 resources in the current library and on Cadman
22 Plaza, that they come from all over the
23 borough, but they're coming for different
24 reasons. They're coming because they're looking
25 for jobs. They're coming because they're

1 interested in starting their own businesses and
2 so it is a different kind of user and we feel
3 strongly that regardless of what happens with
4 the Brooklyn Heights building, that the
5 business library is much better suited for the
6 Central Library from the perspective of the
7 system and for the inhabitation of the entire
8 borough. And I'll just expand by saying that
9 in terms of public transportation in addition
10 to subways, there are terrific busses that also
11 come right to Grand Army Plaza, that if you are
12 anywhere near our building on a pretty day, you
13 will see that it is teeming with activity also,
14 and that as we went through the process of
15 building what we call the information commons
16 in the Central Library, we realize that a lot
17 of what we're doing in the business library is
18 complementary to what we're doing in the
19 information commons, and having the two
20 libraries or departments approximate to one
21 another would allow us to deliver much better
22 services, not only to people using the business
23 and career library, but also the people taking
24 advantage of the wonderful new resources in the
25

1 information commons. The Central Library is the
2 hub of our system. All of the other specialty
3 departments are under that roof, and we feel
4 strongly that that's where the business and
5 career library belong.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Now where--So
8 if the--is it in the process of moving right
9 now, is it? And where's the--where's the
10 funding coming from to outfit the space at the
11 Central Branch, or how much is that going to
12 cost.

13 LINDA JOHNSON: I don't have a
14 number for you yet. Part of what happened is
15 we moved some of the operations out of the
16 Central library which allows us to do this, and
17 we've moved them to Long Island City. And
18 we're working on a master plan, to use
19 Councilman Gentile's words, a master plan for
20 the Central Library and this is at the
21 centerpiece of that plan. We've yet to devise
22 a budget.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I think
24 that we need to talk about that further in the
25 coming months. Okay, yes, Mr. Galante, thank

1
2 you for graciously waiting. I want to ask
3 about on page three of your testimony you
4 talked about HVAC system that is at the heart
5 of this discussion in Brooklyn Heights is the
6 HVAC system. And you said that you're
7 undergoing replacements or upgrades of eight
8 such systems in Queens. Several libraries are
9 currently in need of HVAC replacement at a
10 total of the cost of 4.7 million. So how--so
11 how many libraries are in need of total
12 replacement in Queens?

13 TOM GALANTE: Six, yeah, six--well,
14 six that we currently have that--I had it in my
15 notes. Let me make sure I give you the right
16 numbers. Oh, and we have a lot going on and we
17 have more to go is the bottom line.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and 4.7
19 is the cost for the replacement of all the ones
20 that need to be replaced totally?

21 TOM GALANTE: No, no. It was--I got
22 it right here.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: 4.7 a piece?

24 TOM GALANTE: 4.7 million is for the
25 six HVAC systems that need to be replaced,

1 about--I'm sorry, that's for--yeah, for HVAC.

2 So it's about 800,000 dollar per system.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

4 TOM GALANTE: Keep in mind these are
5 DDC prices, and--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
7 'Cause 800,000 seems a little bit high, right?

8 No, I'm just--I'm joking. Eight hundred--

9 TOM GALANTE: [interposing] For
10 these size libraries, yes, these are 7,500
11 square foot libraries--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

13 TOM GALANTE: that could have a roof
14 top unit put on them.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, so--

16 TOM GALANTE: We can do it for a
17 third of the price.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, because
19 in Brooklyn, obviously--each one of those is
20 7,500 square feet?

21 TOM GALANTE: Yeah, in that
22 neighborhood, yep.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.
24 Because obviously in Brooklyn Heights it's--you
25

1
2 know, the price tag that we've gotten back from
3 DDC is between three and four million dollars.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: It's a 62,000 square
5 foot building, granted some of that space is
6 dedicated to books.

7 TOM GALANTE: It's a big library.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: That's the space
9 that we're talking about.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right. So
11 are all 62,000 square feet air conditioned or
12 the parts with the books not air conditioned?

13 LINDA JOHNSON: Since none of it
14 presently air conditioned except for the
15 auditorium it's hard to answer that question. I
16 don't specifically if the same level of air
17 conditioning will be provided in the entire
18 building, but because of the construction of
19 the building and because of the complexity of
20 replacing it we're told by DDC and another
21 estimate as well that that's the cost.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I guess my--it
23 seems like there's a, you know, obviously 7,500
24 square feet is much different than 60,000.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

TOM GALANTE: I have to say for a 60
some thousand square foot library, which puts
me in a flushing area, it's a lot of money for
us to do it.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

TOM GALANTE: If we were doing it,
I'd be surprised if that number doesn't go up
as DDC gets farther into it, if they actually
had to design it. You're talking almost a
million dollars for me to do a 7,500 square
foot library.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-hm.

TOM GALANTE: So, just saying it
wouldn't surprise me if it was 5 million bucks
when you're done.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-hm.

TOM GALANTE: Just from my
experience and numbers that are initially out
there, they turn into much bigger numbers once
it gets designed and it gets big.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, Mr.
Galante, you're free to go.

TOM GALANTE: Just so you know.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you.

Going to the--

TOM GALANTE: [interposing] Thank
you. You guys--

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you.

TOM GALANTE: have a good hearing.
[laughter]

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Moving onto
the Pacific Branch, now there's a--I'd like to
know, I mean, is--obviously, I believe strongly
that there's a--that there's--that the building
is worthy of landmark status. It ought to be
landmarked. The building ought to be preserved.

LINDA JOHNSON: The Brooklyn Heights
building?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No, no, no,
Pacific Branch.

LINDA JOHNSON: Pacific Branch.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And so, you
know, I think that that to me is a baseline
position and that's where we should be starting
from. Is--there seems to be some divergence.
On the website, Brooklyn Public Library
website, it says that there's--that BPL says,

1 states explicitly that there's not--they're not
2 taking off the table the possibility of moving
3 forward with the disposition of the property.
4 You didn't say that in your testimony. What is
5 the position of BPL right now, and I guess if
6 the City were to proceed with a landmarks, with
7 calendaring the building for landmarks, would
8 BPL be in favor of a calendaring or a land
9 marking of the building or opposed to, to a
10 land marking of the building.
11

12 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, I mean, the
13 fact is that anything that is done that ties
14 our hands with how we operate our buildings is
15 obviously making life more difficult and more
16 expensive for us. So, while we all value the
17 beauty of the building, no, I mean we don't
18 love the idea of land marking it, but we
19 recognize that it's a possibility. So, you
20 know, saying that I want to cut off my arm is
21 not prudent, but in terms of what is or is not
22 off the table, we are still investigating
23 various different scenarios, and we haven't
24 made a decision and we are taking community
25 input into serious account.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So nothing is
3 off the table in other words?

4 LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I
6 would say that there are some in the city that
7 view a land mark designation as a, you know, a
8 positive thing and something that they would
9 seek, so you know--

10 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Well,
11 if funds were not an issue, I would love
12 nothing better than to have all the money we
13 need to fix up Pacific and to have a
14 neighborhood library there in addition to what
15 we're doing at BAM South. I'm trying actually
16 to be realistic about the amount of funding
17 that I have and the level of need that I've got
18 everywhere in the community.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN. Uh-hm. Okay,
20 Mr. Chairman, I think that's my questions for
21 now. I might want to come back for a second
22 round.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.
24 Thank you very much, Council Member Levin. I
25 think we're going to go to Council Member

1
2 Lander and then James to--unless other members
3 have questions that would finish out this
4 panel, and I know that Assembly Member Millman
5 and Assembly Member Kellner and Comptroller Liu
6 is here as well. So we will--and Council
7 Member King as well. So Lander, James and
8 King.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman and also to Chair Gentile. I
11 appreciate your convening this hearing, and
12 this obviously and enormous amount of interest
13 in it, and I guess I want to ask you take a
14 step back and think a little bigger than maybe
15 we have or you have. I've heard from you so
16 far. I appreciate your articulation of your
17 plans, but it seems to me there's a really
18 important moment of opportunity here. There's
19 in part a moment of crisis brought on by many
20 years of cutting operating funds and not
21 providing capital funds to all three library
22 systems, and so we have a situation where one
23 of the resources that we really need to
24 maintain, preserve, and operate the system.
25 There's some moment of recognition of that.

1
2 plans, I want to hear what a fundamental reset
3 looks like. And I think there's some hard
4 questions there. I feel conflicted. I love
5 the Brooklyn Public Library as an institution.
6 I love my neighborhood branches; put a ton of
7 time and energy into helping, maybe a little
8 capital in the friends groups, but the whole
9 system is a little archaic. Having three
10 different systems is part of how this city
11 shirks its fundamental responsibility. We
12 don't really see it as fundamental city
13 infrastructure in a certain way. We see them
14 as nice non-profit organizations, and that's
15 part of why there isn't a big serious master
16 plan of the kind that Council Member Gentile
17 talked about. And so I guess I'd like to hear
18 from you, if you could dream big for a minute,
19 how do we--what does it look like to get out of
20 this important moment and into one where
21 there's a fundamental recognition of our
22 libraries as essential New York City
23 infrastructure? Does that, you know, and I
24 know I'm going to say please imagine like the
25 elimination of your institutions, but--'cause I

1
2 love them, and don't get me wrong, I'm not even
3 saying that's the right answer, but I just--I
4 don't feel like we're yet thinking about how to
5 hit reset in a way that recognizes the
6 magnitude of the crisis, the magnitude of the
7 need and says to the next administration and
8 the next Council we want a different structure
9 of relationship that doesn't put us in a
10 position where what we're talking about is a
11 disposition of that branch or that branch or,
12 oh my god, we're not going to have the air
13 conditioning next summer for a set of
14 institutions that at the same time we've said
15 are the place you're supposed to go in a heat
16 wave. So, help us.

17 TONY MARX: So, thank you for that
18 question. The--of course, you know, we do do
19 sort of putting out fires in crisis, because we
20 don't have a choice to.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: You
22 shouldn't do that. I'm just asking for a few--

23 TONY MARX: [interposing] I
24 understand.

25

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

[interposing] minutes.

TONY MARX: And we do, the three systems, I think in an unprecedented way are cooperating with each other so that we can coordinate in part to meet our current challenges, but also because this is also a moment of amazing opportunity. So let me just try that for just a minute. Our branch libraries have never been more used, as the Cuff [phonetic] report demonstrates, for all kinds of reasons by every measure. But they remain the same model of 100 years ago of basically a passive model. It's wonderful. People come in. They use our books. They use our air conditioning. They use our computers. They use our quiet, many who have no alternatives for those things. We are eager to move to an entirely different model on top of that model which is to be the proactive education provider for all New Yorkers cradle to grave. That's why we're tenfold increasing our English language instruction in a town of immigrants. That's why we're six fold

1 increasing computer skills training. You can't
2 even apply for a job without that kind of
3 skills. That's why instead of being satisfied
4 that 20,000 or 30,000 kids come into our
5 systems, branches, after school to be safe.
6 Let's do something with it, and that's why
7 we're launching after school programs this
8 week, and already have gotten the largest grant
9 in the history of the institution since Andrew
10 Carnegie for the branches to help us partner
11 with the City in doing that. On the other
12 side, we also see the digital possibilities as
13 incredible. We have to preserve our research
14 collections. That's our obligation. We have
15 to do that physically, which is what we're
16 trying to do, but now you don't have to come to
17 42nd Street and 5th Avenue to see these amazing
18 collections. We need everything online. We
19 need everything navigable. We should be the
20 library to the world so that anyone who wants
21 to create is not limited by their physical
22 constraints. That is now possible. We still
23 have to be the great physical facilities.
24 That's why the Schwartzman building, we don't
25

1 want to change any of the existing research
2 aspects in it. We want to add more to it.
3 While, yes, there are more kids coming in and
4 we think that's great and there's circulating
5 library uses, there are also places of the
6 library that should still be shushing, where
7 people can come and do the old fashion work
8 with the great physical collections. We have
9 to do that and we have to add these educational
10 programs. We have to add the digital access
11 because the opportunity is too amazing to miss.
12 And we have to do all that at a moment when
13 we've had less funding. That's why we're
14 trying to be creative.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: No, I just--I want
17 to address your point directly, which is, you
18 know, what have we been doing to step and think
19 about who we can solve some of these problems
20 in a bigger way. So we're here today albeit
21 whining a bit about, you know, the lack of
22 money and the overwhelming nature of the need,
23 but the fact is that the three library systems
24 together have been working on ways to present
25 our issues as a whole and present creative

1 solutions to the administration and to OMB
2 which give options that we think make more
3 sense for us certainly as providers of services
4 that, you know, I always say this, if we
5 provide all things to all people it's not a
6 good business model, but it's the one that
7 we've got. And so we've to, you know, sort of
8 address it head on, and we compete in some ways
9 with other institutions that are doing work in
10 after school, for example, and we always hear,
11 "Well first we have to deal with this and then
12 we'll get to you. And the fact is that we're
13 sort of the safety net for everybody, and we
14 need to figure out exactly what services we
15 should be providing, not overlapping where
16 there are other city institutions that are
17 charged with a similar admission. We need to
18 figure out how we can participate with the
19 City, so that if we are given more for a
20 specific purpose, we have a higher
21 responsibility to raise money, and we've talked
22 to the administration and to OMB about taking
23 that on. So we are trying to step back at the
24 same time that we're dealing with these mini
25

1 fires that we've all got everywhere trying to
2 think in a broader way about the future, and we
3 recognize that this is in fact a moment. And
4 so we started early. We've already made
5 presentation to quite a number of folks in the
6 administration and we're going to continue to
7 work on that plan and continue to present it as
8 the landscape becomes a little firmer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So maybe let
11 me just make a, kind of a comment to wrap up.
12 So I mean, on the one hand I appreciate some of
13 the ways in which you're thinking big and
14 seeing this moment. On the other, it does seem
15 to me that we need a, maybe a political and a
16 structural reset that's a little bigger than
17 what I think we've yet heard or able to do
18 together. You know, partly I'll be honest, I'm
19 tired of hearing you having quiet conversations
20 with the administration, which hasn't put up a
21 dime, while we get the plans last and are the
22 ones who have put up the money. So, I don't--
23 that's not to say that it's--it's not struc--
24 your boards are appointed by mayors and
25 boroughs presidents, and yet--except outside of

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2 Queens, they haven't put up much money, and
3 then we're supposed to keep coming up with the
4 money, but we don't have much input into the
5 plan. So eventually, we might get tired of
6 that. We love the libraries, so I guess we'll
7 just e--and I'm hopeful that the next
8 administration will think about this
9 differently, but as much as I like you guys
10 coming here, if it's essential City
11 infrastructure, then where is the essential
12 City official who's job it is to think with you
13 and with us about how to do this job. So you
14 guys have to run your institutions. You have
15 to keep moving them forward. I appreciate that
16 is more than a full time job in each case, but
17 I guess to both Mr. Chairmen, I think we have
18 some responsibility to figure out some more
19 fundamental structural or political reset, and
20 hopefully this moment of transition gives us
21 some ability to do it, because I think we're in
22 a box that can't deliver solutions as big as
23 both the problem and the opportunity that we're
24 facing. So, thank you--

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] No,
3 I--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: to both of
5 you.

6 LINDA JOHNSON: I think that, you
7 know, it's a great point and the--but the
8 council men also have a similar problem that we
9 do, which is that while you would like to think
10 broadly about the services that we deliver
11 city-wide and we are all four talking to you at
12 that level, but you're also worried obviously
13 as each of you are about the libraries in your
14 individual districts and the fact that the air
15 conditioning isn't working on a hot day, and so
16 we're all sort of in this same box, which we
17 frankly inherited. I mean, this has been going
18 on for a really long time, and none of us are
19 responsible for it, but I feel like this moment
20 that you're referring to is actually the moment
21 and if we live up to our responsibility, which
22 is to change the model and to start doing
23 things that are more creative and actually make
24 a bigger difference instead of this sort of
25 band aid approach that we've been all taking.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I just
3 want to say I could not agree more with Council
4 Member Lander that there is an opportunity here
5 to fundamentally change the way libraries are
6 governed and the extent to which the Council is
7 empowered and the City held accountable for
8 some of the decisions that have been made and
9 some of the structural issues with respect to
10 library governance. Those are very worthwhile
11 topics and we absolutely should and will go
12 there, and I--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And this, I
14 want to thank you. I mean, I think this
15 hearing is opening the box. So I'm looking
16 forward--

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
18 [interposing] Right, and this is the beginning
19 of a discussion which ultimately we'll take
20 advantage of this opportunity because it has to
21 change under the next administration. It has
22 to change starting January 1, given how things
23 have happened. So speaking of change in January
24 1, Council Member Letitia James.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So since--
3 [laughter] from your mouth to God's ears. So,
4 I have been a proponent of preserving libraries
5 all over my public career and continue to
6 advocate on behalf of libraries, and I
7 recognize that you faced some challenges, 230
8 million dollars in long deferred repairs. In
9 addition to that you have all these short
10 falls, and I have negotiated with the
11 administration on a number of projects to
12 provide resources for all of my library since I
13 do not get as much discretionary funds as some
14 of my colleagues. And so some of the efforts
15 that I have put forward is--in negotiations is
16 requiring the administration to fund certain
17 libraries in my district. So though you gave
18 other members credit, I just want you to
19 recognize that part of my efforts have been in
20 negotiation and requiring that the Mayor pick
21 up the cost of preserving the libraries in my
22 district, and I'm sure you're well aware of
23 that because you've been in some of those
24 discussions. I also want to say that I just
25 think that the current employing of finance

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2 model which basically tears down existing
3 libraries to build new ones is just
4 unacceptable, and to me it's really an
5 extension of the flawed policies of this
6 administration. And I think we need to really
7 look outside of the box, and so my first
8 question is, have you approached EDC about
9 issuing a bond to finance repairs for existing
10 libraries in the City of New York. As you
11 know, they have the ability to issue bonds to
12 finance a wide range of capital projects in
13 the City of New York. Has, Ms. Johnson, you or
14 your board approached EDC to issue a bond for
15 the purposes of maintaining these libraries,
16 which are historic in nature and serve a vital
17 purpose.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: So we've actually
19 been working with EDC on the Brooklyn Heights
20 project, and we've had many conversations with
21 them about alternative financing options, and
22 part of the problem with issuing a bond is our
23 ability to guarantee the bond. And with the
24 uncertainty of our annual operating dollars, we
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1
2 have actually been advised that it's probably
3 not an option for us.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: But on
5 average, you tend to get from this
6 administration between 10 and 15 million
7 dollars, 10 to 20 million dollars on average if
8 you look at the last 10 years. Was that enough
9 to put forward as a means to guarantee to pay
10 the debt service on these bonds?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: I've been counseled
12 that it's not, but certainly I'm not an expert.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. Let me
14 also go on to say that at the Brooklyn Heights
15 Library, that would--your proposal as reflected
16 in the RFP results in the reduction to the
17 Brooklyn Heights Library, is that correct?
18 There's a reduction in space.

19 LINDA JOHNSON: There are fewer
20 square feet over all. There are actually as
21 many square feet that will be available to the
22 public. The current Brooklyn Heights Library
23 is built in a way that has less, that over 50
24 percent of the square footage is not used for
25 public space.

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COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

LINDA JOHNSON: And so we are building a new library that will have fewer square feet in total, but more of it will be accessible and it will be built with an eye toward 21st century library needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: But the square footage is going to be reduced, notwithstanding the usage, the square footage in part--in general is going to be less.

LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yeah. And the business library, I've got a--I want to take issue with some of your comments. Yes, the individuals who are using the business library are different from the ones who used it previously, primarily because they're--they come from all over the borough. They're much more diverse, but clearly they come to the business library seeking training, job training and employment opportunities. And you would think that you would want to keep a library in the business community in downtown Brooklyn; easy access. So transferring it to Grand Army

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2 Plaza, I think is sort of inconvenient for
3 those individuals.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Actually not. We
5 know from--we know where they live, the people
6 who are using the business and career library,
7 and we know the public transportation that
8 brings people to Central Library, and we're
9 actually quite certain that this will be a
10 better solution overall than the current one.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And the air
12 rights over at the Brooklyn Heights Library
13 were those sold off to another developer?

14 LINDA JOHNSON: I'm not sure what
15 you're alluding to. I think there was a deal
16 many, many years ago.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yeah.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: That limits some of
19 our air rights, however, that's history. I
20 can't change what happened before. I know
21 exactly what we have available to sell today.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: It's my
23 understanding that in 1986 most of the 10 FAR
24 development rights were transferred out to
25 Forest City Ratner, is that true?

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: Again, whatever was
3 transferred out is a done deal and relates to
4 other buildings that were built in the area.
5 What we have available today is based strictly
6 on what the library and the current building
7 provide, nothing from the past, nothing
8 conjectured about the future.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And the
10 proposal would be to replace the library with
11 luxury housing?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: Absolutely not. We
13 are seeking all sorts of proposals and we are
14 just getting them back. It has nothing to do
15 with luxury housing. It has everything to do
16 with what proposals are coming in and how
17 creative the developers are who are planning,
18 and we understand it's all over the board. And
19 we'll be getting back to all the elected
20 officials as soon as we've had an opportunity
21 to call for them.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Are the
23 elected officials involved in the--in reviewing
24 the proposals? Have they been at the table?

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: As I've said,
3 they've just come in and EDC is managing the
4 process, and when we get to a point where we're
5 ready to share, we will share with elected
6 officials as well as the community at large.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Let me just
8 also go talk a little bit about Pacific Street,
9 which as you know has got a reprieve as a
10 result of a zoning application that involved my
11 district, and I was glad to step in and stop
12 the selling off of the Pacific Street Library,
13 proudly on behalf of the girl scouts. That's
14 who I did it for, and also for the historic
15 nature of the library. So, it's my
16 understanding that right now there is no pla--
17 there are no plans to sell off the Pacific
18 Street Library, correct?

19 LINDA JOHNSON: Now as before there
20 are never any concrete plans. We are still
21 working on our options, and as I have testified
22 today and previously, we love the building and
23 should we have the funding and should the--
24 should it make sense for us to continue
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1
2 operating a neighborhood library at Pacific, we
3 are considering that very seriously.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Last two
5 points because I know the Chair is looking at
6 me, and when he look at me with those beautiful
7 blue eyes, that means wrap it up. The
8 disposition of Pacific Street as well as the
9 Brooklyn Heights library, is that subject to
10 the approval of the City Council?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, both libraries
12 are publicly owned buildings.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And if there's
14 any zoning changes, that would also be subject
15 to the City Council.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct,
17 although we're not asking for zoning changes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
20 very much, Council Member James. I want to
21 just recognize, 'cause I think the Mason
22 Tenders District Council of Greater New York
23 Political Action Committee have submitted
24 testimony. They were going to be here, Mike
25 McGuire, so they have submitted testimony that

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2 I want to be noted, and then we'll go to
3 Council Member Andy King from the Bronx, and
4 then for a second round Council Member Steve
5 Levin from Brooklyn.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good
7 afternoon. Thank you Chair, Chairman Bramer
8 and Gentile. Thank you, Mr. President for
9 being here. And I'm going to take the lighter
10 road. My colleagues have laid out a
11 conversation regards to testimony made which
12 was enlightening, informative, and just hitting
13 the nail on the head where we should be moving.
14 I've sat down with you before and talked about
15 my interest as a Bronxite and how the libraries
16 in my district has--the use has increased over
17 the last year or so in regards to how people
18 get information. The district I represent is
19 one where the school system where we are
20 looking to improve our libraries every day,
21 libraries outside of the school buildings are
22 that much more important. And we're not even
23 just talking about turning them into "community
24 centers" because of heating or any other
25 challenges that we might have, but all the

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2 tools that young people in our communities are
3 so grateful for by using the libraries as a
4 learning tool. First, I want to thank you all,
5 'cause in this trying economic climate that
6 we've been working under over the last four to
7 five years. You've been trying to do a whole
8 lot with less as we all have been asked to do.
9 I think you have met the challenges on most of
10 the things that you've had to do, and just like
11 everyone else we've run into a lot of road
12 blocks on how do we continue to move forward in
13 maintaining our educational structures with the
14 libraries, I believe is just one of the
15 greatest things that maintains history and
16 value in this country and how do we not fund
17 them, how do we not keep them operating at a
18 level that people can say, "Hey, this is what
19 this country was all about and is about." So I
20 want to thank you on behalf of what you have
21 done, what you will continue to do, and I think
22 our committee here will look to work to do all
23 that we can to make sure that if the
24 conversation of baseline and number of things
25 in the Council is of importance. Libraries and

1
2 cultures is on our list as well as taking care
3 of our young people and our seniors. So you
4 can count on me to always be there to join you
5 in this conversation, and when it comes to some
6 of the more technical aspects that you've heard
7 from Council Member James and Lander of how do
8 we continue to look at the brighter spots and
9 moving forward. I think you have a great team
10 and who is going to be on the right side of
11 you. I think the next administration who I'm
12 praying for will--since I'm looking at them as
13 being part of the city system and the school
14 system now, sees that there's a need to put
15 libraries and education first. It's about the
16 people, and I think with that we will have new
17 conversation and different conversations that
18 will allow the library system to thrive moving
19 forward. So I just want to say thank you on
20 that end. Keep up the good work. Keep on, as I
21 say, keep on learning and we'll all keep on
22 growing. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
24 very much, Council Member King. Council Member
25 Levin for our final questions, I think for this

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2 panel, unless others would like to chime in,
3 but we do have many more panels to go. So I
4 think this will close out the first panel.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you
6 very much, Mr. Chairman. So I'm just kind of--
7 and kind of following up on Brad Lander's
8 question before. To me, this is also
9 presenting a, kind of a--it's somewhat of an
10 existential crisis or question for the Brooklyn
11 Public Library system and specifically, I don't
12 necessarily want to speak to the issues that
13 the New York system is facing, but in Brooklyn--
14 -I guess my question is, so how does this
15 really--how would selling off of whatever
16 public asset it is, whether it's the air rights
17 or the ability to build on site or what have
18 you, whether it's Brooklyn Heights or Pacific
19 Branch or any other asset that the system has,
20 how does that constitute a plan? I don't--I
21 still don't understand how that constitutes a
22 broader structural plan. So if we--if we're
23 talking about 300 million dollars in deferred
24 capital, these are one time--these are one
25 shots. They're, you know, they're kind of like

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2 windfalls. They don't really--they're very
3 limited in the--in their ability to do anything
4 about the long term structural problems here,
5 and I think unless--what gives me some
6 discomfort, I guess, is that it's not--they're
7 not--these proposals are not really being
8 accompanied by kind of the large, you know,
9 kind of the larger structural ideas. And so
10 that's what's concerning. It's just what I've
11 been hearing from BPL has been we need the
12 money badly, here's some money that we can
13 access. Then we'll figure out what to do next
14 when we get there, and so I just, I'm--that'
15 what gives me the level of discomfort that I
16 have.

17 LINDA JOHNSON: I understand that
18 discomfort. I think the issue that there is
19 such a large problem that there's not a single
20 tool that will comprehensively deal with
21 everything that we have going on in the
22 borough, and there's not--so, the Brooklyn
23 Heights situation is in essence an opportunity.
24 It's a situation where there is a very valuable
25 piece of real estate that's not been

1 particularly well used by anybody's standards.
2 It's not an architecturally important library.
3 It's not a library that's efficient to deliver
4 service, and so under those circumstances we
5 can get out from under an enormous capital need
6 as well as generate capital money that can be
7 used in other communities, certainly not enough
8 to fix everything, but to at least make a dent
9 in those communities where neighborhoods are
10 dependent on their library, but there isn't a
11 similar resolution to bring those libraries up
12 to where they should be, up to where the people
13 deserve them to be. So you're right, and as--
14 and I think that Councilman Lander makes a good
15 point. We're at an inflection point right now,
16 and the question is, in addition to this kind
17 of a project, how else are we going to right
18 the ship? What is the bigger plan that we'll
19 be able to use to dig ourselves out of the
20 whole that we sort of allowed--we've just sort
21 of drifted into. And I think that what we're
22 trying to do, all three systems, and I don't
23 mean to speak for my colleagues, so, but we're
24 trying to figure out exactly how we can
25

1
2 position ourselves in the city structure to
3 make sure that we're better cared for, that we
4 are cared for at a level that is--that matches
5 the importance of our institutions in our
6 communities. And so yes, I would not say that
7 this Brooklyn Heights plan is a comprehensive
8 plan that will fix everything that's happening
9 in Brooklyn, but it's sure a good first step.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but you
11 understand why it--without anything concrete,
12 like you're not coming to me and saying this is
13 our plan to get issued bonds, right? There's--
14 that would be something like a concrete plan.
15 Without something that's concreted measured
16 that could help make a dent in that capital
17 need, it just--it's hard to accept that it's,
18 you know, it's my--it's the district, the
19 library in the district that I represent today,
20 but then does that mean that down the line
21 you're going to be going into whatever--or the
22 library system's will be going to try to
23 capitalize on the air rights in any number of
24 different districts because I guarantee you,
25 you'll find that the community is going to be

1
2 resisting, and any community you go into. So I
3 just, I understand that this--you might or BPL
4 might think that this is a part of larger
5 comprehensive strategy, but I just don't see
6 what the other 90 percent of that strategy is--

7 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Look,
8 it's a work--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
10 specifically.

11 LINDA JOHNSON: It's a work in
12 progress and you know there are--there is a
13 unique opportunity in Brooklyn Heights by
14 anybody's analysis.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But air rights
16 are valuable wherever you go.

17 LINDA JOHNSON: Oh, really?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Yeah, I mean,
19 the 20 million dollars here, four million
20 dollars there, you know, it just seems--you
21 know, there's a nei--there's value in a lot of
22 these different neighborhood. There really is.

23 LINDA JOHNSON: There's some, but
24 not ones that are accessible to us. So the
25 point is really that Brooklyn Heights deserves

1
2 a better library than it has today, and this is
3 a what we think is the smartest way for us to
4 deliver a better library at the same time that
5 we're able to take care of some other
6 neighborhoods too.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
9 very much, Council Member Levin. I do want to
10 recognize State Senator Simcha Felder is here
11 with us in the back. I don't think he's going
12 to speak, but thank you and welcome.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER UNKNOWN: Getting shy
14 all of a sudden Senator?

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I just
16 want to wrap up by--yes, and Senator Velmanette
17 Montgomery came in and then left room, but we
18 welcome her as well. And, oh, there's Senator
19 Montgomery who is also here and--what's that?
20 So I just want to say one thing to both our
21 President and CEOs, and I think this gets to
22 where Council Member Lander and Council Member
23 Levin were going, which is we at some point
24 have to adopt a set of guidelines and because
25 we know where we're at now, but we seem to not

1 completely know where we're going with this,
2 and so perhaps another time for another
3 hearing, though, is where is this going, how
4 many more libraries will potentially be
5 disposed of or sold? Are there criteria? Are
6 there guidelines where we would never do it in
7 this case because of A B C or D. Or it makes
8 more sense, you know, without that, right?
9 There is some fear that this could be sort of a
10 rolling sort of earthquake, right, which just
11 keeps spreading. And the discussion that you
12 were having about land values, to me, speaks to
13 equity, right? Because the truth is some real
14 estate in the City of New York is incredibly
15 valuable, and some of our neighborhood
16 libraries are in communities where the real
17 estate value is far less, and so you might be
18 able to sell a library in a very hot real
19 estate market and build some fantastic spanking
20 new library, but maybe a poorer community where
21 the land is less valuable wouldn't have that
22 same opportunity. Do you know what I'm talking
23 about? So, so there are questions, long term
24 questions, right, fundamental questions, which
25

1
2 is where I started, that this is really about
3 the future of libraries, the future of public
4 libraries and where we're going with this, and
5 how given the incredible enormous challenges
6 that your facing, we make sure that the end of
7 this process, which first of all has to start
8 with administration that cares about libraries,
9 right? But ultimately we get to a place where
10 we're ensuring that access, equal access is the
11 fundamental principle and is never ever
12 compromised because of where we find ourselves
13 in terms of capital need. So those are big
14 questions for a future hearing, because we have
15 many many more speakers that we do want to
16 hear, but I do want to just say--you seem like
17 you really want to respond, Linda Johnson.
18 It's almost like the jeopardy buzzer, she's
19 about to hit it. But I think those are some
20 big questions, and I don't know if you want to
21 tackle some of the now. You don't have to, but
22 those are really what we're going to need to
23 have.

24 LINDA JOHNSON: I certainly don't
25 want to over stay my welcome. I just would say

1
2 that we totally understand the equity issue and
3 its part of what's actually driving the sale of
4 the Brooklyn Heights Branch, so I'll leave it
5 at that.

6 TONY MARX: Could I just say, we
7 would welcome the conversation that you are
8 suggesting and I think we're all about equity.
9 The New York Public Library includes branches
10 in the poorest neighborhoods of New York, some
11 of the poorest congressional districts in the
12 country. We are--that's why we're doing what
13 we're doing in terms of additional educational
14 programs. It's why we're worried about digital
15 access for people who can't otherwise afford
16 it. You know, we are as eager as you are to
17 have a conversation to get us on a stable
18 footing so that we can grab this moment of
19 opportunity of information, the information
20 age, and really deliver particularly for those
21 who are the most needy in this town.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I thank both
23 of you for your time and we look forward to
24 continuing this discussion with both of you,
25 and now we will be glad to hear from

1
2 Assemblywoman Joan Millman, I believe one of
3 the few actual librarians in New York State
4 Government, and Assembly Member Micah Kellner,
5 who is Chair of our sister Committee in the New
6 York State Assembly. And is Senator Montgomery
7 going to testify? Thank you so much. Thank
8 you, Linda. Senator Montgomery, would you like
9 to testify? And of course, Senator Velmanette
10 Montgomery as well. Welcome to the panel. And
11 Senator Felder wanting to speak or? Why don't
12 you join us, Senator Simcha Felder as well a
13 former member of the New York City Council.
14 And thank you so much particularly to the--to
15 Assembly Members for spending most of your day
16 with us. And why don't we start because the
17 world begins and ends with librarians. We will
18 start with Assemblywoman Joan Millman.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLMAN: Thank you
20 very much. It's an interesting thing to sit
21 here for two hours and hear the back and forth
22 that was exchanged with the Council Members
23 who--in fact having held hearings on the
24 Assembly side, it's very nice to have so many
25 colleagues actually sit with you. Because when

1
2 we have Assembly hearings, our colleagues come
3 from all over the state and they don't often
4 make it down to Manhattan to testify and to sit
5 through a proceeding. I want to thank both
6 Chairman Van Bramer and Chairman Gentile for
7 the opportunity to testify today. I'm
8 Assemblywoman Joan Millman and I represent the
9 52nd Assembly district, which is often called
10 Brownstone Brooklyn. I am testifying today
11 because this issue not only affects all of my
12 constituents, but because I have I think a
13 unique perspective. I hold a Master's Degree
14 in Library Science from Pratt Institute and I
15 served as a public school librarian for several
16 years. The Brooklyn Heights Branch is my home
17 branch, and one that I used when I was going to
18 Pratt to help me with my research. And I also
19 know that during difficult financial times more
20 and more people use our libraries for a whole
21 host of reasons because they can't find these
22 assets anywhere else. I find it laughable that
23 some of the new systems that are in place tell
24 people city-wide "Well, then go online and get
25 the information." So what do you do when you

1 can't go online and can't get the information?
2 Even when it goes to registering children for
3 school. It's a wonderful opportunity, but if
4 you don't have a computer it doesn't do you any
5 good. I know what the topic--I'm not going to
6 read this verbatim because there is some things
7 that occurred to me as I was sitting and
8 listening to your questions and answers. The
9 Pacific Street Branch is kind of in limbo right
10 now. They have taken it off the table. They
11 put it back on. They're not quite sure what
12 they're going to do with it. But the Brooklyn
13 Public Library has indeed issued a memorandum
14 of understanding for the sale of the branch at
15 the--in Brooklyn Heights. And I want to make
16 clear that Linda Johnson inherited this
17 problem. It's not of her making. We have been
18 had deferred maintenance as we had in the City
19 for many years when some of our bridges almost
20 fell down because we didn't put any money into
21 keeping them and maintaining them, and that's
22 why I think we're in such dire straits today.
23 They keep talking about this 11 million dollars
24 that these branches need in repair, and I know
25

1 that I can't remember which one of our
2 colleagues, the City Council colleagues asked
3 that question. I think it was Councilman
4 Levin. If the Queens libraries don't cost
5 quite that much, why we pay more? We must have
6 some kind of special tax in Brooklyn that I'm
7 not aware of, and it costs more for us to fix
8 and repair our buildings. I know that the sale,
9 and it thought that Ms. Johnson made that very
10 clear, if the MOU is not--does not--is not
11 answered or is not a--or if the council doesn't
12 agree to it, then it's off the table and we end
13 up with what we currently have, which is the
14 building in Brooklyn Heights. Now during the
15 summer, my colleague in government, Senator
16 Montgomery and I with the gentleman that we
17 both believe will be the new borough president,
18 took a tour of the Brooklyn Public Library, and
19 we went through all of the room, and Ms.
20 Johnson is absolutely right. There are a lot
21 of rooms that are not being used in an
22 essential way, and I think that whoever
23 designed that library really--they have the
24 children's library upstairs. They have an
25

1 empty auditorium on the first floor. The whole
2 thing doesn't make a whole lot of sense. There
3 is an elevator in the building, so it is
4 accessible, which is a good thing. Now the
5 Pacific Street library is just a gem. It is
6 such a beautiful building, but also it's got
7 little nooks and crannies that make it unusable
8 to a lot of people, but if you're going to ask,
9 and I'm going to just mention this one thing
10 about Pacific. If you're going to ask people,
11 especially school children to have to cross
12 Flatbush Avenue traffic to go to this new BAM
13 library, which is supposed to be a cultural
14 library and not a general use library, it's an
15 impossible situation. For many of our school
16 children, the schools close at three o'clock.
17 If they want to go to a library if they need to
18 do some kind of work in the afternoon on a
19 weekends, where do they go? They go to their
20 local branch. If you take that away from them,
21 they have no place to go. The thing that
22 bothers me the most about all of this, and
23 look, they're not looking in Brooklyn Heights
24 to build a supermarket there, you know? What
25

1
2 they're looking to do is to get a proposal that
3 will build luxury housing. It's not moderately
4 priced housing. It's not senior citizen
5 housing. It is going to be for, you know,
6 market rate, whatever the market will allow,
7 that's the kind of housing they want, and it
8 can go up. It's not part of the historic
9 district. It can go up as high as the
10 adjoining building at the end--not adjoining,
11 but the building at the end of the block which
12 is a commercial building, and that is--I don't
13 know, what 31 stories or something like that.
14 That's how I can go. So the proposal is to
15 sell off the library, sell the air rights to
16 the library and give us, frankly, nothing in
17 return. They haven't found a spot in Brooklyn
18 Heights that will house any part of the
19 collection. There isn't a store front that
20 they have found yet. I know that they're
21 looking, and I appreciate that, but I haven't
22 been told about anything. Now, the library
23 that the Democratic Candidate for Mayor voted
24 on in this past primary is the renovated Park
25 Slope Library. It is beautiful. They did a

1
2 really good job and they are to be applauded
3 for that. And the people in that community
4 waited a little more than three years for that
5 renovation, but they waited patiently 'cause
6 they knew at the end of the day they were
7 getting their library back in the same location
8 and there wasn't going to be luxury housing on
9 top of it. The library in Brooklyn Heights is
10 the branch that the Republican member,
11 Republican Candidate for Mayor could possibly
12 use--I don't know if he does. Alright, Joe
13 Lhota doesn't live far from there either. So I
14 think whatever happens in the next--in the
15 election in November, though I have a choice,
16 but I'm not going to share it here, that that
17 candidate who hopefully will be the new Mayor,
18 hopefully has a kind spot in his heart for
19 library. And I just want to finish my
20 testimony by saying, the Brooklyn Public
21 Library stands for Brooklyn Public Library.
22 It's not private library. I think it's bad
23 public policy to go about thinking that we
24 should sell off assets so we can fund some
25 things that ought to be funded, and it's true,

1
2 the Council time and time again has come the
3 aid of libraries, and I applaud you. We on the
4 State level, unfortunately, have not been
5 nearly as generous, but if we could get--put
6 our heads and wrap our heads together around a
7 sustained capital plan for our libraries we
8 wouldn't be faced with this terrible situation.
9 Sell off a piece here, a piece there, and what
10 they want to do in Brooklyn Heights, 'cause
11 it's just valuable property is fix that li--
12 give us something in its place and use the rest
13 of the money to patchwork some of the other
14 libraries in our borough. Frankly, listening to
15 the guy from Queens I was jealous, because they
16 have done very well. Hopefully with a new
17 borough president, new members of the Council
18 and our borough, the borough of Kings, that we
19 will do nearly as well, at least come up to
20 some of the level that the Queens people have
21 been able to exact from their elected
22 officials. I thank you for this opportunity to
23 testify.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
25 very much, Assemblywoman, and I take credit for

1
2 all that Queens library success. I taught Tom
3 Galante everything he knows. So, and I will
4 let him know what you said, Assemblywoman.
5 Assembly Member Kellner, and then we'll go to
6 the State Senate, if that's alright Senator
7 Montgomery.

8 ASSEMBLY MEMBER KELLNER: Good
9 afternoon Chairman Van Bramer, Chairman
10 Gentile, and the distinguished members of the
11 City Council. I really want to thank you for
12 providing the public the opportunity to testify
13 on this important subject matter. I'm Assembly
14 Member Micah Kellner, and it's my privilege to
15 serve as the Chair of the New York State
16 Assembly's Committee on Libraries and Education
17 Technology. New York's public libraries are
18 rightly deemed a critical element in our city's
19 reputation as the cultural capital of the
20 world. As vital public institutions, New York
21 City's public library systems are supported
22 with significant amount of tax payer dollars as
23 you so noted, a large part of that is coming
24 from the City Council each and every year. I
25 was very very proud when I was able to get a

1
2 measly four million dollars restored to the
3 state's library budget, and that was state-wide
4 money, not even just for the City. It's
5 therefore incumbent upon all of us, in
6 particular of those elected to represent the
7 public, to consider carefully how we can best
8 serve as stewards of these most, as Chairwoman
9 Millman said public of institutions. Our
10 libraries in many ways are sacred public
11 spaces, and public officials have a duty to
12 guard them, those treasured resources, just as
13 the lions stand guard over the main branch of
14 the New York Public Library. It is therefore
15 very troubling that the New York Public Library
16 has proposed a plan that will radically alter
17 it as a public institution. The 42nd Street
18 library renovation plan, until recently known
19 as the Central Library Plan, is a major real
20 estate deal consisting of the sale of the New
21 York Public Library's Mid-Manhattan Branch at
22 40th Street and 5th Avenue, and the Science
23 Industry Business Library at Madison and 34th,
24 known as SIBL, with their function and
25 circulating collections to be moved into an

1 extensively renovated and remodeled main public
2 library building. The 42nd Street library
3 renovation envisions the destruction of the
4 stacks underneath the world renowned Rose
5 Reading Room in the main public library. The
6 extensive collections that were housed in the
7 stacks have already been removed and shipped to
8 an off-site location in New Jersey. The
9 principle architect engaged by the New York
10 Public Library for this proposal, Joseph
11 Tortorella of Robert Silman Associates has
12 likened the removal of the 1,300--that's 1,300
13 steel columns that physically support holding
14 up Rose Reading Room to, and I quote, "cutting
15 the legs off the table while dinner is being
16 served." Needless to say, such a complex and
17 challenging undertaking is highly unlikely to
18 come in either on time or under budget. In my
19 not so humble opinion, the NYPL is offering New
20 Yorkers a false choice, that it must sell Mid-
21 Manhattan to finance an overhaul of 42nd
22 Street, a project unprecedented in its scope,
23 that its engineers still haven't proven they
24 can complete or risk financial ruin. Let us be
25

1 clear, the 42nd Street Library plan is not
2 about making up shortfalls in the NYPL's
3 budget, but instead entails an unalterable
4 transformation of the 42nd Street branch and a
5 fundamental shift in the New York public
6 library's mission. If this plan moves forward
7 in its current form, New York City will forever
8 be altering the nature and purpose of one of
9 our greatest, and mind you free, research
10 libraries in the world. We only have to look
11 at other recent New York Public Library
12 projects. The canary in the coal mine was the
13 sale of the much Donnell Public Library in
14 Midtown Manhattan, and what is now widely
15 considered a bad deal, the building on West
16 53rd Street Housing Donnell was sold by the
17 NYPL for a net profit of only 39 million
18 dollars to a developer who promised to build a
19 new library by 2014. That developer went
20 bankrupt. It was sold to another developer, and
21 now we're looking at a space that still has yet
22 to be built at only one third the size, coming
23 into existence hopefully in 2015. Few would
24 argue that this scenario was optimal for
25

1 library patrons, but it's one I feel will
2 replicate itself on a much larger scale with
3 42nd Street. Given the pre-existing
4 dissatisfaction with the unfolding of the
5 Donnell saga, the NYPL's troubling 42nd Street
6 library renovation plan has created wide spread
7 and vocal objections from many quarters with
8 New Yorkers who care deeply about New York
9 Public Library harboring grave concerns over
10 this untested proposal. Only after an Assembly
11 Libraries Committee hearing which raised more
12 questions than it answered for me at least, and
13 with the discovery of documents indicating that
14 a 1978 agreement between the library, the city
15 and the state bars any structural alterations
16 of the New York Public Library Central Branch
17 without prior consent from New York states, and
18 the filing of a lawsuit that resulted in a
19 temporary restraining order, did the public
20 library's leadership seem truly willing to
21 reconsider its controversial and expensive
22 plan. The NYPL has committed to looking at
23 alternatives, but they have yet to tell us
24 who's looking at those alternatives and what
25

1 alternatives those would be. Many of the New
2 Yorkers who have criticized the 42nd Street
3 library renovation plan argue that the 300
4 million dollars budgeted to the enormously
5 complex plans to remove the stacks at the main
6 library would be better spent in the public
7 interest by instead devoting a lesser sum to
8 renovating the Mid-Manhattan branch and
9 installing state of the art technology in the
10 stacks to better protect the collections. What
11 would a renovation of Mid-Manhattan look like
12 and cost one might ask. We must only look back
13 to 2003 when the NYPL itself commissioned
14 architectural firm Gwathmey Siegel and
15 Associates forever plans to renovate and expand
16 the Mid-Manhattan Library to better meet the
17 daily information needs of the thousands of New
18 Yorkers who use it every day, and mind you, 40
19 percent of the people who use Mid-Manhattan
20 come from the outer boroughs. As Gwathmey
21 Siegel noted when preparing this undertaking,
22 the Mid-Manhattan Library occupies a prime
23 location on 5th Avenue and 40th Street. With
24 dramatic overhaul of the East Midtown rezoning
25

1
2 now under consideration, I would submit that
3 this is the ideal time for the New York Public
4 Library to consider possibly selling air rights
5 to the Mid-Manhattan sites in connection with
6 the anticipated rezoning and using the proceeds
7 to renovate that vital branch. I believe they
8 have upwards of 300,000 square feet in air
9 rights they could sell. I remain one of those
10 who's unconvinced of the soundness and
11 practicality of the 42nd Street library
12 renovation proposal. What I fear most is
13 another Donnell Library scenario on a bigger
14 scale, a large complex financial and
15 architectural plan that provides unrealistic--
16 that proves unrealistic and results in a
17 significant short changing of the public
18 interest in maintaining the 42nd Street Branch
19 as the treasured resource for our great city.
20 Instead, this Council should mandate that the
21 150 million dollars appropriated for the 42nd
22 Street renovation in the City budget be used
23 only to upgrade the stacks so it remains a
24 world class and free research library. I urge
25 the members of your committee and all the

1
2 members of the City Council and of the new
3 mayoral administration to consider carefully
4 what is at stake when we contemplate a complex,
5 expensive and risky undertaking as the 42nd
6 Street renovation. As stewards of the public's
7 trust, we should look long and hard before
8 accepting assurances that the plan itself is
9 indeed in the public interest or blithely
10 assume that all will go according to plan,
11 especially in light of recent history with
12 Donnell. And I'm not alone in expressing these
13 concerns. One of the most progressive
14 magazines in the nation, in America the nation,
15 and City Journal, the flagship publication of
16 the arch conservative Manhattan Institute are
17 united in arguing that the 42nd Street Library
18 renovation proposal is an ill-considered
19 boondoggle, I think we all as New Yorkers
20 should sit up and take notice. In particular,
21 our current political leadership must remain
22 vigilant in assuring that the public--to the
23 public that the 42nd Street library renovation
24 does not become a 21st century Penn Station in
25 which the citizenry is short changed as a

1
2 result of a [inaudible 2:23:58] considered
3 attempt to update and iconic landmark of the
4 greatest city in the world. Thank you for your
5 time and letting me testify.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Senator
10 Montgomery.

11 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Yes, thank you
12 very much for giving us this time to testify as
13 public officials, although, I know that we
14 probably are the least expert, but ours is more
15 political and more personal. Let me just begin
16 by if you will allow me, I'd like to go to the
17 side a little bit. You know, one of the things
18 that--one of the statements that I believe was
19 made by Carnegie when they allocated a money
20 and buildings for libraries was that every
21 community should have a library, and indeed one
22 of the Carnegie libraries is one of the five in
23 my district. The one in particular that I want
24 raise with you off topic so to speak is the
25 Macon Street Library. Now one of the things

1 that the Brooklyn Public Library uses in their
2 annual report or they used for the 2011 annual
3 report was a wonderful photo of a section in
4 the Macon Street Library that is in my district
5 that is part of the Bedford-Stuyvesant
6 community. Unfortunately, this is the only
7 library in the BPL system that has a section
8 that is entitled the African-American Heritage
9 Center. Every other branch has eliminated the
10 African-American section. So rather than
11 seeking the input of the local Council Member
12 who made sure that the funding was actually
13 available for this African-American section and
14 that renovation, it was named for someone that
15 most people have never heard of, and he was not
16 consulted. That is Council Member Albert Vann.
17 So, I have spoken to all of the people that I
18 have, you know, met in the BPL, the officials,
19 to complain about this. I complained to you
20 and I respectfully ask that if there's any way
21 that the Council can be helpful in correcting
22 that error, I would ask that you do so. It
23 would make a huge difference to the people who
24 live in that district and who historically have
25

1
2 always depended on this library as one of the
3 main cultural institutions in the community.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, let
5 me just say, Senator, I was unaware of that,
6 but I will certainly look into it and speak to
7 BPL about it, and get back to you and let you
8 know. And again, Queens comes out shining,
9 'cause we have--

10 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: [interposing]
11 Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
13 [interposing] have the Langston Hughes
14 Community library and cultural center--

15 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: [interposing]
16 Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
18 [interposing] which is a beautiful state of the
19 art--

20 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: [interposing] I
21 agree. I've been there--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
23 [interposing] African-American Culture and
24 Heritage--

1
2 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: [interposing]
3 and you are to be commended--

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Resource
5 center.

6 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Absolutely. So
7 I thank you for allowing me to say that. I just
8 want to mention a couple of things. I know that
9 my colleagues have covered a lot of the issues
10 that I would cover, but I want to say a couple
11 of things just to make sure they don't get
12 lost. One of the things is who uses the
13 library, and why is it still important to have
14 library buildings. And why is it important for
15 the to be available to the public, no matter
16 what the income, no mater where--what
17 community. We do need a library in every
18 community, and I will tell you why. The Pew
19 Research Center has done a fairly recent study
20 or a report on who uses the libraries and the
21 fact of the matter is, as they point out there
22 is a heavy dependence on the library by young
23 people, and I can say my experience in addition
24 to having the information in this report which
25 confirms what I see, that when I go to the

1
2 libraries, if it's after school hours, those
3 libraries are teaming with young people. So it
4 is an educational institution, but it's also a
5 very important place for young people to go for
6 after school safe haven activities. So, and
7 the other thing that I want to mention is that
8 we have in the same meeting that my colleague
9 Joan Millman referred to, our soon to be
10 borough president, new borough president as
11 well as those of us who are in other less, I
12 would say, resourced positions, asked BPL
13 specifically for what will it take to--what
14 plan do we need to come up with in order to be
15 able to begin to meet the needs capital-wise as
16 well as programmatically. We need a
17 comprehensive proposal from them, not to give
18 us piece meal, this library needs that and this
19 library needs that, and those figures changing
20 by the minute. Now, some of us have asked for
21 a--for an audit of that system, which would
22 hopefully give us a better picture of just what
23 the needs are. We would--we need to be able to
24 respond to that system as an entirety as
25 opposed to on a one by one basis. Because

1
2 clearly those libraries in some of those
3 districts--well, you're Manhattan, so that--
4 Some districts will receive more resources
5 because of who represents them. I should say my
6 colleague on the end over here, his districts
7 are all going to be--his libraries are going to
8 be resourced than mine, and you can just
9 imagine why, just look at him, you can see why.
10 He is where he sits and he has resources that I
11 don't have access to. So I'm just saying, I
12 really--we need to have a way of determining
13 what a system needs in addition to what our
14 individual libraries need. And so I would hope
15 that the Council can push forward on making
16 sure that we have this kind of information, and
17 also working to eliminate this way of funding
18 that we have, which is--it's very desperate in
19 the way that libraries are funded. And lastly,
20 I would say we definitively want to maintain a
21 public system. We do not--I would hope that we
22 don't view this library system as an
23 independent institution that is available for
24 the 10 percent of those people who can afford
25 to put money in, that we should be able to fund

1
2 a system that really responds to the needs of
3 our citizens, and responds to every community
4 that we represent in our city. So with that, I
5 want to thank you again. And I want to just
6 recognize my heroes. I mean, all of you are my
7 heroes, don't get me wrong, certainly you, Mr.
8 Chairman, but certainly Councilman Gentile, who
9 we served together for many years, and my own
10 hero City Councilwoman Tish-Letitia James, and
11 Council Member Levin. So, thank you all, and I
12 really appreciate, and my Councilwoman from
13 Harlem, they also have an African-American
14 Cultural Museum in the Village of Harlem,
15 that's Schomburg.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

17 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: So we don't
18 have that in Brooklyn, but at least we should
19 be able to celebrate. I know, I know it's not
20 enough. I appreciate that, but we were on our
21 own. But we would really like to have some
22 consideration for the African-American Heritage
23 Center at the Macon Library.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.
25 Thank you very much, Senator--

1
2 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: [interposing]
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Montgomery,
5 for being here and testifying. You referenced
6 it, but I'll formally recognize Councilwoman
7 Inez Dickens from the Village of Harlem; very
8 very proud of the Schomburg, and as we are
9 Langston Hughes in Queens. And I want to ask
10 distinguished former member of the New York
11 City Council, a legend in some way, State
12 Senator Simcha Felder to say a few words.

13 SENATOR FELDER: Thank you very
14 much. I really had planned not to say anything
15 at all, but since my colleagues Senator
16 Montgomery complimented my--either my good
17 looks or my attire, the--it's not the good
18 looks. It must be the tie that I bought for
19 \$9.95 at Century 21, but having said that, I
20 think that you're never going to embarrass me
21 in any way for getting the most I can for my
22 district, for both libraries and parks and
23 anything else. I'm very proud of doing so, and
24 I pray and wish that you do just as well. So

25

1
2 I'm sure that your compliments were out of
3 jealousy.

4 [laughter]

5 SENATOR FELDER: And I am delighted
6 not that you're jealous, but that we're doing
7 well. The libraries in my district I'm proud
8 to say that every one of our children have
9 spent almost every Friday at the local library,
10 and the first green library in the City was
11 built in my district, in my former Council
12 District and current Senate District as a
13 result of the work that the City Council, my
14 colleagues here, most of whom I've served with
15 were involved with getting that done. So I
16 share the wealth, and I invite everyone one of
17 you to come to the most beautiful library in
18 the City. We're not selling any air rights
19 above it. It's the Kensington Branch, and I do
20 want to say to my other colleagues, that I am
21 not insulted by you not complimenting me in any
22 way or--[laughter] Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I would
24 like to thank all of the Brooklyn elected
25 officials for being here. I--one second

1
2 Senator. One second Senator if you would. I'm
3 just a boy from Queens, so I don't know all of
4 the dynamics of Brooklyn politics, but it seems
5 like an interesting place to hang out. Let me
6 just say that. I also wanted to say, Senator,
7 as someone who before I got elected, I worked
8 for the Queens library system for 11 years, and
9 Assemblywoman Millman and our Queens borough
10 president, current Queens borough President
11 Helen Marshall also worked in the library
12 system. In fact, she co-founded the Langston
13 Hughes Community library and cultural center in
14 the late 60's. Folks who know libraries, folks
15 who have experience in libraries know how
16 important they are, particularly to those with
17 the least in our society, and I really believe
18 that the more folks we have in public service
19 who come from libraries, the better off
20 libraries will be, because we will fight
21 forever for those institutions, 'cause once
22 you've been in them and you know them, you'll
23 never walk away from them, never. Councilwoman
24 James?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I just want

1
2 to thank all the elected officials for
3 testifying today, and I'm sure you all are
4 aware of the proposal by the Bloomberg
5 administration to remove librarians from our
6 public schools. And so if you--I obviously--I
7 have prepared a letter in opposition, and so
8 the question is, what if anything can be done
9 on the state level to fight this proposal to
10 remove librarians from our schools?

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLMAN: There's one
12 thing. I was an elementary school librarian,
13 and by state law, that is not mandated.
14 Librarians licensed, librarians are mandated in
15 the middle and in the high school level. You
16 can't run a library unless you have a licensed
17 individual, but the individual that runs an
18 elementary school library, if you're fortunate
19 enough to have a library in your elementary
20 school, can be run by the reading teacher or
21 the gym teacher, anybody who has a license.
22 And I always thought that that was a failure of
23 the system as a whole, and that comes from
24 state Ed. So if that's a letter that you would
25 like to circulate around, Councilwoman, I'd be

1
2 happy to see it, and I think it ought to not
3 only go to the Bloomberg administration, but
4 up. We ought to do a version of it to the
5 state Education Department, so that they can't
6 do that. They're asking for variants, and
7 they--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: [interposing]
9 Right.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLMAN: should not
11 get it.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So I guess
13 that's what I'm really asking, whether or not
14 the state elected officials could prepare a
15 letter to the State Ed in opposition to that
16 variant.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MLLMAN: Well, I know
18 that I certainly, and I can--I don't want to
19 speak for my colleagues right here, but I would
20 certainly, I can speak for Micah Kellner and I
21 think most of our other colleagues feel it's
22 true is what Councilman Van Bramer said. You
23 know, if you've been in a library and you've
24 worked in a library, you have a special passion

25

1
2 about them, but I know lots of my other
3 colleagues feel that strongly.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And is there
5 anything that can be done legislatively to--

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILLMAN: [interposing]
7 Well, we can--we can certainly, you know, try
8 to do--obviously the reason that they're
9 mandated, libraries are mandated on both the
10 middle school and high school level is because
11 there's legislation that's part of state law.
12 So that would be a good bill that perhaps the
13 library committee would like to put forth. I'd
14 certainly like to co-sponsor it.

15 ASSEMBLYMEMBER KELLNER: Just to
16 follow up, the other thing we can do beyond
17 legislation, and I will definitely put forward
18 that bill, Assemblywoman Millman, is the fact
19 that the regents have to come before us every
20 year to be re-authorized and re-voted upon and
21 it's something we can educate them all upon
22 about the fact that, you know, this is very
23 important that this variance does not go
24 forward. It seems, again, the Bloomberg
25 administration's stepping back from yet another

1
2 responsibility that they have failed to provide
3 and we'll do everything in our power at the
4 state level to make sure the chancellor and the
5 state education commissioner does not allow
6 this to happen.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I just
8 want to add, and I think Council Member Gentile
9 wants to say something as well, our committees
10 along with Chairman Jackson of the Education
11 Committee held a hearing on this topic last
12 year, and we couldn't be more in opposition to
13 that, so. I know Council Member Levin just
14 wants to say a quick thank you, and then we'll
15 have Council Member Gentile close out this
16 particular panel.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you
18 very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank
19 all of my colleagues in government for coming
20 to testify today and in particular I want to
21 thank Assembly Member Millman and Senator
22 Montgomery for working so closely with me and
23 Council Member James and Council Member Lander
24 on these pressing issues. You've been stalwart
25

1
2 allies and I look forward to working with you
3 in the next few years. Thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Just for
5 the record, as a result of that hearing that we
6 had, the Speaker as well as Chairman Van
7 Bramer, myself signed a letter to the State Ed
8 Department objecting to the waiver that was
9 asked for by the Bloomberg administration on
10 the school librarians. So for the record. And
11 I just wanted quickly to ask you, and you may
12 not have been here Senator when Linda Johnson
13 spoke about the Brooklyn Heights Library, but
14 part of the benefits she claims that will come
15 out of the sale of the Brooklyn Heights
16 library, is that there will be extra funding
17 available to use around the borough, like in
18 Bedstye [phonetic] at the Macon Library. So,
19 do you have any--I mean, she says that is a
20 benefit, would you agree?

21 SENATOR MONTGOMERY: Well, let me
22 just say that based on the information that was
23 provided regarding the Pacific Street Library,
24 when that one was about to be considered for
25 sale, we were told that the library expected to

1
2 receive, I think, about 10 million dollars for
3 the property, but in order to build out the so
4 called new replacement, which we don't consider
5 a replacement at all, but in order to build out
6 a new library, they would use that funding to
7 build out the library plus they would have to
8 put in an additional one million dollars so
9 that we were in fact losing money on that deal.
10 So if that's any indication of what happens
11 with other proposals to sell these buildings,
12 then clearly, it doesn't work out to be a value
13 to the system.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
16 very much all four of our distinguished elected
17 officials, and for our next panel we have four
18 individuals, if they would come to the front.
19 Mable Law representing City Comptroller John
20 Lieu. Julie Sandorf representing the Charles
21 H. Revson Foundation. Johnathon Bolles from
22 the Center for an Urban Future. And I believe
23 Michael Nepple from the New York Library
24 Association. I hope I read that right,
25 Michael. So--[off mic conversation] Mable, do

1
2 you want to start? Then we'll go to Julie,
3 Jonathan and Michael.

4 MABLE LAW: Good afternoon Chairman
5 Van Bramer, Chairman Gentile, who was here, and
6 the Committee. I'm Mable Law, I'm representing
7 City Comptroller John Liu. I apologize, he was
8 waiting to testify in person and he couldn't be
9 here up until this point. So I wanted to
10 testify on his behalf, and thank you so much
11 Chairman for letting us do that. I'm just
12 going to ready his testimony, and we provided
13 copies. Testimony of New York City Comptroller
14 John C. Liu, joint oversight hearing on the
15 capital construction needs and the potential
16 disposal of libraries in New York City,
17 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
18 International Intergroup Relations, Select
19 Committee on Libraries, New York City Council
20 September 30th of 2013. "Good afternoon
21 Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Cultural
22 Affairs Committee, and Chairman Gentile and
23 members of the Select Committee on Libraries.
24 Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to
25 present testimony today on the capital,

1
2 construction needs and potential disposal of
3 libraries in New York City. We are here to
4 talk about an issued that speaks to the heart
5 and history of the people of our City. As
6 Council Members you again face the difficult
7 decision of how to address critical funding
8 issues and the needs of your constituents in
9 various local districts throughout the city.
10 The amount of funding for programing and
11 cultural institutions and for the maintenance
12 of their buildings continues to decrease in
13 tough economic times. The administration has
14 proposed the selling of public assets in order
15 to meet capital construction needs, including
16 the disposal of some of the buildings that
17 house our public libraries. As the Comptroller
18 of the City of New York, it is my job to
19 understand investments, to understand when
20 we're making a good deal or something is being
21 sold short, and I can tell you that the selling
22 of the buildings that house our public
23 libraries trades a small short-term gain for a
24 large permanent loss. New Yorkers love their
25 libraries just like they love their schools,

1
2 and when a neighborhood is threatened with the
3 closing or sale of its library, the residents
4 mobilize to try and stop it, because losing a
5 library is a diminishment of that community and
6 the people who live there know it. One of the
7 top priorities of the voters and tax payers of
8 this city is the extension of library hours.
9 Libraries are where New Yorker of all ages from
10 toddlers to teenagers to seniors and the
11 unemployed go to learn and develop themselves,
12 to connect with other people, to join book
13 groups, and look for jobs. Earlier this year
14 my office set up an interactive website that
15 allowed New Yorkers to vote on a variety of
16 city budget proposals. We called it The
17 People's Budget. One of the top two vote
18 getters, in effect, the most popular items that
19 New Yorkers want their city government to spend
20 money on is longer library hours. The other
21 top vote getter and the connection here is
22 obvious, is adult education. We need to
23 remember that New York's public libraries are
24 among our City's crown jewels and they need to
25 be treated as such. The policy of selling

1 these assets is simply short sighted and
2 unwise. Real estate development during the
3 Bloomberg administration has been misguided and
4 we know that many neighborhoods have not been
5 treated in a socially and economically
6 responsible way. From libraries to school
7 sites to **[inaudible 2:46:00]** properties, the
8 Bloomberg administration has used its waning
9 time in office to sell some of the City's most
10 important assets to wealthy developers. This
11 trend of parceling out what rightfully belongs
12 to all New Yorkers must come to an end. The
13 libraries on Pacific Street and in Brooklyn
14 Heights should not be closed and their
15 buildings sold off to private developers.
16 These buildings should be recognized as
17 historic gems and landmarked. Buildings like
18 these cannot be replaced. Demolition, as you
19 know, cannot be reversed. Let's work together
20 to figure out a way to fix the funding problem,
21 and let's safeguard our most valuable public
22 assets so that they can continue to serve and
23 be enjoyed by future generations to come.
24 These are important public assets and we should
25

1
2 do all we can to hold onto our assets because
3 once we give them up, we can never get them
4 back. Thank you for your time."

5 [applause]

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Julie?

7 JULIE SANDORF: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon. My name is Julie Sandorf and I am
9 the President of the Charles H. Revson
10 Foundation. I want to thank Chairman Van
11 Bramer and Chairman Gentile for inviting me to
12 speak to you today. The Revson Foundation
13 operates a variety of grant programs in the
14 areas of urban affairs, education, bio medical
15 research and Jewish life in some of the most
16 innovative and far reaching projects we have
17 funded in New York City have revolved around
18 the public libraries. When Lincoln Center
19 wanted to extend its world class arts and
20 culture beyond its campus, we funded
21 performances in branch libraries across Queens.
22 And then starting in January both Queens and
23 Brooklyn systems in partnership with Lincoln
24 Center will be screening HD productions of
25 Lincoln Center performances representing a

1 performing arts partnership without precedent
2 anywhere in the world. When ReServe was
3 founded to pair retired professionals with non-
4 profit organizations, one of the most
5 meaningful ways to utilize the expertise of
6 older adults was to support the Queens
7 Library's Community Service Programs. Whether
8 the mission is technology, arts and culture,
9 education, senior services, employment, or
10 immigrant services, the unparalleled geographic
11 and programmatic breadth of New York City's
12 public libraries put them in a unique position
13 to form successful and mutually beneficial
14 partnerships with a wide range of institutions
15 and agencies across the City. From the newly
16 revamped Department of Outreach at the Brooklyn
17 Public Library to Queens' public libraries
18 interactive online job readiness assessment
19 software to New York Public libraries national
20 leadership on the issue with E-Books, New York
21 City's libraries are at the forefront of
22 organizational and technological innovations
23 aimed at expanding access to resources to as
24 many New Yorkers as possible and the Revson
25

1 Foundation has been privileged to support these
2 efforts. Some of have argued that in the
3 digital age of ipads and e-books, no one uses
4 the public library anymore. I think today it's
5 obvious that that's not true. However, when we
6 look at the data we see the absolute opposite
7 is true. According to the Center for and Urban
8 Future's Branches of Opportunity report, in
9 2011 the City's 206 branch libraries greeted
10 over 40.5 million visitors, which is more than
11 all of the City's professional and sports
12 teams, sports teams and major cultural
13 institutions combined. Our public libraries
14 are not only being used by millions of New
15 Yorkers, but the usage has reached record
16 levels. In the past decade our city libraries
17 have seen a 27 percent increase in program
18 offerings, a 40 percent increase in program
19 attendance, and a 59 percent increase in
20 circulation. Put that into perspective. New
21 York City's libraries rank in the top 10 in the
22 country in each of these categories. The
23 libraries have accomplished this while
24 simultaneously having to have their budgets cut
25

1
2 by the City. Collectively, New York City's
3 libraries fail to make the top 10 in terms of
4 local government funding, and average hours of
5 service per week when compared to other large
6 US cities. Boston, Seattle, Houston, and even
7 Detroit's libraries are open more hours per
8 week on average than our city libraries. Only
9 eight branches in all of New York City are open
10 on Sundays. This is a waste of precious
11 resources and real estate, but without a viable
12 financial strategy from the City, our libraries
13 are forced to make impossible choices. Given
14 their critical importance, locked library doors
15 seem pennywise and pound foolish. This City
16 has an invaluable resource in the public
17 libraries located in nearly every neighborhood
18 and trusted by all. In order to most
19 effectively use these incredible community
20 assets, libraries must be open more hours. In
21 fact, when the great philanthropist, Andrew
22 Carnegie, built over 100 branch libraries
23 across all five boroughs, the City of New York
24 signed the Carnegie Compact which legally
25 obligated the City to keep the libraries open

1
2 six days a week from at least 9:00 in the
3 morning 'til 9:00 at night. However,
4 currently, the City's public libraries are on
5 average open only 43 hours per week. Can you
6 imagine how many more people would be able to
7 access the vast resources and programs of the
8 library if the branches were open every evening
9 or during the weekends? Just think of the
10 recent immigrant who works all day, but
11 desperately needs to improve her English
12 language skills, or the parents who can never
13 be at home on time to take their son or
14 daughter to the library to pick out books, or
15 the student living in a tiny apartment with
16 five other people looking for a quiet place to
17 study on a Sunday afternoon. Libraries are the
18 only institutions that touch the lives of New
19 Yorkers on a daily basis. And additional 100
20 million dollars in city operating funds would
21 allow the libraries to stay open an average of
22 60 hours per week and position them to become
23 the most utilized public libraries in the
24 country. Equally as important as keeping the
25 libraries open a greater number of hours is

1
2 what we're focused on today, the library's
3 capital needs. As many of you know, the
4 capital funding process is highly discretionary
5 and byzantine, to put it mildly. The libraries
6 do not have a stable capital budget from which
7 to maintain and upgrade their facilities and
8 are heavily reliant, thankfully, on City
9 Council discretionary funds to subsidize their
10 capital needs. Consequently, branches across
11 the city are suffering from decades of neglect
12 and underinvestment. The City's three public
13 library systems as has been said, have over 1.5
14 billion dollars in construction needs,
15 including hundreds of millions of deferred
16 maintenance costs. It's as evident when you
17 walk into branches where there's no air
18 conditioning or elevator, and Brooklyn alone,
19 the branch is more than 60 years old, and there
20 are 18 Carnegie branches that were built more
21 than 90 years ago. Brooklyn libraries have
22 more than 300 million dollars in outstanding
23 maintenance needs. Since the branch libraries
24 depend largely on accumulating funds from
25 Council Member items and borough presidents to

1 repair, renovate, or build a new library, it
2 could take years to raise enough money to even
3 begin a capital project. In most cases, we're
4 not talking about extravagant upgrades. These
5 capital projects include some of the most basic
6 infrastructure needs such as fixing leaking
7 roofs, heating systems, and broken elevators.
8 These issues effect how New Yorkers experience
9 and access their libraries every day, and all
10 the while the physical problems grow worse and
11 building construction costs continue to rise.
12 Every year these necessary repairs are taking
13 money from the libraries already strapped
14 operating budget. I think Chairman Van Bramer,
15 you brought this up. We actually polled the
16 libraries to get a number, and year in and year
17 out all three systems are forced to use their
18 operating funds to address repairs that should
19 be part of the capital process. These funds
20 totaling 3.6 million a year could be used to
21 fund the library's pre-k literacy programs,
22 workshops for job seekers, but instead they're
23 being used to patch the roof. Programming book
24 and hours should not be at the expense of
25

1 building maintenance or vice versa. In fact,
2 improved conditions and renovated space
3 contribute significantly to the program's
4 success and library usage overall. The numbers
5 speak for themselves. The High Bridge Branch
6 in the Bronx, for example, saw its circulation
7 increase by 170 percent, and program attendance
8 rise by 275 percent after undergoing major
9 renovations in 2010. When we invest in the
10 upkeep of our libraries that public is able to
11 take full advantage of its many resources. The
12 current capital process has resulted in wide
13 discrepancies in capital funding between the
14 three systems and has left gaping holes in the
15 library's maintenance budget. For example,
16 between 2003 and 2012 the Brooklyn Public
17 Library received 41 dollars per person in
18 capital funding compared to 62 dollars per
19 person for New York Public and 69 per person
20 for the Queens Public Library. This is
21 unacceptable and it is the result of the
22 failure to adequately fund a city-wide capital
23 plan for all our libraries. This is not a way
24 to fund the upkeep of a vital city asset that
25

1 is in high demand. All three library systems
2 are focused on delivering the best service and
3 providing the best environment for all New
4 Yorkers, but are unable to because of lack of
5 city funding. The philanthropic community has
6 great interest in supporting the wide variety
7 of library programs and services being offered
8 to the public, but not basic infrastructure.
9 The capital funding process must be reformed.
10 The City should raise the capital allocation
11 for the libraries and help the libraries build
12 a long term capital plan to address the
13 critical maintenance issues and bring the aging
14 branches into the digital age. In some cases,
15 accumulating maintenance needs actually make it
16 cheaper to build a new branch than to fully
17 renovate an existing one. The libraries are
18 wise to consider alternatives to address its
19 crumbling infrastructure. Understanding the
20 overall limits of the City capital budget, we
21 should not ignore new potential capital sources
22 drawing from the value of deteriorating
23 facilities. If planned and executed with
24 community input and support, there are many
25

1
2 opportunities for libraries. With proper
3 safeguards and the ability to maintain a
4 library presence during construction, mixed
5 youth's development, for example, holds great
6 promise. In the 1980's when many of the City's
7 neighborhoods were devastated, City government
8 stepped up to rebuild tens of thousands of
9 units of affordable housing through the use of
10 general obligation bonds. The City's
11 commitment not only revitalized our
12 neighborhoods, but also leveraged significant
13 private financing and philanthropic resources.
14 There is no reason why the City Council and the
15 next administration could not execute a similar
16 plan for the libraries using general obligation
17 bonds. I cannot imagine a better bang for your
18 buck. All New Yorkers regardless of
19 neighborhood or borough deserve well-maintained
20 libraries and an equal opportunity to
21 education. In today's digital age rapid access
22 to information isn't a luxury, but a necessity.
23 New Yorkers need their libraries more than
24 ever. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
3 very much. Jonathan?

4 JONATHAN BOWLES: Good afternoon.
5 Thank you Chairman Van Bramer for inviting me
6 here and for all of your great advocacy and
7 support for libraries and to all your
8 colleagues on the Committee. I'm especially
9 grateful to be able to testify here because
10 it's a subject that I'm very passionate about,
11 and it's about an institution that I think is
12 one of the most important for the City's future
13 public libraries. My name is Jonathan Bowles
14 and I am the Executive Director of the Center
15 for an Urban Future. I should point out that
16 the center is not a library advocacy
17 organization, we're an independent think tank
18 that publishes report about critical challenges
19 and opportunities facing New York City. In
20 recent months, for instance, we have published
21 studies about the aging of New York's
22 immigration--immigrant population, how New
23 York's community colleges have been critical
24 platforms for economic mobility, and the
25 importance of expanding and improving workforce

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2 development programs in New York. But whether
3 we are writing about alarming skills gap, the
4 challenged facing the City's immigrants, how
5 New York must plan for the aging of the City's
6 population, or the digital divide, there's one
7 institution that come up again and again,
8 libraries. As we documented in our Branches of
9 Opportunity report earlier this year, the 206
10 branch libraries across the five boroughs have
11 become the go to places for those who lack
12 essential literacy, language, and technological
13 skills needed to get ahead today. They are
14 helping adults upgrade their skills and find
15 jobs, assisting immigrants, learn English,
16 fostering reading skills in young people, and
17 providing technology access for those who don't
18 have a computer or broadband connection at
19 home. In short, at a time when far too many
20 New Yorkers are struggling to make the
21 transition to today's knowledge economy, no
22 institution is really doing more to bridge the
23 gap than the City's libraries. I think that
24 the three library systems should be commended
25 for all that they are doing. Despite all of

1 this, the library's physical infrastructure
2 just has not kept up. Though demand for
3 library resources have never been higher,
4 branches across the city are suffering from
5 decades of neglect and under investment. The
6 City's three public library systems have over
7 1.5 billion dollars in construction needs as
8 Julie Sandorf mentioned, including hundreds of
9 millions in deferred maintenance costs.
10 Although several branches city-wide including
11 the new Jamaica Central Branch to the Bronx
12 Library Center have undergone much needed
13 renovations in recent years. Too many
14 community libraries across the five boroughs
15 remain in bad shape. Dozens of branches across
16 the city need to replace ailing mechanical
17 equipment, patch roof leaks, and ensure ADA
18 compliance to say nothing of the physical
19 upgrades that could dramatically improve the
20 services they offer to the public. The City's
21 three public library systems recognize the need
22 to reinvest in their physical infrastructure,
23 but they've gotten little help. Whereas
24 Chicago used city funding to rebuild and repair
25

1 most of its 79 branch libraries and other
2 cities such as Seattle, San Francisco, and
3 Washington D.C. have all made big public
4 investments in renovating their branch
5 libraries, there has been no similar commitment
6 to fund capital improvements in New York. A
7 big part of the problem is that the city system
8 of funding capital projects for libraries is
9 broken. All three systems receive extremely
10 small amounts in general capital allocations
11 every year and have to rely on the
12 discretionary funds of individual elected
13 officials in order to complete the lion's share
14 of work that they need done. This system has
15 created huge problems for the libraries since
16 it requires them to cobble together funds from
17 multiple sources over many different budgets.
18 While the libraries hunt for money problems are
19 left to fester leading to higher costs down the
20 line. It has also led to wide discrepancy in
21 capital funding among the three systems as
22 Julie Sandorf mentioned. This system
23 absolutely needs to change in the next
24 administration, and I know the Chairman and
25

1
2 several other members of the Council were
3 really putting that idea forth earlier today,
4 but I think because the city has been
5 underinvesting in the branches for decades if
6 not generations, the libraries are also smart
7 to look for ways to raise capital funds beyond
8 what they're likely to get from the city. To
9 be sure selling branch buildings to private
10 developers should be undertaken with extreme
11 care and caution, but in select cases doing so
12 makes sense. First, raising 50 or even 100
13 million dollars through the sale of select
14 branches would allow the libraries to make
15 strategic investments in branches across the
16 City, dramatically improving conditions and
17 services where it is needed most. [clearing
18 throat] Excuse me. Secondly, in select areas
19 co-locating branches in new residential towers
20 could be an effective way to improve services
21 even while reducing operating and maintenance
22 costs. Third, it could allow the libraries to
23 replace branches that are located in out of the
24 way areas with new libraries in high traffic
25 pedestrian corridors, thereby expanding their

1 reach in the community. The proposed--going to
2 stop there. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
5 very much, Jonathan, and Michael Neppl,
6 Director of Government Affairs and General
7 Counsel for the New York Library Association,
8 which I used to be a member of, and used to be
9 a member of the Government Relations Committee.
10 So welcome to NYLA, or New York Library
11 Association.

12 MICHAEL NEPPL: Thank you, Chairman.
13 Good afternoon, my name is Michael Neppl, and
14 as the Chairman mentioned, I am the Director
15 for Government Affairs and General Counsel of
16 the New York Library Association. I would like
17 to thank the Committee for taking my testimony
18 today and particularly thank Councilman Van
19 Bramer for your outstanding leadership on
20 behalf of the library community. I'm here
21 today to submit my testimony on behalf of our
22 over 4,000 member library systems branches,
23 library administrators, and librarians. I'll
24 keep my testimony brief, as many others have
25 spoken to the successes and challenges facing

1
2 New York State's libraries. New York's public
3 libraries provide essential services to our
4 neighborhoods and communities. During the past
5 several years chronic underfunding has robbed
6 citizens of what many view is a basic right for
7 a democratic society rooted in free thought and
8 the first amendment, the right to libraries.
9 This right is not satisfied merely through the
10 existence of a building that houses books, of
11 course. Patrons must have access to modern
12 maintained space with current technologies and
13 they must have the support of professional
14 trained staff to provide critical services
15 during full regularly scheduled hours.
16 Brooklyn Public Library's plan ensures that the
17 Brooklyn Heights residents will again have
18 access to a library worthy of the neighborhood
19 it serves, and will strengthen branches
20 throughout the system. Libraries are only able
21 to deliver on their mission to meet the
22 educational, informational and cultural needs
23 of the community when they are provided
24 adequate funding for capital and operating
25 expenses. Capital needs in particular are

1
2 immense. Consistent cuts in funding have
3 resulted in reduced hours, reduced staff and an
4 accumulation of deferred maintenance. Despite
5 these serious challenges, librarians and
6 library staff have created innovative ways to
7 continue providing critical programs and
8 assistance on which the community has come to
9 rely. Yet many libraries have reached a point
10 at which capital needs are also eroding
11 services and even the most committed library
12 staff and most efficient public library systems
13 are unable to overcome these challenges alone.
14 If policy makers accept as a premise that
15 libraries are integral to an educated, vibrant
16 and economically secure society and that our
17 participatory democracy requires an informed
18 citizenry, then it is the right of every
19 resident of New York to have unfettered access
20 to our public libraries. They are the sole
21 institutions dedicated to the freedom of thought
22 association, openness--pardon me--community
23 development and intellectual vigor for all
24 citizens regardless of age, origin, background
25 or views. To oppose any effort to enhance and

1
2 expand library services is to advocate for a
3 community devoid of character, to suppress
4 freedom of expression and to abridge free
5 thought. Failure to fully fund our libraries
6 and their capital needs is in a sense approval
7 of that position, and it is antithetical to the
8 traditions and cultural identity of New York.
9 For these reasons the New York Library
10 Association supports common sense, innovative
11 plans that enhance and expand library services
12 in response to the needs of the communities
13 they serve.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
15 all very much for your testimony. I want to
16 recognize that we've been joined by Council
17 Member and Finance Chair Domenic Recchia from
18 Brooklyn and again, thank you all for your
19 incredibly thoughtful comments and Julie
20 Sandorf already knows that she's one of my
21 favorite people in the whole world so I say it
22 all the time. But Jonathan, all the work that
23 you've done for libraries this year with the
24 ground breaking study and thank you so much
25 NYLA. And Mable, always good to see you

1
2 representing our Comptroller. So with the next
3 panel. Thank you very much to this panel. Our
4 next panel we'll hear from Eileen Muller, who I
5 hope is still here very much so, representing
6 DC 37, Brooklyn Library Guild, local 1492. And
7 Christian Zabriskie representing Urban
8 Librarians Unite, and one of my favorite
9 constituents in the whole world. And John
10 Kaiteris representing HANAC, and Davis Erin
11 Anderson, Metro New York. It's Davis Erin
12 Anderson still here? There we go, representing
13 Metro New York, who also looks like maybe a
14 constituent, correct?

15 DAVIS ERIN ANDERSON: Yes, I am.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, this is
17 my favorite panel so far, let me just say that.
18 Two constituents on this panel. So why don't
19 we start with you Davis and we'll go left to
20 right depending on which way you're looking at
21 this panel.

22 DAVIS ERIN ANDERSON: Good
23 afternoon. First of all, I'd like to thank
24 Chairs Van Bramer and Gentile for convening
25 this hearing today. My name is Davis Erin

1
2 Anderson. I'm here to speak on behalf of the
3 Metropolitan New York Library Council in
4 support of New York City's library systems. We
5 are colloquially known as Metro, and we are a
6 non-profit member services organization for
7 libraries, archives and museums in New York in
8 Westchester County. Our local public library
9 systems including NYPL, BPL, and QPL are
10 members of ours, and we work in close
11 collaboration with their staff on an issues to
12 benefit the larger community. So I'm honored
13 to be here to speak on behalf of these three
14 world class institutions. As it's been noted
15 several times through this hearing, many of our
16 City's branches are in desperate need of
17 repair. The average branch is 60 years old,
18 and at least a third are Carnegie libraries
19 build prior to 1950. BPL has deferred millions
20 of maintenance costs and of course made
21 headlines this summer when the three facilities
22 closed during the heat wave. The Mid-Manhattan
23 Library of NYPL posts the highest circulation
24 numbers in the country, which is commendable.
25 It continues to be beset by expensive

1 maintenance issues. Meanwhile the advantage of
2 increase capital funding can be seen among
3 library branches that are the recent
4 beneficiaries of modernization. As by way of
5 example QPL has force Hills Branch increase
6 program attendance by 300 percent after it
7 underwent its renovations. NYPL's Bronx
8 Library Center tripled its yearly circulation
9 and more than doubled its program attendance
10 after moving into facilities on Fordham Road.
11 Meanwhile visits to city libraries across the
12 board have increased by 40 percent since 2003.
13 It is clear that the public prefers to study,
14 learn, and gather in comfortable and usable
15 conditions. The discretionary nature of
16 funding for our libraries systems creates an
17 environment in which certain branches flourish
18 while others suffer from chronic under use.
19 Because the City's budget does not currently
20 include baseline funding for capital
21 improvements, the distribution of support is
22 more favorable to one borough over another.
23 Thus, the ability for all New Yorkers to have
24 the same opportunity to learn a new skill or
25

1 find a favorite book is curtailed. It's
2 tempting to believe that rather than investing
3 in infrastructure for our libraries, the
4 information needs of the public can be met
5 digitally, but as the President of Metro's
6 Board of Trustees Norman Jacknis notes, "We
7 live in an era of too much information and too
8 little knowledge." Our public library stands
9 as bastions against the prevalence of surface
10 level information. They provide in depth
11 resources, classes, and individual razor
12 [phonetic] attention to New Yorkers of all
13 ethnicities and married backgrounds. They are
14 a gathering place for communities and are often
15 the only port of call for 29.9 percent of New
16 Yorkers without broadband. Far from being
17 obsolete, our public libraries are in fact 21st
18 century institutions. Only with robust capital
19 funding can they continue to provide critical
20 resources to citizens who seek their
21 assistance. A vote for a significant capital
22 funding for our City's libraries is a vote for
23 the future economic and social well-being of
24
25

1
2 the citizens of New York. Thank you very much
3 for the opportunity to testify this afternoon.

4 EILEEN MULLER: Good afternoon and
5 thank you for allowing me to appear before you
6 and this committee today. My name is Eileen
7 Muller and I'm President of District Council
8 37's local 1482, which is the Brooklyn Library
9 Guild. I represent about 900 members in the 60
10 neighborhood branches across the Brooklyn
11 Public Library System. Each day these
12 dedicated hard working public servants provide
13 critical services to the people who need them
14 most, seniors, families, children, job seekers,
15 and new Americans working to become part of our
16 society. New Yorkers know that public
17 libraries are among the most valuable resources
18 our City has to offer. As a recent report,
19 which everybody is quoting today, the CUNY
20 Center for Urban Futures shows circulation
21 program attendance and program sessions in
22 these three library systems have increased
23 dramatically over the last decade. At Brooklyn
24 Public Library, our members are doing more than
25 they have ever done before. Circulation is up

1
2 77 percent. Attendance is up by 41 percent, and
3 all of this despite the unprecedented cuts to
4 the library's operating budget and a
5 significant cut in the number of front line
6 library staff, we've lost over 200 front line
7 library staff over the last number of years.
8 The City has asked its workers to do more with
9 less and the public library workers have
10 clearly done their part. But cuts to the
11 operating budget are not the only threat that
12 our libraries face. Looming on the horizon
13 like an oncoming storm are truly massive
14 capital funding needs that threaten the public
15 library buildings. In Brooklyn alone, it is
16 estimated that our system confronts roughly 230
17 million dollars in necessary repairs and
18 upgradings for the 60 neighborhood library
19 branches, some more than others, or some needed
20 more than others. These long overdue repairs
21 negatively impact the level of services that
22 our members can provide to the public. At the
23 heavily used Brooklyn Heights Branch, a
24 malfunctioning air conditioning system meant
25 that the public's service hours were severely

1
2 curtailed this summer. A number of our
3 branches had to be closed repeatedly because
4 the buildings were simply not safe for the
5 public or the workers during the summer heat
6 wave. At other branches throughout the system,
7 the public and the library workers who serve
8 them have to contend with broken shelving
9 units, shoddy furniture, inadequate lighting
10 and ventilation. When renovations are done and
11 they do--and begin, the work often takes far
12 longer than originally expected. Denying the
13 community's full library services for years at
14 a time. The lack of adequate public--the lack
15 of adequate capital funding inconveniences the
16 public. It lowers the employee morale, and in
17 this City, the City of New York, which is the
18 richest city and the richest country in the
19 world, for some reason we can't provide and
20 maintain our public library buildings. I feel
21 that this is a disgrace. It needs to be fixed
22 as soon as possible. Unlike operating budgets
23 were are based on the needs of the libraries
24 each year, capital monies are largely dependent
25 upon the discretion of the individual City

1 Council members or Borough President.
2
3 Unfortunately, their efforts haven't come close
4 to keeping up with the needs. Again, according
5 to the CUNY study cited above, from 2003 to
6 2012, Brooklyn Public Library was given about
7 101 million dollars for capital projects, the
8 lowest of the three library systems. That
9 comes out to be about 40 dollars and 50 cents,
10 although the person from that center quoted 41
11 dollars, but that's what we calculated it at.
12 Library management and some elected officials
13 have proposed to deal with the problem by
14 selling lucrative properties to private
15 developers. Tearing down the old library
16 buildings and putting up new branches in the
17 ground floor of new luxury condos, while Linda
18 Johnson might say it's not going to be a luxury
19 condo, that's what we believe it might be. At
20 first glance, this approach might look like a
21 win/win for everyone involved, but the new
22 branches would be far smaller than ones that
23 they are replacing, and the communities that
24 would be directly affected will be out of their
25 branches for many years. This approach is

1 short-sided, and it doesn't get to the root of
2 the problem, the inadequate and haphazard way
3 we are providing capital funding to our
4 libraries. It doesn't have to be this way. As
5 other cities have shown, we can take meaningful
6 steps towards solving the capital funding
7 project without selling off our cultural
8 inheritance to the highest bidder. In San
9 Francisco and Seattle voters have repeatedly
10 approved bond issues to renovate and
11 reconstruct almost all of their library
12 buildings in each of those cities. These
13 projects have been a resounding success and
14 today, both cities have seen--are seen as
15 leaders of the public library system. If San
16 Francisco and Seattle can do it, why can't we?
17 New Yorkers love their libraries and they'll do
18 what it takes to support what has become a
19 truly indispensable service. I'd also like to
20 take this opportunity right now to directly--to
21 direct at all of you Intro 1050, which is a
22 bill right now in front of City Council to give
23 baseline funding through the two percent of the
24 real estate tax that is being collected right
25

1
2 now. It's not an increase in tax, but it is an
3 opportunity for libraries to be funded fully in
4 a baseline way. So, thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
6 very much, Eileen, and the only thing you left
7 out is the fact that I am the prime sponsor of
8 that--

9 EILEEN MULLER: [interposing] I'm so
10 sorry Jimmy--

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
12 [interposing] piece of legislation.

13 EILEEN MULLER: [interposing] you
14 certainly are. You certainly are.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: To fully
16 fund our libraries and baseline library funding
17 and of course, if that were to happen, we would
18 realize a huge influx in funding for libraries
19 city-wide.

20 EILEEN MULLER: Yep.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: A huge
22 influx. So I am proud to be the prime sponsor
23 of that legislation. I think we have like 34
24 co-sponsors--

1
2 EILEEN MULLER: [interposing] Yes,
3 we do.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: in the New
5 York City Council at this point. So we look
6 forward to ending this ridiculousness where we
7 fight for library funding every year once and
8 for all.

9 EILEEN MULLER: As I tell you,
10 Jimmy, I'm not a great dancer, but I would very
11 much love to take this on and get it passed.
12 So, and stop the budget dance.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If we'll
14 ever dance together, let's let it not be about
15 library funding. How about that?

16 EILEEN MULLER: Very good.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Christian
18 Zabriskie?

19 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: Good afternoon.
20 Thank you very much for having me here today.
21 I appreciate your time and of course, the
22 support that libraries have gotten from the
23 City Council for many, many years now. My name
24 is Christian Zabriskie, and I am the Executive
25 Director of Urban Librarians Unite, a 501 C3

1 not for profit organization dedicated to
2 promoting urban libraries, developments in
3 library science in urban areas, librarians in
4 the City, and any library at risk. We have
5 been fighting for and advocating for libraries
6 in New York City for more than four years now.
7 None of our staff are paid, and we have
8 hundreds of volunteers who have dedicated their
9 time to not only advocacy for public libraries
10 during the annual budget dance, but also to
11 supporting school librarians for our public
12 school systems and direct disaster response to
13 hurricane Sandy. I personally have been a
14 public librarian for more than 12 years and
15 have served in almost every capacity that a
16 public librarian can work in that time short of
17 Library Director. I and my members are
18 frontline library workers and advocate, and we
19 have been speaking up for libraries for years
20 now. I'm here today to endorse the plans, the
21 Brooklyn Public Library and New York Public
22 Library have put forward to sell a very limited
23 number of problematic buildings to address
24 capital budget shortfalls, and update service
25

1
2 areas for the best library resources for our
3 communities. I am making this endorsement
4 coming at this issue from the perspective of a
5 library scientist in seeking best practices for
6 facilities and financial administration.
7 Librarians are a very pragmatic profession. We
8 are interested in service over all, and these
9 plans offer the best possible service within
10 the current situation. Would it be nice if we
11 were not in the position where there were these
12 high levels of capital budget shortfalls and
13 maintenance needs? Yes, of course it would be,
14 but we are not in that position, so from a
15 library professional perspective, any other
16 discussion off this point is moot. The best
17 service to the most people is the driving
18 purpose of the public library. These plans
19 represent the best solutions possible and are
20 the result of hard decisions made by
21 experienced professionals. Some of the primary
22 points of this debate bear discussion here,
23 again, from alliance, a library science
24 perspective. NYPL Central library plan has
25 been hotly debated, but at its core, it is a

1 strong plan to take a library that is the
2 proviso of tourists in a dedicated but
3 relatively small user group of scholars and
4 turn it into a functioning community library
5 which will return its research service--which
6 will retain its research services while
7 providing the neighborhood with a far better
8 library for the people who actually live and
9 work in that community. It is worth noting
10 that as I did--

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

13 [interposing] Excuse me. Christian, hold on one
14 second. I would just like to ask for respect.
15 If you disagree with what Christian is saying.
16 You are certainly entitled to disagree with
17 him, but you are not entitled to a reaction
18 that disrespects his viewpoints on this issue.
19 Every single person who has signed up, and
20 there are more than 30 people yet to go, will
21 have their opportunity to speak to this issue,
22 but I ask and I demand that everyone be
23 respectful of every single person who's
24 testifying regardless whether you agree with
25 them or disagree with them. Thank you.

1
2 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: It is worth
3 noting that as I did research into this topic,
4 I found that there has been a vocal minority
5 that has hated the 42nd Street New York Public
6 Library building from its beginning designs
7 right through every significant renovation or
8 design change that has taken place to the
9 present day. Brooklyn Public Library has
10 significant capital budget shortfalls and
11 considerable physical plant requirements. It
12 is nice to romanticize libraries and our grand
13 buildings, but the reality of the working
14 librarian is that our spaces need to be used
15 constantly, and they are. If our library is
16 functioning well, we have people coming in and
17 out, people doing things, reading, working on
18 their computers, creating things every moment
19 of every day. With that level of traffic we
20 cannot have HVAC systems that are shot. We
21 can't have buildings that are falling apart.
22 It is not safe for staff and is not fair to our
23 patrons. The Brooklyn plan provides the best
24 results for the most number of people as a
25 solution to a problem which has been developing

1
2 for years. While the operating budgets for
3 libraries have been cut and restored due to the
4 incredibly hard work of our public officials
5 and their courage, the library capital budgets
6 have not been so fortunate. This crisis has
7 been building for a long time and pre-dates the
8 administration at either Brooklyn Public
9 Library or New York Public Library. These are
10 hard decisions which represent best efforts to
11 solve real problems. If you're ever interested
12 in the financial records of any of the three
13 libraries, they're all publicly available. I
14 regularly look at them myself, and there really
15 isn't a lot of mystery. There has been a lot
16 of controversy around these plans. It is too
17 bad that there has not been as much controversy
18 around the capital budget shortfalls which have
19 brought us to this place. We at ULU have been
20 advocating and pushing for library budgets for
21 years now. It has been a long and lonely fight
22 and it is disappointing to see people attacking
23 the libraries instead of pushing for an
24 infusion of capital funding and calling for
25 baseline funding to stabilize annual operating

1
2 expenditures. Our libraries cannot grow
3 without investment, and until such time is
4 there a budget priority, the libraries will be
5 forced to seek whatever solutions they can to
6 provide the best service to the most New
7 Yorkers. Thank you for your time today.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: John?

9 JOHN KAITERIS: Thank you. Chairman
10 Van Bramer and members of the Committee, I
11 appreciate the opportunity to testify today.
12 My name is John Kaiteris and I am the Executive
13 Director of HANAC, a New York based
14 multifaceted social services organization
15 founded in 1972 to serve the needs of
16 vulnerable populations throughout New York
17 City. Today I'm here to testify on the
18 construction capital needs of the New York
19 City's public libraries. The New York Public
20 Library serves the needs of thousands of not
21 for profit organizations throughout the City.
22 The library is a vital educational resource and
23 allows organizations like HANAC to
24 educationally and culturally empower
25 individuals who otherwise may not have access

1 to such facilities and opportunities. HANAC
2 benefits tremendously from its relationship
3 with the New York Public Library. Our
4 organization runs its ESL, English as a second
5 language program, using critical library
6 resources. This program affords recent
7 immigrants the opportunity to learn English and
8 become productive integrated members of our
9 city. The New York public libraries planned
10 renovation will significantly expand its
11 ability to deliver essential educational
12 services while maintaining the integrity and
13 reputation of its world class research
14 facilities. Further, among the benefits of the
15 library's planned renovation is that the
16 flagship 42nd Street facility, the Stephen A.
17 Schwartzman building will be open seven days a
18 week for more than 12 hours on most days. This
19 enables a very diverse citizenry, those with
20 varying job, family, and travel demands to
21 enjoy the vast benefits of the library and all
22 it has to offer. This is particularly relevant
23 for our City's immigrant communities in which
24 many individuals work multiple jobs and find it
25

1
2 hard to utilize such resources on a more
3 constrained schedule. It is for these reasons
4 and many more that HANAC fully supports the
5 renovation of the New York Public Library's
6 planned renovation of its flagship 42nd Street
7 location, the Stephen A. Schwartzman building.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
10 very much to all of you on this panel, and I
11 appreciate all the viewpoints. Eileen and
12 Christian are two of my favorite in the whole
13 world. They offered very different testimony
14 here today, but I think I love fighting for
15 libraries with both of you. I love fighting
16 for library workers with both of you, and one
17 day we will overcome this, and our libraries
18 will be treated and funded the way they should,
19 rightly so, and I know that we'll get the
20 capital funding right as well. So I just want
21 to say thank you to each of you, and for
22 fighting for libraries, for believing in
23 libraries and for your advocacy on the behalf
24 of the entire library community. So thank you
25 all very, very much. And our next panel--and I

1 do want to reiterate we do have 30 more people
2 who are signed up to speak. So I encourage
3 folks to consolidate testimony--thank you,
4 Eileen--if you have testimony that you've
5 prepared. But the next group we're going to
6 hear from a lot of community advocates now
7 about these plans, and the first is Elliot
8 Hurwitt. Is Elliot Hurwitt here? Elliot.
9 Christabel Gough, I would say, Christabel
10 Gough. Is Christabel here? Thank you. And is
11 Nadhezda Williams from HDC still here? I don't
12 know. Yep. Got it. Okay. One moment, we're
13 just--we're going to adjust the air
14 conditioning level, I think, in the room, and--
15 and I want to thank Council Member Levin and
16 Council Member Dickens. This is hour four of
17 this hearing, and bear with us. So I want to
18 thank them and thank everyone here for waiting
19 to have your say. So why don't we start again
20 with Nadezhda, and then we will work our way
21 towards this end of the table.

23 NADEZHDA WILLIAMS: Hello, my name
24 is Nadezhda Williams. I'm with the Historic
25 Districts Council and also a Woodside resident.

1 So thank you Council Member Van Bramer for
2 holding this hearing. HDC is the advocate for
3 New York City's designated historic districts
4 individual landmarks and structures meriting
5 preservation. The topic of libraries from the
6 great--excuse me--from the drastic New York
7 Public Library's Central library plan to the
8 needless demolition of local branches is a
9 subject of great concern to many New Yorkers.
10 Libraries play a pivotal role in most New York
11 neighborhoods. They serve as learning centers,
12 community anchors and safe public spaces. They
13 are landmarks in the truest sense of the word,
14 and New York City is fortunate to have a
15 remarkable architectural collection to house
16 these essential services. HDC has grave
17 concerns about the central library plan.
18 Assembly Member Kellner covered it quite well,
19 and you see that in the long version of our
20 testimony, but we also are very concerned about
21 plans to sell library branch buildings to
22 developers. It's a key element of the Central
23 Library plan and a troubling part of almost all
24 of the library system's proposals. We have seen
25

1
2 how poorly this scheme worked at the Donnell
3 Library, and HDC has particular concern for the
4 Pacific Branch Library. The first branch
5 building constructed in Brooklyn with money
6 from Steel Magnet Andrew Carnegie, and the
7 disturbing trend that could start in throwing
8 away these historic buildings rather than
9 adapting them for use today. In 1901, Carnegie
10 gave what then was a tremendous amount of money
11 of 5.2 million dollars for the construction of
12 branches throughout the City. And we can still
13 boast the largest collection of Carnegie
14 Libraries of any city in the county. Of the 67
15 built, 57 branches are still standing.
16 Unfortunately most of them are not landmarked,
17 and so they are not protected. The Carnegie
18 branches are beautiful structures built with
19 fine materials by the top architects of the day
20 and sumptuous styles. They were designed to be
21 centerpieces of their communities both
22 physically and intellectually. These were not
23 libraries in the basement of someone else's
24 luxury residence as today's projects are. They
25 were and still are elegant homes of learning

1
2 for all. When Carnegie sought to donate much
3 of his wells to worthy causes, he made a clear
4 distinction between philanthropy and charity,
5 and Carnegie only favored the former with no
6 interest in helping those who are not
7 interested in helping themselves. The
8 construction of public libraries was a perfect
9 use for his philanthropy. He required the
10 towns and cities receiving those donations to
11 invest in these projects also. They had to
12 find the funding for the land, books, and the
13 staff for these libraries. If the City allows
14 selling these buildings to developers, it would
15 symbolize that New York City is no longer
16 interested in improving itself. Carnegie's
17 forethought has withstood the test of time.
18 Since their establishment, New York's libraries
19 have served the public in a variety of ways,
20 but always increasing the public's access to
21 knowledge. As our information bases society
22 continues to evolve, the libraries play an
23 increasingly important role as evidence by
24 their growing use in recent years. The public
25 must increase its investment in them because

1
2 they are too important to our city and our
3 culture to allow market driven forces and
4 private boards to be solely responsible for
5 their guidance. Leaving this essential service
6 to the mercy of the economy will create a
7 leaner meaner system, exactly the wrong thing
8 for a library system to be. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
10 very much for being the first one on the clock
11 and for coming under. My constituents are
12 incredibly efficient.

13 NADEZHDA WILLIAMS: I'm at LPC every
14 Tuesday, so I know my three minute rule.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you
16 go. You timed it well. Woodside is proud of
17 you.

18 CHRISTABEL GOUGH: Hello, I'm
19 Christabel Gough. Thank you for pronouncing my
20 name right, which is rare. And I'm speaking
21 for the Society for the Architecture of the
22 City, a small all volunteer historic
23 preservation advocacy group. So we have a two
24 fold concern with the preservation of historic
25 library buildings and with the availability of

1
2 services which we frequently use to research
3 our testimony before the landmarks commission.
4 As was discussed at the recent hearing on the
5 operating budget, administration cuts followed
6 by usually partial restorations. The dance, as
7 it is called, has taken a huge toll on all
8 three of our struggling library systems.
9 Delaying routine maintenance in order the pump
10 the costs of delayed maintenance into the
11 capital budget is a costly practice, costly in
12 tax payer dollars and costly in terms of
13 damaged amenities for users. In recent years,
14 however, things have got worse. Now, these ill
15 maintained and struggling branch libraries such
16 as Mid-Manhattan are deemed shabby by the
17 millionaire and billionaire trustees of some of
18 our library systems in places where real estate
19 values have skyrocketed to such an extent that
20 rosters of branch libraries have becoming
21 alluring real estate portfolios, and library
22 administrative staff include former financial
23 industry executive like David Offensend and
24 former economic development corporation
25 executives like my recent neighbor Josh

1 Nachowitz. Consequently proposals to sell
2 branch library buildings for real estate
3 development are mushrooming, usually with some
4 attempt to create an appearance of public
5 benefit by promising sparkling new premises
6 located in the less valuable basements and
7 lower floors of luxury towers. How this works
8 in practice is well illustrated by the Donnell
9 sale fiasco in Manhattan where collections were
10 dismantled, usable space reduced to a fraction
11 of its former dimension, and the new library is
12 still not open years later. We oppose the
13 branch library sell off. It does not really
14 solve the underlying funding problem. It wastes
15 public resources and it destroys fine historic
16 buildings that have been loved by generations
17 of readers and bibliophiles, and if I have a
18 few more seconds, I'd just like to comment on
19 what you've heard so much about today, non-
20 public space. The fact that the public is not
21 admitted to a space does not mean that it isn't
22 usable and important to the public. The place
23 where books are stored are vital to a library,
24 which still we have to have balance. We need
25

1
2 digitization. We need books. Many, many
3 people want to read books, prefer to read
4 books. So to say that New York Public is
5 increasing its public space is a little
6 uncertain to me.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, I
8 thank you very much for your testimony. I do
9 want to say I'm not sure we need to mention
10 staff of the libraries and I think Josh
11 Nachowitz, for example, used to be a City
12 Council Staff person and was Counsel to this
13 committee in prior administration and while I
14 know he went to work for EDC, I'm not sure
15 calling him out like that is appropriate. He
16 is a library staffer and a former council
17 staffer, so I think the extent to which we
18 don't get personal or mention people's personal
19 names is probably appreciated by all. So why
20 don't we hear from the next panelist.

21 ELLIOT HURWITT: Yes, my name is
22 Elliot Hurwitt, and in risk of personalizing
23 this I will thank the committee and Chairman
24 Van Bramer in particular for introducing that
25

1
2 proposal 1050 for full funding of the library.
3 That's a great thing to hear.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Elected
5 officials are always appropriate targets.
6 Staff people not so much.

7 ELLIOT HURWITT: My name is Elliot
8 Hurwitt. I am representing myself and the
9 Little Italy Neighbors Association from the
10 remote and forgotten borough of Manhattan. My
11 local branch is the Mulberry Street branch
12 which is one of the newest and a terrific
13 facility. I lived in that neighborhood for
14 nearly 30 years, without having my own library
15 branch. However, I am a professional
16 historian. I frequently use the 42nd Street
17 main branch library, the Schaumburg Center for
18 Studies and Black Culture and the Performing
19 Arts Library at Lincoln Center, all of which as
20 we know are being starved and under funded.
21 The loss of curatorial expertise as senior
22 librarians are phased out with buy out plans,
23 particularly performing arts library. It's
24 tragedy. There is a great loss of cultural
25 memory that cannot be made up for by databases

1
2 or search engines contrary to what you may have
3 heard from a lot of data heads, especially on
4 the West Coast, books and original reference
5 materials and research materials, archives,
6 manuscripts really are the name of the game.
7 They're what we need. We need more books. A
8 book is like a home cooked meal. It's an
9 object of love. As are our libraries. The
10 main library branch at 42nd Street is a
11 masterpiece by Carrere and Hastings; the stacks
12 are integral to it. They are part of a great
13 design built in a golden age of architecture
14 and the arts. Ours is a golden age perhaps of
15 science and technology and medicine, but
16 frankly, I don't think we have better
17 architects than they had then. Any more than
18 we have better composers of symphonies or
19 better poets than they had then, quite the
20 contrary. The new library spaces that have
21 been built and proposed, for example the new
22 Donnell Library is essentially an auditorium
23 shell or amphitheater leading to nowhere in
24 space that will have very little room for
25 books. The existent south court area in the

1
2 42nd Street library, the auditorium is great,
3 but most of the public space doesn't work. It
4 has a vast empty atrium and a very frightening
5 staircase that the senior citizens comprise
6 most of its usership refuse to use; they use
7 the elevator. So this is all very badly
8 designed and advised. Having corporate
9 advisors calling the shots on things like this
10 and hiring these very expensive, but not very
11 good architects is a terrible waste of our tax
12 payers money, and they're taking this in the
13 wrong direction.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
15 very much. You came in right at three minutes.
16 I appreciate that. I do want to thank you for
17 your thoughts on this very important issue. I
18 appreciate you coming down and waiting to
19 speak, and we'll call the next panel. And
20 because seemingly every panel has to have a
21 constituent of mine, Jeff Kressler will be the
22 first one. It looks like SJ Avery, perhaps.
23 SJ Avery, Shelley Hagan--is Shelley Hagan still
24 here? And--fast, you thought that was fast?
25 It's almost four hours into the hearing. And

1 Irene Van Slyke, is Irene Van Slyke here?

2 Okay. So these will be the next four. And--
3 why don't we start with--is it Irene Van Slyke.

4 IRENE VAN SLYKE: Oh, you're going to
5 start with me first?

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, we
7 Van's have to stick together.

8 IRENE VAN SLYKE: I know it.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There
10 aren't that many of us.

11 IRENE VAN SLYKE: Well there's a
12 bunch of us. My name is Irene Van Slyke. I'm a
13 member of Save the Pacific Library. The
14 Pacific, I just want to shorten, but--

15 [off mic conversation]

16 IRENE VAN SLYKE: It's on, yeah,
17 that's what I--to convince you to vote against
18 anything or work against selling the Pacific
19 Street Library.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Can we
21 start the clock?

22 IRENE VAN SLYKE: Okay. The Pacific
23 Library building is of great historic
24 significance and is treasured by the residents
25

1
2 just real estate investors on those boards and
3 maybe people who are familiar with libraries or
4 what the needs are. And the other thing is
5 that the proposed merger, I think that Brooklyn
6 should keep its own library system. I don't
7 know what the benefit would be. I looked at
8 the Brooklyn Library strategic plan which says
9 to create a new fully consolidated and shared
10 library technical services team to reduce the
11 Brooklyn Public Library's operating expenses.
12 I don't know why they called out the Brooklyn
13 Library's system as needing to be cut. So,
14 that's basically all I have to say. Thank you.

15 JEFFERY KROESSLER: Good afternoon,
16 I'm Jeffery Kroessler. I am a librarian at
17 John Jay College of Criminal Justice in CUNY.
18 I am also an urban historian. I was the
19 historian for the Queens Library centennial,
20 and my MA thesis at the Queens College Library
21 School was titled, *One Staff Two Branches*,
22 about the fiscal crisis and the public
23 libraries. I want to compliment the City
24 Council for having a level of funding to the
25 libraries that is spectacular compared to the

1
2 fiscal crisis of the 1970's, but in the 1970's
3 there was never any talk of closing libraries.
4 In the 1970's the goal--or selling off
5 libraries as assets. In the 1970's the
6 struggle was to maintain and expand the public
7 realm. In 2013 we seem to see the public realm
8 as an asset to be monetized, and I think that
9 is a change in our political culture, which is
10 a kind of decay from the urban liberalism that
11 we struggled to maintain in the 1970's and
12 succeeded. The way the libraries recovered
13 after 1980 is magnificent and admirable. That
14 they are in a structural problem today is
15 embarrassing. And in the fiscal crisis it was
16 the urban crisis, New York is failing. Today,
17 it's a structural crisis where we're just not
18 funding libraries in the middle of the biggest
19 real estate recovery in the City's history. So
20 there is a mismatch there, and I have to think
21 the sale of libraries is intentional. SIBL and
22 Mid-Manhattan are being closed, but I want to
23 remind that these were created after the fiscal
24 crisis as a solution to the library's problems.
25 Now they look at SIBL and Mid-Manhattan as

1
2 problems that need a solution, and will
3 retrench in Central Library. This is not the--
4 this is not an improvement in public library
5 service, not matter what they say. The sale of
6 libraries is a short term solution. I want to
7 use the analogy of--we say that a church is not
8 the building. It's the congregation and it's
9 the spirit of those who worship. However,
10 don't we deserve an inspiring space in which to
11 worship, and in the same way, a library
12 deserves an inspiring space, a free standing
13 building, not a room in a luxury tower, which
14 is where we're going with some of this. My
15 three year old niece, year ago I'm walking
16 through the neighborhood with her, and we're
17 looking at things, and she says, "Uncle Jeff,
18 that's my public library." The building she
19 pointed to was the Pacific Branch all those
20 years ago, and that to me is what we ought to
21 be preserving. Thank you.

22 SJ AVERY: My name is SJ Avery. Thank
23 you very much for the opportunity to testify at
24 this hearing. I'm the Co-Chair of the Fourth
25 on Fourth on Avenue Committee of the Park Slope

1 City Council and a trustee of that
2 organization. I've lived for 30 years on a
3 block adjacent to Fourth Avenue about six
4 blocks away from the Pacific Branch Library at
5 Fourth and Dean, and one of the rewards of
6 going late especially in this particular panel
7 is you have the absolute terrific lead-in of
8 the previous speakers. My--I'm going to divert
9 from my testimony to really raise sort of three
10 issues. One is I don't think--I think it's
11 important to not underestimate the firestone
12 that was created when Brooklyn Public Library
13 system said we are planning on selling the
14 Pacific Branch Library, contrary to what was
15 said today, it wasn't like gee, we've been
16 kickin' this idea around, what do you think
17 folks? It was a statement at a public meeting.
18 This was our plan. That was--the public
19 meeting was held in January and by March the
20 City Council had submitted applications for
21 landmark designation, and a number of groups
22 from the--all of the representatives we saw
23 here today as well as Brooklyn Community Board
24 Six, Boerum Hill Association, Project Height's
25

1
2 Neighborhood Development Council, Brooklyn
3 Independent Democrats had all written
4 resolutions supporting the land marking of the
5 library. I'd also--I'd like to add onto what
6 your colleague or my colleague said here that
7 you're right in saying that a library is more
8 than a building, but that building is
9 critically important to one's sense of space
10 and a sense of place, and for 30 years I've
11 felt that the Pacific Branch Library, which has
12 been there for over 100 years, is part of my
13 sense of place and in worst financial crisis
14 than we see now. The last issue is
15 transparency, which isn't really something
16 we've talked about specifically. One of the
17 things that has made so many of us suspicious
18 and really impedes the funding of the library
19 is the fact that the way library monies are
20 spent, and those particular branches that are
21 chosen to receive funding, and I don't begrudge
22 them the funding. God knows we all need it, but
23 it's capricious; it's random. There is no
24 rhyme or reason to the local community
25 advocates. So if we move forward with this

1
2 bigger idea, thinking out of the box as my
3 wonderful Brooklyn posse has suggested,
4 transparency needs to be a key component of
5 that new thinking. Thank you.

6 SHELLEY HAGAN: My name is Shelly--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

8 [interposing] Why don't you take the mic a
9 little bit closer to you.

10 SHELLEY HAGAN: Yeah, thank you. My
11 name is Shelly Hagan. I live in Brooklyn. I
12 know I'm supposed to leave two copies of my
13 testimony, but I'm not leaving two laptops.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's
15 okay.

16 SHELLEY HAGAN: My brother, sister,
17 and I were children in the 1950s. We lived in
18 a small town in Washington State and spent all
19 our time playing in the woods. We went to
20 school in a passive way. We weren't studious.
21 We were enduring. There were a couple hours
22 'til lunch and recess and then a couple more
23 and we got out for the day. We walked home.
24 We took our time exploring along the way, often
25 finding a new specimen to add to the natural

1
2 collections we stashed in various places around
3 the house. Halfway on the trip home was the
4 Madina [phonetic] store, a little grocery post
5 office. The avuncular owner was a well-known
6 birder who would ID feathers and dead birds we
7 had found. We had money. We earned 25 cents a
8 week for chores we did around the house. Even
9 though we were indiscriminate in the presence
10 of sugar we shopped carefully at the candy
11 counter. If your budgeting five cents a day,
12 you have to think a little about the best
13 value. Wax syrups, red hots, lemon drops,
14 tootsie rolls, licorice, popsicles, the excess
15 calories bore us the dawdling last mile home.
16 We carried our empty lunch boxes. I don't
17 remember carrying books. We really didn't have
18 homework. When we got home we changed from our
19 uniforms into jeans and headed into the woods.
20 My sister and her best friend knew all about
21 Lewis and Clark. I don't think they had read
22 the actual diaries, as irresistible as the wild
23 grammar and spelling in the journals are, but
24 they'd read enough about the great explorers to
25 launch and lead a series of expeditions in

1
2 their name. We built a number of forts and
3 kept a variety of tadpoles, newts, frogs, and
4 snakes under observation. My sister was widely
5 admired for amassing the largest bird's nest
6 collection anyone had ever seen outside of the
7 Natural History Museum in Seattle. We scorned
8 study. We had heard of college and were
9 dumbfounded at the very idea. Who would go
10 when they didn't have to? We knew we wouldn't.
11 We were fulfilled away from school. We were
12 good at finding animals and feeding them in
13 secret until they became attached to us and
14 could be presented to our parents who had
15 proven themselves incapable of separating a
16 tremulous little boy or girl from his or her
17 orphan bunny, chick, kitten, hamster. As we
18 got bigger so did our animals. Our sister won
19 a scholarship one summer to Forwin's [phonetic]
20 camp in the San Jaun Islands where she fell in
21 love with a beautiful white mare named Misty.
22 We had read and re-read *Misty of Chincoteague*,
23 the Marguerite Henry book about the wild horses
24 of Chincoteague and the beautiful white mare,
25 Misty.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

[interposing] Ms. Hagan?

SHELLEY HAGAN: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think you're over three minutes. So I think I'm going to ask you--if you'd like for the rest of your testimony to be in the record, submit it in writing or email it to us, as I think we have to move on. There are still about 15 or 20 more people yet to testify, and I want them to be able to say their three minutes as well. So, I want to--

JEFFERY KROESSLER: [interposing]

Councilman?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes?

JEFFERY KROESSLER: May I add something?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Although now you're over your three minutes as well.

JEFFERY KROESSLER: I'm over my three minutes, but Nadezhda had 18 seconds left over. Thank you Nadezhda.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did she give it to you?

1 JEFFERY KROESSLER: Yeah, she did.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: **[inaudible**
3 **3:55:25]** to sunny side, nice. I like that.

4 JEFFERY KROESSLER: I was struck by
5 the comments of the three library chairs about
6 their one billion dollar shortfall in
7 maintenance, deferred maintenance funds, and I
8 just want to point out that I did the math, and
9 the one billion dollar shortfall roughly equals
10 the City's investment in Yankee Stadium, City
11 Field, and Barclay Center. Just for the math.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think
14 it's a point well made. I like the clapping.
15 I don't--you know, some people don't like the
16 clapping. I like the clapping. I just don't
17 like the boos or the hisses, but the clapping
18 you can do. I couldn't agree with you more,
19 and I'm proud not to have been a part of any
20 one of those three deals. And I despite the
21 fact that I'm a Met fan, and I do want to--and
22 I just went back and read my opening statements
23 since two people on the panel references it and
24 I did say that the buildings that house
25

1
2 libraries are important. Right? That was--it
3 was an unqualified line. The buildings which
4 house libraries are important. So I agree with
5 both of you about that. So to be fair to
6 everyone else who is now waiting over four
7 hours to testify, I want to go to the next
8 panel, but thank you all very very much.
9 Michael D. D. White, Citizens Defending
10 Libraries. Thank you Jeff. Yuki Anu
11 [phonetic] is that--thank you very much. Do I
12 have that name right, Yuki Anu--Citizens
13 Defending Libraries. Maybe Patty Hagan? Patty
14 Hagan? Good. Paul Ness, Paul? And I'm going
15 to get this one wrong, Carolyn--is that
16 Macintyre? Carolyn Macintyre, it is. I could
17 see it in there. I could see it in there.
18 Alright. [off mic conversation] Why don't we
19 start--Michael, why don't you start, and then
20 we'll go that way.

21 [off mic conversation]

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Michael, why
23 don't you go ahead and start. If the light's
24 on, it's on.

25

1
2 MICHAEL WHITE: Sorry. So we are
3 under the three minute clock unfortunately. I
4 have a lot of testimony. I have selected one
5 letter to go with. It's not going to come in
6 under the three minutes. I have nine points in
7 it on the subject of transparency, and
8 basically the point of that letter is that due
9 to the total lack of information that the City
10 Council has, you're hampered to almost a point
11 of incompetence in terms of reviewing and the
12 decisions that need to be made. We thought a
13 little bit about how the tone of this letter
14 should be set. You know, we would like to win
15 you over, Mr. Van Bramer. We did meet with your
16 Chief of Staff, and based on that meeting I did
17 not think that we were going to be able to
18 convince you stand against the sale of
19 libraries. There were--when this hearing was
20 held there was some people who told me that,
21 you know, things have may have changed. We
22 might be able to reach out and do that. I
23 gathered from the sort of tone with which
24 you're--I'll reference your opening remarks. I
25 really thought they--there was a bit pishtosh

1 [phonetic] PR in them that sort of was a little
2 bit too hospitable to the--preparing the way
3 for the library heads, and I basically expected
4 you to go easy on them, the way you did. In
5 this letter I said the lack of public review
6 and the overall lack of transparency has been
7 extremely problematic, and it's been extremely
8 problematic that these hearings have not been
9 held up to this time. Previously that said it-
10 - I was going to say that it's absurd and
11 disgraceful that these hearings have not been
12 held up to this time, but in the hopes of
13 winning you over. So, but the main point is if
14 you look at these nine points, you'll find just
15 how difficult, and only a few of them were
16 referenced. I will not that it was not until
17 3:30 today that the subject of Donnell came up,
18 and I don't think you can talk about selling
19 off libraries and the total problem of your
20 oversight without Donnell and saying that it
21 needs to be investigated and you need to use
22 that as a model for what needs to be prevented.
23 And I--the other nine points are amplified in a
24

1 lot more testimony that we will be submitting.
2 That's under three minutes if I go--

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect, I
4 don't agree with everything you said, but you
5 came in under three minutes. Next speaker.

6 PAUL NESS: Hi, my name is Paul Ness,
7 and I'd like to give--I only have one page, so
8 I'd like to give anywhere where I fall short
9 over to Michael so he can finish up some of his
10 points.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But I have
12 to approve the transfer of time, and I'm not
13 going to approve any more time.

14 PAUL NESS: Thank you so much for
15 giving us this opportunity to offer our opinion
16 about the Central Library plan. I've always
17 been a regular at our public libraries and one
18 of the main reasons I bought an apartment where
19 I did was because its proximity to SIBL and to
20 Midtown Library. I was devastated to learn
21 that one part of the CLP was to dramatically
22 scale back and then sell off both of these
23 essential public resources. I should say
24 public treasures, really. As an example of my
25

1 way of thinking, in 2009-2010 I was fortunate
2 enough to be employed by Yale University at the
3 business office, and why was it such a
4 wonderful experience even though I had to
5 commute three hours each way from New York
6 forcing me to rent an apartment in New Haven
7 because my work ID provided me access to their
8 marvelous library, or should I say their 24
9 marvelous libraries. I spent all my free time
10 at Haas Arts Library enjoying an amazing
11 collection of art books and most of them
12 German, unfortunately. Or I was buried in the
13 Stirling Library which houses approximately
14 four million volumes, its 16 floors of book
15 stacks, new and old books in multiple language,
16 books on ceramics in Korean, Chinese, and
17 Japanese, dusty old volumes of criticism and
18 history reflecting a perspective on life not
19 available anywhere else. Yale's Library also
20 has an enormous vault of online materials which
21 pay--for which they pay a costly subscription
22 fee. Of course, I don't expect New York to
23 provide access to its citizens to a high
24 quality facility such as Yale Library, but I am
25

1
2 tempted to say why not? Are we not a world
3 class city and a city that generates vast
4 wealth. Yale is one of the finest universities
5 in the world and I don't know how much it
6 spends on libraries. However, one thing is
7 clear, we should not be scaling back our public
8 libraries and reducing our resources. If
9 anything we should be expanding them to aid our
10 citizens in our competition in the new global
11 economy. I applaud the libraries in New York
12 for enhancing the resources to include access
13 to online materials. However, this must not be
14 done at the expense of paper volumes. What an
15 enormous loss this would be to our citizens,
16 including our young people. Online materials
17 in no way replace paper volumes. A tiny
18 percentage of printed books are available
19 online, tiny percent, microscopic percentage.
20 This would spell disaster to our young and old
21 minds thirsty for knowledge. What can our
22 future hold if we choose this path? In
23 addition, the subscription to online services
24 is not free. Matter of fact, it's very
25 expensive. How easy would it be for some

1
2 future administration to cut funding to online
3 services, thereby ensuring we no longer have
4 paper volumes or access to online materials.

5 Thank you.

6 : Thank you Councilman Van Bramer
7 for calling this critical public hearing on New
8 York City's latest irrational public asset
9 stripping plans. The New York Public Library
10 and the Brooklyn Public Library will sell off,
11 shrink, demolish our public libraries large and
12 small for the flim-flam reason that land
13 grabbing private developers covet these
14 priceless public properties. Public libraries
15 must remain public in perpetuity. Public
16 libraries are a critical part of our common
17 cultural education heritage. New York City
18 Public Library's not for sale. My name is
19 Patty Hagan, an adopted New Yorker, 41 years
20 resident in Brooklyn. I am a lifelong library
21 user as reader, writer, researcher, and so it
22 shocks me to find out that our libraries, these
23 sacred sanctuaries for reading, learning and
24 thinking have been turned into real estate
25 brokerages, that instead of being run by

1
2 library experts, librarians, Wall Streeters
3 have taken them over with a hedge fund
4 mentality. Wall Street has gone digital, so
5 libraries should go digital; "accelerate the
6 transition to e-content" which the New York
7 Public Library said last week at their trustees
8 meeting. Ship the books to thither New Jersey.
9 Do your research on the internet, no. For
10 instance, the Brooklyn Public Library is intent
11 on selling off Brooklyn's first Carnegie
12 Library, the Pacific Branch, common-law land
13 marked by the community, long since. The 1903
14 architectural gem to the developer next door,
15 Bruce Ratner [phonetic], so that he can
16 demolish the Bozart's [phonetic] beauty. Why
17 would a public library in its right mind commit
18 such a desecration? Because, cried the
19 Brooklyn Public Library honchos, the Pacific
20 Branch is "old," has out lived its usefulness,
21 needs repairs, the air conditioning. Libraries
22 existed for thousands of years air
23 conditioning. By such a logic, all Brooklyn's
24 old buildings should be done away with, old
25 people too, me. Too old for red hot 21st

1 century branded Brooklyn. Attention must be
2 paid, library executives. What attracts people
3 to Brooklyn is the old historic buildings,
4 places that have existed a long time. The
5 genius [inaudible 4:07:07] that endures.
6 People love to look at old buildings, live in
7 old buildings, read and research in historic
8 old libraries. One of the most flourishing
9 industries in Brooklyn is old building
10 restoration. Instead of sacrificing our
11 beloved historic libraries to land grabbing
12 developers to destroy then shrink into basement
13 footnotes of luxury sky scraper condos,
14 Brooklyn Public Library CEO Linda Johnson's
15 "cultural condo concept." Fix 'em. Could I
16 please finish?
17

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know,
19 as much as I do want you to--

20 [laughter]

21 PATTY HAGAN: [interposing] Please,
22 please?

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I can't.
24 No, I--you know, I've enjoyed this more than
25 anyone else's testimony today, but to be fair I

1
2 actually have your written testimony in front
3 of me.

4 PATTY HAGAN: You do have it.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And you
6 have--you have a bunch left to go.

7 PATTY HAGAN: I have about one
8 minute.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And there--
10 and I haven't let others go, so I do have to
11 apologize. I--other than the shot at New
12 Jersey, I thought it was terrific and I thank
13 you for your passion and for spelling my name
14 right and not ripping me apart on the last
15 paragraph as I read it now, but I appreciate
16 your passion--

17 PATTY HAGAN: [interposing] No, I
18 appreciate you're having this hearings.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I
20 appreciate your passion a great deal, so thank
21 you very much and I have it and I read it. So--

22 PATTY HAGAN: Can you establish a
23 New York City's most endangered historic public
24 libraries list right now?

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I will tell you that I will look into doing it right now. How about that?

PATTY HAGAN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is that good enough?

PATTY HAGAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I really, I do appreciate your passion, and--

PATTY HAGAN: [interposing] And you can use the book bag, the tote bag too, please.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, I see that. And you have great penmanship as well I wanted to say.

PATTY HAGAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So our last speaker on this particular panel and then we do have four more panels to go, so I just want to.

CAROLYN MCINTYRE: And you said Yuki.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, yes, oh Yuki, oh good.

CAROLYN MCINTYRE: Yes, so he's going to speak too.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good. So
3 Yuki will speak as well, and then just to
4 remind everyone there are four more panels
5 after this, so I thank everyone who is staying
6 and testifying four and half hours after we
7 began, so thank you all for your passion for
8 libraries.

9 CAROLYN MCINTYRE: Thank you for
10 having this hearing, and I hope you all, Jimmy,
11 I hope you're listening right now. This is
12 really important. We the public have a growing
13 distrust. There is a growing disconnect
14 between us, the library leadership, between us
15 and the politicians who are condoning what's
16 happening under the library leadership. And
17 it's a very serious matter. We have over 14,000
18 petition signers and our numbers keep growing.
19 And that distrust comes from good reason
20 because we are seeing libraries being sold off
21 at below market value prices and being turned
22 into luxury high rises, and that sends a
23 message, and when you put a tiny library in a
24 basement that sends a message. And we are at
25 risk of that happening in Brooklyn Heights. We

1 attended the January meeting when they
2 announced as they did with the Pacific group at
3 the same time January that they were going to
4 sell the Pacific Library. They announced they
5 would sell the Brooklyn Heights Library to a
6 developer and let him tear it down and build a
7 luxury high rise and put a tiny library in the
8 basement. They hand picked people to be their
9 community, but those people do not represent
10 the majority of the community. Am I right? Is
11 anybody here from Brooklyn?

12 UNKNOWN: Yeah.

13 PATTY HAGAN: Right.

14 CAROLYN MCINTYRE: Okay. We're--
15 they don't represent our voice, and this is a
16 serious concern to be creating this level of
17 mistrust. I also, I think you may be--there
18 are things that you don't know that are
19 happening out there. Books are disappearing
20 from all the libraries. I am shocked that
21 nobody's mentioned that yet. Yuki, who's about
22 to speak, has been to every, almost every
23 single library. The books are disappearing.
24 This, as I picture, of some of the book shelves
25

1
2 in Mid-Manhattan Library, these pictures were
3 taken, what, in the last two weeks?

4 MICHAEL WHITE: A little bit more
5 than that.

6 CAROLYN MCINTYRE: This, these are
7 two pictures, and pictures say everything, of
8 the Brooklyn Heights Library. Would you like--
9 take a look at how many books have disappeared
10 from the shelves. This tells you the whole
11 story. You are not being told that books are
12 disappearing from the libraries. And yesterday
13 when we were out canvassing we were told by
14 people who use the Jamaica library that books
15 are disappearing from their shelves. We also--
16 Yuki told me yesterday that he was at the
17 George Bruce Library on 125th Street and there
18 are very few books in the children's section.
19 What are we doing to our future, to our
20 children? This is a travesty. We--and it is
21 unconscionable that they are doing this. We
22 have no trust in the BPL leadership or the NYPL
23 leadership. I will pass these around for you
24 to look at. Yuki? Oh, you can take my last
25 ten seconds if you wanted to add something.

[off mic conversation]

YUKI ANU: My name is Yuki Anu, resident of the [inaudible 4:12:44] of Queens and [inaudible 4:12:48] Queens Public Library [inaudible 4:12:49] Public Library, and New York Public Library. I also travel to Long Island and worked as a [4:12:59] County and Weschester County. When I am doing my errand in Long Island and [inaudible 4:13:09] because I love a public library. Public libraries are important for everyone. On the New York Public Library's plan, essential library plan, [inaudible 4:13:28] library. It locate in the Mid-Manhattan and the [inaudible 4:13:36] together. Please leave these libraries alone because the 42nd Street and the [inaudible 4:13:48] are the only place where you could make a [inaudible 4:13:56] library computer. Why Mid-Manhattan is only library that's open early and late than other libraries including on Sunday. I do not want--I am opposite of Brooklyn Library's plan to sell Brooklyn Heights and Pacific Library and replace with a sky scraper. [inaudible 4:14:35] I am also

1 asking not touch any Queens Public Library.

2 **[inaudible 4:14:45]** Everyone enjoys a public
3 library because a library has programs like
4 **[inaudible 4:14:56]**. And I don't want any
5 library to example of **[inaudible 4:15:25]** or
6 the station branch or the **[inaudible 4:15:35]**
7 public library which has no library space in
8 building.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yuki, can
11 you sum up? Is there a lot more there?

12 YUKI ANU: **[inaudible 4:15:54]**
13 assistant on the first floor on the front of
14 the elevator has a **[inaudible 4:16:03]** always
15 out of service every time when I use the
16 computer. Please do not take it **[inaudible**
17 **4:16:16]** library. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,
19 all the way from Jackson Heights. We love
20 that. I thank you all for your testimony. WE
21 have the written testimony and Carolyn we'll
22 investigate the missing books. I heard you say
23 at the Central Library at Jamaica, and I will
24 talk to Mr. Galante about that, and the
25 Brooklyn Public Library system.

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CAROLYN MCINTYRE: Mid-Manhattan,
Brooklyn Heights, SIBL, they're all--but also--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:
[interposing] We will definitely look into
that. Thank you very much, and to move onto
the next panel. Monica Struass? Is Monica
Strauss still here?

UNKNOWN: But I have her testimony.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. If
you would--if you want us to see that
testimony, you can pass it to one of the
sergeants at arms. Charles Warren, is Charles
Warren here? Elizabeth A. R. Brown? Elizabeth
Brown? It looks like Carol Krinsky, is Carol
Krinsky here? And we have two--Nedea
[phonetic] Leaf, is Nedea Leaf here? Veronica
Conant? Veronica Conant? You're up. And
Susan Bernofsky, is Susan Bernofsky here?
Okay. I'm going to ask for a--unless you'd
like to deliver your testimony without me here,
I would request a two minute break, and then
I'll be right back.

[off mic conversation]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
3 very much for indulging me and why don't we
4 start from left to right here.

5 CAROL KRINSKY: I'm used to speaking
6 loudly. My name is Carol Krinsky, I've been a
7 professor at NYU since 1965 and a user of the
8 Central Research Library since 1954. My
9 husband and I contribute to it as Tilden
10 Conservators. I'm here to talk about research
11 primarily. I oppose any plans to remove any
12 part of the stacks, and oppose having the City
13 pay part of the cost. The stacks hold research
14 books that are not available in digital form,
15 and they never will be. Book stacks are meant
16 to hold millions of books for easy retrieval to
17 serve researchers. The purpose of that building
18 uniquely, and I emphasize the unique purpose of
19 the Central Research Library. There's nothing
20 like it anywhere else available to the public.
21 This is research at a level unavailable
22 anywhere else in the library system. The
23 broader public is well served by Mid-Manhattan
24 and it also uses 42nd Street right now. So the
25 costly plans will not suddenly serve the

1 public. Please consider visiting researchers
2 also who come here and add to our economy and
3 knowledge. They can order books in advance if
4 they know to do that, but while reading they
5 find other books that they need. They can get
6 them only in a day or two at least and I
7 emphasize at least. Consider their sudden
8 hotel bills. Consider the library's reputation
9 as the hemisphere's greatest free public
10 research library. Some off-site storage is
11 inevitable, but before more books are sent
12 there the library must make sure that books
13 arrive within 24 hours. Most don't, which
14 obviously affects local readers too. What
15 other job requires a 48 hours wait between
16 doing task one and task two. Most trustees
17 probably have not recently submitted call slips
18 and waited for days. So they cannot understand
19 what we do. Mid-Manhattan is the essential
20 resource for City University students and many
21 other readers. That building should be
22 preserved. How can trustees imagine six floors
23 of materials and services being stuffed into
24 the 42nd Street building without injuring
25

1
2 activities that are now, primarily research
3 because one and half million books are going to
4 be sent off-site, no matter what is said. Now,
5 I have a whole list of places within 42nd
6 Street that could be used to store additional
7 books or if the worst come to worst and Mid-
8 Manhattan is sold to a property developer,
9 these spaces could be used for many of Mid-
10 Manhattan's present purposes without destroying
11 the stacks. I would also like to point out
12 that while Dr. Marx said that the library
13 proposals had been around since '07, they have
14 only been known since Aida Louise Huxtable
15 wrote her death bed article. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

17 UNKNOWN: Thank you so much,
18 Councilman Bramer for giving us the opportunity
19 to express our opinions. It has been a long
20 time since we have been able to be heard. For
21 seven years I have suggested to Paula Claire
22 [phonetic] then to Tony Marx, to the trustees
23 of the New York Public Library that they
24 establish a reader's truly representative
25 Reader's Committee to work with the trustees

1
2 that--a committee that would represent the
3 researchers, the people who use the library
4 every day, and I have had no luck whatsoever.
5 I was delighted to hear Councilman Lander say
6 that he would like to see that you work with
7 the New York Public Library, with the Brooklyn
8 Public Library from the beginning on their
9 plans, because I'm sure if you were doing that,
10 you would listen more carefully to what we
11 need. One of the problems is the real estate
12 interest of New York are--have enormous power
13 in the board of trustees, so do the media, The
14 New York Times, the New Yorker, the New York
15 Review of Books, the Architectural Digest. No
16 wonder people have not heard what we believe
17 because our voice is not there. Thus, we have
18 joined together to save the New York Public
19 Library and as citizens to defend libraries.
20 We ask you to say no to the real estate
21 developers, to those who want to sell the
22 assets of New York City. The wonderful
23 treasure, kindred spirits were sold in 2005.
24 It is now in Arkansas. The money is gone. No
25 one protested. The Attorney General took no

1 steps and it is gone. The Donnell Library,
2 there we have the Bachara [phonetic]
3 residencies, New York. One apartment is being
4 sold for more than the New York Public Library
5 got. The pitiful basement space allotted to
6 the library is a sad reminder of the glory that
7 the Donnell Public--the Donnell Library once
8 was. And in terms of planning and
9 consultation, I was there at the Board of
10 Trustees meeting when the plans were unveiled
11 and the surprise was expressed that readers
12 needed to be able to access the books. The
13 stacks went so high that no one could possibly
14 reach them. A trustee of the public library
15 said to me a couple of months ago, "They don't
16 care about books. They only care about places
17 to meet." I assured him that that might be true
18 for him. It was not true for the rest of us.
19 We care about books.

21 VERONIKA CONANT: Yes, I'm Veronica
22 Conant, a retired academic librarian and member
23 of the Committee to Save the New York Public
24 Library. Thank you for holding this hearing.
25 The--I oppose the use of capital funds for the

1 New York Public Library's Central Library plan.
2 The back side of our Committee has a **[inaudible**
3 **4:28:34]** document and much more information
4 which explains why this plan is bad for
5 everyone except for developers. The Committee
6 to Save the New York Public Library believes
7 the Central Library plan must not proceed until
8 there has been an independent study of its
9 costs, the cost of feasible alternatives, and
10 the impacts of the plan on branch libraries,
11 the research libraries, and the 42nd Street
12 building itself. Please stop funding the
13 Central Library plan. A budget modification
14 could redirect these funds towards alternative
15 plans, the branches, and renovating and
16 rebuilding the Mid-Manhattan Library instead,
17 as so many people have recommended. Many of
18 the New York Public Library systems, 87 branch
19 libraries and four research libraries are in
20 bad physical condition due to deferred
21 maintenance as we have been hearing. The New
22 York City State Library's website has a list of
23 the New York Public Library's estimated
24 construction needs for 2012 through '17, which
25

1 has a list of construction needs of 63
2 libraries and several system wide upgrades in
3 Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island, and totals
4 about 337 million dollars, which is on one hand
5 63 libraries; on the other hand, the Central
6 Library plan 300 to 350 million dollars cost
7 estimate. A copy of the list is attached to my
8 testimony, by the way. The 87 branch libraries
9 and the 40 such libraries have functioned
10 separately as their own financing and catalogue
11 since 1901. That was when Andrew Carnegie
12 donated 5.2 million as we heard to the
13 libraries, but he had a condition, the
14 condition was that the City provides the land,
15 pays the rent, utilities and maintenance,
16 maintains them. As a result of this unique
17 private public partnership, the New York Public
18 Library's contribution in 2002 to the 87 branch
19 libraries was, surprise, nine percent, 13
20 million dollars. The rest of the operating
21 expenses came from the City fund, city, state,
22 and federal funding which is--means the
23 branches are essentially owned and supported by
24 us, the tax payers. No public library should
25

1
2 be allowed to be sold without public hearings
3 and serious consideration of the consequences.
4 Once sold, these buildings do not come back.
5 Now, I don't have time to talk about the
6 Donnell, which is my local library, because you
7 heard that already. I just wanted to say,
8 according to the branches of opportunity,
9 renovated libraries increase in use, that use
10 rose up enormously. This has not happened in
11 the Bronx Central Library and the Mid-Manhattan
12 is not as bad as it described. It's just these
13 minor things. Just want to say one more thing,
14 that we need to establish capital funding for
15 preventing maintenance program. It will cost
16 much less than an emergency repair due to
17 referred maintenance, and in addition to all
18 the other benefits--my last sentence--these
19 projects will also generate much wanted jobs
20 and contribute to the City's **[inaudible**
21 **4:31:51]** Thank you.

22 SUSAN BERNOFSKY: Chairman Van
23 Bramer, honored Council, persons, thank you so
24 much for allowing us to come and speak. My
25 name is Susan Bernofsky, I'm a professor at

1 Columbia University, but I'm speaking here as a
2 private citizen, but I mention my affiliation
3 because I didn't always use to be a professor
4 at Columbia University, I used to be a private
5 researcher who depended entirely on the New
6 York Public Library's research division for my
7 work and I am a literary translator. And I
8 want to--my testimony is similar to Carol
9 Krinsky's. I'll keep it short, but I want to
10 make a couple of points that I think could
11 stand being emphasized one more time. First,
12 the removal of the research division or the
13 lessening of the research division in order to
14 put more public space so to speak into the 42nd
15 Street Library has been promoted as democratic.
16 I would argue that it is the opposite of
17 democratic. Access to high level knowledge at
18 the highest level is available to the public of
19 New York City only in this one place.
20 Otherwise, a young person coming up, a student
21 researching a paper, somebody who wants to do
22 serious research, someone who might want to
23 become a scholar, someone who might want to
24 write a book, if that person does not have
25

1
2 access to one of the private university
3 libraries in the City, there is no way to, you
4 know. They're closed. This is the one shot
5 and if we allow the resources of this library
6 to be shifted off to New Jersey, that will--
7 we'll never get it back again. And the
8 difference between doing research, Carol
9 Krinsky already mentioned this, if you have
10 your resources on site and doing it, if your
11 resources are offsite are enormous. If you're
12 a student writing a paper, you may not have
13 time to wait two to three days for every book
14 to be delivered. Anthony Marx says the books
15 will come in 24 hours. I have repeatedly
16 waited three days for a book from the New York
17 Public Library. Columbia University Library,
18 where I sometimes use quite arcane materials
19 that are in the very same warehouse, they also
20 take three days to arrive, and so the process
21 of research is hugely hampered if the books are
22 shipped off-site. So, right now, Anthony Marx
23 said today that there are three million books
24 in New Jersey. The total collections of the
25 research library right now are 8.2 million

1 books. So there's still five million on site.
2 So a lot more are going to be shipped off site
3 if this plan goes ahead. Just to give you an
4 example of the sorts of materials that I myself
5 have used for my research that are not
6 available digitally, French-German dictionaries
7 from the 19th century, a concordance of the
8 works of Mullier [phonetic] in French, literary
9 magazines from the 19th century. You might
10 think these are things that interest only an
11 elite researcher, but you don't know which of
12 our young people are going to want to become
13 scholars, and this is their one shot at getting
14 at this sort of materials. Thanks so much.

15 [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you
17 all very, very much. And while we may not
18 agree on everything, I am listening to every
19 word you're saying and I appreciate you taking
20 the time to be here and your passion for
21 libraries. It is exciting that there are a lot
22 of people who love libraries. At least to me
23 it is. So our next panel--is there a C.M.
24 Pyle? Pyle C. M.? Carla Lorde? Carla Lorde?
25

1 Lucy Coteine or Lucy--did I get it right?
2
3 Alright. You got to give it to them. That's
4 okay. That's okay. Thank you. And Polly
5 Thistlewait [phonetic]? Polly left. Rita Sue
6 Seigel [phonetic], Rita Sue Seigel? Rita Sue
7 Seigel may have left as well. I'm pretty sure
8 Lynn Surpy [phonetic] left. I saw her earlier.
9 And G. Fishman, G. Fishman also left. So I
10 think that's everyone in the room. And this
11 will be our last panel, unless we've missed
12 somebody who has yet to testify. Why don't we
13 start with you, Ms. Lorde, and we'll go the
14 other way this time.

15 CARLA LORDE: Thank you. First of
16 all I would like to commend the Chair of the
17 Council, the committee, and Mr. Van Bramer, you
18 are the most patient person I have ever seen,
19 and you've seemed to have listened.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know,
21 we can't always agree on everything and these
22 hearings go long, but you deserve nothing less
23 than to be listened to, and so I take this job
24 very seriously, and even at the fifth hour of a
25 hearing, I insist on being here for every

1
2 single word and listening. That's the very
3 least that you could expect or should expect
4 from an elected official. You pay my salary,
5 so I owe you this.

6 CARLA LORDE: And the next thing I
7 wanted to say is that I think the most sensible
8 thing has been said amongst many in terms of
9 research is in terms of funding and this two
10 percent solution as the art solution was many
11 years ago, might be just the ticket, the answer
12 to the funding problem, and possibly floating a
13 bond or two. I don't know. But anyway, but
14 what I had come prepared to say was that as a--
15 actually, I was a member of the--my local
16 library was the Donnell Branch, and we've, I
17 think, said enough about that for the moment.
18 I don't know if Mid-Manhattan is a done deal,
19 but I certainly would not like to see that sold
20 off anymore than any of the libraries in
21 Brooklyn or Manhattan, anywhere else. Let's
22 hang on to them, please. Now I haven't been in
23 this country actually for a while, so I have
24 got my e-mails from Save the Library. 42nd
25 Street is main passion. And what I fear having

1
2 been working in the British Library, is I don't
3 want to see the diminishment of New York as a
4 cultural center. I don't want to see the
5 library dumbed down to use an old expression
6 from last year. I don't want it used for
7 social purposes exclusively, rather than
8 research. I want it used for research and that
9 it should be an indication to the international
10 readers as well as the local ones, that
11 intellectual pursuits, they should still count.
12 Or they shouldn't disappear into the real
13 estate laws, if I may say, and they should
14 count. It's unfortunate that the real estate
15 laws are greedy. I think that's enough for the
16 moment. Thank you.

17 LUCY COTIENE: Good evening. It's
18 been a long day. Thank you very much for these
19 hearings. Thank you very much for these
20 hearings. Is this on? Yeah, I'm at sort of a
21 conundrum where to start. I was going to read
22 some testimony from Theresa Ervin [phonetic]
23 who can't--I'm going to submit it. It was
24 largely about the Pacific Street Library.
25 Irene Van Slyke over there covered some of it.

1
2 So I'm going to read something else I had
3 scribbled out. And I want to say some things
4 in our society should be beyond the touch of
5 our government. One of the sacred institutions
6 in our country are the libraries. The
7 libraries more than any old building housing
8 books. The location and history of the
9 building that's standing in the community are
10 an integral part of its meaning. The place
11 where a person's grandmother went with her
12 children, the place where neighborhood groups
13 like the Girl Scouts meet and community groups
14 holds meetings is important to the stability of
15 the neighborhood. And I think that hasn't been
16 discussed, about the stabilizing effect of the
17 library and its history in that community. To
18 be told that it is too expensive to make
19 necessary repairs after years of deliberate
20 neglect is not acceptable. To be told that the
21 only way to save the libraries is to destroy
22 them by selling off valuable real estate for
23 another shiny glass and steel structure to
24 serve the wealthy speaks of the wrong priority.
25 And to say that the money gained will go to

1 serve other libraries is an outright lie.
2
3 Could we stop the clock for one second, please?
4 Could we stop the clock? I just--a little
5 frustrated here.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
7 Excuse me. I understand you've been waiting for
8 a long time, but the Councilwoman did want to
9 share something with me, so.

10 CARLA LORDE: Oh, that's fine. I
11 just wanted my time.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

13 CARLA LORDE: Is it on? Was it on?
14 Hello, hello, hello. Okay, thank you. And I
15 meant to say I have absolutely no credentials.
16 I just want to assure of that. Being among
17 this body here of so many credentials. And one
18 of the things I was saying was that the money,
19 it is said-and to say that the money gained
20 will go to serve other libraries is an outright
21 lie. There's absolutely nothing legally
22 binding about that. It's just lies. To say
23 that it is the same thing to put a library in
24 the base of a tall luxury high rise, and that
25 this won't intimidate people of lesser means is

1 just callous hog wash spoken by those so out of
2 touch with anybody but the moneyed class. In a
3 city with a budget of 70 billion dollars, the
4 libraries consume a tiny piece of that and
5 serve so many people. It's the most democratic
6 institution we have. The library should be
7 sacred as they are at the base of our
8 democracy, serving people of every age and
9 every socioeconomic group without prejudice.
10 Please investigate--and this is a little bit
11 separate. But I'm asking you, would you
12 investigate the library strategy group. This
13 group came into existence in 2004 with the sole
14 purpose of seeking out real estate deals.
15 That's their whole reason of being, the
16 **[inaudible 4:42:47]** They need to be
17 investigated by the Council with all notes and
18 meeting exposed to the Council. Their six
19 figure salary should be scrutinized. Why is
20 this money going to the strategy group to sell
21 the libraries rather than to the upkeep and
22 preservation of our libraries? Does the
23 Council have any say over the exorbitant
24 salaries of these people as well as President
25

1
2 Marx. His predecessor had a salary of 1.4
3 million dollars. What does Mr. Marx make? I
4 don't know the answer. I hope you can find
5 out. But I also wanted to mention Linda
6 Johnson just seems hell bent on selling that
7 Brooklyn Heights Library. According to her,
8 and she apparently is the world's expert, she's
9 deciding for everyone that the building is not
10 significant. Has absolutely, and she said
11 with, you know, "beyond anyone's analysis it
12 has no significance architecturally or
13 structurally or any other way." Apparently it's
14 not a satisfactory library. This woman on her
15 own, well with the help of others apparently,
16 has made this decision for all of us, for all
17 of us who live in Brooklyn Heights and
18 Brooklyn. She alone has made the decision that
19 the career and business library doesn't belong
20 there. It doesn't belong there, even though
21 it's been there successfully for many years.
22 It needs to be moved to Grand Army Plaza. She
23 also seemed very surprised that Mr. Ratner has
24 bought the air rights in 1986. She was aghast
25 that was public information. That is just so

1
2 dishonest. I mean, obviously she knows that
3 they--I know one of the architects who's
4 working for one of the developers responding to
5 the RFP; they know they have to ask for a
6 zoning change. Their plan is to put a 20 story
7 luxury--saw her face when that question about--
8 that Letitia James asked, was asked about Far
9 City Ratner owning those air rights. So mainly
10 I wanted to say that we need to stop this
11 procedure. It's a disgrace. It's a shame to
12 this City, and we're all--we should all feel
13 ashamed by what's going on right now. This is
14 all for the developers. It's clearly not--and
15 all that other nonsense, that gloss, it's not
16 about the people. It's not about the library.
17 It's about developers. We know that. Thank
18 you so much for listening, and remember to vote
19 everybody, tomorrow, October 1st, don't forget
20 to vote. Go Tish [phonetic].

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now, now,
22 we can't too political here.

23 CARLA LORDE: No political. Just
24 vote. Just vote.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And the
3 final speaker of this five hour hearing.

4 C.M. PYLE: Thank you very much,
5 Chairman Van Bramer and Chairman Gentile, in
6 his absence. I am an independent scholar. I
7 am a fellow of the American Academy in Rome. I
8 founded the Renaissance Studies Program at the
9 Graduate Center of the City University of New
10 York in the late 80's. And I continue to work.
11 Scholarship has been given a bad press in this
12 country, but scholarship is the science of the
13 humanities. It is what our knowledge of the
14 world and the cultures around us is built on.
15 It is the basis for what teachers teach in our
16 schools. The art in our museums to which
17 people nowadays flock in huge numbers is
18 investigated by scholarship. The history of
19 our country and our City, of the myriad
20 traditions in which this city partakes all are
21 known to us through scholarship. Research and
22 history, philosophy, literature is performed
23 with the use of the words and thoughts
24 expressed in books. Whether they be an
25 electronic or tangible form. In the laboratory

1 science, I was a scientist in an earlier
2 incarnation, the written word is a help-mate
3 to, and then a bi-product of laboratory
4 experiments performed on re-agents or other
5 experimental materials. To an active
6 contemporary researcher in the humanities,
7 however, the written word and the thought it
8 expresses are the raw materials on which
9 research and ideas are based. It is--in this
10 undertaking both physical books and electronic
11 resources are needed. The books are the vessels
12 that contain the re-agents, the established
13 facts, the thoughts, the ideas needed in the
14 laboratory which is in fact the library, the
15 repository of books where living human thought
16 processes analyze and integrate the thought
17 found in books to create new ideas for our
18 culture. Like all researchers nowadays, I love
19 the ease of access to the electronic world.
20 The recent phenomenon of this access does in
21 deed seem miraculous, but if you think about it
22 carefully, you realize it is only one portion
23 of the necessary laboratory equipment for
24 scholarships. Scholarship books are the other
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2 portion. There seems to be some confusion on
3 the part of the Board of the Trustees of the
4 New York Public Library as to the function of a
5 research library, as opposed to a neighborhood
6 library. Both are essential to a
7 democratically governed cultural center like
8 New York City. Without new and basic research
9 in the humanities, including the history of
10 science, culture dies. Indeed, recent years
11 have brought the research library as a tourist
12 attraction and as a venue for fundraising
13 parties in spaces where food was and should be
14 banned, and the revised New York Public
15 Library's architectural plan now includes a
16 token section of the magnificent steel stack
17 structure as a historical artifact. It has
18 long been true that one could buy decorative
19 books by the yard to pretend to be a reader.
20 Are we now to buy decorative stacks by the yard
21 to pretend to be a research library, or to rent
22 scholars by the yard, a partial solution to
23 unemployment for tourists to gape at as they
24 now do like visitors in a zoo. This is the
25 concept of coming to watch exotic animals live

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2 their lives in public. Only now it is to watch
3 scholars think deep thoughts in public. This
4 is not the same as doing research in the public
5 library among fellow researchers. I will
6 submit the rest of my testimony. Thank you
7 very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
9 That was terrific. Thank you for giving us all
10 a good chuckle at the end of this five hour
11 hearing. I want to thank everyone for being
12 here. I want to say openly, I don't agree with
13 everything that folks have said, but I
14 sympathize with more than some folks in the
15 room may think I do. And, you know, I wanted
16 to do this hearing because I want the Council
17 and I want our committee to be more active in
18 all this and to insert ourselves into the
19 process. So I've done that, and we will
20 continue to be inserting ourselves in this
21 process and asking some of the tough questions
22 that were asked here, and getting some answers,
23 and of course, there are approvals that need to
24 be still gotten for some of these plans, and
25 ultimately the council will be in a position

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2 and with a new Mayor and a new Council Speaker
3 and lots of changes happening there are all
4 sorts of opportunities. So, I want to thank you
5 all for being a part of the last five hours of
6 my life, and making it as pleasant as possible,
7 and I do want to say as someone who really
8 loves libraries, and who worked for the Queens
9 Library for 11 years, and ran for political
10 office partly based on my love of libraries and
11 my support of libraries. Some people thought
12 that wasn't a good political issue to run on,
13 but I knew differently. I knew that people love
14 libraries and if I talked about the work that I
15 did on behalf of Queens libraries, that I could
16 win a race, and I did. So I thank you for
17 loving libraries even if we don't agree on
18 every single thing that's been said, we do
19 share that passion for libraries and for
20 culture and for the City of New York. So thank
21 you all. This is Matt Wallace, my Chief of
22 Staff. Some have referenced him. He's
23 terrific. I want to thank Matt. I want to
24 thank Tye Mia [phonetic], Cody Rider [phonetic]
25 and Tanya as well for also being here. The

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

staff deserve our appreciation as well, and
thank you all again. This won't be the last
you'll hear from me or for the Committee on
this issue, and I know it won't be the last
we'll hear from you also. Thank you all very,
very much.

[applause]

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 there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date 10/10/2013

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