

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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May 19, 2017
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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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Elizabeth S. Crowley
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Stephen T. Levin
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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
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[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-

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much, Madam Chair and I just want to salute you and
your strength. I know you have been daily chairing
probably 100 hours of testimony. I just want to
thank all of you for being here today, and for
joining us this morning, and it's a lot cooler here
than when we last met, wasn't it? I also want to
encourage you as someone in the balcony knows that we
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, Linda. Good
morning to all of you. It's a pleasure to be here to
the Chairs, Chairs Ferreras-Copeland, Van Bramer and
King and the members of the City Council. Thank you
for your leadership, and we appreciate everything you
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank concludes our
testimony. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

TONY MARX: Uh-huh. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

TONY MARX: Uh-huh.

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: You want to take this?

No problem. Yes, do it. No problem.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Correct.

DENNIS WALCOTT: --together to talk about
ways to improve the both process as well as
deliverables on the money itself. So, while we can
advocate for more money, which we definitely want,
we're also advocating for regulatory change to allow
us more efficiency here in how we do it. And I think
Linda was spot on as far as pass-throughs. And I
won't identify the particular Council Member even
though he is sitting right there in the lead and
worked for the library, but I won't mention his name.
But at one point, a certain council member said, and
don't come back to us and me for any more money, and
he said that in jest, but also in seriousness because
by the time we talk about a project, the money is
allocated by all of you--and you've done a masterful
job in the Borough of Queens--then that money is too
little. And so, we have to come back to you over and
over and over again, and he said it in a correct way
because we should be getting the money, we should be
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 That's a better use and efficiency of how we build or
3 approve the infrastructure, and then, you know, it's
4 just mind boggling as far as getting an answer around
5 a particular issue when we're dealing with our
6 particular construction projects, and we don't like
7 stories, and I can go chapter and verse. I'm not
8 going to stretch it out any longer, but I mean we
9 have two projects in the Borough of Queens that
10 should be done or should be almost complete, and I
11 can add two more to those, and the answer changes day
12 after day after day. It shouldn't be that way
13 because the people who suffer are not us. The people
14 who suffer are our customers who are looking for Kew
15 Gardens Hills to be opened when they say they're
16 going to open it, and then we can do what we have to,
17 or a Hunters Point or a Corona or East Elmhurst and
18 in the Borough of Queens. We need regulatory change
19 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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Uh-huh.

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Uh-huh.

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

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

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

think with term limits, which is a reality, right.

It's—you're doing it for the person that's going to

come in right after you, and that's not how this is

supposed to be. This is not, you know, what it's—how

it's intended to be, and I have to bring up East

Elmhurst, and I know that we worked really hard and

we finally broke ground, but the reality is that

that's a project that started at \$3 million, and it

ended up being \$13 million. And it wasn't like I'm

building a new library. It's the same exact room,

the same exact project with nothing different and

nothing new, and I'm not saying this kind of to you,

I'm saying it with you. It just—it-it can't continue

at this rate. Why I need to hear this from you is

because we also need to understand that while we're

going to advocate for this capital money that we're

not going to be putting money within the same system.

Because okay we fight and we get \$150 million

[coughing] but the system hasn't change. So, how can

we ensure that now we have this new capital funding?

We haven't given you the tools necessary for you to

be able to expedite that. So, that is what, you

know, we need to also figure out that in tandem with

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

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

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

LINDA JOHNSON: Yes.

DENNIS WALCOTT: By all means.

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Of
course.

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

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

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

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

TONY MARX: It has been. Madam Chair.

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

TONY MARX: [laughs]

DENNIS WALCOTT: And SCA, SCA also.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: SCA?

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
[interposing] Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

just really is about finding a more efficient way.

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

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

TONY MARX: Go ahead. [background comments] The-I would say the most notable change 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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

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

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Interesting.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, okay.

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

CHAIRPERSON KING: So, speaking of
research libraries--

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

CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] Okay.

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

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

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

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

LINDA JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

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

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

TONY MARX: June or July.

CHAIRPERSON KING: June, oh, okay.
Alright, beautiful, beautiful and I'm going to kind
of wrap up with this. I understand the funding that
we've been asking for is kind of two offset the
crooked system that we have right now that just isn't
working properly. Madam Chair Julissa-Ferreras just
mentioned that--that the City Council kind of put

together the--the agency that's handling your capital.

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

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

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

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

forward to us improving our library systems. Thank
you.

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: NO.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: No.

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, that's the
reality.

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I--

DENNIS WALCOTT: Unfortunately.

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I know.

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: 980--

DENNIS WALCOTT: Again.

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Yeah, right,

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

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

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: --the busiest. Yeah.

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

DENNIS WALCOTT: Still on top.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah.

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

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

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

LINDA JOHNSON: Exactly.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: On closing?

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

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

LINDA JOHNSON: Definitely.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Great.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TONY MARX: Sure.

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

TONY MARX: Okay.

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

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.
13

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 Finkelpearl 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

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

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much—

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

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

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

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

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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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
So--

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yes.
So, just being on top of that, being--communicating I
think that once honestly speaking and I'll just speak
honestly. We're amongst friends since the public is
here. I feel like Jimmy and I have--Majority Leader
Van Bramer and I had a meeting in about December. At
that point, I felt things were too far--it was way too
far into the fall to have had that meeting. That was
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.

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean
we're right now sort of where were last year. So that
money got added at adoption. It got added, you know,
by the Mayor obviously with the cheerleading of the
City Council as well. So, you know, that's--we're
still in this budget process. The budget process is
I know planning to be wrapped up at a relatively
early date this year. I know that these discussions
are ongoing. I certainly have these discussions
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--

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

[interposing] Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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

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

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

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

from the federal government alone. Then, are you
also seeing a decrease in—in private supports and
foundational support or any corporate support for our
cultural organizations large and small as well?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, first of
all with the federal cuts I think the thing is we
need to fight. It's not over. That's not definitely
going to happen, and I think you know, the rally
obviously that you had, and the activism that people
are involved in has to fight that. We can't think of
that as inevitable. That's true for housing. That's
true for everything else. Okay. The—what we've
seen, and we've done some focus groups around the
Cultural Plan, is that that corporate philanthropy in
arts and culture is decreasing, but the other, you
know, sort of individuals and foundations are doing
better than the corporate sector. A lot of the
corporate sector is putting money in—more into sort
of marketing schemes, et cetera. There are
corporations—we're very actively involved in talking
to a group of corporate philanthropies like Deutsche
Bank is still getting money that, you know, as long
as the bank is doing okay. But, so I think that
that's again something we all have to be focusing on,

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

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

Sure.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --but it is
happening.

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

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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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, yes. I'm
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.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --define it as
a cut.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

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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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do we understand
that number?

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

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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

1 the--the eventuality of cultural cuts, but that's an
2 interesting idea if you're saying this is happening
3 in other agencies. I think what we're saying, and I
4 think what has been said by the Mayor, et cetera is
5 we don't take for granted that these cuts are going
6 to happen. We have to advocate on behalf of them not
7 happening, but that's something we've been doing
8 actively. But I--I would seek the guidance of other
9 agencies, I guess with that. So, you're saying that
10 those contingency plans are in place in other
11 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--
25

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: For sure, yeah.

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What can we do ultimately to get to where we need to be? We've got to do something. This is not--I want to be as professional about it as possible, but we've got to make sure that shore up these organizations because this is--this is the lifeline, this is the bloodline of New York City. This is what New York City is 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--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]

That's no other city like New York--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

That's right.

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
you, Council Member and look we can—we've probably
verbalized it in every way possible. The reality is
that we were hopeful that we wouldn't be talking
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 culturalists 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

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

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

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

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

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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 Finkelpearl 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]

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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