

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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June 13, 2023

Start: 1:10 p.m.

Recess: 3:21 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Alexa Aviles, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Charles Barron
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Chi A. Osse
Lincoln Restler
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Julie Won

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Kevin C. Riley
Jennifer Gutierrez

A P P E A R A N C E S

Keith Grossman, Executive Vice President of
Operation Support Services at New York City
Housing Authority

Vlada Kenniff, Senior Vice President for
Sustainability at New York City Housing Authority

Ukah Busgith, Executive Vice President for
Resident Services, Partnerships, and Initiatives
at New York City Housing Authority

Alex Malecsio, Senior Director of Government
Relations at Urban Upbound

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a sound check for the Committee on Public Housing. Today's date is June 13, 2023, being recorded by Danny Huang (phonetic) in the Chambers.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to the Committee on Public Housing.

At this time, we ask you to please place phones on vibrate or silent mode. Thank you.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: [GAVEL] This meeting is coming to order.

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this hearing of the Committee on Public Housing. I am Council Member Alexa Aviles, and I Chair the Committee on Public Housing.

I'd like to thank you all for attending this oversight hearing on summer preparation in NYCHA apartments. We are joined by my Colleagues, Council Member De La Rosa, Council Member Barron, and Council Member Riley.

As of today, we two weeks away from the end of the school year. The beaches are open, and families across New York City are preparing for their summer, but, far too often, NYCHA families have to

make plans in case their power goes out. Along with it, their elevators, their air conditioning, and, even more worryingly, their life-maintaining medical equipment. This Committee regularly holds a hearing before the winter begins to hear what NYCHA has done to prepare their boilers and other heating equipment to maintain heat and hot water during the winter months. In the same vein, this hearing is aimed at hearing from NYCHA about what steps they have taken to lessen the impact of heat emergencies on NYCHA tenants. As we move into our new reality of increased weather emergencies due to climate change, we can expect hotter summer days and longer heatwaves. While those extreme weather conditions are beyond our immediate control, NYCHA and the City must do all it can to plan to protect tenants from the impacts of extreme heat. This is particularly in NYCHA, which has a high percentage of senior residents who are particularly impacted by extreme heat.

We are looking to hear about the work NYCHA has done by itself and along with their partners such as Con Ed and the New York City Office of Emergency Management to improve and protect the power distribution infrastructure to NYCHA campuses.

We are also interested to hear an update on the elevator replacement work because, in the past when the electric utilities have lowered voltage to neighborhoods with NYCHA developments, it has also meant that many elevators in NYCHA buildings go out of service. To their credit, NYCHA has embarked on a number of different pilot programs to improve efficiency in the buildings, trying new heat pump systems as well as protect and grow the urban forest among their campuses. These projects should be examined, and those that are effective should be continued and grown. I look forward to hearing about any progress or new initiatives that can help NYCHA tenants.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that so many of the issues faced by NYCHA are a result of decades of underfunding by our City, State, and Federal Government. Making sure elevators are updated, making sure voltage issues that are posed by outdated feeder lines, making sure seniors have breathable cool air during the summer months could all be easily addressed if we were simply to shift our priorities by the City, State, and Federal Government.

I hope through this upcoming budget what we see reflected is a City that prioritizes true public safety through the provision of secure and dignified housing. While NYCHA is trying to make lemonade sometimes with what seems rinds, our government, all levels, must step up. We cannot balance the budget on the backs of vulnerable seniors who have received free air conditioners during the pandemic or any other small number of cuts that deeply impact residents in real-time. We need real, significant investments and commitments with urgent action behind them to make it happen. I am utterly disappointed in this Administration's lack of meaningful investment in public housing, but that can get corrected by this Mayor if he chooses to actually commit to a minimum investment of at least 2 billion in capital per year for NYCHA, restoring the Vacant Unit Readiness Program, and covering the remaining rental arrears. This would just be a start of a real commitment to public housing residents. I ask public housing residents to remember that this is a choice that is being made on how important their housing, their health, and their well-being is to this Administration. It is budget time, and the numbers

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

7

2 don't lie. On behalf of public housing residents, I
3 say show me, show us the money.

4 I would like to thank my Staff, Christina
5 Bottego and Edward Cerna, along with the Public
6 Housing Committee Staff, Jose Conde, Charles Kim, and
7 Connor Mealey for all the work they've put into his
8 hearing.

9 Unfortunately, we don't have any
10 residents here who customarily would lead the opening
11 of this hearing so we will go straight to Committee
12 Counsel and swear in NYCHA staff and thank the NYCHA
13 staff for being here today.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL MEALEY: If you could
15 all raise your right hands.

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

20 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL MEALEY: And if you
22 could all state your name and your title for the
23 record.

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1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Keith
3 Grossman, Executive Vice President of Operation
4 Support Services.

5 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Vlada
6 Kenniff, SVP for Sustainability.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Ukah
8 Busgith, Executive Vice President for Resident
9 Services, Partnerships, and Initiatives.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Before we go into
11 your testimony, just want to acknowledge we've been
12 joined by Council Member Gutierrez and Council Member
13 Osse.

14 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Chair
15 Alexa Aviles, Members of the Committee on Public
16 Housing, other distinguished Members of the City
17 Council, NYCHA residents, community advocates, and
18 members of the public, good afternoon. I am Keith
19 Grossman, NYCHA's Executive Vice President for
20 Operations Support Services. I am pleased to be
21 joined by Ukah Busgith, Executive Vice President for
22 Resident Services, Partnerships, and Initiatives, and
23 Vlada Kenniff, Senior Vice President for
24 Sustainability. Thank you for this opportunity to
25 discuss how the Authority strives to keep residents

safe and healthy during the summer season. Promoting the well-being of NYCHA residents and improving the community's quality of life is our top priority as reflected by our greater mission as well as our day-to-day work.

NYCHA has teams and systems in place to address any emergencies that arise from extreme heat to natural disasters such as extreme rain, coastal storms, and hurricanes. We recently merged our Emergency Services Department and Office of Emergency Management. The newly formed Emergency Management and Services Department or EMSD can more comprehensively manage emergencies through emergency planning, response, and preventative infrastructure maintenance work across the Authority.

The EMSD team of more than 130 employees works to reduce NYCHA's vulnerability to hazards while assisting residents and staff to recover from day-to-day emergencies as well as large-scale disruptions. A key focus is on preventative measures such as helping the community to proactively prepare for potential issues like extreme heat and storms. This involves disseminating informational materials to residents at events like Family Days, monitoring

weather forecasts, planning for adequate response with City agencies, activating NYCHA's Emergency Operations Center when needed, and prioritizing and deploying resources.

Our responses to emergencies are coordinated not only internally across departments but also with critical City, State, and Federal partners to ensure the availability of necessary resources, such as equipment, generators, and water stations, and to directly assist those who are impacted.

The EOC enables NYCHA to respond effectively to service interruptions as well as public safety hazards by coordinating the flow of resources and policy decisions. The EOC also communicates vital information and safety alerts to the NYCHA community through robocalls and social media advisories, amplifying the messaging of the City's Advance Warning System.

When extreme heat is forecasted, NYCHA staff will make hundreds of outreach calls to vulnerable residents to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate information, services, and resources, such as access to air conditioning or a cooling

center. We also disseminate information on staying safe to resident associations. Although cooling centers are managed by our City agency partners, NYCHA ensures that cooling centers located on our campuses have sufficient cooling capabilities. NYCHA also works with our utility partners to reduce electrical consumption, and thus the strain on the electrical system, when necessary.

NYCHA prepares for summer emergencies before the season even begins, proactively monitoring our work order system for potential issues and readying key equipment. For instance, NYCHA has 28 stand-by generators on hand in case of power outages, along with a light tower, command bus, emergency response truck, water truck, and water stations. Additionally, we systematized our response processes and emergency plans and have trained and briefed staff across departments on emergency preparedness. That includes training elevator staff on how to respond to power outages. Development staff are also regularly provided with key safety information.

We recognize summers are getting hotter and extreme weather events more frequent. Numerous efforts are underway to make our developments more

resilient. For instance, through the Clean Heat for All Challenge, a collaboration between NYCHA, the New York Power Authority or NYPA, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority or NYSERDA, an additional 70-million-dollar investment is spurring the development and production of 30,000 new heat pumps for NYCHA residents. This electric, efficient, easily installable technology will provide reliable heating and, notably, universal cooling for thousands of residents.

Thanks to another partnership with NYPA, NYCHA is using a design-build delivery model to procure a solar and storage system that will power the critical loads of two senior buildings and a community center at Borinquen Plaza. Additionally, there are over 100 natural gas-powered generators in operation that can provide resilient electric back-up power to more than 10,500 NYCHA homes and over 100 additional generators are on the way.

To prepare for extreme rains, NYCHA is designing cloudburst-resilient infrastructure at seven developments with construction underway at one development. In addition, deployable and permanent

infrastructure is in place to protect more than 170 of our buildings from coastal flooding.

Community programming. We are proud to offer young people a safe and productive place to be this summer thanks to the extended hours at our community centers supported by partners like the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. Summer meals are also available, and NYCHA residents are being hired for this effort at about 30 locations.

Whether it's with partners like New York City Emergency Management, New York City Aging, DYCD, NYPD, or the City Council, collaboration enables us to help ensure safe and healthy communities. Thank you for supporting these critical efforts. We look forward to our continued work together, and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you so much for your testimony. I am just going to ask two questions then I will turn it over to my Colleagues then we'll resume questioning after that.

I know you briefly covered this a little bit in your testimony right now, but can you just describe the work that NYCHA does to prepare for the summer, particularly extreme weather situations?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, absolutely. I'll start with talking about some of our just general preparedness initiatives and then I'll pass it to Vlada.

Well before the summer season, typically in April, around the spring months, we start transitioning towards that posture so we'll convene what we call our Strategic Planning Group, and we'll work with this Committee to ensure that they are forward-leaning, do we have all the supplies and equipment that we need for the summer, are our generators, do they need to go out of service for preventative maintenance, and we'll start working on all these things throughout the, we work on them throughout the year but we'll convene everybody to ensure that all the equipment located throughout the Authority is ready to go, and we'll start preparing our messaging for Resident Family Days as they start our emergency management services department, EMSD Preparedness Unit, we'll get a table at those Family Days and start handing out fliers. We just make sure our messaging is coordinated and ready to go. That's just our general preparedness actions. For some of

our infrastructure enhancements, I'll pass it to Vlada.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Thank you, Keith. I think a lot of the work that my Department oversees and my colleagues at Capital oversee are much longer term but they are preparing us for more resilient summers, to be able to respond more resiliently to warmer weather, to higher-degree days, to higher intensity rains, and so that has been the focus of my Department, and I think that's some of the work that is going on for the last three years as I've been leading the team is finally going to construction. The example of cloud-resilient infrastructure is something that we've been sort of incubating. Nobody has done this before. We're the first agency in New York City to do a cloud-resilient infrastructure at South Jamaica Houses so that is going to construction this summer as well as our ability, because of sort of being ahead of the curve on this, we were able to secure additional funding for seven other locations so, again, cloud-burst resilient infrastructure, the work that is a response of Hurricane Sandy is wrapping up, capital roof replacement program is resulting in cool roofs, and

the heat pump program that Keith had mentioned in his testimony are some notable things.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I would be remiss in leaving this part out. I know that we have discussed this previously, Chair. We continue to communicate and ensure that we have an open, active line of communication with our City partners, specifically New York City Emergency Management, and, of course, during the summer months Con Edison so we want to ensure that that is maintained and active, and we will work with New York City Emergency Management on some of our strategic planning efforts and theirs.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I'll just also quickly add that the capital work, Family Days are really important to us. Our teams are out there. We're able to be present at the developments where we are starting work or planning work, and so that is an important aspect of communications with the residents for my teams.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Every change of season, I get very, very concerned about NYCHA's

response to our residents, whether it's the wintertime and concerned about heating or whether it's the summertime, power outages, air conditioning, these are real problems, and even problems of accessing the Family Day funds. Some of our organizations have difficulties with the paperwork or accessing their funds for Family Day.

The other thing I wanted to ask as you address some of that, will that be expedited. Will we be assured in terms of power outages or air condition issues, particularly for where our seniors are, that they will be protected.

Then the other thing that is disturbing, the Mayor prioritizes privatization of NYCHA so often times those that are under the privatization process, they get the priority over those who are not and RAD and PACT and all of that so I want to know, and you're bound by the truth so tell me the truth, is all of NYCHA regardless of them being in RAD and PACT being treated equally in terms of what needs to happen with infrastructure and then what about wi-fi? Wi-fi is very important, particularly over these months, access for our NYCHA residents so those are some of the questions that I have.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you, sir. I'll start by saying yes, we respond to all issues with NYCHA residents equally.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I'm glad you coughed so I could just, I don't want the general response. Specifically, has your responses been more to the RAD/PACT developments or to those that are not in RAD/PACT because I know the Mayor said the capital money, and I agree with the Chair, that 2 billion would be more adequate yearly because the City does have a 169-billion-dollar 10-year capital plan so 2 billion would be far more feasible, but just in terms of what you're actually doing, not your heart, not your ideal, not what you would like to do, but is it documented that the non-RAD and PACT developments have received equal attention to capital issues as the ones that are privatized?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Thank you for that question. It's one that keeps me up at night. What I'll say is that we are bound by HUD rules in funding streams, and they're limited on the public housing side, and so, given that I lead the sustainability efforts, I'll say that in some ways the funding that we pursue, the grants that we

pursue, we actually lean heavier on the public housing side rather than PACT because there is a vehicle there to recapitalize. There are steadier funding streams from HUD on the PACT side rather than on the public housing side, and so I would say that at least on the sustainability side of things that I'm happy to sit with you separately and show you all the grants that we have applied and all the grants that we secured because there's an incredible opportunity right now, particularly for disadvantaged communities, so I can say honestly that my office really focuses more on the public housing side because there's a greater need.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: All right. I'll be glad to sit with you because I would like to see the actual practice. I understand the HUD regulations and where HUD's priorities are, but the actual practice, what has actually happened, I'd be glad to sit with you.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I would love to...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what about wi-fi and all of that other stuff?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Good afternoon. Thank you for that question. In terms of wi-fi, the City did roll out Big Apple Connect for the majority of NYCHA developments. The only ones that are not covered by Big Apple Connect could be ones that have a smaller contract originally, but we can provide the full data on the Big Apple Connect and the wi-fi program. I think you also mentioned TPA application and funding, funding for TPA application. We conducted our orientation for Family Days earlier this year, and we provided a deadline for all resident leaders to submit their application by May 29th. Currently, we have about 125 Family Days on the list. That means they submitted a proposal, it was approved, and we're in the process of uploading those funds to their commercial card so we are way ahead. We hosted our first Family Day the first week in June, and we have a couple this weekend, but we haven't heard any issues with NYCHA issuing funding for Family Days, and, if you hear of any, please let us know.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: You know I will, I most certainly will. I'll be glad to be of assistance to you.

2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Thank
3 you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you, Council
6 Member Barron. Council Member Riley.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you so much,
8 Chair Aviles. Normally I don't attend this Committee
9 because I'm not on this Committee, but this is the
10 only time I get to talk to you guys because I've been
11 reaching out to you guys since April. I've been
12 having a great relationship prior to this. I worked
13 in Speaker Heastie's office, and I always had a great
14 relationship with Brian Honan, but recently he has
15 not been answering me back so this is why I came to
16 this meeting today.

17 We're talking about summer preparedness,
18 and I know we're focusing on electricity and air
19 conditioning, and I just want us to focus on, in the
20 summertime our NYCHA residents are usually outside. I
21 have a wonderful development in my District,
22 Edenwald, which is the second largest NYCHA
23 development, is going into the PACT program so I have
24 two brothers from Edenwald, Vance and Rashid Jenkins,
25 who have an amazing tournament called Grenada Built

To Win. NYCHA introduced us to a non-profit that came by and did their best to upgrade the court but left small cracks and areas and actually just came by and left the supplies there and told the residents that they had to clean it themselves. I reached out back to NYCHA to Brian Honan to talk to him. I gave him a call. He sent me a text and told me to text him. I texted Brian in April, and Brian still hasn't responded to me or called me back. Speeding up to the end of May, the tournament is going to begin and, like I said, this stops a lot of the violence in the community. I don't think they should be subjected to have a cracked court, the fence is hanging off, landscaping is horrible there. We've been contacting him two months prior to the tournament happening. We haven't heard anything back so my question to NYCHA is what is the preparedness with landscaping because usually in the summertime the residents are outside and utilizing the outside amenities more. What are you guys doing with the outside amenities and are you working with any community-based organization in NYCHA developments that are trying to do summer programs within the developments? That's my question.

Thank you, Chair, for allowing me to ask these questions.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you, Council Member. On the Edenwald matter, we'll follow up with you directly after this hearing.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Please, please.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: As far as the general grounds treatment, something that we focus on in the summer through our Pest Management and Waste Management Departments, we have a seasonal program which we use to expand our ability to clean our grounds and maintain our grounds, and we'll utilize that program for a number of reasons, pest management, special cleaning projects, stuff like that. Additionally, we had a really successful pilot where we have some of our own rear-loading vehicles so we can use them for special projects such as what we're talking about here, and they'll go around and support these seasonal teams. A lot of our seasonal teams are made up of NYCHA employees, and we'll utilize this throughout the summer to, like I said, really our grounds are clean, do our best to ensure that they are rat-free and garbage-free.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. Chair, if I may. A lot of my NYCHA developments are going into the PACT program so I have the same concerns that Council Member Barron has so I just want that open relationship with our office that when we are hearing concerns, say, for instance, Eastchester Gardens, I know their building boiler goes out a lot so usually they didn't have a lot of heat during the wintertime. I just got Parkside Development, which is a new development I'm getting in my District right now, so I just want that open relationship with NYCHA that if we reach out to you guys about some issues you guys could follow up with us even if you don't have a response. That's all. Thank you, Chair.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you, Council Member. Actually, as you mentioned those three developments, I oversee heating as well, there are developments that we're fully aware of and what I can say to you now is that we will ensure that they are receiving the proper services from NYCHA until the day they go into the RAD/PACT program.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Yeah. Thank you, Council Member Riley. I just want to follow up on that.

First of all, it's unacceptable that he hasn't received a response at all. Yeah, I guess, it's just unacceptable, but I'd like to know in terms of the outside preparedness of the campuses, obviously using Pest Management as a way to also do related elements, is there a specific plan that is developed around how do you utilize the external environment of the campuses to mitigate heat and to address issues that arise in the summertime?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: First and foremost, through our Caretaker Training Programs, this is obviously something that we focus on, but our Waste Management and Pest Management Departments are supplementing that and providing guidance to our Property Management Offices around the city and working through, contact has been made, and so working through a lot of these issues, exactly what we were just talking about here so I'm going to just stop there on the general note, but I'll pass it to Vlada so we can talk about some of the investments in special programs and then we can talk about

attaching our residents to some of those outdoor programs to (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: In particular, I guess what I'm looking for is not only obviously forestry, how the trees impact the heat on the development and how it supports residents, but things like benches. We get a lot of complaints that benches have been removed, never to be replaced again, but it's an important summer preparedness piece because, if we don't have air conditioning, the best place to be is out on the campus so how NYCHA prepares for that infrastructure piece is also important.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, wholeheartedly agree. If there's any specific issues, we're happy to follow up on those specific issues of course.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Thank you for that question, Chair. We do have publicly the Open Space Master Plan that looks at the public amenities at every development, at every property, and really breaks down what the cost of some of that public infrastructure is. It is a really important tool that our Design Department developed because it allows us to overlay that information and

particularly when we're advocating for even the cloudburst infrastructure. The cloudburst infrastructure is an engineered design to hold a lot of water, but we don't want to take it on unless it has some benefits to our residents that As we're going through the process of re-capitalizing the campus we can have these additional benefits so the way that we structured the One and the Seven cloudburst projects have those elements of the Open Space Master Plan baked into it that would also have additional benefits to the residents, and so I think that we continue to talk about as we re-capitalize and address some of these other issues that are deeper rooted that are related to the infrastructure, we always have to keep in mind these amenities and so this digital tool will help us do that and we welcome you to look at it too.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Just to close on that piece, the Open Space Master Plans are held in your office or what...

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: It's digital. If you go to our capital page...

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: You can focus in on each development to see what the planning is around that specific development?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF:

(INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. I guess with that I will pass it over to Council Member Gutierrez.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Chair. Thank y'all.

My questions are specific to I think the lack of preparation that has happened. I'm encouraged by your testimony that there has been a merging of the units so that there will be I think a little bit more of a comprehensive response, but I think it still merits an emphasis on the consistent I would say negligence not just from NYCHA but both NYCHA and Con Edison specifically in my District, and I'm emphasizing Bushwick Houses. I know you mentioned Borinquen, but I represent Bushwick Highland, that's a NORC, I represent Borinquen, that's about to be a NORC, Cooper Park as well has experienced outages, and it's every summer. It's every summer that residents can anticipate it, and that's a problem more so because we're speaking specifically about

public housing. We're speaking a dense community, but we're also speaking about a working-class community, a community that in a gentrifying district is predominantly black and brown, and so I can't help but to feel that there has to be a better path in the way that we deliver services more equitably so whether that entail your communication with utility companies, but I have to emphasize last summer just within the span of two weeks, July 23rd, there was low voltage at Borinquen Plaza 1, July 22nd, just the day before, low voltage at Cooper Park, August 8th, the same for Bushwick Houses, and then August 3rd, right before, Cooper Park again, so I know that these are stats the way that we're reading it but these are my constituents, these are people that will then call the office. In both instances, both developments have elevators, right, because they have more than six floors, and so I will very quickly give you my questions in the minute that I have.

One is I just highlighted the incidents last summer. How are you working with Con Ed to ensure that these same issues don't occur this summer because it is every summer, and I pinpoint Bushwick Houses because I've personally gone over there to

deliver bottles of water while the elevators were out for hours.

The second question is do you receive advanced notice from Con Ed about these low-voltage conditions and, if not, will you be requesting advanced notice and do you provide that notice to NYCHA residents.

The last question is what are you doing to ensure elevators continue to function in these low-voltage conditions. If you can just share with us what is your elevator outage response just so that we can communicate to our constituencies. Do you also have a sense in those areas if there is also low voltage to the surrounding areas? For example, if it's happening in Bushwick Houses, is it happening across the street?

I can repeat any of those questions or you.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I'm definitely going to ask for that.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Sorry, Chair.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I will happily start. No, it's okay.

As far as our relationship with Con Ed, it's not just like we have an open line of communication. It is an active discussion. Con Edison or National Grade, depending on the area, will attempt to give us as much of a heads up as they can if there's going to be a voltage reduction. Like I said, it is an active line of communication. We can call them, they can call us, and we have a direct line, our operations center and emergency management and services has a direct line to their emergency operations center, and we can speak back and forth. Dependent upon the amount of time, if we have an hour, we will do everything to make that building safe and provide warning. Sometimes it may only be five minutes, in which case we will go over there and ensure that everybody is safe, and we will initiate a response due to a voltage reduction. That was question one I think, right? Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Yeah, but I would just push back a little bit because I'm not sure that that happens, what you're saying where you go out there and make sure. I've approached Bushwick Houses, Highland Houses, and seen a line of seniors sitting outside because the elevator is out, and so I

would assume if NYCHA did that then they would have least have had some kind of recourse but, if they're telling me we don't know what's going on, that tells me that what you're saying is not happening.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I'm happy to take you through what our procedure is. First of all, I'd like to start by saying that year over year we do track outages related to a voltage reduction from the utility. Last year, we recorded 341 due to low voltage. Neighborhood outages, transformer outages at the property line coming from the street, I wouldn't be able to answer that. I'd refer you to the utility partner, but I will say that from January 1st to May 31st this year, we recorded 22 elevator outages due to low voltage, and that's a 60 percent reduction from the previous year which we recorded 56 outages. As part of our response to an elevator outage, I just want to clarify, if I may. We clarify elevator outages in two different ways. There's an outage which would be an elevator car is affected in a building with more than one elevator. Where we differentiate that is when there are no elevators working. So whether it's one elevator, a single elevator building, or there is a building

where there is a voltage reduction and we have to take the elevators offline for safety reasons, we consider that a no-service condition. Our response is similar, right. Elevator mechanics will respond. We will notify residents of stair-climber availability for a no-service condition. A no-service condition will be our priority response, right. There are no working elevators. We need to provide resources to that building, and our goal is always to get at least one car back up and running so that we can resume service to residents without potentially carrying folks up and down in a stair-climber. That's the general elevator response, and our Emergency Management Services Department will respond as well. We'll use any tactic possible to get those cars up and running, whether it's bringing a standby generator, working with our utility partner. In many cases, they'll be able to generate our transformer from the street, and we will use whatever tactic is available to us to do so and get those cars back up and running. Go ahead.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: I'd like to recognize Council Member Restler, Council Member Sanchez, Council Member Won, and Council Member Ayala.

In a followup to that, you noted a significant decrease in the number of outages specifically for elevators from one year to the next. Are you racking the most impacted and recurring issues. As the Council Member is noting in her question, if the residents are anticipated, that means you should be anticipating it, that means we should be there and it shouldn't be happening so what's happening that this development continues to experience this issue every summer?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, absolutely. Wholeheartedly agree. We are doing that. As far as, we break down outages as planned versus unplanned, of course as you know, and we also do track where they occur. Based on that, knowing where we have low voltage issues, I mentioned in my testimony that there are 28 standby generators. They are staged throughout the City and in locations that you mentioned, some are at Borinquen, and they're staged throughout the City at different problem locations with low voltage, and as the low voltage maybe changes from Borinquen to Bushwick we'll move them over and we'll keep them in the areas of need so we do pre-stage some equipment for this.

Another program that we're really proud of is we work with the Federal Monitor to develop a Preventative Maintenance Pilot which we started last year at two Bronx developments. Actually, we've taken that pilot and we've made it into a Preventative Maintenance Program. In areas where you see a high number of outages, we see them as well, and at these developments we have put in place essentially an extra preventative maintenance team that only focuses on maintenance and, let me rewind for a second, the pilot found that obviously really good sound preventative maintenance on our equipment leads to less elevator outages and less no-service conditions, right. That was a pretty obvious thing. We're expanding this pilot to the areas of need throughout the City, and I'm happy to provide you that list after the hearing. We can follow up with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: My last question is I certainly appreciate the planning of having a generator available, but I don't know if that is the one solution in an area that has developments literally on top of one another. I know there are other parts of Brooklyn that have the same thing, Bushwick, Highland, Borinquen, they're all

across the street from one another, but how do you provide for that? How are you anticipating utilizing that for this summer because I'm sure there will be low voltage again, and then the last question was if, and when, Con Ed does notify you, are you also made aware if there are also low voltage issues in the surrounding areas. Again, because there are luxury buildings across the street from Bushwick Houses, and that's problematic to me if a decision is being made by Con Ed to communicate with you whether or not they're communicating with everybody else, but the disparity of the impact of having no elevators at a public housing development versus what's not happening across the street.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I'll answer the last question first. I would refer you to Con Ed on that piece of it, but there's another thing that I did want..

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: But y'all have to push Con Ed too. I get it. I will call Con Ed, but you're representing public housing.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I wholeheartedly agree. As far as where the outages occur and what they affect, I would have to refer you

to them, but when there is a power outage, my teams are working 24/7, and we are consistently actively conversating with them to get power back.

To the first part of that last question, as you were speaking, the light bulb went off and I touched my head and I was also reminded. We are embarking on a journey to install alternating voltage regulators. What that is, essentially as an elevator loses voltage, there is an operating voltage that is manufacturer recommended, when there's a voltage reduction and it dips below that, the car is not safe so we will have to take those cars offline, and in some cases that is the case. It may be that there's not a full power outage, we've lost enough voltage where we cannot guarantee rider safety in the elevator car so we take that offline. The alternating voltage regulator is essentially a large battery backup system that powers just the elevator so we received some federal funds and some state funds and city funds, and we're utilizing those to put these in not only single-car buildings, which, as you know, Borinquen, not only in single-car buildings but specifically focusing on where we have single-car buildings and a high population of either seniors or

mobility-impaired residents. We ordered the devices. When I say it's a big battery backup, it is similar to the size of a small car. It's made specific to the elevator car, and our goal is to install one of these in eventually all single-car buildings starting with buildings that are single-car buildings and have a high population of seniors or folks who are mobility-impaired.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Borinquen and Bushwick. I know you...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: They're single-car buildings, yeah, absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: (INAUDIBLE) It's Highland and it's Borinquen. Thank you, Chair. That's it.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I can find out where they are in priority and follow up with you, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: I guess in the case of Bushwick Houses, which seems to be the most persistent, where does Bushwick Houses fall on the list of priorities on how to address this particular

issue? What's the remedy that we are planning for since it's been persistent?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN:

Bushwick is an area that we focus on, as far as on the preventative maintenance side, we've done an increased focus there. That's step one. Obviously, keeping the cars in good working order. The single-car buildings in Bushwick obviously are part of this program. Like I said, it is something that we monitor. Again, I wish we could fix the power coming in, but, like I said, we're happy to work with Con Ed as a partner and National Grid to ensure that we're shedding load where we can. We will also message our residents and say if you don't need your dishwasher today, maybe we can shut that down. Obviously, we want to focus on our energy on elevator cars and air conditioners and all that, but we're happy to be a partner as well.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: In terms of the AVRs, how many have been installed and where have they been installed?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: One.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: One has been installed?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: One has been installed. This is a new funding stream. We have in our possession three of the AVRs that we are installing. Like I said, they're large so we're trying to identify space to store them, and they do require a filing. We started initiating some of the filing and the paperwork on those three, and they're to be installed. I'm happy to follow up with you on the exact locations afterwards.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: What's the cost of the AVRs?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: The device itself can be anywhere from, again they're made to the building, but on average they're about 30,000 dollars.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: And that's just for the unit, not the labor that it requires?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Just the unit. Then there's the material cost on top of that and installation and filing costs on top of that, but, overall, like I said, they're specific to the building and it's per machine room, right, so it's one per building. It's not like an AVR to power the entire development. It's essentially this device

gets placed in the machine room, it gets attached to the equipment, and, if there's a voltage reduction and the equipment senses that there's a voltage reduction, it will kick on and provide a steady state of 200 to 205 volts for the machinery to run.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: In terms of, can you tell me which developments are the most impacted by these low voltage issues?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I am happy to come back to you in rank order with them. We do track the data. I just don't have it in front of me.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Yeah, I'd like to know the most impacted and certainly historically which have been the most persistent over the last at least five years.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you. Council Member Osse.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you and good afternoon. As we saw last week with the smog and smoke from the wildfires, it was a detrimental crisis that we saw in the city, most especially when it came

to the health of every New Yorker but most especially our seniors and young people and those with pre-existing conditions as well such as asthma. Many of our NYCHA residents, as you all know, fall into these vulnerable groups and, as climate change continues and wildfires from across the continent continue to persist, I'm sure that we'll see similar events like the one that we saw last week. What is NYCHA's capital plan to upgrade and improve its infrastructure in the midst of climate change impacts, for example, smog, smoke, extreme flooding, and is NYCHA working on these improvements now because we need to start acting fast as some of these events continue in the future of our city.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Thank you for that question. We mentioned some of the initiatives earlier, but I'll dive in a little bit more and maybe point out how, for example, Clean Heat for All, bringing a new, easily installed heat pump to NYCHA would help in the event like the air quality event that we had last week. As a part of Clean Heat for All, we are procuring 30,000 window heat pumps that will replace ACs, that will have filters in them, and, once those are installed, and so that's a

requirement of the program. We are replacing all the windows in addition to putting in the heat pumps in the windows. Once those windows are replaced, they will be more airtight, and the heat pumps will have filters so our advice in an event like that would be to stay at home and run the system and you would be protected from outdoor air quality. Right now, NYCHA is funded for 30,000 of them. There is 70 million dollars set aside, and we continue to advocate to scale this across the portfolio.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: What is the timeline on when those 30,000 heat pumps will be installed across your developments?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I'm proud to say that we got the UL listing on one of the units that we procured (INAUDIBLE) America, and they're being shipped to us as we speak. They will be installed in a line of apartments in Woodside, and the plan has been always to make sure they work. These are units that were designed specifically for NYCHA. We want to make sure that they work for our operations partners who will be installing them. We have to make sure that they work for our residents, and, around this time next year after we've had a

chance to run them for a cooling season and a heating season, we're going to make a decision to move forward on installation of the rest of them.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: And they're solely being installed in Woodside?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: At the moment, Woodside is our first development...

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Okay.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: But we have other developments that we have identified for the rest of the 30,000.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Any in Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I'd have to come back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Is there a public tracker in terms of the progress and in terms of when these will be installed, and is that something that NYCHA could potentially provide publicly?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Yeah, I feel like we've been getting a lot of interest on this. I think that affordable housing in general sees this as a solution that doesn't yet exist for multi-family buildings so we continue to present at

conferences and update our website so we will continue to testify at Council hearings like this and provide information as we progress on the pilot.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you, and you can get me an answer in terms of if there are any being installed in my District...

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF:
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: In particular. Okay, thank you. Those are the questions that I have.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you, Council Member Osse. Council Member De La Rosa.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Yes. Thank you so much. I had a question about ventilation. If anyone's ever stepped foot in a NYCHA building you know that the ventilation tends to be a little poor in some of them. Especially as the weather heats up, it seems to be that the air quality kind of lowers. I'm curious to know if NYCHA has done a comprehensive study of air quality in your buildings, especially in the summertime.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I am not aware of an air quality study, but I do have to say that actually prior to taking on this role that I'm

in now, three years ago NYCHA did secure funding for roof fan replacement program, and I was leading that work out of the Healthy Homes Department so last year we celebrated replacement of over 6,000 roof fans and inspection of over 2,000, and we're very proud of that work. It is improving air quality in the bathrooms. Primarily that's where the mechanical ventilation exists in NYCHA, but that is something that we were able to secure funding for and execute in the last two years.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Yeah. It's an important topic, especially in environmental justice communities like mine. I represent Northern Manhattan. As you know, we have several highways that crisscross into our District and create even more pollution than what we already have.

My other question is around air conditioning. I read in the report that there is a fee for the request for air conditioning. I wasn't aware of that fee so I'm learning something new on the Committee thanks to our Chair, but I'm wondering if there are considerations, obviously all of NYCHA's tenants are income-restricted, a lot of them are low income, so are there considerations given if, for

example, a senior who has health conditions and extreme heat could be something that could be detrimental to their health, how are those considerations made, and then how much money would it take, if you all have done the study, to kind of retrofit the way that cooling is done at NYCHA for the summer months? Is there a cost estimate?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: During the pandemic, I took on this role, and we quickly realized in March 2020 that we had a number of seniors that did not have ACs and all the community centers and parks were closed, and we knew that we had to quickly figure out how to shelter our residents in place. I have to say that it was two months before I went on maternity leave so I clearly remember that time of spending hours and hours on the phone trying to first secure the funding, NYCHA did secure its own emergency funding to purchase those 16,000 ACs, the numbers vary, I think it's actually 13,000 and maybe the additional 3,000 came from the City programs, but we ran in parallel to the Mayor Get Cool program and that was really important to us because we knew that as we were developing our Climate Adaptation Plan, the signs are very clear,

summers are getting hotter, and it's definitely a strategy going forward, and that's why we are developing this heat pump that provides both heating and universal cooling. I feel that NYCHA really took important steps, particularly during the pandemic, to make sure we safeguard our most vulnerable New Yorkers. That distribution happened in two months. It takes years to do something like that. NYCHA mobilized. We worked with our City partners to do those distributions. The fee is a standard fee. It's existed always, maybe not always, since 2008, as long as I've been at NYCHA it's existed for me, so the fee is standard 10 dollars for all residents and 8 dollars for seniors so at the moment of the emergency, when we did the distribution, we knew that we could not facilitate information or charging of that fee and we knew that it could be a barrier and we needed to safeguard our residents. As the pandemic progressed, we had the second year and third year close calls to having to shelter in place so we haven't made those decisions until this year, and you do know our very dire financial situation, and so that is a difficult decision, but it was made recently to institute the charge, primarily because

48,000 of our other senior residents do pay that charge, and so it wouldn't be fair to charge some seniors and not others on top of essentially a gift.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Can you clarify quickly just what the charge is? It's 8 dollars per resident of the household and monthly?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: It's 8 dollars per AC. It's a monthly charge.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Council Member, I may add we do have reasonable accommodations such as the senior that you described so if the senior submitted the proper documentation we can waive the 8-dollar monthly fee.

COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: For the additional ACs.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Next we have Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank you so much, Chair Aviles. I always really appreciate the thoughtfulness of the subject matter at your hearings, and it's good to see the NYCHA team, especially Miss Kenniff. I'm always very impressed by

your work and appreciate the focus on sustainability. I feel like some of the most forward-thinking work that's happening in the City is happening at NYCHA I think in no small part thanks to your leaderships, but I wanted to start by just asking some questions about the air quality incident we had last week, worst air quality certainly in my lifetime here in New York City. We all know that NYCHA already has very poor air quality. Mobile boilers, mold, construction dust, debris, gas stoves, but nothing like last week so could you just give me some quick answers on a few questions. What did NYCHA do to inform residents about the poor air quality event? Did NYCHA monitor air quality in community centers, senior centers? Did NYCHA adjust HVAC to prevent smoke and particulate matter from being circulated internally in those spaces?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you for that. Obviously, we share your concern. The air quality was rough outside. What I'll say is our focus was on following a lot of the DOH guidance, which was pushing our folks to stay inside and in a safe manner. A lot of our staff are NYCHA residents as well. We push them to stay inside. We cancelled

some different inspections. We moved our grounds teams inside to do some additional cleaning and focus on keeping the inside space as safe as possible so our residents would stay inside. We enhanced all the messaging, you look like you have a followup, you want to interrupt me...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Go ahead. As long as you're getting there.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Okay. Most importantly, we did robocalls and fliering. We made contact with our TA Presidents and our Resident Association leaders. In addition to that, we made contact with our most vulnerable residents, positive contact, phone calls, checking in, making sure that they have the support that they needed.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that, but the average age of NYCHA residents is significantly older than the city as a whole. We have a high concentration of people who are asthmatic. These are some of the most vulnerable people during the event that we were experiencing last week. Was there any assessment of the air quality, monitoring of the air quality in the community center, senior center spaces where we know vulnerable NYCHA

residents were gathering and were any additional air purifiers or other resources distributed to help improve the air quality in those spaces and ensure they were safe for vulnerable residents?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Air purification, no, but we followed the guidance just as every other New Yorker and we turned off wherever we could fresh air intakes into those systems to ensure that we were just maintaining the clean air inside, and there was another part of the question that escaped me. I'm sorry.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, just if there was any monitoring of the air quality condition?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Oh, yeah, so we would defer on monitoring of the outdoor air quality to our City agency partners...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But it was the indoor air quality that was a real concern. We all know how dangerous the outdoor air quality was. We know that it was the worst air quality we've ever experienced in our lives here in New York City. The trouble is that many indoor spaces were also very dangerous, and I'm trouble to hear that we weren't

doing monitoring at NYCHA of those spaces where people are encouraged to gather. I think that we need to be much better prepared when this happens again. Clearly, the Administration was caught flatfooted, and the public health guidance that came out of City Hall and Office of Emergency Management and the Health Department was far too limited and far too late, but that's where we look to NYCHA to have its act together and there should have been clean air centers set up for residents to be able to go and safely congregate if the air quality in their apartments was inadequate, and there should have been testing and additional resources such as air purifiers distributed into those spaces to make sure that NYCHA residents had a safe place to go or were safe when they go to their senior center in the first place. I'm disappointed that those things didn't happen, but, look, I realize this was an unprecedented event in some ways. What I hope is that the emergency management team within NYCHA is much better prepared for next time and that we develop the right protocols to deal with the next major air quality event that we know is coming. Unfortunately, the climate realities that we are facing are only

getting worse and so I hope that we will be developing a comprehensive plan for better managing exactly these kinds of situations the next time they occur because I'm disappointed by what was done, how this was handled last week.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you, Council Member. We appreciate that and we will definitely take that back.

I do want to say that our residents do have multiple avenues to report indoor air quality, whether through our compliance department, our Environmental Health and Safety departments, and any complaint regardless of the fact that there was an outdoor air quality issue would be investigated and followed up on.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But, in all fairness, Mr. Grossman, last week, lots of people's homes, NYCHA residents and non-NYCHA residents, weren't able to keep the problematic air out from their homes, and it was very difficult to breath and people were getting headaches and dizzy and experiencing all kinds of nausea within their homes, and the state of NYCHA housing being what it is, I wouldn't be surprised, I would expect, especially

with the existing conditions being so problematic, that things were even worse in our NYCHA developments, and so ensuring that there are safe, reliable places where people can go where the air quality is being monitored and where we're doing everything we can to improve the air quality in those communal spaces so that they are clean air centers, just like we have a cooling center on a really hot day or a heating center on a day where the heat goes out. It's important that we're prepared and organized. I don't think we were last week, and this is not a failure of NYCHA conversation, this is a failure of the City as a whole, the entire Adams' Administration failed here, but we're prioritizing our most vulnerable, and that is disproportionately the residents of NYCHA, and so we just want to see a much more comprehensive approach, much better preparedness for the next time this occurs.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah.

Thank you, sir. I concur, and we will continue to work with our City partners to ensure the safety of our residents moving forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I really appreciate it. I'm not trying to be a jerk. I just

think that we need to do better and we need to be more prepared.

I have other questions, but I went way over on time so I will shut up and, if there's more time later, I will try again.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you, Council Member Restler. Council Member Sanchez.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and I deeply appreciate you giving us the space to ask questions as you are so thank you so much for this hearing.

My question is around cooling centers across the City of New York, and just staring within my own neighborhood, we had two community centers, really important neighborhood assets at Fort Independence and at Bailey Houses, both have been closed for a very long time. Fort Independence more recently due to leaks and flooding, and Bailey Houses is just covered in scaffolding, and it's dark and sad and all of those things. These buildings are going through the PACT process, but it's still begs the broader question of, because those buildings are in very residential areas, they don't have access to a lot of other community facilities or things like

that, what is NYCHA's collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management look like to ensure that there are cooling centers available to all NYCHA residents, in particular, of course, if you have updates on these centers and their timelines to repair, will always appreciate that so I can bring it back. Just to follow up on the OEM question, has NYCHA examined OEM's list, Office of Emergency Management's list, of cooling centers to ensure that there is access?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you, Council Member. I'll begin with our work with New York City Emergency Management and then I'll pass it to Ukah and we can speak about Fort Independence as well.

It's an ongoing conversation. NYCHA's Emergency Management Services Department, or EMSD Preparedness Unit, does sit on the Planning and Preparedness and Steering Committees with New York City Emergency Management. We're an active participant. That being said, obviously NYCHA doesn't manage that program, and actually the cooling centers are typically managed by our agency partners such as New York City Aging, DYCD, and even in some cases

DOE. We obviously will work to make the space available, and we will continue to work with New York City Emergency Management if there is a gap in their coverage to help with the provision of space and ensure that it is properly cooled, but, again, we're essentially just the facility owner, and we'll work with our partners and NYCEM to get to that point. Go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: The followup is do you proactively analyze whether your residents, NYCHA residents, have access to these cooling centers?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: We do re-share the messages from NYCEM to our residents, whether to call 3-1-1, go online to secure the facility, and we will have a number for residents to call to ensure they have access to the cooling center. We can go and take another look at the proposed sites this year. I think they're proposing about 140 on NYCHA grounds with 131 of them being ADA compliant.

I want to follow up on your question with Fort Independence. Unfortunately, at this moment, we don't have the funding to repair, as you mentioned

there are excessive leaks and they will have to replace the roof completely. I think we're waiting for the conversions so they can address that particular center.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Just to be extra clear, you do not proactively assess access to cooling centers? You just share out information about existing cooling centers to your residents?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: We sit on the Steering Committee so we work in conjunction with NYCEM, DYCD partners, and NYC Aging to ensure there is access for NYCHA residents across the City.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Because it's an active conversation, if an issue or a lack of service is flagged to us, we can then bring that to New York City Emergency Management, and they may not only support the NYCHA residents but the larger community so it is active, like if we understand that there's a place that is falling short, we will bring that to their attention and we will work with them to provide the resources for that cooling center if need be.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Madam Chair, just a different question regarding the heat

1 pump expansion program. You mentioned in your
2 testimony 70 million dollars for 30,000 new heat
3 pumps. One major concern as we try to electrify more
4 of the City is just the capacity of existing
5 buildings to support these higher electrical loads so
6 what are you finding in sort of the assessment stage
7 on the building readiness for heat pumps.
8

9 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: It's an
10 important concern, and that was one of the
11 requirements of the specifications to make sure that
12 we design a heat pump that could stay within the
13 existing load of the building so that we don't have
14 to upgrade the electrical infrastructure. We do think
15 that if we start going down that route, these
16 retrofits will become very, very expensive. I do have
17 to say that the heat pumps are actually a lot more
18 efficient than ACs in the summer so there will be
19 some shifting of the load. There will be more
20 probably in the winter and less in the summer, but
21 we'll have to get there, and I think that our
22 understanding that there is capacity in the grid and
23 us being sort of early adopters kind of works in our
24 favor in that regard, but we're also thinking about
25 battery storage, just like we spoke about Borinquen

Plaza earlier is the battery and solar installation and load management in general, and so I think that as we scale this work we'll have to continue to look at the other tools in our toolbox to address both grid reliability and electric capacity of the buildings.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much. I know of some terrible fires that have occurred because of this like a mismatch between the load capacity and putting more electric consumption on so I'm glad to hear the precautions.

Let's just please make sure that all of our residents have access to cooling centers. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you, Council Member. Deputy Speaker Ayala.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you and good afternoon. I have a number of questions so I'll try to go through them quickly.

Can you tell us how much revenue is generated each year from the air conditioning fees and how much NYCHA thinks that it will get from recently requested AC unit fees coming from the free

2 ACs that were gifted to residents during the
3 beginning of the pandemic?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank
5 you, Deputy Speaker. We're happy to follow up with
6 you on the exact amount. We don't have that readily
7 available in regards to how much we receive from the
8 AC fee.

9 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay, when you send
10 me the information, I would like to know how much
11 we're receiving now and how much you think will be
12 added to that revenue.

13 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: From
14 the revenue from the Get Cool Program?

15 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Yes.

16 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Okay.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Did NYCHA secure a
18 signed agreement that made it clear to residents that
19 were accepting the free air conditioners that at some
20 point the resident would be responsible for paying a
21 monthly fee?

22 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Could
23 you repeat that? I'm sorry.

24 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Did NYCHA secure an
25 agreement that was signed by the residents that

states that at some point they would be responsible for paying a fee for the free AC?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Because this program happened during an emergency and our main priority was the distribution and installation, I don't believe that contract was executed or developed.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: So residents were not informed that they would have to pay a fee at some point?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Not to my knowledge.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: It doesn't seem fair that they would be charged for something that was free when there was no communication in advance letting them know that at some point they would have to pay. I mean, I used to work in a senior center, and I loved that work, and I will tell you that in the beginning seniors would come to me and they would be screaming and hollering and I'm like what happened. They raised my cable bill. Okay, by how much? By 5 dollars, and I'm like it's only 5 dollars. To me, it was only 5 dollars, right, but when you factor in, like I represent a constituency whose

gross monthly income is maybe 840 dollars a month and they have to pay for rent and they have to pay for food and they have to pay for medication then every little bit becomes a struggle, so I don't think that it's fair for NYCHA to come at this stage of the game, after a few years have passed, and say oh yeah, by the way, we now want you to pay this fee. I think that there should be consideration to waiving it for those residents that were part of that program.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I appreciate your thoughts and advocacy. It was a very difficult decision. I think that when I advocated for the funding for the emergency funding for this program, it was viewed as an emergency, again, our senior residents could not go to cooling centers, could not go to parks, could not cool off in any other way, we saw that that program as an extreme emergency to make sure that we keep our residents sheltering in place, and so it continues to be viewed as an emergency measure so it is somewhat unfair to the other residents that have had ACs and have been paying a fee so the messaging is very difficult around this to make sure that it's fair to everybody, and so it was a difficult decision to resume the

charge. We did eliminate the barrier to entry. Many of these residents could not afford to purchase an AC so they did get this free AC, but it was a difficult decision to resume the charge.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Yeah, but I mean I think that those are the things that we think about before taking action, and I would argue that even during times when we can't use a cooling center, those NYCHA apartments are heat boxes in the summer, so I can see the value in having the AC. I just feel like it was misleading to give them the AC and then wait a couple of years and now all of a sudden decide, like there's been no communication leading up to the abrupt request or demand for payment, and that's the part of it that I'm not comfortable with.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, absolutely, and understand. Like I said, the fee was obviously waived during the program's initiative, which was an emergency response. Just to be clear, as you know, it's not revenue. This is just a fee towards the electric bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: But the money goes somewhere. Where does it go?

2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: The
3 electric bill.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay, so I would
5 still love to know...

6 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: A
7 little further clarification, yeah, of course, I'm
8 not shirking on getting you the number.

9 What I would say is that most of our
10 buildings are not sub-metered, right, so the AC
11 itself is not sub-metered so we don't (INAUDIBLE)
12 it's just an additional fee, and that's the
13 background of it and it's been in existence since
14 2008.

15 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I understand that,
16 and, listen, I get it. If there's a fee, there's a
17 fee. If I'm entering into some sort of an agreement
18 and I am entering into that agreement willingly and
19 with full understanding of what my commitment is, I'm
20 okay with that. I get it, the intent was great. You
21 intended to do something good, but so much time has
22 elapsed and the fact that they didn't know so I feel
23 for you, but I still argue that that fee should be
24 waived.

Could you tell us how long NYCHA has been operating, on a separate note, a parking lot enforcement unit? I had no idea that this was even a thing.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: You mean subcontracting out our parking lots?

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: No. I mean that there are residents that are getting their cars booted on NYCHA, and the information on the boot says that they have to call NYCHA, actually the website is nycha.mybootinfo.com, in order to pay the fee and get out so I had no idea that NYCHA was running this type of operation. I don't think the residents are aware that NYCHA is running this operation. I doubt that the private company is going to be using NYCHA's information on their documentation so I'm curious to know when did this begin and how much revenue is generated from that?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: We do have a contractor, LAZ, we contracted out with them to manage parking lots, and if there are any cars that are booted on the grounds, they are booting it. If a resident's car was booted illegally or with no just cause, we do have a point person in our Revenue

2 Department and they will work with LAZ to waive the
3 fee or refund the resident.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Does that money
5 come to NYCHA?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: We pay
7 LAZ to manage the parking lot so, yes, we give them a
8 fee, but the revenue comes to NYCHA. We can get back
9 to you on how much is collected.

10 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: And how long this
11 has been in operation and also what type of signs and
12 announcements have been made to residents to let them
13 know that this is a thing because not everybody is
14 parking like in a parking lot. I found out about this
15 through somebody that was parked at Lillian Wald just
16 across the street from PS188, and they were able to
17 get the boot off and they didn't have to pay because
18 it was not a legal boot situation, but I was
19 completely caught off guard because I had no idea
20 what they were talking about.

21 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: This
22 has been in effect for a few years. Residents will
23 have to apply for a parking permit. They are issued
24 one by LAZ, and they have to display the parking
25 permit on the windshield, and if they're...

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: But usually the
3 NYPD comes in and gives you the ticket and usually
4 the NYPD so are we like double-dipping here? Is the
5 person getting a ticket from NYCHA and from the NYPD?
6 How is that happening?

7 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: We're
8 happy to like give you a followup and the rundown of
9 this program. Like we said, we've been doing it for a
10 couple of years, but we can tell you where it is
11 existence and we're happy to follow up.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. I expect that
13 you guys are raising a nice little chunk of change
14 here because I'll tell you that the rates that they
15 charge even for parking are incredibly high.

16 Just bear with me one minute, Madam
17 Chair. In 2009, New York State released 450 million
18 dollars that were earmarked for boiler and elevator
19 upgrades. Could you tell us what the status of the
20 boiler and elevator upgrade plan is to date and how
21 many of the 35 developments that were designated
22 funding have been completed?

23 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Thank you.
24 I do have numbers on the elevators. I don't have
25 numbers on the boilers.

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

70

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay.

3 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Through
4 NYCHA's Capital Plan, 275 elevators are now scheduled
5 to be replaced by the end of 2024. Construction phase
6 activities have started on 242 elevators at 19
7 developments, and 57 elevators are currently in
8 design or procurement.

9 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Are they
10 prioritized in a specific order?

11 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: We can get
12 back to you on that.

13 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. I'm really
14 concerned...

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Could you repeat that
16 one more time? I'm sorry.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I'm concerned about
18 all of them.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Could you repeat
20 those numbers one more time? Thank you.

21 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Yeah.
22 Again, so through our Capital Plan, 275 elevators are
23 now scheduled to be replaced by the end of 2024.
24 Construction phase activities have started for 242
25 elevators at 19 developments with 14 completed as of

the end of May 2023. 57 elevators are currently in design or procurement.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: 14 were completed?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Correct.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Since 2019?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Correct.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Why?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: My understanding, again this is a separate team that leads this work, my understanding is that the administrative process of getting the capital funding committed is lengthy. There were delays in getting parts through the pandemic, etc., but the easiest part of the capital project is the actual construction so now that we're close to that phase I do believe it's going to be move quickly.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. I just have two more questions regarding the budget for appliances. One of the things that I hear consistently across the board from my NYCHA residents is the need for new refrigerators and stoves and the fact that NYCHA is, what they call, frankensteining the stoves and the refrigerators so they're repurposing old refrigerators and stoves in the

Basement and then exchanging those with nonfunctioning refrigerators and stoves for residents and then informing them that they're doing this because there is no money for refrigerators and stoves at those developments, and so I am assuming that there is some sort of budget for appliances annually, and so I would love to know what is that budget on an annual basis, and how does that break down by development?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I am happy to follow up with you on that exact budget for appliances. We will get back to you.

Also, to answer your previous question, our Capital team is reporting that 41 boilers are expected to be turned over by the end of this quarter.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. The last question was really regarding the wi-fi. Is the Big Apple Connect still the contracting agent there?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Yes, for the most part, unless there are smaller companies that are providing wi-fi to specific developments.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay. All right. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Thank you so much. Can we go back to tenant outreach. Can you talk to us a little bit more specifically about the plans that are in place for emergencies, like are there e-mails, phone calls, and door-knocking, when do those things get triggered, any other systems in place outside of like Tenant Association outreach?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: I apologize. I have to correct the record. It was 41 elevators expected to be turned over by the end of this quarter, not 41 boilers.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Appreciate that.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: And now that we cleared that up.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Sure. In terms of outreach for emergencies, we will start with, for example the air quality issue that occurred a few days ago, we definitely started by fliering the developments, issuing robocalls to residents, posting through social media an advisory on what to do in this type of emergency, encouraging residents to stay indoors, to turn off the AC dampers, again it's safer to stay indoors and not turn on your AC if you don't have dampers. We also communicated to our Resident

Associations' leaders via e-mail and also calls. In addition to that, our team secured a list of the residents who declare or informed us they had respiratory issues and made individual phone calls, we called about 1,100 residents and continue to make those phone calls just to follow up so there are multiple streams of communication to residents, and we generally follow the same protocol for all emergencies.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: In terms of, when is the actual door-knocking operation triggered?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: If, for example, we have an elevator outage and we know the elevators will be out for several hours, definitely the property management team will secure a list of all residents who reported that they have a mobility issue or other disabilities and we will door-knock for those residents immediately. Other than that, we will definitely send out robocalls and post fliers in the buildings and, of course, inform the Resident Association leader of any emergencies.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Does that include I guess residents who need medical equipment, life-saving...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH:

Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Those too?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Yes, they're all included.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Mobility and medical issues...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Will trigger actual door-knocking.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: On just a routine emergency, if there is a run of the mill power outage, specifically, or there's an issue affecting power in that building, outreach will be made through the Emergency Management Services Department to residents on life-sustaining equipment so if we see any low voltage, power loss, anything of that nature, we do make a positive contact. To Ukah's point, if we do need to knock on that person's door, we will make positive contact with that person on life-sustaining equipment to ensure that they are okay, make sure that they do not need anything.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Out of 560,000 authorized residents, NYCHA has 1,100 residents that

are registered for I guess you were saying for air quality in particular these registered folks with medical equipment?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: That list of 1,100 encompasses residents who have a case with our Family Partnership Department in addition to residents or seniors who are living in our Elderly Safe at Home Program development so it's a combination of multiple residents. I wouldn't say that all 1,100 had declared a respiratory issue.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: How many seniors does NYCHA have in its developments?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Over 48,000.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Over 48,000. How many mobility-impaired people...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: I don't have that number off the top, but we can get back to you with that, Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Sure. I guess the third tier is the medically fragile or needing that kind of equipment. Is 1,100 what we have registered?

2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: No. I
3 don't have that exact number. As I said, the 1,100
4 calls encompass other groups.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Right. That was made.
6 Sorry.

7 Do we know how many households have
8 appliance agreements for air conditioning?

9 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: I think
10 we have the exact number. It's 104?

11 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I do have
12 some numbers, but they're not including the 11,000
13 that are unregistered that came through the...

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: The 13,000, 11,000,
15 15,000?

16 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: There are
17 1,400 that have registered so we are getting closer
18 to the 13,000, but we do have 48,209 on record,
19 seniors that have registered their AC.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: That is different
21 from the 48,000 seniors?

22 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: It's
23 approximate, right. I think we have to correct that.
24 I think it's closer to 65,000. I did study those
25 numbers during the pandemic so (INAUDIBLE)

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

78

2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: We'll
3 run through the numbers overall again just to make
4 sure it's clear.

5 We have 104,170 households with a
6 registered AC. We have 49,285 households, which is 32
7 percent, that do not have a registered AC.

8 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: And in
9 both numbers, that 11,000 is either added or missing.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: There
11 are 13,000 participants... Go ahead.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Hold on. 49 thousand...

13 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: 285.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: 285.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN:
16 Residents with no air conditioning agreement for
17 their apartment.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: No agreement but they
19 have an AC?

20 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN:
21 According to us, they do not have an AC. According to
22 their tenancy record, they do not have an AC.

23 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: We don't
24 know.

25

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Okay, so why are they singled out? What's the 49,000?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: They don't have a registered AC. They're not in our system.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, we have no record of AC in their apartment. That's all it is. We're not singling them out for any reason...

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Right, right. It's a relatively random number in the context.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: It's just the number that, according to our tenancy rolls, 104,170 households have them, 49,285 do not have them.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: And the hundreds of thousands in balance we have no idea.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: That's households, apartments, but, yeah, and what other numbers do you want to just get to correct the record or ensure that we have the proper record and we're on the same sheet of music?

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: I think we need to (INAUDIBLE) Excel spreadsheet.

2 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: We'll
3 follow up with a spreadsheet.

4 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: We can
5 follow up with a spreadsheet. Happy to.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: I was clearly having
7 some troubles with numbers on the fly. I just see
8 kind of gaps that are relatively inexplicable.

9 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Can I
10 say one number that I do want to clarify is that 73
11 percent of our identified households with a senior as
12 either the head of household or as a member of the
13 household do have air conditioning.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: And that 73 percent
15 would include the 13,000 that were done...

16 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah,
17 it would include the...

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: During the pandemic.

19 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: 12,000
20 and change that were through the Get Cool program.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Okay. I think while I
22 understand your struggles with the equity issue in
23 terms of other seniors and the seniors who received
24 air conditioning through the pandemic and when we do
25 the math, right, it's 1.2 million dollars a year to

pay for those ACs, it is a quite insignificant amount, and I think when we think about the costs involved and potentially retrieving those ACs, scheduling for their retrieval for folks who can no longer pay for them and the hardships that folks have to endure, given that NYCHA has been the persistent worst landlord in New York City for years on end, I would never call these ACs a gift. I understand the difficulty of the decision and obviously the financial situation that NYCHA is in, which is why I ad nauseum talk about the defunding of NYCHA at all levels of government. Nevertheless, it seems a very poor decision to recoup dollars in this given climate change and given these are our most vulnerable seniors. I think we need to find better ways to do this, and I would implore this Administration a million dollars in a budget of 106 billion is, I don't even have the words for it, so I'm just making a statement, and I think we'll move on to maybe some other questions.

Excuse me for one quick second. This is what happens when you let your Colleagues go first. You don't know where you left off.

In terms of the work that has been done around elevator replacements and updates to date, you noted 41 will be done by the end of this quarter, and then how many will be done in the following quarter? Do you have those breakdowns by quarter over the next couple of years and can you provide the Council where those elevators are being replaced?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN:

Absolutely, and we will gladly follow up.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. How does NYCHA determine the priority category of those elevators? Which entity gets put in the queue or actually which development gets put in the priority queue?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: We typically work with our operations partners and look at the useful life of the elevators to prioritize.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. I'd like to recognize Council Member Salamanca and feel free to jump in, Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon.

My apologies. I just actually came from a groundbreaking with the Parks Department and NYCHA at the Watson Houses where I believe one of the Mayor's

initiatives where he allocated 20 million dollars to repair NYCHA playgrounds, and my comments there was that's a really out-of-the-box thinking, and I think it prepared me for this hearing today because we are talking about NYCHA's preparedness, right, for the summer. Question, how many playgrounds does NYCHA have in the City of New York? Do we have that information?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Not with us. We're happy to follow up.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. Look, I'm going to get straight to it. That playground at the Watson Houses, I've done events there with the tenant president there, I've done back to school events in that playground, and I'm just really happy to see that it's getting renewed. I did a back to school even there, and I was with my son who was six years old at the time, and he wanted to slide down the slide and get on the monkey bars, and when I looked at the slide I saw that there were very sharp edges, there was mold, there was rust, and I did not allow him to utilize the slide there, and I was honest. I said Aiden, if you slide there and you get cut I'm going to have to take you to the doctor and get a

tetanus shot, right, but I think that what I saw there in Watson Houses is what I've seen in almost all of my NYCHA developments when it comes to having playgrounds. Who manages the NYCHA playgrounds?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: There is a partnership. We manage certain playgrounds on our property, and we obviously share some with Parks.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Some of your playgrounds such as in Melrose Houses, I know that the Parks Department, they manage their playgrounds, but I also have some NYCHA developments such as Saint Mary's Houses who the NYCHA developments manage their playgrounds. Those playgrounds that are managed by NYCHA, who is responsible for cleaning and maintaining them?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: NYCHA Property Management.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, all right. My concern is we have an issue with the property managers actually managing their own properties and cleaning their own properties, and so many times what I see is that these playgrounds and these NYCHA developments are not maintained properly, whether there is grass, whether there is garbage, or

the equipment is just not working properly. Would NYCHA be receptive to the idea of giving up all of their playgrounds and handing them over to the Parks Department?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: We're happy to talk with you about that further, of course, after this. That being said, I do want to comment on some of the initiatives that we work on over the summer. I had said this earlier and just want you to be aware. In the summer, we actually add a lot of seasonal employees obviously throughout the Authority. However, one of the things that we do focus on is really focus on cleaning our grounds and ensuring a nice waste-free environment for our residents. This also leads to a lot of our preventative measures in our waste management and pest management pillar areas.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: That's great, but I want to talk about playgrounds.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. I want to know, because this Watson playground was in complete disarray, and I'm seeing the change and I'm seeing how by handing over the responsibility of that

playground over to the Parks Department, number one, new construction of course, the Mayor did fund that, and, number two, now we're going to have individuals focused on those playgrounds so, again, my question is will NYCHA be receptive to handing over their playgrounds to the Parks Department, similar to a RAD program?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah. I mean absolutely, like I said, we're happy to have this conversation with you. I think with the RAD program, that is something that we work with all of our City partner agencies on including the Mayor's Office of Rodent Mitigation, Department of Health, and, of course, Parks Department, and where they're co-located we do coordinate our responses to ensure that we're kind of getting the most bang for our buck. We're not double-hitting a place and missing another location because we're both concentrating on the one area.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. Thank you. Finally, my last question, I promise. I also have some senior centers that are located inside NYCHA developments, and many of these senior centers, in the very warm months they serve as cooling

centers. Has NYCHA gone and ensured that these senior centers that are in your facilities that their HVAC systems are clean and operating?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Sure. I can take that, Council Member. We work closely with our partners at NYC Aging, and they converted actually all their HVAC system as of yesterday, they reported to us. There may be one or two where they have to do further maintenance, but they were all converted.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Where are those one and two located?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: I can get back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: You don't know?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: I don't. One second. I don't know where they are, but I can get back to you on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right.
Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you, Council Member.

I'd just like to get back to specifically two developments where we've seen a number of

unplanned outages. Last year between June 1st and August 31st, there were several days of 90-degree weather, particularly East River Houses and Pink Houses where there were seven unplanned outages on those days. What work has been done to prepare those developments in particular in the event of heat emergency this summer?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BUSGITH: Council Member Salamanca, I would like to correct the record. I do know. The one site is the Arturo Schomburg Senior Center is one, and they said they have a plan to restore and work on it tomorrow.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: East River and Pink Houses.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: East River and Pink Houses. I just want to clarify your question. Are we talking about community centers or elevators or just general maintenance for those...

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Elevator outages in the development.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: As I said, I believe it was Council Member Gutierrez asked this earlier, we look at a location where we have a significant number of unplanned elevator outages.

Last year, we had 79 at East River, that's on the high side, and, obviously, Pink Houses as well, we had 32. We look at those as how do we provide the right resources to that location so whether it's staging a mobile generator, whether it's enhancing our preventative maintenance programs. We do utilize those functions to ensure that we're ready for the summer.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: So what do we do for Pink Houses? What's in place for Pink Houses for the next couple of months so that we don't have 32?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Can I answer with East River first?

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Sure.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: We have spoken a little bit about this previously. East River is one of the developments where there is backup generation installed, and there are single-car, no-service condition elevators there. That is one of the locations where they have both. East River, having installed generators, hopefully that leads to us not having as many issues this summer.

As far as Pink Houses, like I said, we increased the number of maintenance teams and work

through any preventative maintenance issues and lingering issues that may be existing there, and, like I said, we will make sure we have a generator available in the vicinity if we need to generate the elevator to bring back at least one car so we're maintaining service there. Of course, it's really continuing to work with Con Ed and our utility partners to ensure the provision of service and maintaining that active line of communication.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: When you say you work with Con Ed for the provision, my understanding is Con Ed manages, they're just the distribution at the point of the campus. All the transmission lines and everything belong to NYPA infrastructure? I'm probably not using the right terms, but our understanding was there's also a need for an upgrade around transmission within the NYCHA campuses which also contributes to some of the voltage issues and particularly how expansive some of the campuses that the electricity runs through, it may not hit the right amount that it needs by the time it gets to the buildings, and that is also a contributing factor.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, absolutely. The provision of power is not just on the

utility, and we do have some role there. For example, if we know we have an issue or a consistent issue, we will make a repair to that electrical distribution system. We have been doing our best to try to become more predictive using our data so where we see consistent rolling outages, again working with our partner to confirm it may or may not be what is coming in from the utility, and then, if they do their investigation and find that it is something on NYCHA's distribution, we're happy to make that repair and coordinate that repair with them because it will most likely involve a planned outage, taking the utility service offline momentarily to make that repair.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Got it. Thank you. In terms of some of the sustainability initiatives, can you tell us how many megawatts of solar paneling are currently installed on NYCHA buildings?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Sure. Thank you for that question, Chair. We are extremely proud of our solar program. Between the two portfolios, the PACT and the public housing portfolio, we're over six megawatts installed. We also have an additional three that have lease

agreements signed so approaching 10 there, and then around Earth week, we released another solicitation offering up another 10 megawatts of solar potential. Our goal is 30 megawatts across our portfolio so there are plans or built-out infrastructure for 2/3 of our goal.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: That's very exciting. Of the six that are both PACT and regular Section 9, what's the division there?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: We procure our own, and the way that we've structured the program is we lease our rooftops to solar developers who pay revenue directly back to those developments. We have some other provisions in the contract where we require training and hiring of NYCHA residents as well as ask that a certain portion of subscriptions of the community-shared solar are low- and moderate-income residents that are not only NYCHA residents but outside. On the PACT side, it's a mix of things. I think some of the PACT partners own their systems. Some of them are community-shared solar. They are separate programs.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Interesting. In terms of the 30 megawatts that are scheduled to come online, wait, that's the goal?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Yeah, the goal of 30 is by 2026. That's the timing in our sustainability agenda.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. You mentioned three megawatts are lease agreements, I guess, in the pipeline?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Have the tenants in the buildings where panels have been installed, have they experienced lower electricity prices or how does that get managed given that they're...

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Yeah, NYCHA residents do not pay electricity bills for the majority of the portfolio. They're master metered. We've looked at all the different models available to us, if we could be behind the meter, if we can own the panels. We arrived at the community-shared solar architecture of the program because we saw it to be the most beneficial in terms of revenue and the sustainability goals of it being able to make sure we

can develop the green workforce so that is the model, and the revenue, as I said before, goes directly back to the developments where the solar panels are hosted.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. What has been the results so far of the retrofit pilot at Ravenswood?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I think I've spoken about it in the past. We bid that pilot in partnership with NYSERDA. We got some really high bids. We had to go back and rethink how we're procuring it and maybe make some things that we really wanted optional. We did re-bid it. We're waiting for bids. I'd have to get back to you soon. The numbers are not coming into my mind. I just reviewed them, but they're not, so we have re-bid it, and we'll be sharing the results of those bids as soon as we're able to make them public.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Thank you. Let's talk about some trees. Can you tell us a little bit more about the initiatives or lessons learned that have come out of the NYCHA Urban Forestry Plan?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I brought a copy, and there's just a few of them and I did want

to share. It is something that we refer to all the time as we advocate and negotiate for the funding for this particular program. As you probably know, NYCHA is the second largest owner of open space behind Parks Department. We have over 1,000 acres of open space. We have a lot of mature, beautiful trees on our campuses. A lot of times our campuses are in neighborhoods where there isn't a lot of tree canopy, and so our urban forest is vital resource not only for NYCHA residents but for others in many neighborhoods, and so I think the early investments in the urban forests have paid off. These trees do exist, and they do need care, and sort of a similar story, in NYCHA's world, there is a lot of deferred care and trees are in that bucket, and so we first really wanted to understand to the extent that we can the types of trees, we've partnered with Green City Forests during the pandemic to do some surveying in the Parks Department and develop this plan, but we also have been using the plan to work with Parks Department to advocate jointly for more proactive tree care. The tree care that happens now is mostly reactive. There was recently an opportunity. As you know, there is quite a bit of funding coming through

IRA. In this case, it's flowing through USDA. Because we've been in discussions and coordination with the Parks Department, we were able to quickly come together and submit an application with NYCHA as the lead but also bring in Green City Forests and Trees New York for a proposal that would be comprehensive across our portfolio that would provide proactive tree care, plants over 6,000 trees, and partner with the Green City Forests and Trees New York and Parks Department to provide training opportunities to NYCHA residents to become foresters.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: We're very excited by that possibility. Does NYCHA have on staff dedicated arborists and foresters?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: Not at the moment, and that's part of this proposal that we would secure permanent staff that would have institutional knowledge and help us take care of this vital resources.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Got it. To date, for tree care, how does NYCHA manage that?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: It's typically done through operations contracts, and they're usually reactive. When there's an issue, it's

reported, and, if there is a dead tree or a branch that needs to be taken down, it is typically a reactive model.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: So no active management model of checking in on the trees and just doing management of them?

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT KENNIFF: I think beyond the 2020 effort with Green City Forests, there hasn't been in quite a long time proactive care.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Got it. Very important piece of work given climate change, given how important we know trees are so we hope there will be an affirmative response around that funding and that we can really dig in and, of course, representing Red Hook where we lost so many trees and it is the one thing people will talk about pretty consistently. We need as many as we can get, especially given the air quality persistent issues.

I think with that, I'd just like to thank you all, and I think what we hear is the tension between reactive and proactive obviously in the context of a difficult financial climate, I think some challenging management issues, both from the ground all the way throughout the agencies and what

gets prioritized so we look forward to certainly receiving the responses to many of the questions, data-oriented, that we asked today. We know there have been many advancements in sustainability and certainly improvements in addressing outages and a lot of work yet to be done. I was heartened to hear much improved numbers around the elevators. It was a frightening proposition several months ago so I hope we get that back on track and really kind of speed things up as quickly as possible and just underscore the critical nature of appropriate outreach to tenants because we quite often experience tenants who don't know what is happening, and the anxiety that that provokes in people is quite profound and damaging in the long run so I would continue to encourage as much proactive communication and holistic because fliers is not outreach. It's just a flier that everyone ignores. Thank you with that, and, any other questions that have come up, we will follow up with NYCHA team in the future so thank you so much.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Thank you so much, and I just want to add one point of information that I missed from your first question

that I wanted to add. In the year 2021, we had 40,941 elevator outages, and it took us 12.04 hours to restore those elevators. Year-to-date, we have 13,444, and we are restoring service in 7.44 hours. I just wanted to note that turnaround.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: You just reminded me of a question I did not ask...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Almost made it.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: About the preventative, we almost made it. Thank you for reminding me.

Can you tell me about the team that manages the preventative maintenance program and also just I think the team overall that manages outages and elevator repairs?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: The Elevator Services Repair Department, it's just over 500 head count, I can get you the exact numbers there in a followup, but it's all the same folks. We take folks into the department from all walks. We put them through our very rigorous training program in Long Island City. We get them licensed by mechanics by the Department of Buildings, and then, before they can

even touch a real elevator, they have gone through our full training facility and met the requirements set forth by DOB. Like I said, it's the same group of people who are working on the preventative maintenance program who are responding to outages. Something that we expanded upon was providing a 24/7 coverage, and I think that that has led to a significant decrease in our outage time just simply by having coverage overnight. Something may have sat for longer. We may have had to call somebody in, but having teams readily available to respond to those is significant. Now that we're at a fuller level of staffing with elevator mechanics, we're also able to focus on some of these projects so having additional elevator mechanics just for having additional elevator mechanics but also as more elevators go into construction for replacement those elevator cars are covered by the contractor which allows us to use our elevator mechanics to...

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Frees them up.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: To focus on preventative maintenance, and some projects that we've mentioned here, preventative maintenance working on installation of the AVRs and working with

our electrical teams to do that. With that being said, I would love to invite you to the training center at Long Island City. We would love to have you up there. I think it would give you a really good insight into the program that our elevator mechanics and helpers go through.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Would you say that the 500, does that meet the need of the agency to be able to kind of address the expanse at this point?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yes. We're responding to outages, like I said, at a fast clip. We're well below our mandated time, both City HUD agreement, and we're really meeting a lot of our metrics with that current group.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great, so you feel like it's sufficiently staffed to be able to address the issues?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Thank you for that. Are there any vacant positions in this unit that you...

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: Yeah, I'm happy to come back to you with our current

2 vacancies. It's a handful of elevator mechanics, 10
3 or so, absolutely.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Got it. Okay. Thank
5 you.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GROSSMAN: No
7 problem.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Thank you so much.
9 With that, we conclude this hearing.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL MEALEY: There may be
11 some public testimony.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Oh, there's public
13 testimony. I am so sorry. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL MEALEY: We'll now move
15 to public testimony. I will read the names of the
16 folks who have submitted appearance cards in person.
17 If you can come up to the dais when your name is
18 called.

19 If anyone is on the Zoom and you would
20 like to testify, you can use the raise hand function.
21 The Zoom participants will testify after the in-
22 person hearing.

23 If I could call up to the table Sheila
24 Duke and Alex Malescio.

If you could identify yourself and your organization and then you can start your testimony.

ALEX MALESCIO: Yes, Alex Malecsio, Urban Upbound. Good afternoon, Chair. My name is Alex Malecsio, and I am the Senior Director of Government Relations at Urban Upbound, a non-profit organization that was founded to break cycles of poverty in Western Queens public housing neighborhoods. Today, we provide underserved youth and adults in every borough with the tools and resources needed to achieve economic prosperity and self-sufficiency through seven comprehensive integrated programs, workforce development, college access and youth development, financial fitness and affordable housing access, tax prep and income support services, worker cooperative and small business support, mental health counseling, and financial inclusion through the Urban Upbound Federal Credit Union.

I am speaking today to share two of Urban Upbound's most pressing recommendations for how NYCHA can contribute to a safe summer for its hundreds of thousands of residents.

Firstly, economic disenfranchisement is a major root cause of violence in public housing

communities. At Urban Upbound, we consistently hear from our clients that they would like access to the career opportunities created by NYCHA, either through direct employment or through contracted maintenance and construction work. Many of our clients feel that by doing so they can not only earn a paycheck but also give back to the community and others like it. NYCHA has shown an initial willingness to work with us to place public housing residents into these jobs, but the agency must do more to remove the barriers that prevent many NYCHA residents from accessing these jobs, specifically NYCHA should commit to holding quarterly or biannual forecasting meetings with workforce development focused non-profits that serve the residents. By sharing upcoming maintenance projects, work timelines, and connections to contractors and relevant unions, local workforce development non-profits can help NYCHA residents get the prep and certifications they need to access these jobs. Advanced notice is key here. Far too often, NYCHA residents only hear about NYCHA's employment opportunities shortly before hiring starts, leaving them little time for preparation.

Urban Upbound's second recommendation today is that NYCHA find creative ways to increase funding to its resident associations. Resident associations across the city plan essential events for their residents such as holiday parties, turkey giveaways, family days, and basketball tournaments. These events, especially during the summer, are key for providing public housing communities with fun and safe space for people to come together. Unfortunately, with the limited budget, resident associations can only host a handful of events per year, yet alone organize any regular programming. Furthermore, at current budget levels, resident associations are often left to crowd source or seek sponsorships to pay for the type of activities that their communities deserve.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Alex, thank you so much for being our sole public testifier today and for sticking through the hearing and thank you for the work at Urban Upbound. I would love to receive your testimony written so we can also integrate it and think more about how we can move forward with some of those recommendations. We appreciate it very

much and certainly agree that offering public housing tenant associations more resources. They're given an enormous responsibility in many ways, and the tenant funds are not sufficient and would love to talk to you more about the workforce issues. Thank you so much.

ALEX MALESCIO: Absolutely. Would love to do that. I'll submit my written testimony to the Committee and then also directly to you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Great. Thank you so much, Alex.

ALEX MALESCIO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: With that, that concludes today's Public Housing hearing. Thank you.

[GAVEL]

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 23, 2023