

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY,
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

----- X

January 14, 2016
Start: 10:09 a.m.
Recess: 12:09 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

JAMES VACCA
Chairperson
VANESSA L. GIBSON
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma
David G. Greenfield
Barry s. Grodenchik
Joseph C. Borelli
Vincent J. Gentile
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Jumaane D. Williams
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Chaim M. Deutsch
Rafael Espinal, Jr.
Rory I. Lancman
Ritchie J. Torres
Steven Matteo

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Mark Levine
Laurie A. Cumbo
Corey D. Johnson

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

David Kirks
Associate Commissioner
New York City Department of Information
Technology and Telecommunications

Inspector Richard Napolitano
Commanding Officer
Communication Division
New York City Police Department

Ronald DiBiase
ECTP Program Integration Manager
New York City Department of Information
Technology and Telecommunications

Christopher Bromson
Deputy Director
Crime Victims Treatment Center

Andres
Representative
Court Legal Interpreting Coalition and
Deaf Community

Marsellette Davis
Representative
Black Deaf Advocates

Nicolyn Plummer
Social Workers
Barrier Free Living

3 **TRANSCRIPTION NOTE:** Inaudible testimony
4 of Nicolyn Plummer beginning at time stamps 01:44:18,
5 01:50:12 and 01:57:30.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay? Can we start?
7 [laughter] Okay.

8 Good morning everyone. My name is James
9 Vacca and I'm Chair of the Committee on Technology.
10 Today is January 14th and we're here today to discuss
11 legislation introduced by our Council Members; my
12 colleagues, Laurie Cumbo, Mark Levine and Vanessa
13 Gibson, Int. 0868, a bill that would require the
14 Department of Information Technology and
15 Telecommunications to create a plan that would allow
16 the public to communicate digitally with emergency
17 responders, using the City's 911 system. This
18 Committee, along with the Committee on Public Safety,
19 chaired by Vanessa Gibson, will examine the
20 possibility of allowing New Yorkers to contact 911
21 via text.

22 I'd like to thank Chair Gibson for
23 holding this hearing with me and we look forward to
24 hearing today's testimony, and I wanna thank the bill
25 sponsor, Laurie Cumbo especially, she approached me
several times to have this hearing and this is

3 something she's enthusiastic about and after I'd seen
4 this legislation, I'm enthusiastic about it also and
5 I thank her for coming up with this suggestion.

6 There's no doubt that being able to text
7 911 would be an extremely helpful alternative to
8 calling 911 in many situations. Those who are deaf,
9 hard of hearing or have a speech disability would
10 certainly benefit from having such a service
11 available to them.

12 Additionally, there are situations in
13 which making a voice call to 911 could be potentially
14 dangerous for someone in peril; incidents of domestic
15 violence, home invasions or active shooter scenarios
16 are examples of situations where texting would be
17 helpful. In each of those instances, dialing a voice
18 call to 911 may alert a potential attacker that
19 emergency personnel are being contacted and the
20 situation could end in tragedy.

21 There are several municipalities across
22 the country whose 911 systems can accept text
23 messages, including seven counties in New York State.
24 Such a system is called Next Generation 911, which
25 permits digital information, including voice, video,
pictures and text, to be transmitted from the public

3 through an internet protocol-based system to
4 emergency responders. In other words, Next
5 Generation 911 allows members of the public to
6 contact emergency services through many means other
7 than direct voice phone calls. Although NG911 has
8 been adopted widely, it's not yet been included as
9 part of New York City's 911 system and the FCC does
10 not mandate it and that's why I really appreciate
11 Councilwoman Cumbo's forward-looking legislation
12 today; it would task DoITT with creating a plan to
13 upgrade to New Generation 911 systems. Since New
14 York City is typically a leader when it comes to
15 technology, why haven't we put a plan in place to
16 implement this system?

17 For more than a decade the City has been
18 executing the Emergency Communications Transformation
19 Program (ECTP), which is a citywide multibillion
20 dollar endeavor intended to modernize New York City's
21 emergency communication infrastructure. Over the
22 years the ECTP has been plagued with construction
23 delays, cost overruns and contract issues and was
24 examined by the Department of Investigation in 2014.
25 DoITT's assessment found that components of the
program will not support the development of the

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

7

3 latest 911 technology standards, but a long-term
4 strategy should be formulated, they say, to include
5 implementation of New Generation 911. While ECTP
6 enters its final stages, it appears the
7 administration is focusing on completing items that
8 suffered previous setbacks, such as PSAC II, the
9 backup call center in my district.

10 Today these committees will be examining
11 the feasibility of adding a text communication
12 component to the existing 911 system and the ongoing
13 ECTP project. We look forward to hearing from DoITT,
14 the Police Department and other stakeholders and it
15 is with all that said that I turn the chair over to
16 my co-chair, Chair Vanessa Gibson of Public Safety.
17 Thank you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very
19 much, Chair Vacca and good morning ladies and
20 gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here, welcome to
21 City Hall. I am Council Member Vanessa Gibson of the
22 16th District in the Bronx and I am proud to serve as
23 the chair of the City Council's Committee on Public
24 Safety. I truly first thank my colleague and fellow
25 co-chair, Council Member Jimmy Vacca for co-chairing
this very important hearing; I thank all of the

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

8

3 members of both the Public Safety and Technology
4 Committee who are here and certainly thank all of my
5 staff.

6 This morning we are hearing Int. 0868
7 relating to creating an emergency mobile text system
8 or text to 911 for out New York City residents. Our
9 911 call system is the backbone of public safety and
10 is most often the first point of contact between the
11 community and emergency assistance. According to
12 recent reports, roughly 96% of New York City
13 residents own cell phones and 80% own smartphones;
14 the way we communicate is simply changing and
15 evolving. In this day and age where everyone sends
16 text messages, including yours truly, photos and
17 video, we need to make sure our emergency system is
18 also updated to meet the needs of this changing time.
19 At the end of 2015, over 400 jurisdictions across the
20 country have adopted text to 911 capabilities. While
21 calling 911 is still the most preferred method of
22 communication, there are circumstances in which
23 calling for help is simply not feasible.

24 For example, in Indiana, a carjacking
25 victim who was in the back seat of her own car was
able to text 911 to alert the police and the

3 carjacker was arrested. In Texas, a woman who was
4 kidnapped by her partner was saved when she texted
5 911; there are other examples in which individuals
6 who are physically unable to speak or are hearing
7 impaired have been saved by using text to 911. In
8 San Bernardino, California, a hearing-impaired woman
9 who lived alone was saved during a heart attack after
10 she texted 911. These are just a few examples which
11 I am sure will grow as more jurisdictions across the
12 country adopt this technology.

13 While we would not want to impede
14 technological progress, we need to make sure that
15 this system is rolled out in a thoughtful and
16 deliberative manner. The technology is one aspect of
17 the equation, but an equally important part of this
18 conversation is our 911 operators. Our 911 call-
19 takers provide a vital and important function in
20 public safety while working in incredibly stressful
21 situations and environments; we are not trying to
22 replace any of those operators with computers, but
23 instead need to make sure that our 911 call-takers
24 are taken into consideration as we contemplate moving
25 into the next generation of technology.

3 I believe Int. 0868, which I proudly sign
4 onto as a co-sponsor, will help to stimulate the
5 conversation around such important technology. In
6 today's hearing I hope to learn from the
7 administration, both DoITT and the NYPD on what steps
8 they have taken towards implementing this technology,
9 ongoing conversations with all stakeholders and how
10 this would impact 911 call-takers as well as
11 emergency procedures. I truly wanna emphasize the
12 importance of our 911 call-takers; myself, as well as
13 Council Member Cumbo and Council Member Levine and
14 others have taken the time to visit the 911 Call
15 Center at MetroTech, we have sat several hours with
16 the call-takers, we have sat with the dispatchers,
17 we've sat with EMS as well as FDNY to really see the
18 day to day operations of the 911 call system.
19 Understanding there are almost 30,000 calls that come
20 into 911 every day on an annual basis, almost 9
21 million phone calls, so we know that whatever
22 technology we are analyzing must be done in a
23 thoughtful way. I appreciate the work our call-
24 takers do every day and the supervisors there,
25 because they do work under extremely difficult
situations, taking every emergency call that comes

3 into the system. My first reaction after my very
4 first visit, because I've been there several times,
5 was I couldn't believe the level of calls and the
6 fact that many individuals call 911 for everything,
7 and so that is something that we are extremely clear
8 about; we will be very considerate and sensitive
9 moving forward, but we certainly want to be a part of
10 a new wave of technology. New York State has been
11 the growing state of lots of different initiatives
12 and we certainly look at technology as an important
13 part of the 21st century, so I am grateful that we're
14 here today; I thank Chair Vacca once more and thank
15 all of my colleagues and especially Chair Cumbo, who
16 chairs the Women's Issues Committee, recognizing this
17 is very important.

18 I wanna recognize the staff on the
19 Committee on Public Safety because I am a part of a
20 team, I don't do this work alone; I wanna thank my
21 Legislative Counsel, Deepa Ambekar and Beth Golub;
22 Legislative Policy Analyst, Laurie Wen; our
23 Legislative Financial Analyst, Ellen Eng; the
24 Speaker's staff, Theo Moore; Fiza Ali, and my
25 government staff, Dana Wax and Kaitlyn O'Hagan.

3 Thank you all for being here; thank you,
4 Chair Vacca and I look forward to a productive
5 hearing.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you Chair
7 Gibson. I'd like to thank my staff as well, Brad
8 Reid, Legislative Counsel; Ken Grace, Legislative
9 Financial Analyst and Stacy Gardener, my Deputy Chief
10 of Staff and Director of Legislation; Frank Fraioli
11 [sp?], my Communications Director.

12 I wanna introduce the sponsor of the
13 bill, Chair Laurie Cumbo.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so very
15 much. Good afternoon; I am Council Member Laurie
16 Cumbo and I'd like to thank you all for coming today.

17 I really, really want to thank so very
18 much, from the bottom of my heart, Council Member
19 Vacca as well as Council Member Gibson for their
20 leadership on this issue. I have been very
21 persistent over the last year in holding and
22 requesting to have a hearing on this particular bill
23 and so I so appreciate all the work that you all have
24 done with me in order to bring it to this point.
25 Today's hearing is the result of over a year's worth
of work of us bringing this particular bill to the

3 forefront and I could not have done it without you.

4 I particularly wanna thank Council Member Gibson,

5 because she has held our hand the entire way in terms

6 of taking us to the call center, introducing us to

7 those dynamic workers, most of them women, who are

8 really and truly essence, the first responders in a

9 sense in terms of when 911 calls come in and they do

10 an extraordinary job; they are extremely hardworking;

11 some very overworked and so this is really very

12 important that we had an opportunity to meet them, as

13 well as with our labor unions and having an

14 opportunity to understand how they see this as well.

15 I also wanna thank on my staff Dominique

16 Bryant; she is my Constituent Affairs Director, and

17 this particular piece of legislation was her idea;

18 she brought it to the office; she is a resident of

19 Ingersoll Houses and even just two days ago a 67-

20 year-old woman was beaten and robbed in an elevator

21 one building away from her; this woman had to get 10

22 stitches; she's 67 years old, and when we hear about

23 cases like this, it's prudent for us as members of

24 the City Council to explore and exhaust every single

25 resource to make sure that New Yorkers are safe in

their homes, when they're walking to and from work,

3 anywhere they are in the city of New York, and so I
4 certainly wanna thank Dominique Bryant for her
5 leadership on this.

6 Over four decades ago 911 was introduced
7 to the public as a reliable source of assistance
8 during emergencies; the landscape of our world has
9 changed dramatically since then; technology has
10 advanced in a measurable way, yet 911 technology is
11 virtually the same today as it was 40 years ago. In
12 the United States, individuals who use 911 must
13 actually dial into a call center; the vast majority
14 of the 911 call centers in our nation use analog
15 equipment that does not have the capability to
16 receive text messages, videos or photos or certain
17 calls from computers. The call centers also don't
18 have the capability to transfer or reroute calls in
19 the instance that they are oversaturated, in the case
20 of a natural disaster, for example, which
21 unfortunately are far too frequent in today's
22 society.

23 In the year 2016 this shouldn't be the
24 case; as the world changes we have no choice but to
25 adapt. Moreover, an individual should be able to get
help from any device at any time, especially those

3 who are caught in a situation where speaking out loud
4 is not possible or when whispers or mumbles are
5 inaudible to someone on the other line, making it
6 more likely for critical information to get lost.
7 This includes victims of high-risk situations where
8 making a phone call is difficult or may put further
9 endanger into peoples' lives in that instance. This
10 also includes the deaf and speech-impaired community,
11 as well as victims of domestic violence who are too
12 afraid to dial 911 an operator for fear of being
13 caught or harmed even further by the abuser. It also
14 includes victims, mainly women, who are sexually
15 assaulted or raped by a perpetrator in a taxicab and
16 nowhere to escape. Just last week the NYPD reported
17 that 14 out of 166 committed rapes by strangers in
18 New York City in the 2015 year happened in taxis,
19 livery cabs and other for-hire vehicles. As Chair of
20 the Women's Issues Committee, I am incredibly
21 concerned about the rise of violence against women in
22 the city of New York; it has escalated in a way that
23 is making every woman feel more vulnerable in the
24 city. Instead of engaging in victim-blaming
25 language, we as public officials should be providing
New Yorkers with tools to ensure that they are

3 effectively protected and taken care of each and
4 every day; that is why we have put forth Int. 0868, a
5 local law to amend the Administrative Code of the
6 City of New York in relation to creating an emergency
7 mobile text system, also known as Next Generation
8 911. Next Generation 911 is said to be the most
9 important technological advancement in public safety
10 communications since mobile radios were first
11 implemented in emergency response vehicles almost a
12 century ago and New York City certainly has to be at
13 the forefront of this. Next Generation 911 goes
14 beyond enabling individuals to send emergency texts;
15 it would also allow for streaming video to and from
16 first responders in the field; it would give call
17 centers the ability to reroute calls to neighboring
18 centers when necessary; it would promote the sharing
19 of information that can ultimately result in valuable
20 information about suspects.

21 I just wanna briefly give you some stats
22 from the Federal Communications Commission.
23 Currently there are over 450 counties in the country
24 that have adopted 911 texting, 7 new call centers
25 were upgraded just between December 2015 and January
2016, 7 counties in New York have 911 call centers

3 adopted emergency text messages, which include
4 Chemung in Elmira, Monroe in Rochester, Montgomery in
5 Fultonville, Oneida in Oriskany [sic], Onondaga in
6 Syracuse, Steuben in Bath and Rockland in Pomona.

7 According to Brian Fontes, the CEO of the
8 National Emergency Number Association that sets the
9 standards for 911 call centers, he mentioned that in
10 the next two to three years an overwhelming number of
11 citizens will have smartphones, almost 85%. Leaders
12 in public safety have been totally satisfied with 911
13 texting he says, calling on legislators to provide
14 the funds to add 911 texting services. He also noted
15 that the main holdup for 911 texting he says is that
16 leaders in every area of government have not stepped
17 up to the plate and made sure that 911 texting works.
18 It's not a technology problem he says because the
19 upgrades are not overly complex; it's mainly a
20 funding problem.

21 Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the
22 incredible first responders, the 911 call-takers, the
23 behind-the-scenes heroes that we rarely hear from.
24 It is their strength and patience that make our city
25 the safest place to live, work and play. I would be
remiss if I did not address the need for the study to

3 include research and recommendations that consider
4 how the technological advance would impact the 911
5 call-takers, specifically the need for additional
6 staffing, professional development and training and
7 the psychological benefits and challenges, as well as
8 educating the public about the advanced system.

9 I wanna thank you again to Chairs Vacca
10 and Gibson for holding this hearing; I wanna thank my
11 co-sponsor, Council Member Mark Levine from Harlem;
12 we have been working very closely together and it has
13 been a pleasure working with you to bring it to this
14 point.

15 I look forward to hearing feedback on the
16 bill, including ways we can improve it so that we can
17 take law enforcement into the 21st century.

18 I wanna thank Aminta Kilawan, I wanna
19 thank Drew Gabriel, my Legislative Director, Monica
20 Abend; she is my Deputy Chief of Staff and also the
21 Director of the Women's Issues Committee; Kristia
22 Beaubrun, who is the Communications Director on my
23 staff and everyone who has made this possible,
24 particularly Dominique Bryant, my Constituent Affairs
25 liaison. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you Council
4 Member Cumbo and let me introduce the members of the
5 Council that are here with us today; to my left,
6 Council Member Annabel Palma, Council Member Barry
7 Grodenchik, Council Member Joe Borelli, Council
8 Member Cumbo, who you just heard from, myself,
9 Council Member Vacca, Council Member Vanessa Gibson;
10 Council Member Mark Levine. [background comment]
11 Oh, Council Member Robert Cornegy, the tallest person
12 in the room and I missed.. I missed the tallest
13 person. See, that's what happens. [background
14 comments] Oh, Council Member Levine wishes to say
15 some words. Council Member Levine.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And very briefly.
17 Thank you, Chair Vacca, thank you Chair Gibson; thank
18 you, Council Member Cumbo for your leadership on
19 this; proud to be working with all of you.

20 It's great to see Inspector Napolitano
21 here; as Council Member Gibson mentioned, the day we
22 got to spend with your team, the frontline call-
23 takers, was I think really important in the
24 development of our understanding of this complicated
25 system and of our appreciation for just how intense
and stressful and challenging the work of the call-

3 takers is; I don't know of any job in the city that
4 has that kind of constant pressure where the life of
5 people is in your hands minute to minute, hour by
6 hour; we wanna give those important frontline workers
7 new tools, we wanna give them new technology and we
8 wanna give the people of New York a chance to connect
9 to emergency services via the means that are becoming
10 more popular and effective in the 21st century.

11 I don't need to repeat all the compelling
12 cases in which having this option could mean the
13 difference between life and death, but I do wanna add
14 a little bit of color by reading you a recent text
15 exchange that took place last week in Alpharetta,
16 Georgia; it started with a woman named Lisa Collis
17 texting: "Does 911 work on text?" And an operator
18 responded: "Alpharetta 911. If it is safe to do so,
19 call 911; if not, what is the address of the
20 emergency?" Miss Collis responds: "I'm at the Old
21 Navy by North Point Mall; someone left two children
22 in a car; they're about 2 and 5 years old, I think;
23 I'm deaf." Operator responds: "Okay, what type of
24 vehicle?" Miss Collis: "It's silver; it's parked
25 right in front of the store." Operator: "Car, truck,
SUV or van?" Miss Collis: "Car." Operator: "Two or

3 four doors?" Miss Collis: "Small car; I'm inside
4 store now, so I can't see the make; I'm keeping an
5 eye on it." Operator: "Thank you for texting; I have
6 an officer on the way to your location; would you
7 like to meet with her?" Miss Collis: "Sure, I will
8 wait for the officer."

9 It's believed that may have saved those
10 two children's lives and people in New York simply
11 wanna know, if you can text 911 in Alpharetta,
12 Georgia; why can't you text 911 in New York City? If
13 in Honolulu you can send in a picture of a suspect on
14 911 via text to help in an apprehension; why can't
15 you do it in New York City? If in Houston you can
16 send in video of a crime that could aid in
17 prosecution; why can't you do that in New York City?
18 If in Indianapolis, if you are under attack in a
19 situation in which it's not safe to speak, you can
20 text 911 to call for help; why can't you do that in
21 New York City? There's really no need to even debate
22 the compelling interest in this city catching up with
23 hundreds of jurisdictions around the country who have
24 already moved to the 21st century, there's just no
25 debate; we almost don't need to spend time on the
topic; the question is, how can we get there, when

3 can we get there and what will it take, and that's
4 what our bill is about. Our bill simply would
5 mandate that the City create a plan, give us a plan
6 how you're gonna do this, we understand it's
7 complicated, we understand this is the biggest 911
8 system in America, but this city has resources
9 unparalleled in any other jurisdiction in America; we
10 have the talent in our IT division, we have talent in
11 the leadership of FDNY and NYPD and we certainly have
12 talent on the frontline among call-takers and
13 dispatchers; we can do this, we must do this; our
14 legislation will ensure it happens in a timely
15 manner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, Council
17 Member Levine. I'd now like to call our first panel,
18 Daniel [sic] Kirks, New York City Department of
19 Information Technology and Telecommunications and
20 Richard Napolitano, Communication Division, New York
21 City Police Department. Mr. Kirks and Mr.
22 Napolitano, I must swear you in. Do you affirm to
23 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
24 truth in your testimony before these committees and
25 to respond honestly to council member questions?

DAVID KIRKS: I do.

3 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: I do.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank you.

5 Who would like to start off?

6 DAVID KIRKS: I'll start.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 'Kay, please
8 introduce yourself for the record.

9 DAVID KIRKS: My name is David Kirks; I
10 am the Associate Commissioner at Department of
11 Information Technology and Telecommunications
12 (DoITT).

13 Good morning Chairs Vacca and Gibson and
14 members of the City Council Committees on Technology
15 and Public Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to
16 testify today on Int. 0868, which would require DoITT
17 to develop a plan to allow the public to communicate
18 digitally with emergency responders using the City's
19 911 system. I would also like to take the
20 opportunity to update you on the steps the City is
21 currently taking to do so.

22 New York City's 911 emergency
23 communications system handles more than 10 million
24 calls each year, delivering emergency; often
25 lifesaving services through an expert combination of
people, processes and technology. So I begin by

3 stating that the administration shares with the
4 Council the goal of this proposed legislation,
5 enhanced access to emergency services for the public
6 and has in fact begun working to develop a long-term
7 strategy for implementing a next-generation 911
8 system or Next Gen 911.

9 As you are aware, when dealing with
10 lifesaving systems, even a single error is an error
11 we must do all we can to prevent; therefore, we must
12 always carefully conduct due diligence before
13 proposing or making changes to the systems and/or
14 processes that fuel our 911 operations.

15 A review conducted by the City has
16 revealed that while some municipalities have made
17 progress with text to 911, to date no large city in
18 the country, and certainly none comparable in size,
19 scope or complexity to New York City, has
20 successfully implemented a comprehensive Next Gen 911
21 system. So before updating the Committees on the
22 progress the City has made with this long-term Next
23 Gen 911 planning, it is beneficial to outline, from a
24 technology perspective, what moving to Next Gen 911
25 means.

3 In order for people to move from older
4 analog telephones, landlines to current cell phone
5 technology that enables text, video and data
6 transfers, mobile carriers have had to build out
7 entirely new digital infrastructure separate from
8 their copper-based legacy networks and in order to
9 offer 911 users the same features, 911 systems across
10 the country must make the same transition to an all-
11 digital network infrastructure. While texting to 911
12 will be available as part of any Next Gen 911 system,
13 some jurisdictions, as has been pointed out, are
14 implementing a version of texting prior to a Next Gen
15 911 rollout. That said; text to analog 911 remains a
16 developing technology with limited market deployment
17 and multiple open technical concerns. However, we
18 are committed to continue working with NYPD and FDNY
19 to find an acceptable solution in the short-term
20 provided such a solution does not in any way
21 compromise the City's ability to quickly and
22 effectively respond to emergencies.

23 So what we have done thus far; DoITT has
24 created a Next Gen 911 project team in the summer of
25 2015 to develop a path forward with all stakeholder
agencies. We received approval from the 911

3 Executive Steering Committee consisting of top
4 executives from the First Deputy Mayor's Office, the
5 Mayor's Office of Operations, NYPD, FDNY, and DoITT
6 to move forward with the proposed path.

7 Next we will be releasing a request for
8 information to assess options for migration to a Next
9 Gen 911 system for New York City. This RFI is still
10 in an early step in our comprehensive planning
11 process but will provide us with a better
12 understanding of the benefits, challenges, risks and
13 issues associated with migrating to a Next Gen 911
14 platform. This RFI will help drive our decisions
15 around Next Gen 911 technologies by surveying experts
16 across the industry and ensuring a holistic look at
17 the City's options for seamlessly integrating the
18 processing of traditional voice calls with various
19 types of modern and emergency forms of communication.
20 Responses to this RFI will help the City create a
21 Next Gen 911 system that ensures highest standards of
22 public safety and emergency response all with the
23 framework of 911's operational needs and
24 specifications.

25 While the City is best positioned to make
determinations about what technologies and practices

3 fit with its functional requirements, throughout this
4 process we are committed to looking at the innovative
5 solutions the private sector has to offer even beyond
6 texting in rolling out a state of the art system for
7 all New Yorkers.

8 We have described today our efforts to
9 plan for a Next Gen 911 system and our commitment to
10 work with NYPD and FDNY to identify potential interim
11 solutions, well aware that any change to a system as
12 vital and complex as our 911 system must be
13 approached in as cautious and deliberate manner as
14 possible. We encourage the Council's continued
15 feedback and input as we work together on a safer,
16 more responsive New York City for all. Thank you.
17 I'd like to now turn it over to Inspector Napolitano.

18 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Good morning Chair
19 Gibson, Chair Vacca and members of the Council. I'm
20 Inspector Richard Napolitano, Commanding Officer of
21 the Communication Division of the New York City
22 Police Department. In that capacity I oversee all
23 NYPD operations at the 911 call center, including
24 call-taking and dispatching. On behalf of Police
25 Commissioner William J. Bratton, I wish to thank the
City Council for the opportunity to comment on Int.

3 0868 as it relates to the Police Department's
4 participation in the current 911 call-taking process.

5 Int. 0868 would require the Department of
6 Information Technology and Telecommunications to
7 create a plan to upgrade the City's 911 system to
8 Next Generation 911 which would allow the public to
9 communicate digitally with NYPD call-takers using the
10 City's 911 system. The system would allow the public
11 to send digital communications, including text
12 messages, videos and photographs to 911.

13 At the outset of my testimony I wanna
14 state very clearly that the NYPD strongly supports
15 the move to this technology. While Int. 0868
16 certainly contemplates important technological
17 advancements that will eventually be made to the
18 City's 911 system, the Police Department agrees with
19 DoITT and the administration that these upgrades to
20 the system must be made thoughtfully, given the
21 significant operational, training and staffing
22 implications involved in upgrading a complex system.

23 NYPD personnel at the 911 call center
24 received 10 million last year; as you probably know
25 by the volume of calls, it is the largest 911 system
in the United States. Under this administration and

3 with the help of this Council, the Police Department
4 has increased the headcount of police communication
5 technicians, commonly known as 911 operators and
6 police dispatchers, which has resulted in handling
7 calls more quickly and efficiently while also
8 reducing the reliance on overtime. There are
9 significant operational implications associated with
10 moving to a system that allows text to 911
11 communication. When call-takers answer a 911 call
12 they are trained to ask a series of questions, all of
13 which are designed to elicit pieces of information
14 that are ultimately used to inform an emergency
15 response. As an example, all 911 callers are asked
16 where is the emergency and what is the emergency.
17 Different types of emergencies require different sets
18 of follow-up questions; the answers to these
19 questions are often essential to ensuring that the
20 responding officers, firefighters or EMTs have the
21 information that they need to respond efficiently,
22 effectively and safely; they are also necessary to be
23 able to prioritize jobs so that we could provide the
24 best service possible to the public. Text to 911 has
25 implications for the back and forth dialogue that our
call-takers use day in and day out to ask these

3 questions and get this information; accordingly,
4 there are certainly operational issues we will have
5 to work through to implement any text to 911 system.
6 There are also significant training implications
7 associated with moving to a text to 911 system. Our
8 dedicated PCTs receive rigorous training, entry level
9 call-takers receive nine weeks of training, radio
10 dispatchers receive an additional five weeks; in-
11 service training is also conducted in order to ensure
12 that our PCTs have the skills to use the most up-to-
13 date procedures.

14 As the intake point to the 911 system,
15 PCTs are strictly and rigorously trained on how to
16 handle each and every one of these approximately
17 27,000 daily emergency calls into the 911 call center
18 with efficiency and precision. Next Generation 911
19 would dramatically change the duties of PCTs and such
20 significant changes would require substantial
21 retraining. The 911 system and PCT training are
22 exclusively based on telephone calls and verbal
23 questions and answers; accepting and analyzing text,
24 video and photos from the public will require an
25 entirely new training curriculum. Finally, there
will certainly be new headcount requirements

3 associated with this change; we are in the process of
4 working through out proposals on hiring associated
5 with text to 911 so that we can ensure that this
6 technology will not hinder response times.

7 We agree that there are benefits to an
8 emergency mobile text system, especially as it
9 relates to domestic violence emergencies or in
10 instances where a person is hiding or unable to speak
11 into a phone, but it benefits all New Yorkers that
12 these important upgrades be dealt with in a
13 meticulous and cautious manner. The NYPD and the
14 administration are committed to further improving the
15 911 system through technological advancements as well
16 as through collaborations with City agencies and the
17 Council.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
19 with you this morning and I am happy to answer any
20 questions that you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you and I do
22 wanna mention we've been joined by Council Member
23 Julissa Ferreras and Council Member Steve Matteo.

24 Thank you both for your testimony, I...
25 [background comment] oh Council Member Gentile is
also here, sorry. I did wanna go into some questions

3 regarding the RFI; now the RFI is referred to in your
4 testimony and Mr. Kirks, can you walk us through what
5 an RFI is and what steps are taken; what does an RFI
6 result in; what is the chronology and the timetable
7 involved?

8 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, an RFI is a
9 communication of the needs for Next Gen 911 that the
10 City has, so it includes scope statements of the
11 kinds of technology solutions that the City is
12 looking for Next Gen 911; it references various
13 standards that the system should adhere to and it is
14 communicated to industry and it looks for industry to
15 provide responses in referencing and describing
16 solutions that they have that they could offer the
17 City; then one of the next steps is to invite those
18 respondents into some meetings with the City and
19 further understand what their offerings are so then
20 we can be well-informed as to what kind of technology
21 solutions out there that are applicable to our
22 particular environment.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So in this case
24 you're issuing an RFI and you are expecting people to
25 come back with proposals; your RFI is going to have a
list of variables that it's going to address and want

3 those who submit proposals to address; is the
4 legislation that Council Member Cumbo has put forth;
5 is that included as one of the specifications that
6 anyone submitting an RFI must include in their
7 package?

8 DAVID KIRKS: Well when you say proposal,
9 I wanna make sure that we're clear; it doesn't
10 include cost information, this is really about
11 solutions that the... [interpose]

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No, no, no, but are
13 you specifying that you want the RFI to include a
14 texting mechanism for people to communicate with 911;
15 is that in your... is that in your RFI...? [crosstalk]

16 DAVID KIRKS: Yes it is. Yes it is. Yes
17 it is.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So is that one of
19 many things you're looking for?

20 DAVID KIRKS: It is one of many things;
21 the other part is the upgrade of technology that's a
22 part of the Next Gen 911 system.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So could someone
24 submit a proposal, or an RFI, could someone submit an
25 RFI that possibly does not include the texting

3 component and still be a successful bidder, so to
4 speak...? [interpose]

5 DAVID KIRKS: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No?

7 DAVID KIRKS: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So they would have to
9 do it. When they submit an RFI to your office, your
10 office assesses the RFIs, and what do you do next; do
11 you then put together an RFP?

12 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, once we invite the
13 respondents in and we assess the completeness and
14 quality of their offerings, then the next step would
15 be to issue a request for proposal.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Alright, and then you
17 assess request for proposals and then you basically
18 will arrive at a proposal that you like the best and
19 then there is a process of approval and review that
20 must take place before that RFP becomes effective?

21 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, we would follow the
22 City's procedures and procurement and contracting
23 procedures.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Now, this
25 process we've spoken about is how long of a process;
do we anticipate this would involve?

3 DAVID KIRKS: I'm afraid I wouldn't be
4 able to give you a precise answer on that; it's
5 dependant upon the procurement process of the City;
6 I'm happy to get you a... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'm going to a
8 certain place here because I'm aware in the past that
9 we've issued RFIs and no one has responded at all and
10 I'm also aware that in the past we've issued RFIs,
11 never proceeding to an RFP and then there have been
12 times where an RFI has been issued and it takes a
13 year-and-a-half to two years until the RFP process is
14 completed... [crosstalk]

15 DAVID KIRKS: Uhm-hm. Uhm-hm.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So my contention
17 here, where I'm going with this line of questioning
18 is that I do not feel that you're coming forth today
19 saying that there is an RFI coming out; I do not feel
20 that that negates the need for Council Member Cumbo's
21 legislation. My question to you is that are you
22 prepared to take the text messaging component and
23 implement it separate from an RFI if we as the
24 legislative body feel that this is a priority with
25 us?

3 DAVID KIRKS: Well our current plans
4 right now are; we are working with NYPD to assess
5 text to 911 solutions and that is independent of
6 going forward with a full Next Gen 911 solution, so
7 we're already working on that with NYPD to assess
8 potential solutions out there that would be a part of
9 our current system.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What is your
11 timetable on that; how long have you been engaged in
12 these discussions and what is your timetable as to a
13 conclusion on those discussions?

14 DAVID KIRKS: Well we began that, as I
15 mentioned before, the summer of 2015, engaged with
16 the plan and we've also been engaged with NYPD to
17 assess potential solutions for a text to 911 system;
18 in terms of how long will that take, I really
19 hesitate to give you an exact date because we're not
20 finished with the assessment of potential solutions.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Would I be correct in
22 stating that you have put this on the fast track and
23 given this a priority?

24 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, you can say that. We
25 have a project team that's dedicated, reports to me,

3 that is working on Next Gen 911 and as a part of
4 that, text to 911 is a component.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Have you included in
6 your deliberations a study of other municipalities
7 and how they've implemented this system?

8 DAVID KIRKS: Yes we have.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Talk to me about the
10 legislation that Council Member Cumbo has submitted;
11 do you support that legislation or are there
12 revisions you would like to see in the legislation?

13 DAVID KIRKS: Well we certainly support
14 the legislation; as we've indicated, we've actually
15 started since last summer on the same path that you
16 are proposing. In terms of the timelines that you
17 want to put in place, it's difficult for me as a
18 technology leader to say that we will have a solution
19 in a particular time.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I understand that
21 you're a technical person...

22 DAVID KIRKS: Uhm-hm.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: but I do have to
24 indicate that the Council's role here is that when we
25 have a member that suggests legislation is the
administration coming to these hearings and the

3 administration telling us not only that they support
4 the legislation and concept, which I am confident you
5 do...

6 DAVID KIRKS: We do.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: but that based on
8 what we're hearing today, based on our hearing today,
9 what revisions would you recommend; what parts of the
10 legislation do you think we should reconsider, so
11 we're looking for that type of input; that's part of
12 the hearing process...

13 DAVID KIRKS: Uhm-hm.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: so I really need to
15 hear from the administration not just that you
16 support the concept of Ms. Cumbo's bill, which I feel
17 confident you do, but I need to know from you, as
18 part of your preparation for today's hearing, what
19 suggestions do you have to make the bill even better
20 or where do you see difficulty in some of the
21 wording, because we need your input as we proceed.
22 So do you have any input concerning that today?

23 DAVID KIRKS: Well my input would be that
24 we're currently assessing a program plan and to state
25 that we would have to have a specific timeline I
think would sort of hamstring us because this is... we

3 have to consider operational impacts with NYPD, so
4 those take a little bit more time.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Well that's
6 reasonable and if that's the only objection I'm
7 hearing today, then we need you to communicate with
8 myself, Chair Gibson and Laurie Cumbo, because
9 legislation regarding... any legislation has to have a
10 timeline, any legislation we pass has to have a
11 timeline, so if the timeline in the legislation is
12 something that concerns you, we would be willing to
13 work with you regarding that timeline; I'm sure I
14 speak for the sponsor and my co-chair, but beyond
15 that I'm not hearing any other objection today, so I
16 would want these discussions to take place and to
17 continue with the administration and the sponsor so
18 that this committee can proceed to adopt the bill
19 expeditiously; I think it's something long overdue.

20 DAVID KIRKS: I would agree that
21 continued discussions need to occur.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Council Member
23 Gibson; do you have any questions?

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Sure.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member Gibson
and then Council Member Cumbo.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very
4 much. Thank you, Chair Vacca and thank you so much,
5 Associate Commissioner, thank you, Mr. Kirks, as well
6 as Inspector Napolitano and I also wanna recognize
7 the presence of the NYPD Deputy Commissioner for
8 Technology, Jessica Tisch, who oversees all the
9 technology at the NYPD, which this Council has been
10 very supportive of, equipping all of our officers
11 with smartphones and tablets, so we're very excited
12 about that. Thank you for your presence and your
13 testimony.

14 So I am excited about Next Gen and I know
15 that while we are in preliminary conversations, the
16 Steering Committee composed of several stakeholders
17 is very important; I just wanted to ask, with the RFI
18 that will, you know, soon be announced, other than
19 text to 911; what other capabilities are we looking
20 for from the industry surrounding advancing 911,
21 besides text messaging, what other capabilities are
22 we looking for?

23 DAVID KIRKS: So the primary components
24 of this will be to transition from an analog-based
25 infrastructure to digital-based.. [crosstalk]

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Right, to
4 digital. Uhm-hm.

5 DAVID KIRKS: so that it can readily
6 receive the texts and the multimedia inputs from
7 callers. But that's not the only thing; it really
8 moves us into a complete digital infrastructure so
9 that the new innovative technologies can be
10 integrated into that infrastructure much more easily
11 than the analog-based systems. Another important
12 component of it is cyber security; we have to make
13 sure that as we move to an all digital-based system
14 that we adequately protect that system from any cyber
15 attacks.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: So that includes,
17 in addition to texting, photos and images as well
18 when you talk about a full... [interpose]

19 DAVID KIRKS: Yeah.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: digital system?

21 DAVID KIRKS: Full digital inputs.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

23 DAVID KIRKS: Yeah.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: And I wanna...

[interpose]

25 DAVID KIRKS: And also... excuse me...

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Uhm-hm.

3 DAVID KIRKS: And also, with the
4 recording systems that we have in place, those would
5 have to be updated to be digitally-based.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Does that
7 also include conversations around storage of data as
8 well?

9 DAVID KIRKS: It does.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, so pretty
11 much everything except cost is what we're looking for
12 from the industry?

13 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, that's correct...

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

15 DAVID KIRKS: in the RFI it does not
16 [crosstalk]

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: In the RFI.
18 Right. So while I know Chair Vacca talked about an
19 actual timeline for the RFI of which we don't have a
20 definitive answer just yet, I wanted to ask, within
21 the RFI, is there an evaluation process that you're
22 looking for from the industry as you solicit requests
23 for information?

24

25

3 DAVID KIRKS: We'll be looking for..
4 maturity of technology, will be a key component of
5 that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And
7 besides maturity, anything else?

8 DAVID KIRKS: The degree of deployment of
9 the solution, so not only how advanced the technology
10 is, but adoption of the technology, the compliance
11 with the national standards as well.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. What has
13 been the conversations with some of the other
14 jurisdictions; I know there are several states that
15 we may have had conversations with, but even within
16 New York State, we identified I believe seven
17 counties right now that have a 911 to text mechanism,
18 including Chemung County, I believe Wyoming; there
19 were several counties in pretty much western New York
20 that have this mechanism, so have there been any
21 conversations around their implementation and what
22 that would mean for us?

23 DAVID KIRKS: There have been
24 discussions, not only with areas in New York, but
25 also other states, such as Oregon and their adoption
of Next Gen 911..

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

4 DAVID KIRKS: I would have to get you the
5 details of those discussions, but the experts that we
6 have hired have been engaged with different
7 municipalities.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And so we
9 identify Chemung, Monroe, Montgomery, Oneida,
10 Onondaga, probably the closest to New York City,
11 Rockland County and Steuben County that have a 911
12 system -- Chemung, Monroe, Montgomery, Oneida,
13 Onondaga, Rockland and Steuben. So I wanted to ask,
14 in addition to the RFI, understanding how popular
15 texting is, if this is something that we are to
16 implement, understanding that it is an option, right,
17 so it would not be the primary level of
18 communication; would there be any conversations or
19 have there been conversations around a public service
20 announcement campaign raising the awareness to the
21 public on a mechanism of text and video footage in
22 addition to the basic and primary communication of
23 phone calls; has that been a part of the Steering
24 Committee's conversations?

25 DAVID KIRKS: The public awareness
campaign has been discussed as an integral part of

3 the program; working with NYPD we recognize that
4 rolling out a new capability, the public needs to be
5 aware of that is a new feature. I would ask if you
6 have comments in terms of the impact to the
7 operational aspects and the public's interaction.

8 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Let me just say
9 thank you, the Council, for acknowledging the hard
10 work and dedication of our 911 dispatchers and
11 operators.

12 As far as educating the public, we all
13 believe that would be incredibly helpful; we spoke
14 with several other states; counties that have simple,
15 you know, call if you can; text if you can messages
16 like that that we can work with the Council gettin'
17 that out to the public and just driving that home so
18 they don't overuse the text to 911.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: So in a lot of
20 the conversations what have you learned in terms of
21 some of the best practices that these jurisdictions
22 have adopted that we could certainly adopt,
23 understanding there's no other locality like the City
24 of New York, their demand is much smaller, their
25 population is much smaller, so have they adopted any

3 best practices that you think would be useful in our
4 current conversations on technology?

5 DAVID KIRKS: If you don't mind, I'd like
6 ask Mr. DiBiase to address that; he's actually been
7 working directly with some of... engaged in some of
8 these conversations.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, sure. You
10 can come forward; we just have to do the oath of
11 office. [background comments]

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Do you affirm to tell
13 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
14 in your testimony before these committees and to
15 respond honestly to council member questions?

16 RONALD DIBIASE: Yes, I do.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Please
18 state your name for the record.

19 RONALD DIBIASE: Ronald DiBiase.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: You may begin.

21 RONALD DIBIASE: Could you just repeat
22 the question?

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: In the
24 conversations with other jurisdictions, what have you
25 learned, what have we learned are some best practices
that these localities have adopted as far as text to

3 911 that we could incorporate in our current
4 conversations?

5 RONALD DIBIASE: We, as the Associate
6 Commissioner had indicated, many months ago had
7 started research into the best approaches for a text
8 to 911, an interim solution until we got to Next Gen,
9 when we can implement a full host of enhanced
10 functionality, and we've come upon many different
11 implementations, there are many vendors out there.
12 So the points that have been brought out, due
13 diligence definitely needs to be done to understand
14 lessons learned from these different municipalities
15 and then what's best for our situation here in New
16 York City. As the Inspector had indicated, we do
17 between 25-27,000 calls a day; once a texting
18 implementation is complete and it gets out to the
19 public, there's no way to pull it back, so we have to
20 be absolutely sure in the manner that we're going to
21 implement this, both from a technology perspective
22 and also from an operational perspective.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. In
24 addition, recognizing, I think Inspector, you talked
25 about the training that current call-takers go
through as of now as well as the dispatchers; do you

3 have an idea of the other jurisdictions, how long
4 their training was and are we looking to also
5 incorporate some of the same level of training for
6 text to 911, and then secondly, some of the
7 localities that I talked about, counties upstate,
8 what they have done is they have a set of 911 call-
9 takers that just do voice calls and then they have a
10 subset of call-takers that handle texts and you know,
11 other forms of communication, so are those
12 conversations, are we looking at that and also, what
13 do you think the training would look like?

14 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Yes, we have spoken
15 to them about that and their training was
16 approximately a day or less; again, they have much
17 smaller departments, probably much fewer issues that
18 we would encounter, and the issue with our training,
19 which would require a decent amount of time, is that
20 anytime I pull people off of the 911 floor I have to
21 backfill that position with somebody on ordered
22 overtime, so due to our large number of employees,
23 approximately 1400 with the PCTs and the supervisors,
24 if I even train 20 a day you can see that it would
25 take... that's approximately 70 days just to train the
floor.

3 Speaking with the other jurisdictions, I
4 noticed that a common concern for them was texting in
5 different languages and that was the most common
6 issue that they spoke about; they've used some
7 translation services, but then that is also a problem
8 of facts being lost in translation. So we will take
9 a very close look at these types of matters; we can
10 learn from the things that they've been through
11 already and move forward.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, thank you;
13 I appreciate that; that was my next question in terms
14 of language access, multiple languages and TTY calls,
15 just to make sure that that is a part of the
16 conversation; if we open the door for a new mechanism
17 of 911 calls, obviously we have to be very concerned
18 about those whose first language is not English,
19 because you know, that's the city that we represent.
20 So that is a part of our thoughts and it will be a
21 part of the conversation?

22 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Absolutely.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay, great. So
24 I just have one final question before I turn it over
25 to my chair. In terms of a lot of the challenges
that you identify that we really must be cognizant

3 of, the workforce, the training, the staffing, the
4 overtime; is this something that we ideally can see
5 happening in the foreseeable future with technology
6 advancing and just lots of different waves of
7 technology; is this something that -- I don't wanna
8 say that we're overly going to embrace, but something
9 that we really can see happening for the future? I
10 mean when you hear some of these stories in other
11 locations, I mean it's pleasing to see that those
12 localities have it, because we don't know what could
13 be the end result had that, you know, option not been
14 available and so I want us collectively as an
15 administration, as stakeholders very involved in
16 these conversations to really look at this as
17 something that could be positive. Knowing the
18 challenges that we face, I understand, but certainly
19 I think, you know, myself, I'll speak just for
20 myself; I am ready to work with all of you to address
21 a lot of those challenges so that this is something
22 that we could realize and once the RFI is out,
23 looking at what the industry will tell us, since they
24 are the experts doing this work all the time and
25 giving us some best practices on what has been
happening and how we can effectively embrace this.

3 So is this something that you both, in your
4 capacities, see this happening in the City of New
5 York?

6 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Absolutely, we
7 strongly support going to text to 911; we just wanna
8 be able to do it right when we do do it.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

10 DAVID KIRKS: And from a technology
11 perspective, it is clear that, you know, my
12 organization and within Commissioner's Roest's
13 organization...

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Uhm-hm.

15 DAVID KIRKS: is really moving forward as
16 quickly as we can to put a plan together to introduce
17 these new technologies.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And I just
19 also wanted to just state that just understanding the
20 legislation, Council Member Cumbo and Int. 0868 is
21 really calling for a study, so it's looking at
22 everything that the Steering Committee is doing and
23 the conversations we're having; it's exactly in line
24 with what DoITT and NYPD has already been thinking
25 about and so that's why, you know, we are grateful
that you support the concept, the idea of this bill

3 because I think we're both having the same
4 conversations and we both wanna get to the same goal,
5 so this bill is really calling for a study; it's not
6 saying implement this tomorrow or next fiscal year,
7 but it is saying let's look at the industry, let's
8 look at best practices, other jurisdictions and what
9 we can do a city to adopt a lot of these options for
10 the residents of this city. Thank you gentlemen and
11 I'll turn it back over to Chair Vacca.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: One question quickly.
13 Have you looked at the fact that you can now text 311
14 as something you would possibly replicate or model
15 after? You can now text 311. So did you look at
16 that model to think of how that could be replicated?

17 DAVID KIRKS: That's something that we
18 are looking at as one of the options or the
19 solutions, is what they've implemented. Yes,
20 absolutely... [crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

22 DAVID KIRKS: So that's on the
23 technology, but I think on the, obviously on the NYPD
24 side there's a different aspect of that in terms of
25 how the information is taken and enacted upon.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 'Kay. Council Member
4 Cumbo.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. I
6 wanna thank both chairs for your very thorough line
7 of questioning; most of my questions were answered,
8 so I only have a few that I wanted to get further
9 clarity on.

10 I really wanted to start; you said that
11 this concept began, your work in the summer of 2015
12 in terms of reviewing this concept and putting
13 together the team that you thought would be able to
14 come together to implement this; is that accurate...?
15 [crosstalk]

16 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, that's correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Were you aware at
18 that time that on the City Council side that we had
19 begun the process of creating legislation and
20 introducing and doing work on the Council side around
21 this same issue; were you all, in your world, aware
22 of the work that we were doing on the Council side?

23 DAVID KIRKS: I was not personally aware
24 of that, no.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Were you aware?

RICHARD NAPOLITANO: No, I was not.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Because there had
4 also been many articles and press conferences that we
5 had put out in regards to this and had begun the
6 process of doing the work legislatively, having our
7 counsels draft the legislation, introducing it at a
8 City Council Stated Meeting and also having press
9 conferences following, so I'm a bit confused how
10 we've been working on these separate tracks for so
11 long, up until now in January, so my concern or I
12 guess my question is; how do you anticipate working
13 alongside us as we have the legislation we're putting
14 forward and you all have really created somewhat of a
15 team of individuals that are already working on this;
16 how do you anticipate working with the Council on
17 this?

18 DAVID KIRKS: Well I think through the
19 Mayor's Office, I'm sure we'd be happy to share the
20 results of all of our... information that we gather
21 from industry and as we put a plan together, share
22 that with the Council.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I would appreciate
24 that immensely, because I feel like it doesn't make
25 sense for us to spin our wheels and expend energy and
to do research when we're looking, as Council Member

3 Gibson said, to get to the same goal, so it's very
4 important that we share this information because this
5 is a very important and timely piece of legislation.

6 I wanted to ask you; have you thought
7 about this or has there been discussion around this
8 as it pertains to work around terrorism in the City
9 of New York? So are a lot of cities looking at this
10 911 text system as also a safety measure when it
11 comes to acts of terrorism, with campaigns such as
12 our "If you see something, say something," or the
13 ability that text 911 would give immediately on the
14 scene to be able to share video, photographs,
15 information that's critical at a very time-sensitive
16 period where you can capture that information and
17 allow first responders to have that while entering
18 into a situation?

19 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Yes, that is
20 something we considered, obviously the call volume
21 and when it's text-capable, the volume of text
22 messages would go up by a large amount; we would put
23 that in our testing scripts to make sure that the
24 system is capable of receiving these volumes. So we
25 actually did speak of incidents of that because that

3 would affect us, just the sheer volume alone. So
4 that is something that we looked into.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Would you
6 anticipate, from the other cities that you're doing
7 work with, and obviously we're the largest
8 municipality; have you anticipated a rough estimate,
9 a broad estimate in terms of how much this would
10 actually cost in terms of a ballpark figure?

11 DAVID KIRKS: No, we're still collecting
12 information in terms of what other municipalities
13 have spent to date on not only text to 911, but as
14 they move towards Next Gen 911. The difficulty in
15 this information, to get, is; they are on a very much
16 different scale, as is New York City; even the state
17 of Oregon, as they've gone to Next Gen 911, the
18 complexity of their systems are not even in the same
19 league as New York City. So we have to understand
20 that while they may have spent a certain of money in
21 transitioning to Next Gen 911, New York City, with
22 its complexities is really on a different scale, so
23 we have to recognize that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do you have any,
25 right here today, any figures in terms of how much it

3 costs to implement in other counties, cities; states
4 across the nation?

5 DAVID KIRKS: I don't have that
6 information with me.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. That
8 information, if you have it, because we were trying
9 to pull it, would be very helpful, so if you have
10 some information on the ballpark, that would be
11 phenomenal for us to have as well.

12 DAVID KIRKS: Right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: How many people
14 currently do you all have that are working on this
15 particular research in terms of finding out all of
16 the information now; are there people that are
17 working on this full-time; is it a team of 5 or 10
18 people; are they across agencies; how many people are
19 working on this specifically at this time?

20 DAVID KIRKS: Within DoITT we have a team
21 of approximately 5 people that are working in this
22 area.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh that's
24 interesting.

25 DAVID KIRKS: Yeah, I'm not sure in terms
of with any agencies.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Are other agencies
4 working on it or you don't know if other agencies are
5 working on it or are they working... [crosstalk]

6 DAVID KIRKS: As we work with NYPD on the
7 text to 911, for example.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. In an ideal
9 setting, in an ideal setting, if everything goes,
10 similar to Council Member Jimmy Vacca's questions, if
11 everything goes as the way you would want it in terms
12 of after the RFP and individual companies send in
13 proposals and that sort of thing, what would be your
14 ideal timeline if everything went according to how
15 you'd like to see it implemented?

16 DAVID KIRKS: You know I'd be just
17 guessing a number; my ideal would be, you know, if we
18 had it next year I would be extremely pleased, but I
19 know with the complexities of the 911 call-taking
20 system, things like that, I know that's not gonna
21 happen. That's part of the assessment process is
22 looking at the technologies that are available to us;
23 then doing that assessment as to how long it'll take
24 to transition to the Next Gen technologies.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What have been
some of the challenges that other counties have

3 stated, cites or states, that they have stated in the
4 911 Next Gen process; what have been some of the
5 setback or some of the challenges or things that have
6 complicated the process for them?

7 DAVID KIRKS: It's really been around the
8 complexity of the integration of the new
9 technologies, moving from an existing production
10 environment or you know, the real operational
11 environment and then transitioning that to another
12 environment that's based upon the all-digital
13 technology, those are the biggest challenges.
14 Obviously with the campaigns to the public, making
15 sure that they're aware of the new capabilities that
16 are being offered by this new technology.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. And my
18 final question goes in terms of -- it's more of I
19 guess a comment than a question, is just that given
20 the interest of time right now and given the
21 complexities of New York City, everywhere from
22 natural disasters and we've seen terrorist attacks
23 here and also abroad, is really a matter of timing
24 and I really just want to express that this is
25 something that we really wanna see moved on
aggressively, effectively, conclusively and with more

3 transparency, because this is certainly something
4 that we should do collaboratively and together. I
5 also just want to acknowledge that my Constituent
6 Affairs Director, Dominique Bryant is here, who
7 conceived of this idea -- Dominique, stand, wave a
8 little bit, there we go -- and just wanna acknowledge
9 here because this has been a tremendous amount of
10 work that she's put forward, so we certainly wanna
11 see this move forward and expeditiously and we
12 certainly wanna be able to do it together. So that
13 concludes my questions, but thank you for your
14 testimony and I look forward to working with you.

15 DAVID KIRKS: Thank you.

16 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Council
18 Member Gibson had a question.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Just wanted to
20 ask, in terms of the current conversations with
21 stakeholders, looking at the text to 911, seeing some
22 challenges with FD and EMS; are they a part of the
23 conversations and to what extent are they giving you
24 feedback on whether this process will be more
25 complicated for them as compared to like police

3 emergencies, compared to medical and fire? Would you
4 happen to know?

5 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Speaking with them,
6 we would have to... again, we would test how we send
7 text messages back and forth, because right now all
8 the calls come into an NYPD operator, originally, and
9 then if it's a medical emergency, we transfer it to
10 EMS; if it's a fire emergency, we transfer it to the
11 Fire Department. So how would we go about processing
12 these texts; would we send it as a group text and get
13 the Fire Department involved and we all text
14 together? These are issues that we're really gonna
15 have to drill down and you know, nail it.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And in
17 terms of the storage, right now I don't think any of
18 us understand how calls are stored into the 911 call
19 system, so I know a part of the RFI discussion is
20 storage and storage capacity, but would there be a
21 difference... well the other jurisdictions that have
22 texting now, is their storage of phone calls
23 different from texts and pictures; is that a
24 different storage process or is it all put in one
25 database?

3 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: One of the agencies
4 I spoke with, it was very different; in fact they
5 didn't store it other than what the details were that
6 they typed into their ICAD system that they would be
7 dispatching to the units in the field. So just say
8 that text message -- I'll try to explain it -- the
9 text message comes in, they type in the information
10 into another system and the information in that other
11 system was saved, but not the actual text messages.
12 We would look to obviously save all the information
13 that came in. So some other agencies, yes, they
14 treat it completely different.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: And what about
16 some of the current TTY information, would that be
17 useful for the texting to 911?

18 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: TTY is used so
19 infrequently in the NYPD that last year we've only
20 handled 4 TTY calls you could say, tech... [crosstalk]

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: For the year?

22 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: for the year, and I
23 spoke with many of my call-takers that have been
24 around for many years and they can't remember ever
25 handling, so just to give some idea that I don't

3 think there's enough calls from TTY to really make
4 that information helpful to us.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: And another part
6 of the conversation for us is the new technology that
7 police officers have; with their new smartphones they
8 are able to receive 911 information; correct?

9 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: That's correct.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. So are we
11 also looking at how that information would be
12 transferred to the officer's phone if it's not an
13 actual phone message, but rather an image or a text?

14 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Sure, that would be
15 something that we would definitely look closely at.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Are we
17 also talking to -- you know, I'm very big on
18 stakeholders and in addition to the 911 call-takers,
19 the union representation as well; are we talking to
20 police officers to see if this is something that they
21 would also embrace, now that they have latest and up-
22 to-date information; are we talking to some of the
23 officers as well?

24 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Yes. And as stated
25 earlier by the Council, everybody that I speak to, we
do embrace it and we look forward to text to 911.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And while
4 I know my -- I was hoping my co-chair would bring it
5 up; I just wanted to ask a very quick question on the
6 PSAC II and how that is relative to this current
7 conversation. Do you know where we are with PSAC II
8 and in terms of the RFI and with Next Gen, how does
9 all of that intertwine together?

10 DAVID KIRKS: Yes, with regards to PSAC
11 II, we're proceeding with a plan to open it in June
12 of this year... [interpose]

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay.

14 DAVID KIRKS: as has been previously
15 announced, and as far as the Next Gen 911, this is
16 where the technologies that we're... the digital-based
17 technologies that we're looking at, is this would be
18 the environments that we would then transition the
19 analog components into digital. So it would be
20 across both PSACs in Manhattan, as well as in the
21 Bronx.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And just
23 one final question -- I always have lots of questions
24 -- in terms of workforce, Inspector, I think you
25 outlined that, obviously with implantation of such a
mechanism there would be a conversation around

3 headcount and with the increased numbers of 911 PCTs,
4 do you have a number of where you think we should be
5 in terms of call-takers, right now we're at 1250,
6 right; do you have an idea of what we would need to
7 be at in terms of implementation of such a measure?

8 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: We would need more
9 is the simple answer. The text messages [background
10 comment] exactly how many more, I don't want to sound
11 greedy and ask for too many, so I would rather just
12 say we could use more call-takers and speaking to
13 other jurisdictions, text messaging does take longer,
14 obviously, a text conversation may take triple the
15 amount of time as a verbal conversation or perhaps
16 even more, so I believe that it would help to hire
17 more PCTs before we roll out the text to 911.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. And then I
19 will imagine that we're also looking at whatever that
20 new headcount would look like and be, we would also
21 make sure that the additional training, every PCT
22 would be trained so we wouldn't have like other
23 jurisdictions has a subset of just dedicated trained
24 PCTs that work on just text and pictures and then the
25 others do all the phone calls, so our system,

3 everyone would be trained on this new mechanism,
4 right; is that what we're looking at?

5 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Yes, everyone would
6 be trained on this.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Okay. Okay.

8 Okay, thank you very much; I appreciate it and
9 certainly look forward to working with you, not only
10 in my capacity as Chair of Public Safety, but
11 certainly as a sponsor of the bill; I really want to
12 have a lot of conversations and make sure that this
13 is something we all can embrace and I think it's a
14 great concept; I'm grateful that we're having
15 conversations and certainly look forward to working
16 with both your administration, your teams as well as
17 the other stakeholders that are involved. Thank your
18 very much for being here.

19 DAVID KIRKS: Thank you.

20 RICHARD NAPOLITANO: Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Your
22 testimony, Mr. Kirks, refers to a possible interim
23 solution, your last paragraph says, "We described
24 today our efforts to plan for a Next Generation 911
25 system and our commitment to work with NYPD and FDNY
to identify potential interim solutions because we're

3 well aware that any change to a system as vital and
4 complex as 911 must be approached in a cautious and
5 deliberate manner." Can you tell me where are those
6 discussions now and what options for potential
7 interim solutions have you explored?

8 DAVID KIRKS: The interim solutions that
9 I referred to are with regards to text to 911. Yes.
10 And so we have been work with NYPD to look at a
11 number of different potential application solutions
12 in the industry and how they might work within our
13 environment, and none of those that we've looked at
14 thus far have been suitable, have been true
15 candidates for ready adoption, so we continue looking
16 at other options.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So when you say
18 interim solutions, you're looking at interim
19 solutions that could be outside the RFI context;
20 you're looking to do something sooner because there
21 is a timeline with the RFI that could be substantial?

22 DAVID KIRKS: The interim solution would
23 be earlier than the RFI, which refers to Next Gen
24 911; that's correct.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Alright. Council
Member Cumbo's legislation requires a study and sets

3 a date by which the City must report to the Council
4 and their efforts. It seems to me that you are
5 studying the issue; I think the issue with the
6 legislation is that perhaps you are concerned with a
7 timeline that the Council requires, but I would
8 suggest to you that that is something we can work
9 out, because I think that between the interim effort
10 and the RFI, we in this Council want to emphasize our
11 oversight responsibility and I think that this bill
12 gives us that vehicle. So I think that we could work
13 expeditiously on making this bill a reality and I
14 would need your assistance and I hope that we can
15 count on the administration's help.

16 DAVID KIRKS: We'd be please to continue
17 this...

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 'Kay.

19 DAVID KIRKS: and support it.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Alright, thank you.

21 I hear no other questions from the Council, so I will
22 now call upon our second panel; I wanna than our
23 first panel, thank you very much. I call up on
24 Christopher Bromson and Andres Piadrachita [sp?], I
25 think. If there's anyone else who wants to speak, we
have slips; please fill them out, and I want to thank

3 the representatives that are here from the hearing
4 impaired community and I see the captioning and it's
5 something that I've advocated for a long time; we in
6 the Council don't have this service at the current
7 time and I think having it today is fantastic and we
8 welcome you to our proceedings and we thank you for
9 your patience. Okay, Mr. Bromson; would you want to
10 go first please, introduce yourself for the record.

11 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: Sure. My name is
12 Christopher Bromson and I'd like to begin by thanking
13 very sincerely Council Member Chair Gibson and Chair
14 Vacca and all of the members of both of these
15 committees and also Council Member Cumbo, her staff
16 and all the co-sponsors of this bill; we're very
17 pleased to see it.

18 Like I said, my name is Christopher
19 Bromson and I am the Deputy Director of the Crime
20 Victims Treatment Center (CVTC) at Mount Sinai, St.
21 Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals and also the co-chair
22 of the Downstate Coalition for Crime Victims
23 Legislative Committee. Between these two roles, I
24 spend each professional day from beginning to end
25 working with survivors of violent crime and today I'm

3 here as an ally of my deaf colleagues and the deaf
4 community at large.

5 CVTC has always worked very hard to
6 address and identify the needs of underserved
7 populations of crime victims; underserved populations
8 include non-English speaking survivors, teens and
9 adolescents, sexually exploited people, young men of
10 color; all of these are underserved populations and
11 we've been pretty successful in engaging those
12 communities.

13 Because of this, three years ago we
14 received a grant from the United States Department of
15 Justice Office on Violence Against Women to increase
16 therapeutic and advocacy services to the deaf and
17 hard of hearing community, specifically survivors of
18 sexual and intimate partner violence. The grant
19 brought together executive leadership from five very
20 prominent organizations in the community -- CVTC,
21 Barrier-Free Living and Harlem Independent Living
22 Center, both of whom are in this room, Connect and
23 the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. Our goal
24 was to work together to create culture change within
25 all of our own organizations that would allow each of

3 us to serve deaf and hard of hearing survivors of
4 crime.

5 Very early on during one of our first
6 coalition meetings, we began discussing the concept
7 of justice. What does justice mean to a crime
8 victim? Is it seeing the perpetrator of the crime
9 arrested and convicted? Is it receiving a sincere
10 apology from the guilty party? Is it simply having
11 the opportunity to heal at a place like CVTC? The
12 conversation went on for several minutes until
13 Christina Curry, who's sitting right over there, she
14 is the Director of Harlem Independent Living Center
15 and is herself deaf, said something that changed
16 everything. Justice to a deaf survivor is simply
17 having access to communicating effectively. A
18 concept of justice beyond that, like the ability to
19 make a police report or pursue legal remedies, things
20 most of us take for granted, are not available in the
21 absence of effective communication; there are things
22 that a deaf survivor may never imagine he or she
23 could have.

24 Imagine being hurt very badly by another
25 person and not being able to call for help, being
trapped in a situation of abuse with no means for

3 independent escape; maybe a neighbor hears something
4 and calls 911, thank god, right, the police arrive
5 and help is finally there, but you can't tell them
6 what happened; maybe the person hurting you can tell
7 them though, maybe he or she is going to explain that
8 this was just a simple argument; accidentally raised
9 my voice, our neighbors misinterpreted it,
10 everything's fine here. Imagine that. The deaf and
11 hard of hearing community are among the most
12 vulnerable to victimization, yet have the least
13 access to services.

14 CVTC has begun working with a small
15 number of deaf clients and the experiences they have
16 had with the people and systems designed to help them
17 are beyond shocking. The right to access 911 should
18 be a given for every individual living in this city,
19 access to police, fire or emergency medical services
20 should not be denied to someone because the language
21 they use is not a spoken one. Lack of access in this
22 case can mean the difference between life and death
23 and it can also mean that those committing violence
24 are able to continue that behavior with no
25 repercussions.

3 I understand the concerns about this bill
4 and the concerns about operational impacts of
5 allowing a text system to exist with 911, but we
6 can't allow those concerns to be a justification for
7 prohibiting the use of 911 by an entire community of
8 New Yorkers.

9 Let's expand the definition of justice
10 for deaf individuals. Access to effective
11 communication shouldn't be anyone's sole definition
12 of justice; access to effective communication should
13 be everyone's right and this is an excellent place to
14 start. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you very much,
16 very effective. Sir.

17 [sign language interpreter]

18 ANDRES: Hello, my name is Andres; thank
19 you for inviting me to speak here today. I am here
20 to speak for the Court Legal Interpreting Coalition
21 and deaf people and hard of hearing community in
22 general.

23 So there's different counties, there's
24 seven counties in New York State here that already
25 have implemented text to 911 program; just most
recently Rockland County; that was October 2015. My

3 goal is for New York State, they have three million
4 people who live in New York State, NIH; that's 15% of
5 the population, they are deaf or hard of hearing or
6 have hearing loss; most of them live here in New York
7 City and that kind of program, text to 911, would
8 provide us great access and it would provide us a
9 form of communication that we have not really had
10 access to, like TTY, VRS, they're wonderful
11 technologies, but they're not fast, they're not fast
12 to respond and we want that response time quick, so
13 text to 911, that's direct communication, so that
14 would get us communication direct to the authorities
15 or the police, EMS, so just anything that we might
16 not [sic] need; we've never had that direct
17 communication before and that program, text to 911,
18 that provide people deaf, hard of hearing, people who
19 have been victim to sexual violence, domestic
20 violence, just a whole heap of people that have been
21 limited in their communication before, different
22 languages, they've had no voice, so they can't access
23 those things, so I think that text to 911 would
24 really provide a voice to those people and it would
25 really provide us more access to the things that
people already have.

3 So I'm gonna explain some of the
4 experiences that I've had from people when you're
5 texting to someone else or if you call someone else;
6 it's not direct, so like the video relay messaging,
7 that's not a direct message, so you have to wait for
8 them to respond or you have to wait for another
9 person, so you're texting and then they're making a
10 call for you, so it really delays the process
11 exponentially and you're not dealing with direct
12 communication. That kind of experience, that should
13 not be able to continue for people, we really deserve
14 direct and immediate access to the same things that
15 everyone else so if there's an emergency they can
16 come immediately so that that 10, 15 minutes, 30
17 minutes, we have no idea how long it would take and
18 that's precious time.

19 I really support this program that would
20 make text to 911 possible and I would love that it
21 happened in New York City, New York County, all of
22 the counties to adopt the text to 911 and really all
23 over the U.S., so I really encourage your guys to try
24 to create a timeline for.. just create a goal date so
25 that we have something to work on to help implement
it and give us a little bit of fire so that we make

3 sure that this happens. Thank you so much for
4 allowing me to speak today. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you and I see
6 the testimony and I hear you and I do think that,
7 Christopher, your statement about justice for persons
8 hearing impaired is the ability to make a report
9 starts there; I think that that is quite an amazing
10 statement.

11 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: And Council Member
12 Vacca, not to call you out, but I think it's
13 important to make a distinction; hearing impaired is
14 not a term that is accepted by the deaf community and
15 I think that as part of this it's important to
16 incorporate all the things that are important to that
17 community and you'll see in my testimony that I've
18 used deaf, both uppercase and lowercase and an
19 uppercase D, Deaf is somebody who identifies as Deaf
20 strong and somebody who was raised in that culture
21 who identifies with the Deaf culture, and lowercase
22 deaf is somebody who may not be able to hear, but
23 doesn't necessarily incorporation themselves into
24 that community as strongly, and I think hearing loss
25 and Deaf with a capital and lowercase d are ways to
call that, so.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you for that;
4 I didn't... I didn't realize that. In so much
5 terminology, we do see that term.

6 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: True.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Great.

8 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Council Member
10 Cumbo; do you have a question?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you.

12 Andres, I really wanna thank you for your question;
13 I've never had a testimony in sign language and it
14 was quite impressive. Wanted to ask you, in terms of
15 Council Member Jimmy Vacca's question earlier to the
16 administration about 311; have you utilized the 311
17 text system for any services or do you know how
18 others in your community might have used 311 and has
19 it been effective by utilizing text?

20 [sign language interpreter]

21 ANDRES: I didn't actually know about
22 that, that system was accessible through text; I
23 don't remember any information coming out or anyone
24 in the community telling me that that was accessible,
25 so I know VRS can't access that, but I don't think
that there was really any push for letting everyone

3 know that 311 was available to the deaf community;
4 there was no education or outreach or anything like
5 that to let us know that that capability was now in
6 place, so. It seems like it would be a good system,
7 but like I said, I've never... I've never known that it
8 was available via text, so I haven't been able to us
9 it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you; that's
10 very important, because that question came up earlier
11 as it pertains to 911, as far as how are we going to
12 inform individuals, how are we gonna inform the city
13 of New York that that is a possibility, and for you
14 to let us know that you were not even aware that 311
15 had that capability is so important for us to know
16 because it lets us know that there is a service out
17 there that an entire community does not know about
18 and is not aware of, so I really thank you for
19 letting us know about that.

20 And Christopher, wanted to ask you a
21 question, in terms of the work that you do, have you
22 found circumstances with dealing with those
23 individuals who are survivors when they tell their
24 story; has there been a lot of testimony in terms of
25 people stating that they couldn't reach out for help;

3 there was no way for them to inform individuals, 911
4 or anything like that because of the circumstance
5 that they were in?

6 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: Yes and I'm only
7 smiling because it happens so often. CVTC has just
8 really started working with deaf and hard of hearing
9 individuals and every client we've work with who is
10 deaf and hard of hearing has had horrible experiences
11 with not being able to access help. But beyond that,
12 also I think for survivors of intimate partner
13 violence... [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uhm-hm.

15 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: and domestic
16 violence, this is a huge issue; somebody who,
17 regardless of whether they can hear or not, is
18 trapped in a situation of abuse, it would be so life-
19 changing to be able to text to 911, to not have that
20 perpetrator breathing down somebody's neck and being
21 able to hear the call to police and things like that.
22 So I think it comes up in all different areas of our
23 work; there are so many situations, especially
24 regarding domestic violence that people don't feel
25 safe enough to call 911, even though it could be
life-saving...

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you.

4 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: I think having that
5 would..

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I just wanted to
7 ask Andres one more question. Are there services
8 that you utilize via text to be able to assist you in
9 your day to day? So for example, because these are
10 things that I don't utilize, so I may not be as
11 aware, such as your cable bill or National Grid or
12 applying for different things; is text messaging
13 utilized in other ways in your life that's very
14 helpful?

15 [sign language interpreter]

16 ANDRES: Most of it used video relay
17 services, so there'll be an interpreter on the phone
18 and there'll be a TV, so I'll be signing in front of
19 the TV and they'll speak for me on the phone, so
20 that's actually quite quick and that's very effective
21 for deaf people in general who use sign language, and
22 that's been around since about 2000. So TTY, some
23 people use it; that's really kind of becoming an
24 obsolete technology..

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uhm-hm.

3 ANDRES: so for the past five years
4 there's been new technologies; you can picture
5 message your... you can sign in a video and you can
6 send that directly to VRS, so that just came out two,
7 three years ago. But text to anything hasn't really
8 become part of our technology uses yet, so. And
9 technology moves so fast that TTY people were use to
10 and now it's just a complete different system, so...
11 and there's a new program available for that, so we
12 have VRS, which kind of made TTY outdated, so that's
13 our current platform for what we use, but many
14 hearing people in the U.S., they have no idea what
15 VRS is, so sometimes that system that we do have, if
16 we get a call and someone answers the phone and says
17 hi, I'm an interpreter, I'm here on behalf of...
18 they'll just hang up the phone; they don't understand
19 what that is, so there are still problems; we do need
20 a lot of education and we need education for both
21 hearing and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals,
22 and that information needs to be readily available
23 for everyone so we can text, use our hands, but there
24 should be different modes of communication that we
25 can be using to try and bridge that gap and utilize

3 the communication that we use every day; that should
4 definitely be included.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so very
6 much, thank you for answering those questions; that
7 is so appreciated; we appreciate you being here today
8 and testifying on behalf of this legislation.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I appreciate also,
10 but I wanted to ask a question, but first let me
11 mention Council Member Williams is here and Council
12 Member Deutsch has joined us. But the mechanism you
13 describe by which a deaf person can reach 911; isn't
14 a time element involved that we should be concerned
15 about? Calling 311 is one thing, because 311 calls
16 are basically about city services and programs, but
17 calling 911 relates to an emergency, so my concern is
18 that the process you just outlined may take time and
19 every minute is a crucial minute when you have a 911
20 situation. So can you tell us what time we are
21 looking at currently?

22 [sign language interpreter]

23 ANDRES: So when I make a call, that
24 company will look for an available interpreter and
25 the FCC, they have rules and regulations saying there
26 have to be 30 seconds or 60 seconds to get a

3 response; if they don't get that response, they will
4 actually bill them and they'll bill them for the
5 delay time, because we should have access to that,
6 and then once we get the operator is ready and
7 standing by, they have to take a few seconds to call,
8 they have to call emergency services and then the
9 call will clarify the person, whoever's on the phone
10 -- hi, I'm an interpreter, I'm speaking for the
11 person on the other line. So it's like almost one
12 minute to two minutes from the time that I call to
13 the introduction saying hi, I'm introducing the two
14 parties, so that's two plus minutes that are
15 completely lost. So texting is just an immediate
16 response, so if I were able to text them, that two
17 minutes is down from two minutes to immediate; I
18 don't need to wait for anybody, and maybe they don't
19 have direct information or the right information, so
20 they have to translate it... maybe the person
21 translating it makes a translation error, so if I'm
22 signing, you can see what I'm doing, but you guys
23 don't know what I'm doing, so the person on the phone
24 doesn't see what I'm doing, so they might not know
25 what's happening, so if I can text, I can get
specifically what I need to say to the people who

3 need to know it. So text to 911 is just way better,
4 'cause it's a direct line, there's nothing in the
5 middle that could possibly get in the way of the
6 information that we're trying to communicate to one
7 another, so it really is the best possible result.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: That answer was very
9 helpful. We in the Council are concerned when we see
10 911 response time go up by seconds; we want oversight
11 hearings, we demand answers because those seconds are
12 important seconds; here we're talking about minutes
13 and we're talking about an entire process that seems
14 to be something we can address through texting. So I
15 thank you very much for your testimony; that was
16 enlightening.

17 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: And if I could just
18 say in response to that question as well... [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes.

20 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: VRM, VRS is
21 incredible technology and is really effective for
22 situations that aren't incredibly dangerous; texting
23 is private, but what he's describing is a booth set
24 up where you have to sign to the interpreter, so if
25 you're in a situation of abuse, if there's somebody
trying to hurt you and is able to see everything that

3 you're signing, you know, that increases the danger
4 tenfold.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And it's often not
6 possible...

7 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: Uhm-hm.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: that's the other
9 argument...

10 CHRISTOPHER BROMSON: Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: often not possible,
12 so how do you get help? Okay. No other questions?
13 Okay. I wanna thank this panel for your testimony,
14 both of you, thank you so much. We have two more
15 speakers who would like to testify, Nicolyn Plummer,
16 Court Legal Interpreting Coalition and Marisela [sic]
17 Davis, Black Deaf Advocate Chapter. [background
18 comments] Oh and we've been joined by Council Member
19 Lancman. Miss Davis; would you like to start off?
20 'Kay.

21 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Hi.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Hello Miss Davis.

23 [sign language interpreter]

24 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Hi, I'm Marsellette
25 Davis; I represent the Black Deaf Advocacy in New
York. I wanted to share with you about our black

3 deaf community experience and texting, for me, for
4 contacting different communications or VRS first and
5 then you explain in your information, hi, I'm deaf,
6 okay, when you send... Okay. So if I am contacting a
7 company, like the gas company or the electric
8 company, that person will text for communication on
9 the way to come to me, so they'll say like, when they
10 arrive, if they need to... like if they're coming to
11 fix my gas or something, they'll text me saying that
12 I'm almost there and then when they arrive we'll have
13 a piece of paper so we can communicate with each
14 other. So that's one of the ways that they're able
15 to bridge the gap, so they utilize texting as part of
16 their services that they provide. So [background
17 comments]

18 NICOLYN PLUMMER: Hello. Okay. Morning;
19 I'm Nicolyn Plummer; I'm a domestic violence social
20 worker from Barrier Free Living [inaudible] who are
21 victims of domestic violence and there is something I
22 would like to clarify about 911. A lot of times when
23 a deaf person calls to 911, the [inaudible] video
24 relay [inaudible] NYPD will not [inaudible] to answer
25 the phone [inaudible] hang up [inaudible] call.

3 MALE VOICE: Yeah, I agree with that,
4 they definitely will hang up on you.

5 NICOLYN PLUMMER: Can everyone hear me?

6 Can you guys hear me? Oh okay. So not only that;

7 last time **[inaudible]** call 911 because I have to

8 depend on someone who is hearing to call on their

9 behalf; if they cannot call on their behalf, call 911

10 on their own, **[inaudible]** the very next day, they'll

11 call a provider, just like myself, to call 911 on

12 their behalf because a lot of times when they'll call

13 911, there has been a lot of **[inaudible]**

14 communication between law enforcement and **[inaudible]**

15 and also, in regard to **[inaudible]**, a very few

16 **[inaudible]**, so uhm but just want to be.. bear in mind

17 that's why it is so difficult for some deaf victims

18 to be able to call 911 because they are not

19 **[inaudible]** and a lot of the times when they do, when

20 they arrive home, the interpreter is not always

21 there, which means they have to ask the officer to

22 call that number right there in their presence,

23 'cause remember, there is no interpreter on-site, so

24 it can be very challenging for EMS, for law

25 enforcement to communicate with a deaf victim while

they rely on someone who can hear **[inaudible]** that's

3 supposed to be communicating directly **[inaudible]**,
4 not someone who can hear, 'cause a lot of the times
5 **[inaudible]** a lot of not be able to voice [sic] for
6 themselves when they're not given an opportunity to
7 speak for themselves. Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you; you've
9 made the case very effectively, all of you today have
10 made the case very effectively and we in the Council
11 are committed to moving this bill and committed to
12 being of help and you've spoken volumes, truly have.
13 So I wanna thank you. Are there any council members
14 with questions or statements? Council Member Cumbo.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I just wanna thank
16 you for your testimony here today; it's extraordinary
17 for you to share your voice with us and to be able to
18 share your experiences with us and really, hearing it
19 from your perspective really drives the point home in
20 terms of how important text 911 is to make sure that
21 all New Yorkers have access to be able to reach out
22 for help and assistance, particularly in an emergency
23 situation. So we thank you so much for your
24 testimony; we thank all of you for being here today;
25 we thank you for sharing your experiences with us and
that is so appreciated. Thank you so much.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
4 Gibson.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you very
6 much, Chair Vacca. And I too wanna thank you for
7 your presence and certainly making sure that you are
8 part of this conversation. When you look at
9 stakeholders and the advocates, I mean everyone has
10 an opportunity be a part of this discussion and so we
11 wanna make sure that we get the voices that are
12 important as a part of this conversation. I just
13 wanted to ask one question. We learned today that
14 there is request for information that the City is
15 looking to get information from the industry, so in
16 addition to texting to 911, from your perspective I
17 wanted to find out how helpful and beneficial it
18 would be to also use other ways to get to 911, like
19 pictures, like images; do you think that would be
20 beneficial to the community, for yourself and for
21 your colleagues as well?

22 [sign language interpreter]

23 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Oh yeah, I definitely
24 think it would be beneficial, texting a picture or a
25 video of everything would benefit the police, it
would benefit the firemen, so while that was

3 happening and they're on the way they can see exactly
4 what they're dealing with in the situation that's
5 arose. So if I'm texting a picture of the problem,
6 they'll be able to receive that picture and they
7 might be able to save my life or the lives of one of
8 my colleagues because of that information. So if I'm
9 sending it, they'll know what it looks like, it's
10 direct communication, so we don't need an
11 interpreter, we don't need a video relay service; if
12 I'm texting a picture or a video, that picture or
13 video is going directly to the people who are gonna
14 be coming to help me, so when the firemen arrive,
15 they tend to talk to the hearing person first, so if
16 I'm the deaf person, I called them, why would they go
17 to someone else before they would go to me, if I'm
18 the one that called them?

19 [background comments]

20 NICOLYN PLUMMER: I wanna clarify
21 something. When we text to 911 it's important to
22 remember **[inaudible]** it's important to incorporate
23 pictures, because we have... the majority **[inaudible]**
24 so it's important to incorporate pictures **[inaudible]**
25 where they can understand **[inaudible]** and reply back,
but without a picture there might be some challenges

3 **[inaudible]** to understand what's been written

4 **[inaudible]** the text, so not just plain English, but
5 to also incorporate the picture, when I take picture,
6 **[inaudible]** something **[inaudible]** that I could
7 understand that someone's on the way, coming.

8 **[inaudible]**

9 [sign language interpreter]

10 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Also, I'm tryin' to
11 remember which one... which language it is; it's not
12 here in New York, but we have staff from a 911 center
13 who can sign, so if there's deaf and they contact
14 them, that person can be transferred directly to
15 someone who's been trained in 911 and maybe there's a
16 video blog or they'll be able to explain what they
17 need help for and that person will know sign
18 language, so they'll be able to accurately explain
19 what they need to and then they can tell the first
20 responders immediately, so if those people are
21 involved in the actual call center, that would save
22 time so I could use my video relay service to call
23 directly to the police and then they could transfer
24 to the appropriate first responders and I'd be able
25 to do that in my own language. So I would suggest if
they were gonna implement that, maybe... if you have so

3 many employees, maybe you could implement a training
4 program to give some people some sign language or
5 maybe do some... reach out in the community and try and
6 get some people who sign, 'cause writing, like my
7 colleague said, some deaf people have a hard time
8 understanding that, so if you have a few staff with
9 sign language skills that can make access easier,
10 especially in a big place like this, or maybe police
11 or firemen or maybe EMS people, just a few people
12 that work specifically with the deaf community; that
13 would also be very, very helpful. I think the 911
14 center should definitely have people with sign
15 language training who are there, so if someone in the
16 deaf community calls using one of our wonderful
17 technology pieces, that they can be transferred
18 directly to them and speak directly to someone who
19 knows and speaks their language.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON GIBSON: Thank you; that's
20 awesome, because my next question was going to be, if
21 you look at emergency services, what else could we be
22 doing as a city to make sure that we incorporate best
23 practices for the deaf community. So you just
24 outlined the training and that's something... I won't
25 say is an easy fix, but I will say that it's an

3 important component to make sure that when we're
4 looking at text to 911 we could also say that within
5 the training for 911 call-takers that they could also
6 be trained on sign language as well. So thank you so
7 much for that great idea; we will make sure you get
8 credit for it too. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Our last
10 question from Council Member Levine.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Well I wanna
12 thank both of you for your eloquence and for speaking
13 out on behalf of New Yorkers who deserve the best
14 services we can offer through emergency response.

15 You know I wanna observe that time and
16 again when we have made policy changes to accommodate
17 people with disabilities it's ended up benefiting
18 everybody, even if that wasn't the original intent.
19 So we originally created closed-caption on
20 televisions for people who are hearing impaired, but
21 today people of all backgrounds use it in all sorts
22 of different circumstances and many people have
23 forgotten that it wasn't for general benefit that the
24 technology was created. We put curb cuts in our
25 sidewalks in New York City originally for people who
use wheelchairs, but now people of all backgrounds,

3 pushing baby strollers or carts or just people who
4 aren't so sure-footed enjoy having the accommodation
5 of a ramp. We put elevators in subway stations
6 originally perhaps for people with wheelchairs, but
7 now New Yorkers of all backgrounds rely on them. And
8 I believe that texting to 911 is another example of a
9 policy we can implement; yes, it will benefit one
10 community, deaf New Yorkers and the hearing impaired,
11 but there are benefits for everybody; there's a
12 compelling case to do this more broadly.

13 I do have a question for both of you,
14 which is, in describing this bill I have often got
15 the feedback saying well, we have teletype or TTY,
16 why do we need this and we learned that there's only
17 four calls a year that come in via that technology in
18 New York City, so I would love to hear from either or
19 both of you an explanation for why this is so rarely
20 used.

21 [sign language interpreter]

22 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Yeah, so TTY, the
23 product is really obsolete, it's... because of new
24 technology, analog's not really being used anymore,
25 so it's all changing to digital, so deaf people have
video phone services, we have VRS, we have cell

3 phones; TTY is... we're not using it anymore because
4 that system is old and it was designed during an
5 analog period, but now we have digital, so we have
6 closed captions, we have video phones, we have... so
7 it'd be really helpful if the 911 center had all
8 these other things that deaf people are actually
9 using nowadays, because like you said, they're not
10 using TTYs anymore and deaf people have their cell
11 phones when they go out with them all the time, so
12 iPhones, you can use FaceTime, so I actually don't
13 even need to be home anymore to make a video phone
14 call. TTY is... it's just nobody's using anymore, it's
15 become an obsolete technology for most of us because
16 we're using the same technology everybody else is
17 using, so now that that's become obsolete we do need
18 to focus on the technology that we are using and
19 bring it up to somewhere that we can actually have
20 access like everybody else does.

21 NICOLYN PLUMMER: I want to clarify about
22 the TTY. **[inaudible]** TTY, it is **[inaudible]**, but it
23 should not be excluded, it should not, because not
24 all individual deaf sign [sic] **[inaudible]** some will
25 prefer to call to TTY to relay if they're not
comfortable calling on the video that she described,

3 that's one method that's primarily being used right
4 now in the deaf community is video relay. TTY is
5 very small percentage, but should not be excluded
6 because you've got to admit [sic], people who don't
7 sign and that would prefer communication through TTY,
8 but most [inaudible], from my experience, [inaudible]
9 to TTY, never answer phone on the other end
10 [inaudible] the NYPD has a TTY phone, hospitals have
11 a TTY phone, but nobody's picking up the phone, so we
12 don't know how the system at the end is set up, but
13 [inaudible] there's no one that will answer the phone
14 directly [inaudible] relay, if someone is not gonna
15 answer a phone at the other end, [inaudible] through
16 the relay. Okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: 'Kay. Thank you
18 both again for your very, very important perspective.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, Council
21 Member Levine and I wanna thank you all, today's
22 hearing has been fantastic. Oh, Council Member
23 Torres is here. And we are going to follow up here
24 at the Council and your testimony and what we learned
25 today is very impactful and I think you should know
that. We're determined to move ahead on this; I

3 I wanna thank my co-chair, Vanessa Gibson and I wanna
4 thank Laurie Cumbo, sponsor of the legislation.

5 There is no further business before this committee

6 [background comment] it is now... oh, there is? Oh... Oh

7 I'm sorry... [interpose]

8 NICOLYN PLUMMER: Uh, uhm...

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: go ahead.

10 NICOLYN PLUMMER: before we close [sic],

11 I'm hoping -- this is going to happen, but I'm hoping

12 that we have the coalition, Court Legal Interpreter

13 Coalition, Black Deaf Advocate and [inaudible]

14 Coalition to work together with you, because we are

15 the experts here in this particular area, but don't

16 know if that might be a part of the [inaudible].

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you for that

18 and I do wanna echo Council Member Gibson's statement

19 before that we in the Council do consider

20 stakeholders to be very important to us and we are

21 always in communication with stakeholders and we

22 certainly want your input as we proceed on the

23 legislation and the oversight. And we've been joined

24 by Council Member Corey Johnson. Without further to

25 do, it is now 12:09 and this hearing is now

adjourned.

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

98

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

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date <INSERT TRANSCRIPTION DATE>