

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

----- X

November 18, 2014  
Start: 1:00 p.m.  
Recess: 2:26 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room  
14th Floor

B E F O R E: JAMES VACCA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma  
Mark S. Weprin  
David G. Greenfield  
Steven Matteo

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

Joe Morrisroe, Executive Director  
New York City's 311

Nicolas O'Brien, Director  
Public Affairs  
Mayor's Office of Data Analytics

Sadia Chowdhury, Director  
Customer Management and Business  
Relationships at 311

Dominic Morrow, Staff Attorney  
Reinvent Albany

Noel Hidalgo  
BetaNYC

Lucille K. Songhai  
Director of Community Affairs  
Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer



2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Hello,  
3 everyone. My name is James Vacca, and I'm Chair of  
4 the Technology Committee of the New York City  
5 Council, and I'd like to welcome everyone to our  
6 hearing today, November 18, 2014. I'm joined by my  
7 colleague Mark Weprin who is with me, and we're today  
8 to examine 311's numerous user-driven technology in  
9 addition to the Administration's collection and  
10 analysis of data gathered from 311 platforms.  
11 Through this committee, I have advocated for City  
12 government to make better use of data and technology  
13 to improve citywide services, and enhance New  
14 Yorkers' quality of life. Today we will hone in 311,  
15 which as we all know is the City's centralized call  
16 center for all non-emergency government information  
17 and services operating 24 hours a day, seven days a  
18 week. 311 can be accessed via phone, through an  
19 online web portal at NewYorkCity.gov, Facebook,  
20 Twitter, text message or a 311 Smart Phone  
21 application. With testimony from the Mayor's Office  
22 of Data Analytics, the Executive Director of 311 and  
23 civic technology advocates, we will gain insight into  
24 how information is collected, analyzed, and used from  
25 these various tools. And how communication data

2 collection and user experience can be improved in the  
3 future.

4 I thank all those testifying for their  
5 input today. 311 is widely used by New Yorkers  
6 having received over 26.7 million inquiries in Fiscal  
7 Year 2014, 21.3 million of which were via telephone;  
8 5.2 million were from 311 online; and about 140,000  
9 from text messages. There does not appear to be a  
10 high volume of complaints received from the mobile  
11 app, which has limited complaint categories.  
12 However, the mobile app allows users to track all  
13 complaints made through the app itself on a  
14 dashboard, which calling or submitting through the  
15 website does not offer.

16 Having been in City service for as long  
17 as I have, I can tell you that tracking a 311  
18 complaint can get difficult, especially if you're on  
19 the go. Constituents of mine have often taken it  
20 upon themselves to call in a complaint prior to  
21 seeking my help. But they may not write down the 11-  
22 character service request number, or they may lose it  
23 or write one number wrong, and then they cannot  
24 follow up. So I'd like it to be made easier to track  
25 complaints. Many typical 311 users may not know that

2 their complaint along with all other service requests  
3 throughout the city is available and updated daily  
4 through a data set on the open data portal. Although  
5 the most accessed data set to date over 45,000 views  
6 and 154,000 downloads that is still a fraction of the  
7 millions of service requests a year.

8           Nonetheless, an incredible amount of 311  
9 data is captured through open data. And has been  
10 used by the public to approximate the City's rat  
11 population, which neighborhoods have the most weekend  
12 late night taxi complaints and were the watch illegal  
13 fireworks. My staff and I have used it to identify  
14 constituent complaint trends including illegal truck  
15 parking and out of service elevators.

16           If journalists and public officials like  
17 me are using 311 to better inform and serve New  
18 Yorkers, does the Administration use their own data?  
19 People in the tech world call this dog-fooding, using  
20 one's own product to assess the usefulness and  
21 quality of that product. There have been several  
22 publicized incidents of this, including 311 complaint  
23 data to locate the mysterious maple syrup smell  
24 identifying illegal social clubs. And finding  
25 locations where noise abatement programs may be most

2 effective. Internally, between city agencies MODA  
3 Created Data Bridge a citywide data-sharing platform  
4 that in part uses 311 data analytics to provide city  
5 agencies access to each other's data.

6 I hope the representatives from the  
7 Administration can provide some more insight into  
8 this program and help agencies make use of it.  
9 Finally, the Committee hopes to learn what other uses  
10 can be made of the prolific 311 data are available  
11 including engaging public opinion. And would also be  
12 interested to know how the integrity of the data can  
13 be improved and what improvements can be made to  
14 311's various platforms to achieve this. With that,  
15 I'd like to turn to our panel. Welcome. I have to  
16 swear you in. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
17 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
18 testimony before this committee, and to respond  
19 honestly to Council Members' questions? Okay. Thank  
20 you. Okay, we can first start by introducing  
21 yourself to the panel.

22 JOE MORRISROE: [off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Is the microphone on?

24 JOE MORRISROE: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Try again.

2 JOE MORRISROE: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, better.

4 JOE MORRISROE: Good afternoon, Chairman  
5 Vacca and members of the City Council. My name is  
6 Joe Morrisroe. I'm the Executive Director of New  
7 York City's 311. I will allow my colleagues to  
8 introduce themselves.

9 NICHOLAS O'BRIEN: My name is Nicolas  
10 O'Brien. I'm the Director of Public Affairs for the  
11 Mayor's Office of Data Analytics.

12 SADIA CHOWDHURY: My name is Sadia  
13 Chowdhury. I'm the Director of Customer Management  
14 and Business Relationships at 311.

15 JOE MORRISROE: Thank you for that, and  
16 I'd like to begin by saying I'm honored to serve as  
17 the Executive Director of 311 since 2008, and to  
18 represented women and men of the 311 team. Since  
19 2010, 311 reports direction the Mayor's Office of  
20 Operations, an alignment that underscores the  
21 importance of this operation and service to the city.  
22 Prior to that, 311 reported to the Department of  
23 Information Technology and Telecommunications known  
24 as DOIT. DOIT continues to provide technology  
25 services and general services administration and

2 support for the 311 organization, and works  
3 collaboratively with 311 and the Mayor's Office on  
4 the continual evolution and the enhancements to the  
5 service delivery and customer experience of 311.

6           As Executive Director, I oversee all  
7 aspects of 311 from the operations of the most  
8 popular component, the Call Center, to the creation  
9 and implementation of multiple customer facing  
10 channels. Performance results and quality control  
11 measures. Interaction with City agencies.  
12 Compliance with regulatory requirements. Data  
13 Collection, and most importantly serving our  
14 customers, the millions of residents, thousands of  
15 businesses and numbers visitors and commuters to New  
16 York City.

17           The 311 process relies on systems  
18 supported by DOIT and partnerships with city agencies  
19 to ensure our customer has access to information  
20 assistance and services through a variety of channels  
21 including the Call Center, 311 online, and text. To  
22 understand 311 Data Collection and Performance  
23 Reporting, it is helpful to understand the flow of  
24 311 service delivery from customer inquiries and  
25 requests to the answers provided and actions taken.

2 And the confirmation provided. With few exceptions,  
3 public interactions with 311 result in one of the  
4 following outcomes: One is a service request where  
5 the city needs to do something. Second, is an  
6 information request such as is alternate side parking  
7 in effect? When is my recycling pickup. And the  
8 third is referral to an outside entity such as the  
9 MTA, New York State or the FCC.

10 The data collection process is consistent  
11 across all these outcomes as well as across the  
12 multiple customer service channels. The 311 system  
13 captures the relevant information for these request  
14 types, creates and stores activity records, and then  
15 feeds that information to a business intelligence  
16 tool supported and managed by DOIT for the  
17 compilation process and then presentation of the  
18 data.

19 The Activity Record can include the date  
20 and time of the call, the topic or the subject, the  
21 agency responsible for providing the information or  
22 the response, and confirmation number used by both  
23 the customer and the agency. And in the case of most  
24 service requests geographic information on the  
25 incident being reported. The Business Intelligence

2 Tool is the backbone that allows this information to  
3 be captured and collected as data, stored and  
4 catalogue reporting and access purposes, and  
5 converted to performance measurements all accessible  
6 to the public.

7           Since 311 launched in March 2003, it has  
8 received over 190 million calls. Originally launched  
9 as a call center, New York City 311 has evolved into  
10 the most comprehensive municipal government customer  
11 service platform in the nation. Available 24/7 in  
12 180 languages and multiple channels, 311 interacts  
13 with over 100,000 customers on a typical business  
14 day. And in an average month, 311 received 1.6  
15 million calls, over 450,000 visits to the companion  
16 311 online website; 50,000 mobile app touches,  
17 140,000 text messages; 1,000 chats and publishes  
18 information for over 100,000 social media followers.

19           The 311 mission is aligned with the  
20 Administration's goals and visions, and most notably  
21 focuses on providing the public with equitable  
22 service delivery through quick, easy access to all  
23 New York City government services and information  
24 while maintaining the highest possible level of  
25 customer service.

2           The 311 team is focused on meeting our  
3 customers where they are by providing an array of  
4 channel options to contact the City ranging from  
5 robust self-supporting-- Sorry. Self-service  
6 solutions to outstanding customer service delivered  
7 by professional, polite, and well-trained  
8 representatives. Over the last four years, an annual  
9 customer satisfaction survey is conducted by the CFI  
10 Group, 311 has ranked equal to or better than the  
11 best contact centers in the private sector, and far  
12 surpasses the best in government centers in  
13 delivering customer service. This outstanding  
14 performance reflects the dedication and commitment of  
15 the women and men who work at 311 and proudly serve  
16 the fellow New Yorkers.

17           It is for these reasons that New York  
18 City 311 is the recognized model for service delivery  
19 and performance reporting for governments across the  
20 nation and around the world who study the New York  
21 City 311 model in considering launching their own  
22 customer service platforms. As the source for non-  
23 emergency government services and information, 311  
24 was the ideal funnel to capture and store relevant  
25 data on activities and outcomes associated with

2 customer questions and requests. Over the past  
3 several years, 311 data and performance results have  
4 been made available to the public by our reports,  
5 dashboards, maps, and APIs. Thanks to a collective  
6 effort by 311, DOIT, the Mayor's Office of Operation,  
7 City agencies, Community Boards, the City Council and  
8 open data advocates.

9           In the early stages of a static report in  
10 a PDF format to the current capabilities, which  
11 include the NYC Open Data Portal, 311, DOIT and the  
12 Mayor's Office of Operations have focused on ensuring  
13 transparency in City government, and make data and  
14 results accessible and understandable. This effort  
15 includes organizing the 311 resources and  
16 organization structure to ensure proper collection  
17 and cataloging the information received, as well as  
18 the data input to the system. And DOIT's work in  
19 building and maintaining the technology and tools  
20 that make the data available.

21           Whether an interaction is performed with  
22 the assistance of a 311 representative or the  
23 customer self-serves by a 311 online or the 311  
24 mobile app, the same data elements are captured and  
25 fed to the Business Intelligence Platform. This is a

2 critical and deliberate consideration that ensures  
3 consistency in data fields and list of values. And  
4 standardization in structure and formatting, which is  
5 necessary for users to access and utilize data sets  
6 and reports.

7           The 311 organization is responsible for  
8 the accuracy, clarity, and consistency of the  
9 information provided to the public. 311 works with  
10 City, State, and Federal agencies to ensure that the  
11 most up-to-date information is available, and then  
12 disseminating it across the various customer  
13 channels. The agency information presented to the  
14 customer and the representative follows a plain  
15 language standard to promote understanding and  
16 clarity. The information captured by the system and  
17 fed to the Business Intelligence Tool is formatted in  
18 standards that allow cataloging, compilation, and  
19 publication. The 311 content management team  
20 structures the information for every city service,  
21 over 4,000-- Excuse me. Over 5,000 unique pieces of  
22 information in a way that makes it unique and  
23 accessible to users in the Call Center or with the  
24 mobile app, and by the Business Intelligence System.

2           This careful design and regular curating  
3 of the content ensures the information provide to the  
4 public is correct, and the resultant data is useful,  
5 accessible, and understandable for our customers  
6 further ensures the accuracy and credibility of data  
7 by inspecting and measuring the intake process with  
8 customers and the data entry process performed by  
9 representatives or customers. This quality control  
10 step is vital to subsequent use of performance  
11 results data.

12           Consumers of 311 data include City  
13 government users and the general public. Internally,  
14 my organization uses the data generated on a number  
15 of levels. This includes monitoring and tracking top  
16 drivers and trends to measuring performance results.  
17 Internal users including partner city agencies, and  
18 the Mayor's Office use the data to evaluate policies  
19 and programs, identify trends, and measure the  
20 success of campaigns. In the even of a citywide or  
21 localized emergency, 311 data is a critical feed in  
22 real time, and is of great use to the Office of  
23 Emergency Management and City agencies responding to  
24 an event.

2           A good recent example of 311 data  
3 monitoring is during the course of the recent  
4 notification on the Ebola concerns. As part of the  
5 normal agency relations process, 311 was working  
6 early on with the Department of Mental Hygiene and  
7 the Office of Emergency Management to ensure correct  
8 content-- Sorry. To ensure correct and current  
9 content was available for customers seeking more  
10 information. The 311 team tracked these inquiries  
11 and created a comparison model using previous public  
12 health concerns, notably the H1N1 outbreak in 2010  
13 and previous flu season inquiries. 311 data was used  
14 to build a baseline response model, and then overlay  
15 the actual response for Ebola related inquiries on a  
16 daily basis. This approach allowed 311 to forecast  
17 scenarios for staffing, establish upper control limit  
18 thresholds providing a relative context to the call  
19 volumes, and ultimately gauging and evaluating public  
20 reaction and response on a daily basis.

21           The 500 plus calls received over a 21-day  
22 period provided a suitable universe for tracking and  
23 was well within comparative thresholds. This  
24 analysis has helped determine there were no hidden  
25 concerns being raised by the public. And there were

2 no unmet needs in terms of definitive information and  
3 instructions. The ability to track Ebola related  
4 inquiries quantitatively as well as qualitatively was  
5 a useful tool for planning and preparation and a  
6 conduit for the Mayor's Office to continuously engage  
7 public response.

8           For external visitors and users with  
9 their wide range of interest, 311 data is accessible  
10 through a variety of options. These include a suite  
11 of offerings known as Citywide Performance Reporting  
12 managed by DOIT and available and summarized on the  
13 Mayor's Office of Operations website on NYC.gov. A  
14 sampling of these offerings shows the scope of data  
15 sharing and multiple uses of the source data. During  
16 the first half of 2014, these tools were accessed in  
17 total over 21,000 times per month by the public with  
18 over 60,000 downloads from the NYC Open Data Portal.  
19 A quick summary of these include:

20           311 Reporting which provides statistics  
21 on the type and frequency of information and service  
22 requests to 311 available on a monthly and annual  
23 basis by type of request and at the borough and  
24 community board levels.

Agency Performance Reporting. Access to critical performance indicators for every city agency including monthly updates and automatic evaluation of trends within specific program areas.

The Street Conditions Observations, also known as SCOUT. It maps street conditions such as potholes and catch basin defects and uses the 311 system to report and submit the conditions, and allow users to track the progress of repairs.

The 311 Service Request Map is a visual representation of the location, frequency, and concentration of service requests filed through the 311 system, at a street or intersection level, as well as by zip code, community board, and City Council District level.

And NYC Open Data. The NYC Open Data Tool managed by DOIT increases the accessibility of public data generated by 311 and various New York City agencies as part of an initiative to improve accessibility, accountability and transparency of City government. This catalog supplies access to a repository of government produced machine-readable data sets.

2 I would now like to turn it over to my  
3 colleague Nick O'Brien, the Director of Public  
4 Affairs at the Mayor's Office Data Analytics on more  
5 insights on their efforts.

6 NICHOLAS O'BRIEN: Thank you, Joe. And  
7 thank you Chairman Vacca and the members of the City  
8 Council Technology Committee for convening this  
9 hearing. My name is Nicholas O'Brien. I'm Director  
10 of Public Affairs for the Mayor's Office of Data  
11 Analytics or MODA. MODA housed within the Mayor's  
12 Office of Operations serves as the civic intelligence  
13 center for operations data allowing the city to  
14 aggregate and analyze data from across city agencies  
15 to more effectively address issues related to crime,  
16 public safety, and quality of life among others.

17 MODA is tasked with executing interagency  
18 data projects, and one of the most valuable sources  
19 of data we use in conducting our analyses is the 311  
20 Service Request Data. For nearly every project we  
21 work on, we examine 311 data to help us assess the  
22 scope and spatial distribution of the problem. We  
23 also have on a few occasions used 311 data as an  
24 input for predicting models to help us move beyond  
25 reactive, and to actually get ahead of problems

2 before the city is directly made aware of an issue.  
3 For example, MODA worked with the Fire Department to  
4 update the risk-based inspection system, an algorithm  
5 that selects buildings and schedules them for FDNY  
6 inspections. FDNY has jurisdiction to proactively  
7 inspect over 300,000 buildings in the city. Along  
8 with the neighborhood and building characteristics,  
9 311 is a key input into the model. We are talking  
10 about closed complaints that will not speak into an  
11 active issue in the building indicates the location  
12 may be problematic, and that inspection resources  
13 should be deployed there quickly.

14 We are also using analytics to enhance  
15 311 information. For example, both the Illegal  
16 Conversion Taskforce and the Department of Buildings  
17 B Plus Program, MODA takes incoming 311 complaints,  
18 and assesses them with respect to other city data to  
19 determine if they are likely to be more problematic  
20 than other complaints, and schedules them for faster  
21 and/or enhances inspection. We see the potential to  
22 scale these types of projects, and are actively  
23 looking for new ways to find and address issues  
24 before they become major problems.

2           In addition to using 311 data to improve  
3 city service provision, MODA is the business owner of  
4 the Open Data Portal, and in this capacity is working  
5 to increase the use of information available on 311  
6 to keep New Yorkers better informed, and to make  
7 better decisions. 311 service request data is posted  
8 daily to the Open Data Portal. This has permitted  
9 easy access by non-technical New Yorkers as well as  
10 permitting developers to create new applications.  
11 The recently launched City Gram sends New Yorkers  
12 alerts when new service requests are made in their  
13 neighborhood, or any area of their choice.

14           Site Comply, which creates unified  
15 reports of city data for building managers includes  
16 311 complaints so that the people responsible for  
17 addressing those complaints are made aware of them  
18 quickly. The Hear Here App looks at trends in 311  
19 data and allows New Yorkers to compare time periods  
20 and neighborhoods. There are a good number alternate  
21 side of the street parking apps available for  
22 download that were created by outside developers. In  
23 order to encourage further app development, 311 did a  
24 partner to create the Reinvent 311 Challenge. This  
25 two-month culminated in January 2014, and produced a

2 series of apps designed to present useful information  
3 to New Yorkers in a more digestible way.

4           One useful example for was Homeless  
5 Helper, an app designed for caseworkers and advocates  
6 for the homeless, which combines city data on food  
7 stamps, homeless prevention, youth counseling, job  
8 services, and other outreach information. All this  
9 data is made available to the public via the 311  
10 Content Application Program and Interface and is  
11 regularly updated. There is also significant  
12 interest in this data from the media and the academic  
13 community. A number of pieces of 311 and the stories  
14 that 311 data tell appeared in popular media  
15 including Wired Magazine, New York Observer,  
16 Gothamist and Gawker. At NYU both the Furman Center  
17 for Real Estate and Urban Policy and the Center for  
18 Urban Science and Progress have done work with 311  
19 data.

20           MODA continues to look for ways to use  
21 311 data to improve city operational performance and  
22 is actively working with open data consumers to  
23 support their efforts to continue to make 311 data an  
24 asset for New Yorkers. And with that, I'd like to  
25 turn it back to Joe Morriseroe.

2                   JOE MORRISROE: Thank you, Nick. The  
3 success of New York City's 311 customer service  
4 platform over the years is tied to its ability to  
5 evolve and expand to meeting ever-changing customer  
6 needs. To do that, the 311 collaborates with  
7 numerous groups to constantly evaluate the current  
8 state, receive and respond to feedback that drives  
9 improvement, and partner to design and create new  
10 initiatives that better serve the city and our  
11 customers. There are many partners involved with the  
12 ongoing tuning and enhancing of the 311 platform. A  
13 notable list includes the following:

14                   The Mayor's Office on Strategic Direction  
15 and Policy

16                   DOIT on Technology Initiatives and  
17 Support

18                   City Agencies for Programmatic and  
19 Procedural Information

20                   Elected Officials and Community Boards  
21 for feedback and Insight

22                   Open government and open data advocates  
23 who provide fresh ideas and perspectives

24                   And a constant is to listen to those who  
25 understand the daily interaction of New York City

2 and it's constituents very well because they do it on  
3 a daily basis, the frontline staff at 311 and our  
4 customers. The care that goes into providing both  
5 the customer service agents and the public with the  
6 right information is the same level of attention and  
7 detail assigned to make sure the data intake and  
8 collection throughout the 311 process is accurate and  
9 complete for users of the 311 data.

10 On behalf of my colleagues, I thank the  
11 Technology Committee and Chair Vacca for your time  
12 and consideration, and the opportunity to testify.  
13 I'm happy to take any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you all for  
15 your testimony. We've been joined by my colleague  
16 Councilman Steve Matteo. Let me ask you questions.  
17 How effectively can you gauge public sentiment or  
18 opinion on policy issues by looking at the 311 data?  
19 How can you gauge public opinion just by looking at  
20 that data? What do you do to see how people are  
21 feeling on key issues?

22 JOE MORRISROE: I think there are a  
23 couple of ways we are able to from our operational  
24 data, which we use to run the Call Center and monitor  
25 the website. We'll get a sense of an issue is a top

2 drive on a given day. So that will indicate if  
3 there's a large call volume, but two of the tools  
4 that I previously mentioned are provided within 24  
5 hours or within 24 hours information on service  
6 requests whether it be the Open Data Portal or the  
7 Service Request Map. Both of those can show not only  
8 the volume and frequency of an issue, but also the  
9 location and concentration of an issue. So those are  
10 a couple of examples of how we would be able to gauge  
11 public data.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How do you get those  
13 observations to the appropriate city agency or to  
14 City Hall? What do you do to get that information  
15 together to make sure that people are heard if you  
16 noticed that there is a trend?

17 JOE MORRISROE: Good question. We have a  
18 couple of ways including a direct relationship, and  
19 as part of the Mayor's Office of Operations. One of  
20 my standard approaches would be to let the Mayor's  
21 Office of Operations aware of anything that we would  
22 seek through one perspective that would be considered  
23 an increase or some response. But there are other  
24 means as well. The agencies themselves receive data  
25 from 311. So as you do the intake process, and

2 you're taking a service request, or a request or a  
3 complaint or a report for a brochure. Whatever it  
4 may be, that data is fed electronically to the City  
5 agencies. So the agencies themselves would know from  
6 the fulfillment side if there's an increase of an  
7 uptick.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: One thing I have to  
9 tell you I noticed in 311 there is, of course,  
10 millions of your service requests. As you indicated  
11 your numbers are very substantial, but there are  
12 about 3,500 that are listed as opinion for the Mayor.  
13 Now, of those only 60 were from before this year.  
14 What has changed? Would 311 not accept opinions  
15 previously? There are so few people giving their  
16 opinions for the Mayor through 311. It seems like  
17 that number should be higher. I wasn't aware of this  
18 until I prepped for this hearing, to be honest. I  
19 wasn't aware that there was a provision in 311 where  
20 you could share your opinion with the Mayor. I think  
21 a lot of people have a lot of opinions, and I think  
22 they would like share them with the Mayor. And I  
23 think 311 is an easy opportunity. Sometimes I even  
24 have some things to say to the Mayor, to tell the  
25 truth. So I'd like to know what happened.

2           JOE MORRISROE: I can address that on a  
3 couple of levels. I'm not sure of the data you  
4 referenced the numbers. You said 3,500 and then down  
5 to 60. I can't speak to those numbers, but I can  
6 tell you about the process, and I can say first and  
7 foremost the opportunity provide feedback to the  
8 Mayor as well as to Commissioner heads, heads of  
9 agencies, Commissioners, has existed at 311 since the  
10 beginning, since 2003. I'm picking up on when you  
11 said opinions to the Mayor. The terminology I  
12 believe has changed over a year ago to go from an  
13 opinion to the Mayor for a comment to the Mayor. SO  
14 the data you data you pulled may only have selected  
15 one of those items. But on average, the number of  
16 comments for the Mayor that are take by 311 just in  
17 the Call Center alone average about 30 to 40 a day.  
18 Obviously, some days it may be a lot higher given  
19 the circumstances, or something going on. Other days  
20 maybe just be relatively low. Other days may just be  
21 relatively low.

22           But the process exists where a  
23 constituent can contact the Call Center. Share with  
24 the representative that they want to provide their  
25 opinion. In this case, let's say for the Mayor. It

2 goes to an agency commissioner, and their opinion  
3 will be taken down by the representative who will  
4 enter it into the 311 system. And then that will  
5 then feed into a downstream system that would have  
6 that. Then the downstream system would use that  
7 information as far as how it gets shared with the  
8 Mayor's Office, the Mayor or the Mayor's Office.  
9 Similarly, it exists on the 311-- I'm sorry, the 311  
10 online process where you can do the same thing. You  
11 can provide a comment for the Mayor. And then for  
12 agency heads, commissioners, again you can do it  
13 through the 311 Call Center or 311 online will land  
14 you at the agency page where you fill out the form  
15 for that. So it is available to everyone who wants  
16 the opportunity, and it's definitely more than 30.  
17 It's about 30 to 40 a day.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now, where does it go  
19 when you give your comment or opinion to the Mayor?  
20 Does it go to a deputy mayor. Does it go to  
21 Intergovernmental Affairs? Where does that opinion  
22 land when you say you want the Mayor to know how you  
23 feel about something. Where does that land?

24 JOE MORRISROE: My understanding is the  
25 opinion for the Mayor or a comment for the Mayor is a

2 service request that goes to the Mayor's Office of  
3 Correspondence. And if it's a comment for the agency  
4 head, a commissioner of an agency, it goes to the  
5 agency. In many cases, my understanding it goes to  
6 the agency's Correspondence Office, but that may vary  
7 by agency.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. I'm going to  
9 test that system I want you know.

10 JOE MORRISROE: Okay, well, if you need  
11 to do something.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I won't say I'm the  
13 Councilman leader. I'm going to test it. I'm Jimmy.  
14 Jim from the Bronx. [laughs] Now, of the people who  
15 wish to contact the Mayor, because I was so  
16 interested in this, how many people submit those  
17 opinions via phone text online? Do you have a  
18 breakdown of people who submit those specific  
19 requests?

20 JOE MORRISROE: I don't have a breakdown  
21 handy. I would say from experience that the majority  
22 would be through the phone channel. Some can do it  
23 online, and I'm going to confirm with Director  
24 Chowdhury if text allows that capability. So, yes,

2 some would come through text, but I don't have the  
3 number on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now, are they  
5 examined for data analysis? You did mention it goes  
6 to the correspondence unit, but does it go through a  
7 data analysis in so much as the commonality of the  
8 complaint, and the breakdown? Is there any type of  
9 analysis that's done?

10 JOE MORRISROE: On the comment for the  
11 Mayor, I believe that work would be done by the  
12 Mayor's Office of Correspondence, and not by 311. We  
13 don't go through a data analysis on that. If we have  
14 comments that come to us as an agency as 311 is an  
15 agency, there is a data analysis. It talks about  
16 what is the comment. We actually get more  
17 compliments than we actually get complaints, but they  
18 are broken down by different categories. So when  
19 it's relative to 311 and we're the recipients, then  
20 we are able to do a data analysis. But I can speak  
21 to the Mayor's Office of Correspondence.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. So when you  
23 get a comment from the Mayor, it is broken down by  
24 Public Safety, Sanitation? Are those comments to the  
25 Mayor broken down? I thought you said that?

2           JOE MORRISROE: No, I'm sorry. A comment  
3 for the Mayor is considered a comment for the Mayor.  
4 And the substance of that ma be anything.

5           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay.

6           JOE MORRISROE: If a constituent wanted  
7 to make a comment about an agency, in this case 311  
8 as an agency, that would have a breakdown of the  
9 category or the type of question. But it would be  
10 more about the rep, the automate system I handled.  
11 Something relative to 311. So that whole detail  
12 would be available.

13           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: On this issue alone,  
14 I would like there to be more publicity about this  
15 existing. I don't think most people know that this  
16 exists. Then, on the second hand, I do think that  
17 for transparency's sake, those complaints that do go  
18 into that folder or whatever, should be broken down  
19 because you would want those stats included in your  
20 overall stats. So if somebody is complaining  
21 directly to the Mayor about crime in his neighborhood  
22 that would be a complaint that should be under crime  
23 as well. Because then for transparency purposes you  
24 could then report not just the complaints, you get

2 about crime, but it went into the other envelope, so  
3 to speak.

4 JOE MORRISROE: Sure

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So I would like to  
6 make that suggestion going forth.

7 JOE MORRISROE: Okay. I'd like to reply.  
8 I understand these, but I don't know if the Mayor's  
9 Office of Correspondence does or doesn't do that  
10 today. So I understand your request, though, and I  
11 will carry that back.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: That's fine. Okay,  
13 thank you. Now, I also tried to, or somebody tried  
14 in my office, tried to text. Now, when you text they  
15 ended up referring the text to the Internet. The  
16 response I think was automated. So people who text  
17 basically will get an automated-- Do they always get  
18 an automated response saying go to this website to  
19 enter your complaint? That's the texting response.

20 JOE MORRISROE: The texting response is  
21 more than that, and I may ask Sadia to assist here.  
22 Automated and fully aided responses are available  
23 through text. So if it's a standard question that  
24 can be satisfied by just giving you a link to the  
25 website that could be an automated response. If it's

2 a question that requires more research or a little  
3 bit of digging or a back and forth with the customer,  
4 then there is a-- It's aided. What we call an aided  
5 response. So you would get more than just a canned  
6 answer.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No, no, but even in  
8 the aided responses, does the ultimate outcome once  
9 the 311 caller understands what the complaint is. At  
10 the end of that, is the ultimate response going to be  
11 that you have to use the website?

12 JOE MORRISROE: Not always.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Not always.

14 JOE MORRISROE: Not always. For some  
15 service requests, the text channel would actually  
16 take the complaint itself, and submit that. So like  
17 a complaint about no heat in your apartment, you  
18 don't have to be referred to the website. You can  
19 give the information through text, and that service  
20 request will go through. In other cases, the service  
21 request is a little bit more complicated, and more  
22 than you would want to do back and forth on a text.  
23 So then, the website would be provided where you can  
24 land on the website, and the customer can do it  
25 themselves. And in many cases when it comes to text,

2 it's not a complaint at all. It's an information  
3 exchange. The customer wants to know something. So  
4 it's not a referral to website. What you'll get is  
5 the content that's on the website, and it's the  
6 answer to your question. So what are my recycle days  
7 or is off-site parking in effect today? That's an  
8 answer that would be provided back. So there's no  
9 website involvement. So those three are three  
10 possible outcomes, and probably a couple more.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Because I noticed in  
12 the breakdown of how 311 is contacted there is a  
13 small amount of people who use texting compared to  
14 those who I know use texting, and texting is very,  
15 very clever. Only 142,930 communicated with 311 via  
16 texting compared to 21.3 million by telephone, 5.2  
17 million from 311 online. I thought that the texting  
18 was small. Is there a reason for that? Is there a  
19 reason that people don't know that they can text, or  
20 is there an issue where people feel that it's not as  
21 responsive via texting or mechanism?

22 JOE MORRISROE: A good question. A  
23 couple of thoughts. The number represents pretty  
24 much a steady state of what we get in texting. The  
25 texting channel during a citywide emergency in

2 particular during Sandy because it was much higher.  
3 Many more people were aware of it because it was more  
4 heavily promoted. I also think there were a number  
5 of other text options available through New York City  
6 to the public as recently as the Pre-K for all  
7 campaign. There was a different text number to use.  
8 It wasn't the 311-692 number. It was an 877 number.  
9 So I think there's a variety of different ways. And  
10 we've also seen a continued increase in our social  
11 media followers and interaction relative to text. So  
12 one would be led to believe maybe more people are  
13 doing it on their mobile phone or on mobile app, or  
14 social media more so than texting. But that number  
15 that you quoted is about average for the prior fiscal  
16 year as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: The texting number is  
18 311 NYC?

19 JOE MORRISROE: 311 NYC or 311-692.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And that's also a 24-  
21 hour number?

22 JOE MORRISROE: Yes, it is.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Do you have people  
24 specifically doing that or do operators at 311 do the  
25 texting, the social media? Do you have people doing

2 multi-tasking or do you have people specifically  
3 engaged in texting, social media, and telephone?  
4 Tell me how people are assigned to what they.

5           JOE MORRISROE: You pretty much have it  
6 there. It's separate by channel, if you will. The  
7 source data is always the same. So you'll have a  
8 different person who's hearing the phone call. A  
9 different person who's posting the Tweet, and a  
10 different person who's handling the text. But the  
11 source information is still the 311 content.

12           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How long does it take  
13 for an average person to get their telephone call  
14 answered? When they call 311, what's the average  
15 wait?

16           JOE MORRISROE: Oh, 84% of all calls made  
17 to 311 that have been answered, have been answered in  
18 less than 30 seconds since the beginning of 311.  
19 This year it's over 85%. [sic]

20           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [interposing] No,  
21 no, no, no, wait, wait. You mean answered with a  
22 live voice, or answered with a tape?

23           JOE MORRISROE: Answered with a live  
24 voice. The call that's answered goes through an  
25 automated system with announcements. On average,

2 that now takes 37 seconds. Then from that, point to  
3 the time it reaches an operator in the last fiscal  
4 years is 23 seconds on average.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Councilman  
6 Matteo, do you have a question? Councilman Matteo.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you Chair  
8 Vacca, and thank you for attending the hearing. I  
9 want to talk about three different subjects. So  
10 first, I'd like to talk about the overnight calls.  
11 So my office gets a lot of noise complaints  
12 especially in the summer. So if someone is calling  
13 or texting or going online not even after hours but  
14 1:00 in the morning say, you know, loud party. Is  
15 311 directing the agencies with the point that this  
16 is a complaint that is generated at 1:00 in the  
17 morning and the noise is 1:00 in the morning? And  
18 how are we getting the agencies out there? I mean I  
19 know if they call my office I directly deal with the  
20 agency. I said, now, listen, this has been happening  
21 on numerous occasions. You've got to get out there  
22 at 2:00 in the morning and that's not easy. But how  
23 is 311 getting the complaint to the agencies in a  
24 pretty fast amount of time. Maybe not that night,  
25 but maybe for the next night or construction that's

2 happening in the early hours especially on the  
3 weekends when they're supposed to start later but  
4 they're not? SO does 311 just send it directly  
5 saying this is occurring for the last three nights at  
6 3:00 a.m. and you need to get out there. Or, we're  
7 waiting 45 days for a response? How are we doing  
8 with the noise complaints that just-- that are  
9 happening overnight?

10           JOE MORRISROE: Good question. There are  
11 two agencies that are primarily responsible for  
12 responding to noise complaints, NYPD and DEP. In  
13 both cases the 311 operating in the Call Center of  
14 the 311 website if you chose to just self-serve and  
15 you use it yourself. They provide a real time fee to  
16 those agencies. So they'll do the intake as far as  
17 the complaint, which includes the time. Any special  
18 conditions about that. There's an opportunity to  
19 include that. Those are then sent to those city  
20 agencies who have their own service level agreement  
21 as far as the response time. In the case of the  
22 NYPD, for example, they would respond on a non-  
23 emergency basis and they have a window of I believe  
24 it's eight hours to update the complaint. It doesn't  
25 say that, you know, they're going to find a problem

2 when they're there, of course, but that is happening,  
3 right. So whether that's 1:00 in the morning or 1:00  
4 in the afternoon, the same process is followed.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. I just  
6 wanted to follow up because I do get a lot of people  
7 who say I called 311 last night. We follow up. The  
8 other issues are I wouldn't say the negative aspect  
9 of 311. They're a different aspect of 311. 311 is  
10 great. There's no question. People should be able  
11 to call about finding information, alerting potholes.  
12 But there is concern in my district that people use  
13 311 for policy. And I'm not sure that this is  
14 something you can answer, but you can at least walk  
15 me through. So you have someone who is passing  
16 through my district in Staten Island. And they go  
17 down Stewart Avenue, and they decide they don't think  
18 no parking should be on the street or whatever. And  
19 they call 311. Now, 311 is just taking that  
20 complaint, and I assume just forwarding it to DOT  
21 because then DOT acts.

22 Now, do you find that that's an issue  
23 that we're just handing off complaints that  
24 necessarily just shouldn't be handed off to an  
25 agency? Is it the agency's responsibility then to

2 not carry out something that, you know, that maybe  
3 not-- You have to address the complaint. There's no  
4 question, but sometimes they're addressing the  
5 complaint and they're turning Stewart Avenue into a  
6 one-way because someone from Brooklyn passed through  
7 Stewart Avenue. And that's an issue in my district  
8 where if someone calls my office, and wants to  
9 discuss a one-way conversion, we're going out there  
10 where we're having meetings with the people on the  
11 block. We're talking about the 16 sub-issues that  
12 come with the one way. We're talking about a grid.  
13 I feel like, you know, some people use it as policy  
14 driven. I'm not so sure that's the best method we  
15 should be using 311 for. Again, I'm not sure you  
16 could give me the right. But my point is that you're  
17 just handing it off to DOT or to the relevant agency,  
18 and then they're deciding to act. And do you see  
19 that as an issue at all, or have you had any  
20 experience in what I've been talking about?

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I follow what you're  
22 talking about, and I think it's perhaps a little bit  
23 beyond the data scope that we're looking at here.  
24 But I can give you my sense of that. I can speak to  
25 the front-end piece of that. So whether it's the

2 specific example you reference or another one. There  
3 is an intake process that has some screening, which  
4 is designed so you can't just make a very general  
5 blanket request or complaint. There's a level of  
6 information that's required, which allows that to be  
7 very specific when it does get to the agency. So  
8 from the intake side, we know we'd go through. You're  
9 correct, it wouldn't be something that a 311 operator  
10 or 311 management would set policy on. But there  
11 would be that initial screening. So it's not just a  
12 simple or very broad or very general request. That  
13 then does go to the City agency responsible. So from  
14 that point, I have to defer to them.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Yeah, I figured.  
16 I just wanted to double check if that was your  
17 answer. We have to deal with that at the agency  
18 level. My last point, and I have a bill on this, and  
19 I'm not looking to discuss the bills or the merits.  
20 But I just want some information on anonymous  
21 complaints. In my district anonymous complaints are  
22 great when you're talking about the street light is  
23 out, noise, potholes. But what's happening, and it's  
24 been happening a lot, is they're turning into  
25 harassment complaints against each other. So we call

2 them the neighbor's neighbor complaint that they're  
3 having some sort of issue with each other, and  
4 they're just call 311 on everything whatever it is.  
5 But the problem is everybody is going out there, and  
6 nothing is being found. Does 311 have a mechanism to  
7 say, this address has been called on 30 days in the  
8 last month, and we keep going out there and nothing  
9 is happening. Do you have data on anonymous  
10 complaints, and is there a mechanism that 311 says  
11 maybe we should stop taking the same complaint over  
12 and over and nothing is happening?

13           JOE MORRISROE: There is no mechanism in  
14 the 311 systems. It's not built to do a check real  
15 time in the data that passes downstream that could be  
16 used by an agency. Then yes, they should be able to  
17 go through and use the data to get to that. But as  
18 far as a mechanism upfront to screen or do a check or  
19 something to that effect for practical purposes that  
20 does not exist.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. That's all  
22 I needed to know. Thank you.

23           JOE MORRISROE: All right. Okay.

24           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I want to come back  
25 to that point because I have a similar situation. I

2 think that most of those anonymous complaints would  
3 come via telephone, of course. Do you think that  
4 they do?

5           JOE MORRISROE: You have the opportunity  
6 to submit anonymously to online and mobile as well  
7 whether the behavior is different. The customer  
8 behavior may be a little different.

9           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, yes. I would  
10 like to know what percentage of complaints come in  
11 anonymously to 311 because you have people who just  
12 really don't like someone else. And they will go  
13 after the person's tree in the back yard, their  
14 fence, leaves that were not picked up. I mean this  
15 happens. When you don't like somebody and you have  
16 an anonymous venue, and you can have inspectors show  
17 up like that. It's happened. I do think we need to  
18 a breakdown as to how many because your agency treats  
19 the anonymous complaint like it would if you had  
20 someone give their name. Am I correct?

21           JOE MORRISROE: In most cases yes.

22           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And sometimes there  
23 is a personal aspect to people complaining about  
24 another person. I do think it bears looking into. I  
25 understand that we may want to accept anonymous

2 complaints, but I can also understand the person who  
3 will say that there's been an inspector at my house  
4 for seven times on the same complaint. I don't have  
5 a tree in my back yard. My tree is pruned. My fence  
6 is fixed. Why do they keep coming back. So I  
7 understanding people feel like they're being singled  
8 out. And, of course, people do assume who it is. I  
9 meant the person who is being called about can assume  
10 that this is the guy who hasn't spoken to me in ten  
11 years. But it's just that we're the City of New  
12 York. We should be prepared to recognize when that  
13 exists, and I don't think the 311 is. It's just a  
14 never ending-- It could be a never-ending thing for  
15 people. And that's what I think we open up when we  
16 have anonymous complaints. So there's got to be a  
17 way I think to itemize and the assess how many  
18 complaints are anonymous. And then for purposes of  
19 transparency to say, are most of them Building  
20 Department complaints? Are most of the Parks  
21 Department complaints. I would be very interested in  
22 seeing that. I think that might tell us something.

23 JOE MORRISROE: I don't have the data  
24 with me on those. We could do a look and see what

2 those are. So at a future hearing I'd be happy to  
3 share that data and make that available.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And Mr. Chair,  
5 again, I agree. I mean, You know, you brought up the  
6 point and that's why I introduced the bill on  
7 anonymous complaints. And I know it's difficult to  
8 come up with a solution because we want people to  
9 call anonymously about potholes. We want people to  
10 call anonymously about construction sites that are  
11 dangerous, or houses that are dangerous. But the  
12 problem is it's becoming, as the Chairman said, it's  
13 becoming everyday. And you have houses that have 45  
14 complaints in 45 days. You know, it's harassment on  
15 the homeowner. It's wasting resources. So I concur  
16 with Chair Vacca that we should look at data to see  
17 if there are in terms of especially residential and  
18 residential complaints.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: You know, one  
20 suggestion I'm thinking of off the top of my head you  
21 may want to say that if the complaint is anonymous,  
22 and it's not a streetlight or a pothole. I mean  
23 those things are certainly whether they're anonymous  
24 or not. But if it turns out to be more than that in  
25 certain areas, you may want to define that the

2 anonymous complaint can only be put in once every six  
3 months or once every three months. I'm thinking of  
4 what I go through when I submit a request for a  
5 traffic light. I can't submit a request for a  
6 traffic light until eight-- I think it's 18 months  
7 elapses. Then DOT will reconsider the traffic light  
8 request, but if I submitted one in June of 2014, I  
9 can't write again in December. So there is a period  
10 of time. So it may be that you to look at that  
11 especially when it comes to certain agencies that are  
12 prevalently used for the anonymous complaint vehicle.

13           JOE MORRISROE: I appreciate the input.  
14 We do have a relationship with the city agencies, the  
15 formal structure to exchange information obviously.  
16 We're happy to share that ultimately with the  
17 agencies in that situation, but I hear you and we'll  
18 take that back.

19           COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: And Mr. Chair--

20           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [interposing] Yes.

21           JOE MORRISROE: --just a point just for  
22 on the record that's exactly what the bill does. It  
23 basically provides a cooling off period of you make a  
24 certain amount of unwarranted complaints with a

2 certain period of time. So I just wanted to clear up  
3 that for the record.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,  
5 Councilman. We've been joined by my colleague  
6 Councilman Greenfield. I wanted to tackle a couple  
7 of things still. Noise. Everybody tells people to  
8 call 311 about noise. I want you to know I tell my  
9 constituents to call the precinct about noise.  
10 Because when we call 311 about noise, your inspector  
11 will not arrive until a day or two later. The  
12 inspectors that investigate noise are from DEP. They  
13 don't come out at 11 o'clock at night when people  
14 can't sleep and somebody has the door of their bar  
15 opened because it's 85 degrees outside, and the whole  
16 block is kept awake. So people call 311 for noise.  
17 311 comes hours later after all the noise is  
18 finished. So why are people to call noise complaints  
19 into 311?

20 JOE MORRISROE: Well, 311 would actually  
21 triage that complaint the customer's description of  
22 that situation. And for starters it may go to NYPD  
23 or DEP depending on the criteria. The majority are  
24 actually handled by NYPD particularly after yours,  
25 and that's the process. The reason it goes to 311 is

2 it offloads the volume going to the precinct or going  
3 to a 911 system. So I don't have data on noise  
4 complaints in total, which again to talk about the  
5 data focus here. But the structure is to call 311,  
6 describe your situation, let the 311 operator or the  
7 311 online tool or the 311 mobile app guide the user  
8 to figure out how to put the information in. At the  
9 end of the day, the customer shouldn't have to know  
10 whether it's NYPD or DEP who is handling it. They  
11 should just know what they have to provide and be  
12 done with it.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But my concern is  
14 that too often the 311 operator is sending this out  
15 to DEP, and DEP does not have people that are going  
16 to go out to communities within a 30-minute, a 45-  
17 minute or one-hour type thing. The DEP operators are  
18 sending this to DEP, but in fact, isn't it easier for  
19 people to make sure that the complaint is sent to the  
20 right place? That they call their local precincts  
21 when they complain? Why are we telling them to do  
22 otherwise?

23 JOE MORRISROE: Again, beyond the data at  
24 this point, my understanding for that is that's  
25 determined by the agencies whose best to equip it,

2 handle it. In most cases an overnight noise  
3 complaint it actually the problem, so NYPD as opposed  
4 to DEP. DEP is more for chronic and ongoing.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Right. DEP would be  
6 for a machine that's on 24 hours a day, that the  
7 machine, a laundromat machine or a generator outside  
8 a building. For those things that go--

9 JOE MORRISROE: [interposing] More  
10 mechanical than chronic. Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --mechanical than  
12 chronic. Okay. Let me skip around quickly. Then I  
13 want to go to Councilman Greenfield who has a  
14 question. Have you considered introducing a  
15 universal dashboard where users could log in, and  
16 view the status of all the requests they have made  
17 across all platforms?

18 JOE MORRISROE: We've considered that and  
19 in many ways there are a couple that already exist  
20 that do that. The SR Data Portal that Mr. O'Brien  
21 mentioned, and the Service Request Map, for the most  
22 part have regardless of whichever platform you've  
23 used, whichever channel you used to make your  
24 complaint, the data goes into our Enterprise Business  
25 Intelligence, and it's then available in the data

2 portal, in the Open Data Portal or the Service  
3 Request Map.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And lastly, do you go  
5 out to community boards to teach them how to best  
6 utilize the analytic possibilities that 311  
7 possesses? I don't know. They're supposed to be in  
8 the vanguard in making sure people get city services  
9 in their local districts. I'm telling you I think  
10 that they tell people to call 311, but I don't know  
11 what type of monitoring goes on. I don't know what  
12 they know about Open Portal. They know about  
13 various-- I think many of them have to be taught.  
14 This is a tool for them, and there's a training  
15 that's needed.

16 JOE MORRISROE:

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA:

18 JOE MORRISROE:

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA:

20 JOE MORRISROE: The 311 group currently  
21 does not do that. Historically, we have done that.  
22 As a matter of fact, the community boards were the  
23 beta testers for 311 online back in 2009 for that  
24 very reason. They were the power users, and super  
25 users, and we invited them in to help test it out

2 before it went live for the public. And over the  
3 years, either on an organized basis through regular  
4 meetings, or just through individual community  
5 boards, we have given information on how to use 311  
6 tools. And I believe the Mayor's Office of Data  
7 Analytics has looked at that as well.

8           NICHOLAS O'BRIEN: And as part of your  
9 suggestion at the Open Data Oversight Hearing, we are  
10 going ahead and setting up with the Bronx Community  
11 Boards currently a training session to show them what  
12 is available, what they can use. And we plan to  
13 continue that type of activity around the city.

14           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I feel  
15 good that something was done from the committee here.  
16 Oh, my God. I don't know what I'm going to do today.  
17 Okay, I'm going to take one of my suggestions. I  
18 have many more suggestions. I hope you'll look into  
19 everything. You're taking one. I'm happy. All  
20 right, Councilman Greenfield.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: You should  
22 take the afternoon off, Mr. Chairman. You certainly  
23 deserve it. Thank you for being here today. I just  
24 wanted to clarify a couple of issues that were  
25 addressed with a slightly different perspective. So,

2 you get multiple 311 calls on an issue, whatever the  
3 issue is. If it's about a pothole or a noise  
4 complaint or a building violation. Does that get  
5 flagged as a higher priority than just a single  
6 call. Is there some sort of metric, or is it just  
7 simply when the first call is report, that's really  
8 it? And then there are no subsequent I guess follow  
9 up beyond that initial call? So basically, just to  
10 clarify, it could happen one of two ways. Ten people  
11 call and you say internal system well we got this  
12 call already so check job done. Or, ten people call,  
13 and you say uh-oh, ten people are calling about this  
14 issue? How does that work from your metric system,  
15 and what reaction do you have when you get multiple  
16 calls on an issue?

17           JOE MORRISROE: On the 311 system from an  
18 intake perspective, every call is processed, and each  
19 call is a unique incident. There is not a collection  
20 that says, this is now number ten and, therefore, it  
21 takes a different priority. So 311 takes everything  
22 in whether it's 10 people call or whether it's one  
23 person calling. Then it feeds electronically these  
24 complaints, service requests downstream to the city  
25 agencies. Some agencies may have tracking mechanisms

2 internally to look at a location or incident, and  
3 group the. But from a 311 perspective, it's all one  
4 by one. Each incident is uniquely reported.

5           NICHOLAS O'BRIEN: And from my  
6 perspective with the Mayor's Office of Data  
7 Analytics, for the Department of Buildings their  
8 incoming 311 calls they look at other city data where  
9 there's a history of complaints on the building.  
10 Where it's owner financial distress, and those do get  
11 flagged for an enhanced inspection.

12           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, just to  
13 be clear. It does not necessarily impact that more  
14 people are calling about one issues.

15           JOE MORRISROE: Right. From the 311  
16 perspective, it would not. I can't speak to the  
17 agency side whether that concentration provides a  
18 different level of insights or a different level of  
19 action.

20           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Should it? I  
21 mean I'm just trying to think about it-- Think about  
22 this out loud. For example, myself as a council  
23 member when I get ten complaints about an issue, I  
24 flag it as a priority because obviously a lot of  
25 people are frustrated about a specific issues as

2 opposed to just one person calling about an issue.  
3 So from your perspective might it make sense perhaps  
4 to flag it or give it a higher priority?

5           JOE MORRISROE: From my perspective I  
6 understand that. I think the downstream process  
7 would be the place to do that rather than the upfront  
8 intake process from intake being 311. Where for  
9 every customer who calls, we want to treat that  
10 customer's issue, request or complaint, whatever it  
11 is as their-- It's the most important thing to them  
12 at that moment. We want to make sure it's the most  
13 important thing when we deal with the. So putting a  
14 filter up front is not the best place, in my opinion.  
15 But downstream you can collect the data, and as Mr.  
16 O'Brien shared that there are tools you can use. It  
17 would be a better place for that, in my opinion.

18           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: But we don't  
19 know if the agency is using it, though?

20           JOE MORRISROE: That I can't speak to,  
21 yes.

22           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, fair  
23 enough. Then let's talk about the other ways of  
24 communicating with 311. So phone calls obviously are  
25 a primary way. We talked specifically about the

2 other platforms and how that's working, Twitter,  
3 Facebook, text. What are the other options and how  
4 does that work?

5           JOE MORRISROE: Sure. We have many  
6 channels now available. 311 online is just Internet  
7 access. NYC.gov/311. Go to home page NYC.gov. You  
8 see a lot of yellow. That's us. You can't miss it,  
9 and that's our backbone for online essentially.  
10 Texting is available. We mentioned the earlier. You  
11 can text to 311NYC or 311-692. We have a Twitter,  
12 Facebook, and Instagram feed. The Twitter and  
13 Facebook feed have piloting now taking service  
14 requests. They never used to do that. They would  
15 just push information, and provide links. Now, we're  
16 actually able to take a handful of service requests  
17 via Twitter and Facebook trying to gauge the use and  
18 see how that's going to play out. The mobile app  
19 provides a number of items including not only being  
20 able to make a service request, but it also provides  
21 information pushes. So that's quite popular. And we  
22 also now are piloting chat. Online chat. So if you  
23 go to the 311 online page, and you land on a page,  
24 and you're stuck or you have a question the chat  
25 invitation will pop up. And you can engage with a

2 representative via chat. So all of those are  
3 available to the public. They all are sourced the  
4 same way. It's that same 311 content that I  
5 mentioned earlier, and all of them, the online, the  
6 mobile app are definitely growth areas.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Right. Let  
8 me ask you about the data. So you're obviously  
9 sitting on mounds of data as a 311 guru. So what  
10 happens to that data? Who does it get shared with.  
11 Is it publicly accessible? How frequently is it  
12 updated, et cetera?

13 JOE MORRISROE: The bulk of the data is  
14 updated within 24 hours. So as it passes through the  
15 311 system it feeds to a Business Intelligence Tool.  
16 That Business Intelligence Tool then feeds a number  
17 of the reporting mechanisms we mentioned earlier.  
18 The predominant ones I would say the Open Data Portal  
19 where you can go and look at any service request data  
20 within 24 hours. And then the Service Request Map.  
21 So, yes, very robust data, and it feeds very quickly  
22 and very-- Well, very organized is not the right  
23 word. In an organized, methodical way it feeds into  
24 the systems that allow the public to access it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, great.  
3 Thank you, Councilman. What are the busiest hours  
4 for 311. When do people call most? What are the  
5 high volume hours.

6 JOE MORRISROE: Monday morning at 11:00  
7 a.m. is our busiest hour on average per week.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Monday morning at  
9 11:00 a.m.

10 JOE MORRISROE: At 11:00 a.m., right.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Is there a reason for  
12 that or people have their coffee and they're fresh  
13 from the weekend or something?

14 JOE MORRISROE: Mondays are busier than  
15 Tuesdays. Tuesdays are busier than Wednesdays. So  
16 it's just a matter of that's the day that people--  
17 more of them call.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So the first part of  
19 the week is the busies, Monday and then Tuesday and  
20 the first part of the week?

21 JOE MORRISROE: Yeah, you've got it.  
22 Yep.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How many operators do  
24 you have?

2           JOE MORRISROE: We have-- They're not  
3 all at work at one time, but I have a budgeted number  
4 of 205.

5           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: On three different  
6 shifts, basically.

7           JOE MORRISROE: Of course, on three  
8 different shifts. Correct.

9           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 205?

10          JOE MORRISROE: 205.

11          CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Has that number  
12 remained stagnant, or has that number gone up or down  
13 recently?

14          JOE MORRISROE: Oh, no, that number is  
15 down significantly from several years ago.

16          CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Down significant?

17          JOE MORRISROE: Yes, uh-huh.

18          CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What was it a couple  
19 of years ago? I think it was near 400 a couple of  
20 years ago?

21          JOE MORRISROE: It was over 300.

22          CHAIRPERSON VACCA: It was over 300 a  
23 couple of years ago. With that type of budget cut or  
24 reduction, how have you coped with that? It seems to  
25 say-- You seem to say that you're more efficient

2 even though you're leaner, but what was the-- How  
3 were you able to do that?

4           JOE MORRISROE: I'll offer a summary.  
5 Five years ago, 99.9% of all contacts with 311 went  
6 through the phone channel. Now, 80% of the contacts  
7 go through the phone channel. 20% go through the  
8 self-service channels such as online, mobile, text,  
9 Twitter. So we've shifted. Using technology, we've  
10 shifted that. We've adapted to the fact that we have  
11 fewer representatives, and we were able to use more  
12 technology to serve the customer.

13           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What does the  
14 training component consist of for a 311 operator, and  
15 is there intermittent training where training is  
16 updated and reviewed?

17           JOE MORRISROE: Now, there's a  
18 significant amount of training and Sadia heads a  
19 number of organization on 311, and could talk for  
20 hours on training. SO there is considerable  
21 training. I don't have all the details here in light  
22 of the fact we were preparing for data. I would stay  
23 close to that site.

24           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'm sorry. One more  
25 question. Councilman Greenfield.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So just one  
3 question I've just always been curious about. So  
4 when someone calls and there is an actual emergency,  
5 and they accidentally call 311, what's the process  
6 that happens on your end?

7 JOE MORRISROE: 311 representatives are  
8 trained and scripted to contact 911 immediately in  
9 the case of any potential emergency. So key words  
10 like danger, imminent threats, something like that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Do they plug  
12 them in on the line, or do they call in separately  
13 or--

14 JOE MORRISROE: Absolutely. It's called  
15 the hot transfer to direct tie to 911, and the 911  
16 operator comes on the line. And then 311 lets 911  
17 make the determination whether they take the call or  
18 they let 311 take the call.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Got it.  
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I want to thank you.  
22 You've done a great job. Very informative.

23 JOE MORRISROE: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'll be calling you  
25 later for the Mayor to respond to me.

2 NICHOLAS O'BRIEN: Okay.

3 JOE MORRISROE: We appreciate the  
4 opportunity. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Our next  
6 panel. Lucille Shanghai representing Manhattan  
7 Borough President Gale Brewer. Noel Hidalgo and  
8 Dominic Morrow, Reinvent Albany.

9 [Pause]

10 [background conversation]

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Let me ask Reinvent  
12 Albany to go first. Sir?

13 DOMINIC MORROW: Sure. Good afternoon.  
14 I'm Dominic Morrow, Staff Attorney of Reinvent  
15 Albany, a non-profit group that advocates for open  
16 and efficient New York State government and which co-  
17 chairs the New York City Transparency Working Group.  
18 In that role, we work closely with the Council, the  
19 Mayor's Office and DOIT to win passage of the New  
20 York City Open Data Law. We work with both city and  
21 state government to promote the use of everyday  
22 technology to make government more transparent and  
23 more accountable. We have strongly supported the NYC  
24 Open Data Law, which has opened up vast expanses of  
25 valuable government information to the public. One

2 of the most important data sets on the Open Data  
3 Portal is the 311 Service Request Data.

4 Publishing that data in an open format  
5 has opened a massive wealth of information about what  
6 services the people of New York are asking their  
7 government to provide. However, while this is very  
8 useful, 311 data does not show the public how the  
9 government responded to their service request. There  
10 is no end-to-end reporting on exactly what an agency  
11 did. But that data, which would shed a light on  
12 agency performance and vastly increase public  
13 accountability is currently only available to the  
14 Mayor's operation staff in the Data Bridge System.  
15 While we understand that this hearing is about 311  
16 data, we think the intent of the hearing is to help  
17 the Technology Committee and Council understand what  
18 the City is doing to be more transparent about it  
19 responds to 311 requests, and service requests in  
20 particular.

21 The reality is that without the data in  
22 Data Bridge, the public does not have a very good  
23 idea of city agencies respond to 311 requests. All  
24 we can see is the request, not the service provided.  
25 The basic idea of the Open Data Law was to get the

2 greatest value that the City already spends enormous  
3 sums of money collecting and compiling. The idea is  
4 that taxpayers get a better value for the money that  
5 they have invested in creating data when that data is  
6 used by other parts of government, academics,  
7 advocates, journalists, and businesses. Data Bridge  
8 is essentially the half of 311 that is missing from  
9 public view. Without it, 311 data is worth much less  
10 to the public and to government. We still live in an  
11 era in which government agencies FOIL each other for  
12 basic information, and we need to progress beyond  
13 that.

14           We estimate that it would cost  
15 approximately \$5 million for the city or its  
16 contractors, Accenture to publish Data Bridge data in  
17 an open data format. This cost is a tiny percentage  
18 of the expense of gathering that data, and collating  
19 it in Data Bridge. Yet, it is an investment, which  
20 offers a huge return by allowing the public, elected  
21 officials, and agency staff to use the same  
22 operational data used by the Mayor's Office of  
23 Operations. Problems with service delivery can be  
24 spotlighted and resolved in public view, a  
25 revolutionary idea, but one, which could transform

2 service delivery and create an unprecedented level of  
3 accountability. It would be a boom to agencies, City  
4 Hall and City Council to have innumerable experts in  
5 different fields providing what would essentially be  
6 free data analysis for government from public  
7 sources.

8           New York City should not have a two-  
9 tiered system with public data sets for the public to  
10 use, and private data sets for internal use only. To  
11 realize the maximum value of this data, it needs to  
12 be shared with the public. The comprehensive agency  
13 data the City has access to via its Data Bridge Data  
14 Management System is among the most valuable the City  
15 has. Our understanding is that only a small portion  
16 of 311 data is not releasable due to privacy or  
17 security concerns. And the bulk is high quality  
18 public data about how agencies respond to 311  
19 requests. Most of the data about 311 service  
20 requests does not affect security or impinge on an  
21 individual's privacy. 311 data without Data Bridge  
22 tells New Yorkers half the story. Let's get Data  
23 Bridge data in the Open Data Portal, and launch a new  
24 era in public data service delivery, transparency and  
25 accountability. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Hidalgo.

3 NOEL HIDALGO: Hi. And they do make  
4 bigger vests. No noise. My name is Noel Hidalgo,  
5 and I have the honor and this opportunity to  
6 represent the New York City Civic Technology Design  
7 and Data Community. In front of you, you have kind  
8 of the prepared notes with some very detailed  
9 outlines of things that we are very happy about, and  
10 things that we would like to see change in the  
11 future. And I will just summarize them briefly.  
12 It's been 12 years since NYC 311 has become a  
13 platform for open government, and New York City 311  
14 illuminates how we can build a city for the people,  
15 by the people.

16 While BetaNYC regards many of 311's  
17 features to be brilliant, portions are clouded by  
18 decades old features that darken the future mission.  
19 First, we would like to point out the guiding light  
20 for open government that 311 has provided. The first  
21 is New York City 311's leadership. The leadership at  
22 311 has done a great job of attending civic  
23 technology events, and explaining the intricacies of  
24 311 data, and its inquiry application programming  
25 interface, the API, and would like to thank Shenda

2 Foocher. [sic] Sorry for mispronouncing her name.  
3 The Assistant Commissioner and her team and the  
4 Content Management Team for attending many, many of  
5 our evening and weekend events, and kind of  
6 demystifying 311. The community communication  
7 interfaces have been great. New York City 311 has  
8 proven its value in adopting and adapting to this  
9 changing social media landscape from SMS to Skype to  
10 Twitter to Facebook to Instagram. New York City 311  
11 is a shining light as a demonstrative example of how  
12 agencies can own a one-to-one digital relationship  
13 with their constituents.

14           The New York City 311 Service Requests as  
15 Dominic has pointed out is absolutely amazing. It's  
16 an excellent example of how agencies can evolve their  
17 data sharing practices. It started of .xls files,  
18 Excel spreadsheets, and then evolved to csv's, which  
19 now has evolved to being on the data mine, which is  
20 now being geocoded, and it's being geocoded in ways  
21 that actually makes the data useful from within the  
22 City's open data mine. I'd like to point out that it  
23 geocodes community boards, boroughs, and the exact  
24 GPS location. And no other municipal data set points  
25 such a complete picture. And within this particular

2 finite data, people can easily use the Open Data  
3 Portal's Mapping Tools, and examine through one  
4 request. And that's exemplified by Manhattan  
5 Community Board 6's website.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can I--?

7 NOEL HIDALGO: Yep.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: You're doing it-- I  
9 appreciate all your testimony, but do you think you  
10 could go to your recommendations because--

11 NOEL HIDALGO: [interposing] Sure.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --from what I'm  
13 hearing here, it's really long.

14 NOEL HIDALGO: [interposing] Well, it-

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And I want to know  
16 what you think, but--

17 NOEL HIDALGO: [interposing] Well, the  
18 recommendations themselves are also very long.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No, the  
20 recommendations-- No, but that's different because  
21 rather than summarize what we have, if you can--

22 NOEL HIDALGO: [interposing] Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --summarize where we  
24 go, that would be helpful.

25 NOEL HIDALGO: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you then.

3 NOEL HIDALGO: No problem. I just wanted  
4 to thank them because I actually think that NYC 311  
5 is so amazing. So that being said, the future of New  
6 York City 311 it needs to be a program that serves  
7 all, and that we need to have all mayoral agencies  
8 have service request types inside of 311. Ideally,  
9 if we could also get state authorities that operate  
10 within the City's boundaries, they should have 311  
11 service related requests.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, now, wait a  
13 minute. Clarify for this for me. So what mayoral  
14 agencies are not in 311, according to your testimony?

15 NOEL HIDALGO: Um, so MODA and not MOME,  
16 the Mayor's Office of Media Entertainment. Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Is not a 311 agency?  
18 Now, they're a mayoral agency. So, okay.

19 NOEL HIDALGO: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So people cannot  
21 register a complaint. If they have a film on their  
22 block that is blocking a driveway, they cannot  
23 register a complaint.

24 NOEL HIDALGO: Correct. I actually met  
25 with one of my neighbors in Green Point who

2 enumerated very detailed problems that he has with  
3 calling 311, and I was hoping that he would be here  
4 to testify, but I don't see him. But essentially, he  
5 calls 311. They put him off to MOME and then there's  
6 no way to actually track within the 311 system his  
7 issues that he has. And it's a very complicated  
8 relationship because within MOME there are elements  
9 of NYPD that are part of the film within filming  
10 units. And so, sometimes he gets passed over to the  
11 NYPD, and the NYPD says I'm sorry but those police  
12 officers are out protecting film shootings. We can't  
13 do anything about it, and it's a very complicated  
14 relationship. And in Green Point we're, you know,  
15 we're the iconic part of the-- We're one of the  
16 iconic parts of New York City. And it's a pain in  
17 the neck, to be polite about it.

18           So that also being said, it would be  
19 great to have State authorities. You know, just  
20 last month we were complaining about NYCHA not being  
21 in the City's Open Data Portal, but once again, there  
22 is this sore spot. For a population almost the size  
23 of Oakland California, we have no transparency in  
24 regards to the complaints and issues that NYCHA  
25 residents have. There is a website that they have a

2 metrics portal, but it doesn't get to the same type  
3 of granularity that we get within 311. And it would  
4 be great. It would seem that if we're asking all New  
5 York City residents to call one particular telephone  
6 number, that NYCHA residents at least have the  
7 opportunity to complain. In that way we can hold  
8 NYCHA accountable.

9           So within the inquiry API, which New York  
10 City was the first city to launch the inquiry or  
11 Content API, which is what the Executive Director was  
12 talking about every single channel can have all the  
13 different questions answered. We encourage the  
14 portions of the Inquiry API to be multi-lingual. The  
15 API is publicly available for any developer to use  
16 within applications. But it's only within English.  
17 And so, as the City has challenged developers and  
18 technologists and media organization to incorporate  
19 the multi-- The inquiry API to solve constituent  
20 problems and help solve those questions, it's only  
21 available in English. And we think that that is an  
22 opportunity to improve.

23           We also encourage the City to host  
24 editathons, which is an opportunity to engage the  
25 public to help solve some of these problems. The

2 Inquiry API is staffed by the Content Management  
3 Team, and they do a great job. But sometimes those  
4 pieces of information aren't up to date. And we just  
5 think that there's an opportunity here to engage the  
6 public to help solve some of these problems.

7           Within the application itself, the 311  
8 application, if you switch between multi-lingual  
9 environments, which are native to your application,  
10 the application doesn't switch language environments.  
11 And so, it's a disservice to New Yorkers who do not  
12 speak English or who are not comfortable in English  
13 to download the application, and to then have to file  
14 their 311 complaint in English. Now, I will have to  
15 point out that the New York City 311 program has a  
16 great program to do on the fly translation if you  
17 call them up. But still, if we're trying to be  
18 efficient in the 21st Century, and to use digital  
19 tools to support communication and open government,  
20 it would be great if this tool was in a multi-lingual  
21 environment.

22           Additionally, we feel that the app like  
23 you stated in your opening remarks should be open to  
24 expand the submission options. Right now I believe  
25 there are only 21 options, and it's grown over time,

2 but it's still that itself is limiting. And we'd  
3 like to see app usage reports. I think you were  
4 asking about the way that things were being  
5 submitted, and we think that because the New York  
6 City 311 app is the-- is a very promoted app within  
7 the ecosystem it would be great for us to understand  
8 who are the people that are making complaints or  
9 filing records requests with 311. So that we can  
10 improve the applications that we would like to put  
11 together.

12           That being said, the Service Request Map  
13 is-- it seems to be coming from a time before Google  
14 Maps, and it's right now has many, many issues from  
15 once again multi-lingual support to usability. It's  
16 a very clunky map. It needs to be completely  
17 rethought, and we hope that the map is redesigned in  
18 an open source way, multi-lingual and mobile  
19 responsive. Additionally, we'd like to see that  
20 service kind of evolve to allow for subscription to  
21 311 alerts. Not only can you subscribe to your 311  
22 alerts and monitor them in a way that's efficient,  
23 but we would like to see for individuals to be able  
24 to subscribe to their neighborhood to see the types  
25 of issues that are going on in that.

2           The last two points are about  
3 interoperability and data quality. As we've seen,  
4 New York City's 311 has become an intergovernmental  
5 platform, and it's becoming the City's core issue  
6 tracker, and it should be an open platform. And the  
7 costs for the development of 311 should be shared  
8 across multiple agencies, and hopefully, other  
9 municipal governments and bodies. And so, we would  
10 hope that as 311 is being envisioned for this next  
11 decade and future decades, that it is done in an open  
12 source way, and that it should be modular. And it  
13 should contain rewrite APIs. That being said, we  
14 hope that one of those APIs is part of a growing  
15 field of data standards, and it's called the Open 311  
16 API. The conversation around the Open 311 allows for  
17 application developers to kind of write once within a  
18 particular paradigm, and be able to share those apps  
19 in a number of different locations. It also just is  
20 a mindset that unlocks 311's submission capabilities.  
21 So that way it's portable and those-- You can take  
22 in those requests from third-party applications or  
23 within agency call centers or within council members'  
24 offices.

2           Lastly, around the data quality, we'd  
3 like to see 311 Service Request Data be what are  
4 updated sub-daily. It's great that we have the daily  
5 updates, but as we have rolled out City Gram, which  
6 is an ability to subscribe to 311 notifications, we'd  
7 like to see the frequency of 311 updates being pushed  
8 out to the public in a sub-daily manner that allows  
9 you to really see the life of the 311 as it's being  
10 updated. I should note that the City of Seattle  
11 provides near real time feeds for the 911 system.  
12 And so if Seattle can do 911, I think we should be  
13 able to do 311.

14           There is another issue around geocoding,  
15 which out of eight million requests that are on the  
16 Open Data site, 8.6% of them, which is roughly  
17 700,000 do not have a geocoded address. And there's  
18 a problem not only within the 311 data, but also  
19 within the crash data, which we surmise. We haven't  
20 been able to verify this, but there is no address  
21 verification workflow. Which means that when you  
22 type in the address that it actually verifies that  
23 that's a New York City address. Now, granted, some  
24 of the requests that are coming in are for out of the  
25 five boroughs. That's cool, but if there is a

2 specific issue that refers to New York City, there  
3 should be some type of address verification, and that  
4 should be baked into the system.

5           Lastly, on top of what Reinvent Albany  
6 was talking about, that the Mayor's Management Report  
7 should be using the 311 data directly. Local Law 47  
8 of 2005 provides that type of oversight. We can see  
9 what type of complaints are going back to 2004, but  
10 the public accountability for the MMR should be built  
11 on the same public and open data that we're using.  
12 And we need better documentation of the Inquiry API,  
13 and hopefully maybe integrate this with Notify NYC.

14           [Pause]

15           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Very good. I think  
16 I think I should talk about Notify NYC, too. Because  
17 Notify NYC is something I'm not really happy with. I  
18 think we can do much better than Notify NYC. You may  
19 have an idea there. Thank you. And Lucille.

20           LUCILLE SONGHAI: My name is Lucille K.  
21 Songhai. I am Director of Community Affairs for the  
22 Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. I would  
23 like to thank Chairman Vacca and the members of the  
24 Committee on Technology for holding this hearing, and  
25 allowing me the opportunity to speak about the ways

our office is using-- utilizing 311 data. The Borough President believes that using 311 is a great tool for citizens to engage the city departments and to accurately reflect the delivery of and problems related to city services. For many city residents, 311 is a direct line to city agencies working in conjunction with elected officials, local community boards, and civic organizations to solve pressing needs.

A few weeks back the Manhattan Borough President testified in front of the same committee on Local Law 11 of 2012, the Open Data Law. As part of her testimony, she explained her belief in community boards being the perfect incubator for teaching citizens how to engage with available data collected by 311. Community boards play an important role in dealing with quality of life issues. They hear the direct complaints from neighborhood residents, and are the first point of contact for citizens wanting to be active and make a difference. Our office sees the future of community board members using data from 311 to help shape and influence decisions that impact their neighborhoods from development proposals to crime reduction strategy. Manhattan Borough

2 President Gale Brewer sees a need to equip boards  
3 with the capacity to use city data sets for decision  
4 making.

5           Just last week our office hosted a  
6 leadership session with the Department of City  
7 Planning to teach community board members how to use  
8 community planning resources and mapping tools. It  
9 is the Borough President's goal to train and provide  
10 technical assistance to give boards the best platform  
11 to highlight the needs of their communities.

12 Currently, our office is training 14 CUNY Service  
13 Core members on the use of the Open Data Portal, and  
14 have been impressed by how quickly they have learned  
15 how to use the data. They have mapped everything  
16 from prevalence of heat complaints to excessive noise  
17 calls, and have tracked complaints about non-  
18 functioning Muni Meters. They have mapped  
19 information that reflects many of the constituent  
20 service calls our office receives daily from  
21 residents in Lower Manhattan to Northern Manhattan.

22           We are encouraged by how quickly they  
23 have learned the portal, and see them as budding  
24 civic technologists who can help to teach others.  
25 This opens up different paths as young people see the

2 ability to solve our city's ills by first being able  
3 to identify what the needs are. As the Service Core  
4 members begin working with community boards, we  
5 expect their fluency to continue to grow, and to  
6 begin to see correlations between 311 data, and the  
7 complaints they will encounter from residents  
8 contacting the community boards. Many of our CUNY  
9 Service Core were unaware of the Open Data Portal's  
10 existence before they began working for our office.  
11 Their fresh eyes have begun to point out ways to make  
12 311 more user-friendly, and to accurately reflect  
13 problems being reported.

14           The Manhattan Borough President believes  
15 that as we are moving forward and using available  
16 data to inform and shape policy, there needs to be an  
17 emphasis on ensuring collected data is comprehensive  
18 and accurate. While exploring 311, Service Core  
19 members have observed a large number of 311 requests  
20 that are in the system as pending, but have been  
21 closed out by a city department after it has been  
22 referred to them. Yet, the problem has not been  
23 resolved or a complaint's shelf life has had a long  
24 extension of a year or more. There should be  
25 consistency and clarity regarding how complaints are

1 processed and the length of time needed to find the  
2 solution. Students also mentioned the lack of  
3 consistency in complaint names. While it can be  
4 valuable to have more detailed categories for certain  
5 violations like noise, it is essential that there be  
6 consistency in the naming. So we can get an accurate  
7 sense of neighborhood issues. It all comes down to  
8 accuracy and consistency.  
9

10           Transparency plays an important role in  
11 making sure citizens continue to see the benefits of  
12 utilizing 311 services. Each piece of information  
13 collected from 311 online or via phone call acts as a  
14 public record. And we should hold city agencies  
15 accountable for their response. Another example  
16 includes a data set attached to this testimony that  
17 is supposed to reflect complaints that have come out  
18 of Manhattan Community Board 1 from September to  
19 November 2014. When mapped, the complaints show  
20 points in Lower Manhattan, but also show complaints  
21 in Northern Manhattan as well. This may be a small  
22 issue, and one that can be easily solved by DOIT, but  
23 continuing to work out the inconsistencies within the  
24 system bolsters the accountability of 311, and the  
25

2 trust people have when acquiring and using  
3 information from its data sets.

4 Another observation, important  
5 observation from our Service Core is about 311 not  
6 capturing NYCHA data. If NYCHA complaints are  
7 missing from 311, then this is a great disservice to  
8 NYCHA residents whose concerns and issues are not  
9 being represented and fairly evaluated. While we  
10 know that NYCHA handles its complaints from residents  
11 using their own internal system, there can be greater  
12 opportunity for NYCHA and NYCHA residents alike to  
13 have a more complete picture of what is happening in  
14 their neighborhood. There could potentially be  
15 information that could even prove useful to other  
16 city departments to assist in closing open cases. A  
17 special code could be devised that allows for 311  
18 agents to continue to send NYCHA complaints directly  
19 to the housing agency. But still allow for it to be  
20 reflected in their system. As of right now, gathered  
21 data sets are not including NYCHA issues, which means  
22 a large amount of data related to one of the City's  
23 largest departments is not transparent to the public.

24 As we continue to see data as a powerful  
25 ally to inform how we solve problems, there are now

2 new applications that work alongside 311. Apps such  
3 as Public Stuff and See Click Fix offer new ways for  
4 citizens to make 311 type requests. We should be  
5 doing all we can within our power as local government  
6 to encourage access to the 311 system for these  
7 engagement apps to make it much easier for everyone  
8 to communicate and get a response back when they see  
9 a local problem in need of a solution.

10           The Manhattan Borough President is  
11 committed to working with City Council and the  
12 Administration to be responsive to the needs of New  
13 Yorkers, and our office looks forward to future  
14 advances in the 311 system and beyond that can make  
15 this happen. Thank you for the opportunity to  
16 testify on the Manhattan Borough President's behalf.

17           CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, all of  
18 you, and this hearing has been fantastic I think.  
19 You've shed light on a lot of things that 311 does  
20 well, and some things that we could do even better.  
21 There is room for improvement. And I especially like  
22 the reference to NYCHA how we can better make sure  
23 that those complaints are tracked. I think using 311  
24 is definitely a way to do it. I think we had some  
25 good suggestions from this hearing that I'm going to

2 follow up on. Certainly the Notify New York City is  
3 something that interests me, and from the Committee  
4 on Technology I think we can do something there  
5 trying to make that better. I thought the hearing  
6 was very, very informative. I mean this hearing is  
7 not about people dressing like Elmo in Times Square  
8 having a plastic bag and writing. But I do think  
9 that this was very important. This is what city  
10 government is all about. So without further  
11 business, it is now almost 2:30, and hereby adjourn  
12 this hearing. [gavel]

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 20, 2014