

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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June 25, 2018  
Start: 11:02 a.m.  
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.  
16<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: Barry S. Grodenchik  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Joseph C. Borelli  
Justin L. Brannan  
Andrew Cohen  
Costa G. Constantinides  
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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)

Nikole Hannah-Jones, Investigative Reporter  
New York Times Magazine and Co-Founder of  
Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting

State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.  
NYC 15th Senatorial District

Congressman Gregory Meeks  
NYC Fifth Congressional District

Melinda Katz, Queens Borough President

Mitchell Silver, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Liam Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Dorothy Lewandowski, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Kate Spellman, Senior Advisor  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Stacey Pheffer Amato, Assemblywoman

Lynn Kelly, Executive Director  
New Yorkers for Parks

Dan Falt, Senior Project Manager  
Coastal Restoration Branch  
Army Corps of Engineers, New York District

Jeremy Jones, Beach 92<sup>nd</sup> Street  
John, Rockaway resident

Claire Hilger, Rockaway Beach Resident and Secretary  
of the Rockaway Beach Civic Assoc.

Hank Iori, President of Belle Harbor Property Owners  
Association

Allen Swern, Member, Belle Harbor Property Owners  
Association

John Signorelli, Belle Harbor Property Owners  
Association

Joe Hardigan, Rockaway Resident, Retired Firefighter

Andrea Cologne, Community Engagement Organizer  
Rockaway Youth Task Force

Joan (sic) Lorrie, Clinical Social Worker  
Rockaway Resident

Maribelle Araho, Owner of Caracas on the Boardwalk,  
Rockaway Beach & Connection between Parks Department  
and Concessions in Rockaway Beach



2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good morning  
4 everybody and welcome to the Parks and Recreation  
5 Committee hearing, which is going to be on protecting  
6 our city's beaches from erosion, but we do have  
7 another matter, which we will be voting on as we go  
8 forth this day, and we have one person who is here to  
9 testify on that. That is the renaming of nearly 100  
10 streets and thoroughfares in the city of New York for  
11 the distinguished New Yorkers who are no longer with  
12 us. Nikole Hannah-Jones, if you would come forward  
13 and take a seat and give us your thoughts on that.  
14 [background comments, pause] Do you see the light?  
15 Okay, you're set.

16 NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES: Now I see the  
17 light.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm glad  
19 somebody does.

20 NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES: [laughs] We've got  
21 dark days. Good morning. I am here to briefly speak  
22 in favor of the renaming of Gold Street from Ida B.  
23 Wells Barnett who was I think one of the greatest  
24 journalists in the history of our country. She, of  
25 course, became a Brooklyn resident briefly after she

2 was run out of Memphis for writing an editorial about  
3 the true cause of the lynching for black men. One of  
4 her favorite quotes of—I guess I should introduce  
5 myself, huh? Sorry. I'm very passionate about Ida  
6 B. Wells. My name is Nikole Hannah-Jones. I'm an  
7 investigative reporter at the New York Times Magazine  
8 and I'm also the co-founder of an organization called  
9 the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting,  
10 and what we do is train and mentor journalists of  
11 color to work in the tradition of Ida B. Wells to  
12 become investigative journalists as well. What Ida B.  
13 Wells said was to right wrongs, you must shine the  
14 light of truth upon them, and I think in this day,  
15 it's very important to recognize those fearless  
16 journalists in a free press who worked very hard to  
17 shine the light of truth on this country and public  
18 officials who were withholding civil rights  
19 Americans, and I think this is kind of a perfect time  
20 to think about renaming a street after Ms. Wells.  
21 She came to live here the city briefly after she was  
22 run out of town for her lynching editorials. She  
23 gave a speech here in New York, and that allowed her  
24 the proceeds to print that editorial into a pamphlet,  
25 which was disbursed out across the world, and really

2 shined a light on the lynching of black men in this  
3 country, and she actually dedicated that first  
4 pamphlet to the black women of Brooklyn and New York.  
5 So, I would just like to argue in favor of the  
6 renaming. I think it would be great for the citizens  
7 of our great borough.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] With  
9 your testimony [on mic] with your testimony, I think  
10 it's unanimous because you're really close to  
11 testifying on this. I'll talk a little more about it  
12 later, but there are other great New Yorkers that—and  
13 some people who weren't necessarily New Yorkers who  
14 are going to be naming streets, and we'll pass it in  
15 committee today I'm sure, and as a former editor of  
16 my school paper being, too, (sic) I am obviously  
17 happy to be a supporter journalist. So, thank you  
18 for being here today.

19 NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We have been  
21 joined thus far by my colleague Andy Cohen from the  
22 Bronx, and from the far southern reaches of the  
23 borough of Queens, Mr. Donovan Richards. Good  
24 morning everybody again, and I'm going to read an  
25 opening statement, and then we'll call our first

2 witnesses on the public hearing today. This hearing  
3 will examine the practices used by multiple levels of  
4 government to combat beach erosion and the success  
5 rate of those efforts and more specifically, but more  
6 specifically we will look into the closure by the  
7 Department of Parks and Recreation, the relatively  
8 large swath of the Rockaway Beaches due to erosion.  
9 The city has 14 miles of beaches, which are managed  
10 by the Department of Parks and Recreation. We know  
11 erosion is a natural and usually cyclical process in  
12 which a beach erosion builds back up again in  
13 response to wave action and usually worsens during  
14 severe storm. Most of the time that's in the winter  
15 in New York City. Climate change plays a role as  
16 well. According to the New York City Panel on  
17 Climate Change the sea level around New York City has  
18 risen 1.1 feet in the last 115 years and more  
19 worrisome, is projected to rise an additional 2.5  
20 feet by the year 2050. While it is unknown what  
21 exact effect on erosion this may have, it is likely  
22 to be significant as time goes by. Erosion is  
23 typically managed with hard and soft techniques.  
24 Hard engineering includes using permanent manmade  
25 structures such as jetties, seawalls, groins and



2 revetments to revetments to stabilize shorelines and  
3 protect property behind those structures. Soft  
4 engineering includes using natural elements such as  
5 sands, dunes, and vegetation to soften the land water  
6 interface helping prevent erosive forces from  
7 reaching the back shore. Soft engineering for  
8 coastal management includes beach nourishment, re-  
9 nourishment, sand dune stabilization and beach  
10 drainage. Policymakers, and many in this room have  
11 to be careful in deciding what types of erosion  
12 techniques to promote. Ill conceived structures  
13 built to prevent erosion in one location may actually  
14 increase in adjacent locations by blocking sand  
15 movement deflecting or increasing wave energies and  
16 removing vegetation resulting in the disruption of  
17 the natural balance of shoreline change. The New York  
18 State Department of Environmental Conservation, the  
19 DEC, identifies coastal areas vulnerable to erosion  
20 and designates them as coastal erosion hazards and  
21 areas. DEC has identified three of those in the  
22 city, the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, Coney Island  
23 in Brooklyn, and the South Shore of Staten Island.  
24 The Rockaways have historically suffered a great deal  
25 as a result of erosion and just as they have

2 recovered from much of their beaches after Super Sam  
3 Sandy--Super Storm Sandy, last year was particularly  
4 difficult as numerous Nor'easters struck the city  
5 including this winter, and even into the spring and  
6 dealt a very harsh blow to the beaches. As a result  
7 of the severe erosion on May 21<sup>st</sup>, just a few days  
8 before the beaches were to open, the Parks Department  
9 announced that an 11-block stretch of Rockaway Beach  
10 between Beach 91<sup>st</sup> and Beach 102 Street would be  
11 closed indefinitely because of the erosion of the sand  
12 there. This comes--this news comes years after the  
13 Army Corps replenished sand in the area in 2014  
14 following Sandy, but the re-nourishment was obviously  
15 not enough in and of itself to secure the viability  
16 of the area for a longer period of time. While the  
17 severity of the erosion faced by the Rockaways has  
18 come as a surprise to no one, least of all over  
19 100,000 people who live there, the lack of a  
20 sufficient and speedy response by all levels of  
21 government to fix the situations--the situation  
22 continue to astound many in the city. A recent New  
23 York Times article put it very clearly: "How the  
24 Rockaways got to this point is a story of an inaction  
25 and finger-pointing between New York City officials

2 and the Army Corps of Engineers whose mission  
3 includes reducing the risk in coastal areas and which  
4 has played a large role in restoring the region's  
5 coastline after Hurricane Sandy. It is clear that the  
6 city and its federal partners need to act fast to fix  
7 this. That's one of the focuses today of this  
8 hearing. It seems clear that a multi-pronged  
9 approach is absolutely necessary including the re-  
10 nourishment of sand along with other approaches to  
11 limit more erosion and to keep the sand that's  
12 already there like building jetties, groins and other  
13 structures to keep more sand from being lost. The  
14 activists and residents of the Rockaways, whom I've  
15 had the pleasure of working with for many, many years  
16 have done everything in their power to protect their  
17 beaches and continue to do so by protesting, writing  
18 to their elected officials all of whom will be here  
19 today, and raising the issue at a recent mayoral town  
20 hall, but all of this activism has not resulted in  
21 the thing that they need the most, a beach that is  
22 fully open and accessible to the residents of the  
23 Rockaways and all the people who want to use it. The  
24 beach has been immortalized in song by the Ramones.  
25 It was a long time ago, but the words still ring

1 true. We need to revisit whether the old techniques  
2 of combatting erosion are still working, and look at  
3 alternatives that may be better at fighting erosion  
4 in our changing world, but we need to do so quickly  
5 and efficiently so that the gems of our city's summer  
6 recreational spaces, our beaches are viable now and  
7 for future generations. I hope that this hearing  
8 helps to get us there. Thank you. We will be taking  
9 a brief part of this hearing, as I said before, to  
10 vote on two pieces of legislation. The first will be  
11 our semi-annual street ceremonial co-naming bill. The  
12 bill will ceremonially name 94  
13 thoroughfares and public places throughout the city.  
14 I am proud of my own district to be co-naming  
15 Ahmadiyya Way in Community Board 8, Armenia  
16 Way in Community Board 11 and just down the  
17 block from that we will also rename Bell  
18 Boulevard where it reaches the Long Island  
19 Expressway Bayside Hills 9/11 Memorial Way,  
20 and I urge my colleagues on this committee to  
21 vote in favor of this legislation. The  
22 second is a resolution co-sponsored by  
23 Council Member Jumaane Williams and our  
24  
25

2 Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo. This  
3 resolution would recognize the tremendous  
4 contributions that New Yorkers of Haitian  
5 ancestry have made to our city and state. It  
6 would summarily designate an area of Flatbush  
7 in Brooklyn as Little Haiti, and I urge my  
8 colleagues again to support this resolution  
9 as well. Alright, I've spoken enough. We  
10 have with the Borough President here.

11  
12 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] She's on her way  
13 up.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: ON her way up.  
15 Alright, I am going to take the chair's indulgence  
16 and I'm going to wait for my borough president who is  
17 an outstanding supporters of parks as Commissioner  
18 Lewandowski of Queens knows and Commissioner Silver  
19 knows. So, the borough presidents before, and I'll  
20 mention the Borough Presidents before here were also  
21 outstanding supporters of our parks. To join the  
22 borough president at this times as well, we are  
23 joined by Senator Addabbo if you would, you could  
24 take one of those seats, I would be happy.  
25 [background comments, pause] Alright, I'm told that

2 the Borough President and Congressman Gregory Meeks  
3 are in the elevator. So, that's assuming the  
4 elevators are working. I want to recognize Senator  
5 Addabbo former Chair of the Parks Committee of the  
6 New York City Council.

7 SENATOR ADDABBO: A great time.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: He told me it  
9 was the best job he ever had. That's on the record  
10 now, Joe so.

11 SENATOR ADDABBO: [off mic] Yes, I want  
12 to thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Other than being  
14 a state senator, of course.

15 SENATOR ADDABBO: [off mic] Of course.  
16 [background comments, laughter, pause]

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Are they taking  
18 an elevator or are they walking? [background  
19 comments, pause] Good morning Borough President.  
20 Could you—yes, would you?

21 MELINDA KATZ: [off mic] [interposing]  
22 Yes, uh-hm. What would you like me to do?

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'd like you to  
24 join Senator Addabbo at the—at the seat there along  
25 with Congressman Meeks. Good morning everybody.

1 COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

15

2 MELINDA KATZ: [off mic] Good morning.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good morning  
4 Congressman.

5 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: Good morning.

6 [background comments, pause]

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, Borough  
8 President, ladies first.

9 MELINDA KATZ: Do you want the  
10 Congressman to go first?

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: As I said,  
12 Congressman first. That's what I meant to say. It's  
13 clearly—whoever would like to go first.

14 MELINDA KATZ: [off mic] I actually need  
15 my testimony to read that. You don't have one. Have  
16 one.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good morning and  
18 welcome to—

19 MELINDA KATZ: Chair, I apologize for the  
20 confusion but I will say that one thing about this  
21 office building your security is impeccable  
22 downstairs. [laughter]

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I wish I could  
24 take credit for that, but—

25

2 MELINDA KATZ: The Borough President, the  
3 Congressman we were making calls. So, we thank you  
4 for that. This has been a very frustrating  
5 experience in the Rockaways. As you know, we had  
6 Super Storm Sandy many years ago, and many years ago,  
7 and it has been one thing after the other to try and  
8 the beaches back to where they should be. As you  
9 know, recently, though, after a history of the Army  
10 Corps of Engineers after a history of getting the  
11 Boardwalk completed and actually safer for the  
12 residents of the borough of the area of Far  
13 Rockaways, which by the way is the first defense when  
14 it comes to Queens, right is the Rockaway beaches.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Right.

16 MELINDA KATZ: They have to be safe.  
17 They same way thy got to be safe in Coney Island, the  
18 same way they have to safe all over the city of New  
19 York, and to get to the point where there was at  
20 least some comfort level is extremely important.  
21 We're now awaiting the Army Corps of Engineers to  
22 really do the final jetties and all that has to come  
23 with protecting our beaches. To make it to this day,  
24 we have been very clear with the Parks Department  
25 that there is fear that the beaches would have to be



2 closed, but unless—because the sand had been coming  
3 out every single day, and it's just amazing how  
4 quickly it is eroding, and so we've had many  
5 discussions in addition to the Build-it-Back Program,  
6 in addition to all of the meetings that we've had  
7 with the Parks Department, and with the community.  
8 It really is the community that said we are watching  
9 the beaches erode. We are sitting here everyday  
10 seeing that the sand needs to be replenished, and  
11 unfortunately recently that hasn't happened. I think  
12 that everyone is waiting for the Army Corps of  
13 Engineers to finish what they need to do for the  
14 permit.

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, they are  
16 here this morning to testify.

17 MELINDA KATZ: But I would argue that  
18 there is a way for us to work with you the Army Corps  
19 of Engineers and out of an 80 something billion  
20 dollar budget in the City of New York and whatever  
21 number the budget is on the federal government—

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] A  
23 lot.

24 MELINDA KATZ: -there should be a way for  
25 us to put a small percentage of money back, and fill

2 these beaches with sand. [applause] Thank you, John  
3 Corey. [laughter]

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: No clapping.

5 MELINDA KATZ: It is—and it is just—it's  
6 one of those things where you look at it and you say  
7 I don't get it. It should be able to be done. I will  
8 tell you that Congressman Meeks and all of the  
9 elected officials and our good friend Senator Addabbo  
10 have been really great partners in this, and we  
11 understand that there is a permanent solution that is  
12 coming. Unfortunately, we met in Congressman Meek's  
13 office and he can talk more about this, but he  
14 convened a meeting a few weeks ago with the Army Corp  
15 and with the Parks Department talking about the  
16 ridiculousness of closing down 12 beaches because  
17 that's really why we are here today, right. So, you  
18 close down 12 beaches. You have a ferry to 108<sup>th</sup>  
19 Street. You close down 102<sup>nd</sup> Street to 91<sup>st</sup> Street,  
20 and so you have people coming off the ferry. You  
21 need to give them a reason to get past the 102<sup>nd</sup>  
22 Street and get to the rest of the peninsula. We have  
23 dedicated so much time and effort over the last four  
24 years to build the Rockaways up to the tourist

2 attraction that it is. In fact, the ferry, by the  
3 way, is too small, right.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, it is.

5 MELINDA KATZ: So, now the city--

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
7 next year.

8 MELINDA KATZ: --needs to rebid for the--  
9 for bigger ferries and put more routes on the ferry,  
10 and yet we're closing 12 beaches. Now, I understand  
11 that the Commissioner called a lot of us a few days  
12 ago, Commissioner Silver who I have to say is always  
13 responsive and always there to talk to and always  
14 does try. I will say that. They are very on top of  
15 trying, and they are going to announce I believe the--  
16 I don't know if I'm telling secrets here. [laughs] I  
17 think it's fine, Commissioner, but they have now  
18 acquiesced and I think it's important to note in a  
19 good way that by the concessions, there will be two  
20 or three blocks open around the concessions. So, at  
21 least the concessions can survive and thrive during  
22 the summer months. The ferry is doing well, the  
23 Boardwalk. All of it is working, but I do think that  
24 over the next few weeks we should be able to figure  
25 out how to replenish those beaches, make sure that

2 the folks in Rockaways get exactly what they deserve,  
3 which is also safety. These beaches are not just  
4 about tourism. These beaches are all about the fact  
5 that it also protects the residents of the Rockaways,  
6 and if the sand is deteriorating so fast on those  
7 beaches, what's to stop it next from coming up  
8 against that Boardwalk and just going right over it  
9 in the next storm that comes, which is supposed to be  
10 the one storm out of 100 years, which we've had like  
11 five or six in the last few years. So, I think it's  
12 an important aspect that you had this hearing. I  
13 appreciate it very much. I know that my colleagues  
14 will have a lot to say as well. I do want to note  
15 the cooperation from the Parks Department and from  
16 Commissioner Silver, who is always responsive, and we  
17 do want to just acquiesce on one thing. I get the  
18 fact that the Army Corp is supposed to be doing the  
19 permanent fixing. I get the fact that it's not the  
20 norm for us to come in and put sand on the beaches.  
21 I will just say that after the Rockaways have been  
22 through what they've been through, after they are the  
23 ones that said you need a ferry because people will  
24 use it, and now we need a bigger and route ferry.  
25 After the Rockaways told us what danger they were in

2 every single day, after they're the ones that said  
3 that the sand was going to erode to the point where  
4 you're going to have to close beaches. I will argue  
5 that wherever the money comes from, it's time to  
6 replenish the sand for the safety and for the tourism  
7 in the Rockaways. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very  
9 much Borough President. Thank you for your advocacy.  
10 I know that you have been a staunch supporter of  
11 parks in general, but certainly I'm a very strong  
12 supporter of the Rockaway Peninsula, which as you  
13 said is our first line of defense. I was there the  
14 day after Irene with former Borough President  
15 Marshall. I thought that was a big deal because the  
16 fascia boarding on the Boardwalk was missing in many  
17 places until I was there the day after with former  
18 Borough President--and may her soul rest--Marshall  
19 after Sandy, and that was every nightmare hurricane  
20 that I had ever seen on video had come to my home  
21 borough. So, it is most importantly a matter of  
22 public safety. I think we would all agree on that,  
23 but we do call it Rockaway Beach. It's not the  
24 mountains. It's the beach. So, that's important.

2 So, thank you for your testimony this morning.

3 Congressman, how are you today?

4 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: I'm very good, Mr.  
5 Chairman.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You came here to  
7 say a few words?

8 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Please.

10 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: This is the first time  
11 I think I've testified before the City Council in  
12 person. I've sent notices, et cetera, but this—I  
13 thought it was important for me to be here.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're very happy  
15 that you're here with us today.

16 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: Because as the Borough  
17 President has indicated and long working with Senator  
18 Addabbo, this is issue that regards safety and  
19 resiliency, and it also requires a partnership,  
20 ultimately the partnership between the City of New  
21 York and, of course the federal government, but the  
22 Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of New York,  
23 and there's got to be that kind of cooperation and  
24 communication. That's important. I concur with the  
25 borough president in saying that Commissioner Silver

2 has been very responsive in the Parks Department.

3 You know, any time that I've called the borough waves  
4 (sic) have returned the call and/or appeared in the  
5 office as the meeting that we just had. But I also  
6 have to say that what caught me by surprise was a few  
7 days before the opening of the beach season was the  
8 first time that we were informed that because of sand  
9 erosion and though the community had been watching,  
10 et cetera, but because of the sand erosion that this  
11 12 blocks of beach would be closed for the summer.

12 No communication, no warning from anyone at that time  
13 and to anyone, and so, therefore, part of what I  
14 think that given the circumstance that we have in the  
15 Rockaways is I want to make sure that we have better  
16 communication because I believe that in that time if  
17 we had more notice welcome and collective together,  
18 given the amount of money that it would take to  
19 replenish the sand if we need to do that on a short-  
20 term bases, you could have at least try to  
21 collectively find a solution and a resolution to the  
22 problems so that the beaches would not have to be  
23 closed. We could have worked together and we could  
24 have looked, in fact, to see what else could we do  
25 had we had any--had more time, but it's their late

2 announcement that struck—struck me and with no  
3 solution other than we've got to shut the beach for  
4 the—for—for the season now. Yes, there has been four  
5 nor'easters I guess this past year or two that has  
6 ravaged the beaches, but we know that and we know  
7 what the plan has to be long range and I want to  
8 address that at the end of my remarks and what I  
9 think that we need to do because I think that the  
10 Army Corps has been working for the long-range. But  
11 when I look at what's taking place right now, and the  
12 negative effect and the financial impact that will  
13 lead and has led to a panic among local business  
14 owners who have built their businesses around the  
15 season of tourism, as well as the concessions and the  
16 profits they make therein. This is what they do for  
17 the whole year. They built their livelihoods around  
18 this season, and I know that there has been various  
19 city agencies that have pledged their support, but we  
20 need some urgency in the commitment so that we can  
21 have an effective alternative to what's taking place.  
22 So, we actually had to talk to the Rockaway Business  
23 Alliance, and we asked them what was going on, and  
24 they mentioned three things that they need to happen,  
25 and I know that the city is working on some. (1)



2 Rockaway Beach is open for business campaign. We  
3 need that opened and done citywide. (2) This may not  
4 be in their jurisdiction, but we need work because  
5 what also is hurting us during the summer season is  
6 we need and because of this the temporary lifting of  
7 the toll coming into the Rockaways for the summer  
8 season because the Cross Bay Bridge toll is  
9 strangling our community and further isolates the  
10 Rockaways from the—from the rest of the city, and (3)  
11 we could temporarily extend the scheduled ferry  
12 services until at least 11 between 11:00 and 12:00  
13 p.m. because that it allows for late night dining.  
14 You know, folks are on the Boardwalk. They're eating  
15 and they can get back on the boat and have a nice  
16 ride back. So, we need the ferry services scheduled  
17 to be open at least until 11:00 p.m. Now, the urgency  
18 that I—again, that the Rockaway Business Alliance  
19 related to me 75% of their members expect to lose a  
20 loss a customers as a result of this closing. Sixty-  
21 seven percent of their members expect a lower summer  
22 time revenue. Ninety-two percent will be increasing  
23 marketing efforts as a result costing them more money  
24 and 85%, of course, want their elected officials and  
25 the city agencies to advocate for Rockaway businesses

2 in particular. I think that needs to be happening.

3 So, let me must conclude with this. Now, I know that

4 we've got to find something immediate to try to save

5 some of this beach season if possible. I also know

6 as a result of our meeting that we had I introduced

7 and amendment because of the partnership, I

8 introduced and amendment in the Water Resource

9 Development Act that aims to expedite the U.S. Army

10 Corps of Engineers Super Storm Sandy Study. Through,

11 though the funding has already been appropriate for

12 coastal protections construction awaits the

13 finalization of the report, and while we continue to

14 search for short-term solutions to address this

15 summer's closure, I know and we're working together,

16 we must also work toward the long-term solutions for

17 protecting our coast from further erosion. So, the

18 fast track plans to safeguard or beaches because what

19 needs to be this plan has to be approved. The bill

20 that passed the house will fast track that so that it

21 could be approved, the Army Corps can be approved and

22 we can begin to work on the long-term, i.e., the

23 earlier. We need the bill to pass the Senate. I've

24 talked to Senator Schumer about that. So, I hope we

25 will get this done in time so that we don't have to

2 worry about a closure, and long-term closure for the  
3 next beach season and the beach season after that,  
4 but we've got to work in a—in a cooperative way and  
5 communicate with one another at all three levels of  
6 government, which I think fail to happen here.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very  
8 much, Congressman. I know you've been on top of this  
9 since the day after Sandy and it—I'm still blown away  
10 by what I saw that morning. So thank you for all  
11 your efforts, and I—I greatly appreciate that as do  
12 the residents of the Rockaways. At this time we're  
13 going to take a quick break in this hearing. I know  
14 we have Mr. Addabbo, but we will get to him very,  
15 very quickly. As I said, we will be voting on  
16 legislation to rename nearly 100 thoroughfares in the  
17 city of New York. We have been joined at this time  
18 by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer of Queens,  
19 Councilman Costa Constantinides of Queens, Councilman  
20 Andrew King of the Bronx, Councilman Eric Ulrich of  
21 Queens and, of course, Justin Brannan who represents  
22 a large swath of Southern Brooklyn. The first piece  
23 of legislation that we're going to vote on today is a  
24 preconsidered intro to rename 95 thoroughfares and  
25 public places. Among the people that are being—

2 having streets and thoroughfares renamed after them  
3 some of them are people that most New Yorkers have  
4 never heard of, but some of them are extremely famous  
5 including the boxer Muhammad Ali, Jack Ruden who led  
6 the Association for a Better New York. Joseph Pap  
7 who brought Shakespeare to millions in Central Park,  
8 Jimmy Breslin the writer, John Brian Marshall the  
9 former assemblyman and Vito Marcantonio the great  
10 congressman from the East Harlem way back in the day,  
11 but other people whose names I recognize and would be  
12 recognizable to some of those people in this room,  
13 Patrick Beckles and Linda MacDougal of East Elmhurst,  
14 Maria Thompson from Woodhaven. Sadly, Detective  
15 Miosotis Familia who was murdered last year, and  
16 firefighter Thomas Patrick Cullen among other heroes  
17 that we are renaming for today. So I could call on  
18 the clerk Billy Martin to call the roll, but before  
19 that I think Any Kind has a brief statement to make.  
20 Councilman. Anybody else?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, thank  
22 you, Mr. Chair. To all of us who have given names,  
23 street renaming throughout the city of New York, to  
24 the families I offer my love, we offer our support as  
25 we continue to remember all those who are beacons in

2 our community, but for me it's a very special day  
3 because out of the two street re-namings that are  
4 happening my district, one is dedicated to my father  
5 Andy Pops King, Jr. who was instrumental for 25 years  
6 in our neighborhood raising about 10,000 young men,  
7 saving their lives using basketball as a tool to  
8 build their character, protect them from the elements  
9 of the neighborhoods and just to be able to develop  
10 them into positive quality young men. So, I just  
11 want to let Pops know that we are grateful in the  
12 borough of the Bronx for all that he has done for  
13 many of the brothers who have become—they have become  
14 doctors, who have become judges who have become  
15 elected officials, and who are just continuing to  
16 pass the—do the work that he's done and laid the  
17 foundation in the North Bronx and beyond. So, with  
18 that being said, I want to thank you, Mr. Chair for  
19 allowing me share a private moment with you what my  
20 dad meant to so many other young men growing up  
21 today. So, thank you again. Thank you everyone, and  
22 looking forward and wanted to vote aye on all our  
23 street re-namings in the City of New York. Thank  
24 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
3 Councilman King. We'll also be hearing—I'm going to  
4 give him a second to settle in from Councilman  
5 Williams on the Little Haiti. Okay, it's going to be  
6 okay. Are you reading Councilman Williams? Go  
7 ahead.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.  
9 Chair. Is this on? Thank you, Mr. Chair, Council  
10 Members, Borough President. Hope everybody is okay.  
11 I just want to speak a little bit on Little Haiti,  
12 which we'll voting on as splotch of area in my  
13 district. I have to shout out Radneyse Bichotte who  
14 is really the one who helped spearhead this. As the  
15 local Council Member I proud to put it in. There has  
16 been a lot of issues locally around this issues  
17 particularly even with Anglo-Caribbean community, but  
18 I thought it was very important that this go forward.  
19 So, I'm going to make sure I put it on the record. I  
20 am also Anglo-Caribbean. My parents come from  
21 Granada, and I know that even—people have a tendency  
22 to point at others. So even within the Caribbean  
23 community there's often within that people who are  
24 overlooked, and so in this—in this day and age when  
25 Haiti was called and S-hole Country by the President

2 of the United States and I I'll say even as I was  
3 growing there's a tendency for folks to try to look  
4 past the contributions particularly of black history  
5 and in certain histories in particular. Africa and  
6 Haiti was one of those, and many of us used to joke  
7 about those cultures not know how much power was  
8 present in those cultures and I always as a black  
9 person and as an American, I am particularly indebted  
10 to Haiti (1) for being the first to free slaves, and  
11 (2) for doubling the size of this country, but again,  
12 even within the Caribbean community we somehow look  
13 down upon Haitians and their contributions and it  
14 wasn't just a language thing because growing up in a  
15 Caribbean church and there could be violent  
16 Panamanians were very much welcomed into that field  
17 and for some reason, Haitians were not. I think it's  
18 beginning to change. We saw a lot of the subtle  
19 changes after Fujis, but we still obviously have a  
20 long way to go. So, when there is a group of people  
21 who feel that they have a particular story, I always  
22 want to stand with those folks. And so, there were  
23 some people saying why can't we have Little  
24 Caribbean? Why can't we have little this, and I  
25 believe that we can have both. We have Little

2 Caribbean. I think we deserve and the Haitian  
3 community deserves to have Little Haiti. There's no  
4 reason when one of us rises all of us doesn't rise,  
5 and to those who say, well, it would needs to have a  
6 Little Grenada, Little Jamaica. There is something  
7 distinct when you go to my community. You do go to  
8 Caribbean restaurants Caribbean churches and you see  
9 everyone in the room enjoying and they have a good  
10 time. You go to a Haitian church, you go to a  
11 certain street, the music will change. The rice will  
12 get a little blacker, the—the culture will shift just  
13 a little bit in those churches and, of course the  
14 languages change. I think that deserves some  
15 recognition in addition to all the other culture, not  
16 at the expense of it. So, I'm very proud that we're  
17 going to be voting on this Little Haiti, and I'm  
18 looking forward to the Council voting on it, and  
19 again , thank you, Council—Assembly Member Radneyse  
20 Bichotte, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
22 Councilman. I do want to note among the names I read  
23 some of them before Toussaint L'Overture Boulevard is  
24 also going to be named. That's today as well. So,  
25 you might.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm sorry.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You're good.

4 Keep going.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I didn't know  
6 that on it today was Toussaint L'Overture. It is an  
7 extraordinary presence of one of the million people  
8 who primarily led the fight against slavery and we  
9 too often—I think purposefully are supposed to forget  
10 these heroes and forget the history. So that, you  
11 know, maybe history will repeat itself or something,  
12 but I see this going on in 2018. So, people like  
13 Toussaint L'Overture, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines  
14 should always be celebrated and should always be  
15 promoted and the history can help bring pride and  
16 honor to some people who for some reason are pushed  
17 to believe that they should not. So, I'm very proud  
18 that that name is here as well, and I look forward to  
19 Jean-Jacques Dessalines' future. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I learned  
21 about Mr. L'Overture at PS 201 in Queens, so we are  
22 getting something out.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
24 Sorry, I want to shout—Sorry Council Member Laurie  
25 Cumbo and Mark Treyger who also helped push this.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
3 Councilman. Among the other names, of course, are  
4 Ida B. Wells, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, great, great  
5 people of the stage and the screen and regrettably  
6 also Will Madonna who had been a staffer for then  
7 Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj who passed away much, much  
8 too young. So, with that, I am told we are going to  
9 be voting both of these at once. They'll be  
10 combined. So, Mr. Clerk.

11 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,  
12 roll call vote Committee on Parks. Chair Grodenchik.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Aye on all.

14 CLERK: Cohen.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Aye.

16 CLERK: Constantinides.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Aye

18 CLERK: King.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: [off mic] I vote  
20 aye, but I just want to free folks, God bless you.  
21 Let's go next with this program and let's go next.

22 FEMALE SPEAKER: I love the color. I love  
23 the color.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And I vote aye on  
25 all. [laughter]

2 CLERK: Van Bramer.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: I vote aye.

4 CLERK: Brannan.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Aye.

6 CLERK: Gjonaj.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Aye on all.

8 CLERK: Ulrich.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I vote aye on

10 all.

11 CLERK: By a vote of 8 in the affirmative  
12 0 in the negative and no abstentions, both items have  
13 been adopted by the committee.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Mr.  
15 Clerk. We will now resume the hearing. We will hold  
16 that open. There are three more members. I know  
17 that Councilman Moya is holding his own hearing  
18 across the street, and the other two members as well,  
19 and Mr. Borelli is in a hearing as well, and I don't  
20 know who the last person is. We are now going to  
21 hear from Senator Joseph Addabbo. Senator.

22 SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you, Mr. Chair  
23 and I want to thank the Committee Members as well for  
24 their time here today and allowing me to give  
25 testimony. I think my constituents and residents

2 from Rockaway that have show up as well. So, good  
3 morning all. I don't mean to dwell on the past  
4 frustrations of why we are here or how we got here or  
5 that the beach is closed. I think it's prudent upon  
6 ourselves to work together in going forward in how do  
7 we salvage the Summer of 2018. I am still hopeful  
8 that we can salvage some of this summer by reopening  
9 some, if not all, of the closed beaches and I want to  
10 thank Commissioner Silver for listening to our-our  
11 residents and the constituents and doing what he can,  
12 you know, for the safety of others and opening up  
13 some of those beaches. I do think it's unacceptable  
14 that, you know, as residents and people from all over  
15 the city come to the Rockaways and see closed  
16 beaches. You know, as the Congressman alluded to  
17 earlier about this bridge, the Cross Bay Memorial  
18 Bridge, hundreds of thousands of people come to  
19 Rockaway using this bridge and that God forsaken  
20 toll, but for them to come over this bridge and the  
21 first thing they see is a closed beach. So, that  
22 welcome sign that welcomes people to Rockaway might  
23 as well do not enter sign. It is unacceptable that  
24 they—the first beach they see when they come to  
25 Rockaway to visit is closed, and I—and I do think

2 this is unacceptable and I, you know, I know many of  
3 my constituents say this would never happen in Coney  
4 island. This would never happen in other parts of  
5 the city, and so, part of this discussion we urge—we  
6 respectfully request that Rockaway Beach be treated  
7 just like any other shoreline in the city. The state  
8 closures are not only detrimental to the visitors who  
9 come to Rockaway but also to the businesses. The  
10 businesses are not warned at all about the closing of  
11 the beaches, and this local economy that depends upon  
12 these open beaches is certainly at a detriment as  
13 well. So, I do believe that there is a way to reopen  
14 these beaches this summer. Collectively by working  
15 together on every level of government, I do believe  
16 there is a way whether we need to capitalize on the  
17 fact the Army Corps of Engineers is doing work not  
18 too far away in Long Island. If we can capitalize on  
19 the fact that they are there and taking that  
20 opportunity to urge them to replenish the sand that  
21 is needed to open the beaches this summer, and  
22 collectively we can find a funding formula to bridge  
23 that gap of the cost of replenishing the beaches or  
24 the aid of the Army Corp coming here, whether it be  
25 through the city budget or even state or federal.

2 Going forward so that we don't find ourselves in this  
3 predicament again, going forward for future beach  
4 seasons, I would look forward to working with my  
5 constituents and the agencies in holding meetings  
6 both locally in Rockaway and certainly hopefully this  
7 committee as well using its authority that we could  
8 figure out in future beach openings, but we aren't  
9 faced with this situation again. To get a call four  
10 days before the beach opening season to say that  
11 there are closed beaches due to erosion, which  
12 doesn't happen overnight. So, hopefully, as we go  
13 forward, we can have these meetings well before the  
14 beach opening season to avoid this situation and as I  
15 mentioned, my constituents being part of that meeting  
16 or those meetings, if these constituents were heard  
17 after Sandy six years ago, if these residents were  
18 heard, we might not be in this situation because  
19 their plea for groins and for jetties have been  
20 ignored, but yet my residents who know far more than  
21 us about beach life and what happens on the beaches  
22 if they were heard, we might be in this situation.  
23 So, I'm hopeful that are voices are heard going  
24 forward. I am hopeful that the authority given to  
25 this committee can be heard as well as we work

2 together, as we go forward to once again like I said,  
3 salvage this summer season. We know the Army Corps  
4 is planning to work in the Rockaway Beaches in 2019-  
5 2020, but we live in the now, and we have a situation  
6 that is facing us now, and I think as elected  
7 officials on every level we can work together to find  
8 some way to salvage this summer season 2018. I thank  
9 you to all the partners as we work together and I  
10 thank this committee for their time and the  
11 opportunity to give testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you and  
13 thank you to all. Really, I have had the honor of  
14 working with the residents of the Rockaways for going  
15 on a really, really long time but especially after  
16 Sandy in many roles that I've had at Borough Hall and  
17 the three great borough presidents including the one  
18 that we have here today. They've all been champions  
19 of the Rockaways. They've all been champions of  
20 parks. I know that the Borough President wanted to  
21 make--just to add to her statement.

22 MELINDA KATZ: So, you know I was getting  
23 over the security from John. (sic)

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You're getting  
25 over the security, because--

2 MELINDA KATZ: [interposing] So, just-  
3 just very quickly I-I did want to just make an  
4 acknowledgment of the community board and all of the  
5 civic associations that have worked so hard over the  
6 last five years. You know, we would not be where we  
7 are without them. Through the changing leadership  
8 and the Borough President's office, and the Mayor's  
9 office, all of that, we would not be sitting here  
10 today talking about these problems. We would be  
11 talking about much greater problems were it not for  
12 them. I don't think that you want to belittle what  
13 we're doing, but really they've done a yeoman's job  
14 in keeping the faith out there, and also working  
15 hard. I do want to thank Councilman Ulrich,  
16 Councilman Richards for the work that they do out in  
17 the Rockaways and for their constituents and just as  
18 a point of information, Mr. Chair, we also want to  
19 make sure that the Parks Department talks a little  
20 bit about what's happening to the rest of the  
21 peninsula, right? Because we hear a lot about the  
22 tourist areas, and that's great, but there's also a  
23 lot of areas that are protecting homes right, and  
24 their ponds are freezing, and applying is harder.  
25 (sic) All of this going down in Far Rockaway, and we



2 want to make sure that we know what type of studies  
3 are being done on those beaches so that we don't have  
4 closures over there as well. Just a point of  
5 information, and Andy King, you're from the Bronx,  
6 but if you want to move to Queens as long as you  
7 don't run against some other Council of for Borough  
8 President, we're okay with that. [laughter] Who is  
9 going to wear the colors? So, we thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I got the colors  
11 on, too.

12 MELINDA KATZ: Mr. Chairman, thank you  
13 for your work for the—for three Queensborough  
14 Presidents and for your work in the Council. You  
15 were, in fact, the first person to text me when they  
16 announced the closings of the beaches in the  
17 Rockaways and said, we're going to do a hearing, and  
18 we appreciate that support.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you, Borough  
20 President. I thank you also for bringing up the role  
21 of the community board and I—I remember the words the  
22 morning after Sandy, John Gasco who has been the  
23 District Manager out there I think since I was in  
24 grade school, but he said, you know, 25 years at that  
25 time how long he had been there and his workers

2 undone overnight, but we have made great strides.  
3 The people of the Rockaways are incredibly resilient.  
4 We know that. Those of us who have had the time and  
5 the pleasure to work with them on a myriad of issues  
6 over the years know how tough they are. They are  
7 true New Yorkers in every sense of the word, and  
8 they're on the front lines of defense when it comes  
9 to our shoreline. I believe at this time Councilman  
10 Richards would like to make a little statement.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Sure, and I'll  
12 be brief, and I want to thank you Chair Grodenchik,  
13 not Garodnick, because I think-

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Don't start that  
15 please.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [laughs] And  
17 certainly when this is announced, you know, one of  
18 the first calls that Eric and I got was from you and  
19 I want to thank you for your leadership in holding  
20 this hearing today. Just a few points on, and  
21 although I don't represent this section of the  
22 Rockaways, I just wanted to make sure that it was  
23 important that I was here to stand I solidarity with  
24 my colleague Eric Ulrich because what affects the  
25 west end also affects the east end, and as I spoke to

2 the Commissioner about this earlier last week, you  
3 know this is about process as well, and we want to  
4 ensure that communities have enough of a window to  
5 adjust in the event of climate change. This is not  
6 going to be the last conversation on beach erosion,  
7 on the effects of climate change across our city, and  
8 I think it's critical that communication is given in  
9 advance. I don't know if we're looking at bills in  
10 relation to—to reporting on specifics around beach  
11 closures, but I'm hoping that we're going to  
12 seriously look and entertain some pieces of  
13 legislation that I think could prevent something like  
14 this from happening in the near future. I also want  
15 to talk about the inequities that we've certainly  
16 witnessed as you look from east to west, work from  
17 west to east, but we have around 50 or 60 blocks of  
18 beaches, beachfront property that is currently closed  
19 and I definitely get the sensitivity around the  
20 piping plovers, but I also understand that, you know,  
21 as a representative of the eastern portion of the  
22 Rockaways how this has hurt the economy certainly for  
23 the eastern portion and yes there are some great  
24 things that have happened, and I want to give a lot  
25 of credit to our Commissioner who has invested a heck

2 of a lot of money into the Rockaways into our park  
3 infrastructure, but I think that this conversation is  
4 such a critical one, and I don't want us to get just  
5 blindsided by talking of this portion of the beach  
6 and not talking of the injustices that we faced for  
7 the last 40 years on the eastern end when it comes to  
8 protections, and as well as ensuring that there are  
9 amenities and other things along the eastern portion  
10 of the peninsula as well. So, I'm hoping that this  
11 is going to lead into that conversation of looking at  
12 the permitting. I know the Army Corps is here today,  
13 and we look forward to having a deeper conversation  
14 about how we can ensure that (1) economically we can  
15 see some justice finally on the east end, but (2)  
16 what that protection looks like as we—as we move  
17 further along the peninsula. So, I want to thank  
18 everybody, thank the Community Board. I see Hank. I  
19 see John Corey here. I see many of the leaders who  
20 have led this fight, and I thought it was just  
21 important to stick my head in to show solidarity with  
22 you. So, look forward to future conversations on  
23 this.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
25 Councilman Richards. We're going to hear a few words

2 now from Councilman Eric Ulrich who represents the  
3 affected section of beach that we have been talking  
4 about today. He has been joined by his assistant.

5 [laughter]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: It's my boss.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: If you could  
8 introduce her as well, I would appreciate if you put  
9 that on the record. Councilman.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Right, Lily.

11 Okay, she's a little shy.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: She's a little  
13 quiet.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I know who she  
15 gets that from. Not me.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: But good morning,  
18 Mr. Chair

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
20 Good morning.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: --and my  
22 colleagues in government and Commissioner thank you  
23 for being here today. This is a very important  
24 hearing and as you can see, so many of my  
25 constituents and civic leaders have taken the day

2 off. Some of them are retired. Some of them are  
3 not, you know, they—they took a day off of work to be  
4 here because they really care about their  
5 communities, and this is an issue that is deeply  
6 personal to them, and because it's so important to  
7 them, it's important to me, and it's important to us  
8 and I don't think that can be understated. So, I'm a  
9 little disappointed and I—I just want to get this on  
10 the record to say in the lack of communication and  
11 the lack of transparency and then the process, and so  
12 this is just a statement. It's not necessarily  
13 something that I'm asking the Parks Department to  
14 respond to necessarily. You know one week before the  
15 announcement we had an Executive Budget hearing, and  
16 I had—we had two rounds of questions, and I asked  
17 questions in both rounds and Commissioner Silver and  
18 Deputy Commissioner Liam Kavanagh responded to those  
19 questions, and I was asking about sun tan lotion  
20 dispensers and dog poopy bags and all the other  
21 things that my constituents were bringing to my  
22 attention. I was not aware at the time that the  
23 Parks Department was about to announce that, you  
24 know, more than ten blocks of the most popular part  
25 of the beach would be closed, and I—I think it—it is

2 a little disingenuous to say the very least that they  
3 could come before the City Council under oath knowing  
4 full well that a week later they're going to announce  
5 these beach closures and not even mention it or-or  
6 bring up the erosion issue in any way. So, it was  
7 almost like everything was fine. So, I'm really  
8 disappointed about that because I learned about it  
9 when I got a call from Commissioner Lewandowski along  
10 with the other elected officials, and-and that is  
11 profoundly disappointing to me because I think that  
12 the elected officials have been very upfront about a  
13 lot of things and-and very forthcoming and very  
14 supportive of the Parks Department since Hurricane  
15 Sandy and even before Hurricane Sandy. My office  
16 works very well with Portia Danford. I think she  
17 does an amazing job representing the Parks Department  
18 in Rockaway, but, you know, these decisions that have  
19 been made and are being made are being made higher up  
20 on the food chain, if you will. So, you know, again  
21 I am disappointed. I know my constituents were  
22 really caught off guard, were really frustrated. I  
23 now that the Parks Department has some-some news to  
24 announce today that I-I read about online last night.  
25 I'll let them do that, and if they already did okay.

2 Oh, you already did? The Borough President did.

3 Okay, great, but, you know, the point is that we have  
4 a long way to go and—and I think that if we want to  
5 repair the bonds of trust that exist between my  
6 community and my constituents in the Parks Department  
7 we need to begin that today, that process today, and  
8 I'm hoping that the Parks Department is willing to do  
9 that because we certainly are willing to do that as  
10 well. I have several questions related to the  
11 erosion and the studies and everything else. I'll  
12 save that until after the Commission's testimony.  
13 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
15 Councilman Ulrich. Thank you to your assistant for  
16 being here today. Congressman.

17 CONGRESSMAN MEEKS: Yeah, let me just real  
18 quick to both of them because I also want to  
19 compliment both of our Councilmen who have been  
20 working diligently across, even across ours here. We  
21 need to learn something about that in Washington D.C.  
22 when we're there [laughter] and all the things how—  
23 how you can work together, but when you have a common  
24 interest in a peninsula that is actually one, and I  
25 think that what Councilman Donovan—Donovan what—what



2 you said is important. I want to bring this because  
3 all of the constituency here understands that in this  
4 sense that we had a tour with the Army Corps and I  
5 wanted to say that the Army Corps has been working  
6 diligently with me and Senator Schumer in trying to  
7 provide long-term resiliency to the-to the-to the  
8 beach front as well as the Bay Side because they're  
9 both tremendously important and what we did and my of  
10 my constituents because I represent the entire  
11 peninsula, they participated in it. We went around  
12 the whole peninsula from the east to the west end on  
13 the beach side and the bay side so that everybody  
14 could see how everything is interconnected. What  
15 affects one on that peninsula affects all, and they  
16 looked at their shortcomings, and what we need to do  
17 in the future along with the Army Corps and we just  
18 need to make sure that that line of communication and  
19 I just wanted to make sure that to my colleagues on  
20 the City Council that the federal with the Army Corps  
21 we have to do and take up our responsibility. So,  
22 it's not about finger pointing to the City Parks  
23 Department or the Army Corps or someone in the state.  
24 All of us have a responsibility to get this done and  
25 to get it done right, and so I just wanted to make

2 sure I'm on the record clear that on the federal  
3 government's side along with the Army Corps we will  
4 be working collectively and I will continue to work  
5 and communicate with you, and I hope you all will so  
6 we can expedite finally a permanent fixture because  
7 want to be back here next year where we have the same  
8 problem happening all over again.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I don't want to  
10 be back here on this again because I only get one  
11 hearing a month. So I got to be very judicious. I  
12 do want to thank you Congressman for summing up.  
13 This is really about coming together and about doing  
14 what is best not just for the beaches in the  
15 Rockaways but for all the beaches that guard our  
16 Southern Border of New York City, and I-I even  
17 remember Orchard Beach up in the Bronx, Councilman  
18 Gjonaj. So, these are important. They're not only  
19 the first line of defense, but they are very, very  
20 important for recreation sources for millions and  
21 millions of New Yorkers. With that, I am going to  
22 release this panel. I thank you for being here  
23 today. I thank you for coming in some cases all the  
24 way from the Rockaways. I know it's a long trip. Mr.  
25 Martin, we have been joined by Council Members Koo

2 and Councilman Borelli. Borelli represents a large  
3 beach on the south shore of Long Island as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: [off mic] Staten  
5 Island.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Staten Island,  
7 I'm sorry. That was my—my slip. So, would you call  
8 the roll again?

9 CLERK: Council Member Koo.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [off mic] I vote aye.

11 CLERK: Council Member Borelli.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: [off mic] Aye.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Like clockwork  
14 here. I want to thank all you folks for being h ere  
15 today. This is the best attendance we've had at one  
16 of our hearings. So, I think Mr. Gjonaj wants to say  
17 one word as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair  
19 and I just want to echo some of the comments made by  
20 my colleagues as well as the Congressman and the  
21 Borough President and Senator. Certainly, we need to  
22 be more proactive than reactive and when it comes to  
23 these natural resources where—we own it to the  
24 waterfront communities, the families all New Yorkers  
25 that we get out of these things and not wait for

2 these last minute surprises that will impact not only  
3 those communities, but all New Yorkers and I hope  
4 that we can moving forward we'll be more transparent,  
5 more aggressive, and more proactive on short-term and  
6 long-term commitments that are needed to protect our  
7 waterfront communities.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
9 Councilman Gjonaj. It's now my pleasure to call the  
10 Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for the City of  
11 New York Mr. Mitchell Silver and the first Deputy  
12 Commissioner of the department Liam Kavanagh and  
13 anybody else who might be joining you. Do you need  
14 more chairs? Are there enough chairs there? We've  
15 joined—good to see you Commissioner Lewandowski as  
16 always, and could the young lady on the end identify  
17 herself as well for the record.

18 KATE SPELLMAN: I am Kate Spellman,  
19 Senior Advisor at NYC Parks.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, very  
21 much. If the Clerk will now swear in the panel, and  
22 then we can begin with the Commissioner's testimony.

23 CLERK: Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
24 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
25 testimony before this committee today?

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I do.

3 CLERK: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
5 Commissioner and thank you for being here, and thank  
6 you for always being responsive to the needs of 8.6  
7 million New Yorkers when it comes to parks and  
8 recreation. Please begin.

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Good morning Chair  
10 Grodenchik and members of the Committee on Parks and  
11 Recreation. I'm Mitchell Silver, Commissioner of New  
12 York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Thank  
13 you for inviting us to offer testimony today  
14 regarding efforts we're undertaking to mitigate  
15 erosion at our city beaches. NYC Parks is the  
16 steward of 14 miles of beaches, which are open for  
17 swimming from Memorial Day through the weekend  
18 following Labor Day. Our recreational beaches  
19 include Orchard beach in the Bronx, Coney Island,  
20 Brighton and Manhattan Beaches in Brooklyn, Rockaway  
21 Beach in Queens and in Staten Island South Midland,  
22 Wolfe's Ponds and Cedar Grove Beaches. Our city  
23 beaches attract millions visitors every year and  
24 serve as an important recreational outlet for New  
25 Yorkers. So, the care and maintenance of our beaches

2 is a top priority for NYC Parks. Last month, NYC  
3 Parks announced that swimming access to Rockaway  
4 Beach will be closed this summer in an area between  
5 91<sup>st</sup> Street Beach 102<sup>nd</sup> Street in order to maintain  
6 the protective dune and keep swimmers safe. As many  
7 of you know, following Super Storm Sandy and as part  
8 of the Rockaway Boardwalk construction, roughly a  
9 100-foot wide berm was installed along the beach that  
10 provides strong protection to inland residents. That  
11 dune occupies much of the space that was previously  
12 available for active recreation in the years before  
13 Sandy. This loss of recreational space was  
14 compounded by this winter's and spring's harsh  
15 weather, which resulted in sharply heightened erosion  
16 along this section of the beach. Due to the lack of  
17 protection groins and unfortunately the confluence of  
18 factors means that there is simply not enough beach  
19 are in this location to safely operate swimming and  
20 recreational activities at this time. This was not  
21 an easy decision to make, and we understand the  
22 committee's frustration about the closure. We worked  
23 through every conceivable alternative to avoid  
24 closure and explored many alternative approaches to  
25 appropriately staging our beach monitoring and rescue

2 operations along the beach. They closely monitored  
3 the condition of the beach from April 30<sup>th</sup> through  
4 May 13<sup>th</sup>. We took careful measurements of the  
5 distance of the toe of the dune and the high and low  
6 tidelines to estimate how much space would be  
7 available for recreational use. As the start of the  
8 beach season approached and the heightened erosion  
9 caused by this season's storms became more and more  
10 apparent we ultimately had to make the difficult  
11 decision in the interest of public safety, which will  
12 always remain our top priority. We will continue to  
13 coordinate in close partnership with the Mayor's  
14 Office of Recovery and Resiliency with the United  
15 States Army Corps of Engineers on their Rockaways  
16 Reformulation Study, the federal government's long-  
17 term solution to mitigate erosion and protect our  
18 coastline along the Rockaways with new dunes, sand  
19 replenishments and groins, which are necessary to  
20 keep sand in place, and prevent it from washing away  
21 with the tides. We're committed to making sure the  
22 U.S. Army Corps will see this work through as soon as  
23 possible, and the city has stayed closely engaged  
24 with the Army Corps to push this project forward.  
25 Last February, Mayor de Blasio and U.S. Senator Chuck

2 Schumer met in Washington with the head of the U.S.  
3 Army Corps of Engineers and secured a commitment to  
4 expedite construction of this vital project. It is  
5 our understanding that construction for this project  
6 will be underway by 2020 if not sooner. The Army  
7 Corps will reportedly be sharing this draft report in  
8 August followed by a final report in November, we  
9 eagerly await these next steps. Beach replenishment  
10 is a complicated and expensive endeavor requiring  
11 federal permits, and state approval. The City has  
12 had a long and successful history of coordinating  
13 with the U.S. Army Corp of engineers and the New York  
14 State Department of Environmental Conservation who  
15 are the primary regulatory entities tasked with  
16 oversight of our shorelines. Following Super Storm  
17 Sandy the city took immediate protective measures to  
18 address the condition of the beach and Boardwalk.  
19 The \$341 million reconstruction project made the  
20 beach wider than ever, and rebuilt 5.5 miles of  
21 Boardwalk, installing retaining walls, and adding  
22 additional sand. We coordinated closely with the  
23 Army Corps in hopes the city's project would dovetail  
24 with the construction of the reformulation project  
25 originally slated for 2016. Though the Army Corps



2 project schedule has been delayed, they have provided  
3 a great deal of vital support for the beach. The  
4 Army Corp's most recent beach replenishment project  
5 in this section of the Rockaways was completed in  
6 2014, and supplied three million cubic yards of sand  
7 from Beach 19 to Beach 149 along the Rockaway  
8 shoreline. Unfortunately, in the years following the  
9 replenishment several sections continued to  
10 experience significant beach erosion most notably  
11 along the Beach 90s. To assess the severity of this  
12 erosion, a marine engineering Oncore Contract from  
13 the City's Economic Development Corporation was  
14 utilize to conduct and erosion study in the  
15 Rockaways. The report was finalized in November of  
16 2017 and the results were shared with local residents  
17 and elected officials. The report found that through  
18 sig-though significant erosion had occurred in these  
19 sections, the beach was wider from Beach 86 to Beach  
20 149 that at almost any time in the last 40 years. It  
21 also found the overall level of resiliency protection  
22 in both Beach 90s and Beach 140s, was significantly  
23 greater than at any point in the last 40 years thanks  
24 to the dune that was constructed after Super Storm  
25 Sandy. As most local residents we are well aware, we

2 confirmed at that time that a key portion of the  
3 beach from Beach 91<sup>st</sup> to 102<sup>nd</sup> had severely eroded.  
4 We prompted, which prompted us to examine possible  
5 solutions to keep the beach open for the 2018 season.  
6 Regrettably in light of the severe weather earlier  
7 this year, those alternatives were found to be  
8 infeasible, which led us to determine that a closure  
9 was necessary. The rebirth of the Rockaway Beach  
10 after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy is a symbol  
11 of the community's strength and determination to move  
12 forward. So, we recognize how difficult it was to  
13 even see a small portion of the beach closure.  
14 However, we cannot forget the 4.5 miles of Rockaway  
15 Beach that remains open this season and we plan to  
16 take the opportunity to remind New Yorkers and  
17 tourists to come and enjoy the sun, sand and  
18 excitement of the Rockaways this summer. We're  
19 working hard to ensure that the local businesses both  
20 on the Boardwalk and in the surrounding neighborhood  
21 have a successful season. Our Boardwalk concessions  
22 are open for business and we are actively working  
23 with them to develop creative opportunities to draw  
24 more visitors. We're adjusting our normal rules to  
25 permit more live music along the Boardwalk earlier in

the day, partnering with local organizations to present great programs like the Live and Local Concert Series and morning yoga sessions and engaging with partners like the City Park Foundation to bring more exciting events to the Boardwalk this summer. We're very pleased to see that thanks to the nice weather and successful public engagement to date, the reported attendance so far this beach season in the Rockaways is close to 1.2 million visitors compared to just over 600,000 over the same period last year, and our beach concession-concessions have seen a 35% increase in revenue compared to the same period in 2017, and we're please to share that starting next weekend, we will open a popular section of the beach for swimming between Beach 96<sup>th</sup> and Beach 98<sup>th</sup> Street directly in front of Parks' concession. We'll be doing this on a trial basis in order to closely monitor the operation to ensure our ability to keep beach goers and swimmers safe. To help educate these visitors, Parks has installed signage clarifying where the beach is accessible and is available, and where concessions are located. Our agency partners at Small Business Services and offer their support to local businesses, and we are finalizing a citywide

2 campaign in partnership with New York & Co. to get  
3 the word out that Rockaways Beach is very much open  
4 for business. We would be—we would be eager to  
5 partner with the Council and other local elected  
6 officials to help us continue to let New Yorkers know  
7 the Rockaways are open and remain a fantastic summer  
8 destination for all to enjoy. Working alongside the  
9 Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency to address  
10 long-term resiliency issues facing New York City and  
11 New York City Parks will continue to work with the  
12 Army Corps of Engineers, the State DEC to enhance our  
13 shoreline protection for the rockaways. NYC Parks  
14 will continue to maintain and invest in our 14 miles  
15 of beaches throughout the city working with our city,  
16 state and federal partners to maintain and enhance  
17 these wonderful settings for outdoor recreation to  
18 benefit local residents and visitors to New York  
19 City's Shorefront. Thank you for allowing me to  
20 testify before you today, and for all of you advocacy  
21 or New York City Parks. We will now be happy to  
22 answer any questions that you may have.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very  
24 much, commissioner. It's always a pleasure to have  
25 you before this committee. I am going to ask a few

2 questions and then I'm going to turn it over first  
3 to—well, to decide who goes first. I'll leave that to  
4 my colleagues from the Rockaways. I want to get  
5 right to the point, though. We certainly have been  
6 aware of the erosion and the severity of the erosion.  
7 This is no surprise to anybody. Can you tell me why  
8 it took so long to let the community know that this  
9 was going to happen? Was it—was it that you were  
10 hoping to keep the beach open and it just didn't  
11 happen or could we get to that right away because I  
12 think that's on everybody's mind?

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well first, let me  
14 say that while we consistently engage the public and  
15 elected officials and stakeholders on the erosion  
16 issue, we do regret that not being explicit with the  
17 public that the closure of severely eroded sections  
18 of the beach was a legitimate possibility. We should  
19 not have assumed that possibility was understood.  
20 So, from that point of view that is something I will  
21 conceded we will make sure we're very explicit going  
22 forward. There was an erosion stud back in June of  
23 '17. At that time, we had agreed to conduct a study.  
24 The study was completed in November of 2017, and at  
25 that time we shared with the public that, as I stated

2 in my testimony, the beach had never been wider than  
3 the last 40 years, and the city's investment in that  
4 betterment to put in that dune it actually helped  
5 with subsequent storms, but it did reduce the  
6 recreational area. The report did suggest that we  
7 need to look at some areas of concern. As time went  
8 on, and we looked at the possibility of replenishment  
9 and trucking sand in was not a possibility. That  
10 endeavor would take well over 18 months at a cost of  
11 \$50 million and in terms of a dredge being available  
12 continued to be a moving target. So, we continued to  
13 monitor the situation between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 13  
14 we started measure the beach itself and that's when  
15 we determined at that time after May 13 that there  
16 was not sufficient sand. We believe we can operate  
17 the beach safely. So, it was about eight days later  
18 when we looked at every conceivable option. It was  
19 determined that we could not find an alternative to  
20 keep the beach open safely, and that is when we  
21 decided that the beach had to be closed between 91<sup>st</sup>  
22 and 102<sup>nd</sup> Street.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Now, you just  
24 announced in your testimony that, and we read this,  
25 but I just want to go over it again that we will have

2 an open section between 96-Beach 96 and Beach 98  
3 Street right in front of the Parks' concessions  
4 there, and what did you have to do to make sure that  
5 the-the bathing public is safe? I know that it's a  
6 very popular section, and I just wanted to-so maybe  
7 you could share those details.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We explored that  
9 alternative as well as other sections during-after-  
10 between May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup> we made the announcement  
11 and so we met with the civic-the Rockaway Civic  
12 Association. They brought up a number of ideas  
13 including this one. We decided to take a second  
14 look. We went out with Commissioner Kavanagh and  
15 with Life Guard Leadership. I have to thank them,  
16 the Park Enforcement Patrol, NYPD. It is still a  
17 small area, but it's directly in front of the  
18 concession. We want to make sure on a trial basis  
19 that we see if, in fact, we can open up that portion  
20 for swimming. We concluded we could, but we want to  
21 be clear it's going to be done a trial basis. We do  
22 not want the lifeguards distracted. We want to make  
23 sure that all the beachgoers follow the Park rules  
24 and so we will analyze it on a week-by-week basis.  
25 We're also going to have to put boards to explain to

2 people with high tide will occur. If it happened  
3 during the day, it could happen in the evening. So,  
4 people have to know although it is open for swimming  
5 because it's such a small section of the beach there  
6 is no protected dune per se in front of the  
7 concession, then we will have to close that beach  
8 during that time period, which could be before the  
9 6:00 p.m. closure when the lifeguards are on duty.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You also  
11 arranged—have you worked with the MTA to make those  
12 announcements? Sometimes you can't hear  
13 announcements on trains, but that's another hearing,  
14 but it would be helpful so people know where to get  
15 off the train because if they're going to that spot,  
16 and it's not open, you'll have a lot of  
17 disappointment. So, if you haven't done so, I would  
18 ask that your public relations people contact the  
19 MTA's people so we can make those announcements.

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, starting June  
21 30<sup>th</sup> that section will be open. Unfortunately we  
22 cannot communicate when the high tide is that day--

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I  
24 understand.



2           COMMISSIONER SILVER: --unless someone  
3 looks online or there will be boards in front of the  
4 areas. It's an easier control section. You have a  
5 sand area in front of the concession. You have one  
6 other access point. We want to communicate that the  
7 Rockaways are open for business, and if that section  
8 is not open, it is not a far walk to an open section.  
9 So, our goal is to communicate that the Rockaway  
10 Beach is open for business.

11           CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, I  
12 appreciate that. The concessionaires who—I'm—I'm—I'm  
13 very happy to see, it's astonishing to me that we've  
14 doubled the number of visitors at least for year to  
15 date and maybe the weather was bas last year. I  
16 don't know, though. It hasn't been so great this  
17 year on the weekends. Has anything been done to help  
18 those concessionaires where the beach is closed?

19           COMMISSIONER SILVER: Yes, we're doing a  
20 number of things for the 97<sup>th</sup> Street Concession. We  
21 provide a 50% rental deferral to our concessionaires.  
22 We've given concessions permission to host live music  
23 earlier in the day than is normally approved starting  
24 at 1:00 p.m. We've added greeters to the impacted  
25 areas to help guide visitors to the concessions.

2 We've installed signage reminding visitors that  
3 concessions are open. We've put together a robust  
4 program. I'm going to have to really commend the  
5 City Parks Foundation and Portia and the Queens Team  
6 for really coming up with an amazing assortment of  
7 programming to help draw people to that location.  
8 We've allowed for bike rentals adjacent to the ferry  
9 landing. We are executing a citywide marketing  
10 campaign to remind New Yorkers and tourists that the  
11 Rockaways are open this beach season. So, we're  
12 still open to do more, but you'll now see the banners  
13 when go out there that talk about the programming  
14 throughout the summer. It's something I'm very  
15 pleased that will enhance the Rockaway experience for  
16 our visitors and New Yorkers.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to go  
18 back. I'm going to take one quick moment because—is  
19 Billy here? Oh, Billy is here. I want to welcome  
20 Councilman Moya, and I just want to take a very brief  
21 break in your testimony because Councilman Moya is  
22 chairing his own hearing today of the Zoning and  
23 Franchise Subcommittee. So, Mr. Martin if you could—

24 -

25

2 CLERK: Continuation of roll call,  
3 Committee on Parks. Council Moya.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Aye on all. Thank  
5 you Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Chair  
7 Moya.

8 CLERK: The final vote on both items now  
9 stand at 11 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and  
10 no abstentions. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.  
12 Thank you, Clerk Martin. Thank you, Councilman Moya.  
13 I'm going to head back to a few more questions and  
14 then I'm going to turn it over to the two members  
15 from the Rockaways. Was any of what happened in your  
16 decision making process? How much effect did the  
17 Army Corps of engineers have on this and how much  
18 consultation did you do with them?

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We have an ongoing  
20 conversation with the Army Corps, but our primary  
21 focus has been the long-term solution. As I stated  
22 in my testimony, dredging was an option, but that was  
23 always a moving target and so we—our attention here  
24 at the city was to focus on the long-term solution,  
25 and the Army Corps I have to say have been great

2 partners. We've maintained a relationship with them  
3 and so I think there was even concurrence that  
4 trucking in the sand was not a viable option, how it  
5 would disturb the beach itself. So, they were aware  
6 throughout the process and that relationship will be  
7 ongoing as we look at the long-term solution.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And I—I'm  
9 familiar with the Rockaways. I'm not as familiar as  
10 the people who live there obviously and I just—I want  
11 to ask you have these closures occurred in the recent  
12 past? I don't—I don't know what the collective  
13 memory is. I know that obviously after Sandy there  
14 was—we had to rebuild the whole beach, but I just  
15 wanted to know have there been any--? I know there  
16 was a closure one June Saturday in—in 2014 when I was  
17 working for Borough President Katz at that time, but  
18 that was not—that was a technical difficulty as we  
19 like to say, but have there been any other closures?

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, I will defer  
21 to Commissioner Kavanagh who has an amazing  
22 encyclopedic mind as he has been here longer than all  
23 of us.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] He  
25 has a very, very good mind.

2                   COMMISSIONER SILVER: I do know as  
3 Council Member Donovan Richards has stated from the  
4 Piping Plovers due to federal requirements there were  
5 closures there and as you stated, for the  
6 construction itself for the Boardwalk there were some  
7 closures, but I will now defer to Commissioner  
8 Kavanagh.

9                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:  
10 Specifically for erosion there have been no closures  
11 in my memory on Rockaway Beach.

12                   CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, any other  
13 beaches in the city?

14                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: About ten  
15 years ago we had to close portions of Orchard Beach  
16 because of extensive erosion. The impacts were very  
17 different. It exposed a layer of rock and substrate  
18 that was very difficult for people to use near the  
19 water.

20                   CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. My last  
21 question for now what is the latest estimate on how  
22 much sand is needed to replenish this closed section  
23 of Rockaway Beach and the cost estimate as well if  
24 you have it.

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It's about 300  
3 cubic yards.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: 300,000.

5 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Oh, I'm sorry,  
6 300,000.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: 300,000 cubic  
8 yards.

9 COMMISSIONER SILVER: 300,000 cubic yards  
10 and estimates vary. It could be anywhere from \$10 to  
11 \$15 million.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Is the  
13 erosion in Coney Island is a problem now? As I  
14 understand it, there may be a little uptick in  
15 erosion. You want to—do you want to talk to that?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We—we have  
17 not seen—erosion is an ongoing process. We are all  
18 aware of that. We have not seen significant erosion  
19 impacting the beaches in Coney Island. We do a  
20 survey of the shoreline twice a year since 2015, and  
21 the shoreline in Coney Island is—remain remarkably  
22 intact.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And the  
24 difference between the Rockaways and—and Coney Island  
25 you have groins, breakwaters. I'm not as familiar

2 with Coney Island. Council Member Treyger has  
3 promised me a visit there, and I will be there  
4 hopefully soon, but is there a difference between the  
5 two beaches?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There—  
7 there is a big—a major difference. There are groins  
8 throughout most of Coney Island Beach, but I think  
9 the—the—the major factor is that Coney Island is  
10 sheltered to some extent by the Rockaway Peninsula.  
11 Rockaway is fully facing the Atlantic Ocean, and  
12 absorbs the full force of that ocean. Coney Island  
13 does not see the same level of waves and sort of  
14 high—high surf that we and often it is—

15 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And they're  
16 taking the sand because I know the flow on the south  
17 shore of Long Island is from—

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: East to  
19 west.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: East to west.  
21 So, they're getting the sand. I have to have a talk  
22 with the people in Brooklyn about that. Okay, at  
23 this time I am going to forego some questions and I'm  
24 going to ask if these two gentlemen flipped a coin.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: You're right.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Well, when--when  
4 you work with a colleague as great as Eric Ulrich,  
5 you know, it's not about ego.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I guess  
7 you're going to you first Council meeting.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: It's not about  
9 ego. So, so--[laughter]

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Council Member  
11 Richards.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And as you see,  
13 we cross--

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
15 yeah, I'm going to--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: --we cross  
17 party lines on a lot of things.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: In this first  
19 round I'm going to ask for a five-minute clock.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Why are you  
23 going to put the clock on when I get on? Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'll put it on  
25 those, too.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And I neglected  
3 to acknowledge the great work of Commissioner  
4 Lewandowski and Portia as well who's really been  
5 great and I want to acknowledge them for the work  
6 that they've done to bring equity to the entire  
7 peninsula when you're talking about park access, but  
8 there still is this question around access to the  
9 beachfront and I-I did hear that there was a new-  
10 well, when it comes to Piping Plovers that there-  
11 there may be a new classification from-when it comes  
12 to the Piping Plovers from endangered to protected  
13 species. So what would that entail when you talk  
14 about permitting for-for the Eastern End, and I keep  
15 bringing this point up because as you know about the  
16 disparities that exist for a long time prior to this  
17 administration. So, to no fault of your own, but we  
18 are dealing with 40 or 50 blocks of beachfront that  
19 is closed, which has really had an adverse effect on  
20 your economy of the eastern end of the peninsula. So,  
21 I just want to hear a little bit more about that, and  
22 then secondly I know that you spoke of some work  
23 you're doing for these small businesses in-in the  
24 90s. I wanted to know what the coordination between  
25 Department of Small Business Services looks like as

2 well as you go through this, is there any  
3 coordination there as well?

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I'll let  
5 Commissioner Kavanagh answer the first part of the  
6 question and I'll respond to the second one

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: --about reaching  
9 out to business owners.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I'm—I'm  
12 not aware that the Federal Fish and Wildlife Agency  
13 is considering changing the designation of plovers  
14 from endangered to protected, but if it were to  
15 happen, it would result in probably less strict  
16 regulations covering the plovers. And, you know, we  
17 do use a variety of different approaches to the  
18 plovers. There is a section between 38 and 58 that  
19 is entirely closed because of the large population of  
20 plovers that have been returning from year to year  
21 there, but we do have sections both in the 20s the  
22 30s and the 60s where we're able cordon off  
23 relatively small sections of the beach for the  
24 plovers—for the plovers, and allow other activities

2 to continue whether it's fishing, sun bathing,  
3 swimming, surfing and things like that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Well, none of  
5 that is happening now on my side so-so--

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It is in  
7 the 20s and 30s. We do have small sections that that  
8 are--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
10 Well, for the 20s but I'm talking more in the  
11 midsection.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: In the  
13 mid, and the 38 to 58 is closed. Yeah, it's closed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: So, we have 20  
15 blocks closed at each front.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, and  
17 that's because it has become a very significant  
18 breeding ground for the plover and they're--they're  
19 right at the shoreline in many cases, and, you know,  
20 we do have an obligation under federal regulations.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: But, if also if  
22 I can just indulge a little bit further, is there not  
23 piping plovers further to the west with a narrower  
24 beach as well?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There are,  
3 but they have--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
5 Or am I confused about that?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, there  
7 are--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
9 Okay.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --plovers  
11 to the west in the 60s. They are not--the colonies  
12 aren't as large as we see, 38 to 58, and we are able  
13 to protect them by using small--small enclosures to  
14 keep people and machinery way from the plovers.  
15 We've been able to do that for the last few years.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: And so, have  
17 there been any--so you're saying that they're breeding  
18 a little bit more. Has there been any thought  
19 between 38 and 58 to sort of help guide them to being  
20 enclosed a little bit more?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We--we're  
22 not allowed to do too much guidance when it comes to  
23 moving. We're not allowed to move the birds around  
24 at all.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right, but  
3 what's the coordination between wild life and parks  
4 on this, and I know the permitting process is now up,  
5 correct?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, we--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
8 Okay.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --we--we  
10 work very closely with them. We review our  
11 procedures and processes at the start of the season.  
12 We report to them on the level of--of breeding  
13 activity that we see for the one beach.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right, but  
15 when--have they been out to the beach? It's 50. Was  
16 that done jointly or is this just the Parks  
17 Department giving their recommendation?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: No, I know  
19 they have been out of the beach with us. I can't say  
20 at what frequency--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
22 Okay.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --and when  
24 their last visit.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Okay. So, I  
3 appreciate if you could follow up on this  
4 Commissioner because I think there's—there's an  
5 opportunity here and I think, you know, for my  
6 portion of the beach, which has been closed, you  
7 know, and people like to point to high unemployment  
8 and all of these things. It's had an adverse effect  
9 on the economy centered in the most dense part of the  
10 Rockaways and where every disparity in the Rockaways  
11 exists whether it's healthcare, whether it's  
12 unemployment and I hate to, you know, I don't want to  
13 say beat-keep beating on the piping plovers, but it  
14 really is an equity issue at this point, and we need  
15 to have further conversations. So, I'm grateful, and  
16 I'm happy to be here to support once again Council  
17 Member Ulrich and his endeavors, but I also am  
18 interested in having a longer term conversation.  
19 Short term, God willing, but longer-term conversation  
20 how we ensure that there's equity to the beach front  
21 on the East End as well.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: To answer your  
23 question about the local business owners. I'll do  
24 this very quickly because of time. You know, you  
25 know the Comprehensive Signage Program, agreed a

2 program to inform beachgoers. We have now new robust  
3 programming and we want to communicate the beach is  
4 open. That's the hardest message because are saying  
5 the section. The beach is--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
7 Right.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: --and so we also  
9 have beacon Technology as an example of how we're  
10 working with the Rockaway Business Alliance that will  
11 be informative kiosks on the beach itself, working  
12 with SBS with their support, and as I mentioned,  
13 we're finalizing a campaign with New York and Company  
14 or--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
16 Alright, I was going to bring that up, and I would-I  
17 would argue because if someone said to me the other  
18 day isn't the beach closed? They--there is this  
19 perception that the entire beach is closed. [bell]  
20 So, I don't know what you can do PR wise. I don't  
21 know if it's another ceremony. I don't what it is--

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposing] But  
23 part of the perception--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: [interposing]  
25 --but we're going to--

2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: --we're going to be  
3 closing a portion of the beach is that the message is  
4 that beach is closed, the beach is closed. Even the  
5 day that we opened on and right before Labor Day our  
6 message was the beach is open as a small section--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Right.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: --but that's being  
9 lost for--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: But there needs  
11 to be more done on that because it's going to have  
12 adverse effects on the economy this summer. So,  
13 thank you. Look forward to working with you.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

15 Councilman Richards. Councilman Ulrich.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair and again, thank you for having this very  
18 important hearing. I have so many questions so I'm  
19 going to try to get to them sort of one at a time,  
20 and my statement is already a matter of record. So, I  
21 don't need to rehash that. The study that the EDC  
22 and the Parks Department conducted last year that was  
23 public that you go the results in November, how much  
24 did it cost?



2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:

3 Approximately \$200,000.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, \$200,000

5 and I—Liam, I remember that you were actually at that  
6 hearing last year when we had the joint hearing with  
7 the Mayor's Officer of Housing Recovery. The Army  
8 Corps was there and you were there, and I was just  
9 pounding them on this particular subject with respect  
10 to the the—the study, you know, that, you know, how  
11 long was the 90? When did the 90 days start? When  
12 was it going to end? When were we going to get the  
13 results? So, was the decision made to close Rockaway  
14 beaches made in November when you got the  
15 determination of the study?

16 COMMISSIONER SILVER: No, no.

17 Determination was made after May 13<sup>th</sup> when it got the  
18 report back about measuring the beach. It was made  
19 at that time.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, so between

21 the—what had changed between November and May 13<sup>th</sup>?

22 You're saying that the winter storms had resulted in—  
23 in worse erosion than we had expected?

24 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, we always

25 knew it was a possibility, but it was—it was the

2 storms that after the storm that are measurements  
3 between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup> and that's when we  
4 knew that there was severe erosion due to the storms,  
5 and that's when we had to make that decision at that  
6 time.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: So, who made the  
8 decision to close the beaches in Rockaway? Was it  
9 yourself? Were there other agencies involved? How  
10 as that decision made?

11 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We always  
12 coordinate with other agencies. It clearly is our  
13 recommendation along with concurrence of others.  
14 Based upon the fact that we went out there to  
15 measure, it was our recommendation that went forward,  
16 so ultimately it was my permanent recommendation  
17 supported by other agencies.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: And then the  
19 Mayor himself made the decision?

20 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I wouldn't say the  
21 Mayor made the decision. Clearly, we consulted all  
22 partners such as—we always consult our partners, but  
23 ultimately it was my decision.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay. So, it was  
25 your decision to close the beaches, and you made that

2 decision after May 13<sup>th</sup> in consultation with other  
3 agencies--

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposing]

5 Correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: --based upon the  
7 reality of--the severity of the beach erosion, which  
8 had occurred. Did the lifeguards have anything to do  
9 with this?

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: The lifeguards  
12 did. So, did the Lifeguard--

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposing] Yes,  
14 they did.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: --Union recommend  
16 that the beaches also be closed?

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: The conversation  
18 that happened is that we wanted to find out how we  
19 can safely operate the beach. We looked at many  
20 alternatives including the one that we are looking at  
21 a small section we're opening up. We checked with  
22 Commissioner Kavanagh working with the lifeguards to  
23 see if there's a way we can operate the beach safely  
24 between 91<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Street. We had a lot of

2 concerns and so, we seek their input, but ultimately  
3 that decision was mine.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: And their input  
5 was in agreement with yours? That basically that  
6 that those beaches should be closed?

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: They expressed  
8 concern about keeping the beachgoers safe in that  
9 section.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: What--what  
11 consideration was given to the berm? I know that the  
12 city was very--and in your testimony you mentioned the  
13 berm that the city had put into place as a temporary  
14 protective measure until the Army Corps plan fully  
15 goes through, but what consideration was given to the  
16 berm in terms of--

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: The berm was part  
18 of the consideration. The berm--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [interposing] Are  
20 you talking about the water damaging the berm or  
21 people damaging the berm.

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, people as  
23 they see the high tide coming, people will retreat  
24 onto the protected dune. That dune is there to  
25 protect both people and property, and so the concern

2 is that as the high tide is coming—you probably know  
3 the beach very well. Some sections are quite narrow  
4 that people are going to retreat to the dunes, and  
5 that is an element that we certainly want to make  
6 sure is protected because that keeps people and  
7 property safe.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: So, you know,  
9 have the Mayor--I'm going to wrap up as quickly as I  
10 can. We had the Mayor at a town hall in November.  
11 You were there. It was a very good town hall  
12 meeting. I think he was well received. Prior to  
13 that town hall meeting, we had impressed upon the  
14 Mayor the importance of the erosion issue not only  
15 downtown in the Beach 90s, but also Uptown and—and  
16 the Mayor sort of assured us that he was going work  
17 with the Army Corps and try to get them to expedite  
18 it, but that he didn't. He was being advised by the  
19 Parks Department not to commit any funding to sand  
20 replenishment because at the time he didn't think  
21 that it would result in beach closure. Is that--?

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: No, I can't say  
23 that's accurate. At the time when were--were putting  
24 ourselves at the Town Hall, we were looking at the  
25 option of sand by trucking it in. That seemed to be

2 an unacceptable option both by cost and by the  
3 operation of trucking in sand. Secondly, as I  
4 mentioned in my testimony that the beach  
5 replenishment through dredging was moving target. We  
6 knew a dredge was coming, but we didn't know when.  
7 We advised the mayor that the best thing to do was  
8 continue to pursue a long-term option with the Army  
9 Corps. He then went to Washington, and agreed to go  
10 to Washington to pursue that. It is my belief the  
11 Army Corps is now receptive to see how they can  
12 expedite that timeline, but our focus was the long-  
13 term solution.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, I have one  
15 last question because I know the bell is about to  
16 ring. Is Neponsit next? Neponsit and Belle Harbor?  
17 [bell] Are there currently plans to close their  
18 beaches later in the season or next season? Can we  
19 expect anything? I'm—I'm talking to the Chair now  
20 about introducing a bill that would require the Parks  
21 Department to give 30 days' notice, not one week's  
22 notice for beach closing. That's something that  
23 we're going to be discussing, you know, internally,  
24 but are there plans to close any other beaches in

2 Rockaway, anywhere in the near horizon that we need  
3 to know about right now?

4 COMMISSIONER SILVER: There are no plans  
5 at this time. We're watching carefully the Beach  
6 30s, the Beach 130s and the 140s. Clearly as a  
7 result of what has transpired the last six months,  
8 we're going to give full-full information about what  
9 is happening to some of those beaches so that the  
10 public is aware, but we're watching those locations,  
11 and we'll make sure figure out how to do more regular  
12 updates to the public so that they're aware  
13 particularly as we're looking at the 2019 beach  
14 season.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you very  
16 much. Thank you, Mr. Chair. \

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.  
18 Thank you, Councilman Ulrich. Councilman Andrew  
19 Cohen, please.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay. Thank you,  
21 Mr. Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I really—I know  
24 Councilman King added himself as with his affinity  
25 for Queens and as my colleagues know, I actually grew

2 up in the Rockaways. You know from when my parents  
3 brought me home from the hospital pretty much until I  
4 graduated Beach Channel High School. So, I know the  
5 area very well, and I have to say I'm surprised that  
6 the report, the 2017 report says that the beaches had  
7 never been—had never been wider because as someone,  
8 you know, as an eye witness, I can tell you that.  
9 It's just factually incorrect. The beaches severe-  
10 you know severely eroded last year, and I've managed  
11 to spend some time as my—as my tan will show you  
12 already this year, and the beaches are obviously  
13 severely eroded this year, but it's not, you know,  
14 there's no new information that we got between 2017  
15 and today about these really severe beach erosion  
16 situation there. So, I don't, you know, I don't know  
17 if you should get your \$200,000 back, but that  
18 information is just plain factually incorrect. There  
19 really is an ongoing severe erosion problem there.  
20 So, I do want to give the Parks Department credit  
21 where credit is due, though. I do have to say and I  
22 can see the beach from my house and, you know, they  
23 do yeoman's work keeping it clean. It's amazing out  
24 there that they're raking everyday. The new  
25 Boardwalk I think is amazing. I didn't get a chance



2 to thank the Borough President for funding the many  
3 concerts that-that people get to enjoy out there, but  
4 really it just can't be a surprise that-that this is--  
5 that the conditions that the beaches are in and as  
6 Councilman Ulrich, you know, I have friends, you know  
7 I go visit Neponsit and the beach there is, you know,  
8 is-is a wisp. It's just a narrow spit. I don't see  
9 that's tenable going forward. So, I really think  
10 that while we wait for the Army Corps of Engineers, I  
11 think that there does need to be an interim solution.

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Councilman Cohen,  
13 to clarify what I said earlier, the beach is wider  
14 because a portion of the beach as a replenishment and  
15 the betterment that portion now that was primarily  
16 used prior to Sandy for recreational use is now a  
17 protected dunes. So, the recreational portion is  
18 what is smaller, and that's where you do have the  
19 erosion. Clearly, having the groins there will  
20 address that issue. So, if you look at what the  
21 study did at the totality of the beach, it is wider  
22 than it's been for 40 years, but a good portion of it  
23 is now with the protected dune.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I-I-I don't want.  
25 It's not, you know, I don't want to debate you here,

2 but I'm telling you I understand. I understood your  
3 testimony. I walk over the dune to the rest of the  
4 beach, and from the wall to the ocean is  
5 significantly narrower than it was before. When I  
6 was growing up, you know, in years past before Sandy.  
7 So, it--there really is that--Again, I don't think that  
8 that information is just factually correct. That  
9 from the wall to water is shorter now than--than I--  
10 than I recall in my lifetime. So, that is, you know,  
11 my impression. I can't say that I took--took  
12 measurements, but I really have spent a fair amount  
13 off time there. So, as an eyewitness, I can tell you  
14 that I don't believe that that information is  
15 correct. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
17 Councilman. Thank you for joining us, and for your  
18 expertise on the Rockaways. I'm wearing things  
19 today. Commissioner, does the city have a, you know,  
20 it's almost unfair, but the Parks--the beaches fall  
21 under your jurisdiction, and we've talked about three  
22 major areas today, Orchard Beach also, but Orchard  
23 Beach not really being the absolute first line of  
24 defense, with all due respect to my colleague, Mr.  
25 Gjonaj, but the Rockaways and the Coney Island area

2 and the South Shore of Long Island are all pretty  
3 much with few exceptions. I know there are some  
4 federal agents, but do we have a comprehensive plan  
5 to deal with this, you know, going forward over 5,  
6 10, 15, 20 years. There's an awful lot of people who  
7 live on these peninsulas.

8 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [off mic] After  
9 Super [on mic] after Super Storm Sandy in our  
10 previous administration they created the Office of  
11 Recovery and Resiliency. They're looking very  
12 carefully. There was a whole plan done before I  
13 arrived here about looking at the whole issue of both  
14 resiliency and climate change. So, the Mayor's  
15 Office of Recovery and Resiliency in cooperation with  
16 many other agencies are looking at the threat and  
17 vulnerabilities citywide. And so, the answer to your  
18 question is yes. A lot of those efforts and planning  
19 projects are well underway from Staten Island to  
20 Rockaway to Coney Island and other vulnerable areas  
21 in the city. So, the answer is yes there is a plan.  
22 That is something that the Mayor's Office of Recovery  
23 and Resiliency is the lead, and we support them, and  
24 agree with their assessment of how to keep New  
25 Yorkers safe.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you for that  
3 answer. The city and obviously we've talked about  
4 the replenishment that took place after Sandy. Are  
5 you the city agency that's responsible for monitoring  
6 on that, you know, how much sand is left or how much  
7 sand is not left? So, who's responsible for  
8 monitoring the beaches on a--COMMISSIONER SILVER:

9 [interposing] Well, I will--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: --I wouldn't say  
11 daily basis but--

12 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I will defer to  
13 Commissioner Kavanagh. I do know that we have staff  
14 going out there measuring during the time period as I  
15 mentioned at the end of April before the beach  
16 season, but we're now doing it periodically as well.  
17 I'll defer to Commissioner Kavanagh to see what other  
18 measures from the Army Corps or what their role is in  
19 measuring the beach as well.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, the  
21 Parks Department is responsible for the city's public  
22 beaches, and we do periodically measure the  
23 shoreline. It is not an erosion study per se, but it  
24 does measure the position of the shoreline, at two  
25 particular points during the calendar year in the

2 spring and the fall to give an indication of how the  
3 beach is performing over a long period of time, and  
4 that's really its value is looking over a long period  
5 of time. We've been doing it for four years since  
6 Hurricane Sandy, and you know, we do use that  
7 information to factor into our management of the  
8 beach, and planning for—for a longer term.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: And is there a  
10 threshold within the agency that determines whether  
11 or not you have a beach erosion problem because I'm  
12 just, you know, I—I know things change on a daily  
13 basis on the shore and the South Shore of Queens, the  
14 whole South Shore of Long Island, which Queens is a  
15 part of. It's been sculpted for eons, and we've tried  
16 to wrestle it to the ground to some extent, but  
17 Mother Nature has her own way. And, I'm just  
18 wondering whether you have within the agency a  
19 threshold where you would have to say to the  
20 Commissioner or somebody would have to say to you  
21 we've got a problem, and how is that determined?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I can't  
23 say we have an explicit threshold, but clearly there  
24 is, you know, a rate at which erosion occurs and its  
25 impact on specific beaches that cause us to make

2 decisions such as the one we made earlier in May that  
3 it's not popular, but we think is in the best  
4 interest of both coastal protect and public safety.

5 In Rockaway, it's been well known for—for a long  
6 period of time that there are two primary erosion

7 areas in the Beach 30s and the Beach 90s. Since

8 Hurricane Sandy, the beaches in Neponsit and Belle

9 Harbor have also shown more erosion than they had

10 traditionally show. Based on what the consultants who

11 conducted the erosion survey concluded that yes there

12 has been significant loss of sand in that area, but

13 it is largely due to the fact that the Army Corps

14 overbuilt those beaches beyond what they had

15 normally—the normal size, when they replenished the

16 beach are Hurricane Sandy, and most of the loss has

17 been basically the beach returning to its normal

18 profile. So, in the long term they do not expect

19 that to be an area of significant increased erosion.

20 Whereas in the 30s and the 90s, you know, we have

21 been experiencing severe erosion for many decades,

22 and that's why the Army Corps' plan focuses on making

23 adjustments to the groins in those areas to slow the

24 rate of erosion substantially.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Do we know where  
3 the sand went? I mean do--have you seen any increases  
4 in--in other areas because I, you know, it's a lot of  
5 sand. It has to go somewhere.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Up to  
7 where--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [interposing] Is  
9 it just laying at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean  
10 or--?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Actually  
12 you--you can see, you know, what they say, what they  
13 call up-drift of the groins. You do see accumulation  
14 and sort of concentrations of sand. For example,  
15 east of the jetty or the groin as they like to call  
16 it, at 88 Street the beaches in that area are  
17 significantly wider than those to the--to the west and  
18 they hold more sand consistently, and I think that  
19 is--demonstrates the--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [interposing] But  
21 the flow is.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: But the  
23 flow is.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I may be missing  
25 something. The flow is from Montauk to--

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:

3 [interposing] Yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: --the end of I  
5 guess to New Jersey.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: But I'm--  
7 I'm--I'm straying into territory I shouldn't--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay,

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --but the  
10 groins do trap and hold sand in place.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Right, and I get  
12 it, and I've seen that at West End 2 Beach, you know,  
13 to keep that channel open. I think it's Reynolds  
14 Channel, and it's amazing how big that beach has  
15 become--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:

17 [interposing] Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: --and if you put--  
19 if you put something there it's going to hold the  
20 sand, and I guess that's why we--we would like to have  
21 groins, but I'm just wondering, and I don't want to  
22 get too--too much into this, but--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: But yes,  
24 but I think that's an example of--of how groins can  
25 work to hold and keep beaches intact over long



2 periods of time. It is the down drift side of the  
3 groin where you see the severe erosion. You see it  
4 in the 90s and if you look at Reese Park west of the  
5 149<sup>th</sup> Street Groin, you'll see a similar phenomenon  
6 there where the beach is sculpted pretty  
7 significantly from—in comparison to our beach east of  
8 149<sup>th</sup> Street.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'll take a look.  
10 I've got to get down there.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Councilman  
12 Gjonaj.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair.  
14 Commissioner, can you elaborate a little bit more on  
15 the rent delay for those concessions that are  
16 impacted by this beach closure?

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: It's not a—it's  
18 basically a 50% rent deferral.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But you have  
20 concessions that are—that will be in places where the  
21 beach is entirely closed? Is this what I understand?

22 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Not, not any  
23 longer. As of June 30<sup>th</sup> a portion of 97<sup>th</sup> Street is  
24 the one that is within the closure. The other ones  
25 are basically outside. The one at 97<sup>th</sup> Street is the

2 one that's primarily impacted. Prior to my decision  
3 to let it be open for swimming, there was a section  
4 of sand that was available because here was no  
5 protected dune in front [coughs] of the concession as  
6 well as supplementing additional activities. Our  
7 recommendation starting June 30<sup>th</sup> is now to open up  
8 that section, a two-block section for swimming, and  
9 so our hope is that it will help. We'll still  
10 continue with the 50% (sic) referral-deferral because  
11 there's still sections that will be closed from 91  
12 and 96 and then 98 to 102.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And because it's  
14 a temporary measure, have you discussed waiving any  
15 rent if the beach in front of these establishments is  
16 closed altogether?

17 COMMISSIONER SILVER: Well, because of  
18 the concession we're able to see the income that's  
19 generating, and we've already noted there's been a 35  
20 increase for all concessions at the Rockaway. As  
21 these reports come in with our Audit Division,  
22 Revenue Division, we'll see exactly how they're  
23 performing, but we've already communicated there will  
24 be a 50% rent deferral.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And what about  
3 extension of contractors? Typically, they're set  
4 with a number of years. If the beach is closed for a  
5 year for them or moving forward to replenish, is  
6 there going to be an extension for the--

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I am not familiar  
8 with that level. It's something I can find out.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It's a concern.  
10 You know, many of these concessions take a gamble, if  
11 you will, and that would be on turnout weather  
12 cooperating to their benefit and nice weekends. They  
13 have so many hurdles to overcome, and many of them  
14 are not in the control of any one, but certainly this  
15 is something that we should be thinking about,  
16 extending their contract periods as well as the rent  
17 concessions, which hurt many of these concessions  
18 small businesses.

19 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [interposing]  
20 Understood. So, you know that all of our contracts  
21 goes to the FCRC. They have a certain term. It's  
22 something we can see what is possible, and we can  
23 look at, but I cannot commit to anything at this time  
24 other than to look to see what is legally possible

2 given the current terms they have with their current  
3 concession agreement.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Do you want to  
5 add something to that?

6 KATE SPELLMAN: No, I mean—yeah, I would  
7 just add that we've been in very, very close touch  
8 with our concessionary out in the Rockaways to  
9 understand that they need from us, and have been  
10 trying to work with them. For example, we've allowed  
11 them to bring amenities sort of outside of their  
12 licensed premises. We've allowed them to, you know,  
13 change the hours that they offer, live music. You  
14 know, so we're trying to understand exactly what  
15 would be helpful to them, and then make that happen  
16 to the extent possible.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Have they all  
18 been receptive to this in the sense that they've  
19 agreed, they've committed themselves to it. There's  
20 no— which is amazing. It's set with the names of the  
21 concessions?

22 KATE SPELLMAN: It's, yeah, no, we have  
23 a—we have a—we have a great relationship and as the  
24 Commissioner said, we've seen really hopeful signs in  
25 terms of their revenue trends so far.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah, I just find  
3 that you say you have a great relationship I'm a  
4 little familiar with the concessions program, and I  
5 never heard anyone say they had a great concession-  
6 they had a great relationship with Parks.

7 COMMISSIONER SILVER: We're make-we're  
8 making history. These will say yes [laughter] we do  
9 have a great relationship with our concessions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It must be to-all  
11 to the credit of you, Commissioner.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright,  
13 Councilman Cohen.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Commissioner  
15 Kavanagh, just to follow because I was thinking, you  
16 know-you know, on the beaches you see all of the  
17 wooden jetties exposed, which you don't normally see.  
18 I mean they're usually is sand almost to the top of  
19 the wooden jetties, and as you walk down from-I would  
20 say from the 120 towards Neponsit, all of those  
21 wooden jetties are now exposed, and like I said,  
22 there's always sand there. I mean isn't that  
23 evidence of--?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Well,  
25 there hasn't always been sand on those wooden

2 jetties. When the Corps replenished the beach in  
3 2013 and 2014, they did cover many of those jetties,  
4 not all of them, but did cover them, and now as that  
5 sand has--has eroded away, the wooden jetties are now  
6 exposed again.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: But I believe that  
8 pre-Sandy that they were--they were also, and was  
9 close to the top of those--of those jetties.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I--I have  
11 a different recollection, Council Member, but I--I  
12 would not stake my--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay, alright.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: --  
15 reputation on it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
18 Councilman Cohen and thank you Councilman Gjonaj. A  
19 few more questions for the Parks Department. Do you  
20 work with anybody outside the agency, scientists,  
21 academics, not-for-profits on--on erosion and  
22 techniques? I imagine--you know, we have some of the  
23 largest public beaches in the world here, and I just  
24 wonder if we consult with people outside.

2           COMMISSIONER SILVER: As I stated, we now  
3 have an officer of Recovery and Resiliency, and we do  
4 believe climate change is a threat and in sea over  
5 rise to the city. We have a group of experts that  
6 monitor our coastal city on a regular basis with  
7 plans and reports about how to protect us going  
8 forward, and I have to say I'm proud of the city  
9 because in many parts of this country they're in a  
10 sense of denial. We are not. So, we know it's a  
11 real threat. So, in terms of our offices that reach  
12 out to the experts as on an as-needed basis, we do  
13 that, and apart from that, I'm sure there are those  
14 that volunteer information to share with us, but  
15 between both parks and we have the Office of Recovery  
16 and Resiliency, and other experts within the city,  
17 this is something that we do watch very closely  
18 because it's a threat to the city going forward.

19           CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Any techniques  
20 that you've used that may not have been used  
21 elsewhere that you want to share with us, you know,  
22 just things that are working better than others  
23 perhaps. I know it's not—it's a science but like,  
24 you know, it's not an exact science. It's very, very

2 difficult and I just wonder if there's anything that  
3 you'd like to share with us about that?

4           COMMISSIONER SILVER: The reformulation  
5 of the study will be the best approach. Just putting  
6 in the groins will help keep sand in place. Having  
7 those reinforced dunes will protect both people and  
8 property, and the public has to realize going forward  
9 that those protected dunes it's a new reality that we  
10 have to deal with climate change. So, from our point  
11 of view just educating the public what climate change  
12 looks like is going to be different in Staten Island  
13 with possibly earth and levies, raise earth and  
14 levies. Coney Island may be different. So, it's a  
15 new reality we now have to deal with going forward.  
16 So, from our perspective that's educating the public  
17 about what the reality of climate change looks like.

18           CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright. I  
19 think I am done, gentlemen.

20           COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Could I--?

21 [laughter]

22           CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Uh-oh.

23           COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: It's not about the  
24 erosion. I just also want to point out in regards to  
25 the dunes, there's a number of places where I think



2 the kids have earned the protective fencing and  
3 there--there needs to be significant gaps in there and  
4 I--I think it's not in anyone's interest to have  
5 people walking through the dunes.

6 COMMISSIONER SILVER: So, please let us  
7 know. I know that we are up and down that Boardwalk  
8 on a regular basis, and it needs to replace.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: [interposing] I  
10 think it calls for replacement in the Belle Harbor  
11 and Neponsit. I think the kids burned the fences  
12 down.

13 COMMISSIONER SILVER: I see Portia and  
14 Guy shaking their head. We're on it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright,  
17 Commissioner, thank you very, very much for being  
18 here today. Deputy Commissioner Kavanagh, Miss  
19 Spellman and your whole team. I would appreciate it  
20 as you always do if you could--I know you may be busy,  
21 but if you could leave some people behind so that the  
22 words of the Rockaway residents will be heard by the  
23 Department of Parks and Recreation, and with that, I  
24 will bid you adieu. Oh, we've got to talk about the  
25 Mets, though, Commissioner. They do play in a Parks

2 Department stadium. [laughter] I am now going to  
3 call—we've heard from the other elected officials in  
4 the community. I am going to call Assemblywoman  
5 Stacey Pheffer-Amato for her testimony, and so that  
6 she won't sit there all by herself, although she's  
7 more than capable of sitting there by herself, I'm  
8 going to call Lynn Kelly for New Yorkers for Parks as  
9 well, and then we're going to start to hear from the  
10 Community. Actually, we're going to hear from the  
11 Army Corps of Engineers and then from the community.  
12 So, Assemblywoman and--[background comments, pause]  
13 Next up will be Daniel Falt. I hope I'm pronouncing  
14 his name right—from the Army Corps of Engineers after  
15 we hear from this panel. Assemblywoman, whenever you  
16 are ready.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Okay,  
18 Great. Good morning.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You've already  
20 heard this morning as you probably know, but I just  
21 want to make sure you know from the Borough  
22 President, from Congressman Meeks and also from your  
23 colleague in the Legislature Senator Addabbo.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Sure.  
25 Thank you. Good morning to everybody to Barry from

2 someone—Chairman that I know for a million years, I  
3 know why your name is on the top of the list. So, I'm  
4 going to call you Chairman Barry.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, ma'am.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER: Because  
7 Grodenchik I will not be able to say this one.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Grodenchik. Did  
9 I butcher it? Your mother can pronounce that.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I know.  
11 So, I want to say good morning, and I want to thank  
12 everyone for being here. I'm not making light of it.  
13 It's like a joke. I have formal testimony, but as  
14 I've just been listening for a few short minutes, I  
15 really just want to say off my hip that I think it's  
16 some input that I would like to give. But I have  
17 formal testimony, which is basically I think and  
18 repeat a lot of what we all have to say. But  
19 yesterday when this information was out there in the  
20 five minutes I was, yes the wood jetties were showing  
21 in the sand prior to Hurricane Sandy. So what does  
22 that say already, which is why my whole speech is  
23 completely thrown is that the story keeps changing  
24 except of the consistency of the story is the  
25 residents, businesses and local, you know, people

2 that are here today that locally we know best. I  
3 think it's proven time and time again on issues every  
4 community could say it for themselves that the people  
5 that are born and raised and spend time and  
6 investment in the Rockaways community could tell you  
7 about our beaches. And that is the one factor that  
8 has been missing from all this from the time  
9 Hurricane Sandy devastated our community 'til now is  
10 still this part of our voices are not completely  
11 respected, and I think that's a problem, and that's  
12 the disconnect with the city and a lot of the  
13 conversation. This whole conversation, which is  
14 about how to protect the city beaches from increased  
15 erosion that question that's here. If I turn to  
16 everyone, what's—what would protect us? Groins.

17 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Probably the  
18 groins.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So that  
20 answers has been out there for 50 years, and I'm 52.  
21 I've large print, but it's started 50 years ago, but  
22 everyone knows that was the answer that was given to  
23 us and somehow nobody wants to invest in that. The  
24 Army Corps has now taken this approach and will  
25 finish their study, and they'll get out, except,

2 guess what? We're missing half of our beaches  
3 because they're only committing to 126<sup>th</sup> Street and  
4 what about the rest of the Atlantic Ocean? What  
5 about the rest from 126<sup>th</sup> up to I guess is 149. So,  
6 how could we say, yeah, we get it we need groins but  
7 only part of the pencil. So,

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We can go-it  
9 would go further, really all the way to Breezy,  
10 literally to Breezy Point.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: And it  
12 should because we'll have the same conversation  
13 because that part of the beaches is your taxpayers is  
14 your homeowners. It's three generations. With the  
15 investment the city has made since Hurricane Sandy,  
16 we'll all on the right. No opinion about the Build-  
17 it-Back Program, but millions of dollars has been  
18 invested in homes on the peninsula, and the city  
19 itself is not willing to invest in their own  
20 investments. So, you might as well just leave here  
21 today and take our taxes out and throw them across  
22 City Hall Park because we not investing in our own  
23 investment.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: No, we wouldn't  
25 want to do that because as go the Rockaways as those

2 screens it protects for one thing the enormous  
3 investment the city, state and federal government has  
4 made today JFK Airport, which is in the tens of  
5 billions if not a hundred billions dollars.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: SO, these  
7 bigger conversations are running like a floodgate in  
8 all that, but if you take the Atlantic side it's  
9 proven. If we're going to talk about groins it has  
10 to—the city has to in a—what is it an \$80 billion  
11 budget we just voted on?

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: \$89.1 and so  
13 yes.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Okay, so  
15 how many dollars were committed to sand  
16 replenishment, groins any sort of beach protection  
17 because it's not just beach. You know, it's almost  
18 like the conversation about flood insurance. We  
19 speak about flood insurance. Everyone thinks it's  
20 homeowners that own yachts and we live out in the  
21 Hamptons. No, flood insurance has to do with our  
22 homes in Broad Channel, Hamilton Beach and Rockaway.  
23 So, when we talk about beach erosion and the beaches,  
24 everyone has their—has their eyes light up and go  
25 yes, I'm on a yacht and in the beach and dressed in

2 white linen. It's not. It's our back yard. It is  
3 enjoyment. It's recreation. It's parks. It's also  
4 our back yard. It is protection to our homes, the  
5 Belle Harbor community. So, it has to be a full  
6 conversation, and I'm asking the city to put that  
7 investment. You know, I could say as a--as a former  
8 Assemblyman Gjonaj and I could say, which is the  
9 purpose of these other communities because we also--

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]

11 Well, I'm a former Assemblyman, too.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So, are  
13 you, too, but he was the--he was the Chairman of small  
14 businesses so it's all appropriate that you're here  
15 for this conversation and thank you for defending our  
16 small businesses right off the bat. Because as much  
17 as the Parks can say they have a great relationship  
18 with concession owners, if they did, they would have  
19 known ahead of time they were shutting them down. So,  
20 there's that answer. But the state, you know, myself  
21 I can commit money to a groin. How much does a groin  
22 cost? One groin?

23 MALE SPEAKER: \$2 million.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So, \$2  
25 million. I have \$2 million of capital money, I'll

2 buy 127<sup>th</sup> Street. Who wants to take 128<sup>th</sup> Street? I  
3 mean that's what we're talking about. We're valuing  
4 each groin. So, we have to figure out how to fund  
5 the rest of that project because the Army Corps says  
6 it should be done, but they're only willing to fund  
7 with their formula 226<sup>th</sup> Street. So, that's the  
8 answer of your part of the hearing, and I'm going to  
9 let everyone else speak about that. There's many  
10 more who knew much more about it than I do about  
11 replenishment and things like that. The other half  
12 of what happened in this conversation is what it did  
13 to our community and our enthusiasm. You know, four  
14 days before Memorial Day to hear that your beaches  
15 are closed, and—and I keep using this example, is no  
16 different than the city closing down 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue three  
17 hours before the ball drops. Right, that wouldn't  
18 happen. You never would close out an avenue on New  
19 Years Eve, but four days before Memorial Day what we  
20 gear up for the big start we close down the beaches.  
21 And what was really disappointing about that is when  
22 I reached out to call because my first reaction was  
23 the businesses, and I call Small Business Services,  
24 the person, you know, our contact and they didn't  
25 know the beaches were closed—closing. So, therefore,



2 one city agency did not speak to another city agency,  
3 which is what happens all the time, and that's the  
4 failure. That to me is irresponsibility and where we  
5 have to do better because if that decision was going  
6 to be made that beaches are going to be closed, like  
7 management failed somewhere because you had to be  
8 able to say, okay what does that look like or calls  
9 us again. So, if you reached out to any of these  
10 stakeholders here, we would say why is that  
11 distracting? (sic) Sorry, I didn't see he left. To  
12 say this is what we're going to do. What do you  
13 think we need to do? This is what's going to happen.  
14 In fact, we didn't like it. It was like taking  
15 medicine, but what could we do to make it better and  
16 then how can we stop this blow because even though  
17 we're opening it and I appreciate those efforts that  
18 we're opening some of the beaches, and—and I felt  
19 your pain of the opening of that day, but you said  
20 yourself your disappointed—you were disappointed with  
21 yourself, and I feel that for you. I know that. I  
22 know you come to our beaches, but a decision like  
23 that we should be having bigger conversations, and—  
24 and we should never be in that position again. So,  
25 for the same effort that the news reported, and I sat

2 there all morning. Channel 7 news kept saying: The  
3 Rockaway beaches are closed. The Rockaway beaches are  
4 closed. We have to reverse that now and keep telling  
5 everyone the beaches are open, all of them, and I  
6 appreciate the effort that you're going to make with  
7 program-programming during the summer, but when you  
8 pull off to 96<sup>th</sup> Street, there's a little park space.  
9 One guy sitting at a table like this with his legs  
10 out like this, and he's waiting to greet people, and  
11 that's not how I feel about how you greet my beach,  
12 and I think we could do better. As far as letting  
13 everyone know they're open and what that means, and  
14 that continuous plan that you have to talk to the  
15 Stakeholders about has to go onto the Army Corps'  
16 plan for three years because we're going to closing  
17 beaches for three years to get this replenishment  
18 done and we have to look at what that's going to look  
19 like as far as the economics go in the community, and  
20 communication goes, and how that's going to look so  
21 people can go to other beaches and get there. So,  
22 that's the other part of the conversation was the  
23 devastation to the economics and yes the concession  
24 stand is 50% deferred rents, and I appreciate that,  
25 but it was the whole beach community that go into an

2 panic, and that's not fair. People, you know, are-  
3 are investing their entire income on a good summer.  
4 They're trying to expand locally—locally hired young  
5 folks, jobs, and people panicked. Hopefully, they  
6 didn't lay anybody off yet, but what is going to look  
7 like continuous, and those up in the concession stand  
8 I still on a regular basis even before I left Albany.  
9 People say, wow, what's going on? I heard those  
10 beaches are closed. So, we kind of have to get the  
11 message out that Rockaway Beach is open. You don't  
12 have to say specifically which beach, just that we're  
13 open, you know, to direct people where to go. We're  
14 open. We've been open. We're not closed and that's  
15 what's hard because then again, what are we saying  
16 because it's beaches? Yes, it's the heart and soul  
17 of our community, but, man, we've worked our butts  
18 off since the storm, each individual civic group,  
19 each, you know, business organization, union,  
20 Rockaway. You know, to get out, and to disclose, I—  
21 my husband operates a small business, and it's not  
22 for my interest. It's the whole block, and we are a  
23 family on Rockaway Beach Boulevard and constantly  
24 telling on each other what you know and what you  
25 don't know. I could say that Select Bus Service did

2 come out after that trying to talk to the businesses,  
3 but most of the businesses feel they won't know the  
4 impact to them until maybe at the end of the summer  
5 after a four-month roll. So those numbers could be  
6 the concession numbers, and I would absolutely thank  
7 that community because we've all been out there  
8 [coughs] trying to support—there always has been  
9 support. There's nothing better than the concession  
10 stands, but we've been out there really trying to  
11 make sure that we're visible that—that everyone can  
12 see us and supporting our own community and telling  
13 people to come down. So, there's two sides of this  
14 conversation. One thing I want to touch on that you  
15 mentioned was the reality of climate change. I'm not  
16 an expert. You know, I was an accounting and  
17 business major in college. Not my thing, but since  
18 Hurricane Sandy, we've all got to really quick  
19 education, and it's real and it's happening, and  
20 there is an Office of Recovery and Resiliency, but  
21 I'm—I'm disappointed in that office lately. You  
22 know, I don't feel any connection or contact and if  
23 that's the state verse the City of New York will work  
24 but our doors are open. I mean I'm as on the ground  
25 in the Rockaway Beach community as you can get, and I

2 feel that office could be doing more and they do have  
3 big investments out there. They are in Washington,  
4 and think their voice-- Are they here today? Are  
5 they representing this conversation? Because they're  
6 the experts in this conversation.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] The  
8 Army Corps [on mic] the Army Corps will be testifying  
9 after you.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: No the  
11 officer of Office of Recovery and Resiliency, the  
12 city's office.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: No, they're--I'm  
14 not expecting them to testify, and they do fall under  
15 the sway of the Committee on Environmental Protection  
16 and Chairman Costa Constantinides. I will talk to him  
17 about that.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So, we then  
19 just did it with the joints, and it's always a joint  
20 hearing because they line up, and if we keep having  
21 this conversation separate, because Parks is in  
22 charge of their parks, and it's standard to the  
23 budget, but is' really the Office of Recovery and  
24 Resiliency that we've dealt with the Corps or we've  
25 dealt with increased--yeah, when we talk about flood

2 insurance and they're that oversight office, and you  
3 said it yourself, resiliency looks different in each  
4 community what Coney Island does, and that's  
5 something else. It's not one big resilient I dare  
6 say wall around the city and the boroughs, but  
7 everybody's shoreline is different, and if everybody  
8 has to be treated differently, but once again it's  
9 always Rockaway, and I'm, you know we're the--the end  
10 of end of the earth, the stepchild that is forgotten.  
11 They're not invested in except we do. You go there.  
12 We-we know it but it's always we're fighting from the  
13 bottom up, and I'm tired of it.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, I-I don't  
15 think it's the end of the earth.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I haven't been  
18 to the end of the earth, but I know it's not the  
19 Rockaway, but it is as--as the Commissioner out in his  
20 testimony, it really is the first line of defense for  
21 New York City because it's--it's the beach that is  
22 really closest out into the Atlantic. There's  
23 nothing separating. You know, Coney Island is  
24 shielded. Staten Island is a little further west, of  
25 course, and so they don't take the brunt although

2 both of those communities were also devastated during  
3 Sandy, but we—we do appreciate your testimony. I  
4 don't want to cut you off, but I--

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: No, I said  
6 I want to say thank you for that.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I don't—I  
9 want everyone else to speak. It's fair. It's really  
10 my constituents' and the community's words that  
11 really I value the most. That's what we're here for.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's what I'm  
13 waiting to hear as well.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: But I will  
15 say to you on that just all I'll ask is that please  
16 remember what you just said that we are the first  
17 line of defense because--

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I  
19 remember it well.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: --because  
21 we have not been treated—thank you. Because that's  
22 something that has to be slipped in the conversations  
23 and thoughts for Rockaway Beach.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's why we're  
25 here today. One of the reasons that we're here

2 today. I do want to tell you that I know you were a  
3 little delayed in getting here. Commissioner Silver  
4 in his testimony did disclosed that as they count  
5 that we have season heretofore compared to last year  
6 we've doubled. So, while some doubled the number of  
7 visitors. So, we've gone from 600,000 to 1.2  
8 million, which is astonishing to me considering how  
9 the weather hasn't really been so great. It hasn't  
10 been that warm but.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: At this  
12 point right now?

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes, at this  
14 point right now.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Apples to  
16 apples?

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Apples to  
18 apples, that's what--it's in the testimony. I can  
19 get you a copy of it or I can give you a copy.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Can I ask  
21 how that's compared, how that tracking is done,  
22 please Commissioner.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Commissioner, if  
24 you would.



2 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [off mic] We know  
3 that that is out there. We know we have to count a  
4 section. We use the same number year over year.  
5 It's part of the program, and last year it got over  
6 60,000 according to the concession that we separate  
7 [off mic] as to what is the concession is using.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: and the food is  
9 excellent.

10 COMMISSIONER SILVER: [off mic] Not any  
11 more.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Right, I don't  
13 know if any of the concessionaires are with us today,  
14 but I can remember being at several beach openings,  
15 and

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO:  
17 [interposing] Right there.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --the food is  
19 outstanding so--

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO:  
21 [interposing] Get yourself an umbrella over your  
22 head.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's not just  
24 about going on the beach. It's about, you know, and  
25 the Rockaways to me it's amazing how far that they've

2 come and I said this earlier in my opening statement  
3 that the people of the Rockaways are among the most  
4 resilient anywhere in New York City and anywhere on  
5 earth, and we know what they've dealt with. I've  
6 been there visiting there--visiting since a little  
7 boy, but in government working with your mother and  
8 the other elected officials who proceeded you. So, I  
9 want to thank you for being here today. I know that  
10 you're along with the other elected officials really  
11 have a special group in the Rockaways--

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --and you're a  
14 little funnier than your mother, also. [laughter] I  
15 have to be very careful.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: She ain't  
17 that funny. I know.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I have to be  
19 very careful. For those of you who don't know, her  
20 mother is the County Clerk, and I do not want to end  
21 up on--

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO:

23 [interposing] I'm picking you.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --a grand jury  
25 for six months. [laughter] So, thank you,

2 Councilwoman, Assemblywoman—I almost gave you a pay  
3 raise. Assembly woman Stacey Pheffer Amato.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [interposing]  
5 Chair, I just want to--

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Oh, go ahead and  
7 Eric Ulrich also, Mr. Gjonaj and then Mister--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Well, I am term  
9 limited just for the record--

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
11 You can do whatever you want right?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: --but I-I just  
13 wanted to say, Chair, on the record what-how  
14 reassuring it is for me as-as the city representative  
15 here to be joined by all of my colleagues at that  
16 federal and state level. They've all come—they've  
17 all come here today to testify on the record about  
18 this issue, and this is very important. It is very  
19 important and I, you know, I-I know that the state  
20 elected officials are working with DEC to look at  
21 their permitting process to see if there's parts of  
22 that that can be cut out or expedited. That's  
23 something that's come up. It really is a group  
24 effort, a team effort. We're trying to do everything  
25 we can to address the erosion in the Rockaways.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you,  
3 Councilman Ulrich. Councilman Gjonaj.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair,  
5 and I just for the record I want to say Assemblywoman  
6 I see the passion in you, and I miss you, and thank  
7 you for what you're doing.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, thank  
10 you, very, very much, Assemblywoman.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Lynn Kelly from  
13 New Yorkers for Parks.

14 LYNN KELLY: Hi, good afternoon. Thank  
15 you, Council Member Grodenchik and the Committee here  
16 on Parks and Recreation. My name is Lynn Kelly. I'm  
17 the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks. We  
18 are a city-citywide independent organization  
19 committed to research, advocacy and promotion of  
20 parks throughout New York City. We, too, echo the  
21 disappointment that many in the room share today that  
22 the beach closed and then the announcement came so  
23 late prior to the beach opening weekend. Furthermore  
24 we believe that more could have been done to notify  
25 elected officials, Concessionaires, the community

2 board and others have all been in this process. But  
3 we're also aware of what climate change has done in  
4 New York City and the difficult response to climate  
5 change. The need to dredge and dump sand has been  
6 critical since Sandy. This work can only really be  
7 completed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and  
8 approved by the Army Corps, and when winter storms  
9 continue to increase at frequency and at rate and  
10 severity it becomes that much harder to keep up. We  
11 appreciate that Parks did make this decision to close  
12 the beach for safety of its residents, but we still  
13 reiterate that more could have been done to share the  
14 news on a more broad scare and to prepare for it in  
15 advance. We believe that additional consideration  
16 should be paid to the 12 concessionaires at Beach 97  
17 that will be impacted by this closure. I can tell  
18 you from personal experience. I grew up two blocks  
19 from the Boardwalk in Staten Island and spent ten  
20 years working in Coney Island directly with  
21 concessionaries and with Boardwalk vendors. I  
22 understand how very difficult it is to have a  
23 business, and it is so seasonal and you make  
24 investments based on a year's worth of income into  
25 your business, but you only get the season in terms

2 of revenue out of it, and I know that first hand.  
3 So, marshalling—marketing resources for example from  
4 NYC & Co. we think is a step in the absolute right  
5 direction, and Commissioner, full disclosure. For  
6 many years I've served on the Board of New York City  
7 & Company. I chair on the Executive Committee, the  
8 Committee for Parks, Recreation and Attractions. I'd  
9 be more than happy to help continue this conversation  
10 or marshal resources. This is important. So, please  
11 turn to me for that not just in my role at NYC &  
12 Company, but my role to help with parks, and we also  
13 think it's great that concessions have already been  
14 considered as it relates to rent. The city may also  
15 want to consider hardship grants or waiving some of  
16 the standard city contract regulations that might  
17 leave these concessioners unable to have profits this  
18 season in addition to let's say for example  
19 increasing the hours for music. So, with the reality  
20 of our changing climate, we urge the Administration  
21 and the City Council to view this experience as a cry  
22 and call for increased funding and coordination with  
23 the Army Corps of Engineers so that we can mitigate  
24 some of this in the future. Hopefully, we won't have  
25 to deal with it any longer. Thank you very much for

2 the opportunity to speak. Council Member Ulrich, I  
3 will say to you that I give Council Member Grodenchik  
4 a hard time every time I sit up here about—every  
5 single time about the fact that there are no women on  
6 the Parks Committee. So, I commend you for bringing  
7 the first woman to the Parks Committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Oh, thank you.

9 [applause]

10 LYNN KELLY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And I want to  
12 thank you. My two great mentors were both women,  
13 Assemblywoman Mayersohn and Borough President Claire  
14 Shulman. I learned a lot from those two great women.  
15 At this time, to sit by himself for the Army Corps of  
16 Engineers Daniel Falt. I hope I'm pronouncing your  
17 name correctly.

18 DANIEL FALT: [off mic] That is correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

20 DANIEL FALT: So, I'm alone here.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay.  
22 You got the power of the federal government behind  
23 you.

24 DANIEL FALT: Yeah. I'm going to see  
25 like--

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yeah, right.

3 DANIEL FALT: Check. Does that work?

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Yes.

5 DANIEL FALT: The little bar here.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Do you have  
7 copies of your testimony, please.

8 DANIEL FALT: Yes, I do.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You can give  
10 them to the sergeant at arms. Thank you. Daniel, I  
11 am going to do as we do with all appointed official, I'm  
12 going to ask the—the clerk to swear you in.

13 DANIEL FALT: Sure.

14 CLERK: Do you affirm to tell the truth,  
15 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your  
16 testimony before this committee today?

17 DANIEL FALT: I do. Okay, good morning.  
18 Thank you for inviting me and allowing me to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for  
20 being here.

21 DANIEL FALT: My name is Dan Falt and I'm  
22 a Senior Project Manager with the Coastal Restoration  
23 Branch of the Army Corps of Engineers New York  
24 District. Pleased to be here on behalf of the Corps  
25 of Engineers and since Hurricane Sandy I've been



2 responsible for a variety of projects in New York  
3 City including work in the Gerritsen Creek, Palm  
4 Beach, Coney Island, Rockaway Beach. I've worked on  
5 ecosystem restorations and many beach replenishment  
6 operations, groin and breakwater construction, and  
7 I've worked on a lot of studies for beach erosion and  
8 related coastal storm risk in New York City. In the  
9 overall-overarching purpose for our agency is to  
10 produce risk to life and property within vulnerable  
11 communities, and our focus had been the protective  
12 aspects of engineered beaches. We're limited to  
13 participate in some of the more recreational aspects.  
14 That's just a feature of our agency and our  
15 authority. Now, speaking with engineering tools for  
16 erosion, I mean there's not that many things you can  
17 do. You can harden shorelines with flood walls. You  
18 can build revetments, sea walls. You can work on  
19 erosion control structures like jetties or groins and  
20 breakwaters. One other thing you can do is you could  
21 retreat. You can move structures, infrastructure  
22 back from the ocean and let an equilibrium shoreline  
23 form. You can learn to live with water, which  
24 basically means you could waterproof your houses and  
25 prepare for those days when the ocean will be at your

2 front door. And one of the other things we is beach  
3 tree nourishment with dunes and vegetative dunes to  
4 provide a soft level of protection. Now, there's  
5 been a long history of beach construction in New York  
6 City. Since the early 1900s, in fact, the first sand  
7 pumping in the country was actually in Coney Island  
8 in 1922. Both city and state efforts constructed the  
9 wood rock groins in the early 1900s and many of the  
10 areas obviously in Rockaway prior to the Corps of  
11 Engineers' involvement, and we all know, you know,  
12 there's been severe beach erosion in Rockaway  
13 specifically in the Beach 30s and Beach 90s. Coney  
14 Island has experienced quite a bit of erosion. Plum  
15 Beach is an area that-that until we went and built  
16 structures there had significant erosion constantly.  
17 Now for the Bach 90s and the Beach 30s within  
18 Rockaway, we average or we estimate that there's 20  
19 feet of beach loss each year on average in those  
20 specific areas the 90s and the 30s. Now that's  
21 average so that means one year you could have 80 feet  
22 and one year you could have none, but 20 feet per  
23 year is-is our general estimate we use for planning.  
24 Now, the Corps of Engineers started work in Rockaway.  
25 We did a study in 1965. We recommended a big beach,

2 a flood wall in front of the Boardwalk, a hurricane  
3 barrier across Jamaica Bay Inlet, and flood walls  
4 that continued all the to Coney Island. This was  
5 never completed. In 1974, Congress authorized us to  
6 build the beach portion and they did not authorize  
7 any hard structures any sort of jetties or any other  
8 things that could have controlled erosion. So, we  
9 began work in 1975 building beaches, and it's pretty  
10 shocking listening to it. We did beach re-  
11 nourishment in 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982,  
12 1984, 1986, 1988, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] Was  
14 that over the Rockaways?

15 DANIEL FALT: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

17 DANIEL FALT: Rockaway Beach, Five Miles  
18 Beach. In 2004, the existing congressional authority  
19 basically ran out and the authority was tied to a  
20 statement saying that the federal government has to  
21 do a report to find out a way to not have to  
22 replenish every two years, and that report was never  
23 completed, and we did not do a full scale re-  
24 nourishment of Rockaway Beach until after Sandy, but  
25 in the years prior to Sand, we put 18 million cubic

2 yard on the Rockaway Beach. Now, I f you think about  
3 it, the biggest dumpster at a construction site is 30  
4 yards. So, think of 18 million cubic yards. Then  
5 immediately after Sandy—well, not immediately—so  
6 right after Sandy we did place 3.5 million cubic  
7 yards between Beach 19<sup>th</sup> and Beach 149<sup>th</sup> and the City  
8 of New York and Parks—the city of—Parks also paid  
9 extra to build the dune feature, which brought the  
10 beach up from plus 10 from our datum to plus 16 and  
11 provided a significant amount of extra protection  
12 that could be in place until we found a more  
13 comprehensive project. So, you know, we've been  
14 working very closely with the city and the state, and  
15 all the elected officials on possible options for  
16 short-term measures, and, you know, because we  
17 understand that there—there are the erosional  
18 hotspots in the Rockaways. So, we have been working  
19 to identify basically either a—a 100% local cots some  
20 sort of mixture of funding or funding for 100%  
21 federal, and right now, we have not identified a  
22 source of funding to use for an interim sand  
23 replenishment. And I also say that the timeline even  
24 at our fastest we would need at least 10 weeks to—  
25 from award to place sand on the beach via dredge.

2 So, we need to keep that in mind. Even when you get  
3 through funding issues, we get through permitting  
4 issues, we need a 10-week is the very minimum we can  
5 do to mobilize dredge placed sand of this volume. Our  
6 future work and I'll just touch briefly on this, too  
7 that the Re-formulation Study, which we've been  
8 talking about quite a bit we'll absolutely recommend  
9 erosion control structures and the know erosional hot  
10 spots in the 30s, in the 90s extending ending of  
11 which we'll have to refine in further design.

12 Currently, I think we have the last groin ending at  
13 Beach 126. We've also looked at a refurbishment of  
14 the Beach 149<sup>th</sup> Street groin, which we think is  
15 fundamental in maintaining the width of the beach and  
16 the Belle Harbor and the Neponset area. Now this—  
17 we're also, of course, going to be recommending  
18 reinforced dunes, which actually are under the dune  
19 pushed up against as far as we can up against the—  
20 either the baffle wall or the Boardwalk will be a  
21 pretty significant structure of steel sheet pile and  
22 rock and on top of that the sand dune and planted  
23 grass so that there'll be a hard backstop or spine  
24 along the sand dune in the case of extraordinary  
25 events, and then we will also work into this a re-

2 nourishment effort for each placement. So, this—this  
3 report we have been working on for many years, and it  
4 has included for many years larger—larger elements  
5 including a hurricane barrier, and as we studied  
6 this, and through the last few years in the last  
7 draft report we realized that this is a \$3 billion  
8 effort that could take upwards of a decade to build,  
9 and we feel we don't have the time to wait for  
10 certain elements like the beaches and probably areas  
11 of high frequency flood risk in the back bay. So, as  
12 an agency we're moving forward with this very  
13 quickly. We will be releasing a draft—re-releasing a  
14 draft report of this in—for public review in late  
15 August, and we will hopefully as soon as possible  
16 submit that to our higher headquarters by the end of  
17 the calendar year for final approval. What—what  
18 happened in the meantime, when Mayor de Blasio,  
19 Senator Schumer and others went up to speak with the  
20 Chief of the Corps of Engineers, the Chief of the  
21 Corps of Engineers gave us approval to do something  
22 fairly unprecedented and that is begin design work  
23 prior to approval. So, underway right now we are  
24 actually working on designs, plan sheets. We have  
25 surveyors taking measurements all over the peninsula,

2 and we're moving forward with even more detailed  
3 computer modeling to make sure we get this groin-  
4 these groins right. You know, I-I do have prepared in  
5 my document-in my testimony some discussion of the  
6 South Shore of Staten Island, but I think, you know,  
7 hearing other testimony, you might want to--

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] Well,  
9 I'm happy that it will be-it will be in the record,  
10 and we have your testimony. [on mic] So I have it,  
11 and we are obviously concerned about all of New York  
12 City.

13 DANIEL FALT: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: The focus today  
15 has been a bit more on the Rockaways where there's  
16 much more immediate need, but I see that the Staten  
17 Island Project is north of \$600 million. Do you have  
18 any other-anything else you want to add before we  
19 start questions?

20 DANIEL FALT: No, I'm happy. Thank you  
21 for the opportunity to provide the testimony. I'm  
22 happy to answer questions.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for  
24 being here today. Did I hear you right when you said

2 \$3 billion? Is that just for the Rockaway Peninsula  
3 or what would that entail?

4 DANIEL FALT: That is—the \$3 billion  
5 would be the estimate for a hurricane barrier closure  
6 gate across Jamaica Bay.

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, that would  
8 be to—to cut Jamaica Bay off, although in theory I  
9 guess God forbid that it could wash over the Rockaway  
10 Peninsula as it did last time.

11 DANIEL FALT: One thing about the—the  
12 plan design we have now for the beach portions of  
13 Rockaway that would be compatible with the featured  
14 gate if one is recommended in a further study and  
15 further appropriation.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Do you have an  
17 estimate on what it would take to put groins where  
18 people would like to see them along the peninsula  
19 itself as opposed to that gate. I know the gate  
20 works in other parts of the world. I know there's a  
21 Thames barrier and it protects London, but I just—  
22 would this gate would that be that kind of thing or  
23 go up and down as necessary or--?

24 DANIEL FALT: Yeah, I mean it's  
25 important to realize the groins don't stop flooding.



2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Not, I get that.

3 DANIEL FALT: It's the gate (sic) and  
4 that stops the flooding. The gate and the groins it  
5 would work together, I think—are you referring to  
6 extending the groin field for this?

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, I'm  
8 referring to that.

9 DANIEL FALT: I think in my estimates  
10 you'd need another 8 to 10 groins to close that gap  
11 at a price of \$2 to \$4 million a piece depending on  
12 the—the—how much rock is actually needed to build the  
13 groin in the existing bottom.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Eight to ten  
15 groins at \$2 to \$4 million a pieces. So, on the short  
16 end we'd probably be around \$18 million, and on the  
17 long end we'd be around \$40 million. Somewhere  
18 around that.

19 DANIEL FALT: That's reasonable, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, do you own  
21 your own dredges?

22 DANIEL FALT: The Corps has a few  
23 dredges, I think two. They're small, they're not  
24 large dredges.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, we generally  
3 contract this work out?

4 DANIEL FALT: Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, alright.  
6 Council Ulrich, I know you had—I'm sorry you have  
7 two.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: No, no I  
9 appreciate it and I—I—I certainly appreciate your  
10 indulgence with each panel because there's so many  
11 different elements to this. It's not something that  
12 we alone can fix and that's why we have all these.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's not you.  
14 It's your assistant I'm worried about so go ahead.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: No, no, she's  
16 fine. She's attending to the dog. Anyway, but  
17 [laughs] I'm reading the testimony that you prepared  
18 and it says that the—we will be in a position to  
19 begin working in Rockaway in late 2019 using 100%  
20 federal funding under Public Law, you know, 113-2.  
21 So, what is funded currently for the federal  
22 government and what is not funded and how much—what  
23 is not funded and how much would those things cost?

24 DANIEL FALT: Well, the entire  
25 recommended project when we released the draft report

2 will be 100% federal. Okay, that will be the beach  
3 design that is basically to the one we had  
4 recommended in the last draft as well as some high  
5 frequency flood risk measures on the back bay that  
6 are still currently being--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [interposing]  
8 What is the price tag on that exactly?

9 DANIEL FALT: The whole thing?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Yeah.

11 DANIEL FALT: I haven't seen the final  
12 estimates. It's somewhere \$4 to \$500 million.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, so 4 to 5.  
14 I won't hold you to it. So, just--just so I have an  
15 idea. So \$4 to \$500 million just for the jetties,  
16 the sand replenishment and you mentioned some  
17 protected measures on the bay side.

18 DANIEL FALT: Yeah, it--yeah, some high  
19 frequency flood risk measures we're looking at on--the  
20 Bay side to the section.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Such as what?  
22 Can you can on there?

23 DANIEL FALT: So, it's small flood wall  
24 it's protecting low-level events. You know,  
25 basically when we--we added these to--these would

2 function with a hurricane barrier if we put them in  
3 place, but we realized that there are areas in the  
4 Rockaway and Jamaica Bay area that even with a  
5 hurricane barrier in place you wouldn't—they are so  
6 low and so endangered by sea level rise that if you  
7 go 50 years in the future they would be flooding at  
8 very low-level storms, storms you wouldn't want to  
9 close a big hurricane barrier. So, we believe with  
10 the funding we had in place, 100% federal there are  
11 certain areas that we think we should examine for  
12 certain sort of smaller measures.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Are there things  
14 that you think we should be doing that are not  
15 funded?

16 DANIEL FALT: I wouldn't—I can't comment  
17 on that. I don't think so.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, well that's  
19 very interesting because I'd like to see what—what—  
20 what was in that grand master plan that \$3 billion  
21 number other than the massive seawall that is not  
22 included in this \$4 to \$500 million project that  
23 maybe the city should be looking at because in the  
24 past the city had contributed significantly to Army

2 Corps projects. Is that—is that correct? I mean  
3 that's a matter of public record?

4 DANIEL FALT: [interposing] Yes, there's  
5 been a cost share involved in—

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [off mic] There  
7 was a share.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: There—there is a  
9 share.

10 DANIEL FALT: And there will be in the  
11 future for future re-nourishment.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Right, but—but  
13 for this project it's 100% federal. So what I'd like  
14 to see is the city is not putting in a dime in this  
15 project in this proposed project that you'll be  
16 really seeing for public review in August.

17 DANIEL FALT: Other than operations and  
18 maintenance that they'll be required to.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Okay, other than  
20 operations and—and maintenance, what I'd like to see  
21 I'm—I'm trying to find out how to find out what items  
22 are not included in this project that perhaps the  
23 city can or should be paying for. Okay because I  
24 thin that the city we have moral imperative and an  
25 obligation quite frankly to contributed to this

2 project in a very significant way because our first  
3 and primary responsibility as a government is to  
4 protect our citizens and to protect people's lives  
5 and their property, and the fact that the city has  
6 basically just kicked the can down the road and said  
7 oh, well. The Army Corps is going to pay for  
8 everything. Why are we going to waste money on sand  
9 replenishment? What are we going to waste money on  
10 this? Why are we going to waste money on that? You  
11 now, just let the federal government pay for it. You  
12 know, that only works for so long. I'd to see what-  
13 if there are any projects or enhancements to this  
14 project maybe at the back end that are not, you know,  
15 very cost-prohibitive that we-that we can pay for  
16 them. You know, so I'd like to find that out, and I  
17 wonder if there's a way to-is there someone in in  
18 Washington that we can speak to? Should we contact  
19 Senator Schumer again? I mean I-I don't know. I  
20 just-the information is very forthcoming. Everything  
21 that you're presenting is stuff that-that really we  
22 already know. Thank you, by the way for being here.  
23 I know you don't have to be here. The Parks  
24 Department is telling us stuff that quite frankly we  
25 already know. I want to know what we don't know.

2 So, I want to know what we're not paying for and what  
3 we could be getting, and how much those things cost.  
4 I think that—that's pretty significant.

5 DANIEL FALT: Yes, sir and when we get  
6 to the end of September and we release the draft  
7 report that the draft final report, we'll see what  
8 elements that—the complete range of elements the  
9 Corps of Engineers is willing to put forward and then  
10 if there are other things that the city or the state  
11 are interested in, we'll talk about putting those on-  
12 -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [interposing] I  
14 think that that's a real, you know, question here,  
15 and that's a real concern that people have. I  
16 appreciate the fact that we're doing design early,  
17 we're doing computer models. We're actually in that  
18 part of the process when we haven't actually executed  
19 any contracts, which is great, and I understand  
20 that's going to speed it up, but are we still on the  
21 same timeline that the Mayor announced with Senator  
22 Schumer? Are we still on—are there any anticipated  
23 delays? I mean tell me when do you actually expect  
24 work to begin? If everything goes as planned

2 according to the plan as it stands now, when are we  
3 going to see construction start?

4 DANIEL FALT: We believe construction  
5 will start before the end of 2019.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Before the end of  
7 2019. Okay, alright. Make note of that, Chair.  
8 [bell] [laughs]

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I think I will.  
10 (sic)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Good man. Alright,  
12 thank you very much. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you.  
14 Thank you, Councilman Ulrich. A couple more  
15 questions here. The Army Corps recently completed an  
16 informed construction on groins and jetties in Long  
17 Beach, which is immediately east of the Rockaways,  
18 and I just want to know will this affect the  
19 Rockaways? Was that in any way because I assume if-  
20 if they're building jetties and groins you're going  
21 to capture sand in the Long Beach area. Will that  
22 affect the flow of sand, which might affect erosion  
23 on the Rockaway Peninsula?

24 DANIEL FALT: The—as part of the  
25 reconstruction of the groins in Long Beach, the Army



2 Corps of Engineers is putting four million cubic  
3 yards, basically up-drift of Rockaway and it has  
4 never placed sand in Long Beach before. So,  
5 presumably the addition of so much sand up there, you  
6 know, groins are not going to capture all of it, and  
7 there will be a lot of sand coming down toward  
8 Rockaway.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Four million.  
10 That's a lot. They're going to get their sand, and  
11 they're going to loan us this sand. Alright.  
12 [laughter] Do you—we asked that—I know you were  
13 here. We asked Commissioner Silver about monitoring.  
14 Does the Army Corps monitor as well? I know in New  
15 York City the Parks Department is responsible for the  
16 beaches and Commissioner, First Deputy Commissioner  
17 Kavanagh testified that they monitor twice a year.  
18 So you guys monitor as well?

19 DANIEL FALT: You know, informally we  
20 monitor, but our—whenever we build a project we have  
21 a non-federal sponsor and that's generally the City  
22 of New York and Parks and Recreation specifically,  
23 and we require them as part of their operations and  
24 maintenance to inspect the projects and let us know  
25 what the condition is. [background comments, pause]

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You know, it's  
3 easy to build the reefs. How would you describe—I  
4 don't know if you—if you had said your pay grade or  
5 above the ongoing relationship with the City and the  
6 Army Corps is it a good one?

7 DANIEL FALT: Yeah, even at my pay grade  
8 it's great. [laughter] We—we work with the city and  
9 state almost daily. We've been working closely  
10 together with them prior to Sandy through Sandy and  
11 since then.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: And is your main  
13 liaison, you—the agency and city is it Parks  
14 Department you liaise with mostly or is there another  
15 agency the resiliency people?

16 DANIEL FALT: The office of Resiliency  
17 and Parks generally together.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

19 DANIEL FALT: And sometimes DEP as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I can only write  
21 so quickly. I know Councilman Ulrich covered this  
22 about what else we could be doing. I—I—I—it's, you  
23 know, it is frustrating and we do know that the  
24 beaches, you know, given time and if nobody were  
25 living there they would do their own thing, but we

2 have over 100,000 people, one of the most densely  
3 populated barrier rounds in the world is the Rockaway  
4 Peninsula, and I'm just—are we missing anything?  
5 [pause] If you had an unlimited checkbook. I'll  
6 give you—you're writing check, you know,

7 DANIEL FALT: You know, everything that  
8 we do has impacts, and too often in ocean  
9 engineering, you can do things that are bad. So,  
10 it's often times better to do things slowly and  
11 reversible and to watch and to do things  
12 evolutionarily. So--

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate  
14 that, but I also have to worry about the people who  
15 are sitting over there who don't have the time, but  
16 I—I understand that that's your best—best opinion and  
17 I—I know we did make little of it, but it is—it is  
18 frustrating. We've heard from a lot of people today.  
19 I've been visiting the Rockaway Peninsula  
20 professionally for three decades, and I know it's  
21 doing much better, and in—in light of Sandy, I have  
22 to say that the people in this room who represent  
23 many of the civic organizations up and down the  
24 peninsula really have come an awfully long way, and  
25 they're to be commended for their—their own personal

2 resiliency. I see Mr. Cohen is—would like to ask a  
3 question, sir.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: If you're done.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I'm done.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'm done. Thank  
7 you Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the Army Corps  
8 participating in this hearing. First, do you—do you  
9 have an opinion or does the Army Corps have an  
10 opinion on the condition of the—the—the beaches in—in  
11 the Rockaways now in terms of erosion? Before, I  
12 don't know if you were present, but the—the Parks  
13 Department does seem to have a different opinion as to  
14 the width of the beaches now.

15 DANIEL FALT: We—we still believe it's a  
16 functioning risk reduction measure in place.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: That the last  
18 replenishment has not been washed away--

19 DANIEL FALT: [interposing] Correct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: --in it's  
21 entirety. The—the draft—I guess the—not the final  
22 drafts but the preliminary draft talked about  
23 stopping jetties at 126 Street. Can you tell us a  
24 little bit what the rationale is for that? Why  
25 they're not needed?

2 DANIEL FALT: Well, you know, the air-  
3 the groin field is really intended to even the  
4 erosion rates of the entire beach to the same because  
5 groins don't solve all erosion. I mean they—they  
6 help. They don't cure it completely. A lot of sand  
7 gets pushed out and lost into the ocean. It's not  
8 all lateral. So, these groins will function and  
9 they'll prove great cost savings and we balance the  
10 cost savings with the groin of how much sand we have  
11 to replenish in the future. So, the groin saves X  
12 amount of money but costs \$2 to \$4 million per groin.  
13 Basically when you design a groin field to now induce  
14 a shadow, you have to have a period of—of tapered  
15 where the groins get smaller. So, the amount of sand  
16 that's caught by each one is slightly less, and the  
17 idea is to build a taper to not impact the down drift  
18 shadow effect from the beach—well from 126<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup>—  
19 149<sup>th</sup> right now, but I also will—will mention that in  
20 our refining—reformulation—excuse me—refinement of  
21 the re-formulation, we're doing some other tools that  
22 we didn't even have access to three years ago for  
23 computer modeling, and we're going to make sure we do  
24 this right, and it may mean spreading the number of  
25 groins. They may extend farther than 126<sup>th</sup>. We may

2 recommend that they don't even extend that far, but  
3 we do need to do some more design refinement and make  
4 sure we get the right design, but the re-formulation  
5 might not capture that full refinement, but it will  
6 be an evolving process that will work with the public  
7 and the agencies with.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Can I--can I also  
9 just so that I'm clear on the testimony, you're  
10 contemplating that this project will be between--  
11 ultimately between \$4 and \$5 million?

12 DANIEL FALT: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: And do we have any  
14 of that money? Is it already--?

15 DANIEL FALT: Yes, it's already  
16 appropriated.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: So, it's fully  
18 funded. Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Your favorite  
20 number.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Alright, thank  
22 you, Mr. Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I--I meant to ask  
24 this before someone who was testifying and assembly  
25 woman Pheffer Amato brought it up. I--I know that the

2 Rockaways don't end at 149<sup>th</sup> Street, and they go a  
3 considerable distance. In fact they go a long way  
4 past 149<sup>th</sup> Street. Is anything being planned for  
5 Breezy Point and I guess Roxbury on the north side of  
6 it, but from Breezy Point there is a federal beach  
7 there when Neponset ends, and—and Jacob Riis Park,  
8 and Pitch and Putt Golf Course, which is near and  
9 dear to my heart, but beyond that we have Breezy and  
10 that is a long way out, and I'm just wondering if  
11 there's anything being planned for that or they're--?

12 DANIEL FALT: Not in this reformulation,  
13 the latest reformulation draft. There is still the—  
14 the FEMA Grant program that was—there was project  
15 that was in works as far as I know for Breezy Point,  
16 but the beach down there is getting wider.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

18 DANIEL FALT: So, at Breezy Point it's  
19 getting 20 feet plus a year instead of 20 feet back.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay. Alright,  
21 well, I think I'm done. Councilman Ulrich,  
22 Councilman Cohen.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to thank  
25 you Mr. Falt for being here today, and I recognize

2 that you didn't have to be here, and we greatly  
3 appreciate that you are here today. Alright, there  
4 we're patiently waiting for 2 hours and 37 minutes,  
5 and I know that they were here earlier because  
6 they're always on time in the Rockaways because they  
7 have to come from so far like I do to get to City  
8 Hall. The first panel will be John Corey, Bridget  
9 Koplanski. I hope I got that one right.

10 BRIDGET KOPLANSKI: [off mic] Yes, I have  
11 to go. So, I'm going to pass.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You're going to  
13 pass. You just went up a few notches in my book. I  
14 love you. [laughter] You sure you don't—you don't  
15 have to pass. Okay.

16 BRIDGET KOPKANSKI: But I do. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, then we  
18 will put Ms. Koplansi aside. Mr. Jeremy Jones. I'm  
19 going to get Mr. Iorti with the other bill for the  
20 Belle Harbor people, and Claire Hilger who also lives  
21 in the Rockaway Beach area. [background comments,  
22 pause]

23 JOHN: Okay, so thanks for having his,  
24 Barry. WE really appreciate it. There's a lot of  
25 things--



2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We got—we got a  
3 clock running and it's running, but if you go over,  
4 you know it's in my discretion but--

5 JOHN: [interposing] Right. So, so  
6 basically, you know our great concern is I think  
7 everything has been said today by others that in  
8 thinking forward, moving forward, there's an  
9 opportunity that's been talked about. I don't  
10 believe that Councilman—Congressman Meeks is here—a  
11 meeting he had. We have a dredging machine that's  
12 going to be at—in Long Beach for the fall. There's a  
13 definite possibility of DDC or ED contacting them and  
14 getting a contract, and I know there's a lot of  
15 procurement issues with that and trying to get that  
16 solved and—and get some sand on the beaches. We've  
17 got to start thinking about next years because as we  
18 lose, we lose 20 feet according to Dan Falt for next  
19 year.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: On average.

21 JOHN: Which is, well, it could be 80  
22 feet across that, but so--

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] It  
24 could be 80, it could be nothing, but--

2           JOHN: So, they've got to get that moving  
3 along. That's a very important things and then the  
4 urgency is for the Rockaway Peninsula, you know, we  
5 talk about recreation versus protection. I mean  
6 obviously this is a Parks and Recreation decision for  
7 the recreation aspect. The dunes are being eaten  
8 (sic). You know, Parks is doing a great job  
9 protecting the dunes, and it's fantastic, but the  
10 city of New York and the Mayor has to do something  
11 better to protect the dunes from the ocean the  
12 velocity of a wave movement. So, that's an important  
13 things, and you know, like-like we-we are starting to  
14 see some-some effect of-of the funding that's come  
15 through. We're going to see some parks breaking  
16 ground very soon. It needs to be pointed out that,  
17 you know, in that recreational area on the beach we  
18 sill have a very large area that still is not rebuilt  
19 on the-on the Parks side and Parks is definitely  
20 doing a great job in getting them moving along. So,  
21 it's not like we're bunch of cry babies in the  
22 Rockaways. We have a lot going on. We've been  
23 fighting a long time. We still have a long way to  
24 go. So, I'm going to pass it over to my Vice  
25 President of the Civic Association Jeremy Jones.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, John, I  
3 want to thank you. I know you've been among the  
4 strongest voices in the Peninsula. It's been my  
5 pleasure to work with you for a number of years now,  
6 and I know it's not easy. A lot of people would have  
7 given up and left, but you haven't.

8 JOHN: We'll never give up.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I know you're  
10 not going to.

11 JEREMY JONES: Hi. My name is Jeremy  
12 Jones from Beach 92<sup>nd</sup> Street. I'd like to thank you  
13 very much for convening the hearing and for give us a  
14 chance to speak for our elected officials who were  
15 here, and also to the Parks Department. I want to  
16 speak on more of an immediate concern of getting all  
17 of the beaches open this summer, and we had a great  
18 meeting with some of the members of the Rockaway  
19 Beach Civic Board with Commissioner Silver and  
20 Lewandowski, Kavanagh and with Portia, and we really  
21 appreciated the time we had. I think we had a great  
22 conversation. One thing that was mentioned in that  
23 meeting was that they--the PEP officers were not  
24 necessarily cape--comfortable being capable with  
25 protecting the dune, and that seemed like one of the

2 reasons they were closing the beach was to protect  
3 the dune as I understood it. What was confusing to  
4 me is that if they can protect the dune from the  
5 Boardwalk side keeping us off the beach, they could  
6 certainly protect the dune from the beach side  
7 keeping people walking through that closed section.  
8 I'm there, my neighbors are there all winter long.  
9 We're picking up trash on that beach. All of a  
10 sudden that beach is closed to me to do something  
11 that gives me a great peace and satisfaction, and we-  
12 we see it and things seem to function quite well all  
13 year round. I understand more visitors, there's more  
14 problems. Not problems but issues. I want to see the  
15 beaches open. I want to see those red flagged  
16 beaches if they can't guard them to swimming, I want  
17 to see them open for people to walk, for me to go  
18 pick up trash. They need to be open, and I don't  
19 believe that they cannot be, and if it's a swimming  
20 issue that's one thing. I didn't see a single  
21 representative from the lifeguards here. That would  
22 have been nice to talk to them. I would like to  
23 reach out to you guys to try to schedule a meeting  
24 with them to work this out, but I want to see the  
25 beaches open. Right the resiliency stuff I'm happy

2 to hear that's happening. I appreciate all the work  
3 everyone is doing, but right now, we still have two  
4 months of summer left, and I want to see the beaches  
5 open, and I want the Parks Department to look at what  
6 they can do again to make that happen for us for the  
7 residents and for the visitors of Rockaway Beach.  
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I thank you for  
10 your testimony and First Deputy Commissioner Kavanaugh  
11 is here along with Queens Commissioner Lewandowski.  
12 So, I—I think they heard you loud and clear. I know  
13 how important it is and I know while you enjoy the  
14 beaches year-round, it's probably nicer maybe in some  
15 aspects of September, October and November before it  
16 gets really cold, but it is a mecca really for—for  
17 New Yorkers and for visitors to New York. So, I know  
18 that they will work on that. Ms. Hilger.

19 CLAIRE HILGER: Yes. Hello, My name is  
20 Claire Hilger. I'm a Rockaway Beach resident and I'm  
21 also Secretary of the Rockaway Beach Civic  
22 Association. I feel there—something has changed in  
23 how Parks is looking at our beach. I know Councilman  
24 Cohen said there's less beach but we are seeing—we  
25 meaning myself, my fellow residents who walk on the

2 sand every day, they're—it's very similar to last  
3 year, and if we look at last year those beaches were  
4 open, and so it's confusing to us that these are now  
5 closed. I think there's two big things in effect:  
6 Parks practices and lifeguard practices and I agree  
7 with Jeremy here in that the lifeguards are missing  
8 from this conversation. They are consulted and we  
9 hear from Parks Department that they are a big part  
10 in their decision mainly, but we never hear from them  
11 explicitly what are the issues that you have? Is it  
12 because you can't—I mean it should be very explicit  
13 why they think they can't safely guard this beach.  
14 Not like, well, it's shorter or it's lesser, less  
15 beach or something like that, and I know people like  
16 John could produce photos of historically when the  
17 beach was even smaller than it is now, and it was  
18 open. So, this closure is a new thing, and I think  
19 it's an new tactic to tackling what's going on on our  
20 beach, and I don't—if we're going to be concerned  
21 about beach erosion, we should also be concerned  
22 about Parks practices including ATVs, leveling of the  
23 sand with like dragging a giant pipe and raking.  
24 Okay, there's a lot of beach practices out there that  
25 are very different and different approaches, and I

2 know they say they're consulting, but I feel like we  
3 need—we need marine scientists looking at this, and  
4 really analyzing how we're taking care of our beach.  
5 Not just to try to make our beach so, so incredibly  
6 safe that it's like a swimming pool. I mean with the  
7 ocean there is risk, and we have to respect the ocean  
8 and do the best we can to work with this so we can  
9 use our beach. We love our beach. We want to be  
10 there on the sand, and we are on that sand as often  
11 as we possibly can. I got this sunburn yesterday in  
12 the water, you know, out in the sand. So, you know  
13 we do—we do love it, and that's why we're here. We  
14 lost our home in Hurricane Sandy. We got in last  
15 July. So four years and nine months later we are  
16 back in our home, and so we're still here. We're not  
17 going anywhere, and we want to be here, and so, we  
18 really hope you consider, you know, all our voices  
19 and suggestions, and we're open to dialogue. We want  
20 to work this out. We don't want to fight against  
21 you. We want to work this through. That's about all  
22 I can say.

23 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I want to thank  
24 you all for being here today, and I will say this: I  
25 have—I don't remember. I have only been a member of

2 the Council for just over 2-1/2 years now to have.  
3 To have your borough president, your Congressman,  
4 your State Senator, both of the Council Members who  
5 represent the peninsula is really in my way almost  
6 unprecedented. I know it's happened before. It  
7 hasn't happened here. So, obviously, and I know  
8 they've all been great champions not only of the  
9 beach, but of the entire peninsula, and what it means  
10 to New York. So, while I know there is a history  
11 here, and I've lived through it with many of you of  
12 the Rockaways kind of being forgotten and some people  
13 maybe like that to some extent, but not when it comes  
14 to these kind of things. So, I would say that you're  
15 not forgotten, and that we certainly here under the  
16 leadership of our speaking Corey Johnson, the members  
17 from the Rockaways Eric who is here and Donavan  
18 Richards who had to go. We hear you loud and clear,  
19 and we know that really the beach is the heart and  
20 soul that when people think of the Rockaways, they  
21 always think of the beach first. So, I want to thank  
22 you for being here, and we are certainly listening.

23 JEREMY JONES: Thank you very much.

24 CLAIRE HILGER: Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: The next panel a  
3 little further west Hank Iori from the Belle Harbor  
4 Property Owners Association, Allen Swern also a Belle  
5 Harbor resident and John Signorelli also from the  
6 Association as well. [pause] [background comments,  
7 pause] Alright, so whoever would like to go first,  
8 please? [background comments] Okay.

9 HANK IORI: The number in priority

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
11 Identify—identify yourself for record.

12 HANK IORI: Oh, it's Hank Iori--

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
14 Okay, I know that, but I have to say that anyway.

15 HANK IORI: --I'm President of the Belle  
16 Harbor Property Owners Association. The number one  
17 priority for us in the Rockaways right now storm  
18 protection, and the signaling that we're getting is  
19 kind of disturbing. We were particularly disturbed  
20 when they closed the beaches on 91<sup>st</sup> to 102<sup>nd</sup> Street.  
21 It really pointed out that we are losing sand at an  
22 alarming rate. Now, when you look at the Rockaways  
23 and you look at the area from 9<sup>th</sup> all the way to 126<sup>th</sup>  
24 Street, you primarily have a Boardwalk and a berm  
25 that that's there protecting the communities. When

2 you go to 126<sup>th</sup> Street to 149<sup>th</sup> Street you see just a  
3 berm. It's a lot less protected than even that other  
4 area that does have Boardwalk, and that's really a  
5 concern for us because along our shoreline the—is  
6 erosion taking place right now at the berm. The  
7 projection of that amount of sand that we're losing  
8 there I estimate that by 2020, it will have been  
9 breached, and it will be bringing water down to our  
10 homes. There's no question in my mind when there'll  
11 be flooding in Belle Harbor, Rockaway Park and  
12 Neponsit by 2020. You can see it. You just have to  
13 come down and look at it. It's just—it's just—that's  
14 the way it is, and what we really want to see in the  
15 future is a longer-term healthy Oceanside and  
16 bayside. So, it's a comprehensive plan that we have  
17 to put in that. So, we have to move things faster.  
18 It's just not moving fast enough. It's—it's a fear  
19 that I have and a fear that all of us have, and on  
20 our beaches there's a likelihood that some beaches  
21 will be closed fairly soon. The Neponsit beaches  
22 that you talked about, the Neponsit and Belle Harbor  
23 beaches the 39 and 38 they're all disappearing before  
24 our very eyes. All we need is another repeat of the  
25 kind of storms that we had this year for next year

2 and that berm will be greatly diminished, flooding  
3 will be taking place in our homes. Now, in our area  
4 if you look back at the history of it and what  
5 happened at Sandy, two people died, 11 homes were—  
6 were burned down, a hotel—not-a restaurant rather,  
7 the harbor light was destroyed, and every home was  
8 flooded in the are, and there's amazing photos of the  
9 beach houses that got totally destroyed. Well, we're  
10 no better off than we were before Sandy at this  
11 point. That's the scary part of it all. So, what  
12 we're really saying is the Army Corps says they're  
13 going to be starting in 2019. What he's really  
14 saying is the 31<sup>st</sup> of December of 2019 we may see a  
15 bulldozer there because from what they've shown as  
16 far as their timeline, they're not going to be in  
17 there in 2019. It's more like 2020 or 2021. We  
18 simply don't have the time to hold back and wait to  
19 see what's happening. [bell] Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I just want to  
21 ask you a question, Hank. Prior to Sandy, and—and  
22 when I toured the Rockaways after Sandy with Borough  
23 President Marshall who's down there a lot, I had met  
24 people up and down the peninsula who said they never

2 had water in their basement or, you know, they'd been  
3 living there for—including you.

4 HANK IORI: Including me.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, so--

6 HANK IORI: It's 100 years my house, too,  
7 and never water in the basement.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, okay. So  
9 you answered my question. So, alright. Yes,

10 ALLEN SWERN: Hi, I'm Allen Swern. I'm  
11 also a member of the Belle Harbor Property Owners  
12 Association--

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I  
14 figured you were somehow with this.

15 ALLEN SWERN: --and I live on and I've  
16 been on Beach 141 for the past 28 years. I--my thing  
17 is obvious. It's these photos that you were given.  
18 Okay, it starts with the photo that I took on my  
19 phone back in July of 2015. The sand was replenished  
20 in 2014. That's photo number 1 I'm talking about.  
21 The sand was replenished in 2014. Those pylons that  
22 I'm standing next to, which it's not knee high,  
23 they're over seven feet tall, but the year before  
24 when the sand was put in only the tallest one showed  
25 two inches above the sand. That's how high the

2 replenishment came. Okay, within a year they were  
3 seven feet out of the sand. Now fast-picture number  
4 2 next to it is me standing in an equivalent spot at  
5 the end of the wooden jetty at Beach 142, and the  
6 bottom showing me in that spot with the entire jetty  
7 exposed, and those pylons 150 feet out into the  
8 ocean. If I was to stand next to those pylons now,  
9 I'd probably be 12 feet deep. Okay, so page 2 shows  
10 that same picture, but then turning your camera  
11 around here's the beach. There's the erosion shown  
12 and the scarfing of where high-where tide will take  
13 out the beach and cut it down, and just behind it  
14 where the green is that's the berms that Hank was  
15 talking about. The lifeguard's chair, which in the  
16 past was much closer to the ocean is now up on the  
17 berm. The berms themselves get eroded when there's a  
18 storm out to sea, and the tide-high tide comes in  
19 even higher and rougher. So the berm is starting to  
20 be eroded away as well. It is imperative-imperative  
21 the something be done because we're sitting ducks.  
22 Another storm comes in not even as strong as Sandy,  
23 the entire peninsula the south shore of it is sitting  
24 ducks, and then the bay fills up and spills over onto  
25 the north side of the peninsula and it's water. It

2 becomes a bath tub, and that's how there was flooding  
3 in my basement as well as long-as well as all my  
4 neighbors. So, I thank you for having this meeting.  
5 I thank you for your concerns. What I've shown you  
6 supports what Councilman Cohen was talking about  
7 earlier. That's it. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: thank you very  
9 much Mr. Swern. Mr. Signorelli.

10 JOHN SIGNORELLI: Yes, good morning.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
12 The process of elimination.

13 JOHN SIGNORELLI: I'm John Signorelli.  
14 I'm a member of the Belle Harbor Association. I'd  
15 like to read from my write-up-

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
17 Certainly.

18 JOHN SIGNORELLI: --to the committee.  
19 The urgent decision made by the very top Parks and  
20 Recreation Management to close the one-half mile plus  
21 length is a prime Rockaway Beach recreation area for  
22 Beach 191<sup>st</sup> Street to Beach 102<sup>nd</sup> Street just before  
23 announcing the summer season beach opening was  
24 unexpected along with, to say the least and the start  
25 of crisis. This decision should have been announced

2 months prior to allowing ample assessment  
3 preparedness and to judge its immediate impact. Who  
4 was asleep during the winter meaning, did anyone  
5 periodically inspect the eroding beach area that was  
6 repeatedly reported by the community many, many times  
7 to Parks and other city agencies including the Mayor  
8 and the news outlets? The sudden unexpected action  
9 by Parks due to safety concerns for beachgoers caused  
10 multiple agencies to mobilize emergency with advance  
11 warning and reasonable community notice. It's  
12 assumed the New York City and New York State  
13 government agencies besides others were unexpectedly  
14 place on notice for the 1-1/2 mile plus Rockaway  
15 Beach closure. The representation are listed as  
16 follows: The Mayor's Office, U.S. Senators, U.S.  
17 Representatives, New York State Senators, New York  
18 State Assembly, New York City Council Members,  
19 Borough President, District Manger, Community Board  
20 and Community Civic Associations, the New York City  
21 Police Department, the Parks Police Department, the  
22 Emergency medical Services, Community Board 14, New  
23 York City and New York State sister agency, U.S. Army  
24 Corps of Engineers and others. Note there hasn't  
25 been mention of the New York City Office of Emergency

2 Management, OEM. Did OEM get involved and take part  
3 in the Rockaway Peninsula Beach Emergency with  
4 reasonable prior notice from the New York City Parks  
5 and Recreation? If so, what were OEM's actions taken  
6 or actions not taken, and how are they identified?  
7 The OEM watch command monitors the weather 24-hours a  
8 day, 7 days a week. The OEM External Affairs  
9 Community Outreach activate the Community Emergency  
10 Response Team, public information and any public and  
11 private initiatives. To this end, I am recommending  
12 a test be implemented and focused on hereon as  
13 follows: (1) Have the New York City Emergency  
14 Management Office involved and take part in the  
15 Rockaway Peninsula Beach emergency. Local Law-(2),  
16 Local Law 24. The New York City Emergency Management  
17 Office must respond and be included in emergency  
18 closure of Rockaway Beach 1-Beach 41<sup>s</sup> Street to Beach  
19 102<sup>nd</sup> Street. What plays and protocols are in place  
20 to guide New York City response to weather emergency  
21 events such as numerous coastal storms, that storm  
22 surge, hurricanes, windstorms, and water flash floods  
23 [bell] and tidal waves. (3) Local Law 26. The OEM  
24 must require responsible agencies to prepare for and  
25 respond to Sandy Erosion emergencies and shoreline



2 related incidences and provide annual Sandy  
3 preparedness in a report for each Sandy erosion event  
4 and/or incident foreseen and occurring. (4) Similar  
5 to New York City roadway salt storage facilities, OEM  
6 must require funds for New York beach sand storage  
7 facilities. (5) Select New York areas to store and  
8 purchase and acquire sand at New York City beach sand  
9 facilities during the winter months where it's used  
10 to manage and repair minor and major beach erosions  
11 and fortify locations that have been damaged or  
12 deteriorated by hurricanes closest to ocean current.  
13 (6) Perform training exercises and evaluation by  
14 conducting tabletop functional and possible full-  
15 scale exercises of envisioned shorefront instances,  
16 and will also develop and conduct agency and partner  
17 training. (7) Study and understand the community  
18 health and medical hazard mitigation, human resources  
19 plan management, and transportation infrastructure  
20 for coastal areas besides logistics. (8) Formulate  
21 the best practices by other U.S. coastal agencies.  
22 The community foresaw and publicized the Rockaway  
23 Beach erosion. New York City Parks and Recreation  
24 and the high consultant areas is now causing the  
25 closure and into the distant future, thus adversely

2 affecting the community to affect the Rockaway  
3 community's population, major summer tourism,  
4 transportation buried New York City in community  
5 publicity disrupting commercial and non-commercial  
6 businesses financially besides their reputation. Be  
7 aware if this not so slow beach erosion disaster  
8 continues and will most likely expand along the  
9 present one-half mile plus of stretch and hopefully  
10 not at other community beach areas since sand  
11 replenishment fast tracking is not occurring, and  
12 planned groin installations are off into the distant  
13 future. Lastly, the New York 2018 Year Atlantic  
14 Hurricane season outlook shows 10 to 16 named sort, 5  
15 to 6 hurricanes and 1 to 4 major hurricanes. I'd  
16 like to thank the committee for allowing me to  
17 present this.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you. Would  
19 you make sure we have a copy of that for our official  
20 record. I would appreciate it very much, and I know  
21 how active your civic and I greatly appreciate that,  
22 and one question, I think I went out with Barbara  
23 Larkin right after the storm, and they were trying to  
24 explain to me what a baffle wall was. I really  
25 couldn't understand it. So, I took a ride out one on

2 Sunday morning and maybe some of you were there.

3 Did—did—were there baffle walls? Were they—were they  
4 ever built. Excuse my ignorance. [background  
5 comments, pause]

6 HANK IORI: Okay. It's an interesting  
7 question. The baffle wall was built. When we first  
8 saw what they had proposed, it was shown to us in one  
9 formulation. When they actually built it, they built  
10 it in such a way that it's actually dangerous.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Well, that's not  
12 good.

13 HANK IORI: Because if it were hit with  
14 a—a flush of water, people who live close to the  
15 beach wall there the baffle wall, they would have a  
16 4-foot by 10-foot piece of concrete come flying into  
17 their homes because it's only connected the I beams  
18 that are holding it in position and resting on top of  
19 another 4 x 10 foot piece of concrete that's in the  
20 ground. So, at ground level there's a seam. You  
21 would probably see it if you take a good look at it.  
22 You hit it, it will—it will come popping right out  
23 and go right into people's homes.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, what's  
25 protecting it? Is the baffle wall behind the berm?

2 HANK IORI: It's behind the berm.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, alright,  
4 thank you for educating me on that. Go ahead  
5 councilman.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Was that Barbara  
7 Larkin my fifth grade teacher? Is that

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
9 Yes, yes, it was.

10 HANK IORI: Well, I just wanted to be  
11 sure. Alright. Thank you.

12 HANK IORI: I'll send her your best.  
13 [laughter]

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, thank  
15 you very much gentlemen. Thank you for coming today.  
16 We have four people on this panel. The next one,  
17 which will probably be our last Joe Hardigan, Andrea  
18 Cologne. [background comments] Joan (sic) Lorrie. I  
19 hope I got that right, and Dennis Futurion-Futuron-

20 DENNIS FUTORYAN: Futoryan.

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Futoryan.  
22 Alright. Futoryan, alright. Good afternoon  
23 everybody and if you could testify in the order I  
24 called you that would help me a lot.

25

2                   JOE HARDIGAN: Okay. I guess I'll go  
3 first.

4                   CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: You go first,  
5 Joe.

6                   JOE HARDIGAN: Joe Hardigan from  
7 Rockaway. I'm retired from the Fire Department.  
8 I've probably been to more jetty beach erosion  
9 meetings than everybody in this room put combined.  
10 Down on the Jersey Shore, Long Beach, in Manhattan.  
11 I've listened to everybody. At least three times  
12 I've been to the Jersey Shore before they started  
13 replenishing the sand. The beach was—you name the  
14 jetty, they got it, and the beach is wiped out. The  
15 simple formula: Once the beach gets to a certain  
16 point, you have to put sand on the beach. While  
17 other people covered other things, you have to have  
18 sand on the beach period. There's no way of getting  
19 around it. We need key jetties. We don't need a ton  
20 of jetties. We need key jetties. The reason why I  
21 came here Donovan Richards spoke on it. Then let's  
22 speak on the bird sanctuary. Bird sanctuary. It's a  
23 mile and a half long. It's in a predominately black  
24 neighborhood. Parks came in and took away the beach.  
25 There is no other beach on the full South Shore of

2 Long Island that has closed the beach because of bird  
3 sanctuary. There are other areas if you want to take  
4 sections in the beach, but not a mile and a half and  
5 they're expanding it. When they talk about closing  
6 the beach in the 90s, if you add the bird sanctuary  
7 and that together, it's 2 miles of a 7-mile beach.  
8 The Jersey Shore is worth \$32 billion a year. If you  
9 break it down per mile, it comes down to \$260 million  
10 per mile. Rockaway is 11 miles long. It should be  
11 worth \$3 billion in economic activity. That's the  
12 real money, \$3 billion. I'm half wrong, I'm a third  
13 wrong, \$1 billion. The black kids in Far Rockaway  
14 cannot use the beach. This does not happen in Long  
15 Beach. It does not happen in Fire Island. It does  
16 not happen in the Hamptons. It happens nowhere else  
17 but in Rockaway a mile and a half of beach can't use  
18 it all summer long, and what's the good of putting  
19 sand on the beach if you can't use the beach? Now,  
20 what's funning about it—nothing is funny about it  
21 all—it's the widest beach in all of Rockaway. It's  
22 the biggest beach, and what could be done at the end  
23 of the summer since it' the widest beach, it gains  
24 the most sand, you could skim some of the sand off of  
25 that to push it in front of Rockaway and the beaches

2 that are closed down in the 90s. One of the things  
3 that was said earlier there's nobody here from Breezy  
4 Point. No one. They have one good jetty and the  
5 sand has built up three miles back, three city blocks  
6 long. In fact, the sand has built up so much that  
7 it's now into the Inlet, and they have the dredge the  
8 Inlet and maintain it. I'm fighting to see who gets  
9 that sand. We want the sand, but it's really unfair.  
10 We have 85 acres of vacant ocean front property in  
11 front of that bird sanctuary, and we can't do  
12 anything. So, the Parks Commission was inaccurate  
13 when they said about the federal rules because in  
14 Breezy Point they have the same federal rules, same  
15 bird sanctuary, they were allowed to use it. [bell]  
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Mr. Harding, are  
18 you telling me that in—from Beach 9<sup>th</sup> Street all the  
19 way out to the 50s or 60s there's no beach open? I'm  
20 sure--

21 JOE HARDIGAN: [interposing] Yes, is in  
22 three spots, but the bird sanctuary keeps getting  
23 bigger.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So, you've got  
25 to be very careful with the facts because--

2 JOE HARDIGAN: [interposing] Oh, no.

3 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --when we say  
4 none that's a big difference between some.

5 JOE HARDIGAN: [interposing] Well, from  
6 Beach 30<sup>th</sup> Street to Beach 60<sup>th</sup> Street--

7 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --you can't use  
8 the beach, but I--

9 JOE HARDIGAN: And then there's a couple  
10 of openings. You heard them say it, and that bird  
11 sanctuary keeps expanding.

12 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I understand  
13 that, but some of that is also under the federal  
14 government because it's, you know, it's--the birds are  
15 protected by--we don't protect them. I don't have any  
16 problem with the piping plovers, but, you know, they  
17 are a protected species so--

18 JOE HARDIGAN: Right, but they have the  
19 same bird sanctuary in Rockaway in Breezy Point in a  
20 gated community, and they are allowed to use the  
21 beach. Can you explain to me--

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I--  
23 I don't--

24 JOE HARDIGAN: --because you can't and--



2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] I  
3 don't know enough about it. I just--

4 JOE HARDIGAN: [interposing] -and nor  
5 can-and nor can Parks why a gated community can use  
6 the beach and-and a neighborhood that has low-income  
7 people can't use the beach. It's not fair.

8 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I-I don't know  
9 enough about the piping plovers. I just wanted to  
10 make sure that-that some of the beaches where you  
11 mentioned were, in fact, open. So, I thank you for  
12 your testimony.

13 JOE HARDIGAN: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Ms. Cologne.

15 ANDREA COLOGNE: Hello. My name is  
16 Andrea Cologne. I'm the Community Engagement  
17 Organizer for the Rockaway Youth Task Force. I am 17  
18 and will be attending Baruch College in the fall and-  
19 -

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing] A  
21 nice school.

22 ANDREA COLOGNE: I personally live in Far  
23 Rockaway where this man was mentioning, and it is a  
24 problem like there's certain-on certain spots at the  
25 beach that you could access, but I am here as an ally

2 to say that erosion is not something that happens  
3 over night, and we have been seeing the problem for a  
4 long time. I go to Beach Channel High School. So, I  
5 go onto the Boardwalk after school with friends like  
6 always happens, and you see it sometimes. It gets to  
7 the point where it like goes—like the ramp like  
8 literally the water is like on the ramp, and as  
9 others have said, it's not acceptable that we were  
10 given a notice a few days before the closing, and  
11 this will negatively impact businesses that creates  
12 tourism and be a burden for many residents, this  
13 should never have gotten to the point that the beach  
14 had to be closed. The lack of utilization is  
15 something that is seen outside of beaches. The  
16 Rockaways are a federally labeled food desert.  
17 There's a lot of land that is not developed, and two  
18 in particular on the east end that are not utilized.  
19 These particular spaces could provide a lot of fresh  
20 and affordable produce for families, but it is not,  
21 and it is all in the Parks planned, and like he said,  
22 it all happens to be in predominately communities of  
23 color. And I understand that today's hearing is  
24 about a portion of beaches being closed, but the

2 conversation needs to be had about all underutilized  
3 parks land in Rockaway.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Alright, thank  
5 you for your testimony. I-I do know that the  
6 members, the elected officials there certainly take  
7 this with great concern, and that's why we had this  
8 hearing today when I first heard about it, and I  
9 spoke to my colleagues here, and to the borough  
10 president. Those were my first calls, and we want to  
11 shine a light on it because we know that the beaches  
12 it's everything in the Rockaways. People live there,  
13 but really it's not very wide. It's not miles wide.  
14 It's not even a mile wide. In some places I guess it  
15 is, but as you go further west it's-it's all about  
16 the beach. So, I thank you for being here today, and  
17 good luck at Baruch. Ms. Lori. Am I pronouncing  
18 that right?

19 JOAN LORRIE: Yes, it's Lorrie. Thank  
20 you and thank you so much. [laughs]

21 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I didn't get his  
22 name right, so I've got to get one of them right.

23 JOAN LORRIE: Thank you for holding this  
24 hearing today.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]

3 You look like you're ready to go to the beach today.

4 JOAN LORRIE: Yes, I am in these.

5 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: I appreciate  
6 your attire.

7 JOAN LORRIE: Yes, I'm bringing the beach  
8 to you

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay,

10 JOAN LORRIE: Yes, because of all the  
11 other testimony, I'm really kind of going off my  
12 notes, and I'm really going to speak from my heart--

13 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay.

14 JOAN LORRIE: --which is what I like to  
15 do most.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It's probably  
17 best.

18 JOAN LORRIE: I'm a Clinical Social  
19 Worker. I've lived in Rockaway for ten years now. I  
20 was there before Sandy, during Sandy and I'm still  
21 there. My experience of how this whole thing  
22 unflowed--unfolded is really very disgusting. I have  
23 to use that word.

24 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay.

25

2 JOAN LORRIE: You know, if you know  
3 anything about the way people's minds work, the worst  
4 thing that you can do for people in terms of  
5 heightening their level of stress is by doing  
6 unexpected things without any notice and giving them  
7 no control. I mean that's stress 101, which is  
8 exactly what happened here. We were treated like  
9 shells on the sand. No regard for our feelings, our  
10 livelihoods or anything else, and I think that is  
11 really disgusting. I live right across from the  
12 beach. I live right across from the Surf Beach at  
13 90<sup>th</sup> Street, and I take great or I did take great  
14 pleasure in walking along the shoreline, entering on  
15 Beach 91<sup>st</sup> going west. I cannot do that now, and the  
16 reality is that it is safer for me to walk along the  
17 shoreline than it is to cross the streets in New York  
18 City and I cannot do it because of this arbitrary  
19 decision. So, I think things really need to be  
20 evaluated and re-evaluated to see what is really  
21 truly in the interest of safety and what was just a  
22 blanketed decision that maybe was easy or convenient  
23 or, you know, I don't know what it was. I just want  
24 to look and see what else and, you know, I think with  
25 Rockaway, one of the things I think people have come

2 to know is that our vulnerability is our greatest  
3 strength, and we are a group of people that are  
4 passionate. We're passionate about Rockaway, about  
5 the beach, about the ocean and things need to change.  
6 We need to be safe, and when we hear protection  
7 presented to us, it needs—we need to know that it's  
8 coming from a true place of caring about us, who we  
9 are as individuals and as a community. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you for  
11 your testimony. I—I'm—I'm happy that the outcry did  
12 produce or we will have--starting this Saturday we  
13 will have some parts of that beach reopened, and I  
14 know that the Rockaways is indeed very, very tough  
15 and most people don't talk about this, but one of the  
16 greatest minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Richard Fineman,  
17 went to Far Rockaway High School.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: So did Burnie  
19 Madoff.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: So did Bernie  
21 Madoff [laughter] but we—we won't talk about him.  
22 Ulrich, where did you go to high school? Just for the  
23 record.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [off mic]  
25 Cathedral Prep.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, Cathedral  
3 Prep.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: [off mic] I don't  
5 want to talk about it.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We have another  
7 great mind here that went to Beach Channel, and I—I  
8 will tell you full—full disclosure, when I was  
9 graduating IS 237, I wanted to go to Beach Channel  
10 High School with my friend Sam Sochet who is now the  
11 principal of Martin Van Buren High School, and  
12 another friend of mine Vincent Taboda (sp?) became an  
13 environmental engineer in New Jersey—until Mrs.  
14 Warman told us it would be about two hours each way  
15 on public transit, and our enthusiasm waned quite  
16 quickly. So, I never did get the benefit of a  
17 Rockaway's education as some of my colleagues here.  
18 So, but thank you for being here today. I  
19 appreciate—I appreciate that. Mr. Dennis Futoryan.  
20 Did I get that right now?

21 Not the second time either.

22 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Not the second  
23 time.

24 DENNIS FUTORYAN: Futoryan. [laughs]

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: We're going to  
3 make some--

4 DENNIS FUTORYAN: That's alright. Plenty  
5 of people have difficulty with the last name.

6 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Futoryan.

7 DENNIS FUTORYAN: Good afternoon. I'm  
8 just going to read off of my--

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: That's okay.

10 DENNIS FUTORYAN: --my testimony.

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: It says you're--  
12 you're representing yourself, which is a good thing.

13 DENNIS FUTORYAN: Yeah. Good afternoon.  
14 My name is Dennis Futoryan. I'm a Rockaway Beach  
15 resident on Beach 81<sup>st</sup> and Shorefront Parkway. I  
16 want to first thank this committee for holding a  
17 hearing on this pressing issue that affects my home  
18 from its commerce and livelihood to its continued  
19 recovery from the environmental devastation from  
20 Hurricane Sandy. It has been six years since Sandy  
21 hit the Rockaways and the peninsula has been slowly  
22 recovering. The neighborhood is steadily returning  
23 to the image that it once had especially after  
24 looking at the vast amounts of beachgoers visiting  
25 our shores, business owners serving the community at



1 the Boardwalk and new developments being constructed  
2 bringing new families into the Rockaways. However,  
3 there is a big gap in this picture one stretching for  
4 approximately 11 city blocks. On May 21<sup>st</sup> the  
5 Department of Park and Rec abruptly announced the  
6 closure of beach access stretching from Beach 91<sup>st</sup> to  
7 Beach 102<sup>nd</sup>. The city claims that there's not enough  
8 beach for safe recreational activities and so it must  
9 close a sizeable stretch of land preventing those  
10 coming from other boroughs—preventing those coming  
11 from other boroughs to join the beach and local  
12 business owners and preventing them from serving  
13 consumers. Although Rockaway residents were told  
14 that there are another 4-1/2 miles of beach that we  
15 can go to, it avoids the crux of the issue: Why did  
16 it take the city so long to announce that action  
17 needed to be taken and what has it been doing since  
18 they knew of the erosion issue to the time of the  
19 announcement. Seniors living in front of the  
20 structured beach will have a hard time getting to  
21 what used to be a beach in front of their home.  
22 While the other parts of the beach may become  
23 incredibly congested, heating up maybe simmering  
24 tensions between homeowners and the tourists.  
25

2 Rockaway has long felt neglected by the city, state  
3 and federal governments whether it was dealing with  
4 burdensome parking regulations and on again/off again  
5 ferry service and dreams of a more robust subway  
6 infrastructure. This is not to say that the city has  
7 not done anything, but it has not done enough, and  
8 action must be expedited to address this serious  
9 issues. I applaud the city's actions reported this  
10 morning that Beach 96<sup>th</sup> to 98<sup>th</sup> Streets will be  
11 reopened presumably on trial basis as well as giving  
12 businesses located at that beach directing a 50% rent  
13 break for the summer, a skate ramp, misting cooling  
14 stations and a children's sand play area. I urge the  
15 city to hold more discussions to identify areas with  
16 the 11-block street closure that can be re-opened for  
17 swimmers and to also look into ways to push the Army  
18 Corps of Engineers to start work on replenishing the  
19 sand on our beach immediately after their November  
20 Study Report not after next summer. One constant  
21 criticism of government is that it does not move fast  
22 enough, and we need to acclimate to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
23 style type of accountability for all New Yorkers. I  
24 would even urge the Council to adopt the resolution  
25 to show the added support pushing the Army Corps of

2 Engineers to work faster, and for Congress to control  
3 appropriations to the matter. Once again, I thank  
4 you for your time and look forward to how the Council  
5 will address this serious problems. Let's refill the  
6 sand, build jetties, take the matter into our own  
7 hands if the federal government is slow walking their  
8 responses and show what good governance is all about.

9 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Mr.  
10 Futoryan. I got it right that time. I spelled it  
11 out. I was careful. If there's anybody else that  
12 wants to testify, we're going to—nobody else? Is  
13 there hands gone up? Okay, that's up. If you would  
14 step forward, yes, and if you would tell us your  
15 name. This panel is dismissed. Thank you very much  
16 for being here. [background comments, pause] We do  
17 need you to fill out a slip first, though. Okay,  
18 that's okay. [pause] And before I forget, I do want  
19 to thank the Army Corps and the Parks Department and  
20 especially Commissioner Lewandowski, First Deputy  
21 Commission Liam Kavanagh for being here, too, through  
22 this whole hearing. I greatly appreciate that.  
23 Thank you Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms. Maribelle Araho?

24 MARIBELLE ARAHO: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Not bad. Not  
3 bad for a kid from primary. (sic) Okay, Ms. Araho,  
4 please.

5 MARIBELLE ARAHO: [off mic] I-I  
6 represent.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please press the  
8 button.

9 MARIBELLE ARAHO: [on mic] Okay. I  
10 represent—I own a business on the Boardwalk. It's  
11 called Caracas, and I own—I'm also the connection  
12 between the Parks Department and all the concessions.  
13 I just wanted to get a couple of things straight. We  
14 do have a good relationship with the Parks  
15 Department.

16 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Good.

17 MARIBELLE ARAHO: I would say, you know,  
18 we understand there are rules and procedures and  
19 bureaucratic things that we have to go through. We  
20 have been there since 2011 with a 10-year agreement,  
21 and we have gone through Sandy, Post-Sandy. I didn't  
22 have a—I-I think 106 was the concession that has—was  
23 connected with the Boardwalk at the last. I didn't  
24 have a beach for a long time. We, you know, we're  
25 there. We want to keep going. One thing that had

2 been said that we're getting a 50% discount. It's  
3 not a discount yet. It just a referral. That means  
4 it's a postponing of the rent, which I understand  
5 it's part of the procedure that the Parks Department  
6 has to go through. They can't make a decision right  
7 away. They can't waive the rent. It has a, you  
8 know, certain steps that they have to go through. I  
9 personally I am the person that actually creates the  
10 reports for them, and I really don't like the idea of  
11 holding the numbers that we have been giving them for  
12 the month of May as a flag to say that we are getting  
13 a lot of beachgoers, and that our numbers are  
14 actually better right now than they were before. I  
15 think that what we're seeing right now is a side  
16 effect or, you know, you can say we're collecting the  
17 fruits for seven summers that we have been there  
18 every summer providing great food, entertainment and  
19 a really decent group of businesses that have been  
20 there, and yeah, everybody's waiting for Rockaway to  
21 open, re-open, they come. A lot of people don't know  
22 up to this day that the beaches are closed. A lot of  
23 them think that the whole entire beach is closed, and  
24 some of them know the details. So, I think that we're  
25 going to really start seeing the impact of this last

2 minute decision in the month of June, and I'm  
3 personally working with them and providing reports.  
4 Hopefully I'm going to be creating one for the first  
5 15 days of the month of June and we're going to see  
6 that the 97<sup>th</sup> Street concession is definitely about  
7 35 to 40% under. We are working with Portia really  
8 close to provide different things to activate areas,  
9 to create more of a moment [bell] so people come to  
10 the concession--

11 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

12 MARIBELLE ARAHO: --more as a destination  
13 and we're going to make the best that we can, but  
14 just wanted to get things straight because I know  
15 that there was an article yesterday that talk about  
16 the rent reduction. We don't have that rent  
17 reduction yet.

18 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay.

19 MARIBELLE ARAHO: Yeah, that's it.

20 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Okay, alright  
21 you for being here today. Thank you for testifying.  
22 I thank you for being willing to invest in the  
23 Rockaways as well. It takes people with spirit.  
24 It's a great neighborhood. It's a great community,  
25 and I have enjoyed the food at Caracas so--

2 MARIBELLE ARAHO: [interposing] Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: --I know how  
5 good it is. With that I am going to close this  
6 hearing. This is my favorite part of the hearing is  
7 the gaveling in and out. So, thank you all for being  
8 here today for shedding light on this. Again, thank  
9 you to the Department of Parks and Recreation, to the  
10 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and all the people from  
11 the Rockaways, New Yorkers for Parks who were here  
12 and my colleagues on the New York City Council, and  
13 to the elected officials of the Rockaways for being  
14 here today. With that, we close this hearing at  
15 2:27. [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 July 15, 2018