

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

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January 29, 2020  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Costa G. Constantinides  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Costa G. Constantinides  
Stephen T. Levin  
Carlos Menchaca  
Donovan J. Richards  
Eric A. Ulrich  
Kalman Yeger  
Paul Vallone  
Keith Powers  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.  
Corey Johnson  
Bill Perkins

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

Dan Zarrilli  
Mayor's Chief Climate Policy Advisor and  
OneNYC Director

Susanne DesRoches  
Deputy Director for Infrastructure and  
Energy at the Mayor's Office of  
Sustainability and the Mayor's Office of  
Resiliency

Pam Elardo  
Deputy Commissioner  
Bureau of Wastewater Treatment  
Department of Environmental Protection

Timothy Farrell  
Senior Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Correction

Clara Zeas  
The Hope Program

Fernando Ortiz  
Climate and Resiliency Organizer  
The Point CDC in Hunt's Point

Claudia Koger  
Astoria Houses Resident Alliance

Annel Hernandez  
New York City Environmental Justice  
Alliance

Sarita Daftary  
Just Leadership USA

Cecil Corbin-Mark  
Deputy Director  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Eric Goldstein  
New York City Environment Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Vidal Guzman

Minister Doctor Victoria Philips  
Visionary V

Melissa Iachan  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Environmental Justice Program  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Curtis Bell  
Policy Associate  
Little Piece of Light

Gregory Bowden  
Senior Wastewater Process Specialist  
AECOM

Lauren Tsuboyama  
Director of Communications  
Regional Plan Association

Rebecca Prior  
Riverkeeper  
Guardians of Flushing Bay  
Swim Coalition

Rebecca Bratspies  
Professor at CUNY School of Law  
Center for Urban Environmental Reform

Adriana Espinosa  
New York City Program Director  
New York League of Conservation Voters

Tyler Nims  
Executive Director  
Lippman Commission

Kendra Clark  
Vice President of Policy and Strategy  
Exodus Transitional Community

Harvey Murphy  
Community Organizer  
Just Leadership USA

Tamika Graham

Georgie Page  
350 Brooklyn

Jane Selden  
350 NYC

John Hall  
WE ACT Environmental Justice Association

1 COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
2 PROTECTION

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3 PEDRO LUGO: Sound check, sound check.

4 This is the sound check for the Committee on  
5 Environmental Protection. Today's date is January  
6 29, 2020, located in the council chambers. Recording  
7 done by Pedro Lugo.

8 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: [gavel] Good  
9 afternoon, everyone. My name is Costa  
10 Constantinides. I'm chair of the Environmental  
11 Protection Committee. I want to thank all of you for  
12 being here today. I want to recognize Kalman Yeger  
13 from Brooklyn, a member of the committee, Donovan  
14 Richards, Council Member from Queens, Paul Vallone,  
15 Council Member from Queens, Keith Powers, Council  
16 Member from Manhattan, and of course I want to  
17 recognize Council Member Rafael Salamanca from the  
18 Bronx, as well as our speaker, Corey Johnson. I want  
19 to thank him for his environmental leadership and all  
20 that he does. And with that I'll turn it over to our  
21 speaker first for his opening statement before I make  
22 my own. But thank you, Speaker Johnson, for your  
23 environmental leadership.

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
25 Good afternoon. I'm Speaker Corey Johnson and I'm  
proud to be here today for another important City

3 Council hearing related to our city's future. Last  
4 October the council passed a historic plan to  
5 permanently close Riker's Island for the purposes of  
6 incarceration following decades upon decades of  
7 profound human rights abuses. For many New Yorkers,  
8 Riker's Island is a symbol of brutality and  
9 inhumanity, and everything that is wrong with our  
10 criminal justice system. There is nothing that we  
11 can do to take back the magnitude of pain, suffering,  
12 and injustices that the Riker's detention system has  
13 inflicted on so many New Yorkers and families. We  
14 sadly cannot undo all of the mistakes of the past,  
15 but we can shift our course for the future. We now  
16 have an extraordinary opportunity to turn Riker's  
17 Island into something positive, that will make the  
18 city a greener and more sustainable place for  
19 everyone for our present and future generations. The  
20 time to do this is now. Our planet is under  
21 tremendous environmental pressures. We must reduce  
22 our greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by the year 2050  
23 in order to avoid the most drastic effects of climate  
24 change. Accomplishing this means we should  
25 aggressively transition off of fossil fuels and onto  
renewable energy. We have to act decisively and we

3 have to act now. To do this we need an all-hands-on-  
4 deck approach. We need increased transmission of  
5 regionally generated clean renewable energy. We need  
6 solar, wind, and geothermal installations powering  
7 our homes and neighborhoods throughout the city.  
8 Plus, we need to evaluate potential areas where  
9 large-scale renewable energy generation and storage  
10 may be possible within the City of New York. The  
11 early exploration of better ways to utilize Riker's  
12 Island gives us a new chance to create and develop  
13 new mechanisms and resources to address the needs of  
14 our city. The opportunity to build large-scale  
15 renewable energy infrastructure exists and we must  
16 strike swiftly while the iron is still hot. Today  
17 we're hearing three bills, all sponsored by our great  
18 chair, Costa Constantinides, which will examine  
19 Riker's Island as a potential location to help our  
20 great city transition to renewable sources to meet  
21 our growing energy needs. Transforming Riker's  
22 Island also provides a simultaneous opportunity to  
23 create green jobs and improve air quality in our  
24 city. This is vital to support the economy of New  
25 York and, most importantly, to our environmental  
justice communities. I again want to thank Chair



3 Constantinides for his continued commitment, vision,  
4 and leadership to improve our city's environment,  
5 sustainability, and resiliency. This includes the  
6 absolutely monumental Local Law 97 of 2019, the  
7 Climate Mobilization Act, which will slash our  
8 emissions from city buildings. Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
9 Together we have already achieved so much and I am  
10 very proud that this city's council is leading the  
11 charge and we'll continue to do everything we can to  
12 fight climate change which, as we know, is a real  
13 threat to our very existence. We are committed to  
14 taking the necessary action now to protect our city's  
15 present and future generations. And there are a lot  
16 of wonderful advocates in the room today. I'm really  
17 grateful to them. I just want to say I'm really glad  
18 to see some of the folks who were instrumental in  
19 getting Riker's Island closed. I see  
20 JustLeadershipUSA here and other advocates. I'm  
21 really grateful for their continued partnership on  
22 this issue. They've been involved since day one, and  
23 there are a lot of other folks in this room that  
24 brought us to this day. I see Eric Goldstein here  
25 and I see other folks that have just been  
instrumental in shaping the council's agenda on

2 having a greener and more environmentally friendly  
3 city. So with that I want to turn it back to our  
4 chair, Chair Constantinides. And thank you all for  
5 being here today.

6 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
7 Speaker Johnson, and I want to begin by really  
8 thanking for your support, for the idea for a  
9 renewable Riker's Island and how this can make a  
10 major contribution to our city's green and  
11 sustainable future. And thank you for your  
12 leadership. You know, passing the Climate  
13 Mobilization Act was not easy last year, but we did  
14 it anyway. And we did it through the, we made it  
15 happen because of many of the advocates in this room  
16 and because of your leadership. So thank you for all  
17 that you do to make our city a greener place. Today  
18 we hear Introductions 5091, 92, and 93, collectively  
19 referred as the Renewable Riker's Act. We will also  
20 hold a general oversight on what a renewable Riker's  
21 Island could look like. Nearly 20 years ago power  
22 companies deployed scare tactics through New York  
23 City to build more secondary power plants. They took  
24 the Enron playbook from California to say we will  
25 face rolling blackouts unless we build more gas-fired

3 power plants immediately. These were cited almost  
4 exclusively in black and brown communities, whether  
5 it was the South Bronx or in western Queens. Our  
6 neighbors said no. But few seemed to listen or even  
7 care. They were promised these plants would only  
8 operate for three years, just until they could get a  
9 better system in order. Power officials skirted an  
10 environmental review process using this false promise  
11 that things would be better by the mid-2000s. Well,  
12 we're approaching two decades later. Every time a  
13 rich community needs more electricity to run more air  
14 conditioning, smart TVs, or iPads, these plants in  
15 low-income communities kick on. The worst imaginable  
16 toxins that humans' lungs can handle settle in the  
17 chests of our kids, who live in the Queensbridge  
18 houses, the Ravenswood houses, and the Astoria  
19 houses, just in Queens. They develop asthma and  
20 other illnesses, so wealthier homes can stay a  
21 comfortable 65 degrees during our increasingly hot  
22 summers. These are in the same neighborhoods who saw  
23 very little investment over the last 50 years beyond  
24 more squad cars. It is no coincidence that these  
25 same over-polluted neighborhoods were the same ones  
continually marginalized by a broken system,

2 emblematic in Riker's Island. Riker's Island has  
3 always been a stain on New York City's history. The  
4 island was settled by the Riker family in the 17th  
5 century and the family's fortunes and slave holdings  
6 grew along with this young nation. The most  
7 prominent member of this family was Richard Riker,  
8 who was notorious for his role in using the courts to  
9 assist kidnappers of free black Americans, seeking to  
10 sell their victims to southern slave traders.  
11 Abolitionists of the time even called Riker and his  
12 cronies the kidnapping club. This history is  
13 inextricably linked with the brutal jail complex that  
14 still bears his name years later. Originally 90  
15 acres, now 413, consisting of primarily of landfill.  
16 The ash and garbage that make up Riker is still  
17 rotting nearly 90 years after it was dumped, that  
18 presents a whole panoply of safety risks. Much of  
19 the island is also within Laguardia Airport's flight  
20 paths and potentially unhealthy levels of airplane  
21 noise. As part of its study to shutter the jail  
22 complex, the Lippman Commission, an independent  
23 commission convened back in 2016, outlined several  
24 scenarios for beneficial reuse. These uses include  
25 waste energy, urban agriculture, power storage, a

2 research facility, and a public greenway. Some even  
3 proposed housing on Riker's Island and possibly even  
4 an airport. The Laguardia Airport is now in the  
5 process of a major renovation without looking at this  
6 process. There are serious concerns on whether we  
7 will be able to meet our climate goals if Laguardia  
8 Airport expanded capacity. The renewable Riker's  
9 plan, originally the work of many of the community  
10 activists in this room, from all five boroughs,  
11 envisions the shuttering of this house of horrors as  
12 an opportunity to not only offer restorative justice  
13 to the communities that have long borne the brunt of  
14 New York City's incarceration system, but also  
15 address facilities on Riker's could also help  
16 removing sanitation trucks from our overburdened  
17 communities. These bills could represent the dawn of  
18 a new era, and for millions of New Yorkers an offer  
19 of blueprint on how a green and sustainable city can  
20 operate in the 21st century. Let me again thank the  
21 speaker again for his leadership, for all the  
22 activists here for all of your work that you have  
23 done to make our city a better place, and to everyone  
24 on the council staff, our staff attorney, Samara  
25 Swanston, our policy analyst, Nadia Johnson and Nicky

2 Tralla, and my staff, Terence Cullen, Nicholas  
3 Zowski, and our finance analyst, Jonathan Seltzer.  
4 So with that, I look forward to hearing from the  
5 administration and your partnership and speaking with  
6 you about this issue. Thank you.

7 DAN ZARRILLI: Good afternoon. Thank you  
8 so much, Chair and Speaker.

9 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I've got to  
10 swear you in.

11 DAN ZARRILLI: Oh, OK.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah, we've  
13 got to go through that.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Would you please  
15 raise your right hands? Do you swear or affirm to  
16 tell truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
17 truth today?

18 DAN ZARRILLI: Yes. Wonderful. Good  
19 afternoon again. My name is Dan Zarrilli, and I'm  
20 the mayor's chief climate policy advisor and OneNYC  
21 director. I'm joined today by my colleague, Susanne  
22 DesRoches, deputy director for infrastructure and  
23 energy at the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and  
24 the Mayor's Office of Resiliency, and Pam Elardo,  
25 deputy commissioner for the Bureau of Wastewater

2 Treatment at the Department of Environmental  
3 Protection. I would like to thank Committee Chair  
4 Constantinides and all of the members of the  
5 Environmental Protection Committee and to you, Mr.  
6 Speaker, for inviting us here on behalf of the mayor  
7 to provide testimony on the Renewable Riker's Act.  
8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify about this  
9 exciting opportunity that we have in front of us, to  
10 collectively reimagining the future of Riker's  
11 Island. Today I intended to briefly discuss the  
12 city's work to confront our climate crisis,  
13 decarcerate our criminal justice system, and close  
14 the Riker's Island jail complex, demonstrating the  
15 commitment to justice that binds these actions  
16 together, while ensuring that all New Yorkers' voices  
17 are heard and considered as we chart a path together  
18 to reimagine this future for the island. The three  
19 bills in the Renewable Riker's Act recognize the  
20 reality that our city faces a clear climate  
21 emergency. In fact, we're already seeing the effects  
22 of global warming, not only on a national and global  
23 level, but here on our own streets. Hurricane Sandy  
24 proved that climate change is already impacting our  
25 health, our communities, and our built and natural

3 environments, with a disproportionate burden falling,  
4 of course, on the city's most vulnerable populations.  
5 And it will only get worse if we fail to act. Well,  
6 New York City is rising to this challenge. Thanks to  
7 the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and to this City  
8 Council, we've become a global leader in the fight  
9 against climate change. With your help we've locked  
10 in the actions necessary to achieve a 40% reduction  
11 in our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, on the road  
12 to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and securing  
13 100% of our electricity from clean sources by 2040.  
14 And we're confronting the climate crisis in a just  
15 and equitable way. True climate solutions must be  
16 ground in inequity as climate justice must go hand-  
17 in-hand with economic and social justice. Planning  
18 for the future of Riker's Island perfectly  
19 illustrates the alignment of these goals. As we all  
20 know, New York City is committed to operating a safe,  
21 fair, and humane criminal justice system and ending  
22 the painful legacy of the Riker's Island Correctional  
23 Facility. Driven by these priorities and having  
24 heard from our communities, the city is committed to  
25 closing the Riker's Island jail complex by 2026. The  
City Council and mayor have been working together to



3 ensure that the island is never used for  
4 incarceration after this date. Two jail facilities  
5 have already been closed and one additional jail  
6 facility will be closed by the end of March as part  
7 of the city's ongoing commitment to end mass  
8 incarceration. With the full closure of the jail  
9 complex over 400 acres of public land will become  
10 available for repurposing, creating a truly  
11 remarkable, once-in-a-generation opportunity to  
12 reimagine this island in a way that serves all New  
13 Yorkers and turns the page on this painful history.  
14 In April 2019 Mayor de Blasio released OneNYC 2050,  
15 our green new deal to confront our climate crisis,  
16 achieve equity, and strengthen our democracy.  
17 Recognizing this opportunity, OneNYC included a  
18 commitment to launch a participatory planning effort  
19 through which New Yorkers will help formulate a new  
20 vision for Riker's Island. In that document, the  
21 city outlined four key principles that are critical  
22 to the future of this island. In our mind, it's  
23 essential that future uses on the island create broad  
24 public benefits, help our city meet urgent goals,  
25 such as climate justice, economic equity and  
fairness, help redress past harms to justice-impacted

3 communities and, where possible, improve waterfront  
4 access in this under-invested portion of our  
5 coastline. It's also essential that all voices are  
6 heard and considered, including the many New Yorkers  
7 impacted by the criminal justice system. Building on  
8 these key OneNYC principles, the goals of the  
9 Renewable Riker's Act and the leadership of the  
10 Renewable Riker's Coalition, the mayor has been  
11 working closely with the City Council to develop a  
12 plan for New Yorkers to shape this future. Soon the  
13 mayor will sign an executive order outlining a  
14 process to engage the public and convene stakeholders  
15 all across the city to develop a community-built  
16 vision for repurposing the island, consistent with  
17 those principles laid out in OneNYC. The executive  
18 order will chart out a path for a participatory  
19 planning effort, providing an exciting opportunity to  
20 not only reimagine a brighter future for these over  
21 400 acres of land with a painful history, but also to  
22 bring together communities all across the city to  
23 collaboratively shape the future of our city. Over  
24 the coming months the OneNYC team will be laying the  
25 groundwork to launch this planning effort, a robust  
multistage engagement process that ensures all New

2 Yorkers' voices are heard as we develop a community-  
3 built vision. This effort includes an advisory  
4 board, public meetings across the city, the  
5 collection of online and in-person comments and a  
6 timeline for compensation of this vision. This work  
7 will aim to generate a new vision for Riker's Island  
8 in a way that informs the future uses consistent with  
9 those principles. The work will establish priorities  
10 for the future for Riker's Island, study the  
11 viability for potential future uses, recommend  
12 potential use options and implementation pathways,  
13 including any necessary transfers of property to  
14 other agencies. It may also identify opportunities  
15 for community uses in neighborhoods off of Riker's  
16 Island that may benefit from co-location of uses on  
17 the island. This community-built vision will hear  
18 and consider the voices of all of our communities,  
19 elected officials, stakeholders, and agencies, and is  
20 the first step in a broad master planning process  
21 that will put in place the future that we all want  
22 for this island. The advisor board specifically will  
23 be convened to offer guidance and expert advice on  
24 the planning process, the various proposed future use  
25 options, and the final vision. It will be comprised

3 of the speaker of the City Council or his designee,  
4 and stakeholders representing key communities  
5 invested in the future of the island. This will  
6 include Queens and Bronx communities, individuals  
7 with a lived experience of the justice system,  
8 justice environmental planning and labor  
9 organizations, communities with borough-based jails,  
10 those communities that have faced environmental  
11 justice challenges, communities housing city  
12 infrastructure, and those that have been historically  
13 targeted by the criminal justice system. And we very  
14 much look forward to convening this advisory board  
15 soon. I will now turn to the pieces of legislation  
16 we are considering today. To determine the  
17 appropriate agency to oversee Riker's Island, the  
18 island's future must first be decided. The mayor's  
19 executive order will require that the vision for the  
20 future of the island include a proposal and schedule  
21 for transferring jurisdiction and management of all  
22 or portions of the island and facilities from the  
23 Department of Correction to appropriate city agencies  
24 as that property is removed from uses connected to  
25 incarceration. We do believe that this planning  
process should be finished prior to any final

3 determinations regarding transfer of jurisdiction.

4 Therefore, while we do not support 1592 as written at

5 this time, we do support and intend to perform much

6 of the work recommended in Intro 1592 to conduct

7 appropriate planning, as described above. To ensure

8 that discussions in the participatory planning effort

9 are informed, productive, and grounded in science,

10 assessments will be needed of current use limitations

11 on the island and of the comparative benefits and

12 challenges of future use options. It will also

13 require analyses of potential uses to assess

14 technical feasibilities, impacts to the city and

15 communities, and interactions with current city

16 infrastructure planning. For these reasons we are

17 very much in support of Intros 1591 and 1593, which

18 study the potential uses of renewable energy and

19 wastewater treatment on the island. The analyses

20 that will result from the bills will play a key role

21 in ensuring that New Yorkers are informed in

22 discussions to develop a new vision for the island.

23 In addition to and analyzing these options, the city

24 may also conduct other analyses for other potential

25 uses for feasibility on the island as well. Intro

1591 would require DEP to study the feasibility of

3 locating a wastewater resource recovery facility on  
4 the island. The city supports this idea. DEP has  
5 already proposed studying the feasibility of such a  
6 project. A new facility that could replace one or  
7 more existing facilities would allow us to design and  
8 construct a modern plant that builds on our legacy of  
9 state-of-the-art wastewater treatment processes and  
10 frees up existing sites for other community uses. A  
11 feasibility study would be necessary to inform a more  
12 formal, inform a more formal siting process. The  
13 study required by Intro 1593 will analyze the  
14 feasibility of constructing different types of  
15 renewable energy sources combined with battery  
16 storage on Riker's Island. The city supports this  
17 idea and is very interested in the possibilities of  
18 siting sustainability and resiliency infrastructure  
19 on a reimaged island. We look forward to  
20 conducting this analysis in tandem with the long-term  
21 energy plan requested by Local Law 248 of 2017 and  
22 Local Law 99 of 2019. In accordance with these laws,  
23 the city is evaluating the current energy systems and  
24 pathways to enable carbon neutrality by 2050n  
25 identifying the policies and programs needed to  
achieve these goals while balancing sustainability,

2 resiliency, affordability, and equity. We look  
3 forward to working with the council to continue  
4 increasing renewables and energy storage across New  
5 York City. Thank you to the members of this  
6 committee for your time today and for your continuous  
7 work to ensure that we serve as a global leader in  
8 confronting our climate crisis and promote  
9 environmental justice as we work to close Riker's  
10 Island and reimagine the future of this public asset.  
11 I would like to give special thanks to Council Member  
12 Constantinides, who has been instrumental in driving  
13 the conversation on Riker's Island with the many  
14 advocates who are hear today. He has organized town  
15 halls and events to mobilize an active base of New  
16 Yorkers who are already engaged in shaping the future  
17 of Riker's Island. We are deeply grateful to the  
18 council member and to the entire coalition for all of  
19 their important work on this issue. We are strongly  
20 in support of Intros 1592 and 1593, and look forward  
21 to working with you all to reimagine a brighter  
22 future for Riker's Island that serves all New  
23 Yorkers, supports our work to confront our climate  
24 crisis, and helps us to build a truly fair and just  
25 city. Thank you.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Dan. Thanks  
3 for being here. Thank you again for being here. Ah,  
4 I really appreciate the testimony and we're excited,  
5 of course, by the mayor's executive order setting up  
6 this process. I want to start off by asking if you  
7 have any preliminary assessment on how much renewable  
8 energy could be generated and potentially stored on  
9 Riker's Island.

10 DAN ZARRILLI: So this is clearly one of  
11 the areas where we need to do a lot of work, and  
12 there have been probably been some early estimates of  
13 this, but part of, um, achieving the, ah,  
14 requirements of the, the intros that are laid out in  
15 front of us requires that we need to do a very robust  
16 analysis to really get to the heart of what's  
17 possible, how to site it, how it works with other  
18 uses on the island, but we would certainly want to  
19 understand the full limit, the full maximization of  
20 the island for that use. And maybe I can turn it  
21 over to Susanne if she wants to add anything to that.

22 SUSANNE DESROCHES: Yes, I, I would say  
23 that, you know, it's, it's a really great  
24 opportunity. As you know, we lack large-scale sites  
25 for, ah, siting renewable energy within the city. We



2 think that there can be a combination of uses, as  
3 both of these studies suggest, and so we're looking  
4 forward to seeing what the maximum possibly could be.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Do we have any range at  
6 this point? Do we have any idea in a place that's  
7 400 acres and all of it is going to be built on.  
8 It's gonna have to be designed in a certain way. Do  
9 we have any idea the size and scope at this point?

10 SUSANNE DESROCHES: Sure, so, I mean, we  
11 can do rough estimates, right? So, um, the, if you  
12 take 30% of the island you're looking at somewhere,  
13 with today's technologies, somewhere between 90 and  
14 100 megawatts, right? So that's, ah, a portion of  
15 the island. But to what Dan said, what we're looking  
16 for is how do we maximize the use of the entire  
17 island, and what can the role of battery storage play  
18 to really maximize that solar installation.

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Great. And do you all  
20 have any preliminary assessment on how many potential  
21 green jobs could be created on Riker's Island,  
22 hopefully we will rename the island, ah, but on the  
23 island, do we have any sense of the number of jobs?

24 DAN ZARRILLI: Let me, um, I'd like to at  
25 least address that second part of your question

2 first. Um, you know, we do very much expect to hear  
3 feedback on the name of the island and want to be  
4 open to that going through these process. So I just  
5 want to make sure that's known as we, ah, as we move  
6 through this. Um, in, in terms of, um, you know, I  
7 think what we're, what we're trying to do is to, to  
8 make sure that we are maximizing the green job  
9 opportunities, um, looking across all the range of  
10 sustainability and resiliency infrastructure that we  
11 can accommodate here, including the connections  
12 between them, and it's the connections on renewable  
13 energy generation and storage, the connections  
14 between potential wastewater treatment and resource  
15 recovery, and organics. There's a lot of things that  
16 work together here and, um, would very much influence  
17 the number of both construction or full-time  
18 permanent jobs that are on the island. I don't think  
19 we have good numbers of what that might look like.  
20 This process is going to very much, um, get into that  
21 and be able to provide those sort of estimates.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And what are the type  
23 of approvals we would need moving forward to do some  
24 of this work? Are there going to be state or any  
25 federal agencies involved that would need to work

2 with the city, depending on what the plan is to  
3 actually effectuate some of these potential plans?

4 DAN ZARRILLI: I think we will be  
5 looking, depending on the options that come up, we'll  
6 be looking at all the feasibility that, that might,  
7 and that might require different permitting and other  
8 approvals. This is city land and so we will be, you  
9 know, working through all of the city processes, the  
10 environmental review process, ah, you know, and  
11 thinking about future uses on the island. So this is  
12 going to help us, this effort is going to help us  
13 answer those questions very specifically so that we  
14 know what the roadmap looks like, ah, for the future  
15 of these 400 acres.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And with state  
17 reliability rules that limit how much of our energy  
18 can be transmitted from outside of the city, is it  
19 even possible or realistic to reach our 80 by 50  
20 goals without large-scale renewable energy generation  
21 within the city itself?

22 DAN ZARRILLI: We need direct connections  
23 into the city or direct renewable energy in the city  
24 or direct renewable energy in the city and then we  
25 can start taking that number of what the required

3 amount of generation in the city is, which is mostly  
4 fossil based at this point. And Susanne may want to  
5 add to that.

6 SUSANNE DESROCHES: Yeah, you know, I  
7 would say what we need is everything. We need solar  
8 on all the buildings, we need storage throughout the  
9 city, we need large-scale renewables that come in  
10 both from upstate and offshore wind. So we're gonna  
11 need all of those resources to happen in order for  
12 the city to meet its goals.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And are there any other  
14 potential locations or possibilities for large-scale  
15 renewable energy generation facilities within the  
16 city, aside from Riker's Island, that we've  
17 identified as part of our planning heading towards  
18 2030 and heading towards 2050?

19 SUSANNE DESROCHES: So the long-term  
20 energy plan is gonna take a deep dive into this, and  
21 it's not just about siting solar. We want to make  
22 sure we're using all resources in a renewable way.  
23 So, um, one of the parts of the study to, to look at  
24 the wastewater treatment plants is how can we use the  
25 biogas that comes out of those facilities in order to  
augment other types of the energy system. So we'll

3 be taking a deep dive into that as part of the long-  
4 term energy plan.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And are there any in,  
6 are there any targets for in-city renewable energy  
7 generation to meet 80 by 50 for both large-scale and  
8 small-scale distributed energy production?

9 SUSANNE DESROCHES: Yes, so right now the  
10 city has set two short, two near-term targets, ah,  
11 500 megawatts of storage by 2025 and 1000 megawatts  
12 of solar by 2030. We have about 200 megawatts of  
13 solar now so we think that we're well on the way and  
14 with the Climate Mobilization Act we think that we  
15 will probably exceed that number.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And you think we're,  
17 we're gonna meet those goals and potentially exceed  
18 those goals?

19 SUSANNE DESROCHES: I think we're  
20 definitely gonna meet those goals. On solar we're  
21 gonna see the industry start to ramp up, ah, through,  
22 throughout the 2020s.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, I'm really,  
24 really excited, ah, by this. I'm excited by the work  
25 that you all have already been doing, which has been  
great, and the partnership that you all have had with

2 the staff here at the council and Chair  
3 Constantinides. We look forward to fully engaging in  
4 this plan, ah, so I really want to thank you, Dan,  
5 Susanne, and Pam for your partnership with us, and I  
6 look, this is going to be a long process that's going  
7 to outlast us here at the City Council and hopefully  
8 you all will be around for whoever is next here at  
9 the council and on the other side of City Hall to  
10 make sure we continue to push and get this done, but  
11 I'm grateful for this partnership, and with that I  
12 want to turn it back to Chair Constantinides.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
14 Speaker Johnson. Thank you. So let's begin. Um,  
15 roughly how old are the DEP's oldest sewage treatment  
16 plants?

17 PAM ELARDO: Good afternoon. Thank you  
18 for that question, Chair. Um, New York City was, my  
19 name is Pam Elardo. I am the deputy commissioner for  
20 the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment within DEP. Ah,  
21 New York City has been, ah, a leader, ah, throughout  
22 the previous century in developing wastewater  
23 recovery facilities. The earliest constructed was in  
24 the 1930s. Um, in fact, 1937 is when the Ward's  
25 Island, ah, plant went into operation. There is a

2 number of other plants that were built in the  
3 Thirties and then a few more in the Fifties and the  
4 Sixties. And then there was, obviously, upgrades  
5 throughout the last several decades.

6 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So how about  
7 Tallman Island, Bowery Bay, ah, Hunt's Point?

8 PAM ELARDO: Ah, Tallman Island 1939,  
9 Ward's Island 1937, ah, Bowery Bay 1939, and then  
10 Hunt's Point came on line in 1952.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So that's  
12 the baby of the group?

13 PAM ELARDO: Yes. And I must say that  
14 all of this happened prior to the Clean Water Act  
15 being passed federally.

16 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Right.

17 PAM ELARDO: So the city really did, ah,  
18 was really a leader. The very, very first, ah,  
19 treatment was around Coney Island, 1897.

20 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Really?

21 PAM ELARDO: Very, it's a rudimentary  
22 sedimentation and disinfection facility.

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Does DEP  
24 have any projection of how much it's going to cost to  
25 maintain Bowery Bay, Ward's Island, Tallman Island,

2 Hunt's Point long term? Ah, we know three of the  
3 four, as you said, were, just celebrated, what, their  
4 eightieth birthday last years? Ah, and then the  
5 youngest is going on 70 really soon. Ah, it will  
6 probably cost a significant sum to keep them on line  
7 as is and then upgrade for climate change, correct?

8 PAM ELARDO: Well, I need to mention  
9 that, ah, we did upgrade it, them, several times  
10 since the 1930s, so we're not using entirely 1930  
11 technology.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Ah, I know.  
13 [laughs]

14 PAM ELARDO: [laughs] However, I would  
15 comment that some of the structural elements are  
16 still, ah, from that vintage, which is, is an amazing  
17 feat and skill. So, ah, we're constantly upgrading  
18 and modifying and trying to adapt the latest  
19 technologies to all these wastewater facilities. Um,  
20 we don't, I can't give you an exact number right now.  
21 We go through a five- and a 10-year capital plan, um,  
22 with each of our facilities. There will be a need  
23 for significant upgrades over the next...

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So  
25 millions...



2 PAM ELARDO: ...few decades.

3 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: ...is, is a  
4 fair assessment?

5 PAM ELARDO: Oh, it's, yes, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Tens of  
7 millions?

8 PAM ELARDO: Well, it, you know, without  
9 going through the numbers, easily. Four wastewater  
10 facilities that you want to keep for another 50  
11 years, it's in the billions.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Billions.

13 PAM ELARDO: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: OK, so a  
15 number beginning with a B. Absolutely. Um, so if we  
16 were to sort of move forward on the renewable Riker's  
17 legislation, ah, which sewer treatment plants could  
18 we even consider down the line closing?

19 PAM ELARDO: So the feasibility study  
20 will be really important in looking at a range of  
21 alternatives. Um, there's four facilities, the four  
22 that I mentioned, that are within a couple miles of  
23 Riker's Island today. Ah, we'd have to look at the  
24 pros and cons of modifying, ah, closing portions of  
25 those and moving them to the island over time. Um,

3 it's a multi, you know, faceted assessment,  
4 obviously. But those four would be the ones that  
5 would be included in the feasibility study itself.  
6 Um, but whether we would have to, you know, whether  
7 all of them ultimately would be closed if in fact  
8 this became reality or what types of systems do we  
9 need to retain the existing plots is all subject to  
10 the feasibility analysis.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And then  
12 looking, I'm going to get to you, Dan, in a second,  
13 on the renewable energy, I promise. But on the  
14 sewage side, ah, you know, last year alone, because  
15 it's only getting wetter and it's only getting  
16 hotter, Flushing Bay, Flushing Creek, just that water  
17 body, um, had five billion gallons of sewage through  
18 CSOs in its waterway. Would we be able to eliminate  
19 some of that discharge of untreated sewage into our  
20 water bodies as well?

21 PAM ELARDO: So, so one of the, ah,  
22 exciting things about the feasibility study that's  
23 recommended in this introduction is that we could  
24 take a, a broader look at the planning that we have  
25 currently for combined sewer overflows and see if  
there's ways that we could maximize that benefit

2 along with, ah, potentially new conveyance systems to  
3 the island. So that's yet to be determined. But it  
4 is another facet of the feasibility analysis.

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Fantastic.

6 So this could potentially both deal with issues  
7 around CSOs and give communities back space in the  
8 South Bronx, in Queens, as well, correct?

9 PAM ELARDO: That's what we're going to  
10 be looking at, for sure, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Absolutely.

12 So that's a vision that we can all look forward to,  
13 right, an opportunity to sort of reimagine our own  
14 sort of communities and especially committees of  
15 environmental justice communities as well and then  
16 not have as much sewage going into our waterways  
17 every day. So, ah, so looking at the renewable  
18 energy side, um, you know, we've recently worked, my  
19 office worked with Sustainable CUNY to perform some  
20 basic calculations to try to create, I think you just  
21 talked about of some of them. They looked at, um,  
22 just 10% of the islands, a little bit less than 10%,  
23 35 acres, ah, that could produce 15 megawatts, or a  
24 little bit, ah, over 7% of the city's total, ah,

2 solar capacity right now, enough to power about 3600  
3 homes. Does this projection sound accurate to you?

4 SUSANNE DESROCHES: So, um, yes. I mean,  
5 listen, I think that depending on how you couple that  
6 with storage is really what we're talking about when  
7 we're powering homes, right? We want to make sure  
8 we're maximizing that solar capacity and coupling it  
9 with storage.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: That was my  
11 next question. So CUNY also, ah, projected that if  
12 only four acres, which was only 1% of the island,  
13 were set aside for energy storage, and I think we'd  
14 do a lot more than that, ah, about 380 containers, a  
15 footprint of 450 square feet each, even these  
16 containers encased about a 1 megawatt battery, it  
17 would create a system with a total capacity of 380  
18 megawatts, which would be more than a third of our  
19 city's goal of having 100, a 1000 megawatts of  
20 storage operated by 2030. On its face does this  
21 sound like it makes, like we're on the right track?

22 SUSANNE DESROCHES: So, again, I, you  
23 know, I can't say that those numbers are right or  
24 wrong. What I think is that this is a huge  
25 opportunity, right? And so we can utilize the space

2 and the site in the best way possible. And whether  
3 that's we can use, you know, 4% of the site or we can  
4 use 50% of the site, or we can site on top of other  
5 facilities, I think that that's the great opportunity  
6 we have.

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And how much  
8 power we need, ah, to be generated, decommission, all  
9 the peaker plants currently serving New York City?  
10 Those plants are, you know, in environmental justice  
11 communities, in communities of color who have been  
12 breathing in those toxins for decades. How much  
13 power would we need to say it's time to take those  
14 down?

15 SUSANNE DESROCHES: So those peaking  
16 units operate in a particular way, right? So on the  
17 hottest days of the year they kick on and they're  
18 dirty and they're old, um, so sort of step one is to  
19 take the oldest ones out of commission...

20 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: That I know.

21 SUSANNE DESROCHES: And the DEC is doing  
22 that. So, ah, as of 2022, 2023, we'll be, the state  
23 will be closing a number of those existing peaker  
24 plants. So how we bring renewable power into the  
25 city in order to complement the rest of, um, how we

2 see the energy vision going forward, we need to look  
3 at what all those options are. So I can't say  
4 megawatt to megawatt we need this much renewable  
5 power to replace these peakers. But the long-term  
6 energy plan that we're working on based on bills  
7 that, that you've passed, will really show us what  
8 that, chart that path and show us what needs to  
9 happen first.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And as part  
11 of this process that we're considering, um, you know,  
12 would we have an idea of community solar, how we  
13 could benefit low-income and moderate-income  
14 communities as the Sustainable CUNY reports, you  
15 know, that they've talked about this as well?

16 SUSANNE DESROCHES: Absolutely. Ah, we  
17 see community solar as a really important part to  
18 serve low-income New Yorkers and that will definitely  
19 be part of what we are looking at, both at Riker's  
20 and across the city where those opportunities are.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And there's  
22 a lot of interest around food waste, and the  
23 opportunities for, ah, anaerobic digestion to be on  
24 the island as well. Could you talk a little bit  
25 about that?

2 PAM ELARDO: Well, I can touch on that.

3 Ah, currently we are taking over 130 tons a day of

4 food waste made into a slurry and putting into the

5 excess digester capacity that we have at Greenpoint,

6 ah, at the Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery

7 Facility. So that amount off food waste is about 8%

8 of the total for the city's commercial food waste per

9 day. Um, as that ramps up we're going to get up to

10 500 tons a day at that facility, hopefully for the

11 next few years. So we're trying to take advantage of

12 that, which is 25% of the city's commercially

13 generated food waste. So it's a pretty big

14 significant amount. Um, so we do have digesters all

15 around the city. If we did put a new wastewater

16 facility on the Riker's Island we would have to

17 assess what is the best places throughout the city to

18 maintain digester infrastructure specifically. So

19 there's just multiple options and I'm really, ah,

20 with the feasibility study and support of this

21 committee looking at what are the optimal

22 arrangements to take food waste with the least amount

23 of travel, with the most benefit for, ah, energy

24 production, um, optimally throughout the city.

25

2 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah, let me add that  
3 we'll be working closely with the Sanitation  
4 Department as well on their organics, um, program.  
5 Because they are continuing to look for more spaces  
6 to do organics processing and so that is, I think,  
7 another area where we want to do some real  
8 feasibility as well, and because it complements this  
9 work so well and, ah, and really serves the city's  
10 need as well. And, and, you know, we continue, half  
11 of, three million New Yorkers now have access to  
12 organics and we know that's just gonna grow, and so  
13 we need to find more space for that processing.

14 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Then lastly  
15 on jobs. Is this process that the mayor is talking  
16 about, um, will it include opportunities for us to  
17 think about how we get men and women are involved in  
18 justice system, how do we get them a just transition,  
19 how do we provide them opportunities to be involved  
20 with, ah, unions, to get these green jobs, to have  
21 these opportunities for the middle class, how do we  
22 go about, what is our thought process there and how,  
23 you know, how do we make sure that comes to fruition?

24 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah, I think is really  
25 where the Green New Deal comes to life, and it's



3 really exciting for us to think about how to build  
4 those green jobs, all across the city, specifically  
5 on Riker's, how to make sure the pathways are there  
6 for formerly incarcerated individuals to be part of  
7 the, um, the opportunity to have those jobs. We've  
8 done a lot of interesting work in this administration  
9 with, um, our work force development team with the  
10 trades to build pathways pre-apprentice programs, to  
11 apprenticeships, and on the path to middle-class  
12 careers. And so I think there's some really exciting  
13 opportunities to do that and whether those are  
14 private jobs or, in a lot of cases what we're talking  
15 about here is going to be, um, city or public jobs.  
16 We want to find and build the pathways to achieve  
17 that through this and make the appropriate  
18 recommendations on how we're going to achieve that.

19 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.

20 So at this time I'm going to hand it over to first  
21 Council Member Richards, then Council Member  
22 Salamanca. I also, I do want to recognize that  
23 Council Member Levin from Brooklyn was here and that  
24 Council Member Menchaca from Brooklyn is here as  
25 well. So with that I'll pass it off first, and  
Council Member Perkins from Manhattan. OK, all

2 right, great. Donovan, I know you're a member of the  
3 committee so I'll let you, give you the opportunity  
4 to go first, yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you so  
6 much, and, ah, congratulations, Chair, on, ah, this  
7 monumental hearing on reimagining on a place that  
8 brought, um, a lot of pain to a lot of communities  
9 like mine certainly. Um, and certainly the hell that  
10 a lot of, ah, detainees certainly felt and still feel  
11 on Riker's Island as we speak today. I just wanted  
12 to go through process a little bit. Um, so I see the  
13 mayor's gonna do an executive order, obviously. You  
14 spoke of environmental review. Will this also go  
15 through ULURP process or no?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: I mean, it will, we're  
17 going through ULURP right now to make sure that, you  
18 know, that the island is never used for incarceration  
19 ever again after 2026.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Great.

21 DAN ZARRILLI: Um, so it's going to be a  
22 public place designation. This planning process will  
23 ultimately recommend, you know, some number of future  
24 uses and opportunities and pathways to achieve that  
25 and I can only imagine that most of those will

2 require all of the regular environmental review, land  
3 use review, um, it goes along with it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: OK, I just  
5 wanted to get that on the record.

6 DAN ZARRILLI: Yep.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Um, because I  
8 know certainly a lot of community boards and others  
9 will raise this issue and just wanted to make sure we  
10 put that out in the open. Um, let's talk about  
11 potential uses, and I'm certainly supportive of, um,  
12 the current plan and I think it's, it's wise in a  
13 time, um, where climate change has impacted  
14 communities like the Rockaways and will continue to  
15 impact many parts of the city, but also I just have  
16 to put on EG, EJ hat for a second, the environmental  
17 justice communities, um, that certainly surround the  
18 facility as well. Um, I want to talk about agencies  
19 for a second, um, because this, this is a real  
20 opportunity, you know, and I don't want us to, I want  
21 to be kind today because we're starting a process  
22 because many residents in public housing will say  
23 they've heard this song and dance around jobs before.  
24 Um, you know, pre-apprenticeships, pathways to  
25 opportunities, all the good buzzwords. So I'm

2 interested in knowing, um, what role will the  
3 Department of Small Business Services play here. Um,  
4 400 acres of land is really a, a key opportunity here  
5 to even think outside of the box. What about a  
6 training center perhaps for the residents of the  
7 local communities in that neighborhood, especially in  
8 light of our police commissioner speaking of an  
9 initiative today to work with a lot more young people  
10 and a lot of our communities. What role will the  
11 Department of Youth and Community Development play at  
12 this site? So I just want to think, to speak, um, a  
13 little bit more frankly around this because while  
14 waste water and all of these things sound great to us  
15 and we all support them in this room, when you go to  
16 speak to the people of Queensbridge or Ravenswood,  
17 um, not saying that they can't comprehend waste water  
18 and they may recommend other uses, right? Um, so I'm  
19 just interested in hearing a little bit more about  
20 what other agencies do you envision at the table?

21 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, I think, you know,  
22 one thing we're not here to do today is to determine  
23 exact uses. This is the start of a process where we  
24 want to hear from, ah, New Yorkers in Queens and  
25 Bronx, all over the city, ah, all sorts of

2 organizations, justice organizations, environmental  
3 planning, um, and New Yorkers and communities that  
4 are impacted by all of the decisions around Riker's  
5 Island and the criminal justice system, so.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And, and I  
7 agree with that.

8 DAN ZARRILLI: Right.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: But the  
10 administration is certainly already thinking about  
11 agencies, although we won't speak deeply into that  
12 today. And I, I just want to hear a little bit more  
13 about, or at least put on the record that I think we  
14 should be thinking boldly here when it comes to, um,  
15 righting the systematic issues that have obviously  
16 got a lot of our young people to Riker's Island in  
17 the first place.

18 DAN ZARRILLI: Right, well, I think, and  
19 you raise some really solid points around just the  
20 difficulties that we've seen in the past around some  
21 of the work force programs and I think we want to,  
22 you know, we need to work within certain structures  
23 here we want to make sure that goes as effectively as  
24 possible. We do intend to talk to Small Business  
25 Services. I think, we expect to hear a lot of this

2 feedback from communities around the opportunities  
3 that this provides. I think what you see here is a  
4 very energy and environment, um, you know, foot  
5 forward from the administration because we think that  
6 there's a lot of opportunity for sustainability and  
7 resiliency type infrastructure here, and that does  
8 lend itself to, um, different types of job creation  
9 that we want to make sure there are pathways to. But  
10 we have to make sure that we're, you know, working  
11 through those, you know, what have been historic, ah,  
12 just challenges on opening that pipeline up and  
13 making sure that more people have access to those  
14 opportunities.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And, ah, let's  
16 just go through it. Is the administration thinking  
17 about housing on, 'cause 400 acres of land is a lot  
18 that can be done there. So I'm interested in, in  
19 just hearing a little bit more about what are some  
20 other uses you're thinking about?

21 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, I think, what, where  
22 we've, you know, what we've said today and I think  
23 what we're going to continue saying is that we have  
24 some really broad principles that we want to see out  
25 of the outcome of this future vision, and that is,

3 you know, uses that serve the public good, that meet  
4 the public, ah, purpose designation that is coming  
5 through the current ULURP. Um, we think that there  
6 are broad uses around achieving climate justice,  
7 economic equity, respecting the history of the  
8 island, on the island, as well as opening up access  
9 to the waterfront in a part of the city that has not  
10 had as much waterfront access. So we then, within  
11 those principles we're gonna hear a lot of ideas.  
12 Some ideas just aren't going to fit those principles  
13 very well. We're very interested in making sure that  
14 this serves the public good and helps us confront our  
15 climate crisis, ah, while respecting the history of  
16 island and so, um, you know, it's, it's premature to,  
17 to give explicit answers here on what will or won't  
18 be included, but the things that fit in those  
19 principles are the things that we're interested in  
20 seeing at the end of the present.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right, and  
22 transportation?

23 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, I think  
24 transportation comes along with the option, the, the  
25 outcomes of the planning process. Again, the uses  
being consistent with climate justice and economic

2 equity and respecting the history of the island as  
3 well as the, the waterfront access. Those then lend  
4 themselves to what of the, you know, figuring those  
5 questions out will then lead to the next conversation  
6 of what are the transportation needs on the island.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right, 'cause  
8 it's easier to get to Florida than it is to get to  
9 Riker's Island.

10 DAN ZARRILLI: There's one bridge, right,  
11 [inaudible] we'll have to work through that. That's  
12 right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And, ah, and  
14 cost estimates. We haven't talked about costs, have  
15 we?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: I think it's way too  
17 premature.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right.

19 DAN ZARRILLI: I think that's part of our  
20 feasibility, um, both.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Even on the DEP  
22 piece it's a little too early?

23 DAN ZARRILLI: It's, it's way  
24 premature...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: OK.



2 DAN ZARRILLI: ...to figure that out right  
3 now, but I think, you know, that's going to go into  
4 feasibility analysis for all of this, um, as we put  
5 forward a vision for the island.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Well, thank  
7 you. Thank you, Chair. I look forward to certainly,  
8 ah, more conversations. This, once again, is a once  
9 in a lifetime opportunity to, to ensure environmental  
10 justice, economic justice, and every other injustice  
11 that many of the individuals who served time on the  
12 island, ah, we can try to fix to ensure in the future  
13 none of these, our young people have to go through  
14 this, um, and certainly I'm hoping that even with  
15 Riker's Island, um, or the new jails coming up in Kew  
16 Gardens are being put in place. We've talked a lot  
17 about insuring that, um, social services and other  
18 things are attached to the island and there should  
19 certainly be some connectivity, um, between the new  
20 facility and certainly some of the social benefits  
21 that, ah, in the future will be on the island. So  
22 I'm hoping there's a lot more connectivity there, but  
23 it is premature to have a lot of these conversations  
24 now. But thank you.

25 DAN ZARRILLI: Great, thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you,  
3 Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right,  
5 just really quickly before I give it up to my  
6 colleagues. The one thing that does concern me and I  
7 think I brought this up to you is the, ah, thought  
8 that maybe as we're going through this process  
9 there's, you know, a separate process going outside  
10 of our own, right? That real estate developers, like  
11 sort of luxury condos, are thinking about this land,  
12 413 acres, I think Donovan alluded to that, and I  
13 think we share that concern about how do we make sure  
14 that we safeguard against, ah, this turning into, you  
15 know, it's been talked about very much, about a  
16 playground for the rich, right? Like this can never  
17 become that. So how do we make sure sort of what  
18 safeguards do we have in place to make sure that  
19 doesn't happen as we go through our own process that  
20 may or may not get done while we're all still in  
21 office?

22 DAN ZARRILLI: Right, well, first and  
23 foremost, this is public land, right? And so we want  
24 to make sure it serves public uses. The current  
25 ULURP action is making sure, is locking in that this

2 will be for the public good. We're laying out  
3 principles in this process to achieve, ah, what we  
4 think is, ah, that means in public good, climate  
5 justice, economic equity, waterfront access, and  
6 respecting the history of the island, um, and any,  
7 anything that would undo that would need to come  
8 through this body, I believe, and so I think we can  
9 work together to make sure that we, this land is in a  
10 place where, ah, we are comfortable and we're happy  
11 and we're proud of the outcome at the end of the day.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I believe  
13 that we just want make sure that at the end of the  
14 day we, we all feel comfortable about which direction  
15 we're going, right?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: It's a  
18 direction that talks about those principles you just  
19 laid out.

20 DAN ZARRILLI: That's right, and that's  
21 why we want to work so closely with you and with the  
22 council on this to make sure that we are proud of the  
23 outcome at the end of the day.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I'll come  
3 back. But first I'll give over to Council Member  
4 Salamanca, followed by Council Member Perkins.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr.  
6 Chair. Good afternoon.

7 DAN ZARRILLI: Good afternoon.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Um, I want, I  
9 just have very few questions. I just want to get  
10 some clarity here on the record. Um, Riker's Island  
11 is currently in what borough?

12 DAN ZARRILLI: So it's in the Bronx.  
13 It's in Queens Community Board 1 and I think that's  
14 the answer to the question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yes. So when  
16 violence happens in Riker's Island there's an  
17 assault, all right? There's a felony against a  
18 detainee against another detainee or against one of  
19 the correction officers. New charges are brought to  
20 that, the person that committed that crime. And it  
21 goes to the Bronx district attorneys, correct? She's  
22 the one who's in charge of following up on whatever  
23 happened there, whatever crime happened there. That  
24 crime that happened gets tagged along where? Where  
25 does that data go to?

2 DAN ZARRILLI: So I'll be the first one  
3 to say that I'm not an expert in the criminal justice  
4 system, but I believe that that gets, um, counted in  
5 the Bronx crime statistics.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah. So  
7 that, so if there's an assault, a felony assault on  
8 Riker's Island that assault gets tagged along to the  
9 precinct in Hunt's Point and Longwood Avenue, right?  
10 And as a result my community looks more violent on  
11 paper than what it physically is in the streets  
12 because, and, and so that is, you know, what I call  
13 systemic racism. This is, this goes way beyond our  
14 time. This is just the way they drew out the lines.  
15 And the reason I'm bringing it up is as we're moving  
16 forward with these conversations, as we're moving  
17 forward with this land use application, and I, I will  
18 be having another conversation with City Planning, I,  
19 I understand that, that ULURP has to go, the process,  
20 it goes to the local community board, the borough  
21 president, and then eventually it will get here.  
22 It's important for decades, whatever bad happened in  
23 Riker's Island it got attached to the South Bronx.  
24 And so now that we're doing something good with  
25 Riker's Island, right? We're finally closing it down

2 and we're having conversations about sustainability,  
3 about jobs, I want to ensure that the community who  
4 was most negatively affected by Riker's Island beyond  
5 on our control is on the table making these decisions  
6 as to what's gonna happen moving forward with Riker's  
7 Island.

8 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, as I believe I said  
9 in my testimony, we are very committed to, um,  
10 engaging with communities in both Queens and the  
11 Bronx for exactly this reason. We know that the, um,  
12 there have been impacts in both boroughs specifically  
13 from the island and want to make sure that we're  
14 working with, ah, your office, your constituencies on  
15 this process, the same way that we'd be working with,  
16 ah, with council members in Queens and on this  
17 process as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So I ask that,  
19 um, as you move forward in having conversations with  
20 stakeholders that you come over to the South Bronx  
21 and have conversations with our stakeholders as well,  
22 because we need to be part of these conversations.

23 DAN ZARRILLI: We're absolutely committed  
24 to doing that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah, all  
3 right. There, finally, I know that there are ideas  
4 on the, ah, having DEP there on water filtration  
5 plants and, Commissioner, I'm happy to see you here.  
6 Um, so if they decide to move forward with water  
7 filtration plants, and I know I'm going years beyond  
8 what can happen here, what would happen in Hunt's  
9 Point since we already have a water filtration plant  
10 and there are plans to build a new one. And I know  
11 that funding has been allocated in past fiscal years  
12 for a new Hunt's Point water filtration plant. Do  
13 those plans get stalled now that these conversations  
14 are happening?

15 PAM ELARDO: Well, I just want to comment  
16 that, ah, currently there is, ah, we're not building  
17 a new, a new facility at Hunt's Point. But we are  
18 upgrading the solid processing there and that needs  
19 to happen as soon as possible regardless of this  
20 planning process, because it's a near-term need and  
21 it has, ah, it's necessary for the current operation  
22 of that plant. I, in the feasibility study for the  
23 Intro 1591, it doesn't, the scope does not include  
24 what happens with the remaining sites should there be  
25 a movement of waste water, some of the wastewater

3 infrastructure to the plant. I believe that's a  
4 separate process. It's outside of that. But it's  
5 probably, ah, a fair questions for the larger program  
6 that we're working on.

7 DAN ZARRILLI: Let me just add to that.  
8 I think it's really exciting to think about, um, if  
9 we land in a place where what we see the future  
10 vision for Riker's Island includes co-locating or  
11 moving certain city facilities or other facilities  
12 onto the island that that opens up opportunity in  
13 those communities and we want to explore some of  
14 those possibilities as well to increase community  
15 uses in communities if we're able to relocate other,  
16 um, other uses out of those communities. So I think  
17 this will, we want to be able to explore and study a  
18 lot of those possibilities.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. And  
20 then, you know, just finally, if, and I just want to  
21 warn my colleagues, you know, ah, I don't know if any  
22 of you have water filtration plants in your  
23 districts, but there are many challenges that come  
24 with it, you know? And my community, you know, the  
25 challenges that I have is the odor problem, where the  
odor is, you know, is infiltrating my residence and



2 it's a major quality of life of issue, and, you know,  
3 these facilities, yes, they get built, you know,  
4 they're good for five, 10 years, but then, you know,  
5 we need to repair them and the city, the DEP has been  
6 very, has been working on a very snail pace to  
7 address some of the issues that we have at Hunt's  
8 Point and, you know, the summer is coming and once  
9 again my community is gonna suffer from foul odors,  
10 um, because the DEP has failed to take the  
11 appropriate measures to fully implement what they  
12 need to implement to, ah, to upgrade the facilities  
13 at Hunt's Point. So I just want to give a fair  
14 warning to my colleagues to be careful what comes in,  
15 when, when we're talking about water filtration  
16 plants.

17 DAN ZARRILLI: Ah, Council Member  
18 Salamanca, I have Bowery Bay, which was built in 1939  
19 in my district. We talked about that at the  
20 beginning of the hearing, so I hear you loud and  
21 clear. I know where you're coming from because it's,  
22 we deal with those same foul odors every day.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right.  
24 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council  
3 Member Perkins?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Thank you. I  
5 just have a, get some clarity. So Riker's Island, as  
6 we are discussing it, will no longer be the prison  
7 that it presently is or the work release program that  
8 used to be a part of it, as I recall from having  
9 worked in that program. So, just so I can be a  
10 little clearer, so Riker's Island the prison is gone,  
11 as per this conversation. Yes? No?

12 DAN ZARRILLI: So the city is committed  
13 to closing Riker's Island and ending incarceration on  
14 the island by 2026. So what we're talking about is  
15 really the opportunity that this opens up for public  
16 benefits that can come when that, when we've hit  
17 those dates, when we're no longer using the island  
18 for incarceration.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So when you talk  
20 about dates, hitting dates, give me an idea of the  
21 flow of the dates that you have in mind and what do  
22 those dates represent in terms of some activity or  
23 some movement towards progress?

24 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, what we're launching  
25 today is, is an effort, um, to hear from New Yorkers

3 and stakeholders in many communities, particularly  
4 those that have been impacted by the criminal justice  
5 system and Riker's Island specifically, and want to  
6 hear all of the opinions on what the future might be  
7 and we're doing a lot of technical analysis in order  
8 to inform that work as well, so that we're doing this  
9 in a way that's feasible and based on the science and  
10 the engineering and what's possible, and we intend to  
11 put out a, you know, after working with communities  
12 and hearing all this input, we'd like to be able to  
13 put out this new vision sometime next year and that  
14 will then, you know, we will, that work will need to  
15 be continued to ultimately lock in. But at the same  
16 time the jails on the island will continue to be  
17 closing. There's another jail to be closed in March  
18 of this year and ultimately by the end of 2026 there  
19 will be no incarceration on the island. And so we're  
20 planning for those moments and getting in front of  
21 that so that we can really put a powerful positive  
22 and a vision for the future of this island when we're  
23 looking forward to the day when there is no  
24 incarceration there.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So that sounds  
25 positive and optimistic. I'm concerned because, um,

2 when that's closed where will those who may have been  
3 incarcerated there go?

4 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, by 2026 the borough-  
5 based jails, the four borough-based jails, will be  
6 constructed and in operation at that point and so the  
7 population will be much reduced by that point and we  
8 will not need...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Borough-based  
10 jails means there will be a jail in every borough?  
11 There'll be a Riker's Island in every borough?

12 DAN ZARRILLI: That will, so there will  
13 be four borough-based jails that have just, um, been  
14 approved.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Four boroughs?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: Correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: What the four  
18 boroughs?

19 DAN ZARRILLI: Ah, the Bronx, Queens,  
20 Manhattan, and Brooklyn.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Staten Island  
22 is, is not gonna be lucky enough to have one?

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council  
24 Member Perkins, we're here today talking about the  
25 renewable plan and if, if we could...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: The what?

3 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: The plan for  
4 around the renewable energy opportunities.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: The plan for?

6 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: For the, the  
7 bills that...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: For new vision  
9 for that island?

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: For the,  
11 right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Right. I'm with  
13 you. I'm just, but I want to be clear what, what I'm  
14 understanding and so if I'm saying something you  
15 don't agree with I don't have any problem with you  
16 putting me in check. But by the same token I just  
17 want to be clear that Riker's Island that I know,  
18 that I worked in, especially when they had a work  
19 release program, is now no longer gonna be. And I'm  
20 just not clear as to what is gonna replace it from  
21 the little conversation that I've already heard. Ah,  
22 can someone give me [inaudible]?

23 DAN ZARRILLI: Right, so the, the mayor  
24 and the council came together and, um, are building  
25 four new borough-based jails to replace what is on

2 Riker's Island, ending the incarceration on the  
3 island itself and with a much-reduced population, ah,  
4 which would be in the four borough-based jails that  
5 are now being constructed.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: What are the  
7 boroughs that we're talking about?

8 DAN ZARRILLI: It's in the Bronx,  
9 Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And what is the  
11 capacity that they will hold?

12 DAN ZARRILLI: I believe 3200.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And the  
14 programming that will be involved?

15 DAN ZARRILLI: So I believe it's 3200,  
16 um, is the, is the targeted population at that point  
17 when those, when the jails would be closed in 2026.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And there will  
19 be four, one for the four boroughs?

20 DAN ZARRILLI: Correct.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And each  
22 borough, each facility will have approximately the  
23 same amount or different amounts?

24 DAN ZARRILLI: Ah, yes, roughly the same  
25 amount. Um, maybe I would call up one of my

2 colleagues from the Department of Corrections to  
3 answer these questions.

4 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Good  
5 afternoon. My name is Timothy Farrell, senior deputy  
6 commissioner for the Department of Correction. Do I  
7 need to be sworn in?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Is that Farrell?

9 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
10 Farrell.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Like [inaudible]  
12 Farrell?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Could you raise your  
14 right. Swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
15 truth, and nothing but the truth today?

16 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I  
17 do. So, Council Member, um, we will be, as part of  
18 the borough-based facilities, there'll be four  
19 facilities, approximately 886 individuals in each  
20 facility, one in Manhattan, one in Brooklyn, one in  
21 the Bronx, and Queens.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Will they have  
23 more or less the same constituency, amount of  
24 inmates, so to speak, or however you describe?

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2 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: The  
3 design is that each facility will house no more than  
4 886.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So they'll have  
6 on average about 800 plus?

7 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And the  
9 programming that will take place at these facilities?  
10 Um...

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council  
12 Member...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I remember  
14 Riker's as work release program that prepared the  
15 inmates to, um, be able to work upon living and so  
16 I'm just wondering what other opportunities are these  
17 facilities going to be providing?

18 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
19 Well, each one of these facilities will be a modern  
20 design. They will have enhanced programming, more  
21 robust vocational educational opportunities.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Give me an idea  
23 of enhanced programming.

24 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Ah,  
25 vocational training, OSHA certification courses, ah,



2 electronics, plumbing, carpentry, as well as GED  
3 programming, and secondary educational programming.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And will...

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council  
6 Member, [inaudible] if you could ask one more  
7 question. I have to move on today [inaudible].

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: OK, I'll ask one  
9 more question.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: OK, great,  
11 thank you. Thank you, Council Member.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And then we'll  
13 get back to a second round.

14 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: OK.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So will there  
16 sort of, will there be any kind of work-release  
17 opportunities involved here?

18 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
19 We'll be entertaining all programming opportunities  
20 going forward.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Particularly  
22 working, ah, employment opportunities.

23 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:  
24 We'll be looking at those as well, yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: OK. Because,  
3 you know, that's, that's very important.

4 SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yes  
5 it is.

6 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
7 Council Member Perkins. Ah, Council Member Menchaca.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,  
9 Chair. And thank you all for being here today. The  
10 mayor or some said somewhere on Twitter that there's  
11 an executive order of some sort relating to Riker's.  
12 Can you tell us a little bit more about that  
13 executive order?

14 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah, absolutely. So, um,  
15 the mayor will be signing an executive order that  
16 lays out, um, you know, the formal details on how  
17 this public process is going to be running. Ah, we  
18 expect to be out in communities later this spring.  
19 We want to make sure that we have an advisory board  
20 that brings all the voices together from the question  
21 and the Bronx, um, other stakeholders, labor  
22 organizations, planning, justice organizations,  
23 environmental, um, and we want to make sure that  
24 we're bringing, and, and doing that in a way that's  
25 also with public meetings, ah, digital engagements, a

3 whole range of options for people to engage in  
4 process and put their point of view in for what the  
5 future of this island can be and at the same time  
6 we're going to be doing technical and feasibility  
7 analysis on a number of options because we're  
8 particularly focused on the principles of climate  
9 justice and really the types of sustainability and  
10 resiliency infrastructure that we'd like to see on  
11 the island, ah, making sure that we're respecting the  
12 history of the island, waterfront access, economic  
13 equity, and job creation. So we want to be hearing  
14 from New Yorkers, and we've laid out some principles  
15 of what we'd like to see at the end of the day and  
16 want to do a robust public participatory process in  
17 order to get to a community-drive vision for what we  
18 want to see on the island after it's no longer being  
19 used for incarceration.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: OK. So I just  
21 want to get a clear, the executive order is to do,  
22 you're, you're kind of talking about like the, the  
23 intentions and what's your seeing. The executive  
24 order does what, just as, says, what, what does it  
25 do?

2 DAN ZARRILLI: It's directing us to  
3 launch this process...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Directing,  
5 who's us?

6 DAN ZARRILLI: To us being, so the  
7 Mayor's Office of Climate Policy and Programs, the  
8 OneNYC team is going to be running this process. Um,  
9 we're going to have an interagency working group  
10 that's pulling together all the feasibility on  
11 different options, informing the public engagement  
12 and the advisory board. Um, it's really about laying  
13 out a process to get to a new vision for, ah, for the  
14 island.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And what, what  
16 compelled the mayor to do an executive order on this?

17 DAN ZARRILLI: Um, I think it's just, um,  
18 it's the effective, it's the right tool in order to  
19 mobilize our administration and working with the  
20 council to get to the right public engagement and  
21 listening that is informed by all the technical  
22 feasibility to get to a new vision for the island  
23 [inaudible] for us.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I get all the  
3 intentions piece, but I just want to get the  
4 mechanics.

5 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah, yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So the  
7 executive order. I just, I don't, um, what makes  
8 that an effective tool?

9 DAN ZARRILLI: I think it's, it's, um,  
10 the mayor laying out the outcomes that he wants, that  
11 he wants the administration to deliver on, and I  
12 think that's the, that is an effective tool for  
13 enacting that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And were we  
15 consulted about that executive order?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: We worked very closely  
17 with the council and speaker's office ah, to deliver  
18 on that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And our chair,  
20 too?

21 DAN ZARRILLI: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: You, you were  
23 connected to that?

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Um-hmm.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Cool.

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yep.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And then the  
4 other question I have about the executive order in  
5 terms of the robust participatory process, ah, I  
6 just, I haven't, we can talk about that actually,  
7 and, and I want to talk a little bit about Red Hook.  
8 The, um, the funding that's connected to this  
9 executive order, where does that, where does that  
10 live?

11 DAN ZARRILLI: Um, I mean, I lives with  
12 OMB, right? That's where like, we get [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Is that  
14 manifested? Is that real? Is it in the budget? How  
15 much is it gonna cost?

16 DAN ZARRILLI: We're working through...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: To fulfill your  
18 goals.

19 DAN ZARRILLI: ...some of the details  
20 there. I think it's, it's important that we are, you  
21 know, we're gonna be securing some, ah, consulting  
22 help to help with the, ah, process and some of the  
23 technical feasibility. So we're working through some  
24 of that now. Which is why we want to, you know,  
25 we're, we're setting out a target that, you know,

2 later this spring we're actually going to be fully  
3 launched and out in communities.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So no budget  
5 yet, no money yet.

6 DAN ZARRILLI: Um, so we're working  
7 through those questions now. I think, I'm not sure  
8 where exactly in the budget that lives on a line  
9 item. We can come back to you on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: OK. And I'm  
11 asking all these things because I, I just, I, I have  
12 been very clear about the whole Riker's piece. I'm  
13 just, I am incredibly suspicious about this whole  
14 thing, and I have, I have been very clear from the  
15 beginning that this whole process has been, ah,  
16 fraught with, ah, bad moves, non-transparency, ah,  
17 we're, we're dealing with a land use after we make,  
18 ah, or the, ah, the kind of Riker's land use piece  
19 after we pass the land use. I, I just think this  
20 whole thing has been pretty disastrous and, and now  
21 that there's the kind of big push for a participatory  
22 process there's questions about whether that's gonna  
23 have all the funding to it. So this is, this is, ah,  
24 I'm, I'm questioning this. And the other piece I  
25 want to bring to the table it something we've been

2 working on for a while in Red Hook. Tonight your  
3 office and the Mayor's Office is going to be  
4 presenting in Red Hook ah, the, the kind of larger,  
5 ah, integrated flood protection plan that includes  
6 about 50 million dollars of federal money and 50  
7 million dollars from the city. That hasn't changed  
8 at all, and I feel like we've been a little bit, um,  
9 disregarded in terms of the increase in need for, for  
10 funding on that. And so I guess I'm just, all we  
11 have to do is look at other projects that you all  
12 have been working on and it just hasn't, hasn't  
13 materialized. And so I don't believe that  
14 something's gonna materialize with Riker's. And  
15 what's happening at Riker's and the vision that might  
16 come up from a community participatory process. And,  
17 and so I'm just, I'm just letting you know I'm  
18 concerned and as a member of this committee I will  
19 continue to ask these questions.

20 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, I appreciate the  
21 questions. Um, I'm not sure I understand the  
22 characterization of some of the, of some of those  
23 projects. Um, and we can certainly, you know, have  
24 the Mayor's Office of Resiliency come back to you  
25



2 with answers on, um, that project. I'm not sure if  
3 you have...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah, I just,  
5 the money, the money...

6 DAN ZARRILLI: The, what I would, I guess  
7 I would want to say is that, you know, this is laying  
8 out a process. This is the mayor committing to, um,  
9 to running a robust community process, working very  
10 closely with the council, hearing from all the  
11 interested stakeholders and communities that have  
12 been impacted by the criminal justice system, because  
13 this is us getting ahead of the curve, right? The,  
14 the jails will be closed by 2026. This is us being  
15 proactive in thinking about what the future looks  
16 like and we're very committed to doing that and  
17 coming back with a, with a vision that can move  
18 forward.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I guess my main  
20 point and final point, and I'll had it back to the  
21 chair, is we've been kind of thinking about that in  
22 Red Hook and that being an integrated flood  
23 protection plan and we are years away from Sandy with  
24 not much. And so this is, this is why I just have no  
25 faith right now that anything's gonna happen. Two

2 years we have left with this administration the whole  
3 city's gonna flip into a whole new trend, a whole new  
4 leadership team at the City Council and so I, I'm  
5 just, I'm left with a lot of suspension and no  
6 confidence whatsoever. And we're gonna want to work  
7 with you to figure out how that can happen. Let's  
8 turn around what's happening in Red Hook, ah, namely  
9 the numbers of dollars that are coming to Red Hook to  
10 really build out what we need to do, and that hasn't  
11 changed for the last four or five years. We still  
12 have 50 million dollars from the mayor and 50 from,  
13 50 million dollar from the federal government. And  
14 that's not the kind of, that's not the kind  
15 involvement that, that a neighborhood needs. So,  
16 anyway, I just want to let you know, I'm...

17 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, we look forward to  
18 working with you on process going forward.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah, I, and we  
20 will. Thank you.

21 DAN ZARRILLI: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Yeah, I have  
23 a...

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yes?  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: What is a robust  
3 community process?

4 DAN ZARRILLI: What we're after in this  
5 process is making sure that we are out in the  
6 community, whether it's at community boards, I think  
7 we will, we will have plenty of, um, meetings, design  
8 meetings to both do a lot of listening and make sure  
9 that we are hearing what the needs from the community  
10 are and the thoughts for what the future might be,  
11 was then sessions to bring back some of the results  
12 or at least the preliminary results of our  
13 feasibility studies, ah, to inform and build a  
14 collective vision for what needs to be on this island  
15 consistent with those principles that we've laid out  
16 here today.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Yeah, I think  
18 what, I just want to be as clear as possible. So  
19 how, how will we know that you're in the community?

20 DAN ZARRILLI: I think...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: How will, how  
22 will I as the councilperson or whatever role I'm  
23 playing know that this, there's this action taking  
24 place in my community as it relates to Riker's  
25 Island.

2 DAN ZARRILLI: Well, we will reach out to  
3 you, um, in, in the planning for that event in your  
4 community and so you'll be...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: In the, in the  
6 beginning of the planning or the middle of the  
7 planning or the end of the planning? I just want to  
8 be clear because, you know, we've been through, I've  
9 been through some of these processes before and I  
10 just want to make sure, you know, how we are going to  
11 be, ah, intimate to this process so that we can be  
12 comfortable about its impact on the neighborhood, on  
13 the constituencies and really fulfilling, I would  
14 believe, is an honorable vision for, for, for, ah,  
15 folks that are going to be, hopefully the  
16 beneficiaries, so.

17 DAN ZARRILLI: I think that's why it's so  
18 important that we're doing this jointly with the  
19 council and with the speaker, ah, serving on the  
20 advisory board. Ah, this is, this is meant to be a  
21 very close process with the council and we want to  
22 deliver on that, and that's, um, I think that's shown  
23 in our intentions with this executive order and the  
24 naming of the speaker or his designee on the advisory  
25 board. That's the, that's the purpose, is to make

2 sure that we have very close, um, working  
3 relationships on this with the council.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So right now  
5 this, it's just the speaker that will be on the so-  
6 called advisory board from the perspective of the  
7 council. Where, where else would the other advisory  
8 board members be coming from?

9 DAN ZARRILLI: So I think we would, um,  
10 see community, ah, organizations and members from the  
11 Bronx and Queens, ah, specifically. We want to see  
12 members from labor and environmental and justice and  
13 planning organizations, ah, communities that, ah,  
14 have been impacted by the criminal justice system or  
15 have environmental justice, ah, needs and concerns.  
16 So we want to be as broad in this process as possible  
17 because this is about Riker's Island and Riker's  
18 Island has had a citywide impact. It's had very  
19 specific impacts in, ah, particular communities. But  
20 then now this is also a, an opportunity for this  
21 assess to serve the public good for the entire city  
22 and make sure that those benefits, um, are serving  
23 environmental justice and criminal justice impacted  
24 communities as well.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And is there  
3 like a scheduling, sort of like a preliminary?

4 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah, so we're, we expect  
5 to be out with some of the first, ah, community  
6 meetings later this spring and we're gonna be working  
7 on this for a least the next twelve months, as laid  
8 out in the, in the two, ah, study bills that are in  
9 front of us today.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So, you know, I  
11 want to make sure that, ah, my office is, ah,  
12 intimately in touch with this process. You know,  
13 this, ah, is a very personal, ah, situation for many  
14 of us when it comes to Riker's Island because of  
15 family and friends and neighborhoods, you know,  
16 these, so, and they're very concerned about what is  
17 actually gonna be happening here? Who's gonna be the  
18 beneficiaries to the extent that there are such  
19 things and, ah, and what it is, how are people gonna  
20 get, ah, informed and to some extent even involved  
21 in, in what's going on.

22 DAN ZARRILLI: So we'll be, we'll be  
23 reaching out to, um, you know, certainly the council  
24 and as we're setting up meetings in particular  
25 communities we'll be working with, ah, the, the

2 impact, ah, council members, so you'll, you'll be  
3 hearing from us.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So you, so the  
5 particular communities that will be impacted, are  
6 they all of the communities, or are there some that  
7 have a higher priority for some reason or another in  
8 terms of one thing or another? I mean, how do you  
9 determine what communities you'll be visiting. You  
10 understand what I'm saying?

11 DAN ZARRILLI: I do. So, I think first  
12 and foremost we want to be talking with communities  
13 in the Queens, ah, in Queens and the Bronx. But, um,  
14 you know, there are communities that have been  
15 impacted by the criminal justice system all over the  
16 city...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Yeah. I  
18 represent Harlem.

19 DAN ZARRILLI: So we want to work...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I represent the,  
21 I represent Harlem.

22 DAN ZARRILLI: ...with the council to make  
23 sure that we are all in the right places, yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So that, you  
25 just, oh...

2 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Left Harlem out  
4 of that and that's a big deal for, for, that's why  
5 I'm.

6 DAN ZARRILLI: So we look forward to  
7 working with your office, ah, on this going forward.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And there are  
9 other Harlems, so to speak that we need to make sure,  
10 you know, they're not, you know, just, they're  
11 another part of this. And I don't see too many, ah,  
12 involvement as being crippling or just in any way  
13 disturbing the vision or the intention of what we're  
14 trying to do so I think this is a touchy situation  
15 when you're talking about this prison and who's gonna  
16 get the benefit of the, of the process.

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Right.  
18 Council Member, I need to go on to the next question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Sure you can.

20 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I'm sorry,  
21 Perk, I have to go on to the next person, but I  
22 absolutely will stay in touch with you about this as  
23 well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Yeah.

25



2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.  
3 Council Member Levin?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Chair.  
5 Um, I don't want to necessarily rehash, ah,  
6 everything that my colleagues have gone over, but I  
7 do want to just add, um, my voice in support of  
8 thinking, um, long term about, um, about how, what we  
9 do with this 400 acres and how, um, and how it can  
10 ameliorate our city's, um, carbon footprint and  
11 impact as it relates to climate change for, um, the  
12 next several generations. This isn't necessarily  
13 about the next 10 years or the next 20 years. Ah,  
14 this is about the next 100 years and 200 years, um,  
15 because we need to be doing everything, as you know,  
16 that we can now to ensure that this is a habitable  
17 city for our great-grandkids and so the most that we  
18 can do, um, to ensure that this is, um, ah, that this  
19 land is, um, able to contribute to us reducing our  
20 dependence on fossil fuels and offsetting, um, the,  
21 um, ah, the overall impact that our city has, we  
22 should be prioritizing that. I agree it needs to  
23 have, ah, a broad group of stakeholders and community  
24 advocacy, not just in, not just to rubberstamp a  
25 predetermined outcome, but actually have

2 participatory and collaborative planning, um, but my,  
3 my sincere hope is that we keep in mind, ah, front  
4 and center, um, the city that we're going to be  
5 leaving to future generations. I'll turn it back to  
6 the chair. Thank you.

7 DAN ZARRILLI: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.  
9 I look forward, oh, you're good? All right. I want  
10 to thank this panel for your testimony today. We  
11 have a lot still to talk about.

12 DAN ZARRILLI: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And I look  
14 forward to continuing our conversations.

15 DAN ZARRILLI: I look forward to working  
16 with you. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you so  
18 much, guys. All right, next up we have, and at this  
19 point forward we're going, we're going to limit  
20 testimony to five minutes, just 'cause we're already  
21 at 2:30 and I want to make sure everyone can speak  
22 today and we have a full panel. So we're going to go  
23 up to six people, ah, per, ah, you know, per  
24 testimony, but we're going to go five minutes apiece.  
25 Ah, so Fernando Ortiz from The Point CDC. Clara Zeas

2 from Hope Program, Sustainable South Bronx. Sarita,  
3 ah, from Just USA. I don't want to pronounce your  
4 name wrong. With a name like Constantinides I want  
5 to make sure I get things right. And if, if, DEP, I  
6 hope you, I hope that the administration is gonna  
7 leave some folks in the room, right? I hope? All  
8 right, fantastic. Ah, Ms. Claudia Koger, ah, Astoria  
9 Tenants Organization, Incorporated, from Astoria  
10 Houses. Ms. Koger, you can come forward. Anel  
11 Hernandez from New York City Environmental Justice  
12 Alliance. And Cecil Corbin-Mark from WE ACT For  
13 Environmental Justice, or if Cecil is not still in  
14 the room I guess than John Hall from, from that  
15 organization. Huh? OK, great. All right, thank you  
16 so much. I guess we'll start here on this side and  
17 work our way over. Just make sure you click the  
18 button on there and we're all good to go. Thank you.

19 CLARA ZEAS: Good afternoon. My name is  
20 Clara Zeas. I am a proud graduate and staff member  
21 of the Hope Program, one of New York City's leading  
22 job training organizations. We are so appreciative  
23 of the ongoing support and partnership of the council  
24 to fuel our effective programs. Thank you. We  
25 offered four different job training programs, three

3 of which focuses on green construction and  
4 maintenance careers. Across all of our programs we  
5 serve men and women with deep barriers to employment,  
6 including, but not limited to, histories of criminal  
7 justice involvement, substance abuse, homeless, and  
8 others. Despite these challenges, 75% of our  
9 graduates secure jobs and 80% are employed one year  
10 later, a rate that outpaces our peers nationwide. I  
11 am here today to share Hope's support for Renewable  
12 Riker's. The philosophy underlying Hope's approach  
13 to green job training is to empower our neighborhoods  
14 who have been disproportionately impacted by negative  
15 environmental and societal impacts to continue to  
16 make positive change in their communities. Renewable  
17 Riker's shares this focus. Just as the men and women  
18 who have been detained on Riker's Island deserve  
19 opportunities to build thriving careers and  
20 sustainable futures, so does the island itself  
21 deserve the opportunity for renewal. We all know  
22 that the City Council has pledged to reduce energy  
23 consumption by 40% in the next decade. Renewable  
24 Riker's has huge potential to help the city meet this  
25 goal. While transforming the legacy of Riker's  
Island and providing hundreds of jobs to our

3 neighbors returning to the communities, the families  
4 and neighborhoods and communities most impacted by  
5 criminal justice policies has earned the new  
6 opportunity created by the transformation into a  
7 sustainable infrastructure hub that creates hope for  
8 a sustainable future. This is a true opportunity to  
9 create pathways for jails to jobs to justice. We  
10 certainly offer to participate in any formal or  
11 informal advisory committees that may be created to  
12 focus on this issue. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you so  
14 much. Next up?

15 FERNANDO ORTIZ: Good afternoon. My name  
16 is Fernando Ortiz. I am the climate and resiliency  
17 organizer at The Point CDC in Hunt's Point. Um, and  
18 I just quickly wanted to thank Councilman Salamanca  
19 for bringing forth some of the issues such as the  
20 historic systemic racism that has occurred on Riker's  
21 Island and for inviting the city, um, to speak with  
22 us from the South Bronx and we hope to be involved in  
23 this participatory advisory team. So today I stand  
24 here representing The Point, um, the Hunt's Point  
25 neighborhood and the larger South Bronx community, in  
supporting the transformation of the penal colony

3 that has been Riker's Island into a hub for renewable  
4 energy and sustainable infrastructure through the  
5 Renewable Riker's Act. A stone throw's away from the  
6 coast of Hunt's Point, Riker's Island, a 413-acre  
7 island, has for decades been an eerie, dark space  
8 where so many of youth and community members have  
9 been confined to because of an inequitable and unjust  
10 system. The South Bronx has for decades been  
11 characterized for its accumulation of polluting  
12 infrastructure, high public health concerns, and high  
13 concentration of social services considered non-  
14 desired in many other places, such as homeless  
15 shelters, detention centers, and rehabs clinics. The  
16 closing of Riker's Island should be seen as an  
17 opportunity to potentially meet many of the state,  
18 citywide, and local community needs through  
19 community-driven and restorative justice initiatives  
20 that seek to advance climate action. The Renewable  
21 Riker's Act will allow for renewable energy and  
22 energy storage technology and other sustainable  
23 infrastructure on Riker's Island to be considered. As  
24 our city moves to meet its rigorous climate and  
25 sustainability goals with an ever-growing population  
and density, we must find truly sustainable solutions

3 that meet our needs and which are developed for the  
4 benefit of those who have been most marginalized and  
5 disadvantaged from the previous colony that was  
6 Riker's Island. In 2000 the New York Power Authority  
7 expedited the siting of several peaker plants  
8 throughout New York City, including four in the South  
9 Bronx. These peaker plants, which were supposed to  
10 be temporary, 18 years later continue to operate and  
11 pollute our already suffering environments during  
12 moments when our city has the highest energy demands.  
13 Yet the communities where these peaker plants are  
14 sited are the same ones who struggle with energy  
15 utility bills and who benefit the least. The  
16 Renewable Riker's Act can help facilitate the closing  
17 of the polluting energy plants and increase our  
18 reliance on renewable energy, while helping to clean  
19 our bodies of water by increasing potential  
20 wastewater treatment in our city. These bills have  
21 the potential to transform a toxic wasteland into a  
22 space that meets community, citywide, and state  
23 needs. However, it is important that the future of  
24 Riker's Island honors those most marginalized and  
25 disadvantaged from its previous uses, and that it is  
reimagined considering these communities nearest and

3 most harmed by it, especially all those who have been  
4 in some way impacted by its school to prison cycle,  
5 and that the city owes the community restorative  
6 justice. The future of Riker's Island should not be  
7 determined by the real estate industry or the  
8 expansion of airport infrastructure. Rather, its  
9 future should be one that is determined by the  
10 community and its victims and which moves our city  
11 towards a renewable, sustainable, and regenerative  
12 future. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you  
14 very much. Ms. Koger? It's always good to see you.  
15 Thank you for making it here today.

16 CLAUDIA KOGER: Good afternoon, and I  
17 respect the council are entirely our mouthpieces for  
18 this city and we appreciate, Councilman Costa, and I  
19 don't mess up your last name, but I want to go  
20 forward with speaking on behalf of the, I speak on  
21 behalf of the Astoria Houses Resident Association, as  
22 well as the other public housing that's on the border  
23 of the riverfront and around Riker's Island. They  
24 all must go. That's one of the things we've been  
25 discussing in our community for years, because it has  
26 been proven that the air is polluted by this oil and



3 we are inundated with pollution living in Astoria  
4 Houses, because we live between two power plants, Con  
5 Edison on 20th Avenue and Ravenswood, which is within  
6 walking distance from us. We also are in a  
7 helicopter pass and we have a crosswind, so we eat,  
8 sleep, and breathe pollution daily. And because of  
9 that our children are absent from school. We have a  
10 population of children that's absent from school at  
11 least 20 days in the year, out of school because of  
12 asthma attacks as well as the fact that the  
13 medication for asthma also is out of reach for most  
14 of the people that's living in public housing, and  
15 because of that we're sitting here today asking you  
16 to take into consideration that this polluted air can  
17 be, can be at least subsidized with the solar energy  
18 plan that is recommended for Riker's Island, the  
19 property on Riker's Island, and this is the most  
20 important thing because we are talking about next  
21 generations, and I am a first generation that lived  
22 in my, in development, and there's three that's  
23 living there now, and those three are suffering.  
24 There's two of them that's suffering. The first one,  
25 my children, that was no asthma attacks. But these  
two generations since these plants has been sitting

2 there, there is asthma in all of them. And I  
3 appreciate your, ah, listening to us today because  
4 not only will it affect just Astoria, quality of air  
5 affects the entire city and we ask of you your  
6 support.

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
8 Ms. Koger, as always. Thank you.

9 ANNEL HERNANDEZ: Hi, good afternoon,  
10 Chairperson Costa Constantinides. I think I said it  
11 right. And of course Samara and other members of  
12 the, the city. My name is Annel Hernandez and I'm He  
13 on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice  
14 Alliance. We are a citywide membership network  
15 liking grassroots organizations from low-income  
16 neighborhoods and communities of color in their  
17 struggle for environmental justice, including The  
18 Point CDC, who just testified, as well as various  
19 other groups in the Bronx and Queens and throughout  
20 the city. We believe that climate justice is based  
21 on the principle that frontline communities most  
22 vulnerable to climate change must play an integral  
23 role in planning for the renewable and regenerative  
24 energy economy. The massive systems change required  
25 to stave off the dangerous climate change impacts and

3 public health hazards requires the consideration of  
4 the unique vulnerability facing the communities we  
5 serve. Currently, New York City is home to 16 peaker  
6 plants, many with multiple generating units, some as  
7 large as 600 megawatts, both publicly and privately  
8 owned. These highly polluting fossil fuel-powered  
9 plants, known as peakers, fire up in the South Bronx,  
10 Sunset Park, and other communities of color on the  
11 hottest days of the year when air quality is at its  
12 worst and sensitive populations are often warned to  
13 stay indoors. Peakers then spew even more harmful  
14 emission into neighborhoods already overburdened by  
15 pollution and exacerbating widespread health  
16 problems. Many of these plants, particularly the  
17 largest, oldest, most polluting, are owned by out-of-  
18 state private developers, taking these billions of  
19 dollars in wealth out of these communities. Instead,  
20 New York City government can use public land to  
21 invest locally in renewable energy and energy storage  
22 that can help us meet this peak demand, reduce  
23 electric bills, and provide a local resilient power.  
24 Renewable and resilient energy systems will advance  
25 energy democracy, reduce energy cost burdens, improve  
air quality, strengthen the resiliency of

2 communities, and capture both the work force and  
3 community benefits of such a sustainable system. To  
4 this end, Intro 1593 is critical, as it helps New  
5 York City assess the potential of different types of  
6 renewable energy sources combined with battery  
7 storage within one year of passage. We need to  
8 ensure we are prioritizing our accelerated time table  
9 for meeting our emission reduction targets with local  
10 generation. Over the past year the Mayor's Office  
11 has made commitment to invest in and support  
12 hydropower from Canada. Instead, they should be  
13 focusing and investing locally in large-scale  
14 renewable energy and storage, and that's the  
15 opportunity that Riker's Island provides.  
16 Additionally, Intro 1592 sends a clear message that  
17 Riker's Island will be used for environmental  
18 purposes by transferring jurisdiction from the  
19 Department of Corrections to the Department of  
20 Environmental Protection. As part of this effort, we  
21 should also seek to understand how a large-scale  
22 renewable energy will be owned and managed by the  
23 agency as well as set standards for job creation and  
24 potential subscriber benefits to the new system.  
25 Moreover, 1591 can provide us with more information

3 on the feasibility of other critical pieces of  
4 infrastructure, including wastewater treatment,  
5 organic waste processing, and large-scale composting  
6 operation. The development of state-of-the-art  
7 anaerobic digester alongside composting operations  
8 would also provide the opportunity to process large  
9 quantities of organic waste diverted from landfill  
10 and from incinerators, therefore helping combat  
11 climate change and furthering the city's zero waste  
12 goals. As we envision a Renewable Riker's New York  
13 City must ensure that the former sites of polluting  
14 infrastructure on our waterfront land can be used for  
15 resilient industrial uses based on local needs as  
16 well as other community-defined priorities. We  
17 support Renewable Riker's because it is an  
18 opportunity to help heal communities that have been  
19 overburdened by poor air quality, over-policing, and  
20 the criminalization of our communities. New York  
21 City's current electricity generation and organic  
22 waste management are polluting, antiquated, and  
23 inequitable. The recent passage of the New York  
24 State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act  
25 serves as a catalyst to move us toward a renewable  
energy and sustainability future, and we must

2 collectively recognize the opportunity to re-envision  
3 Riker's as a demonstration of a just transition in  
4 New York City. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
6 thank you. Sarita?

7 SARITA DAFTARY: Hello. Good afternoon.  
8 Thank you, Council Member and staff and for the  
9 opportunity, whoops. I'll start over. Thank you...

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right,  
11 there ya go.

12 SARITA DAFTARY: Sorry. I have a cold so  
13 I couldn't hear if you couldn't hear me. Um, good  
14 afternoon. Thank you council members and staff for  
15 the opportunity to testify. My name is Sarita  
16 Daftary and I'm testifying on behalf of Just  
17 Leadership USA. As leaders of the Close Riker's  
18 Campaign we strongly support the package of Renewable  
19 Riker's bills, Intro 1591, 1592, and 1593, proposed  
20 by Council Member Constantinides, and thank you for  
21 your leadership on this plan. JLUSA supports all of  
22 these bills for a number of reasons, and I also want  
23 to say that we believe that these can all move  
24 forward immediately along with the participatory  
25 planning process that the administration has

3 proposed. I also could not miss the opportunity to  
4 say that a good start to that planning process would  
5 have been for them to stay and listen to the  
6 environmental justice advocates and criminal justice  
7 advocates that are testifying now. So, moving on.

8 Um, first, ah, by, thank you, thank you [inaudible],  
9 thank you [inaudible], and more of you, thank you.

10 First, by transferring Riker's Island from the  
11 control of the Department of Environmental, sorry,  
12 from the control of the Department of Corrections to  
13 the control of the Department of Environmental  
14 Protection for coordinating future green  
15 infrastructure uses, as called for in 1592. New York  
16 City has the opportunity to further solidify the end  
17 of the Riker's Island jail complex that has  
18 traumatized generations of New Yorkers and  
19 simultaneously ensure that any future use of Riker's  
20 Island benefits the communities that have been most  
21 harmed by mass criminalization, by environmental  
22 injustice, and by disinvestment. Few things could  
23 make the end of Riker's Island penal colony more  
24 definitive than actually transferring the land for a  
25 positive use. Second - any future use of Riker's  
must benefit communities that have been most harmed

3 by its legacy. This has been our position from the  
4 beginning of our campaign to close the jails on  
5 Riker's. In the summer of 2018 we conducted a wide-  
6 ranging community planning process to develop our  
7 Build Communities platform, published in January  
8 2019. The process involved more than 50 partners and  
9 more than 200 individuals in communities most  
10 impacted by Riker's Island. We asked people about  
11 the investments they want and need for their  
12 communities to thrive. Included among our public  
13 health proposals is a vision for dedicating Riker's  
14 Island to green infrastructure uses. We also asked  
15 through our Build Communities assemblies how people  
16 believe Riker's should be remembered. There were a  
17 range of responses, many of them about active public  
18 education and about reparations. People mentioned  
19 education through schools, curricula, and mobile  
20 exhibits. People also suggested a memorial or  
21 memorials either on Riker's, in the communities that  
22 have been most impacted, or in very visible places  
23 throughout the city, or all of those options. Some  
24 form of memorial on Riker's Island could certainly  
25 coexist with the renewable Riker's proposals given  
how much land is available. I also want to say, just



3 to name a couple of partners that weren't able to  
4 attend when the hearing date was moved, ah, Bronx  
5 Connect, the Women's Community Justice Association,  
6 and several of the other 40-plus partners who signed  
7 onto the letter we sent the administration wanted to  
8 be here and were not able to after the reschedule, so  
9 they will submit testimony in writing and support.

10 Um, I also want to note what we did not hear through  
11 our community assemblies. We did not hear anyone who  
12 has been impacted by Riker's Island suggest that it  
13 should be used to expand Laguardia Airport. We did  
14 not hear impacted people say that Riker's Island  
15 should be redeveloped for affordable housing or  
16 mental health treatment centers or homeless shelters.

17 We did not hear people talking about putting  
18 community services on Riker's Island. Certainly,  
19 community services in their communities, but not on  
20 Riker's. Riker's is to this day, as we speak, right  
21 now, is a site of torture. It is a site of  
22 historical trauma. For more than 80 years people the  
23 city didn't want to deal with have been sent to an  
24 isolated, toxic island and it's been a human rights  
25 disaster for 80 years. People do not belong on  
Riker's. I hope we can bury that idea today. It

2 will likely take generations to repair the harm  
3 Riker's has done to black, brown, and poor New  
4 Yorkers. But we must start somewhere and we will not  
5 get another chance to use 400 acres for the benefit  
6 of communities that have borne the brunt of both mass  
7 criminalization and environmental burdens. The bare  
8 minimum to start addressing that legacy is to make  
9 sure Riker's Island is used in a way that is guided  
10 by and for the benefit of people who have suffered  
11 its harms, and the harms of environmental racism that  
12 affect the same communities. If it were not for  
13 courageous advocates who survived Riker's and council  
14 members who trusted and followed their leadership, we  
15 would not be having a conversation about what to do  
16 with that land. If it were not for their leadership  
17 there would be no end in site to its use as a penal  
18 colony. In honor of them and on behalf of the  
19 leaders of the Close Riker's Campaign we ask the  
20 council to move this proposal forward now.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
22 thank you so much.

23 CECIL CORBIN-MARK: Good afternoon,  
24 Chairman Constantinides and distinguished members of  
25 the committee. I'm the deputy of WE ACT For

3 Environmental Justice and we are a 32-year-old  
4 environmental justice community-based membership  
5 organization located in Harlem. Our mission is to  
6 build healthy communities and we do that by engaging  
7 people of color and low income in the creation of  
8 environmental and environmental health policies. I'm  
9 here today to express WE ACT's strong support for  
10 these introductions, which are the foci of today's  
11 hearing, Intro 1591, 1592, and 1593. The ancient  
12 Greeks had two words for time. One was chronos and  
13 the other was chyros. Chronos is about the actual  
14 time as in the hour on the clock, and the other is  
15 about the moment in history. I want to frame my  
16 testimony using these two concepts. But before I do  
17 so, I want to applaud the chair and the other  
18 cosponsors of these three bills and strongly urge  
19 other members of the council to get onto these bills.  
20 These three bills, popularly referred to as Renewable  
21 Riker's bills, offer the city and its residents a  
22 path forward on how to plan for and reimagine the  
23 future of Riker's Island. WE ACT engaged in  
24 conversations with you, Mr. Chair, in 2018 around the  
25 idea of deploying solar and solar storage on Riker's  
Island. We are grateful to you for your leadership

2 in connecting us to other advocates who were also to  
3 you about that. And we gladly join today with other  
4 advocates like New York Lawyers for the Public  
5 Interest and New York City Environmental Justice  
6 Alliance, ah New York City Legal Conservation Voters,  
7 Just USA, Just Leadership USA, sorry, and many others  
8 in supporting Intros 1591 and 1593, which call for  
9 the city to study the feasibility of wastewater  
10 facilities and renewable energy generation and energy  
11 storage on Riker's Island. WE ACT also supports  
12 Intro 1592, which would transfer the jurisdiction of  
13 the island from the Department of Correction to the  
14 Department of Environmental Protection. Why are we  
15 in support of this package of bills, you might ask.  
16 To answer the question, I want to return to the two  
17 concepts of time offered by the ancient Greeks. So  
18 let's start with the chyros. What is the moment that  
19 we find ourselves in? As we begin a new decade,  
20 welcome to the Roaring Twenties, the world's leading  
21 climate scientists have warned that there is only 10  
22 years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of  
23 10.5 degrees Celsius, beyond which even half a degree  
24 will significantly worsen the risk of droughts,  
25 floods, extreme heat, and poverty for hundreds of

2 millions of people. We're in a moment where  
3 frontline communities are already experiencing the  
4 leading edge of public health effects that are  
5 stemming from the climate crisis. For example, we  
6 are already seeing adverse health outcomes related to  
7 extreme heat and we continue to experience an  
8 exacerbated assault on the respiratory health of many  
9 residents in [inaudible] communities that host peaker  
10 plants and wastewater treatment systems. Beyond the  
11 boundaries of our city the Indian Point nuclear power  
12 plant in Westchester County is scheduled to close in  
13 2020, that's this year, or 2021, they say. Indian  
14 Point provides a significant share of the power to  
15 the city. Starting in the 1970s US policy-makers  
16 embraced draconian criminal justice policies as part  
17 of the war on drugs. Tough-on-crime politicians Rose  
18 to power by pledging longer mandatory minimum  
19 sentences and more intense policing practices. The  
20 American legal system became the primary tool for  
21 addressing the nation's social ills, and as  
22 incarceration rapidly grew in the following decades  
23 so too did the coffers of an emerging industrial,  
24 prison industrial complex, and an ever-increasing  
25 number of black and brown bodies became so-called

3 collateral damage. Lastly, this moment is about the  
4 predominantly people of color communities that have  
5 played host to sewage treatment plants that bring  
6 benefits to wealthier, often more white communities  
7 when they flush their toilets daily as host  
8 communities endure odors from the plants like Ward's  
9 Island and North River in east and west Harlem,  
10 respectively. Now to the chronos, if we look at what  
11 the scientists are telling us we are late to get  
12 about the business of planning with the most impacted  
13 residents in our city figuring out the just  
14 transition that puts solar panels on Riker's Island,  
15 um, to speed on the transition to more renewable  
16 energy generation. When we look at the plight of  
17 returning citizens it is past time to create training  
18 opportunities in the solar installation and  
19 maintenance field and, most importantly, jobs for  
20 those most harmed by the prison industrial complex  
21 with four million incarcerated. WE ACT has  
22 successfully run such a training program and we can  
23 testify to the opportunity that this training can  
24 bring for those who have gone through it and entered  
25 the green economy. In fact you'll be hearing from  
one of our members, John Hall, shortly. The idea

3 that we cannot get about the business of planning for  
4 the just future, the redemptive future of our city  
5 and for those residents most impacted, whether they  
6 come from Harlem, El Barrio, ah, Washington Heights  
7 or other communities like it across the city, is  
8 ridiculous and we urge the council to move these  
9 bills quickly and to start the business of figuring  
10 out the just transition. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I mean,  
12 really, just thank, first I just want to thank all of  
13 you for your advocacy, for your thoughtfulness, for  
14 your continued efforts to fight for justice on so  
15 many different levels. You know, our council needs  
16 to move these bills. I agree with you and we are  
17 looking, ah, to, forward to doing so. But without  
18 your efforts many of these things would not be  
19 possible. So first I want to thank you for all of  
20 your advocacy and all that you do, 'cause I agree.  
21 There's a generation of young people that are coming  
22 behind us who are wondering why is it taking so long.  
23 What, what can we do to move faster? Um, we have to  
24 look those young people in the face every day and  
25 explain to them how we have not acted as quickly as  
we need to, um, so, you know, we need to act with

2 that urgency and I understand that urgency and I look  
3 forward to continuing to partner with each and every  
4 one of you with that sense of urgency to meet this  
5 moment. Ah, so, I mean, I have some questions, but I  
6 think I know the answers already. Um, so what you  
7 want [inaudible] sort of looking at the process the  
8 Mayor's Office laid out. What do you believe that  
9 process can achieve, um, short of through their  
10 executive order, through their advisory board? How  
11 do we make sure, what do you feel that we can get  
12 through that process quickly and sort of making sure  
13 that we get it right? Go ahead.

14 FERNANDO ORTIZ: I mean, um, I think for  
15 that process to be done right, I don't think it  
16 should be done quickly. I think, you know...

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: OK.

18 FERNANDO ORTIZ: Um, we're talking about,  
19 ah, an island that has for 80 years or more been, ah,  
20 damaging and, and harming for many communities, and  
21 so I think that when we talk about a visioning plan  
22 for, for the future of that island that we really  
23 need to get all the stakeholders and that we really  
24 need to engage the communities who have been victim  
25 to it and, and, as they mentioned, a citywide effort



2 to really, um, thoroughly envision this island from  
3 the name to its uses to its capacity to, um, you  
4 know, what's going to happen with the people who have  
5 been a victim of the island. So I think it should be  
6 something that is very holistic and, and, and done  
7 right and hopefully not too quickly.

8 ANNEL HERNANDEZ: And to, to build on  
9 what Fernando said, I think, I think many people on  
10 this panel can agree that we've been part of a very  
11 many number of advisory boards and advocacy councils  
12 that have amounted to nothing, might not want to  
13 have this process just for process' sake. I want a  
14 real commitment from the Mayor's Office and a  
15 commitment to invest in this project for  
16 environmental and sustainable uses. Um, in that way  
17 it could potentially be a beneficial process, but I,  
18 I would have to see how it goes and what the  
19 executive order turns out to be and who are the  
20 members appointed to this council.

21 CECIL CORBIN-MARK: I'll just add, ah, to  
22 what both Fernando and Annel have said and say, you  
23 know, I think fine if the mayor wants to move forth  
24 with an executive order. Um, I personally think  
25 that, you know, executive orders can be helpful in

3 certain situations. The challenge I have with an  
4 executive order is that they are not permanent. Your  
5 job as the council is to pass laws and make the mayor  
6 sign it, ah, our job is to make the mayor sign it.  
7 So you all do your job, we'll do our job, and we will  
8 get this signed. Because the idea of an executive  
9 order, you know, that's fine for now. But what about  
10 when the next mayor comes in? If this is not a  
11 priority of the next mayor then it could easily be  
12 revoked, pulled back, or disappear. And our  
13 communities have had way too much of that. It's time  
14 for that kind of foolishness to be ended.

15           CLAUDIA KOGER: I would just like to say  
16 that, um, one of the things, um, that we're  
17 exhibiting here today is blood, sweat, and tears,  
18 because we are talking about years and years and  
19 years where so many things has gone on on Riker's  
20 Island and it has, ah, affected generation after  
21 generation. So we don't want to rush through  
22 something that's not going to be effective in going  
23 forward because we are already having young people  
24 that's dying along the wayside. We need to stop so  
25 that we can protect our future for the generations  
coming along behind us [granted].

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.

3 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. And just  
4 quickly...

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: I will echo, ah, what my  
7 colleagues have said about, um, you know, ensuring  
8 that's there real teeth to this and that the, the  
9 executive order and the planning process can move  
10 forward and these bills could all move forward and  
11 must move forward at the same time. Um, we, one  
12 thing that I want to say about the participatory  
13 planning process is that process needs to not act as  
14 if people started thinking about this the day the  
15 executive order passed. Justice-impacted communities  
16 have been talking about this and thinking about this  
17 and doing participatory planning around this for  
18 years, and so all of that needs to be taken into  
19 account, including all of the things that people have  
20 already said on the record, meetings that people have  
21 turned out to and talked about what should and should  
22 not happen on Riker's Island.

23 FERNANDO ORTIZ: We're suspicious and  
24 it's kind of the summary as, as our Councilman

25

2 Menchaca said, we're, we're suspicious but willing to  
3 collaborate.

4 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.  
5 Council Member Menchaca [inaudible] for him to ask  
6 some questions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah, thank  
8 you, ah, thank you, Chair, and panel for being here  
9 today. Um, on this note, what role did you all have  
10 in shaping the executive order?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: None.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: None. Is that  
13 across the board?

14 UNIDENTIFIED: None.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: OK. Suspicion  
16 rises. Ah, you all bring up very good points about  
17 resources and the work that you've been doing already  
18 for a long time to really build this movement to  
19 close Riker's. I still don't think that, we're,  
20 we're not closed, we haven't closed Riker's. 2026 is  
21 fair away. So much can happen between now and then.  
22 And I'm still on the mission to close Riker's myself,  
23 and so I'm really wanting to work with you to kind of  
24 think about what, what we can keep, ah, the drum beat  
25 that we can keep on to keep everyone accountable,

2 including us, because I think that, that the second  
3 that we believe our own hype is the second we lose  
4 the goal, and that's what has been troubling me this  
5 whole time, this is why I voted the way I voted, and  
6 this is why I'm part of this Renewable Riker's  
7 campaign 'cause I think it begins a new journey for  
8 discussion. But I'm not, I'm not trusting what is on  
9 the books today and I want to work with you to figure  
10 out how we can, 'cause there's some things we can  
11 rush. I think we can rush closing Riker's. I think  
12 we can rush making that happen now rather than 2026.  
13 So that's, that's gonna be my, and I'm seeing some  
14 love here so I'm glad that we're, we're connected on  
15 that front. But we, we can't do that without,  
16 without holding the system accountable and I want to  
17 work with you to do that. So would you, would you  
18 agree to a meeting so we can sit down and talk a  
19 little bit more about that? Cool, awesome, I'll  
20 follow up with, with all of you. And the last thing  
21 I want to say in terms of the work that needs to  
22 happen around, around Renewable Riker's and really  
23 kind of thinking about the future for, for Riker's, I  
24 just met with the indigent, there's a group of  
25 indigenous people in New York City that are doing a

2 lot of work and we're, I'm, I'm just doing a bunch of  
3 opportunities, or I'm creating a lot of opportunities  
4 from our discussion. Is that a, is that a community  
5 that you've engaged as a coalition, and is that  
6 something that we can do together to build  
7 relationship with indigenous people, ah, in New York  
8 City. There's about 200,000 that we think and I'm  
9 working on the census work here just to kind of make,  
10 make a community that feels invisible visible, and is  
11 that an open opportunity? Yah?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Absolutely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: OK, great.

15 Awesome. All this is good. Let's keep working.

16 Thank you, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
18 Council Member Menchaca. Ah, Council Member Perkins,  
19 you have a question? No? OK, great.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I'm looking  
22 forward to continue to work with each and every one  
23 of you. Thank you so much for your time and all of  
24 your advocacy. All right. So this is going to be a  
25 little bit of a bigger panel. I've got, ah,

2 Minister, ah, Dr. Victoria Philips. I've got Curtis  
3 Bell, A Little Piece of Light. I've got Dr. Gregory  
4 Bowden from [AECOM]. Melissa Iachen from NYLPI, ah,  
5 Vidal Guzman from Just USA, ah, Eric Goldstein from  
6 NRDC.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: All right, so nobody wants  
8 to start. Everybody wants to be courteous to our  
9 colleagues.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right,  
11 so we'll start here and then we're gonna get to AECOM  
12 because I think you guys will be set up by then,  
13 right? I hope. OK, great. Let's do it.

14 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Terrific. My name is  
15 Eric Goldstein, New York City environment director at  
16 the Natural Resources Defense Council. Thank you so  
17 much, ah, Chairman Constantinides, for holding this  
18 hearing and your leadership. Ah, NRDC has previously  
19 expressed support for the independent commission on  
20 New York City's criminal justice and incarceration  
21 reform. As the Lippman Commission correctly noted,  
22 closing Riker's Island is a moral imperative, and the  
23 closure presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to  
24 convert this island from an island of shame into a  
25 showplace of sustainability. The island could be

3 transformed into one that houses resilient renewable  
4 energy-producing solar arrays and energy storage,  
5 along with moderate sewage and food waste treatment  
6 facilities, allowing older waste facilities and  
7 polluting power plants located in densely populated  
8 city neighborhoods to close and creating hundreds of  
9 green jobs for city residents, including many of  
10 those who have suffered from the shame of, ah,  
11 incarceration at Riker's. So we're pleased to be  
12 here today to support all three bills. First, we  
13 support the bill 1593 that would direct the Mayor's  
14 Office to conduct a feasibility study on constructing  
15 renewable energy resources. This makes perfect  
16 sense. The island could provide space for solar  
17 arrays and energy storage, as you know, provide New  
18 Yorkers with clean and reliable energy in perpetuity.  
19 Such uses could bring about the closure of older  
20 fossil fuel peaker power plants, located in densely  
21 populated neighborhoods, and whose emissions pose  
22 localized air quality problems. We also support  
23 Intro 1591, which would direct DEP to conduct a  
24 feasibility study concerning the construction of  
25 wastewater treatment facilities on the island. The  
idea of this, constructing modern, state-of-the-art



3 sewage facilities, holds great promise. As we've  
4 heard earlier, four existing city sewage plants,  
5 close to 80 years old, as they approach the end of  
6 their useful lifetimes they will require expensive  
7 upgrades, and being able to shut down one or more of  
8 those facilities and freeing up waterfront acreage so  
9 that they could be devoted to more community-friendly  
10 land uses and creating modern sewage facilities on  
11 Riker's would address a whole variety of  
12 environmental problems, including, ah, creating  
13 opportunities to deal with the combined sewage  
14 overflow problem and nitrogen loadings into nearby  
15 waterways. Finally, NRDC supports Intro 1592,  
16 transferring control of the island from Corrections  
17 to DEP. DEP is the branch of government charged with  
18 safeguarding our air and our water. It's the best  
19 agency to take control of Riker's as the city makes  
20 plans for the island's green future and, importantly,  
21 transferring Riker's to DEP would provide additional  
22 assurances to New Yorkers that Riker's used for jail  
23 facilities would indeed come to a permanent end.  
24 NRDC also believes that another worthwhile land use  
25 for Riker's would be to create modern composting and  
anaerobic digestion facilities on the island. Such

2 operation would prevent this waste from being buried  
3 in landfills, where it's a major source of methane  
4 emissions, and so we urge this committee to work with  
5 the Sanitation Department to expand the city's  
6 residential and commercial composting capacity at  
7 Riker's Island. This could save taxpayers also  
8 millions of dollars from having to send food waste  
9 and yard waste to out-of-state landfills or  
10 incinerators. Finally, three troubling ideas that  
11 are raised that ought to be knocked down and not  
12 given a second's thought. Ah, one is waste  
13 incineration on the island. NRDC opposes a waste  
14 incinerator. It would immediately become one of the  
15 city's largest sources of air pollution emissions and  
16 be inconsistent with forward-looking waste policies  
17 around the nation, which are focused on waste  
18 prevention, recycling, composting, equity, and making  
19 manufacturers responsible for designing products more  
20 sustainably. Second, the idea of a Laguardia Airport  
21 expansion. We oppose that, too. Ah, expanding  
22 Laguardia Airport would harm local wetlands and  
23 waterways with landfill and pollution and represent  
24 the questionable public investment in an era of  
25 increasing global warming and sea level rise. And

2 then finally the idea of building housing on the  
3 island. Ah, NRDC is also troubled by that idea.  
4 Living quarters on, ah, landfill with who knows what  
5 toxins have been buried doesn't sound like a wise  
6 approach and the location, as others have pointed  
7 out, is largely inaccessible to public  
8 transportation. So you're on exactly the right  
9 track. Energy storage, ah, clean energy, modern  
10 sewage treatment, food waste, and anaerobic digestion  
11 facilities, green jobs for New Yorkers, including  
12 folks who have suffered. We look forward to working  
13 with you and the administration. We thank you for  
14 your leadership, and it was great to hear Speaker  
15 Johnson also be supportive today of this next  
16 necessary step to end the shame of Riker's Island.

17 VIDAL GUZMAN: My name is Vidal Guzman.  
18 But before I start my testimony I just really want to  
19 say in two years we know 48 council members,  
20 approximately 48 council members, would be gone and I  
21 really want to say this for advocates and other  
22 individuals that this is a time to fight for  
23 everything. For City Council we are urging you  
24 directly impacted people, directly impacted  
25 communities, this is the moment that every single day

2 we have to fight for better, ah, ah, communities and  
3 a better New York. Ah, this April will make four  
4 years since the Close Riker's campaign began. Over  
5 these past years the campaign grew to a coalition of  
6 170 organizations who marched in rain, snow, cold,  
7 heat to put pressure on Mayor de Blasio to finally  
8 close Riker's. As a mayor, as a member of the Close  
9 Riker's campaign, ah, and someone who spent three-  
10 and-a-half years on Riker's, I'm honored to have  
11 fought and marched with other directly impacted  
12 people like Darren Mack, Gana, Johnny Perez, Anna,  
13 Herbert, and many others. Without their voices  
14 people who have survived Riker's there won't be no  
15 plan about closing Riker's. We won't be talking  
16 about what we do next. But we know that closing  
17 Riker's wasn't enough. Our vision for justice is  
18 always bigger than that. This is why we're proposing  
19 relocating funds, 7.3 billion, from budget from the  
20 Department of Correction, NYPD, the Department of  
21 Probation, and district attorneys to fully fund our,  
22 ah, directly impacted community through our Build  
23 Community platform. But even that's not a complete  
24 version. We have a plan of what we gonna do next  
25 after Riker's is gone. We believe that New York can

2 be a leader in not just decarceration but  
3 environmental justice and as you see this space right  
4 here is criminal justice [inaudible] to justice in  
5 the same space and that is powerful. By replacing  
6 power plants and wastewater treatment sites in South  
7 Bronx and Queensbridge with green infrastructure on  
8 Riker's Island, I lived at Hunt's Point when I was  
9 young. I remember the smell from wastewater  
10 treatment plants, and I remember all the people  
11 dealing with asthma and wonder why. What if Hunt's  
12 Points didn't have to deal with that anymore?  
13 Passing Renewable Riker's will fulfill our vision  
14 that turned that horrible stain of our city in  
15 something that can start to restore the neighborhood  
16 hit hardest by mass incarceration divesting, ah, and  
17 polluting. We have heard all the questions what will  
18 happen next with Riker's. Some people, like the  
19 correctional office unit, are just spreading rumors  
20 about building luxury housing there. We know it's  
21 too toxic for that. But some people have said that  
22 the city should build mental health facilities on  
23 Riker's Island or affordable housing on Riker's  
24 Island and those of us who've been on Riker's Island  
25 saying that is not the way that you address the harm

2 of people who has been impacted, traumatized, and  
3 also people who didn't make it home back home. We  
4 have, we have a choice right now. Those of us who  
5 have been on Riker's know that this is not the way to  
6 address the harm that Riker's Island has done to  
7 communities of color. I can tell you, you cannot pay  
8 me enough affordable housing in our community, I  
9 mean, you cannot pay me enough to live on Riker's  
10 Island. There is much more better ways to create  
11 mental health services and affordable housing in our  
12 communities, and our Build Community platform  
13 describes that. And as I call it, the people's  
14 community, ah, Build Community platform, 'cause  
15 everyone from impacted communities had a point to  
16 input about what they wanted to do. Directly  
17 impacted communities are speaking again. It's time  
18 to move this forward and pass Renewable Riker's. I  
19 been here four years. I'm still gonna be here more  
20 years until we successfully see Riker's close and  
21 Renewable Riker's happen and until we are fully  
22 investing our Build Communities, until we fully see a  
23 New York that reflects, that reflects, as I say  
24 again, people who been criminalized by ah, ah, ah, by  
25 Riker's Island, who been incarcerated on Riker's

2 Island, our voices matter. We are humans. And this  
3 is time to move this forward. And the last thing I  
4 have to say again, City Council, the 48 council  
5 members who are gonna be leaving in two years, fight  
6 like it's your last. Don't just talk, put action  
7 behind your words. And if you care about every  
8 single child that you see, every voter that voted for  
9 you, then fight for them like we're fighting every  
10 single day. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

12 VIDAL GUZMAN: Thank you.

13 MINISTER DOCTOR VICTORIA PHILIPS: Good  
14 afternoon, Chair and all others. My name for most of  
15 you who know is Minister Doctor Victoria Philips.  
16 Everyone also just calls me Ms. V. I'm the founder of  
17 Visionary V. Let me first thank you all once again  
18 who stepped out on faith and voted to close Riker's.  
19 And for holding this hearing today. That vote will  
20 end this city's historic era of holding our fellow  
21 New Yorkers, the majority of whom are heavily from,  
22 the majority are from heavily populated New York City  
23 black and brown communities. And you mainly cage on  
24 the toxic penal colony known as Riker's Island.  
25 Riker's is an isolated site of generational and

3 historical trauma, where the uses like affordable  
4 housing, homeless shelters, treatment centers, and  
5 other human services have no place. Let me explain.  
6 I've delivered countless expert testimony on the  
7 record of my direct observations while doing  
8 cognitive behavioral therapy on Riker's and now  
9 monitoring for the Brad A Settlement through the  
10 mental health project, Urban Justice Center. In  
11 addition, I have remained on the Department of  
12 Corrections advisory board for the past six years and  
13 continue to consistently push forward along with  
14 other advocates most of the changes that have  
15 occurred in the department within that time. For  
16 years I have worked closely with several of you and  
17 your colleagues around various human right abuses and  
18 barbaric treatment exhibited throughout our New York  
19 City Department of Correction. Let me be clear. The  
20 hidden-away access Riker's gives to officers who  
21 choose to abuse their position of power is endless.  
22 Literally for decades people held in Riker's have  
23 been subjected to high rates of avoidable uses of  
24 force, which according to the eight federal monitors'  
25 report released in October of 2019 states have  
continued to rise and it is now at its highest since



3 the reporting began. The sexual abuse is right  
4 behind, with the Bronx DA presenting stats last year  
5 to the Board of Corrections that showed a clear need  
6 to shut Riker's Island down for good. She stated on  
7 the record that from calendar year 2018 60% of all  
8 alleged sexual assaults were against officers. Now  
9 what is interesting is that the Manhattan DA stated  
10 for the same calendar year no reports in their  
11 jurisdiction were received. Dr. Homer Ventures, the  
12 former chief medical officer of New York City Jail  
13 System, previously stated to this council that abuse  
14 and neglect in New York City Jail System have thrived  
15 in large measure because of the physical isolation of  
16 Riker's Island from the rest of New York City, as  
17 well as because of the ongoing disregard of voices of  
18 directly impacted people. Eight years ago while  
19 working on Riker's I became a voice for those never  
20 seen and often disbelieved. The toxicity of Riker's  
21 can be felt even after release through one's mental  
22 state of mind. In fact, after my emergency brain  
23 surgery in 2015 I still couldn't shake the memories  
24 from what I directly observed. Over 40% of those  
25 incarcerated have some form of mental health contact  
while incarcerated. And yet many are not afforded

2 timely access to mental health professionals or  
3 direct medical staff. If you [inaudible] records and  
4 DOC resources to compare you will find grave  
5 disparities and inconsistencies in DOC's reporting.  
6 In fact, last year the report from the Board of  
7 Corrections highlighted this. In 2018 the city  
8 rallied together for those mistreated in a Brooklyn  
9 federal correctional facility. Let me remind you all  
10 that we were able to do so because we could hear the  
11 cries from those unseen. We could hear them banging  
12 on their cells, desperate for their basic need, needs  
13 to be addressed. New Yorkers have virtually no  
14 access to any facilities on Riker's. Imagine being  
15 locked up, abused, put in a shelter, in need of  
16 medical or mental health treatment, and ignored.  
17 Forced to be isolated, many times while cognitively  
18 decompensating and being misdiagnosed by uniform  
19 staff or any other city agency that lacks the  
20 education to understand the difference between a  
21 mental health emergency and insubordination. When  
22 medical staff is permitted to access the population  
23 on Riker's they are often bullied to misrepresent the  
24 situation on documents and are constantly undermined  
25 in their ability to perform their jobs by DOC staff.

2 Never forget that we have allowed this culture of  
3 torture to thrive and then return those impacted  
4 directly back to their communities without addressing  
5 their trauma. DOHMH reports that one out of five New  
6 Yorkers has a mental health concern. Ask yourself,  
7 how many developed their mental health concern after  
8 being placed on Riker's Island and then ask  
9 yourselves how can you start to rebuild those  
10 communities in which the majority of them were  
11 arrested. The biggest cause of history repeating  
12 itself or a society remaining stuck in an era is  
13 largely based on fear. Fear hinders growth. Many of  
14 you fear the unknown. Yet you do not have to make  
15 this decision without experts providing you all with  
16 the supporting data on while the 413 acres known as  
17 Riker's Island should be reinvested for uses that  
18 benefit the communities most harmed by Riker's Island  
19 over the past century. This past weekend our nation  
20 lost a legend in the NBA. Since then people have  
21 spoken of his historic quotes and purpose. I end by  
22 asking you to think of what you want your legacy to  
23 be and to hold and to pass this legislation now.  
24 Much peace and blessings.

25 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

2                   MELISSA IACHAN: Good afternoon. Before  
3 I begin, I just want to say thank you to all the  
4 other advocates, leaders, impacted community members  
5 who are here who spoke before me, who are speaking  
6 with me, and who will speak after me because your  
7 voices are the voices that matter most and I will  
8 echo Sarita that it's a real shame that maybe one or  
9 two people from the admin are left here because it  
10 really makes their claim that they really want public  
11 participation ring hollow. We embrace the mayor's  
12 announcement today for his intention to sign an  
13 executive order that will embark on a long planning  
14 process as to figuring out what to do with Riker's  
15 Island that will embark on a long planning process as  
16 to figuring out what to do with Riker's Island once  
17 the jails are closed. But we say yes and. It's not  
18 that or the Renewable Riker's Act. Yes and we must  
19 pass all three of the bills we are here to hear  
20 today, especially and including Intro 1592, which  
21 makes sure that we hold the mayor, the council, the  
22 city accountable to transferring possession of the  
23 island away from the Department of Correction by a  
24 date certain and that really is the cornerstone of  
25 the Renewable Riker's Act that we are here to discuss

2 today. Now, my testimony goes into a lot of detail  
3 and the written testimony is here. I'm gonna run  
4 through the major points, but I did want to begin  
5 just by saying that. My name is Melissa Iachan.  
6 That's who I am. I'm a senior staff attorney in the  
7 environmental justice program at New York Lawyers for  
8 the Public Interest. Our environmental justice  
9 program works with communities who have shouldered  
10 the disproportionate burden of pollution in our city  
11 for three decades. I am pleased to be here today to  
12 voice NYLPI's strong support of the Renewable Riker's  
13 Act. And, again, thank you to Chair Constantinides  
14 and all the council members who have been here today  
15 for championing these bills in response to the years  
16 of dialogue and advocacy many groups have engaged in  
17 to reimagine the future of Riker's Island. The  
18 Renewable Riker's Act is the first step to turn the  
19 Renewable Riker's vision into a reality. For more  
20 than three years grassroots and community groups,  
21 criminal justice advocates, formerly incarcerated  
22 individuals, and other advocacy organizations,  
23 including NYLPI, have worked together to push the  
24 city to close Riker's Island's jails and reinvest in  
25 the communities most directly impacted by the

2 criminal justice system. NYLPI's environmental  
3 justice work is what brought us to join the Close  
4 Riker's Coalition. It is common knowledge that the  
5 jails are built on a decomposing landfill plagued  
6 with methane leaks and contaminated soil. About four  
7 years ago NYLPI undertook a large-scale project to  
8 investigate potential health implications to  
9 detainees from environmental conditions. We  
10 uncovered serious problems with water contamination  
11 and access to clean running water, which are detailed  
12 in my testimony. Our conclusion was that there are  
13 systemic plumbing problems on Riker's Island that are  
14 likely aggravated by the subsidence of the landfill-  
15 based soil. These problems deprive thousands of New  
16 York City residents of basic human rights regarding  
17 access to water and sanitary living conditions. Not  
18 only are thousands of New York City residents denied  
19 basic human rights, but taxpayers pay hundreds of  
20 millions of dollars a year to maintain this unjust  
21 and failed system. Our findings reinforce the need  
22 to shutter the penal colony on Riker's as soon as  
23 possible. Two years ago, in partnership with Just  
24 Leadership USA NYLPI convened a subcommittee of the  
25 more than 170 partners in the Close Riker's Coalition

3 to explore how a future where Riker's Island jails  
4 are closed could meaningfully benefit impacted  
5 communities with a focus on health, wellness, and  
6 environmental justice. Community members and  
7 organizations came together and agreed that the most  
8 just solution for the future use of the island would  
9 be to build sustainable and renewable infrastructure  
10 that would shift burdens out of environmental justice  
11 communities while moving our entire city to a cleaner  
12 and greener future. Underlying this agreement is the  
13 basic premise that any future use of Riker's must  
14 benefit the communities most impacted by Riker's  
15 Island and our city's unjust system of over-  
16 incarceration. The Renewable Riker's vision would do  
17 just that. The Renewable Riker's Act is the first  
18 step towards making this vision a reality. Intro  
19 1591 directs the city to undertake a feasibility  
20 study of what it would take to construct a state-of-  
21 the-art wastewater treatment plant on Riker's Island.  
22 Such a plant could have more capacity than the  
23 current aging plants sited in low-income communities  
24 and be constructed adjacent to an anaerobic digester,  
25 where the sludge from the plant could be utilized for  
localized renewable energy. Furthermore, as we've

3 seen in much smaller scale with the facility in  
4 Newtown Creek, organic waste could be diverted from  
5 landfill to also be processed by the anaerobic  
6 digester. The system could provide sufficient power  
7 for the island and add renewable energy into the  
8 Local grid to assist our transition off fossil fuels.  
9 Intro 1591 should be amended to ensure that any  
10 feasibility study look at the possibilities of  
11 organic waste processing for the anaerobic digester  
12 in tandem with the wastewater treatment plant as well  
13 as further organics processing by expanded composting  
14 occurring on the island. Intro 1593 directs the city  
15 to conduct a similar feasibility study related to how  
16 much renewable energy could be generated and stored  
17 on the island using large-scale solar arrays and  
18 battery storage. Preliminary estimates indicate that  
19 even devoting just 100 of the 413 acres at Riker's  
20 Island to solar energy could allow many of the city's  
21 fossil fuel-burning peaker plants sited in  
22 environmental justice community to permanently close.  
23 More details in many of our testimony. I will just  
24 say Intro 1592, again, is the cornerstone of the  
25 package of bills because this is the only piece of  
legislation to truly hold the city accountable to its



2 promise to close the abysmal Pentax colonoscope on  
3 Riker's Island and move the city towards a cleaner,  
4 greener future. Together with more than 40 other  
5 organizations who signed our letter of support note  
6 being strongly supportive of seeing Intro 1592 become  
7 law, mandating that within five years control and  
8 possession of Riker's Island formally and finally  
9 leave the Department of Corrections. Instead, the  
10 Department of Environmental Protection should serve  
11 as coordinating agency to ensure that the island be  
12 used to benefit those communities who have suffered  
13 the legacy of Riker's. We do think that Intro 1592  
14 should be amended to explicitly account for other  
15 agencies needed to coordinate with DEP to ensure that  
16 all of the many uses the Renewable Riker's vision has  
17 for the island can be manifested most efficiently and  
18 effectively and to allow for the flexibility we will  
19 need over the next few years of planning. Again, I  
20 will refer you to my written testimony for more and  
21 thank you again for holding this hearing today.

22 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

23 CURTIS BELL: Curtis Bell, policy  
24 associate for Little Piece of Light. Add a little,  
25 yeah, please, got a little cold, bear with me.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: Got a little trickle of  
3 water here.

4 CURTIS BELL: That's good, that's good.

5 Well, let me begin by saying, um, there's a fear in

6 the air from the activist community based on the

7 negligence to come out and give full firm support

8 from the mayor. His support allows us on record, not

9 executive order, it gives us some teeth to fight with

10 when he's out of office. We, the, IN 1592 is a very

11 crucial piece to doing that if politicians do not

12 want to step up and take that. So when, when no

13 political officials want to get up and take that. So

14 when, when no political officials want to get up and

15 publicly say I support this, I'm going to stand by it

16 on record, and I'm gonna hold you accountable even if

17 I leave office. This is what we need. In the

18 activist community we're not, I keep saying this all

19 the time, we're not going nowhere. This fight is,

20 was marshalled to the forefront by the activist

21 community. This is the only time in New York history

22 over the last three years that social justice has

23 been a forum that included directly impacted people

24 on the level it has. And by us getting to this point

25 we have to envision what society we want to build.

2 What should this society look like? What should it  
3 look like for our children? And nowhere in that  
4 vision, when you go home and you're no longer elected  
5 official and you're walking down the street to the  
6 train, nowhere in that vision do you see developers.  
7 Nowhere in that vision do you see suffering. And we  
8 have to question that type of morality. Where does  
9 it go when we walk into these chambers? Because when  
10 you're sitting on the train you or me and I and you,  
11 we have the same struggling and suffering. Our  
12 occupations and who we are should not waver our moral  
13 compass. And that what happens to the underserved  
14 community, we are an afterthought for years. The  
15 excitement and some of the foreignness of these  
16 issues to the council members is because it's never  
17 been an issue before to be discussed in this type of  
18 way, and that lets us know about the neglect. That  
19 lets us know, do not come sit on a council in a  
20 chamber and you don't know the details. And we're  
21 coming in here knowing the details and speaking about  
22 it. It's a little disingenuous to even give that  
23 half ear. And these are sometimes some of the  
24 feelings when we leave this chamber, even though you  
25 say we're with you, we are, but we pay attention to

2 body language. These, this isn't party politics for  
3 us. These are our lives. When we leave here asthma  
4 rates in our community are always the same. You're  
5 gonna park those bus in the same underserved  
6 communities because the real estate prices aren't  
7 high. Or gentrification hasn't hit it as hard as  
8 some other places. We are an afterthought, and let  
9 us be the forethought. I went to prison at the age  
10 of 17 and I came out at 35. That environment I  
11 walked out into seeing, I couldn't recognize it. I  
12 said I had a little innocence when I went in, and I  
13 came out it was like where did it go? We have turned  
14 to a me society instead of an us society. We no  
15 longer care about the suffering of our most  
16 vulnerable and forgotten citizens. And this is what  
17 should matter. We put y'all in office to worry about  
18 the voiceless. The people with voices, they have  
19 money. Their children go to the best schools. And I  
20 will say this, and I was surprised that Madam  
21 Condoleezza Rice said when she was asked about the  
22 last 50 years of the civil rights movement, she said  
23 it reminds me of a Dickens novel, the best of times  
24 and the worst of times. We had two black secretaries  
25 of state and we had our first black president. We're

3 doing real good if you're on the right side of the  
4 wealth curve. And she went on to say, but what I  
5 fear is the witch's brew of poverty, when you can  
6 tell a person's life outcome by their ZIP code. This  
7 is what we fear. We fear that our children, when  
8 we're no longer here, will get up and be treated as  
9 less than equal. For far too long black and brown  
10 bodies have been the economic steam that has  
11 propelled this nation into existence, and we turn a  
12 blind eye in prosperity and we wake up when times are  
13 rough. Like, oh, this is a problem, let's fix this.  
14 Let us be equally a forethought in its process. Let  
15 these communities and these board members really  
16 dictate that destiny, because there's so many  
17 auxiliary jobs in this process and they should go to  
18 the underserved community because social justice  
19 reform should accompany economic and employment  
20 reform. We are those communities most affected by  
21 it. We should be those people that are hired and if,  
22 we seem to do a lot of talking over those particular  
23 facets of it. This is what our community wants to  
24 hear the most. If you're gonna build these four new  
25 jails, put these unions you're giving these contracts  
to, to bring them in conjunction with the criminal

2 justice system. Let the whole system be a reflection  
3 of the society we want to build and not just  
4 particular facets. Let's marshall all of these  
5 forces together and say we are about real social  
6 justice, and real change. Because the biggest  
7 problem in this whole process is we still have to  
8 give out, get over the stigma of employment. And  
9 this is what increases recidivism. We can build a  
10 perfect system on paper but we're still breathing,  
11 living, thinking human beings in that process with  
12 the advisors. We have to hold all of our elected  
13 officials accountable, including our colleagues. Ask  
14 them, vote with your moral compass and not your  
15 party. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.  
17 Dr. Bowden? Make sure it's on.

18 GREGORY BOWDEN: It's on now.

19 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: There you  
20 go.

21 GREGORY BOWDEN: Good afternoon. First,  
22 I want to thank the members of the Committee on  
23 Environmental Protection and particularly Committee  
24 Chair Constantinides for the opportunity to testify  
25 about the potential for a Renewable Riker's and what

2 it can mean for New York City. So my name is Gregory  
3 Bowden. I am a senior wastewater treatment process  
4 specialist with AECOM, a global infrastructure firm.  
5 I have 25 years of experience in wastewater treatment  
6 and projects in North American and across the world.  
7 I wanted to speak today about the potential  
8 community, environmental, and economic benefits and  
9 with that current and proven technologies could offer  
10 and share my assessment of what is possible in a new  
11 state-of-the-art treatment facility on Riker's  
12 Island. These technologies are being used across the  
13 nation, around the world, and I hope the examples  
14 that I provide today in my testimony will help inform  
15 the decision-making process. One of the most  
16 significant benefits of the current technologies is  
17 it can enable New York City to close the four  
18 existing plants that are shown in this PowerPoint  
19 slide. Ward's Island, Tallman Island, Bowery Bay,  
20 and Hunt's Point, and consolidate them into a single  
21 state-of-the-art resource recovery facility at  
22 Riker's Island. These four facilities currently  
23 occupy collectively 170 acres, but they are  
24 physically constrained. There is a great deal of  
25 uncertainty about whether or not they have the

3 capability of treating combined sewer overflows that  
4 are currently being discharged to the receiving  
5 streams and impairing the East River. With the  
6 incorporation of proven wastewater and biosolids  
7 treatment technologies a new consolidated Riker's  
8 Island plant could offer a host of community,  
9 environmental, and economic benefits and be a global  
10 example of an eco-friendly, energy-positive island.  
11 Depending on the city's goals, the new facility could  
12 potentially occupy less than 100 acres, which means a  
13 40% reduction in comparison to the land that's  
14 currently occupied by the four treatment plants.  
15 This would leave three-quarters of Riker's Island  
16 available for other beneficial uses, such as solar  
17 energy recovery, educational facilities, and other  
18 public open spaces. It has the potential to reduce  
19 energy demand and cost by up to 40% by using more  
20 energy-efficient process technologies. It could  
21 include a centralized biosolids, food waste,  
22 organics, energy recovery plant to move towards an  
23 energy-neutral or even an energy-positive facility.  
24 It would, could be designed to capture and treat more  
25 combined sewer overflows, thus improving the  
receiving water quality in the East River. And it



3 would allow for the beneficial reuse of the majority  
4 of the waterfront properties currently occupied by  
5 the four existing plants. Now there are many  
6 community, environmental, and economic benefits of a  
7 new consolidated state-of-the-art plant, including  
8 reduction in odors by having a very compact plant  
9 with covered tanks and odor control. You could  
10 reduce or greatly eliminate odors. You would enhance  
11 the water quality in the East River. You have the  
12 potential to close down peak power plants or reduce  
13 their operating frequency. You have the opportunity  
14 with this new state-of-the-art plant to further  
15 reduce greenhouse gas emissions. You would also have  
16 the opportunity to recover energy and store it during  
17 peak demand periods, such as, you know, redirecting  
18 food waste, fats, oil, and grease, and other high-  
19 energy organics from the landfills to this facility  
20 to, to generate energy. There are environmental  
21 benefits. You could potential product class A  
22 biosolids for beneficial reuse. These solids were  
23 used as a soil amendment, as fertilizers and parts,  
24 and community gardens. You could recover valuable  
25 nutrients for, to generate revenue. An example of  
this is the Chicago Stickney Wastewater Treatment

2 Plant, which will be a similar capacity of this  
3 consolidated plant. Currently they are operating the  
4 largest phosphorus recovery facility in the world,  
5 generating fertilizer for the local fertilizer  
6 market. So in the written testimony there are five  
7 examples of treatment facilities that have been built  
8 and they're very similar to what's being contemplated  
9 here. The first and foremost is the Deer Island  
10 Sewage Treatment Plant in Boston, Massachusetts.  
11 There were two treatment plants that were shut down  
12 and this new treatment plant was built. Before the  
13 treatment plant was built there was a jail on Riker's  
14 Island. Ah, Nut Island Wastewater Treatment Plant  
15 was demolished. The land, the property was  
16 rehabilitated and is now a public open space. The  
17 new facilities improved water quality in Boston  
18 Harbor and the Charles River, and the facilities are  
19 designed to capture and treatment 95% of the CSOs.  
20 May I continue?

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah, please  
22 go.

23 GREGORY BOWDEN: OK. Ah, the second  
24 example I wanted to share with you was the new Lions  
25 Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant in North Vancouver,

2 ah, British Columbia. Ah, the, the new plant is  
3 under construction. The existing plant is on  
4 waterfront property that when the new plant is built  
5 in a smaller footprint, and it has to be in a smaller  
6 footprint because it's sandwiched between an  
7 industrial area and a residential community, that the  
8 existing treatment plant will be demolished. The  
9 land will be rehabilitated and returned to the  
10 Squamish Nation for beneficial community use. The  
11 new plant will improve water quality in the Vancouver  
12 area. It includes energy recovery, and they're even  
13 going to extract energy from the treated water to  
14 provide district heating and cooling for  
15 approximately 500 homes. The next example is the  
16 Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant in Washington,  
17 D.C., and I wanted to focus specifically on the  
18 biosolids and energy recovery processes they  
19 implemented in 2015 that allow them to produce a  
20 class A biosolid for beneficial reuse, and by the  
21 amount of solids they are producing reduce the amount  
22 of biosolids trucking by, by 50%. The energy that  
23 the plant is producing could be as high as 13  
24 megawatts of green power, which is the equivalent of  
25 electricity consumed by 12,000 homes. This kind of

2 process that was adopted at Washington, D.C. could be  
3 a part of Riker's Island or other facilities around  
4 the city to help the city realize its 80 by 50 goal  
5 of 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.  
6 The fourth plant, this is Sha Tin Facility in Hong  
7 Kong. Ah, the current plant is sitting on prime  
8 waterfront property and a new plant is being  
9 constructed in an artificial cave, and because it's  
10 being constructed in a cave they're selecting very  
11 compact technologies for this facility to, to reduce  
12 the costs. So once the new plant is completed the  
13 old plant will be demolished and repurposed for, for  
14 other uses. And finally I wanted to point out the  
15 Tuas Resource Recovery Facility in Singapore, also a  
16 consolidation of multiple wastewater treatment  
17 facilities into a modern compact resource recovery  
18 facility on a largely artificial island. The new  
19 plant has a footprint of 50% in comparison to the  
20 plants that it was replacing. And the properties,  
21 the existing plants or the plants that were, you  
22 know, being consolidated have been recovered and, and  
23 are being reused for other purposes. And the new  
24 facility also has very advanced energy reduction and  
25 recovery technologies. So I would like to say that,

2 you know, the purpose of the testimony was to point  
3 out that this has been done. There are technologies  
4 available to New York City to make this happen if the  
5 results of these studies conclude that these four  
6 plants need to be shut down and a consolidated plant  
7 built on Riker's Island. So I would like to thank  
8 the committee for your time and attention and I can  
9 answer whatever questions you have.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.

11 So I'm gonna begin by just quickly going to the rest  
12 of the panel, Dr. Bowden. I'm just gonna, so the  
13 prospect of having four plants, 177 acres open up in  
14 environmental justice communities that then could  
15 potentially be affordable housing in the South Bronx,  
16 parkland and affordable housing in western Queens,  
17 ah, you know, decided for and by the community. Um,  
18 what do you sort of think of that sort of potential?

19 VIDAL GUZMAN: One thing I want to say  
20 about that it's like we hear from directly impacted  
21 people and, and...

22 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Absolutely.

23 VIDAL GUZMAN: ...as a community organizer  
24 going to directly impacted communities I know the,  
25 the problem of actually getting affordable housing,

3 especially in the Bronx, where the Bronx does have a  
4 lot of shelters and people are waiting two-and-a-half  
5 years, three years in a shelter just to get a roof  
6 over their head, and that's where it's saying we're  
7 the Big Apple, the, the city of opportunity, America,  
8 the city of dreams, um, that is not a dream. And I  
9 think that actually happen, making sure that people  
10 who, who are homeless, who does not have a roof over  
11 their head being able to have access to that, and  
12 that must be a must.

13 CURTIS BELL: One, one thing that reminds  
14 me of is when FDR put the nation back to work. You  
15 know, I think it's that same approach. When we're  
16 looking for like a cost-benefit analysis, who's going  
17 to truly benefit? And to really look now at one,  
18 first and foremost, job placement, second housing.  
19 These two things are very crucial, especially in this  
20 type of climate. The people who are suffering the  
21 most from housing and job placement are those people  
22 who are directly impacted. And if this happens a  
23 transformation will happen not only in the Bronx, it  
24 would happen in Queens, it would happen in Brooklyn,  
25 even though Staten Island doesn't want to be a part  
of the process, it will still happen in Staten

2 Island. They will have some of the latent effects of  
3 this type of change. But at this stage, and I know  
4 it's early, a lot of it is so vague.

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I know, I  
6 mean, Yogi Berra once said it's getting late early.

7 CURTIS BELL: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So we, we  
9 got a lot of work to do.

10 CURTIS BELL: I would, I would like y'all  
11 to have that vision of really incorporating the  
12 community.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Absolutely.

14 CURTIS BELL: Especially in the vision.  
15 A lot of times people think they know what is best  
16 for a particular group of people from sitting afar.  
17 Oh, they can use this. This would be beneficial.  
18 But they, we know what we need. We know exactly what  
19 we need, and it first starts with transparency in  
20 this process.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, Dr.  
22 Bowden, just very quickly, you talked about meeting.  
23 So the facility in Washington, D.C., um, the  
24 biosolids program, the reduction of emissions, 40%  
25 reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, 50% reduction

2 of biosolids trucking there. You know, I was just  
3 conferring with counsel here. I know we were in the  
4 neighborhood of what, five million dollars a year in  
5 biosolids, you know, sort of trucking at the moment,  
6 or sort of rail. Ah, 50% in biosolids management  
7 operations and maintenance cost reduction. That  
8 sounds like we're gonna save money and we're gonna  
9 give relief when it talks to meeting our 80 by 50  
10 goals, correct?

11 GREGORY BOWDEN: Yes, yes it does.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And this is  
13 done already, right? This isn't theoretical, this  
14 isn't something I'm gonna read in a textbook, but  
15 this is something that's actually happening?

16 GREGORY BOWDEN: It's something that's  
17 actually happening, not only in Washington, D.C. but  
18 my last count of plants that were doing this sort of  
19 thing, and we're up to about 70 to 80 plants that are  
20 taking this approach to dealing with their biosolids.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: 70 to 80  
22 plants.

23 GREGORY BOWDEN: Around the world.

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Around the  
25 world, and so New York City, we wouldn't be the



2 leader, we'd be sort of, we'd becoming in a little  
3 bit late to the game, but we'd be in a very good  
4 place.

5 GREGORY BOWDEN: This would be one of the  
6 largest in the world for sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: One of the  
8 largest in the world.

9 GREGORY BOWDEN: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And that  
11 gives us the opportunity, and again the analysis  
12 you've done around these other four sites is based on  
13 that data that you have from the other 70 to 80  
14 plants that are out there, correct?

15 GREGORY BOWDEN: Yes, correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So this is,  
17 again, not something theoretical or textbook but this  
18 actually like in practice.

19 GREGORY BOWDEN: It is in practice. It  
20 is being adopted by Kansas City, San Francisco,  
21 Dallas, um, the adoption of these types of bioways of  
22 dealing with biosolids are becoming more of an  
23 industry standard rather than an outlier.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Do you have  
3 any questions? I'm going to turn it over quickly to  
4 Council Member Menchaca.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,  
6 thank you Chair. I just want to ask about the  
7 presentation. Is that something the committee can  
8 have?

9 GREGORY BOWDEN: Yes, we can provide that  
10 to you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Beautiful. And  
12 maybe the next question is in terms of the  
13 participatory process is that something that you all  
14 can basically tell us what that looks like, because  
15 there's, um, I think there's, there's a syndrome  
16 that's very alive and well in city politics that we,  
17 we know what's best and as I learned from  
18 participatory budgeting you hand, you hand it over to  
19 the people. The people design their structure for  
20 engagement and that's how you honor the people. And,  
21 and so I think it's an opportunity here for you all  
22 to design your ideal plug-in and not wait for the  
23 mayor to do that or for us to do that for you. So I  
24 will welcome that and I will champion that with you.

2 MELISSA IACHAN: Are you talking about  
3 what to do with the [inaudible]...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I'm talking  
5 about, ah, wherever you go...

6 MELISSA IACHAN: ...with Riker's because I  
7 think that what you're seeing is this panel and last  
8 panel we represent a lot of the people who have been  
9 doing that for the last three years. As Sarita said,  
10 as Vidal said, this conversation didn't start today.  
11 Maybe the mayor started his conversation today. But  
12 this conversation has been going on for over three  
13 years with the 170-plus partners who, you know...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right.

15 MELISSA IACHAN: ...worked together to  
16 close to Riker's and build communities. And that  
17 conversation has been going and it's ongoing and so  
18 to sort of say that it's starting today is a false  
19 narrative, and I think that the Renewable Riker's  
20 vision comes from the three years of conversations,  
21 um, and, again, we embrace continued conversation,  
22 but we need to act now and we need to put it in the  
23 law that this is going to happen, that the transfer  
24 is going to happen. And then I think, you know, the  
25 bonus piece is OK, now we have these big multiple-

2 acre pieces of land opening up in the same  
3 communities that have been over-incarcerated on  
4 Riker's and that piece I really think that one  
5 community is not the same as the next. Hunt's Point  
6 is not going to want the same thing as, you know,  
7 western Queens. We have to really at that point  
8 really go into those communities and let those  
9 communities figure it out, and invest the millions of  
10 dollars we're gonna be saving from exporting our  
11 waste and, you know, trucking everything, trucking  
12 waste to, to landfills in these communities and in  
13 this land that will be opened up.

14 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Dr. Philips?

15 MINISTER DOCTOR VICTORIA PHILIPS: Thank  
16 you for acknowledging me. I was trying to jump in  
17 here.

18 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Make sure  
19 you get in there, will you? We're not [inaudible].

20 MINISTER DOCTOR VICTORIA PHILIPS: Before  
21 I walk away, all day I've heard about the Bronx and  
22 Queens. And I just want to put on the record that  
23 Brooklyn, East New York, Flatbush, Brownsville are  
24 also part of the New Yorkers who fill up the majority  
25 of the Department of Corrections. And I do believe,

2 I understand Red Hook, but I do believe that we have  
3 to acknowledge that Brooklyn has to be at the  
4 forefront of this conversation. So when you and your  
5 colleagues mention the Bronx and Queens, throw in  
6 Brooklyn. Because Brooklyn and the Bronx fill up the  
7 majority, um, those are the two boroughs that fill up  
8 the majority of the Department of Corrections. So  
9 let's be clear on that fact. And I do believe East  
10 New York is heavily populated with shelters. And so  
11 they themselves should definitely be invited to the  
12 table to discuss where we put our new shelter  
13 systems, what our new shelter systems will look at,  
14 will look like, what the people actually want, and I  
15 thank you for saying that each neighborhood has  
16 different wants and different needs and I, I  
17 appreciate you for definitely throwing that out and  
18 reminding Council, and I just want to say before I  
19 finish I thank you for all of your hard work, and I  
20 thank you for encouraging your colleagues to jump on  
21 board, and let's push this plan through. And I  
22 understand that we, the last panel talked about  
23 slowing down and I agree with slowing the process,  
24 but this is the time where everything is ripe and so  
25 as we focus and we slow down we have to encourage

2 ourselves to keep a steady pace, because now is the  
3 time to make change. Now is the time that, yes, the  
4 vote to close Riker's has occurred, but people are  
5 still dying on that island. People lives depend on  
6 our work on the outside. So let's hold each other  
7 accountable. The mayor's gonna be gone in a few  
8 years, but so what? We will all be here and we're  
9 all working to replace you, not in a negative way,  
10 but in a positive way because it's our city.

11 [laughter]

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: [laughs]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Amen to that.

14 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Amen.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Amen to all  
16 that. And, and, and really what, what, what I want  
17 to invite is that energy that has been over many  
18 years been cultivated and connected and in coalition,  
19 and I guess what I'm saying the inevitable, this is  
20 part of the syndrome, the inevitable nature of  
21 government is to come up with brand-new ideas,  
22 something sexy, something, and sometimes we skip over  
23 the community, and I've heard today that you were not  
24 part of this conversation in terms of creating this  
25 executive order that is about a participatory

2 process. So that's what I'm, I'm really kind of  
3 focused on is, is to build your own connection to  
4 that, to make it your own, before we celebrate it.  
5 I'm not celebrating that at all and I hope you  
6 understand that. I'm not celebrating that because  
7 you're not part of it. So let's make you a part of  
8 that. You design it and I will champion that. OK.  
9 Thank you, Chair.

10 CURTIS BELL: One last thing. I would  
11 say that Just Leadership has done a remarkable job  
12 designing an efficient plan. It is not, that is not  
13 there. And I want to put that out there. The plan  
14 is there. Every institution, um, I'm a policy  
15 associate at Little Piece of Light. We have a think  
16 tank and all of the suggestions are so similar. We  
17 all know what to do. It's just sometimes they don't  
18 want to adopt it in totality from us. Only the, only  
19 the fastest that are palatable for their political  
20 aspirations, and those, those plans come from  
21 coalition building. And that's what I want to say.  
22 Please take an earnest look at Just Leadership's  
23 plan. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I just want  
25 to thank you all again. You're all, ah, been part of

2 this very important conversation. I'm, I'm looking  
3 forward to partnering with you to make sure we get  
4 these bills done and continue to do good work. So  
5 thank you for your time and your advocacy and all  
6 that you bring to this table. Thank you so very  
7 much. All right, our next panel. Tyler Nims from  
8 the Lippman Commission. Rebecca Bratspies from the  
9 CUNY Center Urban Environmental Reform. Adriana  
10 Espinosa from New York City LCV. Kendra Clark from  
11 Exodus Transitional Community. Michael Delong.  
12 Rebecca Prior from Riverkeeper. And Lauren  
13 Tsuboyama, again, if I mispronounce your name, from  
14 the Regional Plan Association. I have another panel  
15 after this one so I'm still, we're still going. All  
16 right.

17 LAUREN TSUBOYAMA: OK. Hello, City  
18 Council members. Thank you for the opportunity to  
19 submit testimony today. My name is Lauren Tsuboyama  
20 and I'm the director of communications at Regional  
21 Plan Association. RPA is a nonprofit civic  
22 organization that conducts research, planning, and  
23 advocacy to improve equity, sustainability, and the  
24 quality of life for those who live and work in the  
25 metropolitan region. Regional Plan Association is a



3 strong supporter of the Renewable Riker's Act,  
4 proposed by Council Member Constantinides. We are  
5 also supportive of the need to move and repurpose  
6 Riker's Island as quickly as possible and specific  
7 address and redress its legacy of mass incarceration  
8 and those who have been directly affected. These  
9 bills reflect the city's commitment to truly  
10 reinventing the island for uses that benefit the  
11 communities who have been most harmed by Riker's  
12 Island over the last decades. We also want to  
13 recognize the community and environmental  
14 organizations which have already begun to envision  
15 what a new Riker's Island could be and how best to  
16 make sure that the nearby neighborhoods and people  
17 impacted by incarceration benefit from its  
18 transformation. We applaud the steps taken on  
19 criminal justice reform thus far by the  
20 administration. However, concerning Riker's Island  
21 it is past time to translate plans and commitments  
22 into concrete action to close it for good. The  
23 Renewable Riker's Act will open up a once-in-a-  
24 generation opportunity for New York. Closing Riker's  
25 Island is a moral imperative and is also a major  
opportunity to better the lives of New Yorkers,

3 especially those most impacted by its legacy through  
4 needed and beneficial municipal improvements.

5 Transforming the island from one of incarceration to  
6 one of infrastructure could benefit all of New York

7 City. It could provide 40% of our contribution to  
8 zero waste goals, generate enough renewable energy

9 for 30,000 homes, and eliminate greenhouse gas

10 emissions equivalent to 150,000 cars taken off the

11 road. There are also specific possibilities and

12 benefits for surrounding communities, many of which

13 have grappled with a severe legacy of environmental

14 racism. Repurposing Riker's Island for green

15 infrastructure could eliminate 175 combined sewer

16 overflows and nine billion gallons of sewer overflow

17 into the inner Long Island Sound, which is ground

18 zero for combined sewer overflow and detrimental

19 environmental effects. It could open 12 miles of

20 inaccessible shoreline. It could create major sites

21 for parks, open space, and other needed

22 infrastructure. In addition to Riker's Island, much

23 of the land in this area is owned by the city. The

24 four wastewater treatment plants alone could provide

25 over 200 acres of open space. It could reduce air

pollution and significantly improve health. The

2 South Bronx has the worst asthma rates in the city.

3 Moving contaminated [inaudible] to Riker's Island and  
4 reducing truck-to-truck waste transfer stations would  
5 provide health improvements for tens of thousands of  
6 people. Taking concrete steps to end jail usage and  
7 start the true transformation of the island would be  
8 one of the most impactful legacies this council and  
9 this administration could leave for New York City.

10 By transferring Riker's Island from the control of  
11 DOC to the control of the Department of Environmental  
12 Protection as a coordinating agency to direct the  
13 island's green infrastructure uses, New York City can  
14 definitively end the era of holding our fellow New  
15 Yorkers on a toxic penal colony and simultaneously  
16 ensure that any future of Riker's benefits the black  
17 and brown communities that have been most harmed by  
18 mass criminalization, by environmental injustice, and  
19 by disinvestment. The Renewable Riker's Act is a key  
20 first step towards building a roadmap moving the city  
21 into a cleaner and more sustainable future for all of  
22 its residents. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

24 Rebecca.

3 Hello. Thank you, Chairman

4 Constantinides and the members of the New York City

5 Council Committee on Environmental Protection. My

6 name is Rebecca Prior. I am with Riverkeeper and

7 Guardians of Flushing Bay, who is a member of the

8 Swim Coalition, who I'll also be representing today.

9 Ah, Riverkeeper and the Swim Coalition strongly

10 support the swift passage of all three bills, Intro

11 1592, 1592, and 1593. Ah, you know, to being,

12 Riverkeeper is a watchdog organization that works to

13 defend the Hudson River and its tributaries. Swim

14 Coalition is a group of 70 organizations dedicated to

15 ensuring swimmable and fishable waters around New

16 York City through natural, ah, sustainable storm

17 water management practices. So first off, we share

18 your vision for a Renewable Riker's Island. Last

19 week Riverkeeper joined with a number of

20 environmental justice, criminal justice, grassroots,

21 and community organizations to submit a letter to the

22 mayor in support of these bills. Ah, along with our

23 partner organizations, we believe the communities

24 that have been most harmed by mass criminalization,

25 environmental justice, ah, environmental injustice,

should be the beneficiaries of a transition to a

2 cleaner and greener future on Riker's Island. So  
3 with that said I have some key recommendations that  
4 we have the passage of these bills, um, but it does  
5 not go against the full-throated endorsement that we  
6 have of these bills.

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: That wasn't  
8 five minutes.

9 REBECCA PRIOR: I don't think that was my  
10 five, right?

11 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah.

12 REBECCA PRIOR: OK. Um, hope not. Ah,  
13 so first is that the feasibility studies for 1591,  
14 which focuses on wastewater treatment and for 1593,  
15 which focuses on renewable energy, should be  
16 combined. Ah, the Department of Environmental  
17 Protection is the correct agency to study the  
18 potential benefits of creating new wastewater  
19 treatment capacity at Riker's Island, and the same  
20 goes for the Mayor's Office of Sustainability, um,  
21 for renewable energy capacity. But these two  
22 separate agencies should be working together for the  
23 land. Ah, likewise, um, the, the two separate plans  
24 should be considered jointly, ah, and that will, with  
25 the potential to optimize the island to do both

2 things, to both have, ah, wastewater treatment as  
3 well as renewable energy. If the studies are  
4 separate they will result in two separate answers and  
5 two separate plans, ah, moving Riker's forward. So  
6 we recommend that Intros 1591 and 1593 reference each  
7 other and direct the two agencies to work together on  
8 a single feasibility study. Number two - the  
9 legislation should explicitly, ah, direct assessment  
10 of potential environmental and community benefits.  
11 While it's possible, it's yet unclear whether opening  
12 up a new wastewater treatment plant would alleviate  
13 the need for other plants to continue operating. In  
14 addition, it is possible that DEP would, ah, could  
15 reduce sewer overflows by storing and sending excess  
16 volume to Riker's Island. The plant might even  
17 reduce nitrogen inputs into the East River. On the  
18 other hand, it's important that this is not a silver  
19 bullet. Ah, it should be considered, the whole plan  
20 should be considered in the context of the city's  
21 green infrastructure program and its planned gray  
22 infrastructure. The potential for a Riker's Island  
23 treatment plant to work in conjunction with these  
24 plans or in place of them should be studied. Number  
25 three - climate change must be accounted for in the

2 legislation. Some of New York City's water pipes  
3 date back to the 1870s. As we design infrastructure  
4 in the 21st century we should at least be thinking  
5 about the next three generations who will live with  
6 and benefit from the infrastructure we build today.  
7 Unfortunately future generations will have different  
8 conditions that we do now. There will be sea level  
9 rise, there will be storm surge. I'm not going to go  
10 into details of those, I think you know them. Um, at  
11 the very least vegetative buffers should be  
12 maintained to provide storm barrier protection for  
13 this infrastructure and to protect fish habitat.  
14 Number four - there should be an opportunity for  
15 public comment on these studies. Millions of lives  
16 have been adversely affected by incarceration on  
17 Riker's Island. We are joining the chorus of voices,  
18 um, to say that that is true. We are not coming out  
19 in the lead here. Um, we are joining the chorus to  
20 say that millions of lives have been impacted and  
21 that often the same communities suffering from  
22 criminal injustice are suffering from environmental  
23 and climate injustice as well. The communities must  
24 affected deserve a say to facilitate a just  
25 transition for Riker's and future environmental

2 justice. And now that more than 30 public interest  
3 groups have weighed in on the Renewable Riker's plan  
4 and that least, and at last count 35 council members  
5 cosponsored these bills, it is crucial that the  
6 affected public, non-governmental organizations, and  
7 our City Council members have an opportunity to  
8 comment on the studies before they are completed and  
9 that those comments are responded by the agencies  
10 before any final documents are produced. The  
11 legislation should be modified to include provisions  
12 for public input. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

14 Ms. Bratspies.

15 REBECCA BRATSPIES: Two Rebeccas in a  
16 row. It doesn't [inaudible]. Good afternoon. Thank  
17 you for, um, affording me the opportunity to speak  
18 today. My name is Rebecca Bratspies. I'm a  
19 professor at CUNY School of Law and I run the Center  
20 for Urban Environmental Reform. CUNY School of Law  
21 is dedicated to law in the service of human needs,  
22 and my center works from the proposition that  
23 environmental justice is a critical aspect of social  
24 justice. I'm here today to talk about how the three  
25 introductions, 1591, 1592, and 1593 can help New York



2 City promote restorative environmental justice. In  
3 2014 then-US attorney Preet Bharara declared Riker's  
4 Island is broken, finding a pattern and practice of  
5 conduct that violated constitutional rights. Three  
6 years later the Lippman Commission proclaimed Riker's  
7 Island, and I'm quoting, "the stain upon our great  
8 city." The commission's primary recommendation was  
9 that Riker's Island must be closed. The Lippman  
10 Commission posited that a reimaged Riker's Island  
11 could be used to generate the renewable energy  
12 necessary to meet New York City's 80 by 50 commitment  
13 and New York State's renewable energy mandate. And  
14 we've heard that the communities most affected by  
15 incarceration at Riker's Island have come to that  
16 conclusion as well. This is where those, these  
17 introductions begin to make their impact. Converting  
18 Riker's Island to large-scale solar and battery  
19 storage can write a new story for the 413 acres that  
20 has been, um, become infamy for torture. Closing  
21 Riker's jails will be a transformative for the city.  
22 Renewable Riker's could make that moment in  
23 environmental justice transformation as well. These  
24 introductions are a critical first step. By enacting  
25 them City Council can embrace a vision, an

2 envisioning process, for truly restorative  
3 environmental justice. Renewable Riker's is a path  
4 to a more sustainable, more equitable city. New York  
5 State recently committed to 100% carbon-free  
6 electricity generation. To reach that goal we must  
7 transition away from fossil fuels. Replacing the  
8 city's peaker plants with clean energy is a good  
9 place to start. It is both an environmental  
10 necessity and a public health imperative. Peaker  
11 plants contribute to the localized air pollution that  
12 harms people's health in overburdened frontline  
13 communities. Some South Bronx neighborhoods have  
14 childhood asthma hospitalization rates double the  
15 city's average. Pollution-related emergency  
16 department visits and asthma hospitalization in Mott  
17 Haven and Melrose are triple the New York City  
18 average. Replacing dirty peaker plants with  
19 renewable generation and storage on Riker's would  
20 improve air quality in these frontline communities.  
21 Renewable Riker's is an opportunity to right old but  
22 ongoing wrongs. For too long New York City has  
23 disproportionately sited its polluting infrastructure  
24 in low-income communities and communities of color.  
25 The 2000 Power Now project is a clear example. NYPA

2 used Enron's engineered brownouts in California to  
3 justify adding peaker plants on an emergency basis,  
4 running roughshod over frontline communities as it  
5 did so. These plants were all sited in environmental  
6 justice communities. They were sited with no  
7 community engagement, virtually no environmental due  
8 diligence, and over vociferous community objections.  
9 Although they were pitched as temporary, a three-year  
10 emergency solution to a manufactured crisis, they're  
11 still there. Anyone born the year they were  
12 installed is nearly old enough to drink. We are  
13 taking, if we take this opportunity to transform  
14 Riker's Island into sustainable infrastructure we can  
15 right this wrong. A recent Ravenswood project shows  
16 that 360, ah, 316 megawatts of storage can be sited  
17 on seven-and-a-half acres of land. The battery  
18 storage, solar generation, and wastewater treatment,  
19 Renewable Riker's leverages the transformation of our  
20 criminal justice system into a wider transformation  
21 across multiple axes of justice. It benefits the  
22 city as a whole while specifically benefitting the  
23 communities most impacted by mass incarceration and  
24 by incarceration at Riker's. Renewable Riker's could  
25 be a moment for environmental justice. These

2 introductions are a step towards improving air  
3 quality for environmental justice communities, which  
4 are frequently the same communities most impacted by  
5 mass incarceration and by incarceration at Riker's.  
6 Renewable Riker's can be a moment of climate justice.  
7 These introductions are a step towards ensuring a  
8 just transition that reduces the burdens on frontline  
9 communities. Renewable Riker's can be a moment for  
10 restorable justice. Solar installer and wind turbine  
11 technician are the two fastest-growing job categories  
12 in the United States, albeit from a small base.  
13 Renewable Riker's can create jobs with a pathway to  
14 prosperity for everyone, specifically for those most  
15 impacted by mass incarceration and by incarceration  
16 at Riker's. CUNY can help. We can help prepare  
17 students from frontline communities to participate  
18 fully in the planning, building, and operating of  
19 Renewable Riker's. As plans for Riker's' future  
20 mature we need appropriate oversight mechanisms to  
21 make sure that this project benefits the communities  
22 most impacted by Riker's and by environmental racism.  
23 Introduction 1592 is an important step to ensure that  
24 closing Riker's does not devolve into a privatized  
25 land grab. The communities most impacted by

2 incarceration by Riker's and by environmental racism  
3 must be at the forefront of this process. I urge  
4 City Council to make sure these communities and their  
5 representatives are part of whatever decision-making  
6 bodies will ultimately make choices about Riker's  
7 Island. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you so  
9 much.

10 ADRIANA ESPINOSA: Good afternoon. My  
11 name is Adrian Espinosa. I'm the New York City  
12 program director at the New York League of  
13 Conservation Voters. NYLCV represents over 30,000  
14 members in New York City and we're committed to  
15 advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our  
16 people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier  
17 and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair  
18 Constantinides for the opportunity to testify at this  
19 important hearing. We're here today because after  
20 years of work by persistent advocates and members  
21 from impacted communities, many of whom are here  
22 today and we heard from, um, earlier, there, there is  
23 now a plan to close Riker's Island Correctional  
24 Facilities. I am here today to express support for  
25 renewable, or a renewable future for Riker's Island.

2 New York must seize this opportunity to transfer  
3 Riker's Island into a place for the public good. But  
4 let me be very clear. While Renewable Riker's is a  
5 step in the right direction and needs to be fully  
6 explored, it does not immediately redeem us from the  
7 injustices that have incurred there and the trauma  
8 that continues to impact families and communities  
9 across this city. That's why NYLCV strongly supports  
10 a community-driven discussion about what to do in the  
11 next phase of Riker's Island and supports the city  
12 undertaking these studies about how its green new  
13 economy has potential to inform that process. Intro  
14 1591 would explore putting wastewater treatment  
15 plants on Riker's Island and it could be means, as  
16 many others have said today, to combat historic  
17 environmental burdens that many of these  
18 neighborhoods have borne for decades. Moving  
19 wastewater treatment plants to Riker's might mean,  
20 ah, being able to decommission facilities in  
21 environmental justice communities, which would take  
22 away a source of pollution and open up that space for  
23 alternative uses. Furthermore, building renewable  
24 energy and battery storage on Riker's can combat  
25 climate change while also creating a hub for green

2 jobs and clean energy. Intro 1593 directs the  
3 Mayor's Office of Sustainability to study the  
4 feasibility of installing different types of  
5 renewable energy and battery storage on Riker's  
6 Island. This study is especially important, given  
7 there is very limited land available for siting clean  
8 energy within city limits. For these reasons, NYLCV  
9 supports Intros 1591 and 1593 and included both bills  
10 in our 2019 City Council environmental score card.  
11 We will continue to work with our partners to move  
12 these bills forward in 2020, and it is imperative as,  
13 that the push for Renewable Riker's be an inclusive  
14 one that uplifts the voices of communities  
15 disproportionately impacted by the tragic history of  
16 this island and I'd like to thank again Chair  
17 Constantinides for holding this hearing and  
18 championing these bills. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you  
20 very much.

21 TYLER NIMS: Good afternoon. I'm Tyler  
22 Nims. I'm the executive director of the Lippman  
23 Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
24 today. As the dream of shutting down Riker's comes  
25 closer to reality, thanks to the hard work of so many

3 people in this room and elsewhere, it's now time to  
4 make real plans to transform the island from a place  
5 of misery into a resource for the city's future. We  
6 have to do that now and these bills are the right  
7 step forward. So many people have covered a lot of  
8 ground today that I'm gonna go quick. So I'm just  
9 gonna make a few quick points. First, any future use  
10 of the island has to account for its painful history,  
11 its impact on so many communities, with the  
12 recognition that while the city cannot undo that  
13 impact and that history it has to acknowledge the  
14 past and use this chance as an opportunity to seek to  
15 make amends. The second point is that for many of  
16 the same reasons that make Riker's such a terrible  
17 site for jails, it's also a bad site for housing or  
18 commercial development. Or at least we concluded  
19 that housing and commercial development was not  
20 suitable or feasible. Instead, the most sensible  
21 future use is to take advantage of the island's  
22 relative isolation, to turn it into a strength rather  
23 than trying to overcome that isolation. And so that  
24 brings me to the third point, which is that using  
25 this island for green infrastructure as envisioned in  
these bills would help answer the mounting



3 environmental and sustainability crises that we face  
4 as a city and as a society. We've set ambitious but  
5 extremely necessary environmental goals for the  
6 decades ahead. Our commission's initial studies,  
7 performed by urban planners and consultants,  
8 transportation experts, and engineers make clear that  
9 using Riker's for environmental purposes would be a  
10 great boost towards achieving these goals. We  
11 project that infrastructure like a wastewater  
12 treatment plant, a large-scale solar energy  
13 installation, all the stuff that we've talked about  
14 today, would bring the city 40% closer to its zero  
15 waste goals, help to stem the flow of sewage into our  
16 waterways, and reduce emissions by the equivalent of  
17 150,000 cars. It would also generate hundreds of  
18 millions of dollars in economic activity and  
19 thousands of jobs, both permanent jobs and jobs  
20 involved in the construction of these sites. So this  
21 is just an initial analysis that we did that hints at  
22 the island's vast potential and the Renewable Riker's  
23 bills are, are gonna help the city realize that  
24 potential and ensure that the jails on Riker's are  
25 shut down forever. OK, so, just I'm gonna move to  
another jail in another part of the world as I close

2 up. In Johannesburg in South Africa there is a jail  
3 called the Old Fort. This is place where Mahatma  
4 Gandhi and Nelson Mandela and many, many other people  
5 whose names are not discussed in history class were  
6 incarcerated. But today that jail is the site of  
7 South Africa's constitutional court, which is an  
8 institution that is dedicated to resolving the  
9 historical wrongs of apartheid and oppression in that  
10 country and bringing a new South Africa into  
11 existence. So let's make Riker's Island an even  
12 greater example of transformation. Let's turn a  
13 symbol of despair into a symbol of hope and these  
14 bills are the right place to start. So thank you for  
15 introducing them.

16 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

17 KENDRA CLARK: Hello. Thank you for this  
18 hearing today. My name is Kendra Clark. I'm the  
19 vice president of policy and strategy with Exodus  
20 Transitional Community. Um, we're a preventative re-  
21 entry and advocacy organization located in East  
22 Harlem. I'm also one of the leaders on the Close  
23 Riker's and Beyond Rosie's campaigns. I did not  
24 submit written testimony, um, if you're looking. Um,  
25 I think what I really wanted to start with today was

2 how taken aback I was at hearing about the executive  
3 order that's coming out through the Mayor's Office  
4 just at the fact that for years, as so many of us  
5 have testified, we've been talking about Renewable  
6 Riker's, just maybe not the name, Renewable Riker's.  
7 But, um, you know, it's in our Build Communities  
8 platform. I have been on panels at the Queens  
9 Museum, at Astoria Houses, all across the community  
10 of Queens talking about Renewable Riker's for the  
11 last two years. Um, again, not being called  
12 Renewable Riker's but having it be created to a  
13 renewable energy source, um, and so I really implore  
14 the Mayor's Office to not only have us at the table,  
15 but maybe have one of us leaders who's been doing  
16 this work this whole time be a co-chair with Daniel  
17 or whoever is going to oversee this advisory board  
18 and really have us be leaders that are, are really  
19 designing these process, because we've already been  
20 doing community planning on this for so long. We  
21 don't want to backtrack, right? And we also only  
22 have 24 hours in a day and about five jobs between  
23 all of us activists. So to hear that we're gonna  
24 have to go back out and do more community  
25 involvement, I'm all about engaging the community.

2 Um, I just think it's a little exhaustive at a  
3 certain point, especially when we've been talking  
4 about this for two years. What I would love to see  
5 is us engaging the community around when we do close  
6 these, ah, peaker plants, what do they want to see  
7 replacing that in those communities, right? I think  
8 renewable energy is where we need to go with Riker's.  
9 Um, housing is definitely not an area that we want to  
10 go and I have some, some suggestions around housing,  
11 too. But really engaging the community in that  
12 capacity, what do they want to then see in those  
13 neighborhoods that have been impacted the most by  
14 this, right? Um, so I just, I really want to make  
15 that clear. I was, I was a little taken back. We're  
16 very excited to start this process again, but it was  
17 just a little like, wait a minute, has, have people,  
18 have all the council members read our Build  
19 Communities platform? Have they read everything that  
20 has been outlined for the last two years on how we  
21 wanted to move this and make this happen? How can we  
22 really start at that point, too, and make sure that  
23 the Mayor's Office is very clear, too, ah, with this  
24 planning committee on all the work that we've already  
25 done, so again we're not redoing the same work again

2 over and over. Um, we at Exodus and at Beyond  
3 Rosie's, ah, fully support all three bills, and  
4 again, as Sarita has mentioned earlier, you know, we  
5 really want them to move forward immediately and feel  
6 like they can be done simultaneous with the mayor's  
7 planning process for, for the community. Um, and  
8 unfortunately the council member had left, but he  
9 asked a lot of different questions, specifically  
10 around housing, and, you know, just even thinking  
11 through some different ways that we could go about  
12 rectifying our housing, ah, affordable housing crisis  
13 in New York City without using the island, um, you  
14 know we really want to change the abatement rule, the  
15 8020 abatement rule. Like that's something the city  
16 could really clench their teeth in and, and work on  
17 changing, and that would allow more affordable, I  
18 mean, that would right there, would make a huge  
19 difference, right, if it was 60% affordable housing  
20 and maybe 40% not, as opposed to only 20% affordable  
21 housing and 80% for them to get those tax, ah,  
22 reimbursements and reductions. Ah, absentee owners  
23 is something that we've been talking about for a long  
24 time in the city. There is housing in the city,  
25 right? It's just not accessible to our folks. Ban

3 the Box for housing if, if we Ban the Box on housing  
4 applications, I still have trouble getting housing  
5 and I've been off of Riker's for almost 10 years now.  
6 And, ah, you know, the minute a private landlord  
7 realizes that I have a criminal background I still  
8 can't get access to housing. So by just creating  
9 affordable housing on Riker's we're not solving any  
10 of the housing problems that we're currently seeing.  
11 We really need to do a deep dive and I know a lot of  
12 us would love to work with the council members on  
13 really making those changes apparent. Um, and in  
14 addition to, ah, kind of the memory and legacy of, of  
15 Riker's, you know, the Riker's Island Public Memory  
16 Project, and this is another, um, you know, project  
17 that I really want the council members to, to look  
18 at, every single person that we have interviewed and  
19 asked about what they want to see on the island after  
20 never has anything to do with housing, and once we  
21 mention energy, renewable energy, people's eyes light  
22 up. I have talked to every neighbor in my building  
23 alone just in Queens and who are not criminal justice  
24 activists and a lot of them are actually opposed  
25 against closing Riker's, and they are all about  
Renewable Riker's. It's just a no-brainer, honestly,

3 to everybody that I've talked to, whether it's  
4 friends, coworkers, participants, the whole gamut of  
5 it. So, again, through that, that Public Memory  
6 Project it's another thing the mayor, we don't really  
7 need to go back and redo. There's all this data and  
8 all these stories that are already out there on what  
9 the communities most impacted want the island to  
10 become, so I don't want us to re- kind of do that  
11 work again. And just as a final thought, um, why I  
12 was so excited, in addition to needing, obviously,  
13 renewable energy in the city and we're far behind on  
14 that, what I was most excited about this was we were  
15 tortured and harmed by Riker's Island for decades,  
16 generations, you know, some of us years who sat in  
17 there, and as directly impacted people we are really  
18 advocating and striving to say, hey, with Renewable  
19 Riker's the entire city will breathe cleaner air.  
20 Everybody's kids will benefit from it. Here's the  
21 people who have been most harmed and we want to give  
22 back in this really positive and meaningful way and  
23 say hey, we're taking the high road even though we've  
24 been most harmed and we want to help the city  
25 citywide. So, again, you know, we really strongly  
urge you to, ah, you know, pass the three bills that

2 are, that are on the plate and, again, you know, with  
3 the, the Mayor's Office and this planning commission  
4 really having us be leaders and co-chairing and  
5 really, you know, scheduling the events, working with  
6 them, and letting them kind of see all the work that  
7 we've already done and make sure that they're very  
8 clear on, on what's been going on for the last two  
9 and three years. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So first  
11 I'll say how much this entire panel and all of the  
12 activists who have spoken today, how much you all  
13 inspire me, and how much, you know, the great work  
14 that you all are doing, and that we should be  
15 listening to all of you much more than talking. Um,  
16 so thank you for all of the great work that you all  
17 do, ah, and you inspire us and I, you have my word,  
18 we're gonna to continue to fight on all aspects of  
19 these legislations, ah, to make sure that we get it  
20 done. Um, so I'm, I'm guessing from this panel's  
21 testimony that there's no one there who supports the  
22 expansion of Laguardia Airport. And I'm not sure we  
23 have anyone in the room who supports luxury  
24 development on Riker's Island either. I, ah, good,  
25 so I think we're all in a same, very similar place.



2 I think that as we structure this, I think, I've  
3 brought this up to the Mayor's Office as well, is  
4 that there have been conversations and I don't want  
5 to see a new sort of board replace the conversations  
6 that have already happened in neighborhoods. We have  
7 an opportunity to have new conversations with, in  
8 communities, but those shouldn't be replacing the  
9 community conversation that's already taken place,  
10 right? I mean, I think that's where everyone feels  
11 on the panel? Great. All right. So on that note,  
12 does anyone have anything else to ad? All right,  
13 great, so I'm going to..

14 KENDRA CLARK: Thank you, also we've, you  
15 know, been really connected with youth throughout  
16 this entire process and so, you know, what he was  
17 saying, or the other council member was saying  
18 earlier about the mayor kind of just dropping this  
19 executive order, I appreciate that your office has  
20 not done that throughout this entire process. You've  
21 been very, ah, clear and communicative and we just  
22 really appreciate that as advocates.

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.  
24 We're going to continue to do the right thing. Thank  
25 you so much, guys. Thank you for your great

2 testimony and all of your advocacy around all of  
3 these issue. Thank you. All right, so we have one  
4 last panel. We have James Sedlin from 350 New York  
5 City, ah, Harley Murphy, I'm sorry if, I apologize.  
6 Georgie Page from 350 Brooklyn, Tamika Graham from  
7 Just Leadership USA, and also Mr. Hall from, ah, WE  
8 ACT For Environmental Justice, are you still here?  
9 OK, great. All right, and if, if there is anyone  
10 else who thought they wanted to testify and they  
11 still want to testify, now is that moment. All  
12 right, I think we're good. OK. We'll start right  
13 there, all right, there we go.

14 HARVEY MURPHY: I'll start.

15 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Sounds good.

16 HARVEY MURPHY: How you guys doing?

17 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right.

18 HARVEY MURPHY: My name is Harvey Murphy.

19 I'm a community organizer at Just Leadership USA.  
20 Yes, I am a Riker's Island survivor. Let's just, let  
21 me just say, hold on, excuse me one second. Let me  
22 just say that the communities that's most harmed,  
23 that's the most harmed by Riker's Island, my  
24 neighborhood, my constituents, my stakeholders in my  
25 neighborhood ask me, Harvey, what are they gonna do

2 with Riker's Island? They say, Harvey, they're  
3 gonna, ah, extend Laguardia Airport? Are they gonna  
4 build luxury housing? I say no. We have to do  
5 something to invest into our communities that's been  
6 suffering. We can't wait no longer. This right here  
7 is a powerful moment in history. We can't plan no  
8 real plan to invest in communities that were most  
9 harmed by mass incarceration on wastewater plants and  
10 dirty power plants. I live in the Bronx and my  
11 community smells right now. My community smells  
12 right now as I speak. Now is the time for those  
13 wastewater treatment plants that the Bronx, 'cause  
14 I'm from the Bronx, and the Bronx still smells bad to  
15 this day. The time is now. The time is right now.  
16 I just want to say, right, that with this Renewable  
17 Riker's Act, right, what it is doing to the  
18 community? The community is at a uproar. I sat on  
19 Riker's Island, right? And I sat on Riker's Island.  
20 I didn't have no hope. What we doing right here  
21 we're giving communities hope. We giving people  
22 that's formerly incarcerated hope. We giving people  
23 that's sitting in Riker's Island right now, we giving  
24 them hope. I just want to say one of the things that  
25 we have to glorify our, what's the word I'm looking

2 for? We have to glorify our legends. You guys, you  
3 Council Member, you're a legend. The community want  
4 to know who you are. So I want to take a picture  
5 with you, you know, get you involved, you know, cause  
6 my haven community want to know who you are. Um, we  
7 legends here. And don't let for one of us die and to  
8 [say] the work that we did. So we have to honor each  
9 other. I'm a legend. I'm formerly incarcerated.  
10 I'm fighting back for my community. The community is  
11 still on back. You know what the community call me?  
12 They call me, oh, you the new Nipsy Hustle. I say  
13 I'm not Nipsy Hustle. I'm not. I'm a legend. And I  
14 respect what Nipsy Hustle did. But I'm not a, I'm a  
15 legend. And honor me now before I die. Watch the  
16 work that I do. Respect the work that I do and  
17 respect that I am a legend and I am alive. So to my  
18 legend that's in the building, I salute you all, I  
19 raise my hands in the air for you guys, because  
20 honestly this is historical right here. We are  
21 diversing, we are diversing the money back into the  
22 communities that was affected by mass incarceration.  
23 Not only mass incarceration, but the pollution,  
24 'cause right now, right now as I speak, Hunt's Point  
25 is stinking right now. Hunt's Point smells like a

2 body is out there for some reason. So this right  
3 here, this right here, this is amazing. I'm so  
4 ancient about the, I want to leave and go do outreach  
5 on this. I gotta do outreach. I'm mad. I'm, I've  
6 been sitting here about five hours. But honestly...

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Me too,  
8 we're here together, brother.

9 HARVEY MURPHY: Right. Um, I feel like I  
10 just got to get in the community and educate the  
11 community on Renewable Riker's Act and I just want to  
12 say I appreciate you guys. Honestly, I just don't  
13 want to hold up the mic no more. I'm just honestly  
14 and, and privileged to be up here. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

16 TAMIKA GRAHAM: Good afternoon. My name  
17 is Tamika Graham and before I took a stand in  
18 solidarity with my brothers and sisters at Just  
19 Leadership USA to shut down Riker's I was a public  
20 health major and one of my focuses was chronic  
21 illnesses in poverty-stricken urban communities.  
22 Through tons of research I found that obesity,  
23 asthma, cardiovascular disease, and many other  
24 illnesses, both mental and physical, are normal  
25 variables of the factors in which an environment

2 contributes to its inhabitants. Meaning pretty much  
3 you get out what you put in. For instance, the South  
4 Bronx in particular is the poorest congressional  
5 district in the country. It has the fastest increase  
6 in morbidity and mortality rates, the highest rate of  
7 chronic health disorders, the second-highest rate of  
8 incarceration in New York City, and it has the most  
9 waste transfer facilities, as well as power plants  
10 and a heavy flow of industrial truck traffic. Let us  
11 keep in mind I am only speaking of the South Bronx.  
12 I don't have enough time to touch on the different  
13 levels of polluted air I breathe in over the past 40  
14 years as a New Yorker living in those communities  
15 that shouldered these environmental burdens. From  
16 the suffocating smell and fumes of the garbage dumps,  
17 shipping yards, and factories of Staten Island to the  
18 thick smouldering air of the power plants and food  
19 distribution centers at Hunt's Point. Chronic  
20 illnesses are so prevalent in these areas because  
21 there aren't any preventative measures in our  
22 communities to help us counter or combat this poor  
23 quality of life due to socioeconomic factors and  
24 environmental injustice or, better yet, maybe it's so  
25 prevalent because, as the saying goes, money talks

2 and BS walks. I say this because the quality of life  
3 and air is so much better in our white counterparts'  
4 communities. Being raised on Staten Island I had  
5 three white friends who lived two to five blocks away  
6 from the garbage dump. Two of the three had asthma.  
7 And a pump or two from the inhaler was enough for  
8 them. Oh, and let's not forget it took some time,  
9 but they got rid of the garbage dumps out there. In  
10 the Bronx, living on Dosin, all four kids that lived  
11 with me had asthma, along with almost half the  
12 building. Do you know what it's like to take 2, 3,  
13 5, and 8 year olds to the hospital, at least once a  
14 week, to receive asthma treatments? It's very scary  
15 and overwhelming. And you feel extremely powerless  
16 as you are trying, you're trying not to panic while  
17 you watch your loved one struggling to breathe.  
18 While you try to stop your 2 year old nephew from  
19 trying to remove the mask that's providing the saline  
20 solution that's going to open his airwaves so he can  
21 breathe again on his own. I don't even, I don't ever  
22 want anyone to have to feel that pain. This is one  
23 of the many reasons I stand for and urge you to pass  
24 the Renewable Riker's plan. We could go green and  
25 use the land that has caused decades and decades of

2 trauma and health disparities to instead heal its  
3 people. These plants and waste transfer facilities  
4 in black and brown communities, the same ones who  
5 have been terrorized by Riker's Island, should be  
6 replaced with green infrastructure and moved on  
7 Riker's so we can have the land and our communities  
8 back and have our health back. I have survived  
9 Riker's. But Riker's will not survive me. Let the  
10 healing begin.

11 GEORGIE PAGE: Thank you, Chair

12 Constantinides, Samarah, staff, allies. My name is  
13 Georgie Page and I'm a member of 350 Brooklyn, a  
14 former marketing executive and the founding director  
15 of the Page Center for Education and Social Justice.  
16 350 Brooklyn is an all-volunteer community  
17 organization with hundreds of very active, engaged  
18 members working to counter the climate crisis and  
19 achieve climate justice through local action. But  
20 our reach is in the thousands. We promote the  
21 sustainable energy sector, oppose the fossil fuel  
22 industry, and educate and active our community. 350  
23 Brooklyn is also a local affiliate of 350 dot org, a  
24 global grassroots organization, and we support the  
25 Renewable Riker's Act. We are also participants in a



3 newly forming citywide network of environmental  
4 groups that is beginning to embrace Renewable Riker's  
5 as a possible focus of Earth Day Actions. Passage of  
6 the Renewable Riker's Act has the potential to mark a  
7 momentous societal shift, from a society that  
8 regularly and carelessly violates and degrades its  
9 people and planet to one that carefully and  
10 courageously rehabilitates and restores them. Or it  
11 could mark just another failure of our collective  
12 will and the inability to seize a remarkable  
13 opportunity. Furthermore, I am here today because I  
14 was incredibly moved by the horrifying stories of  
15 former Riker's detainees like Kalief Browder and  
16 Korey Wise. In the name of these boys and so many  
17 others I hope each of you will personally seize on  
18 some part, any part, of this singular opportunity to  
19 create a kind of reconciliation, rededicating Riker's  
20 as a site for growth and hope. While there has been  
21 justifiable pride in New York's climate leadership  
22 and in recent legislation addressing our state of  
23 climate emergency, what is needed is to immediately  
24 advance that legislation into more aggressive,  
25 aspirational and accountable plans of action. The  
broader environmental health and economic rationales

2 for moving towards 100% renewable energy and away  
3 from fossil fuels are well established. But New York  
4 City has additional imperatives. The Indian Point  
5 nuclear power plant is scheduled to be closed by  
6 April 2021 and the city could eventually use Riker's  
7 renewable alternatives to replace an estimated 1000  
8 megawatts of the planet's 2000 megawatt output, as  
9 well as some of the jobs lost. With total energy  
10 needs of New York City and Westchester exceeding  
11 13,000 kilowatts there is also a longer-term need for  
12 solar and other renewable energy generation if we are  
13 to meet our climate mobilization act and climate  
14 leadership and community protection acts targets,  
15 eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

16 Increased use of fracking and natural gas are not  
17 accessible replacements and the Williams pipeline  
18 would take us backward when we need to move forward.  
19 350 Brooklyn agrees with the Sierra Club's Atlantic  
20 chapter that imported hydropower would have a  
21 negative environmental impact and create a dependency  
22 that would undercut the developmental of local  
23 renewable energy and local jobs. Continued fossil  
24 fuel emissions, which are currently generated by the  
25 11 peaker power plants situated in and near the

2 city's low-income neighborhoods, will increase  
3 adverse health effects among populations that already  
4 lack adequate resources. Battery storage on Riker's  
5 would allow us close these peaker plants. The recent  
6 approval of a 316 megawatt battery storage facility  
7 at the Ravenswood plant by the New York Public  
8 Service Commission proves that the plant is possible  
9 and, even better, the October 2019 Lippman Commission  
10 report has already determined that the projects on  
11 Riker's could be situated outside of the 100-year and  
12 500-year flood plains, making them more reliable  
13 during extreme weather. While some may think of  
14 Riker's as yet another bonanza for developers or a  
15 wonderful site for low-income housing, Lippman  
16 Commission developers who were consulted soundly  
17 rejected this use. Not only is Riker's Island  
18 impossibly remote and isolating, it is subject to  
19 four-story height restrictions and it is built on  
20 methane-leaking landfill. The island is unsuitable  
21 for most other kinds of development, but it is,  
22 according to the EPA, uniquely compatible with  
23 renewable energy generation. This vision, whose  
24 proposals have been well researched by the Lippman  
25 Commission as well as by CUNY's Center for Urban

3 Environmental Reform, is very viable. According to  
4 the report, if its recommendations are followed a  
5 Renewable Riker's would have a positive economic  
6 impact, generating an estimated 340 million dollars  
7 in annual economic activity as well as 1500 jobs. It  
8 would enable growth, modernizing critical pieces of  
9 the city's infrastructure network, facilitating  
10 future growth in population and economic activity. A  
11 Renewable Riker's would reduce emissions. In total  
12 it would have benefits equivalent to taking more than  
13 150,000 cars off the road and powering up to 30,000  
14 households with renewable energy. And it would  
15 generate annual cost savings for the city of up to 75  
16 million dollars from improved water treatment. All  
17 that is lacking is our commitment and an increased  
18 sense of urgency. A September 22nd report at the  
19 UN's Climate Action Summit determined that there is  
20 still a giant and glaring emissions gap. The gap is  
21 the difference between where we are likely to be  
22 based on current targets and where we need to be.  
23 The report warns that at our current level of  
24 ambition needs to be roughly tripled to align with  
25 the 2% limit and must be increased around fivefold to  
align with the 1.5 degree Celsius limit, limit. We

3 have great hopes for the framework provided for in  
4 the CLCPA, but the timeline gives the New York State  
5 Climate Action Council two full years to create a  
6 plan, just a plan. Local Law 97 of the CMA, known as  
7 the Dirty Buildings Bill, establishes yet another  
8 advisory council, but does not require compliance  
9 until initial period of 2024 to 2029. Swift passage  
10 of the Renewable Riker's Act presents a perfect  
11 opportunity to act on our climate emergency and human  
12 rights crisis now. It is a bold, era-defining move  
13 that doesn't just tell the world the kind of city New  
14 York wants to be, it shows the world the city we will  
15 become. Thank you for your attention.

16 JANE SELDEN: My name is Jane Selden and  
17 I am here representing 350 NYC, an environmental  
18 activist organization focusing on local New York City  
19 climate issues. We are a grassroots climate group  
20 that depends on volunteers to advocate for political  
21 and social solutions to drastically reduce greenhouse  
22 gas emissions caused by burning fossil fuels. First,  
23 we would like to thank the City Council Committee on  
24 Environmental Protection for their instrumental role  
25 in passing the groundbreaking Climate Mobilization  
Act, which we strongly support. I am here today to

3 voice our support for another set of visionary  
4 environmental initiatives, the Renewable Riker's Act.  
5 Nobody's health should be determined by their ZIP  
6 code. Yet right now heavily polluting peaker plants  
7 are located in close proximity to neighborhoods  
8 largely comprised of low-income people and people of  
9 color who continue to suffer serious chronic health  
10 problems as a result of exposure to toxins, like  
11 nitrogen oxide, sulfur oxide, and the most harmful  
12 form of particulate matter. These toxins are linked  
13 to substantially increased rates of asthma and other  
14 resiliency illnesses as well as heart disease. Bill  
15 1593 would determine the feasibility of generating  
16 solar and wind power on Riker's Island. Currently,  
17 only 3% of the city's energy is renewably sourced.  
18 Constructing new solar and wind farms is an important  
19 step in reaching New York State's mandated target of  
20 reducing greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 and 85%  
21 by 2050. In addition, according to the Lippman  
22 report, a solar farm on Riker's Island could provide  
23 electricity for 25,000 households, allowing for the  
24 shutdown of peaker plants. The closure of these  
25 peaker plants would clearly have a beneficial impact  
on the health of many thousands of people, like the

2 residents of Queensbridge Houses, the largest public  
3 housing development in the country, located just a  
4 block away from these plants. Renewable Riker's  
5 includes other projects that would benefit the  
6 residents of marginalized communities and move the  
7 city towards its target of zero waste to landfills by  
8 2030. Currently only 5% of the 1.2 million annual  
9 tons of food scraps and yard waste is composted.  
10 Passing this legislation could result in the  
11 expansion of the composting facility that already  
12 exists on the island, increasing the capacity to  
13 process a thousand tons of organic waste a year and  
14 in the construction of an energy to waste plant that  
15 would be used to convert some of the 20% to 30% of  
16 non-recyclable waste into electricity. The  
17 wastewater that pollutes our local waterways is  
18 another problem addressed by this bill. Riker's  
19 could house a new wastewater treatment plant to  
20 replace the four that exist. Removing these  
21 facilities would protect these communities from  
22 exposure to their noxious emissions and make land  
23 available for housing and open space. Lastly,  
24 additional benefits include an estimated 1500 new  
25 jobs in the area, 75 million dollars in savings to

2 the city from improved water treatment, and  
3 environmental benefits equivalent to taking 150,000  
4 cars off the road. Riker's Island has had a sorry  
5 past. The Renewable Riker's Act would transform  
6 these 413 acres of land into a vision of a better  
7 future. We must take advantage of this opportunity  
8 to develop it as a site for green infrastructure,  
9 thereby tackling multiple environmental injustices  
10 and reducing our greenhouse gas footprint across the  
11 city. We at 350 NYC are supporting this vision of  
12 Renewable Riker's and the bills 1591, 1592, and 1593.  
13 Thank you for your consideration.

14 JOHN HALL: Good afternoon, Chairman  
15 Constantinides, members. My name is John Hall. I'm  
16 a member of WE ACT Environmental Justice Association.  
17 I'm a trained solar person and I was trained through  
18 WE ACT. I'm also an electrician, a designer, and  
19 artist. I came thinking only about the impact that  
20 Riker's had on me. But I didn't realize how much  
21 negative impact it had it everybody else. I was only  
22 gonna talk about just going over to teach classes how  
23 my stomach would knot up on the bus the closer I got  
24 to the island. You know, going forward I feel that  
25 if we do a solar system out there we can reduce the



2 impact on the whole community by 9000 homes, take  
3 them right off the grid, and that will be for, you  
4 know, 24, and that's based on 19, I mean 2018 stats.  
5 You know, systems get better as the time goes, and by  
6 the time we start building this things we'll be way  
7 up there and probably be able to take 2000 homes off  
8 the grid. Um, I believe we should support, um, these  
9 three bills to get this thing moving and get the city  
10 back in a positive light, that when I fly in to  
11 Laguardia I look down I could see something that's a  
12 lot better than the Pepsi-Cola sign or the Hollywood  
13 sign, you know, we can have our own, you know,  
14 beautiful island that will be generating energy and  
15 moving the city ahead of everywhere else. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,  
17 and, again, I, I appreciate all of you. I'm, thank  
18 you, you inspire the work that we do and thank you  
19 for all of your advocacy. Thank you for the time  
20 that you take every single day, um, to, ah, advocate  
21 on issues of social justice, criminal justice,  
22 environmental justice. So thank you for your time.

23 HARVEY MURPHY: I would like to say, ah,  
24 City Council Member Constantinides, I said it right,  
25 right?

2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Close  
3 enough, brother, that's all right. [laughs]

4 HARVEY MURPHY: I mean, all right. You  
5 messed up on my name, though. But, no, I invite you  
6 to Moore Haven, ah, Moore Haven section of the Bronx,  
7 Moore Haven Projects, ah, any time you want to come.  
8 I actually got a flyer for you, man, so if you want,  
9 you know, to come up and shake some hands, man, you a  
10 legend, so we want to honor you while you here, so  
11 just know that.

12 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I appreciate  
13 that. I appreciate that very much, and I look  
14 forward to working with you all to get all of this  
15 work done. So I want to thank you for your time here  
16 today. I know it's been a long history, but a very  
17 worthwhile and inspiring hearing, something that I  
18 know that we can build on to get good things done for  
19 all New Yorkers. So thank you for your time today.  
20 I know that your time is valuable.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.  
24 So with that, I'm not seeing anyone to testify. I  
25 want to thank my staff, ah, Samarah Swanston, our

2 attorney, ah, our policy analysts, Nadia Johnson and  
3 Nicky Charla, our financial analysis, Jonathan  
4 Seltzer. I'll take it, it's all right brother. I  
5 got it. Thank you, thank you. Ah, our, my staff,  
6 Nicholas Wizowski, my attorney, and Terence Come, my  
7 communications director, and my whole team. And I  
8 want to thank the Mayor's Office as well. I'm  
9 looking forward to partnering with you and to, of  
10 course, all the advocates, all of you who inspire us  
11 every single day. We look forward to making sure we  
12 get this Renewable Riker's Act passed. So with that,  
13 and of course Corey Johnson, who was here earlier and  
14 speaking in support. So thank you to our speaker for  
15 his environmental leadership. With that, I will  
16 gavel this committee hearing. Oh, lastly, Sergeant  
17 at Arms, all of our staff here in the City Council  
18 thank you so much for the work that you do. Thank  
19 you very much. And I'll gavel this hearing on the  
20 Environmental Protection Committee closed. [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 February 9, 2020