

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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April 18, 2018
Start: 10:08 a.m.
Recess: 12:29 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: PAUL A. VALLONE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Adrienne E. Adams
Inez D. Barron
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Peter A. Koo
Brad S. Lander
Mark Levine
Carlos Menchaca
Keith Powers
Donavan J. Richards
Carlina Rivera
Helen K. Rosenthal
Jumaane D. Williams

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

David Hopkins, Director of Aviation
NYC Economic Development Council

Alexander Brady, Vice President
Asset Management Division
NYC Economic Development Corporation

Justine Johnson, Vice President
Government & Community Relations
NYC Economic Development Corporation

George Mirtopolis, Vice President
We Love Whitestone Civic organization, Queens

Warren Schreiber, Co-Chair
New York Community Aviation Roundtable, NYCAR

Justin Connor, Field Representative for Congressman
Tom Suozzi, Third Congressional District
Member, La Guardia Roundtable & JFK Roundtable

Sam Goldstein, Deputy Director
Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council

John Dellaportas, Stop the Chop NYMJ

Jeffrey Moskin, Trustee, Riverside Park Conservancy

Mike Gannon, President, Douglas Manor Association

Joseph Schwartz

I'm Marie Chanel, West 88th Street Block Association

John Granico, Battery Park

2 [sound check] [pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Alright. Good
4 morning everyone. We are going to call to order the
5 Committee on Economic Development. [gavel] So, this
6 is an issue near and dear to—to many of us.
7 Obviously those in the room, one that's been tackled
8 in the past by my—by EDC and by the Council, but it's
9 good timing to look at what's going on again the
10 State of the City especially after our most recent
11 tragedy, but this hearing was scheduled prior to
12 that, and we wanted to take a look at safety
13 regulations throughout the city. So, I will start
14 with our statement, and then we will swear in our—our
15 members of the EDC. So, good morning everyone.
16 Today is Wednesday, April 18th. My name is Paul
17 Vallone, and I have the privilege of chairing this
18 committee. Today, right now I'm joined by Council
19 Member Peter Koo. Some of our other members--there
20 are many hearings going on today--will be popping in
21 and out. The purpose of today's hearing is to call
22 on the EDC and the city to create an updated
23 Helicopter Master Safety Plan for the tourism and
24 charter helicopter industries that operate in our
25 city. We must re-examine the safety protocols that

2 are in place, operating guidelines and operating
3 agreements with the FAA and control of operation and
4 maintenance of our existing helicopter system. The
5 most recent tragedy occurred on March 11th involving
6 the Liberty Charter Company that killed five people
7 and left us all with unresolved and unanswered
8 questions. Basic safety standards must be re-
9 examined and determined what agency is supposed to
10 enforce them. In fact, the entire helicopter
11 industry that does business in our great city must be
12 called into account for their existing operating
13 guidelines and safety protocols. We understand that
14 the NTSB is still conducting their investigation, as
15 to the exact cause of the crash. But what we must
16 sure that tragedy like this never happens again.
17 Just today, the City's Economic Development
18 Corporation, who is here, in conjunction with this
19 hearing in our office has announced new safety
20 standards prohibiting the use of doorless flights in
21 the down-from the Downtown Heliport. We applaud as
22 everyone else this great first step and look forward
23 to working with the EDC on creating and overall
24 safety plan for helicopters that fly in and out of
25 New York City. However, more needs to be done.

2 Everyday our residents must endure the constant
3 onslaught of helicopter and aviation traffic and
4 noise over their homes while their quality of life is
5 continuously eroded. Particularly in Northeast
6 Queens in my Council District there's been growing
7 and a seemingly endless attack by low altitude
8 charter helicopters flying just above residential
9 rooftops just about every three minutes at all hours
10 of the night. Frustrations with the 311 and the EDC
11 complain systems have led our residents to create
12 private websites such as Stop the Chop, which tracks
13 complaints about helicopters, and identifies where
14 the complaint occurred. It is a shame that we need
15 to rely on local residents for this information when
16 the city is more than capable of collecting it.
17 These complaints are by no means confined to my
18 district and this is most certainly not a new
19 problem. Since at least 1999, the city has made
20 sporadic attempts to address the quality of life
21 issues created by persistent helicopter noise. At
22 that time, former Mayor Giuliani commissioned a study
23 that ultimately determined that sightseeing flights
24 should be prohibited from all city-owned heliports.
25 At that time, the city's power to regulate

2 helicopters was limited due to a number of
3 outstanding agreements with operators at these
4 heliports. It took a little over a decade for these
5 agreements, which we ultimately sorted out, but since
6 2010, the only heliport that has operated sightseeing
7 tours has been the Downtown Manhattan Heliport right
8 here in Lower Manhattan. Since then, the city has
9 worked with EDC, the Federal Aviation Administration
10 and helicopter tour operators to alleviate noise
11 produced by sightseeing helicopters. This was
12 achieved via route changes, restrictions on
13 operational days and hours, reporting on deviations
14 from agreed upon routes. Many of these concessions
15 were secured from the great negotiations with my
16 colleagues in the Council right here in 2016.
17 Notably, Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal and Chin
18 whose constituents experienced an outsized impact
19 from sightseeing helicopters. I commend them for
20 their efforts in reaching those milestones. However,
21 much work needs to be done to the residents of
22 Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan who still suffer from
23 the consistent noise produced by charter flights.
24 While the FAA have approved route changes for
25 sightseeing helicopters in the city for the charter,

2 and for charter flights over Long Island, it is not
3 addressed beyond growing concerns from residents who
4 live in the areas of New York City who suffer from
5 noise produced by those same charter flights.

6 Senator Chuck Schumer, former representative Tim
7 Bishop have worked with the FAA to amend to amend the
8 so-called North Shore Helicopter Route in 2008.

9 Since then, charter flights between New York City and
10 Eastern Long Island must fly over the water at White
11 Point near Huntington in Suffolk County, roughly 20
12 miles east of La Guardia Airport. This is simply
13 unacceptable for the residents of Queens and Brooklyn
14 who still deal with the loud low flying aircraft at
15 all hours of the day and night. For these reasons,
16 we've sponsored Resolution 178 along with my fellow
17 Queens Council Member Costa Constantinides calling on
18 the FAA to amend the North Shore helicopter route to
19 extend the water requirements further west to cover
20 all of Northeast Queens. I do not believe the FAA is
21 in attendance today, but I hope they are willing to
22 come to the table in order to alleviate the concerns
23 raised by all of the residents of Northeast Queens,
24 and may I add with Northern Nassau County who deal
25 with this noise on a daily basis. The committee will

2 also hearing a Preconsidered Introduction sponsored
3 by Council Member Menchaca and myself, which would
4 require the EDC to develop and continuously update a
5 helicopter safety and sightseeing plan. This plan
6 would create clear objectives for reducing noise,
7 improving air quality and public safety in relation
8 to sightseeing helicopter tours and regular progress
9 reports for furtherance of these goals and charters.

10 We recognize that the EDC's direct authority with
11 respect to achieving these goals is restricted.

12 However, we hope the EDC will work with the community
13 advocates and consult with the FAA, the Port
14 Authority and the operators near the city in their
15 efforts to develop these goals particularly in light
16 of what happened on March 11th with the Liberty
17 helicopter crash in the East River. We hope the EDC
18 will take this opportunity to conduct a complete
19 safety review with helicopter operators on their
20 choice of safety gear when developing the sightseeing
21 helicopter plan required by this legislation. Again,
22 while the NTCP—the NTSB has not concluded its
23 investigation, all signs point to this being a
24 preventable tragedy, and we implore helicopter
25 operators across the Tri-State area to take note, and

2 reconsider the safety equipment and procedures. With
3 that, I would like to thank the committee staff,
4 Legislative Counsel Alex Paulenoff; Policy Analyst
5 Nadia Johnson; Finance Analyst Alia Ali for all their
6 hard work in putting this together. I think we've
7 also been joined by Council Members Lander, Richards,
8 Menchaca, and Chin and with that, if you could swear
9 in, and Council Member Menchaca with an opening
10 statement. He's here.

11 LEGAL COUNSEL: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yes. Thank
13 you, Chair. I just want to say a few words as we
14 start and just really thank the leadership of Chair
15 Vallone. His statement really opens the conversation
16 of our many chapters of saga in this helicopter
17 policy conversation here in the city, and I'm happy
18 that we're having this conversation. The public
19 deserves answers, information, understanding and to
20 be heard, and that's what we're here to do. I
21 understand that there might be workers in the room,
22 the helicopter industry folks. We welcome you in
23 this discussion. We are not starting this anew.
24 This is something that we've been talking about in
25 this last session with multiple piece of legislation

2 that the New York Post false—falsely claims that
3 failed. In fact, I think we went forward in some of
4 the things that we're going to be reviewing today to
5 see how much forward we must be—we actually took. The
6 last thing I want to say is that part of what I want
7 as a Council Member and a New Yorker is a real sense
8 of collaboration partnership with everyone. We as
9 the city, as the Chair said don't have—don't have too
10 much in the wake of—of what happened with the
11 helicopter crash. A lot of power, which means that
12 we need to bring more partners to the table, and that
13 requires the federal government. This requires all
14 of us to come together to collaborate, to
15 partners, and what I feel like it's been before is
16 more like a negotiation, but we can't necessarily
17 feel like negotiation is going to answer the issues
18 around noise and pollution and safety, and so that's
19 what I'm hoping this hearing will get us to, and I'm
20 really proud to be with Council Member Chin and
21 Rosenthal and now Vallone in this effort, and there
22 are others who will be joining us. So, I look
23 forward to the testimony for EDC and—and look forward
24 to the conversation ahead of us. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And thank you for
3 your legislation, Council Member Menchaca. We're
4 happy to co-sponsor that. So, with that, I'd ask the
5 members of the EDC to raise their right hand. Do you
6 swear to affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
7 and nothing but the truth in your testimony today, to
8 respond honestly to Council Members' questions?

9 DAVID HOPKINS: [off mic] I do.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you very
11 much. If you'd like to begin your testimony.

12 DAVID HOPKINS: Good morning Chairman
13 Vallone. I'm David Hopkins. I'm the Director of
14 Aviation at the New York City Economic Development
15 Council. I'm pleased to speak. Closer? I'm please--
16 I'm pleased--

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Pull
18 it closer.

19 DAVID HOPKINS: --pleased to speak to you
20 and our Council colleagues today about the helicopter
21 tourism industry. I'm joined today by Alexander
22 Brady who's our Vice President of our Asset
23 Management Division and by Justine Johnson, a Vice
24 President of our Government and Community Relations
25 Department. I want to give a brief overview today of

2 NYCEDC's oversight of the tour helicopter industry,
3 and it's management of two city-owned heliports, and
4 then touch on Intro 3470, which will require that EDC
5 produce an annual sightseeing plan for tour
6 helicopters. After my testimony we'll be glad to
7 answer any questions that you might have. It's
8 important to begin any conversation with an overview
9 of the regulatory structures of the helicopter
10 industry. The Federal Aviation Administration, the
11 FAA really has sole authority to control all U.S.
12 non-military air space and determines the rules and
13 requirements for its use. This means that the FAA has
14 sole authority to determine aircraft manufacturing
15 standards, operations of maintenance, flight paths
16 and altitudes as well as designating airports and
17 heliports and finally the regulation of aircraft
18 noise. Aircraft noise is regulated through standards
19 that are promulgated internationally through
20 organizations such as the International Civil
21 Aviation Organization, established by regulation by
22 the FAA and applied when an aircraft acquires its air
23 worthiness certification certificate. The standard
24 requires that aircraft meet or that aircraft meet
25 designated noise levels. For helicopters there were

two stages that existed. Stage 2 aircraft and stage 2, but in March of 2014 the FAA adopted the new Stage 3 standard. New helicopter models that are certificated after that date must meet this quieter Stage 3 standards. The aircraft that currently operate out of our heliports are almost exclusively Stage 2 helicopters and Stage 3-heli-helicopters are not yet in the fleet as they are going through the certification process with the FAA. EDC per agreement with the City of New York manages the lease for the city-owned JFK and La Guardia Airports, and also oversees the operations of the two heliports owned by the city, the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and the Heliport at East 34th Street. The heliport at West 30th Street is actually under the purview of the Hudson River Park Trust, the state entity. We see the three heliports in Manhattan as critical components of our transportation infrastructure. They really operate as a system. East 34th Street is really focused on corporate traffic, the Downtown Heliport is focused on tourism, and West 30th Street really on both corporate and Charter traffic. East 34th Street is open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on week days, and is closed on the weekends. The

2 Downtown facility is open for tours from 9:00 a.m. to
3 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. No tour Monday
4 through Saturday. Sorry. No tour flights are
5 allowed on Sunday. Corporate and Charter flights are
6 allowed downtown from 9:00 to 5:00. The Downtown
7 Heliport is also unique in that it's the only
8 facility that can accommodate the military
9 helicopters used for presidential visits. I have
10 recently got some updated statistics from the West
11 30th Street Heliport. So, I wanted to update my
12 testimony, but last year there were about 57,000
13 total helicopter landings at those three facilities.
14 The Downtown Heliport at Pier 6, which is the largest
15 facility accommodated about 33,000 of those
16 operations. Compared to 2015, which is the year
17 before the Helicopter Reduction Plan went into
18 effect, total helicopter traffic has been reduced by
19 about 30%. At the Downtown facility that reduction
20 is almost 50%. So, EDC oversees the facilities, but
21 the day-to-day management of those facilities is
22 handled by our concessionaries. Atlantic Aviation
23 runs the East 34th Street Heliport; Saker Aviation
24 runs the Downtown Heliport. The agreement we have
25 with Saker Aviation expires in April of 2021. The

2 agreement with Atlantic for East 34th Street actually
3 expires at the end of this Year. So, we're going to
4 be issuing a request for proposals this spring for a
5 new operator for East 34th Street. These concession
6 agreements define the terms and conditions for how
7 the facilities will be operated, hours of operation
8 are established, insurance levels set, terms of
9 payment are—are noted, and the terms of the Tour
10 Helicopter Reduction Plan have been incorporated into
11 the agreement with Saker Aviation. Also, the terms
12 of the Special Permit that the Council Approved last
13 year for East 34th Street will be incorporated into
14 the RFP for a new operator. I'd like to then provide
15 a brief overview of the modifications that have been
16 made to the tour flights, and that really takes me
17 back to 2010. In 2010, West 30th street eliminated
18 tourist flights, and since that time all of the tour
19 flights in the city have operated out of the Downtown
20 Heliport. The increase in volume caused by that
21 transfer of flights to Downtown led EDC to convene
22 the operators, the FAA, and local elected officials
23 in revising the tour routes. We eliminated tours of
24 areas such as Central Park and established just two
25 mandated tour routes and I'll give a brief

2 description. Both the tour routes leave the Downtown
3 Heliport. Departing they go on the Buttermilk
4 Channel between Red Hook and Governor's Island. They
5 circle the Statue of Liberty, and then go up the
6 Hudson River. The shorter route, which is called
7 Tour Alpha, turns back about 79th Street near the
8 boat basin, and a longer tour known as Tour Bravo
9 continued across Manhattan at 155th Street and
10 provided a view of Yankee Stadium. Both these tour
11 routes were generally above water, and the altitudes
12 range from 900 to 1,500 feet except when they're
13 landing or taking off. In 2016, as noted by the
14 Chair, Mayor de Blasio and the Council announced that
15 we were going to reduce the number of tour flights by
16 50%. We also made some modifications to the routing
17 including elimination of any portion of the tour
18 flights over land, including Governor's Island,
19 Staten Island and a route over Yankee Stadium, and
20 perhaps most importantly, we prohibited Sunday
21 operations. Together, these combined efforts
22 eliminated almost 30,000 annual tour flights. EDC
23 also tracks complaints about the helicopter activity
24 through our 311 system. Most of the complaints the
25 city receives are actually not related to tour

2 flights. Instead, they tend to be about helicopters
3 that are hovering or flying over other areas of the
4 city. In 2014, 1,299 complaints were made about
5 helicopters through 311. 162 of those related to tour
6 operations. Contrast that to 2107, 988 helicopter
7 complaints were made, and 76 of those related to
8 tours. So, there's been a 24% reduction in overall
9 complaints, but that's contrasted against a more than
10 50% reduction in complaints related to tour
11 helicopters in the first full year after that
12 reduction plan took effect. As the Chair noted on-on
13 Sunday, March 11th tragically a photography tour
14 flight crashed into the East River. The helicopter
15 involved in that flight flew out of New Jersey
16 Heliport, and not from an EDC facility. That
17 helicopter was operating doors off with passengers
18 tightly strapped in. Initial reports indicate that
19 one of the passengers' personal items may have hit
20 the emergency engine shut-off causing the helicopter
21 to go down. The National Transportation Board
22 continues to investigate that accident and should
23 release its finding several months from now. As a
24 result of that tragedy and in partnership with the
25 Council, we proactively reached an agreement with

2 Saker Aviation to ban all doors off sightseeing tour
3 flights. We think our partnership with you as the
4 City Council is important as we work to ensure that
5 any resident or tourist that wants to take a
6 helicopter tour does so in the safest manner, and
7 with minimal impact to the residents below, and we
8 understand that the only way to make strategic
9 adjustments to that tour [siren] plan into flight
10 paths and heliport operations is through the
11 collection of accurate data. Our heliport operators
12 Saker Aviation sends a report to the Council each
13 month that summarizes the number of flights,
14 identifies whether the pilots were taking appropriate
15 routes over water, and summarizes finding from the
16 311 complaint system. In cases of non-compliance,
17 EDC has the authority to make a further reduction in
18 allowed flights and/or impose a fine of \$1,000 per
19 infraction. Recently, we've also begun to share a
20 report that details air quality at the Downtown
21 facility, and lastly, in accordance with our
22 agreement, the operators are researching available
23 technologies to further mitigate noise, emission-
24 reduce emissions and promote fuel efficiency. So, I
25 spent the majority of that testimony really focused

2 on the—the tour industry and the operations from the
3 Downtown Heliport. [coughs] Excuse me. I'd be
4 remiss if I didn't acknowledge the work and the issue
5 about Western and Norther Queens residents faced from
6 charter helicopters flying generally over Long Island
7 to the Hamptons. The routing of these flights over
8 La Guardia Airport means that helicopter fly over
9 neighborhoods such as College Point, Whitestone and
10 Bayside. These flights move over waters as they
11 travel further east along the North Shore near Nassau
12 and Suffolk Counties. As I stated previously, EDC
13 does not have the ability to regulate the path of any
14 charter flight. The FAA actually mandates—mandates
15 that the city heliports be open for public use, and
16 our concession agreements reflect this, but we've
17 advocated and will continue to advocate to the FAA
18 that they re-evaluate the allowable flight path for
19 these charter flights, and we would welcome
20 participating in any working group that might be
21 convening with the FAA and the Council on that issue.
22 On now to Preconsidered Intro T2015-3470 [coughs],
23 which would require that EDC produce an annual
24 helicopter sightseeing plan in consultation with
25 community, industry and advocates. We feel that the

2 sightseeing plan called for in the legislation is
3 mostly captured in our Concession Agreement with
4 Saker, and as you know, we recently extended that
5 agreement, but we look forward to discussing with the
6 Council in greater detail what additional information
7 could be useful and a reporting time frame that makes
8 the most sense. We look forward to working with the
9 sponsor and with the Council to ensure that this
10 legislation accomplishes the goals of reducing the
11 impacts of helicopter on communities and the
12 residents. So, I would thank you for your attention,
13 and we're happy to answer any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, David.
15 We've been joined by Council Member Adrienne Adams,
16 and we also—we also have Brad Lander and Margaret
17 Chin and Carlos Menchaca with us. Your testimony is
18 right on point. I think it—it takes us to the—I
19 guess the success story that you worked out within
20 the last year or two with Council Members Menchaca
21 and Chin and Helen Rosenthal on the tour operators.
22 It shows the path that we have to take for the
23 charter flights and I—I think for those who are
24 listening for the first time were—especially those
25 communities that are suffering with what was heard

2 and say how does that relate to us? Why don't we
3 just talk real quick—we've joined by Council Member
4 Powers. The agreement that was—we worked on today I
5 think that's a big step, and I think it's timeline
6 important, and I think based on the tragedy that
7 happened on March 11th I don't want to under-estimate
8 the impact of that. So, would you just once again
9 explain to us what was actually put in place today?

10 DAVID HOPKINS: So, the agreement that
11 was put in place today bans doors-off tour flights
12 from operating from the Downtown Heliport, and it was
13 developed in consultation with Saker Aviation, and
14 it's in accord with the FAA prohibition against such
15 flights for tours.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, that's a
17 wonderful step, and that was in conjunction with this
18 hear and our office and working that out with you.
19 What would the next step? So that was with Saker.
20 We have other operators. So, can we expand that?
21 Could we take it to the next level?

22 DAVID HOPKINS: So, the agreement with
23 Saker then flows down to the tour helicopter
24 operating companies. So that provision applies to
25 them under the terms of our concession agreement with

2 Saker. So, no tour flights are authorized to operate
3 doors off as a result of this agreement.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And now, this
5 incident was not a New York based helicopter. This
6 was a New Jersey based.

7 DAVID HOPKINS: Exactly.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Is there any hope
9 or any conversation that we can get our friends in
10 New Jersey at the table to mirror what we've done
11 here?

12 DAVID HOPKINS: Well, we're hoping
13 obviously that the FAA develops additional safety
14 protocols as a result of the accident, and does a
15 further investigation that leads to safety standards
16 for all operators operating in the region.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, with the Safety
18 Protocols that the FAA have in place, and the Safety
19 Protocols are agreeable. Council Members are asking
20 to be looked at. Is the EDC involved in any way with
21 the FAA and—and creating some of the basic standards
22 of the helicopter aviation industry?

23 DAVID HOPKINS: So, there—Council Member,
24 I'd say there's sort of two parts to that answer.
25 The first is that the FAA has certain mandates that

2 come as a result of regulating the tour helicopter
3 industry. Tour helicopters are actually regulated
4 under what's known as Part 135 Certificate, and all
5 the companies that operate out of the Downtown
6 Heliport have to conform to the safety regulations
7 associated with that operating certificate, and that
8 includes things such as ensuring that the helicopters
9 come with pontoons so that they can land in the water
10 in case of an emergency. It ensures that the
11 helicopter passengers have to carry with them life
12 preservers in the even of a water landing. It
13 includes mandatory pilot safety review of the
14 aircraft. What--what in addition to those safety
15 requirements there are--

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Is
17 this just tours or it's all helicopters?

18 DAVID HOPKINS: That relates to the tours
19 because those--those operators those are the
20 requirements of that Part 135 requirement. For
21 example, the--the--the life preserver requirement I do
22 not believe applies to the charter operations, but
23 generally most of the charter operators have those
24 available, and also have the pontoons on the--on their
25 aircraft.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And so, with those
3 guidelines in place, and with the operators that use
4 our heliports, does the existing operating companies
5 ever file with the EDC that they are in compliance
6 with these standard regulations?

7 DAVID HOPKINS: So, they have to certify
8 to the FAA that they're in compliance with those
9 standards, and the FAA has the ability if they are
10 found out of compliance to either—to either revoke
11 their operating certificate or suspend their
12 operating certificate. Obviously, the tour operators
13 have a great incentive to ensure that they're in
14 compliance and I wanted—if I could follow on the
15 answer to your previous question. Saker and EDC have
16 gone beyond what the FAA requires in terms of safety
17 protocols for passengers that use tour helicopters.
18 So, there is a security system in place at the
19 Downtown Heliport so that all passengers coming into
20 the facility have to be wanded to ensure they're not
21 carrying weapons. There is also a requirement with
22 the tour operators that passengers can only carry
23 small personal items. So, you can only carry a
24 camera or a small purse. All other items such as
25 backpacks or larger items have to be checked in

2 lockers at the facility, and Saker Aviation also
3 requires that all passengers to and from the—the
4 tarmac, the landing pad have to be escorted at all
5 times by Saker employees. There's also a safety
6 video that all the tour helicopter companies have in
7 place that is required to be viewed by all passengers
8 on the tour flight. So, we think that the
9 combination of the FAA mandated safety requirements
10 and the tour helicopter company requirements are a
11 good match of safety regulations.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, those safety
13 regulations are in place with Saker. Is that bound
14 just to Saker or is it going to be bound for any and
15 all future contractors and operators?

16 DAVID HOPKINS: Again, those regulations
17 that Saker imposes flow through their permit
18 agreements with the tour operators to all of those
19 companies—those five companies that operate out of
20 Downtown, and those are the only companies that are
21 allowed to operate tour flights.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, we're confident
23 that we can going forward that those combined, any
24 future RFPs or operators that come out of the
25 Downtown Heliport?

2 DAVID HOPKINS: We—we'd be—yes, we want
3 to ensure that those protocols are reflected in any
4 future concession agreements that we execute.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And that's one of
6 the bills that we've been talking about is to make
7 sure that those type of regulations are not—not
8 modifiable by a—by a con—by a contract or a
9 concession agreement. Those need to be mandated and
10 set, and that's one of the bills that we'll be
11 cementing together as a team here, making sure that
12 anybody who—who's seeking to operate a helicopter are
13 bound by a set of standards by the FAA and by us and
14 I think that's where a future hearing and/or
15 conversations with the FAA and the Port Authority to
16 talk about how we get to that point will be the next
17 step. So back to the FAA Guidelines that are in
18 place. Is there any requirement that those
19 certificates be filed with the EDC specifically once
20 they're obtained by their FAA?

21 DAVID HOPKINS: I don't believe there's
22 requirement that they be filed with the EDC. We
23 could obviously reach out to the FAA and ensure that—
24 ask them that we receive copies of those
25 certificates. [door bangs]

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, that's—that's
3 the other pending bill that we have coming. Is—is
4 just to make that also a requirement. A lot of this
5 happened do quickly, the timeline didn't allow us to
6 have those bills in front of us, but these are what I
7 believe, and I think we all believe in this—this
8 committee are some common sense filling of
9 information that even though FAA and the Port
10 Authority may trump us on certain things, filing the
11 certificates that you're in compliance I think should
12 be a—a-a requirement from every operator. And what
13 about the—the flip side? What if there's an actual
14 violation issued by the FAA, do we have any record of
15 existing violations issued to the tour companies that
16 operate in New York City by the FAA for them
17 violating any FAA standards?

18 DAVID HOPKINS: Chairman, I'm not aware
19 of any, but again, we'd be more than happy to work
20 with the operators and the FAA to investigate that
21 issue.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You're not aware
23 that any were actually created, or not aware that any
24 existed in the first place.

2 DAVID HOPKINS: That any were issued
3 recently.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So this is--this is
5 the type of information that we want to work together
6 with you. I think this--this is how we're going
7 forward. As a city we're going to create some new
8 devotees that don't really require FAA permission. I
9 think this is--if you have--just like if I was a driver
10 and people know if I had a violation for something
11 from my driving record. I think the same thing is
12 going to apply with our helicopter whether it's a--a
13 tour operator or a charter operator, if they've
14 received any violation or in any bad standing for any
15 procedure, especially with the new RFP coming now.
16 Right? You said spring for the 34th Street heliport.
17 This is the type of information I think would be
18 critical before we were to hand out any RFP to
19 businesses. What is your track record? Do you have
20 a safety plan in place? Are you in compliance with
21 the FAA? Do you have any existing violations and
22 what have you done to rectify those violations.
23 Those are the type of things that I want us to work
24 on that at least we know we don't have to go to a
25 table from somebody in the Port Authority or the

2 Northeast Coast of the port or the FAA to say, Hey,
3 do we need your permission on something on this? I
4 think those are where Council Members Menchaca and
5 Chin and Rosenthal started the conversation with the
6 tour operators, and now with the direction that we're
7 taking, we're going to bringing in charter flights
8 because they kind of had a free pass up until today,
9 and now we're going to have them also at the table.
10 I think--

11 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] So-so,
12 Council Member we certainly agree that--that safety is
13 paramount with the operations of our facilities, and
14 we'd be more than willing to work with you, and the
15 FAA to explore areas in which we can ensure that
16 those certifications are up to date.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. I think
18 these are great steps. That's what this hearing is
19 all about is to bring forward this conversation, and
20 have us--have us get-- Now, I always start off by
21 looking at the testimony. So, we've been--your
22 testimony mentioned the wonderful concessions that
23 Council Members Menchaca Chink and Rosenthal worked
24 out on advising the tour routes out of Downtown. So,
25 what were some of the considerations that were used

2 when the two tour routes were finally decided that
3 are being used and Point Benton now? (sic)

4 DAVID HOPKINS: So, I think the—the key
5 consideration especially with respect to the
6 modifications that were made two years ago is we had
7 certain elements of the tour that—that ran over land.
8 In particular the longer tour included a segment that
9 went across 155th Street and provided an overview of
10 Yankee Stadium. The—the—I think the first thing we
11 said, let's make the tour routes be completely over
12 water and, therefore, the impact to the communities
13 is reduced particularly those where the over flights
14 were taking place. So, the first two were, as I
15 mentioned, goes out the Hudson and turns back at the
16 boat basin. The second tour as opposed to now, as
17 opposed to previously going to Yankee Stadium, now
18 continues up the Hudson to—just biting the whole—and
19 on the Henry Hudson Bridge before turning around. So,
20 the other thing is that we—the FAA had worked to
21 ensure that that particular operating corridor was
22 available to tour helicopter, and so it's clearly
23 delineated on the FAA's Helicopter Route Map, and
24 pilots are aware that helicopter tour traffic is
25 operating in that vicinity, and there are protocols

2 put in place between the tour operators and the FAA
3 that lay out the operating standards and
4 requirements. For example, at a certain point all
5 along the longer tour, helicopters are asked to
6 request a higher elevation, but you're entering an
7 area in which the La Guardia Airport Control Tower is
8 controlling the air space. So, the tour helicopter
9 operators reach out to the La Guardia Tower and ask
10 for permission to climb to that—that higher level.
11 Generally, they're granted it, but sometimes they're
12 not. So—so when I said that the—the tours tend to
13 operate 900 and 1,300 feet, that's the standard, but
14 we ask them to go to 1,500 if La Guardia gives them
15 permission.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, I—I thank for
17 that. David, you just said that in working with the
18 community groups and the Council Members were able to
19 reduce or mitigate flying over land, that way to
20 reduce the air traffic impact of the noise on our
21 residents in the city that it was the least impactful
22 route that we could do, that we reduced time and
23 additional regulations out of the heliports out of
24 34th Street. Every one of those arguments is exactly
25 what every one of the advocates and the groups that

2 are sitting behind us are saying what we need to do
3 for charter flights. So, since we've done it, we
4 need to now do it across the board for all the rest
5 of the flights, and I think that's the importance of
6 today's hearing. With the advances that we made for
7 the tour agency are now going to be what we want
8 implemented on the charter industry, and we're—we are
9 not really going to rest until that happens. So,
10 exactly the path that you just took, and that's why I
11 wanted you to over it is exactly the path that we
12 need to take with the FAA and the Port Authority and
13 La Guardia Tower and the residents of College Point,
14 Whitestone base like Queens and Brooklyn and place
15 else that they're being affected by. Someone who
16 decides to jump on a charter flight for Manhattan to
17 go make it to their homes in the Hamptons. In the
18 meantime, it's killing every one of us. That's what
19 we want to work on. So, can we have I guess some
20 type of agreement or conversation in the future as to
21 bringing in the charter flights to the same type of
22 voluntary, but now regulations that exist for tour
23 flights?

24 DAVID HOPKINS: So, again we—we certainly
25 understand the impact that those—those tour—those

2 charter flights are having the communities in
3 Northern and Western Queens, and we'd be more than
4 willing to sit down with—with your office, with the
5 other Council Members and with the FAA to talk
6 through options for reducing the impact of those
7 flights and routing issues associated with them. I—
8 I'd be remiss going in and saying that ultimately
9 that—that we're not the decision maker in that arena.
10 It really will be up to the FAA to ensure that any
11 operating modifications to—to routing accords with
12 overall aviation safety, but—but I think we need to—
13 we are more than happy to sit down and have that
14 discussion.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Is there an
16 opportunity now with the fact being that there's a
17 new RFP being—about to be issued that we can start to
18 include some of this conversation into the future RFP
19 out of 34th Street?

20 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Justine from EDC. I
21 just wanted to add onto David's point. I hear you
22 definitely in terms of it being a collaborative
23 effort here, and, you know, I think we also, we share
24 the same view in terms of making sure that, you know,
25 we can have a system that works for everyone here,

2 and so, we just wanted to-just re-reinstate our
3 commitment to working with the Council with the
4 community with the FAA and a variety of our other
5 partners to make sure that we are truly thinking
6 through a plan very similar to how you identified
7 with the tour operators that we can get something
8 very similar with charters as well.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, and I see
10 that Council Member Rosenthal has walked in and-and
11 part of your leadership and guidance got us to the
12 agreements with Council Members Menchaca and Chin.
13 So, now we're trying to emulate that and-and extend
14 that, and so I think since those agreements were put
15 in place. David, if we could, I think I'm going to
16 let--the Council Members all have very specific
17 questions as to -as to some of the past legislation,
18 and know-and we're going to come back to 311
19 complaints and we're going to come back to talking
20 about the future of these past. The RFP, though, we
21 have an opportunity here to engage in this [sneezing]
22 in this-God bless you-into our question of creating
23 the new guidelines obviously with FAA, and with the
24 Port Authority, but we as the owner operator of the
25 city, about to issue and RFP, I think the agreement

2 that you just sanctioned into Saker, the
3 conversations that we're having, and a lot of this
4 can be voluntarily gained. If somebody wants to do
5 business with us, and these are the things we're
6 asking for, it should be part of the RFP. I just
7 wanted to get your thoughts on the ability to maybe
8 amend or re-look at the RFP before it gets issued to
9 include some of these conversations about safety
10 flight paths—paths and having a future look at what
11 was just gained our tour operators and now putting
12 into them into our charter flights.

13 ALEX BRADY: So, Alex Brady, EDC. We
14 would be happy to continue the conversation with the
15 Council about appropriate measures to incorporate
16 into the RFP to make sure that we're addressing
17 concerns as we move forward.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. That's—
19 that's wonder news. Now, for questions Council
20 Member Lander. I believe you were the first to ask
21 some. So, we'd like to turn it over to you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very
23 much, Chair Vallone and thanks to EDC for being here
24 for the hearing and thanks, of course to Council
25 Members Menchaca and Chin and Rosenthal for their

2 leadership. I—I really—I mean I appreciate the
3 collaborative tone in the sense of progress, but I
4 guess I want it into question. I—I don't think there
5 haring we're having is the right place, and I
6 certainly don't believe that extending what we've
7 done around tourist helicopters is exactly the right
8 path. And I guess I'll start [applause] well, we—we
9 do—we—we can do our fingers here because we take
10 noise pollution seriously at the New York City
11 Council, and I take it seriously. So, let me—let me
12 ask you to—I'll start with this. I asked at the
13 hearing that we had last term whether EDC had some
14 sort of misery index because there's no doubt
15 whatever else these tourist helicopters do, that when
16 they take off and land and, of course, when they fly
17 over neighborhoods, too, but certainly when they take
18 off and land, they really cause misery for people and
19 that's hard to factor into like how much—what's the
20 economic value, what are the emissions? What are the
21 noise levels? So, I asked the question and, you
22 know, beyond just 311 complaints, which become a not
23 very useful method of reporting if it happens every
24 single day. Again, let do this, and I was told at
25 the time EDC would take it seriously, and would go

2 out on the ground and do some research and talk to
3 people and develop some measures for figuring out
4 whether, in fact, misery was being reduced by the
5 path we took. I haven't seen that. So, do you do
6 something beyond track 311 complaints just to know
7 how miserable people are made by their proximity to
8 tourist helicopters taking off and landing? Which
9 should be one factor others, and considering whether
10 this tourist industry, tourist helicopter industry is
11 worth it all?

12 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, I
13 think the actions we took two years ago were
14 motivated by reducing the impact that tour
15 helicopters have on the residents of New York City.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, that's what
17 I'm asking. Are we—did we develop a measure to know
18 whether that's true beyond 311 complaints?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: Well, I—I think the 311
20 complaints are emblematic of that reduction in that
21 we have seen significantly in the—those reduction
22 flights has been led by a corresponding decrease in
23 311 complaints, and so we think that moving the—
24 moving the helicopter routes over water has

2 significantly reduced the impact of the tour
3 helicopters on New York City residents.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But you—that
5 sounds like no you did not develop an index for
6 check-for-for evaluating. My belief is that the
7 people who live near the heliport on the Brooklyn
8 side or the Manhattan side have essentially given up.
9 They know what the plan was. The helicopters
10 continue to take off and land. Calling 311 to
11 complain about something that's part of our policy
12 and endemic. [applause] No, please, folks, come on,
13 come on, come on.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Keep it down. Talk.
15 (sic) No volume.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please don't make
18 these. Do this. (sic)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm toing to move
20 on and—and just take that as a now that we don't—we
21 did not, in fact, try to put something in place, and
22 it's hard to measure. What I learned at that hearing
23 is different people can block out. Different people
24 hear it more or less, but that we have not taken
25 seriously just how much misery it causes and really

2 weave that into whether this industry is worth it at
3 all. Let me ask a couple other questions. So, could
4 you just tell me First Stage 1, 2 and 3 helicopters
5 what the decibel levels of take off and landing are,
6 and what the emissions are. Like are we moving to
7 electric-electric powered helicopters, and if not,
8 what are they burning and how much per hour does each
9 of the Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 helicopters
10 consume.

11 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, I'm--
12 I'm not an expert. So, I'm not going to be able to
13 answer all those questions in terms of emissions,
14 and--and--and things like that. What--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
16 Who's the expert?

17 DAVID HOPKINS: --what I can tell you is
18 that the Stage 3 helicopters are quieter than the
19 Stage 1 and 2 helicopters, and the Stage 3
20 helicopters have a better emissions profile than the
21 Stage 1 and 2 helicopters. Those--those standards
22 that the FAA established should reduce the decibel
23 level of the largest helicopters by three decibels,
24 which is--which is a significant reduction. They
25 should reduce the--the decibel level--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] I'm
3 sorry. Can you--can you--you--you can either answer the
4 question about what the decibel levels of the Stage 1
5 and Stage 2 and Stage 3 helicopters are like you
6 can't get credit for the reduct--the potential
7 reductions without giving me any information on
8 current reality.

9 DAVID HOPKINS: So, so again, the--the
10 decibel levels of specific helicopters vary. There
11 are maximum established levels with respect to Stage
12 3 helicopters. The FAA has provided a little bit of
13 information about what that level will be, and if I
14 can find the answer here I believe it was--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
16 Don't tell me about the Stage 3 helicopters if you
17 can't tell me about the Stage 1 and Stage 2 ones,
18 which are the ones that are currently flying above my
19 constituents. You don't know.

20 DAVID HOPKINS: I came prepared to answer
21 the question about Stage 3. I'd be more than happy
22 to get back to with information about Stage 1 and
23 Stage 2.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Just so I'm
3 clear, what's flying currently are stage 1 and stage
4 2 helicopters?

5 DAVID HOPKINS: We believe that almost
6 all the helicopters serving our heliports are Stage 2
7 helicopters. In reviewing the fleet mix associated
8 with the operators at our facilities, I-I don't think
9 that any Stage 1 helicopters are operating in our
10 facilities.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright. Well,
12 then I would appreciate it if you would get back to
13 me on both the-the decibel levels and the emissions
14 levels that you believe the Stage 2 helicopters are
15 subjecting our-our city to.

16 DAVID HOPKINS: Okay. So, I-I do have
17 some information on Stage 2. It looks like that they
18 were allowed--the heaviest Stage 2 were allowed a
19 decibel level of 106 on takeoff, 109 on landing and
20 104 during flight, and these limits are lower for
21 lighter aircraft, and that the Stage 3 would reduce
22 those by about 3 decibels, as I mentioned. Sorry. I
23 didn't realize I had that information.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, that would
25 reduce it from-by 3 from 106. So, still, you know,

2 more than train. Anyway, I'm not gong to—I'll—I'll
3 let my colleagues, there's other colleagues. So,
4 what I would just say is this: The core question it
5 seems to me should have been then and should still be
6 now, Is it worth it to have the tourist helicopter
7 industry in New York City, and it doesn't sound to me
8 like we have evaluated the question in an honest way.
9 Like we're not measuring misery it causes people.
10 We're not honestly looking at the impacts of the
11 decibel levels. We're not honestly looking at
12 emissions. Like how can we continue to burn fossil
13 fuels when we want to reduce our fossil fuel
14 consumption? I'm not aware that people are promoting
15 renewable electric charging tourist helicopters
16 although you could tell me if there, and that that
17 level of misery and emissions against the—the ability
18 of a few wealthy tourists to get a view of our city,
19 it's just not worth it, and I join Congress Members
20 Nadler, and Valazquez and Maloney, and obviously
21 there are issues of what have to be done by the FAA.
22 What has to be done by the city, but while I
23 appreciate the attention to regulation and again,
24 respect the work my colleagues did to get significant
25 reductions in tourist helicopters, I just think the

2 evidence is clear it's not worth for our city. The
3 modest benefit of the economic activity gained, which
4 I'll grant exists. Like I don't want to be cavalier
5 about the jobs or the economic benefit. They exist,
6 but to me, they are far, far smaller than the misery
7 created, and the environmental harm, and the safety
8 risk, which I'm not going to spend any of my time on,
9 and it just doesn't feel to me like the
10 administration is just taking that question
11 seriously. Given the harms against the benefits, is
12 it worth it? I feel like if you do, you'll come to
13 the same conclusion that most of us have that the
14 answer is no, and that what we're mostly doing here,
15 though productive, is tinkering at the edges. So,
16 I'll leave it there. Thank you.

17 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Thank you, Council
18 Member for that information as well. I just want to
19 also be very mindful that banning tour helicopters
20 from operating out of New York City does not
21 necessarily mean that there will not be noise
22 experience and helicopters. As you may know,
23 helicopters can depart from New Jersey or any other
24 Tri-State region or municipality. So, we do not have
25 the authority to have juris-have infor-have

2 information or enforcement about where those
3 helicopters are hovering in the flight paths that
4 they take. So, I just want to make sure that we're
5 clear.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
7 Okay, but where—where are they loudest for nearby
8 residents? Am I right that they're loudest for
9 nearby residents when they take off and when they
10 land?

11 JUSTINE JOHNSON: And again, if they are
12 hovering over a specific area depending on the, again
13 the—the altitude that they are going.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Come on, I mean—

15 JUSTINE JOHNSON: [interposing] I just
16 add--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --if you've got
18 other arguments for my Brooklyn constituents and the
19 Brooklyn constituents and the Manhattan constituents
20 of other folks up here--

21 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Right.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --where the
23 misery is concentrated is where they takeoff and
24 where they land, that's where they're loudest.
25 That's, of course, where they are all the time.

2 That's where it doesn't matter if you change the
3 flight path or the route, and we do control that, and
4 we're putting this unnecessary thing right in the
5 middle of hundreds of thousands of people. So, it's--
6 sure your true--I mean yes they might go to Jersey,
7 and we might lose a few jobs and little economic
8 value, and still have some of the headaches
9 associated with it, but for the hundreds of thousands
10 of people that live close to the Downtown Heliport,
11 we would immensely increase their quality of life,
12 and for a set of people for whom they really hear it,
13 and this is why I started with that misery index. I
14 don't think we're really under it. I'll be honest.
15 Personally, I'm able to block it out a little more.
16 Like I don't notice it, but I know from talking to
17 people that there are a lot of people who's like--
18 whatever--the wiring in our brains is all different--
19 who can't block it out, and whose lives are in
20 immiserated by this unnecessary thing, and we could
21 change that, and I just don't feel like we've taken
22 seriously whether we should change that, and--and I
23 for one think we should. So, thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, thank you,
25 Council Member Lander and we have other Council

2 Members. I would like to invite you on working on
3 the negotiations that we worked on by Council Members
4 Menchaca, Rosenthal and Chin in the past.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] And
6 I really do praise their work. I hope that's clear,
7 right? I made that clear-

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] A lot
9 of work.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --that I value
11 and praise the work that they have done.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] A lot
13 of work, and reaching those agreements to extend
14 going forward is what the purpose of today's hearing
15 is, and to bring it to like the concerns. I think
16 earlier the Council Member brought up the 311 system
17 is not working. The ability for someone, a senior
18 anyone to navigate the 311 system to log in a
19 complaint to say this helicopter is making too much
20 noise, it doesn't exist. There are only three
21 breakdowns--drop down categories when link onto
22 helicopter noise. It's either flying too low, it's
23 hovering or it's passing by, and then the other
24 subcategories are whether it's NYPD, news gathering
25 or other. There's no tracking device like we have

1 with planes flying in and out of La Guardia and JFK.
2 There's no ability to make a simple, 'There is loud
3 noise and I can't live in my house because of this
4 helicopter.' You can't do it, and that's why these
5 secondary sites have been created by average citizens
6 here in the city to log it, and their numbers are
7 astronomical compared to the numbers that are here.
8 We're talking about over 12,000 have been logged
9 since 2018, and your numbers have like 3,200 since
10 2014, and without any breakdown of whether they're
11 charter, whether they're tour, whether they're even
12 over Queens or Brooklyn and Manhattan. We have asked
13 even at our pre-meeting whether EDC would be able to
14 revamp the 311 system. I just want to get your
15 thoughts on that.

17 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, we
18 feel that the 311 system is a critical component of
19 assessing the impact of helicopters on residents, and
20 we really want to ensure that that system operates
21 well for all residents in New York city, and that all
22 residents in New York City have the opportunity to
23 file complaints. Working with you office I know
24 we've made a minor correction to the—the intake
25

2 information that's established on 311 to make it
3 clear that all helicopter complaints are welcome--

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Yeah.

5 DAVID HOPKINS: --for the 311 system. So,
6 we'd be more than happy to continue to explore things
7 that can improve the quality of that 311 system and
8 the complaint process. I-I will give you a little
9 overview of what happens when a tour complaint comes
10 in. We do ask that people who complain to 311 if
11 they can give us a specific location and the time as
12 a specific time, it really assists our consultant in
13 examining and trying to find a track, a flight track
14 associated with that complaint. So, the Port
15 Authority operates a system called Web Track that--
16 that keeps track of all fixed wing and all rotor
17 aircraft, and so our consultant tries to associate
18 that complaint to a specific tour flight track to
19 ensure and verify that that--whether that tour flight
20 was operating in compliance with the rules of the
21 tour helicopter sightseeing plan. So, every tour
22 complaint is measured against that standard, but as I
23 mentioned, we'd be more than happy to--[background
24 comments]--

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: [interposing] Quiet
3 down, please.

4 DAVID HOPKINS: --to explain--to--to work
5 with in you and try and conclude--

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Yeah,
7 that's--that's clearly an areas that we can expand on
8 because it's being done now. Right, we have websites
9 that are out there. They're doing a much job--

10 JUSTINE JOHNSON: [interposing] Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --than we as the
12 City of New York are doing. So, we need to
13 incorporate that data--

14 JUSTINE JOHNSON: [interposing] Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --and use that
16 format for our system because if you're going to
17 track--

18 JUSTINE JOHNSON: [interposing] Exactly.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --and see which
20 are--the bad operators are, which are the good
21 operators, who are making these continuous low-flying
22 routes when they can make these different changes.
23 The city and a resident needs to be able to say
24 there's a helicopter, 1,000 feet off my back yard and
25 wherever it is, Manhattan, California, Whitestone,

2 Bayside, this 311 system doesn't prove that relief.

3 We just did it with the--the goat operators coming out
4 of City Field. The noise complaints coming last year
5 are now you can actually track the boats coming out
6 of City Field, and we're going to say it's that boat-

7 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --at 11:30 at night
9 that is destroying my quality of life. Guess what?
10 That boat operator has to answer to us now and say
11 how the heck did you have Mrs. Smith at 3 o'clock in
12 the morning with a tour. They shut the music off--

13 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --because we were
15 able to track it.

16 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Uh-hm.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And so they can't
18 hide any more. I mean this is--this what we're talking
19 about.

20 JUSTINE JOHNSON: And Council Member, we
21 hear you loud and clear on that particular point. I
22 also want to work with you in terms of as we think
23 about the 311 prompt system and as well as the
24 categories of filing complaints. I'm happy to work
25 with you in terms of looking at what potential

2 solutions that are available, whether that's looking
3 at other websites as you mentioned that may have
4 better tracking and-and categorizing system of
5 complaints, seeing how we can work with 311 to make
6 sure that some of those items are implemented into
7 the 311 system and whether that's over the phone,
8 social media, online as well.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Council
10 Member Koo, I know you came early. So, if you have
11 some questions, and if we could do five minutes for
12 the Council Members because we still have some
13 Council Members who want to speak.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [coughs] Thank you,
15 Chair Vallone, and thank you to EDC for coming her to
16 testify. You know, I-I live in same Downtown
17 Flushing, you know, which is really noisy. You know,
18 we have La Guardia Airport and JFK Airport only five
19 minutes from La Guardia and maybe 20 minutes from
20 JFK. So, it's already really noisy with a lot of
21 airplanes taking off and landing. So, my question is
22 like why do we need to have helicopter tours in New
23 York City? I mean we have enough noise already, and-
24 and I mean I can see we need helicopters for like
25 emergency, for the news, for medical reasons, but we

2 are not Grand Canyon here. We don't need to take a
3 helicopter to—to do a tour in Manhattan. So, I think
4 those tours should be in a van or cut down as much as
5 possible so that the residents can have a quieter
6 like we already have too much noise with the
7 ambulance, the bus, you know, the—everything else is—
8 too much. This affects our quality of life very
9 much. So, my question is like how many helicopters
10 above Queens you have—we have every day or every—
11 especially a lot of these because even I was in
12 Downtown Flushing. We have a big portion of
13 residential area. It's Northeast (sic) Queens, which
14 are—Flushing is part of it, and people from over
15 there they always call and complain about the noise
16 of the helicopters and about the airplane noise. So,
17 how many helicopter tours they have in Northeast
18 Queens?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, as
20 EDC and as the Administration we are very concerned
21 about the impact of these flights and we think that
22 we've—we're working to achieve the balance between
23 the economic development activity and the—and the—the
24 residents concerns, and that's why we're—we were
25 pleased to work with the Council in terms of reducing

2 the helicopter tour volumes by 50%. That—that
3 reduction has led to a total helicopter flight volume
4 in the city that actually is below levels that were
5 in effect ten years—in effect ten years ago. So, we
6 think—we think that action was—was good, and reduced
7 the impact. We—I don't know exactly how many flights
8 are running over Queens because we—we track the
9 number of flights that take off and land at our
10 facilities. However, there are no designated tour
11 routes over Queens because the only tour route, the
12 only tour flights that are allowed out of our
13 facilities are the two I mentioned that run up the
14 Hudson River. There may be—there are—most of the
15 flights that are probably over Queens are charter
16 flights or some corporate traffic that could be
17 headed up toward New England.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, all of those
19 flights are of the helicopter, do you classify
20 whether they're tours or medical or anything else?

21 DAVID HOPKINS: We keep a classification
22 of whether they're tours or they're no tours. That's
23 the—that's the distinction we have in terms of the—
24 the way they're logged.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, how much revenue
3 you generate from—from those tours? I mean how much
4 royalty they give to the city?

5 DAVID HOPKINS: I'll let Alex answer that
6 question.

7 ALEX BRADY: [coughs] The Downtown
8 Manhattan Heliport where the tour flights are
9 concentrated and generates, you know, it fluctuates
10 over time, but between \$2 and \$3 million a year
11 directly to the city from the Concession Agreement as
12 well as supporting the 250 jobs of the folks that
13 work there.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you.
15 [background comments] Can you say it one more time?
16 Yeah. Say it closer to the--

17 ALEX BRADY: Sorry, the answer was the--
18 the tour flights question was the concentrated the
19 Downtown Manhattan Heliport, that generates between
20 \$2 and \$3 million a year. That has gone down since
21 the flight reductions were implemented, and
22 supporting 250 jobs as well. [pause]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, that's not--
24 that's not a sufficient amount of money for the
25 people to tolerate yeah. That's not sufficient

2 enough I mean for us to tolerate all this noise. So,
3 I'm asking you if you have to charge them more or cut
4 it town tremendously more, you know.

5 ALEX BRADY: Yeah, I think I would echo
6 what David said earlier that we're trying to strike
7 the balance between economic impact and the—and the
8 residents' concerns, and again, you know, it's fair
9 to continue that conversation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, Council
12 Member Koo, it's a very critical point, and when
13 we're balancing the economic impact versus the life—
14 the quality of life we're suffering on, if we're
15 looking at numbers that are going to create new
16 homeless shelters and create new economic relief and
17 we're going to get new schools and then we're going—
18 then you start thinking about okay, what's the
19 sacrifice, but if we're talking about an impact so
20 great as this versus and economic benefit so low as
21 that, it—it makes those arguments very ordinary.
22 (sic) So, the—Mark—Council Member Levine was here,
23 but Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal and Chin
24 we're going to have the questions asked together
25 since they were the authors of the success of the

2 previous bills. So, however you want to handle the
3 questions amongst the three of you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I will go
5 first. Again, Buenos Dias. Again, thank you for
6 coming today, and I think you're seeing and hearing a
7 vanguard, a real vanguard for change. The system is
8 broken. Everything from 311 to the environmental
9 data that we're capturing that just started. I think
10 some of my colleagues are going to ask about that.
11 The system is broken, and when we think about what's
12 happening in our neighborhoods, we're hearing
13 complaints about noise, air pollution. I myself take
14 the ferry often and get off at Wall Street and such
15 the fumes from the helicopters every day that I get
16 off. In fact, we're inviting you to have a meeting
17 and discussion there so we can all be at a peak
18 moment [coughs] to witness and—and have our own
19 testimony of the impacts it has. But what I want to
20 do is really elevate this discussion beyond—beyond
21 just the siloed discussions we're having in your
22 neighborhoods from Queens to Brooklyn and Red Hook,
23 and really look at it through a new lens. And, my
24 first question is how—how are you balancing this
25 contract and other contracts of the industry for

2 economic development sake under a sense of
3 principles? What principles, what values are you
4 bringing to the table to help make the decision from
5 EDC. Can you describe that for me?

6 DAVID HOPKINS: So, I—I think I mentioned
7 balance, and I think that balance includes that
8 economic development issues associated with—with both
9 corporate traffic and—and—and charter traffic and
10 that includes the tourism--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
12 Well, I'll pause you there.

13 DAVID HOPKINS: --and tourism traffic.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Let me just
15 help to frame it. What values are driving your
16 decision about this another contracts. Let's stick
17 to this contract to make a decision. So, I'm looking
18 for values.

19 DAVID HOPKINS: So, the first value is
20 operating an aviation system that is accessible to
21 those who need to use it. That includes corporate
22 and charter traffic. The second is ensuring that we
23 also meet the needs of the tourism industry in New
24 York City, and I think the concern that we have is
25 that-that-that--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
3 I'm not looking for concerns yet. I want to—I want
4 to unpackage the values. That's where—I want to stay
5 here.

6 DAVID HOPKINS: I hear you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I'm going to
8 spend some time here.

9 DAVID HOPKINS: Alright. [laughs]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So—because I—
11 we—we need to make some decisions, and if the values
12 are not aligned, we're going to have some problems--

13 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] Right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --and we have
15 some solutions that we're discussing today through
16 legislation. So, right now the values that I heard
17 are: Tourism, industry is important, and--

18 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] And also--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing] -
20 and the need for jobs associated with it. Great.
21 What else?

22 DAVID HOPKINS: [pause] Yeah, and—and
23 so, other values include operating a first class
24 aviation facility, and having the resources available
25 to ensure that those facilities are first class.

2 Ensuring that those facilities are operated in a safe
3 manner sot that we protect the safety of all those
4 who use it--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
6 Okay.

7 DAVID HOPKINS: --and obviously ensuring
8 that the impacts on New York City residents are
9 minimized to the greatest extent possible. So, those
10 are some of the values Council Member.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, and-and
12 so I'm-I'm-I'm happy that-and we're-we're going to
13 spend more time offline to really design that
14 understanding--

15 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] Uh-hm.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --if we
17 actually have alignment, but those are-we have a lot
18 of conflict here. Everything you presented, and I
19 guess what I'll-the lens that I want to proposed
20 today as we move forward in this new City Council
21 with this new committee with the incredible
22 leadership of-of Chair Vallone, is that we move into
23 what advocates call just transitions. We have to say
24 no to industries where the balance is not necessarily
25 clear when we bring questions about the future of the

2 plane, the future of our neighborhoods and quality of
3 life and whether or not this is a necessity for the-
4 the everyday lives of New Yorkers. EDC is a-is in
5 service to New York City residents, and you are
6 hearing us speak and lift the voices of our residents
7 including the workers, and so I-I really want to
8 champion the work that we need to do as a city
9 economic development to protect our workers and
10 transition them out of this fossil fuel noisy,
11 dangerous industry that you're hearing from us now is
12 just not going to be acceptable, and yes heard that
13 New Jersey might have helicopters in the air, but
14 this does not preclude from and you should be at the
15 table to negotiate in regional conversation so that
16 we can advocate with our congressional members and
17 come up with a plan, and I think EDC needs to be
18 driving that with the lens if we are aligned under a
19 just transition needs model where we can move our
20 industries away from where we need to be instead of
21 protecting a sense of bottom line in a contract of X
22 millions of dollars. It might not be worth it. So,
23 this is an important place to hang out, and
24 understand as we forward in discussion for these
25 bills. The 311 complaints offer me some questions

2 about what we can do with [bell] helicopters to
3 identify them right now. As we discuss the future of
4 the industry, can we—can we tell NYPD and their
5 helicopters to have a very particular kind of
6 identifiable color underneath so that we don't have
7 to get too much of a burden for our people who are
8 calling 311 or our local news stations or our tourist
9 industry. So, they are at least color coded where I
10 saw a red helicopter above me, and now I can report a
11 red helicopter that has a connection so we can make
12 the system better. These are the kinds of things and
13 the collaboration I'm speaking about that we haven't
14 yet seen, and we're going to need EDC to either align
15 with us or—or we align you. And that's I think the
16 message that I want to send today as we continue to
17 work through these issues on legislation, contracts
18 and the future of this industry not just here in New
19 York City but beyond.

20 DAVID HOPKINS: And Council Member, I
21 think we're always willing to engage in that
22 conversation, and I definitely participated in the
23 past with regional forums that involve residents,
24 elected officials, the FAA and—and the operators.
25 So, I would be more than happy to continue.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Than you, Council
3 Member Menchaca. Council Members Chin and Rosenthal.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair,
5 and thank you for holding this important hearing, and
6 I just wanted to get it on the record that the
7 tourist helicopter industry the problem has not gone
8 away. Two years ago when we worked with EDC and the
9 city, the main reason we agreed to the negotiations
10 was to bring immediate relief to our residents in the
11 city and workers who have been suffering from the
12 noise and pollution, right. We have introduced
13 legislation. We demanded change, but in order to
14 bring immediate relief, we had to sit down with EDC
15 and we worked out some negotiations to decrease the
16 number. Even with that, just imagine I live right
17 near there. Okay, right near the Downtown Heliport,
18 and I agree finally, you know, on Sunday there is
19 some peace of mind because there's supposed to be no
20 tourist helicopter flight on Sunday. That was one of
21 the major agreements. It was good for a while, but
22 all of a sudden they're able to find some loophole,
23 charter flight is okay. So, if the tourists get
24 together and do a charter, they could do it on
25 Sunday. We thought there was no helicopter flying on

2 Sunday, but somehow they found a loophole, and we
3 asked for the environmental report of the pollution,
4 right. We finally got that, but there's no detail.
5 All I see in the report is yeah, we—we're within the
6 guideline of permitted exposure level. Yes, we're
7 within the guidelines, but if you stand near, the
8 best place to take a view is at the—on Water Street
9 we have the—the park on the upper level.

10 DAVID HOPKINS: Uh-hm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I've been there. I
12 took pictures. Imagine 10, 11 helicopters waiting to
13 take off, and they're all—their propellers are going.
14 Why do they need to do that? I remember when we were
15 doing the discussion, the negotiation back then, I
16 said, you know, they're waiting to take off, but
17 they're already getting read, and you could smell the
18 fumes, and it's not just the residents. The people
19 who work close by our own agencies the Department of
20 Transportation talked to some of your colleagues
21 about the fumes. Okay, so in the report that we
22 give, yes, you know, 50% reduction sounds great, but
23 there are times. Imagine just the report that we got
24 last October, Chair. There were 3,226 flights, and
25 they're, Oh, but we were permitted to do 3,490. So,

2 we actually did less, but just imagine that and do by
3 math. Okay, no flights on Sunday. So, 25 days out
4 of 30 days, right? 129 flights a day, 10 hours
5 they're open average. Five-one flight every five
6 minutes. Can you imagine going up, going up, coming-
7 and this is not count the one coming back, right. I
8 mean if you look at that scenario, and this is what
9 we're facing every single day. Even when in the
10 freezing cold winter, it's still over a thousand
11 flights a month. Okay, so they don't off five
12 minutes. They take off every 15 minutes, but that's
13 happening every single day. Okay, excluding Sunday,
14 Sunday only this charter or whatever. This is not
15 the kind of life for our residents—that we want for
16 our residents. Imagine if you lived down here or in
17 Battery Park City. This is what is happening to them
18 every day, and it's not worth it. When you talk
19 about the amount of money the city generates in the
20 tourism industry that is something, Chair, that we
21 have never got from the industry the exact number.
22 They're talking about oh, we generate this amount of
23 jobs, this amount of money for the city tourism
24 industry. Tourists come to New York to watch a
25 Broadway show. Okay, they stay in a hotel. You

2 don't add all that and include that in your
3 helicopter. Not everybody needs to take a helicopter
4 to visit New York City. They come because of the New
5 York City experience by walking. That's how you
6 experience our city. It's not worth it. Okay, so,
7 we get the—we try to cut down the number of flights
8 so that could get some immediate relief for our
9 residents and our workers in the city, but it's not
10 enough. So, we got to find a way to really deal with
11 this, issue. [bell] It's not worth the money.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And Council Member
13 Chin, I [applause]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: --I believe what
16 you're hearing now today is that it doesn't matter
17 which Council District it is, it doesn't matter what
18 part of the city, the city is done. The frustration
19 is there, and we really don't care about the tourists
20 day when they think they'll fly over. They're not
21 coming to New York City like Council Member Chin said
22 to take a helicopter ride. So, that the only impact
23 or benefit that the city is receiving is a small \$2
24 to \$3 million when every city residents is being
25 impacted by this extreme quality of life infringement

2 that makes people just want to leave, is-is not
3 acceptable, and I think the more that we talk about
4 this, and I believe that the Council members and—and
5 Council Member Chin, that's why we've been thanking
6 the first steps were what you did two years ago.
7 That's in no way an answer to everything, but you got
8 to start somewhere, and that was a start, and even
9 with the—the victories that were received through
10 tourists none of that was done through charter. So,
11 there's many ways for our operators to abuse what's
12 in place and I think what we're seeing is that we
13 have the ability as the greatest city in the world to
14 make regular. If you're going to do business in this
15 city, and you're going to use our heliports, then
16 you're going to answer to the EDC, to the Council and
17 to the people of this city because we can't take it
18 any more, and that's what's happening.

19 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, Council Member
21 Rosenthal, I know you're there and I believe that
22 Council Member Powers and then we can get to then
23 next panel.

24 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Yeah, and I just want
25 to issue a clarification in terms of the \$2 to \$3

2 million that's generated. That's directly to EDC for
3 the operations that are taking place out of the
4 Downtown and Midtown Heliport. There is also in
5 terms of the number of tourists that are utilizing I
6 guess you'd say like the spillover effect into the
7 tourism industry that is around \$30 million per year.
8 So, I just wanted to be clear in terms of the
9 economic impact from the tourists.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, I'm just
11 going to start by saying that I—I'm not an economist.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Yes,
13 could those—those numbers one more time?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: The number
15 that you said was \$30 million and that was a flawed
16 report--

17 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Okay.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --and we went
19 through that—we went through that report every page
20 last time around, and it pains me that you bring up
21 that number because it was discredited last time
22 around.

23 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Okay.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, I'd rather
25 talk about the loss of all the tourists who no longer

2 go to the South Street Seaport because when they're
3 standing there, they're watching 10 helicopters
4 taking off, and they're inhaling the fumes--

5 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Right.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --and you
7 know, I would ask each of you before you come before
8 this Council again to spend an hour downtown on a
9 Saturday. You can't breathe, and it's--there's no
10 question in my mind--I do have a public health
11 degree--we are killing people every day, and they may
12 not die today or tomorrow, but the effects on
13 people's physical health I'm sure can't be good and
14 what's so frustrating to me is that where we left it
15 last time around, was that you agreed to do a serious
16 analysis of the impact. The two things that you are
17 not addressing today, which are noise pollution and
18 the--the effects of the air pollution. Now, the fact
19 that you contracted out to some company to do this
20 analysis gives me no assurance mainly because the
21 results back are that there's no problem. That just
22 doesn't pass the smell test. We asked you to do two
23 things: Work toward having electric helicopters to
24 eliminate the noise and the fumes, and tell us what
25 the real impact of these fumes and the noise is.

2 You've not done either of those things, and I don't
3 understand how you can continue in good faith with
4 your franchise agreement Downtown Heliport and with
5 the thought of redoing or doing an RFP and a new
6 contract at the 30th Street with such an embarrassing
7 record. I-I don't-I-I don't know how. We've gotten
8 mad. We've gone through the five stages. We've
9 gotten mad, we got mad again. Some people are
10 crying. We've-you're denying it. What-what can we
11 do to move the ball forward to get these helicopters
12 to move to the next stage in technology. I-I love
13 the way Council Member Menchaca worded it, just what-
14 just transit. Just transition. You're-you guys are
15 doing great stuff with green jobs. Why are we
16 falling down in this industry? What-what are the
17 hurdles?

18 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, I
19 think that those two concerns are our concerns as
20 well. We could-we care about the noise impacts. We
21 care about the emissions impacts. We're-we're--

22 JUSTINE JOHNSON: [interposing] Just-
23 you're-we don't want to go through the anger again.
24 So, that's only like please don't do a preamble like
25

2 that. Please, I'm begging you. You're talking to
3 people who are relatively smart, and-

4 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] And I'm
5 stating what--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
7 All we're asking you to do is pay attention to the
8 needs of the residents of New York and there's no
9 question that you seem to get it in some areas,
10 right, green jobs, wind, solar. The whole point of
11 an EDC is to use economic tools to move the ball
12 forward for our city. You're falling down on the
13 job. Please don't start the sentence with we're doing
14 everything we can because we've establish you
15 haven't. So, what I'm asking you is something a
16 little different. What are the hurdles to moving the
17 ball forward to green technology? What's the hurdle?
18 What's getting in our way here?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: So, so, the issue with
20 respect to noise and emissions, and the certification
21 of helicopters, again, I mentioned the FAA in terms
22 of its certification protocol. So, so the--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
24 I understand the federal government. We all know
25 that hurdle.

2 DAVID HOPKINS: We do not.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]

4 Now what tool in the toolbox [bell] does EDC have--

5 DAVID HOPKINS: So--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --to address
7 these concerns? You. I'm not talking about the FAA.

8 DAVID HOPKINS: So, EDC and the city
9 advocated that Stage 3 helicopter technology should
10 become the law of the land. It became the law of the
11 land, and EDC advocated that Congress mandate phasing
12 out of Stage 1 and Stage 2 helicopters.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, does your--

14 DAVID HOPKINS: [interposing] So, I think
15 would be--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --does your
17 contract reflect that? Does your Franchise Agreement
18 reflect that belief?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: Our Franchise Agreement
20 cannot prohibit those helicopters from operating--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]

22 Is it a timing toward the model Stage 3 helicopters?

23 Do you have a--a timing that says okay, we're going to
24 give you two years industry--

25 DAVID HOPKINS: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --to get there
3 or are we going to do what Trump's doing, which is
4 saying ah, maybe not?

5 DAVID HOPKINS: We would welcome phasing
6 out those--those types of helicopters. However, we
7 are precluded from doing so by federal law. So,
8 we're more than happy to advocate on that behalf,
9 and--and--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
11 Why not use other financial tools like incentivize
12 them to say that you're--the--you're allowed to lease
13 our space. The cost to you is \$100 million today,
14 and as you move towards Stage 3 helicopters, the cost
15 to you will be \$2 million. So, you know, that can
16 take as long or little as you want, but the Franchise
17 Agreement, the RFP makes a financial incentive
18 because you're EDC. How about that?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: I think we're more than
20 willing to explore options that allow us to incent--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And--

22 DAVID HOPKINS: --to incentivize without--
23 without running into federal preemption issues. So,
24 I can't begin to discuss it with you today because I

2 just don't know where that boundary is, but again
3 that's—that's a conversation we're willing to have.

4 JUSTINE JOHNSON: And I just—just want to
5 add, I hear you loud and clear on that particular
6 point.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you.

8 JUSTINE JOHNSON: And just want to make
9 sure that, you know, we are working together in terms
10 of to your point there are incentives that whether we
11 can look at different strategies or solutions, I'm
12 happy to work with you on those particular areas. So,
13 I hear you loud and clear in terms of what incentives
14 can we—can we make sure that we can look at and—and
15 really consider as we have an opportunity as part of
16 a new RFP to think through some of these items. So,
17 I think this is an ongoing conversation, but I think
18 what I'm hearing is very clear that looking at
19 incentives could be one potential solution here, and
20 I think there are many more that we can continue to
21 discuss.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I think what's
23 so disheartening is that your willingness in this
24 room to say we're happy to work with you is just
25 hollow, and we know that because of the negotiations

2 that ended before where it specifically said in the
3 agreement--

4 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Uh-hm.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: --in addition
6 the reduction in flights included a requirement to
7 "actively research available technologies to further
8 mitigate helicopter noise, reduce emissions, and
9 promote fuel efficiency, and to implement such
10 technology as it becomes commercially feasible. Now,
11 look, the reports we get on a monthly--I apologize,
12 Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: No, this is an
14 important stuff to learn.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: But the
16 reports we get back and what you showed us at a
17 meeting prior to this hearing don't reflect any of
18 that.

19 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Okay.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: They reflect a
21 silly outside contractor. I'm really nervous how
22 much we're paying these guys, and I'm--because
23 whatever that is, we should put that money to taking
24 care of the homeless because they're clearly not
25

2 capturing what any human being is experiencing down
3 at the seaport.

4 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, I
6 appreciate your words, but today they're hollow.

7 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Okay, understood, and
8 David, if you could talk a little bit about the
9 emissions monitoring at Downtown, I think that's what
10 else we have for this one.

11 DAVID HOPKINS: Yeah, so we have put in
12 the Emissions Monitoring Protocol Downtown. Again,
13 we're more than happy to work to see if we--there are
14 ways we can enhance that protocol so it provides
15 better information to you as--as decision makers so--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Well, I--you
17 tell me. Don't come to me with your problems. All I
18 know is that you gave me a report that said there's
19 no problem with emissions. You know, I'm sure you
20 figured that out after a month or two noticing that
21 it didn't have any value. So, what did you do about
22 it, or are you waiting until I need to say something?

23 DAVID HOPKINS: Well, we upon getting
24 those initial reading, which--which showed very low
25 levels of criteria pollutants associated with jet

2 fuel, we reached back out to our environmental
3 consultant and aske for the reason, and they are
4 largely weather related and volume related that in
5 the winter months the—the

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
7 I—I, please. I mean if you want to say it on the
8 record you're on oath, and you're, you know, I want
9 this administration to shine, but continue with your
10 answer.

11 DAVID HOPKINS: No, in—in the winter
12 months the likelihood of exceeding those OSHA EPA
13 standards are much less than they are in the summer
14 months because of the—the conditions there, and the
15 heat associated, and how it affects the emissions,
16 and the volume of helicopter noise. [sneezing]

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Bless you.

18 DAVID HOPKINS: So, we think—I was—I was
19 concerned about the readings, and reached out to try
20 to understand why they were low, but as I mentioned,
21 we're more than happy to have a conversation about
22 how we can enhance protocol.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, again, I'm
24 not paid to do this work. You are, but that answer

2 doesn't pass the smell test. Have you gone there and
3 looked at where they put the--the monitors?

4 DAVID HOPKINS: It's on the roof of the
5 heliport. So--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
7 Do--have you looked to see exactly where?

8 DAVID HOPKINS: Yes, it's on the roof of
9 the heliport. So, I--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
11 On the roof of the heliport? Where?

12 DAVID HOPKINS: That means it's--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
14 How many? Is it the right number?

15 DAVID HOPKINS: There's one monitor, and
16 it is--we just--we determined it--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
18 Sounds like it's a weak monitor. Is it up to code?
19 Is it up to the standards of what monitors should be?
20 How much are you paying the contractor to do this
21 work?

22 DAVID HOPKINS: I don't have that number
23 with me so--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
25 Is it \$100,000? Is it \$500,000?

2 DAVID HOPKINS: I'm sorry. I don't know
3 what the contractor--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
5 This is really disappointing. So, Chair, again, I
6 want to thank you for holding this hearing. I want to
7 warn you because I know you're looking at what to do
8 with the charter flights over your district. Buy
9 beware, you know, this is a group, this is an agency
10 that promised me pretty much in the first year of my
11 job that they would be requiring painting the under
12 bellies of the helicopters so they would know whether
13 it's tour, charter or whatever. That has not been
14 done. What we get from them in terms of reports are
15 inadequate and not satisfactory. So, I-I just want
16 to share with you. I just want to calm down and take
17 a deep breath.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [laughs] Breathe it
19 out.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: It's just
21 really, really disappointing and I-on behalf of New
22 York City residents and in my oversight capacity, I
23 want to let you know how deeply, deeply disappointed
24 that we are. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, Council Member
3 Rosenthal, now you know why I fought so hard to be
4 the Chair of EDC. The Northeast Queens and the rest
5 of the city that has not had any conversation is now
6 having a conversation, that has never had that
7 before, and to bring that passion that you have with
8 Council Members Menchaca and Chin for what happened
9 in Manhattan, need to be applied in all five boroughs
10 so that everyone has a seat at this table to talk
11 about this onslaught of helicopters and that there's—
12 it's providing no benefit to anyone sitting at this
13 table or at the city. So, even to just call for a
14 complete new look at helicopter safety protocols and
15 standards, which is what we're doing. That's what
16 this hearing is about. It's a complete it hasn't
17 worked. What can we do? What can EDC do in their
18 capacity as the owner-operator? What can we do as a
19 Council do as a Council to bring in accountability
20 for the community impact that we are suffering.
21 That's what this is about, and to bring Northeast
22 Queens and our Queens residents to this table that
23 has not been heard before is why I'm here today
24 because we were too long forgotten, and I—I thank the
25 advocates that made their way throughout the rest of

2 the city. We will get to you part of this testimony,
3 and I know EDC is going to stop and listen. We also
4 have Council Member Powers, and we've been joined
5 Council Member Cornegy.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you, and I
7 can't follow Council Member Rosenthal so passionately
8 partially because I'm under the weather, but thank
9 for being here and for your testimony. I'm sorry I
10 missed the beginning of it. I actually represent the
11 34th Street Heliport, which I think has some
12 different usages than—uses than the other ones, but I
13 guess it's the—the first question I had was you were
14 talking about—I think that Council Member Lander and
15 others really talked about how to balance between the
16 economic impact and the economic value of any item.
17 I mean this is what we do all the time as Council
18 Members and make these decisions about economic
19 impact and value relative the community and the
20 community's concerns and that's I think the balance,
21 and I've not been for—for much long—for very long.
22 So, I don't have the frustration that others do, and
23 I will mention I think 34th Street has less issues
24 than the other others. I don't actually get many
25 complaints about it, but—but it might be. My

2 question is that economic impact that we talked about
3 whether it's around tourism, corporate charters, I
4 heard something that Council Member Rosenthal brought
5 up, but this the Economic Development Committee so I
6 should ask what is the economic value or development
7 value of the—of the those three different charters,
8 tourists and—and—and what's the third one? There are
9 charter tours and the corp—and the corporate. For
10 those three, I think the \$30 million number was named
11 earlier, but do you guys have a study? I mean we
12 talked about that, but what is the—how do we present
13 the value of the industry.

14 DAVID HOPKINS: So—so Council Member, we
15 have not done a recent study of the economic value of
16 the heliport system. The studies that were done back
17 in 2011 or 2012 really did focus on the tour
18 helicopter industry. One was done internally at EDC
19 and one was done by the Rudin Center and that's where
20 that \$30 million comes—figure comes from. It
21 includes obviously some—some tourists associated
22 spending. The bulk of it, though, is the direct
23 expenditures of the tour helicopter operating
24 companies themselves in terms of fuel maintenance,
25 employees' salaries, stuff like that. That being

2 said, we don't have a study that I'm aware of that
3 looks at the impact and the value of the corporate
4 and the charter traffic. I think the Council in its
5 approval of the East 34th Street Special Permit last
6 year recognized the value of the heliports to the
7 corporate community in New York City, and that these
8 facilities are relied upon by those corporations for
9 transportation, and that there is a--there is
10 obviously a value associated with that, but I really
11 can't tell you what that is, but it's been--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing] So,
13 I would certainly recommend. I mean as--as we did
14 they--and we're hearing a lot of passion about whether
15 to change or do something, and we have some of that
16 legislation before us, and we will be debating more
17 legislation I'm sure in the future. It would be
18 helpful I think for the EDC to have an economic study
19 (a) to talk about the value that it provides, and
20 what I mean by that is we can then evaluate that
21 exact conversation that I think folks are--are asking,
22 which is how do we find the balance. You have folks
23 from Queens and other--downtown and other places that
24 feel like it's--it's too much, and--and I think the
25 argument in favor is around or--or in some

2 preservation of is around the value, but I don't
3 think we have anything today that actually provides.
4 So, I think that to come to a hearing and to-to tell
5 the economic value of something, it would be-it would
6 seem to me be, you know, not wise or-or something
7 else to actually numbers to us about that economic
8 impact. The second question what-what does EDC-I
9 think Council Member Rosenthal asked this question,
10 but what is F-the FAA has control over the routes it
11 sound like and some federal preemption on helicopter
12 standard, but EDC has control the site-the two of the
13 three facilities, and so I have two questions. One
14 is if we made changes to the two 34th Street in my
15 district and Downtown does that-at the city level-
16 does that leave 30th Street absent whatever changes
17 we make, and second what is within your control?
18 Obviously, the RFP process is within your control
19 determining what types of-of flights are-fly out of
20 any single facility.? What-else is directly under
21 EDC?

22 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, the
23 West 30th Street Heliport is under the purview of the
24 Hudson River Park Trust and is run similarly under
25 and agreement between the Hudson River Park Trust and

2 Air Pegasus who runs that facility on their behalf.
3 Obviously, standards that we would apply to our
4 facilities would not necessarily apply to HRPT and
5 their oversight of that facility, but they can be
6 part of the conversation. With respect to what is
7 within our purview, these facilities operate as
8 public use heliports available to anybody who's
9 flying a helicopter [bell] subject to-to protocols in
10 terms of notifying about landing and take-off. So,
11 we have limited authority in terms of restricting the
12 types of helicopters that use that facility. What we
13 can do is, as you know, is we've established
14 operating powers for both-both the heliports that
15 seek to limit activity at night, and at East 34th
16 Street on the weekends. So, again, that's part of
17 that balancing. So, we have authority there. We
18 don't have authority to-as I mentioned to restrict
19 the types of helicopters.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Are there going
21 to see changes in the RFP coming up that would impact
22 any of the concerns that folks are brining up here or
23 whether it's related to--? I know you can't talk on
24 an RFP, you know, publicly, but I mean what are-what-

2 what changes should anybody anticipate in terms of
3 concerns or comments that have been raised to date.

4 DAVID HOPKINS: Some one of the—what we
5 have incorporated so far in the drafts of the RFP are
6 the standards that the Council asked for as part of
7 the Special Permit for East 34th Street. So, for
8 example, the operator will be required to report on
9 the number of operations monthly and the number of
10 complaints—and then we will also report on the number
11 of complaints that are filed from your Community
12 Board district in terms of East 34th Street. There
13 are other protocols in the RFP associated with the
14 safety of operation, the financial terms and all that
15 stuff that are standard in—in both our agreements.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And—and I just
17 want to—I know I used—I know I used my time up, but
18 just how many flights are out of 34th Street per day?

19 DAVID HOPKINS: I don't have per day, but
20 for last year, I just got the updated numbers from
21 the operator, there were 9,200 flights year out of
22 34th Street obviously Monday through Friday since
23 it's closed on the weekends.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Right, right,
25 yeah, and on Stage the transition to Stage 3

2 helicopters I think you said Stage 2 is what
3 everybody is using right now. It sounds like Stage 3
4 is something that is being requested in terms of
5 different standards. Has the--what would--what would
6 be a timeline in terms of actually moving to State 3
7 and what--what is--what does the EDC feel like is the
8 timeline, what does the industry feel like is the
9 timeline to get there? I mean I think my colleagues
10 here it's today.

11 DAVID HOPKINS: Right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: So, what is the
13 actual--?

14 DAVID HOPKINS: I--I wish I could answer
15 that question, Council Member powers because it
16 really is up to the industry in terms of developing
17 helicopters that are certificated under that
18 standard. We're obviously--would hope it would hope it
19 would be sooner rather than later. We think as I
20 mentioned in--in the previous remarks to Council
21 Member Rosenthal, we think it would be very helpful
22 if Congress would mandated a phase-out of Stage 1 and
23 Stage 2, and require operators to--to move their
24 fleets. A similar phase-out was required for fixed
25 wing aircraft by Congress many years ago. So, that

2 Stage 1 and Stage 2 fixed wing aircraft had a dead-a
3 sunset date by which they could not be not in the air
4 or their engines had to be retrofit to new noise and
5 emissions regulations associated with Stage 3 fixed
6 wing aircraft. We think something like that would be
7 a-a great thing for instituting at our heliports, but
8 again, we can't take that action unilaterally.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: You can't do-you
10 think EDC has no power to regulate?

11 DAVID HOPKINS: No, because--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing] or
13 inside device?

14 DAVID HOPKINS: --because as a public use
15 facility, we-we are open to those aircraft that are
16 allowed to fly in the sky, and that includes all
17 three states.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Got you, and I'll
19 finish with this: Would-would be willing to-I might
20 ask you to commit under oath anything that I-I think
21 it would helpful for me if you would be willing to
22 work and obviously those-the--the districts that are
23 impacted, industry and others to come up with some
24 snapshot around economic development of the-of the
25 different industries that ones that are impacted that

2 are flying out of 34th Street, the tourism industry.

3 So, we can find out what out what that balance looks

4 like, and I support—I certainly support my colleagues

5 representing their neighborhood, their communities

6 around noise and noise issues. I think that Council

7 Member Lander was I think pretty responsible in his—

8 in his comments about how do you construct a balance,

9 and think to be here and not have the actual economic

10 numbers around what is the being provided doesn't

11 actually let us argue the—argue the value and, in

12 fact, leads to—to—to believe that we don't have the

13 numbers or we're not willing to share it. And—and

14 certainly as you talked to Council Member Vallone,

15 council Member Chin and Council Member Rosenthal,

16 they're—I think they're doing a—a good job

17 representing their constituents who feel under the

18 stress and so we have to find a—a pathway here, but I

19 certainly would—would welcome seeing the actual

20 numbers that you guys are talking about in terms of

21 the value.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council

23 Member Powers.

24 DAVID HOPKINS: I'd be glad to take that

25 request back to our leadership. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, before let the
3 EDC panel go, I mean part of today's hearing, talking
4 about frustration, was the comment and our call to
5 extend the North Shore Helicopter route. So, just
6 for those who aren't even aware, could you imagine
7 the level of frustration we in the city have when a
8 regulation is passed in 2008 that says yep, those
9 charter flights coming out of Manhattan and they're
10 going down to the Hamptons. So, what we're going to
11 do is mandate those charter flights to fly over the
12 water, but only in Nassau County and east. So, guess
13 what? They could fly straight over Queens, right our
14 houses, right over George Mirts house where he's got
15 a landing of a Apocalypse now every three minutes in
16 his back yard. All he needs is the music coming out
17 of the speakers, and it was never even considered for
18 Queens. So, our resolution is calling on the
19 extension of the North Shore Helicopter Route to say
20 get over the water. So, flying over the land. So,
21 that's what our call is today on that resolution is
22 to ask for our in Albany and Congress to make sure
23 that that's addressed. Does EDC have any point in
24 support or a comment on the extension of the route?

2 DAVID HOPKINS: So, Council Member, I
3 think I mentioned earlier we'd be more than happy to
4 participate in discussions about that because we
5 realized that the residents in your district are
6 adversely affected by the mandated--

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] A
8 little bit.

9 DAVID HOPKINS: --routing on the North
10 Shore route.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [laughs] Just a
12 little bit. It's alright.

13 JUSTINE JOHNSON: Again, we're happy to--
14 happy to work with you on that particular resolution.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Alright, and I'll
16 think the EDC for almost two hours of testimony.
17 There's a lot of work to be done. Clearly, the
18 safety of the city is on the line here with a
19 complete overlook of the helicopter industry today is
20 a step in that direction, and I think you for your
21 conversation. So, our first panel will be from
22 Congress Member Thomas Suozzi's Office whose district
23 comes right through into North East Queens, Justin
24 Connor, Sam Goldfin from the Helicopter Tours and
25 Council, George Mirtsopoulos from We Love Whitestone

2 and Warren Schreiber from the New York Community
3 Aviation Roundtable amongst many of his tables and
4 Council Member Barron has joined us. Thank you very
5 much, Council Member Barron. That will be our first
6 panel. [pause] I would ask everyone to keep their
7 comments to a limit of three minutes because there's
8 a few panels that are going to speak. [pause]
9 Council Member Menchaca is going to take over this
10 panel for two minutes. I'll be right back.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, you may-
12 may begin. [background comments] Awesome and make
13 sure the—the red light is on.

14 GEORGE MIRTSOPOULOS: Okay. I got it.
15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I can hear you
17 loud and clear.

18 GEORGE MIRTSOPOULOS: Thank you. Hi.
19 First of all, my—I want to thank you, Council Member
20 Menchaca because you hit it right on—the nail on the
21 head earlier collaboration and partnership. In our
22 experience we've met with the FAA and others on this
23 whole issue. We get a lot of talk, but we get no
24 partnership, no collaboration. So, having said that,
25 I'll read my statement. My name is George

2 Mirtopolis. I'm the Vice President of We Love
3 Whitestone Civic organization in Queens, and I'm a
4 resident of Whitestone for 32 years, and I'm just
5 going to jump to the—the issue is the sea planes and
6 the helicopters. For us it's the helicopters. One
7 of the things that was said earlier is the misery
8 level. We have 25 to 30 helicopters flying over your
9 house in an hour, that's misery. When you're mowing
10 your lawn and the sound of your lawnmower is drowned
11 out by the helicopter flying over your head, that's
12 what you're experiencing in Whitestone. In our
13 community we—we sort of dread the upcoming Memorial
14 Day Weekend because once Memorial Day hits, the
15 commuter helicopters it's a onslaught to our senses.
16 They just fly over constantly. It's become really
17 intolerable for us to deal with this, and it goes on
18 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. It really goes on
19 all year now, but that is the peak time that we—you
20 can't go outside, you can't sit in your back yard,
21 you can't enjoy yourself. The kids can't play
22 outside because, you know, there's so much noise.
23 They can't go in the pools. It's just crazy.
24 [pause] So, what we're—what we think is, you know,
25 the people that are taking these flights are the

2 people that are going to the Hamptons for a vacation.
3 They're having a good time. We're miserable. Okay,
4 and it's got to--something got to come to a head.
5 We've been meeting with FAA with other people, with
6 our Congressmen with our Congressman with our new
7 Congressman, the Mayor, everybody you can think of,
8 and we're still here. I was here 3-1/2 years ago,
9 and we're still at the same point. Nothing.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And so, with
11 the last minute, is there any recommendations you
12 want to give us, any--any specific ideas,
13 recommendations that you want us to hear?

14 GEORGE MIRTSOPOULOS: Well, I think the--
15 the issue of reporting with 311, the 311 system is
16 very flawed, okay. We have an app that we use that
17 one of our residents developed, and when you talk
18 about getting information, the helicopter pops up on
19 the map. I tells you what the altitude is, it tells
20 you what the speed is. You get the tail number. If
21 it's an NYPD helicopter, it knows it's an NYPD
22 helicopter. The information that, you know, they're
23 getting from 311, it's just not--it's not accurate
24 all. The number I wanted to tell you real quick, I
25 know I'm limited here. I'm sorry, but I wonder if

2 there's one or not. Okay, so, this application that
3 we have, in 2017, we had over 79,000 complaints
4 logged in. Okay, now that includes Long Island.
5 [bell] In the Queen area--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
7 Are you talking about your app?

8 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: The app. Okay.

10 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: In the Queens area
11 along in Whitestone, there were over 10,000
12 complaints 10 to 12,000 complaints logged in from
13 residents about the helicopters flying over,
14 significantly different than what the 311 is saying
15 about 900. So, that's something else, you know, that
16 has to be looked at.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay. So thank
18 you for your testimony, and I know we have a written
19 copy.

20 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: Everything is
21 there, so--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So thank you
23 for that, and we'll follow up with you probably to
24 kind of capture that data so that we can compare--

25 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: Absolutely.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: --at the
3 committee level.

4 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: Whatever is needed
5 I'm here.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you so
7 much.

8 GEORGE MIRTISOPOULOS: You're welcome.

9 WARREN SCHREIBER: Good morning Council
10 Member Menchaca. I'm going to veer a little bit from
11 the written testimony. My name is Warren Schreiber.
12 I'm currently the Co-Chair of the New York Community
13 Aviation Roundtable also know as NYCAR. We represent
14 over four million residents of Brooklyn, Queens,
15 Manhattan, the Bronx and Nassau County, and we were
16 created under a director from Governor Cuomo. The-
17 today you heard a lot of testimony about details of-
18 details about the aircraft, and it doesn't have to be
19 that difficult. It's about noise. It's about noise
20 and we all know noise when we hear it, and that's
21 what's happening with the helicopters. The noise
22 that comes from the helicopter are greater than the
23 noise that comes from aircraft for a couple of
24 reasons: Helicopters fly at a lower altitude, they
25 fly at a lower speed so that the noise stays in that

2 one particular area for a longer period of time, and
3 these charters that are going out east to the
4 Hamptons, they offer no benefit whatsoever to the
5 city of New York. This is solely for recreational
6 purposes. The passengers on these flights they pay
7 anywhere from \$650 to \$1,500 per seat to be—to be on
8 these on these flights. The—there's there was a
9 report from the United Kingdom Civil Aviation
10 Authority, which is showing aircraft noise to be a
11 major stressor impacting cardiovascular disease,
12 children's learning abilities, sleep disturbance,
13 nocturnal patterns, psychological matters with
14 pregnancy and obesity. These helicopters they go
15 over residences, schools, libraries, hospitals,
16 nursing homes, place of worship and recreational
17 areas, and all of those places are negatively
18 impacted. Our solution is to have the FAA mandate
19 that these helicopters fly a water route. They don't
20 have to fly on the land—over land. They could fly a
21 water route. Also, EDC has to accept some
22 responsibility in this, and one of the solutions
23 would be that if there were really bad players in the
24 industry maybe their-their ability to depart and
25 arrive at the heliport should be suspended. They

2 should no longer be allowed to operate, and I just
3 want to—just one—one last thing that I—I heard the
4 mention of a DB level of 100, and the FAA, which is
5 somewhat behind at times, and not mucked up with
6 other countries, they consider a threshold of 65 DNL.
7 [bell] So, 100 DB-DB, that's—that's totally off the
8 charts. I can't even imagine people being impacted
9 to that level of noise. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you. A
11 really quick question before I hand it back to the
12 chair, is there and EDC representative in the—in the
13 room? Can you raise your hand? [laughter]
14 [background comments]

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You're on a great
16 team. Go ahead.

17 JUSTIN CONNOR: [off mic] Good morning
18 everybody. My name is Justin Connor. Oh, sorry.
19 [background comments] Thank you, Warren. Good
20 morning everyone. My name is Justin Connor. I'm a
21 Field Representative for Congressman Tom Suozzi who
22 represents the Third Congressional District.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [interposing] Thank
24 you for being here.

2 JUSTIN CONNOR: --of Northeast Queens.

3 What?

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you for being
5 here.

6 JUSTIN CONNOR: Actually, no problem.
7 Portions of Nassau County and Suffolk County and as
8 per Warren Schreiber right here, I am also on the La
9 Guardia Roundtable as a member, and the JFK
10 Roundtable as a member. We do quarterly meetings
11 regarding the different airports, but one of the
12 biggest issues that our office has been dealing with
13 this the constant helicopter assault of Whitestone,
14 Bay Terrace, Bayside. It seems to be non-stop. This
15 gentlemen that's in back left here his name is Albert
16 Moraishi. George Mirtsopouls, his wife Carmen is
17 over here. There's a gentleman by the name of Harry
18 Savartis, who is not here today. However, he was in
19 the hospital four weeks ago, five weeks ago with
20 chest pains, potential stroke, potential heart, high
21 blood pressure, stomach issues, mainly because of
22 post-traumatic stress disorder due to the amount of
23 helicopters that are flying over his house at all
24 hours, 500, 600, 700, 800 feet, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 in
25 the morning. I have visited his house. I have been

2 to Whitestone, and I have seen the helicopters go
3 over the-this area. The Congressman—we just
4 submitted for the Omnibus wording and the exact
5 wording I did not bring with me, but I can—I can let
6 everybody know is that the helicopters should be
7 flying minimum 2,500 feet. Actually excuse me.
8 Maximum 2,500–2,500 feet but also over the water.
9 There's no real reason for these helicopters to be
10 taking the shortcut over the residents of Whitestone
11 and Bay Terrace and Bayside. The Congressman
12 submitted a letter, which I'm going to read, and also
13 I did not get to hand it out, but I'll be—I'll be
14 happy to give everybody a copy of this letter. This
15 is a letter that the Congressman—we still have not
16 gotten a response to this letter. This letter is
17 dated March 7, 2018.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And if you could
19 read that for the record.

20 JUSTIN CONNOR: Excuse me.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: If you could read
22 that for the record. Thank you.

23 JUSTIN CONNOR: That's what I'm going to
24 do. It's from Congressman Thomas Suozzi. This is
25 addressed to the Honorable Daniel K. Elwell, Acting

2 Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration, 800

3 Independence Avenue, Southwest Washington, DC 20591-

4 001. Dear Acting Administrator Elwell, I represent

5 thousands of constituents in Northeast Queens who are

6 bombarded by helicopter noise on a daily basis.

7 Helicopter traffic is going to get worse as the

8 weather warms and affluent vacationers get away to

9 the east end of Long Island. We need your help.

10 Please the North Shore helicopter route extend

11 further west to cover Northeast Queens.

12 Specifically, to encompass the residential

13 neighborhoods of Whitestone and Bay Terrace.

14 Helicopter noise is not merely an annoyance [bell],

15 noise pollution is an environmental hazard that

16 negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of Queens

17 and Long Island residents. I became Co-Chair of the

18 Congressional Quiet Skies Caucus because my

19 constituents in Northeast Queens are forced to bear

20 with constant and intrusive noise due to low-flying

21 helicopters at all hours of the night. Noise

22 pollution deteriorates quality of life as well as

23 property values and New York elected officials have a

24 responsibility to work with the Federal Aviation

25 Administration, FAA, to develop long-term strategies

2 to alleviate unreasonable helicopter noise. The FAA
3 established the North Shore Helicopter Route in 2008
4 first as a voluntary path pilots could take over
5 North Shore, Long Island. Then in 2012, it mandated
6 helicopter pilots utilize the route when flying to
7 and from Long Island. In July 2016, the FAA ruled to
8 keep the route active through August of 2020, an
9 unacceptable byproduct of the current helicopter's
10 pilots fly directly over Northeast Queens and shift
11 to flying over Long Island Sound, once they reach the
12 residential areas in Long Island. The current
13 arrangement complies with North Shore Helicopter
14 Route, but forces Queens residents to suffer constant
15 disruptive helicopter noise. The FAA and New York
16 elected officials must come together and build upon
17 the existing agreement. I propose the FAA amend the
18 current rule that requires helicopter pilots to use
19 the North Shore—the New York North Shore Helicopter
20 Route to include Whitestone, Malba Garden and Bay
21 Terrace in the designated area shielded from
22 excessive helicopter traffic. City Council Member
23 Paul Vallone introduced a resolution on February 14,
24 2018 to the New York City Council to call on the FAA
25 to address the North Shore Helicopter Route to extend

2 to cover Northeast Queens. I'm in full support of
3 Council Member Vallone's resolution, and I call upon
4 the FAA to seriously review our proposals. I look
5 forward to your response and thank you in advance for
6 working with us to achieve this important goal.

7 Sincerely, Thomas R. Suozzi, U.S. Congressman, Third
8 District of New York.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

10 SAM GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Council
11 Members for hold this. My name is Sam Goldstein. I
12 work with the Helicopter Tourism and Jobs Council.
13 We represent the employees and the customers who fly
14 the tours out of Downtown Manhattan. I came
15 specifically today to speak on the oversight of
16 modifying helicopter routes as well as the
17 Preconsidered Introduction regarding setting up an
18 annual helicopter plan. Air tour operators in New
19 York City are very familiar with annual plans as our
20 tours are the only helicopters operating under a
21 structured set of regulations that ensure community
22 concerns are alleviated while providing customers
23 with an unforgettable viewing experience. These
24 regulations include: One designated heliport to
25 conduct air tours from, set hours and days of

2 operation including no tour flights on Sunday, an
3 established route that keeps tour flights over water,
4 and does not permits flights from crossing over any
5 area of land. Monthly caps on flights allowed to
6 operate out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and
7 monitoring of air quality. Measure in place ensure
8 flights to not deviate from the above restrictions.
9 They also limit noise, which is supported by the fact
10 that air tours constitute a very small percentage of
11 total noise complaints to the city related
12 helicopters. Other helicopters, the news gathering
13 charters, emergency services have none of the same
14 restrictions and are most often a source of
15 residential complaints. Contrary to some public
16 statements by proponents of today's and other
17 legislation, operators do not fly off route or
18 operate at greater volumes than permitted. The
19 consequences of even one flight in violation of these
20 rules are strict and effective in guaranteeing
21 operator compliance. As the Helicopter Tourism and
22 Job Council has been with our partners with the city
23 and EDC, we're happy to be a partner in any working
24 group with community members and elected officials to
25 alleviate concerns that still exist.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, Sam, it's
3 almost like you—you should be in a separate hearing
4 because everyone from the helicopter industry be here
5 to have—answer the same question from every Council
6 member and every person that's lodged a complaint.
7 You have your agreement in places. We're not happy
8 with the terms of the agreement. We're looking out
9 for voluntary concessions. We're looking for
10 mandatory changes to helicopter safety and procedures
11 in the city, and whether that's done voluntary or
12 not, we are going to achieve that. We're looking at
13 everything, and the groups that are here, the
14 residents that are here, the Council members that are
15 here it's not working. It's not working, and it's
16 not benefitting the city. So, all of this is going
17 to be looked at. Congressman Suozzi can't tell you
18 how important it is to have our congressional support
19 from everyone of the congress members that are now on
20 board with this. In fact, there isn't anybody is
21 actually on board with what we're asking for. There
22 is yet to be someone to come up to me and say, you
23 know what, that's not a good idea. There—there
24 really hasn't been anyone that's come up to say
25 changes can't be made. George Mirts and to Dan and

2 everyone that we know (sic) at Whitestone. [bell] If
3 you didn't volunteer. I got my own beep. Look at
4 that.

5 SAM GOLDSTEIN: Yeah. [laughter]

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: It's just the
7 frickin' Chair right here. [laughter] [background
8 comments] But if-if you were voluntarily doing that,
9 we wouldn't have either data, right? If we didn't'
10 have that website that so clearly showed to everyone
11 for the first time and then you go to EDC and say,
12 can't we do that, and then you go we have a 311
13 system. [laughs] It doesn't work, and Warren you-you
14 hold so many titles we thank you. Just before the
15 panel goes, what has the Aviation Roundtables dealt
16 with regarding this issue? Has it come up? Have we
17 had conversations with FAA and Port Authority about
18 helicopter safety?

19 WARREN SCHREIBER: Sure it's-Council
20 Member, it's been-it's been an important issue for
21 us. At our last meeting of the La Guardia Committee,
22 I believe it was back in October, we actually had
23 representatives of the Eastern Regional Helicopter
24 Council at the meeting, and they made a presentation
25 about their Friendly Skies--

2 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Initiative.

3 WARREN SCHREIBER: --initiative. Yeah,
4 which we didn't feel was very friendly, but-but-but
5 at least we were able to open a dialogue with them,
6 and I know George has met with them. He's gone to
7 some of his--to some of his meetings. As far as I
8 know, the FAA has not taken an active role in this
9 issue. The reason now a new--a Regional Director,
10 Director Solomon, and I--I think that she's looking to
11 back away from what was at one time an adversarial
12 relationship with the community and I--I think she
13 would be open to working with people.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, I'm getting
15 that sense also that there's--there is--these
16 conversations are happening because there's more of
17 an ability to take these common sense asks and
18 almost be impossible to fight because we're asking--
19 some of the things were two years ago could clearly
20 immediately go into effect in the charter flights,
21 and now the reason why the timing of this hearing was
22 so perfect is you have an RFP about to be extended to
23 the 34th Street Heliport. Now, is exactly the time
24 that we--every that every advocate and every person in
25 the city to say hey, don't issue another contract t

2 anyone until we talk about that, and make sure it's
3 embodied in the contract, or we lose three, four,
4 five more years, and then we're going to wait. It's
5 going to be a whole other Council and it's who other-
6 sometimes the arguments against, they just wait us
7 out, you know, and sometimes that works and the
8 airports wait us out. We get annoyed, we get pissed
9 off, and then life goes on just like unfortunately
10 with our school tragedies, that's what the NRA has
11 done. They just wait us out, and nothing has been
12 done, and that's just not acceptable. So, we have
13 other panels. Let get to them. Thank you everyone
14 else for making up this one bit and one bit of
15 comments here. One minute, last minute of comment
16 sir.

17 JUSTIN CONNOR: [interposing] Just one-
18 one last comment. I have spoke with the FAA within
19 the past two weeks and Robert Gartell (sp?), the
20 President of the Eastern Helicopter Regional
21 Committee, and they have promised to George and the
22 just-they promised in front of 60 people that they
23 will be having a meeting with We Love Whitestone, the
24 FAA and the Eastern Helicopter Regional Committee
25 some time in May at the FAA headquarter in Jamaica.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, you may want
3 to inform them if they don't have the meeting with
4 EDC and this committee, it's really not going to have
5 any weight. So, we have to make sure that all the
6 parties--because we don't want to reinvent wheel and
7 over and over again--are sitting at the same time so
8 we can this done so we can get this done.

9 JUSTIN CONNOR: No problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you everyone.
11 So, the next panel will have four--four members, and
12 we'll keep it going the same way, will be John
13 Dellaportas from Stop the Chop; Jeffrey Moskin from
14 Riverside Park conservancy I think; Mike Gannon from
15 Douglas Manor Association. Welcome Mike and Joseph
16 Schwartz from the residents of Lower Manhattan.
17 You're going to need more people if you're
18 representing all the residents of Lower Manhattan.
19 [background comments, pause] And then we have for
20 those who are left just so you, and you already had
21 set up, we have six people left. Those six I'll do
22 real quick. Ms. Campbell, Ms. Timmel, Ms. Juno, Mr.
23 Granick and Michael Wychek and Stacey Shell, you're
24 going to be on the last panel. So hang around then.
25 Okay, if you want to start from maybe left to right.

2 JOHN DELLAPORTAS: [off mic] Thank you
3 to—is this on? [on mic] Thank you—thank City Council
4 Member Vallone. My name is John Dellaportas. I'm
5 with Stop the Chop NYMJ. We're a community group.
6 We have about 2,000 members. We represent a lot of
7 different folks who are very negatively affected. We
8 represent—we have veterans back from Afghanistan who
9 say it's worse than Afghanistan, and triggers their
10 PTSD to always have the helicopters. We represent
11 elderly people who told me that it sets off their
12 hearing aids when these helicopters passes and sets a
13 tinging noise. We have new—new mothers that say
14 their babies can't sleep because of these
15 helicopters. We have people trying to work from home
16 and earn a living who say that they can't work from
17 home because of these helicopters. We have people
18 whose pets go crazy because of these helicopters. We
19 have everything under the sun. It's—it's really just
20 the amount of human misery is—is incredible, and so
21 we thank you for taking the time. I think that we're
22 very thankful that you're taking the time to do this.
23 If I had one critique, it's only that the EDC in our
24 view is just hopelessly corrupt, and they're never
25 going to do anything about, and the fellow from the

2 EDC almost everything he said was a lie. So, I only
3 have three minutes, but I'll through as many of his
4 lies as I can in the three minutes. [background
5 comments] Let's see, he says FAA is the decision
6 maker, Lie, lie, lie, lie, lie. The city--

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I think we
8 established that today.

9 JOHN DELLAPORTAS: Yeah, the city--the
10 city's contract with the helicopter operator says
11 that the mayor at any time without cause can
12 terminate the contract if the mayor determines it's
13 in the best interest of the city to do so. So, at
14 any time the City Council can pass a resolution
15 directing the Mayor to terminate that agreement and
16 we're done. We don't have to deal with the EDC. We
17 don't have to deal with the FAA. We don't have to
18 have any more studies. We can just be done with
19 this, and that's the answer. As far as the--the--the
20 raise the bar (sic), you know, there's still going to
21 be helicopters. The EDC's own studies show that 97%
22 of the helicopter over the city are their tourist
23 flights. So, yes, there will still be 3% of the
24 helicopter traffic that there was before. They--they
25 left that out. They said they worked with community

2 groups. We're the biggest community group. We've
3 been around for five years. We have 2,000 members.
4 We've—we've—we've begged them for a meeting. They've
5 never met with us. They've never even responded to
6 our multiple requests for a meeting. What community
7 groups is he working with? I'd like to know. 311 I
8 think it's obvious. There are 200 helicopter who
9 pass by my window every day. Am I supposed to report
10 200 times a day to 311, and when you do report it
11 they say, what's the number on the helicopter? And I
12 reported it a couple times and they say oh, the
13 helicopter was doing what it's supposed to be doing.
14 So, the problem isn't—the problem isn't the—the—the
15 problem is the plan. They problem isn't violations
16 for the plan. The problem is the plan itself. The
17 plan is horrible. The plan was drafted by the
18 industry with no community input and it's horrible.
19 We do think the City Council Members who got it cut
20 in half go bless them. [bell] They did a great job,
21 but it's—it's not nearly enough. Thank you very
22 much.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, just so you,
24 you probably have about 200,000 more people from my

2 district that will happily join Stop the Chop. So,
3 they will have more than 2,000 members after today.

4 Well, thank you. My name is Jeffrey
5 Moskin. I'm the Trustee of the Riverside Park
6 Conservancy. Last Saturday, a glorious spring day,
7 during a walk in Riverside Park from 59th to 87th
8 Street the noise from tourist helicopter was
9 continuous. At times four tourist helicopter were in
10 view chopping up and down the Hudson River. I
11 reached out to friend and neighbors who I discovered
12 were equally disturbed, but did not have a voice or
13 plan of action about this. We at the Conservancy
14 have begun to organize the park organizations, park
15 users and resident from Brooklyn Heights to Hamilton
16 Heights. This will include the Hudson River Park,
17 Battery Park, City Park, Highline and the new park on
18 the Brooklyn Waterfront. We have gotten energetic
19 responses from residents of Lincoln Towers and other
20 co-ops along the waterfront. It was only by chance
21 that we learned yesterday of this hearing. You can
22 be sure that if we had more time you would be hearing
23 from many other angry and upset-upset constituents.
24 We urge the Council to take all necessary measures to
25 insist that Mayor de Blasio cancel the license on

2 this obnoxious and dangerous use the skies of New
3 York City. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

5 DOUGLAS GANNON: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Mike Gannon. I'm President of Douglas Manor
7 Association, and we support Resolution 178-2018. The
8 Douglas Manor Association is a home owner association
9 representing 595 families in Northeast Queens the
10 Community of Douglas Manor, the Peninsula of land
11 jutting out into Little Neck Bay in Long Island Sound
12 at the Queens and Nassau County border. We're all
13 troubled by helicopter noise. Our community receives
14 the brunt of the traffic as helicopters enter and
15 leave the FAA's North Shore route a the Nassau line,
16 but the noise and disruption to our quality of life
17 peaks on Friday and Saturday or Friday and Sunday,
18 during the summer vacation time period and it also
19 remains a year round problem. We support the
20 resolution, which extend the North Shore route
21 westward to include Queens County. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

23 JOSEPH SCHWARTZ: Thank you very much,
24 Council, for giving me an opportunity to speak today.
25 My name is Joseph Schwartz and I've worked and lived

1 in Lower Manhattan since 2003. The family is simply
2 shocked and outraged their son drowned to death in
3 this manner and what was supposed to be a pleasurable
4 sightseeing helicopter tour said Attorney Gary Robb
5 regarding the death of 26-year-old Trevor Cadigan.
6 Richard Vance, the Liberty Helicopter pilot failed to
7 keep control of the helicopter causing it to crash
8 into the East River killing all five passengers. The
9 pilot Mr. Vance was the only survivor. In 2009, a
10 sightseeing helicopter of the same model and operated
11 by the same company as the one in Sunday's wreck
12 collided with a small private plane over the Hudson
13 River killing nine people including a group of
14 Italian tourist. A crash in October 2011 in the East
15 River killed a British woman visiting our city for
16 her 40th birthday and two other passengers. A
17 helicopter on a sightseeing tour in Manhattan crashed
18 in the Hudson River in July 2007 shaking up the eight
19 people but injuring of them. In June 2005 two
20 helicopters crashed in the East River in the same
21 week. One injured eight people injuring some banking
22 executives. The other hit the water shortly after
23 take-off on a sightseeing flight injuring six
24 tourists and a pilot. On this latest crash, Brian
25

2 McDaniel a firefighter, and first responder from
3 Dallas who understood emergency situations was
4 killed. While the passengers were not able to remove
5 their harnesses and were still strapped in when found
6 at the bottom of the river. It's very likely most or
7 all would have perished even if the harnesses had
8 been disengaged. The recent ruling banning open-door
9 helicopters is a travesty, and won't prevent further
10 deaths from future helicopter crashes. They city and
11 its residents are vulnerable as the helicopter pilots
12 violate FAA regulations consistently by numerous
13 violations that I've even noted flying directly over
14 several buildings in my neighborhood. I also noted
15 pilots fly very at low levels when it's overcast due
16 to low cloud ceilings. They practically hover above
17 the buildings they flow so low, much lower than the
18 900 minimum requirement. A noise at that level is
19 deafening. I've seen Liberty helicopters hovering in
20 place on many occasion allowing for more photography
21 at the World Trade Center, which I believe is also a
22 violation. I'm seen tourist helicopters on returning
23 on their flight coming down south of the river to fly
24 to east side of the river to allow tourists to get
25 additional pictures of the Word Trade Center. I've

2 counted as many as 106 flights going by my building
3 in a 60 minute interval, those flights going both
4 north and south up the Hudson River. Please
5 understand residents in Battery Park City and Lower
6 Manhattan can hear those loud helicopters when
7 they're flying on the east and the west sides of the
8 river both ways. Think about it, a 106 flights in 60
9 minutes. There wasn't one minute, one second of
10 silence. I heard the noise of helicopters for that
11 entire hour. I'm forced to close my windows as the
12 noise is sometimes so deafening. [bell] We to
13 prohibit all tourist helicopters from flying over the
14 city. Mayor de Blasio received \$205,000 in campaign
15 contributions from Liberty Helicopter and the
16 Helicopter Association. Follow the money. How many
17 more deaths will it take? I'm not talking about
18 noise Council people. I'm talking about deaths,
19 people dying because of tourist helicopters out of
20 Pier 6 and campaign contributions and jobs it may
21 cost are not even close to be worth the lives of so
22 many. Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Joe and
24 thank you everyone to the panel. What I want to just
25 say is I think unified is the message. So, matter

2 where our complaints are coming from whether it's
3 Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, part of the goal today
4 was to unify the opposition from all sides so that we
5 don't just tackle one side of this problem. It's a
6 problem that's affecting whether we're living in
7 Downtown Manhattan, whether it's Brooklyn or it's
8 Queens, whether it's Hoboken or the residents of
9 Manhattan, this is a plague that we're looking at
10 right now. So, thank you. So our last panel is.
11 [background comments, pause] So, if we can all kind
12 of see if we can grab two more chairs for the—for the
13 panel. It's Sherry Campbell from To ban Tour
14 Helicopters. A good title; Marie Timmel from the
15 West 88th Street Block Association; Lana Tonel (sp?)
16 from 70 Battery Place; and John Gronick (sp?0, right,
17 and Michael Wycek. Sorry. Is that everyone?
18 Stacey Schub. Sorry Stacey. [laughter] I kept
19 flipping over one more. Thank you and thank you to
20 Council Member Menchaca for staying and Council
21 Member Chin for making it through the whole hearing.
22 Thank you very much. So, maybe we'll start with
23 Stacey and we'll work our way over. I think we lost
24 two. So, maybe we can slide into the middle. Thank
25 you.

2 STACEY SCHUB [off mic] Thank you. I
3 played with the

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Just make sure your
5 red light is on there.

6 STACEY SCHUB: That's light is on. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: There you go.

9 STACEY SCHUB: I've lived at the South
10 Street Seaport for over 20 years. I hear them, I see
11 them, I feel them, and my family breathes their
12 fumes. Council Member Chin, thank you for
13 negotiating a trial of reduced flights. It served
14 the purpose the purpose of showing that even cutting
15 flights by 50% was imperceptible. It's still
16 miserable. Our challenge the operators even further
17 on the supposition regarding the incremental
18 financial benefit to the city, even the few millions
19 of dollars. It seems that tourists came with money
20 in their pockets specifically earmarked for only
21 helicopter tours. I guarantee that if they stop,
22 they'll hit you with a taxi, go to Governor's Island,
23 go to the top of the Trade Center or maybe got to
24 TKTS, and conversely, it also supposes that the money
25 that was spend with them couldn't have otherwise been

2 spent on some other safer tourist attraction. I have
3 to be a naysayer. I solve problems for a living, but
4 tourist helicopters are incompatible in a densely
5 populate city of skyscrapers. Even with the all of
6 the suggestions that I was listening to sitting here
7 going electric, monitoring, social media, reigning
8 rogue pilots, Stage 3, government mandates, fly only
9 over water. There's still too much inherent misery
10 and risk will persist that outweighs the small
11 perceived financial benefit. As I was sitting here
12 in the back listening to the back and forth, it
13 reminded me of trying to figure out a safe way for a
14 baby to play for a baby to play in traffic. Should
15 we put up signs, construct a barrier, Tweet when an
16 oncoming car is coming? They're the wrong questions
17 to ask. How about just pick up the baby and don't
18 let them play in traffic. Here's why. Because even
19 if you were able to do everything that were
20 suggestion, we'll still have unnecessary noise,
21 unnecessary carcinogens. If we could eliminate the
22 noise and get the fumes down, which is a huge if,
23 we'll still have vibrations. I feel the helicopters.
24 Even through my windows I feel them reverberating off
25 of the buildings. It kills me. We have still a

2 danger to the passengers as evidenced by the recent
3 crash, but even more important is the danger to
4 people who didn't choose to be on the helicopters,
5 the non-passengers either by an accident or what
6 hasn't been mentioned that I heard of, intentional.
7 Is a helicopter not more vulnerable than the cockpit
8 of a closed airplane? Do you know that on the roof,
9 on Peck's Slip, there's a school where school
10 children play everyday Monday through Friday in
11 shifts? They are only a half a block off of the
12 water. Even quieter less polluting helicopters with
13 a path over the water would still take their lives if
14 it veered a half a block instead of going down in the
15 river. Would the injury through inhaled fumes act as
16 an intentional downing of a helicopter be worth this
17 unnecessary tourist attraction? I was here September
18 11th. My daughter was walking home from school the
19 day the van intentionally went up on the sidewalk
20 downtown. I'm acutely aware of the risks I choose to
21 [bell] take by living here, but I go back to you.
22 Is this unnecessary risk worth it? Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you and what
24 you were doing all day, back to your.

2 Hi, I'm Marie Chanel. I represent the
3 West 88th Street Block Association, and also myself.
4 I'm a long time resident of the Upper West Side, and
5 I've long enjoyed our parks. The best thing that ever
6 happened in Manhattan was Hudson River Park. Before
7 9/11, when it first opened, I was one of the first
8 people out on that bike path. Now, all of Hudson
9 River Park has a helicopter running up the coast
10 every six minutes, every six minutes and I want to
11 make it clear about noise. Noise has two components.
12 First is decibel and second is vibration. It's
13 vibration that is killing us. If you feel it going
14 over your house, it's scary. Hudson River Park not
15 only is an oasis for New Yorkers who are weary of
16 construction and noise, our parks are the only places
17 where we have serenity. Our parks a being ruined by
18 air tourism and our parks are one of our tourist
19 attractions. People come from all over the world to
20 see Central Park. I mean I complain that it's
21 overrun with tourists, but why are the tourists in
22 the air more important than the tourists in the park
23 on the ground? They're being disrupted, too. Hudson
24 River Park has people driving in from out of town to
25 use it. The second point I want to make is there is-

2 I don't know if it's air tourism or charter flights.

3 There is a de factor air helicopter corridor right

4 now between 86th and 90th Street running from west to

5 east, and a lot of it is the draw of the Central Park

6 Reservoir. Again, a place that's a tourist draw, and

7 a place of serenity, and there are helicopters over

8 the reservoir all the time now, and they're running

9 over my house all the time, and I think they're

10 charter because they tend to be Friday evening and

11 Sunday evening. Finally, these pilots are rogue. I

12 see them over the land. I observe them. I've been

13 looking at this issue since early 2014 when I wrote

14 Bill de Blasio and all my representative to stop air

15 tourism. I'm concerned about the dangers of air

16 tourism as well. When I wrote Bill in April of 2014,

17 I wrote, I noted that the NTSB, the National

18 Transportation Safety Board wrote a white paper in

19 January 2014 about the dangers of helicopters. In

20 the white paper they stated that helicopter accidents

21 were at unacceptably high levels. Since 2004, more

22 than 1,600 accidents occurred involving helicopters,

23 and there were more than 500 casualties and, of

24 course, since 2014 that has gone up. The NTSB called

25 helicopters in that white paper inherently unstable

2 vehicles, and they're running right over my house.

3 It's like terror from the air, and, you know, when I
4 hear this stuff [bell] it scares me. So, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

6 JOHN CORNICO: I appreciate the
7 opportunity. John Granico, resident from Battery
8 Park for the last seven years. I'd really like to
9 say, you know, in terms of the helicopter issue, I
10 haven't noticed any meaningful changes over the last
11 several years. It continues to be a significant
12 issue from a noise perspective, a pollution
13 perspective and from a safety perspective. And I
14 think one of the things that's a little bit of a
15 misconception is we continue to talk about, you know,
16 the issues with the—a helicopter or the noise from a
17 helicopter, but in reality, if you sit out there on
18 the park it's usually four to six at any one point in
19 time. So, you know, it's really this, you know,
20 combination of living next to an aerial highway or a
21 war zone depending upon the way you look at. I think
22 the other thing that is often raised is really the
23 economic impact, and I think, you know, some of my
24 friends here have raised similar points. You know, I
25 think one of the things that really needs to be

2 studied is what is the true economic value of this as
3 opposed to these individuals spending money at One
4 World Trade, a museum, a dinner, a variety of other
5 things. I feel like the economics always assumes
6 this is the sole purpose of the visit when in reality
7 that's probably slim to none of the individuals that
8 come to New York City. So, any analysis that comes
9 from the Economic Development Group should really
10 highlight what is the incremental money that New York
11 City is going to lose, and what is that relative to
12 the value of the residents that continue to have
13 safety, noise, pollution issues, you know, over the
14 next several years as its contract continues to go
15 despite, you know, concerns of the residents because
16 my opinion we're the ones who truly matter. We
17 provide more economics to the city than all of these
18 tourists. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I think that was
20 probably one of the most stark points that came out
21 of today's hearing was hearing that \$2 to \$3 million
22 number. We all looked at each other as if what the
23 hell are we talking about? Is this--this is what
24 we're fighting over?

25 JOHN CORNICO: Right, and I did hear it.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I mean I was
3 waiting to hear that they're constructing the west-a
4 new West Side Highway with the money. Not with this
5 type. I think when you mentioned parks, too, and I
6 know you're going to speak, George can tell you when
7 you go from MacNeil Park and College Point to Third
8 Avenue to Francis Louis Park, to Kosher Lawn (sic) to
9 Fort Totten to Douglaston Bay, every one of those
10 communities feels the exact same pain that you are
11 and-and, you know, we chose the city to live in.
12 We're paying the highest taxes in the world to live
13 here, and you-you start feeling the frustration of
14 everything, buildings and how much more can we take?
15 And when we're willing to take our fair share when
16 somebody puts a plan in front us and says there's a
17 reason why we need to do this, and here are the
18 reasons. We didn't get that today. We didn't get
19 anything to make me feel like going home saying
20 alright we can work out a plan. I mean because of
21 the passion in everyone that came forward, we as the
22 Council Members are-are hearing that even with the
23 plans that we're talking about, it's-it's not even
24 enough. We got to start because I don't anybody have
25 to walk form any industry to think that they're not

2 going to do anything. So, we've got to start this
3 and keep this momentum going as to the entire city is
4 unified against this because nobody is really asking
5 for it, and any tourists that comes here never--
6 friends of ours who come and visit our homes no one
7 every said gee, I had a great helicopter tour in New
8 York. Nobody has ever said that, right? I mean who
9 comes to us saying I'm going to the greatest city in
10 the world because they have a helicopter tour? It's
11 just not happening. So, go ahead. I didn't mean to
12 cut off, but everyone was--was in that.

13 MICHAEL WYCHEK: No, I wanted to thank
14 you all. I'm Michael Wyчек. I live in Brooklyn.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Welcome, Michael

16 MICHAEL WYCHEK: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Michael is your mic
18 on?

19 MICHAEL WYCHEK: Sure. I'm Michael
20 Wyчек. This is my first meeting ever like this.
21 That's--

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Welcome.

23 MICHAEL WYCHEK: --so, I appreciate. So,
24 thank you, and the point I'm here--the reason I'm here
25 is because this point means so much so much to me.

2 I've lived in Brooklyn Heights for 30 years, and the
3 last--I don't know how many years it's just a
4 constant drone of the helicopters as other people
5 have attested to, and I had heart surgery a little
6 while ago, and even at home you still want the
7 windows shut. You still hear and feel the
8 helicopter, and then you're like you're like okay,
9 well, I want to get outside. So, you have the
10 promenade that you go down to the Brooklyn Bridge
11 Park and somebody just said war zone. It really
12 feels at points like it's a war zone down there. So,
13 I just wanted to say I empathize and appreciate your
14 work on doing this, and I really think the only
15 solution is just to really, you know, ban the--ban the
16 tourist helicopters. So, thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay, and it's all
18 fine when we do that. (sic) Council Member Chin, any
19 closing comments.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair,
21 really, and thank you all for coming out today. I
22 mean the amount of frustration in the past couple of
23 years, we feel it because we also lived down there,
24 and as I said earlier, two years go in a way we were
25 forced into a position where we got to get some

2 immediate relief, but I think as this issue is
3 expanding it's—it's not just Lower Manhattan. It's
4 all over the city. So, we can all ban together. I
5 think we have enough to say that it's not worth. It's
6 not worth it, and even still, Chair, they have not
7 give us the economic impact because they try to lump
8 everything together. I mean we have a very, very
9 strong argument to really force the city enough is
10 enough, not worth it. We got to stop it.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I agree. Thank you
12 very, Chair. Thank you, everyone. I think we all
13 gave one—one giant applause for that, and—and I think
14 when we were in that, we were also unified, and that
15 was purpose. Really, I wanted to do this. It wasn't
16 just about tourism and charters. It was all of us
17 saying, hey, the work that was done two years ago
18 let's expand it, let's grow it, let's ban it if we
19 can, but let's take the steps to get where we need to
20 go. Thank you everyone. We are 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 May 10, 2018