

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS

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March 18, 2026  
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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shekar Krishnan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Linda Lee  
Sandra Ung

A P P E A R A N C E S

Christopher Ryan, Acting Commissioner of the  
Department of Investigation

Ben Weinberg, Director of Public Policy at  
Citizens Union

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good  
3 afternoon, and welcome to today's New York City  
4 Council hearing for the Committee on Oversight and  
5 Investigations.

6 At this time, I would like to remind  
7 everyone to silence all electronic devices.

8 Also at this point and going forward, no  
9 one is to approach the dais.

10 Chair, we're ready to begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: [GAVEL] Good  
12 afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for joining  
13 our hearing today. Welcome to the Fiscal 2027  
14 preliminary budget hearing for the Committee on  
15 Oversight Investigations. I'm Council Member Shekar  
16 Krishnan, Chair of the Committee on Oversight  
17 Investigations, and today we will review the  
18 Department of Investigations, or DOI's, Fiscal 2027  
19 preliminary budget, to understand the changes in the  
20 Department's budget and how it addresses the needs of  
21 the Department and improves the way that New York  
City operates.

I see this Committee and its partnership  
with DOI to be a powerful tool in rooting out  
corruption and a way to hold anyone or anything

1 accountable that takes advantage of New Yorkers. From  
2 taking on bad landlords, to greedy corporations, to  
3 ensuring City agencies are fulfilling their mission,  
4 to ensuring the corruption we saw over the last four  
5 years in City Hall never happens again. These are the  
6 tasks in front of us and with this Committee.

7 Together, we are working to restore trust in our  
8 government and prove to New Yorkers that our City  
9 fights for you and works for you. Over the Eric Adams  
10 Administration, we saw troubling amounts of  
11 corruption and misuse of City resources. The  
12 Department of DOIs and FBIs and the other federal  
13 investigations into his Administration resulted in 20  
14 individuals with links to City Hall, including former  
15 Mayor Adams himself, being charged with bribery,  
16 conspiracy, and fraud. All while Mayor Adams was  
17 slashing the budget for the Department of  
18 Investigations at the same time. A budget whose  
19 purpose is to bring oversight to City government and  
20 hold bad actors accountable. Former Mayor Adams cut  
21 the workforce of DOI by 28 percent, deeply limiting  
the Department's ability to properly and  
comprehensively oversee City agencies and root out  
corruption.

1  
2 With a new era in City Hall, we are  
3 hoping to turn the page on this corruption and  
4 restore some of these budget actions in the coming  
5 plans. We must allow this Department the resources it  
6 needs to provide comprehensive oversight of previous  
and current programs.

7 I look forward to hearing about your  
8 budget requests from DOI and continuing our fruitful  
9 conversations with ongoing oversight hearings. But I  
10 know that we have a lot of work ahead of us. I look  
11 forward to hearing about the impact we can have  
together in rooting out corruption, waste, and fraud  
for New Yorkers.

12 I also want to thank our Oversight  
13 Investigations Committee Staff for their hard work,  
14 our Financial Analyst, Owen Kotowski; Policy  
15 Analysts, Erica Cohen and Alex Yablon; Committee  
16 Counsel, Nicole Catá, and the incredible Oversight  
17 Investigations Division. I also want to thank Jack  
18 Storey and Eisha Wright and everyone from our Finance  
19 Staff as well, who have worked with us to prepare us  
20 for today's hearing. And of course, I want to thank  
21 my Staff, Chanel Martinez, Hunter Divinagracia, and

2 Victoria Opperman, for all their hard work leading up  
3 to today.

4 And when our Colleagues join, we will  
5 recognize them too. And I'd like to welcome now,  
6 Acting Commissioner Christopher Ryan and his  
7 leadership team.

8 I'm now going to pass it back to our  
9 Committee Counsel for a few procedural items.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much,  
11 Chair.

12 We will now hear testimony from the  
13 Administration. We will hear from DOI Acting  
14 Commissioner Chris Ryan.

15 Before we begin, I will administer the  
16 affirmation. Please raise your right hand.

17 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
18 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
19 Committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member  
20 questions?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may  
begin when ready.

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Good afternoon,  
Chair Krishnan and Members of the Committee on

1 Oversight Investigations. My name is Christopher  
2 Ryan, and I'm the Acting Commissioner of the  
3 Department of Investigation. I appreciate the  
4 opportunity to testify today about DOI's preliminary  
5 budget for Fiscal Year 2027. My testimony will focus  
6 on DOI's work over the past year, our preliminary  
7 budget and staffing, and our new needs requests that  
8 have been submitted to the Office of Management and  
9 Budget, and which are critical for DOI's continued  
10 operations. I will also outline the difficult cuts  
11 that we have been asked to implement for the  
12 executive budget.

13 Before I begin, I would like to provide  
14 some brief but important background to give you a  
15 better understanding of how we operate and conduct  
16 investigations. DOI is a unique oversight agency  
17 established more than 153 years ago to combat  
18 corruption, fraud, waste, and mismanagement in New  
19 York City government. The City Charter establishes  
20 our jurisdiction and grants DOI the authority to make  
21 any study or investigation which, in the opinion of  
the Commissioner, may be in the best interest of the  
City. The Mayor and the New York City Council also  
may direct the DOI Commissioner to conduct

1 investigations. Over the years, mayors have  
2 strengthened DOI's authority through several mayoral  
3 executive orders, most notably in the late 1970s  
4 through the mid-1980s. Those executive orders give  
5 DOI the authority to access most City records,  
6 emails, and other documents without a subpoena, and  
7 to compel interviews of City employees and vendors.  
8 The executive orders also mandate that all City  
9 employees who become aware of suspected corruption or  
10 fraud must report it directly and promptly to DOI or  
11 risk discipline. DOI has the power to subpoena third  
12 parties, non-City employees, for documents and for  
13 testimony, which DOI is authorized to take under  
14 oath. A mayoral executive order in the mid-1980s  
15 reorganized DOI to its current structure, with  
16 Inspectors General reporting to the DOI Commissioner.  
17 This shift removed mayoral agency oversight of  
18 Inspectors General and provided DOI with an important  
19 measure of independence, establishing DOI as the City  
20 agency responsible for combating City-related  
21 corruption.

DOI's investigations and factual findings  
can lead to criminal prosecutions, disciplinary  
proceedings, and other administrative actions. Our

1 staff has deep knowledge of government operations and  
2 its complexities, and the many ways that corruption  
3 can creep into City government, thereby undermining  
4 access to City services and siphoning precious public  
5 funds. Based on our investigations, DOI makes  
6 recommendations for policy and procedural reforms to  
7 City agencies to address corruption, vulnerabilities,  
8 and prevent misconduct from reoccurring. DOI also  
9 issues public reports that have significant impact in  
10 New York City. These public reports discuss DOI's  
11 factual findings and our reasoning for the  
12 recommendations that we issue.

13 In addition to criminal and disciplinary  
14 investigations, DOI investigates potential conflicts  
15 of interest that may result in referrals to Conflicts  
16 of Interest Board, as well as claims of retaliation  
17 against employees of agencies and City contractors  
18 who report misconduct and are protected by the City's  
19 whistleblower law. DOI also provides other critical  
20 services to the City, including background  
21 investigations for certain City employees, vendor  
name checks for City-funded vendors, and integrity  
monitoring services for large City projects, and to  
rehabilitate needed vendors with integrity concerns.

2 DOI's work saves the City money by  
3 preventing fraud, identifying waste, and receiving  
4 millions of dollars in asset forfeiture and  
5 restitution funds that are collected as a result of  
6 some of our investigations. DOI's investigations in  
7 Calendar Year 2025 have covered a broad range of  
8 areas, from strengthening the safety of young people  
9 in the City's care, protecting public funds, and  
10 tackling crimes that compromise New Yorkers' access  
11 to essential needs such as housing and wages. DOI  
12 issued 14 public reports and saved more than 5  
13 million dollars for the City through DOI's  
14 monitorship of the asylum seeker contracts. In  
15 addition, DOI investigations led to the collection of  
16 more than 6 million dollars in financial recoveries  
17 to the City. DOI made 174 arrests, fielded nearly  
18 13,000 complaints, provided corruption prevention  
19 training to more than 37,000 City employees, and  
20 others through our digital learning module, webinars,  
21 and in-person lectures, and issued 113 policy and  
procedure recommendations to improve City operations  
and best practices. These are only some of the  
agency's accomplishments. The full list is cataloged

2 in our year-end report, which was issued last month  
3 and is attached to your testimony.

4 I want to take a moment to recognize the  
5 hardworking and dedicated staff at DOI who made these  
6 accomplishments happen through their deep commitment  
7 to DOI's mission and to New Yorkers. Their work is  
8 even more noteworthy when we recognize that it was  
9 achieved while simultaneously conducting numerous  
10 high-profile, labor-intensive investigations focused  
11 on a number of high-level City officials. Those  
12 investigations required a significant number of staff  
13 and resources, all while we faced continuous budget  
14 cuts and hiring and retention challenges.

15 I'd like to highlight some of the  
16 criminal cases that DOI worked on in 2025. They  
17 included the indictment of former Mayor Adams' Chief  
18 Advisor and eight other co-defendants in an alleged  
19 State bribery conspiracy case. The conviction on  
20 bribery, fraud, or extortion offenses of all 70  
21 employees of the New York City Housing Authority,  
charged in a February 2024 sweep that touched almost  
one-third of NYCHA's 365 developments in each of the  
five boroughs. The sentencing of two former Chiefs in  
the Fire Department to prison terms for providing

2 expedited plan reviews and priority inspections in  
3 return for bribes. The guilty pleas of principals of  
4 a fire alarm maintenance company and their sentencing  
5 to prison time for a decades-long scheme to defraud  
6 multiple City agencies by overbilling those agencies  
7 using fabricated invoices with fraudulently inflated  
8 prices and shell companies. The charging of youth  
9 development specialists with the City Administration  
10 for Children Services with bringing in contraband to  
11 a juvenile center in Brooklyn. And separately, the  
12 sentencing of four former ACS youth development  
13 specialists for participating in contraband  
14 smuggling. The indictment of landlords on charges of  
15 allegedly harassing two older rent-regulated tenants  
16 in Chelsea, resulting in these tenants frequently  
17 living without heat for extended periods each winter  
18 and other dangerous conditions. Two separate wage  
19 theft cases that resulted in guilty pleas and the  
20 return of stolen wages to victimized workers. The  
21 sentencing of a former fraud investigator with the  
Department of Homeless Services, another individual  
to prison for stealing homeless victims' identities  
to apply for unemployment benefits. The sentencing of  
a former employee with a New York City employee's

2 retirement system to one to three years in prison for  
3 stealing pension checks valued at 624,000 dollars  
4 from two retirees. An array of contraband smuggling  
5 investigations on Rikers Island that resulted in  
6 charges and in some cases convictions of corrections  
7 officers for their role in these crimes. And guilty  
8 pleas by a construction safety training school and  
9 its president for issuing certificates to workers  
10 without providing the required safety training. The  
11 company lost its security license and the president  
12 was sentenced to one year in jail, 100 hours of  
13 community service, and was ordered to forfeit 100,000  
14 dollars. A total of 22 defendants associated with  
15 this case have pleaded guilty or have been found  
16 guilty after trial.

17 DOI's work goes beyond its criminal  
18 cases. In 2025, DOI established the Protest Response  
19 Oversight Unit, which is overseeing the New York City  
20 Police Department's response to certain protests, as  
21 agreed to in the City's settlement of a lawsuit over  
the policing during the summer of 2022 demonstrations  
during that summer. The work of that unit is already  
underway, and it is currently reviewing two protests  
selected by the plaintiffs, the protest at Brooklyn

1 College in May 2025 and the protest at 26 Federal  
2 Plaza in June 2025. This past year, DOI restructured  
3 the office of the Inspector General for the NYPD and  
4 filled positions that had remained vacant for too  
5 long. I'm pleased to share with this Committee that  
6 in 2025, DOI hired nine new staff members for this  
7 unit, and it currently operates with an active  
8 headcount of ten. The budget provides sufficient  
9 funding for only two of the five open positions in  
10 this unit, and DOI plans to hire for an additional  
11 assistant inspector general position and the  
12 inspector general position, which we hope to fill  
13 once the new DOI Commissioner arrives. The unit will  
14 soon issue two reports that are mandated by the  
15 Council, its annual report and the fourth annual  
16 report regarding NYPD's compliance with the Public  
17 Oversight of Surveillance Technology, known as the  
18 POST Act, that will focus on the NYPD's use of facial  
19 recognition technology. These two reports join the 13  
20 reports that the unit has produced since January  
21 2022, despite the serious staffing challenges it  
faced during that time.

DOI has been actively working to amend  
State law that currently precludes DOI from being

2 able to meaningfully exercise independent oversight  
3 over ACS's handling of child abuse and neglect  
4 investigations, or its operation of the City's  
5 juvenile detention facilities. DOI thanks Assembly  
6 Member Andrew Hevesi and Senator Jabari Brisport for  
7 their attention to this critical issue and for  
8 carrying the legislation forward. And DOI has  
9 completed and closed all pending background  
10 investigations that were part of a nearly 6,500 case  
11 backlog identified in 2019, thereby completely  
12 eliminating that backlog.

13 Let me turn to DOI's Fiscal Year '27  
14 preliminary budget, which is 54.1 million. The total  
15 is comprised of 30.5 million for personal services  
16 and 23.6 million for other than personal services,  
17 which is largely made up of non-discretionary  
18 expenditures, such as our rental obligation and  
19 integrity monitorships. At the start of Fiscal Year  
20 '27, as it has in previous years, DOI anticipates  
21 receiving an additional 1.7 million dollars in  
intercity funds from other agencies that support a  
portion of our staffing. The total Fiscal Year '27  
budget will support an anticipated 451 employees, 309  
funded through DOI's budget and memoranda of

2 understanding arrangements. The remaining 142 staff  
3 represent employees directly funded by other City  
4 agencies and public authorities, including NYCHA and  
5 New York City Health and Hospitals.

6 DOI has also made significant progress in  
7 reducing our vacancy rate, which is the lowest it has  
8 been in recent years, because we have ensured that  
9 open funded positions are immediately posted and that  
10 identifying potential candidates occurs swiftly.  
11 Currently, DOI has an 11 percent vacancy rate for its  
12 budgeted headcount, significantly lower than in  
13 Fiscal Year '24, when our vacancy rate was about 17  
14 percent.

15 I'd like to take this opportunity to  
16 highlight how DOI's capacity has been reduced over  
17 the past five fiscal years, particularly relative to  
18 the size of the City's workforce and the City's  
19 budget, with which we remain tasked with overseeing.  
20 Just six fiscal years ago, in Fiscal Year 2021, DOI's  
21 preliminary budget was 58.2 million dollars. This  
year, DOI's preliminary budget is only 54.1 million,  
even as both salaries and expenses have continued to  
rise. In Fiscal Year 2021, DOI had an active  
headcount of 525 staff, including both DOI funded and

2 on loan employees. This year, DOI has an active  
3 headcount of just 417. As of today, there are 108  
4 fewer DOI professionals conducting oversight of the  
5 City and its vendors, even as the City's budgeted  
6 workforce has remained largely relatively stable, and  
7 the preliminary budget has increased from 95.3  
8 billion to 127 billion over the same period. Former  
9 Commissioner Jocelyn Strauber repeatedly testified  
10 over the past few years about the strain that these  
11 cuts have put on our agency and our existing staff to  
12 the detriment of the City. And I reiterate that point  
13 today.

14 For the Fiscal Year '27 executive budget,  
15 the Office of Management and Budget proposed an OTPS  
16 PEG of 664,000 dollars in Fiscal Year '26 and 1.1  
17 million in Fiscal Year '27 and the outyears. An OTPS  
18 PEG of this size is not reasonable for DOI. DOI's  
19 City tax levy funds OTPS budget totals 23.1 million  
20 in '26 and 23.6 million in Fiscal Year '27. That  
21 funding pays for DOI's 18.5-million-dollar rental  
obligation and 4.4 million for two integrity  
monitorships. These are non-discretionary expenses  
that DOI has no ability to reduce. That leaves only  
approximately 200,000 dollars in discretionary OTPS

2 funding that could be used to satisfy the PEG. DOI  
3 has requested repeatedly that its non-discretionary  
4 OTPS funding be exempted from the PEG, but this  
5 request has not yet been approved.

6 OMB is also proposing a PS PEG in the  
7 form of 50 percent vacancy reduction in Fiscal Year  
8 '26 and beyond and a one-time PS reduction of 478,000  
9 in Fiscal Year '26. This would reduce DOI's budgeted  
10 headcount by 13 lines and at a time when we are  
11 already struggling with insufficient headcount. DOI  
12 has similarly requested an exemption from the PS PEG,  
13 but to date, that request has not been approved. As  
14 the Council is aware, unlike other agencies, DOI's  
15 budget goes solely, solely to support  
16 mission-critical expenses. DOI does not operate  
17 discretionary programs that could be scaled back or  
18 eliminated to satisfy the continuous PEGs. Except for  
19 the approximately 200,000 dollars in discretionary  
20 OTPS funding that I just referenced, DOI's entire  
21 City tax levy funded budget goes to support staff  
salaries, rent, and contracted integrity monitorships  
for two citywide projects.

In advance of the release of the Fiscal  
Year '27 preliminary budget, DOI submitted a new

2 needs request to OMB. Only one of our requests was  
3 funded in the budget, namely 600,000 dollars for  
4 DOI's lease obligations. Let me outline some of our  
5 high-priority requests which remain unfunded. In July  
6 2025, the City passed Resolution Number 560-A,  
7 directing DOI to ascertain the knowledge mayoral  
8 administrations had about environmental toxins  
9 produced by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks  
10 on the World Trade Center and to support a report to  
11 the Council by July 2027. As the Council was  
12 considering this resolution, DOI explained that given  
13 the volume and scope of such an examination, DOI  
14 would need funding to hire a team of investigators,  
15 attorneys, and experts to properly conduct the  
16 investigation. To that end, DOI has requested 3  
17 million dollars in funding in FY27 to hire an outside  
18 firm with the essential expertise that DOI will  
19 manage. Based on the responses we received to our  
20 request for information, DOI now estimates that the  
21 cost of the overall investigation will total between  
4 and 5 million dollars, and we will be submitting a  
revised request to OMB.

DOI requested 1.1 million in new baseline  
PS funding to support 17 additional headcount. The

2 new headcount is needed to allow DOI to add  
3 specialized staff to its ranks, specifically  
4 auditors, data analysts, and background  
5 investigators. This funding also includes the hiring  
6 of seven entry-level investigators to better support  
7 our current investigative squads and 130,000 dollars  
8 to hire two operational support staff in our  
9 procurement and budget offices.

10 DOI has worked hard to recruit and retain  
11 its staff, particularly during the budgetary cuts  
12 over recent fiscal years in which the City's  
13 two-for-one hiring freeze created a severe burden on  
14 the staff. To accomplish this critical staffing  
15 effort, DOI leveraged existing vacancy funding to  
16 revise the salary structure for our investigative  
17 titles, which experienced some of the highest  
18 attrition rates in the agency's recent history, and  
19 which established a viable path for young  
20 investigators who desired promotional opportunities  
21 within the agency. As a result, 14 positions were  
defunded, and DOI has requested that those positions,  
totaling 1.4 million dollars, be restored.

DOI has requested a little over 1 million  
to cover ongoing maintenance and technical support

2 that has increased significantly from Fiscal Year  
3 2024 and to continue the process of updating and  
4 replacing aging technology. In past years, DOI has  
5 leveraged State and Federal asset forfeiture to  
6 supplement our needs in this area, but at the current  
7 rate of spending, forfeiture reserves are projected  
8 to be depleted by Fiscal Year '28.

9 Let me provide some background on how we  
10 receive forfeiture funding and the legal rules for  
11 using it. Forfeiture funding is intended to  
12 supplement DOI's resources and expand its  
13 investigative capacities, not to pay for ordinary  
14 expenditures that should be appropriately funded by  
15 the City. DOI receives forfeiture from its criminal  
16 investigations. Both federal and state laws provide  
17 for the seizure of assets that are connected to  
18 criminal activity and the subsequent sharing of those  
19 funds with the investigative agencies responsible for  
20 the investigations. Forfeiture funds must be used to  
21 support legitimate law enforcement activities. The  
majority of our forfeiture funds come from federal  
prosecutions, and there are very strict Department of  
Justice guidelines on how forfeiture funds can be  
used and for what purposes. The DOJ guidelines

1 require that forfeiture funds supplement, not  
2 supplant, DOI budget. This means that the City cannot  
3 reduce DOI's budget due to the ability of forfeiture  
4 funds. Investigations do not always result in  
5 forfeiture funding to DOI, and there is no way to  
6 predict how much forfeiture DOI will receive in any  
7 given year.

8 I want to take a moment to say that it  
9 has been an honor to serve as DOI's Acting  
10 Commissioner, and while that honor sits with me, I  
11 want to certainly note the DOI staff here. We have  
12 held the fort down, I think admirably, as a team over  
13 the course of the last several weeks, and everyone at  
14 DOI is looking forward to the arrival of our new  
15 Commissioner, under whose leadership we will continue  
16 to provide the independent oversight that has been  
17 the hallmark of DOI's work as New York City's  
18 Inspector General. Thank you, and I'm happy to answer  
19 any questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much,  
21 Commissioner, for your testimony.

I want to recognize that we've been  
joined by our Finance Chair and Committee Member,

2 Council Member Linda Lee, and also Council Member  
3 Sandra Ung.

4 First, before getting started,  
5 Commissioner, I want to thank you for all your  
6 service to our City, the work that you've done. I've  
7 been aware of your work over these years, too, even  
8 as the First Deputy Commissioner as well, and now as  
9 the Acting Commissioner of this agency, too. It's  
10 very much appreciated. These are very turbulent  
11 times, and DOI played a leading role in ensuring that  
12 the City rooted out corruption and moved forward.

13 And on a personal note, you knew me 20  
14 years ago when I was a first-year law school intern  
15 in the Manhattan DA's office, so it's been an honor  
16 to at least, for the last couple hearings, be in this  
17 role together years later. It comes full circle. So  
18 thank you for all your service to the City, and best  
19 wishes on your next endeavor as well.

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I want to get  
started by, you give a lot of information here, you  
know, just about the state of the budget and where we  
are right now, but I want to zoom out for a minute  
and just highlight a few key things that you

1 mentioned. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Department  
2 received 14,435 complaints, which led to 1,515 active  
3 investigations and 782 referrals for civil and  
4 administrative action and criminal prosecution. Does  
5 those numbers sound correct to you in terms of the  
6 work and scale of complaints and investigations you  
7 all did?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And you also  
10 mentioned, I think in the beginning of your testimony  
11 too, the amount of work that DOI had done on criminal  
12 cases, from the indictment of former Mayor Adams'  
13 Chief Advisor and eight other co-defendants, 70  
14 employees at NYCHA, ACS, FDNY, various levels of  
15 fraud, and other landlords that were indicted for  
16 harassing rent-regulated tenants, just to name a few.  
17 Is that a correct summary of all the work that you  
18 had done?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: It was a  
20 sampling of the work we have done. It goes obviously  
21 well beyond that, but those are matters that we  
thought we would highlight.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And in this year's  
preliminary budget, the current proposal is, despite

2 all of that work, 54 million in this preliminary  
3 budget, right?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And as you  
6 mentioned, that is, going back for the last five  
7 years, a 4-million-dollar decline in the budget, if I  
8 had that right, in the preliminary budget for DOI as  
9 well. Is that right?

10 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And about five  
12 years ago, you all had a staff of 525, and now you  
13 all have a staff of 417, which, as you mentioned, 108  
14 fewer staff doing oversight over the last five years.  
15 Is that right?

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And that is despite  
18 the fact that expenses and salaries have risen, and  
19 even more so despite the fact that the City budget  
20 workforce has remained stable, and in fact the budget  
21 has gone up from 95 billion to 127 billion. Is that  
right?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, budget's gone  
24 up, workforce has remained stable, yet during that

2 time, DOI's resources and budget have drastically  
3 been reduced. Is that right?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And that is also  
6 during a time where you all were not only doing a  
7 number of different investigations and complaints,  
8 but where you all were investigating and bringing  
9 forward and recommending for charges criminal  
10 activity occurring at the highest levels of City  
11 Hall. Is that correct?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Which ultimately  
14 led to a change in leadership at City Hall as well,  
15 and a number of federal and state indictments that  
16 came out as a result of that work too from DOI. Is  
17 that right?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So that is really  
20 what stuns me today. Commissioner, do you believe  
21 that an agency with a mission as important as the  
Department of Investigation to root out corruption at  
every level of government, do you believe that the  
budget of an agency like that should be subject to  
the whims of City Hall, to the whims and the results

1 of investigations that you all undertake? Do you  
2 believe that that should have any bearing on the  
3 budget you all receive as DOI?

4           ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: No. I believe  
5 it was last year DOI worked with and certainly made a  
6 proposal in the Charter revision process to come up  
7 with a way to prevent exactly what you're describing.  
8 And what we proposed was pegging DOI's budget as a  
9 percentage of the City budget to remove even the  
10 appearance that an administration would be  
11 intentionally defunding the oversight agency. And so  
12 if DOI's budget was pegged in a particular way, and I  
13 think we recommended a percentage of the City budget  
14 at 0.06 percent, if the budget rose, so would DOI's  
15 budget. If the budget was reduced, so would ours. But  
16 it would remove any ability or even the appearance  
17 that our budget was being manipulated for in order to  
18 reduce the ability of the agency to conduct  
19 oversight. We had made that proposal. It is a sound  
20 methodology that is used by other cities. And we  
21 talked to some of our colleagues in other cities who  
operated under that same regimen, and so we made that  
recommendation last year.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, you all  
3 proposed, as part of the Charter Revision Commission,  
4 funding and basing the funding of the important  
5 agency, and this agency's important work, based on a  
6 percentage of the City budget.

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And that was done  
8 to protect the independence of the Department of  
9 Investigations, right?

9 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And that  
11 independence is a critical element of DOI's work  
12 because you are examining, investigating corruption  
13 at every level of City government, from any City  
14 employee to the top of city hall. Is that correct?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: What happened to  
16 that proposal that you all had put forward?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yeah. So, it's  
18 our understanding that our proposal is within one of  
19 the two kind of competing Charter revision sets of  
20 proposals that stand now. Whether or not ours will be  
21 adopted, I don't think we know that.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So a proposal as important as this has been, so to speak, lost in the sauce of the dueling Charter Revision Commissions, one put forth by former Mayor Adams. Is that right?

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: You know, what really stuns me about this is given the importance of DOI's mission and mandate, given the crucial role that DOI played in the investigation and federal charges that ultimately led to the indictment of former Mayor Adams, given the importance of DOI's independence to do that work, to see the budget slashed over these years, to see the staffing slashed over these years is just shocking. And it raises serious questions, in my mind, about the hollowing out of this agency by a prior Administration that themselves were the subject of sprawling Federal and State investigations that DOI was a part of. I don't believe any agency should be subject to the whims of politics that way, but an agency with such an important independent mandate like DOI's, to see it subjected to political games the way that it has been the last four years is frankly part of the problem and part of what we need to address moving forward

1 with this new Administration and with this new era in  
2 City government.

3 My question is, to the extent you can  
4 reveal, what were the conversations like with the  
5 Department of Investigations and the prior  
6 Administration when it came to funding for DOI,  
7 whether it's with OMB or the Mayor's Office? How did  
8 those conversations go when it came to hiring, budget  
9 modifications, or interagency coordination? I'm sure  
10 you all, I was there for your testimony, for prior  
11 budget hearings. To the extent you can disclose, what  
12 were the outcomes of those discussions with City  
13 Hall? Where did they go? We know what happened in the  
14 budget itself and the resources you got and didn't  
15 get, but was DOI making its case to City Hall as to  
16 the importance of these resources?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Unquestionably,  
18 DOI was repeatedly, at every opportunity, making its  
19 case with the prior Administration, particularly  
20 through OMB and through City Hall. All the proposals,  
21 everything that was included in my testimony today,  
the facts, the figures, the downward trend, we made  
our case at every opportunity that we had with the  
last Administration.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what was the reaction that you received?

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We had some positive responses on particularized requests, but generally speaking, the largest ticket items that we had requested that would really have the most significant structural impact on the agency, in terms of hiring and salary and retention, were not acted on by the Administration. And we were repeatedly subject to PEGs and reductions and the cost cutting that puts us in the position we are in now.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Which is shocking to me, because we have not seen, since the days of Tammany Hall, the level of corruption we saw at City Hall over the last four years. And you all are tasked with investigating and rooting out that corruption, which you did very commendably. Do you all feel that when the budgets get cut this way, when you see such a reduction in staffing and a 4-million-dollar decline in your budget over the last four years, does that hamper your ability to conduct the anti-corruption and other investigations that you all do at the Department of Investigation?

1                   ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: As I said in my  
2 testimony, it certainly has negatively impacted our  
3 ability to do everything that we want to do. I will  
4 say that the staff at DOI is committed to this  
5 mission and there are things that we would want to  
6 do, but that they are reduced in our ability to do  
7 so. However, we continue to do day-to-day the  
8 important work and make do with what we can. So, the  
9 mission is there. The staff is dedicated to the work.  
10 It would be disingenuous to say that it has not  
11 impacted our day-to-day ability to do the work. It  
12 simply causes us to triage more and to decide where  
13 can we dedicate the scarce resources that we have to  
14 deliver the most meaningful impact for the City. So,  
15 it certainly is a balancing act and a prioritization,  
16 which I think we've been very effective in doing. We  
17 certainly needed to do the large-scale,  
18 labor-intensive, high-profile cases last year. I  
19 think the City needed us to do that. And while  
20 keeping the day-to-day work going, it was asking a  
21 lot of staff. Staff were asked to do a lot more with  
a lot less and a lot fewer of them. So, it has been a  
challenge, but the staff is admirably dedicated to  
the work that we do.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Which, as you  
3 pointed out at the end, and that's the key, you all  
4 have done a lot more with a lot less. And very  
5 commendably, so may I add. But it is very surprising  
6 to see that this preliminary budget only proposes 54  
7 million dollars for an agency with such a broad and  
8 critical mandate across the city.

9 I have a few more questions, and I'm  
10 going to turn it over to our Finance Chair to ask  
11 some questions as well.

12 So, my first question is, since the start  
13 of the Adams Administration, the Department's  
14 budgeted head count has been reduced by 28 percent,  
15 and we know the impact that that has, and you  
16 testified to it as well. Can you point to a time when  
17 you felt the Department's funding was at an optimal  
18 level?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I don't think  
20 we can necessarily point to a particular point in  
21 time. But when the opportunity to rethink our budget,  
and we did this under Commissioner Strauber's  
leadership last year, we did a really deep dive,  
deliberate assessment, because we knew we would be  
asking, in the Charter revision context, for

1 something durable, and so we took an extraordinary  
2 deep dive and really analyzed unit by unit within DOI  
3 what we would need without asking. We remember this  
4 is still government so, we were not asking for  
5 anything that we thought was extravagant. But we did  
6 an analysis, unit by unit, of what we would need to  
7 really optimize the performance of our squad. And  
8 that is where we came to that pegging of the budget  
9 idea at .066 percent. That would be, in our  
10 collective assessment, an optimal point. I believe it  
11 would bring our budget into the something like 72  
12 million or so and bring our headcount into the high  
13 sixes or the low sevens, inclusive of on loans from  
14 other agencies. But that would be a really optimal  
15 situation without it being asking more than we would  
16 credibly be able to ask.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right. And how many  
16 cities, or can you name a few of them, have adopted  
17 this model of tying their DOI budgets to the city  
18 budget?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We spent a lot  
19 of time speaking with our colleagues in Chicago who  
20 have been operating under this regimen for a very  
21 long time. It is also an extraordinarily productive

1 and insightful office that has been very generous  
2 with their time. And we talk to each other in the  
3 inspector general world. But the one that comes to  
4 mind was Chicago. They've operated under this. And  
5 they were very helpful in walking us through thinking  
6 how to pick the right number. Obviously, it's a  
7 Charter revision, so we wanted to get this right. And  
8 I think we believe we got a reasonable, proper  
9 number. And I'm sure we may have spoken with Los  
10 Angeles as well, but I actually don't remember that  
right now.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it.

12 And you mentioned before, that would  
13 bring the overall headcount to high 600s, low 700s,  
right?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Should be an  
16 optimal amount.

17 Commissioner Strauber mentioned at a  
18 prior budget hearing, the Department couldn't perform  
19 proactive investigations due to headcount  
20 restrictions. Is that still the case? And is this  
21 optimal budget that you've testified to, what you  
need to proactively stop fraud and waste? I mean, I

1 think it's clear to everybody that we've got to make  
2 sure we stop bad actors and bad behavior before it  
3 actually happens. So, what is the status of these  
4 proactive investigations?

5           ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, what I  
6 think the point Commissioner Strauber was making is  
7 that we have to balance our proactive work and our  
8 complaint-driven work, the 13,000, 14,000 complaints  
9 that come in every year. DOI looks at them. We look  
10 at everyone and make some determination whether it's  
11 something that we can refer to another City agency,  
12 whether it's something that really falls within the  
13 purview of DOI. But we do that work, obviously, every  
14 day. We are engaged in proactive investigations all  
15 the time, and so it's not necessarily an either-or,  
16 but it is a balancing act. I believe that is what  
17 Commissioner Strauber was describing when she  
18 testified. And it goes back to, I think, my prior  
19 comments. There is a triaging of opportunities. DOI  
20 has all sorts of opportunities to do lots of very  
21 productive, impactful work. We want our work to be as  
impactful as possible. And if it's a matter of doing  
a proactive investigation, we want to do the most  
impactful ones that help agencies perform better,

1 services to be delivered more effectively by the  
2 city, and have, again, also the psychological impact,  
3 both for City employees, that DOI is here. Our  
4 numbers are down, but we are still here and we are  
5 still actively working with agencies on issues of  
6 corruption but also to let the public know that DOI  
7 is still actively doing our job. Every City agency is  
8 operating under constraints, but we want to pick the  
9 proactive work that is the most impactful. And I  
think we've been able to do that.

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And just a couple  
11 more questions from my side, at least for a bit.

12 You testified about the asset forfeiture  
13 funding that you all use, which, to me, what was very  
14 shocking about that for prior budget hearings is how  
15 much you all rely on asset forfeiture funds to fund  
16 important needs of the Department. And as you  
17 mentioned before, federal guidelines also emphasize  
18 that asset forfeiture funds cannot supplant any core  
19 funding from the City and for operations. They can  
20 only supplement. But it seems to me that you all have  
21 been using it for any new needs that come up. And in  
particular, from one case where, over time,  
obviously, those funds will diminish. So, I just want

1 to get a better sense of how much funding has the  
2 Department had to utilize from the asset forfeiture  
3 funds over the years? And how much baseline OTPS  
4 funding does the Department need added in the next  
5 fiscal year so you don't have to utilize asset  
6 forfeiture funds?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Give me one  
8 moment.

9 So going back, I'll just give you a  
10 sampling of some years. Going back to Fiscal Year  
11 '23, our forfeiture spend, and it's a combination of  
12 Department of Justice, Department of Treasury, and  
13 State forfeiture. Our forfeiture spend in Fiscal Year  
14 '23 was 1.37 million. In '24, that rose to 3.62  
15 million. In Fiscal Year '25, our expenditure was 6.97  
16 million. In '26, our current obligations for which we  
17 have dedicated forfeiture is 7.3 million. And we  
18 believe our forecast would be that should rise to 9.9  
19 million, or another 2.6 million additionally in 2026,  
20 in order to fund our operations.

21 So, to your question, what we would need  
from City tax levy to fill that gap, essentially,  
those are the numbers.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, Commissioner, can I just pause on that for a minute? So, from FY23, 1.37 million drawn from forfeiture. And then FY26, currently 7.3 million, but likely ending up at about 9.9 million by the end. So, 1.3 to 9.9. So, 8.6-million-dollar increase over the last several years in drawing down on the asset forfeiture funds. Is that right?

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And that's obviously results of the budget declining, and you all needing to pull that money from somewhere to be able to, is it to sustain operations, or is it for new needs as well?

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I can check with my colleagues, I would categorize it as sustaining operations in the sense, I mean, I'll give you just one example. Our case management system. DOI had an antiquated case management system, which was not able to function properly or adequately for the internal needs. With the changes in discovery law that we saw over the last few years, and I think other agencies have dealt with as well, we needed a system that would allow us to be able to manage

2 internal data in a way that would allow us to be more  
3 productive internally, but also to be able to comply  
4 with state, the compliance of discovery. And so we  
5 use forfeiture for that. It's both a new need, but I  
6 would consider that, you know, kind of more of an  
7 internal maintenance. We're not looking for something  
8 in addition to what we had. We were replacing  
9 something that was old and not working with something  
10 that was new and modern and more effective for our  
11 internal needs. But it wasn't, you know, it was an  
12 internal maintenance need.

13 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: It was new needs,  
14 but to sustain core operations.

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right.

17 Have other cities, Department of  
18 Investigations, I mean, you all are talking to their  
19 IG offices, even law enforcement agencies. Have you  
20 seen that much reliance on asset forfeiture funds to  
21 fund that level of, you know, new needs, but to  
22 sustain core operations?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I don't know  
24 specifically the answer to that. It's something we  
25 would certainly be able to find out and get back to

1 the Committee on. My suspicion is, I mean, New York  
2 is unique, and the reason why we have the forfeiture  
3 funds we have would largely emanate from the CityTime  
4 case, which was a long time ago, but only released  
5 within, you know, several years ago. But for that  
6 particular case, we would not have the forfeiture  
7 that we have. So, it's possible that other cities  
8 have similar forfeiture experiences, but like, unless  
9 there is a case like that. So, I would largely think  
10 the answer would be no, but I could certainly confirm  
that and get back to the Council.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And my final  
12 question is just, you know, you mentioned the  
13 CityTime case. That was where a lot of the asset  
14 forfeiture funds are coming from. How much is left in  
15 that fund? And at the rate you all are drawing down,  
when would that fund be depleted?

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, at our  
17 current rate of spend, we would deplete that reserve  
in two to four years.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Two to four years?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct, yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how much is  
21 left in that fund?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: The DOI  
3 received 32 million from that, and there's 20 million  
4 left. So, we received that in 2022, that 32 million  
5 that is now in the current year 20 million. But as  
6 you can see by the rate of spend, it's simply not  
7 sustainable.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And lastly, if you  
9 all did tie your agency's budget to the City budget,  
10 or saw an increase in the agency budget in other  
11 ways, you would not need to draw down at that asset  
12 forfeiture fund at that rate, right?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Correct, not at  
14 that rate. I mean, forfeiture funds need to be spent.  
15 They can't be squirreled away. And so, there's an  
16 obligation to spend them, but this is unusual. So,  
17 yes, if we were to receive the adequate funding, that  
18 rate of spend would change dramatically.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you.

20 I'm going to turn it over now to our  
21 Finance Chair to ask questions.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: Hi. Good afternoon.

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON LEE: So, a really quick  
question on just the Chief Savings Officers, because

2 I know every agency is being asked to do this. So,  
3 have you identified someone actually within the  
4 agency to be the Chief Savings Officer?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We have. We  
6 have a wonderful Chief Savings Officer. She is here  
7 today. Deputy Commissioner Kaytlin Simmons is our  
8 head of all things, operations and heads up finance,  
9 and she is our Chief Savings Officer.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Awesome. Nice to meet  
11 you.

12 I think the target reductions for FY26  
13 and '27 are the same, I'm assuming, right, which is  
14 1.5 percent for FY26, and then 2.5 percent for FY27?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes. That's  
16 correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And have you  
18 identified, I know the reports are technically due  
19 Friday, but have you identified any areas in where  
20 savings can be found, and has the administration  
21 looked to decrease or eliminate any units for  
22 savings?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: One moment. So,  
24 yes, DOI has been asked to find 1.5 percent in  
25 savings in 2026 and 2.5 percent in Fiscal Year '27

1 and the outyears. We have been struggling to identify  
2 areas for cuts. Again, as I said in my testimony, we  
3 are not a programmatic agency. We are people,  
4 equipment, that's really what we have to cut. We're  
5 already very lean. We don't have excessive spending.  
6 Any cuts will impact DOI's ability to fulfill its  
7 mission. There's no getting around that. We will do  
8 everything we can to, you know, effectively perform  
9 our mission as best as possible, but any cuts will  
10 reduce our ability to do that and to determine where  
11 best to focus our remaining resources. We will  
12 continue that triaging of resources. Our three  
13 primary drivers of our budget are salaries, rent, and  
14 the two integrity monitorships, none of which we have  
15 the ability to cut if we wanted to.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right.

15 Well, that's my follow-up question. So,  
16 are you subject to the vacancy reductions and are  
17 there any positions that are exempt?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We are subject  
19 to the vacancy reduction, and the answer to exemption  
20 is no.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Perfect. Thank you  
so much.

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you, Chair.

4 Council Member Ung, do you have any  
5 questions?

6 Going back to a few different areas to  
7 look at. Well, my first question is, oh, sorry, going  
8 back to the asset forfeiture. You mentioned that  
9 there are statutory requirements to draw down over  
10 the funds over time. They can't just sit there. So,  
11 what are the statutory timelines for that? I mean,  
12 when are you required or legally obligated to draw  
13 down at what rate? How does that work?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: My  
15 understanding is there is no predetermined rate of  
16 spend that is required by DOJ, Treasury, or the  
17 State. They're there to help agencies, you know,  
18 supplement budgets. So, we would want to use  
19 forfeiture to enhance the services that we deliver to  
20 the City to work more proactively with agencies.  
21 There's a lot we can do with forfeiture. So, we would  
22 certainly be spending them. But there is no  
23 particular duration by which they have to be spent or  
24 any rate of spend that's required, but we would

1 certainly want to use them to enhance our oversight  
2 of City agencies.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And going back to  
4 the reports that you all issue, how many mandated and  
5 unmandated reports has the Department issued in the  
6 last year? How does that compare to previous years?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: One moment. I  
8 have that right here.

9 So, in 2025, DOI issued 14 reports. Two  
10 of those were mandated. Just to give you some kind of  
11 a comparison, in 2024, we did 15 reports, five were  
12 mandated. In 2023, we did nine, and three were  
13 mandated. And in 2022, we did four. So we're  
14 averaging, in recent years, about 14, 15 reports a  
15 year.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But presumably with  
17 less staff and less resources, that's more burdensome  
18 on the existing staff to keep up that pace.

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: It's harder to  
20 do. We have staff who are the subject matter experts  
21 who are finding themselves in the field more to try  
to get them now to come in, sit and actually write an  
investigative report. It's doable. We're doing it. We  
will continue to do it. And we are moving resources

1 around in order to make sure that we fulfill that  
2 obligation to the City. But absolutely correct. It is  
3 increasingly difficult to do. And I think our reports  
4 tend to be really, really impactful and really  
5 meaningful and are designed to speak not only to  
6 policymakers but to the public to let them know how  
7 their City agencies that provide services to them are  
8 performing, and we note ways that DOI improves City  
9 services. I think it's very important for the public  
10 to see that. Again, we'll keep doing it. It's going  
to become increasingly harder to do at that rate.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And to the extent  
12 you can disclose, what reports are you working on  
now?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, what I can  
14 share publicly is the Office of the Inspector General  
15 for the NYPD is currently working on its annual  
16 report. And we are also working on the POST act  
17 report, which this year will be focusing on the  
18 NYPD's use of facial recognition technology, which  
19 is, I think, something that's widely of interest to  
20 individuals in the public and policymakers. We're  
also working on our annual anti-corruption report,  
which will look at the auditing capabilities of City

1 agencies. And we're also working on a report that  
2 will detail the challenges that we have in exercising  
3 independent oversight of ACS because of certain State  
4 laws that restrict our ability to access their  
5 records, as well as the restrictive manner in which  
6 the State's Office of Children and Family Services  
7 exercises its limited discretionary authority to  
8 approve our access to records. Finally, our Protest  
9 Response Oversight Unit is working on the first of  
10 their reports that they will be releasing this  
spring.

11 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you.

12 And I want to go through a couple of  
13 different areas that you testified to before about  
14 the work you're all doing and how the budget impacts  
that.

15 So, you mentioned or, you know, we've  
16 heard a bit about the Vendor Integrity Unit that DOI  
17 has that oversees the monitor program, DEP projects  
18 and vendor name checks for contracts over 250,000.  
19 What is the budget and headcount for this unit? Is it  
fully staffed?

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, yes. So,  
21 one moment. So, the current headcount of Vendor

1 Integrity is 18. It's split between three areas. One  
2 is the inspector general for Vendor Integrity who has  
3 three staff members here in the City, and the  
4 inspector general manages all of the City's  
5 monitorships, of which I believe there are probably  
6 about 10 operating right now. Those include some of  
7 the big-ticket items like the Borough-based jail  
8 monitorship, which we are engaged in currently. The  
9 asylum seeker monitorship from the last couple of  
10 years, which was obviously a wide-ranging enterprise.  
11 We also have the Vendex unit, which runs name checks  
12 on City vendors. We also have, which is probably  
13 lesser known, we have seven staff members in, I'll  
14 call it upstate New York because I'm from Queens, so  
15 everything is upstate, but they're up in near  
16 Poughkeepsie and they operate the watershed. So, we  
17 have investigators, largely capital construction  
18 funded by DEP, but we have an entire staff up there  
19 doing operational work to protect the watershed and  
20 the New York City drinking water, which is something  
21 that's interesting. They are largely fully staffed.  
We have a couple openings, but I think we're in the  
process of onboarding at least one or two. So, we're  
very close to being fully staffed.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And could this unit  
3 investigate and provide oversight into the varying  
4 contract costs that agencies have for similar  
5 services? What will the unit need to perform its duty  
6 or do you feel like it's sufficiently back to this  
7 point?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: It would be  
9 very difficult for this unit to perform that  
10 function. During the pendency of the asylum seeker  
11 monitorship, we worked, this unit worked very closely  
12 with the assigned monitor in real-time monitoring of  
13 contracts across City agencies and actually did, I  
14 think, a remarkable job of communicating contract  
15 costs, per unit costs that were by contract, by  
16 agency. So, the agencies could see, we're spending  
17 more for this and you're spending less for this to be  
18 able to look at their contract costs. To do that on  
19 our own, we did that with KPMG as an exterior, as an  
20 outside monitor. For DOI to replicate that, we  
21 certainly could. It would require funding for the  
appropriate personnel with the appropriate training.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And you testified  
20 to this a bit before too, but for the 9/11  
21

2 investigation mandate, what are the budget requests  
3 for that?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: The final  
5 budget request will be 4 to 5 million.

6 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And for NYPD OIG,  
7 the preliminary plan includes 1.7 million and 17  
8 positions in FY27. Is this sufficient funding to  
9 provide oversight to the NYPD? What are the  
10 challenges in hiring and retaining an inspector  
11 general for this position?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, we think  
13 the funding is appropriate. We've got to a staffing  
14 level. We had the opportunity to hire up new staff,  
15 as I said earlier, sometime mid last year. We have a  
16 terrific staff. They are well underway in their work.  
17 So, I think their current staffing, given the  
18 systemic work that they're doing, is appropriate.

19 In terms of identifying and onboarding an  
20 inspector general, we've certainly been exploring  
21 that. It's something we very much wanted to do with  
the new Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And when it comes  
to housing investigations, I've got a particular  
interest in them too, as a former tenant's lawyer,

1 and looking at the ways in which DOI can play a role  
2 in ensuring that tenants have robust protections and  
3 that landlords are held accountable, as you all are  
4 doing. The Administration recently announced a  
5 2.1-million-dollar settlement with a landlord who was  
6 responsible for terrible housing conditions. And  
7 this, I would think, would signal a larger push by  
8 the Administration to hold landlords accountable.  
9 What is the staffing for Squads number three and  
10 number seven? I know these are the squads that  
11 oversee DOB and HPD. That's Squad three, and Squad  
12 seven oversees NYCHA. So, what is their current  
13 staffing?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, squad  
15 three, which oversees HPD buildings, has a staff of  
16 16. Squad seven, which oversees NYCHA, has a staff of  
17 51.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how does Squad  
19 three play a role in investigating hazardous  
20 conditions and tenant harassment for City-funded  
21 projects?

ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: So, the IG for  
Squad three is a subject matter expert who has  
longstanding relationships within both the Department

1 of Buildings and Housing Preservation and  
2 Development. He's really knowledgeable about this  
3 area and very innovative in thinking about ways to  
4 use limited staff to have the most impact. And I  
5 won't say it's new, but I think it's probably the  
6 best in a long time. Our relationship with the DA's  
7 offices, both the IG and the executive staff, we're  
8 constantly in contact with our partners at the five  
9 DA's offices, talking about these issues and looking  
10 for opportunities to work together. Everything we do  
11 in the tenant harassment field, we share very early  
12 and often both ways with the DA's offices. It's a  
13 very cooperative and collaborative relationship that  
14 has really both brought really effective cases, but  
15 brought cases quicker. Anytime you have an allegation  
16 that a tenant is being harassed, time is of the  
17 essence. Unlike other investigations where you might  
18 give more time, that's something we want to act on  
19 very, very quickly. And the DA's have been great.  
20 That Squad also responds to building collapses,  
21 fires, along with DOB staff. We see on New York One  
something happening that fire and DOB are out at, DOI  
has staff members responding as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And are any squads  
3 in desperate need of additional staff or resources?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I don't know  
5 how we define desperate. Every squad has  
6 significantly fewer individuals than it did at three  
7 or four or five years ago. We need more staff. We are  
8 a people agency, as I've said two or three times  
9 already. We are run by people. We are lean. We don't  
10 have extravagant spending on anything beyond people,  
11 vehicles, computers, and rent. Those are the things  
12 that we need. If we have more people, DOI can  
13 continue to do the job that the City expects it to  
14 do.

15 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And, of course,  
16 you're also moving around inspectors between squads  
17 too, right, as needs arise?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We are --

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Investigators,  
20 sorry.

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: We're certainly  
moving staff depending on the needs of any project.  
It's all hands-on deck all the time.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And when it comes  
to the Protest Settlement Monitor Unit, the Council

1 had pushed for in the last budget approximately  
2 600,000 to be included to create that unit with five  
3 staff. Have you hired for all these positions? And do  
4 you feel that five positions are enough to conduct  
5 the oversight that this unit is responsible for  
6 doing?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Yes. We've  
8 hired one inspector general, two investigative  
9 attorneys, I believe that's their title, and two  
10 investigators. They are a remarkably experienced,  
11 highly skilled group. They've done a tremendous job  
12 to date. And I think they are adequately funded and  
13 staffed.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And how is the  
15 staffing for Squad one that oversees the Department  
16 of Probations?

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Squad one's total  
18 staffing stands at 24, and that's a combination of  
19 DOI staff and on loan staff from DOC.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Okay.

21 And recently the Department referred over  
a case investigating the former Commissioner. Can you  
talk a bit with public detail about that was a  
referral that was made from you all over to City

2 authorities, I believe, to the DA's office, or I may  
3 be misremembering that, or maybe not. But if you can,  
4 to the extent you can, publicly disclose the  
5 substance of that referral and who it was made to.

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I can't.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Are there other  
8 pending cases the Department is looking into? Are  
9 there other pending cases the Department is looking  
10 into? Concerning the Department of Probation? Also,  
11 if you can.

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Also, not  
13 something I can talk about.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: To the extent you  
15 can disclose this, will there be a report on the  
16 findings that you all, from your investigations?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Whenever we do  
18 an investigation, depending on what the outcome is,  
19 one of the options is to do a report, yes. What the  
20 outcome for anything relating to the Department of  
21 Probation, it would be too early to know what the  
ultimate outcome would be.

CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Thank you.

And according to the FY25 Mayor's  
Management Report, the average time to complete

1 investigation took 251 days, which is 20 percent  
2 increase from the four-year average between 2021 and  
3 2024 of 208 days so, it's gone up by about 43 days.  
4 The Department target for this indicator is 180 days.  
5 Could you tell us a little bit more about what may be  
6 causing this increase?

7           ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: I think  
8 everything that we have talked about today is  
9 responsible for the source of that continued up.  
10 Certainly, there is manpower, certainly, there's  
11 resources. I think also when you have, you know, 180  
12 is the goal. Not all cases fall within that being a  
13 reasonable expectation, particularly long-term  
14 investigations of high-ranking officials in City  
15 government. Those tend to skew the timeframe. So, I  
16 would suspect that that is also the investigations  
17 that have been public over the last year and a half  
18 or two are very much not something that the 180-day  
19 kind of is even a reasonable thought.

20           CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Sure.

21           Well, those are all the questions we had,  
Commissioner.

          You know, I think one of the big themes  
we see today is we appreciate all that DOI has done

1 so much and more that DOI has done with far less. But  
2 as we stated and began this hearing by commenting on,  
3 I do strongly believe that you all deserve and need  
4 the resources commensurate with the critical work  
5 that you're all doing when it comes to transparency  
6 and accountability in government so we'll keep  
7 pushing for that on our end. And I think it's  
8 critical to see the differences in this new budget as  
9 well, given what's transpired over the last four  
10 years. But I want to thank you all for your work.  
11 Thank the staff of DOI as well and appreciate your  
12 leadership too.

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER RYAN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Now we're going to  
15 call up public testimony.

16 I'm now going to open up the hearing for  
17 public testimony.

18 I remind members of the public that this  
19 is a government proceeding and that the quorum shall  
20 be observed at all times. As such, members of the  
21 public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people  
who wish to testify. No video recordings or  
photography is allowed from the witness table.

2 Members of the public may not present audio or video  
3 recordings of testimony, but may submit transcripts  
4 to the Sergeant for inclusion in the hearing record.

5 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,  
6 which is the oversight hearing topic, the DOI's  
7 Fiscal 2020-2027 Preliminary Budget, you'll have two  
8 minutes to speak. If you have a written statement or  
9 additional written testimony, you can submit that for  
10 the record. Please provide a copy of that testimony  
11 to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You can also email it as  
12 well.

13 For in-person panelists, please come up  
14 to the table once your name has been called. I'll  
15 call our first witness and our only witness now, Ben  
16 Weinberg from Citizens Union.

17 BEN WEINBERG: Thank you. Good afternoon,  
18 Chair, and congratulations on your appointment to  
19 this important Committee.

20 My name is Ben Weinberg, and I'm the  
21 Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union. We are a  
non-partisan, good government group working to ensure  
honest and accountable government, fair and open  
election, and a civically engaged public. We are here  
to urge the Council to provide increased funding in

1 Fiscal '27 for the City's ethics and anti-corruption  
2 watchdogs beyond the levels proposed in the Mayor's  
3 preliminary budget. That includes both the DOI, which  
4 is the subject of today's hearing, but also the  
5 Conflicts of Interest Board, another watchdog agency  
6 that does not receive a dedicated budget oversight  
7 hearing. Both these agencies experience cuts, hiring  
8 freezes, and attrition. We've heard Commissioner  
9 discuss that, and the Mayor's preliminary budget  
10 keeps their funding more or less flat, but the need  
11 to ensure a clean and ethical government has not  
12 remained flat. If anything, it has grown in the wake  
13 of the misconduct that marked the previous  
14 Administration. And these agencies played a crucial  
15 role in these investigations. And when, as was  
16 mentioned here, when pursuing sensitive matters  
17 involving City Hall, they have faced delays in  
18 authority to fill these vacancies. The former DOI  
19 Commissioner has suggested in at least one interview  
20 that requests for support received limited response  
21 as investigations involving City Hall became public.

And Chair, if I may, I just want to take  
a step back and take a look of where we are. You  
alluded to this earlier. We are at the other end of

1 really one of the more kind of corrupt  
2 Administrations we have seen. We at Citizens Union  
3 have published a report January of last year that  
4 took a look at the number of senior City Hall  
5 officials that were either indicted or resigned under  
6 investigation related to corruption and found that  
7 the (TIMER CHIME) number of those officials was twice  
8 as much as in the four prior mayoral administrations  
9 combined. One of those mayors served 12 years. So, to  
10 hear from the acting DOI Commissioner here about  
11 these sharp PEG cuts, both to the OTPS and PS, is  
12 quite remarkable. If we do want to show the people of  
13 New York that we are turning the page on the  
14 corruption of the last Administration, that this is a  
15 new era, you know, how can we seriously do that if we  
16 are not turning the page on the budget policy as it  
17 relates to the main anti-corruption watchdog in our  
18 City? We really urge the Council to address that.

16 And as was mentioned here last year, the  
17 Charter Revision Commission appointed by the Council  
18 recognized the risks of underfunding these agencies  
19 and recommended, in its final report, protected  
20 budget levels for both the DOI and the COIB. And the  
21 agency's current budget requests are much more modest

1 than those levels, the levels that were recommended.  
2 We support the DOI's request for 17 new full-time  
3 positions to assist with investigation, background  
4 checks, and operations. And as was mentioned, even  
5 with those additions, staffing would remain well  
6 below 2020 levels while their workload has increased,  
7 the number of complaints has increased, and the  
8 strain on their operations is reflected in the MMR.  
9 As you had mentioned, investigations are taking  
10 longer to complete, background checks are taking  
longer to complete.

11 I will also mention, again, we do want to  
12 raise the COIB budget, although this is not the  
13 appropriate Committee, but this is kind of related to  
14 oversight and investigation. And the COIB does not  
15 receive its own budget requests. Their headcount  
16 dropped from 26 in 2022 to 20 today. They do have  
17 approval to fill two vacancies. The proposed Mayor  
18 budget also keeps their budget effectively flat at  
19 2.86 million. This is the same level they had prior  
20 to the Adams Administration. But as we know, with  
21 inflation, with the growth of City budget and  
personnel, that means that that budget the factor has  
been reduced. So, we recommend restoring the COIB to

1 at least 26 staff members and provide it with  
2 adequate funding to retain experienced staff. It's a  
3 very small agency and every position matters in such  
4 an agency.

5 Finally, this was mentioned here both by  
6 the Commissioner and by you, Chair, we strongly  
7 support establishing Charter protected minimum  
8 budgets for both the DOI and the COIB. And we have  
9 testified numerous times with the Charter Commission  
10 last year and worked with them to devise some of the  
11 language around that proposal. This would ensure  
12 their independence and stability over time, and we  
13 really want to urge the Council to advance these  
14 reforms and they can be advanced either by the same  
15 Commission to Strengthen Local Democracy. It is on  
16 pause because of Mayor Adams' kind of last-minute  
17 commission. But if that Commission dies one way or  
18 another and there's legislation in Albany actually  
19 trying to prevent it from being able to put a  
20 question on about then that commission will have a  
21 clear path to the ballot. And if a future commission  
established by Mayor Mamdani is run then we would  
recommend pushing for those reforms in that

2 commission. Thank you for the time. I know I'm on my  
3 time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you very much  
5 for your testimony. We appreciate it. And I  
6 appreciate hearing Citizens Union's perspective on  
7 these important issues and couldn't agree more with  
8 many of them too. So, thank you for your testimony.

9 That will conclude our budget hearing. I  
10 want to thank everyone for coming and thank you for  
11 your testimony, and we will continue the process of  
12 negotiating this budget. Thanks, everybody.

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Hearing is now ended. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 15, 2026