

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND
Chairperson

JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

ANDY L. KING
Chairperson

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

Tony Marx, President & CEO
New York Public Library

Dennis Walcott, President & CEO
Queens Public Library

Linda Johnson, President & CEO
Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner
Department of Cultural Affairs

[sound check, pause] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Good

morning and welcome to today's Finance Committee hearing. My name is Julissa Ferreras-Copeland. I am the Chair of the committee. I want to begin by thanking my Co-Chair, Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer and Council Member Andy King. [background comments, pause] We've been joined by Council Members—Minority Leader Matteo, Council Member Koo, and Council Member Cornegy. This morning the committee continues its look at Fiscal 2018's Executive Budget with our city's three library systems. We will hear testimony from the New York Public Library President & CEO, Tony Marx, Queens Public Library President & CEO Dennis Walcott, and Brooklyn Public Library's President CEO—and CEO Linda Johnson. I'll begin with an overview of the library's budget for Fiscal 2018 which totals \$365.9 million. This is a decrease of approximately \$791,000 from Fiscal Year 2017's Adopted Budget. The Executive 2018 Capital Commitment Plan includes \$976.4 million in Fiscal 2017 to 2021 for the library system, which is a 4—which is 4% greater than the amount included in the Preliminary Plan. The Ten-

2 Year Capital Strategy for the library totals \$604.2
3 million, a \$44.9 million increase of the Preliminary
4 Strategy with nearly all this funding allocated for
5 critical reconstruction of facilities. With nearly
6 40 million visitors a year, our library branches face
7 significant renovations and repair needs. All three
8 library systems have frequently highlighted a
9 challenge of maintaining an aging infrastructure
10 while accommodating the increase demanded for
11 services. The Council's budget response urged the
12 Administration to add an additional \$40 million to
13 the budget of each library system to meet these
14 critical maintenance needs. Unfortunately, the
15 Executive Plan fails to include those important
16 funds. We will continue to push the Administration
17 to establish an annual capital funding level that
18 allows the libraries to address their most important
19 needs immediately rather than having the work done
20 bit by bit over a long period. I also want to
21 address an issue that has been brought up frequently
22 during the budget cycle. The Administration's
23 Capital Commitment Plan Executive Capital Commitment
24 Plan continues its reoccurring practice of
25 frontloading its capital appropriations in a manner

1 that does not correspond with the actual ability to
2 execute these projects. This is particularly
3 significant when it comes to the Capital Plan for
4 Libraries. For example, in Fiscal 2016, the library
5 system only committed \$7.1% of its Annual Capital
6 Plan; \$28.7 million of planned \$407 million. Were,
7 therefore—we, therefore, assumed that a significant
8 portion of the Fiscal 2017 Capital Plan will be
9 rolled into Fiscal 2018. We will continue to
10 strongly urge the Administration to increase
11 transparency and accountability when it comes to
12 capital projects through more realistic budgeting. A
13 significant part of this discrepancy, however, can be
14 attributed to the significant problems we see in the
15 capital construction process for our city libraries.
16 Despite the press—the pressing needs of maintenance
17 and repairs that I mentioned, library projects
18 managed by the Department of Design and Construction
19 tend to take much longer to complete at a
20 significantly larger cost than other capital
21 projects. This can force months, even years of
22 closures denying New Yorkers their vital programming
23 offered by the system. As I highlighted during DDC's
24 Preliminary Budget hearing, I expressed—I expressed—I

1 experienced this—I expressed this with the East
2 Elmhurst Library in my first—in my district where
3 work only recently began after years of unnecessary
4 delays. It is long past due that DDC take a concrete
5 step to improve its performance when it comes these
6 essential community resources. I look forward to
7 hearing from the city's three library systems about
8 these issues and more at today's hearing. Before
9 turning it over to my co-chairs, I want to thank the
10 Finance staff that helped prepare for his hearing,
11 Regina Poreda Ryan, Nathan Toth, John Russell, Ali-
12 Ali—Alia Ali—Allia—God. Allia Ali. I know what that
13 feels like with a name like Ferreras and Eric
14 Bernstein. I will now turn it over to Chairs Van
15 Bramer and King for their opening remarks.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much, Madam Chair and I just want to salute you and
19 your strength. I know you have been daily chairing
20 probably 100 hours of testimony. I just want to
21 thank all of you for being here today, and for
22 joining us this morning, and it's a lot cooler here
23 than when we last met, wasn't it? I also want to
24 encourage you as someone in the balcony knows that we
25 don't clap here, but if you agree with something that

1 we say, we all do this, right? So, does everyone
2 believe we need seven-day service? Right. Does
3 everyone believe we need more in capital funding for
4 libraries. So, feel free to do that on your own as
5 we go through this hearing. So, I just want to say
6 it's great to be here once again. I'm very, very
7 pleased that working together with the Chair, with
8 the Speaker and the Mayor we have done amazing work
9 for our libraries, right, we have restored six-day
10 service and baselined six-day service, but we still
11 need to go further. Our libraries are so incredibly
12 important, more important than ever, and we need them
13 to continue to be open and accessible when New
14 Yorkers so desperately need you, library workers, to
15 help them through whatever information gathering
16 pursuit they are engaged in, or that you also
17 increasingly see are real important struggles that
18 people are going through in their daily lives, and-
19 and libraries are there to meet those needs in a time
20 that's really frightening for a lot of people who
21 need our libraries, who go to our libraries every
22 single day, and you are that sanctuary. You are that
23 place really the heart of what we call sanctuary
24 cities. Libraries have always been that first place
25

1 of refuge, that—that inspiration. So, I want to
2 thank all the library workers who are here, and also
3 say that the push for seven-day service is—is a good
4 and-and valid one, but we also know that having the
5 libraries open is just the first part of the
6 struggles making sure that they ae in good state of
7 repair, they are well maintained that there aren't
8 leaky roofs, and that the air conditioning works in
9 the summer and heat works in the winder. Those are
10 incredibly important. So, you believe that our
11 libraries should be in good working order, that we
12 should have air conditioning in the summer and heat
13 in the winter, libraries that don't leak, children's
14 rooms that don't have mold. These are the issues
15 that we face, and this is why it is so critable—
16 critically important to meet the need, and I'm—I'm
17 really proud of our Council. The Budget Response to
18 the Mayor did include \$120 million in critical
19 capital repair needs. That should be in this budget.
20 Our response did call for the necessary funds to
21 implement full seven-day service in the city of New
22 York. We are going to continue in this fight with
23 our three presidents and CEOs, but also all of you,
24 the heart and soul of our library system. So, thank
25

1
2 you for the work that you do. Thank you for being
3 here, thank you for joining us on this blazingly hot
4 day on the steps of City Hall earlier for our very
5 inspiring rally and—and press conference, and I look
6 forward to hearing the testimony, and engaging in a
7 question and answer session. Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
9 you, Chair. Chair King.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Good morning and thank
11 you, Madam Chair Ferreras-Copeland. Oh, I'm supposed
12 to be on that side.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: You can
14 decide wherever you want to be.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. I just followed
16 the signs. [laughter] But today it's—it's a good
17 day and it's sad day as well because again we're here
18 having this conversation that we need not have
19 especially in 90 degrees. To Chair Van Bramer for
20 your diligence and your commitment and fight over the
21 last 18 to 19 years. I commend you for your passion
22 in making sure that everyone that wears the color is
23 in good favor when it comes to our libraries. So, I
24 thank you as well as our Finance Chair who the
25 energized bunny for the budget season and I give you

1 more blessings and strength during this Fiscal Year
2 2018, but I would like to say I am a little saddened
3 as many of us are that—to see that the Administration
4 did not add the additional \$34 million in expense
5 funding as well as the \$120 million in capital
6 funding that's recommended by the Council in the
7 Preliminary Budget Response. However, this is an
8 ongoing discussion with the Administration. I'm
9 looking forward to us finalizing a budget over the
10 next couple of months that meets the needs of all
11 three of the systems. As a system—as our system
12 is vital to our city, public libraries provide a
13 broad range of services to New Yorkers. This goes
14 beyond access to books, New York City libraries are
15 more accessible for patrons who need them most:
16 Working parents who get home late from work need to
17 go with their children on a Saturday afternoon or a
18 Saturday, or busy professionals who try to find time
19 to get a library for the services that are being
20 provided. Our library system provide a range of
21 programs to the community and participate in a
22 variety of initiatives such as adult basic education,
23 Early Childhood Literacy initiatives, and broadband
24 technology opportunity programs. It is therefore
25

2 essential that the libraries or systems are fulling
3 funded. In a few minutes I know we're going to hear
4 from the three systems on specific plans for the
5 allocated budget. I hope to hear specifically from
6 Presidents Row over there, specific update on new
7 programs that were launched, updates on performance
8 measures and targets on how libraries have
9 implemented the City Council's initiatives. I also
10 would like to thank---I also would like the libraries
11 to update the Council on major capital projects and
12 highlight-highlighted in their Capital Plan. I know
13 that's going to be a spirited conversation for us all
14 to hear. I hope as we move through the budget
15 process we can move towards the Ten-Year Capital Plan
16 and Expense Budget Plan, which is more in tune with
17 the needs of the library system, and one that gives
18 library a chance to meet the growing demands from New
19 Yorkers. We must acknowledge the accomplishment of
20 the library systems, and the significant impact they
21 make in the communities in terms of education,
22 cultural enhancement and safety net for New Yorkers
23 by providing them with adequate capital funding for
24 help in continuing your tremendous work that they do
25 for our community. In closing, I would like to thank

1 all the committee staff and my staff for helping
2 putting this hearing together, but I also want to add
3 this piece: This morning we all stood out there in
4 the blazing heat with a passionate commitment to
5 improve the library systems. We were all on the same
6 page. You have advocates all that are up here.
7 Let's do all that we can to improve our libraries. I
8 ask us in the Council and I ask the Administration
9 that we do something differently in our Executive
10 Budget hearings because the conversations that we
11 have with them sometimes they're not able to answer.
12 Maybe we need to have the Administration and OMB be
13 in the room to have the real answers to questions
14 that we need to have answered so they can't say we
15 don't have the answer, the guy has the answer, and
16 they're never in this—in the room for this
17 conversation. So, with that all said, I'm hoping
18 that we can have that kind of conversation, because
19 we are all on the same page in improving our
20 libraries in the city New York. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
23 you, Chair King. Yes, this is always and awkward
24 hearing because we're kind of saying the same things
25 back and forth to each other, but we have to get

1 these things on the record so that we can push back
2 on OMB and deliver and use this to negotiate, and
3 also to get information for the record. So, with
4 that being said, my counsel is going to swear you in.
5 Oh, we don't even need to swear you in because we
6 believe you. [laughter] This one is different I
7 said, right. Please, you can begin in the order that
8 you have decided already, and we will gladly listen
9 to your testimony.
10

11 TONY MARX: [off mic] Good morning. Is
12 he mic on? No. [on mic] Good morning. Thank you,
13 Madam Chair, other chairs, members of the City
14 Council. So, here we are. In a year in which New
15 Yorkers need more and deserve more on so many fronts
16 and the one place, the one institution in every
17 neighborhood that they look to meet those needs in
18 larger number than any other are their public and
19 local libraries. That's true for the kids who need
20 literacy help or in Pre-K. It's true for the kids
21 trying to do better at school, after school, homework
22 help. It's true for our homeless, it's true for our
23 job seekers, it's true for our parents, grandparents,
24 it's true for all New Yorkers in larger numbers than
25 any other institution in this city. They come to and

1 depend upon their libraries. We need to meet those
2 needs. We are your instrument, your most effective
3 instrument to meet those needs because we are
4 committed to serving all the people of this city. We
5 know that this City Council understands all of that.
6 You have made that commitment clear. You have
7 ensured citywide six-day service. You have kept our
8 doors open longer, and allowed us to plan important
9 renovations in our branches, but more needs to be
10 done. As we have all said, we were disappointed that
11 the libraries were not included in the Mayor's
12 Executive Budget on either the capital or the expense
13 side. At a moment when the educational and digital
14 and economic divide is growing in this amazing city,
15 we need to push back. We need to use libraries to
16 push back, to provide its affordable and essential
17 services to partner with our colleagues in the
18 Administration of the city and with non-government
19 organizations and others, which we are eager to do.
20 Because we all know that when people come to the
21 library, people learn, people grow, people are
22 stronger, our communities are stronger, our democracy
23 is stronger. What could be important than that at
24 this moment. So, we've come to you to say we need

1 \$150 million in capital funding for critical
2 maintenance needs, and we're asking for \$34 million
3 of additional operating to increase the number of
4 libraries open seven days. I'm sorry, this is pretty
5 straightforward. This is New York. We're talking
6 about our neighbors, our citizens. We shouldn't have
7 to be asking that our libraries be open on seven
8 days. Most New Yorkers are working hard. They can't
9 get to the library during the week. They need our
10 essential services. Every neighborhood in this city,
11 every City Council Member's district should have at
12 least one library open on Sundays so that all the
13 ting that we could be made available to the people
14 who can only get there. Right now only about 93% of
15 the city's branches are closed on either Saturday or
16 Sunday. That's outrageous. Think about the
17 immigrant families, the working families who that
18 excludes, and we are asking for capital projects
19 because we know the return on those is so high. For
20 instance, the Stapleton Library a high needs area in
21 Staten Island fully renovated in 2013. We saw
22 program attendance increase 177%. Just last week
23 reopened the 103-year-old Woodstock Library in the
24 poorest congressional district in the United States
25

1 of America, and we expect to see, having doubled that
2 space, and add, we will be adding program. We will
3 see similar results. The doors need to be open, and
4 the buildings need to be in good shape, again in New
5 York at this moment to say we need to ensure that
6 the—that the roofs aren't leaking, you know, that our
7 great library staff aren't spending their time
8 dealing with a crises of the building. That's like
9 that—that shouldn't be necessary. It's time to
10 renew, and we've issued a report on that front. We
11 remind you—we remind our colleagues throughout the
12 city of the agreement that this city made with Andrew
13 Carnegie over a hundred years ago, a contract that
14 said we will be open, and we will provide the
15 services that Carnegie as a young poor boy in
16 Scotland understood were essential. If we're fixing
17 leaks and caulking windows all the time, have HVAC
18 out, we can't do our work, and there are too many
19 examples of this. The West Farms Library in the
20 Bronx, we have to cover our children's room computers
21 every time it rains with a tarp. Excuse me. At the
22 County Cullen Library in Harlem, only one in four of
23 the boilers work. So, we use space heaters that we
24 plug in, and it blows the 100-year-old electric
25

1 system. In New Brighton in Staten Island, we have no
2 spaces for the essential growing educational programs
3 that teams or kids depend on. We have been your
4 partners, we've been the partners with the Mayor.
5 This is the moment to continue the momentum of what
6 you have done, and we are eager to continue to be
7 your partners in that. We're grateful for everything
8 that's brought us here, but we should not be still
9 faced with the situations that our citizens, our
10 patrons are faced with. Thank you.

12 LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Tony and thank
13 you, Majority Leader and Cultural Affairs and
14 Libraries Chair Van Bramer, Library Subcommittee
15 King, Finance Committee Chair Ferreras-Copeland, our
16 fabulous Brooklyn Delegation and the entire City
17 Council for supporting New York City's libraries. As
18 Tony said, it is imperative that we build on the
19 progress set in motion two years ago when you made it
20 possible for us to provide universal six-day service.
21 More people are coming to the library than ever
22 before, and their needs are more diverse and more
23 complex than at any time in recent memory, but
24 unfortunately, our ability to serve the public is
25 greatly compromised by the physical state of our

1 buildings most of which are plagued by maintenance
2 issues and equipment failures not to mention dismal
3 interiors. The capital budget request we submit
4 today is actually \$150 million for the three library
5 systems in Fiscal Year 2018, and this is \$30 million
6 more than the request we submitted in March. We have
7 increased our request by \$10 million for each system
8 because thus far, the Administration has not included
9 additional funding for libraries in the current Ten-
10 Year Capital Plan. Our inclusion in the last Ten-
11 Year Plan two years ago was encouraging and we remain
12 grateful to the Administration and to Council, but
13 that investment amounted to less than one-quarter of
14 our total capital need. Each library system needs
15 \$50 million this year to fix failing infrastructure
16 and replace equipment long past its useful life. You
17 have heard us speak many times about the specific
18 challenges in our branches. In fact, you have seen
19 these challenges yourselves and have tried with your
20 own discretionary funds to help us fix them, and for
21 that we are also grateful. If you have *The Time to*
22 *Renew Report* published earlier this week, you know
23 for example that at Pacific Library in Boerum Hill,
24 staff and patrons shout over noisy portable chillers,
25

2 a makeshift replacement for the branch's failed air
3 conditioning system. Pacific is also virtually
4 inaccessible to people with mobility impairments not
5 to mention parents and caregivers with strollers.
6 Time to Renew also highlights Saratoga Library in
7 Bushwick where patrons who cannot negotiate stairs
8 must ride a rickety lift barely big enough for two.
9 And I'm sure you have encountered similar issues at
10 branches in your own districts. At our current level
11 of capital funding, it is difficult for libraries to
12 address any but the most urgent problems. We spend
13 much of our time and resources responding to
14 emergencies. Chronic underfunding also makes it
15 impossible for us to manage capital projects
16 efficiently. Urgently needed improvements are often
17 delayed over the slightest change in scope because we
18 are not able to address routine adjustments and
19 overruns with dollars budgeted for the coming year.
20 We simply do not have that kind of flexibility. As a
21 result, even funded projects cannot be completed
22 within a remotely reasonable timeframe. This is
23 currently the case at three branches in need of new
24 heating and cooling systems. Projects at the
25 Bushwick and Rider Libraries that were funded in 2015

1 have stalled due to shortfalls of \$1.3 and \$1.1
2 million respectfully—respectively while at the
3 Cypress Hills Branch an HVAC replacement funded in
4 2014 has been delayed because of a nearly \$2 million
5 gap. In total, we face shortfalls of more than \$34
6 million on 40 projects throughout the borough. We
7 have projects planned for nearly half of our
8 libraries that are on hold or in danger of being
9 delayed, and the problem worsens with each passing
10 day. Brooklyn Public Library receives approximately
11 \$10 to \$15 million in discretionary capital funds
12 annually to care for an aging physical plant over 1.1
13 million square feet. This is not enough to cover of
14 what needs—of half of what we need to finish work
15 that has been funded for years, though as it turns
16 out not sufficiently funded. In Brooklyn, we are
17 responding to capital challenges with creative
18 solutions. New library projects in Sunset Park,
19 Greenpoint, Bower Park and Brooklyn Heights will wipe
20 out tens of millions in unfunded capital needs.
21 Revenue from the sale of Brooklyn Heights Library
22 will allow us to improve several branches that are in
23 bad need of repair, but there is a limit to what we
24 can do on our own. Libraries need your help, and we
25

1 have proven that with sufficient resources we can
2 care for our—our buildings and enhance the quality of
3 our patrons' experiences. At Kingsbridge Library in
4 the Bronx, circulation is up 76%, and program
5 attendance has increased 90% after a full branch
6 renovation. In Queens teen program attendance has
7 nearly doubled with the opening of a new teen center
8 a Cambria Heights Library. Young adult circulation
9 is up 29%. In Brooklyn we partnered with Space Works
10 to renovate the second floor of Williamsburg Library
11 to build affordable artist studios and performance
12 spaces. More people are coming to the branch taking
13 advantage of programs offered by the resident
14 artists, and circulation is up as well. By offering
15 non-traditional library services in a beautifully
16 renovated space, we are able to reach more people
17 with core services like book lending and literacy
18 programs. We have seen similar success at Arlington
19 Library in Cypress Hills where overall attendance
20 increased by one-third and program attendance rose by
21 an astonishing 163% with the opening of a passport
22 office and a new adult programming space. In all
23 five boroughs and across all three systems, libraries
24 are an excellent investment. By supporting our
25

1 capital request for \$150 million for the three
2 library systems this year, you will be investing not
3 only in our buildings, but more importantly in the
4 people who use them. As you consider request from
5 many worthy organizations and agencies, I hope you
6 will remember the millions of New Yorkers who visit
7 our branches every year. We are the representatives,
8 and therefore, it is our responsibility to advocate
9 for them. Our patrons need libraries that are open
10 seven days a week. They should be able to check out
11 books and attend programs in buildings with
12 functional HVAC systems and water tight roofs. They
13 deserve spaces and collections that inspire them to
14 do their best thinking, and most of all, they deserve
15 to love coming to the library. We thank you on
16 behalf of the patrons who are here with us today, and
17 the millions more who will benefit if the city
18 supports our requests. Thank you.

19
20 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, Linda. Good
21 morning to all of you. It's a pleasure to be here to
22 the Chairs, Chairs Ferreras-Copeland, Van Bramer and
23 King and the members of the City Council. Thank you
24 for your leadership, and we appreciate everything you
25 do, and you've heard this before, and so, I will not

1 redundant, but I'm going to go off script because
2 it's important for you to really get the true feel as
3 well as what you know very well. One day last week I
4 was standing outside of Central Library and just
5 hanging outside for a moment, and I was talking to
6 one of my colleagues, and I just realized who we are
7 and what we represent for the people of New York
8 City. I was watching the diversity of the
9 individuals walking in our doors. I was watching the
10 people who had a need for either books, or they used
11 the computers, taking a class, to find out
12 information, to go to our job business academy, to
13 get some career guidance, and it really struck me, we
14 are open to all people. And when you really think
15 about, you think about any institution in New York
16 City how many of them can say their door is open free
17 of charge, not asking them for any ID to walk in
18 their door for a service, and that's what we
19 represent and you know it very well. So, I'm not
20 going to preach to the choir, but it's just amazing
21 when you look at the diversity of individuals that
22 come into all of our respective libraries, by age, by
23 sexual orientation, by immigrant status, by the need,
24 and that's what your investment has done to allows us
25

1 six days a week to provide those services to
2 individuals, and in a rare case seven days a week.
3 And I say that because the investment of seven days a
4 week will allows us to even give more return on your
5 investment as far as opening up the doors for those
6 individuals to get quality services. The one thing I
7 don't think you've ever heard in any of our testimony
8 or for any feedback is someone saying we've gotten
9 poor service for the library. When they walk in our
10 doors thanks to those individuals, thanks to the
11 hardworking staff who are here and those who are now
12 staffing the libraries while we're here, they get a
13 commitment from individuals who are there to serve
14 their needs. And we're saying to you is that we want
15 to expand those services. It's not that difficult.
16 We want to expand our services seven days a week, and
17 as Tony and Linda have indicated, at least one per
18 Councilmanic District. And, it's not just expanding
19 the services because we can build programs. Look at
20 the leadership that's here. Look at the folks who
21 are here and look at the people who are back at our
22 respective libraries. We can build programs, but at
23 the same time, we want to make sure we have
24 facilities that represent New York City. I remember
25

2 the days when—when this City Council Chamber did not
3 look like this at all, and take a look at your
4 Council Chamber right now, and you sit here with
5 great pride on the way it looks as a result of an
6 investment on the part of the Administration and the
7 City Council to make sure we have a quality chamber
8 here. All we're asking for is the same thing, a
9 quality investment in our libraries from a capital
10 point of view to allow us to use the money
11 efficiently not to benefit us as individuals, but to
12 benefit those customers, those people who come in and
13 our staff so they have a facility that they're proud
14 of. And the thing that we haven't really talked
15 about we want that type of investment, but we want
16 that investment to turn around quickly. We don't
17 want to string that investment out over a 10 to 12-
18 year period of time. You invest in us, we want to
19 make sure we turn that investment back to the
20 community in a timely way so they reap the benefits
21 of that investment. That's what this is about. So,
22 enough of us. Let's hear from the actual customers
23 who matter, who have talked about their needs, who
24 represent the people who come through our doors.
25 Thank you for the opportunity.

LIBRARY PATRON 1: Living in New York I
remember is hard. It's hard especially because I was
illegal and I wanted to go to college. I have to get
an education. If I really want to be someone in this
world, I have to get an education.

LIBRARY PATRON 2: Before we come in a
mentor to kids, we were being mentored on how to work
with the kids, and through that program at first I
learned so much. I've opened up myself to a whole
new work. That opened up a person that I never knew
existed within myself.

LIBRARY PATRON 3: I'm here thanks to my
youngest. She brought me. She went on the Internet.
She said, Mommy, we are grown now and what you want
to do? I said, you know what I want to do, and I
always ant to do, I want to learn to read and write.
I have this opportunity to come this library to do
what I wanted to do all my life.

LIBRARY PATRON 4: Before, I couldn't read
because there were some hard words I couldn't
understand, but now I could—I could read now because
the library helped me and my heart is—is still ready
read now because I can understand better.

1
2 LIBRARY PATRON 5: You think of a
3 library, you are—it is something official for under
4 the government, you are giving me correct data, you
5 are teaching me my rights in a nice way, you're
6 understanding my culture, you're understanding my
7 pain and ignorance. Yes, I'm ignorance with a lot of
8 things, you know, and you respect my ignorance. So I
9 am put in the correct class, you know, if you don't
10 like me, it is that you are expecting me.

11 LIBRARY PATRON 6: I didn't really like
12 feel a vibe or a momentum to coming to school, but
13 after the library, it kind of gave me a push to like,
14 you know, strive for the best or, you know, earn for
15 the 90s, earn for the 100s, get the honor roll.
16 Something like that. So, I think I'm going in the
17 right direction.

18 LIBRARY PATRON 7: I joined the business
19 (sic) class for here. I make the business plan.
20 Before, you know, I have a dream about own a coffee
21 shop. That's just a dream, but finish the—at Queens
22 Library the business, I have a plan, a business plan.

23 LIBRARY PATRON 8: It's been more comfort
24 that I work for the United States because I learn a
25 lot about myself (sic) from the library, and they

1
2 prepare to me very, very well. I say thank you to my
3 teacher, thank you for that, and thank you for this
4 country because like it's so, so hard.

5 LIBRARY PATRON 9: On June 5, 2014, I
6 lost my home and I became homeless because I hadn't
7 read in years, you know, and to able to read again
8 and get on the computers and just to meet the people,
9 it's been very, you know, it's-it's helped me out a
10 lot.

11 LIBRARY PATRON 10: The library for me
12 was really a place where I-I kind of found myself. I
13 realized my love for learning while sitting at one of
14 these tables, and then this is me coming back home.
15 I finished my school in May, and now I'm working
16 right here in the Bronx. So, it's kind of coming
17 back to the community that has sort of helped raise
18 me in a way.

19 LIBRARY PATRON 11: I walked into the
20 library two days after I landed here, and I got
21 myself a library card, and I had something that-that
22 has my name on it and the name of New York. I took
23 my high school exam this year. I sat here, and I
24 applied to colleges from here, and I got accepted in
25 Queens College, and I also applied for my jobs here.

1 I made my resume here. So, it was kind of home at
2 library and home for me. So, a very long life. (sic)

3 LIBRARY PATRON 12: The library help us
4 to be a US Citizen. [laughs]

5 LIBRARY PATRON 13: I can vote. I can
6 participate.

7 LIBRARY PATRON 14: This is my dream I-
8 and I can speak English well. I'm not there for a
9 while. I'm-I'm very happy.

10 LIBRARY PATRON 15: When I was 15, my
11 father got deported, and it shattered my world, and
12 completely turned my life upside down. First-when I
13 first started this program, you know, I was a really
14 bad case, and now here I am-I'm more than happy with
15 the-who I was with, the kids that I work with. What
16 life throws at us, I know that it gets hard, but
17 there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank concludes our
19 testimony. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: That
21 adjourns this hearing. Like what are we [laughter]-
22 what do we have to talk about here? Incredibly
23 powerful. I would like to make sure that we get that
24 over to the Administration. So, we should figure out
25

1 a way that you can get a copy so we can play it for
2 Mr. Dean Fuleihan. Again, this hearing is very
3 different from our other hearings. This is usually
4 when we question the Administration, and we push back
5 and we say, you know, why haven't you applied this
6 funding? Where is this funding? We need to
7 prioritize this. Why this is different is because we
8 have your allies and the advocates at the other
9 table. So, we're going to ask things that are
10 related to the budget, and the first round of
11 questions after the Chairs ask their questions will
12 be five minutes, and if we need a second round, we'll
13 come back for a third minute round. So, I wanted to
14 jump right in. In the current budget of \$365.9
15 million, is it sufficient to meet all the needs for
16 all the systems? [background noise, poise]

18 TONY MARX: It is—it is not sufficient to
19 meet all the needs if you consider those needs being
20 having libraries open on the days when working New
21 Yorkers can get to them. Right now, we do not have
22 enough libraries open on Sundays. In cases on Sat—
23 also not on Saturdays. That's when folks can get to
24 it. We have together invested so much more in
25 educational program, amazing staff, but if the doors

1 are locked because we don't have sufficient days and
2 hours it doesn't—it doesn't work. So, it—it's simply
3 that we can't—we see increased demand and we—you
4 know, we need additional capacity to meet that
5 demand.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So, at
8 the request that you have, the Council urged the
9 Administration to put in an additional \$34 million
10 for funding.

11 TONY MARX: Uh-huh. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: You're
13 welcome. Would the 30—does the \$34 million bring you
14 to date does that allow you to plan for the future?

15 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, the \$34 million
16 allows us to have at least one library open in each
17 councilmanic district seven days a week, and—and we'd
18 love to plan for that.

19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.
20 Now, I want to talk about capital because I think
21 it's one of—one of the parallel important questions
22 that we have. The capital commitment rate is
23 something that we've been asking every agency,
24 everyone that has come before us because as a council
25 we want to ensure that what we plan for is exactly

1 what could be spent down, and I think there's an
2 opportunity for the systems to express some of the
3 challenges that you may be having with buildings,
4 right. So, actually once you get this money in, what
5 are the challenges? We are working with DDC, but
6 we're also looking at opportunities within EDC
7 because has had a commitment rate that's, you know,
8 you—they build at a rate that's much more expedient.

10 TONY MARX: Uh-huh.

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: We're
12 currently putting together a taskforce for
13 commitment—for-to looking-looking at the procurement
14 process across our city, and it's just an opportunity
15 for us to better understand what can we do in the
16 Council or within this process that can be
17 highlighted as a challenge that we might need to look
18 into to help facilitate this process for you. So, if
19 you can just talk about the libraries have expressed
20 a strong need increased capital funding. However,
21 the system's commitment of \$28.7 million or 7-1--\$7-
22 7.1% of its annual capital plan of 407 what steps can
23 we take together to improve that rate?

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: You want to take this?

25 No problem. Yes, do it. No problem.

1
2 LINDA JOHNSON: So, there, too—it's a
3 complex problem. That's why I—[laughs] So, the—the
4 first issue is that because we're underfunded and so
5 deeply underfunded even the money that we were to get
6 in 20, in Fiscal 2018 wouldn't make up for the
7 shortfalls that we are experiencing with projects
8 that have been funded for a long time and are
9 currently in progress. So, we are right now in
10 jeopardy of having to halt about 40 projects around
11 the borough that need to be completed, and these are
12 not extravagant projects. We are talking about HVAC
13 systems and roofs and just very basic infrastructure
14 what we've been calling state of good repair projects
15 around the borough. And so, the funding stream
16 itself contributes to the problem, and then there's
17 the other problem that we're all sort of dancing
18 here, which is the length of time and the amount of
19 money that some of these projects cost. And the
20 problems that we have when we are using the—using DDC
21 as our construction company. And that—that problem,
22 the length of time that things take sets into motion
23 delays that—that create stories you could not even
24 believe. Like when I—when—when—when I sit there and
25 hear from the various people who work in our Capital

1 Planning and Facilities Management Department, why
2 things have been halted, and why we're talking ten
3 years down the road about a project that should have
4 been completed in a year, it's mind boggling. But,
5 there are—there are some things that are out of
6 control, regulatory changes that—that change
7 standards that we need to build to and, you know,
8 none of us have control over that. But, the delay
9 that occurs and the increase in costs that occur
10 before a project even begins construction, just
11 before we even get to final design.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Right.

14 LINDA JOHNSON: And—and that is one of
15 the reasons that we are trying to do some of these
16 projects as pass-throughs and using EDC is certainly
17 one technique that we think would help us greatly.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, if I may add to that
19 I think it's not just about the money. It really is
20 about money and efficiency and how we allocated the
21 dollars, and I think the barriers to use those
22 dollars. And, one of the things since I started last
23 year is becoming more aware of the hurdles that we
24 face as far as responding to the type of issues that
25 Linda talked about, and I think the need from your

1 leadership, your respective leadership to try to
2 convene the appropriate parties, which includes OMB
3 as well--

4
5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Correct.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: --together to talk about
7 ways to improve the both process as well as
8 deliverables on the money itself. So, while we can
9 advocate for more money, which we definitely want,
10 we're also advocating for regulatory change to allow
11 us more efficiency here in how we do it. And I think
12 Linda was spot on as far as pass-throughs. And I
13 won't identify the particular Council Member even
14 though he is sitting right there in the lead and
15 worked for the library, but I won't mention his name.
16 But at one point, a certain council member said, and
17 don't come back to us and me for any more money, and
18 he said that in jest, but also in seriousness because
19 by the time we talk about a project, the money is
20 allocated by all of you--and you've done a masterful
21 job in the Borough of Queens--then that money is too
22 little. And so, we have to come back to you over and
23 over and over again, and he said it in a correct way
24 because we should be getting the money, we should be
25 able to plan it out and use the dollars as has been

1 allocated to us, and not have to come back to you.
2
3 That's a better use and efficiency of how we build or
4 approve the infrastructure, and then, you know, it's
5 just mind boggling as far as getting an answer around
6 a particular issue when we're dealing with our
7 particular construction projects, and we don't like
8 stories, and I can go chapter and verse. I'm not
9 going to stretch it out any longer, but I mean we
10 have two projects in the Borough of Queens that
11 should be done or should be almost complete, and I
12 can add two more to those, and the answer changes day
13 after day after day. It shouldn't be that way
14 because the people who suffer are not us. The people
15 who suffer are our customers who are looking for Kew
16 Gardens Hills to be opened when they say they're
17 going to open it, and then we can do what we have to,
18 or a Hunters Point or a Corona or East Elmhurst and
19 in the Borough of Queens. We need regulatory change
20 as well as obviously greater dollars to do the job.

21 LINDA JOHNSON: One of the reasons that
22 in my testimony I was specific about each library
23 system need \$50 million this year is so that we can
24 actually prevent a lot of these projects that are in
25 jeopardy of coming to a grinding halt, and it we

1 could start to catch up with an allocation like \$50
2 million not that it will take care of everything, but
3 we could start to catch up, and start to plan address
4 construction and renovation issues before they become
5 emergencies, then we wouldn't be in this position
6 year after year.

8 TONY MARX: Madam Chair, you've hit a
9 nerve.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Uh-huh.

11 TONY MARX: There are I think three
12 ingredients here. One is critical maintenance,
13 right. If we do not have the money to stop the leaks,
14 the leaks get worse. That's bad for everybody.
15 Second is a steady stream of major investment so that
16 we can do the full renovations rather than Band-Aids
17 that don't to the job.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Uh-huh.

19 TONY MARX: And third is we need a
20 process that takes the resources that you and the
21 Mayor provide, the city taxpayers provide and makes
22 the best use of them. At the New York Public
23 Library, we have seen that when we do—when we are
24 able to manage our own projects, and we are open to
25 whatever arrangements makes sense, if EDC makes

1 sense, whatever it is, we can get them done in half
2 the time for roughly half the money. I'm not an
3 expert, but that sounds fairly dramatic to me, and as
4 Dennis just said, it's not just that we're
5 frustrated, it's not that the elected officials are
6 frustrated because you don't get to see the projects
7 done in a timely way. It's the citizens of New York
8 who deserve to get twice as much bang for their buck
9 at twice the speed and if they're not getting it
10 because we haven't figure out a process that works,
11 then that's on us to figure it out.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And
14 that's exactly what we needed for the record and for
15 the testimony because as we talk about the capital
16 commitments across our city, there's nothing more
17 frustrating for elected officials. We have to
18 advocate, prod, pull, push, negotiate every dollar
19 that we're able to bring back to our districts. And
20 there's nothing more frustrating than when you go to
21 your district and present this wonderful plan, and
22 say hey guys we're finally going to fix the air
23 condition, we're finally going to fix that roof,
24 except when it doesn't happen, and it happens six or
25 seven years later. And in many cases especially now I

1 think with term limits, which is a reality, right.
2
3 It's—you're doing it for the person that's going to
4 come in right after you, and that's not how this is
5 supposed to be. This is not, you know, what it's—how
6 it's intended to be, and I have to bring up East
7 Elmhurst, and I know that we worked really hard and
8 we finally broke ground, but the reality is that
9 that's a project that started at \$3 million, and it
10 ended up being \$13 million. And it wasn't like I'm
11 building a new library. It's the same exact room,
12 the same exact project with nothing different and
13 nothing new, and I'm not saying this kind of to you,
14 I'm saying it with you. It just—it-it can't continue
15 at this rate. Why I need to hear this from you is
16 because we also need to understand that while we're
17 going to advocate for this capital money that we're
18 not going to be putting money within the same system.
19 Because okay we fight and we get \$150 million
20 [coughing] but the system hasn't change. So, how can
21 we ensure that now we have this new capital funding?
22 We haven't given you the tools necessary for you to
23 be able to expedite that. So, that is what, you
24 know, we need to also figure out that in tandem with
25 the money, is the improvements of, you know, the

critical maintenance, but also the—the improvements
of the structure are giving you an opportunity to
expedite these buildouts.

TONY MARX: Can I—can I say, Madam
Chairman, I—I think that's absolutely right, and it's
my impression that everybody agrees.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

TONY MARX: Right, we agree--

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Right.

TONY MARX: --you agree, the Mayor's side
agrees, everyone—everyone agrees. So that sounds
like a moment of opportunity to me.

DENNIS WALCOTT: It boggles my mind that
we're having this conversation between the folks who
are up here are the Council people are chair people,
the people who are on our respective staffs. You
have the best brains here to solve this problem, and
again, as you've laid out, and we've talked to others
as well, it's not just about the money, and I think
we have talked about it among ourselves as far as you
look in the room here, and you have great minds to
solve this issue and to change the regulatory
requirement and restrictions that go on. And it
shouldn't be the case as you identified with the \$3

1 million that balloons into \$13 million, and by the
2 time the industry is hot, then we have to come back
3 for more money. It shouldn't be that way and we're
4 pledging our support, our collective support to work
5 with and our teams to find a way to solve this.

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay,
8 great. So, can all of you walk efficiently if we're
9 able to identify pass-throughs that can be done? Can
10 we get a commitment on the record from all of you?
11 Can you do that?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: By all means.

14 TONY MARX: Yes, we do more pass-throughs
15 I think than any of the systems. I will say, you
16 know, at some point we need a partnership.

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Of
18 course.

19 TONY MARX: --with-with the
20 Administration. We have it. We need it to work even
21 better to be able to do this in an affordable and
22 efficient way.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Have you
24 worked with any other agency other than DDC to build
25 any parts of-of the library system?

2 TONY MARX: [off mic] No, just EDC.

3 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay, and
4 have—in your experience with using EDC has it been
5 more efficient or the same?

6 TONY MARX: It has been. Madam Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Great.
8 I'm getting all this for the record. I already know
9 these answers.

10 TONY MARX: [laughs]

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: And SCA, SCA also.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: SCA?

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Is a potential. I mean
14 we've talked to SCA and SCA may have some interest in
15 working with us as well. So, SCA can't be--

16 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So, would
17 it be for—for library systems close to a school or
18 just any system?

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: It's to be explored but
20 I mean--

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
22 [interposing] Okay.

23 DENNIS WALCOTT: --we're—and I've—I've
24 talked about this before I mean we're also talking
25 about we don't have to be relegated to EDC. We could

1 form our library construction authority and it could
2 be modeled after an SCA as well, and that gives us
3 the ability to be more efficient in the way we do
4 things. I think there are various options available
5 to us.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Tony Marx
8 is dying over there. [laughter]

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: Well, Tony is always
10 fine. That's why I look in his direction.

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I-I like
12 the-I like the idea-I know the School Construction
13 Authority is something we've used often to compare a
14 system that actually builds expediently, and does it
15 well. I'm going to have my co-chairs ask their
16 questions, and I'll come back for my final questions
17 in a second round. Chair Van Bramer followed by
18 Chair King.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much, Madam Chair, and it-this is a difficult hearing
21 in many ways because we-we agree. I agree
22 wholeheartedly with the asks, and-and so it's-it's-
23 it's more like a rally in some ways, an informative
24 rally, but I want to ask you a couple of things.
25 First I want to say thank you for the video because

2 it is a very touching reminder of—of what this is all
3 about, and I think government politics even the day-
4 to-day of the work that you all do sometimes we don't
5 see that enough. We're not reminded frequently
6 enough about the work that's done, and I remember
7 when worked for the library, I thought was one of the
8 greatest jobs in the world because every single day
9 you went to work, you saw the people that you were
10 helping, right. You actually knew that every day you
11 went to work whether it's the Queens, Brooklyn and
12 New York Public Libraries that—that your job was to
13 actually bring a little bit of goodness to the world
14 every single day, and not everyone has a job like
15 that where you can feel that sense of satisfaction,
16 right? You can feel that sense of decency right and
17 humanity moving in the right direction, and all of
18 you do that. So, I just hope that every single
19 person here who has the privilege of working for a
20 public library feels that every single day, right? I
21 hope you feel that and know that that you make such
22 an incredible difference in the lives of all those—
23 those folks, and speaking of which, you know, we—we
24 talk a lot about this moment with the federal
25 government, and the Administrations that's in chaos.

1
2 And that chaos that we can about from a political-in
3 a political way has deep meaning with respect to
4 crisis for many of the people who we see at our
5 public libraries, and so I wanted to ask all of you
6 about what you're seeing in the systems in terms of
7 people who are needing you more. Maybe it's an
8 immigration questions and maybe it's a safe space to
9 go. Maybe it's just wanting to talk to that friendly
10 library worker about the fact that they're afraid or
11 their children are afraid of what is happening,
12 seeing the events that are so big. And-and also
13 maybe speak to this within the context of the seven-
14 day request because if-if a family is afraid, and the
15 library is not opened, they can't go, and so the
16 crisis that's happening in people's lives everyday
17 doesn't take a break on Sundays. It is still with
18 them every single day. So, needless to say, I
19 support the seven-day request, but maybe you can
20 speak a little to its urgency and why it's so
21 important.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, we at Queens started
23 our Queens is for everyone campaign, which basically
24 is respond to that because we have heard, we see, we
25 feel the fear that people have around what's taking

2 place in the news and raising questions on status or
3 just trying to find basic information on what's going
4 on. And our folks have been wearing both T-shirts,
5 but also going out and finding different ways go
6 going beyond our walls to spread our library services
7 to people to address those questions. We plan to
8 have a 31-hours marathon at one of our libraries.
9 We'll be all night and all morning, and providing
10 services to respond to those particular needs as
11 well. And it's as a result of what our customers are
12 saying to us, and the type of response that they need
13 to have in addressing the questions. And they look
14 to the library for quality information, reliable
15 information and accessible information, and by tying
16 that into seven days a week, that builds in a great
17 accountability and accessibility to the public at
18 large as far as being able to get them information.
19 Because people work. People do different things, and
20 Sunday should not be a day where they can't get that
21 information from these hardworking individuals who
22 provide the quality services. Because the one thing
23 when you think about it, and you really do think
24 about and say, I can go into a library and be
25 confident of the information I'm going to get. That

1 librarian is the person who is grounded in research,
2 grounded in knowledge and being able to provide
3 reading information, and our citizens need that a 7-
4 day week basis. So, while we can't open up all of
5 our libraries, we would love seven days a week, we
6 definitely can open up one per councilmanic district.
7 It's not that much to ask for, and having again the
8 quality buildings, and it ties in councilman to the
9 point that people just don't know. I mean when you
10 look at the newspapers, the story changes every hour.
11 It's not like an everyday story something new
12 happens. I mean you go on line and you see breaking
13 news, breaking news, breaking news. Imagine how you
14 feel, and imagine how people who are not connected to
15 the system feel, who don't know, who are being
16 attacked one way or another either directly or
17 through inference, and then people have to respond to
18 that, and where do they go? Where do they come to
19 for that free service? They know that door will be
20 open at some hour of the day, our libraries, and we
21 need to open up more to make sure they're able to get
22 those services.
23

24 TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, the—I think
25 we've been moving towards meeting these needs sort of

1 in anticipation. So at the New York Public Library a
2 500% increase in English language instruction over
3 the last four years and adding citizenship classes as
4 well as other resources and expertise as Dennis
5 described. We do hear about families even caregivers
6 who are now fearful about coming into the library
7 whether it's for story time or English language
8 classes. We hear about people coming into our
9 branches to get information about what are described
10 as predators in terms of visa advice that is
11 fraudulent, and they rely on us-for that. I-I think
12 we've reach to the legal services community during
13 these last months, and we've said what do you need?
14 And the answer has been, well, actually we need
15 places where our experts can meet with the people who
16 need our advice in the neighborhoods open on
17 Saturdays when people can come to them. That sounds
18 like a library, and one of the powers of the library
19 is because everyone comes, there's a protection in
20 that, right. The fact that-that libraries welcome
21 all with no necessary credentials, proof, identify
22 papers or anything says all New Yorkers come.
23 Therefore, we can meet the needs of those New Yorkers
24 who are living in increased fear without saying
25

1 that's—you need—you should not be fearful to come to
2 the library because everyone is coming. It's not an
3 accident that this year's logo is Invest in All New
4 Yorkers. [siren]

6 LINDA JOHNSON: So, my colleagues have
7 spoken eloquently on this subject. I would add
8 really only one thing and that is that libraries have
9 always been a trusted environment, a place where our
10 doors have been open for everyone and where we have
11 tried to provide services that reflect the needs of
12 our communities. And—and of course, that's what
13 we're all doing right now, is—is trying to provide
14 that safety and that environment for people who are
15 expressing to us a new set of—of needs or at least
16 feeling, or least have become more vocal about
17 expressing those needs to us at this particular time.
18 So, I think that the more we can do for our
19 communities regardless of the political environment
20 the better, and—and that this is a moment where we
21 should be stepping up.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I—I just
23 think, you know, the work that libraries do and that
24 library workers do it's really hard for everybody to
25 understand the full breadth of—of what that

2 represents, right? And, you know, I'll-I'll as even
3 some of the folks, and you can-you can raise your
4 hands if-if-if you believe this is true. But I know
5 that there are occasions when-when people receive
6 potentially devastating medical diagnoses for
7 example, and has anyone ever had someone come to
8 their library or know a library worker who has been
9 approached by someone who has just had a diagnosis,
10 and they come to the library to try to read up about
11 that, and-and look at their treatment options and
12 what they could be and how to survive, right. People
13 don't understand, right the power of that moment when
14 that person comes into the library, and says to the
15 librarian, right, I've just been diagnosed with
16 ovarian cancer, right. I need some books of ovarian
17 cancer, right. I need some books on how to survive
18 this, right, or a child whose-whose parents are
19 fighting or maybe getting a divorce or maybe there's
20 insecurity in the home. But how many folks have
21 either witnessed or know of a staff member who has
22 had to reassure a child, right, that it's going to be
23 okay, right that they're going to be safe. You know,
24 you all represent that front line, right. That's why
25 we need libraries open seven days week. Right,

2 that's why we need these safe havens. So, it's just
3 incredibly important, and we say all the time that
4 you really make a difference in people's lives in
5 terms of in some cases life or death. It's not an
6 exaggeration. So, thank you again. I've seen it
7 myself and I know there is certainly other examples
8 of-of folks who are coming and seeing the frontline
9 library workers in that interaction. Right, it's
10 about life and death. That interaction is about how
11 they overcome, how they succeed, how they make it to-
12 to a better place. So that's-that's my-my 7-day
13 piece. And in terms of the capital, you know, we
14 have to get this right because I think, you know,
15 Chair Ferreras-Copeland and I certainly believe in
16 the investment, and continue to invest. But we don't
17 want other, you know, folks in government to see the
18 delays as a reason to disinvest. Why we can't allow
19 the problems with East Elmhurst or Hunters Point to
20 be a disincentive to anyone to say why should we give
21 them more capital because there are all these
22 problems. No one is more livid about Hunters Point
23 than I am. No one has learned more about windows
24 that me, but I would still even give all the problems
25 and invest another \$40 million into a brand new

1 library because I know what that will do the day we
2 open it for the people of Long Island City. But
3 that's why we have to get this right. We have to
4 invest this funding. We have to make sure these
5 libraries have what they need, and then—and then at
6 the same time, and I love the Library Construction
7 Authority, by the way. I think we should make that
8 happen tomorrow. It's jut too important. It's just
9 too important. So, you know, I—I don't—I have a few
10 more questions and more statements, but in the
11 interest of time, I'll just say, you know, we'll
12 fight as we always have. I'm proud of the work that
13 we've done, adding libraries to the Ten-Year Capital
14 Plan, increasing by \$300 million the capital, and now
15 we need another \$150 and—and we need to continue the
16 progress. Baselining six-day service was a huge
17 victory, and as some folks know, this is the—the 19th
18 budget season in a row where I have sat in this
19 Chamber for this hearing. The first 11 as a member
20 of the staff of the Queens Library and the last eight
21 as the Chair of the Cultural Affairs and Libraries
22 Committee. So, this is a 20-year piece. I'm not yet
23 50 so it's a big part of my life really that I've
24 been doing this work. So, I know how important it
25

1 is. It is really essential that we get there. So, I
2 want to thank all of you, but more to the point I
3 want to thank all of you for your fight, and being
4 part of this fight. So, let's—let's go and do it.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank—
7 thank you, Chair. We'll hear from Chair King. I
8 just wanted to for the record actually acknowledge
9 that this committee actually created DDC, and the
10 reason why it created DDC was to do exactly not what
11 they're doing now. It was to make the process of
12 capital commitments more efficient, to move processes
13 along, to—and I think that in many way, and you know,
14 Pena Moda (sp?) or someone is watching right now. I
15 think there are things that are done efficiently
16 through the agency. There is something to be said
17 about prioritizing, and—and that is our biggest
18 engagement in conversation with the Administration is
19 making sure that your projects are prioritized, and
20 in many ways while the number seems very large when
21 you compare it to paving roads and doing other big
22 things, there are huge. Those are a huge
23 undertaking, and I think that is probably one of the
24 challenges that DDC faces. So, no ways are we trying
25 to, you know, bad mouth an agency or in that way. It

1 just really is about finding a more efficient way.

2 So, when you talk about a library construction
3 authority or, you know, or-or an entity like that,
4 you know, it's not like we haven't done it here in
5 the Council before. So, I just wanted to put that on
6 the record. Chair King.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Madam Chair
9 and thank you, Mr. Chair as well. Thank you for
10 today's conversation. Thank you for your testimony.
11 Thank you for all. I'm having the privilege of
12 staying with three of you and for all of you to help
13 have a right conversation to improve our library
14 system. I have a couple of questions that I want to
15 ask you. At the risk of advocating against myself
16 I'm still going to ask some of these questions. So,
17 I'm just going to jump right in. So, I'd just like
18 to know since Fiscal Year say 2015 to today, what
19 would you say has been the increase of usership in or
20 visits to the library total from two years ago to
21 today? What would say that total number looks like?
22 [pause]

23 TONY MARX: Go ahead. [background
24 comments] The-I would say the most notable change
25 that we have seen again I think in partnership with

1 the City Council and with the Mayor is a-a
2 significant increase in programming attendance in the
3 libraries, right. So, in the old days, right, you
4 came, you grabbed a book, you went or you came, you
5 grabbed a book, you sat and then you went, and now an
6 increasing number of people who are coming, are
7 coming for Pre-K literacy work, after school or
8 homework help. They're coming from English language
9 classes, citizenship classes. They're coming at the
10 New York Public Library 100,000 at a-in a year for
11 basic computer skills training all the way to up
12 coding, and what that also means, Mr. Chairman, is
13 the length of stay in the library has increased. So,
14 it's moving from purely or more transactional book
15 in, book out to no I'm here to not just grab my
16 books, but also to learn, and we think that's just a
17 very exciting additional part of-of our part of the
18 fabric of New York.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, so I'm going
21 somewhere with this question.

22 TONY MARX: Yes, sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, I just want to try
24 to get an understanding. What you're saying in the
25 last two years just picking a number that

1 participation in libraries have risen say by maybe
2 10,000 more people coming through the whole three
3 systems or 50,000 you might think that visit the
4 system or have increased? What would you say that
5 number might look like?
6

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: I can tell you in
8 Queens. I'm not sure about the last two years. I
9 can tell you from year to year we've had, as Tony
10 indicated, we see the biggest growth in program
11 services, a 25.5% increase in the number of people
12 coming to Queens Library to receive program services,
13 and as Tony indicated also, a lot of that is directly
14 correlated to having the six-day week service so we
15 show that we've been able to improve both the
16 quality, but also the number of program offerings as
17 a result of that.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

19 LINDA JOHNSON: And in Brooklyn as well
20 program attendance is the largest area of growth.
21 Nearly 65,000 program sessions with nearly a million
22 attendees in 2016, and in addition to that, WiFi
23 sessions continue to increase, which is an
24 interesting—an interesting fact because it means
25 people are bringing their own devices into the

1 library but still needing the service itself in order
2 to be connected. So, this work that we do to connect
3 the people who are on the wrong side of the Digital
4 Divide continues to be—continues to be critical.

5
6 DENNIS WALCOTT: And if I can add to it
7 in going back to the prior conversation that increase
8 is as a result of also not having all our libraries
9 up and running when they should be either. So, as a
10 result of delays, we lose hours or days or weeks and
11 months of having libraries off line because of those
12 delays. And so, imagine how much higher the numbers
13 would be.

14 JOSE LOPEZ: I have a heartbreaking
15 statistic, which is that in 2016 we lost over 550
16 hours of library service due to unscheduled closings.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Interesting.

18 TONY MARX: We—we've seen at—at the New
19 York Public Library we're now about 93,000 system
20 wide programs. We're projecting that in this year
21 just in the Early Literacy Programs we'll be at
22 700,000 attendees. We were at—somewhere in the
23 250,000 two years ago as I recall or thereabouts.
24 We—we've seen with your investment and—and the
25 Mayor's investment in moving towards increased seven-

1 day service, which is part of what we're asking to
2 continue with here. We've seen 60,000 more visits
3 and that's just with having added four or five new
4 locations. If we—we project—this is a projection—
5 that if every City Council Member's district, every
6 neighborhood in New York had at least one library
7 open on Sundays just in the New York Public Library
8 system that would—we think that would be a roughly
9 \$300,000 increase of visits, but what's more
10 important it isn't just—just the numbers, it's what
11 happens when you come, right. Whether it's you're an
12 immigrant in fear and eager to learn English or
13 citizenship advice or we hope legal services as well,
14 which we've begun to provide in the libraries.
15 Whether it's, you know, needing help with your
16 homework so you can do better at school, all are
17 learning computers or getting access to computers so
18 you can apply to jobs. If the doors are closed, we
19 cannot do that.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah. So, Tony makes a
23 great point because we—in our request if you take the
24 \$34 million that we're asking for seven-day service
25 and break it down by system, Brooklyn's share of that

2 is 9--is \$9.75 million, of that there--there is--a lot
3 of that is allocated to hiring the staff that we
4 would need in order to keep the libraries open those
5 hours, but there's a significant portion that is also
6 dedicated to the acquisition of additional materials
7 and additional programming, and it's not just keeping
8 the doors open. That is not enough. It's truly as
9 Tony expressed what happens while the library is
10 open.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. So, I'm going to
12 ask you, not for an answer right now, but maybe later
13 you can calculate. I'd like to get a number of how
14 many people actually come through the door. You said
15 somewhere about 90,000 and you're going up to
16 110,000. Just give the actual number because I would
17 like to either a break somewhere in the future in
18 each borough of how many people go into the
19 libraries. In your system, how many people go into
20 the libraries so the Administration can actually get
21 an understanding of the numbers because we know we're
22 know we're driven in society--

23 TONY MARX: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: --and they really need
25 to know how many people are attending our public

2 library system so they can't say it's not a need for
3 seven-day services..

4 TONY MARX: Right, Mr.—Mr. Chairman, the—
5 the one thing we absolutely know is across the three
6 systems, we get about 38 million physical visits a
7 year. That is more, with all due respect to my
8 friends and colleagues than all the cultural
9 institute—other cultural institutions and
10 professional sporting teams combined.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, thank you,
12 thank you. So I have a couple more questions.
13 Thank you for that answer. The \$34 million that you
14 are asking for to open up a library in each of the 51
15 districts saying that we're able to accomplish this
16 and you're able to do that, how would you determine
17 which libraries would be open in any district? How
18 do you—how do you—what—do you have a process in place
19 to say who would be open?

20 LINDA JOHNSON: So, we're not talking at
21 this moment about which libraries. We're making the
22 representation that there would be one in each
23 councilmanic district.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, okay, I got it.
25 Thank you, and Queens.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: And we have an internal
3 process of analysis that we would go through if we
4 reached that particular point as far as making that
5 determination.

6 TONY MARX: Again, we would using data as
7 to usage space, demand public transport to make sure
8 that wherever we did this we had the maximum impact
9 and, of course, we'd be in discussions with—with you
10 and with our elected officials.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, another question.
12 Knowing that our library system is the largest in the
13 country, how—how—how would you say that funding is
14 used to promote to people out who are non-city
15 residents? Because if we have the largest kind of
16 system, how do we—are we using programs to encourage
17 other people—other New Yorkers to use our system?
18 Are people coming outside of New York because of our
19 system, to use our library systems?

20 TONY MARX: We—I think as a matter of
21 law, if you are a New York State resident because the
22 state does at least in the New York Public Library I
23 think we get about \$20 million a year from the state.
24 You could use the New York Public Library. I think
25

1 that in the circulating branches that's a very small
2 number.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, okay.

5 TONY MARX: In our case, the--the big use
6 of non-New York City residents is in the Research
7 Library, which is vast--the vast majority of which we
8 privately fund.

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, speaking of
10 research libraries--

11 TONY MARX: [interposing] Well, I
12 apologize. The other exception is the Andrew High
13 School Library for the blind.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] Okay.

15 TONY MARX: It is the federally funded
16 Tri-State basis for all library services for the
17 blind.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, thank you, thank
19 you, and you mentioned Research Libraries. So, does
20 this \$37.7 million include the city and non-city
21 funds for Fiscal Year 2017, in the Executive Capital
22 Plan for research libraries. So, I know there's been
23 work done, about \$13.5 million for the Schomburg, the
24 proposed--process of the project further. Do you have
25

1 an idea of when that's going to be completed? I know
2 we've been there and there's been work being done?

3 TONY MARX: The--the total \$20 million
4 investment in the second round of renovation of the
5 incredible Schomburg Center in Harlem will be--will be
6 completed by the end of June. We have an amazing new
7 director there. We just announced the acquisition of
8 the James Baldwin Archive amongst other things that
9 we've been working on for five years.

10 LINDA JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

11 TONY MARX: Just checking. The--[laughs]
12 but--but we're really excited about having that
13 renovation. It's--I was just there a couple days ago,
14 and it's almost done.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Almost done. You're
16 looking at--

17 TONY MARX: June or July.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: June, oh, okay.

19 Alright, beautiful, beautiful and I'm going to kind
20 of wrap up with this. I understand the funding that
21 we've been asking for is kind of two offset the
22 crooked system that we have right now that just isn't
23 working properly. Madam Chair Julissa-Ferreras just
24 mentioned that--that the City Council kind of put
25

1 together the—the agency that's handling your capital.

2 So, I want her to hear this. Madam Chair.

3 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: You mentioned—you just
5 mentioned that the City Council kind of put together
6 the system that allows or doesn't allow for you to
7 get capital projects done correctly or in a timely
8 manner. I would subscribe that we got to figure out
9 what I call the F-F Program, which is that if they
10 can't—
11 can't—

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: [off mic]
13 Go with the F-F [laughter].

14 TONY MARX: Because I'm going to—I'm—I'm
15 going to drop it right now that we neither—either fix
16 this system that you can get capital funding and get
17 it down and get things built or we fire—fire
18 something so we can get it done the correct way
19 because we come in and having these conversations
20 regularly. We're all on the same page, and we know
21 where the problem lies. So, if they can't fix it,
22 then you got to fire it and start doing something
23 different—something different so we can get different
24 results. So, we're going to continue to work to help
25 you. You have all of our support, and I'm looking

1 forward to us improving our library systems. Thank
2 you.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
5 you, Chair. I was a little worried with your F-F
6 system there. [laughter] We've been joined by
7 Council Members Crowley, Rodriguez, Constantinides.
8 We will now hear from Council Member Constantinides
9 followed by Council Member Koo.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: It's good
11 to see you all again, and I know as a father, you
12 know, my son is going to turn eight next week, and
13 the families in my district thousands and thousands
14 of families they're not expecting us to fix the
15 libraries tomorrow, but they want to see their
16 children rooms get renovated while their kids are
17 still of the age to sit on their lap and read with
18 one another, right. I mean I think that—looking at
19 that sort of end of childhood. People expect that
20 they're—they're going to be able to read in their
21 libraries with their children while they're still
22 children, and continue that level of reading all the
23 way through their lives. So, I—I appreciate the
24 great capital conundrum we're under here as trying to
25 see things move as quickly as possible because I—I

1 think we all have our own stories. I'm going to ask
2 about my district in particular just because-- I'm--
3 I'm sorry, Dennis I always put you on the spot.

4 [laughs]

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: NO.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: But how--
7 how is--any new news about Steinway Library at all
8 and--and we still on--on track to maybe break ground
9 this year. [laughs]

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: It is my hope to do
11 that, but I mean one of the things I've learned in
12 this job is not to give a definitive answer, and I
13 say that [laughter]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES:
15 [interposing] That's a bill, a budget. (sic)

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: I say that not being
17 funny, but the reality is sometimes the road map
18 changes, but it is our goal and as you know, we
19 definitely collaborate with our elected officials in
20 the Borough of Queens as well as the status of the
21 project, and I'm looking around at Jonathan or our
22 capital people to get me an accurate answer, and
23 where---where are you Jonathan. Show me if want to
24 Stein (sic) like face to renovation. In design right
25

1 now with a completion date of autumn of 2019, and so
2 we're in direct design phase right now.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: You don't
5 have a contractor yet that's--?

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: No.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: If we're
8 coming out with procurements that means we're still
9 in design and--

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: The same. They're
11 really not.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Which
13 means we're probably not going to be breaking ground?

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, that's the
15 reality.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I--

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Unfortunately.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I-I-I
19 stand with you. I'm-I'm asking these questions--

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I know.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --to sort
22 of highlight these own challenges that we're each
23 having in every--everyone of our districts, and I
24 stand with both of our chairs in expressing and with
25 you and all of the workers here who do the work every

1 single day and in conditions that are not ideal, and
2 in saying that we have to do better. So, today I
3 want to put that on the record, and ask about the
4 library. I always ask at every hearing. So thank
5 you.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I will
9 turn I back over to our chairs. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
11 you, Council Member. We will hear from Council
12 Member Koo followed by Council Member Levin.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank, Madam Chair
14 and thank you Tony, Dennis and Linda for coming to
15 testify, and I want to appreciate your leaderships
16 and all the staff and all the people here for showing
17 up in this public hearing. It means very important
18 the library services, really critical in New York
19 City, and I especially like your slogan today, and
20 you mentioned libraries is investing all New Yorkers.
21 You know, it's true. I mean you said we have to ask
22 the Mayor and make sure the City Council support all
23 your financial needs because it takes money to make
24 money, and to make our citizens more productive. So,
25 I have a question for Dennis he is what? The Queens

1 Chair, you know. The Flushing Library, the Main
2 Street Library is always really crowded and so I
3 wonder now what is the census for the library a day.
4 How many people use the library daily?
5

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: I have that information.
7 So, give me a second. The Flushing we have as of
8 this date April 30th if I'm reading it correctly
9 981,000 people have take advantage of Flushing as of
10 April 30th.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: 980--

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: Again.

13 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] 5,000 a day.

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: 5,000 a day. So 5,000 a
15 day.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Oh, so 5,000 people
17 a day.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, right,

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, and this is one
20 of the most busy libraries.

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: It is—I'm not in
22 competition with my colleagues here, but Flushing is--

23 -

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, 5,000 a day
25 is--

2 DENNIS WALCOTT: --the busiest. Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, is it—is it on
4 the top of all other libraries?

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: Still on top.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: Uh-huh. [laughter] I'm
8 trying—I'm trying to be on good behavior right now
9 that I've got my two colleagues, but Flushing, I mean
10 we know Flushing is the high demand area, and
11 especially we're—we're pleased to say with all this
12 doom and gloom that we just completed, as you know
13 because you were there, the opening of our children
14 room—children's room.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: That's why everyday
16 I go to that. Not, everyday, and I live by the
17 library not too far, and I go to the library very
18 often, and every time I go the library is really too
19 crowded, you know, and you see people sitting on the
20 floors reading the books, and almost every floor.
21 So, that means we need more libraries.

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: You know, I like—I like
23 crowded. I mean—

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] Yeah.

25

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: --because crowded means
3 people are coming to the libraries, but as you also
4 know we're about to do some more work in Flushing as
5 well, and I think with the redesign of the lobby
6 area, that we just put in place, which also is
7 adjacent to the opening in the expansion of the
8 Children's room, that will even create more demand
9 for people because they see a library that's even
10 more useful to them. So we will be putting new
11 elevators in place as we've talked about. So we have
12 a lot of plans for Flushing and in Queens as well.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: What about the--the
14 branch at Queensboro Hill? It has been closed for a
15 long, long time, yeah. So it's under construction
16 and I know.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, so that goes to my
18 earlier--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] So
20 how--how--how soon can they expect it to be open?

21 DENNIS WALCOTT: We talked about that a
22 couple of days ago internally and Queensboro Hill I
23 think is being pushed out to the June? Yeah, to
24 June. So, Queensboro we're looking at June and we
25 were hoping to have it open sooner, but it is not the

1 case. And so, we're looking at a pushout to June for
2 the opening of Queensboro Hill.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, thank you and I—
5 and I urge my Chair and the others Chair to be and
6 Chair Julissa to support the library as much as we
7 because I mean it is front—it's a shame that this be
8 in New York City. We're one of the biggest cities in
9 the world and we have vigils in the library—library,
10 you know, and we—so those are the basic
11 infrastructure with those. It should happen in here.
12 So, we should give them ample funding to do all the
13 things they need to do. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
15 very much, Peter. Council Member Levin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
17 much, Madam Chair, Mr. Chair. I'll keep my questions
18 very brief. Hi, everybody. I just have a quick
19 question following up on the Brooklyn Heights sale
20 from last year. Just what's the status there? Ms.
21 Johnson, can you fill us in on—on when, you know, how
22 many—how much in terms of since this is a budget
23 hearing, how—what type of funds are—are expected to
24 be as a result of the—the proceeds of that sale?
25

1
2 LINDA JOHNSON: So, the-first of all,
3 thank you for all your help in this transaction.
4 The-the-the schedule-the closing is scheduled and I
5 believe it's actually a good date at this point for
6 next week.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: So, that's a big step
9 forward. In the meantime if you've been by the
10 branch at all, you'll see that the demolition work is
11 already underway with the interior, and we are hoping
12 to be able to after we spend money fitting out the
13 new library Brooklyn Heights, to take \$40 million out
14 of that project, out of the sale-the proceeds of the
15 sale of that property, and spend it around the
16 borough and other libraries. And, we've identified
17 several projects that we will targeting. The Sunset
18 Park Library will the beneficiary of-of money from
19 that transaction. Washington Irving, Pacific, Walt
20 Whitman, Ulmer Park, Leonard. And then, as you now,
21 part of the-part of the negotiation over the Brooklyn
22 Heights project was to open a new branch for the
23 first time serving the communities of Dumbo-Dumbo
24 Vinegar Hill. And so, we're excited that we'll be
25 opening a branch there probably in 2020.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and then
3 with-when you say closing next week that means that
4 the-the transaction will happen next week as well?

5 LINDA JOHNSON: Exactly.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: On closing?

7 LINDA JOHNSON: Right, in other words
8 the-the funds will transfer from-from the developer
9 who is purchasing the property to the city. EDC is
10 their agent.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Can you let us know
12 when that is completed?

13 LINDA JOHNSON: Definitely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Great.

15 LINDA JOHNSON: We will be-we will be
16 televising.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, thank. Thank
18 you-thank you Mr. and Madam Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
20 you, Council Member. Chair Van Bramer.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
22 much. I think we've had an important discussion
23 here, the continuation of the advocacy. Again, we
24 have made great strides for our libraries over the
25 last few years in particular, but more needs to be

1 done, and I know that the Chair and I feel very
2 strongly about libraries. We've always loved
3 libraries, and it is an important part of our lives
4 and we're going to keep fighting for all of you. So
5 is everyone ready to keep fighting for libraries.
6 Right. Seven-day service? \$150 million in capital?
7 So let's—let's get it done. We want to thank all of
8 you for being here, and again, thank you to all the
9 library workers who day in and day out make our city
10 a better place. Madam Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
13 you, Chair. I just wanted to acknowledge that BC our
14 Culturals Commissioner clapped to that, too.
15 [laughter] So, it's duly noted, Commissioner
16 Finkelpearl.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, just in
18 fairness to all of you who love culture and the arts
19 as well [laughter]—Great, does that get through?
20 (sic)

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Great. I
22 don't know if you have this number. If you don't we
23 can follow up. As was mentioned, we all kind of had
24 our different experiences at the library. My first
25 job at the library where I learned the Dewey Decimal

1 System, and yes. [laughter] How many Summer Youth
2 Employment young people do you bring on or have
3 brought on? It's okay if you don't have the number--

4 TONY MARX: [interposing] We'll, get
5 that.

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --but
7 we've been asking every agency before us. So, if you
8 can get that number back to us--

9 TONY MARX: Sure.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --it
11 would be incredibly helpful. We're looking to expand
12 that program and want to know not only how many you
13 have, but do you have capacity to take more.

14 TONY MARX: Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.
16 Well, with that, we'd like to also thank everyone
17 who's come out today. This has been the most well
18 attended hearing of this fiscal year, and I think
19 it's because it's important, right. Excellent. I
20 also urge you to come back and give your own public
21 testimony on May 25th right here in this room at 1:00
22 p.m. is when the public gets to come and testify and
23 express your concerns. So, please be sure to come
24 back. That concludes the first part of today's
25

1 budget hearings. I want to thank Presidents Marx,
2 Walcott and Johnson for testifying. As a reminder,
3 as I said, the public will be invited to testify on
4 May 25th at 1:00 p.m. If you'd like to submit written
5 testimony if you can't make it, please do so at
6 council.nyc.gov/budget/testimony. I don't know if
7 that's a good idea, if that's a good suggestion,
8 public testimony if they can't make it, and the staff
9 will make it a part of the official record. We will
10 now take a five-minute break before we conclude
11 today's hearing with the Department of Cultural
12 Affairs.

14 TONY MARX: Thank you very much and thank
15 you to the Speaker as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
17 you. Yes. Oh, I forgot you wanted to make a
18 statement. [pause] [coughs] Good afternoon, my name
19 is Julissa Ferreras-Copeland. I'm the Chair of the
20 Finance Committee. I will now conclude the eleventh
21 day of budget hearings with testimony from
22 Commissioner Tom Finkelppearl of the Department of
23 Cultural Affairs. The Finance Committee is again
24 joined by Chair Van Bramer and his committee. In the
25 interest of time, I will forego an opening statement

1 and turn it over to my co-chair, Majority Leader Van
2 Bramer.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
5 much—

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
7 [interposing] They're getting longer.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --madam Chair,
9 yes, and thank you again for these eleven days and
10 your amazing stamina and dedication. I want to thank
11 all of you from the cultural community including I
12 believe a place called BAM. Is that—is that yes.
13 Lots of folks from and those great T-shirts for being
14 here and being a part of this important day and
15 process, and those who were here earlier for our
16 press conference and rally for the arts and culture
17 including our science based cultural institutions, of
18 course. This is an incredibly important time for all
19 of us. I—I said before and I'll say it again where
20 the very belief in the value of culture and arts is
21 under assault in so many places. We were seeing
22 unprecedented attacks on federal agencies that
23 obviously have an impact on so many of us, and really
24 New York City is and always has been and should be
25 where that—that stops, right that—that belief that

2 this doesn't matter, isn't important, isn't worthy of
3 funding, that—that end here right. In the city of
4 New York we understand the value of the arts. We
5 understand the incredible contributions that culture
6 and the arts make. Yes, you can do this if would
7 like. I see some people sort of like one went way in
8 the air, and then there was like a half a hand, and
9 you're like no go all in. So, it's—it's more
10 important than ever that the city of New York, which
11 I'm really proud of the way we support the art, and—
12 and the increases that we have had, but to really
13 secure stability and—and a future that—that the
14 cultural organizations can—can rely on, the city can
15 and should step up and do even more for culture and
16 the arts. And I'm very proud of the City Council.
17 Under the last three years with the Speaker, Finance
18 Chair and myself, we doubled City Council cultural
19 initiatives. We alone in the City Council now are
20 looking at somewhere in the neighborhoods or \$30
21 million a year in cultural initiatives alone, right.
22 That's a significant, significant increase and
23 investment by this City Council, and las year we were
24 thrilled to push forward, and obviously Commissioner
25 Finkelpearl deserves a lot of credit for this. The

2 Mayor included \$10 million in the final budget for
3 culture and the arts. However, that was not
4 baselined. Yes, and it was not included in this
5 budget. So, that funding not only should be
6 restored, but it should be increased and it should be
7 baselines, and—and so we are very much at this very,
8 very precarious time for culture and the arts in—in
9 the city of New York and—and in the—and in the
10 country because if the President has his way and
11 devastates the NEA, the NEH, the NSF, the IMLS, all
12 of these agencies where—where so many of our folks
13 derive important funding, and this is for some of the
14 largest of cultural institutions but also some of the
15 smallest of our—our cultural institutions. We're not
16 going to let that happen in the city of New York.
17 We're not going to let them suffer, and—and so, how
18 we make of that I believe is through budget process
19 sure that culture and the arts are funded, and
20 valued. Right, this is about values. If budgets are
21 about values, this is about recognizing you value,
22 and—and what you mean to the city of New York. So,
23 I'm anxious to hear the Commissioner and what he has
24 to say, and—and I just want to thank all of you for

continuing to be a part of this. So, thank you very,
Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
you, Chair. Commissioner, after you're sworn in by
my counsel, you may begin your testimony.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL Thank you.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in
your testimony before the committee today, and to
respond honestly to Council Member questions?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Okay.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, and I am
going to read my testimony. [coughs] Good afternoon
Chair Van Bramer, Chair Ferreras-Copeland, and
committee members. I'm here today to present the
testimony regarding the Mayor's Executive Fiscal Year
2018 Budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs.
I'm joined by a number of my DCLA staff over here. I
will start with a brief look at DCLA's FY18 Executive
Budget a total expense allocation of \$143 million.
It includes \$106 million for the Cultural Institution
Group, \$28.56 million for the Cultural Development
Fund, and \$6.3 million for agency operations. These

1 figures do not include the Council initiatives and
2 other one-time items that are typically added at
3 adoption. Altogether, this funding refers to nearly
4 1,000 non-profit cultural organizations every year.
5 These groups in turn support a vast range of
6 programming that reaches communities in every part of
7 every borough. With just around 4% of our Executive
8 Budget allocated to agency overhead [coughs] we're
9 also green operation. The vast majority of DCLA
10 funding goes straight to the organizations doing the
11 work in our communities. I'm please to announce that
12 is funding includes \$1 million in new funding to
13 provide energy support for organizations to operate
14 city-owned facilities under my agency's jurisdiction
15 but not member of the Cultural Institution Group.
16 This is second year that we have been able to provide
17 this funding. This is a diverse group of
18 organizations who deep roots in our communities such
19 as Weeksville and BRIC in Brooklyn to Harlem Stage
20 and Clemente Seto Velez in Manhattan. We're proud to
21 provide this increased investment in these groups.
22 The budget also includes \$420,000 of baselined
23 support to continue our Building Community Capacity
24 program. Since expanding BCC last year, the program
25

1 has increased its support for four underserved
2 neighborhoods across the City, East New York,
3 Brownsville and Cypress Hills in Brooklyn, Inwood in
4 Upper Manhattan, Jamaica, Queens and the South Bronx.
5 BCC works with local cultural groups in these
6 neighborhoods to organize—to organize, cultivate
7 resources and develop programming that addresses
8 local needs. For instance, the Coalition of BCC
9 groups in Jamaica called Jamaica Is... hosted a
10 community visioning event in March bringing together
11 stakeholders from across sectors. The goal was to
12 build a community that highlights arts and culture
13 and it encourages and strengthens broad participation
14 and collaboration through engaging residents,
15 artists, students and cultural institutions of all
16 kinds. And tomorrow as part of the NYC by Design
17 Festival, the Bronx Cultural Collective is hosting a
18 South Bronx Baton, Reflections ON Change. This
19 walking tour and panel discussions will highlight the
20 work of four community development corporations that
21 have helped to transform the neighborhoods of the
22 South Bronx over the last several decades. [coughs]
23 This programming and more like it in other BCC
24 communities foster local collaboration and as a Bronx
25

1 Culture Collective visit preserve and amplify our
2 regional cultural for generations to follow. Turning
3 to our Capital Budget, we currently have \$826.6
4 million allocated for nearly 400 active projects at
5 more than 200 organizations over the next four years.
6 This includes \$152 million that was added at adoption
7 of FY2017. For 2018, we have received request for
8 funding from 132 organizations encompassing 177
9 projects. This is on par with prior years. We look
10 forward to working with the City Council and Borough
11 Presidents to allocate funding for important cultural
12 infrastructure projects across the city.

14 Some highlights of our Capital Portfolio
15 include Nuyoricana Poet's Café, which is the complete
16 exterior rehabilitation and interior renovation of
17 the existing café facility on East Third Street.
18 This DDC managed project is currently in design.
19 Brooklyn Historical Society in Dumbo just yesterday I
20 helped cut the ribbon for Brooklyn Historical
21 Society's second location at the Empire Stores
22 Complex. It's located in a renovated 19th Century
23 warehouse in Brooklyn Waterfront that has been vacant
24 since the end of World War II. In fact, today it's
25 the first day that it's open public hours. I

1 encourage everyone to visit us as soon as this
2 hearing is over. Admission will be free of charge for
3 the full weekend. The New York Botanical Garden,
4 Edible Academy and Family Garden enhancements, which
5 will prove the existing Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden
6 and allow more families to experience and engage with
7 NYPG's living collections and programming. Queens
8 Botanical Garden Education Building, construction of
9 a new educational building and surrounding landscape
10 that will include a teaching greenhouse, teaching
11 kitchen, space for adult education programs and
12 family programming to better serve the community.
13 Funds are still being put together for this project.
14 Snug Harbor Music Hall. The Fiscal 2018 Executive
15 Capital Plan includes \$13 million in city funding for
16 Fiscal 2017 through 21. This 120-year-old
17 historically significant structure provides a
18 professional 686-seat venues for concerts,
19 performances, lectures, films, public seminars and
20 symposium. No other city in America provides capital
21 funding for cultural infrastructure at this scale.
22 Our projects collaborations with cultural
23 organizations with city agencies have recently
24 received awards. Mary Temple received for her
25

Percent for Art Commission at McCarren Park, received a design excellence award from the Design Commission. The exhibit across Bronx River wasn't exciting enough on its own. New Yorkers will be able to do so on an award winning zipline. The Treetop Adventures Zipline and Nature Trek at the Bronx Zoo also won an Excellence in Design Award this year, and just last week the first ship that my agency has ever restored, the Wavetree, received a Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy. This 132-year-old wrought iron sailing ship was restored right here in New York City at Caddell Dry dock in Staten Island. We thank our colleagues at the Department of Design and Construction for the excellent management of this unique project. You can visit the Wavertree at the South Street Seaport Museum.

Our Program Unit is hard at work facilitating panels to review nearly 800 applications collected by 2018 Cultural Development Fund support. In fact, a big chunk of my agency is currently back in the office right now facilitating the 16th of this year's 22 panels. We thank the Council for their participation in this important process. It is worth

2 mentioning here that our commitment to providing
3 robust support for culture as the Majority Speaker—
4 Peter just said, robust support for culture is as
5 strong as ever as we face an uncertain future with
6 regard to federal funding. We work tirelessly to
7 make the argument that support for culture means
8 supporting individuals, communities and regions as
9 the federal government budget is determined. I was
10 proud to join you on the steps of City Hall last
11 month to rally against these cuts. Let's keep up the
12 fight in months to come. In other news my agency
13 recently concluded a one-year long Public Artist In
14 Residency, PAIR, P-A-I-R, partnership with the
15 Administration for Children's Services. The loss
16 (sic) collected a group of four theater artists and
17 activists, spent one year in residence at five LGBTQ
18 plus youth foster homes in Brooklyn and Queens
19 learning about theater and interdisciplinary art
20 practices to 30 youth. The residency ended with a
21 reception and exhibition at the Nuyorican Poets Café
22 where they each shared their self-portraits,
23 photographs, poetry, original music composition and
24 experimental autobiographical films. The night and
25 the residency were transformative for the youth and

1 all involved. At the end of the residency, Jennifer
2 Genell, Director of SCO, the organization that
3 facilitates the youth homes reflected that after this
4 year she wonders if art is a right for these youth in
5 additional to clinical services. She said that this
6 residency offered an element of antidote to the very
7 heavy trauma that is so much a part of the system for
8 which the youth and even the staff suffer. We're
9 always looking for ways to mitigate this heaviness to
10 open doors. Art immediately brought likeness making
11 me ask if this human necessity—is a human necessity
12 the same way other healthcare process are. [coughs]
13 It is art a way to decrease—decrease everyone's sense
14 of trauma. This public artisan residents is an
15 example of the potential for change, personal,
16 systematic, social and political that artists can
17 bring when embedded in the city agencies.

18
19 For the last part of my testimony I'm
20 going to turn to the Create NYC Cultural Plan, the
21 Council and the Chair members of the committee in
22 particular has been incredible on this project that
23 all of you had been to events. As I testified back
24 in February, your partnership in so many ways, in so
25 many of our workshops and other events send a

1 powerful message to New Yorkers that their
2 representatives in government are really truly
3 listening to their ideas and concerns. This past
4 Monday we released what we heard and looked at
5 everything we've been—we've learned through the
6 Create NYC public engagement process since last fall.
7 Over 185,000 residents have participated so far
8 including more than 25,000 who showed up at more than
9 400 live events. Our partnership with the city's
10 three library systems also helped us collect more
11 than 10,000 surveys. Outreach has also included a—
12 also includes a phone survey conducted by Siena
13 College Research Institute, which reveals some eye
14 popping numbers. 97% of respondents said that arts
15 and culture are an important part overall quality of
16 life in New York. 92% said that art and culture are
17 important to their lives. 77% of respondents said
18 that they wished that they were able to attend more
19 arts and cultural activities. 90% indicated that
20 promoting arts and culture is a key part of
21 protecting the heritage of New Yorkers.

22
23 We've heard loud and clear that New
24 Yorkers believe that culture is incredibly important
25 to their lives and their communities. Never once in

2 our interactions with tens of thousands of residents
3 did anyone question if our local government should be
4 in the business of supporting arts and culture. Some
5 notable takeaways from the public feedback include
6 calls for equitable distribution of arts and culture
7 across the boroughs. They continue to support the
8 city's existing institutions to provide quality arts
9 education for students to support local arts
10 education to thrive in place, and to promote
11 affordability for all. More information is available
12 at Createnyc.org. At this time we're asking the
13 public to review these proposals and take poll to
14 rate their priorities and help us identify anything
15 we're missing that's important to them. Please help
16 get the word out to your constituents—constituents.
17 Visit the website and take the poll by May 31st to
18 make sure that your priorities are clearly reflected
19 in the plan.

20 I will also be hitting the road. I have
21 already have started hitting the road one more time
22 to discuss the contents of what we heard with the
23 public through a series of office hours at library
24 branches in all five boroughs. Staten Island was
25 last night, Queens is tomorrow. We had our first one

1 in Staten Island yesterday. You can find out details
2 of the upcoming events at CreateNYC.org. We hope
3 you'll be able to join us. Beyond the content
4 represented in what we heard, the planning process is
5 to provide us with a transformative opportunity to
6 reimagine our work based on close reciprocal
7 relationship with the public. We will continue to
8 work closely with our constituents in the 1,000 non-
9 profit cultural organizations—organizations we find
10 annually. We also want to expand our opportunities
11 for direct feedback from the public. We've seen the
12 power in bringing people together around a common
13 cause. The NYC Artist Coalition formed after we
14 hosted a meeting for DIY Arts Community this past
15 January, a meeting with Art Dealers Association of
16 America, the Department of Small Business Services
17 and commercial art galleries has opened up new
18 avenues for collaboration between the city and this
19 vital component of our city's art scene, and the
20 Disability Arts NYC taskforce called DINT formed
21 around the plan. It has had a huge influence both on
22 the plan itself and our thinking related disability
23 arts within the agency. Thank you for your ongoing
24
25

1 support for art and culture in New York City. I'm
2 happy to answer questions at this time.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
5 so much, Commissioner for your testimony. We
6 appreciate it. I do know this--this is always an
7 interesting hearing because we know you from your
8 prior hat and, you know, the many, many years you've
9 spent sitting on those white chairs on that side
10 where everyone else. So, while, you know, we--I think
11 it's incredibly powerful that you're there as
12 Commissioner with the wealth of experience of
13 actually having represented such an incredible
14 institution like the Queens Museum. You can also
15 better than anyone understand, and I see one clap for
16 the Queens Museum like way back there.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs] Our
18 member Dave is there.

19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
20 David Strauss but the reality is that you also
21 understand more than anyone that challenge of pulling
22 down money. So this is a budget hearing and one of
23 the biggest issues that we have is for a lot of our
24 non-profits and our cultural institutions being able
25 to go through the process and that a year later

1 sometimes money hasn't been certified or signed off
2 on. It is incredibly complicated for each of the
3 City Council's initiatives for what percentage of the
4 designations has initial payments been processed for.
5

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I will have
7 to get you that answer, but I actually understand
8 the—I'd like to address the question.

9 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I don't have
11 the statistic [coughs] on what happened this year
12 with the Council initiative, some of the Council
13 Initiatives. So it—it took us a long time to get the
14 payments made. We've been meeting actively with
15 Chair Van Bramer with City Council Finance. I just
16 saw Jimmy just now, we just talked about this. We're
17 not going to let that happen again. A lot of these
18 payments were made later and some of the initiatives
19 we pressed go as usual in—in the fall. Some of the
20 initiatives got delayed until the winter. There's a
21 complicated set of reasons. We actually had a
22 hearing specifically on that to address it. I am—I
23 think it's not valuable to—to point fingers or
24 anything at this point. We just have to make sure
25

1 that it doesn't happen again. I am personally
2 committed to that.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So what
5 are the steps? So--

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
7 So-

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: How do
9 we--how do we not get to what we were, you know, last
10 year?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah. So, I
12 mean I think that the--first of all, you know, the
13 quest of getting all the designations made in a
14 timely manner it doesn't get---

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
16 [interposing] Form the Council?

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yes.
18 So, just being on top of that, being--communicating I
19 think that once honestly speaking and I'll just speak
20 honestly. We're amongst friends since the public is
21 here. I feel like Jimmy and I have--Majority Leader
22 Van Bramer and I had a meeting in about December. At
23 that point, I felt things were too far--it was way too
24 far into the fall to have had that meeting. That was
25 the point at which we began to really work together

1
2 closely between the Council, Council Finance, the
3 Chair of the Cultural Committee, my staff to get this
4 ball rolling. Once the ball got rolling things got
5 designed well within--

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

7 [interposing] But how different was that from other
8 years. That's the--because--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It portends,
10 yeah. (sic)

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: These
12 initiatives we enhanced initiatives. We didn't
13 create new initiatives.

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: But the--the
15 size of the initiatives, the number of number of
16 designation that had to be made there were many
17 Council Members who made their designations on time.
18 I don't want to paint--But there were--there was--it was
19 a much bigger and by the way, congratulations. It is
20 great. I am so happy those initiatives that existed
21 got bigger. So that--this a good thing. What it did
22 was it meant that many Council Members had a lot of
23 new designations to make. Some we had just, you
24 know, it too a long time and then there was a, quite
25 honestly a very clear policy we always had, which is

1 you going to have to wait for the all the
2 designations within a particular initiative to press
3 go with that initiative. That had been our policy
4 for a long time. That was a--the dispute that we've
5 had quite publicly saying that it doesn't really have
6 to be up to the 100% and 98%. So I think that being
7 on top of it being aware of exactly where the Council
8 Initiative where the holes are, getting the
9 designations made, pressing go as quickly as
10 possible. We will do it. We are aiming for the
11 middle of September.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well, I think
15 that that's our goal. So, [coughs] I've--I'll say
16 public again, I'm personally committed to making that
17 happen.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.
19 The budget responses the Chair and both our--both the
20 chair and I, spoke about it in our opening
21 statements, the \$10 million it was an amazing-- No, I
22 don't want to say amazing. It was a good step
23 forward--

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --and
3 actually we were, you know, our--our thoughts in
4 January or the plan was they will baseline the ten so
5 that we can ask for more, but we're kind of back at
6 the beginning. Why wasn't it baselined? Did you ask
7 for it to be baselined? And, you know, our belief is
8 that we should be supporting the cultural
9 institutions at a greater number, but when we kind of
10 start back at asking for just baselining the ten. It
11 just puts us kind of in a different position
12 especially we've already committed a significant
13 amount of money from the Council's side [coughing]
14 for--to support the agency through the cultural
15 initiatives.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean
17 we're right now sort of where were last year. So that
18 money got added at adoption. It got added, you know,
19 by the Mayor obviously with the cheerleading of the
20 City Council as well. So, you know, that's--we're
21 still in this budget process. The budget process is
22 I know planning to be wrapped up at a relatively
23 early date this year. I know that these discussions
24 are ongoing. I certainly have these discussions
25 everyday with my colleagues in city government and I

1 know that that's happening. But that--that money, you
2 know, that wasn't baselined. We started at the same
3 point last year that we started this year, and I will
4 also that, you know, one of the great things about
5 this last several years is that we do--we haven't had
6 the budget dance around getting back to zero. So
7 there could be a discussion about additional money.
8 So, the budget dance that happened especially towards
9 the last year's de Blasio (sic) Administration where
10 this kind of crushing--this is when I was sitting on
11 the other side of the, you know, going to try to get
12 back zero with help from the City Council, which
13 always came into help. So, look, it is an ongoing
14 discussion. It's ongoing negotiation. We're hoping
15 for a great outcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And--and I
18 just want to say that while I would agree that we
19 obviously are not doing budget dance that's now
20 bringing us back to zero, there is something to be
21 said that we're asking for more than ever from our
22 cultural institutions. We have--we're expecting to
23 partner with us at IDNYC. The visiting numbers are
24 higher. They've engaged with us on many of our
25 immigrant advocacy and a lot of the panic and--and the

2 anxiety that we see in our communities are often the
3 place that people go for some type of reprieve is our
4 cultural institutions. So, the cost of living is
5 higher, the cost of running a non-profit is higher.
6 So, when we don't baseline this \$10 million it's—I
7 think it is a very bad sign from the administration,
8 and to leave it to adoption puts us in a very---you-
9 you take away our advocacy to actually expand the
10 ten. So, we have to ask for the ten when we should
11 be asking for a lot more because the ten wasn't the
12 original number. It wasn't the number that would
13 have helped these cultural institutions expand. It
14 was very much appreciated and no one is saying that
15 it's not appreciated but like we have to be frank.
16 It wasn't the number that would get them to be where
17 they needed to be, and I just feel like if we do the
18 same thing that we did last year, we're going to end
19 up with the same thing.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I—I agree
21 with you that—that the—it's interesting because this
22 was the first increase in many, many years. I don't
23 know when the last increase, but—but in a decade. I
24 mean I'm—I'm—in my time at the Queens Museum, I
25 didn't see an increase to our funding. So, it's--

1

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

2

[interposing] It's—it's just an economic time.

3

4

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yeah, I
mean it sort of went up and down. This is even
before 2008 actually--

5

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

6

[interposing] Right.

7

8

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: 2008 is
understandable. It went down quite a bit. Everybody
understood that. So, it was also kind of a surprise
to me that—that it wasn't—it was the least celebrated
\$10 million increase that had occurred. But I also
hear what you're saying about the IDNYC, and I want
to say that—that we have some encouraging-- So, one
of the big questions of IDNYC was how many members
would organizations get in the long run? So, you
have one year of free membership and then you have,
you know, you're asked to renew. And so, we've had
some more encouraging numbers recently about some of
the renewal rates, which does mean that—that it can
some permanence to the connection to different
communities. The IDNYC was a way to increase
audiences, to increase openness. It was a great
thing for the ID card in general to have the cultural

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2 benefit. It's amazing that it reached a million
3 people with the card and 500,000 memberships. So, I
4 absolutely hear you, and with—I've heard from
5 cultural organizations that there is a benefit also—
6 also with cultural organizations potentially at the
7 end of the day if they retain enough members to make
8 it worth while.

9 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I think—I
10 agree. There is a benefit if they get at least \$10
11 million baselined then they can see the benefit. I
12 want to talk about the capital commitment rate. In
13 Fiscal 2016 the Department of Cultural Affairs
14 committed \$109.6 million or 17% of the Annual Capital
15 Plan of \$643.8 million. What has the agency done to
16 improve its capital commitment rate, and what
17 challenges does this face in committing to projects?

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean,
19 the—one of—there are a couple of different answers to
20 that question, and I'm, you know, the way that
21 cultural projects are funded in multi-year cycles
22 this is sort of a normal thing, we've been working
23 also with our partners at DDC to expedite projects,
24 to get projects moving more quickly. I personally as
25 you well know in your district worked on one of those

2 projects that took a long time to complete, but it
3 was also an amazing project that never could have
4 happened that we at the Queens Museum didn't have a
5 capital unit. So, working there are big advantages
6 to the way that the partnership works with DDC, that
7 I think are little bit under-acknowledged. But this
8 is something, you know, it is vexing that--that these
9 don't get committed, that the projects take so long,
10 and this is something we're looking at pre-scoping
11 with working with cultural institutions beforehand to
12 make sure that there's capital readiness that when we
13 press go on a project that the organization is ready
14 to go and that's fully funded. There's stuff going
15 on between us and OMB and DDC to try to expedite
16 that.

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And, of
18 course. I thin that there is a role for DDC, and I'd
19 like to remind everyone, you know, DDC was created by
20 this committee--

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
22 Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --because
24 it was to expedite projects, but the reality is that
25 everyday the DDC takes longer or that the projects

2 take longer, it only gets more expensive, and there's
3 nothing more frustrating than when a cultural
4 institution comes to you asking you to support a
5 project and you support, and then they got to come
6 back to you the following year and say hey we need \$2
7 million more for that same project, and then the
8 following year, hey, by the way, we're almost there.
9 We just need \$4 million more for the same project.
10 It just gets a little frustrating, and I think that
11 we're going to come up to a challenge where we will
12 serve our time in office, and never see a project
13 completed, and that is not I think the most efficient
14 way to use taxpayer dollars. And it's not that it's
15 getting more costly because you've added a new wing
16 or you're doing something else to the plan. It just
17 is because it's getting more expensive because we're
18 taking longer to build it, and I do believe that, you
19 know, we must and-and-and I got to say the-the Mayor
20 has agreed that we have to kind of an overhaul look
21 of this entire process. My question is within your
22 project is it scoping? Is it procurement? Is it the
23 actual construction like where-where are the-the
24 bottlenecks or is it every step with it.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It's
everything yeah. No, everything you mentioned is the
problem.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
[laughter] We have to throw it all out there.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It is. No,
but and I just—I'd like to just say that there are
great projects that happen on time, on budget, and
for example the Wavertree is just a fantastic
project. It was a very complicated project. It was
a ship that had, you know, \$12 million of repairs
that had to be. It was done in Staten Island. It
was done on time. It was great. I does happen.
There problems and one of the things I would say that
is—makes it particularly difficult for us to—to get
these things done on time and on budget is that every
single project is completely unique as we spoke.
It's the—you're starting--every cultural organization
is completely different. You have visionaries, you
know, you know, but I'm not saying I'm a visionary,
but we did at the Queens Museum look at this, and say
we need to do this, this and this. Things did, you
know, get added. So, it was some scope change even
within that project to get to the finish line with a

2 great institution that our community deserved. So,
3 it's not like even building a school. Schools are
4 same yes, costumes are a certain size, fully
5 stationed. These are very, very unique projects. So
6 each has their own. So, I do think that there's some
7 unique challenges in cultural institutions. I
8 absolutely think we need to figure out how to improve
9 on all aspects of the everyone in terms of speed.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay, and
11 yes, I get you. When we're doing a ground-up
12 project, it's understandable, but when we're trying
13 to fix the HVAC at a cultural institution or the roof
14 at a cultural institution, it shouldn't take eight
15 years. It just shouldn't. So, those are the
16 questions that I'm looking to answer. Obviously, I
17 understand that there are complex plans that need to
18 be thought about, but we kind of keep hearing the
19 same project that we've been really excited about,
20 and just add two more million, two more million, four
21 more million--

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --I just
24 feel like it's going to wane. Eventually it's going
25 to get kind of old here, and--and we have to be better

2 at it. We will now hear from Chair Van Bramer about-

3 -

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
5 I'd like--could I just say one more thing?

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, even and--
8 and look, I-I hear you. I hear you and I hear from
9 the groups, but even on that--that HVAC or that roof.
10 I was working at PS1 Contemporary Art Center back in
11 the '80s. We got a new- This is an historic
12 building. It was a, you know--

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I know
14 what you're going to say. It's an historic building
15 with. It was a special roof.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: There you go.

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I got it.
18 We can do better.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: We've
21 been joined by Council Member Cumbo followed by
22 Council Rodriguez after we hear from Chair Van
23 Bramer.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
25 much, Madam Chair, and than you Tom. So, Tom, I

2 wanted to ask you if you believe that the threat from
3 Washington is real, and that we could see a decrease
4 I federal support for the arts and culture to New
5 York City institutions and organizations.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Absolutely I
7 think the threat is real. People that I've talked to
8 who know what's going on in Washington, and I think
9 it's, by the way, up for grabs, don't think that
10 these agencies are going to disappear that the
11 agencies will be intact, but that there will be cuts.
12 Those cuts are very substantial. The Corporation for
13 Public Broadcasting, IMLS, NEA, NEH all that put--\$50
14 million in New York City. It's a lot of money.
15 About \$28 or \$29 million of it is directly to
16 cultural institutions. When I've talked to the
17 science based institutions, they're--there was one
18 institution I was talking to recently that gets money
19 from six federal agencies that slated for complete
20 elimination right now. So, it's not just that \$50
21 million, it's the, you know, as you said NSF and
22 other sources. So, yes, the threat is real.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, we could be
24 looking at tens of millions of dollars in funding
25 cuts to our New York City cultural organizations just

1 from the federal government alone. Then, are you
2 also seeing a decrease in—in private supports and
3 foundational support or any corporate support for our
4 cultural organizations large and small as well?
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6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, first of
7 all with the federal cuts I think the thing is we
8 need to fight. It's not over. That's not definitely
9 going to happen, and I think you know, the rally
10 obviously that you had, and the activism that people
11 are involved in has to fight that. We can't think of
12 that as inevitable. That's true for housing. That's
13 true for everything else. Okay. The—what we've
14 seen, and we've done some focus groups around the
15 Cultural Plan, is that that corporate philanthropy in
16 arts and culture is decreasing, but the other, you
17 know, sort of individuals and foundations are doing
18 better than the corporate sector. A lot of the
19 corporate sector is putting money in—more into sort
20 of marketing schemes, et cetera. There are
21 corporations—we're very actively involved in talking
22 to a group of corporate philanthropies like Deutsche
23 Bank is still getting money that, you know, as long
24 as the bank is doing okay. But, so I think that
25 that's again something we all have to be focusing on,

1 and not think of it as inevitable that corporations
2 turn their backs on arts and cultural programs--

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

4 Sure.

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --but it is
6 happening.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. So, just
8 to--jut to go back, I mean yes. No, I---I think we're
9 going to resist President Trump and his assault on
10 culture and the arts that with everything we've got,
11 and--and we're going to continue just all the folks in
12 this audience do everyday, which is to figure out how
13 to get more money for their organizations, how to--how
14 to appeal to philanthropists and philanthropic
15 organizations. But putting it altogether what we've
16 seen is, you know, a decrease in a lot of private
17 support. We have an assault on the arts in the
18 federal level, and all of this to say that we should
19 do more, and these groups need more because what
20 they've been doing is simply doing more with less.
21 And when you factor in inflation over the years and
22 all of the things that they've struggled with, we
23 need the \$40 million, right, to bring them to a place
24 where they need to be. The \$10 million was a
25

2 significant victory on top of the \$30 million that
3 the City Council alone puts in to culture and the
4 arts. But-but we need to do better, and-and this has
5 got to be the year, right? I mean this is really the
6 year where we need to see the funding baselined. The
7 Chair asked about the lack of baselining the \$10
8 million, and I-I guess I'm just interested to hear
9 from you because I don't think you-you definitively
10 answered the Chair's question on-on why-why the
11 Administration chose not to baseline that \$10
12 million, and-and I-and I want to hear from you
13 because I know your personal answer to this question,
14 but insofar as folks might feel like that's a
15 statement of values itself, right--

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
17 I mean I--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --speak to--

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --speak to that
21 on behalf of the Administration, which clearly put
22 money in last year understanding the value of-of the
23 arts, but then we-we didn't see the baselining.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right. So, I
25 mean I think again this year's Budget the OEM (sic)

2 it's the largest arts and cultural budget any city in
3 America has ever seen adjusted for inflation. That's
4 a combination of a lot of great stuff the City
5 Council did, which by nature is not baselined. It's
6 including the \$10 million that—that the
7 Administration put it. So, I mean that—that the
8 statement of values is we just had the biggest
9 cultural budget any city ever had. That's—that's
10 something to celebrate. We have a very large
11 cultural budget in the Executive Budget and we're
12 waiting for, you know, to see what happens at
13 adoption. So I—I believe that this administration
14 cares about arts and culture. You know, I talk to my
15 colleagues in government all the time. I also want
16 to say just not to belabor this with a long answer,
17 there's a lot of other stuff happening in arts and
18 culture in government that needs to be acknowledge.
19 For example, the \$23 million which was, you know,
20 pushed by—by the Council but put in as baselined in
21 the Department of Education's budget, which has led
22 to hundreds of new art teachers all over the city.
23 When we did our Cultural Plan, the number one thing
24 that came up most often was better arts education in
25 the public school system. That's what New Yorkers'

2 number one concern is. So there--that's--that's money
3 that's bigger than the cultural budget of most cities
4 as is the Council's initiatives. We--so that's a
5 baseline change that is a belief by one of the great
6 advocates for arts and culture in New York City,
7 which is the Chancellor of the Department of
8 Education. You know she cares about arts education
9 in a way that hasn't been seen in the public school
10 system in a generation. So, I just wanted to say
11 that there are other ways you can look at the value
12 statement. We have the largest arts and cultural
13 budget ever, and all this other good stuff is
14 happening in other agencies, and that's one of the
15 reasons we want to bring up our partnership with the
16 Administration for Children's Services for example.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Don't dispute
18 any of that. I would just for the record want to say
19 that the \$92 million for arts and education was in
20 this Council's budget response to the mayor. We were
21 the first ones to call for that, and--and thrilled of
22 course--

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --that--that the
25 mayor saw fit to put it in the budget, but I just

2 want to say I think the Council have been leading the
3 charge for culture and the arts for a very long time,
4 and insisting that this be a priority, and even a
5 higher priority. Because I think it's true there's a
6 greater budget for arts and culture in—in this city
7 than any other in the United States, and that's as it
8 should be because we are the greatest city in the
9 United States right. And—and we have the capacity to
10 do more. I think that that's the—the central
11 question is—is—is if the will is there, there's the
12 capacity to do even more to be even greater--

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --to allow these
15 folks to—to get that much more done. I think that's
16 really, really important, and I don't—I don't think
17 you disagree, and are there active discussions?
18 Obviously you can't speak to the—the nature of the
19 discussion, but I think it would be helpful for all
20 of us to know that this \$40 million ask, the
21 baselining of the \$10 million, the—the valuing of
22 culture and the arts is an active budgetary
23 discussion within the Administration, with you and
24 all of those whom you're working with up to and
25 including the Mayor.

2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And how is that
4 going, Tom? [laughter]

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We have active
6 discussions. I mean, you know, what can I say. I
7 think that the—again, people take it seriously. It
8 is no joke. It's an important part of the city.
9 It's an important part of the economy. It's an
10 important part of communities. So, it is actively
11 under discussion.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And—and I know
13 that the—the city is projecting a decrease in some
14 tourism as a result of—of the nonsense that's going
15 in DC, but I want to ask you all sort of to speak to
16 the financial impact of—of the arts and culture in
17 the city of New York because as I said earlier, I—I
18 long believe that, though it's impossible to quantify
19 the value of—of the arts because impacting one
20 child's life is priceless, right? That's silly to
21 even attempt it, but there is a—there is an economic
22 value, and—and our cultural sector spins off billions
23 in revenue for the city of New York that then allows
24 us to even fund other programs, which are incredibly
25 valuable. So, so maybe you can speak to that, and

2 also speak to the importance and the value that the
3 administration places on that.

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, so I
5 mean I think that, look, out o the tens of millions
6 of tourists, 60 millions tourists over half of them
7 come either their first or second reason for arts and
8 culture. This is all, you know, information gathered
9 by NYC & Company, and that is undeniable. The—the
10 institutions that draw huge numbers of tourists are
11 important. I think it was, you know, this whole idea
12 of what to do about the question of decreasing
13 tourism from abroad. One of the answers is increasing
14 tourism domestically, and this is something that NYC
15 & Company has been working on. I will say also that
16 the Administration has been very supportive of NYC &
17 Company and those, you know, tourism efforts. So,
18 the, you know, that has been studied for decades, the
19 arts and culture as drivers of economic, the numbers
20 of jobs, 250,000 jobs we think in in New York City
21 are directly or indirectly supported by the arts.
22 But then also, and I don't want to go, you know, into
23 depth, but the social impact of the arts project that
24 was commissioned this year showed that arts and
25 culture is associated with lots of other good

1
2 outcomes in low-income communities, better health,
3 education and safety in those communities. So, I
4 think that yes tourism, yes, jobs but also year
5 quality of life in—in all communities.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, just a
7 couple more questions. Number one if—if the funding
8 isn't restored then organizations in the city would
9 experience a cut, right, which in my mind is
10 unfathomable in a time when there are resources.
11 They're not fine—they're not unlimited, but that's
12 where we really are at, right. That's where these
13 organizations really are at. Some experienced a 12%
14 increase or a six percent increase--

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --but folks got
17 an increase, and if we don't do that again at a
18 minimum, they will be cut this year, and—and—and then
19 I—I go to the—the \$40 million. What do you think
20 would be benefit to the city of New York if we
21 realized that \$40 million and could you spend that?
22 Could we as a city spend that in a way that further
23 enriches and empowers people of the city of New York?

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, yes. I'm
25 confident that if that a \$40 million increase occurs

1 that there are tremendous ways that would stabilize
2 organization's budgets. It would be great for
3 tourism, et cetera. So, all those good things that
4 are happening, you would have more of it. So, yes,
5 and I think that if you asked any commissioner if
6 your agency were to, you know, add a certain amount
7 of money to, if you ask Polly over at DOT could you
8 spend the money to do more paving of more roads, she
9 would say yes. So, the other thing it's interest
10 because, of course, I've been on the other side of
11 this. We had baselined budget. We increased it by
12 \$10 million. If that money goes away is it a cut or
13 is it going back. So, this is, you know, obviously I
14 think I know what everybody on that side of the room
15 thinks, but it is a definitional issue. So, we added
16 money to the budget. It wasn't baselined.
17 Obviously, it is seen by the groups as a cut because
18 they simply define it as how much money you got last
19 year versus this year. Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, let me just
22 say it's not only the people over there who would see
23 there's a cut. [laughter]

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: The people
25 over here.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I am with them,
3 and we believe speaking for myself that if-if that
4 \$10 million wasn't restore, it is a cut, Tom.
5 Commissioner, it is a very real cut for these
6 organizations who are struggling to make it today,
7 and desperately need not just that money restored to
8 their budget but, in fact, need more. So--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I understand
10 that everybody except for perhaps a small group over
11 here who worked for me--

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
13 [interposing] [off mic] Because they were--

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --define it as
15 a cut.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So-so, look, I
18 get it, and-and so the-the definition is what you got
19 last year, this is what you get this year. It's a
20 cut.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I just-I-
22 no one has more respect for you than I think the
23 three council members who are here. I just don't
24 want to engage in-in semantics--

25 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: -right. It's
3 sort of like acrobatics, right with words when-when I
4 think we all really know, that it's a cut, and I-and
5 I say that that with-with a great deal of respect
6 and-and fondness for you, as you know--

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --but like we-we
9 need to get this funding. We-we-we should baseline
10 it, and-and we really have to go further.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I just want
13 to say that and thank the chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
15 you, Chair Van Bramer. We will-we've been joined by
16 Council Member Gibson, and we will now hear from
17 Council Member Cumbo. [background comments] She has
18 her own delegation here today.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [laughs] I just
20 want to acknowledge that there are several groups in
21 my district that I see here today. I see the
22 Brooklyn Academy of Music. Oh, wow, I see the
23 Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

24 FEMALE SPEAKER: Wow. Yay.
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: We're all one
3 family. I saw the Brooklyn Children's Museum.
4 [background comments] Oh, I love that and I see our
5 Brooklyn Music School front and center. Awesome.
6 We're all one family here in the 35th District.
7 Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you so much for being
8 here. Just wanted to open up questions in terms of
9 do we know how much or have we done a survey to find
10 out what—how many organizations that we service are
11 actually receiving federal funding? So, how many are
12 getting NEH funding, NEA funding, IMLS funding. Do
13 we know what the impact of potential cuts will be as
14 it will impact many of the organizations that we
15 service?

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, we have
17 the numbers, and we can give them to you of exactly
18 how much money is coming from each of those agencies
19 to New York City organizations. I don't have the
20 list. I mean actually, if you look at the website of
21 those, we can look down at the grantees, but we have
22 the aggregate number. We know that \$28 million
23 between IMLS, NEA and NEH are coming to New York City
24 organizations last year.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do we have an
3 understanding of what federal cuts will actually look
4 like? Is it--

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do we understand
7 that number?

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, no. I
9 mean the thing is that the--the budget proposed by the
10 Trump Administration cuts the agencies to zero. The
11 agencies don't exist any more. That in the
12 continuing resolution that was passed through
13 November, you know, so at least NEA got a small
14 increase. So this--the NEA is still alive and well.
15 It's giving out grants. I mean all those org--all
16 those agencies did. So, it's going to be part of a
17 negotiation in the fall, and again, I don't think
18 anybody knows what's going to happen. I do think
19 that one of the only places you will see on a regular
20 basis Republicans and Democrats sitting down together
21 towards a goal is on cultural boards. I think
22 there's lots of Republican support all over America
23 for culture and there are plenty of--or some Congress
24 people have already come out from the Republican side
25 to say that they don't think that these agencies

2 should be eliminated. So, I actually don't think
3 they will be. I'm an optimist, but that's what other
4 people, but-but there are good possibilities of cuts,
5 rather than elimination of the agencies. That's what
6 I think.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do we have a
8 contingency plan here in New York City for if these
9 budget cuts should be as drastic as they are propose
10 to be at this time?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [coughs] So,
12 are you saying do we have a way to baseline? I mean
13 it would be--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] The
15 New York City plan in terms of like discussions in
16 terms of how we're shoring up NYCHA understanding
17 that there are going to be significant cuts there.
18 Also, our healthcare system understanding what we
19 need to do around women's issues and planned
20 parenthood. Are there discussions as far as
21 contingency as far as how much we as a city can put
22 forward in resources to make these different entities
23 whole again in some way?

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, yeah. So,
25 no, we have not created a contingency plan around

2 the--the eventuality of cultural cuts, but that's an
3 interesting idea if you're saying this is happening
4 in other agencies. I think what we're saying, and I
5 think what has been said by the Mayor, et cetera is
6 we don't take for granted that these cuts are going
7 to happen. We have to advocate on behalf of them not
8 happening, but that's something we've been doing
9 actively. But I--I would seek the guidance of other
10 agencies, I guess with that. So, you're saying that
11 those contingency plans are in place in other
12 agencies. Yeah, yeah, interesting.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: When I was sitting
14 in the white chairs similar to you, we used to talk a
15 lot about there are 800 or so organizations and I
16 can't remember the exact number that received
17 programmatic support, and now that number seems to be
18 increased to over 1,000. So, from when we first took
19 office in this term and you as well from 2014 to 2017
20 do you know the increase in the amount of the
21 organizations? Because the CIG group does not
22 expand--

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
24 Yeah, I think it actually--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --the programmatic
3 groups it seems or appears to have expanded.

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I know. Okay,
5 so first of all, I mentioned in my testimony there
6 are panels for the entire CDF crew is back over at
7 the agency. I think that the number of applications
8 and the number of groups being funded has remained
9 pretty steady over the last three years, but I can
10 get back to you with the exact statistics. That
11 hasn't increased in greatly in numbers, and we have--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] But
13 it has increased, though?

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I don't--
15 actually, I don't think so, but I would have to get
16 you the numbers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Because the--the
18 challenge again as Council Member Van Bramer as well
19 as Chair Ferreras has brought up is the challenge
20 that we're stagnant at this \$10 million number, and
21 every other agency primarily that comes here is
22 coming here with funding that's already been placed
23 in the Executive Budget that's already been
24 baselined, and it seems this is the only agency where
25 we are questioning what is going to be the future of

1 the organizations as far as future funding moving
2 forward, understanding how to plan their budgets,
3 staffing, and all of those aspects. I'm very
4 concerned about, as everyone has brought up, the \$10
5 million mark because we're fighting to maintain \$10
6 million when the original number was \$40 million, and
7 so perhaps that was the reason for the not so
8 excited--
9

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: For sure,
11 yeah.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --victory thank
13 you that--that maybe the agency was looking for, but
14 it was appreciated, but also not anticipated that
15 that's what the increase would be.

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, I think
17 you're absolutely correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What can we do
19 ultimately to get to where we need to be? We've go
20 to do something. This is not--I want to be as
21 professional about it as possible, but we've got to
22 make sure that shore up these organizations because
23 this is--this is the lifeline, this is the bloodline
24 of New York City. This is what New York City is
25 based off. It's based off of art and culture. It's

1 based off people traveling here from all over the
2 world. It's based on the restaurants that are going
3 to benefit from it. It's based on the real estate
4 industry that says move next to the Brooklyn Academy
5 of Music. It's based on all of these different
6 things, but yet we're debating about \$10 million, and
7 it's just not right.

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I hear
10 you, and I understand what you're saying that the--
11 we're debating about the additional \$10 million that
12 was put into the budget last year. There's--or if the
13 Council, you know, initiatives happen as we expect
14 they will, there are still \$160, \$170 million in or
15 expense budget, and last year there as an addition
16 \$150 million of--of capital. So, \$300 million. It's
17 not that that--that we have pulled the plug on
18 funding. It's that there's this additional \$10
19 million that's being, you know, hoped to be restored,
20 but the \$300 million is, you know. Again, by far,
21 we're the largest city in America, but that's a very
22 high budget per capita compared to other cities, than
23 other cities. That doesn't mean that we couldn't
24 spend the money or that there's--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]
3 That's no other city like New York--

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
5 That's right.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --and there's no
7 other city with the cultural resources and
8 institutions that we have. I love the other cities,
9 they're great, but there's no place like New York
10 City.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Agreed. So, I
12 agree with that, but I'm just saying that--that it's
13 not that we're--that the Administration is proposing a
14 budget that banned arts and culture even if the \$10
15 million is not put there. I understand the value of
16 the \$10 million. I have heard it from the groups
17 extensively. I know that they are wanting, and in
18 some cases counting on that money. So I don't want
19 to diminish that at all, but I also just to say there
20 is a lot of money in the budget that a lot of the
21 core services that the sector supports are still
22 being supported by the Council, by the Administration
23 in this Administration

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] I'm
25 just going to close on that one, and just say that

1 the \$40 million that was originally what was proposed
2 is—is really what we should be talking about here.
3 We should be talking about \$40 million because what
4 we're seeing this Federal Administration, and
5 significant cuts that are coming our way, and this
6 uncertainty about what's going to happen to \$10
7 million, it's really an opportunity for us to shore
8 up these organizations and give them the confidence
9 to move forward especially in an administration where
10 a city like New York relies heavily on tourism,
11 heavily on people coming to the city. We need to
12 make sure that our organizations and our economy
13 continue to grow, and the only way we can do that is
14 through investing in our organization, shoring them
15 up, making them whole, and letting them know we
16 appreciate what you give to the city and what you do
17 for the city, and we wouldn't be New York City if we
18 didn't have that. I know my time is up, and I'll
19 turn it back over to the Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
22 you, Council Member and look we can—we've probably
23 verbalized it in every way possible. The reality is
24 that we were hopeful that we wouldn't be talking
25 about \$10 million that we would be talking about 20

1 or 30 or the actual 40 that is what was projected,
2 and what we have done is that we're essentially
3 talking about once again the \$10 million that the
4 culturals have already proven that they need, and
5 already have proven that can be used, and already
6 proven what they needed to prove. So, that is why
7 you see this urgent-sense of urgency and almost
8 dismay because this shouldn't have been a topic of
9 conversation for our budget in Fiscal 18. So, we
10 will continue to push. I know the Chair wanted to
11 make some closing remarks before we bring this
12 committee hearing to adjournment.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
15 much, Madam Chair, and again, I want to say thank you
16 to all of you for being with us today, and say to the
17 commissioner that as you go about your internal
18 advocacy, you know that you have this Council pushing
19 incredibly hard, and just as this Council last year
20 allocated almost \$30 million of our Council
21 initiative money towards culture and the arts so,
22 too, do we want the Administration to-to come in with
23 numbers that look like that, and if we were to do
24 that, and baseline it, then I think we would see a

2 celebration from the arts community that we have
3 never seen before, right?

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

5 [interposing] Because they could put on a party for
6 us.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, and—and—
8 and that would be a moment. So, I think both the
9 Chair and myself and Council Member Cumbo are all
10 speaking with one voice here, and—and saying that the
11 \$10 million was a—was a good and welcome addition,
12 and—and I would add that not only have they proven
13 that—that it's useful and that it can be used, it's
14 also been spent, right, in my many ways, already
15 spent. And so, to—to not see that funding again
16 would very much be a cut because they have—that money
17 is—is—is used, and—and used well already. So, look
18 forward to the next couple of weeks and—and a good
19 result for—for culture and the arts and obviously
20 this Council has demonstrated time and time again
21 it's fierce, fierce commitment to this community one
22 obviously that I know you share our passion for. So,
23 thank you but also I want to thank all the advocates
24 for being here, and fighting the good fight. Thank
25 you.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
you, Chair and that is a reminder we look forward to
seeing you here on May 25th, which is when the public
can come and testify right here in this room, and
it's the last day of budget hearings at about 1:00
p.m. That concludes today's hearing. Thank you
again for—to Commissioner Finkelppearl for being with
us today. I also would like to once again thank my
co-chair for today's hearings, Majority Leader Van
Bramer and Council Member King and the members of
their committee. For those of you that cannot come
to the public testimony, you can submit your
testimony on the Council's website at
council.nyc.gov/budget/testimony and the staff will
make it a part of the official record. The Finance
Committee will resume budget hearings on Monday in
this room at 10:00 a.m. in the committee with the
Committee on Public Safety to hear from the NYPD
followed by District Attorney—by our District
Attorneys. I hope everyone has a great weekend and
with that said, we will now call this hearing
adjourned. [gavel]

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL
AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 17, 2017