CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-8th Fl.- Hearing Rm. 1

B E F O R E: Ty Hankerson
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Skekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Christopher Marte
Frank Morano
Mercedes Narcisse
Sandy Nurse
Yusef Salaam
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Kayla Santosuosso
Sandra Ung

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

Matt Drury
Chief of Legislative Affairs at New York City Parks Department

Ben Osborne
Assistant Commissioner of Forestry and Horticulture at New York City Parks Department

Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz
Commissioner of Department of Records and Information Services

Matt Molina
NYCH20

Seth
NYCH20

Henry Villa
NYCH20

David Chuchuca
NYCH20

Nkosi Newton
NYCH20

Sophia Hart
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Jordan Casalinova
NYCH20

Oliver Rivera

Scott Kearney

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to the New York City Hybrid Hearing on the Committee on Parks and Recreation. Please silence all electronic devices at this time. Also, please do not approach the dais. If you have any questions, please raise your hand and we will kindly assist you. Thank you very much for your kind cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Ty Hankerson, Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. I'd like to welcome all of you to the hearing today. At this hearing, we'll be considering six various pieces of legislation introduced by my colleagues which relate to various parks-related topics. First is Intro 89, sponsored by Council Member Brewer. This bill would require the Commissioner of DPR to identify tree pits located on streets and in landscaped parks and display them on the city's online tree map within three years, and also update the map annually to reflect changes to tree pits and the creation of new tree pits. Next is Intro 576, sponsored by Council Member Gennaro. This bill would specify that DPR may only issue a permit to remove a city-owned tree if the permit application

provides the name of the certified arborist who will remove the tree and report annually on city-owned trees removed in the previous year, including the location of removed trees and whether Parks has replaced those removed trees. Intro 666— interesting number— sponsored by Council Member Williams would require DPR to publish any current maintenance prioritization rating assigned by DPR to each tree under its jurisdiction and the reason for the rating on its interactive treemap website. Next is Intro 859, sponsored by Council Member Brewer, which would specify the process to be used by the Department of Records and Information Services to comply with existing law that requires the posting of biographical information for the subjects of name changes of streets and parks when no biographical information can be found in the legislative record. Excuse me. Finally, we have two bills on minimizing dog waste through our city, which is quickly becoming one of the largest quality of life concerns. Intro 864, sponsored by Council Member Epstein, would require DPR to establish a pilot program to collect dog feces from dog runs under DPR's jurisdiction for composting. At dog runs, the Commissioner would

install dog waste collection bins, provide compostable dog feces bags, and post a sign at each of the bins recommending that individual deposit dog waste in the bins— that individuals deposit dog waste in the bins. The waste would then be transferred to the appropriate compost facility. And Intro 880, sponsored by Council Member Narcisse, would require DPR to post signs at the entrances and exits of parks and at certain park facilities stating the rule prohibiting a person from leaving dog waste on the ground and the associated penalties for violation. It would also require DOT to post signs on the New York State requirement concerning dog waste removal in public areas and associated penalties. I look forward to examining these bills in more detail, and I'd like to welcome the administration and the advocates who have come today to testify. Thank you. With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues for their remarks, starting with Council Member Narcisse and then Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Parks Department, for being present. And thank you all the fellows and NYH to all [sic] in the house. I love you guys. You've been very

helpful to District 46. I will never forget that, and I'll be there to support. I love to see young folks not spending this summer not doing anything but be present and participate, especially when it comes to our environment. So thank you for your time. I am proud to sponsor Intro Number 880. This bill is simple: dog owners are required by law to clean up after their pets whether they are in a park or on the sidewalk. But across the city, that rule is rarely posted anywhere. You cannot expect people to follow a law or rule they have never seen and never heard of. Intro 880 requires the Parks Department to post signs at every park entrance, playground, our beach, our fitness area, picnic spot, and dog run. It also requires DOT to respond to 311 complaints about dog waste on sidewalks and, and pedestrian plazas with the signage in those locations. And it is required annual public reporting so we can track where the problems are and whether there is a— the— if this work— this is working for us. Signs work. They tell us which way to drive down the street. They warn us when a beach or it's not safe for swimming, and they can help us get a handle on the dog waste, too. I have heard every excuses under the sky. My dog is

small. I forgot a bag. I did not see it happen. Well, your neighbors saw it and they are calling 311 about it. This bill gives the city a clear, low-cost tool to back up a law that already exists. And I look forward to working with the administration to get this implemented because this is maybe simple for a lot of folks, but not for some, because when you step on it, you know- I mean, I don't like it when I'm going to my car or your children running in the park and step on it to come to you. That's not good. So I'm looking forward to make sure we implement this. So thank you, Chair, appreciate your time.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Council Member. Council Member Brewer?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Thank you very much. So I'm calling your attention to Intro 89. I think we all know that trees die. There are vacant tree beds. Constituents contact our office about them all the time. They want to plant them and they want a tree. And sometimes an empty tree bed is still a viable planting site, or sometimes, as I'm getting now the request all the time, because it's more ecologically correct to expand the bed. Other times the tree bed can't be replanted to meet the

Parks Department's current standards. Perhaps the tree bed is too small, it can't be expanded, it's in front of a building entrance, the sidewalks are too narrow to comply with ADA, or utilities are present below. So I know that that's a concern, but I have to say, in most cases, there was a tree there and a new tree can be planted. Constituents and block associations may place duplicate requests for the same tree bed which can be time-consuming for the Parks Department and frustrating for constituents and block associations and nonprofits who are in the environmental world, because they all want to expand— we all want to expand our local tree canopy. We want to work with the Department of Environmental Protection to do initiatives like rain gardens. Into 89 would require the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation to identify tree pits located on streets and in landscaped parks and display them on the city's online tree map within three years after the effective date of the bill. The Commissioner would therefore have to update the map annually to reflect changes to tree pits and the creation of new tree pits. The map must note whether each tree pit contains a tree, and if a tree pit does not contain a

tree the reason for the disuse of the tree pit. Developing the legislation, we worked with The Nature Conservancy and Trees New York. These people work daily with trees. We were sensitive to not wanting the data collection process to be too onerous. As written, the bill envisions that this information would be cataloged as part of the tree inspection process, which the Parks Department does. The goal is to add transparency to opportunities for greening locally and help reach our city's aggressive sustainability goals while consolidating this information centrally on the city's tree map. And I have to say, I know that the Parks Department may currently be against it, but I hope they continue to work with us. The maps are important. People don't know why there's no tree in a spot. They do need to know. I also just want to talk about 859. 859 honors New Yorkers with street co-namings twice a year. And I want to just be clear, last year we celebrated, as others have, the pianist Larry Harlow on West 86th Street. We've all done many, many honorings. The Council, just- you may know this, in 2003 passed Local Law 104 which called on the Department of Records and Information Services, known as DORIS, one

of my favorite agencies, to create a searchable map of these co-namings, and they did. It took me, like, 20 years to get this friggin' map, but they did. And in 2002 and 2003, I was there. 400+ streets were named for first responders killed on 9/11. I went to many, many, many of those signings where the signs went up. But many of those streets lacked biographical information because they went up so fast. Under the guidance of former DORIS Commissioner Pauline O'Toole and her staff, the stories of these individuals lost on that terrible day were compiled, and Intro 859 allows DORIS to update the map. A special note of appreciation to Committee Counsel Kris Sartori [sp?] and Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Patrick Mulvihill [sp?] for their work on Local Law 104 as well as 859. And I want to thank Schula Puder [sp?] from my office. The background here is that I think the names could have just gone up on the website. However, to DORIS' credit, they felt that they wanted the City Council to be sure to bless them legislatively and legally. And then when they go up, there's a feeling that the biographical information is correct. I believe we got all but one person of all the signs in the entire five boroughs,

and we're still trying to get that one person from Staten Island who we can't find. Thank you very much. Even Jimmy Oddo can't find them, but we're still trying.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you. Thank you, Councilmember. I am going to read to the best of my ability, the statement from Deputy Speaker Williams regarding her bill Intro 666. Okay, here we go. As I am sure my fellow Council Members are aware, residents across the five boroughs have repeatedly expressed frustration regarding dangerous trees outside their homes and within their neighborhoods and local parks. Street trees and park trees are an important part of our city's infrastructure. They improve air quality, provide shade, reduce urban heat, and contribute to healthier and more livable communities. At the same time, when trees are damaged, deceased— excuse me, diseased or structurally comprised- compromised— today is the day— they can pose serious risks to public safety and property. The Department of Parks and Recreation currently utilizes internal prioritization criteria to determine which trees require maintenance or removal based on safety and condition. However, this

information is not publicly available, leaving residents unaware of potentially dangerous trees until they are either maintained or pose an immediate risk. This lack of transparency causes confusion and frustration, especially in areas with high foot traffic or after storms when fallen or damaged trees can create dangerous conditions. Constituents often contact our offices– constituents often contact our offices after reporting tree-related concerns through 311, seeking updates and answers about when action will be taken. Too often, residents are left without meaningful information about where their complaints stand or how the city is determining urgency. That uncertainty undermines public confidence and makes it harder for communities to understand the maintenance process. My bill, Intro 666, would codify into law the tree prioritization ratings that already exist and require that these ratings, along with the reasoning behind them, be made publicly available. This is a common-sense transparency measure. By making this information accessible to the public, residents will have a clearer understanding of how maintenance decisions are made and which trees are considered higher priority for intervention. This

simple change to the administrative code would increase transparency between DPR and the public, improve accountability, and help create a safer environment for all New Yorkers. I'd like to mention that we've been joined by Council Members Narcisse, Marte, Morano, Lee, Brewer, Salaam, Ung on Zoom, Pierina Sanchez, Nurse– yes. Okay. With that, I'm going to turn it over to the agency for their opening remarks– for being sworn in and opening remarks. Thank you all for bearing with me.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. Would the representatives of the Parks Department and Department of Records Information Services please raise your right hand if you're able? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Councilmember questions?

CHIEF DRURY: I do.

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Please begin when ready.

CHIEF DRURY: Good afternoon, Chair Hankerson, members of the Parks Committee, and other members of the Council. My name is Matt Drury. I'm

the Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs for NYC Parks, and I'm joined by Ben Osborne, our Assistant Commissioner for Forestry. We're pleased to be here to testify alongside our fellow agency partners to discuss the various pieces of legislation being considered today. First, since three of the bills being heard today are related to forestry and our city's urban tree canopy, I'd like to provide a quick update on the tree impacts that resulted from the numerous storms the city's experienced in recent weeks, including the June 6th storm, which produced the most significant tree impacts we've witnessed since Tropical Storm Isaias in August 2020. We're grateful to our expert forestry crews at Parks and to our partners at the Downed Tree Task Force, including NYC Emergency Management, Department of Sanitation, FDNY, NYPD, Con Edison, and PSE&G, who all helped address tree-related storm conditions. Since May 20th, we have received over 4,500 storm-related service requests, which led to over 3,500 inspections, resulting in the creation of over 2,500 work orders for damaged and fallen trees and branches, including roughly 100 block streets and 60 trees on houses. Our first priority following any

storm event is to address those life safety hazards, especially blocked trees and trees on houses, which we aim to complete as quickly as possible using all available resources, including our emergency contractor and partner agency crews at the city and state level. As of today, all work orders resulting from these storms have been completed except for roughly 200 low-priority jobs remaining from the June 6th event and another thunderstorm on June 12th. To be clear, resolving tree-related conditions can be complex, challenging, and highly dangerous work, especially in stormy or excessively hot conditions, requiring the use of heavy equipment and large vehicles. So we thank New Yorkers for their patience and support as this work continues. Beginning with Introduction 89, this legislation would require parks to identify tree beds located on streets and in landscape parks and display them on the city's online tree map, noting whether each tree bed contains a tree. To be explicitly clear, the presence of an empty tree bed along a street has no bearing on whether that site is viable for planting, because planting standards evolve over time and new infrastructure conflicts can arise. Similarly, the

absence of a pre-existing tree bed bears absolutely no relation as to whether a tree can be planted at that location. We recognize that empty street beds which are no longer viable for tree planting can become unsightly and inconvenient over time. So through our neighborhood tree planting strategy, while we assess each and every block in New York City for street tree planting opportunities, we identify any empty street tree beds that are no longer viable for planting, and unless the bed is going to be maintained as a garden, we revert them back to sidewalk alongside the other tree-related work that's going to be done along that block, in hopes that these situations can gradually become increasingly rare. The citywide canvassing and geolocating of tree beds on streets and parks as proposed by the bill would be a massive logistical undertaking and the investment of finite agency resources with little to no practical public benefit, and the dataset would become outdated nearly immediately after such a canvas were to be completed, leading to unnecessary public confusion. We're always happy to work with the Council to discuss the ways in which the agency can best engage with local residents regarding our new

approach to planting and the improvements that it will bring to our city's streetscape, but we oppose this legislation as it's currently drafted. Next, Introduction 576 would require applicants seeking New York City Parks' authorization for a tree removal to provide the name of a certified arborist who will conduct the proposed tree removal. It would also require the agency to report annually on trees under Parks' jurisdiction that have been removed in the previous year. We appreciate the apparent intent of this bill, as our agency is keenly focused on growing and protecting our urban tree canopy, and we only approve tree removals in very select circumstances. To be clear, New York City Parks is the sole authority that can allow the removal of a tree under our jurisdiction. We take that decision very- to allow the removal of a tree very, very seriously, and tree removal proposals are rigorously reviewed by our agency's highly qualified technical staff. We do not currently require tree removal work to be performed by an ISA-certified arborist, which is a credential that's more applicable to the decision-making pertaining to the care, maintenance, and preservation of trees than the physical work of removing a tree.

It's worth noting that additional regulatory requirements for tree removal permits could inadvertently encourage parties to avoid seeking formal approval from Parks, which would result in the unauthorized removal of healthy city trees that otherwise would not have been allowed. As for the reporting requirement imposed by the legislation, Parks is committed to public transparency and is happy to look more closely at the types of datasets that can best inform New Yorkers looking to learn more about our tree management efforts in an efficient and productive manner. To this end, we'd like to discuss this bill further with the sponsor to learn more about its intended outcomes so we can work together towards the goals we clearly share. Introduction 666 would require New York City Parks to publish any current maintenance prioritization ratings assigned by Parks to each tree under its jurisdiction pursuant to a tree inspection, and the reason for that rating on our interactive tree map website. We make a robust set of information available on our agency website to anyone looking to learn more about the individual street and park trees in our canopy, including their species, inspection

and work order status, and the ecological and economic benefits provided by each individual tree. We support the intent of this legislation. We're happy to work with the sponsor to discuss the ways in which legislation can best achieve our shared goals while providing sufficient time for any mandatory website development updates, which can be a time-intensive undertaking. Turning to Introduction 859, this bill would authorize the relevant agency or office to conduct its own historical research while posting biographical information related to individuals or entities for whom streets and parks have been co-named by local law when no other biographical information can be found in the legislative record. New York City Parks already routinely provides biographical and historical information related to the persons or entities in whose honor our parks are named, both via our historical interpretive signage physically installed at park sites, as well as robust information available on the websites dedicated to individual properties on our agency website. We believe our current operational practices already largely comply with the spirit of this bill. We look forward to

working with the sponsor and our colleagues at DORIS to ensure that the legislation can best help achieve our shared goals. Lastly, we'll turn to two bills regarding the presence of dog waste in our public spaces. We appreciate the Council's advocacy and efforts to help educate dog owners about the importance of picking up after their pets, as just about every New Yorker has had an unpleasant encounter with this persistent inconvenience at one time or another. Introduction 864 would compel Parks to establish a two-year pilot program to collect dog waste from dog runs located within parks for the purposes of processing that waste into compost and submit a report on the operational results of that pilot, including the amount of dog waste processed into compost and how or where any resulting compost was utilized. We share the Council's support for sustainable practices, and we work closely with DSNY and other partners in a variety of ways to ensure that organic materials like park, yard, and leaf waste can be kept out of landfills. We currently host nearly 90 formalized dog runs throughout our park system, a list of which can be accessed on our agency website, as well as information about areas in parks

that allow dogs off leash in early morning and evening hours. To be clear, dog run trash receptacles are placed outside of each dog run, and Parks employees do not enter dog runs to perform routine cleaning or maintenance, though we do work closely with the dog owners at each dog run as we advance necessary repairs or other substantial site improvements. Excuse me, sorry. In accordance with existing guidance with DSNY related to organic waste collection, any dog owners that are visiting a dog run are expected to place their dog's waste in the adjacent trash bin. Though we appreciate the broader ecological goals of this legislation, we do not support this bill as it's currently drafted, largely due to the fact that the processing of organic waste into compost lies outside of our agency's mission and expertise, and the pilot program and related reporting that would be mandated by this bill would be incredibly resource intensive in the context of our exceedingly finite agency resources. Lastly, Introduction 880 would require New York City Parks to post park signage related to agency rules prohibiting persons from leaving dog waste on the ground and the associated penalties for violation. We believe all

New Yorkers should have clean parks, and our maintenance and operations staff work tirelessly to clean our park properties every single day to keep these spaces enjoyable for everyone. So we want dog owners and their furry friends to do the right thing and responsibly enjoy our city parks. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers enforce park rules related to picking up after dogs, and they routinely educate dog owners and other park visitors about the importance of following park rules. We do install standard consolidated rule signage in multiple languages at the entrances of each of our parks, including a reference to picking up dog waste. And we install specific signage at dog runs to outline the specific rules and policies in place at those features. We very much support the intent of this legislation. We do have some technical and operational concerns regarding the way in which the bill is currently drafted, which we look forward to discussing further with the sponsor. We will also additionally note, Introduction 880 would create a new signage mandate for New York City Department of Transportation outside of parks. We defer to our sister agency on that aspect of legislation. But I'll

note they have shared that it would create severe operational concerns to require an open-ended number of signs at any 311 complaint location. Dictating signage siting via 311 complaints would result in thousands or tens of thousands of mandated signs, particularly since the complaints may be unverified or will likely get resolved before signage installation. DOT has further expressed concerns about the likely impact this legislation would have on their capacity to install life-protecting safety signage such as stop signs or other traffic control signage. Thanks for allowing for us to testify before you today and for your continued advocacy and support for our city parks. We'll now hand it over to our colleagues at DORIS.

COMMISSIONER SMITH-CRUZ: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, and I'm the Commissioner for the Department of Records and Information Services. I've had the privilege of serving as the Commissioner for DORIS since May 18th, 2026, having joined city government only about a month ago. I come to this work with a professional background in libraries and archives, or as a

librarian and an archivist, and I appreciate your patience as I continue learning the culture of processes of municipal government. In reviewing prior City Council records, hearing records, I understand that about twice each year the Council recognizes New Yorkers through honorary street co-namings. In 2023, the Council enacted Local Law 104 to support and strengthen the commemorative process. Earlier local laws enacted in 2002 and 2003 named more than 400 streets in honor of first responders who lost their lives on September 11th, 2001. However, many of those commemorative street designations did not include accompanying biographical information. Documenting who these individuals were and why they were honored. Over the past year, DORIS developed the Honorary Street Naming Project to support the creation of the interactive public map documenting more than 4,200 New York City street co-namings from 1902 through 2026. The purpose of this project is not only to document where honorary street designations exist, but also to preserve and share with the public the stories behind them. The interactive map was developed using ArcGIS mapping software and incorporates City Council legislative records from

1998 through 2026. To expand and enrich the historical record, DORIS also incorporated municipal library archival resources, including pre-1998 proceedings, local laws, and microfilm collections. To date, DORIS has researched and completed approximately 393 biographies connected to the 9/11-related co-namings, and an additional 28 biographies for co-naming dating from 1940 through 1981. This work includes 176 biographies in 2002, 116 in 2003, 73 biographies in 2004, 22 biographies in 2005, five biographies from 2006, and one biography from 2008. Intro number 859 would provide guidance regarding the posting of biographical information for individuals honored through street and park naming actions when that information is not available in the legislative record. Importantly, this legislation recognizes the value of archival and historical research already conducted by DORIS and allows that independently researched content to be incorporated into the public-facing website with sourcing information included where available. This legislation strengthens the historical record, enhances public understanding of those being commemorated, and helps ensure that future

generations understand not only the names on signs, but the lives and contributions those names represent. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we welcome any questions.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Alright, thank you. At this time, I'm going to turn it over to the bill sponsors, starting with Council Member Narcisse, and then immediately after, Council Member Brewer, for their questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you so much, Chair. First, let's start— and- NYCHU has spent six years restoring the Ridgewood Reservoir wetland, and it's ready to resume. They hold a DC permit, have met every parks requirement, and park staff confirmed there is no legal or liability barrier. Yet the written authorization still has not issued, and the removal season is slipping. Commissioner, would you direct your legal team to let them begin to work? Is that possible?

CHIEF DRURY: Firstly, thanks for the promotion. I'm just—

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] You know, they work in my district a lot.

CHIEF DRURY: That's fine. Thank you for the question. I'm not as up to date on the status of that permit, but we're happy to take that back to our team and get you an update.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you for that. What are the current signage protocols? Let's get to the my bill now. What are this current signage protocol for the dog waste in parks?

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, thanks for asking, Council Member. We install standard consolidating rule signage in multiple languages at the entrances of all of our parks. That includes a reference to picking up dog waste. Additionally, we install specific signage dog runs that outline the specific rules and policies in place at those features, including the importance of picking up after your dogs.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. What are the relevant penalties for not cleaning up your dog's waste? And it— this is— this is commonly enforced violation by your DPR?

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, thanks for the question. There is a specific park rule in reference to dog waste in Section 1-4, control and removal of

animal waste. That's the standing rule violation. I believe is $100 for the– and then it defaults to $200. Those are handled by the Environmental Control Board, ECB, as, you know, as via OATH hearings. So this is not a criminal court summons. Our Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers, I'll just note that they are in our parks enforcing park rules, including picking up after dogs. They're routinely educating dog owners, making sure that folks are aware. To be frank, the presence of a uniformed individual is usually sufficient enough to inspire dog owners to do the right thing, lo and behold. So the issue of a summons is kind of a last ditch effort, if you will. It's, you know, it's not often that we have to actually issue summons. The impact we normally have is educating and making sure that we're correcting the condition. And usually, frankly, when a dog owner is kind of approached by, you know, a PEP officer or other uniformed personnel, they usually sort of all of a sudden, lo and behold, find, you know, that plastic bag or what have you that they— and do what they need to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Commissioner, you know, I love Parks, right? I love Parks and I

love you. I appreciate you. If it's one agency I'm going to put up, I will put up Parks, definitely. But Commissioner, I have been in Parks because I love to hang out in Parks. I have not seen one DPR stop anyone with the dog poop.

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, again–

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] For my time being in parks. And I've been around long enough.

CHIEF DRURY: You sure have. And I'm– our Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers are out there. They are in parks patrolling every single day. I will say that, you know, again, their very presence, the Enforcement Patrol Officer's presence usually ends up reminding dog owners. So it is pretty uncommon that those interactions happen, because when people see, you know, that sort of— first of all, most dog owners far and away are doing the right thing and picking up after their dog, like, to be clear. Dog waste is definitely a condition that we do witness on the interior parks, but the truth of the matter is it's actually far more common and prevalent on the exterior of parks along sidewalks, just as it's a common occurrence on sidewalks all over the city. So

on the interior of parks- and we're responsible to clean it up, you know, regardless, obviously, in the course of doing our trash removal and other pickups. But I will note that, you know, it is not as common a concern on the interior of parks. So it is- it's reasonable that you may not witness an actual interaction between a PEP Enforcement Patrol Officer and a dog owner because we approach that dog owner, lo and behold, the waste gets picked up, you know, and everything's, you know, everything's kosher. So it doesn't surprise. It's something we take very, very seriously. But, you know, I think we're- most of the dog owners that are coming to the interior of our parks to enjoy those areas are by and large doing the right thing. And if, you know, if that's not the case, if we see dog waste, that's something that's taken very, very seriously. It's a condition that's, you know, that is addressed by our MNO staff, you know, when it's observed.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate that. But how many summons that you gave over the year?

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: For example, for last year.

CHIEF DRURY: So in 2025—

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] Okay.

CHIEF DRURY: So just to put it in context, just to step back, just to give you kind of a frame of reference, we receive about 140-150 311 complaints about dog waste specific to park properties. So that's sort of what we're seeing, 140, 150 a year, 311 complaints. That's- okay. So that's just—

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] That's summons?

CHIEF DRURY: As a frame of reference, DSNY receives about 2,500 to 2,600 dog waste complaints. So that's just to give you that sort of frame of reference. So specific to summons issued specifically for dog waste, it is pretty low. I can say that in the past few years— sorry, let me pull it here— we have issued about 22 over the last, you know, and that's going back to 2021. So, we do— this is not-

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] From 2021 to 2025-

CHIEF DRURY: [interposing] Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: We only have 22 summonses.

CHIEF DRURY: Yes. And that speaks to our—

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] And then we stepping on poops every day. If I call in my community right now-

CHIEF DRURY: [interposing] So-

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: it's a lot going on. So if we could put this signage- the way I'm getting to the point. I want to bring it home to you. When you see the signage all the time, like in front of you, you will be more careful and people will remind you kindly, there's a signage here, you need to pick up, and people will feel more comfortable and people will bring more awareness to what they're doing. Sometimes people just need a little check-in, that's all. Last question I have: what areas of the city are more problematic in terms of dog waste complaints and non-compliance with disposable rules?

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, so our- there's a couple different ways in which we're assessing this

condition in our park system. I mentioned the 311 requests. That's actually relatively distributed throughout the city fairly, fairly equally. And additionally, we have what we refer to as our Parks Inspection Program, which is sort of our independent secret shopper, you know, separate from our maintenance and operations team. We have an independent audit team that is getting out there, and they, you know, are observing, you know, when this condition is observed. We're- by and large, we're not seeing any drastic geographic distinctions in terms of where this is being observed. It does— it is something that happens. It is addressed when it's— when it's observed, but we're not seeing any drastic geographic distinctions.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm just sharing a picture somewhere that I put—

CHIEF DRURY: [interposing] Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: around her gates all over, and I cannot read it for you, but take whatever it is, take it elsewhere in the worst word that you can use. That's when people are tired of that.

CHIEF DRURY: Sure, and I'd be curious to hear-

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] And we got to do something about it.

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah. So that's someone who's putting up their own signage, right? About the condition.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah. No, I'm telling you-

CHIEF DRURY: [interposing] And I'd be curious to hear how effective that is.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: It's just like, so kind of like-

CHIEF DRURY: [interposing] Sounds like it hasn't been very effective. So I guess I just need to talk about it.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And then because the person is tired. When I went in- you know, I stopped my car. I went in to have a conversation.

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: It was in my district. And she said, you know what? I don't know, everywhere. Like, it's people normalizing it and we should not.

CHIEF DRURY: No, and I–

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] And that's what I'm asking you for your help. So we need to do something about this bill.

CHIEF DRURY: We agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And that bill have to go through.

CHIEF DRURY: New York dog owners need to do the right thing and pick up after their pets.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Do the right thing.

CHIEF DRURY: We agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: People have to do that. We have to. Thank you, Commissioner. I appreciate you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Okay. First I want to thank Commissioner Smith-Cruz. Welcome. We love DORIS, and we look forward to working with you. So thank you so much. I'm very excited about— it looks to me like as a result of DORIS's efforts, all of the names of those who are up on the signs who have contributed and have passed will be there, and that's a big deal. All their

biographies. Thank you. Tree pits. Okay, how many— do you have any idea how many exist? I get nauseous every time I see one, but I do need data. We all need data, and you don't want to provide the data, but do you have any sense of how many there are?

CHIEF DRURY: Thanks for the question. I'm going to turn it over to our Assistant Commissioner for Forestry, Ben Osborne.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: Good afternoon, Council Member. Thanks for that question. So we do not track the number of tree beds that are unplanted in the city. But of course, we've heard concerns from the Council and from constituents for years about empty tree beds and the eyesore that they can present. So for the first time in the city's history, we now have a plan to address this through our neighborhood tree planting program. Under this program, we will plant every available location on each block regardless of whether or not a tree bed exists and close tree beds that do not meet our current planting standards, unless they're being maintained as garden space by residents.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I- what I do is I pull up the flowers and say, you're going to get a

tree, but okay. I mean, you know, what I'm saying though is– so you're saying, but that's part of that neighborhood where you go neighborhood to neighborhood program. You're not going to, like, do individuals. It's when the program is in that area for the tree planting, and then you will obviously take into consideration the vacant tree pits if they can be planted, right? Is that what you're saying?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: So, yeah, as part of the comprehensive service that we're providing through neighborhood tree planting, we will plant every available planting space–

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Okay.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: regardless of whether a bed exists and close those beds that are not being gardened.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I understand. Most of them, I think, are available to be planted. There are some vaults, there's this and that, but— and where there's a garden, you should have a conversation because the tree arbor is more important than the garden.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: The maintenance of, you know, flowers or other, you know, horticulture in those beds does not preclude us from planting.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Yeah. All right. I mean, why is it so hard? I'm a bit— I passed the open data bill. I believe in data. You have the trees. But why is it so difficult? I don't think it is to include vacant tree pits. So you have a sense of what the overall citywide number is. Why is that so hard? I can do it–

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: [interposing] So again–

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] in my neighborhood.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: this is not something that we have data on. So the collection of this data would be a massive undertaking. And to do so in the three-year time frame under this bill would actually likely take away resources from the staff who oversee planting. So it may slow down our planting efforts.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I mean, I do think we should continue to discuss this issue

though, because I think you could do it with some volunteers. You have many volunteers who will be willing to do it, and you would probably have a little asterisk that says this is not assigned by the Parks Department. There are ways to do it. People really want to know where there's a tree pit that's vacant and where there's a stump that needs to be taken out. It's— they can then do some planning of their own. Data, data, data. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Council Member. Council Member Morano followed by Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thanks very much. I have a couple of quick questions for Parks and then one or two for DORIS if there's time. You testified that emptying— the identifying empty tree pits citywide would be a massive undertaking with little public benefit. But doesn't Parks already know where many of these locations are? And basically, if the agency already possesses a lot of this information, why shouldn't taxpayers have the same access to it?

CHIEF DRURY: So I'll hand it over to Commissioner Osborne in just a second, but I guess I'd just note that in addition to the, you know, the

resources that it would take to undertake this effort systematically and comprehensively, you know, I think that's being weighed against what the public would gain from that information, noting, as Commissioner Osborn just mentioned, that we now have funding in place and a comprehensive plan to essentially revert these empty, unplantable tree pits over time, right? So I believe— I think what we're ultimately trying to say is that overall, you know, would the public benefit from that knowledge, like, what would be gleaned from that, weighed against the undertaking that it would require. So I think that— I just wanted to kind of put it in that context, but I'd like to hand it over to Commissioner Osborne.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: Sure. And thank you for the question, Council Member. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this introduced legislation, this is not data that we have kept because it is not operationally useful. So sure, we know where we've- you know, where we have had trees in the past, but, you know, that does not indicate whether or not there's a tree bed there. In some cases, there are- you know, especially in Staten Island, there are contiguous lawn strips which don't

exactly, you know, meet the definition of tree bed. So because this is not— because we don't require a tree bed for planting, this is just simply not data we've kept.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: So since you mentioned Staten Island, Staten Islanders frequently contact my office asking why an empty tree pit on their block sits vacant for years. If you oppose publicly identifying vacant tree pits, how exactly are residents supposed to know whether a location is awaiting planting, deemed unsuitable, or simply just being overlooked?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: Sure. Well, you know, as part of our neighborhood tree planting program now, they can look on our website, know exactly when we will be on their block surveying the entire block looking for planting opportunities that meet our current standards, whether or not there is a tree bed present. If there is no tree bed present, but the location is suitable for planting, we'll create a new tree bed. If there is a tree bed present and it's not suitable for planting, we'll close it at that time. So they can use our map to know exactly when we'll be there.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: On the tree removal, Mr. Drury, you testified that additional permitting requirements might discourage people from seeking approval before removing trees. Is the department really suggesting that transparency requirements should be weakened because some people might break the law?

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah- no, sorry, to be clear, that testimony was in reference to a new— what the legislature— what the first part of legislation proposes is that someone who's performing tree removal work needs to be certified as an arborist, which is a relatively lofty designation for that.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Got it.

CHIEF DRURY: And we're arguing that adding that additional layer, if you will, of regulatory burden could inadvertently inspire someone to not seek that approval. So the report— that's not in reference to the reporting.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Got it. Understood, understood. You did mention that more than 4,500 storm-related service requests were in the pipeline or came about. How many came from Staten

Island, and what was the average response time in Staten Island compared with the other boroughs?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: Just give me a moment to find those numbers here.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Well, you look for that, Commissioner. I'll ask Mr. Drury one question about Intro 666, which I'm happy to be a sponsor of.

CHIEF DRURY: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: If a tree near a school, a playground, or home has been internally identified as a maintenance priority, why shouldn't the public be allowed to know that?

CHIEF DRURY: Oh, I mean, so we— yeah, we— I think we very much appreciate the spirit of the legislation. We're not- we're not opposed to the bill. So sorry if that's just to be clear. I think we are— anyone who submits a service request regarding, you know, a tree risk issue, whether it's pruning or removal, what have you, that person is already notified about the risk assessment level. This bill would essentially, you know, make it- take that information and sort of display it on a- in a map format, and we're open- we're not opposed to that notion.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OSBORNE: With respect to your question about the storm- the several storms we've had over the past month or so. Staten Island was largely spared from these events, thankfully. Only about 175 service requests in total came from Staten Island, so it's Staten Island faired pretty well.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Two final questions for Parks quickly, if I may. The department says website updates are time-consuming. Can you tell us how many full-time employees currently work on public-facing digital information, and what specifically makes posting a prioritization rating so burdensome?

CHIEF DRURY: So I'll answer the second part first. It's not the nature of the project that's burdensome, but the bill as it's currently drafted only provides for 30 days for compliance, which is just pretty tight, you know, and just given the volume of projects that the agency is under— we're always trying to make our website more robust, more, more informational. And that is a- you know, that is just, you know, there is a list of projects to be executed by that team with finite staff. I actually

don't know the number of that staff offhand. I apologize, except to note that they are by definition finite. But we can check on that for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: I have just one DORIS question, if I may, Chair. Thank you for your testimony and welcome aboard and good luck. Of the more than 4,200 honorary street co-namings you've cataloged, how many are on Staten Island, and have you identified any gaps in the historical record that disproportionately affect Staten Island veterans, civic leaders, first responders, or community figures?

COMMISSIONER SMITH-CRUZ: I love— thank you for the question.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER SMITH-CRUZ: I love that question. Of course, I don't have the answer, but I would love to get it back to you because I think it's a good question. And I did hear that Council Member Brewer pointed specifically to Staten Island-

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: [interposing] Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER SMITH-CRUZ: representative in the set, so I can check in to see how many of

which of the larger 4,200 represents Staten Island. But it is a map, and so one could go to the map itself, and it's interactive, so one could zoom into the map over Staten Island and see which names are represented in that location.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: So you were able to create an interactive map with more than 4,200 co-namings and hundreds of biographies. What lessons should other city agencies learn from this effort when they claim it's too difficult or resource-intensive to make information available to the public?

COMMISSIONER SMITH-CRUZ: I think that all of the— thank you for the question. I think all of the agencies do a really great job of making information available to the public, and DORIS has its very tiny staff of less than 50. We're doing our best to match up to everyone else's robust web environment. And so I think that we're all working collaboratively to make it happen. And DORIS, what we would love to do is work with agencies to have some of our municipal archives and our materials from inside of government online so we could just work together and do more.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you all. Thank you, Chair, for your patience.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you. I want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member Krishnan, and now we're going over to Council Member Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon. Also want to— I want to double down on the comments or acknowledgement made by Council Member Narcisse about New York City H2O. And they do a lot of great work at Highland Park in the Ridgewood Reservoir and hope to see them continue to do that work there. And we support their interns there who are learning a lot about water ecology. I'm going to ask about a district thing. I'm sorry, I'm not— I'm off topic, but that's how we got to do it. I'm getting a ton of incoming from residents who live around Kelly Callahan Playground, because of obviously there's a lot of demolition work and construction around the Broadway Junction Station. It's going to be a very long project, so we are going to have a very long problem of rat burrows being shaken up and rats just coming out of the ground. I mean, subway demolition excavation work. So, we're

asking for an extraordinary level of attention to this park for abatement, rodent abatement, and consistency in trash, as well as, any landscaping work that needs to be done to keep areas looking tidy because obviously, this was a brand new park, just got done. It's beautiful. We love it. We love that Parks made that happen. But now people wanna enjoy it and they are so upset and saying that we are not doing our job. And so if I'm getting told I'm not doing my job, that means I got to revert it to you guys and say, you guys are not doing your job because I'm not the one in charge of cleaning the parks. And so I know that this administration has not fulfilled the funding goals of the one percent for Parks or increased that. But we really need that because I'm- you know, we're at a point where I got to start yelling if I'm getting yelled at. So, I will say that Marty has been excellent and super responsive. We talked this morning and he is and has escalated the work, but we need more because it's just unfortunate that, that construction is happening, but it's going to keep happening.

CHIEF DRURY: Yeah, thanks for- thanks for that, Council Member, and I'm very glad to hear

Commissioner Maher [sp?] is, you know, obviously, you know, just an icon, so responsive, so that's excellent to hear. But we're absolutely happy to also take this back to our First Deputy Commissioner and other folks just to make sure there's even more keener awareness. Obviously, you're in good hands with Commissioner Maher, but having said that, we will certainly elevate that. It does happen, you know, when there are reverberations or ripple effects from, you know, adjacent construction. It's especially unfortunate when it's a newly completed, you know, renovated project that, you know, lends itself to some of those factors. But yeah, that's something we will obviously take back and look at very closely.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: It's going to be for a while because it's not just that station, right?

CHIEF DRURY: Right, the whole- yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: There's the plazas that are being— all the transit- precinct is going to be demolished. Like, this is going to be like a decade of disruption. And we're just into groundbreaking and already people are pissed at me.

And that's- that should not be the case. We should, I mean, we really need those resources there and ramped up. I don't know how many people are on shift there. I know Emilio was great when he was there. I know he retired, but we need- I need some dynamics to change quickly or else I have to change my dynamic with the agency and I don't want to do that.

CHIEF DRURY: Understood and appreciate it.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So please would love to continue to have support on this.

CHIEF DRURY: For sure. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Before we move into public comment, Council Member Morano, did you have any final questions for the agencies?

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: I think I'm okay.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Good? Okay. Alright, I want to thank the agencies for joining us today. We're now opening the hearing for public testimony. I want to remind members of the public

that this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times. The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table. Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topics, Intros 89, 576, 666, 859, 864, and 880. If you have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov or yes- within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted. At this time, I'm going to call the first panel: Matt Molina, Scott Kearney, Henry Villa, and Seth- pardon, I can't pronounce the last name. Hopefully there's only one Seth in the room.

There's only one Seth in the room. Okay. Matt, good to see you.

MATT MOLINA: Great to see you, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Okay, you may begin.

MATT MOLINA: Good afternoon, Chair Hankerson and members of the committee. I'm Matt Molina, founder of NYCH2O and Executive Director. NYCH2O is an environmental nonprofit connecting New Yorkers with our waterways and green spaces. For six years, our team has restored the Ridgewood Reservoir in Highland Park, clearing two acres of invasive phragmites and planting more than 300 native plants across 12 species and training 34 young adults, many of whom are here in the room with me and will be testifying. The results has been a healthier wetland and better park for East New York, Cypress Hills, Bushwick, and Ridgewood. This work delivers real value to the city: a restored wetland that supports habitat and stormwater resilience, a better green space for thousands of park visitors each year, and paid environmental training for local youth. This season, we have seven returning interns, five of whom

are here now, ready, and 11 more starting in- at the end of June. The work is fully funded through grants and staff by our own paid crews. It costs the city nothing in labor. It's fully permitted. The New York State DEC has issued the wetland permit, which the Parks Department holds. One thing stands in our way. It's a written authorization from Parks, and they've confirmed that there's no legal or liability barrier. It's only paperwork. Meanwhile, the season is slipping away. The phragmites is growing aggressively. Every week off-site erodes years of our work in progress. We're grateful for the Parks Department's partnership, and we're not asking for money or a policy change, just help with one administrative step. My request is simple: please urge the Parks Department to issue an interim authorization so that we can get back to work. Thank you.

SETH: Good afternoon. My name is Seth. I'm from Cypress Hills, and I'm one of the eco-interns that helps restore Ridgewood Reservoir with NYCH2O. This is a paid internship that has taught me how to identify and remove invasive species, how to care for the environment and my

community. If this work isn't able to continue, other people won't be given the chance that I was to form a new bond with nature and community. I've spent two seasons working with NYCH2O, helping to keep the phragmites at bay by taking them out by hand. You can see the major impact we've had on the reservoir as natives slowly come back stronger and the park is made more beautiful. Let me step back. And the park becomes more beautiful. But since we haven't been able to work, we've been forced to do off-season work like repair benches in Thompson Square Park, when we can be working at Ridgewood Reservoir, which is closer to most of us than Tompkins. We have been ready to work, and every day we don't, the problem continues to grow. Please help however you can to get the green light from Parks so we can get back to restoring and helping Ridgewood Reservoir and the community.

HENRY VILLA: Oh, it's on? Alright. Good afternoon. My name is Henry Villa. I'm a student at the City College of New York, currently studying environmental engineering. I joined NYCH2O as an intern in the summer of 2023 when I was a junior in high school. Currently, I'm an upcoming junior for

college. When I first joined the program, it was just me and four other people. I was the only new intern that year, I believe. There were days where it was just me and Boris, my supervisor, working at the reservoir removing phragmites. The days were long but exhausting. But the dedication was evident. But over time, I started to feel isolated. There wasn't anyone around my age that I could really relate to or talk with. So I would show up, work, and then go home. And if I'm being honest, I probably would have left much earlier if some of my high school friends hadn't joined the program the following year. Having people around my age changed everything. I started looking forward to coming to work. The long days of removing phragmites became more enjoyable, and the reservoir felt like a community instead of a job site. Now every year, seeing new interns join makes me happy because it reminds me of when I started. This program doesn't just restore wetlands, it gives young people a place to grow, build friendships, and feel connected to something larger than themselves. That's why I'm asking for your support. By allowing this work to continue, you're not only helping protect the Ridgewood Reservoir, you're also ensuring that future

interns have the same opportunity as me to find a community, develop confidence, and make a positive impact on something that they really care about.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Henry. Thank you, Seth. Thank you, Matt. We're going to call our next panel. David Chuchuca, Nkosi Newton [sp?], Sophia Hart [sp?]. Jordan Castellanovo— Castellanova [sp?]. David, you may begin.

DAVID CHUCHUCA: Thank you for the time. Chair Hankerson. My name is David Chachuca. I am the School Programs Director at NYCH2O, and I've been involved with the Ridgewood Reservoir restoration project since 2019 and now help lead our summer crew in the hands-on stewardship of this unique wetland. Our work is more— is about more than removing invasive species. Every summer, we invest in young adults by teaching them field skills, environmental science, and what it means to care for public land. Many of our interns are experiencing ecological restoration work for the first time and beginning to see themselves as environmental stewards and future leaders in the green sector. Our crews are funded, trained, and ready to work. We will have new interns this year eager to learn and contribute, but without

authorization from Parks, we cannot begin. Every week of delay is a week of paid training, mentorship, and hands-on experience that these young people lose. At the same time, the restoration work we planned for this season sits undone. The Phragmites grows aggressively throughout the spring and summer, and every delay allows it to reclaim ground that volunteers, interns, and staff have spent years restoring. Each season of inaction risks undoing years of incremental process— progress. I respectfully ask the committee to help us obtain the necessary authorization from Parks so our crews can get back to work restoring this landscape and cultivating the young people who are committed to its future. Thank you.

NKOSI NEWTON: Hello, my name is Nkosi Newton. I've been with NYCH2O and doing work in the Ridgewood Reservoir for about— this is my- it's my third season coming up. And I'm from South Jamaica, Queens. I've met with Mr. Ty Hankerson a couple times before, and the Ridgewood Reservoir is a very large part of the community. I've seen a lot of people that I went to high school with, I see on a daily work in the reservoir and garner a love for ecology and

wetlands and just learning these things as I have. And I think that's a very impactful thing for the youth. And to me, yeah, sure, it's a job for the summer, but it's also like a thing that I use to learn, make an impact on my community in which other ways I probably wouldn't be doing because we haven't been working in the reservoir. We just came from Tompkins Square Park fixing benches. I wouldn't be doing that regularly, you know, that's just not a normal thing to do. And I just— I'm just asking for the committee and whoever can help to ask the Parks Department if they could please help us and just speed up the process so that we can get back to work and all of our hard work isn't just erased. Thank you.

SOPHIA HART: My name is Sophia Hart. I am a biology major in the Macaulay Honors Program at the College of Staten Island, and this is my second summer working with NYCH2O. The work we do restoring Ridgewood Reservoir has taught me about the ecology of freshwater wetlands and the negative impact that invasive species such as Phragmites can have when they outcompete our native plants. More importantly though, I have learned the value of stewarding these

urban green spaces. By removing the Phrag, we are opening the water to a variety of native aerial insectivores, waterfowl, and shorebirds, and simultaneously improving how members of the community interact with nature. And in my time working with this crew in the basin, many of the parkgoers have come by and expressed their gratitude for what we do. And so all we're doing is awaiting Parks' go-ahead to continue frag cutting this season, and the longer we wait, the more our work is being reversed.

JORDAN CASALINOVA: Good afternoon. Nice to meet you all. My name is Jordan Casalinova. I've been an intern at NYCH2O for three years now. I was born and raised in Bushwick. I'm currently living in East New York, and I am a freshman at Brooklyn College pursuing exercise science. And I know exercise and the environment are kind of unrelated, but that just shows how much this company's been— meant to me. It's been so influential, and I have to give a quick thank you to Henry for introducing me to the company. Thank you, Henry. I've learned so many different things about the environment, plants, and water systems. I've seen the impacts that we have, the things we can do, and I've been— I've even been

applying my knowledge outside of work, and it's very influential, and I would love to keep the opportunity. And Highland Park is like my home away from home now, and even more so now that I'm local to the area. Cutting Phragmites has made such a big difference, even more than what we could have thought. We've seen new native plants showing up like cattails, and they're not just returning, but they're also thriving with the work we've done. And our full team is ready to come back. We're all ready to get back into action. We have some people traveling far. We're all ready to work through the heat, ready to work through rain. We've done it before, and it's something we do out of love. And right now we can't do it. And every day- every day that goes by, we don't have access to our work. We're watching all of it slowly slip away. Everything's going in vain. So if you would, please help us get the green light to not just allow us to do what we love, but to make our world a better and healthier place.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Jordan, Sophia, Nkosi, and David. Thank you. And we have one final panelist joining us via Zoom. Oliver Rivera, are you there? Oliver, are you there on the Zoom?

OLIVER RIVERA: Hi everyone.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Hi. You may be—

OLIVER RIVERA: Good afternoon. so hearing all those great testimonies, that's amazing. I love the work that's going on. Thanks for having me today, speakers. Pierina, you rock. I'm glad that you're there. I'm just here today to speak on funding. I know that this is based on the three bills that you presented. Kind of new to this process, but I joined the Finance Committee hearing testimony last week, and I spoke on the funding for Parks and Recreation. So I just wanted to get on the record on this committee and just state the fact that, you know, speaking to tree pits and everything that was brought up today, all the topics. Overall the Parks Department just needs more funding. Right now one percent of the annual budget at $1.2 million is not going to cut it. We spoke of PEP officers and what they do, from enforcing people with dogs who let their dogs leave waste everywhere, the tree pits, these programs that need funding to keep the parks in order, the maintenance teams. I just want to kinda push for increased funding, you know. Three percent of the annual budget is what should be considered at

least every year for parks. We have too many parks across all five boroughs. Staten Island having the most, Bronx being the second with Van Cortlandt and Pelham Bay, and in order to keep these parks thriving, you know- my kids are part of the New York Junior Tennis League. We use the parks frequently, from Williamsbridge Oval to Van Cortlandt. We need more maintenance workers around the clock for bathrooms, for restrooms, for litter, for pickup, more enforcement for wrongdoers that are in the park smoking and drinking and letting their dogs poop. All these things require funding.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony. Your time has expired.

OLIVER RIVERA: Okay. Three percent is what I'm asking for, please. $3 million, that'd be great. Thank you, everyone.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Oliver. We're trying to get to one percent first. We're at 0.5, but thank you so much.

OLIVER RIVERA: Yeah, I heard it was one percent, but not enough.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: I hear you.

OLIVER RIVERA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Alright. We're going to call on— we're going to go back to Scott Kearney. You got to take your seat first. Right over here. I love that. Yeah, we got a seat for you.

SCOTT KEARNEY: Okay. First, I wanted to congratulate Alley Pond [sic] Nature Center. If everybody's aware of them, they recently got a concession that they struggled for years and years and years to get. They have 60,000 visitors annually. Salt Marsh Nature Center has 4,000. District 46 and the Parks Department has under- has not paid attention to the fact that the rangers just don't have the staff to operate it. What needs to happen is a process that's for creating a concession for the Marine Park Nature Center. The first thing you do is identify the site and the agency, determine that it's underutilized. After that, there's a drafting and approval of an RFP. And lastly, the solicitation of bids and you— it's awarded. I'd like the Council to jump on this. In the meantime, let's put up a sign for all those empty days. They're only open five hours on Saturday and five hours on Sunday. Whereas seven days a week the Alley Pond is open. Now, this is part embarrassment to encourage the district to do

something about it, and part very important for our children's education. I want to post a scannable at the front door of Marine Park locked doors, telling anybody who comes to the nature center that there's a nature center up in Douglaston on that very day, on that very hour, that you can bring your children to. If we're closed, this is where you can go. And I do admit that it is to embarrass District 46 to hurry up and to push for this concession. This nature center was put there by myself 27 years ago. I think we've waited long enough.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you, Scott.

SCOTT KEARNEY: Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON HANKERSON: Thank you. All right, seeing that there is no more public testimony, the Parks hearing of June 16th is now adjourned.

[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 September 15, 2026