

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES
AND VETERANS

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September 23, 2009
Start: 01:00 pm
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HELD AT: Hearing Room
 250 Broadway, 16th Floor

B E F O R E: JAMES SANDERS, JR.
 Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
 Charles Barron
 Elizabeth Crowley
 Julissa Ferreras
 Letitia James
 Helen Sears
 Michael C. Nelson
 Tony Avella

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

Roger Newman
Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs

Latisha Lamott
Social Service Coordinator
Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs

Edward Hill
Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence

Marvin Jeffcoat
Commander
Queens County
Veterans of Foreign Wars

Sissy Stam
Volunteer Mediator
Safe Horizon

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Good

afternoon. I'd like to thank everyone for coming to today's hearing. My name is Councilman James Sanders Jr., and I am the chair of the Committee on Veterans. I would like to first take a moment to thank our men and women in uniform for their sacrifices on behalf of our county. Today's hearing, which will be held jointly with the Women's Issues Committee, will explore a very difficult subject matter, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD. It's one of the most common mental health disorders found among returning combat veterans. Rates for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with PTSD are thought to be higher than the rates of occurrence for Vietnam veterans. PTSD can take months or even years to manifest and the numbers of those affected will more like continue to rise. PTSD can be crippling for veterans, which in turn can cause tremendous stress on personal relationships and families of those suffering from it. The complexities of the disorder and how it manifests, coupled with the limited access to mental service for family members can lead to a very troubling situation for

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2 all involved. In general, high rates of marital
3 instability have been recorded among veterans with
4 PTSD and veterans and active duty military members
5 with PTSD have higher rates of committing domestic
6 violence than the general public. With so many
7 New York City residents among those engaged in
8 hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Veterans
9 Committee remains concerned about the availability
10 of services for our men and women returning from
11 these dangerous assignments. And with an
12 anticipated increase in need for mental health
13 services for veterans, the Committee on Veterans
14 continues to seek to explore ways to improve such
15 services for those veterans who may need
16 assistance with so many issues. Unfortunately,
17 some of those suffering will resort to violence
18 against their spouses, partners and children.
19 PTSD and domestic violence experts see a strong
20 connection between the two. Some advocacy groups
21 have expressed concern about the VA's ability to
22 manage what they are describing as a "mental
23 health crisis". Therefore, today's Veterans
24 Committee along with the Women's Issues Committee
25 will hear testimony about the needs and challenges

1
2 being confronted by our returning troops and their
3 families. Today's hearing will explore how
4 coordinating services can assist veterans and
5 their families. The committees will seek to find
6 out how to identify city agencies that may end up
7 providing services to those who do not or cannot
8 access care through the VA system and help prepare
9 for such needs. We will hear from domestic
10 violence advocates and veterans' advocates in
11 order to better understand how we can address this
12 very troubling issue. I do want to recognize the
13 committee members who are here today. We have
14 several. We have Council Member Tony Avella
15 Brooklyn. I'm sorry. Well I need a drink of
16 water. That's the start. I was really about to
17 say mayor. I won't make a comment on that one.
18 I'm still from Queens so I want to stay in good
19 graces. We have Councilman Tony Avella from
20 Queens and Council Member Barron from Brooklyn and
21 Council Member Ferreras. I'm ruining it. I can't
22 get it together.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Ferreras.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Ferreras. I
25 can do this. Council Member Ferreras from Queens

1
2 and of Council Member Sanders, or what's left of
3 him from Queens. I want to commend all of my
4 colleagues for their incredible runs. Each one
5 has gotten out of an election. So if you hear any
6 disjointedness, it's the stress of coming out of
7 that stuff. Now, having said that, I think we'll
8 hear from the commissioner. I apologize for
9 holding you here and making you this late, sir.
10 It just was interesting getting here and we will
11 hear from you at this moment. Good to see you
12 again.

13 ROGER NEWMAN: Good to see you.
14 Good afternoon Chair Sanders and members of both
15 the Committee on Veterans and the Committee on
16 Women's Issues. My name is--

17 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [interposing]
18 Sir. You beat me to it. I was about to say
19 everyone who speaks if you can state your name for
20 the record. But you beat me to it.

21 ROGER NEWMAN: My name is Roger
22 Newman and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's
23 Office of Veteran's Affairs, MOVA. With me today
24 is Latisha Lamott from MOVA, and Edward Hill from
25 the Mayor's Office for Combat Domestic Violence.

1
2 Ms. Lamott serves a MOVA service coordinator and
3 as a facilitator of a monthly support group for
4 military women sponsored by MOVA in collaboration
5 with the Manhattan Veterans Center. We are here
6 today to testify on the issues of domestic
7 violence and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as
8 they relate to veterans and their families. Let
9 me first give you some statistics on the effect of
10 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and domestic
11 violence in military families. Research indicates
12 that there is a link between Post Traumatic Stress
13 Disorder and domestic violence in military
14 families. A 2006 study, published in the Journal
15 of Marital and Family Therapy, revealed that
16 veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD were
17 significantly more likely to perpetuate violence
18 towards their partners, with 80% committing at
19 least one act of violence against their spouse in
20 the previous year. The Department of Veterans
21 Affairs National Center for Post Traumatic Stress
22 Disorder estimates that domestic violence rates
23 among veterans and active duty service members is
24 three times higher than rates seen among
25 civilians. In addition, the PTSD Center reports

1
2 that 40% of women veterans report having
3 experience intimate partner violence in their
4 lifetime. This occurrence of domestic violence
5 among veterans is of particular interest since
6 almost a quarter of a million New York City
7 residents are veterans and there are approximately
8 4,000 and actually it's a little higher than that,
9 it's closer to 5,000, city residents currently on
10 active duty overseas. MOVA operates as a conduit
11 for veterans in need of the many services provided
12 throughout the city. For instance, MOVA will work
13 with the New York City Housing Authority to find
14 Section 8 housing for veterans or work with the VA
15 in providing benefits for a client who may have
16 called 311. Thus, while my office does not
17 provide direct services for victims of domestic
18 violence or persons with Post Traumatic Stress
19 Disorder, we do make referrals to the appropriate
20 agencies or organizations that may assist the
21 victim or rehabilitate the batterer. In the case
22 of domestic violence, we would refer the victim to
23 one of the Family Justice Centers, or in the case
24 involving a veteran with possible PTSD; we would
25 refer the veteran to a veteran's center. The

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2 veteran's centers, operated by the Department of
3 Veterans Affairs, provide counseling and other
4 service to persons with PTSD. There are to vet
5 centers in Manhattan and one in each of the other
6 four boroughs. Each city agency, per Executive
7 Order 110, must appoint an agency liaison to work
8 with MOVA on a regular basis. These meetings
9 create a dialogue through which MOVA and other
10 agencies can establish guidelines on how to handle
11 special issues with regard to the veteran
12 community. For instance, after working with MOVA,
13 the New York Police Department issued Operation
14 Order 34 on August 25, 2009 which instructs
15 officers to inquire about a person's veteran
16 status when called to assist and notify MOVA
17 immediately. By alerting MOVA immediately, MOVA
18 can reach out to the veteran and ascertain if
19 there are veteran-specific programs that may
20 provide assistance. In the cases of PTSD, MOVA
21 can immediately arrange for treatment. Similarly,
22 by working with the Mayor's Office to Combat
23 Domestic violence, if a victim of domestic
24 violence comes to MOVA, MOVA immediately refers
25 the person to a family justice center and makes

1 center staff aware that the victim coming in may
2 have issues unique to their or their spouse's
3 military service. Recently MOVA and the Mayor's
4 Office to Combat Domestic Violence established
5 protocols to track the number of clients that are
6 veterans or a family member of a veteran. This
7 process allows for an assessment of the
8 correlation between PTSD and domestic violence in
9 the New York City veteran community and assists
10 the veteran or family member in determining what
11 additional services, benefits or compensation from
12 the various levels of government or the private
13 sector. Furthermore, the family justice staff
14 can gain insight on the elevated risk of violence
15 among military couples due to PTSD and can act
16 accordingly. Thank you for the opportunity to
17 testify. I will take questions at the conclusion
18 of Mr. Hill's testimony.

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20 EDWARD HILL: I'm Ed Hill with the
21 Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. Good
22 afternoon Chairperson Sanders, Chairperson Mealy
23 and members of the City Council Committee on
24 Veterans and Women's Issues. Thank you for the
25 opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of

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2 Commissioner Jimenez of the Mayor's Office to
3 Combat Domestic Violence, OCDV, about the city's
4 initiatives addressing services for domestic
5 violence victims specifically veterans. My
6 colleagues from the Mayor's Office on Veterans
7 Affairs testified to the impact of Post Traumatic
8 Stress Disorder on veterans returning to New York
9 City as well as our efforts to reinforce the
10 collaboration between our two offices to
11 effectively and efficiently serve veterans who are
12 domestic violence victims and seek services at the
13 New York City Family Justice Centers. I will
14 provide testimony on the city's response to
15 domestic violence and specifically on the services
16 available through the centers that currently
17 operate in Brooklyn and Queens. Domestic
18 violence, which can include physical, emotional,
19 financial and sexual abuse, is a significant
20 health and safety concern. It is a pattern of
21 behaviors designed to achieve and maintain power
22 and control over another person. Domestic
23 violence can affect any person, regardless of age,
24 race, ethnicity, religion, income, gender,
25 disability status or sexual orientation. Last

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2 year alone in New York City, the police responded
3 to over 230,000 domestic violence incidents, an
4 average of over 600 incidents per day and the
5 city's domestic violence hotline answered almost
6 135,000 calls, an average of 370 calls per day.
7 While domestic violence remains pervasive, there
8 is also encouraging news. Over the last seven
9 years, we have seen a 24% decrease in all family-
10 related crimes and an 8% drop in family-related
11 homicides. Significantly, female intimate partner
12 homicides have decreased by almost 30%. Despite
13 these reductions, we know that veterans and their
14 spouses face unique challenges in regards to
15 domestic violence. Because so many veterans may
16 be at increased risk of perpetrating acts of
17 domestic violence, it is important to note that
18 there are resources available in the city to
19 assist batterers. Annually, the city spends over
20 \$500,000 on batterers' accountability programs.
21 Participation in these programs is usually
22 mandated by courts as part of a criminal
23 disposition. These programs differ from anger
24 management classes in that they bring groups of
25 batterers together to learn how to take

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2 responsibility for past actions and how to be
3 accountable for them. For any victim trying to
4 leave an abusive relationship, there are both
5 personal and institutional challenges. They may
6 be unaware of where to get services, fear that
7 they will not get the help that they need or that
8 they will not qualify for the services. To escape
9 domestic violence, a victim must often leave
10 everything behind and start over with nothing, no
11 home, no money, no job. Reaching out for help
12 takes a tremendous amount of courage. Through
13 strong private and public partnerships, the city
14 is working to eliminate some of these barriers
15 that victims face in seeking and maintaining
16 safety. The city's efforts encompass the work of
17 14 city agencies, including criminal justice,
18 social service and health, which address the
19 issues of domestic violence. This administration
20 spends over \$227 million each year for social
21 services, legal services, shelter and housing,
22 criminal justice intervention, training and
23 prevention, among others. Our office has also
24 secured almost \$10 million through private
25 foundation, individual donors and competitive

1 grants. One of the most effective ways the city
2 facilitates access to services is through the New
3 York City Family Justice Centers, an initiative of
4 OCDV in partnership with the district attorneys'
5 offices. The one stop centers and where city
6 agencies and community-based organizations have
7 co-located to provide wrap around services for
8 domestic violence victims and their children.
9 These innovative centers enable victims to meet
10 with a prosecutor, speak with a trained counselor
11 and apply for housing assistance in just one
12 visit, all in their language while their play
13 safely in the next room. The city's first center
14 opened in Brooklyn in July 2005 and has since seen
15 over 52,000 client visits, including over 5,000
16 children visits. Due to the overwhelming success
17 of the Brooklyn Center, the city opened a second
18 center in Queens in July 2008, which has seen over
19 9,000 client visits and over 900 children visits
20 since its opening. A third center is currently
21 under development in the Bronx and will open
22 before the end of this fiscal year. We made these
23 centers as friendly and accessible as possible. A
24 client can get a broad range of services at the
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1 center, including counseling, civil legal
2 assistance, parenting classes, assistance with
3 housing applications, elder abuse services and
4 spiritual support. A client can also meet onsite
5 with one of 20 community-based partners and/or a
6 representative from the district attorney's office
7 or a variety of city agencies such as the New York
8 City Police Department, Department of Probation or
9 the Human Resources Administration. Lastly, if
10 the client has physical injuries or expresses a
11 need to be connected to a medical provider, we
12 have formal partnerships with the Health and
13 Hospitals Corporation facilities where the client
14 can be directly linked to a domestic violence
15 coordinator. To assist the client in gaining
16 economic independence, the centers also provide
17 self-sufficiency services such as English as a
18 second language classes, resume and interview
19 preparation classes and onsite connections to job
20 readiness programs, vocational training and
21 financial planning. While the clients receive
22 services at the center, the children can visit
23 Margaret's Place, a child's room funded by the Joe
24 Torre's Safe at Home Foundation where they can
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2 play, read books and if appropriate be connected
3 to specialized children's counseling. Before the
4 client leaves the center, they are asked to
5 complete a client satisfaction survey, currently
6 available in both Spanish and English. This
7 survey helps us learn how to better assist
8 clients. Results from the first round of surveys
9 conducted during June of this year indicate that
10 96% of the clients who completed this survey were
11 satisfied or very satisfied with their experience
12 at the center. We are committed to making it as
13 easy as possible for all domestic violence victims
14 to get the help that they need and expanding and
15 enhancing the services based on what the clients
16 tell us. While the centers have many services
17 available for domestic violence victims, the
18 formalized referral process to which Commissioner
19 Newman testified will help ensure that all victims
20 visiting the centers are aware of the additional
21 services and benefits to which they might be
22 entitled based on their military status. While
23 the New York City Family Justice Centers will
24 continue to provide clients with domestic violence
25 services, they will also be linked to veteran-

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2 specific benefits such as military trauma
3 counseling, employment placement, job training,
4 education assistance, medical referrals and
5 assistance obtaining other military benefits. The
6 referral process will enhance an already existing
7 relationship between our Brooklyn Center and the
8 Department of Veteran Affairs New York Harbor
9 Health Care System Brooklyn campus. This
10 relationship has allowed veterans or their spouses
11 in need of domestic violence services to be
12 referred directly to the center through the victim
13 services unit at the Kings County District
14 Attorney's Office. In addition, counseling staff
15 from the Veteran's Administration Medical Center
16 Brooklyn campus regularly attend the elder abuse
17 task force meeting and the quarterly health care
18 symposium at the center. The success of this
19 relationship has led the Veterans Administration
20 New York Harbor Health Care System to appoint a
21 coordinator for domestic violence victims to
22 address issues that arise at all four Veterans
23 Administration medical campuses in New York City.
24 Through this service coordination, appropriate
25 cases have also been referred to our Queens Family

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2 Justice Center. The referral process with the
3 Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs will afford us
4 the ability to identify veterans who do not come
5 to the centers through the Veterans Administration
6 medical centers. It will ensure that all veterans
7 served and the centers are informed about
8 additional benefits and services to which they are
9 entitled. Over the past couple of years, OCDV has
10 undertaken several initiatives to increase
11 awareness of the services at the centers and
12 increase the number of victims reaching out for
13 and obtaining appropriate services. One such
14 program is the New York City Family Justice Center
15 Early Victim Engagement, EVE Project. Research
16 indicates that domestic violence victims are most
17 likely to utilize services if they are connected
18 as soon as possible after the violent incident. A
19 defendant in a criminal case must be arraigned
20 within 24 hours and at arraignment judges make
21 bail determinations and routinely issue criminal
22 orders of protection. Victims typically are not
23 present at arraignment so they are often unaware
24 of the status of the case. Since the program's
25 inception in April 2008, EVE Project teams

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2 consisting of a district attorney office paralegal
3 an a nonprofit victim advocate based in criminal
4 court have contacted over 5,400 victims annually
5 to provide them with information about the outcome
6 of the arraignment including whether an order of
7 protection has been issued and linking them to
8 services at the center. Significantly, since the
9 EVE Project started, there has been a 42% increase
10 in the client's meeting with the district
11 attorney's office to discuss their criminal case.
12 Over the past year, OCDV has partnered with the
13 Department of Homeless Services to train over 400
14 shelter staff in the Bronx and Brooklyn on
15 domestic violence. Topics covered in the training
16 have included identifying and properly screening
17 for domestic violence and making appropriate
18 referrals for service. This program will be
19 expanded during October to include shelter staff
20 working in Queens. In closing, over the past
21 seven years we have been collaborating with city,
22 state, federal and nonprofit partners to help all
23 domestic violence victims including veterans. We
24 recognize, however, that there is still more to be
25 done. We look forward to continuing these efforts

1
2 and working with the Council on our shared goal of
3 reducing domestic violence in all communities.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you,
6 sir. We have been joined by my fellow veteran
7 Councilman Nelson from Brooklyn. I got that part
8 right at least. I'm sorry and Council Member
9 Sears from Queens. I didn't look to my right. I
10 have three or four questions for you, Mr. Hill and
11 then I'm going to yield and see if my colleagues
12 have a question or two and then I have some more
13 questions. You spoke of how the domestic centers
14 were being opened or are opening. Are you opening
15 them where the need is? Are you opening them
16 based on the amount of domestic abuse in the
17 borough?

18 EDWARD HILL: Yes. The center in
19 Brooklyn when it opened was based on the need, the
20 highest level of domestic violence in the city.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Is in
22 Brooklyn?

23 EDWARD HILL: It was in Brooklyn.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Followed by
25 Queens.

1
2 EDWARD HILL: Well actually
3 followed by Brooklyn and then Queens. Queens
4 opened first because the space was available to
5 open there. And then as you can see, it was a
6 very short period of time between opening in
7 Queens and we're now open in the Bronx where
8 actually domestic violence is probably the second
9 highest rate in the city.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Is it just
11 population or any other factors perhaps?

12 EDWARD HILL: Actually, I'm the
13 coordinator of the New York City Domestic Violence
14 Fatality Review Committee and we're actually doing
15 a community assessment in the Bronx to figure out
16 what are some of the factors that may be leading
17 to the higher rates of domestic violence in the
18 community. We've looked at some factors. I know
19 that poverty is somewhat correlated and education
20 attainment and what have you, but if you look at
21 the area of concentration in the Bronx where the
22 highest levels are, they're not necessarily the
23 areas of the lowest level of poverty or the lowest
24 level of education attainment. So for the past
25 year, me and the dedicated staff at the OCDV

1
2 office have been out meeting with community
3 organizations, doing a community-based survey to
4 gauge the community's perception of domestic
5 violence and also doing focus groups with
6 individuals, domestic violence survivors who have
7 actually reached out for service. We're about
8 halfway through that process and hopefully within
9 the next six months or so we'll be wrapping up
10 that assessment and kind of presenting our
11 findings to the Council and to the Mayor.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Of course
13 you're looking into cultural correlations which we
14 can also look into the culture of the military.

15 EDWARD HILL: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: You had
17 mentioned that there was \$227 million in social
18 services. I wish this were just for the veterans
19 or for domestic violence. Where did this \$227
20 come from?

21 EDWARD HILL: Actually, I'm sorry
22 but the exact breakdown I cannot testify to. I
23 can get that to you.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: So it is a
25 generality of social services, not simply for

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2 these populations.

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EDWARD HILL: Not simply for veterans. No, it's the total amount the city spends on domestic violence services.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: On domestic violence.

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EDWARD HILL: Right.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I would love to see how much of that is targeted to veterans. There has been a beautiful decrease in domestic violence and homicides. Any particular reason why?

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EDWARD HILL: Again, it's part of our community assessment and trying to look at why there have been reductions. Sometimes there is a reduction one year followed by an increase the next year, so we've kind of been tracking it along. But over the seven years there has been a reduction. Hopefully when we finish our assessment we'll have a clear understanding of the entire picture of domestic violence in the city.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: My last question for a moment before I see if my colleagues have one. The issue of police reports

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has come up. I'm trying to find out what

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percentage of the domestic violence problem is

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stemming from veterans?

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EDWARD HILL: Actually I don't have

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a statistic on that. I can do some further

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research and find out if I can find that for you.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: It would be

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useful to know. It would be almost perhaps

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startling. Commissioner?

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ROGER NEWMAN: The relationship

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that we formalize will require asking questions

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that haven't been asked in the past so that going

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forward we will know whether it's a veteran that's

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being serviced or not. Currently that information

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isn't being requested. So there's no way that

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they would have that information.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: So the police

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department until this point has not really

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tabulated this.

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ROGER NEWMAN: No. You had asked

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how many persons that were reported with domestic

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violence issues. That information wasn't

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categorized before.

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EDWARD HILL: I think there's a

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2 little bit of confusion. Your question is about
3 in relation to police reports and veterans.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Yes.

5 EDWARD HILL: As far as I know we
6 don't capture that information. But as I said, I
7 will go back and check to make sure that's
8 accurate and if I can get additional information
9 for you I would. I think Commissioner Newman was
10 referring to capturing the number of veterans that
11 come into the Family Justice Centers for service.
12 We'll get a clearer picture on that through our
13 new collaboration.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Both worthy
15 points. I will yield for a moment and see if any
16 of my colleagues have any questions. Council
17 Member Ferreras has a question. I'm getting
18 there. You work with me and I will get there.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: That was
20 close.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: It was?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: It was
23 close.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I'll never do
25 it again.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: My

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question is actually for Mr. Hill. Does the

4

Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence have

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any initiatives focused specifically on veteran

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families?

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EDWARD HILL: No, we do not.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: My other

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question is does the office keep in touch with

10

MOVA where veterans of mental health services to

11

coordinate family care for veteran families after

12

you've identified them?

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EDWARD HILL: If they're identified

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the way the system works and the way it's actually

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worked even before we had this formal agreement.

16

If a client at the Family Justice Center

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identifies themselves as having served in the

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military, we give them information about the

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Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs and direct them

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directly to them to do follow up and an additional

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assessment that's done by them.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Can you

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just be more specific when you say having

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identified themselves? Do they have to say it

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themselves or is there a process where you ask

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2 this question?

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EDWARD HILL: There will be a process going forward. We're in the middle of changing our client intake system and that system will include a question which MOVA helped us develop. It'll ask whether the person has served in the military and if that is answered yes, they will be directed to services at MOVA.

COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I am confused. I don't understand how we can have a hearing on services for veterans and their families on domestic violence and you don't have the breakdown. You're not even asking the question on the application whether they're a veteran. We don't know the amount of money that's put toward it. How can we come to a hearing specifically on veteran families and domestic violence and not have that information and have to come back to give us that? I don't understand why we weren't more prepared when you know you're

1
2 coming to a hearing like this and if those figures
3 exist why you have to go back. We don't have time
4 to have hearings over and over. And you have this
5 thick report. I mean your testimony was the
6 thickest. It was like five or six pages. We
7 can't find fundamental information on what's
8 happening with veterans and domestic violence and
9 their families and the services to them. So we
10 get these reports usually during election from the
11 mayor and we get these wonderful statistics. But
12 the bottom line is the real service is not there.
13 Let me ask the commissioner, how much money does
14 the mayor fund, how much is the funding for your
15 office?

16 ROGER NEWMAN: We've been over this
17 territory before and you've not accepted my answer
18 in the past.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: How much
20 money is your office funded?

21 ROGER NEWMAN: Like I said before,
22 I do not have a dollar amount.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You still
24 don't have a dollar amount?

25 ROGER NEWMAN: No, there isn't a

1
2 dollar amount. I explained the formula though.
3 Just as this relationship that we have with
4 Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, that
5 office is there, that office is funded to provide
6 that service and so we are making sure that we
7 make use of that service just like we make use of
8 the other city services that are available. We
9 make use of the services that HRA provides. We
10 make use of the services the DHS provides. We
11 piggyback on a lot of services and we make use of
12 those services to support the veterans that we
13 service.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: All of us
15 could make use of services that exist. We all do
16 that. We could do the same things with the
17 veterans in our district, just say call this
18 office. When you have a commission that's set up
19 there is always some kind of funding. I'm going
20 to keep raising it every time you come because
21 that needs to be a major issue.

22 ROGER NEWMAN: Let me give you
23 another example.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Let me
25 finish. Do we have any specific numbers from you,

1
2 Mr. Hill, funding that's designated and not \$227
3 million for social services for the whole city and
4 you don't even know how many veterans are included
5 in that, but do we have any specific money that's
6 allocated specifically for veterans?

7 EDWARD HILL: I don't have that
8 information with me, I'm sorry.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I don't
10 have any further questions. This is ridiculous.
11 It really is ridiculous that the people who serve
12 this country and some are disabled because of it
13 and they have done so much in service and they get
14 this kind of lack of respect and focus and
15 appreciation. Just throwing them in a lump with a
16 whole lot of folks and not knowing these numbers
17 when this specific hearing is about veterans. To
18 not have these numbers I think is ridiculous. But
19 since you all don't have the answers, I have no
20 more questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I do say that
22 the Council Member's remarks of course are not
23 aimed at any individuals. It is aimed however at
24 the Mayor's Office.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: No, my

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2 remarks are aimed at the Mayor. So let me just be
3 very, very clear. My remarks are aimed at the
4 Mayor. This is ridiculous that the Mayor is not
5 prioritizing our veterans with some dollars.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Let me join
7 you in your frustration on another issue that I'm
8 having with the mayor. We have requested, and
9 this has nothing to do with the people before us,
10 we have requested a meeting about the disabled
11 veterans who are trying to get their vendor
12 license and it was brought before this committee
13 some time ago that veterans were having trouble
14 getting their vendor license. I'm going on the
15 record as saying we have been stonewalled by the
16 administration in terms of meeting with them to
17 find out what is the process for disabled veterans
18 getting their vendor license. Of course, this has
19 nothing to do with these gentlemen and ladies
20 here. I will go on record. When you put me as
21 the chair I'm going to try to go for the truth
22 regardless of where it leads. I will go with the
23 next person and that is Council Member Nelson.
24 Allow me to go out of order, Council Member
25 Nelson, only because I believe that Council Member

1
2 Avella would be on the line of questioning sir.

3 Council Member Avella is next.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVELLA: Well, first
5 of all, Mr. Chair I want to sort of piggyback on
6 the comments you just made, especially about the
7 permits for the disabled veterans. I have
8 legislation in the Council that's been languishing
9 in the Consumer Affairs Committee. So I'm happy
10 to hear that you're supportive of this issue. I
11 need your help to talk to the chair of the
12 Consumer Affairs Committee to have another hearing
13 on that bill and pass it out. Because this
14 administration is violating state law in terms of
15 restricting the number of permits that disabled
16 veterans can get. It is an absolute disgrace.
17 The other thing, I don't have a question for
18 Commissioner Newman because when he was saying
19 we've gone over this ground before about their
20 budget, I'm sure he was referring to me. I can't
21 imagine a situation where the commissioner of an
22 agency doesn't know what his or her budget is. I
23 think that's an absolute disgrace. And as Council
24 Member Barron said, for these individuals to come
25 before a City Council hearing and not have

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2 specific information that relates to the hearing
3 is an affront to this Council. It's an affront to
4 people who are victims of domestic violence and
5 it's an affront to the veterans in this city. Mr.
6 Chair, I've got to tell you, I almost want to get
7 off of this committee because if we're not going
8 to really do something and hold the
9 administration's feet to the fire, what are we
10 accomplishing here? Because we are letting them
11 get away with too much. This is a disgrace. Mike
12 Bloomberg marches in every Veteran's Day parade
13 and then does nothing to help the veterans of this
14 city. I'm just fed up. Absolutely fed up and I
15 appreciate you taking me out of order. We have to
16 exercise the power that this committee has and the
17 City Council has to end this sort of nonsense.
18 Because as long as we let them get away with just
19 coming with no information, it's just going to
20 continue.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: I yield.

22 ROGER NEWMAN: May I speak?

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Please.

24 ROGER NEWMAN: I mean if you
25 remember, you came to my office, I entertained you

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2 and I went over all of the things that my office
3 has done for veterans. But it seems that that
4 information has been conveniently forgotten. I
5 just want to raise that point. I'm sorry that
6 Council Member Avella left, but I would be curious
7 to know, since he's the longest standing member on
8 this committee exactly what has he done for
9 veterans other than use his position as a member
10 of this committee as a platform to talk from.

11 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Tony Avella
12 is known to speak for himself so I will certainly
13 let him speak for himself. I am saying for the
14 record that my patience perhaps is a little longer
15 than Council Member Avella's and my approach may
16 be different. But if I am given a position as a
17 marine I'm going to follow it through. I'm going
18 to where it leads. You guys have nothing to do
19 with what I'm speaking about. My issue is a
20 little different and I am speaking of a three
21 month odyssey where we have requested to have a
22 meeting with the Department of Consumer Affairs
23 and the Department of Parks to find out what is
24 the process for disabled vets to become vendors.
25 In three months the closest we got was an

1
2 appointment for today which yesterday was abruptly
3 cancelled. I have an excellent relationship with
4 the mayor but I have an excellent relationship
5 with the truth and I knew the truth before the
6 mayor. I'm hoping to know both of them but I
7 prefer not to choose. I have spoken enough on
8 that subject. This is what we're trying to find
9 out. Council Member Nelson has a question.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair. I don't like to be a pile-on, guys, so
12 I won't be. The other side of the coin perhaps,
13 is you aware of any of the municipalities that
14 have an office to combat domestic violence in
15 other cities?

16 EDWARD HILL: I think there are two
17 others. There is one in Chicago and I believe
18 there is one in San Diego.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: That's
20 commendable that we have one then. That's the
21 bright side of the issue. Perhaps you should
22 compare notes though, maybe to get in touch with
23 them just to see if the stats add up and there are
24 some correlations, assessments and so on. I think
25 New York City should be proud that we're one of

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2 perhaps only three of the towns that have this. I
3 imagine there are a lot of other offices for
4 Veteran's Affairs. But then again, I'm sure not
5 every city or municipality has that as well. Just
6 one question and you probably don't have these
7 stats either, but how many veterans have been
8 afforded Section 8 housing or the domestic
9 partners who have been battered? Do we have an
10 idea approximately how many?

11 EDWARD HILL: I do not. I can try
12 and find out for you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: I think
14 that would be fairly important because it's no
15 easy to get Section 8. It goes along in a way
16 with the questioning. I think that's something
17 perhaps more palatable and interesting and helpful
18 to those who have been involved in domestic
19 violence situations. Okay, just some of the good
20 side of this hearing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: You're more
22 than welcome. Does OCDV recognize veterans' wives
23 and husbands for that matter as an at-risk
24 population?

25 EDWARD HILL: Yes. The screening

1
2 staff at all of the centers is aware of the
3 research that indicates they're at greater risk
4 for both being abused and being abusers. So
5 they're made aware of that. We recently developed
6 a risk assessment tool as part of our ongoing
7 training at the centers. And part of that
8 training they've been made aware of the increased
9 risk for veterans.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I'm
11 interested in knowing, but of course I don't think
12 this is the appropriate place, I'm interested in
13 knowing what the active service are doing about
14 this issue. What are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps
15 and Air Force doing before folk become veterans to
16 combat this issue? I don't know if this is an
17 appropriate place or if you have this information.

18 EDWARD HILL: I don't have any
19 information about that.

20 ROGER NEWMAN: I don't have any
21 statistics but I know that the Department of
22 Defense they do have a database that they've
23 recently started and they're keeping track. I
24 don't know what the results of that are though.

25 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Tell me more

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about the working relationship between the two agencies MOVA and OCDV. Is there a quick way of saying that sir?

EDWARD HILL: No, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: See MOVA, they got it. They worked on it. Move those letters around, I mean we can work on this. Tell me the working relationship between your agencies. What is and what is hoped for in the future.

EDWARD HILL: Currently the staff are trained that if someone discloses that they served in the military that they are just to notify them that there are additional benefits available to them due to their military status. Because the issue is complex and after talking to Commissioner Newman's office, that's as far as we take it. We give them the contact information and pass them on to his office that can do a more thorough assessment depending on when you served and where you served depends on what kind of benefits that you would get. The one thing that we have not been doing is tracking the number of individuals who are actually identifying themselves as serving in the military. Going

1
2 forward with our new system we'll actually be able
3 to tell how many veterans are actually accessing
4 service at the center and be able to provide
5 statistics about how many are actually coming
6 through the door. Since the centers have been
7 opened, there have been over 60,000 client visits
8 at the center and I would assume a fair number of
9 those in proportion to what veterans are in the
10 city there have been veterans accessing services
11 there.

12 ROGER NEWMAN: I think this is
13 really a positive step going forward. It will
14 answer a lot of questions that we have not had in
15 the past. I know that any constituent that comes
16 to my office and if they are dealing with any of
17 these issues we automatically make the referral.
18 So I know that they are receiving the best
19 possible services that they can get. What this
20 will do for us going forward is sort of quantify
21 what that number is. That's number one. And I
22 think it will also allow the Family Justice Center
23 to tailor their treatment knowing that there are
24 some military, that there is a family of a soldier
25 or whatever. I also know that depending on the

1
2 type of discharge, if there is a discharge from
3 the military and if there is some documentation
4 prior to that discharge that there was some
5 domestic violence involved, under certain
6 circumstances people are eligible to receive money
7 compensation. That's another thing that we would
8 be able to look at.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Can you break
10 that down a little bit more, sir? I'm not fully
11 following you.

12 ROGER NEWMAN: If there is a
13 service member in the military and there have been
14 documented cases of domestic violence while they
15 are in the military.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Committed
17 against them.

18 ROGER NEWMAN: Committed against
19 them. Under certain circumstances once they've
20 been discharged they can collect compensation as a
21 result of that discharge.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Good to know.
23 Can I suggest Mr. Hill that as we get more
24 information about the veteran population in
25 domestic violence community if you wish that you

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2 should put more resources into working with MOVA.
3 Just as with the homeless population we're
4 discovering an enormous veteran population there
5 and I have spoken to the commissioner there about
6 if that's the case then we need to put resources
7 into working with MOVA and other organizations
8 about the homeless population. As the research
9 goes forward we should follow these things with
10 the logical results of doing this.

11 EDWARD HILL: And I think that's
12 been the pattern at the Family Justice Centers.
13 When we first opened we did not provide services
14 for the actual children of the victims. We began
15 to collect some data on that and were able to,
16 through the data, we were able to go out and
17 actually get funding to actually start a
18 children's counseling program. And I'd envision
19 the same thing with the data that we're going to
20 be collecting on veterans. It'll enable us to go
21 out and make the case to get additional funding
22 services.

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: We have been
24 joined by Council Member James from Brooklyn. I
25 congratulated everyone on their election. Let me

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2 congratulate you. Do you have any questions? If
3 that's the case then I will thank this panel. I
4 thank you very much for participating and we will
5 call our next witnesses. They are Marvin Jeffcoat
6 and Sissy Stam. Now that is a big gorgeous dog.
7 I'm a dog owner myself. Actually the dogs
8 actually own people after a while. I have a large
9 dog but that's a dog. I have a standard, it's a
10 giant poodle. You sit wherever the dog doesn't
11 want to sit. The dog has the choice. Yes,
12 wherever the dog wants to sit. I have a bias; I'm
13 a dog owner, so I will let the young lady who has
14 the dog go first.

15 SISSY STAM: First of all, thank
16 you for allowing me to testify or whatever you
17 call what I am doing. I have PTSD to thank.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Just identify
19 yourself.

20 SISSY STAM: I'm sorry. My name is
21 Sissy Stam. I'm an individual. I'm an advocate
22 for people with disabilities who use service dogs
23 and I'm a volunteer mediator at Safe Horizon. The
24 first thing that I want to say is thank you. The
25 second thing I want to say is if you look around

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2 this room, what you see is everyone who said what
3 it is they wanted to say, heard what it is they
4 wanted to say from the various political and
5 government employees and then got up and walked
6 out when you have citizens who have things to say
7 and nobody wants to listen. That's emblematic of
8 what the veterans population has experienced and
9 what the disabled population has experienced. I'm
10 speaking to you as a non-veteran. I'm speaking to
11 you as someone who is involved in service dogs for
12 PTSD for veterans. But most of all, what I want
13 to say right now is I'm outraged, really outraged
14 that you could hold a public hearing like this and
15 then not care what the public has to say. This
16 isn't directed at you, Councilman. It really is
17 directed at the rest of the people who felt like
18 they could get up and leave and don't care what it
19 is that people who took the time and effort to
20 come here have to say. This isn't meant as an
21 embarrassment to you. You don't have listed on
22 your website that you're the chairman of this
23 committee. That was something that I reported to
24 your legislative liaison on the 9th. As of today
25 that has not been rectified. Even though I can't

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2 imagine that it's intentional, it gives the
3 appearance of not caring. Everything about the
4 way veterans' affairs are conducted ultimately
5 leaves the people for whom this is supposed to be
6 done feeling as though nobody cares and nobody
7 cares about the issues that they have. Now that
8 I've said that, which was not what I had planned
9 to say, would you give me two seconds to collect
10 myself?

11 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: With your
12 permission, I will have him speak and then come
13 back to you.

14 Sissy Stam: That is fine with me.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Sir?

16 MARVIN JEFFCOAT: Councilman and
17 fellow members of the committee my name is Marvin
18 Jeffcoat, Queens County Commander, Veterans of
19 Foreign Wars. I wanted to thank you for one,
20 recognizing the connection between Post Traumatic
21 Stress Syndrome Disorder and domestic violence. I
22 wanted to thank you for giving me the opportunity
23 to speak on such short notice. Having said that,
24 I want to read a part of a report that was issued
25 to everyone here and then I'd like to speak on

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2 that from my personal experiences in the military.
3 Journalist and author Ann Jones referred to the
4 military as proud of its traditional of misogyny
5 and emotional repression. She stated that the
6 military does not act on the problem of domestic
7 violence, but instead protects servicemen by
8 regularly sheltering accused soldiers at military
9 bases from civilian orders or protection or arrest
10 warrants. Now, Councilman and members of the
11 Council, I'd like to share with you my personal
12 experience as a rifle platoon sergeant in the 82nd
13 Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
14 If I had a soldier that was involved in an
15 altercation off post, that soldier would come up
16 on the blotter because we had a reciprocal
17 agreement with Cumberland County Sheriff's
18 Department and Fayetteville Police Department. So
19 through the chain of command, we would be notified
20 that a soldier had an incidence of domestic
21 violence either way, and whether it was him as the
22 victim or as the perpetrator, he came up on the
23 blotter and orders came down. As a rifle platoon
24 sergeant, I personally had the unfortunate
25 experience of escorting young men down to the MP

1 station where they were immediately turned over to
2 the custody of the Cumberland County Sheriff's
3 Deputy Liaison housed on the government
4 installation in the MP station. At that time that
5 soldier's career was placed in peril because the
6 U.S. Congress had just enacted a law that said if
7 a service member or law enforcement member was
8 convicted of domestic violence that they could no
9 longer carry a weapon. Now, not just infantrymen
10 such as myself but any soldier that can't carry a
11 weapon, male or female, is basically useless to
12 the military and subject to being discharged.
13 Additionally, when a soldier separates from a
14 spouse Army regulation 608-99 mandates under pain
15 of court marshal, that that soldier immediately
16 make available the funds for the full amount of
17 their basic allowance of quarters to that
18 dependent spouse. So I just want to set the
19 record straight as a professional soldier to say
20 it is wrong to say that the military would cover
21 up domestic abuse. It is absolutely false and
22 wrong. And I think as a society, as it is in most
23 cases, we could look to the military for examples
24 of how to deal with a lot of society's ills. I
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1
2 look forward to working with you on improving
3 things for veterans. I think one of the things we
4 can do with regards to PTSD within the city's
5 employees is we can allow them to participate in
6 PTSD counseling during duty hours without having
7 to worry about burning up medical or annual leave
8 as would be the case for a city employee who say
9 had a substance abuse problem. There is a program
10 within the city where the city provides time for
11 city employees to go and receive that type of
12 counseling. So I think if we looked at that model
13 and tried to make that something that would be
14 available to our employees that would help with
15 removing the stigma. That person could set up an
16 appointment during duty hours and go get
17 counseling for their PTSD and then return back to
18 work. Another thing is settling back into
19 civilian life is a bit difficult. I've had to do
20 it myself. Employment is always a stressor. They
21 tell that in PTSD counseling you have certain
22 stressors but they're not always related to what
23 caused the PTSD because you're not always going to
24 see dismembered bodies lying in the street. But
25 you will have stressors and you will have a

1 shorter temper if you suffer from PTSD. One of
2 the ways to reduce that would be long-term
3 employment. Of course, long-term employment would
4 help ease homelessness among veterans and the rest
5 of the homeless population. I look forward to
6 taking a positive example from the military and
7 helping veterans out and helping those out with
8 PTSD and helping them heal themselves so that they
9 can go back and be productive members of society,
10 but more importantly so that they can be the
11 father or mother of their family that they should
12 be instead of turning their depression on the ones
13 that love them. That's really the tragedy. So I
14 would hope that we could do that. I want to share
15 one more thing with you. All branches of service
16 have a similar thing, but in the Army we call it
17 ACAP, Army Career Alumni Program. After 22 years
18 active federal service, I didn't know how to wear
19 clothes. I mean I had a set of fatigues that were
20 starched and I was one of those that I starched it
21 myself until I made E-5 and then I put it in the
22 cleaners. I always spit shined my own boots, not
23 my wife. So let me dispel that rumor. But
24 seriously, they showed me a videotape from Men's
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1
2 Warehouse. They showed me what casual attire was,
3 what business dress was. They taught me how to
4 make a resume. They taught me how to take
5 military acronyms and turn them into civilian
6 skill sets. They taught me how to talk, how to
7 conduct myself at an interview, and they allowed
8 me to videotape that so I could brief myself back
9 and refine my interview techniques. That was
10 because they learned the lessons of the Vietnam
11 War and earlier wars where they just took veterans
12 sometimes not even less than 30 days after being
13 in a country in a hostile environment and they
14 just released them into the street. Now that's a
15 good program, ACAP, but there is a gap. That gap
16 is among our National Guard and Reserve. As a
17 professional soldier I'm ashamed to say that a
18 large part of our wars are being fought by the
19 National Guard and Reserve and we couldn't find
20 that. As a federal soldier I'm sad to say that we
21 put that burden on them and these young men and
22 women are taken off the street, out of their jobs,
23 their life is disrupted, they're placed in combat
24 willingly to serve their country. Some of them
25 are killed, some of them are maimed. They come

1
2 back and they don't get ACAP because they're not
3 discharged or retired like I was. They're
4 demobilized. And when they're demobilized they're
5 sent back to their parent unit here in the states
6 and there's no adjustment for them. So I think
7 that's a gap that we could address. One final
8 thing is that we criticize MOVA and I don't know,
9 maybe that's justifiable, but as a Council I think
10 you should give them an operating budget. You
11 know this goes all the way up to the federal
12 level. The Congress has failed to give the VA a
13 line item in the budget. So now they have a
14 process where every two years they set a budget
15 two years in advance. So you know how many people
16 you're going to have to cut, what services you're
17 going to have to cut or increase. But if you give
18 them a line item in a budget and you make them
19 abide by it, you can hold their feet to the fire
20 and hold them accountable. And you give them,
21 along with the responsibility you give them; you
22 give them the ability to perform that task. So I
23 would like to see things like that and I leave it
24 up to your good guidance to figure out the
25 legalities of it. I'm sure you're up to the

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2 challenge because although you're not an Airborne
3 Ranger, you are a Marine. Semper Fi and thank you
4 sir.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Semper Fi.

6 Among the elite, I too must recognize the 82nd as
7 they actually know what the heck they're talking
8 about, which is rare for the Army. Forget the Air
9 Force. My friend served in the Air Force.

10 They're good to get you where you need to go and
11 then they get out of there, but that's a different
12 story for a different day. Now after you finish
13 speaking, I'm going to try to respond to some of
14 the things that you said in both sets of comments.
15 They are worthy and they deserve a reply. But
16 I'll let you go through your testimony before I
17 respond.

18 Sissy Stam: I have now calmed
19 down. And not only have I calmed down, I am about
20 to move on to positive things and to let you know
21 that Safe Horizon has a relationship with the Red
22 Hook Community Justice Center. One of the things
23 that I will try to get moving and that I think
24 would be very, very helpful and at no cost and
25 totally confidential to veterans if family

1 mediation, which is very different from family
2 counseling. Family mediation takes a situation,
3 looks at it for what it is and says okay, what's
4 the plan for now, not you're an idiot, you're an
5 idiot, you're wrong, you're wrong, if only you
6 wouldn't do this. There is not a blame factor.
7 It's dealing with neutrals that are trained to do
8 this. We have a great depth in custody and
9 visitation mediation, JD mediations and this is
10 something that I think would be of great benefit
11 to returning veterans who don't want to deal with
12 having their brains looked into by psychologists
13 who may or may not understand where they're coming
14 from. This is where they are and they have to
15 reintegrate and they have to have a family life.
16 They want it, their family wants it. What's the
17 plan? We're facilitative mediators. That means
18 that we don't tell them what they should do or
19 shouldn't do, we take them as the experts on their
20 own life and let them come up with a plan that
21 works for both of them. Part of the issue in
22 dealing with all of the agencies is a lack of
23 respect for the client. That's profoundly felt
24 and it keeps people from getting assistance. A
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1
2 short anecdote, a Vietnam vet acquaintance of mine
3 how uses a service dog fell on hard times, went to
4 the welfare office to get services and was unable
5 to get in because he was accompanied by his
6 service god. I'm going to cry because this
7 enrages me so much and I cry when I'm angry. This
8 guy then went to the food stamp office to apply
9 for food stamps and he had two of what people in
10 the service dog community called rent-a-cops which
11 are security officers, get in his face in a major
12 way. He then went to our Human Rights Commission,
13 or non-commission, and was told that in order for
14 him to file a complaint he had to turn over his
15 complete medical records, which is a violation of
16 Title 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and
17 a violation of New York State law. You might want
18 to ask Matt Samplan [phonetic] because we've asked
19 him to get involved in dealing with the issues and
20 he hasn't. People with mental illness are at the
21 bottom of the disabilities whatever and people who
22 use service dogs, I mean who would want to have to
23 deal with using a service dog. I can tell you
24 it's a pain in the butt. They're worried about
25 fake service dogs. You know, people pretending

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2 their dog is a service dog and isn't really a
3 service dog. The whole community is protected
4 against that because anyone who has a service dog
5 whether or not it's certified, which they don't
6 have to be law, licensed, which they don't have to
7 be by law, legally their wheelchairs. They're
8 assistive devices. And if your assistive device
9 misbehaves, it's a part of your and it's
10 disorderly conduct and you can be asked to remove
11 your dog. That's the protection that the public
12 has. The other issue is the Fair Housing Act
13 which states that emotional support dogs are
14 allowed in no-pet housing and so are service dogs.
15 Landlords and everyone else is up in arms over oh
16 my God, what is this going to mean, how are we
17 going to deal? People are complaining that people
18 are faking service dogs. They don't have a
19 policy. We've been unable to get a policy out
20 them. Delbert Liche [phonetic] tried and was
21 basically told well if someone goes into a
22 restaurant with a dog and you can't see what's
23 wrong with them, how are they supposed to know
24 that it's really a service dog? This came from
25 the assistant commissioner. We could not get a

1
2 written policy from the New York City Human Rights
3 Commission on what their service dog policy is. I
4 haven't been able to do it through the Civil
5 Rights Committee either. As you can tell, I've
6 been at this for a long time. I've used a dog for
7 13 years. If a vet with PTSD comes back, uses a
8 dog and has to be faced with those kinds of
9 confrontations, and if you expect a vet to be able
10 to deal with it if that vet had PTSD you're asking
11 an awful lot. One of the things that I would
12 suggest simply for the protection of our veterans
13 who are willing to self-identify or willing to
14 wear a Medic Alert is to say that they have PTSD
15 so that they don't end up incarcerated. They
16 don't end up being made worse, so that the police
17 are trained. Listen, I sued the New York City
18 Police Department after eight years of having them
19 get in my face on the subway system. And I can't
20 tell you what it's like. I wasn't in combat. I'm
21 just a person with PTSD. To have cops get in your
22 face and put you in a corner and toss you out.
23 The Air Carriers Access Act which is meant to
24 enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act has
25 two standards for dealing with service dogs; one

1
2 for people who have physical disabilities and the
3 other for people who have mental impairments.
4 People with mental impairments are required now to
5 give 48 hours notice before they travel and a
6 doctor's note with their DSM4 diagnosis. You want
7 to put our vets through that? So before we
8 unleash on the American public our leashed service
9 dogs which are now the newest hot thing for vets
10 with PTSD, the public, the state officials, the
11 government officials need to be educated. In this
12 day and age for someone to walk into the Division
13 of Human Rights or the Commission on Human Rights,
14 I don't know what they call themselves, and be
15 told that they have to provide their complete
16 medical records, for a city agency to deny access,
17 for the court officers of New York State to be
18 untrained and to have as a policy of guide dogs
19 only which thankfully Debra Glick got straightened
20 out, you can't protect the vets. You can't
21 service the vets until you have people who
22 understand what their needs are and don't use them
23 as political footballs. Now I am finished and I
24 thank you very much. I am sorry that I again got
25 emotional.

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2 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: No, there is
3 a lot to be emotional about. It's not a picnic.
4 It's not going to be a polite thing. We're going
5 to have to get emotional. We're going to have to
6 cry, we're going to have to bark, we're going to
7 have to do all kinds of things to get some
8 resolution. Allow me to respond. You put a lot
9 of stuff out and I'm going to try to respond to
10 some of them.

11 Sissy Stam: I appreciate it.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: On a personal
13 level, I just sent word back to my office tearing
14 them a new nostril. I'm very proud to be the
15 chair of the committee. I sent word back and I
16 said I don't care what it takes; I want to see
17 this up before the day is up and I will continue
18 to do that when I walk out of here. I'm very
19 proud and I appreciate your bringing that to my
20 attention. My staff may not like it, but that's a
21 different story for a different day. I am a
22 disabled Marine Corps grunt.

23 Sissy Stam: I'm sorry, I would
24 just like to say that this veteran that I was
25 telling you about with the service dog who

1
2 couldn't get services, he had a heart attack and
3 almost died.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: That's very
5 sad. We should not have to get to that point.

6 SISSY STAM: He was saved by his
7 service dog. Maybe it was a blessing because he
8 needed stents, but he died on the table. This is
9 serious stuff.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: At then end
11 of all of this good conversation, it's a matter of
12 life and death. It's a matter of people having a
13 decent quality of life or being left on the
14 wayside. Leaving folk on the field, which we
15 claim that we'll never do, send out what, four, to
16 get one. Let me explain some of the things that
17 you somehow walked into. Of course there are
18 other committee meetings taking place. Some of my
19 colleagues have a frustration with MOVA, the
20 Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs. This
21 frustration really does not have to do with the
22 individual sitting in the chair, it has to do with
23 the rights and responsibilities of the office and
24 the very unique system of funding that MOVA is
25 faced with where the budget of New York City is

1
2 made as of June 30th. We are here, it's September
3 23rd and the commissioner doesn't know his budget.
4 There are some very worthy questions. I can argue
5 how we ask these questions. I can argue over
6 several things but I can't argue over the validity
7 of the question because at the end of that
8 question it has to do with how real are we going
9 to be with the veterans. To their credit, some of
10 my colleagues are determined not to be part of
11 anything that they feel is not real with the
12 veterans. I assure you these things were not
13 aimed at you or anyone in here. One could argue
14 that they were aimed in your interest. I may
15 argue over how to do stuff but I don't argue over
16 their sentiment. I just wanted you to understand
17 those things.

18 SISSY STAM: I'm going to respond
19 by saying that given all of that and given that I
20 certainly accept that, but to not say anything
21 about it just leaves the perception of not caring.
22 That's not a good perception to leave given the
23 perception that's already there.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I have
25 certain disagreements with my colleagues but I can

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2

state emphatically that these folk they do care.

3

One can argue they care too much but they

4

absolutely care. So on behalf of them I apologize

5

to anyone who took umbrage to that. We have been

6

joined by Council Member Comrie. I'm really fun

7

up here, Council Member Crowley from Queens.

8

There is a slight difference between you and

9

Council Member Comrie. Good to see you.

10

Congratulations on your race. I obviously have

11

not recovered from mine yet. Is there any

12

question, comment or statement that you would like

13

to make?

14

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Not at

15

this time.

16

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Then I want

17

to thank this panel for being up here. How long

18

have you been the commander, sir?

19

MARVIN JEFFCOAT: I was installed

20

in June.

21

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I thought you

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were new, relatively speaking. So you were sworn

23

in so you can be sworn at.

24

MARVIN JEFFCOAT: Correct.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I

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congratulate you for this.

MARVIN JEFFCOAT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Your Army tie is very apparent. I wish you would turn it on the other side when you come to testify, but that's all right, you don't have to. It's not a requirement. I look forward to working with you to see what we can do together, as with you Ms. Stam where I look forward. You put some great ideas about training, about working with people to find ways. I would suggest to you that your first partnership is right at that table right there where there is so much information there. My last question to you ma'am is what breed is the dog?

SISSY STAM: This is an Anatolian Shepherd Dog. This is a Turkish flock guardian breed. I do not recommend them for service dog work because, what can I say, they're dogs that are not particularly easy to train and you have to like a dog that says, "Why should I".

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Well, when you're at that size, you could say whatever the heck you want.

SISSY STAM: Yeah, it's not a good

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size for service dog work either. It should
smaller.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Did you have
any trouble getting into this building?

5

6

SISSY STAM: No, but I had to go to
Debra Glick because both of us came here to
testify a couple of years ago and we could not get
into the building. Debra Glick has been really
good about helping us resolve those problems. The
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
basically snubs their nose at people who have
psychiatric impairments.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Well I could
see why they may have one or two questions about
your dog.

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SISSY STAM: Well what about yours?

18

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: But yours, I
don't see. Well, there I go thinking again and it
usually gets me in trouble.

19

20

21

SISSY STAM: You know, what says
what the dog is better than--

22

23

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [interposing]
The dog itself?

24

25

SISSY STAM: But the suspicion and

1
2 this is what drives us crazy, the suspicion is
3 that somehow because you can't see our
4 disabilities that there's nothing wrong with us.
5 Self-identifying as a person who has PTSD or any
6 other mental illness is a very difficult place to
7 get to.

8 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I understand.
9 My disability is hearing so it's not going to be
10 seen.

11 SISSY STAM: I'm hearing impaired.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: No wonder
13 we're looking so much.

14 SISSY STAM: There is so much co-
15 morbidity between TBI, PTSD and hearing impairment
16 that part of the issue with PTSD for people who
17 have hearing impairment is you don't know where
18 sound is coming from and you don't know how far
19 away it is. One of the great benefits of a dog
20 for PTSD is you can send them into a room for a
21 room check before you even go in. You can teach
22 them interrupt nightmares so you can take the
23 knife from under your pillow. This dog will not
24 let anyone get close to me unless I tell them it's
25 okay.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: You don't

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have that problem with me.

4

SISSY STAM: Neither will this dog

5

as small as she is. You can teach them to bark on

6

cue as a game, you know that's not aggression.

7

It's like all right, you know, speak, like some

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people do with their other dogs. You can give

9

them a hand signal to paw you so that if you need

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to get out of a situation where you don't want to

11

be embarrassed they will help.

12

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Did you give

13

the signal now?

14

SISSY STAM: No, he saw me get up.

15

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Let me do one

16

thing. This hearing is official closed. We can

17

continue our conversation. Thank you very much

18

for everyone for being here. I'm going nowhere I

19

see some until this dog leaves.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Signature

Date September 30, 2009