

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

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April 30, 2018
Start: 1:08 p.m.
Recess: 2:45 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
14th Fl.

B E F O R E: BARRY S. GRODENCHIK
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Joseph C. Borelli
Justin L. Brannan
Andrew Cohen
Costa G. Constantinides
Mark Gjonaj
Andy L. King
Peter A. Koo
Francisco P. Moya
Eric A. Ulrich
James G. Van Bramer

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

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

Esteban Peralta Testifying via Translator

Yuman (sic) Chang, Chinatown Athletic Council

Sarah Hill, Five Star Soccer Academy

Isaac Daniel Astrachan, Architect
Board Member & VP of Downtown United Soccer Club

Brad Taylor, Friends of Morningside Park

2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good afternoon,
4 and welcome to the April Parks and Recreation
5 Committee hearing. I am Barry Grodenchik. I have
6 the honor of chairing the committee for this Council
7 term. I'm just going to have some opening remarks,
8 and then we will hear from First Deputy Commissioner
9 Kavanagh and Matt Drury. Over 30,000 acres of
10 parkland are part of a vital construction that makes
11 New York City function. When you think about the
12 benefits of parks, you might think about the various
13 recreational opportunities they offer to all of our
14 residents from parks—from playground for our children
15 to recreation centers to athletic fields and courts,
16 to marinas and concert and event venues as well as
17 beaches and pools and, of course, my favorite, golf
18 courses. Today's hearing will deal with the athletic
19 features of our park system and focus on the
20 Department of Parks and Recreation's process for
21 issuing permits for the use of its athletic fields
22 and court. DPR currently has over 800 athletic
23 fields, 1,800 basketball courts, and 550 tennis
24 courts throughout the city, and requires permits for
25 any type of organized league activities on those

2 fields and courts. Most recently in 2017, DPR issued
3 8,1800 athletic permits, which represented 261,000
4 hours of permitted adult time and 616,000 hours of
5 permitted youth time. Parks recently revamped the
6 process to more fairly allocate ball fields and
7 courts for a wide range of applicants by creating a
8 process that would prioritize different categories of
9 permit applications with youth and school leagues
10 having first access followed by adult athletic
11 organizations, and then by non-affiliated individuals
12 who apply to use a field for a specified season or
13 reason. This updated process was in response to
14 concerns by many of the league participants,
15 administrators, and regular park goers that—that the
16 way that they permits were proceed created an
17 inefficient way of allocating fields for league use
18 and was ripe for abuse. Some have alleged that
19 various organizations and individuals who were issued
20 permits have often avoided them without actually
21 using the field for which they were issued the
22 permit. This resulted in park users being confused
23 regarding whether is a park they could use for sports
24 activities and when they become available. Others
25 have even alleged that various permit holders have

2 sold or scalped their permits to those who wish to
3 use a field at a given time, thereby, trying to
4 profit for themselves from a service that should be
5 of minimal cost to most park goers and, of course,
6 free for our children. This hearing will examine
7 whether the current practices that DPR has
8 implemented have, in fact, led to a better and more
9 equitable permitting process and whether the abuses
10 that have been alleged for years in some cases have
11 been successfully curbed by the department. Those
12 allegations are very alarming to me. They're
13 alarming to the Council. So, I want to make sure
14 that DPR is proactive in addressing them, by
15 enforcing the rules, keeping tabs on bad actors and
16 making the entire permitting process more transparent
17 so all New Yorkers have a better understanding of how
18 they can make the best use of other ball fields and
19 courts. Let me again start by welcoming the
20 Administration, our friends at Parks, Park advocates,
21 park users and anyone else who has come to take part
22 in this hearing, and thank you for being here today.
23 I want to welcome before we begin my colleague Peter
24 Koo who represents Queens County, specifically
25 Flushing and the surrounding areas, and now I'm going

2 to ask the Committee Counsel to swear in our first
3 two testifies. Testifiers. I don't know if that's
4 the right word, but it will work.

5 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
6 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in
7 your testimony before this committee today?

8 Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We are honored
10 to have with us the First Deputy Commissioner of
11 Parks. This is your life's goal, right? This is the
12 whole—how many years have you been there, Deputy
13 Commissioner?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Over 35.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Over 35. That's
16 an honest answer. Okay. So, we welcome your
17 testimony and please begin.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you.
19 Good afternoon, Chair Grodenchik and members of the
20 Parks and Recreation Committee. I am Liam Kavanagh,
21 First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City
22 Department of Parks and Recreation, and thank you for
23 inviting me to testify today regarding the Parks
24 Department's Athletic field permit process. At New
25 York City Parks our mission is to offer resilient and

2 sustainable parks, public spaces and recreational
3 amenities for present and future generations. Making
4 our athletic facilities available to the public is a
5 significant way in which we fulfill that mission as
6 is the care and maintenance of those facilities. We
7 are the steward of over 1,000 athletic fields and
8 over—and close to 5,000 athletic courts. The agency
9 issues approximately 8,300 athletic field permits
10 annually, which represents just over 900,000 hours of
11 playing time. It is our agency's responsibility to
12 provide athletic permits to hundreds of schools,
13 youth leagues and adult recreational leagues
14 throughout New York City for the use of the fields
15 all over the city. Our athletic field permit holders
16 are as varied as the population of New York
17 itself, approximately a thousand youth leagues, 400
18 schools enrolled in the Public School Athletic League
19 and an additional 400 schools affiliated with leagues
20 other than the PSAL, and 600 adult leagues all
21 hosting games and practices of a wide variety of
22 competitive sports. We are proud to share that the
23 agency has made significant strides in recent years
24 making our athletic field permitting process less
25 cumbersome, more transparent and more equitable for

2 our users. Our initial efforts were in the form of
3 technological improvements to the underlying
4 framework of our permit system. In 2012, we worked
5 closely with the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event
6 Coordination and management and the New York City
7 Department of Information Technology and
8 Telecommunications in an effort to transition from a
9 permitting system largely based on paper to a wedge-
10 to a web based permitting system. Along with a
11 coordinated outreach effort to our permit holders, we
12 conducted a comprehensive endeavor to map and compile
13 attribute data for every single field and court under
14 our jurisdiction. The creation of this geospatial
15 map dataset served as the basis for our online
16 permitting system, which became known as the Citywide
17 Event Management or CEMS. While CEMS is the Citywide
18 Permitting System that serves many of our agency
19 partners, we worked diligently to ensure that our
20 online permit system was customized to meet the
21 specific needs expressed by our users. We are the
22 only city agency as far as we know that uses CEMS
23 while maintaining internal control of the public
24 facing application process. Our digital media team
25 at Parks serves as the steward of our public facing

2 application system, which allows us to easily respond
3 to changes in the system's content and layout,
4 helping us to be more responsive to our permit
5 holders. Since 2014, we have been fully utilizing
6 CEMS for all special event and athletic park permits
7 issued to the public. In conjunction with our move
8 to a permit-to a new permit system, we updated our
9 athletic permit rules and regulations to better
10 reflect our mission of transparency and equity. We
11 conducted listening sessions in all five boroughs,
12 and held a public hearing before adopting new rules
13 in 2012. Consistent with our mission to provide free
14 and accessible opportunity for youth activities, our
15 ruled codified a longstanding practice of
16 prioritizing youth league permit requests over
17 requests submitted by adult leagues, and given
18 priority to applicants who have through—who have held
19 a given permit in the previous season. Through our
20 current permit distribution process, we grant
21 priority for field permits first to youth leagues,
22 follows by other school leagues such as the PSAL and
23 then returning applicants including adult leagues,
24 and then lastly, also applied within the optimal
25 season request period. Further, we established a

2 winter permit season for asphalt and synthetic turf
3 fields, created a permit for teams to conduct
4 practice sessions in addition to competitive games
5 and responded to the demand for year-round sports by
6 creating out-of-season permits. Our revised rules
7 and permit priority guidelines established well
8 defined application periods and expanded season al
9 play to accommodate growing demand. For context, in
10 2017 we received close to 11,000 permit requests.
11 Seventy-six percent of which we were able to
12 accommodate. New York City Parks makes every effort
13 to fairly to accommodate as many requests for fields
14 and courts as possible for each season. To give you
15 a sense of demand for athletic fields displayed here
16 are some overview maps that outline some of those
17 trends. As you can see, well maybe you can't see as
18 well as we thought. As you can—as you can see, we
19 received thousands of permit requests, many of the--
20 for the same fields and times, and we make every
21 intent to distribute permits equitably. We do this
22 in close coordination with our Parks Enforcement
23 Patrol to ensure that permit rules are being
24 followed, confirm that groups are using their
25 permitting time appropriately, and minimize instances

2 of permit time going unused. Unfortunately, it's not
3 as easy to read as—as we hoped it would be. It does
4 show demand, and those fields that are in red or
5 orange, indicate places where we had more demand than
6 we were able to accommodate, and those that are in
7 green basically show fields where we were able to
8 accommodate the vast majority of requests we
9 received. It varies, you know, pretty—pretty
10 significantly by neighborhood. Clearly, there are
11 fields throughout the city that are more in demand,
12 and where it is almost impossible to meet all the
13 requests that were received. It also indicates that
14 there are fields in each borough where we are able to
15 meet the demand, and in many cases accommodate even
16 more demand than what we've received. The problems
17 obviously are obvious. It's travel. It's the amount
18 of time it takes to get there. It's access by public
19 transportation and things like that, but there are
20 fields out there even today where you could request
21 and receive a permit to play this season.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: There's our
23 trans-[gavel] Go ahead. [laughs]

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Okay, and
25 we will provide these maps to the—to the Council--

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I
3 would appreciate that. Yes.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --so that
5 you would be able to look at them in more detail and--
6 and certainly we're happy to follow up with any
7 questions you may have about the--the information that
8 we're presenting. In an effort to be more trans--more
9 transparent and provide more access to our fields, we
10 continue to be proactive in our efforts to
11 continually improve the permit process. We work
12 closely with our digital media staff to respond to
13 feedback we receive from our users regarding new and
14 creative ways to improve user experience through the
15 online application system. For example, our website--
16 on our website we provide updated athletic facility
17 usage reports that the public can access to determine
18 what fields are currently permitted, and what fields
19 may be available. It's clear to us that New Yorkers
20 are passionate about living active healthy lives from
21 soccer in the Bronx, flag football in Brooklyn,
22 Roller hockey in Manhattan, cricket in Queens and
23 youth baseball on Staten Island. Our ball fields are
24 put to use every single day in every corner of the
25 city. Simply put, the demand for our fields can

2 often outweigh the supply that we can offer, but we
3 make every effort to accommodate as many requests as
4 possible. We're proud of the steps our agency has
5 taken to make the permitting process for athletic
6 fields more accessible, transparent and equitable.
7 Thank you for allowing me to testify before you
8 today, and for all your continued advocacy on behalf
9 of New York City Parks, and I'll be happy to answer
10 any questions you may have.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
12 Commissioner. We've been joined by my colleague
13 Francisco Moya also of Queens. So, let me begin with
14 some questions, and then if these two gentlemen
15 either of them have questions, we'll go to them as
16 well and anybody else who may show up. Does Parks
17 track complaints made against permit holders for
18 violations of permit conditions or other Park rules,
19 and how does that happen, if it does happen?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, on
21 the permit itself, we advise permittees to call 311,
22 if they see any abuse of the field time or if fields
23 are not being used. We take those very seriously.
24 We go and investigate if there are repeated
25

2 infractions or failure to use the field. We can and
3 do technology--

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]

5 You said--you said permittees. Do you mean that they
6 would be--they wouldn't report themselves? I was a
7 little--maybe I'm a little confused there.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: No, no,
9 but typically other permit holders are most
10 interested in--

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]

12 Yes, they are.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --in-in,
14 you know, available time, particularly where they
15 already have established play for their leagues, and
16 if they see fields not being used or being improperly
17 used, they are not shy about notifying us, and we
18 tell them right on their permit to call 311 if they
19 see anything being used improperly. We do follow up.
20 We investigate the--the circumstances for any failure
21 to use a field and or improper use. We will, you
22 know, contact the league that holds the permit to
23 find out if there are any extenuating circumstances
24 involved, and if there is repeated failure to either
25 adhere to the permit requirements or to use the

2 field, we will revoke the permit and take time back
3 from the permittee.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: How many times
5 would it take for me not to show up before my permit
6 got yanked?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Typically
8 we—we—try to have three times before revoke the
9 permit.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
11 Three strikes and you're out?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Three
13 strikes and you're out, exactly, and our rules do
14 allow a permit holder to appeal to our General
15 Counsel after we issue a revocation, but just for
16 example--

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
18 Does it happen often?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: In—in 2017
20 alone, we reclaimed 11,000 hours of permit time from—
21 from our holders.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, it's
24 not huge, but it is significant.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's a lot.
3 It's a lot right? It's-based on what I have here
4 it's about one percent.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Something like
7 that. Do you do spot checking? Does--does the
8 Recreation--I--I-if I want a permit I apply to
9 recreation. Do they do spot checking or does, you
10 know, your PEP Officers?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We--the PEP
12 Officers do spot check permits, and other
13 requirements of the--of the--of use of our fields. The
14 Borough Permit Officers often go out and check
15 themselves. They have relationships with many of the
16 leagues and they like to maintain those relationships
17 and sort of see them in action, and our Park
18 Supervisors during our normal inspections can also--
19 they have all of the permit holders that are assigned
20 to a park or a group of fields, and they are--they do
21 periodically go out and check to make sure that the
22 permits are being properly used.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And your fee
24 structure, can you explain that a little, and talk

2 about that little for let's take two sports. Let's
3 take soccer and let's take baseball. So--?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Okay,
5 there are--as you know, there no fees for youth sports
6 regardless of the field--

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --or the
9 sport that they play. Our first--our permit charges,
10 I'm sorry, it is \$25 per hour for a lighted
11 ballfield. It is \$16.00 per hour for cricket
12 football, Lacrosse, Rugby, soccer, and Ultimate
13 Frisbee. They typically are played on larger fields,
14 and it's \$12.50 for baseball, softball, volley ball
15 and other turf soft surface sports.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, that's a
17 pretty bargain then--to we're--we're basically just
18 paying for the administrative fee, which is fine. I
19 mean, we spend a lot of money on parks. I wish we
20 spent more, but as I'm sure you do, but it's
21 essentially an administrative fee, which is what it's
22 supposed to be?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Okay, we
25 asked that question. What happens if I got bounced

2 last year, and I try to come back, is there a, you go
3 to the back of the list? How does that work?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: You would
5 not be able to reclaim the time. As a returning
6 permit holder, you could apply and if there is time
7 available at a--at a field that you are interested in
8 playing you could be granted that time.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Alright.
10 In the interest of promote democracy, I call upon my
11 colleagues at this time, and Mr. Koo, I believe you
12 were here first. So, if you are ready. Okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah, thank you, Mr.
14 Chair.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We won't
16 put a clock on you since there's only two of you.
17 So--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] Thank
19 you, Commissioner for coming. So, my question is
20 like, you know, groups clearly have priority if they
21 had the permit in the past, right?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: What about the new
24 groups applying for the permit? So, how do you say
25 what the criteria is? You know, in the past we have

2 something like convincing soccer groups to reach out
3 to our office about applying for permits, but they
4 were always denying the—the tour. So, do you get
5 into the system?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we
7 made every effort to accommodate as many applicants
8 as possible, and while we may not be able to offer
9 playing time at a preferred location, we can often
10 direct applicants to other fields that allow that
11 same sport to be played, but our rules specifically
12 allow us to consider among the decision making
13 factors when we issue a permit accommodating new and
14 new leagues, and we often do that by working with
15 established leagues to find some time on fields that
16 area most popular, and often times leagues are
17 willing to work with us because they remember when
18 they were getting started, and trying to establish
19 themselves, and they often had to—had to rely on
20 other groups being willing to share time with them in
21 order to get established. So, it is a factor that we
22 consider in granting permits both for youth and for
23 adults. We do—I'm not going to, you know, understate
24 the fact that we do, you know, favor returning
25 applicants, but it's one of the factors we consider

2 and one of them we take very seriously in trying to
3 make more fields available to new applicants.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [off mic] Yes, this
5 location--[on mic] location is very important, and
6 some groups they want to pay the particular field
7 because they all, you know, they--it's not easy for
8 them to go to other fields, you know that is
9 available, and--and how do you prevent people like
10 having a permit, and actually they're not using it.
11 They let other people use it. I mean, how do you
12 identify this group, by Social Security numbers or
13 they have the tax ID or what--what is the way you can
14 identify that applies--the group applies and actually
15 the group who's playing on the field?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we--
17 we issue a permit--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --to all--
20 to the leagues and all of the teams that are playing
21 in the league, and they have to have the permit with
22 them when they're playing, and it does identify the
23 actual teams that are supposed to be using the field.
24 So, if it is not a member--a team that is enrolled in
25 that league, that is certainly one way in which we

2 would know that the--that something wrong has
3 happened, and we would take further investigative
4 steps to determine why the team or the league that
5 was issued the permit was not using the field.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yes. How do you
7 identify? Do you go to a team leader or a captain or
8 what? I mean who--who is supposed to be in charge on
9 the particular team?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Anyone who
11 ever--every team that's using a field a permitted
12 field is supposed have the permit present with them
13 while they are playing, and we may not know which
14 individual has the permit when we approach them, but
15 most leagues know they have to produce the permit and
16 they do produce it when we ask them. If they don't,
17 then we would take steps to make sure that the
18 permitted team is on the field, and if they--and if
19 it's not, then we would take action against the
20 league that is supposed to be using the field.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, you say you only
22 check whether they have the permit?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, I suppose I
25 applied and I get a permit. I--I let other people to

2 go—I keep my permit and we will play on the field,
3 you know. How do you prevent that?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: That would
5 be very difficult for us to—to determine if they have
6 a valid permit for use of the field, and the time
7 that's stated on the permit, it's—it would be almost
8 impossible for us to determine whether every single
9 player was enrolled and affiliated with a league. It
10 would be—it would be a massive administrative burden
11 to try go to that level of detail.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, may—may I
13 suggest that you have a team leader's name, at least
14 that much person on the field. Because if you own a
15 restaurant, you know, the—the—whoever cook in the
16 kitchen they have a permit. You know, it's not fair.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
18 [interposing] Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: You get a fine from—
20 -

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
22 [interposing] I—I understand the analogy, Council
23 Member, but there are a thousand fields and there are
24 40 hours a week that a team could be using it. It
25 would be—I think it might be unreasonable to expect a

2 league to have one or two persons present at every
3 field at every time.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: No, Edmond Field, I
5 mean that--that particular field. So, you assign the
6 field to play, and you have--you have to be there.
7 You cannot give it to other people, other teams to
8 play.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Again,
10 there are so many league teams involved in these
11 leagues--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Uh-hm.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --I think
14 it would be difficult to insist that one official
15 representative from a league be present at every
16 game.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Well, I hope you can
18 try. You know, I mean the biggest--I--I cannot prove
19 it, but I know I heard people that they abuse the
20 system where people they have--they have the permits.
21 They let--they--they--they lend the permit to other
22 people to pay, but they--actually, they're not doing
23 the right thing.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Council
25 Member, we don't want people to abuse their permits

2 either. If you hear from your constituents that that
3 is occurring, please let us know. We will be happy
4 to follow up, and do whatever we can to determine if
5 the right permit holder is on the field at the time
6 they've requested.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay, thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I
9 just want to—I just want to follow-up on Councilman
10 Koo's question. Have you had instances in the last
11 year or two or three that where—whatever you want to
12 call it scalping or black market operations of
13 permits. You know, we've all heard the anecdotes,
14 and one of the reasons we called this hearing today
15 was to find out a little bit about that, and what
16 Parks is doing to prevent that. I know it's—it is a
17 big system, and people will always try to take
18 advantage of some people, but I just wanted to know
19 if you've had recent experience with that, and what
20 has happened.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We have
22 fully revoked 18 permits over the last two years for
23 abuses, some of which are similar to what you
24 described. We do follow up on cases where—where
25 people allege that permits have been sold because

2 that is clearly, you know, an extreme violation of
3 our permits, and our rules and regulations. It's a
4 very difficult thing to be able to prove that money
5 has changed hands, you know, for a permit. I think
6 we did—we were able to establish that clearly in a
7 couple of cases, and revoke the—the permits, and
8 actually referred cases to the Department of
9 Investigation in those instances, but it—it can be a
10 difficult thing to prove.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Council Member,
12 do you have any more questions?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: No, I have one more
14 question. For the permit application process, you
15 know, now long it takes. There are some people who
16 told me it takes a awhile, you know. Like you have
17 to apply like three months ahead or is it--?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we—
19 we have an—an application period that we established
20 and our—primarily so that established leagues can—
21 they can submit their requests for the following
22 season in a timeframe that allows them to prepare for
23 the coming season. Many leagues don't know exactly
24 how many teams will be participating, how many
25 players will be in the league. They like to have

2 some time in which to assemble all that information
3 before they submit their applications. So, we give
4 a—roughly a two-month period in which returning
5 applicants can submit their application and, you
6 know, we find that it works well for them. It gives
7 them enough time to plan and prepare, and it gives
8 our staff enough time to process the permit
9 applications in advance of the actual playing season.
10 But you can apply for a permit today. If a field is
11 available in the next couple of days, we'll be happy
12 to grant you a permit.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I see. Okay.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: But there
15 are, you know, sort of peak demand periods certainly
16 at the start of the spring, at the start of the fall
17 season where everyone wants to get their permit at
18 the same time, and it does take a little bit longer
19 during those periods in order to process all of the
20 requests and issue the permits.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, on one question
22 how do you reach to the PEP Officers? Because you—we
23 usually don't see them on the fields or in the park.
24 Very rarely I see one, you know.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:

3 [interposing] PEP Officers?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, if I have some-
5 some important thing happening, I want to call a PEP
6 Officer. You call 311?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: And they-
10 they connect directly to our central dispatch and we
11 would sent an officer, if an officer is available.
12 They're not always available, but we would send an
13 officer to the-to the situation.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay, thanks.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: [off mic]
16 You're welcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
18 Councilman Koo. I just want to let everyone know
19 we've been joined by Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer also
20 from Queens. This is a-we have Queens infield today.
21 At this time, Councilman Moya has some questions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you,
23 Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing, this
24 very important hearing. Thank you to the Deputy
25 Commissioner for being here. Again, I-I have a

2 district that encompasses Fleshing Meadows-Corona
3 Park and a large area where we've seen a lot of this
4 abuse that has been going on. For me, the—the
5 question is do you have a public database that people
6 can search to see when the field is open, and what
7 group has it booked particular times?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, we
9 produce reports that we post on our website that
10 allows anybody to see what fields are open and
11 available and what fields are permitted to determine
12 whether or not the permit holder is actually using
13 the field as permitted.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: And does your
15 department prioritize fields in courts requested—
16 requests that are made by returning customers, and do
17 you have a sense of how many of them may be reselling
18 their permits?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We
20 prioritize first by youth sports, and then adults and
21 within both youth and adults we prioritize by
22 returning customers. We—if we had any knowledge of
23 any either youth or adult selling permits we would
24 take action and I—I'm not aware of anyone that is
25 selling permits.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: So, I say this
3 because a New York Post article that was published
4 last June it talked about the Queens Little League,
5 and it's president that was charging \$400 in cash to
6 use the Park of the Americas in Corona, Queens for
7 children's leagues, and that field should have been
8 free. Are you aware of the Story?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, I'm
10 aware of the story.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: So, I'm—I'm going
12 with this because we've also done some events in the
13 park--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Uh-hm.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: --where we had
16 brought in a soccer player who was going to do a free
17 clinic to about four of five public schools in the
18 area. We worked with your department to ensure that
19 whichever groups that were there that had the permits
20 for those fields, we made personal phone calls to
21 incorporate them in part of this soccer clinic, and
22 when we made those calls—and I think we spoke about
23 this to some of your folks here—those folks weren't
24 even—didn't even have a team. They weren't even
25 utilizing the field, and it raised some red flags to

2 us given that these are so desperately needed by so
3 many different youth leagues that want to use these
4 fields, and then we had four groups that were not
5 even utilizing those fields. Now, you said it's
6 three strikes and you're out. Is this a matter of
7 enforcement? Is this a matter of not having enough
8 in the department to actually go out there and look
9 and investigate that this is a prevailing problem
10 within our community?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We—we are
12 not in a position to—to oversee every game at every
13 field.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I'm not talking
15 about every game.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I know.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I'm talking about
18 specific groups that actually have permits for
19 specific times in a park that is heavily utilize. We
20 know that there's nine soccer fields I think in
21 Flushing Meadows-Corona Park or roughly 9 to 11
22 right, based on what the use is. Is there any way of
23 having spot checks to see if they are actually being
24 utilized by the permit holders?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, we do
3 spot checks through Park Enforcement, through the
4 District supervision and through out permit staff.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: So, can you walk me
6 through that process? What kind—what is the spot
7 check? Is it once a month? Is it random? Like what
8 are—what are those?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I—I
10 couldn't say exactly how frequently it occurs.
11 Obviously, we—we tend to concentrate at the start of
12 the season both spring and fall when we have just
13 issued new permits, and we—we—we ask both our
14 supervisors and we give, of course, the list of all
15 the permit holders, and we ask them to periodically
16 visit the field particularly during high use periods,
17 and that's 3:00 to 7:00 no week days, 8:00 to 6:00 on
18 Saturdays and Sundays to visit, check to make sure
19 the—the permit holder is present. They have their
20 permit, and they are using the field properly. I
21 can't tell you how frequently it happens, but it is
22 something that happens regularly.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: [interposing] So,
24 that—that—that's my concern is that there is not
25 sufficient spot checks here, and what we're seeing

2 now more than ever is that as the increase for groups
3 that want to come in and use these-these ball fields
4 they are now forced to rent out and pay money to
5 permit holders to utilize these fields whether it's
6 for the weekend or whether it's for tournament, and
7 I'm trying to get to the-how we can solve this
8 problem, and whether that's through more enforcement,
9 a better management of how we know that in Flushing
10 Meadows-Corona Park in particular we have 11 ball
11 fields. How can we better manage that process, and
12 how can you let me know how that process is being
13 handled?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Council
15 Member, if there are specific fields and Park of the
16 Americas you mentioned is one, and Flushing Meadow I
17 imagine is another. If there are particular fields
18 that you are concerned about, we can certainly focus
19 more of our oversight attention on those fields (1)
20 to ensure that the proper permits holders are using
21 it, and (2) to communicate to the, you know, the-the
22 ball field community that we are being more attentive
23 to those fields. We are absolutely happy to do that,
24 but if anyone is approached about purchasing a
25 permit, they should let us know immediately. We will

2 take the strongest possible action we can to
3 determine whether sales are happening, and if they
4 are we will (1) of course revoke the permit, and take
5 any legal steps that we can against someone who is
6 doing that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great and I
8 encourage you to please stay or have your staff stay,
9 because we do have someone from the neighborhood who
10 is actually going to testify to that, and I think
11 that that's something that I would love to continue
12 to work with—with you and—and—and staff on this
13 because this is something that is a growing problem
14 in—in—not just my community, but I think you've heard
15 some of the members here in Queens who have seen this
16 happening and the complaints continue to grow. We
17 want to make sure that especially if there's
18 children's leagues that are abusing that—that—that
19 permit that we are taking swift and severe action to
20 revoke their permits, and making sure that that does
21 not continue to happen.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you. Thank
24 you, Chairman.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. Mr.
3 Van Bramer. We've been joined by as well from the
4 great Borough of the Bronx the land of my birth, Mark
5 Gjonaj. Do you have any questions, Councilmen?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I do.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Put him
8 on a 30-second clock. [laughter]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But the Borough
10 of the Bronx uses a different type of a clock.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And I want to
13 know what—who oversees these spot checks? Is it PEP
14 Officers?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It is
16 usually with Borough Management. They work with the
17 PEP, they work with the supervisors and they work
18 with the permit staff to oversee the spot checks.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: What is the
20 number of borough managers that we have?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: In the
22 Bronx--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing]
24 Citywide?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Oh, for
3 citywide approximately 60.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Sixty. So, 60
5 mangers to oversee 1,000 athletic fields, 4,000
6 athletic courts roughly 8,300 athletic field permits,
7 which represents over 900,000 hours of playing time.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's not
9 just the managers who do this. There are
10 approximately 250 supervisors who may be assigned to
11 this function. There are approximately 250 PEP
12 Officers who may also be assigned to this function.
13 So, it's not simply the managers who are responsible
14 for conducting the spot checks.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right, the—so
16 give me an idea or give us all an idea. Explain to
17 us the spot checks by department, by title.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We produce
19 a list of all the permit holders for all of the
20 fields within a borough. We assign either
21 supervisors in the—the Maintenance and Operations
22 supervisors or other staff within the operations
23 chain of command or PEP to do spot checks of those
24 permit holder to make sure that they are complying
25 with their permit terms, they have their permit

2 present, the right team is using the field at the
3 right time, and now because of Local Law 57 that they
4 have an AED and a certified operator present during
5 Little League Baseball games.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: What were the
7 number of spot checks that were done last year?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I-I don't
9 know off the top of my head.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Okay, what was it
11 in previous years?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't
13 have that information with me, Council Member. We
14 will be happy to provide it to you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I hope that you
16 would. That would be essential for this type of a
17 hearing to outline the checks and balances that we
18 have. Now, I understand that we don't have enough
19 PEP officers to meet the needs of the city to begin
20 with whether on supervisors or whatnot that we're
21 understaffed. This a big city with many parks
22 including the Borough of the Bronx, which has the
23 largest part in the city--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: --and we are
3 often understaffed. So, it's very difficult for me
4 to believe that we're doing proper spot checks when I
5 can't get law-I can't get the proper enforcement of
6 our parks let alone the diversion to athletic fiddles
7 and we've got serious crimes that are--that are being
8 reported everything from illegal barbecues and--and
9 detrimental community and parkland alike. You--you--
10 help me understand what it would take for us to be
11 doing this, to have this done correctly to make sure
12 that everyone has a fair opportunity.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, as
14 with many of the other activities that the Parks
15 Department performs, this is very seasonal in nature,
16 and before, you know, usually your activities occur.
17 The beach is open, the pool is open. People start
18 barbecuing more frequently in the parks. We have
19 windows in which we can strategically direct our
20 staff to do the kind of oversight we're discussing.
21 Our ballfield permits for the spring season become
22 active in March, and they run through the end of
23 August. That period between March and the middle of
24 May we have a little bit more flexibility with our
25 staff to do the kind of oversight we're discussing,

2 and the truth of the matter of is after May the use
3 of baseball fields tends to decline pretty
4 significantly once school gets out, and during the
5 summer the—the, you know, the level of use is lower
6 than it is during the spring. So, we do have windows
7 of opportunity where we can provide more focus, but
8 yes, you're right over the course of a full year,
9 we're not going to be in a position where we can be
10 out there as regularly as we would like ensuring
11 compliance with our permits. A similar situation
12 occurs in the fall when permits become active. It's
13 after the busy summer season. We have a little bit
14 more time during that period in which we can focus
15 some of those resources on compliance with our
16 permits, but there again, it's not unlimited and we
17 cannot visit every field and every team as—as likely—
18 as often as we would like.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Is there a
20 waiting list of teams that have applied for fields?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I—I
22 wouldn't call it a waiting list, but yes there are—
23 there are teams of leagues that cannot, that—that are
24 not given permit time for the field that they
25 requested. We always offer them an alternative,

2 where we can. Many teams of leagues accept that in
3 some cases, you know, the—the alternative field may
4 not be convenient for them, and they don't accept
5 what we offer. They can reapply. They can apply for
6 other fields, but we don't keep a formal waiting
7 list.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, for
9 transparency sake, what is that number of teams or
10 leagues that we denied or could not be given a proper
11 kind accommodation?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we—
13 we were able to provide a field either the requested
14 field or an alternative to 76% of the applicants that
15 we received last year. So, 24% were not. In terms
16 of what the—the number was, it was 20—26—2,600
17 applicants were not able to receive a permit for the
18 field and the time they requested. Eighty—over 8,200
19 did receive a permit either for the time and field
20 they requested or an alternative that they were able
21 to use.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, roughly a
23 quarter of the applicants will not have an
24 opportunity to enjoy the fields of New York City?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: In many
3 cases there are fields available. It may not be
4 convenient to the applicant.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Okay. I come
6 from the Borough of the Bronx. Sending me to
7 Brooklyn is not acceptable. I got it.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: No, it's I
9 mean--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, the--the facts
11 of the numbers are the numbers. A quarter of
12 applicants will not be afforded an opportunity to use
13 fields in New York City?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That's the
16 tragedy, and that has to be reversed, and if we have
17 unscrupulous or questionable leagues and teams that
18 are using this high demand and the supply is not
19 there to meet the demand, then we're calling on you
20 and the agency, the department to weed our those in
21 individuals to make sure that every field is used to
22 tis maximum possibility.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We agree,
24 Council Member. [pause]

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2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
3 Council Member Gjonaj.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Under 30 seconds.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Under 30
6 seconds.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: The Bronx way.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We'll give you a
9 Bronx cheer. We've also been joined now by Council
10 Member Cost Constantinides. We will get to you in a
11 second. Give him a few seconds to get his thoughts
12 together. I have a few more questions that are fairly
13 straightforward. If multiple groups apply for
14 permits for the same space at the same time, which I
15 imagine happens a lot, how does Parks determine who
16 should receive the permit? Is it based on seniority
17 or somebody who has been there or--?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: The first
19 criteria is whether it's a youth league or an adult
20 league. Obviously youth receive priority. Within
21 that returning permit holders that is—that is permit
22 holders who received that field and that time the
23 prior year, and who fulfilled all of their
24 obligations as a permit holder would get preference.
25 Though our rules do allow us to consider new

2 applicants who have never, you know, held a permit
3 for that time and field before, but that's the way we
4 prioritize our field allocations.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Can you give an
6 estimate on how many fields are taken by the same
7 group year after year or how many are--would you say--I
8 call them returnees?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't
10 think we have that information with us, but we can
11 probably deduce it from our--

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I
13 would appreciate it if we could get that at least
14 the, you know, an estimate, a good guess. I would
15 assume most of the--I mean leagues come and I know
16 that in my part of the world Little Leagues are
17 starting to combine with each other. We have a--a
18 large private complex in Eastern Queens, they're part
19 of Van Crelan Fields where a bunch of baseball fields
20 come together. Councilman Moya, you had a quick
21 follow up?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I--I just had a
23 quick follow up. Can--can you just get me some
24 information about what--whether you investigated and

2 find-found out anything about the Parks of the
3 Americas?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We
5 referred it to DOI. You know, we—we are not an
6 investigative agency. We referred it to the
7 Department of Investigation. I don't know what they
8 concluded yet, and sometimes they don't tell us for
9 good reasons, but we did refer it to them.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Okay, and has there
11 been spot checks done at that particular park since
12 then?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It is
14 definitely on our list to be spot checked [background
15 comments] because it is a youth league facility, and
16 they are required to have AEDs. I can't say when it
17 was done, but it should have been done this spring.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Can—can you--

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I can look
20 at that, and let you know.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you so much.
22 Thank you, Chairman.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
24 Council Member Moya. How often does it happen that
25 somebody gets a permit and then they don't use it?

2 Do you have a percentage basis for that or—I'm sure
3 it's greatly troubling to you because we had such a
4 limited amount of space for the number of people that
5 applied.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I—I don't
7 think we have that information as the—

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
9 Okay.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we
11 do not have any permit applications that were
12 withdrawn, but that's more a function of, you know,
13 it—it is so easy to apply for a permit now. You can
14 do it online. If you're returning customer, you
15 know, your information auto populates. We think that
16 many people apply for lots of time and lots of fields
17 that they are unable to use just to see if they can
18 get access to a preferred location or a preferred
19 time slot. So, we've seen over 2,400 applicants
20 withdraw. Perhaps, you know, they've received what
21 they really wanted or as much as they could possibly
22 use, but in terms of actually issuing a permit and
23 having a league not use it, that—I don't have that
24 information here.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Is there a limit
3 of on the number of permits a—a league can have?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, there
5 is a limit to the amount of—the percentage of time a
6 league can use an individual facility unless it's a
7 very large facility where we have more than 10
8 fields, but I think you're limited to 32 hours a week
9 of play.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Now, what about
11 individuals who might be applying? Is there a limit
12 to how much time they could get also?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Not an
14 individual, no. If—if they're spread out over
15 multiple fields, and they are not exceeding the limit
16 that we place on, you know, the allocation an
17 individual league can receive at the field, no, they
18 can apply.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, if let's say
20 Citizen Grodenchick say wanted to apply, he—he or she
21 could apply in theory all over the city, and I—I
22 guess you might trip them up to some extent, but then
23 again you might not because that does concern me if—
24 if somebody is not limited to the amount of space
25 they could take they might see an opportunity there,

2 the less reasonable among us, they might see an
3 opportunity there to do what we talked about before.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes. It
5 takes a lot of work to organize and--

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
7 Yeah, I know that.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --and do
9 the teams, and you know, to just to--if someone was
10 trying to just monopolize time without using it, we
11 would know that pretty quickly.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: But it does take
13 less time to maybe try in an underhanded way to sell
14 a permit that they--they didn't really qualify for and
15 shouldn't have had in the first place. I know you
16 don't--you're not an investigative agency, and I
17 appreciate that, but it does concern me and we may
18 take a look at that, Mr. Counsel. At this time,
19 Councilman Constantinides, please. Give him a minute
20 because he's from Queens. [laughter]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES:

22 [interposing] [off mic] Well, I'm sorry if I didn't
23 put it up. (sic) Thanks, Chair Grodenchik, I think.
24 [laughs] It's good to see you. Deputy Commissioner,
25 how are you? Just--I have a question. Is preference

2 given on a geo-on a geographic basis? So youth
3 leagues from the community would have preference over
4 youth leagues from other parts of the city, or-how
5 would that work?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There is
7 no geographic preference in our rules, though
8 typically, especially when it comes to youth leagues,
9 they receive, you know, the-the most convenient
10 location that we can provide.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay.
12 So, there's nothing-there's nothing-no hard and fast
13 rule there that's-that's saying we're not going to
14 send kids to, you know, a different part of the
15 borough even a different borough when it comes to
16 these types of-of leagues, right?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: No, there
18 is not.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Should
20 there be. [laughs]

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's a
22 tough question. You know, our fields are not
23 equitably-equitably distributed according to either
24 community board lines or council lines and, you know,
25 to limit applicants to a geographic area, you know,

2 may be just as unfair as—as what you suggest. You
3 know, forcing kids to got to—travel extreme distances
4 in order to play.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I guess
6 the other question I have is so we're looking at a
7 new field potentially in Astoria with the Anchor Park
8 Project coming up.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: So, how
11 will that work? Because I know we have several youth
12 soccer leagues that are very enthusiastic about the—
13 the opportunity to play. There's also a community
14 that's very enthusiastic about the opportunity to
15 play. How do we—how do we sort of envision a new
16 field coming on line and—and what would be your
17 preference? You know, how would we make sure there's
18 still time form free play, and for the actual
19 community to get onto the field and—and utilize it.
20 So, how do we sort of balance all of these things as
21 we're starting from scratch?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Those are
23 good questions, Council Member. [laughs] No, this—
24 this would present a unique opportunity for us, and
25 we would want to take into—all those things—all those

2 factors into consideration. Clearly, first, of
3 course, you know, bona fide youth leagues would get
4 preference for what we consider the prime playing
5 time, which is usually 3:00 to 7:00 on week days and
6 8:00 to 6:00 on weekends, but we do try to
7 accommodate, you know, local on structured play or
8 free play and sometimes there are fields and it's
9 permitted in our rules where we do not permit certain
10 periods of time in order to allow that to occur. So,
11 I'm not saying that this would be the case, but I
12 could envision at Astoria where Sunday afternoons we
13 would not formally permit the field for organized
14 sports to allow, you know, the local community
15 whether youth or adults for pickup games. Many of
16 our fields they are large enough to support informal
17 games, more than one informal game at a time, and
18 people use them in that way to let more people have
19 access in a short period of time. So, after we, you
20 know, consider youth and local youth leagues, and we
21 would try to be as fair as we could in the
22 apportioning time among applicants that fall into
23 that category, I think we would be open to
24 considering what suits the community best in terms of
25 other permitted or non-permitted play.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: The other
3 questions I have then are, you know, looking at
4 someone that maybe has preference. Right, you talked
5 about sometimes there are fields that—that we have
6 someone or attorney as—as the chair talked about.
7 Beyond the permit fees, do we require them to pay any
8 maintenance fees, or anything that would help the
9 upkeep of the field for the long-term or are we just
10 collecting the—the fee as we make those types of
11 agreements? Is that something we have in our—in our
12 toolbox to make sure we can keep the field viable in
13 the long-term?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We don't
15 charge any additional fees beyond the stated, you
16 now, ballfield permit fees for adult leagues. The
17 only instance that I know of where we have agreements
18 with leagues, and they tend to be Little Leagues, we
19 have what we call maintenance agreements whereby the
20 league to maintain a field up to a certain standard.
21 They don't get exclusive use of the field. They do
22 have to allow other eligible permittees to use the
23 field during certain blocks of time, but they do get
24 the majority of the playing time at those fields.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, but
3 there are--okay, let's try and get a sense--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
5 [interposing] Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --again.
7 I'm trying to piece this together as we sort of have
8 this new field coming online. I wanted to see the
9 field in the Astoria go well--

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Uh-hm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --as-as
12 conflict free as possible. I want to make sure that
13 all of the leagues that want to play especially with
14 youth leagues they'll be up to 300 kids who are very,
15 you know, chomping at the bit to get onto that field
16 as soon as it's constructed, but also making sure
17 that as a community that there is, you know, is there
18 good maintenance in place, and we have opportunities
19 for free play, and opportunities for--for this field
20 to stay intact for, you know, 10, 20, 30, 40--you know
21 that we're not having to go redo the field in five
22 years, and it's--so--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
24 [interposing] Uh-hm, yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --so-so
3 well used.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: No, we-we
5 completely agree. I will make a shameless plug. We
6 developed a new synthetic turf maintenance crew that
7 is doing really terrific work. It's allowing us to
8 maintain the fields at a high level, and to extend
9 their useful life, and we will be using that crew at
10 Astoria when the field is built.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: If the
12 Chair will indulge me one more question?

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] Yeah,
14 yeah, yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: [laughs]
16 How about fields that have been utilized for a long
17 time? What do we do to make sure that we can live up
18 to our obligations? I know we've had some issues at
19 Saint Michael's Field in Astoria where the goal posts
20 were not in good condition, and we had permit holders
21 that were sort of--had some sort of consistent
22 complaints about the--the sort of shape of the goal
23 posts and--and the condition that they were in. How
24 do we make sure that once we're leasing the fields

2 out that they're in good condition to ensure that
3 they can actually go ahead and play?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We inspect
5 the field on a regular basis, and if there is a
6 condition with an element like the goal posts, we
7 should be picking it up, and we should be taking
8 corrective action.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Alright,
10 great and I definitely want to—I think it was fixed,
11 but I want to make sure that in the future that it
12 doesn't take as many emails as it took in order to
13 get it fixed--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --next
16 time around. So, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank
19 you, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
21 Councilman Constantinides. Revenue. I know it's--
22 without--this is not a money maker for--it's probably,
23 you know, for the city, but just curious how much
24 money do we get in permit fees?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't
3 have the number here. It all goes to the General
4 Fund as--

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
6 Right, I understand that.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --you
8 know, we don't--we don't retain any of the revenue,
9 but we can calculate the--the amount we contribute,
10 just to be-

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
12 Just to be curious, I know when it comes to fee
13 collection, we're only supposed to--it's not a fee,
14 not a tax or--

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
16 [interposing] Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --it's not a
18 money maker for the city and--

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
20 [interposing] No, it's not.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --unless
22 somebody is shooting a movie or something like that,
23 but that's not what we're talking about here, but we
24 would know for the fee--is the amount collected gone

2 up or down? Are we just—and the reason here is we
3 just--?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It has—it
5 has gone up. One, we did increase the, you know,
6 the—the price of a permit a couple of years ago, when
7 we did—when we redid our rules, and there has been
8 some growth in the adult category. Most of the—most
9 of the growths has occurred in youth sports, but we
10 have seen some growth in—in adults with sports as
11 well.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, and, you
13 know, obviously you've made it clear you're trying to
14 accommodate everybody, and through Councilman
15 Gjonaj's line of questioning, we kind of have an idea
16 of how many people get fields as opposed to the
17 number of people who are disappointed. I'll ask this
18 question. What is the number of athletic fields that
19 are typically reserved for permitted activity
20 compared to fields that are available for open and
21 non-permitted uses open to the general public? So,
22 do you have baseball fields that are kind of left on
23 the side just in case somebody wants to have a pickup
24 game or do you tend to permit everything that you

2 can, issue permits for everything that you can during
3 the—the heavy season?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Rather
5 than not permit a field, we—we would allow certain
6 days or time periods to be—to be unpermitted to allow
7 for local play. So, it would—would not, you know,
8 exclude a field from potentially being permitted for
9 some activity, but we carve out time for informal
10 play.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know like when
12 I drove by the soccer field this morning at
13 Cunningham Park, they were not being used because it
14 was—it was early in the morning, a perfectly good
15 time.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: A little chilly
18 this morning, but it's hard. We, you know, it's—
19 they're very heavily used in the afternoon greatly
20 so, which always makes me feel good. I love to see
21 hundreds and hundreds of mostly children running
22 around.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
24 [interposing] No, if you're able to play on a
25

2 weekday, during the school year, you—before 3:00, you
3 could almost have your pick of fields.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]

5 That's true. Yeah, that's—that's okay, though. I
6 mean it's—it's a great credit to the city that we—we
7 allow these uses, and we have them when the fields
8 are not being used, but I guess it's also good for
9 the field. The grass gets to grow. It needs to rest
10 as well.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes,
12 natural turf fields actually need more rest than
13 we're able to provide--

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I
15 know.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --during
17 the—during the actual season.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're trying
19 also. We're watering those fields.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Can you describe
22 the permitting process for groups of fewer than 20
23 participants? Is there a difference for smaller
24 groups?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well,
3 there is a-a completely different process for
4 applying for and receiving a special event permit--

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --and a
7 group that is less than 20% does not--well, 20 persons
8 rather, does not need a special event permit.
9 However, if you want to reserve a specific place to
10 hold your event even if you're less than 20, you--you
11 should get a permit to make sure that that spot is
12 available for you when you want to hold your event.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Are there--I
14 guess there are certain sections of parks that are
15 just not permitted that, you know, we--we wouldn't
16 have people playing sports there at any time that
17 people want to come, and they want to put the chair
18 out and read the newspaper or something like that.
19 Is that--is there information on you website where
20 there are places like that for a small event like to
21 set up a volleyball game or something like that?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well, we--
23 we have volleyball courts, official volley ball
24 courts where we do issue permits for people to play
25 and they can play on them informally if there is no

2 active permit, but we also have identified event
3 locations around the city that are separate and apart
4 from ball fields and courts where people can hold,
5 you know, a variety of events depending on, you know,
6 what their—where they want to be, and what type of
7 event they want to hold or certainly events that are
8 structured around barbecuing or picnicking take place
9 in—in specific areas, you know, gatherings of—of
10 groups depending on the size. We—we have a wide
11 range of spaces that we can offer and we have, you
12 know, clearly identified what those spaces are and
13 are able to, you know, to share them with people and,
14 of course, many people, you know, especially, you
15 know, parents with young children. They want to have
16 a—a birthday party in a playground, and we can often
17 accommodate that. So, there's a wide range of
18 places.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's gotten
20 pretty sophisticated because I guess it was last year
21 and not this year, but I was in Cunningham Park where
22 they have the name taped on, you know. It's pretty—
23 that's pretty good to see that. Is there any
24 difference in the permitting process say in Staten
25 Island than you would have in the Bronx, or Queens or

2 is there-? It's a--is it a uniform process? I guess
3 that's what I'm getting at.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's a
5 uniform process, and the same rules apply in every
6 borough.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, and is
8 there a process that you have to determine what
9 spaces would be used for--would be held for groups as
10 opposed so that it might be--It's kind of like a
11 follow-up to what I asked before. What space would
12 be held for organized Little Leagues or adult groups
13 as opposed to, you know, 20 people that decide that
14 on the first Saturday of the month they're going to
15 play a game, you know, guys getting together, women
16 getting together for that? Is there--it's harder I
17 know--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
19 [interposing] It is.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --you don't like
21 to leave fields open just for maybe--

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:
23 [interposing] We--no, for, you know, for--maybe, but we
24 do have a category in our permit rules for, you know,
25 for special--it's now called Special Event Applicants,

2 but it's different from out Seasonal Applicants,
3 people who want to play a season's worth of sports.
4 It's limited. It's for tournaments and it's for
5 events like you described a reunion and where they
6 have a softball game as part of their festivities.
7 We do allow that. Sometimes it's actually easier to
8 find, you know, one small block of time in a field
9 that a group of adults can access than it is to
10 provide a league with a season's worth of playing
11 time at a specific field or group of fields. .

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright. I'm
13 done. Anything else, Councilman? I guess that's
14 yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you for
16 recognizing the Borough of the Bronx has the largest
17 park. Therefore, we get a second round with the
18 chair. Of the thousand athletic fields, what is the
19 breakdown borough wide by borough?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, in
21 total number of field and courts that is and courts
22 are by far the largest number, there are 1,800 in
23 Brooklyn, a 1,000 in Manhattan, 1,800 in Queens, 244
24 in Staten Island and 983 in the Bronx.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And just athletic
3 fields?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Athletic
5 fields it's broken down a little bit. So, it may be
6 a little hard, but in base—I'm sorry—in baseball
7 there are 50 in Brooklyn, 26 in Manhattan, 52 in
8 Queens, 8 in Staten Island, 34 in the Bronx. Cricket
9 11 in Brooklyn, none in Manhattan, 26 in Queens, one
10 in Staten Island, 16 in the Bronx. Football there
11 are 34 in Brooklyn, 8 in Manhattan, 16 in Queens, 8
12 in Staten Island, 8 in the Bronx. The next one—big
13 one is soccer. 73 in Brooklyn, 74 in Manhattan, 49
14 in Queens, 9 in Staten Island, 35, in the Bronx, and
15 in Softball that's 150 in Brooklyn and 124 in
16 Manhattan, 204 in Queens, 39 in Staten Island and 95
17 in the Bronx.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah, besides I
19 guess there's added benefits of living in Brooklyn
20 although the Borough of the Bronx seems to have much
21 more parkland, we certainly don't have the equivalent
22 in fields, and the number of soccer fields in the
23 Borough of the Bronx was 35. Is that correct?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes,
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: To Brooklyn 73,
3 to Queens, 74.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Manhattan
5 is 74 including Randall's Island which is a citywide
6 facility.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Randall's
9 Island, I was looking at the other day just a map
10 because I want to visit there, but it seemed like
11 Randall's Island has an enormous amount of playing
12 fields.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Randall's
14 Island does have the largest concentration of playing
15 fields in the city. It's a great story. It was
16 developed by Randall's Island Park Association.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: What's the
18 number?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's a
20 citywide resource. It's heavily used by teens from
21 the Bronx as well as from Queens and Manhattan and,
22 you know, I do have to point out that yes, the Bronx
23 a lot more parkland. Brooklyn has a lot more people.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I understand
25 that, you know, will we get more people to the

2 Borough of the Bronx by doing more options, and this
3 may not be a bad one but what—now using those same
4 numbers, and—and I like math—

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: --when math 1 and
7 1 and equals 2 and not that fuzzy math that's
8 sometimes used, of the 24% of the quarter of
9 applicants that are denied, what is the breakdown by
10 borough?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: [pause] I
12 can't do the percentage in my head, but it—but there
13 were 1,100 approved applicants in the Bronx and 292
14 were denied out of 1,563.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That's a quarter.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, it's
17 roughly the same as the citywide.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It's one and a
19 quarter.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It's a
21 little higher.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: A little more
23 than Queens. (sic)

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: About 30% right.
3 [background comments] Continue please. What's—and
4 for the rest of the boroughs.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Oh.
6 Again, I don't have percentages, but for example, in
7 terms of the total number of—of applications denied,
8 Manhattan by far had the highest, 1,531. I think it's
9 a function of a small number of fields and a larger
10 demand because of corporations that want to play
11 there, and the public schools of Manhattan don't have
12 their own fields as they have in other boroughs. So,
13 it creates more demand. In Brooklyn there were 558
14 denials. In Queens it was only 169 and in Staten
15 Island there were 52.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Okay. Because
17 you brought up an interesting fact that Brooklyn has
18 more people, therefore, more fields. Just looking at
19 the number, right, with the exception of Manhattan,
20 which has vari—variables as to why there's such a
21 high demand. The borough of the Bronx by far exceeds
22 the number of denied permits than any other borough
23 percentage per capita. So, abased on the 1 million—
24 1.4 million residents of the great Borough of the
25 Bronx, we have a much higher denial rate on requests

2 for fields. Although we have the largest number, the
3 largest acreage of parkland in the entire city, and
4 you see a tremendous disadvantage for Bronx sites the
5 requests for use of athletic fields compared to the
6 rest of the city, and I want to make that a point.
7 The largest park, largest denial, and per capita.
8 So, we need to do more to increase the number of
9 playing fields that we have just basically simply on
10 demand per capita. The Bronx should get its fair
11 share. [pause]

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm with you on
13 that. I want to thank you, Commissioner for being
14 here today, and for answering the questions I do
15 have. It's always a pleasure to see you. I would
16 ask as was requested by Council Member Moya before
17 that somebody be left here. Not left here, but
18 somebody be stationed here until the testimonies are-
19 are completed. I'm going to call the first panel to
20 follow the Commissioner. Mr. Esteban Peralto or is
21 it Peralta. I figured it was Peralta. I should have
22 gone with Peralta. Raymond Chung, and Yuman (sp?)
23 Pang. So that will be the first panel. [background
24 comments, pause] Are you going to leave your laptop
25 there or just-is that your laptop? That is ours?

2 Okay then. Even better. [pause] I'm going to ask
3 that the Clerk set the—the sergeant-at-arms set the
4 clock for three minutes, and Mr. Peralta, please
5 begin.

6 ESTEBAN PERALTA: Three minutes? Oh, no,
7 but I need somebody in Spanish.

8 TRANSLATOR: So, let me stop you right
9 there so I can do a quick translation. Okay.

10 ESTEBAN PERALTA: Yes.

11 TRANSLATOR: So, what Mr. Peralta is
12 saying is that he represents the Club at Monte
13 Zuneva's (sp?) in Corona, Queens. He's specifically
14 citing examples of when his baseball league has gone,
15 their permits have gone to the end of August, and
16 they've needed extensions to go into September
17 because of the playoffs that they—that they have paid
18 upwards of \$300 for the permits from other leagues to
19 utilize the baseball fields to be extended into that
20 time, and then he was talking about the children's
21 leagues that he's seeing the same problems that he's
22 facing. So continue.

23 ESTEBAN PERALTA: [Speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: Hold on right there. So,
25 he's saying that in Hinden Park where it's all for

2 children's leagues that are there, there is only one
3 permit holder for those leagues, and if they want to
4 do anything with their children's baseball leagues,
5 they to go to that particular individual and pay
6 upwards to \$200 to get the permit to utilize the
7 baseball field there.

8 ESTEBAN PERALTA: [Speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: So, he—the permit holder
10 also associates himself with another league called La
11 Haria (sp?) and they then utilize the space under the
12 permits—under his leagues and this particular league
13 to hold all of the permits in the areas, and if they
14 want to go to any one of—they have to go to either
15 one of them to get the permits.

16 ESTEBAN PERALTA: [Speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: So, he's talking about the
18 distribution of equity that it should be a fairer
19 process. They had to suspend their children's
20 baseball league because of the fact that there was no
21 availability for permits, and that, you know,
22 obviously they have to pay in order to get these
23 permits and he just wants to see a fairer process.

24 ESTEBAN PERALTA: [Speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: He wants to thank the Deputy
3 Commissioner and the chair and asked that they please
4 look into the issue of what is going on in Corona in
5 particular with these leagues so that there can be a
6 more fair and equitable balance in terms of how these
7 permits are being issued and to ensure that these
8 kids can have a--an opportunity to play in these
9 leagues.

10 TRANSLATOR: Thank you for your testimony

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Muchas gracias,
12 Senor Peralta. Mr. Chang.

13 YUMAN CHANG: [off mic] Hi, [on mic]
14 hello, hello.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's it.

16 YUMAN CHANG: Okay. Hi, my name is Yuman
17 (sic) Chang. I'm from Chinatown Athletic Council.
18 We have been in the community for more than 200
19 years. We have other athletic organizations for when
20 you want different devices such as in the New
21 Chinatown Parade, Wind festival vents and also Moons
22 Festival events. We sent our team members to help
23 community to create a better Chinatown, and--but--and
24 also we help a lot of kids--we want a lot of soccer
25 programs in Chinatown for kids in Chinatown and also

2 we welcome everybody to join us because it's pretty
3 set that everyone have to, you know, for local people
4 have to sit outside and watch other people to play
5 soccer, because, you now, you have to pay a lot of
6 money to get into those leagues. So, that's why
7 anyway we got out permit-permit from-usually from
8 Friday and Sunday afternoon. Each team they have
9 about four hours. Then we are at Roosevelt or older
10 people (sic) and our grandchildren increase Christy
11 Shoot. Now we have the permit, we-we-we somewhat-
12 somewhat in some also other typically time for, you
13 know, Sunday and it's not fair for us to just watch
14 them to play soccer. I hope you could reconsider our
15 group and submit, I mean let us introduce with you in
16 the future. We have one of our parents here to speak
17 about programs. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] Thank
19 you, Mr. Chang.

20 YUMAN CHANG: Okay.

21 MALE SPEAKER: Hi. Yes, my-I have two
22 little kids 5 and 7. We've been doing the program
23 for over two years. It's actually the highlight of
24 our summer because it's not just about soccer. I
25 mean it's great for community like he said. It's

2 free. It's for the community and a lot—a lot of
3 these kids cannot afford to go to soccer programs.
4 So, it really helps the community. The—the actual
5 field is on Chrystie and Grand. It's pretty much in
6 the middle of Chinatown. I mean every—al the
7 community all the store owners, everyone is Chinese
8 in that community. I've—I mean I grew up in this
9 community all my life and—and it provides my kids a
10 way of basically playing soccer, and not just that, a
11 lot of—well, all the volunteers are actually a lot of
12 seniors, and they devote their time and they also do
13 like a lot of like if they say—if you—if you can't do
14 it on Sunday, I'll—I'll—I'll come in on Tuesday.
15 I'll just, you know, bring—you know, they're just
16 wanted to volunteer to get their time, and it's not
17 just soccer. They also teach Chinese. [laughter]
18 It's on the side because they speak in the—in our
19 native tongue, which is not really spoken as much.
20 We're—we're not just, you know, we speak—I speak
21 Cantonese, which is anyone speaking Mandarin now, and
22 it's just brings us back to the—to—to the community,
23 and I feel like we—we lost this permit, but like he
24 said, we've been doing this for 20 years, and it is a
25 community thing.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You—you had a
3 permit and you lost it or--

4 YUMAN CHANG: Yeah, I—I have the permit.
5 It's in a bank rate pay loan. It just opened and we
6 used to have two days, and after two years, they took
7 away our Friday night because more people coming then
8 from other boroughs from time to time from other
9 boroughs. Anyway, now we only have Sunday afternoon.
10 The same last year, and then we lost it, you know,
11 last year. (sic)

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Were you given a
13 reason why lost it?

14 YUMAN CHANG: They say that we have an
15 adult pay in our field. We are getting our youth
16 permit but, however, you know we are—we're had—like
17 as I told you before we have had our program since 20
18 years, and we were—we were just 15 and 16-years old
19 back then, and now everyone go in our, you know, to
20 get with us (sic), and—and they also want to give
21 away, I mean, give back to community to, and they all
22 come out and help our youth program as a coach, and
23 as return and I—I wanted to put in some time to play
24 soccer. Like I say, everyone have to pay, you know,
25 from duty—I mean 6 to 9 every Sunday afternoon, every

2 go, you know, from out these—they have to pay out. I
3 mean you have to pay a huge amount when you are
4 passing to 2009 to join a team to join a league and
5 us is free, and that's why I think they're talking
6 that way. They say I have to have adult to pay it
7 with my time spot.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Council Moya,
9 you had a question?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Yes. So one, let me
11 just thank you for coming here and taking the time
12 out of your busy schedule to testify here today. I
13 thin that this very helpful for us to really start
14 focusing a little bit more on what is happening and
15 shed some light on this permitting process. Just a
16 quick question, and I'm going to say it in Spanish
17 and I'll translate back into English. Senor Peralta.
18 [Speaking Spanish]

19 ESTEBAN PERALTA: [Speaking Spanish]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: So, I asked the
21 question is if this problem that he sees in the
22 baseball fields in Corona is this a recent problem?
23 Is this a long-term problem? Has it gotten worse
24 since the—both the baseball and soccer are—are the
25 biggest played sports in—in the community? His

2 response was that it's been an ongoing program and it
3 continues to get to worse. He—he cited another
4 example of the park on 114th Street where during the
5 day—during the day games, they—they rent it out and
6 it's and again it's for kids' leagues, which makes it
7 more difficult for people to get to utilize the park
8 for their leagues.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Gracias. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Gentlemen, thank
13 you for testifying today. I appreciate that you're
14 taking your time to make the process fairer, and we
15 greatly appreciate your being here today.

16 ESTEBAN PERALTA: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. The
18 next panel. Isaac Daniel Astrachan. Did I get that
19 right, I hope.

20 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: Close.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Close enough for
22 government work, is that what you're saying? Paul
23 Fox and Sarah Hill. Fred, I haven't forgotten about
24 you, Fred. If we were in the chamber, I'd get four
25 of you up there, but I think I would be a little

2 tight. So, we'll try the first three, and then Fred,
3 you'll have your own bell. Alright, whoever would
4 like begin. [background comments] Ladies.

5 SARAH HILL: Hi, my name is Sarah Hill,
6 and I represent Five Star Soccer Academy. It's a non-
7 profit youth training program that my husband and I
8 had started last year. I'm here to testify to kind
9 of share my experience of obtaining some fields for
10 the kids to play. In the colder weather we—we use
11 the city public schools to—

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Which borough
13 are you in?

14 SARAH HILL: In Queens.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Queens. Okay.

16 SARAH HILL: Primarily in Long Island
17 City and Astoria. So, in the winter we use the city
18 schools, public schools to use the—for indoor, and in
19 the summer it's been very difficult to obtain fields
20 and a lot of times what my husband has done is just
21 kind of, you know, figure out what field is not being
22 used, and the arrive about and hour and a half early
23 to set up, and for the most part, people don't show.
24 So, it's worked, but it's not the ideal scenario as
25 we want to be able to grow our academy, but we can't

2 if we don't know where exactly we're going to be.
3 Primarily on Wednesday, we use Queensbridge Park, and
4 we've really had some issues with figuring out when
5 it's available. We have emailed. We have, you know,
6 every-on the day when it's open, we have submitted a
7 permit and it's always been denied. They give us the
8 rate, you know, when we put in our application which
9 is a very easy process. They respond either with a
10 withdrawal or decline, and in some-lately they've
11 given us a couple of handful days, and we've asked,
12 you know, when we were first getting up or scheduling
13 our-our season, we can be flexible with times and so
14 we've asked many times, you know, what are the times
15 that are available, and we've never been given a
16 response. So, you know, we have a permit for a
17 handful of days for, you know, for about a month, but
18 that's it. However, we're still using the field
19 because no one is there. So, I wanted to testify to
20 share my experience that, you know, the fields are
21 still not being used. It's unclear who are the
22 current holders because, you know, we wanted to reach
23 out to make sure that it was okay for us to come or
24 they weren't going to show up. So, it's still, you
25 know, there's still that issue, and I was also very

2 unclear who to go to report this. I'm glad I came
3 today because now I—I understand.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's the First
5 Deputy Commissioner right there.

6 SARAH HILL: [laughs] Yes. So, now I
7 know who to call, but it's still very unclear on the
8 system. You know, you mentioned that there is
9 reports, but I don't know where to access this, and—
10 and again, it's very unclear who are the current, and
11 I hop that that becomes more of a fair process as
12 we're a new academy and—and our mission is very
13 honorable. My husband really wants to bring more
14 soccer at a very affordable rate. We only charge \$50
15 a month for our kids to train, and it's just so very
16 hard to grow his academy without really having a
17 place, a field that we can call our own.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate
19 your testimony. I would appreciate if you could send
20 after you're—we're done here today the counsel to the
21 committee your information when you've found fields
22 empty and, you know, the First Deputy Commissioner is
23 here as well as some of the staff in Parks. So, I
24 would appreciate it if you would with them so they
25 can look into that as well.

2 SARAH HILL: And just to—who am I sharing
3 this with? I mean am I giving you—I'm just taking
4 down your contact information?

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes.

6 SARAH HILL: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright,
8 gentlemen.

9 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: Thank you very
10 much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you
11 today. It's been very enlightening hearing
12 everyone's testimony. I'm a Board member of Downtown
13 United Soccer. Since 1982 we've operated on the west
14 side of Manhattan mostly at Pier 40, and we have
15 4,000 players in our league. Recently we have
16 noticed that there is not a soccer presence on the
17 Lower East Side, and just to give you a comparison,
18 three years ago we started a free program at the
19 Henry Street Settlement. We now have 170 kids that
20 we're providing free soccer for, and we want to
21 expand into a rec league into Lindsay Park on the
22 Lower East Side. As far as we can tell, there are
23 about 500 kids in soccer programs on the Lower East
24 Side. If you look at the 4,000 that I have on the
25 west side and the demographics on the East Side, you

2 should have 8,000 kids playing soccer. We're not
3 that special at what we do. We roll the ball out
4 like everybody else and the parents are involved.
5 So, you should definitely have that number. I went
6 to the Parks Department. We're relatively familiar
7 with the permitting process. We go through it every
8 year, and we were told that there are no available
9 permits and that they will all be given to the
10 existing holders. That being said, I then started
11 along the path of contacting each of the Council
12 members. Each of the Council members referred me
13 down to the local community board, which I'm happy to
14 go through this process. I'm learning a lot along
15 the way. Presented it in the community board, and
16 waiting to onto the Parks Subcommittee of the
17 Community Board to ply my case. What I'm not seeing
18 in terms of transparency in the process is in—I can
19 pull up on the website right now who has the spring
20 permits, but I want the fall permits, and I've
21 started this discussion so that we can get things
22 organized and be ready. You can't see who has the
23 fall permits or who had them last year. Every
24 season, they pull them down the—the winter permits
25 and they put up the spring permits. So, my bad. I

2 didn't go and take the screen shot in the fall
3 because I just didn't know it, but that's a minor
4 point, but if we could have history, it would be
5 helpful because I'm now going to go to the Community
6 Board and make the argument, hey, this is an adult
7 league. Hey, this a for-profit league. Hey, this
8 unused space, and we're going to have a conversation.
9 The next mechanisms that I'm unclear on is how
10 exactly does that community board articulate the view
11 of the community to the Parks Department that--so that
12 once I've been vetted by them, and they believe me,
13 how are we going to displace those people or is there
14 no way because [bell] they hold the existing process--
15 permits?

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, think--

17 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: [interposing] I
18 got in just in time.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You were
20 perfect. I think that we have heard today that youth
21 organizations have priority in the city of New York.
22 I heard that from the First Deputy Commissioner.
23 Every community board--I used to be in charge of the
24 community boards in the Borough of Queens. So, I can
25 tell you that every community board have different

2 processes. For instance, you know, when it comes to
3 naming streets and street corners for various
4 individuals who did great things for our city, some
5 community boards don't act on them at all. Some act
6 through their transportation committee, some act
7 through their transportation committee followed up by
8 the full committee. That's just three of my different
9 community boards just to give you some idea of what
10 happens. So, you may find that in one community
11 board on the Lower East Side it may be totally
12 different than the community board on the west side
13 of Manhattan, but that just develops over years, and
14 the community boards have been around for close to,
15 you know, 50 years now. So-

16 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: [interposing]
17 But, going through the community board is the right
18 path?

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It-well, you
20 could apply directly. You know, you can talk to the
21 local Parks people.

22 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: Well, we-we
23 have. We started with that, and we were rebuffed.
24 We were told there were no permits available, and we
25 are a known quantity to them. We hold permits all

2 over the city, and we are also a youth soccer
3 program. So, now we have to go through there, and I
4 assume they're all held by not-for-profits and
5 children focused groups.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I guess
7 you'll—you'll be able to see right now who holds them
8 at least for the spring.

9 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: Right, but in
10 the fall is what we're--

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Council Member
12 Moya.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Just a quick point.
14 You brought up a really point about seeing the
15 history of who's actually getting those permits, and
16 whether or not they're a for-profit, non-for-profit.
17 Are they running a youth league? Maybe that's
18 something that we can work with the Parks Department
19 and the folks that are still here on making sure that
20 those lists do stay up so that we can have a history
21 of who is utilizing those spaces. I also want to
22 commend the Deputy Commissioner for staying here. A
23 lot of times we have the agencies come in and just
24 the staff stays, but I want to thank you for staying
25 here because this really is a very important hearing,

2 and the fact that you remain is a point that is well
3 taken here by-by myself and I think this committee as
4 well.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Certainly.
6 Thank you, Council Member Moya. I'm not going to try
7 to pronounce your last name.

8 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: Astrachan. Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Astrachan.
10 Okay.

11 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: I'm a resident
12 of Battery Park City. I'm an architect by day and a-
13 the Vice President of Downtown United Soccer Club by
14 night or vice versa these days. Like Paul said, we
15 serve a lot of kids with various different programs,
16 recreational to an academy program when kids are
17 training multiple times a week four or five times a
18 week. So, just to give the-to go back to this notion
19 of proximity from an example that I know well, my
20 son-my son has a Wednesday practice. He lives in
21 Battery Park City, has a Wednesday practice in-on
22 Randall's Island. He take the subway. Has a
23 Thursday practice on Roosevelt and a Friday practice
24 at Columbia University all the way at Baker Field.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: He's well
3 motivated.

4 ISAAC DANIEL ASTRACHAN: He's very, very
5 motivated, but we have a lot of very, very motivated
6 players who want to play and want to keep playing and
7 want to play in college and it's a big part of their
8 lives, and this problem is not going away. As you
9 all know there's just not enough fields available.
10 So, if we can streamline the field permitting process
11 that would be already going in the right direction.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
14 much. Yeah. Manhattan is small. Randall's Island
15 is a great facility. You could look at it on Google
16 Earth now. It's just unbelievable how many fields
17 that we have there. The--the drawback to some extent
18 is that it's not exactly--it's in the middle of the
19 city, but it's not exactly in the middle of a--a
20 populated area. You have to make an effort to get
21 there, but the fields are there. So, I want to thank
22 you for helping us to hear about these issues today.
23 Thank you very much. I also want to thank you for
24 your work with the young people of New York City.
25 Having been a Little League manager and coach over

2 several decades, I know how wonderful that can be and
3 the feeling that you get in working with the young
4 people, and also how frustrating it can be at times
5 as well, but that goes with I guess just being a
6 human being. So, thank you for being here today.
7 We're going to dismiss this panel, and ask for Mr.
8 Brad Taylor. If there's anyone else that wants to
9 testify, please see the sergeant-at-arms. I also
10 want to welcome from the borough of Brooklyn Justin
11 Brannan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: [off mic] Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Mr. Taylor,
15 you're with Friends of Morningside Park?

16 BRAD TAYLOR: Yes. I'm not with--with a
17 league. We--we actually are a Friends group, a Parks
18 advocacy group, and so we actually try to stay away
19 from taking permits out on the fields because we want
20 the leagues to be able to do that. So, I just had
21 some very minor suggestions, but I think that they
22 could be helpful in all of this--

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

24 BRAD TAYLOR: --in terms of transparency,
25 and--and that is while--while I--I now realize that the

2 permits, you can see the permits online. They're not
3 posted at the fields themselves at least not-not
4 where we are, and-and for a Parks advocacy group, and
5 we've got our board that lives right around the park
6 for us to be able to see a list at the field, you
7 know, of who is supposed to be on this field and who
8 is not on this field? I mean we're in Manhattan. We
9 get a lot of people wanting to use the fields, and
10 frankly there's a lot of unpermitted use, and if you
11 looked at the schedule online, you would say, wow
12 this-this field, you know, does get a chance to rest
13 because it's only the West Side Little League and X,
14 Y, Z are using it on the weekends. But, in fact,
15 when you go out there you see a tremendous amount of
16 use. And if-if members of the public or Park
17 advocates were able to see which groups actually did
18 have permits, and which did not we could actually
19 help out and, you know, call PEP directly or call
20 311, but that's-that's-by not having the list there
21 at the fields it's-it's a detriment to our trying to
22 help out with this problem.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You could
24 probably access that information fairly quickly at
25 the Parks website, you know, with a-with any kind of

2 Smart Phone these days. I think it would be almost
3 impossible given the resources available to the Parks
4 Department to track down every person that's using a
5 field. I-my-my community has a great number, almost
6 1,500 acres of park lands, and dozens and dozens
7 baseball fields, lots of soccer fields, Cricket, and
8 so sometimes—and I know when it's an organized league
9 because they're wearing new uniforms, and I know when
10 it's not because you could just tell, but it would be
11 impossible, and most of the time at least in Eastern
12 Queens, the fields aren't being used because nobody
13 wants to play 8:00 in the morning on a Monday
14 because they have to work or they're school or
15 whatever. It's unusual. We do have pickup games.
16 The cops and the firefighters are there. They have
17 tournaments, but that's more unusual than not.

18 BRAD TAYLOR: Yeah I'm not saying that,
19 you know, you need to have every—but just having it
20 posted at the field. I mean because it's just a
21 common sense thing to do, and I don't think it's that
22 hard to do at least not-not-not from—from where we
23 are in Morningside Park. There's bulletin board
24 right there. Why can't we have the permits posted at
25 the field?

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's not a bad
3 idea. The First Deputy had has heard it, and I'm
4 sure he'll take it under advisement. If you have any
5 thing else?

6 BRAD TAYLOR: No, that's it.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very
8 much. Anyone else? Going once, going twice. Sold.
9 Thank you all for being here today. With that we
10 close the hearing. [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 29, 2018