

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

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March 19, 2021  
Start: 10:03 a.m.  
Recess: 11:25 a.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing - Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: Joseph C. Borelli  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Justin L. Brannan  
Fernando Cabrera  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
James F. Gennaro  
Alan N. Maisel

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

Daniel Nigro  
NYC Fire Commissioner

Thomas Richardson  
Chief of Staff

Lillian Bonsignore  
Chief of EMS

Lizette Christoff  
Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Finance

Andrew D'Amora  
First Deputy Commissioner NYC Emergency  
Management

Stacy Rosenfeld  
Chief Financial officer at NYCEM

Oren Barzilay  
EMS Union

Ryan Monel [sp?]  
Real Estate Board



2 UNIDENTIFIED: Sergeant at Arms in charge  
3 of recordings, please start.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: EC [sic] recording has  
5 started.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Recording to the cloud all  
7 set.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Back up is rolling.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Sergeant Lugo  
11 [sp?], the floor is yours.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning everyone.  
13 Welcome to today's Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary  
14 Budget Hearing of the Committee on Fire and Emergency  
15 Management. At this time, would all panelists please  
16 turn on your video? To minimize disruption, please  
17 place electronic devices to vibrate or silent. If  
18 you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at  
19 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's  
20 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your  
21 cooperation. Chair Borelli, we are ready to begin.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Good  
23 morning, Commissioner and everyone, and welcome to  
24 the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget hearing for  
25 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. My

1 name is Joseph Borelli. I'm the Chair of the  
2 Committee, and we're joined by Council Members  
3 Maisel, Deutsch, and Cabrera. Today we will review  
4 the Fire Department and the New York City Emergency  
5 Management's Fiscal 2022 budgets to understand how  
6 they address the needs of all New Yorkers. I'd like  
7 to be by thanking the members of the Fire Department  
8 for their sacrifices over the past year. The  
9 frontline responses of EMTs, in particular paramedics  
10 and fire fighters, have been on full display  
11 throughout this pandemic, and because of their direct  
12 life-saving actions, our city is a safer, better, and  
13 more recoverable place. The Fire Department's EMS  
14 members and fire fighters are known as New York's  
15 best and greatest. I believe those nicknames are  
16 aptly given. I'd also like to thank the members of  
17 New York City Emergency Management, as they have been  
18 working incredibly long and difficult hours to assist  
19 the city's response, performing a job that often does  
20 not get the recognition it deserves. The Fire  
21 Department's Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget totals  
22 2.1 billion with 17,288 positions. The FY 22  
23 Preliminary Budget has undergone moderate changes,  
24 decreasing just 12 million dollars since adoption.  
25

2 The Department did not have any new needs, and  
3 federal funding supports the majority of the FY 2021  
4 increases primarily from the State Homeland Security  
5 Grant and the Urban Area Security Initiative. The  
6 Fire Department's Fiscal 2021 through 2025 Capital  
7 Commitment Plan totals 607 million dollars and  
8 supports 281 distinct projects. The pandemic has  
9 offered a unique insight into how essential the Fire  
10 Department's mission is to the City. With hundreds  
11 of fire and EMS stations across the five boroughs, we  
12 should assess the need for additional fire and EMS  
13 resources throughout the city to ensure a proper  
14 emergency response and continue to look at how best  
15 to improve the operations through the expense and  
16 capital budgets. The Committee has held oversight  
17 hearings on various topics over the past year about  
18 the City's emergency preparedness for a second wave  
19 of COVID, the failure of the City's 311 and 911  
20 systems during Tropical Storm Isaias, and recently a  
21 hearing on past legislation regarding film site  
22 safety, strengthening the ability of fire fighters to  
23 respond to emergencies at film sites throughout the  
24 City. There weren't any new needs in the November  
25 preliminary financial plans, and with the many recent

2 changes due to COVID-19, many would like to revisit  
3 some of the budgeting and programmatic priorities  
4 raised last year. EMS members fill a critical role.  
5 They continue to earn far less than other first  
6 responders. The diversity of the Fire Department  
7 still lags behind other uniformed agencies and the  
8 make-up of the City's workforce as a whole, and we  
9 would like an update on the relocation of Rescue One  
10 and EMS Station Seven in the Hudson Yards area. I  
11 would also like to discuss the EMS revenue increase,  
12 the EMS mental health pilot team programs, fire  
13 safety inspections, uniform promotional exams and the  
14 safety of EMS members which, as you know, has  
15 recently come-- become front page news. I'd like to  
16 thank our Committee staff for their hard work,  
17 Financial Analyst Jack Kearn [sp?] who put on his  
18 best tie today I see, Unit Head Aisha Wright [sp?],  
19 Committee Counsel Josh Kingsley [sp?], Policy Analyst  
20 Will Hungetch [sp?], and my Chief of Staff Frank  
21 Masha [sp?]. I also like to welcome and thank  
22 Commissioner Nigro and all the uniformed EMT and fire  
23 fighter administration folks that are here as well as  
24 their civilian staff. and this being most likely our  
25 last budget together, I just want to say thank you

2 for having basically four years now of very  
3 cooperative and productive partnership between your  
4 agency and the department and Council, too. So, I  
5 look forward to hearing from you, Commissioner, and  
6 the Committee Counsel will now swear you in. I just  
7 got a text, so let me just check. Nope, that is for  
8 me and not for the public. So thank you very much,  
9 and I will-- believe the only colleagues I have are  
10 still Maisel, Cabrera, and Deutsch. So, if that  
11 changes, we'll let you know. Committee Counsel,  
12 please swear them in.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. Hi  
14 everyone, I'm Josh Kingsley, Counsel to the Fire and  
15 Emergency Management Committee. Before we begin  
16 testimony I want to remind everyone that you'll be on  
17 mute until you're called on to testify. Afterwards,  
18 you will be unmuted by the host. I will be calling on  
19 panelists to testify. Please listen to your name to  
20 be called. I will be periodically announcing who is  
21 the next panelist. First panelist to give testimony  
22 will be representatives from the New York City Fire  
23 Department. Testimony will be provided by  
24 Commissioner Daniel Nigro. The following individuals  
25 will also be available for questions: First Deputy



2 Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, Chief Operations Thomas  
3 Richardson, Chief of EMS Lillian Bonsignore, Deputy  
4 Commissioner for Budget and Finance Lizette  
5 Christoff, Chief Medical Officer Adam Prezant [sp?],  
6 and Assistant Commissioner for Recruitment and  
7 Diversity Nafeesah Noonan. I will call on you when  
8 it's your turn to speak. During the hearing, if  
9 Council Members have any questions, please use the  
10 Zoom raise hand function, and I will call on you in  
11 order. I will now call the representatives of the  
12 Fire Department to testify. Before we begin, I will  
13 administer the oath. I will call on each of you  
14 individually for a response. Please raise your right  
15 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
16 truth and nothing but the truth before these  
17 committees and to respond honestly to Council Member  
18 questions? Commissioner Nigro?

19 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy  
21 Commissioner Kavanagh?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I  
23 do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Richardson?

25 CHIEF RICHARDSON: I do.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner  
3 Christoff?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Prezant? Chief  
6 Prezant, are you unmuted? Okay, we'll just continue,  
7 I guess. And last is Assistant Commissioner Noonan.  
8 Oh, and I guess Chief Bonsignore is also there. Hold  
9 on for a second.

10 CHIEF BOSIGNORE: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, awesome.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: I do  
13 also.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you so  
15 much. Go ahead Commissioner.

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Okay, good morning,  
17 Chair Borelli and all Council Members present. My  
18 name is Dan Nigro, and I am the Commissioner of the  
19 New York City Fire Department. I appreciate this  
20 opportunity to speak with you today about the year  
21 that we've had at the Fire Department and the outlook  
22 for the year ahead. I am proud to report that when  
23 confronted with one of the most challenging public  
24 health emergencies in the history of New York City,  
25 the members of the FDNY elevated their performance to

2 meet the challenge head-on. While COVID-19 has  
3 touched the lives of every New Yorker, our  
4 extraordinary emergency medical technicians,  
5 paramedics, and fire fighters were among the first  
6 people in the City to confront the virus. At the peak  
7 of the crisis, they labored through the busiest days  
8 in the history of EMS, responding to 6,500 medical  
9 emergencies a day. It was an immense burden on our  
10 work force, but we took early action that prepared us  
11 well to handle the rapidly expanding workload. We  
12 shored up internal resources, remained flexible, and  
13 frequently adapted policies to meet the changing  
14 needs of the operational environment, and we called  
15 upon our partners in the private sector and  
16 municipalities across the country to aid in the  
17 fight. Courageous EMS personnel came from all over  
18 the United States to lend a hand. By pulling  
19 together, our EMTs, paramedics, fire fighters,  
20 officers, and civilian support staff were able to  
21 fulfill the Department's mission to keep New Yorkers  
22 safe during some of the toughest times the city's  
23 ever experienced. Even as we succeeded in the field,  
24 the virus took a toll on our members and their  
25 families. Fourteen members of the Department passed

2 away due to COVID-related issues. One visiting  
3 paramedic from Denver, Colorado also died after  
4 traveling to New York as part of the Federal  
5 Emergency Management Agency's National Ambulance  
6 Contract. The Fire Department introduced safety  
7 measures to protect our members working with the FDNY  
8 Foundation, the Mayor's Office, and our fellow city  
9 agencies to set up alternate accommodations to  
10 provide members with the option of staying in a hotel  
11 to decrease the risk to their own families. We  
12 partnered with NYU and North Well [sp?] so that our  
13 members could visit a broad range of sites to receive  
14 free testing. Once the vaccine became available, we  
15 worked with New York State and negotiated to receive  
16 our own supply of vaccine so that we could begin  
17 vaccinating our members as quickly as possible. We  
18 began with three vaccination sites that have since  
19 increased to five locations, two of which serve  
20 eligible city employees from other agencies as well.  
21 As of March 17<sup>th</sup>, we have performed over 60,000  
22 vaccination doses. This includes approximately 13,500  
23 first dose vaccinations for FDNY members and  
24 approximately 25,000 first dose vaccinations for  
25 employees of other city agencies, as well as more

2 than 9,500 second dose shots for FDNY members and  
3 more than 12,000 second dose vaccinations for  
4 employees from other city agencies. Not a single  
5 recipient has experienced a serious side effect.  
6 However, it's not just the physical effort effects of  
7 the virus that take a toll on our members. EMTs,  
8 paramedics, and fire fighters spend each shift day-in  
9 and day-out responding to emergencies. During the  
10 heaviest period of COVID responses members were  
11 responding to cardiac arrest and death totals that  
12 reach previously unseen heights. Our counseling  
13 service unit ramped up their outreach logging on to  
14 thousands of virtual counseling sessions to provide  
15 support for members in need. CSU maintained an active  
16 24-hour hotline so that members had the option of  
17 speaking with a live counselor at any hour of the  
18 day. They also trained additional peer support  
19 personnel who visited firehouses and EMS stations.  
20 The Department performed targeted outreach to members  
21 who were quarantined or isolated with their families,  
22 checking on their wellbeing and delivering personal  
23 protective equipment. In addition to the  
24 extraordinary work of the Bureau of EMS, the Fire  
25 Department also had great success last year with

2 regard to firefighting operations. New York City  
3 experienced 63 civilian fire deaths in 2020, which  
4 represented a five percent decrease from the previous  
5 year. It also marks the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of  
6 fewer than 100 fire fatalities. We do not take this  
7 achievement lightly. To put this trend into  
8 historical context, when I began my career with the  
9 Fire Department, in the 1970s we routinely  
10 experienced hundreds of deaths with 310 in 1970.  
11 That number stayed high for a long time with 285  
12 deaths in 1980 and 275 in 1990. The progress of the  
13 last decade and a half is the result of well-trained  
14 members responding quickly using top of the line  
15 fire-fighting and emergency medical equipment,  
16 providing unrivaled medical care, inspecting  
17 buildings and areas of public assembly to eradicate  
18 unsafe conditions, and thoroughly investigating  
19 fires. We also know that if a fire does occur, one  
20 of the biggest factors in the occupants emerging  
21 safely is a working smoke alarm. By partnering with  
22 the FDNY Foundation, the American Red Cross, alarm  
23 manufacturers, and the Council since 2015, we've  
24 distributed approximately 200,000 alarms and  
25 installed more than 110,000 alarms. We also make it a

1 priority to proactively educate members of the public  
2 who help them avoid experiencing serious fines. As  
3 many Council Members know firsthand from experiences  
4 in your own districts, prior to the pandemic a large  
5 component of our public education campaign consisted  
6 of in-person presentations. Teams of fire fighters  
7 and retired fire fighters visit schools, community  
8 centers, senior facilities, and public housing  
9 complexes, to name just a few, to conduct fire safety  
10 presentations. Often, the presentations are geared  
11 toward the audience or seasonal points of emphasis  
12 such as upcoming holidays. Without the ability to  
13 gather in person, our ability to perform traditional  
14 outreach was severely curtailed. However, the team  
15 quickly retooled and shifted their focus to  
16 conducting outreach, using the methods available to  
17 them. Using video conferencing and remote  
18 instruction, the Department was able to continue  
19 educating the public by performing fire safety  
20 education, mobile CPR, and maintaining the Fire  
21 Department's usual brand of aggressive community  
22 engagement. Faced with the inability to send teams of  
23 educators into classrooms. The fire safety education  
24 group [sic] developed a digital curriculum for  
25

2 school-aged audiences. The curriculum was shared  
3 with administrators across the City and promoted to  
4 more than 500 schools. United Federation of  
5 Teachers, borough chapters, and private schools, they  
6 developed an online curriculum for adult audiences  
7 and worked with community partners to share the  
8 information with senior populations throughout the  
9 City. We were even able to host a full calendar of  
10 events for Fire Prevention Week in October. Well, of  
11 course, it looked a little different than it has in  
12 previous years. Members of the Fire Safety Education  
13 Unit had more than 30 outdoor tabling events  
14 throughout the five boroughs working with community  
15 groups and elected officials to complement that  
16 effort by promoting fire safety messaging through  
17 email blasts and on social media. The highlight of  
18 the week was a virtual educational event that took  
19 place at the fire zone in Rockefeller Center with  
20 more than 3,500 New York City students tuning into  
21 the event. These efforts were bolstered by the Fire  
22 Department's own social media platforms where the  
23 Department shares a wide variety of content,  
24 including public service announcement on topics such  
25 as safe cooking, properly using smoke and carbon



2 monoxide alarms, and creating an escape plan.

3 Overall, educational content posted to social media  
4 in 2020 had a total reach of more than 149 million  
5 viewers. The Fire Department's Youth Workforce and  
6 pipeline programs also had a historic year despite  
7 the complications of the pandemic. At Captain Vernon  
8 A. Richard High School, FDNY instructors work with  
9 DOE partners to successfully transition to virtual  
10 education. We were able to maintain full enrollment  
11 in EMS 101 course which is provided as a junior year  
12 elective, and the FDNY prep course which is provided  
13 as a senior elective. For the last decade the Fire  
14 Department has conducted a job readiness final for  
15 FDNY prep scholars that involves students sitting for  
16 a mock job interview with members of the Department's  
17 Executive team. Determined not to let the current  
18 state of events interfere, our youth workforce team  
19 crated a program of virtual job interviews. Students  
20 were able to meet with executive staff such as the  
21 First Deputy Commissioner, the Chief of Operations,  
22 and the Chief of Staff, and I join the group myself  
23 for post-interview chat. We held a surprise  
24 graduation party for our FDNY prep scholars traveling  
25 to their homes with a caravan of FDNY vehicles and

2 gift bags. We conducted both winter and summer  
3 installations of our EMS Youth Academy programs and  
4 56 students completed their New York State EMT basic  
5 certification and filed for civil service. That  
6 represents the largest-ever number of FDNY youth  
7 participants to become certified EMTs in a calendar  
8 year. This program has been a great success for the  
9 City of New York. In all, 100 former FDNY youth  
10 participants have been hired by the Department. We  
11 look forward to developing new members from this  
12 program for years to come. Given the current fiscal  
13 environment, I do not have a great deal of new  
14 spending to discuss Fiscal Year 2022. However, I do  
15 want to highlight funding that we received for the  
16 Mental Health Response Pilot that we are partnering  
17 on this year with Health + Hospitals. In the case of  
18 calls regarding nonviolent mental health emergencies  
19 in which the individuals does not possess a weapon,  
20 the City will dispatch a team consisting of two EMTs  
21 and a Health + Hospitals licensed clinical caseworker  
22 to respond to the individual. Calls that include  
23 violence or in which the individual is believed to  
24 have a weapon will be routed in the traditional  
25 manner, which includes a response form the NYPD. The

2 safety of our members is paramount. So precautions  
3 have been taken to design a program in which EMS  
4 members feel secure. Training for the members of  
5 this pilot will be conducted by several agencies  
6 including FNDY, DoHMH, and the NYPD, and we worked  
7 directly with the unions in establishing the  
8 qualifications of members who are eligible to  
9 participate. Like any pilot, this will provide us  
10 with an opportunity to learn and develop best  
11 practices. We are hopeful that the results will  
12 enable us to provide better care for New Yorkers  
13 experiencing mental health emergencies. I am  
14 optimistic as we look ahead to the coming year. I  
15 take great pride in the resilience of our members and  
16 their ability to perform under enormous pressure in  
17 the most demanding of environments. I hope that the  
18 people of New York share this stance and that a  
19 silver lining of this turbulent period is that they  
20 feel reassured that no matter what obstacles arise,  
21 the Fire Department will answer the call and  
22 immediately begin working to keep them safe. Thank  
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you,  
25 Commissioner, and I'll note we've also been joined by

2 Council Members Brannan and I believe in his first  
3 meeting of a committee, Council Member Gennaro.  
4 Welcome to-- welcome back to the Council, of course,  
5 and welcome to the committee. I'm going to begin  
6 with some questions and then I'll turn it over to my  
7 colleagues. Forgive me, my printer ran out of ink so  
8 I'm not buying bitcoins or playing games if you see  
9 me using my computer. I have to get some of the  
10 questions that we discussed previously.  
11 Commissioner, you've mentioned that there are--  
12 there's no new spending to discuss and that makes  
13 sense given the pandemic and the fiscal problem the  
14 City now faces, but is there a-- are there any goals,  
15 departmental goals, that you have planned out for the  
16 next seven or eight months before the new  
17 Administration comes in?

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think as you  
19 said, we certainly don't expect funding for any new  
20 programs. So our efforts are to shore up the  
21 programs we have to ensure they're all working as  
22 they should, and so far they are. We will be hiring  
23 EMTs. We'll be hiring fire fighters. We hope to be  
24 promoting, and I think the Department is looking  
25 forward to better times, fiscal times. We have in

2 recent years enjoyed those times, and I'm sure that  
3 economics in the City will improve as COVID fades,  
4 and I'm hopeful that it will.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thanks. And yeah,  
6 you mentioned promotional exams, and I'd like to just  
7 speak from experience that this is a topic that more  
8 than one group of individuals that work for you and  
9 are extremely pleased to work for you have reached  
10 out to our office and have spoken at our committee  
11 before. So could you just go through the how, what,  
12 and why some promotional exams have been delayed and  
13 what the status is with DCAS being able to schedule  
14 the next round?

15 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Sure. Here's a  
16 subject that's personally very important to me being  
17 someone who sat for man promotional exams and knew  
18 the importance of it and how important it is to  
19 members of the Department to have the opportunity to  
20 advance. So of course in these times, our exams are  
21 hands-on, and we've had to pivot to find new ways to  
22 administer exams. We have active lists right now for  
23 Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief, Fire Marshall,  
24 etcetera. What we're concerned, most concerned, is  
25 Lieutenant and Captain Rank in fire fighter. So the

2 current lists will expire in August this year, and we  
3 have not held an exam for either Captain or  
4 Lieutenant, but we are working with DCAS very closely  
5 on the next Captains exam. They believe they have a  
6 way to conduct it, and we're optimistic that we will  
7 be able to hold that exam before this Fiscal Year  
8 ends. That's the exam, promotion to Captain. And as  
9 soon as we have word that we have a formula and a  
10 plan to administer that, and we think we will, we  
11 will begin working on the Lieutenants exam to hold  
12 that as soon as possible after the Captains exam. So  
13 that's currently the outlook.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So the goal for  
15 Captains would be to have it before June 31<sup>st</sup>, or  
16 June 30<sup>th</sup> [inaudible].

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That's correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, and then the  
19 Lieutenants promotional exam would shortly follow.  
20 And then how long would it take to grade and develop  
21 a list that you could hire off of?

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Traditionally, that  
23 takes up to a year. So, you could see that as the  
24 other exams expire in August without being extended,  
25 which is an option, there will be a gap between the

2 old list expiration and a new list that we'd be able  
3 to use. So the two options we would have is to  
4 either extend the existing list further or to promote  
5 additional people at the very end of the list in  
6 August to cover that gap until a new list is  
7 available.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there any  
9 decision? I mean, I'm only asking for more clarity  
10 because as I'm sure you're aware, there are you know,  
11 a hundred or so people that are on these lists who,  
12 you know, are in very, very compromising positions in  
13 their life and they just want to have answers for  
14 their families and for their careers. So, I mean, do  
15 we have any indication of whether we'll be hiring  
16 from those lists past August or not?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think, again, it  
18 depends on which option is taken. Whether it's an  
19 extension of the list or promoting people in August  
20 to fill that gap between the time the list expires  
21 and the new list is available. I wish I, you know, I  
22 had that crystal ball for each and every one of those  
23 members because it is a difficult time as you sit on  
24 a list and wonder whether you'll ever be promoted or  
25 not, but I would have them all be as optimistic as

2 possible, and as soon as the Department has anything  
3 more definitive, we'll certainly release it.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, and do we  
5 have an idea of how many companies are short-staffed,  
6 both with Captains, Lieutenants, and fire fighters?

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, currently the  
8 short-staffing is in the fire fighter rank. So, we  
9 had to delay pro-b [sic] class and the next pro-b  
10 class will approximately 150 in May, and I think  
11 we're already about 300 members short in that rank.  
12 As far as officers are concerned, the shortage is not  
13 as serious yet, but you know, we have attrition each  
14 and every month. People leave the Department, many  
15 for medical reasons, and therefore, the Department  
16 needs move as each month goes by. The vacancies  
17 increase, so we have to take that into consideration  
18 as we look to whether we will extend a list or hire  
19 additional people to fill those gaps.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The last fire  
21 fighter exam was December of 2016, and the following  
22 year-- so Fiscal Year I guess 2018 there ws a 20  
23 percent attrition rate for EMS which is far more than  
24 any other non-seasonal job in the City of New York, I  
25 believe. Was the necessary hours, the man hours to



2 staff EMS spots, was that made up with overtime, or  
3 was that made up with additional hiring, and do we  
4 expect the same situation to occur after the 2021 or  
5 2022 fire fighter exam?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I think it was  
7 the-- the gap was filled both ways, with overtime  
8 tours, but also the Department staffed up beforehand.  
9 So, we were overstaffed in EMS anticipating the  
10 number of members. It was actually somewhat more  
11 than we anticipated in that list. But right now in  
12 the EMT rank, for instance, we're over headcount.  
13 Short in paramedics. We're over in EMTs and we hope  
14 to correct that with the next group of paramedics  
15 coming out, and we'll increase the headcount for  
16 paramedics. So our headcount is good, and we'll--  
17 what we'll try to do again before the next promotion  
18 exam from EMT to fire fighter would be to staff up in  
19 anticipation of losing some of those members.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I mean, outside of  
21 pandemic-related costs, would you have expected the  
22 EMS overtime to increase this fiscal year?

23 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I would not have,  
24 no.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Stick with EMS for  
3 a moment. This committee has heard some testimony  
4 over the years. You know, in adjacent cities like  
5 Philadelphia have starting salaries for EMTs of  
6 \$57,000. So it's, you know, 35 percent really more  
7 than the FDNY EMT starting salary. Can you talk  
8 about any efforts the Department is undertaking to  
9 increase the EMS members' wages so that they're  
10 comparable? I mean, this is a question that gets  
11 asked every time. I mean, does the Department  
12 [inaudible] raises and what can we do to make it  
13 happen?

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, we certainly  
15 appreciate the Council's efforts in support of our  
16 EMS personnel. I don't think you'd find anyone in our  
17 Department that does not think that our EMS members  
18 should make more, but as you well know, we don't  
19 control the process. So, negotiations are going on  
20 now between union leadership and OLR, and we wish  
21 them well. We realize that they are hardworking,  
22 dedicated people who perhaps do not receive the  
23 compensation they should for this work, and for good  
24 reason Commissioners don't control the wages of I  
25 think all of us. Commissioners of various agencies

2 would increase the budget in that way, and it would  
3 cause problems for all of you. So, that's it. The  
4 negotiating process is difficult. It's--

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: [interposing] You  
6 say everyone in the Department, though, is in favor  
7 of increasing the wages or would like that. Just to  
8 be personal, does that include you and have you  
9 expressed this position to the Mayor and to OLR?

10 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Sure. I personally  
11 believe that I'm not compensated as they should, but  
12 I also realize process involves more than that, and  
13 it is a very difficult situation for negotiators that  
14 come up with something. You know, we've done smaller  
15 things. Additional pay for rescue medics or haz-tech  
16 folks to try to increase avenues for people to make  
17 more money, increasing the class sizes for paramedics  
18 who make more than EMTs, but as far as being able to,  
19 you know, wave a magic wand and say here's the new  
20 salary ranges for our folks. We can't do it, and we  
21 can only depend on negotiations.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, again, just  
23 sticking to the EMTs, on March 5<sup>th</sup>, as you're  
24 undoubtedly aware, an EMT was bit on the face in  
25 Sheepshead Bay, you know,-- I mean great food in

2 Sheepshead Bay, probably shouldn't be anyone's face.  
3 But this is just one of a number of horrific injuries  
4 that EMS members have encountered when responding to  
5 emergencies. Now, we-- the data we have shown that  
6 there were 1,774 service-connected injuries last year  
7 in FY2020, the most in any fiscal year, 10 percent  
8 more than the last five year averages. So, does the  
9 Department keep specific track of the number of job-  
10 related injuries that are due to assault?

11 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yeah, we do. I could  
12 get you those numbers. They were fairly similar for  
13 the last two years, very close. We don't see a large  
14 uptick. I mean, that being said, and especially you  
15 point to that one horrific incident and there have  
16 been others. One is too many. You know, it's a  
17 serious crime. It's a felony to assault an EMT, and  
18 it should be, punishable by up to seven years in, and  
19 again, it points to the dangers of this job. People-  
20 - our EMTs and paramedics can't treat people without  
21 being up close, and the mechanics of that injury  
22 where here was a paramedic doing the best they could  
23 for a patient, which meant being very close to them,  
24 when that patient decided to attack them. There's no  
25 way for them to do their job without this personal,

2 close contact, and it just lends itself to the  
3 dangers of being an EMT or a paramedic in our city  
4 that go on, you know, a 1,400,000 calls and some very  
5 small number, but serious number of these calls can  
6 escalate into this type of dangerous situation.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: With the mental  
8 health response teams, the pilot now happening in  
9 Harlem, number one, do you see it working? In other  
10 words, would your recommendation and perhaps Chief  
11 Bonsignore's recommendation be that it continue and  
12 be expanded? And if so, have we seen any assaults  
13 related to those type of responses?

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Sure. I'm going to  
15 start and then I'm going to pivy [sic]-- pivot to the  
16 chief. I believe if the calls are triaged the way  
17 they should be, that these teams will not respond to  
18 calls involving dangerous individuals, and that if  
19 situations change, we can summon help in a timely  
20 manner. So, let me have Lillian expand on that,  
21 because she's been involved right from the beginning  
22 in this project. Chief? I think we have to unmute  
23 Chief Bonsignore.

24 CHIEF BONSIGNORE: Yep. I think I'm  
25 good. Yes, thanks Commissioner. This particular

2 project is an important change on how we respond to  
3 mental health crises by taking a medical approach to  
4 this particular type of call. This program has not  
5 actually started yet. We have not responded to any  
6 of the jobs yet. We still are in the development  
7 stage of this program, working very closely with our  
8 union presidents and partners. We're working with  
9 New York City Thrive and NYPD developing out the  
10 curriculum for the multi-week training. The training  
11 is expected to be a joint training consisting of  
12 about five weeks of targeted training for this  
13 particular type of response. This program is really  
14 geared toward the low acuity EDP-type call type. So  
15 these are folks that are not immediately identified  
16 as violent. There's no weapon. Not homicidal. Not  
17 suicidal.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Who makes the  
19 [inaudible], dispatcher?

20 CHIEF BONSIGNORE: Yeah, so we've  
21 developed questions that the dispatcher-- you know,  
22 the call receiving operators will go through to sort  
23 these particular job types out so that there will be  
24 one critical type job type which would include  
25 reports of a weapon or violence, any kind of

2 suicidal, imminent suicidal or homicidal complaints,  
3 and then there's the other call type which is the  
4 lower acuity call type which would be, you know, non-  
5 violent, no weapon reported, not imminently suicidal  
6 or homicidal, and that is the group of assignments t  
7 that this particular unit is targeting. So, this  
8 response unit would consist of two EMTs and a social  
9 worker. If at any point the situation became  
10 dangerous or aggressive or uncomfortable, we have  
11 direct access to NYPD. They are aware of our  
12 presence, and we have the ability to talk directly to  
13 their dispatcher, so they would respond if we needed  
14 any help, but we have not actually started this  
15 program yet.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Great. Thank you.  
17 I want to get into more general revenue and expense  
18 questions before I turn it over. The-- on the  
19 revenue side, the-- the revenue has dramatically  
20 increased from the actual 187 million from FY2020,  
21 you know, we're talking about a 60 or 70 percent  
22 increase. Why is EMS projecting a significant  
23 increase? I'm hoping to hear that it's because of,  
24 you know, some of the pressure our committee has put  
25 on the department to start actually recovering some

2 of the cost of-- especially the billable and insured  
3 patients, some of the cost in transporting folks and  
4 treating them. So, can you just go into why we see  
5 this revenue increase?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, we have gotten  
7 approval for that. So, the fees that are charged for  
8 transport and also for care have increased, and  
9 therefore, our revenue will increase from our  
10 transport and treatment of patients. I don't have  
11 the exact numbers. Perhaps Deputy Commissioner  
12 Christoff can help me with those numbers. They don't  
13 come to mind quickly. She might have them.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I guess, the  
15 questions we have, though, are basically what  
16 percentage of the Department's current rate to  
17 transport someone does Medicare and Medicaid actually  
18 reimburse transports, and then once the CPE funds are  
19 received, what will the new percentage of the  
20 Department's current rate be? Like, how we doing?  
21 How we go-- where we going type of thing?

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Chairman, I'll have  
23 to get that for you. I really-- I don't have that  
24 breakdown right now, but I'm sure it's available to  
25 us.



2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Does the Department  
3 as an entity negotiate with CMS?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So we are  
5 working--

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: [interposing]  
7 Lizette, thank you.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: No  
9 problem. You are right that the majority of that  
10 increase is tied to the CPE conversation. So, we  
11 have been working very closely with New York State to  
12 increase the amount of federal reimbursement we get  
13 for Medicaid transport, and so we are actively in  
14 that process. So, right now, the rate that we get,  
15 the Medicaid and Medicare, based on a fee schedule  
16 that they set. Through CPE, which stands for  
17 Certified Public Expenditures, our Medicaid  
18 reimbursement will increase to be based more on what  
19 our actual costs are for transporting Medicaid  
20 patients. We don't negotiate directly with CMS. We  
21 have to go through the state. It has to be part of  
22 the New York State Medicaid plan amendment.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But we have to  
24 justify the cost in order to put that cost forward

2 and then use that as leverage to recover more money,  
3 correct?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So if--

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: So--

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: EMS and EMTs and  
8 paramedics were being paid slightly more, that would  
9 be sort of a justifiable cost, which we would then  
10 negotiate with CMS?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOFF: If there  
12 were changes to our cost it would be reflected in our  
13 expenditures and then-- it could impact the amount of  
14 reimbursement that we receive, but there's already a  
15 big gap even with our existing cost.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I think there's  
17 always going to be a gap. I mean, when you go to the  
18 dentist, you know, you get your bill three weeks  
19 later and it's never what your insurance pays. I  
20 respect the fact that there's always going to be a  
21 gap, but if we do like my dentist and we inflate the  
22 cost a bit and hopefully recover some more money,  
23 that's probably beneficial to all of us. but what  
24 I'm saying is, if we push the costs up through higher  
25 wages for EMTs, that cost potentially could be born

2 to some degree by reimbursement now that we're  
3 actually--

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: [interposing] A key  
5 word there I think is potentially. It does  
6 potential, but it goes through New York State and  
7 it's not automatic, so but I see where we're going  
8 here. We'd say incentive for us to get additional  
9 funds should our employees earn additional salaries.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I mean, I'll be  
11 optimistic about that. So, I mean, hopefully that is  
12 something that could continue to go forward. I'm  
13 going to turn it over to-- I know at least one  
14 colleague of mine has questions, Council Member  
15 Cabrera, and if anyone else please feel free to use  
16 the raise hand feature, but I'll turn it over to  
17 Council Member Cabrera now. Once again, Commissioner  
18 and your staff, thank you for always being a very  
19 willing partner, and to all the Chiefs and to the  
20 civilian employees in the Department, again, thank  
21 you.

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you for your  
23 support.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I'm ready.

25 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There you are.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you.

3 Thank you so much to the Chair. Thank you for your  
4 leadership. Commissioner, welcome. I want to thank  
5 the public, all of the members of the FDNY for the  
6 great job and courageous job that we saw this last  
7 year. I want to bring two things to your attention.  
8 One of them is echoing our Chair when it comes to the  
9 EMT. I find it-- I always find it ironic, and now  
10 serving as a Council Member for the last 11 years,  
11 that we always struggle to find funding for the EMT  
12 workers, and yet-- for a raise, and yet, we always  
13 seem to find a way to come out with different  
14 [inaudible] or and for that matter all throughout the  
15 system, create new jobs. And what I come to the  
16 conclusion there is not a lack of funding. We have  
17 had years of prosperity, barred this last year,  
18 years. I remember one year we had three billion  
19 dollars in excess, unexpected funding. And yet, we  
20 seem not to be able to find funding for those who  
21 risk their lives day-in and day-out. The second  
22 thing, because I only have three minutes left here,  
23 is the issue of the exams. When it comes to-- come  
24 to my attention we only have when it comes to  
25 Captain, only half of one percent of Captains are

2 minorities. I've been here for a long time, and I  
3 have heard all the reasons why we cannot increase  
4 those numbers or we haven't or we want to do better.  
5 And yet, we have a new exam that you want to put  
6 forth, and you have enough people to have taken the  
7 test, passed the test to move the needle. So, I'm  
8 calling upon you, Commissioner. I want you to leave  
9 a tremendous legacy here, that you are the ones who  
10 are able to move that needle because one thing to  
11 have the entry-level. It's another thing that we're  
12 never going to see the levels of Chief and higher  
13 position at FDNY if we don't have the Captains. And  
14 we have enough in there right now, in the pipeline  
15 waiting. They've been waiting. They took the test.  
16 They-- you know, as you know, that test is a very  
17 difficult test. Everyone here, just about everyone  
18 here that is in your team has taken that test. It's  
19 not an easy test, and then just to be put out in  
20 August and not be given the opportunity when they  
21 already passed it. Now, somebody might comeback to m  
22 and say, well we don't feel like they're prepared.  
23 Then I will say where is the mentorship. Where is  
24 the mentorship that is required to bring the next  
25 level of people of color to be there? When I first

2 got into the Council, the Vulcans [sic] had to get in  
3 and fight, because we had problems with the test, and  
4 now, we are here 11 years later and we're dealing  
5 with such a long number, but you can make that  
6 happen. You can make it happen. I'm going to be  
7 optimistic. I think we have an optimistic group of  
8 Council Members here today that we could see that  
9 needle move. Please help us with that, because I  
10 have to tell you that some of the members are  
11 starting to believe that the test that is coming up  
12 is to bypass-- in order to bypass some of them that  
13 really have a great chance, and they need them right  
14 now. It's not like we don't need them. We need  
15 them, and I think that they are prepared and they are  
16 ready to do this job. We have to have a system in  
17 place. I just don't see a system in place to making  
18 sure that people of color make it to the higher  
19 ranks.

20 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Okay, I'll address  
21 the second part of your question first, and if there  
22 are, you know, people of color, Lieutenants right now  
23 who are on the current Captain's list, there's a  
24 likelihood that we'll reach their names and they will  
25 be promoted. The process is, as you say, you take

2 this difficult test, you get on the list. Perhaps  
3 they're in positions now that either [inaudible]  
4 earlier to the Chairman, when this list expires in  
5 August, we will either promote additional people then  
6 to fill the gap before the new list or extend the  
7 list. So, therefore, I would be optimistic that some  
8 of the folks that you may be talking about have a  
9 likelihood of being promoted. And we hope, now that  
10 before this Administration came in, this department  
11 had sunk to such a low number of people of color, and  
12 we've now raised that number up and these people are  
13 becoming eligible to become Lieutenants and to become  
14 Captains, and it's exactly what the Department needs.  
15 So, I share your interest in that, and hopefully we  
16 are moving in that direction before this  
17 Administration ends.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner, and I'm going to-- and by the way, the  
20 reason why the number moved is that-- is because  
21 there was legal action that took place many, many  
22 years ago. This is before you came in, Commissioner.  
23 So, I don't want you to carry that--

24 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: [interposing]  
25 [inaudible]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: that water, as  
3 you remember. And so, but what I want to see is  
4 that-- and I'm hearing something that I'm hopeful.  
5 I'm going to put my anchor of hope on your words that  
6 we can see some of these members become captains and  
7 change the percentage. The percentage is so low. It's  
8 probably the lowest of any agency in the City of New  
9 York, any Department, and so I'm going to believe the  
10 best, and I'm going to assume the best. Thank you so  
11 much, Commissioner.

12 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Chair, for the extra time.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: No problem, Council  
16 Member Cabrera. It'll be-- I'll get my pound of  
17 flesh out of you next time, my friend. Next we'll  
18 hear from Council Member Brannan.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you,  
21 Chair. Commissioner, how are you? Good to see you.

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: You also.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, I'm going to  
24 hit on my two refrains that I always ask about. Do  
25 you have a-- so far, I know we're just about out of



2 the extreme cold weather for now before we get into  
3 extreme heat. Do you have a list of the times where  
4 the fifth fire fighter has been called for during  
5 this past winter?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Let me pivot to  
7 Chief Richardson for this. I'm not sure who he has  
8 in front of him, but he can tell you some of the  
9 criteria that the Department uses when we do make  
10 that change. Tom?

11 CHIEF RICHARDSON: Good morning, sir.  
12 So, I could tell you that this past winter there were  
13 two times where we activated and implemented the  
14 fifth fire fighter in the engine companies due to the  
15 impending storms. So, when we think about doing  
16 that, me and my time along with the Chief of  
17 Department and the Fire Commissioner, we collaborate  
18 and we discuss the impending weather. We look at the  
19 forecasts, and typically one of the benchmarks that  
20 we typically use is when we're going to see upwards  
21 of 10+ inches of snow. Then we'll start thinking  
22 about the fifth fire fighter. That's been the  
23 benchmark in the past, and so we continued that this  
24 year. Actually, one of the storms we had already

2 posted at. You know, we were going by the weather  
3 forecast, but we did it twice over the winter.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So you do it  
5 based on forecast of snow and not temperature?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Typically, we'll do  
7 it as it relates to the snow accumulation, only  
8 because of the issue as far as slower response times,  
9 and once we get there with the deep snow we use the  
10 extra fire fighters to help us get hose lines into  
11 position more quickly. So, that's typically the  
12 benchmark that we use.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, so we-- I  
14 can't legislate this stuff, but I have, you know, I  
15 have a couple of resolutions that call on FD to  
16 either-- ideally, fully reinstate the fifth fire  
17 fighter or, you know, have-- instead of having to  
18 sort of call it as we see it, reinstating the fifth  
19 man any time we have extreme weather, whether its  
20 code blue in the winter or it's extreme heat in the  
21 summer. I mean, normally when it's code blue, isn't  
22 that usually what would trigger a fifth fire fighter?

23 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I'm not sure  
24 it'd be exactly-- code blue is fairly often. I think  
25 we'd be more likely, and we're certainly not budgeted

2 to do this at every code blue occasion, and not just  
3 when it snows but some unreasonably cold or  
4 unreasonably hot stretch of weather, we could look at  
5 that when we really-- you know, the Chiefs believe  
6 that this would have an adverse effect on our  
7 firefighting and we can reassess at times other than  
8 snow storms. I mean, I understand what you're  
9 saying, but I think there might be some-- I think it  
10 would have to be a little more extreme than a code  
11 blue situation.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah, I mean,  
13 I'd like to see it just be-- I'd like to see it be  
14 some sort of standard thing, right? So it's not  
15 always scrambling to figure out if we need it or not,  
16 right? If the weather hits a certain marker, or the  
17 forecast is calling for whatever it is, then that  
18 should trigger ideally a fifth fire fighter.

19 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: The UFA has yet to  
20 get a contract, and they haven't bargained yet. So  
21 it's something that they could, because it affects  
22 that union greatly. They could look for in  
23 collective bargaining as that collective bargaining  
24 goes up. Either the increase in the number of units  
25

2 that are working with a fifth fire fighter regularly  
3 or an increase in certain weather conditions.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, really  
5 quick. This month is going to be 25 years since the  
6 EMS was combined with FNDY. Do you think that that  
7 is-- you know, do you think that separating those two  
8 agencies again and making EMS its own department  
9 would be a way to-- or a pathway to fixing the  
10 inequity?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, the fact that  
13 I was around when we did merge, and I can tell you  
14 there were about 2,000 people in New York City EMS at  
15 the time that were not well paid, that were not well  
16 supplied, ambulances were breaking down regularly. I  
17 don't think that's the magic solution to better  
18 working conditions for them, and I'm hopeful that  
19 through negotiations we can reach a better place.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Alright,  
21 Commissioner, thank you. Thank you for your service.

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very  
24 much. And I just wat to-- the last topic before we  
25 have the next panel, I sort of forgot earlier-- is on

2 the inspection side. Can you give us a briefing and  
3 maybe a run-down really of the impact of COVID-19-  
4 related inspections on the normal examinations and  
5 CFO [sic] work, and sprinklers, etcetera. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: You know, as COVID  
7 had an effect on so many other things, there were 72  
8 short staffing-wise in Bureau of Fire Prevention,  
9 working very hard towards staffing those positions.  
10 And that, besides COVID, added to the delays or the  
11 time it took for us to do inspections. While COVID  
12 took place, some of our inspectors were taken out  
13 because of the way to balance this was-- is a delay  
14 in inspection worth putting people which could be  
15 life-saving in COVID activities. So, a certain  
16 number of our inspectors were switched to COVID  
17 activity doing inspections for illegal activity or  
18 unsafe conditions and it resulted in an increase in  
19 the inspection time, in the delays. Those people are  
20 all back right now, so we are hoping to lose the gap  
21 again, and we are hoping that by filling these 72  
22 positions in the near future, this delay will be  
23 behind us. But I think it was worthwhile to have  
24 these inspectors, these loyal folks who are out there  
25 working every day while other people maybe were not,

2 or had the luxury of working from home. They were out  
3 in the street fighting COVID in other ways, ways that  
4 they didn't expect before this came, and we thank  
5 them for their service in that regard, and now  
6 they're back to their usual tasks, and we think that--  
7 - and we're also working with folks in the industry  
8 on how to streamline some of our processes and  
9 decrease the delays for them. We have a lot of ways  
10 we can help, and that's all coming together right  
11 now.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. So, I  
13 just want to-- just convey on the record, the  
14 importance it is to expedite and get as many as these  
15 people-- I'm sorry if you can hear that, my  
16 neighbor's doing some work if you can overhear that  
17 noise.

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That's okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Challenges in  
20 working from home.

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That's what happens.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I just want to  
23 convey the importance of getting these inspections  
24 back on track because the economic recovery of our  
25

2 city certainly rests a great deal on their ability to  
3 help the building industry go forward. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: We certainly  
5 understand that. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Next panel?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. I  
8 think we're moving onto NYCEM, New York City  
9 Emergency Management next. So the next panel will be  
10 New York City Emergency Management. Testimony will  
11 be provided by First Deputy Commissioner Andy D'Amora  
12 and also Chief Finance Officer Stacy Rosenfeld.  
13 Let's see-- I believe that they're currently logging  
14 on. So, just bear with us for a second.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I see Andy is on if  
16 we could unmute him.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, let me see  
18 that. He was having some issues connecting to the  
19 audio it seemed, but let's see if we can get him now.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Probably a good  
21 time to point out the amount of screens and cameras  
22 they have at OEM.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Have me  
24 now?

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Hello, yeah,  
3 you're here.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: One second.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Take your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Also, we are joined  
7 by Council Member Rosenthal. Thank you very much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You ready, sir?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Yes, just  
10 is my other-- is Stacy on?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I do not see her.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Just give  
13 me one second to get my finance person to make sure  
14 she's on.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okie doke [sic].

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA:

17 Okay, sorry for the delay.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No problem. So  
19 should we begin, or?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Yes.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: She's joining us?

22 Okay. So thanks again. Now we're going to hear  
23 testimony from New York City Emergency Management.

24 Before I begin I will administer the oath. I'll call  
25 on each of you individually for a response. Please



2 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the  
3 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
4 before these committees and to respond honestly to  
5 Council Member questions? Deputy Commissioner  
6 D'Amora? You're unmuted now.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Yes, sir, I  
8 agree. I affirm.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you so  
10 much. I still don't see Stacy on, but let's just--  
11 you could start with your testimony. Is she in the  
12 room with you? She's walking in. Come on.

13 STACY ROSENFELD: Oh, hi.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If you could just  
15 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
16 nothing but the truth in your testimony.

17 STACY ROSENFELD: I absolutely do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thanks so  
19 much. Go ahead.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Thank you.  
21 Good morning, Chairperson Borelli and members of the  
22 Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. I am  
23 Andy D'Amora, First Deputy Commissioner of New York  
24 City Emergency Management. I'm joined today by  
25 Emergency Management Chief Financial Officer Stacy

2 Rosenfeld. Clearly it has been a year like no other.  
3 We have been fully activated for COVID-19 for more  
4 than one calendar year, the longest activation of  
5 Emergency Management in history. During this time  
6 there have been multiple overlapping activations,  
7 heat emergencies, snow storms, and Tropical Storm  
8 Isaias. We have responded to over 500 incidents  
9 including building collapses, fires, infrastructure  
10 incidents, and water mains, held 88 outreach events,  
11 sent approximately 3,300 Notify NYC messages,  
12 released nine podcasts, and provided 500  
13 notifications to elected officials. Emergency  
14 Management also assisted with large-scale programs  
15 such as Get Food, Get Cool, and the Vaccine Command  
16 Center, all this while continuing our non-emergency  
17 work, mandates, and responsibilities. Additionally,  
18 this year, Emergency Management was in the midst of  
19 an organizational realignment that streamlined the  
20 agency into five bureaus and executive offices. The  
21 new bureaus mirrored the national model for Emergency  
22 Management that views disasters as recurring events  
23 with four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response,  
24 and recovery. Reorganizing around this national  
25 model allows us to build and administer the new

2 capabilities necessary to reduce risk, prepare our  
3 communities and minimize the consequences of  
4 emergencies. The agency also formed an Equity and  
5 Diversity Council as an employee-engaged approach to  
6 both facilitate discussions on issues and concerns  
7 regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to  
8 integrate the aforementioned structures into the  
9 agency's mission, operations and strategies. It  
10 further develops and maintains an agency climate that  
11 welcomes and promotes respect for the wide variety of  
12 human experiences. Allow me a moment to express my  
13 gratitude to the more than 200 dedicated  
14 professionals at Emergency Management who have  
15 literally worked around the clock over the past year  
16 in an unending activation site. We continue to look  
17 ahead to find new ways to prepare the city and our  
18 citizens for the next emergency. With that, let me  
19 now provide a snapshot of our budget for next year.  
20 Our projected total Fiscal Year 2022 City Tax Levy  
21 Expense Budget is 28.1 million. We rely on our City  
22 Tax Levy Expense Budget to support the majority of  
23 the agency's administrative, technological, and  
24 operation cost. The projected Fiscal Year 2022 City  
25 Tax Levy Personal Service Budget is 6.4 million which

2 supports the 63 personal lines paid directly through  
3 our tax levy funds. This includes 1.5 million in  
4 funding for 18 staff members dedicated to working on  
5 increasing communication and services to people with  
6 access and functional needs. Our other staffing is  
7 supported through grant funds and personnel on  
8 assignment for multiple city agencies. Our projected  
9 Fiscal Year 2022 other than personal service budget  
10 is 21.7 million which covers all agency operating and  
11 administrative costs. This budget includes a  
12 significant portion of non-discretionary funding.  
13 These funds are designated to cover our warehouse  
14 lease, utilities, and telecommunications costs  
15 including the maintenance and operations of our  
16 emergency operations center and back-up facilities.  
17 This money also supports our fleet and all additional  
18 equipment, supplies, and materials needed to run the  
19 agency. The agency receives grant funding to support  
20 many of our core programs. In the past year, we  
21 secured 32.7 million in federal funding, primarily  
22 through the Urban Areas Security Initiative Grant.  
23 This funding is vital to our ability to run many of  
24 our finest initiatives, including the Ready New York  
25 Public Education Program, Community Emergency

2 Response Team Program, Continuity of Operations  
3 Program, geographic information systems, training and  
4 exercises, watch command and response, ad citywide  
5 incident management systems planning, and the  
6 emergency stock supply stock pile. We work with City  
7 Hall, OMB, the city's congressional delegation, and  
8 our partner agencies to push for full Homeland  
9 Security Funding in future years. This money  
10 supports critical operations within ours and several  
11 other agencies' budgets and is critical to the City.  
12 In addition to our regular mandate during the COVID-  
13 19 activation we put in place approximately 100  
14 contracts to support the City's COVID-19 response.  
15 This includes contracts to support medical staffing  
16 for hospitals and nursing homes, hoteling of people  
17 exposed to COVID-19 who needed a safe place to  
18 isolate, PPE for essential workers, self-stable food  
19 for vulnerable populations, and renewed sign language  
20 translation contract to ensure all New Yorkers had  
21 the access and support they needed during this very  
22 difficult time. We continue to work closely with OMB  
23 to ensure the city's reimbursed by FEMA for all  
24 eligible costs. Thank you for the opportunity to  
25 testify today. I look forward to working with the

2 Council on issues of emergency readiness and  
3 response, and I am now happy to take any questions  
4 you may have. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Deputy  
6 Commissioner. The first question I have is basically  
7 about the vaccine distribution. Can you just explain  
8 the agency's role in the distribution if there is any  
9 and the agency's involvement on setting up vaccine  
10 sites, etcetera, or if there is any?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Thank you  
12 for the question, Chairperson Borelli. We are  
13 involved with the Vaccine Command Center. We have  
14 personnel assigned there in a supporting role meeting  
15 the-- helping the coordination with logistics and  
16 some contract support as well for the different  
17 vaccine sites. We also have some personnel out at  
18 vaccine sites doing checks and make sure things are  
19 going well.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: During the  
21 pandemic, has your vision of what needs to be stocked  
22 in the City's emergency stockpile changed as it began  
23 to include more PPE and stuff like that?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Yeah, this  
25 time last year we were all scrambling because the

2 city, state, nation [inaudible] PPE. Now we're in a  
3 much better place than we were last year regarding  
4 PPE and other things as well regarding the pandemic.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And just-- I guess  
6 my final question is about the funding. You know,  
7 obviously the federal funding is not included in our  
8 projection for next year as it is in every year, but  
9 there are no positions funded federally that are  
10 going to fall off a cliff at any point where we're  
11 going to lose it if we don't immediately get  
12 replenished. Is that correct?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Yes, that's  
14 correct. We have just been have permission also to  
15 fill 15 vacancies that were on grants. So we're  
16 moving forward with filling personnel vacancies as  
17 well.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. I mean, I  
19 have no more questions for you guys. I'll give it a  
20 second for the other committee members to raise their  
21 hand. I'm shocked with all the cameras and screens  
22 and conference rooms you have at OEM, that you picked  
23 to use your office.

24

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: I know, we  
3 had something going, and of course, something  
4 happened. It's virtually.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I don't see anyone  
6 else, so thank you very much.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AMORA: Thank you,  
8 sir. Have a great weekend.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And Counsel, we  
10 will get the next panel.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [inaudible] Thank you  
12 everyone. We're now turning to public testimony.  
13 I'd like to remind everyone that unlike our typical  
14 council hearings, we'll be calling on individuals  
15 one-by-one. Again, Council Members use the raise  
16 hand function on Zoom if you have any questions once  
17 the panelist has completed their testimony. We would  
18 now like to welcome to start Oren Barzilay from the  
19 EMS Union. Go ahead Oren.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 OREN BARZILAY: Can you guys hear me?

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes.

23 OREN BARZILAY: Okay. Good morning  
24 everybody. Good morning Committee Chair and all the  
25 Council Members. Before I start, I would like to say



2 my gratitude to Commissioner Daniel Nigro for his  
3 work with the FDNY and his support for FDNY EMS. The  
4 proposed 2022 FDNY budget is to be applauded;  
5 however, it does nothing to address the reality of  
6 the situation at the Emergency Medical Service.  
7 Historically, the pre-hospital care providers have  
8 been too subjected to a regimen of benign neglect.  
9 It is imperative that the budget allocation be  
10 aligned with the most pressing needs of the EMTs and  
11 paramedics of the 911 system. The current situation  
12 of these heroes is becoming dire with each passing  
13 hours. The coronavirus has resulted in a totally  
14 unique situation. We have seen an unprecedented  
15 number of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, from an  
16 average of 80 calls of cardiac arrest a day to over  
17 500 cardiac arrest a day, all of which involve  
18 patients of younger age than pre-pandemic. The  
19 result is my members are struggling with feelings of  
20 hopelessness as they attempt to save patients. This  
21 war zone is causing people to lose sleep, start  
22 drinking, become depressed. Three of my men have  
23 committed suicide. Others, contemplating suicide.  
24 Psychiatric and psychologists show emergency medical  
25 technicians and paramedics are at a higher risk of

2 developing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder because of  
3 the pandemic. Yet, there is zero funding for any  
4 type of mental health initiatives targeted to EMTs  
5 and paramedics. Meanwhile, the FDNY provides zero  
6 funding to address this impending crisis. Perhaps  
7 it's just another instance of institutional  
8 indifference or simply benign neglect. Last year,  
9 over 200 of my members of the service were assaulted  
10 in the line of duty. The most horrendous of which  
11 was a cannibal-like facial bite. We have requested,  
12 no implored, the Fire Department to institute  
13 conflict resolution training coupled with basic self-  
14 defense training. Apparently, the Department is  
15 comfortable with its members being assaulted on a  
16 daily basis, because there is zero funding for these  
17 suggested initiatives. Currently, more than three-  
18 quarters of the issued ballistic vest have exceeded  
19 the manufacturers recommended life span, essentially  
20 rendering them less than useless. Yet, the  
21 Department has steadfastly refused to replace these  
22 life-saving articles. This year, four of my men were  
23 robbed at gun point while performing their duties. I  
24 am not sure what else it will take or what else needs  
25 to happen before these issues are addressed, perhaps

2 another killing of one of my members. The Fire  
3 Department recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
4 of the FDNY EMS merger that saw the Commissioner  
5 issue a proclamation expressing his respect for my  
6 members. Meanwhile, the department fights us tooth  
7 and nail at the Office of Labor Relations as we  
8 strive to obtain a true living wage. They deny all  
9 requests to fund initiatives that are paramount to  
10 our health, safety, and wellbeing. I will have some  
11 things that I would like to discuss if I'm allowed to  
12 regarding some of the questions that the Council  
13 Members have.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes, please.

15 OREN BARZILAY: Every so often we hear  
16 the Mayor's Office, the Department use the excuse of  
17 our wages are so far apart because of collective  
18 bargaining, making it seem like we don't know how to  
19 bargain for our members, or suggesting we don't know  
20 how to bargain. The fact is, it's the City that's  
21 fighting us back. It's the City that pushes back. It  
22 doesn't matter how many times we demand equality and  
23 fairness, we're not being heard. It's not given to  
24 us. We need to stop with this collective bargaining  
25 excuse for the disparity of pay. They're going to

2 start a Mental Health Response Unit. We're not  
3 objecting to it at this time. However, when is  
4 mental health going to come to EMS? Aw man, I heard  
5 it.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's up.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: You can continue,  
8 please.

9 OREN BARZILAY: Our men and women are  
10 hurting, not from what-- only what they've seen, but  
11 from what they're experiencing on a daily basis,  
12 members being assaulted, and no justice given to  
13 anyone. It's been four years since Idir Arroyo [sp?]  
14 has been killed, and we're still having hearings  
15 whether this man is eligible to be held in court.  
16 They tout that they established a peer support for  
17 our men and women. While it's great that we have  
18 peer support, these are EMTs and paramedics who are  
19 only going around to talk to them. However, when  
20 they encounter a member who is experiencing PTSD,  
21 they have no instruction or direction of what to give  
22 them. The FDNY needs to hire psychiatrists and  
23 psychologists to assist our men and women. They  
24 can't afford to go on their own to see a psychiatrist  
25 or psychologist. The wages are so low, how can you

2 afford a copayment? I'm glad that fire deaths in New  
3 York City have declined. This needs to be  
4 acknowledged that our Fire Prevention Inspectors are  
5 responsible for that. They too are now in danger as  
6 the Fire Department have pulled out some safety  
7 measures. They have taken away their CO meters.  
8 They have taken away their bunker [sic] gear. These  
9 are all safety equipment that needs to be carried at  
10 all times. I'll take any questions you have.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Oren. I  
12 don't believe I have any questions for you. Give the  
13 committee a second. It doesn't look like anyone else  
14 does. Thank you very much as always Oren, and thank  
15 you on behalf of the City to all your members. We  
16 appreciate everything you all have done over the past  
17 year. Thank you.

18 OREN BARZILAY: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair  
20 Borelli. Next for public testimony will be Ryan  
21 Monel [sp?] from the Real Estate Board of New York.  
22 You can go ahead, sir.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 RYAN MONEL: Thanks Chair Borelli,  
25 members of the committee for the opportunity to

2 testify today. Very appreciative of the earlier  
3 questions in regards to funding and staffing levels  
4 around the Bureau of Fire Safety. You know, I think  
5 I'd be remiss if I said that we weren't grateful for  
6 the opportunities that we've had to speak to the  
7 Department about the wait times for inspections that  
8 our members are facing, particularly as it pertains  
9 to larger projects in Manhattan. And you know, we've  
10 faced increasingly long wait times over the past  
11 couple of years. This actually predates the  
12 pandemic. So I am understanding and appreciative of  
13 the Fire Department is doing what they can to help  
14 keep people safe, and that might have required folks  
15 to be moved from the inspection aspect of the work of  
16 the Department. You know, this is an economic  
17 development issue that we're now facing. If there's  
18 a conversation that can be had in regards to  
19 increasing not only the budget for the bureau, but  
20 also staffing levels is something that we look  
21 forward to working with the council and the  
22 Department to do. And you know, we're hoping that we  
23 can get wait times which have gone to upwards of 11  
24 weeks, which of course affects the ability for a  
25 project to obtain a TCO or a Certificate of Occupancy

2 to getting that number much lower. And so, you know,  
3 we want to continue this conversation. We understand  
4 that funding might be limited, but there's  
5 opportunity to continue that discussion, we'd  
6 appreciate the ability to work with you. So, with  
7 that said, I'm happy to take any questions, but thank  
8 you Chair Borelli for your time today.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Monel. Counsel, any questions or next panel?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That is the final  
12 panel, sir, so you can close out when you're ready.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Alright, this  
14 concludes today's hearing. Thank you all very much.

15 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 15, 2021