

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

----- X

September 25, 2013

Start: 1:05 p.m.

Recess: 1:44 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room
16th Floor

B E F O R E: Fernando Cabrera
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Letitia James
G. Oliver Koppell
Mark S. Weprin

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

Todd Asher

First Deputy Commissioner for Mayor's Office of
Media and Entertainment

John Battista

Deputy Commissioner for Mayor's Office of Media
and Entertainment

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

3

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [off mic conversation] Alright, this meeting, we're going to get started. Good afternoon and welcome to the oversight hearing concerning the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment. In July 2010, Mayor Bloomberg announced the creation the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, which combined the Mayor's Office of Film, Theater, and Broadcasting with NYC Media and a new Digital Coordination Office which later became NYC Digital. The merger was intended to integrate and expand the City's diverse media industry and spur the development of new media technologies. The Mayor's Office of Film, Theater and Broadcasting is one stop shop for all production needs in New York City. This agency markets New York City as a prime location, provides customer service to production companies and facility production throughout the five boroughs. NYC Media is the official tv, radio and online network of New York City, informing, educating, and entertaining New Yorkers about the City's diverse neighborhoods, services, attractions

1
2 and activities. NYC Digital was created in
3 July 2010 to establish and implement a city-
4 wide digital strategy. Among other things, it
5 has outlined a digital roadmap of plans and
6 recommendation to enhance the City's digital
7 operations. The Committee hopes to learn more
8 about each of these three offices that comprise
9 MOME, the services that each office provides,
10 and whether the sharing of resources has
11 affected the services that each provide. And
12 I'm going to turn it over, and if you can
13 introduce yourself, and welcome.

14 TODD ASHER: Certainly. Thank you
15 Chairperson Cabrera. It's a privilege to be before
16 you again. My name is Todd, I'm the First Deputy
17 Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Media and
18 Entertainment, and I'm joined by Deputy Commissioner,
19 John Battista, and we welcome the opportunity to
20 testify again today. Thank you for the warm welcome.
21 There--I may have some small redundancies in my
22 introduction, but you summarized our office very
23 well. As you know, our office, the Mayor's Office of
24 Media and Entertainment consists of the Office of
25 Film, Theater and Broadcasting, which you mentioned

1 facilitates and supports film and television
2 production throughout the five boroughs. NYC Digital
3 which works to realize New York City's potential as
4 the world's leading digital city. Good afternoon.
5 And NYC Media, which is the official tv, radio, and
6 online network of the city of New York. And
7 throughout this administration we've worked hard to
8 innovate and revitalize New York City's entertainment
9 and digital industries, helping to attract new
10 businesses and job opportunities to the city and
11 increase access and transparency and government. The
12 Office of Film, Theater and Broadcasting specifically
13 over the past several years has seen tremendous
14 growth in the City's film and television production
15 industry. Recent economic impact study conducted by
16 the Boston Consultant Group found that the industry
17 is currently the strongest it has been its history,
18 now generating a direct annual spend of 7.1 billion
19 dollars per year, an increase of over two billion
20 dollars annually since 2002. Film and television
21 production now employs 130,000 people, and increase
22 of 30,000 jobs since 2004. This growth that--this
23 growth has also been accompanied by private
24 infrastructure investment and expanding studio and
25

1 post production capacity. Ten years ago only seven
2 episodic series were produced here. Last season
3 there were 27, and we expect additional series to
4 begin filming on location at it's stages throughout
5 the City in the coming months. All of this
6 production activity means several things. First it
7 means that more New Yorkers are working in well-
8 paying jobs behind the cameras and they aren't forced
9 to move away from the city to find work in their
10 chosen career. Second, it means that thousands of
11 local businesses are being supported by these
12 productions. Small businesses across the City have
13 told our office that the increase in production has
14 been a boom to their businesses. Some even pointing
15 out that without the money generated from film and tv
16 shows patronizing their shops, they wouldn't have
17 survived in the recent economic crisis. Third, it
18 means that our office has continued to strengthen our
19 efforts to lessen the impact on location filming has
20 on local residents and communities. To that end, we
21 no require that whenever productions post no parking
22 signs in the community, they must also include
23 contact information for the location manager of the
24 production so that residents can get in touch with
25

1 the production directly if any situation arises. As
2 always, the staff at the Office of Film, Theater and
3 Broadcasting can also be contacted by a 311, and can
4 intervene if a resident's concerns aren't fully and
5 immediately addressed. For example, our staff has
6 stepped in and had a production move its catering
7 table away from a restaurant and ensured that a
8 moving van would have access to a street where a
9 production was filming. Productions are required to
10 post no parking signs at least 48 hours in advance of
11 filming and distribute letters to the residents and
12 businesses that will be affected by filming on their
13 street, and our office has revoked permits from
14 productions that have failed to do so. We send field
15 representatives from our office out daily to monitor
16 a production's footprint in the community and also to
17 ensure that they're in compliance with their permits.
18 The field reps have also visited the offices of the
19 local City Council Member as well as the Community
20 Board to hear any concerns that might exist out of
21 neighborhoods. Our office hosts meetings every year,
22 inviting community boards, business improvement
23 districts, and city council members to talk about the
24 upcoming year, and discuss any concerns or questions
25

1 they might have. Based on feedback from the
2 community, community boards now have the ability to
3 access information regarding productions throughout
4 city-wide event coordination and management system.
5 We also host appreciation screenings working closely
6 with the council members offices and community boards
7 so that residents have a chance to see their
8 neighborhood on screen after hosting a film crew on
9 their street, and share in the pride of the finished
10 product. And we encourage productions to give back
11 to communities in which they film. Shows like
12 Elementary brought in a food truck and served waffles
13 to residents on the street where the show was
14 working. And in the aftermath of hurricane Sandy,
15 volunteers from Made in New York Productions came out
16 to volunteer at food and water distribution sites,
17 donated supplies, and coordinated donation pick-ups
18 and volunteer transportation. All of this is part of
19 our numerous efforts to keep New York City film
20 friendly and a place where 130,000 New Yorkers can
21 continue to earn their living and support their
22 families. In April of this year, we reached the
23 milestone of having graduated more than 400 Made in
24 New York Production Assistants since the program's
25

1 inception in 2006. The program which was developed
2 and partnership between the Mayor's Office of Media
3 and Entertainment and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations,
4 a local not for profit organization involved five
5 weeks of free intensive hands-on training for
6 unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers, and covers
7 everything from community outreach strategies to life
8 management skills. Upon graduation, new PA's are put
9 to work on sets and in production offices for future
10 films, TV shows and commercials. The program
11 continues to support graduates by providing two years
12 of job placement assistance as the PA's also begin to
13 build their network of contacts in the industry.
14 Made in New York PA's have worked on over 2,000
15 productions and are now also advancing in their
16 careers becoming associate producers, production
17 coordinators, camera operators, and set costumers,
18 gaining union membership. In the coming months, we
19 expect to graduate the 450th Made in New York PA.
20 We're also looking the future of the industry, and
21 next month, the Made in New York Media Center will
22 officially open in DUMBO Brooklyn, next week even.
23 Working with IFP and General Assembly, our office has
24 helped to create a centralized hub for the creative
25

1 community that promotes collaboration, workforce
2 development, and entrepreneurship. The media center
3 will provide a co-working space, affordable office
4 space, classrooms, a screening room and a café. It
5 is our hope that this incubator will connect film
6 makers, digital designers and story tellers so that
7 they can create cutting-edge projects and establish
8 new business opportunities. NYC Media, as the City's
9 official television, radio and online network, NYC
10 Media has continued to produce engaging and
11 informative content that let's New Yorkers know about
12 the various services offered by the city of New York.
13 NYC Media also shares valuable information to
14 residents in times of emergency. Last fall, NYC
15 Media carried all of the Mayoral press conferences
16 before, during, and after Hurricane Sandy live to
17 television via the switch, as well as to the new live
18 feed technology online. Following Hurricane Sandy,
19 on NYC Life Channel 25, we showcase the reopening of
20 various small businesses affected by the storm in a
21 series of videos and highlighted the reopening of
22 Rockaway Beach. In terms of content airing on NYC
23 Media, for the series, That's So New York, for
24 example, we spotlighted a range of topics that effect
25

1 residents and business owners, like a new housing
2 project in the South Bronx featuring a roof-top
3 garden or the New Business Acceleration team which
4 helps new businesses open faster and meet the City's
5 requirements. We've produced half our specials about
6 life-saving technology and city hospitals, emergency
7 preparedness, and the job help and online workshops
8 provided by the Department of Small Business
9 Services. In the recent season of 999, which
10 highlights entertaining and educational activities to
11 do throughout the five boroughs on a budget, we
12 devoted an entire episode to local volunteering
13 opportunities. We've produced public service
14 announcements about the 9/11 Victims Compensation
15 Fund, and how to help those in need after the
16 hurricane. We've also created public service
17 announcements for the Department of Health and Human-
18 -excuse me--Human Resources Administration,
19 Department of environmental protection and others
20 working with the agencies to get their messages out
21 to the public. We also produced a public service
22 announcement that focuses on the daily live feed of
23 City Council meetings. As you know, since May of
24 2012, live coverage of the City Council hearings has
25

1 been available on New York City Government's TV
2 station, NYC GOV, channel 74, which is also available
3 to non-cable subscribers and online at
4 Council.NYC.gov. With live coverage from City
5 Council Chambers and the Council's 250 Broadway
6 Committee rooms, New York City has become the largest
7 municipality to carry live legislative hearings.
8 This has been achieved through close working
9 relationship our agency has developed with the
10 Council to make city government more accessible for
11 New Yorkers. All together we provide over 4,000
12 hours of annual coverage each year. NYC Digital,
13 since its creation in 2011, NYC Digital had made
14 great strides in helping New York City achieve its
15 goal of becoming the world's leading digital city.
16 The following initiatives laid out in the digital
17 road map and driven by a vibrant technology industry,
18 a strong social media presence, infrastructure
19 improvements and historic investments in education.
20 Today, the total size of the City's digital reach is
21 7.5 million, which includes monthly traffic to
22 NYC.gov and the followers, subscribers, and users of
23 city curated digital media channels. Since the
24 release of the digital road map in May of 2011, the
25

1 City's social media audience has more than tripled,
2 growing from 1.2 million to a current peak of 3.7
3 million social media followers across over 340
4 channels. Overall, the City's digital reach has
5 nearly doubled since the introduction of the road
6 map, increasing from four million in 2011 to 7.8
7 million in 2013, and increase of 85 percent. This
8 means that more New Yorkers are able to engage
9 directly with City Services and agencies that they're
10 most interested in, allowing them to have easy access
11 to vital information that effects their daily lives.
12 The road map itself outlines an array of digital
13 initiatives that are now in place, including more
14 access to the internet for low income New Yorkers,
15 increased free WiFi in public spaces, educational
16 programs that promote science, technology,
17 engineering and mathematics learning in city schools,
18 NYC open data, and the promotion of the City's
19 thriving tech industry. With the introduction of the
20 newly redesigned NYC.gov later this month, all of the
21 goals outlined in the original digital road map will
22 have been achieved in less than two and half years.
23 In preparation of this release, the upcoming update
24 to the digital road map, NYC Digital, has also
25

1 reached out to resident in the outer boroughs to hear
2 firsthand how technology affects their lives, and
3 that feedback will be incorporated into the next
4 digital road map update. Recognizing that the City's
5 tech industry is growing and in an effort to attract
6 new start-ups to the area and connect New Yorkers
7 with new job opportunities, NYC Digital launched the
8 We are Made in New York initiative in February of
9 2013. Included in this economic development,
10 Initiative is a comprehensive website,
11 wearemadeinnewyork.com, that brings together all of
12 the City's resources for entrepreneurs, lists
13 opportunities for novice to learn coding, and become
14 part of the digital sector and hosts the digital jobs
15 map, an interactive map that currently includes more
16 than 1,300 tech companies in New York City that are
17 currently hiring. The We are Made in New York
18 initiative also included an advertising campaign that
19 was seen in subways and on buses, as well as in
20 college newspapers of leading technology campuses in
21 an effort to recruit graduates to the city. The
22 initiative also expanded the Made in New York logo,
23 previously given to film and TV shows produced in the
24 city, to those companies that face at least 75
25

1 percent or more of their development within the five
2 boroughs. In addition to helping the tech industry,
3 we want to help small business owners grow their
4 companies and attract new customers online by taking
5 advantage of new digital tools. In August of 2012,
6 the Mayor, NYC Digital, and the Department of Small
7 Business Services launched the Small Business Digital
8 Tool Kit. This initiative offers small businesses
9 free training and resources to digitally attract
10 customers, conduct business online, and market their
11 products or services through the use of e-commerce
12 technology. Small businesses have the opportunity
13 to learn how to leverage social media more
14 effectively, launch a website with how-to guides, and
15 incorporate search engine optimization and
16 advertising techniques. The resources are also
17 available online, along with a series of training
18 videos created by NYC Media so that they can be
19 accessed at any time by small businesses. That is a
20 summary of some of our various initiatives and
21 programs. The Mayor's Office of Media and
22 Entertainment looks after an important part of the
23 City's economy with industries that are employing
24 thousands of New Yorkers and creating jobs and
25

1 businesses every day. We have worked diligently to
2 make New York City the place to film episodic
3 television, develop a start-up, and create new
4 content, and we look forward to the work ahead. Thank
5 you again for the opportunity to testify again today,
6 and we are now happy to address any questions you may
7 have. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Great. First off,
10 thank you so much for your testimony. Let me
11 acknowledge Council Member Weprin and Council Member
12 Koppell. I just have a few questions and then if my
13 colleagues have questions, then I'll come back with
14 some other questions. I don't like to make my
15 colleagues wait too long. But if you could tell me
16 about the road map for the Digital City, what has not
17 yet out of all the initiatives that were introduced,
18 can you share with us which initiatives are still in
19 process, which ones have not been attained, and by
20 when?

21 TODD ASHER: So the third installment of
22 the Digital Road Map should be coming out in the
23 course of the next two to three weeks, and we've been
24 going through final review. I read a final version
25 again this morning, and we're very proud to say that

1
2 all of the challenges that were set out in 2011 in
3 the initial road map have been met. In the third
4 installment there will be a description of all of
5 those programs and how those milestones have been met
6 and also some suggestions going forward for ways to
7 expand on the things that have already been done.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Beautiful. Let me
9 just change gears real quick. In terms of--by the
10 way, let me commend you on the information that now
11 is providing and the no parking signs that now that
12 have a contact information. I think that's very
13 useful, practical, and it's a way of being a better
14 neighbor with the neighbors.

15 TODD ASHER: Right.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But you mentioned
17 that you have a 130,000 people that have been
18 employed. How many out of those 130,000 are extras
19 in a movie?

20 TODD ASHER: Extra's, specifically--

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Oh,
22 is that including the 130,000? 'Cause I know, you
23 know, given more you could have 3-400, 1,000 extras.

24 JOHN BATTISTA: That's not just the--
25 that's not just with the movies. It's the

1 television. It's programming. It's everybody
2 throughout the industry from the top level people to
3 the bottom. So from production assistants to extras
4 to anybody who collects a paycheck.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But do you have--
7 you know, the people who do this like part time.

8 TODD ASHER: It's a--It's a good
9 question. I don't know that I--

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Do
11 you happen to have that number?

12 TODD ASHER: I--

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] I'm
14 just curious.

15 TODD ASHER: My initial reaction is that
16 extras aren't captured, but I need to confirm if
17 that's the case because it's primarily below the
18 line. It's the electricians, it's the camera people.
19 It's all of the staff that goes into setting up and
20 executing the production, but it's a great question
21 about extras to see if they're captured somewhere.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And most of these
23 are union jobs, right, the 130,000?

24 JOHN BATTISTA: We believe so, most of
25 them are union.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, and out of the 130,000, how many of those are minorities? Do you happen to know that?

JOHN BATTISTA: We don't have the data on that.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. 'Cause I know in the movies, it's very hard for minorities to make roadways, and in television--

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing] You looking for a new career?

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Listen, if I get call upon, you know, any open doors there, Council Member Weprin? To be or not to be, right? So, is-- you know, because I know in previous hearings this has been an issue that--and I hear it out there that it's very difficult for minorities to get in, and a lot of the unions, which I'm all for unions, but you know, it's generational. You have the grandfather, the great grandfather who started and all the way to the children and it just kind of an ingrown kind of a business. And then with that, the follow up question is, what is your office doing to open that door?

1
2 TODD ASHER: So it's--the program that we
3 mentioned in the testimony, the PA program which is
4 for production assistants--

5 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing]
6 Right.

7 TODD ASHER: is a program that our office
8 began and now has graduated 400 individuals from the
9 boot camp. Ninety-five percent of the people that
10 have gone through the program are of color, and they
11 are gaining employment with productions. So we work
12 hard to not only make sure that the program continues
13 and expands but also with studios and encourage them
14 to hire these individuals. Many of them, as I
15 mentioned the first step as PA, which is a non-union
16 position, but many of them are now going up through
17 the ranks and also joining the unions. So it's an
18 attempt to make a change to the--what you point out.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And let me commend
20 you for the program. I thought it was very
21 innovative. Four hundred is a substantial amount.
22 It would be great, I don't know if you guys have the
23 capacity to do this, to be able to track those 400
24 and to see how far in have they been able to make it
25 it, and how many, what type of jobs, to see how far

1
2 your success, what you've been able to achieve so
3 far, you know, has been accomplished. But again,
4 it's a great program. I have referred people to
5 them. I say, "Listen, I heard you want to get in the
6 business, call the office." And so I'm very happy
7 regarding that. I--let me ask you, regarding movies,
8 I know theaters and studios, they're having a
9 capacity problem in terms of space, what is your
10 office doing to help or can you do anything to
11 facilitate for space? I know that when they were
12 making the movie, I think it was X-Men or one of the--
13 -I'm sure you could tell me a few that they couldn't
14 do them all here, they could only do a couple of
15 weeks because we didn't have the capacity like
16 Hollywood has. What do you foresee in the future?
17 What can we do to help studio expansion in the city?

18 TODD ASHER: Talk about sound stages.

19 JOHN BATTISTA: I mean, as far as sound
20 stages, they were all owned privately and this one of
21 the major concerns for our office is how and who can
22 develop more sound stages. What I can tell you is we
23 even just recently had a phone call and I held a
24 meeting with some investors who are looking to build
25 brand new up in the Bronx.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Oh really?

JOHN BATTISTA: Brand new facilities as well as the conversion of warehouses is what has been done in the recent years, and once they become a qualified stage, you know, we're able to fill them rather quickly.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: How much space they need?

JOHN BATTISTA: Well, you know, on a TV show, for example, they look to have at least two stages of 18,000 square feet back to back, because they go from one set to the other, and a height of 30 feet.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thirty feet.

JOHN BATTISTA: On feature films they look for bigger space, maybe 20,000 to 40,000 square feet with a height of up to 45 feet.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Let me turn it over to Council Member Weprin. I have a lot of questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Yeah, I don't have much. I just had a couple of questions. I just want you to know, Mr. Chairman, I think you have those Hollywood good looks, so you could pull it off. And

1
2 if they want to make an ice, an ice skating movie, we
3 got the perfect location now.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Matter of fact, the
5 movie people, they came, they wanted to put a studio
6 in the Kingsbridge Armory. We'll see.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Gentleman, what
8 I--before I was in the City Council I served in the
9 State Legislature, and we were very--I was, you know,
10 a big proponent of the film and television tax credit
11 that was put in place at the time, and I haven't
12 followed it as closely as I probably should since
13 then, but obviously your testimony today about how
14 booming we are on tax--on films, do you give a lot of
15 credit to that tax credit, 'cause I know that the
16 movie--the studios were pushing it very hard. The TV
17 shows were all pushing it very hard. Have you
18 noticed that that tax credit has had an effect on the
19 amount of filming that's going on in New York City?

20 TODD ASHER: As you know, the only state-
21 -or excuse me--the only tax credit that's currently
22 offered is at the state level. The city no longer
23 has a tax credit. We think it's an important part of
24 why people are coming to New York City to film, but
25 we're very much focused on the other services, which

1
2 are equally important, and being able to create
3 complicated productions in the streets of New York.
4 Making sure that we have a balance with the community
5 is just as important, but I think all of it is
6 important to keeping the business.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Have other states
8 changed their tax credit in order to try to out
9 credit the New York market?

10 TODD ASHER: Because we're--because we're
11 sort of out of the business of the--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
13 Right.

14 TODD ASHER: of the tax credits
15 ourselves, it's not something that we follow in the
16 same way, but it's--I think that generally having
17 read different information, there's states who
18 previously did offer them, but don't. But I think a
19 lot of it had to do with actually having the
20 infrastructure to support it. So whereas they might
21 have been attracting the business initially, they
22 don't have the crews that we have. They don't have
23 the--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]
25 Right.

1
2 TODD ASHER: the infrastructure that we
3 have, and so it really is a, you know, a larger piece
4 of one puzzle of a larger piece.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right. There's
6 only one New York City, and one of the arguments that
7 made back then is that the difference was huge back
8 then in Canada and Connecticut even had a much better
9 tax structure, so much that I was willing to move out
10 of New York, but obviously there's only one New York
11 and the scenes and the places are something you can't
12 find anywhere else when you do outside shooting and
13 onsite. Let me ask a question about onsite shooting,
14 then. Just curious. Do you get involved with when
15 movie studios come in and say, "Hey, we're looking
16 for this type of shot or this type of neighborhood."
17 Do they come to the City and ask for advice on that,
18 or?

19 JOHN BATTISTA: Yes, they do, and that's
20 part of the office's overall goal is you can have a
21 tax credit, but you also have to be able to have
22 access to streets and locations, and that's where our
23 office comes in. So when people come in and they're
24 looking for something in particular, we have what we
25 call "hot shots" and it's a--

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

Right.

JOHN BATTISTA: And it's all city-owned properties such as streets, parks, different locations where they can go onto our website and view it.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: [interposing]

You suggest it?

JOHN BATTISTA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: You know, this is going off the board a little bit, but next year there's going to be a big issue about carriages in Central Park. It's going to, you know--If de Blasio becomes Mayor, he's talked a lot about trying to ch-- you know, go away from the horse-drawn carriages or at least experiment with electric cars. You know, a lot of people have said, "Well, you know, electric cars, that's not an iconic image of New York City." And the truth is I said, "You know, one good Tom Hanks movie and they could be. You know." So I'm just curious like is that, you know, I mean that's something you might recommend depending, you know, is that a popular site, horse-drawn carriages in Central Park to get New York shots? And do you agree with me

1
2 that if indeed something else did come in to work
3 alongside those horses, that they too could be
4 recommended as a site possibly, if our new mayor
5 wanted to encourage the office to do so?

6 JOHN BATTISTA: Well, you know, the
7 movies are your best commercials, movies and
8 television. So we have requests whether it's horse-
9 drawn carriages or elephants walking into Madison
10 Square Garden. So all these are relevant topics. How
11 people actually view them, you know are on individual
12 basis.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I wasn't talking
14 about the Republican convention, I was talking about
15 movies. No, I'm kidding. Anyway, I will leave it at
16 that, 'cause I'll only go downhill from here. But
17 Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So let me ask you
19 alongside with that, if the carriages were to be
20 gone, but they were to make a movie, they would just
21 bring, I would imagine, the horses and the carriages
22 and the elephants--

23 JOHN BATTISTA:: [interposing] If they
24 wanted to use a horse and carriage for a movie, we
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

would always be able to issue a permit, even if they were outlawed for the purpose of film.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So talk to me about permits. How do--how does someone goes, or company goes about getting a permit? How long does it take? What's the process?

JOHN BATTISTA: Well, we are completely online now, so the beauty of that is anyone can file for a film permit, 24 hours a day from basically any location, from their house to their office space to sitting in a parked car on a set. And as long as the first step is filling out an application and they must have a valid insurance policy. Once the insurance policy is verified they fill out the application, and then they, on a daily basis file for permits.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So is there a special insurance whenever they do filming or so it's--

JOHN BATTISTA: [interposing] It' a million dollar--

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] or just an umbrella--

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

JOHN BATTISTA: [interposing] insurance policy that everybody must have.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. And do--you know, I remember the days when you wanted to reign from New York City Public schools that you could actually--it would get calculated right there online. Is that the--do you have the same scenario there? Or is this different free for--

JOHN BATTISTA: [interposing] For the pricing--

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] for the permits or--

JOHN BATTISTA: [interposing] No, no there is one fee, it's an application fee of 300 dollars.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

JOHN BATTISTA: And then the rest, all the permits for daily shooting are free. So that application is from your start date of your project to your end date.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It's only 300 dollars, that's it?

JOHN BATTISTA: Three hundred dollars.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA To film, that's it?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

JOHN BATTISTA: Correct.

TODD ASHER: It's an assessment of how much it costs the City to perform the process of processing the application.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. So we're not really looking for to make a big, you know--this is not--we don't want it to be a big revenue source. In the front end what we're looking at is for them to come in and for them to go ahead and to buy local and so forth.

TODD ASHER: And employ.

JOHN BATTISTA: That's right.

TODD ASHER: Employment and spending.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Talk to me about where filming's taking place, which borough is the most active. Talk to me about the Bronx, you know I have to ask that.

JOHN BATTISTA: Well, I knew you were going to ask about the Bronx, 'cause that's what came up last time.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

JOHN BATTISTA: And so I did go through the last 18 months. And in the last 18 months alone

1
2 we've had 19 feature films go up to the Bronx to
3 film.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Really?

5 JOHN BATTISTA: As well as over 50 TV
6 shows.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Impressive.

8 JOHN BATTISTA: So it's our job to try
9 and spread the wealth among all five boroughs.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: How does that
11 compare to Queens?

12 [off mic conversation]

13 JOHN BATTISTA: Well, Queens is very
14 popular, and the reason being is that Queens has
15 numerous stages there, whether it's, you know, Silver
16 Cup and Kaufman Astoria. You know, Long Island City
17 is a very popular area for that as well as Brooklyn,
18 and now even Staten Island. Everyone used to come
19 just for Manhattan. More and more actors have moved
20 into the City and live in Brooklyn and Queens and
21 all, so we've seen an increase in all five boroughs.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But you didn't give
23 me the numbers.

24 JOHN BATTISTA: Exact numbers, I don't
25 have.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, so all you had was for the Bronx.

JOHN BATTISTA: I don't have that for you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. Is that increase from the previous 18 months?

JOHN BATTISTA: In the Bronx, yes.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. And what did we have before, do you remember right off hand?

JOHN BATTISTA: I think in the last testimony when we were here I did give you numbers, but I don't have them with me.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I don't remember those--

JOHN BATTISTA: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: right off the bat either. Also, talk to me about are you getting more complaints, less complaints from, you know, whenever this, you know--I just saw right here, I think Church Street they're making a movie.

TODD ASHER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: It looks pretty interesting, but are you getting more complaints from the neighbors or less complaints? And where most of

1
2 the complaints are coming from Manhattan; is it
3 coming from Queens?

4 JOHN BATTISTA: Okay, and here again, as
5 Todd has mentioned earlier, we went from
6 approximately six TV shows to this past year of
7 having 26 TV shows on the ground. The beauty about
8 having a TV show is it films 10 out of the 12 months
9 of the year. And what does that mean? They have to
10 come back to our office on a daily basis for permits,
11 and what they are granted is based a great deal on
12 the behavior. So they know that, and we always
13 remind them, that they're guests in the
14 neighborhoods. They're the guests and they should
15 leave it better than they found it. What we did
16 install which was mentioned also in the testimony is
17 contact information that they can call an on-site
18 location manager so that if it's eight o'clock at
19 night and there's a problem, it could be just a
20 simple problem, it could just be a question of how
21 long are you going to be here; they have that contact
22 number. They'll call them up and they get responses
23 right away. If they don't, what happens is they wind
24 up calling our office, and if they call our office,
25 they know we will reach out to them. So they've

1
2 been, you know, very receptive and I think it has
3 brought down complaints a great deal.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Do you have--do you
5 keep numbers of the complaints?

6 JOHN BATTISTA: No, we don't have exact
7 numbers for each complaint.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. Will you be--
9 -you think it's valuable to--you know, I know I will
10 be proportioned to the amount of movies. You know,
11 in all fairness, you know, you got 20 movies, you're
12 more likely, but at least you could keep the ratio.
13 That will be a suggestion, you know, just to--just so
14 you can see progress, something you could talk to the
15 people in the field, and it could be something to
16 really celebrate, that the complaints are going down.
17 You know, I'm not assuming they're going up.

18 JOHN BATTISTA: And if they come into us,
19 we have our field reps go out and address that
20 complaint immediately and make sure it's rectified,
21 and they keep--

22 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: The field reps, do
23 they just do random visits to site or they only go
24 whenever there's a complaint.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

JOHN BATTISTA: No, no, random. We have them visit each one as like even a surprise visit to make sure they're staying within permitted boundaries.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: What do you see for 2014? How many movies do you see coming our ways, TV series?

JOHN BATTISTA: Pilot season starts in January, and I just returned actually from Los Angeles and they said they have numerous pilots that they'd like to come in, and the pilot is the first show that is filmed why they try to introduce it and maybe make a full time series out of it. We've heard from HBO--has several projects as well as Sony Studios looking to come in and Warner Brothers. So it's a very attractive area and as mentioned before, all the stages are expanding.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And then what about Breaking Bad part two?

JOHN BATTISTA: No, Breaking Bad is wrapped up and done. That was New Mexico on--

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Yeah, a New York version. He moves to New York. We don't know what's going to happen on Sunday. I don't know if he's

1 going to make it or not. Let's see. Let me move on
2 to--I'm almost finished with the question list.
3 Council Member Weprin has more questions. But would
4 Mome or Momay [phonetic] if you could tell us, you
5 know, what has been some of the challenges and
6 putting all of the different departments coming
7 together, what has been some of the challenges and
8 success stories?
9

10 TODD ASHER: Well, in terms of the
11 logistics of what we--when we had originally the film
12 office and then NYC Media was a separate entity and
13 then creation of NYC Digital, the goal was really to
14 utilize existing resources and task each of the
15 professional services from legal to accounting to
16 marketing to do--to do more, and I think we were very
17 successful in being able to do that. There was a lot
18 of learning with NYC Digital because for everyone
19 across the City, all of the social media and the use
20 of the web was very new, and so now that we've been
21 able to integrate them, I think you'll be very
22 pleased with the roll out of NYC Gov, which is coming
23 very soon, and really being able to highlight all of
24 the different services that the City has through
25 different mechanisms and I think that people have

1 pulled together and looked to reach people where they
2 already are. So if you're somebody who is happy
3 using the website, or if you need to call 311, or if
4 you're following social media, you have access to the
5 same thing as everyone else. And it also helps for
6 those people who do want to use the phone and don't
7 want to use technology or can't use technology, it
8 frees up those lines, because your questions can be
9 answered quickly and efficiently, makes you happy,
10 and also makes the person who needs to use the phone
11 happy as well. So I think on the whole we're very
12 proud of the way that it's gone, and that it's been
13 very successful.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: One last question
16 unless Council Member Weprin has a question, but my
17 last question to you is regarding DOT NYC, what's the
18 latest?

19 TODD ASHER: The latest is that it's set
20 for a launch in 2014. Rachel Howe [phonetic] our
21 Chief Digital Officer, I think testified sometime
22 this last year about the specifics and we're working
23 with--there was a vendor that went through RFP whose
24 executing on it, and we're going through the process
25 right now of identifying what sites are going to be

1
2 made for city use and then all of the other sites
3 would be opened up to the general public to bid on.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: How did--help me
5 understand the first day DOT NYC is being offered to
6 the public, I'm sure, you know, you're going to have
7 Apple who's going to want to get--are there certain
8 pe--certain corporations, I mean outside of the
9 government that are going to get a block on, they're
10 going to get preferential treatment, or is whoever
11 could get on line first and put the application in,
12 how does that work?

13 TODD ASHER: So there's certain city-
14 related trademarks, for instance, like NYPD and those
15 sorts of things that will be protected for the--

16 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing]
17 Right.

18 TODD ASHER: DOT NYC domain, and then it
19 will be made available to people who have presence in
20 New York City. So either an individual or a business
21 that has some sort of proven presence in New York.
22 So, the question about maybe an Apple or somebody
23 that has presence other ways, I'd really have to
24 direct the question to Rachel, and we can get back to
25 you on how that works, but the focus is first on

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

serving the City's needs and then it's all of the residents and businesses that are city based.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, great. Well, I want to you thank you for the great work that you're doing, and I'm looking forward to hearing in the future progress and thank you for bringing business to the Bronx, and we want to see more movies over there, of course, and all throughout the city, but overall everything you're doing, you're doing a fantastic job.

TODD ASHER: Thank you so much.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you gentleman.

TODD ASHER: I appreciate it, thank you.

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 there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date 10/03/2013