

COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 1
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND
WATERFRONTS JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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April 11, 2022
Start: 1:05 p.m.
Recess: 3:50 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING - VIRTUAL ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Ari Kagan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola
James F. Gennaro
Christopher Marte
Sandy Nurse
Vickie Paladino
David M. Carr
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Robert F. Holden
Kevin C. Riley
Lynn C. Schulman
Kalman Yeger
Carlina Rivera
Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S

Kizzy Charles-Guzman, Executive Director of the
Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental
Justice

Christina Farrell, First Deputy Commissioner of
New York City Emergency Management

Carrie Grassie, Deputy Director of the Mayor's
Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

Eric Wilson, Deputy Director of the Mayor's
Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

Vincent Sapienza, Chief Operations Officer of the
Department of Environmental Protection

Angela Licata, Deputy Commissioner of the
Department of Environmental Protection

Shaan Mavani, Chief Asset and Capital Officer of
the New York City Housing Authority

Joy Sinderbrand, Vice President of Recovery and
Resilience of the New York City Housing Authority

1
2 SERGEANT LEONARDO: Sergeants, can you
3 please start your recordings?

4 HOST: This meeting is being recorded.

5 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Recording to the cloud
6 all set.

7 SERGEANT LEONARDO: Good afternoon, and
8 welcome to today's remote New York City Council
9 hearing for the Committee on Resiliency and
10 Waterfronts jointly with the Committee on Fire and
11 Emergency Management.

12 At this time, we ask that Council Members
13 and staff please turn on their videos for
14 verification purposes.

15 To minimize disruptions throughout the
16 hearing, please place cell phones and electronic
17 devices to vibrate or silent.

18 If you have testimony you wish to submit
19 for the record, you may do so via email at
20 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
21 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

22 We thank you for your cooperation. Chair,
23 we are ready to begin.

24 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you for joining
25 our virtual hearing today before the Council's

1
2 Committees on Resiliency and Waterfronts and Fire and
3 Emergency Management. First of all, I would like to
4 acknowledge my co-Chair, Council Member Joann Ariola,
5 and my other Colleagues who have joined us so far
6 today, Council Member Schulman, Council Member Marte,
7 Council Member Gennaro, Council Member Riley, Council
8 Member Rivera, Council Member Nurse, Council Member
9 Paladino, Public Advocate Williams, Council Member
10 Feliz, and Council Member Carr.

11 Now, I'm going to turn it over to our
12 Committee Counsel, Jessica Steinberg Albin, to go
13 over some procedural items.

14 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
15 you, Chair. I am Jessica Steinberg Albin, Counsel to
16 the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts.

17 Before we begin, I want to remind
18 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
19 called on to testify, when you will be unmuted by the
20 host.

21 I will be calling on panelists to
22 testify. Please listen for your name to be called. I
23 will be periodically announcing who the next panelist
24 will be.

1
2 The first panelists to give testimony
3 will be from the administration, Kizzy Charles-
4 Guzman, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of
5 Climate and Environmental Justice, and Christina
6 Farrell, First Deputy Commissioner of New York City
7 Emergency Management. I will call you when it is your
8 turn to speak.

9 For the question and answer period only,
10 we will also be joined by Carrie Grassie, Deputy
11 Director of the Mayor's Office of Climate and
12 Environmental Justice, Eric Wilson, Deputy Director
13 of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental
14 Justice, Vincent Sapienza, Chief Operations Officer
15 of the Department of Environmental Protection, Angela
16 Likata, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of
17 Environment Protection, Shaan Mavani, Chief Asset and
18 Capital Management Officer of the New York City
19 Housing Authority, and Joy Sinderbrand, Vice
20 President of Recovery and Resilience of the New York
21 City Housing Authority.

22 During the hearing, if Council Members
23 would like to ask a question of the administration or
24 a specific panelist, please use the Zoom raise hand
25 function, and I will call on you in order. We will be

1 limiting Council Member questions to 5 minutes, which
2 includes the time it takes to answer your questions.
3

4 I will now pass it back to Chair Kagan to
5 give an opening statement. Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you. Good
7 afternoon. My name is Council Member Ari Kagan, and I
8 have the privilege of Chairing the Committee on
9 Resiliency and Waterfronts. I want to welcome you to
10 today's joint hearing with the Committee on Fire and
11 Emergency Management and to thank my co-Chair,
12 Council Member Joann Ariola, for holding this
13 important hearing. Today, we will hear from the
14 Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice
15 and New York City Emergency Management about their
16 planning for severe weather events, what resiliency
17 projects have been completed and are being developed,
18 and what improvements can and should be made
19 throughout the city to ensure that we are prepared
20 for the next big storm. We also invited to this
21 hearing representatives of New York City Housing
22 Authority, Department of Environmental Protection,
23 and we will listen to some public testimonies.

24 Coastal flooding and severe storms are
25 becoming more intense and more severe. We have a huge

1 task in front of us, and we must be proactive on how
2 we make our city, our shorelines, and our
3 infrastructure more resilient. We cannot wait for the
4 next storm before we act. Mother Nature will not let
5 us. We must use the lessons that we learned from the
6 past 10 years, lessons from Superstorm Sandy in 2012,
7 Tropical Storm Isaias in 2020, Tropical Storms Elsa,
8 Henri, and Ida in 2021. I have lived in South
9 Brooklyn waterfront areas for most of my life here in
10 America and have seen the damage and destruction from
11 such intense storms and floodings. New York City is
12 not immune to the impacts of climate change, and
13 every borough is affected. The city has 520 miles of
14 coastline and flood plain that covers 48 square
15 miles. By 2050, the number is expected to rise to 72
16 square miles, an area larger than the size of
17 Brooklyn, and more city residents live now in high-
18 risk flood zone than in any other city in the United
19 States of America.

21 Although climate change affects all city
22 residents, communities of color and low-income
23 communities are disproportionately impacted by
24 climate hazards, sea level rise, and flooding. 28
25 percent of NYCHA developments including all in Coney

1 Island are located in flood plains. Superstorm Sandy
2 cost almost 2 billion dollars in damage to NYCHA
3 developments, knocking out power, heat, and hot water
4 to 10 percent of NYCHA properties, 400 buildings had
5 no power, 386 buildings also had no heat or hot water
6 for weeks and some for months. The city must have
7 clearly communicated evacuation plans in place,
8 especially in low-income communities and also for
9 nursing homes. During Superstorm Sandy, many nursing
10 home residents were trapped on upper floors with no
11 plans for safe evacuations. It is also critical the
12 city continues its outreach and education for
13 residents living in flood zones about what they
14 should do before severe weather events and how to
15 evacuate if necessary. This outreach must be done in
16 many different languages. We live in the capital of
17 the world. I remember that during and after
18 Superstorm Sandy, the residents were confused and
19 frightened because they did not know what to do. Last
20 year, City Council passed Local Law 122, which
21 requires the administration to develop a
22 comprehensive city-wide climate adaptation plan to
23 study the suite of climate hazards and recommend
24 resiliency and adaptation measures to protect the
25

1 city residents, property, and infrastructure from the
2 effects of climate change. This plan is due by
3 September 2022, and I look forward to hearing from
4 the administration on its progress in developing this
5 plan.
6

7 Today, we will hear Intro 76 sponsored by
8 Council Member Brennan and Council Member Gennaro.

9 This bill would require the DEP to establish a
10 program that provides financial assistance to reduce
11 the cost of purchasing and installing backwater
12 valves.

13 We will also hear a preconsidered bill
14 sponsored by the Public Advocate Williams and Council
15 Member Rivera. This bill would require Emergency
16 Management to establish a flood emergency evacuation
17 plan for residents of multiple dwellings. I look
18 forward to hearing from the new Mayor's Office of
19 Climate and Environmental Justice and also from New
20 York City Emergency Management. We must work together
21 to plan for the city's future and ensure that we are
22 prepared before the next climate disaster strikes.

23 Before we begin, I would like to thank my
24 Committee staff, Committee Counsel Jessica Steinberg
25 Albin, Senior Policy Analyst Patrick Mulvihill,

2 Senior Finance Analyst Jonathan Seltzer, my
3 Legislative and Budget and Policy Director,
4 (INAUDIBLE) as well as the staff for the Fire and
5 Emergency Management Committee for all their hard
6 work putting this hearing together.

7 I also would like to acknowledge the
8 other Council Members who joined us, which is Council
9 Member De La Rosa and Council Member Holden as well
10 as Council Member Carr. Thank you. Now I would like
11 to turn over to my great co-Chair Joann Ariola to
12 give an opening statement.

13 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Chair
14 Ariola, can you please unmute yourself.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That would be good,
16 right.

17 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR:
18 Thank you. Please begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If you give me one
20 moment. I have to pull it up. One moment. I had it up
21 on the screen.

22 Good afternoon. My name is Council Member
23 Joann Ariola, Chair of the Fire and Emergency
24 Management Committee.

1 I want to thank co-Chair Kagan for
2 holding this hearing today. I would also like to
3 thank my Colleagues and the public for attending
4 today's hearing.

5
6 The Committee on Fire and Emergency
7 Management, which I Chair, oversees the Office of
8 Emergency Management also known as NYCEM, which is
9 responsible for coordinating New York City's
10 emergency planning and response for all types and
11 scales of emergencies, including extreme weather
12 emergencies such as coastal storms and flash
13 flooding. We are gathered here today to discuss the
14 important topic of New York City's preparedness for
15 coastal storms and severe weather as well as ensuring
16 that the city has the proper safeguards in place for
17 its citizens during coastal storms.

18 Last year, the city experienced several
19 large scale storms, notably Storm Ida in September,
20 where the city faced ongoing issues of extreme flash
21 flooding during periods of heavy rain. These events,
22 which have proven deadly at times, presented
23 challenges to the city's aging infrastructure and our
24 ability to deliver vital emergency services to
25 residents in need.

1
2 Today, the Committee will examine areas
3 related to the city's readiness in addressing severe
4 weather through its multiagency response and
5 potential incidents that may affect public health and
6 safety. We look forward to hearing testimony from the
7 administration about these vital efforts and examine
8 the plans to ensure that all New Yorkers remain safe
9 when facing weather emergencies.

10 I know that Council Members Gennaro and
11 Rivera as well as Public Advocate Williams have
12 opening statements. We can start with Council Member
13 Gennaro followed by Public Advocate Williams and then
14 Council Member Rivera. Council Member Gennaro, you
15 have the floor.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Thank you, Chair
17 Ariola, thank you, Chair Kagan, for having this
18 hearing particularly on Intro 0076 requiring DEP to
19 set up a program to provide financial assistance when
20 purchasing installation of backflow prevention
21 valves. I congratulate Council Member Brennan for his
22 vision in introducing this bill. I'm happy to be a
23 prime cosponsor on this bill. After Hurricane Ida, my
24 District and I'm sure every District in the city were
25 flooded, and, unfortunately, some New Yorkers lost

1 their lives. With this legislation, New Yorkers have
2 the opportunity and financial assistance to install
3 backflow prevention devices to safeguard their
4 properties and stop sewer backups. Intense stormwater
5 overloads the capacity of the sewer and creates sewer
6 backups into people's homes and most businesses,
7 which is most destructive and costly and, as I've
8 just said, can be deadly. There is precedent for the
9 city making the investment to put fixtures in
10 residence and businesses. The city did this 25-some-
11 odd years ago with the toilet rebate program when the
12 city had a goal of making sure it reduced its water
13 consumption and now in the era of very intense
14 flooding with no solution on the horizon for these
15 very intense storms that are dropping 2 and 2-1/2
16 inches and as we saw recently 3 inches per hour. When
17 we have a sewer capacity of 1.75 inches per hour
18 pretty much is the standard, although some parts of
19 the city it's 1.5 inches, and some areas even 1 inch,
20 I think we need the ability to prevent backups of
21 stormwater into businesses, and this bill will be a
22 great first step in protecting our residents. I'll
23 end where I began which is thanking both Chairs. I
24 look forward to having this important hearing and
25

2 thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on
3 Intro 0076. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Council
5 Member Gennaro. Now I would like to give a chance to
6 speak to Public Advocate Williams.

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS. Thank you so
8 much. Can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Yes.

10 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
11 much. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams,
12 Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you,
13 Chairs Kagan and Ariola, for holding a hearing today
14 on storm preparedness that includes consideration of
15 proposal of Local Law by myself and Council Member
16 Brennan and Gennaro. Thank you for giving me the
17 opportunity to speak a little bit today.

18 In the past decade, New Yorkers have been
19 challenged by the hurricanes and floods that struck
20 the New York City area leading to tragic consequences
21 throughout the 5 boroughs. From the fires in
22 (INAUDIBLE) Queens to the Lower Manhattan blackout to
23 Hurricane Sandy (INAUDIBLE) the death traps created
24 by Hurricane Ida in basement apartments through
25 Queens in 2021, we must do better in protecting and

2 preparing our residents as well as our first
3 responders. While New York City and the rest of the
4 world grapple with the effects of climate change, we
5 can put policies in place to prepare individuals who
6 reside in flood zones. We continue to talk about once
7 in a lifetime and once in a hundred years storm, but
8 we now know that they will be much more frequent, and
9 the horrors I saw when I traveled the city during
10 Hurricane Ida, nothing is worse than losing lives
11 that could've been prevented, and what we saw in the
12 loss of lives in the homes, especially Queens and
13 Southeast Queens, was that we could've prevented
14 these lives from being lost with preemptive intention
15 and communication because we had enough information
16 to let folks know what was going to happen. We also
17 noted areas that continually flooded. Many of these
18 areas have had residents complaining for many, many
19 years without government responding. Council Member
20 Rivera and I are (INAUDIBLE) that we codify a flash
21 flood emergency evacuation plan for basements and
22 first floor apartments and buildings with multiple
23 dwelling units. Additionally, a multiagency outreach
24 plan must be delineated and implemented as well as a
25 report must be provided to the Mayor, City Council,

1 and Public Advocate within 2 months after the
2
3 occurrence. There are many things that individuals
4 and agencies can do in anticipation of the storm or
5 flood. The benefit of codifying that process will
6 ensure that everyone becomes familiar with the
7 process. For individuals and agencies alike, the
8 process will become instinctual. Preparation is the
9 key for maximizing best practice and minimizing
10 tragedies. As mentioned, while everyone was impacted,
11 unfortunately, once again, the most impacted black
12 and brown communities and communities of lower
13 income, communities like NYCHA. I look forward to
14 hearing the testimony of the agencies and working
15 with everyone involved to pass this legislation.
16 Thank you, again, for the time and your consideration
17 on the bill.

18 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
19 you. Council Member Rivera, you have the floor.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you, Chairs
21 Kagan and Ariola, for the time. Climate change poses
22 one of the most significant threats to our city. We
23 knew it when Hurricane Sandy ravaged our communities
24 in 2012, and we certainly know it now. In the 10
25 years since, advocates and officials have called for

1 permanent protections from extreme storms, but the
2 tragic events in September 2021 from Hurricane Ida
3 demand urgent action. Thirteen people in New York
4 City lost their lives in a storm that resulted in the
5 wettest hour in New York City history according to
6 the National Weather Service. The event was a first
7 for the 5 boroughs and further exposed the city's
8 weakness in infrastructure and the lack of planning
9 for families living in the most vulnerable areas. The
10 city must take a comprehensive approach, and some
11 initiatives are underway including better maintenance
12 of drains and catch basins, installing more bioswales
13 citywide, and putting forward engineering upgrades
14 and solutions for aging systems, but we also know
15 these types of infrastructure projects take funding a
16 lot of time. New Yorkers desperately need
17 comprehensive emergency response plans that protect
18 them, their families, and their livelihoods not if,
19 but when, we face the next extreme weather disaster.
20 As the storms last fall made all too clear, we don't
21 have much time.

22
23 Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and I
24 are introducing legislation mandating the city
25 immediately establish a flash flood emergency

1 evacuation plan for multiple dwelling tenants in
2 flood zones to prevent deaths such as those the city
3 suffered as a result of Hurricane Ida. Our bill also
4 includes provisions for culturally appropriate
5 outreach in all designated citywide languages and
6 timely reporting mandates so that the city can
7 address any challenges in implementing this plan in
8 real time. The bill is reflective of the critical
9 action we need to keep our community safe, and I hope
10 we can count on your support. We need to take bold,
11 swift measures to scale our resiliency efforts to
12 combat and prevent the fatal impacts of the climate
13 crises, and I hope that all of us here this afternoon
14 share this urgency. Thank you so much.

16 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
17 you, Council Member Rivera. I now turn back to Chair
18 Ari Kagan.

19 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Counsel.
20 Thank you, Chairs. Thank you, Council Member Ariola.
21 I also would like to say that we are joined by
22 Council Member Yeger, and I would like to Council
23 Member Rivera for her speech.

24 Now, I would like to turn it over to our
25 Moderator, Committee Counsel Jessica Steinberg Albin.

JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
you, Chair Kagan, and thank you, Chairs, Council
Members, and Public Advocate.

We will now call on the administration to
testify. Kizzy Charles-Guzman, Executive Director of
the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental
Justice, and Christina Farrell, First Deputy
Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management.

Before we begin, I will administer the
oath. Kizzy Charles-Guzman, Christina Farrell, Carrie
Grassie, Eric Wilson, Vincent Sapienza, Angela
Licata, Shaan Mavani, and Joy Sinderbrand. I will
call on each of you individually for a response.
Please raise your right hands.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these
Committees and respond honestly to Council Member
questions? Executive Director Kizzy Charles-Guzman.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Yes, I
do.

JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: First
Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell.

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I do.

1 COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS JOINTLY WITH
2 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 20

3 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR:

4 Deputy Director Carrie Grassie.

5 DEPUTY DIRECTOR GRASSIE: Yes.

6 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR:

7 Deputy Director Eric Wilson.

8 DEPUTY DIRECTOR WILSON: Yes.

9 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Chief

10 Operations Officer Vincent Sapienza.

11 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: I do.

12 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR:

13 Deputy Commissioner Angela Licata.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: I do.

15 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Chief

16 Asset and Capital Management Officer Shaan Mavani.

17 CHIEF ASSET OFFICER MAVANI: I do.

18 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Vice

19 President Joy Sinderbrand.

20 VICE PRESIDENT SINDERBRAND: I do.

21 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank

22 you. Executive Director Kizzy Charles-Guzman and

23 First Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell, you may

begin when ready.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Good

25 afternoon, everyone. Again, my name is Kizzy Charles-

1
2 Guzman. I'm the Executive Director of the Mayor's
3 Office of Climate and Environmental Justice. I'm
4 thrilled to be here. This is my first City Council
5 hearing in this role, 2 months on the job, really
6 eager to work with all of you as we prepare the city
7 to meet the environmental needs of the coming
8 decades. I just want to take a moment to thank Chairs
9 Kagan and Ariola and the Council Members of the
10 Resiliency and Waterfronts and Fire and Emergency
11 Management Committees for the opportunity to testify
12 today.

13 As you know, we are joined by First
14 Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Emergency
15 Management Christina Farrell who will also provide
16 testimony today. For questions today, I would like to
17 acknowledge my Colleagues, Deputy Directors Eric
18 Wilson and Carrie Grassie, also from the Mayor's
19 Office on Climate and Environmental Justice, and our
20 Colleagues from the Department of Environmental
21 Protection, Chief Operating Officer Vinnie Sapienza
22 and Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability Angela
23 Licata as well as our Colleagues from NYCHA, Shaan
24 Mavani, Chief Asset and Capital Management Officer,

and Joy Sinderbrand, Vice President of Recovery and Resiliency.

I'd just like to begin today's testimony by outlining the new configuration of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice for this Council so that you're aware of the scope of this exciting new team. I am now responsible for ensuring that New York City is prepared to withstand and emerge stronger from the impacts of climate change, mitigating its greenhouse gas emissions, and address the remediation and environmental coordination efforts from an equity and public health perspective. MOCEJ, that's our acronym, our role here is to lead the city's strategic direction as it pertains to environmental sustainability and resiliency with a focus on environmental justice and to coordinate with agencies to implement this important work. The city is preparing to adapt to a variety of climate hazards including chronic conditions like heat, tidal flooding, and air pollution as well as acute events such as coastal storm surge, extreme rainfall, and power outages. We call this a multi-hazard approach since it addresses all of the climate threats that impact our city. This work has been in progress for

1 more than a decade and includes hundreds of completed
2 projects as well as important policy changes such as
3 reforms to the building code and zoning resolutions.
4 While we are urgently working to address these
5 multiple risks, my testimony today will focus on how
6 we're protecting New Yorkers from intense rainfall
7 from storms like Hurricanes Henri and Ida as well as
8 coastal storms like Hurricane Sandy.
9

10 Our climate adaptation strategy also
11 takes what we call a multilayered approach. This
12 means that we're focused on establishing multiple
13 layers of resiliency at various and different scales
14 across the city to respond to these multiple hazards.
15 As we have seen most recently with Hurricane Ida and
16 recent historic storms, all of these layers of
17 support so green infrastructure, (INAUDIBLE)
18 redundancy, coastal protection projects, emergency
19 communication, building code, zoning resolutions, and
20 flood insurance are all critical components of our
21 system. Our work to strengthen our infrastructure and
22 response to climate change was moved forward with
23 urgency, funding, and partnership within all levels
24 of government.
25

2 As we think about a broader vision for
3 resiliency under the Adams' administration, there's
4 several strategic and coordinated plans that we're
5 currently working on that will help New Yorkers make
6 sense of how climate change impacts them and where we
7 go from here. Thanks to the Council's leadership in
8 the last few years, our office will release a
9 citywide climate adaptation plan pursuant to Local
10 Law 122 of 2021. We will use localized climate
11 projections from the New York City Panel on Climate
12 Change and translate that data simply to explain how
13 communities can expect to (INAUDIBLE) experience
14 climate impacts and the ways in which those impacts
15 will be experienced immediately due to historical and
16 current inequities. We will also outline different
17 neighborhood profiles and what types of strategies
18 may be best suited for each of those profiles. For
19 example, an inland neighborhood that experiences
20 extreme precipitation may be best suited to certain
21 types of strategies, certain programs and policies as
22 compared to low-lying coastal neighborhoods at risk
23 of frequent Nor'easters or a neighborhood that's
24 dealing with the impact of extreme heat. Through this
25 analysis that we've been conducting and which we will

1 release online, our office will make citywide
2 adaptation information more accessible and
3 transparent as we seek to tackle the next generation
4 of climate-readiness projects, plans, and actions.
5

6 Additionally, our Office is undertaking
7 the city's first comprehensive study of environmental
8 justice, working towards the release of an
9 Environmental Justice for All Report as required by
10 Local Law 60 and 64 of 2017. This work will analyze
11 environmental and climate issues and identify which
12 communities are being disproportionately impacted by
13 environmental burdens and which are not seeing the
14 benefits of green investments made by the city. Taken
15 together, our analysis will inform how the city will
16 address activities that exacerbate environmental
17 justice concerns and set the stage for a set of
18 equitable climate mitigation adaptation actions.

19 I would now like to turn my attention to
20 the topic of extreme rainfall. In the immediate
21 aftermath of Hurricane Ida, the city outlined short
22 and long-term strategies and actions to protect New
23 Yorkers from future intense precipitation events. The
24 resulting report, *The New Normal*, committed over 2
25 billion dollars of new capital funding and 17 million

2 dollars in expense funding for fiscal year '22. These
3 funds are critical for mitigating stormwater flooding
4 and supporting programs, science-based tools, and
5 resilience capacity at our agencies.

6 In addition, the city has been actively
7 advocating for and tracking additional funds from the
8 state and federal governments to further strengthen
9 this work. While The New Normal was an important
10 start to our Ida response, our administration truly
11 sees it just as a jumping off point. With that said,
12 we are excited to develop and implement key pieces
13 mentioned in the report, specifically innovative
14 cloudburst solutions which are projects designed for
15 heavy downpours that transform open space and
16 streetscapes to absorb water where possible and store
17 excess water safely until the event passes to take
18 pressure off of the sewer system. To select priority
19 neighborhoods for these important projects, the city
20 is developing a data-driven framework, which
21 considers feasibility, indicators of physical risks
22 such as topography, subsurface conditions, land use,
23 and recent complaint and damages data as well as
24 socio-economic factors which include income,
25 demographics, and access to existing green space. The

1 result of this work will be to implement cloudburst
2 management projects in 4 neighborhoods. An
3 interagency taskforce has been established to
4 identify neighborhoods where cloudburst projects will
5 be installed, and the city is pursuing state and
6 federal funding to implement additional projects.
7

8 In addition to the cloudburst work, we're
9 also expanding NYCHA's green infrastructure program
10 to 7 new sites, adding new green infrastructure in
11 parks, developing 20 new stormwater management
12 playgrounds with the Trust for Public Land, and
13 implementing 3 priority projects in the New York City
14 wetlands management framework in Queens and the
15 Bronx.

16 We also know that there are areas that
17 face unique risks and require special investments.
18 For example, we know that many areas in Southeast
19 Queens are particularly vulnerable to rain-based
20 flooding. To address this vulnerability, DEP along
21 with DOT and DDC is currently engaged in a massive
22 2.5 billion buildout of the sewer system there to
23 alleviate flooding and improve the quality of life of
24 residents and businesses.

2 The city is also leading the way with
3 best practices, managing the resiliency of our
4 capital assets using the climate resiliency design
5 guidelines. We're really grateful for Council's
6 partnership in incorporating these guidelines into
7 Local Law 41 of 2021, which promotes the use of
8 resilient design methods for new public facilities
9 and infrastructure so they can withstand the more
10 severe flooding we expect to see in the future. We're
11 delighted that 23 city agencies are now participating
12 in a pilot program, and we'll begin designing and
13 constructing dozens of new projects using the New
14 York City climate resiliency design guidelines. Forty
15 pilots were selected through a rigorous process that
16 considered climate exposure, equity, and project
17 scope. Over 40 percent of the projects being advanced
18 under this program will be constructed in
19 environmental justice areas, and we look forward to
20 using the results of this pilot to inform development
21 with a resiliency score metric that will be applied
22 across the entire capital plans starting in 2027.
23 This climate resiliency design guidelines pilot
24 program will help all city agencies identify the most
25 effective but also the most cost-efficient strategies

1 to address future climate extremes. We will keep the
2 City Council informed regarding our progress and look
3 forward to your support as these findings emerge.
4

5 Even with these significant investments
6 and policy efforts, we must also recognize that we
7 can never fully eliminate risks. Encouraging New
8 Yorkers to protect their financial health with flood
9 insurance is another important component of our work
10 and our strategy. We are continuing to advocate in
11 Washington for reforms to the National Flood
12 Insurance Program that would implement an
13 affordability framework for low and moderate income
14 households. Our office also continues to partner
15 closely with FEMA to conduct neighborhood outreach
16 and increase flood insurance enrollment and promote
17 risk awareness to our partnership with the Center for
18 New York City Neighborhoods and FloodHelpNY.

19 My team is also working with agencies
20 trying to identify and develop opportunities to
21 retrofit existing buildings. While our office does
22 not implement or manage capital work, we were
23 recently awarded FEMA funding to conduct a study of
24 where and when backwater valves work best in the
25 city. Our goal is to understand how this tool can

1 benefit New Yorkers and how to develop a sustainable
2 program that will reduce flooding in homes and
3 businesses. We are also exploring ways to partner
4 with different levels of government to support
5 building owners and strengthen our existing building
6 stock as it relates to retrofits. We look forward to
7 working with Council as this backwater valve study
8 progresses, and we expect it to be complete by the
9 end of this year or early next.
10

11 I now want to turn my attention to
12 coastal storms. Since Hurricane Sandy, we've made
13 considerable strides in our coastal protection
14 portfolio, partnering with different city, state, and
15 federal agencies to complete several coastal
16 resiliency projects. These efforts have included
17 wetland restoration efforts in Queens and Staten
18 Island, the reconstructed Rockaway Boardwalk, the T-
19 groin Project in Seagate, Brooklyn, street raising in
20 Broad Channel, Queens, an emergency management
21 interim flood protection measures program which now
22 covers more than 50 sites across the city. Our
23 achievements also include groundbreaking for the U.S.
24 Army Corps of Engineers, Rockaways Atlantic
25 Shorefront Project, and the city's East Side Coastal

1 Resiliency Project. In May 2022, we also anticipate
2 reopening Asser Levy Playground, which is the first
3 completed section of the East Side Coastal Resiliency
4 Project. Capital coastal protection projects,
5 especially those in dense urban environments like
6 ours, take many years of planning, contracting, and
7 development. These are enormous achievements which
8 are providing critical protections to diverse
9 communities that were devastated by Hurricane Sandy.
10

11 We're also continuing to advocate for
12 many other coastal resiliency projects across the
13 city, from Red Hook to Jamaica Bay to Staten Island.
14 The Army Corps is expected to break ground this year
15 on the Southshore Staten Island Resiliency Project
16 with the construction of the large interior drainage
17 pond that would also serve to mitigate stormwater
18 flooding in the area. Additionally, the city will
19 break ground on the (INAUDIBLE) Raised Shoreline
20 Project and the Brooklyn Bridge to Montgomery Coastal
21 Resiliency Project. Our agency partners are also
22 advancing design work on the rest of the Raised
23 Shoreline Portfolio which includes Coney Island
24 Creek, Motts Basin, Travis Avenue, and Mayberry, and
25 the Red Hook Coastal Resiliency Project.

1 Now, as we approach the 10-year
2
3 anniversary of Sandy, we're also eagerly awaiting a
4 tentatively selected plan from the U.S. Corps of
5 Engineers, New York, New Jersey Harbor and
6 Tributaries feasibility study this summer, which will
7 lay out an approach to coastal resiliency investments
8 for the entire New York Harbor and lay the groundwork
9 for a whole new set of coastal infrastructure
10 projects moving forward. The tentatively selected
11 plan will be followed by a review period where the
12 city and the public will have the chance to comment
13 on the Army Corps' recommendations. Our office will
14 lead the city's effort to review and provide
15 comprehensive comments on the tentatively selected
16 plan. The Corps will then take all the comments
17 followed by further study, evaluation, and design and
18 finalize the recommendation in a final report that
19 will be completed by 2024. The final report will help
20 the city advocate for the next set of significant
21 federal resiliency project investments.

22 I would also like to reiterate that
23 coastal infrastructure projects are just one of many
24 layers of resiliency and really are not a panacea. As
25 we think about our build environment, we must focus

1 on how and where we build and how we're planning for
2 the future.
3

4 With respect to the how, one important
5 tool in our toolbox is the building code. Last year,
6 the Department of Buildings updated Appendix G of the
7 building code establishing stringent standards for
8 the construction of all new and substantially
9 rehabilitated structures in the flood plain. We will
10 need to go even further to account for rapidly
11 changing conditions that will lead to flooding that
12 is both more frequent and that extends outside of the
13 current flood plain. To this end, our office is
14 partnering with FEMA to develop future flood risk
15 maps that go beyond the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate
16 maps which are based only on historic flood risk
17 information. Once finalized, these future flood risk
18 maps will provide property-specific information about
19 flood risks that incorporate sea level rise. Now,
20 because buildings are constructed to last
21 generations, we do hope to see these future flood
22 risk maps replace the use of the static Flood
23 Insurance Rate maps in the building code. We look
24 forward to working with Council when you review
25

1 future building code updates to ensure the city's
2 building stock accounts for future flood conditions.

3
4 The where also matters tremendously,
5 especially as we think about climate change. In 2017,
6 the Department of City Planning developed a
7 designation of special coast risk districts in the
8 zoning resolution. After extensive community
9 engagement, these districts were created for
10 neighborhoods that flood regularly from high tides
11 and that are projected to face daily tidal
12 inundation. This zoning designation limits the
13 density of future development to limit further growth
14 of the residential population in those areas while
15 allowing the many residents that are currently there
16 to make investments in their existing homes to make
17 them safer so Broad Channel, Hamilton Beach Queens,
18 and sections of the East Shore of Staten Island, and
19 a portion of Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn are all
20 examples of these districts. Building on this work,
21 just this past December, the Department of City
22 Planning released its comprehensive waterfront plan
23 and laid out a framework firmly centered on equity to
24 help communities access and maintain stable housing
25 given future climate risks. This framework is

1 designed to help policymakers make informed decisions
2 about where and why to densify, maintain density, and
3 where we may ultimately need to de-densify. The city
4 envisions supporting communities with a comprehensive
5 toolkit that could include options of voluntary
6 buyouts, resiliency audits, retrofit programs,
7 financial counseling for homeowners and renters, all
8 of that to ensure housing stability as climate risks
9 increase. We are currently awaiting federal funding
10 guidance to understand how we can prioritize these
11 types of services for low and moderate income
12 residents.
13

14 I also want to acknowledge Intro 76
15 regarding the backwater valves. We are pleased that
16 Council has taken interest in this issue. As I
17 mentioned earlier, our Office is currently working
18 with DEP, Emergency Management, and HPD to conduct a
19 FEMA-funded backwater valve study to determine
20 exactly where backwater valves will be most
21 effective. These valves may be a low-cost retrofit
22 that would benefit many New Yorkers, and, in some
23 cases, they're already required by the plumbing code.
24 The results of our study will inform decisions
25 related to whether such a program would be sensible

1 and, if so, the scale of the program, areas of
2 prioritization, and direct community outreach by
3 clearly delineating what types of buildings and
4 locations would most benefit from backwater valves.
5 It will also consider which agency may be the best
6 implementation partner for this work.
7

8 To wrap up, while the city has made great
9 investments and great strides towards a multi-hazard
10 and, again, multilayered approach to resiliency, we
11 know there's still a lot of work to be done, and much
12 of it can only be accomplished through the
13 collaboration, partnership, and funding from our
14 federal and state partners. I am optimistic about our
15 ability to meet these challenges rapidly and
16 equitably for all New Yorkers. We are coordinating
17 closely with the Office of Management and Budget as
18 well as other agencies to take full advantage of
19 federal funds from the infrastructure bill and Ida
20 relief bills and COVID-19 supplemental funds. The New
21 York state Environmental Bond Act, if approved this
22 November, could also provide critical funding for
23 green infrastructure projects, stormwater management,
24 coastal protection and rehabilitation, waterfront
25 revitalization, and heat mitigation strategies.

2 I would just like to thank the Committees
3 on Resilience and Waterfronts and Fire and Emergency
4 Management for allowing me to testify here today. I
5 look forward to your questions following my
6 Colleague's testimony, and I yield the floor now to
7 my Colleague, First Deputy Commissioner Christina
8 Farrell. Thank you.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Thank
10 you, Kizzy. Good afternoon, all, Chairs Kagan and
11 Ariola, Public Advocate Williams, and Members of the
12 2 Committees. I'm Christina Farrell, First Deputy
13 Commissioner here at New York City Emergency
14 Management, and I'm here today to discuss storm
15 preparedness from a citywide planning and public
16 information perspective.

17 First, I want to briefly explain our role
18 in city government and emergency response. New York
19 City Emergency Management helps New Yorkers before,
20 during, and after emergencies through preparedness,
21 education, and response. Our agency is responsible
22 for coordinating citywide emergency planning and
23 response for all types and sizes of emergencies.
24 We're staffed by nearly 270 dedicated professionals
25 with diverse backgrounds in areas of expertise,

1 including individuals assigned from other city
2 agencies. As the coordinating agency for the city of
3 New York, Emergency Management functions as a general
4 facilitator when it comes to emergency response,
5 ensuring that resources are available for our sister
6 agencies to complete their core competencies and
7 serving New Yorkers in what can be their worst days
8 with compassion and cultural sensitivity. As we all
9 know, every emergency can create new and unforeseen
10 conditions. Emergency Management coordinates
11 interagency planning efforts and is responsible for
12 the development, maintenance, and oversight of about
13 150 planning documents for citywide response
14 including hazard-specific plans such as the New York
15 City Coastal Storm Plan and the Flash Flood Emergency
16 Plan, or we also plan for specific facets of an
17 emergency such as fuel management, restoring power,
18 and feeding affected residents. These plans include
19 citywide objectives for managing the incident,
20 logistical resource needs and operations, templates
21 for interagency coordination calls, and checklists
22 for key tasks and actions among other aspects. These
23 plans include coordinated roles and responsibilities
24 of key stakeholders, primarily city agencies but also
25

1 utilities, nonprofits, and other levels of government
2 agencies for these events. Roles are formalized under
3 the Citywide Incident Management System, or CIMS,
4 which assigns responsibilities to agencies based on
5 their respective core competencies. In addition to
6 working with our city agency partners, we remain in
7 constant contact with the appropriate state and
8 federal partners based on the emergency and have the
9 ability to bring them in to our emergency planning
10 calls and into the city's emergency operation center,
11 or EOC. The EOC is the central nervous system of a
12 citywide emergency. This is where various groups of
13 partners can meet, discuss issues, and troubleshoot
14 problems.
15

16 While some of the actions the city takes
17 are the same for both the Coastal Storm Plan and the
18 Flash Flood Emergency Plan, they are very different
19 events. Coastal storms can be tracked and assessed
20 for multiple days, allowing for a longer time to make
21 decisions and, if necessary, implement an evacuation
22 order while it is still safe to be outside and
23 traveling. Flash flooding creates a logistical
24 challenge to this kind of advanced action as the
25 forecasting technology does not provide enough time

1 to warn of serious inundation nor does it allow for
2 neighborhood-specific forecasting. With this being
3 said, Emergency Management has learned a lot since
4 Hurricane Ida and other recent storms. I want to
5 speak briefly about the actions we've taken since
6 Hurricane Ida struck and what we continue to work on.

8 Emergency Management continues to partner
9 with the National Weather Service, and we have also
10 contracted with a private forecasting service to get
11 further insight into developing weather conditions
12 and to make informed decisions based on these
13 consultations. Whenever the forecast indicates
14 considerable or even catastrophic flash flooding may
15 impact New York City, Emergency Management works with
16 the Mayor's Office to determine whether a declaration
17 of a state of emergency is necessary and to issue
18 preparedness recommendations promptly including
19 guidance on preparing for heavy rain and possible
20 power outages and moving to higher ground when
21 possible. Travel bans may also be issued based on the
22 predicted severity of a storm. The public is alerted
23 to these emergency orders and city actions through
24 Mayoral press conferences, press releases, and
25 amplification to local media sources, social media,

1 Notify NYC which is the city's free, official
2 emergency communications program, and also through
3 partner agencies, elected officials, community-based
4 organization, private sector organizations, our
5 advanced warning system which messages out to service
6 providers serving those with disabilities, access and
7 functional needs, and, in some cases, through the
8 Wireless Emergency Alert System.
9

10 New York City Emergency Management also
11 has enhanced its communications with more aggressive,
12 earlier warnings that include increased public
13 messaging about hazards that may affect our city.

14 This messaging is scaled to storm severity. Many of
15 the messages are tailored for residents living in a
16 basement or at ground level. Messaging begins with
17 notifications that urge residents to prepare and
18 increase in intensity based on the threat level.

19 Messaging and actions are tied to both National
20 Weather Service products and existing plan triggers.

21 New York City Emergency Management has dedicated
22 staff in our external affairs and our community
23 engagement bureaus who work tirelessly to engage the
24 public, elected officials, the private sector,
25 community groups, the media, and others and to

1 educate them on emergency preparedness. Prior to the
2 COVID-19 pandemic, the agency regularly conducted
3 more than 1,000 presentations and outreach events
4 each year. As we slowly return to that level of
5 engagement, it is more important than ever that we
6 reach your constituents. This is where we're asking
7 for your help. As trusted messengers in your
8 communities, we ask that you help us promote
9 emergency preparedness and the Notify NYC program and
10 its ability to provide free emergency alerts and
11 updates in New Yorkers' preferred language and
12 format. In fact, Notify NYC recently surpassed 1
13 million subscribers, which is a fantastic
14 achievement. However, we know it's not enough until
15 all households in New York City are signed up for
16 Notify NYC and receive these critical updates,
17 especially in households with vulnerable communities
18 and those who are non-English-speakers. You can help
19 us amplify that message and save lives. We welcome
20 the opportunity to speak with your communities and
21 provide you with the resources to keep them safe and
22 prepared.
23

24 With that, I want to discuss
25 preconsidered Introduction 534-2022. As we discussed,

1
2 Emergency Management is in the process of adapting
3 our plans for flash flood emergencies thoughtfully
4 and comprehensively. We are working diligently with
5 our partners to adapt lessons learned from Hurricane
6 Ida into our citywide planning efforts. The
7 development and implementation of evacuation plans
8 required by this legislation would be extremely
9 challenging as the forecasting technology to predict
10 extreme flooding at a neighborhood level with enough
11 time to evacuate in a flash flood does not presently
12 exist. We are still taking the necessary time to
13 analyze every detail of this bill, but we will
14 continue to review and work with the Council
15 productively on this legislation.

16 Thank you for inviting me to testify
17 today. I am happy to answer your questions.

18 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
19 you very much for your testimony. I will now turn it
20 over to questions from Chair Kagan. For these
21 questions, we will also be joined by Carrie Grassie,
22 Eric Wilson, Vincent Sapienza, Angela Licata, Shaan
23 Mavani, and Joy Sinderbrand.

Panelists, please stay unmuted if possible during this question and answer period. Thank you. Chair Kagan, please begin.

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Jessica. I would like to thank the representatives of the city administration for their testimony. I have a few questions to elaborate. My question for the Office of Climate and Environmental Justice particularly about this study that was mentioned that studied the New York, New Jersey Harbor and Tributary Study. It was reauthorized by Congress in 2021 after federal funding had been paused by the Trump administration, and the U.S. Army Corps is now evaluating alternatives to address coastal storm and flood risk among the coast from New Jersey to New York. My question is what would the administration like to see in the Army Corps of Engineer's final product? I thought that you said it's going to be finished by 2024 so what the administration would like to see as an Army Corps final product?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Thank you so much for the question, Chair Kagan. We are very happy that the study has been restarted. We think it's an essential step in defining future

1 resiliency investments for the city. This summer,
2 again, the Corps will release their draft report for
3 public review and comment. It will include a
4 recommended approach which is that tentatively
5 selected plan and a high-level environmental
6 analysis. Again, when that is released, it will be
7 followed by a community-engagement process led by the
8 Army Corps, and I think that this is a critical
9 process to hear feedback from the entire city to help
10 steer the long-term direction of future coastal
11 infrastructure investments throughout the city. We
12 simply cannot construct these unprecedented large-
13 scale projects without our federal partners so we're
14 excited that this study will lay the groundwork for
15 future potential infrastructure projects. As for the
16 administration involvement, we are in regular
17 communication with the Corps about the study
18 milestones, both at the staff and leadership level,
19 and we're going to continue to be engaged on this,
20 but, as you know, we're just one of several critical
21 partners. The New York state and the state of New
22 Jersey are non-federal sponsors, and they contribute
23 to the cost share for the study whereas New York City
24 is a non-federal partner but we're a partner due to
25

1 the impact that the investments will have in the
2 city, but we do not at this time contribute to the
3 cost share. As to our preferred deliverable, because
4 we have not yet seen that tentatively selected plan
5 nor the full analysis behind it and the Corps still
6 needs to undergo community engagement on this draft
7 this summer, it's just too premature for us to
8 comment on the city's desired outcome. That said, for
9 us, for our team, a comprehensive coastal protection
10 plan includes several important factors. We are
11 looking for approaches that provide protection to the
12 most vulnerable neighborhoods of the city, but we
13 also think it's important that these approaches
14 minimize environmental harms and impacts. We want
15 them to be implementable and maintainable, and we
16 want them to provide social, economic, and ecological
17 co-benefits to the communities that they serve.
18 Again, just wanting to reiterate that for us
19 resiliency is a process and our approach is layered.
20 There will be many solutions regarding the citywide
21 Resiliency Now Adaptation plan which, again, is due
22 to you guys this September, but, for us, we're
23 looking at the integrated ways that these provide
24 benefits to all New Yorkers.
25

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you. One more question about spending federal money for resiliency projects. I would say it's 2 questions here. One is the online Sandy funding tracker indicates that 17 billion dollars of federal funding has been earmarked for projects in New York City so how much of this was spent, on what kind of projects, and do we still have some money left?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Sure, sure. Thank you, again, for that question. Today, I'm going to provide you with these high-level numbers, and, if you need more specifics, we can take your questions back to OMB, but here's where we are. Our total FEMA Sandy grant amount is about 10 billion dollars, so 9.9 billion. Of that, we've spent 6.4 billion dollars, and we've been reimbursed for 4.5 billion of that. Other Sandy grants, so Federal Highway, Federal Transit, it's about 709 million dollars. Of that, we've spent about 446 million. Our total HUD CDBG-DR, our community development grants, the amount is 4.2 billion, and, of that, we've spent about 3.9 billion. The total NDR grant amount is 176 million, and, of that, only a negligible amount has been spent because the project hasn't yet gone into

1 construction, and that's when most of the spend out
2 would happen. These will all be reflected in the
3 upcoming update to the tracker which is scheduled for
4 the end of the month. I just also want to say that
5 grants that are administered by the federal
6 government amount to an additional 2.4 billion. Of
7 that, 840 million of that is Army Corps, 595 million
8 of that is for FEMA for individual assistance, 413
9 million is for small business administration, 356
10 million from the Department of Interior, and 207
11 million from the VA, but we don't have a more
12 specific breakdown than this. The rest of the dollars
13 to be spent will continue to restore assets to their
14 predecessor condition or restore them in an
15 alternative fashion that better suits the city needs.
16 Some of the funding will also go to increasing
17 resiliency through restorations and upgrades of
18 critical equipment at the impacted sites.

20 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you. Similar
21 question related to my previous question. Could you
22 discuss the status of other coastal resiliency
23 projects throughout the city? The state published a
24 feasibility study for resiliency projects in areas of
25 Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Manhattan Beach, and

1 Sea Gate in 2014. Have any of these resiliency
2 projects been developed for these areas? If no, why
3 not? Also, you know I'm co-Chair with Council Member
4 Joann Ariola, please say if any of those projects are
5 available for Howard Beach.
6

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN:

8 Council Member, I'm going to tag team this question
9 with Deputy Director Carrie Grassie, but, again, I'll
10 just remind us all that because resiliency is so
11 broad, for the purposes of this hearing we're going
12 to just continue to focus on Sandy FEMA dollars and
13 our CDBG-DR Funding as per the Mayor's preliminary
14 budget for FY-22, but that is not all-inclusive of
15 all the resiliency dollars or all the ways that our
16 city agencies help New Yorkers to be more resilient
17 to a changing climate. Carrie, if you can jump in
18 here and provide some specific examples, that'll be
19 great.

20 DEPUTY DIRECTOR GRASSIE: Sure, sure. To
21 just sort of speak generally about all of the coastal
22 resiliency projects across the city, we're continuing
23 to advance many of them from Red Hook to Jamaica Bay
24 to Staten Island. As Kizzy mentioned in her
25 testimony, the Army Corps did break ground this year

on the Southshore Staten Island Resiliency Project.

ESCR is construction as is the Army Corps' Rockaway

project on the Atlantic Shorefront, and the city will

break ground on the Howard Beach Raised Shoreline

project and the Brooklyn Bridge to Montgomery Coastal

Resiliency this year. You asked specifically about

Howard Beach so in Howard Beach EDC, our partner at

the Economic Development Corporation, is working on

the Howard Beach Raised Shoreline project. This

project entails building bulkheads or sort of low

walls at 2 low-lying street ends that are the entry

points for coastal flooding due to high tides from

sea level rise so we're very excited about that

project finally breaking ground.

You also asked about the New York Rising

program, particularly for the Brighton Beach, Coney

Island area. This is the New York State's New York

Rising Community Reconstruction program. They

produced a set of conceptual plans, not only for this

neighborhood but for neighborhoods all over the city

to be implemented with the State's CDBG-DR funding.

As the state sort of pursued those projects, not all

of the projects were deemed to be feasible and then

not all of the projects were to be implemented by the

1 city. The state ended up implementing some of them so
2 for the particular community that you've asked about,
3 some of the funding that went to the city in
4 particular went towards upgrades to the Manhattan
5 Beach Promenade, a project that I believe has just
6 opened. It includes new ADA-compliant ramps, steps,
7 an entryway along with new landscaping and seating,
8 and all of the components of the project were built
9 resiliently to withstand storm conditions, wave
10 impacts, and saltwater inundations. Additional
11 funding from this particular community actually went
12 to a larger program, the Department of Small Business
13 Services Business Prep Risk Assessment and Grant
14 Service. This program was available to small
15 businesses in multiple Sandy-impacted communities
16 across the city to help them better prepare for
17 flooding and business interruptions. For a complete
18 status on projects funded by the state, I would
19 suggest reaching out to the Governor's Office of
20 Storm Recovery because, again, they are responsible
21 for implementing and reporting on their CDBG-DR
22 funding.
23

24 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: I would like to ask
25 one more time are we aware of any, I emphasize any,

1 storm-resiliency projects in Coney Island, Sea Gate
2 area, any of them funded by federal or state
3 government?
4

5 DEPUTY DIRECTOR GRASSIE: For Coney
6 Island, there actually have been quite a few
7 investments so the city and its partners have
8 invested over, I think, about 2 billion dollars to
9 make Coney Island stronger and more resilient over
10 the past year since Sandy so these investments
11 include protecting the MTA Coney Island Railyard
12 Complex against flooding. This includes flood walls,
13 gates, drainage, and pump stations. I believe that's
14 currently in construction. Repairing and increasing
15 the resiliency of Coney Island Hospital including
16 locating all critical patient services above the 500
17 year flood elevation, increasing the resiliency of
18 the NYCHA Coney Island houses, and then collaborating
19 with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build new T-
20 Groins and (INAUDIBLE) the beaches with new sand in
21 Sea Gate.

22 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: A question related to
23 Urban flooding. After Ida storm, it became even more
24 increasingly obvious that we need to do much more.
25 That's probably a question to DEP or whoever wants to

2 answer this question. What are the city's views on
3 constructing homes and businesses in areas that
4 regularly flood now, and do you agree that the city
5 continues to build homes in the areas of high flood
6 risk, is it an issue for you or you think everything
7 is okay?

8 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SAPIENZA: Mr.
9 Chair, I think that's probably maybe for MOCEJ. DEP
10 hasn't made (INAUDIBLE).

11 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Eric,
13 go ahead.

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR WILSON: Yeah, so I could
15 start off with MOCEJ. I would also invite our
16 partners from DEP to talk a little bit about the
17 unified stormwater rule, which could also apply here
18 in an inland flooding context. Just to get us
19 started, thank you, Chair, for that question. Again,
20 my name's Eric Wilson. I'm the Deputy Director for
21 Land Use and Buildings with the Office of Climate and
22 Environmental Justice. As Kizzy mentioned in her
23 opening testimony, there's a comprehensive waterfront
24 plan that we worked with the Department of City
25 Planning to release last December. In this document,

1 there's a land use framework that we present for
2 areas that are exposed to flooding now and will be
3 exposed to flooding in the future. The comprehensive
4 waterfront plan includes this framework in detail,
5 but, in summary, the concept is that areas where
6 flood risks can be practically managed and that are
7 well-connected by transportation and other kinds of
8 infrastructure, these are areas where it is
9 reasonable to consider new developments and to
10 consider to promote development at existing density.
11 In contrast, there are parts of the city that are
12 exposed to chronic flooding and there are areas where
13 we may need to cap existing developments, and, in
14 fact, there are places where the city has designated
15 as special coastal risk districts, you can find these
16 in the zoning resolution right now, where new
17 residential development capacities are capped. These
18 are areas exposed to chronic flooding, as I said, now
19 and also less connected than other areas. In a
20 nutshell, Chair, there's no one-size-fits-all answer
21 to your question in coastal contexts. There's a lot
22 of differences across our extent of waterfronts, and
23 the land use framework is intended to be flexible to
24 address some of those localized conditions. That's
25

2 the context of coastal flooding communities. I'll
3 pass it off to my Colleague, Deputy Commissioner
4 Licata, to talk about stormwater areas.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: Thank you,
6 Eric. I'd be pleased to give you a little briefing on
7 the Unified Stormwater Rule. This was just passed
8 this last February 15th, and this is a very unique
9 new requirement in the city of New York. I was
10 actually pleased to see this weekend that one of the
11 major environmental law firms did a nice blog about
12 it. That was sort of gratifying to see. What this
13 does is when a property is subject to redevelopment,
14 it requires that that property look at the maximum
15 extent to which the stormwater can be managed on
16 site, and we refer to that as source control. In this
17 case, we are not saying that we will take the
18 stormwater that the fronting sewer cannot accept,
19 but, instead, we will maximize the stormwater
20 management that you can do on your property, and this
21 will apply to sites that are 20,000 square feet or
22 greater and will also require that any 5,000 square
23 feet of new impervious surfaces would also be subject
24 to these requirements. Before a development could
25 even get a permit from the Buildings Department to

1 start construction activity, they have to start with
2 the Department of Environmental Protection. That's
3 how important this rule is to the city of New York.
4 The site plans really will create significant changes
5 in the way that stormwater is managed. We will
6 require green infrastructure as a first form of
7 defense and then we will gradually move to slower and
8 lower detention rates as the properties prove that
9 they cannot do the highest level of control so we
10 look forward to that. If there are any questions, let
11 me know.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you very much. I
14 have a question for DEP again. How many catch basins
15 are in the city and how often are they inspected and
16 maintained and how does the city identify what areas
17 need catch basins, like last year Storm Ida took a
18 lot of folks by total surprise, like some pictures
19 and videos from Storm Ida were like surprising and
20 outrageous, like people couldn't cross the street and
21 I'm not even mentioning MTA subway stations so the
22 question is like even in normal circumstances, any
23 kind of strong rain creates a lot of problems for
24 ordinary New Yorkers so do you know how many catch
25

2 basins we have in New York City and how often they're
3 inspected and maintained?

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SAPIENZA: Okay,
5 Mr. Chair, let's start with the number of catch
6 basins in the city. There are about 150,000 catch
7 basins, and those are on street corners, on roadways,
8 highways, parks. DEP does regular inspections and
9 cleaning when necessary. We have a cycle that's
10 slightly different for whether it's on a commercial
11 strip where there may be more street trash and debris
12 that gets into the basins versus a residential street
13 that may be a bit cleaner. We target about 93,000
14 catch basins a year to do an inspection, basically
15 twice a year on the commercial strips and then less
16 often in residential areas, and then cleaning as
17 necessary. I should point out because there always
18 seems to be a confusion about cleaning a catch basin
19 versus clearing a catch basin, and we make the
20 distinction as you clean a catch basin when the box
21 beneath the street is full of debris, and we have a
22 special truck that comes in, the grate of the catch
23 basin is removed, and then all the material inside
24 the box is dug out and taken out on the back of a
25 truck. That's called cleaning. Clearing a catch basin

1 is often, you may see trash or leaves on top of the
2 grate, and that can cause problems too because runoff
3 from the street can't get into the catch basin
4 because it's blocked up by leaves and debris so we
5 ask everyone to help us out with clearing catch
6 basins from that issue. I want to point out during
7 that you mentioned Ida and obviously there was a lot
8 of flooding. That was not a catch basin issue really,
9 Mr. Chair. The sewer system itself was just full. All
10 of the sewers had reached capacity. Whether we had
11 more catch basins or not, it wouldn't have really
12 mattered because no more water could go down the
13 drains so at that point during that evening during
14 Ida with the sewers full and the catch basins at
15 capacity, water was just running down the street so
16 it wasn't really a catch basin issue. It was more of
17 a sewer capacity situation.

19 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: What could be done for
20 future storms like Ida in terms of clearing both
21 catch basins and the sewer systems?

22 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SAPIENZA: That's
23 what we're really looking at now. The last
24 administration came out with what they called the New
25 Normal Report, and Mayor Adams is coming out with

1 another report to use that New Normal Report as a
2 foundation or a jumping off point as Kizzy said
3 earlier, but it's going to have to be a hybrid
4 approach. In some parts of the city, there's
5 opportunities to build bigger sewers, but in a lot of
6 parts of the city you're really at the maximum size
7 that you can install under the street. We're
8 installing new storm sewers in Southeast Queens, and,
9 if you go out there and look at some of the projects,
10 the sewers, and they're basically boxes, are from
11 corner to corner. You can't really fit more on the
12 street so the hybrid approach is looking at things
13 like green infrastructure, the cloudburst initiatives
14 that you heard about a little bit earlier, Bluebelts
15 like we've done on Staten Island so we've got to look
16 at all ways of making our streets less permeable so
17 that there's less of an impact on the sewer system.

19 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay. Thank you. I
20 would like to switch to Office of Emergency
21 Management. Thank you, Commissioner, I thank you. My
22 question is to Office of Emergency Management about
23 preparedness for future emergencies related to
24 hurricanes, storms. I lived during Superstorm Sandy,
25 and I remember vividly people were not notified

1 properly. People, if they were notified, they were
2 notified only in English. Especially seniors and
3 immigrant communities were totally confused very
4 often, and many people were stuck on the upper
5 floors. They were not evacuated. Even later on, after
6 Sandy struck, for several months, there was a lot of
7 confusion, what to do, how to communicate with
8 anybody. It also affected not just the people who
9 lived in buildings and in private homes but also
10 patients in nursing homes, patients in hospitals so
11 are we prepared for a similar situation in the
12 future, how are we going to communicate, and any kind
13 of trainings maybe by the Office of Emergency
14 Management in different communities?
15

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Sure.
17 Thank you. We're coming up, I think as everyone
18 knows, on the 10th anniversary of Sandy, and
19 Emergency Management and all of our partners, we have
20 many new partners, we have been working every coastal
21 storm season on this and then in the 6 months that
22 isn't coastal storm season we're working on
23 improvements. Ten years ago, things have progressed a
24 lot, obviously technology is at a different place,
25 Notify NYC is in a very different place. As I noted

1 before, we now have a million subscribers to Notify
2 NYC. That's not enough. We want 3, 4 million, however
3 many cellphones, how ever many land lines and email
4 addresses and everything that in the city, but we
5 also back in 2012, the system as you noted was
6 English only. We have worked very hard to translate
7 all of our messages into 13 different languages, and
8 those are available across the city. I will say that
9 the vast majority of people that have subscribed to
10 Notify NYC have done so in English and so our big
11 push now is to get these messages out to get
12 subscribers in these different languages. We're doing
13 a large ad campaign. People probably know we're
14 coming up on coastal storm season. It starts June
15 1st, and New York City is most at risk August 1st, so
16 we have ads going out in dozens of different
17 languages and ethnic media and other. We're happy to
18 share those ads with you. If you can share them in
19 your newsletters with your constituents, and we have
20 all 13 languages on Twitter, but we understand that a
21 lot of populations may not use Twitter the way
22 English speakers do so we're looking at other ways to
23 get the message out, other apps or other formats that
24 people use, and then, as we noted during COVID,

1 obviously person-to-person outreach was very
2 difficult. We have been ramping that up as quickly as
3 can. We were in Chairperson Ariola's district last
4 week doing outreach alongside her on the weekend.
5 We're happy to come out to everyone's district on
6 whatever day, whatever time, whatever languages you
7 need, and to prepare your residents, and we want to
8 hear your ideas. Like I said, if there are other ways
9 that we can get the word out to people, we start with
10 young children. We have a Ready Superhero, Ready
11 Girl. We go out. We start with people with nursery
12 school, and we go all the way up to senior centers,
13 and we hit houses of worship, civic groups, whatever
14 way we can get the word out to help people to
15 prepare, and it's an ongoing situation. We all
16 remember Hurricane Sandy. It was 10 years ago. There
17 are a lot of people have moved into the city. People
18 may have been basically children and now they are
19 young adults, and it's an ongoing process so we
20 appreciate your focus on this and we will continue to
21 work, and we welcome your ideas and feedback on how
22 we can improve our outreach.
23

24 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, First
25 Deputy Commissioner. I would like to emphasize that I

1 am by trade an ethnic journalist myself. I worked for
2 ethnic newspaper, radio, and TV most of my adult life
3 here in New York City, and I can tell you that an
4 outreach to ethnic and immigrant community media is
5 crucial. Maybe that's the main reason why Mayor Eric
6 Adams established the Office of Ethnic and Community
7 Media, and I will encourage you to work together with
8 this office to put more information, more press
9 conferences in various languages and in various
10 communities that are sometimes hard to reach and
11 ignored and sometimes have very limited information.
12 That's very, very important, especially when we talk
13 about the preparedness for storms, hurricanes, and
14 any kind of emergencies.

15
16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I
17 agree.

18 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: It is crucial. Thank
19 you. I wanted to ask at the very least 2 questions to
20 NYCHA. We have representatives of NYCHA today, and I
21 would like to ask these questions. First question to
22 NYCHA representatives, what specific evacuation plans
23 do you have in place for residents of NYCHA
24 buildings, how have these plans been communicated to
25 residents, and in what languages all over again. Do

1 you have any plans on how residents will be evacuated
2 in case of any kind of severe floods and storms
3 because I recall also what happened in Coney Island
4 specifically after Superstorm Sandy. A lot of people,
5 especially seniors, were stuck on upper floors
6 because elevators didn't work, flooding was severe,
7 and there was a lot of confusion and almost zero
8 communication. That's my first question to NYCHA.

10 VICE PRESIDENT SINDERBRAND: Thank you for
11 the question. We are excited to partnering with your
12 office to continue to invest almost 700 million
13 dollars at the NYCHA campuses in Coney Island. A lot
14 of that capital improvement work, both the repairs
15 from Sandy and the resilience work is well underway
16 and completed many developments. Your specific
17 question is really a collaboration between NYCHA and
18 the city's Emergency Management Office. Really, we
19 yield to them. They take the lead on all the planning
20 for residential around New York City and then NYCHA
21 works to amplify that messaging. If you're looking
22 for some more specific examples of that message
23 amplification, I have to circle back with you to the
24 Office of Communications to give you copies of what
25 those assets might look like.

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Second question, what protections are now in place to protect NYCHA residents and infrastructure located in the flood zone, to protect them against future storms and floodings?

VICE PRESIDENT SINDERBRAND: On Coney Island, we have a number of developments that are substantially complete, Coney Island 1B, Coney Island Sites 4-5, Coney Island Houses, and (INAUDIBLE) Houses, which is over 97 percent complete, which have protection from future storm surge events. This is raised critical infrastructure, new heat and hot water systems that are protected against flooding, taking into account sea level rise and wave action. We also put full backup power generators at these buildings so that that issue you talked about, those elevator outages, not just for hurricane season but the peak of hot summer or if there's any other issue with the electrical grid, these buildings will be protected from outages, and that will protect not just the elevators but also the drinking water, the lighting in the common areas and the lighting and all the electrical units within the residents' apartment.

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: I would like just to comment that even without any flooding, any superstorms, any storms, elevators in most of the NYCHA buildings I've visited very often are in terrible conditions even in peaceful times I would say. It's like almost a weekly occurrence in NYCHA buildings that one of the elevators, sometimes both elevators, do not work so in case of emergency, in case of another superstorm or flooding, it could be even bigger issue, especially for seniors and people with disabilities.

VICE PRESIDENT SINDERBRAND: Understood.

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: So do you have any plans to change this situation?

VICE PRESIDENT SINDERBRAND: I would have to circle back to you about the scope of work in the 5-year capital plan for elevators in Coney Island. That was outside of the scope of the recovery and resilience work.

CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay. I would like more information about it because elevators are a big issue, even in peaceful time when everything is dry, no storms and no floodings. I would like to give a

1 chance to my co-Chair Ariola to ask her questions to
2 the administration.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair
5 Kagan, and thank you to everyone from the agencies
6 who have come today to testify and answer questions.
7 I'd like to start with Director Charles-Guzman. I
8 want to thank you for mentioning the projects that
9 are happening within my district on the Boardwalk,
10 the street raisings in Broad Channel, the soon-to-be
11 street raising in Howard Beach so I just want to stay
12 there for a moment because I do have a question about
13 an Army Corps of Engineer project that was to be
14 conducted to determine what measures should be taken
15 to protect communities around Jamaica Bay including
16 areas I represent such as Rockaway, Broad Channel,
17 Howard Beach, and Hamilton Beach. These areas saw
18 devastating floods during Superstorm Sandy with 7
19 feet of water in the streets. The Corps moved that
20 study into a much larger New York Harbor study that
21 will take years to go through the process of review
22 and take even longer than that to come to fruition.
23 In the meantime, the communities remain just as
24 vulnerable now as they were in 2012 to storm surge.
25 Is there a way that we can expedite this study or

2 launch one of our own so that we can get the district
3 the storm surge protection it deserves?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Thank
5 you so much for that question, Chair Ariola. Let me
6 just reassure that, again, while we are waiting on
7 the Army Corps Harbor and Tributary study which is
8 examining the variety of projects that can protect
9 across the Harbor, that does not mean that we're not
10 engaging and doing the work that we need to do in
11 communities now to understand what other measures can
12 help keep them safe so just to give you a very quick
13 example as part of that New Normal report following
14 Hurricane Ida, we are working on expanding local
15 flood sensors throughout the city and we have
16 deployed 4 sensors and (INAUDIBLE) in Hamilton Beach
17 via FloodNet. These sensors provide real-time street
18 level flood information to New York City agencies and
19 local residents, emergency response teams, and
20 researchers. The data can inform potential road
21 closures or travel bans, they can alert communities
22 to the need for emergency preparedness and response.
23 Roger Gendron and the Hamilton Beach Civic
24 Association have all been integral in identifying
25 local locations at risk of flooding for the sensor

1 deployment so that's just one example of the kind of
2 activity that we're continuing to implement in
3 neighborhoods across New York City. We really are not
4 going to put all our eggs in the big coastal
5 protection basket, right, in that one place. Again,
6 as I mentioned for us, this is about a multi-hazard,
7 multi-layered approach, and I think that day-to-day,
8 green infrastructure, community engagement, flood
9 insurance, education, and outreach, all of those
10 things are pieces that come to place as we continue
11 to plan for communities. I will also add before
12 handing it over to Carrie to add more detail if she
13 can, again, we do owe you, the City Council, an
14 adaptation plan for the city, which we plan to
15 release later this year, and, again, what we're
16 trying to do there is just think about that
17 neighborhood, bottom-up engagement needs to happen so
18 that we can identify the set of strategies that
19 neighbors want to see, right, so, again, we're not
20 going to just rely on engineered solutions that the
21 Army Corps is going to propose. We're going to launch
22 a process that can truly engage residents in the kind
23 of work that they want to see in their neighborhoods.
24

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I look forward to
working with you on that. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Of
course. Absolutely, absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I didn't know if it
you were kicking it over to Carrie, but...

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GRASSIE: I can add a
little. I just wanted to sort of, I know you
mentioned the HAT study, and I know it's been
frustrating that it's taken so long to sort of get
the Jamaica Bay Barrier was sort of, as you
mentioned, kicked into the HAT study, but we are very
close to the next milestone. Again, as Kizzy
mentioned in her testimony, this summer we will see
that tentatively selected plan and so not only is
that critical to laying out the investments needed by
the federal government, it also gives us an
opportunity to have something to react to and so it's
really critical that we work together to make sure
that folks in your community are reviewing that
proposal, are commenting on that proposal to really
bring the local perspective to the Corps so that we
can advance a plan, a project that makes sense for
those communities. We really do look forward with

1 continuing to work with your office on coordination
2 with the Corps.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,
5 and we do have such engaged civic associations. You
6 mentioned Roger Gendron. We have Dan Mundy in Broad
7 Channel and our partners on the Rockaway Peninsula so
8 they were all very much engaged. We've been doing a
9 lot of talking about projects that are funded so what
10 types of resiliency projects do we have that are
11 currently unfunded or underfunded?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: I can
13 take this. Chair Ariola, this is a hard question to
14 answer for sure because, again, resiliency for us is
15 a broad set of initiatives and projects so it spans
16 many agencies and layers of government so what I can
17 say is that all of our coastal resiliency projects
18 are funded and we have a variety of ongoing efforts
19 to find additional funding for our important
20 stormwater, heat mitigation, and coastal resiliency
21 goals. Funding is consistently our greatest
22 limitation so we're always looking to identify new
23 federal and state resources that can help us unlock
24 initiatives that New Yorkers want to see related to
25 staying safe from climate hazards. Think of it this

1 way, for us, a tree is a resiliency measure, right,
2 and so is a bioswale and so is that backwater valve
3 and so is the overall coastal resiliency project and
4 so each of those things shows up in a very different
5 budget and a very different agency, and it might not
6 be earmarked resiliency, but what we know is that
7 environmental amenities actually do keep us safe.
8 They keep us safe from storms, from rain, from heat,
9 and, again, we do take that multi-hazard approach so
10 we will continue to always try to identify funding to
11 make sure that New Yorkers get the environmental
12 quality of life they deserve today.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Great. Great. Earlier
15 in your testimony, you spoke about climate readiness
16 programs and in my district we're very excited and
17 proud to have a living shoreline. Living shorelines
18 and natural and nature-based features help protect
19 coastal communities against flooding and erosion. How
20 are natural resources such as wetlands and living
21 shorelines incorporated into the city's resiliency
22 and development projects?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Thank
24 you for that question. Wetlands and nature-based
25 solutions are an incredibly important tool in our

1 toolkit, and I love them in particular, mosquito-ey
2 as they are, because they provide so many
3 neighborhood co-benefits beyond storm protection,
4 recreation, sustainability benefits, biodiversity
5 benefits so they are central to our approach. We
6 don't only want engineered solutions. We want to
7 incorporate nature-based features as much as we can
8 to help with flooding and erosion, but I want to be
9 fair and see if Carrie has anything to add, if she
10 can provide more specific examples on the location of
11 these projects in your district.
12

13 DEPUTY DIRECTOR GRASSIE: Sure, and maybe
14 I can just take a moment to also talk about some of
15 the frameworks and approaches that the city is
16 taking. It's a great question. The city is absolutely
17 committed to maintaining and restoring the
18 waterfronts' natural habitats and ecological
19 diversity for all the reasons that Kizzy mentioned in
20 addition to what you mentioned in terms of helping to
21 slow storm surges and mitigate flooding by trapping
22 and slowly releasing precipitation and, of course,
23 helping to slow erosion. From 2013 to 2017, the Parks
24 Department and the Natural Areas Conservancy actually
25 assessed the condition of more than 1,300 acres of

1 tidal and freshwater wetlands and 26 miles of streams
2
3 so they put out the Wetlands Management Framework,
4 which was released last year. It summarizes these
5 indicators of ecological health and really lays a
6 path forward for wetland management in New York City
7 which is so critical. In addition, another sort of
8 tool or approach that has been taken is through the
9 Department of City Planning's Zoning for Coastal
10 Flood Resiliency, or ZCFR, adopted in 2021, and this
11 provides important design tools that enable
12 waterfront sites to support resilient shorelines and
13 healthy coastal ecosystems. Some examples of wetlands
14 and nature-based solutions around the city. One that
15 you might be very familiar with, our partnership
16 again with the Corps, on the restoration of the
17 Jamaica Bay complex of Marsh Islands, which provide
18 wave reduction benefits from storms to all of the
19 Jamaica Bay communities, the new Waterfront Park at
20 Hunter's Point South in Queens that includes a 1-acre
21 tidal wetland and habitat creation, things like the
22 Sawmill Creek Wetland Mitigation Bank, and we could
23 go on, many, many across the city.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good. Very good to
25 know. Thank you. After the devastation caused by

1 Tropical Storm Ida, the administration formed an
2 interagency cloudburst taskforce led by the DEP and
3 then Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency to bring
4 cloudburst management projects into neighborhoods
5 vulnerable to flooding from heavy rain. Feasibility
6 studies were to be conducted with a pub process also
7 to occur in 2022. What is the status of that
8 feasibility study?
9

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: I can take
11 that, Chair. I will start by saying that we are well
12 on our way with this cloudburst study, and we're,
13 again, very excited to really look at the potential
14 here in New York City. We've been studying what was
15 accomplished in Rotterdam, Netherlands and in
16 Copenhagen, Denmark where they were able to utilize
17 both above-ground and below-ground structures that
18 they created that would co-exist within the community
19 for stormwater management, and they have built them
20 to scale. I have seen them myself, and I'm very
21 excited, again, about the possibilities of
22 translating some of that to our communities. What we
23 have done so far is we're looking at those highly
24 vulnerable neighborhoods, and we are also not only
25 looking at them from the environmental perspective or

1 to complement our drainage system, but also looking
2 at them from the social risks and the economic risks
3 that may exist in some of these communities, so
4 really looking to prioritize those neighborhoods that
5 have an aggregation of factors. What we will do is we
6 will start with the engineering work that can be
7 accomplished in those neighborhoods. Normally, that
8 is about where are the locations, where is it
9 possible to site structures, are the soils suitable
10 at those locations, can we network the stormwater
11 management so that we can combine various elements
12 and, again, really exponentially create a system that
13 is really looking to improve the stormwater
14 management in an area. We're very excited about these
15 projects, and we hope to have a very robust public
16 participation process that will begin just as soon as
17 we highlight some of the priority neighborhoods.
18 Then, I would also like just to close by saying we do
19 have some pilots. They're at a smaller scale than
20 what we hope to eventually accomplish, but South
21 Jamaica Houses, which is a NYCHA development, is one
22 of the first where we'll be utilizing a grassy area,
23 also a basketball court to enable us to store and
24 manage stormwater, again the grassy area would just
25

1 be allowed to infiltrate, the basketball court would
2 have below-ground storage so there are some projects
3 that we are ready to roll out in construction 2023
4 and 2024 that will start to prove these concepts. I
5 hope I answered your question.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, very much so. I
8 really do appreciate the work that you're doing, and
9 I look forward to working with you into the future to
10 make sure that communities like mine and like Chair
11 Kagan's and other inland communities throughout the
12 entire city are storm resilient.

13 I'm not going to ask questions of New
14 York City Emergency Management or the DEP because, as
15 Deputy Commissioner Farrell mentioned, she came out
16 to the district, met with me, and so did our Chief
17 Operating Officer Vincent Sapienza of the DEP, so any
18 question would be redundant. Therefore, I will yield
19 my time to my Colleagues who have been so patient in
20 having their hands up.

21 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
22 you very much, Chair Ariola, and thank you, Chair
23 Kagan. I will now call on Council Members in the
24 order that they have used the Zoom raise hand
25 function. If you would like to ask a question and

1 have not yet used the Zoom raise hand function,
2
3 please raise it now.

4 Council Members, please keep your
5 questions to 5 minutes. The Sergeant-at-Arms will
6 keep a timer, and I will let you know when your time
7 is up. You should begin once I have called on you and
8 the Sergeant has announced that you may begin before
9 delivering your testimony.

10 First, we will hear from Council Member
11 Gennaro followed by Council Member Holden followed by
12 Council Member Marte. Council Member Gennaro, please
13 begin.

14 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Thank you,
16 Moderator, and thank you to both of the Chairs and to
17 the great witnesses that we have here from the
18 administration. Kizzy and I go back a long time. I
19 was present when Kizzy got the EPA Lifetime
20 Achievement Award in 2013 so not only has she been
21 laboring in the vineyard to do good things for the
22 city. It's a pleasure to see you back in this
23 administration. Kizzy, I'd like to thank you for
24 speaking about Intro 76, about the backflow
25 prevention devices and the FEMA-funded study. That is

1 certainly good news, but the study is not going to be
2 done until, this is what you said in your testimony,
3 it won't be done until the end of this year or early
4 next year, and it's very difficult for Council
5 Members to go back to their districts and even go to
6 civic associations to indicate that a study is coming
7 in a year or maybe a little less than a year and then
8 we won't move forward until then. The Council may be
9 inclined to pass this bill before then so I think we
10 have to move up the timetable somehow. Otherwise,
11 we're just going to act. If you could speak to that,
12 that'll be great.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Sure,
15 Council Member. I'll start and ask Eric for his
16 support if he has more specifics on the study to add.
17 Here's the thing. Again, thank you for your vision
18 and leadership, and we do think that this is an
19 important resiliency tool, and it is widely available
20 to homeowners today. Part of this is, for us, the
21 study is the way in which we are assessing where it
22 makes sense to target outreach, what types of
23 buildings it makes sense to, this will be more cost
24 effective and more impactful retrofit for, but in the
25 meantime any homeowner, any business owner that is

1 able that wants to put in a backwater valve, they
2
3 can.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: We're certainly
5 aware of that, and, if people could spend thousands
6 of dollars, we're looking for a city infrastructure
7 solution here so please continue. I heard your
8 testimony the first time. I'm just trying to drill
9 down a little bit.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN:

11 Totally. I get it, and part of it is that for this
12 legislation we are obviously are (INAUDIBLE) There
13 are some restrictions with how we spend city dollars
14 on private property, and this is not something that
15 we normally do. That said, there are programs that
16 already do support low-income and moderate-income
17 homeowners that want to do this type of retrofit, but
18 as it relates to this particular legislation, this is
19 something that our (INAUDIBLE) still very much needs
20 to take a look at to understand the legality of us
21 standing up this program in this way so part of what
22 we're saying is the study is allowing us to also say
23 which agency and who's our best implementation
24 partner, whether it be the state..

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Right, yeah.

2

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN:

3

Dollars on behalf of homeowners that need the

4

subsidy, that need the support. We agree with you

5

that subsidizing resiliency investments and

6

sustainability retrofits are critical. The question

7

of what the source is for that is part of what we're

8

working really hard to understand.

9

COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Okay. I want to

10

roll to my next question. I only got a little more

11

than a minute left. Thank you for that answer. I

12

appreciate working with you again certainly. This is

13

probably a question for Angela from (INAUDIBLE) I

14

would think. You mentioned (INAUDIBLE) Local Law 122

15

(INAUDIBLE) climate change adaptation plan which is

16

due in September. I passed essentially an identical

17

law 10 years ago, in 2012, Local Law 42 of 2012. It

18

was about climate change and adaptation. That bill

19

was passed 6 weeks before Sandy, and I'm wondering

20

whatever happened to Local Law 42 of 2012. I think

21

that's probably an Angela question.

22

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: Yeah, I

23

believe that you're referring to the Stormwater

24

Management Plan that we developed.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: No, no, no. This
3 is not the Stormwater Management. Again, I'll just
4 make a note as I run out of time here for the
5 Committee Counsel to take a look at the fate of Local
6 Law 42 of 2012. The purpose of it was to plan and
7 figure out how to fund and how we partner with people
8 on climate change adaptation. It was basically
9 identical to Local Law 122, and this is one of the
10 frustrations when we're doing 10 years later that
11 which we did 10 years ago and no one knows what
12 happened to it. I'll just make a note for the
13 Committee Counsel. We'll talk more offline and we can
14 follow up, and, with that, I would like to thank both
15 Chairs and the Members of the administration and my
16 Colleagues for being with us today, and thank you all
17 very much.

18 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
19 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
20 Member Holden followed by Council Member Marte
21 followed by Public Advocate Williams. Council Member
22 Holden.

23 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chairs,
25 and thank you to the administration for your

1 testimony. Let's talk about lessons learned and the
2 hybrid approach to deal with flooding. Of the 13
3 people known to have died in the city from the
4 remnants of Hurricane Ida, 11 were living in basement
5 apartments including a 2-year-old boy who died with
6 his parents in a basement apartment, and I believe 9
7 or more were from Queens alone and many were close in
8 my district so given this horrible data, has the
9 administration stepped up enforcement of the illegal
10 apartments or have notified them because we're
11 getting into the spring and then, of course, into
12 storm season. Especially in flood-prone areas, are
13 there plans to address the basement apartments
14 considering the deaths we suffered under Tropical
15 Storm Ida? Anyone?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I can
18 speak, Emergency Management is not enforcement. I
19 think we will have to probably talk to the Department
20 of Buildings and get back to you on that, but, as I
21 noted, the most important thing to us is preparing
22 all New Yorkers and having them understand what the
23 risks are. By and large, the areas that were flooded
24 and the tragedies that happened during Ida, those
25 were not coastal areas so it's really different

1 areas, but the bottom line is everyone needs to be
2 prepared. As we're in the 21st century, as we keep
3 facing all different types of emergencies, and so we
4 have stepped up our messaging. There were some storms
5 in the fall, October, luckily nothing like Ida
6 obviously, but it let us try out some of our enhanced
7 messaging. We're not afraid to use the Wireless
8 Emergency Alerts, which are the things that
9 intentionally disrupt your phone and people don't
10 have to sign up for those. Those hit everyone's
11 phone. Those are organized through the federal
12 government. They're in English and Spanish so
13 obviously an opportunity for the whole country is to
14 work with the federal government to get those
15 warnings into more languages. We are in the process
16 of going through some federal recommendations and
17 putting in our comments. It was the advocacy of New
18 York City and other large cities across the country
19 that got the messages in Spanish, but they obviously
20 need to go out in many more. While we work on that,
21 we need people to sign up for Notify or we need to
22 figure out the best way to reach them and to
23 understand if an emergency comes, you're either going
24 to evacuate or you're going to shelter in place.
25

1 Those are pretty much your 2 options, and so
2 different situations call for different action so
3 that is what we do as we get into coastal storm
4 season and, as you noted, spring flooding to work
5 with all of our partners to make sure that we can
6 reach people where they are and have them understand
7 how to become prepared.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: DEP doesn't want
10 to comment because, so essentially nothing was done
11 in cracking down or at least addressing basement
12 apartments that are very vulnerable. There are
13 certain low-lying areas of my district and the
14 districts around especially Queens because most of
15 the people living in basements died so it looks like
16 nothing was done. It looks like nothing was addressed
17 so we're just waiting again, and this could happen
18 again, and this is what I'm a little upset about
19 because I knew the answer to this. I knew that
20 nothing's been done so that's alarming. This is
21 something we can address right away. The Department
22 of Buildings gets together with DEP. My second
23 question is does DEP or the administration have plans
24 to use geographic information systems or geospatial
25 technology to kind of predict, if there's a big storm

1 coming and it's got a lot of water in it then we need
2 to know the low-lying areas, the areas with a lot of
3 basement apartments which you can ask the Council
4 Members, so we can get this data out to the public to
5 alarm, some kind of alarm system. To lose 9 people in
6 Queens to a storm trapped in a basement. It's a
7 horrible death, by the way, drowning like that in a
8 basement, trapped, in a flash flood, and especially
9 to lose so many, you would think that we would have
10 some kind of emergency steps involved here but
11 apparently not and that's alarming.

12
13 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER SAPIENZA: Just on
14 geographic information systems and mapping, Council
15 Member, we've heard your concern about that before,
16 and we actually are moving forward. I'll ask Deputy
17 Commissioner Licata to jus talk about some of the
18 work we're doing to put some maps together.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: Thank you,
20 Vinnie. We have been working really hard to present
21 various scenarios in maps using modeling, and they
22 are very useful tools for us to show what areas may
23 be at risk and may be vulnerable based on different
24 outcomes that we have been plugging into these
25 models. For instance, we can indicate what might

1 happen in a rainfall event of a 10-year return
2 frequency, what would happen if that storm occurred
3 during mean high water. We could take another look at
4 a set of scenarios that look at what things might
5 look like if they exacerbate and worsen with climate
6 change predictions. We're able to utilize those tools
7 to now help us with the planning and investments on
8 the city side with respect to our infrastructure, and
9 we are now just beginning to look at how we can use
10 those as a notification tool to the very point that
11 you're making.
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, so, Deputy
14 Commissioner, can we work with DOB to address some of
15 these apartments that we know could flood and we know
16 that people could be trapped in? Can we warn them in
17 advance and work with DOB and work with the Council
18 Members or the Community Boards to kind of address
19 this in a real program, not just, yeah, we're going
20 to supply the information but here comes the
21 hurricane season in June, right, hurricane season is
22 upon us, and we could get hit with a very similar
23 storm that, if we don't do anything between now and
24 then, shame on us.

25 SERGEANT HOPE: Time expired.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: We can and we
4 should.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

6 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
7 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
8 Member Marte followed by Public Advocate Williams
9 followed by Council Member Nurse. Council Member
10 Marte.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: First, I'd like to
13 thank the Chairs and the administration for a really
14 informative hearing. As many of you know, I represent
15 Lower Manhattan, which was seriously affected by
16 Hurricane Sandy, and now 10 years later there are
17 many still questions that community members have. The
18 one question I have today is what is the current
19 strategy or plan for doing geotechnical engineering
20 analysis on buildings after a superstorm to make sure
21 that the integrity of the structure or the foundation
22 is still intact, and, if you do that, is that
23 analysis and information publicly available? This
24 question is mostly for buildings in the Two Bridges
25 neighborhood that some of them experienced almost 10

1 feet of flooding and so we know that some of these
2 buildings were affected seriously, and we want to
3 make sure that the city either has done that work or
4 will do that work to make sure that the people will
5 remain safe in their buildings as development happens
6 on the waterfront.
7

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN:

9 Council Member, I do not have an answer to your
10 question today, but I can absolutely circle back with
11 you. I'm wondering if my Deputy Director Wilson has
12 any thoughts, but this is not something I'm aware of.
13 My apologies.

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR WILSON: That's correct,
15 Kizzy. Council Member, the Department of Buildings
16 conducts damage assessments immediately after events.
17 I'm not sure to what extent they conduct Geotech
18 analyses on existing buildings, but they do conduct
19 thorough evaluations of buildings and the structural
20 integrity after an event. I'm not familiar with
21 specific plans in the area that you suggested, and
22 that's something that we could check on and get back
23 to you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I guess, if you can
25 also find out where this information is being held,

1 if it's public if they have it, to make sure that the
2 residents have access to it.
3

4 DEPUTY DIRECTOR WILSON: Okay, we can
5 check on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you.

7 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
8 you, Council Member. We will now call on Public
9 Advocate Williams followed by Council Member Nurse
10 followed by Council Member Paladino. Public Advocate.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you. Can
13 you hear me?

14 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Yes,
15 we can hear you.

16 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
17 much. I just wanted to be clear with my bill, 0534. I
18 think I heard that there wouldn't be support because
19 of logistically not being able to get information. I
20 just want to clarify what it was I heard. Before you
21 answer, also, I just want to, it's okay, you can
22 answer that question first. Anyone?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I
24 didn't say that we don't support it because of
25 logistical concerns. What I said is that coastal

1 storms, the way they come up the coast, we have 3, 4,
2 5 days notice. There are 400 evacuation shelters and
3 centers in the city. All but one of them are public
4 schools so if we are going to call an evacuation,
5 which the last time we did that was 10 years ago for
6 Hurricane Sandy, it's not a small endeavor by any
7 means. We have to activate a large stockpile so we
8 can keep people safe and fed and housed and
9 everything else, give them a place to sleep. We have
10 to close all the schools. We have to bring in all the
11 people to staff the shelters. We need security. We
12 need transportation to get them there. We need to
13 publicize it as has been noted in culturally
14 competent ways and language so people understand what
15 we are asking them to do and that these shelters are
16 available. Then we need to get them there. We need to
17 do this all before the storm starts so we can ensure
18 people's safety. The nature of a flash flood is that
19 it's forecast, obviously, the way the weather is
20 forecast, it's coming up, and it doesn't, a lot of
21 times, flash flood, if you look at the different
22 warnings and the products that come out, it's not
23 clear that we're going to be in a catastrophic event
24 like Ida until that event is on top of us, it's
25

1 literally raining, and so it is very difficult, first
2 of all, we don't want to send anyone into danger,
3 especially as been noted people with children, with
4 access and functional needs, and then figuring out a
5 large scale evacuation, we have been looking, we have
6 been thinking about this a lot and looking at how
7 people could safely be evacuated, most likely by
8 first responders who will be putting themselves in
9 danger in those situations and they would need to go
10 to places, many of our evacuation centers that we
11 have for coastal storms, they actually flooded during
12 Ida because they're out of the coastal storm
13 evacuation zone but they were at risk for flooding
14 for that so it's a complicated situation. We want to
15 figure out if people need to leave their basement
16 apartment or their first floor apartment, we can work
17 with them to build that plan. We encourage people to
18 go to family and friends. We have other resources,
19 just like we have someone after a fire or after some
20 type of other emergency...

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: I'm sorry. My
23 time...

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FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL:

Working. It's just it's not the same as setting up a shelter system for coastal storms. That was my point.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you. I understand what you're saying. I think there has to be maybe some in between because I understand what you're saying (INAUDIBLE) a full evacuation, just making sure that folks have information so, as you mentioned, they might be able to take some measures in their own hands if they understand what could possibly happen so if a full evacuation (INAUDIBLE) may have a couple of texts before that where people can assess but I think doing nothing is a problem (INAUDIBLE) this will be on us if it happens again because this happened too many times, and there are areas in particular that we may want to focus on even if we can't focus on everywhere just to get the information out. I've represented districts on the Council (INAUDIBLE) culturally competent ways (INAUDIBLE) to get information timely, and we have to do the same here. I think it's really important so (INAUDIBLE) do something (INAUDIBLE) also to what Council Member Holden was saying, we do have to do something about basement apartments. I have

1 (INAUDIBLE) Council Member Holden is, but we
2
3 definitely can't act like it's going to happen but we
4 also can't act like (INAUDIBLE) because we have an
5 affordable housing crisis so we have been pushing to
6 try to get some money to folks, some information to
7 folks to try to (INAUDIBLE) better than it is now. I
8 know that's not all (INAUDIBLE) on this call. In
9 addition, (INAUDIBLE) Southeast Queens, my
10 understanding is they still haven't gotten all of the
11 services they needed and some folks still haven't
12 moved back in so we're moving very slowly. That's not
13 a question, just a statement (INAUDIBLE) Thank you so
14 much.

15 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
16 you, Public Advocate. We will now hear from Council
17 Member Nurse followed by Council Member Paladino
18 followed by Council Member Carr. Council Member
19 Nurse.

20 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Hi. Thank you, and
22 thank you, Chairs Kagan and Ariola, for hosting this
23 important hearing. I have a similar question although
24 I won't go down the rabbit hole, but my question is
25 similar to Council Member Holden. I represent the

1 37th, and we also had a basement death in Cypress
2 Hills of an elder as well as severe damage along
3 Knickerbocker to businesses and households so just
4 listening in, this is very informative, I'm learning
5 so much, getting a lot of wrinkles in my brain, but I
6 understand that these 2 options of go to family and
7 friends or shelter in place are kind of where we're
8 at for these pluvial flooding or cloudburst, I'm
9 trying to incorporate the language, but I can
10 understand that in these situations we're learning,
11 but I guess I'm just curious for this upcoming
12 season, is there a timeline for an outreach program
13 that we think we could have and, if not, can you
14 provide the Council Members who have high-risk areas
15 for this kind of rain flooding, like a list of
16 targeted blocks? Our team, we're willing to go spend
17 some time, we're willing to do workshops in the
18 community. I think we just need a little bit more of
19 the technical information of where to go specifically
20 in lieu of a clear timeline of when we might see more
21 robust outreach program for the city so that's my
22 question.
23

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I can
25 start and then if anyone else may have some things.

1 Like I mentioned, Emergency Management, our staff, we
2 also have fabulous volunteers, community emergency
3 response team volunteers, CERT, and there's actually
4 many more of them than there are of Emergency
5 Management staff. They're happy and we're happy to
6 come out with you to do the work with you at
7 different events, and really everyone at the city is
8 at risk for different emergencies so we can look at
9 what was hit during Ida and Isaias and other things,
10 but everyone needs to be prepared. I will also say
11 that as some of the work looking at COVID and the
12 impacts on emergencies on different populations, we
13 started a project at Emergency Management last year
14 called Strengthening Communities, and that gives us
15 money that then we fund community groups. We did a
16 pilot with 9 last year across the boroughs. We've
17 added 7 a couple weeks ago and then we're really
18 ramping up to dozens of more groups in 2023, starting
19 in July, and the idea behind that is we're not going
20 to ask community groups that already get asked to do
21 so much to do another unfunded project just because
22 it's important. We're able to give them funding, and
23 they can work with us to really understand the
24 planning process for their district, to be with us in
25

1 the emergency operations center during an event to
2 help with the messaging and to get information back,
3 and then during the recovery process. Like I said, we
4 have 17 right now, and we're building more, and
5 that's definitely a great partnership where we can
6 get electeds and others involved so we can follow up
7 more specifically on the work that we're doing on
8 that side, but this is very labor-intensive work,
9 working building by building, household by household,
10 but we're there and we want to do that with you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I just have a
13 question, my last question with the time, can you
14 just share a little bit more about those response
15 teams, the CERT team? Does each community district
16 have one? Are they all trained and resourced the same
17 way or is it mostly held like kind of a central
18 space?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Yeah,
20 no problem. CERT has been around across the country
21 since the '80s. It was started on the west coast to
22 help with forest fire fighting, and it came to New
23 York City, to Emergency Management, in 2003 after
24 9/11. It is centralized through Emergency Management
25 through our community preparedness, but it's all

1 volunteers. They are trained by police officers,
2 firefighters, EMTs, and Emergency Management in
3 different types of emergency preparedness and
4 response and then they're divided into divisions, and
5 we constantly do training, we do drills, and then
6 they go out. They were great helping us with the
7 Bronx fire. They did a lot of work after Hurricane
8 Ida. They do a lot of preparedness work so if you're
9 not familiar with CERT and who the CERT leaders in
10 your community are, our Intergov team will definitely
11 follow up with you, and we just started a training
12 cycle a couple weeks ago so we can also let you know
13 the process for your residents. You just have to be
14 18 years old is pretty much the requirement and live
15 or work in the city, but we can certainly get you
16 more information on that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you.

19 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
20 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
21 Member Paladino followed by Council Member Carr.
22 Council Member Paladino.

23 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon,
25 everybody, and this was a terrific meeting. Thank you

2 to Council Member Kagan and Ariola. A very, very,
3 very informative meeting, very important meeting.
4 Here in District 19, we are surrounded by water. I am
5 a coastal district on the Long Island Sound. We go
6 from College Point to Little Neck, Douglaston, but,
7 however, this is not about my coast. We're doing very
8 well here. Our flooding is not due to our coastal
9 shorelines. Our flooding, especially during Ida, we
10 took a big hit in this neighborhood, huge hit in this
11 district, and so my questions are going to be more
12 for Emergency Management and DEP. We had a lot of
13 people lose major portions of their homes, their
14 cars, 2 people almost died in a basement apartment if
15 it wasn't for a neighborhood, another hysterical
16 neighbor, they actually broke down the basement door
17 with an axe because the water was up to 8 feet high,
18 he and his son. These are normal neighborhoods that
19 have never had this happen before ever, and my
20 question is this. How many trucks does the DEP have
21 going around that actually clean out the storm catch
22 basins? That's my first question. I have another
23 question. Earlier in the meeting here, somebody said,
24 I believe it was you, Commissioner Vincent, about the
25 sewer systems, that it's not so much the catch

1 basins, you're doing what's necessary with the catch
2 basins, but you said it was the sewer systems so like
3 a homeowner, every once in a while we have to snake
4 out the drains so the same thing holds true for sewer
5 systems so I'm just wondering how often is this work
6 done. A few decades, I remember that these trucks
7 used to go around, it amazed us as younger people, it
8 amazed us when we got older, but they were cleaned at
9 least once or twice a year. They would go down with
10 the big dowels and they would pick up the debris and
11 you know how the population has grown and it's
12 really, we're overpopulated and that's added to it
13 but how do I answer my constituents as they're
14 washing machines, I mean you're talking about
15 refrigerators, washing machines, cars floating in the
16 street, in Whitestone, in Little Neck, in Douglaston,
17 unheard of, absolutely unheard of, how could you help
18 me answer a constituent with these questions as their
19 homes are floating but most important of all too how
20 do they answer their insurance companies?

21
22 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: All
23 great questions, Council Member Paladino. I'll just
24 start, we'll talk about the cleaning and maintenance
25 that we do at DEP. As you noted, you said when you

1 were younger you saw those devices. We still have
2 those. We call them clamshells on a crane, and we
3 continue to do good maintenance on cleaning catch
4 basins, we clean sewers, we flush sewers. In Ida,
5 unfortunately, the amount of rainfall that fell was
6 just beyond the capacity of the catch basins and
7 sewers. Generally, our sewers are built to hand about
8 1.75 inches of rain per hour. Ida was more than 3
9 inches per hour. Catch basins and sewers were just
10 full, and what happens there is then water can't get
11 down the drain, it runs off down the street and where
12 does it run to, the low point. So if you live in a
13 hilly community and you're at a lower point, water's
14 going to come downhill towards you and,
15 unfortunately, that's what happened in some parts of
16 your district and we heard from...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: It was
19 absolutely unbelievable because we've never got hit
20 before. Thank God, Sandy didn't hit us, we've had a
21 few little patches of tornadoes that come through in
22 a minute or two and they're done with, but never has
23 my community seen, and I've been living here 68
24 years, never have I seen anything quite like Ida. It
25 ripped off the tops of, you know how the gas stations

1 have those canopies over the, those came down. I know
2 that it's, but everybody says they never see their
3 catch basins get cleaned anymore and what happened
4 too also was when DEP trucks, how many DEP trucks are
5 assigned to the borough of Queens and particularly to
6 my district and how often do the catch basins get
7 cleaned and, if you can't answer me now, that's
8 perfectly fine, but I need to give back. I need to
9 have answers, and that's when I was campaigning back
10 in September and I was being taken from pillar to
11 post but I'd like you to answer that for me quickly
12 if you could.

14 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: Sure,
15 yeah, yeah, sure.

16 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Time expired.

17 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: I
18 don't have the number of trucks, but the catch
19 basins, we have a crew of 28 people who deal with the
20 inspections and they get cleaned when they need to
21 be, but you mentioned you've never seen anything like
22 Ida before, none of us have, it was the highest
23 rainfall in an hour that New York City has ever
24 experienced, but our concern is going forward there's
25 going to be more Idas because climate is changing and

2 we're going to see heavier storms and we have to
3 prepare for that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: All right. We'll
5 be in touch. Thank you so very much for your time.
6 Thank you. Thank you.

7 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
8 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
9 Member Carr.

10 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Good afternoon.
12 Thank you to Chairs Kagan and Ariola for presiding
13 over this really critical hearing. My district was
14 very badly hit during Sandy and in Hurricane Irene
15 the year before so we learned the dangers of tidal
16 surge and then last year we learned the challenges we
17 face with respect to rain and neighborhoods that are
18 not anywhere near the waterfront being particularly
19 vulnerable. In spite of maybe being the beneficiaries
20 of recent sewer upgrades, particularly storm sewer
21 upgrades, and it's sort of begging the question and
22 Chief Sapienza, it's always good to see you, what are
23 we doing in terms of reevaluating coming capital
24 projects to upgrade our sewer infrastructure that are
25 maybe going to be designed to handle more than that

1 1.75 inches of rain per hour, more than that 5-year
2 storm that our storm sewers typically are engineered
3 to anticipate?
4

5 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: It's
6 good to see you too, and thanks for the question.
7 You're right. That 1.75 inches per hour has been our
8 traditional design strategy, but we know going
9 forward more intense storms, we're going to have to
10 look to see how we optimize that, where we can put in
11 larger sewers going forward we will. Again, in
12 certain smaller residential streets, it's tough to
13 build bigger sewers so we want to look at what other
14 options we have, particularly in Staten Island, the
15 Bluebelt solution seems to work well and we want to
16 continue certainly to do more of that where we're
17 building detention ponds to help with those intense
18 storms. We have to look at, again, a variety of
19 tools. It's not just building bigger pipes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: No, I agree with
21 you. The Bluebelt has been a success, and it'll be
22 even more so when more of them come online and I
23 appreciate the work that DEP and then in the future
24 the Army Corps are going to be doing on that, but in
25 terms of, you making points about retention ponds, we

1 do have naturally occurring lakes and ponds in my
2 district. We have Brady's Pond and Cameron Lake over
3 in Grasmere. We have the Willowbrook Pond Park which
4 is city parkland. We've heard for years from
5 residents and from some folks in government that we
6 could really use some dredging in these areas, and is
7 that something that DEP can look at in terms of
8 coordinating, whether it's with a private owner like
9 the Cameron Club or City Parks about seeing what we
10 can do to really help get more drainage and more
11 volume in those ponds by dredging?
12

13 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA:

14 Another good point. We'll follow up with you on that.
15 We have been talking to the Parks Department about
16 leveraging some of their ponds and lakes that they
17 have so we'll circle back on that one.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay. I appreciate
19 that. Couple of more questions. My predecessor, Steve
20 Matteo, financed pump trucks because we have really
21 severe ponding locations that have been recurring for
22 a long period of time and as you know these below the
23 boulevard neighborhoods haven't been able to have
24 traditional sewers and so as a bridge to ultimate
25 Bluebelt activation, he funded these trucks to come

2 and pump really severe ponding locations. Is DEP
3 looking at maybe getting more of those vehicles
4 because we already have too many sites for them to go
5 to with the 2 I think that we have in the borough.

6 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA:

7 Another good issue that you've raised. Certainly,
8 we've been looking going forward when there are
9 significant storms to reposition some of the pump
10 trucks we have and potentially look at getting more.
11 One thing I wanted to raise to you is Lake Grimsby,
12 hopefully it won't be a lake anymore. We've done some
13 work there. Last couple of rainstorms that we've had,
14 it looks pretty good so we'll stay on top of that
15 location as well.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Glad to hear it.

17 That's the most infamous example, and I look forward
18 to that being just a memory in the minds of
19 residents. I guess my last question is a lot of the
20 flooding that took place in the storms last year was
21 in Westerly. I know DEP and DDC just announced a
22 Forest Avenue project, and I look forward to our
23 walkthrough in the neighborhood coming up, but I just
24 wanted to kind of put on your radar and if you could
25 go into a little bit about what we think we can do in

1 terms of catch basins and coordinating better with
2 DOT about really pitching streets when they do their
3 resurfacing to make sure that water is actually
4 flowing to these basins that DEP installs or might
5 already have in the area and what DEP does in terms
6 of talking to DOT when a paving happens to make sure
7 that that engineering aspect is being taken into
8 account when the work gets done.

10 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA:

11 (INAUDIBLE) We certainly need to all do a better job,
12 DEP, DOT, and the Department of Design and
13 Construction just to make sure that when we're
14 delivering these big projects that we do it right,
15 and we'll continue to make sure that we have boots on
16 the ground. When roadways are resurfaced or new
17 roadways constructed, that the crowns and the pitches
18 are all right to get water to catch basins.

19 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Time expired.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I appreciate that. I
21 thank the Chairs for their time, and I just want to
22 take this opportunity, Chief Sapienza, just to thank
23 your team, Mario Bruno, Steve (INAUDIBLE), Jeff Jay,
24 and the other guys in operations in the borough. They
25 always do phenomenal work, and I thank you.

1
2 CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER SAPIENZA: Thank
3 you.

4 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
5 you, Council Member. I will now turn it back to Chair
6 Kagan for additional questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Jessica.
8 Before we go to public testimony, I'd like to ask 2
9 more questions to Office of Climate and Environmental
10 Justice, and they're related. One is any central
11 location, maybe on internet, website where the public
12 can view information about all of these resiliency
13 studies, all of these federal studies? They're very
14 important. Is there any kind of central location
15 where the public can view all of these locations and
16 studies? That's first question. Second, everybody's
17 new (INAUDIBLE) a new Council Member, even the office
18 itself of Climate and Environmental Justice is new,
19 but do you see any kind of gaps 10 years from
20 Superstorm Sandy that we still have work to do in
21 terms of improving our resiliency and preparedness
22 for future storms and hurricanes?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Thank
24 you for that question. Let me reiterate something I
25 mentioned earlier briefly, which is that again for

1 us, we take a multi-approach, it's like a multi-
2 layered approach to resiliency so we don't maintain a
3 list of resiliency projects all in one place so to us
4 the tree planting that we do as part of Cool
5 Neighborhoods NYC, for example, that's a resiliency
6 project. However, we don't maintain that list, but
7 our portfolio expands to so many different agencies
8 that we are trying to look at ways that New Yorkers
9 can access this information in a more transparent way
10 and also an easier way so I think that especially as
11 we do the adaptation plan that we owe you later this
12 year, we're thinking about how to communicate this
13 information to New Yorkers in the simplest format and
14 making changes to our website to make sure that we
15 can really talk about our projects in ways that make
16 more sense to the neighborhoods that we're serving,
17 but, sadly, we don't have a big repository. That
18 said, the Emergency Management has their Mitigation
19 Action Plan and then there's the Office of Management
20 and Budget's Sandy Funding Tracker so there are a
21 couple of sites that do direct us to the federal
22 funding that we have received and so we can share
23 that with the Chair and the rest of the Council if
24 they're interested.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: And my second question
3 was about do you see some kinds of still major gaps
4 that should be filled. Again, it's the 10-year
5 anniversary this year from Superstorm Sandy, and do
6 you see some gaps that we are still not ready for
7 major superstorm if it hits, God forbid, tomorrow so
8 what do you see the priority like, what do you see
9 the gaps that still exist in terms of storm
10 preparedness.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: I'll
12 take this as an opinion and let my Colleagues jump in
13 from their perspective. Again, I think that we have
14 done a tremendous job in the last 10 years trying to
15 get us ready for that next large-scale event, but, at
16 the same time, one thing that I think we are really
17 thinking about more is flood insurance so there have
18 been so many questions today about catch basins and
19 all of that, I think we all are thinking really about
20 the big project that is going to keep the water out.
21 I think ultimately we also need to ensure that New
22 Yorkers have the tools to be able to bounce back and
23 to have their investments protected and sometimes
24 flood insurance can help that, and I think that
25 there's a lot of misconception about flood insurance,

2 that it's only for areas in the coastal plain, but
3 it's really for anyone, and it does cost something,
4 but I think it is the first step. That is one of the
5 reasons why our office has put in so much effort to
6 doing targeted outreach and expanding our marketing,
7 social media, trainings, community events, really
8 trying to get homeowners educated on this issue, the
9 importance of having flood insurance. We absolutely
10 value and really appreciate the Council's partnership
11 on this because we need the way that we are accessing
12 your constituents and making them aware that flood
13 insurance is the way that they can try to protect
14 themselves when this is happening because we do
15 expect extreme weather events to get more common in
16 the coming years. So to me, I see that as a gap but
17 also thinking about as residents, how do we bring
18 them more into the fold of the protective actions
19 that we need to take to keep each other safe and
20 creating those networks of support, strengthening the
21 social resiliency for our neighborhoods.

22 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay. I thought more
23 like building sea walls, something like this. Flood
24 insurance is very, very, very important, of course,
25 and I recall there was an issue in some areas that

1 people, homeowners, couldn't even obtain flood
2 insurance in the first place and it was an issue in
3 2012 as well, but I thought you would talk something
4 about like building some protective measures, sea
5 walls or something like this, that's what I thought.
6

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN:

8 Everybody wants a sea wall. Again, we are excited to
9 see what the Army Corps is going to propose this
10 summer. Again, it is not the end-all, be-all. We are
11 thinking about adaptation planning in a more
12 comprehensive way. Again, I think that there is a way
13 that we think that these large infrastructure
14 projects are the only solution, these large
15 engineering solutions are the only thing that will
16 keep us safe. We're trying both things, right, so
17 bottom-up, neighborhood engagement, neighborhood
18 planning, engagement with your local leaders and with
19 you guys, the Council Members, to ensure that we're
20 also bringing in benefits today so that we're not
21 just waiting for this wall that will take 25 years to
22 be constructed so when the Army Corps comes out with
23 their proposal, we'll comment on it. We will
24 absolutely welcome your partnership to ensure that we
25

1 have a robust showing as a city to provide comments
2 on their proposals, and we'll take it from there.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay. Thank you very
5 much. Of course, we will need to come back to this
6 issue maybe later this year because work is ongoing
7 so I would like to turn now again to Committee
8 Counsel Jessica Steinberg Albin for public testimony.

9 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
10 you very much, Chair, and thank you to the
11 administration.

12 We will now turn to public testimony. I
13 would like to remind everyone that unlike our typical
14 hearings we will be calling individuals one-by-one to
15 testify. Each panelist will be given 5 minutes to
16 speak. Please begin once the Sergeant has started the
17 timer.

18 Council Members who have questions for a
19 particular panelist should use the raise hand
20 function in Zoom, and I will call on you after the
21 panelist has completed their testimony.

22 For panelists, once your name is called a
23 member of our staff will unmute you, and the
24 Sergeant-at-Arms will give you the go ahead upon
25 setting the timer. Please wait for the Sergeant to

2 announce that you may begin before delivering your
3 testimony.

4 We will first hear from Tyler Taba of the
5 Waterfront Alliance followed by Michael Silverman of
6 Amalgamated Warbasse Houses. Tyler Taba, you may
7 begin when the Sergeant calls time.

8 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

9 TYLER TABA: Thank you. My name is Tyler
10 Taba, Senior Manager for Climate Policy at Waterfront
11 Alliance, an alliance of more than 1,100
12 organizations, businesses, and individuals.
13 Waterfront Alliance is a leader in waterfront
14 revitalization, climate resilience, and advocacy for
15 the New York, New Jersey Harbor region. We're
16 committed to sustainability and to mitigating the
17 effects of climate change across the regions hundreds
18 of miles of waterfront. We spearhead the Rise 2
19 Resilience Coalition of 100+ groups advocating for
20 policy related to climate resilience and we also run
21 the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines program for
22 promoting innovation in climate design.

23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
24 at today's hearing regarding storm preparedness. I'd
25 like to address the need for adequate funding levels

1 in New York City's budget that reflect the commitment
2 to overall climate preparedness. A climate-resilient
3 budget lays the foundation for storm preparedness by
4 making long-term investments in community engagement,
5 green infrastructure, green infrastructure upgrades,
6 and climate adaptation. These pre-storm investments
7 are extremely important when we talk about
8 preparedness.
9

10 New York City's preliminary budget
11 proposal urges fiscal responsibility for New York
12 City, but, without proper investments to fund
13 resilience and adaptation, we will spend billions of
14 dollars in recovery efforts following storms that
15 frankly we're unprepared for, like Sandy, Ida, and
16 Henri. Storm preparedness means investing in
17 protection upfront.

18 For starters, we must ensure that New
19 York City understands where vulnerabilities exist at
20 a hyper-local, community level through data
21 collection, analysis, and neighborhood planning and
22 engagement. This process is taking place in some
23 neighborhoods already, but a coordinated fully funded
24 plan for citywide adaptation and resilience that can
25 be completed within a reasonable timeframe does not

1 exist. Last year, the City Council passed Intro 1620
2 which is now Local Law 122, that establishes a 5-
3 borough climate adaptation plan to be led by the
4 Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice
5 that gets exactly to this point. Local Law 122 has
6 the potential to be the backbone for climate
7 resiliency in New York City but only if adequately
8 funded, sustained, and prioritized. More
9 specifically, we strongly recommend the neighborhood
10 planning component of this plan remain at the
11 forefront of the city's holistic approach to
12 advancing solutions that will allow New York City to
13 solve overlapping environmental, social, and economic
14 challenges simultaneously. Again, I want to emphasize
15 that this will be a long-term ongoing process that
16 has to be funded and sustained at the city level.

18 Along the same lines, New York City must
19 be prepared to leverage historic levels of federal
20 funding that are being made available for resiliency
21 and adaptation projects. There is no single solution
22 for climate change, especially along 520 miles of
23 diverse coastlines in our city. Part of the process
24 of leveraging federal funding is outlining clear and
25 well thought out projects. For this reason, we

2 encourage stronger collaboration among city agencies,
3 lawmakers, and communities to plan and secure funding
4 for innovative projects that protect areas most
5 unprepared for the impacts of climate change.

6 In the near-term, the city must prepare
7 to respond to the upcoming release of the proposed
8 designs of the New York, New Jersey Harbor and
9 Tributary study and what it means for our region. In
10 May, the Army Corps is set to release their
11 tentatively selected plan for this massive
12 infrastructure project, and as the region is facing a
13 confluence of heavier precipitation, sea level rise,
14 and storm surge, multi-layered solutions will be
15 needed in this plan. About 2 years ago, the Corps
16 proposed as a part of several alternatives a massive
17 storm surge barrier as a part of this HAT plan. The
18 goal for this project is to "investigate measures to
19 manage future flood risks in ways that support long-
20 term resilience and sustainability of the coastal
21 ecosystem and surrounding communities and reduce the
22 economic costs and risks associated with flood and
23 storm events." Waterfront Alliance does not support a
24 storm surge barrier alone for the Army Corps'
25 response to this goal. Based on the timeline that

2 we've seen, we're calling for an extension of the
3 Corps' public engagement process, and we also
4 encourage the City Council to call the Army Corps for
5 a hearing once the HAT proposal is introduced. New
6 York City should coordinate strongly with the Corps
7 to ensure that the New York, New Jersey HAT works in
8 tandem with and is complementary to the efforts the
9 city will undertake to develop and implement multiple
10 climate hazard resilience projects in the most
11 vulnerable communities.

12 Regarding Intro 76, Waterfront Alliance
13 supports the establishment of a program to provide
14 financial assistance for purchasing and installing
15 backwater valves. Affordable solutions for climate
16 retrofits like the one being proposed in that bill
17 are necessary to protect flood-vulnerable
18 communities.

19 As I mentioned earlier, there is no
20 single solution to tackling climate change. We are
21 supportive of increasing resilience and adaptation
22 retrofits that address sea level rise and flooding
23 concerns. This includes the installation of green
24 infrastructure, basement filling, home elevation,
25 raising mechanicals, flood vents, and backwater

1 valves. Not only do these retrofits protect residents
2 but they also save money by reducing damages during
3 flood events, and they can also save money for
4 residents through reduction in their insurance rates.
5

6 I encourage the City Council to consider
7 outreach to communities, especially environmental
8 justice communities, when rolling out these programs.
9 Information should be shared in multiple languages to
10 ensure that residents understand how these retrofits
11 are helpful.

12 In summary, New York City must view
13 climate solutions through a holistic, comprehensive
14 lens. City agencies and lawmakers need to speak with
15 New Yorkers before disasters to discuss how they can
16 be prepared for storms. Being physically out in the
17 community is still the most effective way to..

18 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Time expired.

19 TYLER TABA: Support residents, understand
20 their needs, and work together to find solutions.
21 When there's a way for homeowners and residents to be
22 more resilient to climate change, an incentive or
23 technical assistance program should follow. Climate
24 solutions will include planning, funding, natural,
25

2 and hard infrastructure. Like our coastlines, they
3 have to be unique and diverse.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to present
5 on these topics, and I look forward to having a
6 conversation with you.

7 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Thank
8 you for your testimony. We will now call on Michael
9 Silverman. Michael Silverman, you may begin when the
10 Sergeant calls time.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Starting time.

12 MICHAEL SILVERMAN: Thank you, Chair Kagan
13 and Chair Ariola, and to the entire Committee for
14 allowing me a few minutes at today's hearing. My name
15 is Michael Silverman, and I am President of the Board
16 of Directors at Amalgamated Warbasse Houses, a
17 Mitchell-Lama co-op located in Southern Brooklyn,
18 Coney Island. Warbasse is situated on 26 acres, is
19 five 24-story buildings with almost 2,600 apartments
20 and approximately 8,000 residents plus professional
21 spaces and our own shopping center. We are also a
22 NORC community, naturally occurring retirement
23 community, with largely senior population. We are
24 also completely off the grid as we provide our own
25 hot water heating, cooling, and energy from our own

2 steam turbine power plant. We do not have a hookup to
3 Con Edison. Our power plant provides all of our
4 energy. The steam turbines generate the 4,160 watts
5 to each building's electrical substation which then
6 converts it to normal current and sends the power
7 into each apartment and common area. Since today's
8 hearing is at least partly about resiliency and
9 waterfronts, let me take you back to October 2012.
10 This is the day that we were hit by a huge storm
11 combined with raised sea levels. Superstorm Sandy had
12 laid waste to most of the eastern seaboard, but
13 Warbasse, being only 2 blocks from the ocean, was
14 absolutely devastated. Back in the '60s when Warbasse
15 came online, no one thought twice about placing these
16 substations below ground level. As you can imagine,
17 each transformer was wiped out by the seawater. By
18 that time, Coney Island Creek had risen to extreme
19 levels and began to flood the lower level of our
20 power plant which was only about 100 yards away.
21 Quick thinking by our power plant staff immediately
22 shut down the power plant, thus preventing a
23 catastrophe both there and with our substations.
24 However, this plunged our residents into darkness, no
25 lights, no heat, no elevators, and no water to drink

2 or even to flush the toilets. You see, while the
3 ocean had flooded our buildings and elevator shafts,
4 it was the rising levels of the creek that forced us
5 to shut down the power plant. With residents stranded
6 both downstairs and within their apartments, our
7 emergency plans were immediately put into effect. We
8 had residents that required oxygen, seniors that
9 needed food and water, residents stuck in elevators
10 and in their apartments, and pets that needed
11 walking. There is nothing darker than a high-rise
12 hallway without lights after the backup batteries
13 have gone dead. Immediately that night we went out to
14 try to secure 6 diesel generators, one for each
15 building and one for the shopping center. Of course,
16 everyone else was too. We called out to all of our
17 elected officials at the time, both here and in
18 Washington, but there were none to be found. In the
19 meantime, our security and maintenance personnel were
20 helping people climb the stairs and reassuring those
21 stuck in their apartments, offering what little help
22 they could give at the time. After a day or two, our
23 local Councilman was able to deliver some fresh
24 water, some food, and badly needed volunteers to
25 deliver the water and assistance. A few days or so

1 later, a plumbing company was able to get us 4 diesel
2 generators, and a resident who happened to work for
3 the city made us aware that there were generators at
4 the site of the New York City Marathon and was able
5 to secure one through OEM after the race was
6 cancelled. So long story short, we were basically
7 forced to fend for ourselves and residents. We were
8 able to get partial power to the buildings, allowing
9 for limited elevator service and started the water
10 flowing as well as the heat. Ultimately, we were
11 reimbursed by our insurance company for the rental
12 fees of the generators. At this point, we needed to
13 raise and build our substations 8 feet above ground
14 plane and replace the underground feeder cables from
15 our power plant to each building, which by now was
16 swimming in salty seawater. Since insurance would
17 only cover rebuilding as like, we were stuck with a
18 huge bill of 500,000 dollars for each substation, of
19 which we needed 5, which forced us to get a bridge
20 loan from the AFL-CIO to pay for it. This was the
21 start of a very long process, both financially and
22 engineering-wise. Today, our substations...

24 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Time expired.

2 MICHAEL SILVERMAN: Are 8 feet above
3 floodplain, let me just finish this, and, I'm sorry.
4 Today, our flood stations are 8 feet above
5 floodplain, our power plant is more storm-hardened
6 than before Sandy, moving critical-to-the-operation
7 machinery to the second level. We have built our own
8 email, voice, and text blasts with emergency
9 broadcast to our residents notifying them of
10 impending weather issues and updates. However, to be
11 honest, this body must do more to help provide funds
12 and grants to help finance the way to make our
13 neighborhoods more resilient to these events. It's
14 not about passing another Local Law on the backs of
15 people already overburdened with higher costs of
16 insurance, it's not just about the buildings, it's
17 about critical and quick action. It's about outreach.
18 It's about subsidized flood insurance costs. It's
19 about the people that count on this body to help
20 them. Thank you for your time. I yield back to the
21 Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Michael
23 Silverman. I have question for you. Besides I see
24 need for investments even now from city, state, and
25 federal governments to continue to rebuild all of

1 these issues that you mentioned 10 years ago, but,
2 right now, we have on virtual hearing Christina
3 Farrell, she's the First Deputy Commissioner of
4 Office of Emergency Management, and what you just
5 described in the first few days after Superstorm
6 Sandy, do you think in terms of notification, in
7 times of like coordination between agencies, anything
8 could be done differently today to prepare for
9 possible evacuation, any kind of measures that will
10 mitigate, that will make it less chaotic next time if
11 anything like Mother Nature gives us happens?
12

13 MICHAEL SILVERMAN: Well, certainly in my
14 opinion, anything is better than what happened then
15 because there was no coordination. We were left
16 alone. We did not even see the National Guard here.
17 If it wasn't for the local Councilman bringing in
18 some people to help us, to help our seniors, to help
19 our residents, we did not hear from any city agency
20 at all except when it came to OEM getting us that
21 additional diesel that was so important.

22 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: That was my question,
23 and you basically answered my question. Much better
24 coordination is needed, much better notification
25 needed. Thank you for your testimony, but my next

2 question, like followup, I would like with Christina
3 Farrell because I hope she's still with us. Is she
4 still with us? Christina Farrell from the Department
5 of Emergency Management, are you still with us? Did
6 she leave? It looks like she left, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: She may have just
8 stepped away from the computer. We'll give her a
9 moment.

10 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Okay. We can let
11 Michael, thank you so much for your testimony, and it
12 was very educational I would say for many folks..

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Chair Kagan, she's
14 back.

15 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Grandiose plans. She's
16 back. Good.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: Sorry
18 about that. I had to take a call.

19 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Did you hear testimony
20 by Michael Silverman.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I
22 heard a little bit of it. I had to take a call in the
23 middle. Do you have a question for me? I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: To summarize, Michael
25 Silverman is Board President of Amalgamated Warbasse

1 Houses a few blocks from the water I would say. He
2 described..

3
4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I know
5 Warbasse.

6 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: (INAUDIBLE) in the
7 first few days after Sandy, and I asked him what
8 could be done differently now in terms of
9 coordination between city agencies, in terms of
10 notification of residents, in terms of any
11 notification, and I want you also to comment on this.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: For
13 sure. One of our main CERT members lives in Warbasse,
14 and so we've done different work with them, but
15 there's always more to be done so maybe the best
16 thing, Michael, is if I get your information and you
17 and I talk about different ways that we can
18 collaborate and some preparedness or events we can do
19 to help the development.

20 MICHAEL SILVERMAN: Certainly.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARRELL: I'll
22 get your information from Councilman Kagan, and we
23 can get in touch and work together.

24 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Mr.
25 Silverman. Thank you very much for your testimony.

2 MICHAEL SILVERMAN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: That's all. I believe
4 we don't have any more public testimony.

5 JESSICA STEINBERG ALBIN, MODERATOR: Yeah.
6 I just have to do one announcement, Chair Kagan,
7 before turning it back to you. Thank you. Thank you
8 for your testimony.

9 If we have inadvertently missed anyone
10 that is registered to testify today and yet to have
11 been called, please use the Zoom raise hand function,
12 and you will be called in the order that your hand
13 has been raised.

14 Seeing none, I will now turn it over to
15 Chair Kagan and Chair Ariola for closing remarks.
16 Chair Kagan.

17 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you very much,
18 Jessica. I would like to say first of all again thank
19 you to Committee Counsel Jessica Steinberg Albin,
20 Senior Policy Analyst Patrick Mulvihill, Senior
21 Finance Analyst Jonathan Seltzer, and my Legislative
22 Budget Policy Director (INAUDIBLE) as well as to the
23 staff of the Fire and Emergency Management Committee
24 and, of course, my co-Chair of this hearing, Council
25 Member Joann Ariola, and all Council Members who

1 participated, Council Member Schulman, Council Member
2 Marte, Council Member Gennaro, Council Member Riley,
3 Council Member Rivera, Council Member Nurse,
4 Paladino, Public Advocate Williams, Council Member
5 Feliz, Carr, De La Rosa, Holden, and Yeger.

7 Today's hearing was very important. It
8 was the first step in this discussion, and, of
9 course, we have a lot of new Commissioners and even
10 newly created Mayor's Office of Climate and
11 Environmental Justice, but New Yorkers still cannot
12 wait. Mother Nature is not waiting for us. We're
13 still facing a lot climate changes and a lot of
14 problems and a lot of major natural disasters so we
15 cannot wait for 20 years or 30 years until we come up
16 with a plan to prepare for future problems. I believe
17 today's testimony, today's questions, and today's
18 hearing was the first step in working together with
19 the administration, community leaders, and everyone
20 who believes that we need to do more to prepare New
21 York City for future storms and natural disasters. I
22 would like to thank each participant, and we will do
23 even more on Council side and we will work closely
24 with all agencies. Thank you for your attention. We
25 will come back to this topic definitely by the end of

2 this year because a lot of work to be done on every
3 level of government. We need assistance, clearly
4 assistance from state and federal government as well.
5 Thank you so much.

6 I would like now to yield to my great co-
7 Chair, Council Member Ariola.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair
9 Kagan, and thank you for really pushing hard to make
10 sure that we had this joint Committee hearing. It was
11 an extremely informative hearing. We had so many of
12 the agencies on, and I want to thank the agency heads
13 for coming on and being prepared with real answers to
14 real questions from this body. I think that we've
15 really learned so much in that what has happened in
16 the 10 years, where we needed to fill gaps, where we
17 needed to implement resiliency projects, how we
18 needed to do outreach for emergency preparedness, and
19 how we can work together as a Council, as a civic, as
20 a Community Board, as an agency, work together to
21 make sure that we never see the devastation that we
22 saw during Hurricane Sandy and most recently Ida.
23 What I think is most important that came out of this
24 meeting today is that we are now aware of the
25 nontraditional flood zones, and we have to really put

1 that as part of our package for outreach and for
2 mitigation to make sure that areas like my Colleague
3 who represents Forest Hills, Lynn Schulman, has who
4 was devastated through Storm Ida that these inland
5 flood zones like Bob Holden's area, like a great
6 portion of my District, we really have to work with
7 the Department of Buildings and perhaps at our next
8 hearing, Chair Kagan, our next joint hearing we have
9 Department of Buildings present so that we can
10 address the areas where lives were lost. I want to
11 thank all of you. I want to thank Council staff, our
12 Sergeant-at-Arms, and everyone from the public who
13 came on to make this a worthwhile and informative
14 hearing.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON KAGAN: Thank you, Council
17 Member Ariola. Thank you for your leadership, and I
18 would like to conclude this hearing. It is the first
19 step. It is the first hearing on this topic, not the
20 last one, and thank you, again, to all attendees. At
21 this point, I would like to adjourn this hearing.

22 [GAVEL]
23
24
25

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 June 2, 2022