

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION,
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY

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June 19, 2014
Start: 1:18 p.m.
Recess: 3:19 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
16th Fl.

B E F O R E:

MARK LEVINE
Chairperson
MARK TREYGER
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Darlene Mealy
James G. Van Bramer
Andrew Cohen
Alan N. Maisel
Rosie Mendez
Andy L. King
Donovan J. Richards
Steven Matteo
Eric A. Ulrich
Margaret S. Chin

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

Liam Kavanagh
First Deputy Commissioner
New York City Department of
Parks and Recreation

Daniel Zarrilli
Director
Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency

Larry Scott Blackmon
Deputy Commissioner for Community Outreach
New York City Department of
Parks and Recreation

Bram Gunther
Chief
Forestry, Horticulture & Natural Resources
New York City Department of
Parks and Recreation

Dorothy Lewankowski
Queens Parks Commissioner
New York City Department of
Parks and Recreation

Ida Sanoff

John Cori
Friends of Rockaway Beach

James Yolles
Communications Director
New Yorkers for Parks

Hope Cohen
Battery Conservancy

Teresa Pedroza
Grandmother, Activist

2 [background comments]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: 'Kay.

4 [gavel]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Good afternoon

6 everybody. [background comments] Welcome. Thank

7 you for coming to our very special joint hearing

8 between the Committees of Parks and Recreation and

9 Recovery and Resiliency. I'm Mark Levine, Chair of

10 the Parks Committee and you'll be hearing shortly

11 from my colleague, Chair Mark Treyger, Chair of

12 Recovery and Resiliency. Our Committees today will

13 be focusing on the issue of rebuilding the parks and

14 beaches that were affected by Hurricane Sandy and we

15 will explore the question of which measures the Parks

16 Department is putting in place to prepare parks and

17 beaches to be more resilient ahead of the inevitable

18 next major storm.

19 The Committees will also hear Intro 0074,

20 sponsored by our colleague, Council Member Andy King,

21 who I believe is here, and that would require the

22 creation of a process by which City agencies and

23 local electric corporations can more efficiently

24 operate together when downed or damaged trees

25 intermix with electrical wires.

2 And the Parks Committee will also hear a
3 Preconsidered street co-naming bill which will
4 ceremonially name 64 streets and thoroughfares
5 throughout the City.

6 This is the first hearing on both bills
7 and the Committee will not be voting on these bills
8 at this hearing.

9 When Hurricane Sandy hit on Monday,
10 October 29th of 2012, it laid waste not only to homes
11 and businesses, but also to parks, beaches and trees.
12 Thousands of trees were knocked down by the storm or
13 had to be cut down; thousands more were damaged by
14 the salt water flooding into their roots. Hurricane
15 Sandy inundated over 5,700 acres of the park system,
16 damaged approximately 430 acres, destroyed nearly
17 five miles of the Rockaway boardwalk, caused over
18 \$800 million worth of damage to parks, and moved over
19 a million cubic yards of sand inland from the beaches
20 into back yards, streets and homes. Our city
21 responded heroically to this devastation. The Parks
22 Department and a wide array of City agencies
23 mobilized in an unprecedented fashion to reopen our
24 beaches and boardwalks in time for the 2013 summer
25 season. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and

2 thousands of volunteers from across the city and
3 region also played a critical role in the massive
4 cleanup and rebuilding effort. This effort is of
5 course still ongoing, with some beach closures
6 remaining even now, 20 months after Sandy. The City
7 has not yet finalized its plan for reconstruction of
8 the Rockaway boardwalk, the placement of roughly 3
9 million cubic yards of sand is still ongoing and
10 critical berms are still being constructed at beaches
11 in Staten Island and Rockaway beach.

12 The pace of reconstruction has been
13 hampered by the inexcusably slow pace of
14 reimbursement the Parks Department has received from
15 FEMA. At a recent budget hearing, the Parks
16 Department testified that they have to date received
17 less than half of the \$72.4 million in reimbursements
18 we are due for expense costs from the Federal
19 Government and we have not yet received any capital
20 reimbursements from FEMA so far.

21 We hope to hear an update today on those
22 numbers, along with testimony on what obstacles, if
23 any, are preventing the full reimbursement.

24 The Parks Department Capital Division has
25 been tested like never before over the past year-and-

2 a-half by the massive post Sandy reconstruction
3 needs. This has impacted the pace of capital
4 projects in parks system-wide, not just in storm-
5 affected areas. These capacity constraints have
6 contributed to delays of up to four years for even
7 the smallest projects. The Council is pushing for
8 the City's budget to fund an additional 55 staff
9 members for the Capital Division in order to help
10 alleviate this crisis.

11 Sadly, Sandy will not be the last
12 Superstorm which pounds our city's coastline, so we
13 hope to explore today the ways in which
14 reconstruction of our beaches and boardwalks will
15 create more resilient infrastructure better able to
16 withstand the next major weather event. But better
17 infrastructure can only do so much to protect our
18 city in an era of global climate change, rising sea
19 levels and increasingly extreme megastorms. I hope
20 today's hearing will serve as a sobering reminder
21 that all of us need to treat reduction of greenhouse
22 gas emissions as the greatest imperative of our age.

23 Our hearing today will focus on the more
24 prosaic matters of building and near-term resiliency,
25 but I nonetheless look forward to a robust discussion

2 on these important topics. Thank you. And now I'm
3 gonna pass it off to my colleague today, Chair
4 Treyger.

5 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Thank you, Chair
6 Levine. Good afternoon, I am Mark Treyger, Chair of
7 the Committee on Recovery and Resiliency. I wanna
8 welcome everyone to this joint hearing and I wanna
9 again thank my co-chair of this hearing, Mark Levine,
10 who is the Chair of the Committee on Parks and
11 Recreation, for both his leadership and his
12 dedication to improving all of our city's parks.

13 Today's topic is an examination of our
14 city's parks and beaches, both as they recovery from
15 Hurricane Sandy and as we prepare for the next storm.
16 In previous hearings this Committee has examined the
17 City's recovery plans for housing, for small
18 businesses, for public housing and for
19 infrastructure; in those hearings I repeatedly said
20 that the City's recovery will be judged not by
21 announcements for presentations, but by what is
22 actually delivered to the community. Today's topic
23 is no different, our city's parks and beaches are
24 literally our frontline defense against future

2 storms. Approximately a third of our city's
3 shoreline is made up of park land.

4 There would be little sense in spending
5 millions of dollars to rebuild homes and businesses
6 today if we're only to leave them vulnerable to
7 flooding tomorrow. We will be judged by how well we
8 rebuild and how well protected we are in future
9 storms.

10 Currently one of the key elements of our
11 protection plan seems to be the building of dunes and
12 berms along our coastlines to place a raised barrier
13 between our communities and potential flood waters,
14 but these are only effective if they are well built
15 and maintained. Unfortunately, we have heard reports
16 that some of the berms already built are crumbling or
17 falling apart. I understand that there is currently
18 an insufficient amount of dune grass, which plays a
19 vital role in holding dunes together, available for
20 us to plant in all of the berms we have constructed.
21 Even worse, we have heard that berms in Staten Island
22 are being damaged by ATV riders, using them as an
23 off-road driving course. These communities believe
24 that the protection and maintenance of these berms is
25 just as critical as their construction and should be

2 treated just as seriously. We hope to have a
3 discussion today on how we can best protect these
4 berms from future damage.

5 I am also concerned about the current
6 protective plans or lack of plans for the beaches in
7 Brighton Beach and Coney Island. We are aiming to
8 protect the Rockaway coast with dunes and berms; we
9 are aiming to protect the Staten Island shore with
10 berms in one of the winning rebuild-by-design
11 proposals, which calls for the building of berms to
12 protect Lower Manhattan. Yet in Coney Island, where
13 water came up over the ocean, over the boardwalk in
14 some areas into homes, I have been told berms are not
15 needed. Quite frankly, the costs are too high when
16 we are wrong when it comes to flood protection and it
17 strikes me as sensible that we over prepare rather
18 than under repair. I hope we will be able to discuss
19 this issue today.

20 Finally, these committees would also like
21 to hear an update on the status of trees that were in
22 the flooded areas. Salt water and other contaminants
23 damaged or killed thousands of trees after the storm,
24 some of which were removed and some of which were
25 weakened but left to be periodically inspected. We

2 hope to hear more about the progress of those
3 inspections and how many weakened trees remained in
4 the affected areas. We would also like to hear the
5 Department's progress on the replacements of downed
6 or removed trees, including if more salt-tolerant
7 species are being introduced to these areas. The
8 truth of the matter is is that we have all these
9 recovery programs for homes and businesses but if we
10 get this part of the recovery wrong, if we don't
11 build up the frontline of defense of our parks and
12 beaches, then we may find ourselves right back to
13 square one. So this is an important topic and I look
14 forward to hearing from the affected residents and
15 from the administration on these issues so we can
16 move forward together.

17 I'd like to repeat what the Chair
18 mentioned about over \$800 million in park capital
19 damage were done, we still have damaged parks, park
20 land across the City, we have received zero dollars
21 thus far from FEMA and today we'll be examining what
22 is the log jam and how we can best move forward to
23 make sure that every community impacted by Sandy gets
24 the recovery dollars needed and how best we can move
25 forward. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much,
3 Chair Treyger. I want to acknowledge we have
4 colleagues here with us today, including Council
5 Member Maisel from Brooklyn, Council Member King from
6 the Bronx, Council Member Mendez from Manhattan,
7 Council Member Chin from Manhattan, and Council
8 Member Matteo from Staten Island. This is the 11th
9 hour in budget negotiations and so I wanna warn you
10 that you'll be seeing members coming in and out
11 throughout our hearing; don't take that as a personal
12 affront; it's a very busy day for all of us. See,
13 we've been also joined by our Majority Leader, Jimmy
14 Van Bramer. Thank you very much. [background
15 comments] Okay. Wonderful. Okay. [background
16 comment] Alright. We're now gonna turn it over to
17 the administration for their testimony. [background
18 comment] Thank you.

19 LIAM KAVANAGH: Good afternoon Chairs
20 Levine and Treyger and members of both the Parks and
21 Recreation and Recovery and Resiliency Committees. I
22 am Liam Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner for the
23 New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and
24 on behalf of our Commissioner... [interpose]
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Deputy Commissioner,
3 I apologize, but we're under instructions now to
4 swear in those who are testifying; not a personal
5 attack on your integrity by any means, but I'm gonna
6 ask my co-chair here to conduct the swearing in.
7 Mark, can you go forth? [sic]

8 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

10 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Do you swear or affirm
11 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
12 the truth in your testimony before this committee and
13 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

14 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

15 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: 'Kay. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: One more further
17 improvisation on the agenda; I'm told that Council
18 Member King needs to leave and would like to make a
19 very brief statement in support of his bill, so Mr.
20 King.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'm gonna speed
22 through... speed read through this, [laughter] but I
23 apologize, but I have to get back into E and T [sic]
24 meeting right now. But Mr. Commissioner, I wanna
25 thank you; Mr. Chairs, Levine and Treyger, Parks

2 Committee, Recreation and Recovery and Resiliency.
3 I'm Council Member Andy King; I represent the 12th
4 District in the Bronx and today you're gonna hear
5 information that involves [sic] Intro 0074, which is
6 a deficiency in timely removal of trees downed as a
7 result of a severe weather event.

8 In my district, Superstorm Sandy, there
9 was a widespread of power failures due to high winds
10 which were knocked down [sic] and power lines. At
11 this time I was still a candidate running, so I
12 wasn't even a part of the infrastructure here, but I
13 saw how the response to appear time for utility
14 companies and Parks Department and the Sanitation
15 Department were significantly delayed because of lack
16 of coordinated responses; I was out on the street
17 trying to flag down trucks and find out what was
18 going on and there was no coordinated effort between
19 those agencies.

20 According to Con Edison, there's over
21 16,970 miles of overhead cables running throughout
22 the five boroughs of the City of New York; according
23 to Million Trees NYC, there are also 592,130 trees in
24 New York City streets. During severe weather events
25 such as Superstorm Sandy, when a tree fell on a power

2 line, the Parks or the Sanitation Department will
3 respond to the scene for tree removal; however, they
4 were unable to do so because they needed to wait for
5 Con Edison to respond to check whether or not the
6 power lines were alive or not and there was a
7 devastation widespread of their whole grid.
8 Conversely, when Con Edison responded to the scene
9 first, they couldn't repair a power line because
10 there was a tree on it. So when the Sanitation or
11 Parks got there, they couldn't do anything because of
12 the power line and when Con Ed got there, there was a
13 problem because they couldn't do anything because
14 there was a tree on the power line. So this Intro
15 0074 is designated to make sure that there's a
16 dedicated communication between the Parks Department,
17 Department of Sanitation and the Office of Emergency
18 Management and local power utility companies and to
19 assist and ensure a quick and efficient response to
20 power failures as a result of downed power lines felt
21 by trees. Intro 0074 will require the Office of
22 Management and Department of Sanitation, local
23 electric corporations to develop a protocol for
24 removal of trees that have been downed or damaged as
25 a result of weather climate events. The bill will

2 also require these institutions to establish and
3 response team to act in concert after receiving
4 information regarding to the status of downed or
5 damaged trees. I believe with the increase of number
6 of trees being planted in New York City, coupled with
7 the vulnerability of our city to severe weather
8 events, this is another step in helping expedite our
9 recovery time. I'm looking forward; unfortunately
10 I'm not gonna be here long, but I know there's gonna
11 be great testimony that's gonna happen and whatever I
12 can do to help be part of that conversation to make
13 sure that we don't have this miscommunication but
14 there's a dedicated resource to deal with these
15 challenges; I'm looking forward to doing whatever I
16 can and work with you, Deputy Commissioner, and thank
17 you again for your time and energy and effort today.

18 LIAM KAVANAGH: You're welcome.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
20 Member King. I want to acknowledge we've been joined
21 by two of our colleagues from the Parks Committee,
22 Council Member Mealy from Brooklyn and Council Member
23 Cohen from the Bronx. And now Deputy Commissioner, I
24 apologize, the floor is indeed yours.

2 LIAM KAVANAGH: Once again, good
3 afternoon, [laughter] Chairs Levine and Treyger and
4 members of both the Parks and Recreation and Recovery
5 and Resilience Committee; I am Liam Kavanagh, First
6 Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Department
7 of Parks and Recreation and on behalf of our
8 Commissioner, Mitchell Silver, I thank you for
9 allowing me to speak before you today about our work
10 in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. I'm joined
11 here by Dan Zarrilli, Deputy Director of the Mayor's
12 Office of Rebuilding and Resiliency..

13 DAN ZARRILLI: Recovery and Resiliency.

14 LIAM KAVANAGH: Recovery and Resiliency,
15 excuse me, who will assist me in answering your
16 questions today.

17 Sandy forever changed the landscape of
18 the City; the storm forced us to rethink our
19 policies, procedures and park development plans. We
20 shared much of this with the Council in February of
21 last year and what we will do today is to provide an
22 overview of our efforts around resiliency and our
23 thoughts related to building for the future.

24 The damage caused by Superstorm Sandy was
25 catastrophic; we estimate over \$830 million in

2 damages to parks and park properties citywide. Aside
3 from monetary damages, Sandy inundated roughly 5,700
4 acres of our 29,000-acre park system [background
5 comments] and damaged approximately 400 park sites.
6 With 27 percent of the City's shoreline in our
7 jurisdiction, our beaches bore the brunt of the storm
8 surge, as nearly 3 million cubic yards of sand was
9 displaced from our beaches. Sandy's impact on
10 natural resources was equally as destructive, as
11 nearly 20,000 trees in the New York City park system,
12 natural areas, park lands and on streets were
13 damaged. We estimate an additional 10,000 trees
14 suffered salt water inundation as a result of the
15 storm. This was by far the biggest storm in terms of
16 tree damage the City has ever faced and to put in
17 perspective, during Hurricane Irene, a total of 3,444
18 street trees were lost; over 10,000 were destroyed
19 during Sandy, so the scale is very different and
20 dramatically different.

21 We learned many lessons from the storm --
22 first was that when we are able to properly design
23 and plan parks and open spaces they can withstand
24 severe weather better than if they had not been
25 designed for those purposes and in many cases they

2 act as the first line of defense, providing an all
3 too important role during a time when areas of the
4 city need as much protection as possible, must as
5 Council Member Treyger mentioned in his opening
6 remarks.

7 Our team in the Capital Division worked
8 nonstop to clean, repair and open parks with a
9 particular focus on the 14 miles of New York City's
10 beaches; we wanted to complete as much as possible in
11 time for the 2013 beach season. Our goal was not
12 only to rebuild, but to do so with resiliency in
13 mind, integrating strategies to protect and enhance
14 the community, public space and infrastructure. I'd
15 like to share a few examples of our work around those
16 communities.

17 Our goal was to clean up our sites,
18 inspect to ensure that they were safe, open up where
19 possible and rebuild the damaged sites with a focus
20 on resiliency. Doing so required a tremendous amount
21 of planning and coordination with a number of
22 agencies across city, state and federal governments.
23 While the list of agencies we partnered with to date
24 is extensive, we would especially like to thank the
25 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department

2 of Environmental Conservation, as well as our sister
3 agencies from around the City for their invaluable
4 partnership.

5 Parks staff inspected almost 2,000 parks
6 and playgrounds in the immediate aftermath of the
7 storm to assess damage. We're proud of what we
8 accomplished; to date 99 percent of our properties
9 are open and our inspections have identified over
10 \$830 million in damages to 420 park sites.

11 In Brooklyn, working with the Army Corps
12 of Engineers, 600,000 cubic yards of sand was pumped
13 onto the beaches of Coney Island last summer.
14 Steeplechase Pier was reconstructed and we installed
15 storm-resistant modular buildings elevated above,
16 well above the 100-year flood plain.

17 Also in Brooklyn, along the Coney Island
18 boardwalk, while working to rebuild the area in a
19 more strong and resilient fashion, a major project
20 currently occurring is the rebuilding of Nautilus
21 Park. Since Superstorm Sandy, New York City Parks
22 has dedicated over \$1 million towards enhancing this
23 outdoor space. Nautilus was damaged during the
24 storm, especially the play equipment, which was
25 corroded due to salt water inundation. This

2 construction includes handball courts, basketball
3 courts and replacement of other play equipment and
4 beaches.

5 In Rockaway, which bore the brunt of the
6 storm, we continue to work to build in a manner that
7 not only returns the beach and boardwalk to its
8 former glory, but build for the future. We have
9 constructed a number of boardwalk islands, installed
10 baffle walls, berms and the aforementioned modular
11 buildings. We used recaptured boardwalk wood washed
12 away by the storm to create new elevated seating
13 areas and even as we speak, the Army Corps of
14 Engineers is currently pumping upwards of 3 million
15 cubic yards of sand on the beach, and we have
16 renovated our buildings to elevate utilities and
17 incorporate elements to make our facilities as
18 watertight as possible.

19 In Staten Island we repaired two-and-a-
20 half miles of boardwalk and installed over 26,000
21 linear feet of interim shoreline protection, from
22 South Beach to Conference House Park.

23 In the Bronx we repaired the Orchard
24 Beach Promenade and repaired paving stones that were
25 uplifted during the storm. As evident by the recent

2 concert at Orchard Beach featuring Jennifer Lopez, we
3 believe Orchard Beach is back and being enjoyed as
4 much as ever.

5 Parks are most resilient when there is a
6 strong sense of community stewardship and
7 opportunities for engagement; we heard this
8 throughout the city, most notably in Rockaway, where
9 the community was eager to partner with us throughout
10 the rebuilding process. Parks led a conceptual
11 planning process that created a blueprint for a
12 comprehensive park system from Beach 2nd to Beach
13 49th Street, beach to bay; we held many community
14 meetings and are pleased to have the support of
15 Community Board 14, local elected officials,
16 including Council Members Ulrich and Richards, as
17 well as civic and community leaders. The plan
18 includes recommendations to replace recreational
19 amenities lost in the storm. These amenities are
20 being built with resiliency in mind.

21 Community stewardship is one of the
22 cornerstones of our efforts; in the aftermath of the
23 storm, our Partnerships for Parks program; working
24 with NYC Service, facilitated 125 cleanup events,
25 bringing nearly 8,000 volunteers to our parks,

2 playgrounds and beaches and recreation centers. Our
3 volunteers collected more than 22,000 bags of debris
4 alone.

5 On Jamaica Bay, Rockaway Park Restoration
6 Corps also worked to enhance stewardship; the Corps
7 advances physical and social resiliency by offering
8 employment and educational opportunities that result
9 in ecological restoration and community protection.
10 In 2013, the Corps hired 200 trainees to perform
11 cleanup work and community outreach after Superstorm
12 Sandy; the Corps removed enormous amounts of sand
13 from streets and boardwalks and other places where it
14 was difficult to get heavy equipment, collected over
15 10,000 bags of debris, maintained over 5,700 young
16 street trees and planted flowers and shrubs and
17 gardens throughout the community, in both Rockaway
18 and around Jamaica Bay.

19 Twenty-seven percent of the City's
20 shoreline is in Parks' jurisdiction; Superstorm Sandy
21 foreshadowed the ongoing challenges -- climate change
22 and sea level rise -- well posed [sic] for open
23 spaces, communities, infrastructure and the
24 waterfront in general. Data from the New York Panel
25 on Climate Change indicates that sea level rise and

2 climate change present vast challenges to open spaces
3 and communities. By the 2020s, approximately 6,600
4 acres of park land will be in the 100-year flood
5 plain and by the 2050s; park land in the 100-year
6 flood plain will increase to approximately 7,400
7 acres. Climate change will impact open space in
8 neighboring communities through higher temperatures,
9 sea level rise, increased precipitation and flooding
10 and ecosystem changes.

11 There are two major plans that New York
12 City is implementing concurrently in the aftermath of
13 Superstorm Sandy. The first plan created, called "A
14 Stronger More Resilient New York" pledges to increase
15 resiliency through 257 initiatives that aim to
16 strengthen coastal defenses, as well as upgrade and
17 protect infrastructure to make our neighborhoods
18 safer and more vibrant and we're lucky to have Dan
19 Zarrilli, who was one of the primary authors of that
20 document, here with us today, and then Mayor de
21 Blasio released "One City Rebuilding Together," a
22 report to accelerate Sandy recovery and expand the
23 City's climate resiliency in four ways. The report
24 seeks to enhance policy and planning, expedite
25 efforts to secure federal funds, continue

2 collaboration with state efforts and expand economic
3 opportunities for all New Yorkers even as we rebuild.

4 The City's plan for a stronger, more
5 resilient New York outlined over 30 park-related
6 initiatives, including updating landscape design
7 guidelines, planning and implementation for coastal
8 parks, beach nourishment and coastal protection
9 planning for Staten Island, Brooklyn and Queens
10 through partnerships with the U.S. Army Corps of
11 Engineers, Jamaica Bay area restoration, studies and
12 resiliency coordination with the National Park
13 Service, addressing at-risk operations and
14 recreational facilities, increasing the health of
15 natural systems in areas through nature-based design
16 and restoration, forest and wetland management, and
17 green infrastructure.

18 To cover ongoing waterfront inspections,
19 we have secured \$2.5 million in funding for a
20 systemic waterfront inspection program. Parks
21 manages 148 miles of natural and built waterfront
22 shoreline; this initial funding stream will cover
23 four years of inspections of the built waterfront.

24 Parks are critical pieces of community
25 infrastructure and serve as buffers during storm

2 events; we are currently planning for the future by
3 creating a comprehensive set of design guidelines for
4 parks and facilities in areas that are at risk of
5 damage by catastrophic storms, flooding and sea level
6 rise. Design and planning for the flood zone will be
7 an online resource outlining best practices in risk
8 assessment, planning, design, construction and
9 management of parks and facilities in the flood zone.
10 This online tool will cover bulkheads, esplanades,
11 beaches, boardwalks, wetlands, natural areas,
12 playgrounds, adult fitness equipment, athletic
13 fields, recreation centers, cultural resources,
14 historic properties, marinas, Brownfield sites,
15 upland flood control, forested areas, street trees,
16 and green infrastructure.

17 The aforementioned initiatives are
18 complimentary to the resiliency measures. We have
19 been coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of
20 Engineers; the Corps has been critical in advancing
21 shoreline protection in the Rockaways, Brighton
22 Beach, Coney Island, as well as Plumb Beach.
23 Coordinated projects with the Corps of Engineers
24 include the Rockaway Phase 1, where, as I mentioned
25 earlier, 3.5 million cubic yards of sand are being

2 pumped onto the beach to create higher dunes in
3 Brighton Beach and Coney Island; as also mentioned
4 previously, 600,000 cubic yards of sand were added to
5 the beach last summer for the same purposes, and
6 further, and Plumb Beach had 130,000 cubic yards
7 replenished, T-groins installed and 200 feet of break
8 water installed.

9 Our continued coordination with the Corps
10 of Engineers is critical to advance shoreline
11 protection on Staten Island; this concludes the
12 completion of Phase 1 for beach protection
13 alternatives for Fort Wadsworth, Oakwood Beach, and a
14 Phase 2 study of Great Kills to Tottenville.

15 Another critical shoreline protection, a
16 vulnerable location, is the Jamaica Bay area and to
17 meet our resiliency goals, Parks, the Mayor's Office
18 and the Army Corps are working for a timely
19 completion of the reformulation study for beachfront
20 protections and feasibility study for bayside
21 protections.

22 Broad collaboration and forward-thinking
23 planning are crucial towards ensuring future
24 resilience; Parks is actively partnering with the New
25 York State Office of Storm Recovery and the Mayor's

2 Office of Recovery and Resilience to advance
3 resiliency through the New York Rising Community
4 Reconstruction Program projects. Many of these
5 projects have been funded and others have been
6 recommended for funding that include coastal
7 protection planning, dune improvements, streetscape
8 improvements, bioswales, and beach grass plantings,
9 some of which will occur in Coney Island.

10 On 2013, the U.S. Department of Housing
11 and Urban Development launched the Rebuild by Design
12 competition to promote innovative design solutions
13 that foster resilience; winning projects include the
14 Big U at East River Park, which was awarded \$335
15 million for bridging berms that provide protection,
16 waterfront accessibility and passive recreation. In
17 Staten Island, Tottenville was awarded \$60 million
18 for a living breakwater project that includes
19 breakwaters, reefs, cultural programming and
20 education programming. Another project, the Hunts
21 Point Lifelines, was awarded \$20 million for a
22 feasibility study and pilot project for flood
23 protections, green infrastructure, community and
24 economic development and maritime supply chains. We
25

2 continue to work closely with HUD to implement these
3 three innovative projects.

4 Parks actively pursued funding through a
5 \$100 million grant opportunity from the National Fish
6 and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Department of
7 Interior and just this last Monday, we learned that
8 five of our projects were funded; we're receiving
9 almost \$1 million, for the Brighton Beach Green
10 Infrastructure pilot project, \$250,000 for a project
11 to explore day lighting, Tibbetts Brook in the Bronx,
12 over \$4 million for Spring Creek salt marsh and
13 coastal upland restoration, and almost \$5 million for
14 the restoration of Sunset Cove. On top of that, we
15 were also awarded \$4.4 million for shoreline
16 restoration on the Bronx River at Starlight Park.

17 We continue to work closely with FEMA to
18 obtain funding to rebuild our facilities better and
19 stronger in the aftermath of the storm; to date,
20 Parks has 20 FEMA project worksheets obligated,
21 representing \$72.5 million in reimbursable funds; of
22 the \$72.5 million in obligated funds, we have
23 received \$33.5 million in reimbursement. All of the
24 reimbursed funds to date have been for expense items.
25 The additional \$40.2 million in obligated funds

2 comprises \$20 million in capital funding and an
3 additional \$19.4 million in expense funding.

4 Parks is dedicated to advancing
5 resiliency by building and supporting communities and
6 sustaining and restoring ecologies, our natural
7 resources, including wetlands, grasslands, forests
8 and green infrastructure play a critical role in
9 storm protection. When restored properly, wetlands
10 withstand large storms, absorbing storm water and
11 providing precious habitat for various type of
12 species. A prime example of this restoration project
13 occurred at Gerritsen Creek in Brooklyn, which was
14 completed prior to the storm and weathered the storm
15 with very limited damage. We are working to expand
16 green infrastructure throughout the city to reduce
17 flooding from rain and compliment the storm water
18 filtration and absorption benefits provided by our
19 wetlands. These ecosystems are also sources of
20 biodiversity and help ensure continued ecosystem
21 function and services.

22 Research and data-gathering are critical
23 pieces of our resilience recovery and preparedness
24 strategy. In partnerships with the Natural Areas
25 Conservancy, we're currently conducting a citywide

2 ecological and social assessment to measure the
3 health of our forest wetlands and grasslands. This
4 assessment helps us understand how these areas
5 function ecologically and benefit our diverse
6 communities. Parks also continues to actively
7 monitor and research the impacts of Superstorm Sandy
8 on our communities and natural resources in order to
9 better prepare for future events.

10 As part of our ecological assessments we
11 have also partnered with the City University of New
12 York to form the Jamaica Bay Science and Resilience
13 Institute; the Institute is run by a consortium
14 overseen by CUNY; the focus is on ecological and
15 social assessments and indicators modeling of the
16 bay, as well as decision-making and support tools.
17 Part of the consortium is the Public Agency Council
18 which comprises city, state and federal agencies who
19 are stakeholders of the Jamaica Bay area. The Public
20 Agency Council has met several times to analyze the
21 projects that Parks is requesting the Army Corps to
22 prioritize.

23 And to analyze the effect of salt water
24 inundation, in the summer of 2013 the Parks
25 Department performed an extensive survey in the

2 Superstorm Sandy inundation zones. One of the
3 measures we used to ascertain tree damage was to
4 examine the percentage of a tree's canopy that
5 developed leaves. This is referred to as a tree's
6 leaf out. Parks analyzed and mapped trees in the
7 inundation zone that were insufficiently leafed out a
8 year after Sandy. Combined with information on
9 routine tree removals, Parks visualized and
10 identified areas where there was a need for
11 additional tree removal, continued monitoring and new
12 plantings. The survey identified a total of 10,192
13 street and park trees showing signs of reduced leaf
14 out; 6,864 of those were street trees, which is
15 nearly 14 percent of the street trees within the
16 inundation zone and since we began that process, we
17 have removed 1,700 of those trees because their
18 condition was such that it was clear they were not
19 going to rebound and resume life as healthy street
20 trees. This spring there are more trees that are in
21 that category; we have so far identified over 1,800
22 trees that need to be removed; we have contracts in
23 place in Manhattan; we've already started working to
24 remove those trees; contractors will begin working in
25 Brooklyn within the next week and in the other three

2 boroughs shortly thereafter. We will continue of
3 course to use our own forces to remove trees that
4 pose any imminent dangers, but we are relying on
5 these contracts to remove the bulk of the trees that
6 we've identified during the surveys we just conducted
7 this spring. We're going to continue to monitor
8 those trees; I expect there will be additional
9 removals as a result of the inundation from storm
10 water, but it's something we are keeping a close eye
11 on and we will be replanting the trees that are
12 removed through these contracts and we will be using
13 more salt water-tolerant trees; there are no trees
14 that are fully resistant, I think, to salt water, but
15 we've created a list of species that meet that
16 criteria; we are sharing them with experts in the
17 field to get their input on whether we've selected
18 the right trees and other things that we may have
19 overlooked and we will certainly be replanting with
20 an eye towards the potential for future inundation.

21 So in conclusion, Superstorm Sandy marks
22 an arduous time in the history of New York City and
23 on our parks as well. Our parks are fully committed
24 to not only the full restoration of the park system,
25 but also ensuring that they are in better shape and

2 can withstand the projected future storms for
3 generations to come. Thank you for allowing me to
4 appear before you today and I am glad to answer any
5 questions you might have.

6 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Okay. Thank you,
7 Deputy Commissioner; I guess I'll begin questions
8 first and then I'll turn it over to Chair Levine.

9 Given the time delays and difficulties
10 that the Parks Department has had historically in
11 keeping projects on schedule and moving capital
12 projects in a timely manner, how is the Department
13 preparing to be able to spend the additional \$442.8
14 million in Sandy-related city and non-city-funded
15 capital commitments for FY2014 to 2018?

16 LIAM KAVANAGH: Commissioner Silver, as
17 he testified at the budget hearing a month or so ago,
18 is committed to reviewing the capital process and
19 finding ways in which we can get projects through the
20 process quicker, get them in construction faster and
21 most importantly, get them built quicker; it's a
22 process he has spent a lot of time working on already
23 and while we have not, you now, don't have a final
24 project to advance, it is something that we are very
25 clearly focused on; we want projects to benefit the

2 public as quickly as they possibly can. At the time
3 we're working very closely with OMB to expedite hires
4 that have already been approved and we are working
5 internally to focus our efforts on eliminating any
6 delays that may occur in our internal processes so
7 that there's nothing that we're doing to delay a
8 project from moving to construction and to finally to
9 opening for the public.

10 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: And if I heard correct
11 at the previous Parks hearing, there was a commitment
12 from the commissioner to create an online tracking
13 database... [interpose]

14 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yeah.

15 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: system so the public
16 can see the status updates about these projects. Is
17 that correct?

18 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes, you are correct and
19 that is in development right now.

20 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Any estimated time
21 when we might see that happen?

22 LIAM KAVANAGH: I would hesitate to give
23 you an estimate right now, but I'll be happy to
24 follow up with you after the hearing.

2 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Okay. Is the Parks
3 Department the lead on Sandy-related parks capital
4 projects or is it the Mayor's Office of Recovery and
5 Resiliency taking the lead on these issues?

6 LIAM KAVANAGH: Well, it's a team effort.
7 Certainly smaller projects that are typical to the
8 kind of work we do are being performed directly by
9 the Parks Department and Parks Department staff
10 through the normal contracting processes; other
11 projects that are bigger in scale that require
12 coordination among multiple agencies or permit review
13 by a host of other entities, you know we have worked
14 with the Mayor's Office, of course, DDC, EDC and
15 other agencies, like the Army Corps to ensure that
16 the work is getting done as expeditiously as
17 possible. So it really is a team effort.

18 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: But is there a special
19 emphasis on Sandy-related parks projects that are
20 being pushed at a more expedited fashion because of
21 the fact that, you know; just to give you some
22 context here, as we learned this year, there are
23 still thousands of people waiting for housing
24 recovery assistance, there are still many small
25 businesses still waiting for any type of assistance

2 and not all of the parks have been restored to their
3 conditions prior to Sandy or improved. So is there a
4 special emphasis now, special prioritization of
5 expediting improvements to park land in light of the
6 Sandy damage?

7 DAN ZARRILLI: Let me jump in on this and
8 then turn it over to Liam for a Parks-specific
9 answer. The administration is absolutely committed
10 to advancing all of the Sandy-related recovery and
11 resiliency efforts; we've made significant commitment
12 to accelerate the housing recovery efforts, we have
13 major effort and now focus with the Office of
14 Recovery and Resiliency to examine and expedite all
15 of the recovery elements through FEMA funding, HUD
16 funding, working with the Army Corps; it's an
17 administration-wide effort to expedite all of these,
18 and that includes the Parks Department; we are
19 working very closely with Parks as well as other
20 agencies to make sure that we delivering on all of
21 the needs, the vulnerabilities and ultimately the
22 commitments that we do make.

23 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Alright. And so
24 having said that, other parts of the recovery -- for
25 example, the housing recovery, Director Peterson

2 testified that they're in the process of hiring
3 additional staff to accommodate the volume of cases.
4 Has additional capital staff been hired to work
5 exclusively on Sandy-related park projects?

6 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes. Yes, in the
7 immediate aftermath of the storm, we hired a team to
8 work exclusively on the park projects, on the damage
9 projects that we wanted to push through the capital
10 process; that began very soon after the storm.
11 They're still working on that; we have projects in
12 every borough that have been completed; that are in
13 construction, some of them are still in design.
14 There's only a handful of places that are still
15 closed to the public; I think it's a total of six
16 citywide and they're places that are at the
17 beachfront that absorbs significant damage and may
18 have to be rethought about what gets built and how it
19 gets rebuilt. But we expedited that; as you know, we
20 focused very much on the beaches last year to get
21 Rockaway, Coney Island, the beaches on Staten Island
22 open; that work still continues in many of those
23 neighborhoods and through our work on the late leaf
24 out, you know we're clearly focused on damage that is
25 still becoming evident as a result of the storm and

2 taking very aggressive measures to address it as
3 quickly as possible.

4 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Do you have figures,
5 you know of the \$710 million plus in Sandy-related
6 capital damage to Parks' property, how much has been
7 repaired, how much reflects damages yet to be
8 repaired and what are the issues that are
9 contributing to any delays?

10 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes we do, we have an
11 extensive list that I'd be happy to share with you
12 showing the status of all the projects. Again, there
13 is only I think a half-a-dozen projects that have not
14 gone into the process in some phase and it's because
15 they're projects of where we may have to rethink what
16 we should rebuild. You know, most of them are on
17 Staten Island; on Staten Island we had a synthetic
18 turf field, you know directly next to the beach and
19 it's probably not a good idea to put that back in
20 that location. Similarly, there are a couple of
21 playgrounds along the Staten Island beachfront that
22 we have not rebuilt yet because the Army Corps' plan
23 to build protection may impact the amount of space
24 that we have and what we might want to put in that
25 location. So there are considerations like those

2 that are the only things that have really prevented
3 us from moving forward with repairs or replacements
4 of damaged features and facilities.

5 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: I would greatly
6 appreciate that list of... [interpose]

7 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yeah.

8 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: parks that were
9 damaged and where they stand right now and I would
10 greatly ask the Department and the Mayor's Office to
11 expedite these projects and to hire any additional
12 staff needed, because these are communities that are
13 still going through a lot. [background comment]
14 Just to give you into context, even though this is
15 not parks related, last night there was a shooting in
16 Coney Island right in front of a closed, destroyed
17 NYCHA community center that was destroyed by Sandy.
18 I'd rather have residents inside centers with
19 programs than still be outside, shut out from the
20 evidence of inaction that has been really going on
21 now for over 18-19 months. So I would urge the
22 administration to quickly expedite these works so
23 that the public can see progress happening on the
24 ground.

2 Deputy Commissioner, you testified that
3 we're going to see sea levels rise and I think that
4 for the most part we are in agreement with that. Now
5 the berms that are being constructed now in the
6 Rockaways and Staten Island, are they meant to be
7 permanent barriers?

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: That's a difficult
9 question to answer. Berms by their nature are not
10 necessarily permanent, but... and right now they sort
11 of fall into two categories. The berms that were
12 built on Staten Island were interim protective
13 measures, they were an effort on the part of the City
14 to create a barrier quickly between the water and the
15 communities, and they've been very effective so far,
16 but they are not meant to be a permanent solution to
17 the issues of coastal storms or sea level rise. Our
18 work with the Army Corps of Engineers, the work with
19 Rebuild by Design and some of the work from New York
20 Rising are going to provide longer term protection
21 for those communities. In Rockaway the sand that's
22 being pumped onto the beach right now is creating a
23 very substantial storm berm that will provide an
24 enormous amount of protection in future storms, but
25 it is sort of the first phase of a longer term

2 reformulation project which will provide more
3 significant protection for the Rockaway beachfront.

4 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Now, the neighborhoods
5 of Coney Island and Brighton Beach go inundated from
6 both ends, Coney Island from the creek as well as
7 from the Atlantic Ocean and that was the case in
8 Brighton Beach as well, where residents actually
9 witnessed the ocean coming over the beach and
10 boardwalk and I am aware that the beach in Coney
11 Island and Brighton Beach is in higher elevation than
12 the beach in the Rockaways, but the fact that it
13 still came up over the beach and boardwalk is really
14 eye opening. Why is not even a smaller dune or berm
15 being considered for the beaches in Coney Island and
16 Brighton?

17 DAN ZARRILLI: Jump in first on this. So
18 just to echo this; I mean the dunes or the berms are
19 very much a key piece of the city's comprehensive
20 coastal protection plan that we wanna continue to
21 advance over time; the Parks Department did a great
22 job in putting in 26,000 linear feet of those berms
23 in Staten Island; we're building a lot of those in
24 the Rockaways and we pumped a lot of sand in Coney
25 Island. In the long term I think we... you know the

2 plan does show that we want to see ultimately dunes
3 in Coney Island, expanding them in the Rockaways,
4 building even more substantial improvements in Staten
5 Island through the Army Corps' works, and also, a
6 commitment to planting those dunes, reinforcing those
7 dunes; making sure they are a key portion of a
8 comprehensive coastal plan. So... but I think to... it's
9 also important to recognize that we will never be
10 able to effectively say that we are stopping all
11 flood risk from the coastline... [interpose]

12 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Agree.

13 DAN ZARRILLI: there are different levels
14 of protection, there's cost-effectiveness measures
15 that we need to consider and we are keenly aware of
16 the risks on our beach and have put out plans and are
17 advancing those plans as quickly as possible to
18 upgrade the protections on the beaches; also looking
19 at the back door flooding risk that comes from places
20 like Coney Island Creek. The administration has put
21 out a feasibility study looking at some pretty bold,
22 innovative solutions in Coney Island Creek itself and
23 those proposals are gonna be coming and we're
24 expediting that analysis now and similar work around
25 the city to look at the different types of solutions

2 than perhaps we would have been relying on in the
3 past, because we need to be thinking differently
4 about this. But it's also... the coastal protection
5 plan is a key portion of an entire plan that
6 recognizes we're not gonna stop all the risks on the
7 cost; we need to make sure that we're effectively
8 reducing those risks where we can, but also preparing
9 our buildings, preparing our neighborhoods,
10 protecting our infrastructure in a multi-layered
11 defense against flood risk more specifically and then
12 climate risk more broadly, and that's also looking at
13 heat wave risk and wind and precipitation and a whole
14 range of factors that we're facing. And so the
15 coastal portions very much do emphasize risk
16 production including dunes and berms, but it's one
17 piece of a larger strategy as well.

18 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: I mean I am in
19 agreement with you that we will never fully escape
20 the challenges of being a coastal city, and that's
21 why I do think we have an obligation to study every
22 opportunity to better protect our communities. But
23 just one thing that I will say is that, I do believe
24 that building a dune or a berm might be a more cost-
25 effective measure than building walls and gates and

2 I'm not discounting them at this time, but I'm just
3 saying in the meantime it could be a more cost-
4 effective, more expedited way of moving forward. So
5 to be clear, is the administration considering dunes
6 or berms for the Coney Island; Brighton Beach
7 communities?

8 DAN ZARRILLI: The answer is absolutely
9 yes that we are considering them; we're working with
10 the Army Corps on a range of issues to look at
11 vulnerabilities through their comprehensive study and
12 through their existing authorizations to find ways to
13 continue to upgrade the protections that do exist.
14 Right now the work that was conducted last summer,
15 the 600,000 cubic yards of sand, is a pretty
16 substantial improvement; those improvements are being
17 upgraded to include other protections in Seagate and
18 those are... you know there's a project coming there
19 for additional coastal risk reduction in these
20 neighborhoods and over time we're gonna look to
21 continue building upon that to ultimately build out
22 the entire comprehensive coastal protection plan that
23 we've laid out, which does includes dunes in Coney
24 Island.

2 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: The last question;
3 then I'll turn it over to Chair Levine is; the
4 keyword, in my opinion, historically and even now, is
5 maintenance. If you look historically at the
6 beaches, particularly in Southern Brooklyn, and I'm
7 sure other parts of the city as well, the beach and
8 the boardwalk, which are now really, in my opinion,
9 infrastructure; not just recreational areas anymore,
10 maintenance has been an issue. Mr. Zarrilli and
11 Commissioner Kavanagh, there were cases where people
12 have actually fallen through the boardwalk,
13 particularly in the west end of Coney Island; that's
14 how poorly maintained it has been historically. The
15 beaches have not always been kept in great shape; it
16 shouldn't take a crisis like Sandy to open our eyes
17 to this, and are there plans in the budget right now;
18 is there a commitment on your part to increase the
19 maintenance staff, to increase the maintenance of not
20 just these recreational areas, but really the
21 frontline defense to our communities that are
22 vulnerable to future storms?

23 LIAM KAVANAGH: We have had a substantial
24 increase in our maintenance staffing over the last
25 year-and-a-half; it has allowed us to provide more

2 regular and dedicated maintenance; I'm not going to
3 content that it is to the level that you're
4 describing, but se are in better shape to inspect and
5 to make immediate necessary repairs than we had been
6 in prior years. For example, we did a substantial
7 amount of repair work on the Staten Island boardwalk
8 after the storm in order to make it accessible for
9 the public, last summer and this summer as well, we
10 did work with our own staff in Rockaway to link
11 sections of the boardwalk that had been damaged by
12 the storm but that would allow us to create an
13 extensive east/west connection along the beachfront
14 while other work happens, and we are in a position to
15 do more; I'm not... again, I'm not saying that it is to
16 the level that you're suggesting.

17 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Yes, because I...

18 [background comment] Yeah, please.

19 DAN ZARRILLI: Can I add one more thing
20 to that, to reinforce that? The Mayor's Office and
21 Parks Department worked very closely together to add
22 funds to the budget to increase our inspections of
23 the Parks' waterfront assets and so, you know,
24 effective maintenance, particularly the things you're
25 talking about with structural maintenance, the first

2 thing you need to do is inspect and you know, hire
3 the right engineers and perhaps drivers to go out and
4 look at the conditions of the assets that we're
5 talking about. We've made a major commitment and
6 Parks should be commended for pushing to make these
7 investments and getting this money put into the
8 budget so that we can make those inspections of those
9 assets and continue that on a regular basis. So
10 that's... you know, it's a step and it actually helps
11 inform the future maintenance needs that are
12 required.

13 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: I mean inspections are
14 great, but we definitely need an increase in
15 maintenance and I think that historically that's not
16 always been the case and I think that Parks would
17 agree that more can be done in terms of maintenance,
18 it's just a matter of funds and I'm a major supporter
19 of increasing maintenance funds, but we need a
20 commitment from your end that if given the
21 opportunity you will increase the maintenance
22 staffing to better maintain the beaches and the
23 boardwalk. Has the new commissioner... I know he's in
24 receipt of a letter from a number of officials in
25 southern Brooklyn; has the new commissioner taken a

2 position on the use of the tropical wood for the
3 boardwalks, because that was an issue in the previous
4 administration where there was... they were against
5 using that; are we anywhere near a decision from the
6 new commissioner with regards to the use of tropical
7 wood for the building or maintenance of boardwalks?

8 DAN ZARRILLI: Let me I guess jump in on
9 that. I'm not sure there's any particular... there's
10 not a decision being made; the policy on tropical
11 hardwoods and the use of concrete for boardwalks
12 remains unchanged at this point and you now we know
13 the environmental impacts of the tropical hardwoods,
14 we know the... you know the... non-sustainability impacts
15 of chopping down tropical hardwoods and the problems
16 that causes for climate change and also the analysis
17 that was done showing the increased resiliency
18 benefits for using concrete for boardwalks is a sound
19 decision and that stands.

20 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Right. So just with
21 the issue of the concrete, Mr. Zarrilli, is just... and
22 I am not claiming to be an expert here; just for
23 those people who will try to convince me that
24 concrete is somehow safer than wood or RPL or the
25 other type of items, look no further than the city of

2 New Orleans, where they were told that those concrete
3 levies would hold up and mind you, Katrina did not
4 hit New Orleans as a major hurricane; it actually
5 weakened before it actually impacted the city and
6 those levies snapped and they broke. So I'm not
7 claiming that one is more safe than the other; both
8 can be easily destroyed, but just be aware that there
9 is a strong demand desire from many stakeholders to
10 see the preservation of historical boardwalks, not
11 sidewalks. And of course, we can have a follow-up
12 conversation about how we make sure that they're
13 fortified, that they're built right and properly
14 maintained and I look forward to having that
15 conversation with the administration. I'll turn it
16 over to Chair Levine.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Chair
18 Treyger. I wanna start by continuing on an important
19 point that the chairman was making about operations,
20 staffing and spending on beaches and boardwalks. I
21 think when most people look at a park they understand
22 what the operations work is, it's pretty clear,
23 you've gotta prune the trees, you've gotta repair
24 benches, you've gotta fix the paths; you've gotta
25 work on plumbing of fountains and other things.

2 Perhaps when we look at beach land it might not be
3 apparent just all the operations work that's needed.
4 Could you talk to us about the number of maintenance
5 workers that are assigned to beaches and boardwalks
6 and to the extent you can, tell us what those job
7 categories are, if they're not landscapers and
8 gardeners; what are these jobs?

9 LIAM KAVANAGH: Most of the workers who
10 are assigned to the beaches... well there's actually
11 three categories, of course there are the lifeguards,
12 there's the park enforcement patrol who assist public
13 safety and visitor orientation, things of that
14 nature, and there's the maintenance staff. The
15 maintenance staff is comprised primarily of three
16 categories -- supervision, the equipment operators
17 and the cleaning staff. Supervisions are responsible
18 for patrol line inspections and inspecting all of the
19 facilities, the boardwalk, the restrooms; any other
20 features or amenities that are there at the beach,
21 and they direct the staff to both clean, to repair
22 what they can or to contact others who have
23 specialized skills in order to facilitate the
24 repairs. The equipment operators operate... most of
25 our cleaning is done by specialized beach cleaning

2 equipment; some cases it operates overnight to avoid
3 conflicts with crowded beaches, but it's mechanized
4 equipment that sifts the sand essentially and we rely
5 on that very heavily to provide a clean beach, we do
6 augmented with staff who clean in areas where the
7 equipment can't reach and who assist in places where
8 it's just not feasible to have staff. We typically
9 have staff at the comfort stations to make sure that
10 they're stocked throughout the course of the day and
11 to keep those areas clean because they are places
12 that people congregate around and tend to generate
13 more refuse and impacts. There are differences among
14 all of our beaches of course, depending on their size
15 and the nature of the beach itself; in Coney Island,
16 for example, in the amusement area there's an
17 enormous... there can be enormous crowds of people
18 using both the beach and the boardwalk throughout the
19 day and circulating in and out of the amusement
20 areas; in other beaches the usages are much more
21 predictable, it's families or neighborhood residents
22 using the beach that is adjacent to their homes. We
23 of course have skilled trades people, carpenters and
24 plumbers primarily, but electricians as well, who are
25 part of our maintenance plan for the beaches;

2 carpenters, obviously when there's damage to boards
3 or benches or things like that on the boardwalk,
4 plumbing is of course key, both for the restrooms,
5 the spray showers and foot showers, drinking
6 fountains and things of that nature and there's
7 usually a lot of work at the beaches for plumbers
8 during the course of the year and electricians for...
9 largely for the comfort stations, they maintain light
10 fixtures, automatic sensors that we have gravitated
11 towards for purposes of our toilets and urinals, hair
12 dryers and things like that. So those are the
13 primary titles. The exact numbers I don't have with
14 me right now, but I'd be happy to provide them to you
15 after the hearing... [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Could you even give
17 us a ballpark on the three categories of water
18 safety, pathway maintenance?

19 LIAM KAVANAGH: Water safety citywide,
20 it's a little over 600 lifeguards who are assigned to
21 the beach each year, all beaches in all four boroughs
22 that have beaches. For PEP, it's... I think it's in
23 the area of about 200 and that includes both park
24 enforcement officers and the park security force, who
25 are seasonals who work every year at our beaches and

2 pools in a security role, who work with the park
3 enforcement patrol to help keep places orderly,
4 orient visitors and enforce rules and regulations.
5 The maintenance staff... I hesitate to give you a
6 number off the top of my head, but I think it's also
7 in the neighborhood of about 300 people citywide.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Several follow-up
9 questions then. Could you explain the difference
10 between a PEP officer and a security agent, I think
11 was the word you used? PEP officers have arrest
12 powers... [interpose]

13 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I assume the
15 security agents don't and... [interpose]

16 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: could you explain
18 what the breakdown is between those two categories
19 and the 200 officers you mentioned?

20 LIAM KAVANAGH: Again, this is an
21 estimate off the top of my head, but I would think
22 that it's roughly 25 percent PEP officers, either
23 supervisors or fully shielded PEP officers, and 75
24 percent park security force.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [background comment]
3 differences between the... [crosstalk]

4 LIAM KAVANAGH: And the differences... a
5 Park Enforcement Patrol Officer is a full-time
6 employee of the Parks Department, has gone through
7 the training academy, which is pretty extensive
8 training in security -- parks specifically, security
9 in general -- they hold peace officer status and they
10 have special patrolman status -- they can make
11 arrests, they can issue summonses for a variety of
12 infractions and they are trained in, specifically, in
13 defensive measures. The park security patrol
14 members, they're seasonal employees, they do receive
15 training in rules and regulations, in interacting
16 with the public, in crowd control and things of that
17 nature, but they cannot themselves make arrests or
18 issue summonses.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And of the 300
20 maintenance workers, could you tell us what the
21 breakdown between full-time and part-time is roughly
22 and what portions are JTP?

23 LIAM KAVANAGH: I would estimate again;
24 it's probably 25 percent full-times, 75 percent part-

2 time, including JTPs and JTPs probably comprise 40-50
3 percent of the total.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And how do numbers
5 in all these categories compare to historic trends if
6 you look in decades past?

7 LIAM KAVANAGH: Well, if you go back many
8 decades, there were many more seasonals on the beach;
9 however, over time we have made effective use of
10 mechanized equipment that has allowed us to keep the
11 beaches clean with fewer people and that sort of
12 carried us through periods when... you know, the city's
13 budget was such that our seasonal funding was reduced
14 significantly in some years and so you know we have
15 compared; historically it's lower than it had, but
16 the effectiveness of the workforce I think is
17 significantly greater now, thanks to advances in
18 technology.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Are there any
20 beaches that are managed by private conservancies or
21 other entities?

22 LIAM KAVANAGH: No, none of the beaches
23 are managed... none of the city-owned beaches assigned
24 to the Parks Department. There of course are private
25

2 beaches around the city, but they're not public park
3 land.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. I guess the
5 beach in Brooklyn Bridge Park is too small to count,
6 but that would be one example of sort of a micro
7 beach, but other than that... [crosstalk]

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yeah, but it's not a
9 swimming beach, I'm sorry, I always sort of make that
10 distinction in my mind... [crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Fair point. Fair
12 point. Are there other non-swimming beaches though
13 that you can think of?

14 LIAM KAVANAGH: No, I can't; you know
15 there is shoreline around Randall's Island, where
16 people fish and enjoy coming in contact with the East
17 River, but no, there's no swimming beaches or things
18 that I would consider a beach.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And to what extent
20 do city beaches, swimming beaches have friends of
21 groups? Do all of them have friends of groups; can
22 you comment on the status and effectiveness and
23 resources of those groups?

24 LIAM KAVANAGH: There are friends groups
25 and in Coney Island I know there's friends groups in

2 Coney Island; we have some friends groups in every
3 borough that are interested in the beaches; in
4 communities of Rockaway, they participate in
5 volunteer events; there has been some discussion
6 about forming a formal conservancy for Rockaway, but
7 I don't think it's quite gelled yet; I think they're
8 largely at the status where they provide volunteer
9 support and of course, are boosters for the beach and
10 advocates on behalf of the beach, but there aren't
11 any entities out there that are either poised to or
12 moving towards becoming maintenance or operating
13 entities for the beaches.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But we'd of course
15 love to hear more about any plans to create a
16 conservancy in the Rockaways and in general, the
17 Committee's thinking about how we can expand and
18 strengthen friends groups beyond the traditional
19 higher-income areas of the city.

20 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes. And let me just
21 say, there is the Jamaica Bay Rockaway Park
22 Conservancy, which was formed last year, it's an
23 outgrowth of the partnership between the city and the
24 Department of Interior to cooperatively manage all of
25 the park properties around Jamaica Bay. The

2 organization is still in formation, it does not have
3 any maintenance or management responsibilities for
4 any properties around the bay, either federal or
5 city, but it is a conservancy that is developing and
6 we're hoping will grow into an organization that can
7 help both the national parks and the city parks
8 improve the quality of the public space in Jamaica
9 Bay.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: You didn't comment
11 directly on Intro 0074 that Council Member King has
12 sponsored, but I'd love to give you a minute just to
13 tell us how you feel current protocols for dealing
14 with trees that entangle with power lines are working
15 and what if anything could be done to improve them?

16 LIAM KAVANAGH: I certainly appreciate
17 the issue that [background comment] Council Member
18 King identified [background comments] and is seeking
19 to address in the legislation; it is something that
20 we're very aware of. You know, during major storms
21 like Sandy there was enormous amount of damage, there
22 were many people trying to correct situations as
23 quickly as possible, communications is often
24 difficult; the Council Member mentioned that he went
25 out and spoke to people who were working on the

2 streets and you know, at that level it's very
3 difficult for them to understand what the bigger
4 picture is, other than the work that they've been
5 assigned to, so a lot of times in those situations
6 you'll get a response that may not seem appropriate
7 or adequate or address the condition that you're
8 looking to do. But let me just say that that issue
9 of coordination during storms is something that we
10 have been working very closely with the Office of
11 Emergency Management, Con Ed, other utilities,
12 Department of Sanitation, the Fire Department and the
13 Police Department. I think we made pretty
14 significant strides during Sandy; we introduced a
15 mobile technology that allowed us to track tree
16 damage much more effectively than we've ever been
17 able to do in the past; since the storm we've been
18 working on ways in which we can share that technology
19 with Sanitation, which we've already done, and with
20 Con Ed so that we can be using the same maps, the
21 same sort of individual damage reports and the same
22 sort of protocols to coordinate our work better. One
23 of the issues with working with Con Ed is that the
24 City has a firewall around its IT infrastructure that
25 doesn't let private utilities in as easily as we'd

2 like; we're trying to figure out a way to get around
3 that. The other sort of consideration from my
4 perspective is that, you know Con Ed, it does have a
5 responsibility for providing emergency services to
6 restore not just the electric service, but to address
7 tree conditions that result in it, and you know,
8 during a major storm like Sandy, they get overwhelmed
9 as much as we do, so we certainly understand that and
10 we do help them as much as we can, but they still
11 have an obligation of course to address situations
12 that they're responsible for under their permit to
13 run their wires above city streets. But we're
14 working very closely with all of the members of the
15 downed tree task force to improve that response, the
16 coordination, and especially communication to the
17 public about who is responsible and when we're gonna
18 get to any particular emergency condition.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Thank you.

20 I've just been informed that, from my colleague's
21 information, we have a democratic conference at 3:30
22 to discuss budget, so we're just gonna try and move a
23 little bit more quickly through the rest of our
24 agenda, and we're gonna open it up to our colleagues
25 for their questions of the administration. In order

2 to keep us moving, we can go back to a second round;
3 we're gonna have a five-minute clock on questions
4 from our colleagues and first up will be Council
5 Member Mendez.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you, Mr.
7 Chair; Deputy Commissioner. My district was hard hit
8 by Sandy and one of the things that's not in your
9 report today is part of Parks' jurisdiction is our
10 community gardens; I have the most community gardens,
11 I think in all of the city and I still have trees,
12 weeping willows that we lost and some that look
13 damaged, so I'd like to know from these numbers that
14 you gave on Page 1, the \$830 million in damages and
15 the 5,700 acres; how much of that is parks, beaches;
16 how much is the gardens, joint playgrounds that you
17 also do with DOE that some of mine got damage, and
18 the piers, and I don't know if you have that
19 information available today, but I'm sure you can get
20 it to us?

21 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes, I don't have that
22 information with me today, but we can provide that
23 level of detail.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Okay, great. I'd
25 also like to know... and what the damages were in those

2 areas... a list... you said there were, I forget, 1,800
3 trees that are gonna be lost and I don't know how
4 many you took down; would like to know the breakdown
5 by borough and by council member, 'cause I know I
6 have a lot of at-risk trees and just wanna know if
7 they've been targeted. And... [interpose]

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes, they are; you know,
9 particularly along the FDR Drive there are trees both
10 in Corlears Hook and East River Park that clearly
11 have succumbed to the salt damage; [background
12 comment] they're being removed right now, in fact; I
13 saw a crew working in East River Park today removing
14 those trees and we're continue to work in the
15 community in the areas affected by the inundation.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Okay, great.
17 Also in East River Park we have not just the leaf out
18 problem; we have like a reverse leafing problem where
19 now they're growing leaves from the base to just the
20 branches, but the branches aren't growing anything
21 and I don't... it's just weird; just wondering if
22 you've identified what that problem is.

23 LIAM KAVANAGH: It is an indication that
24 the tree is under stress. Trees under stress
25 typically produce what they call sucker growth; it is

2 sort of adventitious growth that springs from the
3 bottom of the trunk of the tree; it's a sign that the
4 tree is under stress.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: And we are
6 looking forward to trying to get some of our weeping
7 willows replaced; it is a much beloved tree in our
8 district and grows well, so wanna have that
9 conversation with you at some other point,
10 identifying where we lost those weeping willows.

11 The other issue is, on Page 5, when you
12 talk about the Big U, so myself and Margaret Chin, as
13 well as parts of Corey Johnson and Dan Garodnick's
14 district are gonna be a beneficiary of the Big U, but
15 we had had plans and I've been trying, while we've
16 been discussing this Big U that finally got chosen,
17 to understand the proposals for wetland in the East
18 River Park, the proposal for upgrades to Pier 42 and
19 now that the Big U is gonna happen, I wanna
20 understand how that would impact these proposals, as
21 well as there's a bunch of capital requests for the
22 East River Park and before we put anymore money, just
23 wanna [background comment] make sure that we're using
24 our capital funding in the best possible way. That's
25

2 probably not a discussion to have her; I just wanna
3 flag it because East River Park is a citywide park.

4 LIAM KAVANAGH: No, you're exactly right,
5 there's a lot of interest and investments, some
6 investments planned for East River Park that have to
7 be rethought in light of the Big U project, it's an
8 enormous opportunity to both make stronger protection
9 along the river for the communities, but also to
10 reimagine East River Park and how it serves the
11 adjoining communities.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: So I know that
13 the gardens and the joint playgrounds are a smaller
14 part of your portfolio; any idea off the top of your
15 head how much of these damages were in those area?

16 LIAM KAVANAGH: I'll ask our Deputy
17 Commission, Larry Scott Blackmon to speak about..
18 [background comments] [crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you.

20 [background comments]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Larry, we're gonna
22 continue the formality of swearing in; again, not to
23 impute your integrity, just a formality. Do you
24 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
25 and nothing but the truth in your testimony before

2 this committee and to respond honestly to council
3 members' questions?

4 LARRY SCOTT BLACKMON: I do. Thank you,
5 Council Member. Good afternoon to the Committees;
6 Larry Scott Blackmon, Deputy Commissioner for
7 Community Outreach with the New York City Department
8 of Parks and also oversee GreenThumb, the City's
9 gardening program. Council Member, roughly one month
10 ago, actually -- one, we maintain and we inspect
11 gardens on a regular basis, but about a month ago the
12 entire team from GreenThumb, including; led by Nancy
13 Kohn, it's new director; actually went to the Lower
14 East Side and we visually inspected every garden in
15 the Lower East Side, we walked block to block;
16 certainly some of the gardens did sustain some
17 damage, but we've done a pretty good job working with
18 LRP, the operations arm of GreenThumb, to repair
19 those gardens and there were some gardens that are
20 currently actually in really, really beautiful
21 condition, but we maintain regular inspections and we
22 are in communication with the gardeners in the Lower
23 East Side.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: I'm just gonna
3 flag one issue, Mr. Chair, and I've been in
4 discussion with Steve Simon..

5 LARRY SCOTT BLACKMON: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: there is one
7 particular garden that abuts on a private building
8 and what is the retaining wall for the back yard of
9 that building..

10 LARRY SCOTT BLACKMON: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: has collapsed and
12 so that's created a dangerous condition for the
13 garden that's higher up. So I was trying to get some
14 expense funding in there, but it's unclear how much
15 it's gonna cost; the building hasn't done anything
16 about it; it's now been close to two years, so just,
17 you know, since the gardens are open to the public,
18 we are afraid about that condition.

19 LARRY SCOTT BLACKMON: Yes, we'll follow
20 up with Steve and I'll touch base with your office to
21 follow up on it. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you. And
23 Mr. Chair, when we get that breakdown, I will get a
24 copy of those. Thank you very much. [crosstalk]

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: For sure. Sure; you
3 got it. I want to acknowledge we've been joined by
4 our colleague from the Rockaways, none other than
5 Council Member Donovan Richards, and we go to
6 questions now from Council Member Matteo; he'll be
7 followed by Council Members Cohen and Maisel.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you. I
9 have a few issues, so I'll try and be quick. I wanna
10 start the conversation talking about the Army Corps
11 project for the boardwalk, the "sea wall," you
12 mentioned in your testimony about Phase 1; do you
13 have specifics; do you have a timeline; are we also
14 looking at the existing boardwalk and do we have to
15 change that from the wood that it is now to a
16 different material to hold the sea wall, if you can
17 comment?

18 DAN ZARRILLI: Sure. I mean we've, with
19 the Parks Department and DEP and our office, we've
20 been working really closely with the Army Corps on
21 this particular project; it's probably one of the
22 most impactful things we can be doing as a city; it's
23 a really important project and we're advancing it.
24 And the project itself, we're working with the Corps
25 on its schedule, they have currently committed to us

2 that we'll see a draft feasibility study early this
3 fall and that's the next milestone to hit in order to
4 be able to finish the feasibility study, get the
5 chief's report, launch design; anything else and we
6 get into construction and so we're really focused on
7 finishing that draft feasibility study and making
8 sure the Army Corps, you know, gets that to us on the
9 timeframe that we expect it.

10 The boardwalk piece of the conversation,
11 one of the concepts around here with this project is
12 building the, ultimately a promenade, whether it's a
13 boardwalk or something different over time; building
14 that into the protection and you know, the cross-
15 sections that the Army Corps is talking about has an
16 elevated promenade built into the structure itself.
17 So essentially it would replace the boardwalk, but
18 still have the same functionality.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Okay. So when we
20 get the feasibility study I guess we can all request
21 it, we all sit down and we meet with the Staten
22 Island... [crosstalk]

23 DAN ZARRILLI: Makes a lot of sense.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: local elected
25 officials. I'm hearing 2016; are you hearing the

2 same for construction start? Is that wishful
3 thinking?

4 DAN ZARRILLI: I think we'll have to see
5 what the draft feasibility study says before we...
6 before we start... [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Alright, fair
8 enough.

9 DAN ZARRILLI: putting dates on paper.
10 [sic]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: But I ask that
12 you update us and... [crosstalk]

13 DAN ZARRILLI: We're trying to work with
14 them as quickly as we can on everything we're doing.
15 Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Thank you. For
17 the New Dorp Friendship Club that was damaged,
18 obviously seniors in New Dorp Beach are now going
19 through obviously different friendship clubs, senior
20 centers; about a week ago, week-and-a-half ago I was
21 sent an email about what Parks plans to do; I haven't
22 been told though if it's fully funded; is FEMA paying
23 for it; is there a timeline; if someone can comment
24 on the status of the Friendship Club.

2 LIAM KAVANAGH: Council Member, I can't
3 give you any details right now; I will follow up
4 after the meeting with those specifics about the
5 project. I am familiar with it, I know that we have
6 had engineers in there to assess the condition and it
7 is structurally sound, it can be renovated; I know we
8 were putting a plan together to renovate it; I don't
9 have the details, but I will provide them to you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Please, and
11 that's a priority for us, and again, I was sent what
12 the plan might be; I just need to know if it's funded
13 and timeline, so if we could follow up, I'd
14 appreciate that.

15 LIAM KAVANAGH: Okay.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Last month there
17 was an announcement that the beaches were open, Cedar
18 Grove in my district and I think Wolfe's Pond are
19 still closed... is open now? [crosstalk]

20 LIAM KAVANAGH: Wolfe's Pond is open; it
21 has been open for some... [crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Cedar Grove
23 though, there's modulars that we're repairing?

24 LIAM KAVANAGH: No, it's the waterline;
25 we had to install an entirely new waterline after the

2 storm and testing the waterline and make sure the
3 water quality met DEP's standards was a little bit
4 challenging; we've overcome those hurdles and we
5 think the beach may be open this weekend.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Great. I wanna
7 talk about the dunes; obviously we worked together to
8 provide dunes [background comment] across the East
9 Shore and we appreciate; we still have an issue with
10 Miller Field and I know it's National Parks, but if
11 we had a hurricane tomorrow, you know, we'd be in
12 trouble in that area -- New Dorp Lane, residential
13 areas of Cedar Grove -- I think we need to revisit
14 working with National Parks to provide the dunes
15 there, [background comment] you also mentioned John
16 D'Amato Field, the synthetic turf field; myself and
17 Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis agree with you, that
18 we shouldn't rebuild a football field there, but it's
19 a perfect place for landscaping; other protections
20 that we can provide the residential... [interpose]

21 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: area, so I wanna
23 renew a strong call to work with NPS to get berms by
24 Miller Field, because we're not just protecting
25 Miller Field, we're protecting [background comment]

2 the residential area, which is huge, and again, if we
3 have a hurricane tomorrow, we're gonna be in trouble,
4 so I ask that we reconvene, come up with a plan ASAP
5 working with the feds on this as well; we need you as
6 partners, so are you hearing anything and you know,
7 please work with us on this very important issue.

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: We will, Council Member.

9 DAN ZARRILLI: Can I add one thing to
10 that?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Yeah, please.

12 DAN ZARRILLI: On the topic of NPS,
13 [bell] so the short-term we hear you and we can... we
14 need to engage with them and see what can be done
15 further in the short-term, but in the longer term,
16 they are absolutely part of the Army Corps study, and
17 so making sure that the two areas we're talking
18 about, the D'Amato Field as well as Miller Field,
19 both ultimately may play a role in the long-term
20 coastal protection and so we need to keep that in
21 mind as we're thinking about what we put in place in
22 the near-term, as there will be ultimately longer
23 term protections in those areas.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I appreciate that
3 and you know, on the short-term, if we can get berms...
4 [crosstalk]

5 DAN ZARRILLI: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Chair, just one
7 final question and I'm done. Next in Cedar Grove,
8 there was an old baseball field, Our Lady of Lourdes...
9 next to Our Lady of Lourdes, the Manresa baseball
10 field, softball field; it's turned into a breeding
11 ground for mosquitoes. You know we've asked for
12 buffers, landscape; I asked that Parks revisit this,
13 the Borough President and I sent a letter and you
14 know it's becoming an issue for those who actually
15 have returned home [background comment] in New Dorp
16 Beach, and I've asked the Health Department for law
17 assign and everything, but it's Parks property and
18 I'd like to know if any plans, what we can do to
19 remedy the situation.

20 LIAM KAVANAGH: I'm familiar with the
21 field and I know it's current conditions; I don't
22 know what the right plan for it is, but I will visit
23 the field in the next week and I'll be happy to meet
24 with you out there and come up with a solution.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Please, and I
3 appreciate you follow up and I would love for you to
4 come out and we'll discuss all these issues. Thank
5 you; appreciate.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Council
7 Member Matteo; I just wan to remind folks, we're
8 running a bit of a hurry-up offense here because of
9 impending budget meetings and next up is Council
10 Member Cohen.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, I'll be
12 brief. Thank you for your testimony, Commissioner.
13 On Saturday actually, I did don my bathing suit and
14 conduct a mission out to... a fact-finding mission out
15 to the Rockaways, so I just had some questions about
16 [laughter] some things I saw out there; [interpose]
17 [background comment] it was a lovely day out there
18 and in terms of napping, the beaches are in perfect
19 condition. [laughter] The boardwalk in the
20 Rockaways... you mentioned islands, it seems like there
21 is a lot more to fill in those islands than is
22 existing now; is the sea wall in the eastern portion
23 of the Rockaways gonna be incorporated into the
24 design of the boardwalk, 'cause I noticed from, I
25 guess 149th Street to 126th Street there's a, you

2 know, what seems to me, a very substantial sea wall
3 and then where the boardwalk starts there is no
4 boardwalk or sea wall it seems, so I think that's a
5 real concern and I think that people would feel a lot
6 better having, you know... you know, knowing when a
7 sea wall was gonna be put in there.

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes and working with the
9 community for the design of the new boardwalk, it's
10 going to be elevated to the 100-year flood level,
11 it's going to be made out of concrete so that it is
12 more resilient and it's also going to have that same
13 sand-retaining wall on the north side of the
14 boardwalk, the entire length of the elevated
15 boardwalk, to provide the same features that the wall
16 you see in Belle Harbor Neponset provides those
17 communities.

18 DAN ZARRILLI: I'll be a little more
19 maybe direct on that topic. I mean the term... the use
20 of the term sea wall I think can be a bit of a
21 misnomer; those are... they're sand-retaining walls;
22 it's helping keep the sand on the beach is what you
23 see there; they are replacing a structure that was
24 there that was ultimately damaged during Sandy; those
25 aren't meant to hold back the ocean, they're meant to

2 keep the sand on the beach, which is incredibly
3 important during all the other times of the year that
4 sand ultimately migrates off the beach, and so I
5 think it's just important to just clarify the intent
6 and purpose of those structures, which are going to
7 be incorporated into the function of the boardwalk
8 through the Parks project.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Well that wall is
10 obviously designed to do more than keep sand on the
11 beach; I mean you know, it's I-beam and heavy.. it's a
12 masonry construction; I don't think that's just for
13 sand.

14 DAN ZARRILLI: That's largely the
15 function. I mean it was damaged during the storm
16 because that's what's essentially allowable from the
17 regulatory environment they're working with the state
18 and others; you know, a hard vertical structural
19 ultimately is probably not gonna be permitted if it's
20 meant to be a sea wall in that same manner, but what
21 we've worked with them very closely to accommodate is
22 all the other functions that we need to address and
23 keeping sand on the beach is an important part of
24 that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: What is the status
3 of the beach grass planting? [background comments]

4 LIAM KAVANAGH: We planted several blocks
5 of beach grass in Rockaway late in the spring, we've
6 planted extensive in Staten Island, because the berms
7 were in place earlier in the season; the beach grass
8 can only be planted during two very specific time
9 periods during the year; it's late fall into early
10 winter and late winter into early spring. When the
11 ground is frozen or the plant is frozen, you can't
12 plant it and once it breaks dormancy it should not be
13 transplanted. So we planted everything we could
14 during those two windows; it's doing well, really
15 well, it looks great, and we anticipate doing an
16 enormous amount of beach grass planting this fall and
17 early next spring.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'm sorry; I just
19 wanted to... and on the boardwalk, do you have a
20 timeline on the boardwalk that...

21 LIAM KAVANAGH: The boardwalk, as we've
22 announced in the past, it'll be fully completed by...
23 I'm trying to remember off the top of my head... by
24 Memorial Day of 2017.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you very
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
5 Member Cohen; next up we have Council Member Maisel,
6 followed by Council Member Richards.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you very
8 much. [static] Prior to Sandy, the Army Corps was
9 doing a project to protect Plumb Beach, which has
10 been a problem for 30 years; when I got started
11 working on it I was working for Congressman Schumer
12 at the time, so it's been a long-term problem and now
13 of course, Plumb Beach is actually eroding and so the
14 Army Corps has a project -- what has happened to that
15 project; do you know when it's gonna be completed and
16 if any allowances have been made to the new realities
17 of Sandy to either change it or adapt it for rising
18 sea level?

19 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes, the project is
20 complete, the Army Corps added 130,000 cubic yards of
21 sand to the beach and they also installed two T-
22 groins and some breakwaters to both retain the sand
23 in place for longer periods of time and to prevent
24 the wave action from accelerating the erosion. So
25 they did a very substantial and carefully thought out

2 project to both restore and preserve Plumb Beach and
3 it looks great and we're very hopefully that it will
4 serve both our recreational purpose and an important
5 coastal protection purpose, because it's, as you
6 know, right next to the Belt Parkway.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yeah, well that
8 was always the concern [background comments] that the
9 water will just wash away the Belt Parkway and then
10 we're in a lot of trouble.

11 Has anybody from Parks been monitoring
12 White Island?

13 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Because I was
15 very much involved in that project as well with Parks
16 and with DEC. Has anybody been there to see
17 recently? Because I did a boat tour in the whole
18 area last week and it looked like the invasive
19 species that we're trying to get rid of are back.

20 LIAM KAVANAGH: I haven't heard that, but
21 I'll definitely check into it [background comment]
22 after the meeting, but the island is still in
23 construction, we haven't [background comment] fully
24 completed it yet, so there may be some interlopers
25 getting in there while we complete construction, but

2 [background comment] it's a very important project...

3 [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: I also noticed
5 that the concrete, those wafers that are supposed to
6 be filled with plants, [background comment] sea
7 grass, whatever I saw, there was no sea grass in any
8 of them; I'm wondering if that's a direct consequence
9 of Sandy.

10 LIAM KAVANAGH: I don't think so, but
11 I'll confirm that. Yes... [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: You now what I'm
13 referring to, the con... you know those... [crosstalk]

14 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes. Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: looks like egg
16 crates.

17 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yeah. [background
18 comment] Oh I'm sorry, we have our expert, Bram
19 Gunther. [background comments, laughter]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And... [crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Be prepared to be
22 sworn in.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Do you swear
24 [laughter] or affirm to tell the truth, the whole
25 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony

2 before this committee and to respond honestly to
3 council members' questions?

4 BRAM GUNTHER: I do. So White Island,
5 which we just recently completed, we visit it
6 regularly because it was recently completed; we have
7 noticed some invasive species colonizing, but we have
8 another herbicide spraying in our contract to do and
9 we... [interpose]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Are you gonna let
11 the community know about it?

12 BRAM GUNTHER: Absolutely; that's a law...
13 [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Okay. Okay.

15 BRAM GUNTHER: so we have to. I don't
16 know exactly when it is and it will probably be more
17 pinpointed than we've been doing in the past in
18 prepping the site, we did about two years of
19 herbicide spraying in preparation before the
20 planting; we know that usually it takes anywhere from
21 two years to five years for the native plants to
22 become established and we think we can pull back from
23 maintenance and let... and they can usually stand on
24 their own. So we are checking it regularly, both in
25 the spring, summer and the fall to see the invasives

2 and then depending upon what species they are and how
3 many are colonating, we'll address it in what we
4 think is the best, most effective and safest manner.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Okay, thank you.

6 BRAM GUNTHER: You're welcome.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And next we'll be
8 hearing from Council Member Donovan Richards.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you,
10 Council Member Levine. I think Council Member Cohen
11 did such a good job pushing them on the Rockaways; I
12 felt like he took my seat for a second, but it is
13 great to be here and I will try to be short and sweet
14 so we can get back to budget.

15 So one of the things I wanted to raise
16 was lighting on the boardwalk; in particular, in-
17 between, I wanna say 59th Street down into the 20s,
18 and I've gotten reports and my office has reached out
19 recently on the lack of lighting on the boardwalk
20 ever since the storm, so it's pitch dark black and
21 we've heard reports of robberies happening on the
22 boardwalk, so I wanted to see where we're at in terms
23 of replacing that particular lighting and I know that
24 I think my... the way my office relayed the message to
25 me was that partially DOT obviously we know installs

2 lights and then has responsibility here, so I wanna
3 know how are you guys working with DOT to ensure that
4 these lights are up sooner than later?

5 LIAM KAVANAGH: I'll call upon our Queens
6 Borough Commissioner... [interpose]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Yay.

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: who is more in touch with
9 the issue than I.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Commissioner
11 Lewandowski. [background comments] She's my
12 favorite, by the way.

13 DOROTHY LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you. Can I
14 say I do?

15 [background comments]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Mark, you've
17 gotta swear her in.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Oh... Okay..
19 [crosstalk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: to tell the
21 truth. [laughter, background comments]

22 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: There's two Marks here
23 that chair, right? Do you... [interpose]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: The Marks brothers.
25

2 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Right, the Mark...
3 right. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
4 whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
5 testimony before these committees and to respond
6 honestly to council member questions?

7 DOROTHY LEWANDOWSKI: Yes I do.

8 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Thank you.

9 DOROTHY LEWANDOWSKI: Hi, I'm Dorothy
10 Lewandowski; I'm the Queens Parks Commissioner...

11 [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: She does all
13 the time.

14 DOROTHY LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you, Council
15 Member. [laughter] I am familiar with the area
16 you're speaking about, Jill Weber, the Park
17 Administrator, mentioned that to me. As part of the
18 long-term plan for the rebuilding of the boardwalk,
19 all of those lights will be restored, all new. I
20 know that in the interim we need to take some
21 actions; we do have a meeting scheduled with DOT so
22 that we can see what we can do in an interim measure;
23 we may not be able to do it on the entire length, but
24 we're looking to see how we can link our street ends
25 to at least make street ends better.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: So if I can
3 urge you guys to really move fast on that, because
4 it's a... [crosstalk]

5 DOROTHY LEWANDOWSKI: I... I will get back
6 to you tomorrow.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: safety issue...
8 Okay, great. And then I just wanted to touch base,
9 and I know EDC... I don't know if EDC is here, but
10 certainly in terms of the jobs for the boardwalks,
11 can you guys speak to where we're at in that process
12 in terms of individuals from the local community
13 benefiting from being hired to work on the boardwalk
14 project?

15 LIAM KAVANAGH: Council Member, I'm
16 sorry; I don't have those numbers with me, but we
17 will definitely follow up with you after the meeting
18 [crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay. So work
20 has started on the boardwalk, I'm assuming.

21 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes, preliminary work has
22 started on... [crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay.

24 LIAM KAVANAGH: on the demolition and
25 site preparation.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: So I just, you
3 know, wanna put this back on the record that we are
4 looking at the numbers and we wanna see the numbers
5 on how the local community is gonna benefit in terms
6 of qualified individuals [background comment] are
7 gonna benefit from being able to work on the
8 boardwalk project. You know, I know Skanska was out
9 there and we had over 1,000 applicants...

10 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: to work on the
12 project, so we're at least looking, the very least,
13 at least for 30 percent, 40 percent of those jobs to
14 go to the local community, so I'm hoping that we're
15 gonna reach that and I think that's a low bar to set
16 in one sense, but at least that amount. So I'll look
17 forward to hearing from you on that. And then, if
18 you can just touch on the phases on when you guys
19 anticipate to get to the eastern end of the
20 peninsula?

21 LIAM KAVANAGH: The project is divided up
22 into five phases, the first phase we've already
23 started the demolition and site preparations, the
24 second phase will start very shortly, perhaps as soon
25 as next week; that covers the area from 86th Street

2 to 106th Street; phase 3 goes from 109th Street to
3 126th, and phase 4 is from roughly 60th Street to
4 86th Street. Those two phases, phases 3 and 4, are
5 still in design and review with the community boards;
6 we expect to have them into construction later this
7 year and so they would both be in construction next
8 year, throughout the entire year. The way the plan...
9 let me see... phase 5, which is the area east of 60th
10 Street going down to 19th Street, we're projecting
11 starting work in the fall of 2015, for both phases of
12 phase 5, we've divided into A and B. As you know,
13 most of the boardwalk is still intact; we did connect
14 those four blocks that were destroyed during the
15 storm, so there is east/west [bell] circulation in
16 that area. We do wanna rebuild it so that it has the
17 same features as the rest of the boardwalk; it's
18 elevated; it's more resilient; it is integrated into
19 the whole coastal protection network of measures that
20 were taken to provide protection. But the
21 construction won't start until the fall of 2015 and
22 will not be completed until Memorial Day of 2017.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay. And I
24 certainly understand that and I'm glad the
25 Commissioner, we work together to, you know,

2 obviously make sure that we push each other [sic] as
3 far as we could.

4 Just last question; what plans do you
5 guys have... so are you guys looking at dunes and other
6 protective measures? I know the sea... so the sea
7 walls are gonna come particularly all the way down?

8 LIAM KAVANAGH: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And are you
10 guys looking at dunes and other natural habitats?

11 [crosstalk]

12 LIAM KAVANAGH: Well dunes -- the berm is
13 going in... [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay.

15 LIAM KAVANAGH: right now; it hasn't
16 reached the east end... it's going to come... [crosstalk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: So it's gonna
18 come... Okay.

19 LIAM KAVANAGH: It's gonna come all the
20 way down to 19th Street, where the elevated boardwalk
21 starts...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay.

23 LIAM KAVANAGH: And there is already a
24 network of sort of natural dunes in that area already
25 and this will compliment... [interpose]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right.

3 LIAM KAVANAGH: that. But the Army
4 Corps' reformulation plan is considering a number of
5 different alternatives for enhancing coastal
6 protection along the entire beachfront. [background
7 comment] I know that they have a number of ideas in
8 mind that they're still considering; I'm not quite
9 sure when they're going to be sharing them more
10 broadly, but they're... I know they're working very
11 intently on moving that project forward.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Alrighty. Well
13 thank you guys; you guys have certainly communicated
14 with us in a much better fashion than we've
15 experienced in the past; I look forward to continuing
16 to work with Commissioner Lewandowski and all of you
17 guys until we see this thing through and thank you to
18 both chairs, both Marks for giving me time today.
19 Thank you.

20 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Yeah, just two very
21 quick follow-up questions. In your testimony, First
22 Commissioner, you mentioned that Brighton Beach
23 qualified for a \$990,000 green infrastructure
24 project; can you just explain what that is?
25

2 LIAM KAVANAGH: Green infrastructure is a
3 system of natural installations that capture storm
4 water, prevent it from going into the city's sewer
5 system; in most cases it is diverted from the
6 combined sewer system, which contributes towards what
7 they call combined sewer overflow, which contributes
8 pollutants to the surrounding waters. In Brighton
9 Beach, however, because a lot of the sewers are not
10 connected to the combined system, some of the water
11 flows directly out into the ocean and so with the
12 green infrastructure we're gonna be capturing water,
13 filtering out pollutants and preventing it from going
14 into the water and the beaches off of Brighton Beach.

15 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Maybe we'll have a
16 follow-up discussion [background comment] about that...
17 that scope of the project. And just to again... I
18 mentioned before; just worth repeating one more time,
19 to make sure we flag those parks that are still
20 damaged, not just... of course the beach work were
21 critical, but I'm saying playgrounds for families and
22 children as we enter the summer season right now,
23 [background comment] there is surf playgrounds in
24 Coney Island, Nautilus that you mentioned that
25 requires additional funding; there's also a park

2 that's not physically in my district, but serves my
3 district, Bensonhurst Park, and that promenade near
4 Cesar's Bay, [background comment] which sustained
5 quite a bit of damage and that's park land there, so
6 we must make sure that we're getting reimbursements
7 and funding and flag them to expedite that work,
8 because we're entering summer season now and
9 neighborhoods are still not seeing that type of
10 progress that we all would hope to see. [background
11 comment] Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much,
13 thanks to the administration for your testimony and
14 your answers. We're now gonna call up our panel of
15 public witnesses, which will include -- let's see,
16 Ida Sanoff, John Cori of Friends of Rockaway Beach,
17 James Yolles from New Yorkers for Parks; Hope Cohen
18 from the Battery Conservancy. [background comments]

19 So are you ready, Miss Sanoff with your
20 presentation or would you like to go second?

21 [background comments] Okay. We have only three
22 minutes for presentation because we have a hard stop
23 coming up at 3:30. [background comment] So if...
24 [background comments] Your entire written testimony
25 will be entered into the record, so we'll review that

2 for sure and we can enter your presentation into the
3 record electronically as well. Just make sure your
4 mic is on.

5 IDA SANOFF: Is it on now? [background
6 comment] Okay. [background comment] It's amazing
7 sitting here and listening to some of the testimony.
8 Brighton Beach and Coney Island were badly flooded;
9 it's close to two years past Hurricane Sandy and the
10 only thing we have to show for it is a beach
11 replenishment. There is talk of a multi-million-
12 dollar project to protect Coney Island Creek and I
13 call it the "When Pigs Will Fly" project, because
14 that's how long it's going to take to design, vet,
15 review, study, decide, and look at this project. So
16 instead of using cost-effective, proven economical
17 measures, such as sand dunes, we're spending tens of
18 millions of dollars on a project that will probably
19 never be built.

20 One of the bigger problems is the
21 invisible line in the sand. On one side of the
22 beach, New York State DEC regulations apply and a
23 while back they wanted to put a concrete bike path on
24 the beach and DEC said absolutely not; in a storm
25 surge it's going to lift up and form projectiles, yet

2 on the opposite side of this invisible line of the
3 sand the Parks Department's regulations apply and
4 they wanna put concrete slab boardwalk sections in
5 without any safety testing environmental studies,
6 they're doing it as pilot projects, so that avoids
7 all oversight. Now I had some... I don't know if we're
8 gonna have time... bottom line is, a year before
9 Hurricane Sandy the project, the pilot study came
10 before the design commission, I presented 150 years
11 worth of Army Corps of Engineers storm surge data for
12 Coney Island and I was told, "Lady, a storm surge is
13 never gonna hit that boardwalk." I didn't evacuate;
14 I watched the storm surge come over the boardwalk and
15 briefly, I guess you can't get it up, but I've got
16 some things here and I'll leave them here; you can
17 see under the concrete section there is erosion, and
18 you have this in the bigger printout there; there it
19 is again, erosion. When you look at the street next
20 to the concrete section, here's all the sand, 8-10
21 feet of sand, but when you look at the parts of the
22 boardwalk where you have a wooden boardwalk on either
23 side of it, there was no erosion. So something
24 happened next to that concrete -- here it is, you can
25 see over here, okay, here's the erosion; there's the

2 erosion, and all of a sudden it stops where there's
3 wood; why; something happened. And when you look on
4 the top of the boardwalk you can see that on the
5 wooden section [bell] the sand settled out. Okay,
6 that indicates that the wave slowed down so that the
7 sand could settle out. And when you look at the
8 concrete there's not a speck of sand. Here's the
9 wooden boardwalk, inches and inches of sand; here's
10 the concrete right next to it; not a grain of sand
11 because that storm surge hit that concrete full force
12 and it didn't slow down. So there's all this talk
13 about resiliency and protection and engaging the
14 stakeholders, well I've been walkin' around with this
15 stuff since, I don't know, 2012, 2011... [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank...

17 IDA SANOFF: and nobody... [interpose]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank...

19 IDA SANOFF: wanted to listen; that storm
20 surge came over the boardwalk, it hit at that spot...
21 [interpose]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you.

23 IDA SANOFF: exactly what I said would
24 happen happened and nobody's still listening.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Mrs.
3 Sanoff.

4 IDA SANOFF: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. Okay,
6 next up we'll hear from Mr. Cori.

7 JOHN CORI: How you doin'? John Cori,
8 Friends of Rockaway Beach. I just wanna correct
9 Commissioner Kavanagh; there is a group called
10 Friends of Rockaway Beach in Rockaway.

11 I did come here to speak about a couple
12 of specific items, but I do wanna tap into this talk
13 of dunes. In the SIR report, Page 47, it talks about
14 dunes as a potential safety barrier in the future.
15 Dune will not work; fortified dunes will work; you've
16 gotta have a double dune system with a fortified
17 dune, meaning, secondary dune has some sort of a
18 revetment or a concrete barrier, something strong
19 that's gonna hold the water back.

20 Now, the other thing is, you know I've
21 been advocating for rock jetties -- stone groins is
22 the exact name. If you look in the Rockaways between
23 86th Street, looking east in middle of the peninsula,
24 we have stone groins and there's significantly less
25 damage and that's because... and there were no dunes; I

2 mean this SIR report claims there were dunes; there
3 was some beach grass. Now obviously, you know, it's
4 not that easy to just go out there and just throw
5 out... the city can't just throw out stone groins, but
6 obviously stone groins hold sand; you cannot put a
7 dune on a beach without a groin, anywhere on the Long
8 Island seashore, which goes from Coney Island to
9 Montauk, now this talk of dunes is not a good idea
10 unless you really seriously make them correctly.

11 Now the main reason I really came here
12 today was about the issue in the Rockaways -- I have
13 no pictures to show, 'cause there's nothing left to
14 show -- we lost... along the Rockaway boardwalk we lost
15 a mile of beach, probably \$50 million, and I can't
16 estimate correctly, but according to Parks, numbers
17 they've thrown out there over the years in looking to
18 get things replaced prior to the storm, we lost about
19 a mile of beach... I'm sorry; a mile of park next to
20 the boardwalk; obviously we have the money now,
21 supposedly, we're gonna be redoing our boardwalk, but
22 the issue is, our kids have nothing, skate park
23 obliterated, hockey rink obliterated, 28 handball
24 courts obliterated, gone, they're not there.
25 Unfortunately Parks has told us they've only

2 requested from FEMA of that \$800 million, \$4.7
3 million; something is gravely wrong with those
4 numbers. Now, that being said, you know it's just
5 incredible that now Parks has spent a year with
6 probably tens of thousands of dollars doing outreach
7 studies to look at a conceptual plan, a conceptual
8 plan that includes the entire Rockaway peninsula,
9 most of which was not significantly damaged from the
10 storm and yet the area that we are talking about
11 between 86th Street and 108th Street in Longshore
12 from Parkway and Rockaway Beach [sic] in the
13 neighborhood of Rockaway Park, we have no park,
14 there's no plan to put it back, \$4.7 million may put
15 back part of one of the playgrounds and maybe part of
16 the skate park; in the meantime we have no handball
17 courts, they're all gone -- the kids have no swing
18 sets, there's nothing, nothing to show -- something
19 needs to be corrected, someone really needs to pay
20 attention to this; unfortunately the [bell] \$4.7
21 million is not gonna do it, we need a lot more money
22 and we really appreciate the time, you guys doing
23 this. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you Mr. Cori.

25 Okay, Mr. Yolles, you're next.

2 JAMES YOLLES: Thanks, good to see you,
3 Chair. I'm James Yolles, Communications Director at
4 New Yorkers for Parks. This summer New Yorkers for
5 Parks is conducting a comprehensive post Sandy
6 assessment of the city's eight municipal swimming
7 beaches, including boardwalks, for our next report
8 card on beaches. Because that work is ongoing, our
9 comments today will largely concern other elements of
10 citywide storm recovery. But first, a note on that
11 upcoming report. Obviously few Parks Department
12 properties sustained as much damage as the City's
13 eight public swimming beaches; we published report
14 cards on these properties in 2007, 2009 and 2011;
15 while the maintenance conditions dramatically
16 improved over that time, these spaces obviously
17 require a fresh assessment now. Our new report will
18 be twofold, it will score maintenance conditions at
19 every beach and it will assess how the Parks
20 Department is handling the recovery at each beach
21 from a management perspective. We're hopeful that
22 the report will provide the Department with a helpful
23 independent assessment of its post Sandy beach
24 recovery work and we look forward to sharing the

2 findings of that report with both committees here
3 today.

4 As increasingly volatile weather becomes
5 the norm, it's critical that the Council and
6 administration work to ensure that the Department is
7 staffed and funded accordingly, just two examples,
8 with interest of time.

9 First on tree care. Even though the
10 Parks Department has, thanks to recent budget
11 restorations, shortened its pruning cycle for street
12 trees to a nine-year cycle, we were dismayed to learn
13 at the Council's February 25th hearing on tree care
14 that the Department does not have the budget to prune
15 trees in parks with the same frequency. We hope the
16 Council and Parks Department can work together on a
17 plan to start getting trees in parks closer to the
18 recommended seven-year cycle; this is especially
19 important with the salt water damage to tree roots
20 after Sandy and certainly there will be more weather
21 events in the future.

22 Second, Capital Division staffing.
23 Following Hurricane Sandy, the Parks Department was
24 forced to sideline numerous capital projects, as
25 Capital Division staff turned its attention to Sandy

2 recovery, project planning and oversight. This
3 backlog remains and takes a citywide toll on an
4 already slow capital construction process. One small
5 step that will contribute to faster capital project
6 timelines would be to increase the Capital Division
7 staff. Adding \$4 million to the FY15 budget for
8 parks would create 55 more full-time positions in the
9 Capital Division. This expansion would allow the
10 Department to clear its backlog of Sandy-related
11 projects and allow the city to move forward more
12 quickly with plans to address capital needs in
13 neighborhood parks across the city. We're encouraged
14 that Chair Levine and his colleagues are supporting
15 this \$4 million request as part of the Council's
16 overall budget request package. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. And next
18 up is Miss Cohen.

19 HOPE COHEN: Thank you; I'm here from the
20 Battery Conservancy and we got hit hard by Sandy too,
21 we're recovering, we are looking forward to working
22 with the Parks Department as we plan resilient
23 measures into the park; we're actually expecting,
24 hoping to get a grant from the New York Rising for
25 initial berming, but that's actually not what I'm

2 here to talk to you about today, I wanted to raise
3 the Council's awareness of other projects that have
4 their heritage in Sandy that effect parks. So while
5 we have our own recovery and continue to need to plan
6 resiliency measures into the surface of the park, we
7 have been made aware in recent months of how much
8 other infrastructure impacts the park and how other
9 agencies, other than the Parks Department, have
10 projects that will impact the park. And in our park
11 particularly, obviously that's the one that I know
12 the best, major, major projects from New York City
13 DOT and from MTA New York City Transit and I expect
14 that we are not the only parking system that has this
15 situation that after some recovery of the surface
16 park there's major impact to the park to be had from
17 other agencies needing to do also vital recovery and
18 resiliency work and I just wanna make the Council
19 aware of that, to put that on your agenda going
20 forward.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you very much
22 and you have the thanks of a grateful nation for
23 yielding the remaining of your time. This is going
24 to con... [background comment] excuse me. [background
25 comment] Sure. This is gonna conclude the portion

2 of our meeting devoted to our topic jointly with the
3 Recovery and Resiliency Committee; everyone's welcome
4 to stay as we transition to introduction of
5 legislation related to parks co-naming. This is
6 something that the Council does once a year.. excuse
7 me, twice a year and we have currently 64 co-namings
8 that have been proposed by members of the Council.
9 We're gonna allow members who wish to make statements
10 and we'll be hearing from any public witnesses who
11 wish to comment on street co-naming. I'll just
12 mention very quickly that I have submitted for two
13 street co-namings myself, the first is George Carlin
14 Way, which we're proposing for the corner of 121st
15 Street and Broadway in my district; this is the block
16 where he grew up and spent much of his life; of
17 course George Carlin was not only a comedian, writer
18 and social critic, but he was also really at the
19 forefront of expanding free speech in the media,
20 including a case that went all the way to Supreme
21 Court. I have a second co-naming on the corner of
22 116th Street and Broadway in honor of Barnard
23 College, which is celebrating its 125th anniversary
24 this year; this is an institution which is a pioneer
25 in higher education for women in America and remains

2 a vital source of such education for women today. I
3 believe that my colleague, Council Member Mendez
4 would like to comment on a couple co-namings.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENDEZ: Thank you, Mr.
6 Chair. I'd like to speak about three co-namings; one
7 which I co-introduced with Margaret Chin, she's the
8 prime sponsor; one which I introduced and Margaret's
9 name was left off, so that was our bad; my intern
10 didn't know, and one which I've introduced by myself.
11 So the one that Margaret and I introduced is Section
12 6, Deshane Santana Way; her grandmother is here
13 today, Teresa Pedroza, and in the one that Margaret
14 and I are supposed to be introducing, Marie
15 Christopher Way, Section 30. These are two instances
16 where individuals, instead of being victimized have
17 decided to make a difference. In the case of Deshane
18 Santana, her grandmother has become an activist, very
19 vocal on transportation issues, and this was a very
20 dangerous intersection and as a result of her work
21 and the work of the community and Community Board 3,
22 we've installed lots of traffic-calming measures.
23 Deshane was 12 years old and was killed right by the
24 Williamsburg bridge several years ago after school
25 and so as a result of that, that is a safer

2 intersection for children and adults alike and we
3 hope never to have these kinds of incidents again.

4 Marie Christopher was a tenant activist, she turned
5 her life to improving lives of tenants after she was
6 burnt out of her own apartment in Harlem and then
7 moved to the Lower East Side; when in the Lower East
8 Side she was confronted with a lot of drug dealing
9 and she organized, not just within her project-based
10 Section 8 building, but with the public housing
11 across the street and created a lot of coalitions.

12 When my mother moved to Puerto Rico a couple of years
13 ago, Marie Christopher decided she will become my
14 mother and at every meeting she would ensure that I
15 ate, that I had my tea and my vitamins and we lost
16 her shortly after Sandy to pancreatic cancer and she
17 has been much missed by all of us in the tenant
18 movement and by those of us in the Lower East side.

19 Father Damien's Way is in the northern part of my
20 district on East 33rd Street; the Archdiocese has
21 several institutions there besides churches and
22 Father Damien was very instrumental in fighting
23 leprosy and Community Board 6 has agreed to co-name
24 this street where they have a chapel and a center and
25 they do lots of work from there and I am happy to

2 support these three co-namings, as well as those of
3 my colleagues. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you very much,
5 Council Member Mendez. We have one member of the
6 public who's requested to speak on a street co-
7 naming; that is... believe it's Teresa Pedroza, if I
8 pronounce the name correctly. Welcome, Miss Pedroza
9 and a reminder that we're on a three-minute clock for
10 the public testimony. [interpose]

11 TERESA PEDROZA: Yes. Well first I wanna
12 talk about the trees; we had a lot of trees down in
13 our neighborhood and I would like to make sure that
14 you put salt-resilient trees, not just one kinda
15 tree. I talked to... I live in the housing projects
16 and we lost over 1,000 trees and I talked to Cecil,
17 Mr. House... Mr. House, and he was sayin' that they're
18 gonna start putting trees next year, because the
19 norwood tree has to be put in at a certain time, but
20 that's the same tree that had the problem anyway, so
21 I think that you should think about putting a
22 different kinda tree, 'kay, not just a norwood tree.

23 The second issue is the co-naming of my
24 granddaughter, co-name of the north end of Delancey
25 Street. She was 12 years old when she passed; she

2 was coming out of school with the rest of the kids.
3 So I have a letter from one of the kids that I would
4 like to read.

5 "In honor of our friend Deshane, I would
6 like to request that Delancey Street be renamed
7 Deshane Santana, that the street should not only be
8 renamed, but fixed, the crossing lights go away too
9 quickly, even as it counts down. If you could find
10 it possible to slow down the countdown by an extra
11 three seconds. Also, widen and lengthen the curb to
12 prevent another child from being hurt and any
13 families from feeling injustice."

14 This is from a little girl that was
15 crossing the street with Deshane and she's still
16 worried about crossing Delancey Street. So the
17 changes were great, but they are still scared to
18 cross that street and if you could vote on this
19 issue, I'll greatly appreciate this. Thank you very
20 much.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Miss
22 Pedroza, [background comment] very moving testimony
23 and perhaps we'll work with Council Member Mendez,
24 since this is your district, to contact DO... oh, it's
25 Council Member Chin's? Okay, forgive me.

2 [background comment] Okay. Well perhaps the two of
3 us can reach out to her to talk about reaching out to
4 DOT to fix this signal timing on that. Okay. Great.

5 Well this concludes our hearing today;
6 thank you all for being here and it was wonderful
7 working with you, Mr. Chair... [interpose]

8 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: hopefully we'll have
10 occasion to do it again sometime.

11 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: I expect... Thank you
12 for your leadership on this issue and many other
13 Parks equity issues and I think this is the first of
14 many joint Parks hearings to discuss Sandy recovery
15 update. Thank you, Chair.

16 [gavel]

17 CO-CHAIR TREYGER: Yes, and thanks to our
18 counsels as well and to the staff. Thanks.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date June 26, 2014