

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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June 23, 2011
Start: 10:00 am
Recess: 11:47 am

HELD AT: Hearing Room, 16th Floor
 250 Broadway

B E F O R E: MATHIEU EUGENE
 Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Mathieu Eugene
James Sanders, Jr.
Lewis A. Fidler
Vincent J. Gentile
Fernando Cabrera
Daniel Dromm
David G. Greenfield

A P P E A R A N C E S

Terrance C. Holliday
Commissioner
NYC Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs

Latisha LaMont
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Senior Legislative Associate
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Lionelle Hamanka
Military Families Speak Out

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2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning
3 and welcome to this meeting of the Committee on
4 Veteran affairs. My name is Mathieu Eugene, and I
5 have the privilege to be the chair of this
6 committee.

7 The Committee on Veterans is here
8 today to conduct a hearing on Intro 480, a bill
9 that would require that each city agency have a
10 veteran liaison, and that the Mayor's Office of
11 Veteran Affairs publish a list of liaisons on its
12 website.

13 Over 225,000 veterans live in New
14 York City, and these figures are expected to rise
15 as thousands more return from the wars in Iraq and
16 Afghanistan. This population of veteran, in
17 particular, experiences problems with finding and
18 retaining jobs. In April 2011, the unemployment
19 rate was 9 percent. However, for veterans serving
20 since 2001, the unemployment was 11.5 percent
21 overall, 13.1 percent for those 25-34 years old
22 and 20.9 percent for those 18-24 years old.

23 There are government-sponsored
24 initiatives to assist the veterans upon their
25 return home. The federal government provides many

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2 benefits, including health care, funds for
3 education, insurance and transition assistance.
4 New York benefits include low fixed-rate mortgages
5 and additional credit on civil service
6 examination. New York City has a Mayor's Office
7 of Veteran Affairs that assists the veterans with
8 issues including education, retraining, medical
9 and rehabilitation services and employment.

10 There is also an Access NYC program
11 that screens veterans for over 30 government
12 benefits programs. In addition, there are private
13 programs to help programs. For example, the New
14 York Bar Association provides legal services; some
15 1,100 colleges and universities participate in the
16 program in which the federal government provides
17 matching funds to private institutions that offer
18 scholarships to veterans. The challenge is to
19 provide veterans with information about these
20 services. The bill we are considering today is
21 one way to meet that challenge.

22 Today, we hope to learn more about
23 the role of veteran liaisons, what function they
24 serve and how they assist veterans in need of city
25 services, about veterans in organizations serving

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2 veterans the ability to directly contact the
3 appropriate liaisons and to create more effective
4 way for veterans to connect with the services they
5 need. During the hearing, we will hear testimony
6 from the administration, veterans, nonprofit
7 organizations and valued stakeholders. If you
8 wish to testify, please sign up with the sergeant-
9 at-arms in the front.

10 I'm going to give the opportunity
11 to my colleague, Council Member Vincent Gentile,
12 to present a statement. Before that, let me
13 acknowledge the members that we have with us. We
14 have with us Council Member Lew Fidler on the far
15 right, Council Member Fernando Cabrera, Council
16 Member Vincent Gentile and we have with us also
17 Barbara Butler, legislative counsel, and Brian
18 Footer, policy analyst.

19 Now, it is my privilege to call on
20 Council Member Gentile, the author of this
21 legislation. My colleague is a very strong
22 advocate for veterans and I want to congratulate
23 him and thank him for this wonderful legislation
24 and for the wonderful job that he's doing on
25 behalf of the veterans. Council Member Gentile?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Why thank
3 you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that. That's very
4 nice of you. Good morning and thank you very,
5 very much, as we talk about Intro 480, which would
6 require city agencies to designate an employee to
7 act as a liaison between the agency and the
8 veteran community.

9 I first would like to thank our
10 chair, Mathieu Eugene, for holding this hearing,
11 and thank the committee staff for their work and
12 time preparing this bill and this hearing.

13 Frequently, when this committee
14 meets, we review the many services that are not
15 currently available to veterans or where there is
16 a gap between available services and the
17 tremendous demand within our veteran community.
18 Sometimes, we overlook the unique needs that
19 veterans have for city services already available
20 for New York City residents generally.

21 After all, our veterans are not
22 just our heroes who have sacrificed to protect and
23 defend our freedoms, they, too, are our small
24 business owners, our neighbors, parents and
25 grandparents and consumers. Far too often, I

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2 hear, and many of my colleagues hear from our vets
3 and veteran organizations that there is a
4 disconnect. The services are available but it is
5 difficult to navigate the bureaucracy, or it takes
6 significant time, energy and persistence to get
7 the desired services.

8 In issuing Executive Order 110,
9 Mayor Bloomberg took an important step to ensure
10 that every agency was interacting with the Mayor's
11 Office of Veterans Affairs through an agency
12 liaison, to help foster a city government that
13 better serves our veterans. Intro 480 seeks to
14 improve upon this important goal by requiring each
15 agency to designate an employee to be publicly
16 listed as the liaison between the agency and the
17 veteran community.

18 While this may be the same person
19 that works between the agency and MOVA, in many
20 cases it may not be. When the veteran has a
21 question or desires a service from Small Business
22 Services, Consumer Affairs, Health, Housing, or
23 any other agency, this bill would provide them a
24 direct person to speak with.

25 While they may be seeking a

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2 generally available city service, we recognize
3 that there are frequent concerns and questions
4 unique to the veteran community. By designating
5 an agency employee as a veteran liaison, through
6 their day-to-day work, they will become familiar
7 with these concerns, questions and frequent
8 service needs and be better equipped to work with
9 other veterans.

10 Now, Intro 480 does not establish
11 one of the services that our veterans so
12 desperately need and deserve. It doesn't ensure
13 that every veteran will get every service that
14 they're entitled to, but what it does is a strong
15 step in the right direction. It leads to a better
16 recognition by agencies of general veteran's needs
17 that relate to that particular agency and will
18 help veterans and veteran organizations to better
19 coordinate and more efficiently seek existing
20 services, whether or not they are veteran-
21 specific.

22 So once again, I thank you for
23 being here today. I look forward to the testimony
24 of the commissioner and anyone else who testifies
25 today. Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this

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hearing.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Gentile. Before I call the speakers, let me thank Commissioner Holliday for being here. Thank you very much. Also, I want to thank also Mr. Alan Mullin [phonetic] to be here, from the Mayor's Office. And to each one of you here, thank you very much for your presence.

Now, we want to call the first panel. Commissioner, would you please?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Good morning, Chair Eugene and members of the Veterans Committee. My name is Terrance Holliday and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs, MOVA. Seated with me is my military liaison, Latisha LaMont. She handles a lot of these cases and has a direct involvement in the liaison list that we're talking about today. Thank you very much for having me here today; I really thank you.

I am here today to testify and offer my support to the Council's Intro 480, a Local Law to amend the New York City Charter, in relation to the Mayor's Office of Veterans'

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2 Affairs and the establishment of veteran liaisons.

3 The Mayor's Office of Veterans'
4 Affairs, MOVA, was established by Local Law 53 in
5 1987. We advise the Mayor on issues and
6 initiatives impacting the veteran and military
7 community. We work with the U.S. Department of
8 Veterans Affairs, the New York State Division of
9 Veterans Affairs and city agencies, veterans'
10 organizations, area military commanders and other
11 stakeholders to offer services to veterans, their
12 dependents and survivors; while encouraging
13 innovative partnerships to ensure creative problem
14 solving regardless of military discharge status.

15 On January 17, 2008, Mayor Michael
16 Bloomberg signed Executive Order 110 which, among
17 other things, requires each agency to assign a
18 senior level staff member to serve as a liaison to
19 MOVA. The agency liaisons work with MOVA to
20 enhance services, provide information and
21 guidance. The agency liaisons have been meeting
22 annually since 2008 to learn about new policies
23 and receive training from local stakeholders that
24 will help to better assist veterans.

25 The assistance provided by the

1
2 agency liaisons is invaluable. For example,
3 agency liaisons have helped with the following:
4 assisting veterans who inquire about their
5 applications for the Veterans' Property Tax
6 Exemption through the New York City Department of
7 Finance. Also, with assisting with verification
8 of City employees who may be eligible for
9 Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi
10 Freedom Extended Military Benefits Package, the
11 EMBP for City employees who are members of the
12 National Guard or reserve.

13 Veterans' preference points for NYC
14 civil service examinations. This is also
15 administered through DCAS and depending upon the
16 veteran's military service a Veteran can receive
17 either 5 or 10 preference points on civil service
18 examinations. The liaisons assist MOVA with
19 verifying whether a veteran is eligible to use
20 preference points or if this benefit has been
21 previously used.

22 MOVA has assisted veterans through
23 the Department of Homeless services, Human
24 Resources Administration and New York City Housing
25 Authority to obtain the benefits needed to move

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2 into permanent housing. These agency liaisons
3 have assisted in obtaining inspections for
4 apartments, obtaining their HUD-VASH voucher and
5 with moving allowances, and this was on a one-shot
6 basis.

7 With the assistance of the city
8 agency liaisons MOVA ran a successful care package
9 campaign that allowed us to send over 6,000
10 packages to OEF and OIF deployed service members.
11 They, the liaisons, have been currently assisting
12 us with the Suit Drive campaign to provide
13 interview attire to veterans seeking employment.
14 That is ongoing.

15 As noted above, MOVA has been
16 utilizing agency liaisons for the past three years
17 and we support the proposed legislation.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to
19 testify. I might also add that this list was
20 published on our website. I directed it on
21 Friday. It has been on our website on Monday. A
22 copy of that list is attached to the notes that
23 you have there.

24 So I thank you very much again for
25 having and if you have any questions, I'm here for

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you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Commissioner, for your testimony. Thank you very much. I have a few questions. You mention in your testimony that the agency liaisons work with MOVA to provide information and guidance. Could you please give us an example? I know you mentioned that the assistance provided by the agency liaison is invaluable. For example, agency liaisons have helped with the following, you mentioned assisting veterans who acquired for veteran exempt property tax, and the list goes on.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Do you think that the assistance of the agency has been adequate, sufficient to information the veterans about the services available?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: I feel very comfortable with what they've been able to do for us. Since I've come onboard in January, I've looked at a bunch of things, and we're trying to really enhance it and make many things that we do at MOVA more effective. That's what a new person is supposed to do.

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2 What we do is when a constituent
3 comes along, and has a particular problem we try
4 to give them some assistance and guidance. And
5 every once in a while you run into a speed bump,
6 and at that point in time you need somebody with
7 sufficient knowledge, sufficient authority to help
8 us overcome that.

9 In one situation, we ran into a
10 matter where a veteran had applied for housing and
11 ran into a customer service representative who was
12 difficult to deal with. We went around that
13 customer service representative and corrected the
14 problem and the veteran was properly served. Not
15 only that, we believe that the other customer
16 service--that was a training opportunity for the
17 rest of the customer service force. So everybody
18 else benefited from that.

19 There was one that I had particular
20 hands-on with. I'm going to get this a little
21 wrong, but I think I'm right. When you enlist,
22 you incur a six-year obligation for men, and I
23 believe the same thing for women. You can serve
24 that obligation in the military in any combination
25 of active duty, active reserve or the individual

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ready reserve.

Many people, after they complete their enlistments, if they have two years or four years left, whatever it may be, they go into the individual ready reserve. You have a requirement in the ready reserve to meet once a year to make certain that your uniform fits, to make certain that you have shots, so that if the country needs you, they call you up. This is a pool of people. Less than 10 percent probably even comply with that federal regulation.

Some time ago, the individual ready reserve in this area, sponsored by the VA, had something where they called people from all over the east coast to attend a meeting. So they were on 23rd Street. A lot of them parked illegally. They got tickets. So the VA reached out to us and said we made a mistake. We didn't tell these people where to park. Is there anything that you can do?

I reached out to the Department of Finance and said hey, we've got a problem. Individual ready reserve, we keep trying to encourage people to participate in this and these

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2 guys did. These guys and gals did, and they had a
3 problem. So I went to the agency liaison, Peter
4 Sammarco, and he checked into it and the answer
5 came back very quickly: we really can't do
6 anything about that. We advised the VA and they
7 handled it. So sometimes it works; sometimes it
8 doesn't.

9 What does happen here is that we
10 told the VA, the next time that you plan for this,
11 plan a little bit better to make certain your
12 people are informed. So it's like a give/take
13 type thing.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Commissioner,
15 talking with the veterans, it seems that they're
16 not completely satisfied with the way the
17 information has been transmitted to them. What I
18 mean is we know that there are many services
19 available in the city but I'm afraid that the
20 veterans don't have enough information to access
21 those services. Do you think that there is a way
22 to improve the way we information the veterans
23 about the services available? Or that it's 100
24 percent efficient and we don't have anything to
25 do?

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2 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, I come
3 from a culture that says improvement is a
4 continuous process. So we're going from a point
5 where we were getting information out to one where
6 we're getting a lot of information out and it's
7 coming out in streams. It's sort of matching--and
8 I understand where you're coming from--but we're
9 trying to match up that information with the
10 veterans. We're visiting veterans' groups. Ms.
11 LaMont visited outgoing Navy personnel who were
12 deploying, two weeks ago. I visited National
13 Guardsmen. We reached out to about 600-700 people
14 that day, not including families. So we're
15 getting that information out. We're active on our
16 website. We've active on Facebook. We're using
17 the social media to get out there and reach
18 people. The word that we're getting back is that
19 people know we're there. They're taking a look at
20 us as a source of information. It has to get
21 better; it will get better.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I believe that
23 there is a need of a way to coordinate the
24 information that we are trying to provide to the
25 veterans. With the work of MOVA and the work of

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2 the liaisons, what is the coordination process?
3 How does MOVA coordinate the system? You know,
4 the information from the liaison, and also to the
5 veterans.

6 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: May I ask
7 Ms. LaMont to answer that?

8 LATISHA LAMONT: Hi. We have
9 annual meetings to discuss or pass out new
10 information. However, when new information comes
11 into our office, we submit an email to the list of
12 the agency coordinators of any new information
13 that's coming in. So any time we get new
14 information, we're constantly sending it out to
15 our liaisons, who therefore disseminate throughout
16 their agencies and to their constituents.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But do you
18 have an idea how many veterans have been served
19 through the liaisons? Do you keep that
20 information?

21 LATISHA LAMONT: We keep track.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Every year or
23 every month, do you keep track of that?

24 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, we have
25 to get back to you with that information. We do

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have some information on that that we can put together and let you know that.

LATISHA LAMONT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: The reason I'm asking is to ensure and be certain that the process is effective. We have to keep track of information to see how many veterans we serve, what type of services have been provided. We have to keep track. If we don't keep track of that information, there's no way we can say that the system is efficient enough.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Right.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Before I ask my next question, let me acknowledge that we have been joined by Council Member Dromm from Queens.

Let me ask you the last question before I ask my colleagues if they have questions. We know that the numbers of the veterans living in New York City is going to increase very soon, is increasing with those who have to return home. What does MOVA have in place to make sure they accommodate those veterans who will be returning very soon, in terms of information and providing information to them and for them to access the

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2 services? I know the system that you have, as
3 you've said, you believe in improvement. You said
4 that there is room for improvement. I share that
5 philosophy with you. There is always a way to
6 improve everything that we are doing.

7 The system that you are using, the
8 resources that you have right now has been used
9 for a certain number of veterans. The number is
10 going to increase. I believe that something
11 should be done to be able to serve the number of
12 the veterans who will be reaching very soon. What
13 does MOVA have in place to make sure that you have
14 enough resources and that the system that you have
15 is capable to serve also those who are coming
16 home?

17 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, we're
18 tinkering around with a couple of things. The VA
19 is one. Let me just share an observation with
20 you. I'm a retired reserve colonel. I am meeting
21 probably every two or three months with the
22 commander or with Colonel Mike Gold over at Fort
23 Hamilton, Captain Sam Tate up in the Bronx and
24 Captain Linda Fagan over at the Coast Guard. We
25 just decide we're going to have coffee every once

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2 in a while. We met about two weeks ago. We're
3 talking about a lot of issues affecting their
4 troops.

5 In New York City, the major
6 opportunity that we have, that we can have some
7 impact on are the reserve forces. It's the Army
8 Reserve, the New York National Guard and the
9 Marine Reserve and of course the Navy. The Navy
10 is easy because they're in a big cluster up in the
11 Bronx. So what we've done is that we're
12 identifying these clusters.

13 Now, what I wanted to make certain
14 is that we have a good communications loop with
15 all of the military folks. So, what we have
16 started doing is reaching out to the military
17 members and their family as they're deploying and
18 providing them with information that's good career
19 information, also deployment information. Then we
20 get them on their first or second yellow ribbon
21 event where we're sharing this other information
22 with them.

23 So we're trying to get better and
24 better at reaching out to the veteran forces that
25 we're going to begin seeing in New York City. We

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2 have to figure out a way to reach the active duty
3 members who are going to ultimately come back to
4 reside in New York City, return to New York City.
5 Right now, I don't believe those are the larger of
6 the numbers, but we're tracking in that direction.

7 One of the thoughts that we have is
8 to get out an electronic envelope of forms and
9 facts about New York City, so that when a military
10 member leaves the service from wherever they
11 depart the service from, on the check off sheet
12 they have a New York City box where they can take
13 a look at forms and contact information from us.
14 That's going to be the hard one to crack. But the
15 Guard, the Reserves, we've made good inroads with
16 them right now.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. Let me now call on Council Member
19 Gentile for some questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you.
21 Thank you, Commissioner for being here and thank
22 you for your testimony also.

23 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Thank you,
24 sir.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And your

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2 good work. The fact that you posted the liaisons
3 that are under Executive Order 100 this past week
4 is a great step in the right direction to get
5 those names on your website. But I'm curious that
6 there are some blanks here in some of the agencies
7 that veterans might very well need to interact
8 with. Those liaisons are designated to work with
9 MOVA. The fact that this is blank, does that
10 indicate that there currently is not a liaison
11 working with MOVA from these agencies?

12 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sort of.
13 What generally has happened with this list, if we
14 need some help some place we just go there and we
15 have been getting it. So, some of those agencies
16 are very small agencies. We are going to rework
17 that list. This list is going to be updated
18 periodically and the new current list will be
19 there. We're going to reach out to these folks
20 and make certain that they're there. That's an
21 oversight on my part.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: It would
23 seem though, one of the agencies, for example,
24 Department of Small Business Services, is a pretty
25 important agency to work with MOVA, given many of

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the veterans who have small businesses or vendors in some way or another.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: I'm glad you said that, sir, because I'm brand new to a lot of things. We connected with the Small Business Agency probably about six or seven weeks ago and we've been working with them. So they will be on that list. This list will be full. I can assure you that this list will be full.

I will tell you this just as a personal thing. You go in and you see things and you want to try to fix a lot of things that are out there. And there are some things that just work well and you say, okay, I'll get to that. This was an "I'll get to it."

So, you know, if there's a rock that you need to throw about this, with me with this list, this was me. I found that this list was very helpful when we got stuck and we needed to get something done about it. It was sort of like that favorite tool that you like to use that you're not going to lend to your neighbor. This was a favorite tool that I thought was very, very helpful. I don't like to wear things out. So I

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think it was.

Then we got together and we talked about it and I was sort of like, okay, why not. That's why it showed up. I'm a stubborn old guy, and I used to be a colonel. I still am a colonel.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You are a colonel.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: So, the thing is when I said I wanted something, that's how it went. So I fell on my sword because it was the right thing to do. It was also a reasonable thing to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Right.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: So this list will be full and I'll give us about two weeks to get people in there. Believe me, it'll be full.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I see, for example, also the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. I would imagine that would be an agency that should be working directly with MOVA.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: We have been. We absolutely have been. But I think it's a one or two person operations. So if I need something, I call up and I speak to the

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commissioner.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I see.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: You know, I mean I just speak to him. That's what some of them are. It's not like we have to call these folks every day. I found when this all came up, I started talking to members of my staff. Some folks call people on the list two or three times a month. Others call them two or three times a day, and not necessarily those people but the folks that are in there.

This is sort of like, you know in the subways--I don't know if they still have them, I'll have to take a look at it when I take the number one tonight--you know, in case of emergency, break glass. That's what we try to use them for. Sometimes they get overused or whatever, but every time we've had to go out to an agency liaison, we got it done. We just got it done.

So if there are lapses in it and a couple of other things, it's my fault. I just haven't gotten around to it, but I'll get around to it now.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: No, as I
3 said, it's a great step. The fact that you have
4 it on your website is very much in keeping with
5 Executive Order 100, because these are, under that
6 Executive Order, the liaisons that are designated
7 to work with MOVA.

8 Now, Intro 480 would require the
9 agencies individually to have on their website the
10 veteran liaison that the public can go to in the
11 case of veterans.

12 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: That's the
14 aspect that Intro 480 adds to this whole picture
15 here. So I guess my question to you then would be
16 since you'd be working Intro 480 should it become
17 law and Executive 110 in tandem, would you see the
18 person who is appointed to work with you from the
19 agencies also the same person being designated by
20 the agency to be the public liaison to the
21 veterans?

22 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, I'd
23 have to give that some thought. I think that if
24 you're talking about a senior level person in an
25 agency, maybe the best way to do it is through

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2 like a 311 to this person. I don't think you want
3 everybody in humanity calling this individual up
4 about nickel and dime information or something
5 that they really don't need to go to them for.

6 I think that anything that we do
7 that takes away support from veterans or anything
8 that we do that places more weight on the back of
9 veterans, is a disservice to them. So I think the
10 list is fine. I think how you reach out to these
11 people or whatever you do, I mean that's fine. I
12 mean whatever you decide to do; I think that that
13 requires a little bit more consideration. I would
14 recommend that. But I think it's good to have it
15 out there.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: And staff
17 has just corrected me that Intro 480, should it
18 become law, would not actually require each agency
19 to have it listed, but it would have to be listed
20 on the MOVA website. The ones that would be under
21 Intro 480 listed for the public. So it would seem
22 to me that it would be a little confusing if we
23 had two lists on there.

24 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: I absolutely
25 agree with you on that.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You said you have regular meetings with those who are currently those?

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TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Not exactly.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Okay.

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TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: We're required to have meetings as needed. Now, I came onboard in January. So you have people who died, people retire, people leave. Then this is like if you're in the military you get other duties as assigned. So that's what this is. So maybe now it's somebody else's turn to do it.

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I felt that we should probably get together at least once a year. I'd like to do it at the beginning of the year. We had a meeting for about a half hour, so that they knew who I was. I introduced them to my staff so that they knew who would be calling. I restated Executive Order 110 to them. We had about a 45 minute meeting. You take away coffee and donuts, we had about 10 minutes. But it was basically so people could get facial recognition just to call up, you know if they needed from us, or we needed something from them, that familiarity was there.

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2 From a coordination standpoint it just made sense.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Should

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Intro 480 become law, do you envision having some

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type of outreach to those liaisons in some way in

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terms of maybe sensitizing them to some type of

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area in which their agency deals with? Or would

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that be left up to the agency particularly?

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TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: That's an

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interesting question. We're going to have to

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reach out to them anyhow because they're dealing

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with veterans. I had an issue with a veteran

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service organization, but it cut across agency

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lines. I think you're better served by reaching

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out to the agency liaison and letting them know

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you've got a probably with so-and-so, can you look

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into it, rather than us trying to reach in and say

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you've got to correct this, get back to the

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commissioner on it.

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I think that creates a problem. So

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we're going to reach out to them anyhow, but just

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to make certain that everybody's up to snuff about

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what Intro 480, what Executive Order 110 is about.

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When we reach out to them, what we are probably

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looking for and what we could do. I believe in

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2 the communications process. So the short answer
3 is yes, we'll reach out to them. We're not going
4 to tell them how to run their agency; it's not my
5 job.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: It's good
7 to know that you believe in the communications
8 process because this really sets up the framework
9 for that communication. Certainly, that
10 interaction can only benefit the veterans who have
11 those types of questions or those types of
12 problems.

13

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Yes, sir.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So thank
15 you. Mr. Chairman, I'll hand it back to you.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
17 much, Commissioner. Thank you, Council Member
18 Gentile. Now, we are going to call on Council
19 Member Cabrera for some questions.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you
21 so much, Mr. Chair. Congratulations to Council
22 Member Gentile on this bill.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: You're on
24 there.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: As a

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matter of fact, add me to the bill. I'd love to be on this bill.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Oh no, you're not on there.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: No, I'm not, but I'm going to be. I did have a question, just one question. We have all these liaisons, but you only have five staff, right, in your office?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, the Spartans only had 300 at Thermopylae.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: We'll take 300.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: We only have five. If you give me a couple of more, that'd be great, but if not, we're smoking right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: The Mayor could do that. The Mayor could certainly give you two more, and that's a good suggestion, Commissioner. I mean we have a quarter of a million veterans, correct, in New York City?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: No. It's about 215,000-220,000 depending upon whoever you're looking at right now. Can I just say this?

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2 Before I came here, I was the Acting Director of
3 Public Affairs for the Air Force. Excuse me,
4 Acting Director of Public Affairs for the Air
5 Force in New York City. We're located up on Third
6 Avenue and 49th Street. I'm a retired colonel.
7 They brought me out of retirement. I was the
8 deputy director.

9 As soon as I came, they activated
10 all four military members. They sent them to
11 Afghanistan, Kurdistan, they sent them all over
12 the place, and it was just me and the secretary.
13 I had to deal with very major issues involving
14 senior officials from the Pentagon, military
15 officials, and I had to keep the day-to-day
16 operation going there. I did it for about 14
17 months, until everybody started to come back.

18 What we are doing right now is
19 trying to redefine--not redefine but sort of focus
20 on the MOVA mission and do those things that we
21 need to do which is to reach out to our military
22 members who are deploying and coming back. That's
23 the big deal right now. We've got 7,000 New York
24 City employees who are members of the reserves.
25 We need to make certain that their families are

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2 taken care of, that they're taken care of, that
3 when they come back we're good to go with that.

4 Then there are other programs that
5 we're doing. We're running veterans' events for
6 housing, employment, and it's only five of us that
7 are doing that. We're doing that with a bunch of
8 other partners. Agency liaisons have helped us
9 out a lot, because when we run into a problem,
10 we've reached out to them.

11 In the military we do something
12 called force extension. You get a weapon system,
13 like in World War II we used how many B-17s to get
14 something done? Today, for every 20 B-17s, we may
15 use one B-2. That's my philosophy in life.
16 There's a lot that we're trying to do right now at
17 MOVA. The five of us can do it as long as the
18 five of us are working together. You give me
19 reinforcements, I won't cry, but we got the job
20 covered.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Mr.
22 Commissioner, I really don't believe that if
23 you're really running full force the way MOVA is
24 to operate and execute its mission that five
25 people are enough. I mean we spend a tremendous

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2 amount of money in staffing other agencies that
3 serve a lot less people. I just don't see the
4 resources that are needed to let you effectively
5 do the job.

6

Really, I'm advocating for you.

7 For you to have the soldiers, if I may, to have
8 the team, and I understand the power of the
9 network, understand the power of working with all
10 the agencies and the liaisons. I'm happy about
11 that. But if we were to have the many veterans
12 coming to the office the way they should or they
13 will, I just don't see how five staff is just
14 enough. I see how I have a district of 150,000
15 people, we all do, and we have staff comparable
16 with that and I can just barely keep up.

17

Imagine with veterans who come with
18 very multi-layered issues, coming out of the war,
19 of having been in the war, whichever war, again
20 with very complicated issues and long-term needs.
21 I just don't see how five staff is enough. I
22 would hope that in the near future the
23 administration would take steps. I know we're
24 tight in terms of providing resources. But I just
25 see other agencies who serve a lot less people get

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a lot more.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Thank you,
sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you
so much, Mr. Commissioner. Mr. Chair, I turn it
back to you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you,
Council Member Cabrera. We have been joined by
Council Member James Sanders from Queens. I think
Council Member Sanders has some questions. Would
you please, Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Thank you,
Sir. Thank you, Chair. Good to see you again,
sir.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Thank you,
sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: And ma'am,
I stand corrected, good to see you again also.
Here are just a couple of facts on the ground.
One-third of all of the homeless, according to the
Department of Homeless, are veterans. Your very
worthy staff, the majority of your budget is going
just to support the staff. No reflection on that,
just a statement of fact. Each Council district

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2 has more staff than you do, and you're covering a
3 far larger population. The Mayor's immediate
4 office, just to cover what the Mayor is doing, has
5 more staff than you do, sir. In fact, just about
6 any of his departments have more staff than you
7 do.

8 This is not so much a reflection of
9 you, sir. It's not. You inherited this. We have
10 to do something. There's no way that we can meet
11 our responsibility to veterans in such a--the
12 first word that went through my mind was tepid--
13 tepid fashion. We have to fund you at a level
14 where you can take the mission. If you tell me
15 that you're able to deal with the mission, I would
16 tell you that you had defined the mission too
17 narrowly. If you can do it with five, then you
18 have defined the mission too narrowly.

19 In every branch, there's a
20 difference between a platoon and a company. You
21 don't send a platoon to do what a company or to do
22 what a regiment needs to do. You are doing the
23 noble job of a regiment. A platoon can't do it.
24 As worthy as they are, they can't do it. They'd
25 just be worn out, just by attrition, if nothing

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else.

So I absolutely am in favor, and this is why I'm a supporter of this. But even this bill will not be enough, Mr. Chair. We must find ways of moving real money into this department so that they can grapple with the issues that the veterans have. I applaud everyone on this committee for having the common sense, just a clear vision that as worthy as these people are before us, they simply can't do it and we need to do it. They may feel that a platoon can go against a regiment. It may have happened somewhere in history, but it doesn't happen often. It shouldn't happen in New York. Thank you very much.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Sanders. Mr. Commissioner, I don't know if you have an answer for that?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Yes. I have just a quick one. I really appreciate everything you said and I don't disagree with you. But we're knocking down some victories at MOVA right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Oh, sure.

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2 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Tomorrow, we
3 are sponsoring a first-ever MOVA thing. Most of
4 your staff probably knows about it. It's at the
5 Borough of Manhattan Community College. We're
6 doing a forum for the mental health professionals
7 from 9:00 until 12:00. We want to talk about the
8 topic of military sexual trauma, and we're talking
9 about PTSD. It's basically professionals to
10 professionals. It's a networking thing.

11 We're hopeful to get 75 to 100
12 people there. We're working with the Department
13 of Mental Health. We're working with the VA. So
14 this is like a first-ever we're doing for MOVA.
15 So really, what we did is we partnered with CUNY.
16 So that's going across the state lines. They're
17 providing the physical facilities. We're getting
18 all of these people together and we're going to
19 talk about these issues. It's almost like a train
20 the trainer. It's a networking type thing.

21 If you bear with me, we had a
22 veteran's event in April. I think it was April
23 21st. We brought veterans and we provided
24 services for them: VA, housing, employment. It
25 worked well. We serviced about 42 vets, I think

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it was 42.

Last week, we had a similar event. We just sat around the table, we thought outside the box. We had 180 people registered for this thing. There were 123 that actually showed up. I got a phone call last night, just out of the blue, and it had nothing to do with today. The employment agencies were coming back to us. Ten of those vets, since last week Thursday, are already working or have job offers. Fifteen, excuse me, it's 15. Ten may have gotten offers or started working yesterday. One guy got a job offer from a headhunter that next year he may be making \$140,000. So we're thinking outside the box.

Now, you will help me out very much if you can get back to your veterans in your communities and let your veterans know that on August 5th, MOVA is doing the same thing, except, I'm tinkering with the components. So the time is going to be from 10:00 to 3:00, it's a Friday. It's at 108 Leonard Street. Bring you DD form 214. I got more employers.

When I was working for the Air

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2 Force, when you saw these flyovers in Shea
3 Stadium, Fenway Park, it was me. I wasn't flying
4 the plan, but I arranged it. So, I reached out
5 for favors. So I have some people who are getting
6 back to me and I'm saying can you send some people
7 from your HR to be there. We're working with
8 Workforce 1. We're working with America Works.

9 Again, it's only five of us. If
10 this thing works, I may need to take you up on
11 that offer. But right now, we're okay. People
12 are feeling good about what we're doing. A small
13 group of people can do stuff. We can have this
14 conversation some other time and I'll let you
15 know.

16 If I get 300 people to show up
17 instead of 123, I need more people. What we do is
18 we reach out to other agencies like New York City
19 Cares, we get volunteers from them. They help us
20 out when we have those peaks and valleys.
21 Sometimes we have dead time. And when we have
22 that dead time, do we have to have a large staff?
23 I don't know. But we want to take a look at other
24 issues.

25 We reached out and we got some

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2 interns. I got some dynamite interns and they're
3 helping me look at some other issues. We talked
4 about services for female vets. We're looking at
5 some of these things. I have a female vet, two
6 tours in Afghanistan, working for me. She's there
7 and we're trying to move out with that.

8 I'm making do with the best that I
9 have, and if I need more, I'll yell for help. I'm
10 no idiot. Right now, I appreciate the concern,
11 but I think we're moving in the right direction.
12 A few more successes and I'll get back to you.
13 But I thank you very much for it.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you,
15 Commissioner. I don't know if you can handle some
16 more questions.

17 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sure, from
18 you, anything.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.
20 According to the Section 2 of Executive Order 110,
21 the commissioner of MOVA shall set forth an annual
22 plan assessing the needs of the city's veteran
23 community, a method by which MOVA shall coordinate
24 exiting or develop new services in partnership to
25 address those needs. Additionally, the annual

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2 plan shall be submitted no later than July 1st of
3 each year. Is this report published?

4 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: No, sir,
5 it's not. In fact, it's something that we've just
6 started thinking about. We'll put it down. We're
7 going to run to that July 1st deadline. There are
8 a lot of things that we're doing where we were
9 thinking ahead with a lot of things that we're
10 doing at this particular point. Basically, a lot
11 of the stuff is going to be an extension because
12 we've run into some really big successes with the
13 veterans' events that we've been having. So, if
14 every five to six weeks we can put something
15 together and people get jobs and find out about
16 their benefits, that's going to be part of the
17 plan.

18 So we hope to have this done in the
19 next few days. The components are there, but we
20 need to get running on that. We may be a little
21 late. If we are, it's my fault. But it will be
22 done and we'll let you know about that.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Since the
24 report has not been published, what's MOVA
25 identified as a need of the city veteran

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community?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Housing.

These are just my thoughts, and when we have the staff meeting--just because I'm the commissioner doesn't mean that it gets accepted. Everybody has got an equal vote around the table. Housing remains the big deal. Affordable housing, affordable daycare and employment--you get those and you can build on the other things. So those are some of the issues. Those will always remain the issues, but that's got to be part of how we plan to move out and do these things.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I know that you mentioned that with the stuff you have been doing, you've been doing very well also.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: My colleagues have stressed the need for you to have more staff or more people to provide the services that you should provide to the veterans. Do you think with the needs you have identified, housing and other needs that you have identified, do you think that you have the capacity to address those needs when the veterans start coming back home?

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TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Sir, the veterans are here already.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Those who come back from Iraq and Afghanistan.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: But they're here already. The veterans are here and the veterans are here in the form of the people that Latisha and I have been reaching out to, the National Guard and Reserve. When we talk about the thousands of veterans coming back, we're not talking about World War II, where New York City was a major embarkation point, where the ships came over from Europe, they dumped the soldiers, sailors, marines and everything in New York City and many of them never went home because they loved the city, so they just stayed here.

So what's happening now, I had to wait at Newark airport for a captain who was coming back from Afghanistan. Well that plane took off from Germany. She wound up in Germany. That plane made several stops. I had to call upstate New York, Chicago, Oklahoma, and then she came back to Newark airport. So they basically drop these people off to their home stations and

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everything else.

I believe, and I could be wrong--
no, I'm not wrong. I believe that the veterans
are already here. The veterans that we are going
to deal with are in the New York National Guard,
the Army Reserve units handling here and the SUNY
folks. The veterans that we're dealing with are
those 7,000 New York City residents who are
members of the National Guard and Reserve.

In fact, we're having a meeting
next week to sort of talk about reintegration of
city employees into the workforce. We want to
make certain that everybody's okay.

Once we start getting these ideas,
we need to go back and revisit maybe the staffing
thing if we think about it, but a lot of these--
when we talk about housing, you find the housing
folks and they bring the staff in and you sort of
figure out how to work through that. It's not
that labor intensive; it's more mind intensive to
do it.

So these are things that we're
addressing and maybe three, four, five months from
now we might say the staffing is a consideration.

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2 But right now, it's not really bothering. I'm an
3 old guy and I don't like to work that hard. I
4 really don't see that as a problem right now. As
5 an issue; it may become one, but I just don't see
6 it.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I know that
8 MOVA and the veteran liaisons have been working
9 together, and you mentioned that. What could you
10 tell us more about the relationship between MOVA
11 and veteran liaisons? Is it a good relationship?
12 Are you satisfied about the performance of the
13 veteran liaisons?

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LATISHA LAMONT: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is there
16 something that needs to be improved between the
17 partnership of MOVA and the liaisons?

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LATISHA LAMONT: Again, we always
19 should be improving communication. However, we
20 have a very good working relationship with the
21 agency coordinators. In the beginning, when the
22 Executive Order was established in 2008, we had
23 multitudes of training with these agency liaisons,
24 bringing the VA in, bringing in other agencies
25 that strictly deal with veterans, training our

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2 agency liaisons, any questions and concerns. We
3 kept constant communication with the agency
4 liaisons. As they switch hands, we are notified
5 immediately and we reestablish a relationship with
6 that agency and that agency liaison. So we have a
7 very good communication with the agency liaisons.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I think that
9 we all can agree that there is always room for
10 improvement, right?

11 LATISHA LAMONT: Oh, absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: If there's one
13 specific thing that you believe should be
14 improved, what would it be?

15 LATISHA LAMONT: Knowing the number
16 of veterans they're actually serving. We have a
17 grasp on the city agency veterans but as far as
18 each agency, how many veterans they actually serve
19 in their community, we need a better grasp on
20 that.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Could you tell
22 us how the veteran liaisons are selected?

23 LATISHA LAMONT: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: No?

25 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: No, sir.

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LATISHA LAMONT: No, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Don't you think that this is something that you should know in order to make a better impact on the relationship that you have with the veteran liaisons?

LATISHA LAMONT: I'm quite sure the commissioner, because it is the commissioner's job to select these liaisons. They had to go strictly by Executive Order 110 on how to identify who would be the veteran liaison.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: I think we could probably throw in a line or make a suggestion; you know this should be someone who has some understanding of veterans and veterans' issues. If you have someone who is running an agency, it should be their selection. We can make a recommendation. I wouldn't want anyone telling me how to run my agency. Except you, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I would try to make sure that I collaborate with you in order to better serve the veterans.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: I think that's a good idea and that's an easy fix. I

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think that's an easy fix just to throw it in there.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Are there any qualifications required for veteran liaisons? If so, what are the criteria?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Just a senior official within an agency. There is no requirement for them to be a veteran, there's nothing at all.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is there any training? Are the veteran liaisons getting any training? Who does the training?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: You see, the issues that they deal with would be the issues that any constituent deals with. But when you run into a speed bump, that's when you reach out to that person can tell you right away. If it's DCAS, somebody from DCAS can go in and find it, you know, the five to ten point preference you can only use it once. You can only use it once. So DCAS can tell you immediately. They can hit a button or look at somebody and say no, he used it in 1992, so he can't use it. That's the type of information that you get.

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So it's not veterans' training. There are so few people who are veterans today. It would be great in a lot of situations but not necessarily realistic. There's no special training.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I don't have any further questions. I want to thank you, Commissioner, and miss, I want to thank you also for your presence and your participation to this hearing. I don't know if my colleagues--

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Commissioner, I was just curious, can you get us the information about the August 5th event?

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Done, sir. Brian Footer was at our last one. Listen, I just want to say something, and I hope it doesn't open up any other questions. I can't really tell you that I look forward to--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] We're so happy that you are here. We love you to be here.

TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: You're too good, I'll tell you. I can't tell you that I really look forward to prepping and doing this.

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2 But this is now the third time I've done this and
3 every time I walk away, I walk away with a little
4 bit more to think about in terms of how we can
5 better serve and what we do, like a couple of
6 things I hadn't really given a lot of thought
7 about.

8 At the end of my term, just as long
9 as we're further along and we're better off
10 wherever we are. I have gotten some really good--
11 at the time I didn't realize it. I had to think
12 about it two or three days after I got through the
13 shell shock of dealing with you. But it was
14 really good experience and I thank you for it.
15 Don't do it again too soon, but I thank you for
16 it.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Commissioner,
18 we'd like to ask you more questions because we
19 love to have a conversation with you to know
20 better how we can both, you, your office and the
21 City Council, how we can work together to better
22 serve the veterans. But since we want to give you
23 the opportunity to come back the next time, we're
24 going to let you go.

25 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: If you can

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2 put our August 5th thing on your website and push
3 it to your veteran constituency, that'll be
4 absolutely great. I'm looking for about 150
5 people. That'll be about capacity. If you can
6 help us with that, I'll love you. Thank you very
7 much.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
9 much. Thank you, Commissioner.

10 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Thank you so
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you,
13 miss.

14 TERRANCE C. HOLLIDAY: Take care,
15 sir.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.
17 Now, we are going to call the next panel: Devin
18 Holmes, would you please, Tom Tarantino, thank you
19 very much, and Lionelle, thank you. Do you have
20 testimony?

21 [Pause]

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
23 much, sir. Thank you. Before you start, let me
24 thank one more time Ms. Lionelle. Thank you for
25 your advocacy and your commitment. You have been

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2 here every single hearing to advocate on behalf of
3 the veterans. Thank you so much. I commend you
4 for that. Thank you very much.

5 LIONELLE HAMANKA: Thank you for
6 having these hearings.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you so
8 much. You may start anytime now, and please
9 remember to state your name for the record.

10 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Thank you. My
11 name is Devin Holmes, from Warrior Gateway.

12 Good morning, Dr. Eugene. Good
13 morning distinguished members of the New York City
14 Council Committee on Veterans. Thank you for the
15 opportunity to provide testimony today in support
16 of Intro 0480, a Local Law to amend the New York
17 City Charter, in relation to the Mayor's Office of
18 Veterans' Affairs and the establishment of veteran
19 liaisons.

20 My name is Devin Holmes and I am
21 the CEO of Warrior Gateway, a nonprofit launched a
22 little over a year ago to help veterans and
23 military families connect with organizations in
24 their local community that are there to support
25 them in all aspects of their life; be it

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healthcare, employment, education or just connecting with fellow veteran or family member.

In May of last year, I found myself here in City Hall announcing a partnership with the City Council--Dr. Eugene, you and I were there--to help connect veterans to city services. At that time more than 40 organizations had provided their service information to Warrior Gateway and we had over 17,000 programs and organizations listed nationwide.

Today, within 20 miles of where we stand right now there are over 450 organizations listed in Warrior Gateway that exist to help and support our veterans and their families and we have over 45,000 programs and organizations listed nationwide. But there is still a long way to go.

After returning home from active duty, our servicemen and women often face a new battle at home. And yet, while the treatments for their injuries in some cases are complex, when they come home to their communities, their desires are simple and straightforward. They want to recover, find their new normal life, and enjoy time with their family and friends. And yet so

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2 many of them still ask that simple question:

3 "Where do I go for help?"

4 Rather than share the alarming and
5 growing statistics on unemployment, homelessness
6 and suicides, I would like to read to you an
7 excerpt from an email I received a couple of
8 months ago from a veteran in Ft. Lauderdale,
9 Florida, struggling with post traumatic stress.
10 Her email reads as follows: "My family is in need
11 of help. I am a disabled OIF veteran married to
12 another veteran with multiple deployments. We
13 have three children. I need some information
14 before my family breaks apart."

15 Despite the progress New York City
16 has made, we know from examples around the country
17 like the one I just read that there is a
18 tremendous need to support our veterans and their
19 families who are returning home and that we simply
20 are not doing a good enough job in connecting
21 these individuals with the support that exists in
22 their local community.

23 In today's world, we use high tech
24 solutions to find the best local restaurants, the
25 hippest bars, the coolest hotels and now through

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2 the efforts of the New York City Council in
3 partnership with Warrior Gateway, local programs
4 and organizations to support our veterans and
5 their families. But sometimes, high tech isn't
6 enough. Sometimes connecting with a live person
7 is what is needed.

8 Our goal should be to share
9 information and work together so that no matter
10 where our military community looks for
11 information, the answers they receive will be
12 immediate, accurate and consistent regardless of
13 where they ask that question "Where do I go for
14 help?"

15 As part of this proposed amendment,
16 I would also encourage the City Council and
17 Mayor's Office to continue to leverage public-
18 private partnerships--that force extension that
19 the Commissioner talked about--with
20 non-governmental organizations like Warrior
21 Gateway that can support individuals like those
22 proposed Veteran Liaisons by providing them with
23 consistent, accurate and easy to use information
24 about federal, state, local government programs
25 and nonprofit organizations that support our

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2 military community. Information, that I would
3 add, is maintained and provided at no cost, which
4 I'm sure the taxpayers will like.

5 In closing, I would like to
6 reiterate that Warrior Gateway supports Intro 480,
7 the Local Law to amend the New York City Charter.
8 We would like to congratulate New York City, its
9 leaders, its service community and this committee
10 for taking an active role in serving New York
11 City's veterans, for working to connect them with
12 the support that exists here to help them and for
13 making New York City a role model for the rest of
14 the country to follow. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
16 much, Mr. Holmes. Thank you. The next speaker
17 please?

18 TOM TARANTINO: Mr. Chairman, and
19 members of the committee, on behalf of Iraq and
20 Afghanistan Veterans of America's 8,000 member
21 veterans and supporters within New York City, I
22 thank you for inviting me to testify today.

23 My name is Tom Tarantino and I am
24 the Senior Legislative Associate with IAVA. I
25 proudly served 10 years in the Army beginning my

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2 career as an enlisted Reservist, and leaving
3 service as an active duty Cavalry Officer in 2007.
4 Throughout these 10 years, my single most
5 important duty was to take care of other soldiers.
6 In the military they teach us to have each other's
7 backs. And although my uniform is now a suit and
8 tie, I am proud to work with New York City to
9 continue to have the backs of America's veterans.

10 IAVA supports Intro 480 and
11 believes that the legislation under consideration
12 can be a significant step towards providing the
13 counsel, guidance and encouragement that veterans
14 need as they navigate the readjustment to civilian
15 life. Having a designated veteran liaison, a
16 known entity where institutional knowledge and
17 experience resides, is significant positive force
18 in speeding along the resolution of any issues
19 that veterans face. Having this liaison
20 accessible in each and every department provides
21 veterans with ease of access and will help assure
22 that this resource is not wasted or unused.

23 While IAVA endorses this
24 legislation, we also must consider other factors.
25 First, the city must ensure that liaisons are more

1
2 than mere symbols, who have presence but lack
3 authority. Veteran liaisons must have actual
4 power, a clear mission, and access to the highest
5 levels of their department and the city
6 government. Their authority must be clearly
7 defined, and advocacy for veterans must be their
8 primary function. It is critical to grant them
9 the power to help veterans in a meaningful,
10 impactful and accountable way.

11 In preparation for this testimony,
12 IAVA staff communicated with veteran liaisons and
13 veteran commissioners in several cities and states
14 from across the country, to get ideas how everyone
15 is trying to crack this nut. We talked to the
16 city of Boston, the city of Chicago, states of
17 Connecticut and Oregon, just to name a few.

18 Curious about how New York's
19 current system is running, we contacted the
20 Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. Two staff
21 members in that office told us that departmental
22 veteran liaisons do exist and that there is a
23 contact list; however, they could not grant us
24 access to that list. Instead, they told us to
25 call the departments directly and, if the

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departments chose, they could connect us.

Unfortunately, this exercise proved to be rather futile. Only person in the several departments we spoke to had any idea who we were talking about or what we were talking about. This is obviously an evolving program. From what I've heard from the commissioner today, New York is actually leaps and bounds ahead of where most other cities in this country are in figuring out how to deal with veteran services. I think that's important to remember.

Fortunately, the list is now posted on the Mayor's Office for Veterans Affairs website. Hopefully this will clear up a lot of the confusion that my staff had when trying to research this.

If anything, IAVA believes that my staff's experience is an example and a strong argument for formalizing the duties and the position of veteran liaisons within city departments. If we, a well-recognized veteran service organization that has been asked to testify before the City Council, could not locate or gain access to the existing liaisons, what is

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2 the likelihood that an average veteran off the
3 street could? Do veterans even know that these
4 liaisons exist? We could not speak to the
5 liaisons to figure out how the program is working.
6 In fact, the first I actually heard of everything
7 that's happening was from the testimony today, and
8 I'm incredibly impressed. But I think the answer
9 to first question is probably no, and the second
10 remains unanswered because I couldn't talk to
11 anybody prior to this testimony.

12 So in conclusion, IAVA believes
13 that New York's plan and New York's current system
14 is actually a unique solution and it is worthy of
15 support. In fact, not other city that we
16 contacted had individual liaisons in each
17 government agency, and that's impressive.

18 We also believe that care must be
19 taken to ensure that the efficacy of any proposed
20 solution before it's implemented, especially when
21 there is new ground like this being broken. I
22 think it's important to note that when the
23 Commissioner talked about having five employees
24 and not wanting any more at the time, that's very
25 wise. We all have to take into account how to

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2 scale new programs and new businesses and new
3 organizations at a proper fashion. Throwing 50
4 people into a new agency that's trying to figure
5 out how to solve complex problems might not solve
6 the probably at all. In fact, it might actually
7 hurt until you can properly scale it in an
8 efficient and effective manner.

9 I think that it's wise that the
10 commissioner is taking a realistic view of where
11 they are now and then figuring out how they want
12 to scale that program into the future. I think we
13 should heed his advice.

14 With the proper structure and
15 resources, this New York plan could actually
16 become a model for outreach to veterans within
17 governments across the nation. I want to thank
18 you all for your time and your attention.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
20 much, Mr. Tarantino. Thank you very much. Next
21 speaker?

22 LIONELLE HAMANKA: Hi, my name is
23 Lionelle Hamanka. I'm from Military Families
24 Speak Out. We support the Introduction to the Law
25 480, provided that it doesn't do duplicative work.

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2 He was talking about a liaison that already
3 exists.

4 I don't know if you can figure out
5 some other way of augmenting the services to make
6 it more public for veterans so that they don't get
7 frustrated and feel that this is not a vet-
8 friendly city. I think the main thing is that we
9 are trying to create more money going towards
10 veteran services where there's a response from the
11 government. That's very important.

12 I know Commissioner Holliday is a
13 good guy. I called him up at some prior meeting,
14 afterwards, because I ran into a homeless vet on
15 57th Street. So he said, I'll go and see if he's
16 still there. The guy wouldn't give me his
17 address, because he was homeless, he just told me
18 where he slept at night, which was under a gazebo
19 in Central Park. I was told before he came here
20 that the services were lacking from the
21 administration. So I think he's sincere in trying
22 to do something.

23 The problem is that there might not
24 be enough money or enough structure to support it.
25 I personally advocate a one-stop where people can

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come in every borough where they know that they can get an ear. If there is somebody with an ear in every agency that actually can do something about what they hear over the phone, that could only help speed along things.

Also, I know someone in your district in Bay Ridge, and she said you're a good guy.

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: [off mic]:

Was that my mom?

LIONELLE HAMANKA: No, she's not your mother, but she is a military mom.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. I wish that you could know somebody in my district to say the same thing about me. Thank you very much. Before I call my colleagues for some questions, let me take the opportunity to thank you one more time, Mr. Holmes, for the partnership of Warrior Gateway and the City Council. I do remember when we had the press conference to launch the wonderful partnership between the City Council and your company. Thank you for what you are doing. I think that was a very important venture, and I thank you and I

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commend you for that.

Before I ask a few questions, let me give the opportunity to Council Member Dromm because he has to leave. If you please?

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's very kind of you. I do have some budget concerns that I have to take care of. Basically, I only had really one question, a follow-up for Mr. Tarantino.

In your testimony, you said that the authority of the liaisons must be clearly defined and advocacy for veterans must be their primary function. It's critical to grant them the power to help veterans in a meaningful and impactful and accountable way.

I am not sure that we actually got to ask that question of the commissioner, although I think the commissioner also has been doing a fantastic job since he came into his office. Can you just elaborate a little bit further on why you think that should be their primary function? I would like to follow up later on with the commissioner to find out actually if that is the liaison's primary function or if they have other

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duties as well.

TOM TARANTINO: Yes, sir. In an ideal world, a veteran's liaison, and I know this from working in Veterans Affairs, veteran's issues are unique in any special interest in that they don't fall in one policy pigeonhole. They deal with healthcare, they deal with homelessness, they deal with small business development, they deal economics, and they deal with all sorts of problems. So anybody who specializes with veterans needs to--in an ideal world, every agency would have a fulltime person doing this. I think that is the best solution if we're really going to provide the highest quality service.

Now, in all reality, maybe that's not optimal. Maybe that's not the most efficient solution for a city government. A city government the size of New York, I think you could probably get pretty close to that optimal level; a city government the size of San Francisco probably not so much.

I think it's important though that in order to provide these high quality services is that there is someone who's job, who understands

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2 that agency, how the regulations of that agency
3 deals with veterans, especially the deep, deep
4 well of benefits and services and regulations that
5 are available not just at the state and city level
6 but also at the federal level.

7 If I'm a New Yorker, I'm going to
8 go to my city first. I'm going to go to my
9 community first before I go to the VA, because
10 frankly, the VA just scares me. I hear horror
11 stories coming out the VA, whether they're true or
12 not. But I'm going to go to my city official
13 first.

14 I used to have an instructor at the
15 Special Warfare Center who used to tell me that
16 you don't have to know where everything is, but
17 you do have to know where to find it. If a
18 liaison's attention is split and it is one of
19 their 25 additional duties, like I used to have an
20 officer--you know, I led a platoon but I was also
21 a voting assistance officer, I was an Army
22 emergency relief guy--if an eighth of your time is
23 spent dealing with something as complex as
24 veterans' issues, then you're probably not going
25 to be giving out the help that you should be.

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2 That is why whenever we say there
3 is a veteran liaison that it needs to be their
4 primary duty or at least a significant portion of
5 their day-to-day job.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
8 much, Council Member Dromm.

9 Mr. Holmes, let me ask you one
10 thing. I think it is very important, the
11 partnership of your institution, with the City of
12 New York because we have to find all the ways, any
13 means to better serve the veterans, those who make
14 the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country.
15 Could you tell us how many people you have been
16 able to serve? How many veterans visit your page,
17 through the partnership that your institution has
18 with the City of New York?

19 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir. I will
20 apologize in advance, I did not look up the New
21 York specific numbers, but I will get those to
22 you. On a monthly basis, there are about 20,000
23 individuals that utilize the Warrior Gateway
24 information to find resources and that's across
25 the country, that's nationwide.

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2 We are starting to expand
3 partnerships, like the one we did with the City
4 Council here in New York, with some of the state
5 agencies across the country. Our fundamental
6 belief is that there should be no wrong door when
7 you ask for help. So, if you ask
8 warriorgateway.org, a website, you ask MOVA's
9 website, you ask a veteran's liaison, where do I
10 go for help for homelessness in a particular
11 borough, you should be getting the same answer
12 every single time, not three different answers.

13 So, while we serve people directly
14 with information, we also share that information
15 with other agencies and nonprofit partners so they
16 have the same information that we do and we're
17 answering that question consistently and
18 accurately every single time.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I know that
20 you have been doing the best that you can do to
21 provide services, but is there anything that you
22 believe that should be done to improve your system
23 the way it is right now to make it more efficient
24 in providing information to the veterans? Is
25 there anything that you believe that you, your

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2 institution and the City Council can do to improve
3 the system?

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DEVIN B. HOLMES: I think the
5 biggest point is I would argue what part of Mr.
6 Tarantino's testimony, is transparency of
7 information. Up until a week ago, that veteran
8 liaison list was not published. We are one
9 smaller than the commissioner's staff, we're four
10 people. We have doubled in size since we last
11 met. We were two people last year. So we didn't
12 have the opportunity to do the research that Mr.
13 Tarantino's staff did, but it's very telling. We
14 see this at the city level here and we see this at
15 the federal level and state levels as well. The
16 transparency of information of what is available
17 to our veterans

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I'll paraphrase a quote from a good
19 friend of mine. He says if you don't have
20 posttraumatic stress when you go on a government
21 website, you will when you come off. Finding
22 information is painful. This is our fulltime job
23 and we find it painful, and we're very good at it.
24 I can't imagine what a veteran who is potentially
25 homeless, posttraumatic stress, maybe traumatic

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brain injury is dealing with.

So, I would say, specifically recommend to the City Council to find ways to partner with non-governmental organizations and share the information, make it more transparent. Let's follow the models of open government. If you have a list, put it on your website, but also send it to me, send it to IAVA, send it to anyone else working here in New York City, to the Jericho Project in the Bronx that just opened up.

Make sure everybody knows because otherwise, if you only put it one place, the only time that it's found is when the person goes to that one place. That would be telling you that if you want a cup of coffee, that's great, there's only one Starbucks in the city to go get it. That doesn't work. You need multiple places with all the same information. So let's share it and make it transparent.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Are you working also with veteran liaison? If not what role can your agency play to make the services of the veteran liaison more effective and more efficient?

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2 DEVIN B. HOLMES: We are not,
3 because we are not aware of who they are. We are
4 going to go look at that list and make sure that
5 we contact all of them. We are also, as we grow
6 from four to five, in the next few months, we'll
7 be placing an individual here in New York that we
8 call a community partner manager. That person is
9 responsible for working with the veteran liaisons,
10 working with nonprofits like IAVA and working with
11 veterans to make sure that it doesn't matter if
12 you know exactly where the service is, but as Mr.
13 Tarantino said, you just have to know where to
14 look. We're going to make sure that person knows
15 where to look when they get asked that question as
16 well.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: After your
18 search, could you get back to my office and see in
19 which way we can work together.

20 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Include the
22 veteran liaisons.

23 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir, I will
24 do that.

25 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Please. Let

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2 me ask you the last question. You say we use high
3 tech solution to find the best local restaurants,
4 the hippest bars and the coolest hotel and now
5 through the effort of the New York City Council in
6 partnership with Warrior Gateway, local programs
7 and organizations to support our veterans and our
8 families. But you said that sometimes high tech
9 isn't enough. Sometimes connection with a live
10 person is what is needed.

11 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Can you give
13 us more detail of what should be done, what more
14 should be done in addition to the high tech? Can
15 you tell us more in detail, what is your
16 recommendation, what is your suggestion in terms
17 of improving the services that we are providing?
18 What in addition to the high tech that we can do?

19 DEVIN B. HOLMES: I'm not sure it's
20 improving services, it's improving access to
21 services. The example that I read when that
22 veteran contacted us, all the services that she
23 needed for her family were available, the
24 information was available via Warrior Gateway. We
25 utilized our own tool to connect her with local

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2 programs in Ft. Lauderdale. It was just she
3 really needed to talk to somebody. She wanted to
4 have that high touch component.

5 I would echo the comments of my
6 colleague saying that the veteran liaisons this
7 needs to be their entire job or their primary job.
8 They need to be accessible to the veterans of New
9 York City in a responsive manner. So that when
10 someone does need to talk to a human voice, that
11 they can pick up the phone, send an email or go
12 visit them in the office and say I'm looking for
13 help, I need you to help me find that help.

14 So again, it's about creating
15 access to information and options. I'm not here
16 to judge the quality of the programs in New York
17 City. Everything is on a continuous improvement
18 cycle. I do believe that from what I've seen in
19 the last year that a lot of the services exist,
20 whether they are veteran-specific or whether they
21 just represent, for example, small businesses.
22 It's access to those services that is a challenge
23 for veterans, and finding those individuals.

24 So veteran liaisons, and what the
25 City Council could do is not only propose the

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2 publishing of the list but also empowering and
3 chartering those individuals to be connected to
4 the public and to the veterans and have that as
5 their primary responsibility.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
7 much, Mr. Holmes.

8 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Thank you, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
10 much. Mr. Tarantino, based on your experience and
11 your knowledge, what more can you tell us about
12 the services provided by the veteran liaison? Do
13 you believe that they are not efficient enough?
14 What do you believe that should be done to ensure
15 that they provide proper services to the veterans?

16 TOM TARANTINO: To be fair, we
17 weren't able to actually talk to any. When I was
18 speaking about efficiency and accountability, I
19 was speaking in general terms. We were not able
20 to get a hold of any veteran liaisons in New York
21 City, so we weren't able to ask them about what
22 they did and what they felt about it.

23 We had at-length conversations with
24 counterparts in Chicago and Boston about how they
25 felt their role was, what they thought was

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2 happening right, what they thought was happening
3 wrong. Frankly, I wasn't able to talk to anybody
4 in New York. In fact, the only information I was
5 able to get was by attending this hearing.

6 Hopefully now that the list is published and there
7 is contact information, this is something that can
8 be rectified in the future.

9 Again, transparency is very key.

10 As we evolve these programs, not just in New York,
11 but around the nation, we have to start thinking
12 differently. This new generation of vets defines
13 community differently. They look at information
14 differently. We don't look at information that is
15 stovepipe. We expect information to be open and
16 to be out there and to be completely unbound. We
17 define community based on our access to
18 information, not necessarily based on where we
19 live.

20 So when we start thinking about
21 services, especially targeted towards this new
22 generation of veterans, they expect to turn on
23 their iPad, go on a website or find information on
24 Facebook or Twitter or through a million different
25 avenues, just like Mr. Holmes said. They expect

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2 to find that information within 30 seconds or
3 less, doing a Google search, or going to a
4 targeted website that they know is there.

5 So I am glad that the Mayor's
6 Office is publishing this information. I am
7 hoping that as the program is evolving that the
8 level of transparency and access for veterans,
9 whether it's through their office to the liaisons
10 or directly to the liaisons themselves--that's up
11 to the city government to determine which is the
12 most effective system. I'm hoping that that
13 increases.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
15 much, Mr. Tarantino. Before I continue with my
16 questions, let me acknowledge that we have been
17 joined by Council Member Greenfield from Brooklyn.

18 I want to call Council Member
19 Gentile for some questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman. Mr. Tarantino, I think you've
22 answered the question I had. I would imagine
23 other veterans have had that same experience of
24 trying to find a connection to somebody in an
25 agency and being told that either we don't know

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2 what you're talking about or you can't speak to
3 the person directly. Under Executive Order 110,
4 it was set up that that liaison be the liaison to
5 MOVA, not necessarily to the public. That's what
6 we hope that Intro 480 would rectify, and there
7 would be a published person listed for the veteran
8 with each agency.

9 So being that, should this become
10 law, you envision your experience not being an
11 issue any longer, correct?

12 TOM TARANTINO: I would hope not.
13 I think it's important that the question of
14 systems is one that I don't think is answered. I
15 certainly don't have the correct answer. Maybe
16 the right system is to have all the coordination
17 go through MOVA. In which case, that means you're
18 going to have to go to a service officer type
19 model. I mean that actually works very well for
20 the City of Boston. They do that and that's what
21 works, where all contact goes through one office
22 and then the information flows in and out through
23 there and it's easily trackable.

24 It works for them. Whether it
25 works for New York is something that I think the

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2 Council and the Mayor's Office has to sit down and
3 look at. Maybe direct liaisons with a city
4 government this large might actually be the most
5 efficient way to deliver services. At the end of
6 the day, and the commissioner correctly stated
7 this, at the end of the day, it's about getting
8 the services in the hands of the vets in the
9 timely manner that's effective.

10 So this is something that I think
11 both the Council and the Mayor's Office really has
12 to drill down on and think what is the best
13 system, what is the best delivery method for New
14 York. New York is obviously a very unique place.
15 It's a unique city. It has a very unique
16 population with different needs.

17 So this is something that I cannot
18 answer. I can give recommendations based on what
19 I see out in the world and what I see from the
20 national view. But I think that's really the
21 first question you have to answer internally is
22 what type of service model works for this city and
23 then you move on from there.

24 What I'm kind of seeing is that
25 there was an idea and it was a good idea and it

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2 was in the right direction and then we have the
3 sort of competing idea that everything goes
4 through MOVA. And there's a competing idea saying
5 that well all the liaisons should be public and
6 have direct access. My next question is what
7 metrics do we have, beyond the fact that we're all
8 really smart people and have good ideas, to
9 determine which is the best way to go? This is a
10 problem that, I mean I see this in Congress all
11 the time in D.C.

12 This is something that I think it
13 would be helpful that as this goes forward, and I
14 don't think 480 and 110 are mutually exclusive,
15 that it would be worth everyone's time to drill
16 down and really figure out what is the best
17 service model. Then, you know what, feel free to
18 experiment. Test something for a year.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: I would
20 think, should 480 become law, that's probably
21 what's going to happen, to see how it works
22 together and what we can experiment with.

23 That brings me actually to my next
24 question for Mr. Holmes. Assuming that the list
25 is published under Intro 480, should it become

1
2 law, and there is a direct connection with the
3 veteran and an agency liaison, do you envision a
4 question being put to a liaison in particular
5 agency, say Small Business, that that liaison
6 would then in turn maybe contact you at the
7 Warrior Gateway and you would provide him
8 information? That was what I seemed to get from
9 some of your testimony that the liaison would
10 actually look to you as a resource to get the
11 information for that veteran.

12 DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir. The
13 latter half of your statement I would agree with.
14 Warrior Gateway, we're the high tech side of the
15 world. I see the veteran liaisons as the high
16 touch. So I think the way I would answer your
17 question, sir, is that a veteran asks a veteran
18 liaison in Small Business, for example, a
19 question. One of the information resources that
20 that liaison uses is warrorgateway.org, and says
21 let me see if I can find an organization to help
22 you. I think I would encourage everyone to
23 remember that government can't solve this problem
24 alone. Government needs to partner with
25 nonprofits out there.

1
2 In the Small Business example, the
3 first thing that comes to mind is a great program
4 called Entrepreneurial Boot Camp for Veterans up
5 in Syracuse, New York and eight other universities
6 around the country. It isn't a government program
7 but it is a great nonprofit program to teach
8 veterans how to be entrepreneurs.

9 Well, that liaison in Small
10 Business should be able to say that in New York
11 City we have these city programs but we also have
12 these nonprofits that we know are really good and
13 let me connect you with all of these programs and
14 organizations. So I would envision and I would
15 hope that the liaison uses warriorgateway.org as
16 an information source, the same way they might use
17 Google, though we are far more targeted,
18 obviously. We only focus on this community.

19 We are not a high touch
20 organization. We don't staff call centers and
21 actual individuals, except in very specific cases.
22 We are the information people out there. That's
23 how I would see the partnership working in that
24 specific example, sir.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: So then I

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2 would hope, should this become law, that there
3 would be some outreach from Warrior Gateway to
4 these liaisons to in the first instance make them
5 aware that you're there.

6

DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir. That's
7 why we're actually going to place a community
8 partner manager here in New York, specifically for
9 that purpose.

10

COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Great. I
11 think that kind of partnership can really boost
12 this whole concept of transparency, of information
13 flowing, and really help with MOVA having just
14 five people. But if the information is available
15 to the liaisons, I think that helps the overall
16 concept of what we're trying to accomplish.

17

DEVIN B. HOLMES: Yes, sir.

18

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chairman. Thank you.

20

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
21 much, Council Member Gentile. Now, let me call on
22 Council Member Sanders for a few questions.

23

COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: Thank you,
24 sir. If no one has told you welcome home, sir,
25 let me one of them to do so. As a fiscal moderate

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2 in New York City, I agree that money and resources
3 are not the only things that you need to solve a
4 problem. I agree that we should think a thing
5 through before moving money and resources. It
6 helps with the moving of money and resources. But
7 as a Marine Corps grunt, at the end of the day, I
8 understand it's got to be close up and personal.
9 At the end of the day, someone has to go and find
10 that guy in Central Park. Someone has to go and
11 they have to get the information and the need for
12 data, but move the information into something that
13 is actionable, something that results in the
14 objectives being met.

15 With that in mind, I'm concerned
16 about MOVA. MOVA is not new. MOVA has been here
17 since '87. The situation on the ground in New
18 York City is often dire for veterans and not
19 getting--arguably getting better. I'll be kind
20 and say arguably getting better. MOVA has come a
21 long way. It has come an incredibly long way.
22 MOVA has a long way to go.

23 The real question that has been put
24 many different ways is what is the mission of
25 MOVA? The mission will determine how you go about

1
2 meeting your mission. If MOVA is an information
3 agency, then it should indeed partner with a
4 Warrior Gateway and simply do that. But if there
5 is a need for someone to go and knock on the door
6 or do whatever is needed, then if MOVA is not the
7 organization then someone has to be. Someone
8 somewhere has to be.

9 I am aware, of course, of all of
10 the different service agencies, the veteran
11 service organizations. If that's the case, if
12 MOVA is not the agency, then we need to speak of
13 funding them. Perhaps that is a vehicle, not to
14 mention your own very worthy one, not being fully
15 aware of your mission either.

16 So the conversation has to be held
17 because it may be unfair to be beating MOVA up
18 over something that perhaps is not its mission or
19 it has not accepted the mission as such. But we
20 certainly need to find a way of addressing the
21 issue.

22 On an ally point, were the
23 commissioner here, I would tell him that it might
24 be a wise thing to train the other commissioners.
25 Not simply the liaison person, because the liaison

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2 person, as worthy as they are, can only take their
3 lead from the commissioner of the agency.

4 Different commissioners will buy into a thing on a
5 different level. Such is life. If they are all
6 jointly trained one way or another by MOVA or the
7 Mayor or whoever, then at least they have the same
8 information that they're starting with, and that
9 they can give to the liaison person who there also
10 should be a joint training in, so that we do have
11 the one conversation that we need to have and we
12 start with the same body of knowledge necessary.

13 So I would encourage the
14 commissioner to consider training, brief perhaps,
15 a training of other commissioners on the
16 initiatives. I want to applaud the Warrior
17 Gateway, my first time bumping into you. Just as
18 an aside and this is not critical, just good to
19 know, are you a veteran, sir?

20 DEVIN B. HOLMES: No, sir. My
21 father served and my grandfather served. I'm part
22 of the 99 percent that support the 1 percent.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANDERS: God bless
24 the 99 percent. It's not critical, it's just to
25 be applauded even more that someone outside

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2 recognizing a great need and meeting a need. That
3 certainly is to be applauded. Those are my few
4 contributions, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the
5 people for doing the good work that they're doing,
6 who are behind a very tough desk over there.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
8 much, Council Member Sanders. Miss Lionelle?

9 LIONELLE HAMANKA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Again, I want
11 to congratulate you and commend you because you
12 are really an advocate for veterans. In terms of
13 veteran liaisons, what do you know about them? Do
14 you believe that they have been serving you as a
15 parent of veterans, and in which way? Did you
16 ever use the services? Do you know about them?

17 LIONELLE HAMANKA: I didn't know
18 they existed. I mean, I just heard from the
19 commissioner today that they existed. I didn't
20 know about the Mayor's law. I wasn't sure of the
21 content of your law except that it sounded good.
22 I tried to get a copy of it but I couldn't get in
23 touch with the people.

24 I just know that there is a great
25 need so that military families don't become the

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2 social services of America and get stuck doing a
3 job that they can't really do. I mean we do a
4 lot. Like I said before, I've known families that
5 spent a year or so staying up all night with
6 people to prevent them from freaking out or
7 committing suicide. I know people who are parents
8 of veterans who have committed suicide. I know
9 people who are looking for jobs.

10 I just thought that because we have
11 a successful thing in New York called one-stop for
12 senior citizens, it might help to have them also,
13 those places also have some information for
14 veterans because it's already known in the
15 community and it's all over New York.

16 I think that's a good idea that
17 Council Member Sanders said that there are veteran
18 organizations like the Harlem Veterans Center that
19 already provide some social services. If it's too
20 much at this point for MOVA to do, maybe they
21 should be given the funds or the staff people to
22 help.

23 Whatever can be done to stem the
24 tide, especially now that 200,000 Vietnam veterans
25 have applied for help with various physical

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2 ailments, and that includes social services and
3 it's sort of clogging things up. It makes it more
4 difficult for more recent veterans to get help.
5 Whatever the city can do, it would be great. New
6 York is a great city and we should have a great
7 program for the veterans.

8 When he was talking about only
9 serving the reservists, you know we were in
10 Afghanistan for ten years, so people who serve a
11 full term for eight years, who are not lifers,
12 there's only maybe a two or three year period of
13 people who are no longer reservists. But those
14 people have needs also, so they shouldn't be
15 discounted. They should not be shunted aside.
16 Not everybody is a reservist anymore, or at least
17 they will soon not be.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very
19 much. Thank you so much. Are there any other
20 questions? Seeing none, we are going to adjourn
21 the meeting. Before that, I want to thank all of
22 you from the panel. Mr. Tarantino, thank you for
23 your service. Also, Mr. Holmes, thank you very
24 much for your dedication also to serve the
25 veterans. To all of you, thank you very much.

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Thank you. Meeting adjourned.

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 Donna Hintze

Date July 14, 2011