

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGING AND SENIOR CENTERS

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December 4, 2008

Start: 1:19 pm

Recess: 6:02 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO  
JAMES VACCA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Albert Vann  
Diana Reyna  
Letitia James  
Melissa Mark-Viverito  
Simcha Felder  
Robert Jackson  
Melinda R. Katz  
G. Oliver Koppell  
Christine C. Quinn  
Darlene Mealy  
Rosie Mendez  
Inez E. Dickens  
Gale A. Brewer

## A P P E A R A N C E S

## COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Helen D. Foster  
Kendall Stewart  
Sara M. Gonzalez  
Vincent J. Gentile  
Mathieu Eugene  
Anthony Como

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

Caryn Resnick  
Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs  
New York City Department for the Aging

Monica Parikh  
Special Counsel  
Department for the Aging

Helen Marshall  
Queens Borough President

Scott Stringer  
Manhattan Borough President

Marty Markowitz  
Brooklyn Borough President

Lee Covino  
Agency Chief Contracting Officer  
Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro

Molly Bidol  
Office of Assemblymember Deborah Glick

Glenn von Nostitz  
Director  
Office of Policy Management, New York City's  
Comptroller Office

Bobbie Sackman  
Director of Public Policy  
Council of Senior Centers and Services

Sandra Christian  
Assistant Executive Director  
Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council

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

Julia Schwartz Leeper  
Executive Director  
Riverdale Senior Services

Crissy Liu  
Policy Analyst  
United Neighborhood Houses

Kathy Fitzgibbons  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Federation of Protestant welfare agencies

Molly Krakowski  
Director of Legislative Affairs  
Joint Public Affairs Committee for Older Adults  
Jewish Association for Services for the Aged

Elana Broitman  
Director of City Policy and Public Affairs  
UJA Federation

Andrew Martin  
Vivian Fenster Ehrlich  
DOROT

Michael Adams  
Executive Director of Services and Advocacy  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders

Nancy Miller  
Executive Director  
Vision Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Glen Francis  
Executive Director  
GRIOT Circle

Linda Leest  
Executive Director  
Services Now for Adult Persons

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

Naomi Altman  
Assistant Executive Director  
Queens Community House

Carol Hunt  
Executive Director  
Jamaica Service Program for Older Adults

Judy Zangwill  
Executive Director  
Sunnyside Community Services

Reed Hansen  
JASA West Side Senior Center

Kay Hansen  
JASA West Side Senior Center

Joan Serrano Laufer  
Executive Director  
Queensboro Council for Social Welfare

Alberta R. Payne  
Lincoln Senior Center

Kathy Andrade  
Hudson Guild of New York City

Thelma Thomas  
Lincoln Housing Center

Cynthia Zalisky  
Executive Director  
Queens Jewish Community Council

Jorge Rivera  
Mosholu Montefiore Senior Center

Carolyn Stem  
IFSA

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2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you all  
3 for being here. I--there is overflow room in the  
4 committee room right next door for those who must  
5 have a seat and we apologize, but this is the  
6 largest venue that we have at City Hall and it is  
7 a testament to the sentiment about this RFP, the  
8 number of people that are in this room, I want to  
9 thank you all for being here. My name is Maria  
10 del Carmen Arroyo, and I Chair the Committee on  
11 Aging for the City Council and it is my privilege  
12 to be here with all of you and my colleagues to  
13 have this conversation. I want to thank and  
14 welcome my colleague, Council Member James Vacca,  
15 who Chairs the Subcommittee on Senior Centers, our  
16 Speaker, Christine Quinn, for their support and  
17 their leadership on this issue. I'd also like to  
18 welcome the borough presidents of various boroughs  
19 that are--have joined us in this effort to get the  
20 administration to call this RFP back. Today's  
21 hearing will focus on the subject that has  
22 generated much debate, a lot of controversy over  
23 the last few months, and, as we all know, the  
24 Department for the Aging is in the process of  
25 redesigning the way it provides senior services in

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2 our city. It started with the redesign of case  
3 management and home delivered meals. Case  
4 management contracts have been awarded, providers  
5 working; the home delivered meal contracts have  
6 been awarded and are still in negotiations with  
7 the administration around how they can best do the  
8 work that's required for the dollars that will be  
9 paid for the service. Still, many questions  
10 remain about how successful the case management  
11 RFP transition has occurred and too much is  
12 pending for the home delivered meals contracts and  
13 here we are discussing yet another RFP. And I  
14 have said on numerous occasions, privately to the  
15 administration, publicly in every forum I've been  
16 able to speak at, that too much, too soon at a  
17 time when our city is facing such difficult  
18 financial circumstances is not only ill-conceived  
19 and not prudent, but puts us and our city seniors  
20 at great risk. In particular, since we do not  
21 know or understand a great deal of the rationale  
22 that has gone into the planning of this RFP and  
23 where we could potentially sacrifice the small  
24 community-based centers in favor of larger centers  
25 that seniors would have to travel greater

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2 distances to get to, they often have very  
3 difficult times traveling to their local community  
4 center hubs and larger centers. While,  
5 conceptually, a good idea, not one that favors  
6 small, remote communities in our city and those  
7 communities tend to be the ones with the largest  
8 pockets of seniors living. [Pause] I have an  
9 incredibly large opening statement to read, which  
10 I'm not going to go into, I want to save as much  
11 time as possible to hear the testimony from DFTA.  
12 I want to first say how disappointed and offended  
13 I am that Commissioner Mendez-Santiago has not  
14 thought it important enough to be here personally.  
15 And with as much respect as I have for him as  
16 Commissioner of this agency, I think it's an  
17 absolute disrespect to, not only this committee  
18 given the nature and the importance of this issue,  
19 but to our city's seniors for him not to  
20 personally be here to answer the questions that we  
21 will pose to you, questions that I hope will  
22 center around, and this is something that I will  
23 urge my colleagues to bear in mind, that DFTA will  
24 say they will not be able to answer questions  
25 regarding competition or the possibility of any

1 center provider winning an RFP over the other.  
2 The questions must focus on the concept, the  
3 concerns that you have around the concept, and  
4 understanding it better in the hope that the  
5 answers that you provide for us will get us to a  
6 place where we can understand why you continue to  
7 insist on moving this RFP forward. And with that,  
8 I introduce my Co-Chair Council Member James  
9 Vacca.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Maria Arroyo, and I have to tell you  
13 all, ladies and gentlemen, that Maria Arroyo and I  
14 have been at these meetings about the RFP for over  
15 a year, meeting after meeting, hearing after  
16 hearing, and it's now come to this. It's now come  
17 to this because it has to come to this. Senior  
18 citizens may not have unions and senior citizens  
19 may not have lobbyists, but this turn out today  
20 shows that senior citizens have strength and will  
21 not, will not be cast aside. It is outrageous  
22 that for months what we've heard is the  
23 bureaucratic doubletalk, the bureaucratic maybes  
24 and we'll get back to you, and we'll see. What  
25 do you mean we'll get back to you and we'll see?

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2 We know what we have and we don't know what we're  
3 going to get. Leave what's not broken alone and  
4 leave our centers as they are. This plan takes us  
5 backwards, not forwards, make no mistake about it.  
6 Why should we go backwards when we have more  
7 people living to be older; when we have more  
8 people that we want to keep at home in their  
9 communities with their friends and their families?  
10 Why should we go backward when we've learned that  
11 we did not do enough in the past? Why should we  
12 have mega centers when our senior citizen centers  
13 in our neighborhoods are working and they're the  
14 lifeline for our people? Why? DFTA needs to go  
15 back to the drawing board, DFTA needs to ask  
16 themselves by looking in the mirror, why do we  
17 have to modernize all 327 centers at once, what  
18 were we doing all these years? Ladies and  
19 gentlemen, the funding sources that DFTA says make  
20 up the RFP are gobbled together, they have holes  
21 as does Swiss cheese. I am concerned about the  
22 future for our seniors, I feel, as someone who has  
23 chaired the Subcommittee on Senior Centers and  
24 someone who has been a chairman of a senior center  
25 advisory board before I came here, I feel that

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2 this is a defining moment for this Council. We  
3 have stood up, the Speaker and this Committee, we  
4 have stood up and said now stop, now, no way. We  
5 want the RFP scrapped, we're asking for reason to-  
6 -we want reason to prevail and we hope it does and  
7 you being here today in numbers like this shows  
8 that you know what's going on. Knowledge is power  
9 and your being here shows you are indeed  
10 knowledgeable. Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
12 Jimmy. I could not think of any one who would  
13 make a stronger partner than Jimmy Vacca on this  
14 issue, thank you for your work. I want to  
15 acknowledge--we also have an issue or a proposed  
16 Intro 821-A that we will also be discussing during  
17 this hearing, and I think it gets embellished into  
18 the conversation because my co-chair is a prime  
19 sponsor of this Bill which proposes to require  
20 that DFTA provide 60 days advance notice to local  
21 communities where it hit has decided to close  
22 senior centers. Since this modernization plan  
23 threatens the closure of almost 100 centers in our  
24 city, it is only appropriate and reasonable that  
25 should closures become a reality--and we hope that

1  
2 because this RFP can get pulled this conversation  
3 becomes a moot point--members of communities  
4 affected will have the right to know what's going  
5 on and be prepared to meet the challenges that  
6 closing any senior center may create in those  
7 communities. While I hope that this situation  
8 this Bill seeks to address never comes to  
9 fruition, it is necessary that we examine it here  
10 today as well in the event administration does not  
11 get the message. I know that we have a packed  
12 house today and many strong feelings about this  
13 issue. I'm going to ask that everyone be  
14 courteous and respectful to everyone who  
15 testifies, whether they testify in favor or  
16 against, but my understanding is that we only have  
17 one panel in favor, so that conversation should be  
18 very short. I want to thank you all and welcome  
19 you and hope that if you agree, Tish, what's the  
20 sign that we should be...

21 [Off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. And what  
23 is it that we do when we disagree? Tish? Okay.  
24 So that we can keep the testimony or the  
25 questioning moving in as smooth a process as

1 possible so that we don't have to interrupt for  
2 applause. I want to first thank the Committee  
3 staff and all of the Speaker's staff who have  
4 worked on this issue with us for the months and  
5 months that we have been working. First, David  
6 Pristin, who is here somewhere I know. David?  
7 Yes, we can clap for--David Pristin from the  
8 Speaker's office, Yolanda McBride; the committee  
9 staff, Kris Sartori, Shauneequa Owusu, and Pakhi  
10 Sengupta, who are all sitting here at the panel.  
11 And I also want to acknowledge the many colleagues  
12 who are with us today, but first, the members of  
13 the committee: Dr. Eugene from Brooklyn, Sara  
14 Gonzalez from Brooklyn, Council Member Gale  
15 Brewer, Council Member Vincent Gentile, and  
16 Council Member Como. And joining us for the  
17 hearing, Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito,  
18 Council Member Felder, Councilwoman Katz,  
19 Councilwoman Reyna, Councilman Jackson, Council  
20 Member Tish James, who gave us the training on how  
21 we're going to agree and disagree, and Council  
22 Member Al Vann, who I think is sitting behind me  
23 on the throne. And with that--yes.

24  
25 MALE VOICE: Have about 15 seats

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2 open in the committee--

3 [Pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: There about 15  
5 seats open in the committee room for anyone who  
6 must have a seat, we welcome you to sit in the  
7 room across, I think the sound will carry into the  
8 room as well. And now I'd like to invite in the  
9 first panel, the Department for the Aging, Deputy  
10 Commissioner Caryn Resnick--welcome, Deputy  
11 Commissioner, it's always a pleasure to see you--  
12 and Monica Parkin?

13 MONICA PARIKH: Parikh.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Parikh.

15 MONICA PARIKH: Parikh.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Parikh. And I  
17 would imagine that SP is Special Counsel?

18 MONICA PARIKH: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Yeah, they  
20 bring the attorneys when they know that there's  
21 going to be trouble. And, again, state my strong  
22 disappointments and offense at the fact that the  
23 Commissioner is not here with us today. You may  
24 proceed.

25 [Pause]

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: Thank you and good  
3 morning, my name is Caryn Resnick, I'm the Deputy  
4 Commissioner for External Affairs for the New York  
5 City Department for the Aging. I am joined here  
6 this afternoon by Monica Parikh, Special Counsel,  
7 and Kristen Simpson Zack [phonetic], Special  
8 Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner. Thank you,  
9 Chairs Arroyo and Vacca and all the members of the  
10 Aging Committee, for the opportunity to testify  
11 before you on two topics: the senior center  
12 Request for Proposals and Intro 821-A. Starting  
13 in 2003, the city of New York and its Department  
14 for the Aging began taking steps to prepare for  
15 the city's rapidly growing older adult population  
16 by analyzing three core aging services--case  
17 management, home-delivered meals, and senior  
18 centers--with the intent to update and enhance  
19 these services to reflect the changing needs and  
20 lifestyles of the growing population. Case  
21 management and home-delivered meals focus on the  
22 needs of the frail elderly population. DFTA's  
23 goal in redesigning the delivery of case  
24 management services was to ensure that frail older  
25 adults who could benefit from in-home services are

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2 properly assessed and that they fully understand  
3 the service options currently available to them so  
4 that they may make informed decisions about their  
5 abilities to remain at home. The changes to the  
6 case management system are now fully underway.

7 Next, DFTA evaluated the home-delivered meals  
8 program. Based on the experience with the Bronx  
9 Senior Options pilot program, DFTA worked with the  
10 community stakeholders to redesign the delivery of  
11 meals to the homes of older New Yorkers to make  
12 the system more efficient and able to provide for  
13 the increasing numbers of frail elderly who may  
14 need such services in the future. The redesigned  
15 home delivery program will begin its rollout on  
16 January 1st, 2009. With the issuance of the RFP  
17 for congregate programs for older adults, DFTA now  
18 focuses on the redesign of senior centers to  
19 promote healthy aging activities. New York City  
20 is far from alone in this kind of movement.

21 Supported by changes in the Older Americans Act,  
22 area agencies on aging throughout the United  
23 States are testing new and emerging models for  
24 congregate programs, including using congregate  
25 activities to integrate public health prevention

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2 expertise into aging services. By providing a  
3 broad range of healthy aging activities,  
4 congregate programs are becoming springboards for  
5 greater community involvement, personal  
6 fulfillment and wellness pursuits throughout the  
7 country. We hope that New York City will be a  
8 part of this positive change in service delivery.

9 [Pause] The Department released the Request for  
10 Proposals for Senior Congregate Services on  
11 November 3rd, 2008, after a long and comprehensive  
12 consultative process with stakeholders throughout  
13 the city of New York. This process included  
14 approximately 200 meetings, forums, and  
15 presentations with elected officials, community  
16 organizations, aging services providers, and  
17 seniors themselves. The Department also held two  
18 briefings on modernization for City Council  
19 Members and staff, including a taste test of  
20 sample home-delivered meals. DFTA is confident  
21 that the final product presents us with a tool to  
22 solicit innovative proposals from the aging  
23 services community that will result in enhanced  
24 services for older adults throughout the diverse  
25 communities of New York City. [Pause] Why

1  
2 modernize. The city's older adult population is  
3 rapidly increasing. Individuals age 60 and older  
4 are the fastest-growing age cohort in the city and  
5 the population of city residents aged 65 and older  
6 is expected to increase by 44% by the year 2030.  
7 Despite this population surge, utilization of  
8 senior centers has actually decreased over time.  
9 Currently, our city senior centers are only  
10 routinely utilized by about 2% of eligible senior  
11 citizens. However, we've discovered that the  
12 growth in the senior population is not only about  
13 numbers. Older adults today are living healthier,  
14 independent, and active lifestyles. National  
15 research on senior centers has shown that the  
16 expectations of older adults with regard to  
17 customer service, programming, and activities  
18 offered at today's center differ greatly from  
19 those of seniors a generation ago. Armed with  
20 this information, along with input from New York  
21 City seniors, aging services professionals,  
22 community leaders, and best practices from across  
23 the nation, DFTA is redefining the city's Senior  
24 Center model to make it more responsive to the  
25 changing needs of today's older adults. Senior

1  
2 centers will now be organized around a mission of  
3 promoting health and wellness. This new focus  
4 will make our city senior centers more attractive  
5 to older adults from a broad range of ages, from  
6 those who just recently turned 60 to those aged 80  
7 and above. Senior centers are in a unique  
8 position to play an integral role in preventing  
9 chronic disease among our city's senior population  
10 through exercise, nutrition education, and other  
11 programming and services. In fact, the New York  
12 City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is  
13 committed to working with DFTA and our providers  
14 to bring their expertise and knowledge of public  
15 health issues to senior congregate activities,  
16 including the implementation of evidence-based  
17 programming. The use of evidence-based models  
18 will not only assist senior center staff in  
19 introducing additional exercise, health screening,  
20 and socialization and wellness programs, but will  
21 also equip them with the tools to measure the  
22 impacts of these important programs. The newly  
23 redesigned senior centers will be operating under  
24 one of two models: neighborhood centers and senior  
25 hubs. The neighborhood center model strengthens

1  
2 the traditional center--senior center model by  
3 offering more activities with a focus on health  
4 and wellness. Neighborhood centers will provide  
5 meals, recreation, social activities, basic levels  
6 of daily health and wellness activities, and  
7 routine health programs throughout the year. For  
8 example, neighborhood centers will be required to  
9 have a walking club and to provide flu vaccines  
10 and health screenings. They must also sponsor  
11 regular monthly health promotion and disease  
12 prevention activities on important health issues  
13 such as falls prevention, hypertension, and  
14 diabetes. Proposals for neighborhood centers must  
15 include collaborations with other organizations  
16 such as local gyms, arts organizations, and  
17 libraries. In addition, neighborhood centers will  
18 be expected to link with the senior hubs in their  
19 vicinity so that seniors are aware of all the  
20 resources and activities that are available to  
21 them throughout the larger community.

22 [Off mic]

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet down,  
24 please.

25 MALE VOICE: They are paying

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attention [crosstalk]--

CARYN RESNICK: The senior hub model includes all of the activities and requirements of the neighborhood models and adds many new additional features. Senior hubs will provide complex health and wellness activities, such as weight control and fitness classes, on a regular basis. These centers will also be required to provide evidence-based programming involving issues such as falls prevention or the management of chronic diseases. In addition, senior hubs will offer an annual health risk assessment to certain center participants. Furthermore, these senior centers will provide computer labs with Internet access; a wide array of programming on topics such as employment assistance, the arts, jewelry making, painting, and culture, lectures, musical or theatrical performance opportunities; and recreational trips to museums, theaters, and sporting events. The two distinct program models built into the RFP will provide seniors with additional choices and more enriched programming. We envision a network where an individual senior could have lunch at a center that offers their

1 favorite food and then take advantage of  
2 opportunities at other centers, such as yoga  
3 classes, book clubs, lectures, or field trips.  
4 Senior hubs will augment, rather than replace,  
5 neighborhood centers. By making these two  
6 different models available, DFTA is encouraging  
7 small neighborhood-based organizations as well as  
8 large citywide organizations to respond to the  
9 RFP. Similarly, DFTA is also encouraging  
10 organizations to partner with one another to offer  
11 varied and comprehensive programming. We consider  
12 this to be an opportunity to diversify  
13 programming, stretch senior center activities  
14 beyond a building's four walls, and increase the  
15 number of older New Yorkers who opt to spend time  
16 in a senior center. I'd now like to briefly  
17 discuss Intro 821-A sponsored by Councilman Vacca.  
18 This legislation would require the Department to  
19 provide written notification to elected officials  
20 and community boards prior to the closing,  
21 relocation, or consolidation of any DFTA-funded  
22 senior center. We are unclear as to the purpose  
23 of this legislation, which, in our view, is not  
24 needed.  
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MALE VOICE: What?

CARYN RESNICK: For one--

[Off mic]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [Crosstalk]

please [crosstalk] Quiet, please.

CARYN RESNICK: For one, a process that has worked well is already in place to identify and assist senior centers that may be struggling. This agency has a long history of working intensively with nonprofit providers who demonstrate weaknesses or fail to comply with all provisions of a contract. DFTA nurtures and supports struggling centers with technical assistance, both internally and through a contract with a community resource exchange, in order to bring them into contract compliance. Senior centers receive comprehensive evaluations yearly and DFTA program officers provide ongoing assistance in helping centers address any areas which are identified as needing improvement. In the rare instance when a decision has been made to terminate a contract after all other options are exhausted, city procurement law dictates that city agencies must provide 30 days written notice to a

1 provider before a contract can be terminated. In  
2 short, new legislation is not needed to provide  
3 notification of contract termination as several  
4 safeguards are already in place. Furthermore,  
5 DFTA has consistently communicated with members of  
6 the Council, Borough Presidents, and other elected  
7 officials on issues facing senior centers. Our  
8 agency routinely informs area legislators when  
9 concerns regarding senior centers located in their  
10 districts arise and we have worked closely with  
11 officials in addressing fiscal, programmatic, and  
12 facility challenges faced by our centers. We  
13 understand there is a feeling of uncertainty  
14 surrounding the senior center RFP among some  
15 members of the community. However, let me assure  
16 you that we are committed to an open and  
17 transparent process in regard to our modernization  
18 efforts as has been demonstrated by the intensive-

19 -  
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21 [Off mic]

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

23 [Off mic]

24 [Pause]

25 CARYN RESNICK: --consultative

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2 process that we have pursued over the past two  
3 years. This process has included holding  
4 approximately 200 meetings, forums, and  
5 presentations through which we have solicited and  
6 received feedback from elected officials,  
7 community organizations, aging services providers,  
8 and older New Yorkers. Also Chairs Arroyo and  
9 Vacca and Speaker Quinn have been included in  
10 major planning meetings regarding modernization  
11 efforts organized by the Deputy Mayor for Health  
12 and Human Services. In fact, the Department has  
13 made several noteworthy changes to the design of  
14 the RFP based on suggestions made by the City  
15 Council members. These include allowing  
16 organizations to apply for two different program  
17 models--the neighborhood center and the senior  
18 hub--as well as providing technical assistance to  
19 organizations interested in responding to the RFP.  
20 In addition, the city's procurement process is  
21 already open and transparent. Allow me to offer a  
22 roadmap of this process for the senior centers'  
23 RFP. The release of the RFP was advertised in the  
24 City Record, a notice of solicitation was mailed  
25 to all organizations from the city's centralized

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2 bidder's list, as well as sponsors of DFTA-funded  
3 programs, New York City elected officials, and any  
4 agency that has expressed an interest in DFTA  
5 contract opportunities. Earlier this week, we  
6 held a bidders' conference that was open to the  
7 public and attended by hundreds of individuals.  
8 At the conference, members of DFTA's senior  
9 leadership provided detailed information about the  
10 RFP, including programming requirements--

11 [Off mic]

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [Crosstalk]

13 please.

14 CARYN RESNICK: --financial

15 guidelines, and the application process. In  
16 addition, attendees had ample opportunity to ask  
17 and receive answers to their questions concerning  
18 the RFP. Proposals in response to the RFP are due  
19 in January of 2009. All proposals that are  
20 submitted to DFTA in a timely manner will be  
21 carefully evaluated by a team of professionals  
22 familiar with senior center services based on a  
23 set criteria. When awardees are designated, a  
24 public hearing will be held. Awardees will also  
25 be announced in the City Record upon registration

1 of the contracts by the Controller and  
2 notification of awards will be sent to elected  
3 officials, as is a routine practice. In short, a  
4 process to notify bidders and the general public  
5 is already in place and will be closely adhered to  
6 during the procurement process for the senior  
7 center RFP. To summarize, DFTA strongly opposes  
8 Intro 821-A because it's unnecessary, would  
9 require our agency to duplicate efforts that are  
10 already in place. As I've explained, DFTA has  
11 implemented a successful process to identify and  
12 assist senior centers that may be struggling. We  
13 also routinely discuss senior centers with local  
14 elected officials and seek their feedback on a  
15 variety of issues related to the centers,  
16 including the recent RFP. Furthermore, the city's  
17 procurement rules and DFTA's own outreach efforts  
18 will ensure that bidders and other members of the  
19 public are adequately informed throughout all of  
20 the stages of the RFP process. Through the senior  
21 center RFP and our other modernization efforts, we  
22 will continue to pursue our core mission of  
23 working for the empowerment, independence,  
24 dignity, and quality of life of New York City's  
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1  
2 older adults. We appreciate your feedback and I  
3 look forward to continuing our partnership with  
4 you in this endeavor and I welcome your questions.

5 [Off mic]

6 MALE VOICE: [Off mic] is out of  
7 control. [Off mic] out of control.

8 [Off mic]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you  
10 imagine what Simcha [phonetic] was like as a kid?  
11 Attention disorder plus.

12 MALE VOICE: I know.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Off mic]  
14 still got it.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
16 Deputy Commissioner, I will now turn it over to  
17 Council Member Vacca for questions followed by  
18 Council Member Brewer and Eugene.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you, Chair  
20 Arroyo. I first have to say that for a simple  
21 bill, which says that before a senior center could  
22 close, the senior citizens should have 60 days  
23 notice. For that bill to be opposed this  
24 inexplicable to me. It defies imagination. It is  
25 a common decency to tell people that you are going

1  
2 to close a center and the RFP will end up closing  
3 75 to 80 centers. So do you mean that no one  
4 should be given a formal prior notice? I think  
5 that that's inexplicable. I do have to state the  
6 way that the mega centers sound, the way you made  
7 the mega centers sound, they sound like a resort  
8 in the Catskills or a cabin on the Love Boat. And  
9 if you believe what you heard about those mega  
10 centers, I have a bridge to sell you somewhere,  
11 maybe in Alaska. When we hear that only 2% of our  
12 seniors go to senior centers, that means 2% daily  
13 count, it means the lunch count because DFTA all  
14 these years has not developed any other criteria  
15 to assess the effectiveness of a senior center.  
16 Twenty percent of our seniors attend senior  
17 centers and that number is growing and that number  
18 should have grown all these years, if there was  
19 outreach and if we began to have all the  
20 innovative programs--programming that we did not  
21 have to wait for an RFP to see in every center.  
22 And many of our centers already have walk-in clubs  
23 and they already give flu shots and they already  
24 do many of these things, so let's not get  
25 distracted. My only question to you,

1  
2 Commissioner, again, I ask the perennial question,  
3 can you tell this Committee how many centers will  
4 close based on the RFP you have issued, can you  
5 assure us that existing centers will remain open?

6 CARYN RESNICK: I think we've been  
7 around the block on this several times and so I  
8 will again for the record reiterate that there is  
9 absolutely no intent in this process to close  
10 senior centers, there is no target for a number of  
11 senior centers that are anticipated to close, and  
12 the response remains and is still that through the  
13 procurement process, we cannot guarantee that  
14 every current sponsor will again be awarded a  
15 contract, which does not mean that there's a  
16 target to close specific senior centers.

17 [Pause]

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: You cannot tell  
19 us that--not talking about sponsors, I don't care  
20 who gets what contract--I am asking, can we have  
21 an assurance from you that existing locations that  
22 now house senior centers will remain in place,  
23 should the RFP go through?

24 [Pause]

25 CARYN RESNICK: Again, this is a

1  
2 part of the procurement process, we may have  
3 bidders that bid and propose new locations. There  
4 is absolutely no way we can guarantee that every  
5 location and every center will remain the same.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please  
7 keep it down, please, keep it down.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: The money from  
9 the--the money that you are going to allocate for  
10 new mega centers, 30 to 40 mega centers, about \$1  
11 million each, that money is coming from money that  
12 would normally be used to operate existing senior  
13 centers, am I correct?

14 [Pause]

15 CARYN RESNICK: I mean, the answer  
16 to that is no, there are additional dollars that  
17 were put into this RFP and that is to keep open  
18 both the neighborhood centers and the senior hubs.

19 [Pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Am I correct in  
21 stating that the additional dollars came from  
22 programmatic monies that the Borough Presidents  
23 have given to senior citizen that the Borough  
24 Presidents--

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --\$7 million  
3 citywide that the Borough Presidents have  
4 allocated to senior citizen centers and senior  
5 social program service providers, that money--  
6 money that the City Council has allocated for rent  
7 needs, money that the City Council has allocated  
8 for food, money that the City Council has  
9 allocated for transportation--all this money has  
10 been seized and taken into the RFP without the  
11 acquiescence or consent of the Borough Presidents  
12 or the Council. Am I correct?

13 CARYN RESNICK: No, sir, you're not  
14 correct the funds that are allocated--

15 [Off mic]

16 [Pause]

17 CARYN RESNICK: --funds that have  
18 been utilized to support senior centers are rolled  
19 in and included in this RFP so that the baseline  
20 budgets of either 500,000 or up to \$1 million can  
21 be provided and so that there'll be an even  
22 playing field and that all programs can budget  
23 appropriately for the actual cost of operating a  
24 senior center.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Commissioner, I

1  
2 will end here, but your last statement is not at  
3 variance with my statement, you did not disagree  
4 with me. You did state what you stated with--and  
5 all due respect, I appreciate your statement--but  
6 my statement remains that the Borough Presidents'  
7 money and the City Council monies in those  
8 specific areas for seniors were taken without the  
9 approval of the Council or the Borough Presidents  
10 and that they are been lumped into an RFP. My  
11 point is that we are taking from Peter to pay Paul  
12 and that the end result will be a reduction in  
13 services and closing of centers, and that is my  
14 point, but I appreciate your clarification. I  
15 have to tell everyone here that Commissioner  
16 Resnick and this Committee have always had a good  
17 relationship. She is an honorable person, but  
18 that does not mean that we have a disagreement and  
19 we obviously do, she has been an effective Deputy  
20 Commissioner. I do feel that the truth be known,  
21 this is just interchanging of monies,  
22 interchanging of funds. The bottom line will be  
23 significant reductions that all of you will feel--  
24 that's why we're here today.

25 MALE VOICE: She seems to be [off

1

2 mic]

3

[Off mic]

4

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Council Member

5

Brewer followed by Council Member Eugene and

6

Council Member Katz.

7

[Pause]

8

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you

9

very much and I want to second the discussion that

10

the--Caryn Resnick is a wonderful public servant,

11

we wish the Commissioner was here, I'm 100%

12

opposed to this RFP, the Westside senior centers

13

do the kind of work that's already described in

14

this RFP, they do it well, they don't need to be

15

changed. Let me just ask a couple of questions.

16

It's my understanding--and I'm not as versed on

17

this as the two wonderful Chairs today--but that

18

DFTA will require neighborhood centers to provide

19

75 meals per day on average. How many of the

20

current congregate programs fail to meet this

21

threshold?

22

[Pause]

23

CARYN RESNICK: I don't have an

24

exact number for you--

25

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Crosstalk]

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: --it's a small  
3 number, but I'll have to get back to you with  
4 that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.  
6 That's the kind of information--my understanding  
7 was, it was a good meeting on December 2nd in  
8 terms of turnout, but a lot of questions were not  
9 answered and that's what I heard universally from  
10 people who participated. Let me ask a couple of  
11 other things. As you know, I Chair the Technology  
12 Committee and I have a strong belief that  
13 computers are a wonderful asset to older adults  
14 and they should be part of the center and you  
15 mention that in your testimony, that that is,  
16 along with many other programming, Internet access  
17 is a good thing. However, the DFTA RFP states  
18 that activity space must be sufficient for 25  
19 persons. Where did this figure come from?  
20 Because ideal class size for computers is around  
21 12, yoga, fall prevention, and so on, well below  
22 25 people. Where did that number come from and,  
23 if it, exists then computers and yoga and fall  
24 prevention and everything else could not be taught  
25 well.

1  
2 MONICA PARIKH: Hi, Council Member  
3 Brewer, I'm going to take that question. So your  
4 question goes to the heart of the substance of the  
5 RFP--

6 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [Interposing]  
7 Identify yourself for the record before you speak  
8 and--

9 MONICA PARIKH: Oh, okay. My name  
10 is Monica Parikh and I'm Special Counsel for the  
11 Department for the Aging. So again, Council  
12 Member Brewer's questions goes to the substance of  
13 the RFP that's currently on the street and, as the  
14 Council knows, to maintain the integrity of the  
15 RFP process, we can't speak about substantive  
16 questions to the RFP because we don't want--we  
17 don't want certain proposers or potential  
18 proposers to have information that others don't  
19 have. So we do have a process to answer these  
20 substantive questions and it's a three-part  
21 process. Part one is there's a contact person  
22 within the agency who can answer questions; part  
23 two is that we just had the pre-proposal  
24 conference on December 2nd, which you referred to;  
25 and the third part of that is that we actually

1  
2 will issue a formal addendum, which will basically  
3 go through all of the questions that the potential  
4 proposers need to know the answers to and the  
5 official agency position on them. That question  
6 has been addressed multiple times and will be  
7 formalized in an addendum which will be posted on  
8 DFTA's website, as well as available to anyone who  
9 has questions. And I would state for the record  
10 that I think that it's in everyone's interest here  
11 that we would want a level playing field, we  
12 wouldn't want to have certain proposers have  
13 information that others don't have.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I  
15 mean, I'm not going to go on 'cause I'm sure that  
16 there are many other questions, but I'm just  
17 saying that's an example of details that don't fit  
18 into what you said in the testimony--

19 MONICA PARIKH: Right.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --

21 [crosstalk] testimony, okay.

22 MONICA PARIKH: Well, we will put--  
23 that question is in the addendum, Council Member  
24 and--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: What kind of

1  
2 assistance can providers expect from the city  
3 Department of Health and Mental Health? 'Cause  
4 you mention that in your testimony.

5 MONICA PARIKH: And, again, that's  
6 also a substantive question that's [crosstalk]--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So all of  
8 the questions I have here cannot be answered.  
9 Okay?

10 [Off mic]

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have--all  
13 right, Madam and Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask just  
14 one other general question because all of my  
15 questions I think are going to get the same  
16 answer. So my other question is, I'm--as you  
17 know, I'm a big proponent, along with the Co-  
18 Chairs of NORC program and the NORC--can an agency  
19 with the NORC program apply for a hub or a  
20 neighborhood center and be able to keep the  
21 extraordinary NORC funding?

22 [Pause]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Uh-oh, here  
24 we go.

25 MONICA PARIKH: So, again, Council

1

2 Member Brewer, at the risk of--

2

3

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh boy.

4

5

MONICA PARIKH: --the boos that I'm

6

going to get out of the audience, that question

7

was actually raised at the pre-proposal conference

8

on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, it will--

9

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] And what was the answer?

10

MONICA PARIKH: --it will be issued

11

in a formal addendum.

12

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Crosstalk]

13

All right. Thank you.

14

[Off mic]

15

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Keep it down.

16

MALE VOICE: No answers [off mic]

17

[Off mic]

18

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Order, please,

19

please. I'd like to introduce now the Speaker of

20

the City Council, Christine Quinn.

21

SPEAKER QUINN: Thank you. I

22

apologize for being a little late. First, let me

23

start by thanking Chairpersons Arroyo and Vacca

24

for organizing today's hearing and also for all of

25

their work on this RFP issue. Let me thank all

1  
2 the seniors who are here today and also the 14,000  
3 seniors who have written letters expressing their  
4 tremendous concern about this--

5 [off mic]

6 SPEAKER QUINN: No, no, shhh, keep  
7 it down, keep it down. Let me say before I make a  
8 more substantive statement, Caryn, I want to just  
9 reiterate the concern that it's great you're here,  
10 but the Commissioner should be here and I think we  
11 may--no clapping, no clapping, no clapping, no  
12 clapping--you know, I think we made it clear to  
13 the--I know I have personally made my deep concern  
14 about this RFP clear to the administration, we may  
15 even have made it clear that I was going to be  
16 here for part of the time today and, although I  
17 think you are an outstanding Chief of Staff to the  
18 Department for the Aging, I think the Commissioner  
19 should have been here and I think we need to  
20 understand from him later why he was not able to  
21 be here. That said, I know that there was concern  
22 from the administration about testifying in the  
23 context of an RFP. That said, I would like a  
24 legal interpretation about why it is you can't  
25 provide us answers and you can only provide

1  
2 answers in a post-bidders' conference. I don't--I  
3 would be surprised if there was a legal constraint  
4 that prohibited you from giving answers to the  
5 Council. If there was some type of legal  
6 constraint for you making public answers because  
7 it might give, say a bidder who was in this room a  
8 leg up against a bidder who didn't come to this  
9 room, that should have been communicated and you  
10 could have given us answers that we could have  
11 used internally in the Council and not made public  
12 at the hearing and I think we could've explained  
13 that to folks. But I think minimally we deserve  
14 the courtesy of that legal interpretation from  
15 your counsel and or the corp [phonetic] counsel,  
16 'cause obviously we could understand something  
17 like that had we been given the courtesy, 'cause  
18 you knew we were going to ask RFP questions. That  
19 said, I just want to reiterate, this--my position  
20 that I made clear to the agency and to the Deputy  
21 Mayor, I don't think there is anybody in this city  
22 who doesn't like the idea of exploring how we can  
23 better provide senior services--that's why we're  
24 working with you and the Deputy Mayor on the aging  
25 blueprint. That's why we spent months talking to

1  
2 seniors and service providers about how we can do  
3 it better. Now that said, I don't understand why,  
4 in a context of doing it better, we would create  
5 the possibility of many, many senior centers  
6 closing. Now some might say, well we've been  
7 working on this for a long time. But the world's  
8 changed dramatically in a very short period of  
9 time and what might have been sustainable at one  
10 period of time, just isn't sustainable now given  
11 the terrible economic crisis that we're in and I  
12 think it is just foolhardy to take a step that  
13 doesn't even save any money, but could  
14 dramatically destabilize services at a time when  
15 seniors need them most. So let me just ask two  
16 questions and then I don't want to take up a lot  
17 of time from my colleagues, is it correct that the  
18 RFP as now structured could potentially result,  
19 potentially, in the closure of upwards to 85 to  
20 100 senior centers?

21 [Pause]

22 CARYN RESNICK: We discussed some of  
23 this before you arrived, but--

24 SPEAKER QUINN: But I'm here now--

25 CARYN RESNICK: --I know you are--

1  
2 SPEAKER QUINN: --so we're going to  
3 discuss it again.

4 CARYN RESNICK: We are very unclear  
5 where that number came from--

6 SPEAKER QUINN: Okay.

7 CARYN RESNICK: --we don't agree  
8 with that number and--

9 SPEAKER QUINN: [Interposing] So how  
10 many do you think could potentially close?

11 CARYN RESNICK: We don't have an  
12 answer to that question, we do not anticipate that  
13 there will be closures of senior centers.

14 SPEAKER QUINN: So does that mean,  
15 Commissioner, that--

16 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] We  
17 think there's adequate support for a full--the  
18 full complement of senior centers.

19 SPEAKER QUINN: But let me just  
20 clarify 'cause, look, if the bottom line of this  
21 RFP is that not one senior center is going to  
22 close, then, you know, kudos to this hearing and  
23 we got information we didn't have before, and we  
24 were wrong and didn't get it right and we can  
25 admit that, but I've been told by people in the

1  
2 administration at the highest levels that they  
3 cannot guarantee me that senior centers will not  
4 close as a result of this RFP.

5 CARYN RESNICK: And I restated--

6 SPEAKER QUINN: So are you--

7 CARYN RESNICK: --the same that as--  
8 and we discuss procurement, we will get a number  
9 of proposals and they will be ranked and rated  
10 and, based on the awards, we cannot determine now,  
11 in advance, the number of centers or what the  
12 award's going to look like.

13 SPEAKER QUINN: So there could very  
14 well be--so you're not--

15 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] We  
16 don't--there's no targeted number, this number 75,  
17 85, 100--

18 SPEAKER QUINN: But I--

19 CARYN RESNICK: --that's not built  
20 into this process in any way.

21 [Pause]

22 SPEAKER QUINN: Well let me say  
23 three things, one, you should know that the  
24 administration at another hearing, other  
25 conversations with the Council, they're the ones

1  
2 where we got from the conversations around the  
3 capital access program that there could be 85  
4 senior centers less, so that's an administrative  
5 number as I understand it and the staff can give  
6 you the specifics that we've gotten from other  
7 people in the administration as it relates to the  
8 loan guarantee program. That said, I understand  
9 that in an RFP you can't say the same exact senior  
10 centers that exist today might exist tomorrow  
11 'cause that could change in an RFP, but will there  
12 be the same number, maybe not the same providers,  
13 but the same number if the RFP goes through after  
14 the RFP as there is today?

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: I mean I have to say  
17 that it's impossible to answer that question  
18 'cause you're asking us to have a crystal ball and  
19 we will not know--

20 SPEAKER QUINN: Okay.

21 CARYN RESNICK: --until the process  
22 has concluded.

23 SPEAKER QUINN: --so, okay, so then  
24 we're not wrong on the Council to fear that the  
25 RFP could result in senior center closures.

1

2 Correct?

3

[Off mic]

4

MALE VOICE: So then the RFP [off

5

mic]

6

SPEAKER QUINN: So--

7

MONICA PARIKH: Speaker Quinn?

8

SPEAKER QUINN: Yeah.

9

MONICA PARIKH: In response to your

10

question, I mean, I think that the Council could

11

also have the same level of optimism that the

12

proposers who actually win the contracts will be

13

able to provide more robust services than are

14

currently in place.

15

SPEAKER QUINN: But will they be

16

provided at the same number of locations, not the

17

same locations, but the same number of locations.

18

It seems to me your point is exactly potentially

19

the challenge, right? That you want there to be

20

this kind of different level of service, which I

21

don't think there's a disagreement as a long-term

22

goal, I think there's agreement if you look at our

23

aging blueprint, the problem is moving to that

24

different model given that the amount of money

25

associated to senior centers can't possibly go up

1  
2 right now given the economic situation. It seems  
3 just logically impossible that you could have the  
4 same number of places with some of them getting  
5 dramatically more money to be these supercenters,  
6 that money's going to have to come from somewhere,  
7 it's going to come from the other centers and  
8 they're not going to have enough money to stay  
9 open. Seems to me the only way that the math  
10 could add--'cause even if you determine there's  
11 some centers that just aren't cutting the mustard  
12 and should be closed 'cause they're not good,  
13 there's not going to be enough of those to  
14 generate enough money to create the supercenters,  
15 it seems to me.

16 MONICA PARIKH: I mean I would say  
17 that, Speaker Quinn, that we are in agreement that  
18 the services that are going to be provided to  
19 seniors should be as robust as they are now, if  
20 not more so, and I think we're in agreement that  
21 times are changing and that seniors needs are  
22 changing, you know, with the baby boomer  
23 generations getting older, as you said before and  
24 I think as Council Member Brewer said, we want our  
25 seniors to have access to computer labs, tai chi,

1  
2 yoga programs. So, yes, we are looking for a  
3 model that's obviously going to provide enhanced  
4 services and I think it forces us and this  
5 administration to look at doing business  
6 differently, but in a very positive light.

7 MALE VOICE: Answer the question.

8 [Off mic]

9 SPEAKER QUINN: Let me just move us  
10 on 'cause I think--

11 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] Well I  
12 also would like to add to that--

13 SPEAKER QUINN: Sure.

14 CARYN RESNICK: --that I think that  
15 the real bottom line here is service to seniors  
16 and in the redesigned model--and I know your  
17 concern is about the individual locations--there  
18 is more than adequate support to serve additional  
19 seniors that we are currently not serving. We  
20 talked about the 2%, we have a goal to bring that  
21 up to 5% of the senior population.

22 SPEAKER QUINN: Right, but--

23 CARYN RESNICK: So we want to serve  
24 more seniors with better and more enhanced  
25 programming and I think that's important to keep

1

2

in mind.

3

4

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12

FEMALE VOICE: Right.

13

14

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18

CARYN RESNICK: All right.

19

20

21

22

is like--is 370, right?

23

24

25

CARYN RESNICK: No, it's in the 320s, so if you add the 310 plus the 40 some odd hubs, you do not come out with the decrease in--

1

SPEAKER QUINN: But--

2

3

CARYN RESNICK: --the overall

4

number.

5

SPEAKER QUINN: --but what if you

6

take the 225?

7

[Pause]

8

CARYN RESNICK: But we talk about a

9

range.

10

SPEAKER QUINN: Right, and so being-

11

-

12

CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] And

13

you have to add the hubs into that equation.

14

SPEAKER QUINN: Right, but the 225

15

leaves a much lower number. Now if you're going

16

to take the 225 off the table, it's an altogether

17

different situation, but I understand you can't

18

take the 225 off the table, which seems to me that

19

that reality of the numbers that we've been

20

talking about seems much more realistic. Let me

21

just say lastly, as it relates to when you go back

22

to talk to corp counsel and your council on what

23

you can and can't say on RFPs, we've had, you

24

know, EDC in here recently, just last month,

25

coming in asking questions about RFPs and there

1  
2 didn't seem to be any problem from a legal  
3 perspective in what they could share with us. So  
4 I just think there should be a consistency because  
5 that's what our committee's expectations is based  
6 in part on is our ability to have conversations  
7 with agencies, in this case, a month ago with EDC  
8 on RFP questions. So, in closing, let me just  
9 thank the Chairs again for letting me jump in, I'm  
10 sorry that I was late and won't be able to stay  
11 'til the end. But, again, I think the best thing  
12 for all of us would be to shelve this RFP and  
13 continue [pause] to shelve this RFP and instead  
14 continue our ongoing conversations, whether that's  
15 through the aging blueprint work, through the work  
16 that the Mayor talked about in his State of the  
17 City last year around long-term plannings in a  
18 2030 context for seniors, but this recession has  
19 caused us to have to change many things in this  
20 city. You know, part of the reason I'm late and  
21 will leave early is we're in conversations about  
22 the November budget modification. Many, many  
23 things have changed and many things are having to  
24 be put on the shelf in the effort of consistency  
25 and stabilization and I think for a lot of reasons

1  
2 even beyond the recession, this RFP has to be one  
3 of them. Thank you.

4 [Pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
6 thank you, Speaker Quinn, and now I go to Council  
7 Member Eugene. Followed by Council Member Katz  
8 and then Council Member Jackson.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you  
10 very much, Chair Arroyo and Chair Vacca, thank you  
11 very much. First, let me thank all of you for  
12 coming over here today because our seniors have  
13 given their all for this city, for this society,  
14 they deserve the best and we have to make sure  
15 that we protect them and they receive the best  
16 that this society can provide to them. We cannot  
17 accept that we put too much burden [phonetic] on  
18 the--on our neighborhood senior center that are  
19 providing very vital services to them. Let me  
20 ask--I don't have too much question--too many  
21 question because I know that my colleagues are  
22 going to ask a lot of questions and so we know  
23 that most of our senior citizens, they go exactly  
24 to centers that fulfill their cultural and  
25 conditional needs, they'll go to their

1  
2 neighborhood, they'll go where they feel that they  
3 are home. Those mega centers will--what we going  
4 to do some of the neighborhood center will have to  
5 merge and some of the center will take them over,  
6 so that means our senior center will have to  
7 travel to other places. This is no good. What  
8 you going to do to make sure that those senior  
9 citizen will receive the services that they  
10 deserve? What are you going to do? Because this  
11 is going to decrease their participation.

12 [Pause]

13 CARYN RESNICK: Once again, it is  
14 the goal and the vision that we are going to  
15 increase and enhance services, that they will  
16 continue to be neighborhood centers with a much  
17 greater focus on cultural diversity and cultural  
18 sensitivity, and the adding or augmenting of our  
19 network with mega centers is an additional  
20 opportunity. Transportation can be offered by  
21 neighborhood centers or those hubs. And we do not  
22 see this as taking away services from neighborhood  
23 centers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: But it seem  
25 that we said that about 75 to 80, 85 senior

1  
2 centers will be closed because of the RFP, so that  
3 means those seniors citizens who are receiving  
4 services in their neighborhood will have to travel  
5 to get to the mega center.

6 [Pause]

7 CARYN RESNICK: Well I think we're  
8 going to go through this for the rest of the  
9 hearing, but we are not in agreement with the fact  
10 that 75 or more centers will necessarily close, so  
11 I think that's anticipating--an anticipatory  
12 anxiety that may not come to fruition.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: You're--it  
14 seem also that we are talking about underutilizing  
15 a center, could you clarify that for me? [Pause]  
16 There is a certain [off mic] The neighborhood  
17 senior centers should provide 75 millions in  
18 certain services. Could you clarify that you  
19 have--

20 CARYN RESNICK: We have not--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: --  
22 underutilized--

23 CARYN RESNICK: --specifically tied  
24 underutilization to the RFP, what I spoke of was  
25 overall an underutilization, according to what we

1  
2 have planned for meals served in our centers and  
3 what actually we do serve on an annual basis and  
4 that number has been, very sadly, going down over  
5 the past decade by almost a million meals per  
6 year. So there is much more capacity in the  
7 system than what we have been using over the years  
8 and that's really a major impetus for this kind of  
9 reform. We want every senior who is interested to  
10 be able to come and participate.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you  
12 very much.

13 [Pause]

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
15 Council Member. I'd like to acknowledge we've  
16 been joined by Council Member Oliver Koppell, who  
17 is sitting back here, very quietly, and Council  
18 Member Kendall Stewart, who is also a member of  
19 the Aging Committee. Council Member Katz?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Thank you,  
21 Madam Chair and I want to thank you and Council  
22 Member Vacca as well for holding this hearing. I  
23 know you spent a lot of time on this a few weeks  
24 ago with the budget hearings as well, it's an  
25 important topic. And I also want to add if I can,

1  
2 Deputy Commissioner, the only people probably  
3 sorrier that the Commissioner isn't here is  
4 probably the three of you sitting up there. But I  
5 really do want to add my voice to the Speaker and  
6 to the Chairs to say that really is shameful, he  
7 should be here. I understand that this was a big  
8 topic a few weeks ago at the hearing, but all  
9 these seniors are here to listen to what the  
10 Commissioner had to say, as well as to talk to us  
11 and I think he should have been here, it would  
12 have been respectful. I just have a few very  
13 quick questions, the 200 meetings that were held  
14 regarding the RFP, is there an assumption that at  
15 those meetings there are folks that were for  
16 revamping the senior centers? [Pause] Or you  
17 call it modernization, but I'll call it revamping  
18 for my purposes.

19 [Pause]

20 CARYN RESNICK: I attended many of  
21 those, so there was a dialog, there were people  
22 who were supportive, there were people who were  
23 not support, but they--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: [Interposing]  
25 What kind of people [crosstalk]--

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: --were public forums  
3 where people express their opinions, both in  
4 favor--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: [Interposing]  
6 I guess I'm curious as to who came in support of  
7 issuing RFPs instead of having the senior centers  
8 that are already in existence perhaps better  
9 funded or better, whatever, just I'd like to know  
10 the folks that testified for the revamping.

11 [Pause]

12 CARYN RESNICK: The forums were not  
13 about the issuance of an RFP, but you know that  
14 that is the way the city procures our programs and  
15 so senior centers have been RFPd over the history  
16 of our agency. It's not the RFP process itself I  
17 think that's at question.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: So the over  
19 200 meetings basically didn't discuss the fact  
20 that we were going to revamp the whole system, do  
21 an RFP. I'm sure people came and said, look, I  
22 run senior centers, I'd love to have more funding  
23 for culture, I'd love to have more funding for  
24 health and wellness, I'd love to have more funding  
25 for different things that I want to provide my

1  
2 seniors for, but my question is your testimony, I  
3 think it was three times, mentioned over 200  
4 meetings. So my question is whether or not that  
5 discussion was surrounded with the RFP process  
6 that we are now entering into.

7 [Pause]

8 CARYN RESNICK: It was around the  
9 vision for where we're going with the RFP.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: The other  
11 question, I guess, which begs to be asked because  
12 your testimony is the fact that seniors want more  
13 of these services that you're discussing will be  
14 available in the neighborhood in senior hubs. So  
15 I guess my question really is, how many letters  
16 from seniors do you have in the city from before  
17 your proposal and then after supporting the type  
18 of RFP that DFTA would like to issue? [Pause]  
19 Because I would love to see them.

20 CARYN RESNICK: We do get letters in  
21 support, I would say that the organized opposition  
22 is more organized than those in support, but--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: [Interposing]  
24 Well, but yeah, those are two different issues, I  
25 guess my question really is, is that if this is a

1  
2 result of the facts, I guess from DFTA's point of  
3 view, that these services need to be expanded, we  
4 need to modernize, then something must've been the  
5 impetus for that and the impetus for doing an RFP  
6 instead of going to the individual senior centers  
7 and trying to figure out how to make them better  
8 if that was the need. And so my question is, is  
9 there on record letters of support for this  
10 process?

11 [Pause]

12 CARYN RESNICK: Part of the impetus  
13 is, which I do refer to in the testimony, is what  
14 is really sweeping the country and is being  
15 modeled and called for by the older--the  
16 Administration on Aging that has been grappling  
17 with this problem now for over a decade of senior  
18 centers not being utilized and not--and part of  
19 the conclusion that has been drawn nationwide is  
20 that they are not as relevant as they could be to  
21 the seniors of today and tomorrow. So we are not  
22 unique in this--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Just so you  
24 know, in my district, they're really relevant. I  
25 mean, just I'm saying, I think it depends on--

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] And  
3 we'd like that to be citywide.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Just, I guess,  
5 and the speaker alluded to it and I think that  
6 this is something that she has been talking about  
7 really at length, we have a \$4 billion budget gap  
8 I guess we're trying to close in 2009, 2010, you  
9 want to totally revamp the way these senior  
10 centers work. My question is, is there a budget  
11 savings to this? Because we don't see it on the  
12 balance sheet.

13 CARYN RESNICK: There was never a  
14 motivation to do this as a budget measure so it  
15 is--

16 [Off mic]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: All right.  
18 Can I--I just--

19 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] Yeah,  
20 and we began this process way before our current  
21 deficit situation, so budget savings were not  
22 really ever built into this process.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: All right. I  
24 thank you. I really would love whatever press is  
25 here to really notice the fact that there is no

1  
2 cost savings analysis to this process. This is a  
3 process that DFTA has asked for that, as far as I  
4 can tell, no seniors or senior center has asked  
5 for. This RFP is asking to provide services that  
6 our senior centers already provide and in the end--  
7 -I guess and in the end it's not going to close  
8 any gap, which I would still be against even if it  
9 was to go towards that, but it's not even that.  
10 So I would love, if nothing else, that the press  
11 picks up the one question is, what is the point?  
12 So I thank you very much.

13 [Pause]

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Council Member  
15 Jackson, followed by Council Member Reyna, and--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you,  
17 Madam Chair--

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --James.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --and good  
20 afternoon, ladies and gents, and let me just say  
21 that, Deputy Commissioner, I represent northern  
22 Manhattan on the City Council, geographical areas  
23 of Inwood, Washington Heights, Harlem, and  
24 Hamilton Heights. And I heard that the  
25 Commissioner wasn't here, but I did not hear--or I

1  
2 didn't hear a direct question, why isn't the  
3 Commissioner here this afternoon? Why? I ask you  
4 that as a Deputy Commissioner, why isn't he here  
5 when this is the most important issue facing your  
6 agency today. Why?

7 CARYN RESNICK: The Commissioner had  
8 another urgent appointment and I was asked to  
9 represent him at this hearing and he did spend, I  
10 believe, it was 3 1/2 hours at the budget hearing  
11 reviewing many of these same issues.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: The budget  
13 issue was only--was about budget overall, this is  
14 a very, very specific issue and, quite frankly,  
15 this is the most important issue facing the city  
16 of New York when it comes to seniors and let me  
17 tell you, I am offended that he's not here on  
18 behalf of the people that I represent. So let me  
19 just state that for the record. And number two,  
20 you know, my dad is a senior and he attends  
21 breakfast and lunch, he's 83 years old and he's  
22 sitting right there. And so my dad is a face of  
23 all of the seniors in New York City, and I say to  
24 you, I've gone to that senior centers and other  
25 senior centers and not one senior has said to me

1  
2 that they agree with this RFP process, not one.  
3 And if in fact you have the names of anyone in my  
4 district, please give me their names from 123rd  
5 Street and Broadway up to 220th Street, give me  
6 their names and phone number because I'm going to  
7 ask them did they know the ramifications at the  
8 time when they said yes and I will probably bet  
9 you my paycheck they will say, no, I did not, no  
10 one explained it to me. But now that the City  
11 Council is out there trying to communicate with  
12 people--and let me tell you, we're not  
13 communicating anything that's not true, because  
14 the question put forward by the Chair--by the  
15 Chair of both the committee and subcommittee and  
16 by the Speaker, is there any guarantee that any  
17 senior centers will be closed, they could not get  
18 a definitive answer that the answer is no. So--  
19 and let me just say to you, in my opinion, the  
20 seniors here and the seniors across the city do  
21 not trust DFTA--that's my opinion, do not trust  
22 DFTA. And here's my question to you, now that  
23 I've let off some steam on behalf of the people  
24 that I represent, now my understanding is that the  
25 RFP is about a--what is that, the value of that?

1

2 About a hundred and how much is that?

3 FEMALE VOICE: [Off mic] 17 million.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: 17 million?

5 CARYN RESNICK: \$117 million.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And how  
7 much of that was City Council money and borough  
8 Presidents' money and other money?

9 [Off mic]

10 FEMALE VOICE: [Off mic] 17 million?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: My  
12 understanding that you had about 94 and the rest  
13 was Borough President and City Council money, is  
14 that correct?

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: Yeah, I'm not sure  
17 that that's an accurate representation  
18 [crosstalk]--19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
20 [Interposing] Okay. But around there, give or  
21 take?

22 [Off mic]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Give or  
24 take.

25 [Off mic]

1  
2 MONICA PARIKH: No, I think you can  
3 say a no.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm just  
5 trying to get a guesstimate, I don't want an exact  
6 figure--

7 MONICA PARIKH: [Crosstalk] Comment  
8 on--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --a  
10 guesstimate.

11 MONICA PARIKH: --representation.

12 CARYN RESNICK: I can't comment on  
13 your representation, but I don't believe that it's  
14 accurate.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. Well  
16 then--well quite frankly, in my opinion, you have  
17 your people here, that answer I should be able to  
18 get, that's not a very difficult question. How  
19 much money is Borough President money and City  
20 Council money? That's not a difficult question  
21 and if you can't answer that question, let me tell  
22 you, you're come unprepared. I'm being quite  
23 frank with you. You have staff here, you have a  
24 Blackberry in your--if you don't have the answer,  
25 than Blackberry someone, please, please don't take

1  
2 us for granted. That's a very simple question and  
3 it should be a very simple answer and I'll wait  
4 until you Blackberry the people at headquarters.

5 [Off mic]

6 MONICA PARIKH: There's no such  
7 thing as Borough President money, that that was a-

8 -

9 [Pause]

10 CARYN RESNICK: We've debated this  
11 issue in the past as well, but, in regards--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

13 [Interposing] Debated with whom? You didn't  
14 debate it with me.

15 CARYN RESNICK: [Crosstalk] Council-  
16 -well we did with this Committee.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But I'm not  
18 here to debate, I just want a simple answer. How  
19 much money is Borough President--

20 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] I  
21 think at the crux of the argument is that the BP  
22 funds are baselined in the Department's budget and  
23 so we view those as our dollars.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
25 Baseline.

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: And we've had that  
3 conversation multiple times.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. But  
5 still you--and I hear you, that's the way you view  
6 it--

7 CARYN RESNICK: Right.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --and you  
9 know one thing, you're entitled, you're the boss,  
10 meaning--

11 CARYN RESNICK: Well--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --you're  
13 the boss--

14 CARYN RESNICK: --I'm not--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --because -

16 -

17 CARYN RESNICK: --but thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --no, yes  
19 you are, when I say you, DFTA--you know, I'm not  
20 saying you particularly, but the question is, what  
21 is that, even though you view it as being  
22 baseline, how much is it?

23 CARYN RESNICK: We will--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: That's what  
25 I want to know.

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: --we will,  
3 Blackberry and get you a response and [crosstalk]-  
4 -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. If  
6 you don't mind, not only--

7 CARYN RESNICK: What I mentioned  
8 earlier--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Yes, ma'am.

10 CARYN RESNICK: --is that those  
11 dollars are dollars that have always been  
12 allocated to supporting our senior centers--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
14 that's fine--

15 CARYN RESNICK: --and so they will  
16 continue to be allocated in that way.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: All right.  
18 Okay. And assuming that be the truth for a  
19 second, and I believe you, I believe it will  
20 continue to be allocated. Are you telling me  
21 then, if the monies were allocated, even though  
22 it's, you know, it's in DFTA, by the Borough  
23 President and by the City Council, is there an  
24 assumption that those funds will continue by the  
25 Borough President or the City Council or all of

1

2 those monies will now be baselined by the Mayor?

3 [Pause]

4 CARYN RESNICK: Can I ask you what  
5 the substance of the question is?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: The  
7 substance of the question is--yes, you can, and  
8 legitimately so, the substance of the question is,  
9 if the money was allocated by the Borough  
10 President and by the City Council and make the  
11 assumption they will not be allocated anymore  
12 because we don't like what you're doing, okay?  
13 Then is the Mayor's office going to baseline in  
14 order to keep all of these senior centers open  
15 that you say that besides the hubs, you said all  
16 of the senior centers will remain in place,  
17 because you put more money in there. And my  
18 question to you is, as the Deputy Commissioner is,  
19 will the Mayor's office continue to baseline all  
20 of the monies that have been allocated by the City  
21 Council and the Borough President to keep all  
22 these senior centers open?

23 [Pause]

24 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: It totals \$16.3  
25 million.

1

2

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Madam

3

Chair, I appreciate that, I really want to hear it

4

from their offices how much it is to verify your--

5

our calculation.

6

[Off mic]

7

[Pause]

8

CARYN RESNICK: Our goal is to

9

continue to fund these--

10

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Oh boy, oh

11

boy.

12

CARYN RESNICK: --programs, the

13

amount of dollars that went out in this RFP is

14

\$117 million--

15

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

16

CARYN RESNICK: --and that's the

17

amount of funds that we are committed to for this

18

year and for this process.

19

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. Well

20

I appreciate your goal and objective and, quite

21

frankly, as I said to you earlier, I hope and pray

22

on behalf of all the people that I represent that

23

what you're seeing here today, a year from now,

24

that it is in fact the truth, I will be very, very

25

pleased. But let me just finally say that on

1  
2       behalf of the--the seniors that I represent, we  
3       don't trust you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4                       CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Quiet, please.

5                       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Keep it down.

6                       CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I'd like to  
7       acknowledge that we've been joined by Council  
8       Member Darlene Mealy from Brooklyn, welcome back,  
9       Council Member, we missed you. Council Member  
10      Reyna followed by Council Member James.

11                      COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Thank you,  
12      Madam Chair. I just wanted to take an  
13      opportunity, I know that we have said a lot  
14      concerning this RFP and it goes to show how this  
15      RFP should be dismissed considering a lot of the  
16      questions that are being raised and the  
17      disagreement between why at this time do we need  
18      to change a system that already provides--and  
19      there could be improvements, but improvement also  
20      comes with oversight on behalf of the agency--to  
21      then ask senior centers to do more and provide  
22      them with the funding appropriate to do more. The  
23      issue I'm most concerned of right now is that the  
24      range between 225--and before I forget when the  
25      Commissioner was here two weeks ago for a hearing

1  
2 on the budget, I had asked specifically for a list  
3 of every senior center and a category as to what  
4 space they lease and how much money for rent is  
5 there per site for that specific senior center  
6 because there's a discrepancy there and that is  
7 not being taken into account in this RFP. And so  
8 those that don't pay rent and have to now, and had  
9 not in the past, you're asking them to write a  
10 figure as a phantom idea that perhaps there may be  
11 money, but we're not too sure and it raises a huge  
12 concern, because if the budget is not taking into  
13 account space cost then why are we asking centers  
14 to include a figure in the first place? So I need  
15 to, on the record, once again, two weeks later,  
16 ask, because we have not received the list, that  
17 we receive that comprehensive list of each senior  
18 center, where they occupy space, under what  
19 category, because I believe there's three  
20 categories: NYCHA space, private city leases, and  
21 I believe, it's a nonprofit owned leasing with the  
22 city. The question that I had began with  
23 concerned your range between 220--I'm sorry,  
24 Deputy Commissioner, can I just trust the fact  
25 that you will get back to us on that?

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: Yes, I wanted to  
3 tell you that we are working--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Yes.

5 CARYN RESNICK: --on--there were  
6 many things that we promised to get back and we're  
7 compiling that and you will have it shortly.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: I appreciate  
9 that. You know, one of the biggest concerns is  
10 the fact that NYCHA had a hearing the same day or  
11 the day before where they expect DFTA to pay cost  
12 to spaces that they have been generous to give to  
13 DFTA for senior center programming and DFTA  
14 Commissioner said that that is not true. So just  
15 interagency, there's a lack of communication, the  
16 left is not speaking to the right and vice versa.  
17 The 225--between 225 and 310 senior centers, if I  
18 take and divide that at the highest range of  
19 senior centers granted from this proposal,  
20 dividing 117 million, per center, at the very  
21 best, would be averaging a budget of \$377,000,  
22 which means that we can never get to 310 senior  
23 centers funded, which is way below already what we  
24 currently have--or not way below, you mention that  
25 we're in the 320s, the range is from 225 to 310,

1  
2 averaging at the highest number of senior centers-  
3 -

4 CARYN RESNICK: 500.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: --approved,  
6 we're talking about less than the minimum  
7 requirement that already stipulates in the RFP.  
8 So we already have a problem in the RFP because  
9 not every senior center at the highest of your  
10 range as stipulated in your contract, as far as  
11 your RFP is concerned, will get funded. Is there  
12 any comment to that calculation?

13 [Pause]

14 CARYN RESNICK: It's not an exercise  
15 that you can simply divide by and come up with a  
16 figure, this is really going to depend on the  
17 responses that we get to the RFP. There's no--we  
18 can't--we don't know in advance if every existing  
19 senior center will be responding to the RFP and at  
20 what level the budgets look like, so until we have  
21 the entire pool of candidates and go through and  
22 evaluate and read them, we won't be able to have  
23 what the final number is going to look like.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Well at the  
25 very least--

1  
2 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] It's a  
3 competitive process and it depends on what the  
4 competition looks like as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And I  
6 understand it is a competitive process, but we're  
7 also trying to centralize senior centers in this  
8 RFP and so if you take the minimum requirement for  
9 serving meals at 75, senior centers that have a  
10 certificate of occupancy of less than 75 are  
11 already losing out, so they won't be competitive.  
12 Just based on their space--

13 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing]  
14 [Crosstalk] have to find another location--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So--

16 CARYN RESNICK: --that can support  
17 75, that doesn't mean they can't compete--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: --that  
19 specific--so stay right there, Deputy  
20 Commissioner, that specific center will not  
21 qualify to be competitive in the process.

22 [Pause]

23 CARYN RESNICK: Part of the question  
24 is can we afford to operate senior centers that  
25 have less than 75 people and that's part of why we

1  
2 looked at a number because we have--there are some  
3 sites that are very, very small and the--clearly  
4 you can still compete, but you might have to find  
5 a new location that could accommodate and have  
6 room for other classes and classroom spaces. We  
7 know that we have some facility issues and we  
8 really want to make our centers as appealing as is  
9 possible.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So we're  
11 consolidating--

12 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] Which  
13 includes having the facility that could offer  
14 those opportunities.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So there will  
16 be a consolidation process in this RFP.

17 CARYN RESNICK: It could be the same  
18 number, but they might not be in the same basement  
19 or room that they're in now, but would have to  
20 find a space that could accommodate additional  
21 seniors.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: It doesn't  
23 necessarily have to be the same community board.  
24 [Pause] Which means that community board will  
25 lose a center.

1

CARYN RESNICK: Not necessarily.

2

[Off mic]

3

[Pause]

4

CARYN RESNICK: These are

5

suppositions, I mean I can't respond because,

6

again, it's going to depend on what the proposers

7

propose. So it's not built in that there's--

8

we'll, you know, we're going to look for X or Y or

9

eliminate, you know, or consolidate...

10

[Off mic]

11

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: What's the

12

average number of senior centers in a senior

13

center now?

14

CARYN RESNICK: The average number

15

of participants?

16

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Yes, the

17

senior--based on congregate meals, because that's

18

what you have, right?

19

CARYN RESNICK: Yeah, I don't know

20

what the average number is, it's more than 75.

21

[Pause] We'll have to get back with an exact

22

number, but I know that the average exceeds the

23

75, if that's the question that you're asking.

24

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So and--do we

25

1  
2 know in your demographics as far as the population  
3 that you serve what the average age is?

4 CARYN RESNICK: Our average age is  
5 77 currently in our senior centers.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: And so a 77-  
7 year-old from one community board may have to  
8 travel farther in this RFP due to the fact that a  
9 smaller senior center that perhaps is across the  
10 street from that individual will not be providing  
11 services to this senior anymore.

12 [Pause]

13 CARYN RESNICK: In our current  
14 system, today, we don't really--we don't have  
15 consistency from community board to community  
16 board. There is in fact a community district that  
17 has one center, there are community districts that  
18 have more than 20 centers. So [pause] I can't  
19 promise the person might have to walk an  
20 additional block, but the commitment is to  
21 preserve neighborhood senior centers, so it is not  
22 to have people having to travel outside their  
23 district in order to get services, but to be able  
24 to preserve neighborhood centers and the  
25 neighborhood flavor within communities.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: I just--my  
3 last comment as far as the figures that I've been  
4 trying to understand, the--if we were to use the  
5 highest number of your range at 310 and my average  
6 budget of 377 with the \$117 million RFP that's out  
7 right now, I have 18 senior centers currently in  
8 community board one with an average budget of  
9 \$562,000. Just that alone indicates to me how  
10 this RFP makes me uncomfortable because that means  
11 that we would have to close down at least three to  
12 four different senior centers in order to qualify  
13 for the \$500,000 budget. In order to provide the  
14 services that this RFP is mandating. [Pause]  
15 Would you disagree or agree with my analysis or...

16 CARYN RESNICK: Not necessarily, and  
17 some of those centers have the opportunity to  
18 apply as a hub as well, so and with a budget of up  
19 to \$1 million.

20 [Pause]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: So the  
22 consolidation [pause] bigger senior centers is  
23 better, smaller are not--smaller centers that  
24 perhaps are--have existed for 35 years, 40 years  
25 will not be of existence and that's a concern to

1  
2 me because that's where perhaps the best run  
3 senior centers are operating, servicing our  
4 seniors, recommended to our seniors. And so, you  
5 know, these figures, as much as we want to run  
6 away from we're not closing or eliminating  
7 centers, we certainly are just from the few  
8 figures that I've shifted back and forth and  
9 you're not necessarily disagreeing with me in this  
10 instance. So I appreciate just trying to follow  
11 where I was leading towards, I think it's clear to  
12 me that I will be losing, not just one or two, but  
13 perhaps three and four senior centers. Thank you.

14 [Pause]

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
16 Council Member Reyna. I want to ask my colleagues  
17 to be mindful that we're in a room that's very  
18 crowded and hot, a lot of colleagues have  
19 questions, we have a lot of testimony to go  
20 through this afternoon. Council Member James?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Followed by  
23 Council Member Gentile and then Mark-Viverito.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you. I  
25 will be brief, I'll make some observations and

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then I just have three questions.

FEMALE VOICE: Questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And my first observation is the following: When using the word hub, when I think of the term hub I think of a transportation hub, hubs should never be used when it comes to senior centers. Those--that phrase, it's a phrase--again, it's an inconsistent phrase and I don't believe it should apply. Let me also go on to say that on Thanksgiving I went to several neighborhood senior centers in my district, they were crowded, there were a number of seniors whose faces look like the faces in this room, who were lonely, who are hungry, who wanted some compassion. I served a number of these seniors and they talked to me about their pains and their struggles. You can see their stories on their face, stories of trials and tribulations. The thought of closing any small senior center in central Brooklyn, the neighborhood that I represent--Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and parts of Bedford Stuyvesant--I can tell you right now it will be a line in the sand. And I'm happy that so many of

1  
2 the members of the City Council have come together  
3 and we found our voice and we have basically laid  
4 down the gauntlet when it comes to this proposal.  
5 I am of the opinion that this proposal is dead on  
6 arrival; I am of the opinion that this proposal  
7 will not pass and that it's a number one priority  
8 within this body. Now for far too long, you know,  
9 we've unfortunately suffered under administrations  
10 and politicians and I understand why there's so  
11 much cynicism in the world today because most  
12 people don't trust politicians and I understand.  
13 [Pause] I truly understand, but after the recent  
14 historic election, I believe so many of us have  
15 hope in our hearts and in our minds and that we  
16 brought a change to this country and we can bring  
17 change to this city next November. And so we must  
18 never forget that this proposal is really nothing  
19 more than an attempt to balance the budget on the  
20 backs of people who have built this city and who  
21 basically--who are here because--and all of us,  
22 every member of this City Council stands on your  
23 shoulders and we will never forget that and so I'm  
24 happy that so many members have come out and  
25 support you. Let me also go on to say that I hate

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the word mega, I hate mega supermarkets, I hate mega malls, I hate mega blocks, and I hate mega senior centers. The notion, the argument, the discussion, the word, again, is inconsistent. There's something very impersonal about the word mega and that's what's so wonderful about neighborhood senior centers, and that's why they should be supported. So I've gone to some senior centers and, again, they have served between 75, in some cases, more than 200 senior centers and so my question is, will these senior centers be reimbursed for serving over 200 residents and, if so, at what rate?

[Pause]

CARYN RESNICK: Historically, we have been able, when there were accruals in our budget, we've been able to serve--to reimburse centers when they served above their contracted units. So all--I can only answer that by saying that if there were funds available through accruals, that we'd be able to make those adjustments, but I certainly can't guarantee that.

[Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: The critical

1  
2 word in that was if and given these fiscal times,  
3 that's a big if and so that's why this whole RFP  
4 proposal is very daunting and very fearful for a  
5 number of us. Has there been any studies with  
6 regards to what senior centers work and what  
7 senior centers don't work? Have there--has there  
8 been any assessment of the system as a whole and  
9 has there been any thought as to rolling this out  
10 on a pilot basis or on a trial basis as opposed to  
11 just changing the system in one full sweep?

12 [Pause]

13 CARYN RESNICK: Through the many  
14 community forums and public forums we've had, we  
15 have shared the results of data from across the  
16 country, as well as a utilization study that we  
17 did ourselves at the Department. So the answer is  
18 yes, we took a hard look over a number of years at  
19 both utilization, leadership, and the kinds of  
20 programming that were most effective in our senior  
21 centers and used that to help inform this process.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And it was  
23 done senior center by senior center?

24 CARYN RESNICK: We collect data  
25 senior center by senior center, so certainly in

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terms of utilization rates and so on, we looked at that data.

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COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Beyond looking at utilization rates, did you study any other aspect of a senior center?

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CARYN RESNICK: We studied, not only utilization rates, but we also looked at leadership and we looked at types of programming that were positive in centers.

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MALE VOICE: [Off mic] Hundreds.

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COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: My last, again, my last question, because I know my colleagues have a number of other questions is, you know, again, the term restructuring, modernization, reconfigurating, reengineering, and redefining and revamping always scare me and so you did a RFP for congregate care, if I'm not mistaken in central Brooklyn, and a number of organizations that had previously issued--had previously provided congregate care in central Brooklyn lost out on those bids, a number of residents who lived in the neighborhood worked at these programs and lost their jobs. One, again, it was historic, these programs had been providing

1  
2 this service for a very long time, because of a  
3 competitive RFP a local community-based  
4 organization of color lost the contract and it was  
5 given to another organization. A significant  
6 number of people in central Brooklyn, which is--  
7 which already suffers from a depression, lost out  
8 and so my concern is whether or not there's  
9 concern with diversifying these RFPs and ensuring  
10 that every organization, which was reflective of  
11 the city of New York and reflected of the rainbow  
12 in this room is awarded a contract so that  
13 everyone can work in the city of New York. In  
14 central Brooklyn we have high rates of poverty, as  
15 a result of this RFP a significant number of small  
16 community-based organizations were put out of  
17 work. They know this neighborhood best, they  
18 reflect the cultural differences within the  
19 community, and they reflect the diversity of the  
20 respective community and now it was rewarded to  
21 another community-based organization that knows  
22 nothing about the community. And I am fearful  
23 that that's the same thing that will happen with  
24 this RFP that, again, it go out to a mega company  
25 again, ignoring the needs and concerns and the

1  
2 voice of the people who live in the respective  
3 community. [Pause] Is that--is there any concern  
4 with respect to that in the RFP?

5 CARYN RESNICK: Yes, again, I need a  
6 little bit of clarification. This RFP that we're  
7 discussing today is for the congregate services  
8 program, so perhaps you're referring to a  
9 different RFP.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: There was an-  
11 -there was another RFP that Concorde Family  
12 Services had won at one time.

13 CARYN RESNICK: Case management.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Case  
15 management, excuse me, and Concorde Family  
16 Services, which has been in existence for 50 some  
17 odd years, lost that contract. As a result of  
18 that, significant number of people were laid off.  
19 It went to some organization that most of the  
20 elected officials in the community do not have a  
21 relationship with and as a result of that,  
22 unfortunately, a number of people in the  
23 neighborhood were very much concerned about that.

24 [Pause]

25 CARYN RESNICK: Again, through the

1  
2 RFP process, which is competitive, we can never  
3 guarantee who is a winner or loser, it's based on  
4 the merit of the contract. I do know that we have  
5 done extensive reemployment and help with anybody  
6 in transitioning and there are just about no  
7 people that lost jobs directly as a result of the  
8 loss of the case management contracts.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I'm just very  
10 much concerned about, again, this RFP and, as you  
11 know, we have a significant number of--we have a  
12 high rate of unemployment in central Brooklyn and  
13 to add to that burden as a result of this  
14 restructuring, again, is a major concern to the  
15 elected officials in central Brooklyn. I thank  
16 you.

17 [Pause]

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
19 Council Member. Council Member Mark-Viverito  
20 followed by Council Member Gonzalez and then  
21 Council Member Stewart.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Thank  
23 you, Madam Chair and, again, I really do want to  
24 thank everyone that's here, and people who are not  
25 aware, we actually had to put people in the room

1  
2 next door, there are those probably who even were  
3 turned away, so this has been an incredible show  
4 of strength of the community and solidarity on  
5 this issue. But I really want to just add on a  
6 little bit to the comments that my colleague, Tish  
7 James, mentioned, which is a real serious concern  
8 is with regards to the smaller--

9 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [Interposing]  
10 Council Member, give me--those exiting the room,  
11 if you could do so quietly, and anyone in  
12 conversation, if you could take it out into the  
13 hallway, we really would appreciate it. Thank  
14 you.

15 [Pause]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --  
17 smaller nonprofits that our providers that are  
18 currently serving within our communities that  
19 really are not going to be at a competitive  
20 advantage in these RFPs and whenever these kinds  
21 of RFPs and these consolidation efforts happen, it  
22 always shortchanges communities of color, let's be  
23 very, very clear. And it really is of concern to  
24 me, as well that my district--and I represent East  
25 Harlem, part of South Bronx, and Manhattan Valley

1 on the Westside--you know, is going to be  
2 seriously hurt by this and it does not have--I do  
3 not think, DFTA has really thought this out, as  
4 well and I think the lack of clarity on questions  
5 that we're asking or information or details is  
6 indicative of that. Some basic questions have  
7 been asked that you have not been able to provide  
8 us with information. Now, your RFP clearly has  
9 guidelines and it clearly has requirements that  
10 are expected of certain providers and as they  
11 respond. You currently manage DFTA, 138 NYCHA  
12 centers or senior centers in NYCHA developments, I  
13 want to know whether an assessment has been done  
14 as to whether or not those 138 facilities actually  
15 would meet the requirements that are outlined in  
16 your RFP. You should have done that analysis  
17 because that would indicate whether or not those  
18 facilities would not be eligible for this RFP and,  
19 in essence, would mean a closing of a senior  
20 center. So you have very clear requirements with  
21 regards to program facility requirements, with  
22 regards to programmatic structure and so those  
23 senior services that are being provided in those  
24 138 NYCHA developments, their sites, their  
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2 locations, you should know whether or not every  
3 single one of those would be eligible to compete  
4 in this RFP. Do you have an answer on that? Have  
5 you done that level of analysis?

6 [Pause]

7 CARYN RESNICK: I don't think I  
8 agree with the analysis which is that if they did  
9 not meet the requirements now, the goal of the RFP  
10 is that the program would meet the requirements--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: You  
12 have very specific--

13 CARYN RESNICK: --so I don't think  
14 it's as--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --is-

16 -

17 CARYN RESNICK: --relevant whether  
18 or not a facility currently meets the definition.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Well,  
20 I mean, I think it's a very relevant question, you  
21 have very specific facility requirements in the  
22 RFP means that the facility or the site that is  
23 being identified must meet that criteria. Have  
24 you assessed whether, within the NYCHA--I'm  
25 thinking of NYCHA developments specifically, 138

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2 DFTA-managed senior centers--whether each and  
3 every one of those existing facilities meets your  
4 eligibility requirements, because that, again,  
5 will be reflective as to whether or not there  
6 would be senior centers in NYCHA developments that  
7 would close, in essence, because they wouldn't be  
8 eligible.

9 [Pause]

10 CARYN RESNICK: Can I ask you which  
11 requirements you're referring to?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: You  
13 have program facility, site control facility, site  
14 standards, accessible and convenient to older  
15 adults, offers enough space to effectively--and  
16 you have a minimum number of requirements in terms  
17 of participants per room.

18 CARYN RESNICK: Right.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:  
20 Cooling capacity, and a lot--you know, we have a  
21 lot of challenges with a lot of our NYCHA  
22 developments, we've had to put in capital monies  
23 for that. You have very specific criteria, that's  
24 only the facility requirement, not taking into  
25 account any additional programmatic requirements.

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2 So I believe that it will be a very shortsighted  
3 if that level of analysis had not been provided by  
4 DFTA ahead of time as to assess how senior centers  
5 would be closing within NYCHA developments and  
6 what level of impact that would have in  
7 communities--that's very--I think it's very  
8 important, it's very basic to me. Obviously, I'm  
9 not--there's not an answer, but I want to just  
10 jump on a little bit more along the lines of  
11 NYCHA, and I'm going to--I'm just going to say  
12 this, I think it's pretty galling, you know, to  
13 sit here and listen to DFTA say, well, you know,  
14 the monies that we as a Council fought, and the  
15 Borough ,Presidents fought very, very hard to  
16 allocate for initiatives or to allocate for senior  
17 services, that to say that DFTA has complete  
18 oversight over that money that you did not foresee  
19 or this administration did not foresee as  
20 important, because we had to fight tooth and nail,  
21 to now say, well that's our money and it's under  
22 our purview to decide how to spend it, is  
23 problematic for me, but that's a whole other  
24 conversation. We fought very hard in the City  
25 Council and this last budget to allocate \$18

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2 million to NYCHA with the understanding, because  
3 it was threats, the senior centers would close.  
4 Very specifically, we wanted to have a  
5 conversation--which has not happened--with the  
6 administration and with DFTA as to how you're  
7 going to spend that money--I want to understand,  
8 with regards to the administration and DFTA, what  
9 conversations have gone on with this \$18 million  
10 that the City Council allocated, that we fought  
11 hard for, that we allocated for maintaining senior  
12 centers open, how much of this 18 million is being  
13 projected in this RFP? [Pause] If any, I mean,  
14 I'm not even sure.

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: I don't have an  
17 answer as to how it's allocated in the RFP, I do  
18 know that the funds have been restored to our  
19 budget for the operations of all of the NYCHA  
20 facilities.

21 [Pause]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: I  
23 don't--repeat that, please. That--I--repeat that.

24 CARYN RESNICK: In the Department  
25 for the Aging's budgets, there is just over \$29--

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2 \$29 million that supports the operation of the  
3 NYCHA facilities.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay.  
5 [Pause] So that money, which is basically the 138  
6 centers that you manage at the moment.

7 CARYN RESNICK: It's--that's not  
8 really the number, it's a lesser number but about  
9 104 I think.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay.  
11 So then that's something--can you provide us with  
12 more clarity on that? We would really like to  
13 understand, what is the vision of the  
14 administration and DFTA with regards to monies  
15 that, again, we fought very hard for. So just as  
16 my, you know, closing comment, obviously, you  
17 know, we feel, as you've heard, we feel very  
18 strongly about this, that it should be rescinded,  
19 withdrawn, taken off the table. I think that with  
20 some of the questions and some of the detail that  
21 we're asking for here today, the fact that we're  
22 not being able to get clarification, I think is  
23 indicative of the shortsightedness of this. It  
24 should be done in a pilot way or more incremental.  
25 We're facing very tenuous times, it's too much,

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2 too fast, people have concerns with, already, how  
3 the case management contracts are being--are  
4 happening and the meal delivery is happening, and  
5 there should be some level of analysis of how that  
6 is going before you go forward on something so  
7 drastically. So that--those are, you know, my  
8 questions and my concerns and I know, in essence,  
9 that what you're also proposing, 'cause we heard  
10 the budget hearing a couple of weeks ago, that  
11 there's other programs within DFTA that you are  
12 completely eliminating. And my question, I guess,  
13 my last question is, is that money being allocated  
14 and projected to be included in this RFP? Elder  
15 abuse, some of the other programs that are being  
16 proposed to be eliminated.

17 CARYN RESNICK: No, absolutely not.  
18 Quite sadly, that was the peg that we had to meet  
19 of--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

21 [Crosstalk]

22 CARYN RESNICK: --just over \$3  
23 million and those monies are gone from our budget.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Well  
25 thank you for your answers, thank you, everyone,

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for being here and thank you, Madam Chair.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Council Member  
Gonzalez.

COUNCIL MEMBER GONZALEZ: Thank you,  
Chair Arroyo, and thank you to Jimmy Vacca, Chair  
of the Subcommittee. First of all, I want to  
thank you for your testimony, Deputy Mayor, and I  
don't envy where you're sitting, but I certainly  
will ask you a question, I don't think it's  
brought up--been brought up today, at least not in  
this whole time that I've been back and forth.  
What--have you measured, or has the Department  
measured in any way during your work with this  
RFP, the impact of mental health on a senior in  
respect to the possibility of a closure? Because  
I can tell you that, though my parents are having  
a terrific time in their center, my father's in a  
wheelchair, those were questions that came up.  
Seniors develop relationships, they're in an  
environment that's cohesive for them at that time,  
whether it's a coffee buddy or a Domino buddy or  
whatever it is that they do there. Has there been  
any thought at all during your work in this RFP

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2 pertaining to the possibility of some kind of  
3 impact in respect to mental health and the loss of  
4 something? Because change is difficult, it's  
5 difficult at any age, but when you're a senior and  
6 you have developed relationships and you have a  
7 center that maybe houses 50 or 60 and doesn't fit  
8 the criteria, there is a concern. Is there a  
9 thought, or has there been any work done in  
10 respect to that? Because today--first of all,  
11 they watch TV a lot, my parents watch TV a lot,  
12 the recession is on their mind, the fact that the  
13 economy is where it is, and even terrorism at our  
14 doors. So I would think in sitting here with all  
15 the questions that were asked, which were very  
16 viable and very important to this process, has  
17 there been any thought given to the mental health  
18 piece, the impact on a senior or even outreach  
19 that can be done beforehand to let people know,  
20 your center won't be there, or they're going to  
21 merge you with another, or maybe there's a  
22 possibility that someone like my dad cannot travel  
23 to another center, so he will no longer be part of  
24 that process?

25 [Pause]

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2 CARYN RESNICK: Again, in  
3 anticipation, I don't believe there's any way we  
4 could assess potential mental health needs, what I  
5 do think is important to mention is that the  
6 Department, and the Commissioner in particular, is  
7 extremely concerned about mental health issues and  
8 the elderly and we've piloted a number of projects  
9 that deal with depression and doing depression  
10 screening and we anticipate and hope as part of  
11 the RFP, that mental health services will be  
12 included and doing screenings for depression for  
13 the entire center population will be built into  
14 the senior center of the future.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GONZALEZ: I don't  
16 mean long-term in respect to--I know you have the  
17 wellness program, I know that DFTA does a lot of  
18 good work with the communities, I have incredible  
19 centers--I'm talking about this RFP and looking at  
20 it and sitting down, looking at every part of it  
21 and saying, how is this going to impact, never  
22 mind fiscal, within the community numbers or  
23 whatever, how is it going to impact the  
24 individual? I think this is something that is  
25 lost sometimes in the work we do here, that people

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2 do not realize that change does impact people.  
3 And that, though the economy is in the condition  
4 it's in, these individuals may not understand  
5 that. And it may not be a long-term mental  
6 situation, it may be just an immediate situation  
7 that needs to be addressed in respect to either  
8 some kind of outreach, or something that has to be  
9 done because when people hear there's a  
10 possibility that your center will be closed, it  
11 trickles, it trickles to the whole center and, as  
12 much as you want to bring information--I know I  
13 have tried very hard to go, I go to my centers  
14 very often, and I tell them, you know, there are  
15 no sacred cows. But the reality is that these  
16 people need to be dealt with and in a city such as  
17 New York City, with all the technology and all the  
18 work that is being done here, that has been done,  
19 I think there should have been a part here and  
20 there should be or maybe could be, I'm not sure at  
21 this point, in respect to thinking about how does  
22 it impact their lives and how will it continue to  
23 have cohesiveness or relationships, are we going  
24 to lose our relationships and that's a thought.  
25 That's all I have to say, thank--

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[Pause]

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CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Did you want to respond, Council Member?

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COUNCIL MEMBER GONZALEZ: I hope that it's not insignificant because it is important. What I have just said to you. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Thank you. Council Member Stewart followed by Council Member Mealy, and I'd like to acknowledge we've been joined by, now sitting on the throne, Council Member Rosie Mendez and Council Member Foster, who is a member of the Aging Committee.

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COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Thank you, Madam Chair. Commissioner, I have some simple questions, I see everybody was really trying to get on your case, but I'm not going to be on your case. I just want to know, we--in one of the other agency, which is the health, the education agency, we said that big is no good and we want to get smaller, so what we did, we break up the big schools to smaller schools. And I want to find out if you're not thinking the same way that they're thinking, whereby you now trying to

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2 consolidate, you're bringing the smaller centers  
3 to be big centers. Isn't there some sort of  
4 contradiction in terms of a policy or a  
5 philosophy?

6 [Pause]

7 CARYN RESNICK: No, I don't think  
8 so, we're looking for a balance, we have clearly  
9 far more neighborhood centers than we are  
10 proposing to have of the hub centers and it's  
11 looking at a balance and offering an additional  
12 opportunity. It's not one in lieu of the other.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: So what  
14 you're trying to say that bringing all these  
15 centers together in terms of RFP is not really  
16 bringing the smaller centers to a big center.

17 [Pause] That's not what you're--

18 CARYN RESNICK: Not at all, no.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: --trying to  
20 do. [Pause] All right, if that's not what you're  
21 doing, then can you guarantee that there's not  
22 going to be less space or slots for the seniors  
23 when you've made this--when you make this  
24 transition?

25 CARYN RESNICK: No, quite the

1  
2 contrary, we're trying to guarantee that there'll  
3 be additional space and room for seniors in the  
4 new model.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: So you say-  
6 -you guarantee that there going to be more space,  
7 more slots, that's what you're saying.

8 CARYN RESNICK: We're trying to  
9 ensure that there'll be greater utilization in the  
10 spaces that are available in the new program.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART:  
12 [Interposing] I--my question I'm asking is if  
13 you're going to say, you guarantee that there's  
14 going to be more slots or continue the same amount  
15 of slots for seniors, that's what I'm asking.  
16 Whether you're utilizing--we can do the same thing  
17 with the slots that we have now without really  
18 consolidating. What I'm saying basically is, are  
19 you going to guarantee that we're not going to  
20 have less slots for seniors when this transition  
21 takes place?

22 [Pause]

23 CARYN RESNICK: One, we can never  
24 know who will or will not attend a senior center,  
25 so I can't guarantee who it is that's going to

1  
2 attend our centers, but, yes, there will be  
3 additional capacity within the system to serve  
4 more seniors and that's the goal of the RFP.  
5 We're not looking to reduce slots as you put it.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Well a  
7 while ago you said it's not about money, isn't  
8 that true? You say it's not about money. Right?  
9 You made the state--

10 CARYN RESNICK: I said that the RFP  
11 was not based on budget or cost savings.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Well, I  
13 think we're dealing with semantics here. What I'm  
14 asking, this consolidation effort and all of that,  
15 is it about saving the city any money?

16 CARYN RESNICK: No.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: All right.  
18 Since it's not about saving money, what is it  
19 about?

20 [Pause]

21 [Applause]

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

23 CARYN RESNICK: It's about embracing  
24 a new model and a new vision for providing senior  
25 services that would keep us with what's happening

1  
2 around the rest of the country to meet the needs  
3 of the growing demographic, to have a greater  
4 focus on health and wellness, to be able to help  
5 seniors who are living longer, be able to deal  
6 with chronic conditions, and to offer the variety  
7 and array of services that are out there, some of  
8 which are not currently offered in all of our  
9 senior centers as they stand today.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: All right.  
11 Do you think that the system that we have  
12 currently now is broken? Would you use the term  
13 broken--

14 CARYN RESNICK: I would--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: --to  
16 describe the system that we have right now?

17 CARYN RESNICK: No, I wouldn't use  
18 the term broken, but what we've explored through  
19 many testimonies and meetings and public forums is  
20 that there is some thing that is keeping part of  
21 the 1.3 million seniors that we have in the city  
22 of New York from accessing services that are  
23 available to them. So I think, you know, the  
24 Commissioner's favorite line is that people vote  
25 with their feet and there is something in the

1  
2 current system that is not attracting the numbers  
3 of seniors who really could avail themselves of  
4 services and we want to, working together, figure  
5 out what's going to bring those people through the  
6 doors.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: So you  
8 think by consolidating will bring them through the  
9 doors, does that--

10 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] I--  
11 we're not consolidating.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Well, you  
13 know, I think those are the terms we've been using  
14 all along. That--

15 CARYN RESNICK: No we're not using  
16 those terms.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: All right.  
18 So there's not--my concern is the rapid change. I  
19 thought if we see that we can make--

20 [Off mic]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: --we can  
22 make a difference, we can do something, take one  
23 example and rebuild on that and gradually do, if  
24 it's successful, we do continuing that. But to  
25 me, this RFP system here is going to change--make

1

2

a rapid change and if you're saying that the system is not broken, why are you changing, why you making that rapid change?

4

5

[Off mic]

6

[Pause]

7

CARYN RESNICK: I mean, we can

8

continue to go back and forth on this, but we feel

9

that the time is ripe, that there's been chronic

10

underutilization in the system, that we have some-

11

-

12

COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART:

13

[Interposing] So it's broken.

14

CARYN RESNICK: --stellar--there

15

are--

16

COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: So the

17

system is broken.

18

CARYN RESNICK: --deficiencies in

19

the system. There are.

20

COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Well, you

21

know, I think we'll leave it for much more

22

discussion later, but the fact is, if you're

23

saying it's not broken and you want to make a

24

rapid change and then when you try to explain,

25

you're telling me well, you know, you're using

1  
2 terms that really tell me it's broken and to me  
3 that's not really explaining the question, not  
4 really answering the question and it's not really  
5 given me any good feeling that what we are doing  
6 is the right thing because if there's something  
7 wrong with what we are doing now, we can at least,  
8 and we [off mic] to make a change, we can at least  
9 gradually make that change rather than make a  
10 wholesale change of the entire system. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
12 Council Member. Council Member Mealy?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, I want  
14 to commend everyone here this day. From someone  
15 who just had an accident and laid on their back  
16 for seven weeks straight and now to see at this  
17 day and age to have our seniors come out here and  
18 try to defend housing and food for their senior  
19 center, it's a disgrace in this 21st-century, it's  
20 a sad day in New York City. You have paved the  
21 way for us all this time and here it is now that  
22 we have to sit here and ask for senior centers in  
23 which we need--I have to ask, I only have one  
24 question, Chairman, I will be gone. Here it is, I  
25 have some senior center, I have two of them that

1  
2 they're saying they're trying to close and that  
3 when I came through, I said why would they even  
4 think about dealing with the seniors right now  
5 with this budget crunch, how we're going through a  
6 financial crisis. I have a senior center in  
7 Brevoort that is in the middle of NYCHA, it's not  
8 even a NYCHA, it's a whole 24-unit of pure  
9 housing, that is so full every day, I'm saying  
10 what criteria could you possibly give me that you  
11 will want to close a senior center that is--they  
12 have singing, they have arts, they have computer--  
13 how could you even think about putting that senior  
14 center on the chopping block, could you explain  
15 that to me?

16 CARYN RESNICK: That senior center  
17 is not on the chopping block--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That--

19 CARYN RESNICK: --the centers are up  
20 for RFP, I am hopeful that you'll be working with  
21 that center to make sure that they apply for the  
22 RFP and there is absolutely--I can assure you,  
23 they are not on a chopping block or targeted in  
24 any way.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Have you even

1  
2 thought about--have DFTA thought about the two  
3 that they supposedly want to close is right in the  
4 same facility of Bedford Stuyvesant and it's about  
5 10 miles to any other senior center in that area,  
6 so how do you think that after, if you close that  
7 down, where would our seniors go? Do you know how  
8 many seniors would probably perish for lack of  
9 communication, food? So have you all even thought  
10 about the distance between the senior centers, if  
11 someone do not go for that RFP or could not apply  
12 for that RFP? And do not get it and then you have  
13 to shut it down? Have you all considered it? The  
14 distance where people will have to go to?

15 CARYN RESNICK: That will be taken  
16 into consideration when proposals are reviewed--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [Interposing]  
18 Could you explain to me--

19 CARYN RESNICK: --absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --what kind  
21 of consideration could be taken into  
22 consideration? Tell me what kind--if a center do  
23 an RFP and they do not get that RFP, what  
24 consequences? It's closed, right? I can't hear  
25 you.

1

[Off mic]

2

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Huh?

3

CARYN RESNICK: I think that as part  
of the process--

4

5

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [Interposing]

6

It's just yes or no. Will that center be closed?

7

If they do not get that RFP?

8

CARYN RESNICK: That center is not  
slated to be closed.

9

10

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I'm not

11

talking--I say anyone. If the center do not get

12

the RFP, they apply, they do not get it, that

13

center will be closed. Yes or no.

14

CARYN RESNICK: Yes, and--

15

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yeah, all

16

right, that's it--

17

CARYN RESNICK: --another center--

18

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --that's it

19

[crosstalk]--

20

CARYN RESNICK: --and another center  
would open in its place if, for some reason, that  
center did not win the bid.

21

22

23

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Wait a

24

minute, in Community Board 17, Kendall--my

25

1  
2 colleague, Kendall Stewart is still here? Oh, we  
3 just got a senior center and it took us so long to  
4 get another senior center in that vicinity just  
5 because we didn't have a facility for it, we  
6 couldn't find a facility. So if a center closed,  
7 where would we find a facility nowadays with the  
8 money, it's so high to rent out any facility, to  
9 get a program you said to put in to run a senior  
10 center, we still going back to day one with over-  
11 budgeting, we're still spinning out money, it  
12 doesn't balance. So if we close that center,  
13 where else could someone--if you can't find  
14 another place, where would you find another center  
15 in that vicinity?

16 [Pause]

17 CARYN RESNICK: One, there are NYCHA  
18 facilities that are available and with the  
19 increased budget--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [Interposing]

21 But these are [crosstalk]--

22 CARYN RESNICK: --that we've made  
23 available--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Ma'am?

25 CARYN RESNICK: --there is an

1  
2 opportunity to pay rents where now many of our  
3 senior centers struggle to be able to find dollars  
4 to pay rents within much smaller budgets.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But you  
6 still--am I getting confused here something? It's  
7 the same thing, if the RFP--if someone applied for  
8 RFP and if they do not get it, now that center is  
9 closed, now we're going to be looking for another  
10 center somewhere, we still spending money, we  
11 still now--if it was a NYCHA center where they're  
12 not paying that much with NYCHA, now we have to go  
13 outside and get another building and pay rent and  
14 we still spending extra money, we're not saving,  
15 you not doing anything new, you just creating  
16 another budget, overpriced budget. So what is the  
17 sense of closing any senior center if it's not  
18 profiting you?

19 CARYN RESNICK: I will keep  
20 repeating that the goal is not to close any senior  
21 center and that all senior centers and, perhaps  
22 for the public that's here, all senior centers  
23 have always been RFPd, that is the process there  
24 is not a guarantee that a provider continually  
25 gets a renewed contract in perpetuity, so it is

1  
2 not the process of the RFP really that should be  
3 at issue. At some point or another, every senior  
4 center program in our portfolio must be RFPd and  
5 then they either win or lose the contract, that's  
6 part of the process.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And if they  
8 lose the contract, now where about two of them  
9 lose the contract in the same vicinity, where now-  
10 -you would have to find another building to house  
11 them, right?

12 CARYN RESNICK: Well, we don't have  
13 to find the building, a proposer would propose  
14 another site and be awarded a contract in that  
15 community.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Now that's  
17 still now disenfranchising our seniors to now have  
18 to travel somewhere else, where they're  
19 comfortable that is right near, you all not  
20 providing that much transportation, you know  
21 'cause numerous of my seniors centers had asked  
22 for transportation, vans--you all don't put that  
23 in there--the director's budget that they could  
24 get transportation, so who are we fooling here?  
25 You're not doing anything [off mic] for the

1  
2 seniors whatsoever, you're not enhancing us, you  
3 said it's not for profit, so I beg of you all to  
4 reevaluate this RFP and, matter of fact, you  
5 should just drop the RFP. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

7 [Applause]

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Keep it down,  
9 please.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I reserved a  
11 couple of questions for the end for myself. I  
12 want to first apologize to the Borough Presidents,  
13 a few of you have been sitting around for a couple  
14 of hours. We apologize for making you wait as  
15 long, but this is a very, very difficult time for  
16 us. Deputy Commissioner, I--if I fail to say so  
17 in my opening statement, I want to take this  
18 opportunity to thank you for your work and for  
19 your partnership and for always picking up the  
20 phone when we call. The partnership is a strong  
21 one, it is based on respect, as Council Member  
22 Vacca indicated earlier, we simply just disagree  
23 about how you have decided to deal with the  
24 modernization efforts of senior centers in our  
25 city. I have several questions, I'm going to try

1  
2 to ask them as simply as I can so you can say yes  
3 or no or give a number or--so that I don't want to  
4 get into the theoretical disagreement. Can you  
5 tell us how many meals were served in each center  
6 in July of 2007, July 2008, and October 2008?

7 CARYN RESNICK: I can't tell you  
8 right now sitting here, but, yes, we do have that  
9 data.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: We have been  
11 trying to get that information from DFTA for a few  
12 days and have not been able to get it--

13 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] We  
14 just recently were able--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --and I find  
16 that very--

17 CARYN RESNICK: --to [crosstalk]  
18 that.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --and I'm  
20 trying to make a point here because I think when  
21 we get into the debate about modernizing and  
22 underutilization and trying to make our centers  
23 more attractive, I would argue that our centers  
24 are over-utilized today, given that financial  
25 crunch that we find ourselves in and that centers

1

2 have--despite the disagreements or not about the  
3 RFP, understand the need to step up to provide  
4 better services and our centers have already done  
5 that in light of this conversation. So--

6 CARYN RESNICK: I can tell you that  
7 that's not the case 'cause we have just--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [Interposing]  
9 They haven't stepped up?

10 CARYN RESNICK: Oh no, excuse me,  
11 I'm arguing with the point that they're now over-  
12 utilized--

13 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: The number,  
14 okay.

15 CARYN RESNICK: --they absolutely  
16 are not, we are still underutilized.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. So we  
18 will look at the numbers that I know the staff has  
19 been trying to get from DFTA and we'll draw our  
20 own conclusion from that. One of the things that  
21 many of our advocates have proposed to us as an  
22 alternative is instead of taking every single  
23 center and putting it into this RFP, why not RFP  
24 the ones whose contracts are up for renewal and  
25 use those areas or those centers or those

1  
2 communities or--as a test for how possibly the  
3 response will be to the RFP given all of the  
4 factors that have to be considered when an RFP  
5 will be deemed competitive: physical structure of  
6 the center, do they have the square footage  
7 necessary to provide the services that's mandated  
8 under the RFP, the issue of rent or don't pay  
9 rent. There's a debate between NYCHA and DFTA  
10 about whether NYCHA is--will be expecting to  
11 receive rent from providers that are housed in  
12 NYCHA facilities, the Chairman of the New York  
13 City Housing Authority testified that NYCHA is  
14 expecting revenue from DFTA-funded centers, the  
15 Commissioner last week said, no that's not the  
16 case, so what's the deal?

17 CARYN RESNICK: It's still my  
18 understanding that, no, we are not expected to pay  
19 rent in the senior center programs. And, again,  
20 just to clarify, it happens to be that all of the  
21 portfolio of senior centers has come to the end of  
22 their contracts and so, in order to move forward  
23 with any of the contracting, we must at this point  
24 RFP the entire portfolio. All of the extensions  
25 have all run out.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Was that done  
3 deliberately or is--what happened?

4 [Pause]

5 CARYN RESNICK: No, not done  
6 deliberately, these are contracts that were signed  
7 years ago, there were renewals and at some point  
8 there's no further--you can't renew without re-  
9 RFPing.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: But I know that  
11 historically DFTA RFPd by community districts and  
12 they were staggered, not every community district  
13 was RFPd at the same time. What happened that  
14 they're all due now?

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: As far as I know,  
17 this was just the natural course of events that  
18 the term limits have expired on those contracts.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. So one  
20 other piece of information that I'd like to add to  
21 the list of information that we want to get from  
22 the agency is, if you can give us a chronology of  
23 center contracts or program contracts when they  
24 were awarded, when they expired, extensions, if  
25 any, to any of those, that would be helpful

1  
2 because based on my history and community work in  
3 the South Bronx, I know that every three years  
4 there was an RFP for Community Boards 1, 2, and a  
5 few others, that the providers usually ended up  
6 being the same ones for whatever the reason, but  
7 they were never RFPd with anybody else across the  
8 city, except for some other communities in other  
9 boroughs. So I--it just confusing to me how RFPs  
10 go out in a staggered fashion all come due at the  
11 same time, those contracts, it's just hard for me  
12 to understand, so if you can provide that  
13 information, that would be helpful. Could you  
14 tell us what \$117 million consists of? Where is  
15 the money coming from? Can you give us a line  
16 item of what the 117 million consists of? [Pause]  
17 City Council funding, Borough Presidents, what?

18 CARYN RESNICK: I don't have a  
19 breakdown of the 117 million, but, yes, it  
20 includes all of the funding that has continued to  
21 support senior centers, I believe that's about 94,  
22 \$95 million and the BP money and City Council  
23 money and I'd have to get you a breakdown--

24 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay.

25 CARYN RESNICK: --I don't have a

1

2 dollar breakdown.

3

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So that we  
4 won't continue to argue about whether it's 16.3 or  
5 15 or whatever that number that has been kicked  
6 around. [Pause] There is 15 to 30 hubs written  
7 into the RFP, do we have the infrastructure to  
8 have 15 to 30 hubs in the city? I mean in terms  
9 of in communities, do you know what--how many per  
10 community per borough, where is it likely that  
11 these hub would be located, understanding your  
12 network of providers now, or have you done an  
13 analysis of the real estate available in the city  
14 and know that for a fact you will be able to  
15 create these hubs?

16

[Pause]

17

CARYN RESNICK: Again, it's the  
18 proposers that have to propose a sited location,  
19 we're not out scouting the sites and locations  
20 and, I think quite sadly because of the economy at  
21 the moment, there is going to be more real estate  
22 available at lesser cost than had been the case  
23 over the last decades.

24

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So since you're  
25 relying on proposers, [pause] what happens if we

1  
2 ultimately end up with very few proposals in  
3 communities that currently have a number of senior  
4 centers--I know my district has a number, I  
5 probably have the most housing--New York City  
6 Housing developments in the city, located in the  
7 district--but what happens if at the end of the  
8 process--are we listening, Commissioner?

9 [Off mic]

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. What  
11 happens is if, at the end of the RFP, you find  
12 that you have not received responses that will  
13 enable you to create a richer network than the one  
14 that we have now?

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: It's not our  
17 expectation that that would occur, but, of course,  
18 there would always be the right to re-RFP if  
19 there's a neighborhood or one of the districts for  
20 which there has not been a response.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And what would  
22 be the process that you follow for that?

23 CARYN RESNICK: We'd actually put it  
24 back out to bid again on the street and look for  
25 additional solicitations.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So does that  
3 mean that you don't grant to any contracts or you  
4 hold off your contracting process until you are  
5 satisfied that you have a network that will--

6 CARYN RESNICK: [Interposing] No, I  
7 believe [crosstalk]--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --ensure that  
9 we don't lose services in the communities?

10 CARYN RESNICK: --I believe we would  
11 move forward with the contracts that are won and  
12 then whatever particular community or district  
13 where there was not a bid, then we would just re-  
14 open that up. No, we would not stop the rest of  
15 the contracting process.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So, as an  
17 example, would Council Member Mealy know that in  
18 her district there is an absence of respondents  
19 and a problem with identifying providers for  
20 service sites, etc.?

21 CARYN RESNICK: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So walk me  
23 through that process, how do you anticipate that  
24 would happen? The information process.

25 CARYN RESNICK: It would happen very

1  
2 much I think the way in which it happens now,  
3 which is we always reach out when we know that  
4 there's an issue, currently if there's a problem  
5 with a provider or a site needs to be relocated  
6 for emergency reasons and we would work together  
7 and we would re-issue a bid and encourage  
8 solicitations from the community.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And in the  
10 meantime, does that center in Council Member  
11 Mealy's district continue to operate? Do they get  
12 an extension of their existing contract? And I'm  
13 sorry, Darlene, that I'm using you as the example.

14 [Off mic]

15 [Pause]

16 CARYN RESNICK: I think we have to  
17 get back to you, I don't know the answer to that  
18 question.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: You see, Deputy  
20 Commissioner, as much as I and truly respect you  
21 and your professionalism, that--therein lies the  
22 heart of the matter in that you are not sure about  
23 a great many things that can result from this RFP  
24 and because we know that you don't have all the  
25 answers and there are too many unknowns, in the

1  
2 climate that we find ourselves in, we continue to  
3 request that DFTA pull this RFP, allow our city  
4 and our economy to go through the natural course  
5 of things that happen when we find ourselves in  
6 these difficult times. Help the centers that  
7 currently operate improve their service, if they  
8 are lacking in some way, pull the RFP, let's go  
9 through a process of allowing these centers with  
10 technical assistance and whatever other support  
11 they may need to raise the bar, not only on  
12 themselves, but to ensure that we, individually  
13 and collectively, can hold them accountable for  
14 the services that we're expecting they provide to  
15 our seniors and engage in this conversation at a  
16 point where we're in a better financial situation  
17 and we have a clearer understanding of what some  
18 of these--or a better answers to the questions  
19 that we've posed. I would also like to mention  
20 we've been joined by Council Member Inez Dickens,  
21 I know Council Member Dickens came in, would you  
22 have any questions, Council Member?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I apologize  
24 for my lateness, but I had another hearing on  
25 health that I had to attend, Madam Chair.

1  
2 Commissioner, thank you for your testimony, but we  
3 are very unhappy with the RFP process. Our  
4 communities will not be served properly if our  
5 centers are closed and hubs are allowed to take  
6 over. The hubs may or may not know the diversity  
7 that's within any of the communities, they will  
8 not serve us properly because of the lack of  
9 knowledge that they will have, it's a learning  
10 curve for them. And during a time when,  
11 economically, this city is in really bad straits I  
12 think that this is not the time for us to make a  
13 change when our seniors need the nutrition that  
14 they can currently get, the exercise--everything  
15 that they can get from their centers, to have a  
16 hub and ask them to travel to, depending upon  
17 where that hub is located, how far will they have  
18 to travel, how that will impact upon their  
19 mobility and their nutrition. And the fact that  
20 putting a hub in means that they--those  
21 relationships that they have cultivated currently  
22 will be adversely impacted because they will be  
23 meeting new people and right now my seniors--  
24 everybody here that attends a center regularly, if  
25 they don't show up somebody comes looking for

1  
2 them, wants to know where they are. And that's  
3 going to be woefully lacking for a great deal of  
4 time if there's a hub allowed. So we're having  
5 these hearings, but I'm imploring you, I'm begging  
6 that you reconsider and recall this RFP and let us  
7 work together to determine what is best for the  
8 citizens of this great city so that we can move  
9 forward in these very dire economic times. But  
10 together so that those that will be impacted the  
11 most, these seniors right here in this room, will  
12 have the protection and know that they have the  
13 protection of the city in which they live and that  
14 they have worked all their lives. Thank you.

15 [Pause]

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
17 Council Member Dickens. Deputy Commissioner, I  
18 would hope that--I'm sure you will--convey a very  
19 strong sentiment to the Commissioner my personal  
20 disappointment in him, our collective  
21 disappointment in him, as Commissioner for not  
22 being present at this hearing today. Thank you  
23 for your testimony and we look forward to  
24 discussions on Monday regarding the proposed  
25 budget cuts, which we have not even talked about

1

2 today. Thank you.

2

3

CARYN RESNICK: Thank you.

4

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And now I'd

5

like to call up our Borough Presidents, I have

6

sign-in slips for two and I think there's a third

7

in the room that I saw standing in the back, yeah,

8

there he goes. We have Borough President Marty

9

Markowitz from Brooklyn, we have Helen Marshall

10

from Queens, we have Scott Stringer from

11

Manhattan, and I know that we have representatives

12

here from other offices who will be called up in

13

the next panel, but I know that we have testimony

14

for the record from Council Member--former Council

15

Member Borough President from the Bronx, Adolfo

16

Carrion, and--I don't know who else is here?

17

Okay. So thank you again for being here and

18

joining us in this discussion. Again, I apologize

19

for the wait, but we are so happy to see you here.

20

You can flip a coin, be cavalier and let ladies

21

first, or she may want to prove a point and let

22

one of you guys do the talking first.

23

[Pause]

24

HELEN MARSHALL: Thank you very

25

much, Chair Arroyo and also to Co-Chair Vecca,

1

2 Vacca?

3

[Off mic]

4

5 HELEN MARSHALL: Vacca, and I'd like  
6 to--and, of course, Speaker Quinn, who was here  
7 earlier and to all the members of the Committee,  
8 absolutely, and many people might not know, but  
9 everyone sitting here was not on this committee,  
10 but I saw 10 to 12 additional council people come  
11 to this because they are concerned about it. Many  
12 of them have gone on because they said their  
13 peace, but they came voluntarily and they have  
14 other things to do, I know, and I certainly, and  
15 so do my colleagues have other things to do, but  
16 there could be nothing more important than the  
17 care of our seniors, our most helpless population.  
18 [Pause] So thank you very much. Okay. This is  
19 the third [pause] this is the third time in less  
20 than one year that I have come before you to  
21 testify against--

21

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

22

23

24

25

HELEN MARSHALL: --a RFP released by  
DFTA. This is the last of three steps launched by  
DFTA to totally dismantle the entire senior  
citizens delivery system in the city of New York.

1  
2 In the new RFP, DFTA indicates that requirements  
3 for program space that necessitate the use of  
4 classrooms and it clearly states that no funding  
5 will be available to lease escalations, expenses  
6 for building renovations, or major long-term  
7 equipment. That burden will have to be borne by  
8 the local senior center organization, which is  
9 awarded the contract. During these very difficult  
10 fiscal times, it is irresponsible for DFTA to  
11 shift this burden on nonprofit community-based  
12 organizations. The administration has  
13 acknowledged that, due to this modernization  
14 process, approximately 85 senior centers citywide  
15 would be forced to close, yet they persist. The  
16 November plan includes the elimination of Social  
17 Adult Day Care programs, elder abuse prevention,  
18 and many other support services. That means that  
19 people who have dementia, people who are  
20 physically frail will not be able to get their  
21 services, which is really--that's essential for  
22 their survival, that's a problem. [Pause] How  
23 will all these seniors access the services they so  
24 desperately need? You can't have a senior program  
25 without transportation, and I want to tell you

1  
2 from the time that I was in the assembly and sat  
3 where you are in the City Council, it is us who  
4 have provided the transportation--to backup the  
5 transportation system for our seniors. And  
6 there's not going to be any more money, right now  
7 we're paying their insurance, we're paying for  
8 their drivers, we're paying for their gasoline--  
9 where will that money come from? By the year  
10 2030, one-fifth of New York City's population will  
11 be 60 years of age and older, with seniors  
12 outnumbering school-age children. These  
13 demographics undoubtedly call for change,  
14 expansion, and renovation. However, we have not  
15 been sleeping at the helm. Neither myself nor my-  
16 -the Borough President who preceded me, and all of  
17 the Borough Presidents that are sitting here right  
18 now. We have always been creative in how we  
19 handle our senior citizens to meet their needs.  
20 We have DFTA--I'm sorry, we have QICA, which is  
21 Queens Interagency Council on Aging. Once a  
22 month, all of the senior citizen directors of our  
23 programs get together, they're interesting topics,  
24 we always invite the Commissioner, he comes from  
25 time to time, but most of the time it's his Deputy

1  
2 Commissioner, Mrs. Resnick, who comes--and I do  
3 feel badly, she is the messenger, but she must  
4 say, you know, and so she's upholding her part of  
5 the bargain. Like all city services, continual  
6 improvement should be the goal. The destruction  
7 of the systems--of this system is not the answer.  
8 It is totally reckless and irresponsible for DFTA  
9 to proceed with this RFP while case management  
10 services and Meals on Wheels program are in such  
11 turmoil. Now that's what preceded this. Now good  
12 planning would say, let's deal with one at a time,  
13 and let's not rush it into a month or two months  
14 or three months, let's really sit down and decide  
15 what we really want to do--that's good planning  
16 and we should be doing that with everything that  
17 we do when we treat the public, that's our  
18 responsibility. [Pause] Now [pause] the Meals on  
19 Wheel contractors are being nicked and dime to  
20 death as they try to negotiate the new contracts  
21 with DFTA. Not to mention the fact that the  
22 regions for the new Meals on Wheels contracts have  
23 been deliberately configured to make it  
24 logistically impossible for community-based  
25 organizations to deliver hot meals on a daily

1  
2 basis. Why? Because right now, they just have  
3 enough to deal with the people who they're  
4 serving, okay? And if you're going to now enlarge  
5 it--only a commercial vendor could possibly meet  
6 it, and when it gets that big--this is one thing  
7 that should not be mega. Right now, each of our  
8 centers has a good source for their hot meals,  
9 Meals on Wheels for people, although that's not  
10 the debate today, but it adds to the whole misery  
11 of this whole proposal. They are getting food  
12 very often--and I represent one of the most  
13 ethnically diverse counties in the world--right  
14 now people are getting healthy meals and meals  
15 that they will eat, and that's very important.  
16 And, of course, I have always been concerned about  
17 frozen meals and even the meals that they do  
18 receive that are not frozen, they will--they were  
19 frozen meals which were once--they were frozen  
20 meals that prepared before and had to be defrosted  
21 for them to eat to be delivered. As you know,  
22 every Meals on Wheels client will receive the same  
23 meal, and even if they are lucky enough to get a  
24 hot meal every day, again, it will be flash frozen  
25 meal reheated. So I ask, where is the choice that

1  
2 DFTA keeps talking about? What happens to the  
3 human lifeline that so many of our seniors rely  
4 on? In the senior center RFP, DFTA mandates that  
5 services be designated to accommodate an ethnic-  
6 diverse membership, yet no accommodations were  
7 made to deliver meals that would appeal to multi-  
8 ethnic population. I really had a major battle  
9 with the Commissioner because he wanted to do this  
10 once a week, meals delivery of frozen meals and I  
11 said, please don't bring it across the board, many  
12 seniors cannot--they cannot operate microwaves and  
13 many of them don't even have them. Therefore, I  
14 join Speaker Quinn and the City Council in seeking  
15 a delay of the modernization plan. We are all  
16 willing to work with the administration in  
17 providing the best services and programs in our  
18 cities--to our city's older resident, but it needs  
19 to be done with a rational, logical process, not  
20 in a rush to meet a time restricted deadline that  
21 has nothing to do with the provision of services.  
22 There were some things that I heard today, which  
23 are not--I'm responding to, how can you not  
24 predict an outcome when you're developing a  
25 totally new model is ridiculous. I mean, we've

1  
2 all done that, we know what to do. You have to  
3 first of all, you don't just do it to be doing it,  
4 it has to have a predictive ending and a benefit  
5 to the structure. So I found that very difficult  
6 to accept. As a legislator before us that is  
7 required--that you're asking for today, how  
8 terrible it would be to give the senior centers a  
9 30 day notice. Do you know what it means to  
10 change the lives of seniors? They have become  
11 accustomed to coming to a certain place, they know  
12 how to get there, they have--their plans have been  
13 laid out and they've been worked out in their  
14 minds and also by the agencies or the centers that  
15 they go to, you can't just tell them in a month,  
16 it's not going to be that's impossible. Okay.  
17 And lastly, I would like to say about Commissioner  
18 Mendez-Santiago. He had a professional and human  
19 responsibility to be here for this major  
20 reorganization. This is going to be how we are  
21 going to treat our seniors for God knows how long.  
22 These seniors are whose shoulders we stand on, how  
23 in the world can we just treat them like this?  
24 You see this audience today and they were all up  
25 in the balconies and they were there, they had to

1  
2 leave because the only way they could probably get  
3 here is by coming by bus, and I could tell you, I-  
4 -to think that we have been sleeping at the wheel  
5 is wrong. We have some--I brought all of my  
6 senior citizen center directors and all my  
7 cultural center directors together to see if we  
8 couldn't get seniors to fill those hours when  
9 those school children are there and when the  
10 general public is not there. Well they loved the  
11 idea and it has been put in position and it's  
12 actually going on now. We brought all of our  
13 senior centers together because some were paying  
14 one kind of insurance for their units and others  
15 were paying, you know, the--advance and so on.  
16 They got together and worked and looked at the  
17 lowest denominator, the lowest figure that was  
18 there and decide to go after that. Those are  
19 things--I mean, we must not, you know, everything  
20 can't come from one source, everything can't come  
21 from one source. Over the years I remember when  
22 we didn't have senior centers and certainly I  
23 remember when we didn't have community boards and  
24 all these other things that bring the government  
25 to the people and there's nothing more that brings

1  
2 the government to the people that are senior  
3 centers. So I truly support your legislation  
4 today and I also say that this--that we--we need  
5 to also hold back on this RFP, actually all the  
6 borough presidents have been asking for a special  
7 meeting on this, okay? We have not been granted  
8 it. And I heard today so many questions that were  
9 put to the deputy bureau--the Deputy Commissioner  
10 that were not answered, that were not answered.  
11 Numbers that you asked were numbers should have  
12 been--you should've had the numbers before--I was  
13 a Chair of the--I was Chair of the Higher Ed  
14 Committee, I had the numbers. When the Chancellor  
15 came, he had all the numbers that he thought I  
16 might ask, and that's the responsibility of a  
17 Commissioner, but certainly Commissioner Mendez,  
18 if he had to crawl here, he should have been here.  
19 Thank you very much. Okay.

20 [Off mic]

21 SCOTT STRINGER: Good afternoon. I  
22 want to thank Chairperson Arroyo and Chairperson  
23 Vacca, members of the Committee for not just  
24 holding this hearing, but also staying with this  
25 very important issue New York City's seniors owe

1  
2 you a debt of gratitude. I'm here today to submit  
3 formal testimony to you and then just to have a  
4 conversation a little bit about this issue and  
5 following up on what Borough President Marshall  
6 talked about, I do want to mention two things at  
7 the outset. First of all, the notion that the  
8 Commissioner can't be here today to talk about his  
9 plan shows me that this modernization is not his  
10 plan, it's coming out of city hall, and it's  
11 coming from bureaucrats that have nothing to do  
12 with, Madam Borough President--

13 [Off mic]

14 SCOTT STRINGER: --because otherwise  
15 he should be here proud to talk about a  
16 modernization. The fact that he's not here is  
17 they probably haven't told him how to deal with  
18 this and I feel bad for him because he's  
19 contributed to this city in many positive ways.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [Interposing]  
21 Mr. President, if you would identify yourself for  
22 the record.

23 SCOTT STRINGER: Oh, Scott Stringer,  
24 Borough President of Manhattan. Thank you. We  
25 recognize that by 2030 seniors will be 20% of our

1  
2 city's residents, 60--20% will be over 60 years  
3 old, including myself, so I think it's therefore  
4 critical that we strengthen the infrastructure and  
5 the programs and also recognize that we have to  
6 change the way we deliver senior services,  
7 longevity is now the key for the senior citizens  
8 of today. Of course they're not going to look  
9 like the senior centers of tomorrow, nor should  
10 they, change is sometimes difficult, but  
11 inevitable and can be very exciting. And clearly  
12 the seniors that I know today are engaged in  
13 computer literacy and higher learning and it's not  
14 just about meals and coming to a center and  
15 leaving, there is a whole lot to look forward to  
16 as people are living longer. But I am now  
17 convinced, having talked to providers and  
18 advocates and, most importantly, seniors, that  
19 this modernization is not about that, it's not  
20 about the seniors of tomorrow and the future, it's  
21 about a agenda that talks about downsizing, it's  
22 when Macy's merges with Bloomingdale's, we don't  
23 create more jobs, we shrink more jobs. That's  
24 exactly what's going on here, shrink the senior  
25 centers down to the privileged few in the

1  
2 neighborhoods that can support these kind of  
3 centers. This is about creating jobs for grant  
4 writers and bureaucrats to sort of recognize that  
5 it's not about the social workers and the day-to-  
6 day workers of the centers in the poorest  
7 neighborhoods in some of the remote neighborhoods  
8 of the city, but it's really about creating a  
9 bigger business. And the problem with that, is  
10 that, while some may very well benefit from a  
11 modernization that speaks to the resources  
12 necessary to access those RFPs, there's going to  
13 be a whole lot of communities who are going to be  
14 left behind and that does not speak to what DFTA  
15 and what the city is supposed to be about. A lot  
16 of people have been mentioning the Borough  
17 Presidents' money, I'm here to tell you, this is  
18 not the Borough Presidents' money--

19 FEMALE VOICE: It's the people--

20 SCOTT STRINGER: --this is the  
21 taxpayers' money, this is the seniors' money, and  
22 I--and if someone else can spend it better, that's  
23 fine with me, but don't swallow up millions of  
24 dollars to create a larger bureaucracy, use that  
25 money for meals, services, for staffing, and to

1  
2 get things going. So from here on it's not BP  
3 money, people's money spend it as if you represent  
4 the people, don't take it and tell me after we've  
5 made allocations some nonsense about having to  
6 reconfigure everything and leave the poorest  
7 senior centers hanging in the balance--that's what  
8 I'm mad at, that we can't give people an answer.  
9 A \$5,000 grant means keeping that senior program  
10 going and they're not doing that and look what's  
11 happening in this city right now. So I want to  
12 make that point clear. The second thing I want to  
13 just talk about is, Council Member Jackson talked  
14 today about, you know, you know, our money and  
15 when did we--you know, what meetings did they have  
16 with the Borough Presidents, I want to tell you, I  
17 had one meeting with Deputy Mayor Gibbs to talk  
18 about this, okay? It lasted about 17 minutes and  
19 at that time I said I'm open to anything the  
20 administration wants to talk about, modernization  
21 and change, I didn't go in there and shove a sign  
22 up and say no way, I said come back to me, talk to  
23 me, let's go to the senior centers, let's figure  
24 it out. The next conversation I had was with the  
25 DFTA Commissioner who talked to me about there's

1  
2 going to be no money for the centers. That's not  
3 collaboration, that's not participation. They had  
4 this plan and their hope was to ignore our offices  
5 and the Council and all of this. So, Council  
6 Members, I want to be forthcoming and tell you  
7 that this is a total disregard, not of us, but of  
8 the people that we all collectively represent. I  
9 don't know what David Stockman Reaganomics they  
10 want to practice and experiment on our seniors,  
11 but I have a sense that if they get away with this  
12 for seniors, they're now going to do this for  
13 youth programs, and then they're going to do this  
14 the next time. So it's not just about protecting  
15 the seniors, but it's the way we govern to protect  
16 all the people. So I did not have long  
17 conversations. There has been an effort by the  
18 borough presidents to meet with the Mayor  
19 directly, not as bureaucrats, and I hope that he  
20 will meet with us because we have a lot to tell  
21 him about what's going on in the administration  
22 that relates modernization--we want to meet. You  
23 know, one of the things that I remember being in  
24 the assembly was how shocked I was with a mayor  
25 from a different era during the Diallo shootings

1  
2 and whatever, never met with people for years  
3 until a tragedy happened and I remember my  
4 predecessor Virginia Fields meeting with the mayor  
5 once over a five or six year period and then  
6 suddenly everyone wanted to meet with her when a  
7 crisis happened. We are an economic crisis,  
8 collectively, we should be meeting all the time,  
9 we should be coming and working together, that's  
10 how we're going to get out of this crisis. So I  
11 hope the Mayor is listening, I hope they set up  
12 meetings, both collectively and individually, what  
13 better way to spend time sharing ideas, listening  
14 to arguments, and at the end of the day, if we are  
15 wrong, we'll say we're wrong or we'll compromise  
16 or we'll figure something out. But this is not  
17 the way to govern in a fiscal crisis and if you  
18 look back to the 1970s when there were different  
19 players here, Hugh Carey, Gotbaum, Shanker, the  
20 people who were the architects of the rebirth of  
21 this city, it was about collaboration and being  
22 collective. And we're going to have to work with  
23 the State, House, and the City people to do that  
24 and this modernization, the way it is operating  
25 right now is being dictated by bureaucrats who

1  
2 have not spent time in our senior centers and have  
3 not spent time in our communities. So I want to  
4 just leave you with just a couple questions I hope  
5 you'll answer and I commend the Council and the  
6 Speaker for taking this on in a real way. One,  
7 DFTA must convince me that centers will remain--  
8 that centers will maintain core services--you all  
9 know what that means. Two, I want DFTA to inform  
10 the public which senior centers up front they will  
11 close and ensure adequate geographic coverage if  
12 this were to move on. Three, DFTA must consider  
13 transportation services, as the Borough President  
14 talked about, what she does in her borough, DFTA  
15 must maintain culturally appropriate services--  
16 funny how that never seems to come up right? DFTA  
17 must preserve social networks amidst the senior  
18 center closures, anyone who's ever been in a  
19 senior center knows that the relationship with the  
20 providers and the people is almost a second family  
21 and for many people it's a first family. And,  
22 finally, DFTA must support senior center  
23 management and staff in transition. None of these  
24 questions have been answered and I could go on and  
25 on, but I won't because I know you have a long

1  
2 agenda. Please listen to what we have to say and  
3 make this the line in the sand. This is a battle  
4 worth fighting because all these people in the  
5 audience have given so much of their lives through  
6 so many difficult situations, we should never put  
7 them in harm's way or jeopardy, they're too  
8 important to mess with. Thank you very much.

9 MARTY MARKOWITZ: Thank you, Scott.  
10 Thank you very, very much, I'm Marty Markowitz,  
11 Borough President of Brooklyn and thank you for  
12 inviting me today, Madam Chair and members of the  
13 Committee on Aging. I come before you today not  
14 only as Borough President, but some of you may not  
15 know that before I became Borough President,  
16 before I became a state senator, I founded and was  
17 president of a senior citizens center when I was  
18 only 26 years of age. In fact, that senior center  
19 joins us today, Lenore Friedman and the Senior  
20 League of Flatbush are here. Three years ago, to  
21 show you how fast it goes, Madam Chair, I became a  
22 member of the center I organized when I was 26.  
23 When I heard the Deputy Commissioner talk about  
24 demographics, I'm the demographic, at 63, I'm the  
25 demographic, not over 65 yet, but I can feel it

1 very close and anyone 55 and older are the  
2 demographics they're referring to. With the  
3 benefit of that experience, I can say that this  
4 RFP must be put on hold period. Don't mistake me,  
5 there are a number of good ideas, wellness  
6 certainly is a good thing, physical and mental for  
7 sure, staying active and engaged is essential for  
8 our seniors to stave off the negative effects of  
9 aging, but this RFP does not add any new funding  
10 to accomplish these goals. Instead, they have a  
11 brilliant idea and that is take the discretionary  
12 money from the Borough Presidents and, by the way,  
13 not just us how about you too--the City Council as  
14 well and call that an increase. And why? So they  
15 think they can make all the decisions, and that's  
16 what their objective is, because they think they  
17 know what's best for us, what's best for our  
18 seniors--in fact, they think that they know what's  
19 best for everybody. Unfortunately, they're not  
20 listening to the specialists in the field who have  
21 the real expertise, many of them were here at your  
22 hearing today and are here now. Borough  
23 Presidents know our districts, our boroughs; City  
24 Council Members know their districts very well.  
25

1  
2 We should have the right to appropriate funding to  
3 those senior centers that we know best address the  
4 concerns of the seniors in the areas we represent.  
5 Everything should not be centrally planned out by  
6 the Mayor's office directly. Now this plan may  
7 actually lead to closing of senior centers--we  
8 know that. New York currently has 329 centers,  
9 one-third of them are in Brooklyn, but given the  
10 level of funding in this plan, as few as 240  
11 centers could be funded. That means 89 centers  
12 could possibly be closed and that's why I support  
13 Council Member Vacca's bill to require 60 days  
14 public notice before any senior center is closed--  
15 thank you for that bill. Of course there are  
16 other concerns. As I said, the RFP sounds good,  
17 to some, but the devil's in the details. The  
18 providers in Brooklyn are worried about the heavy  
19 emphasis on health and wellness programs--don't  
20 get me wrong, I said before, wellness programs are  
21 great, but not at the expense of funding the  
22 basics, like transportation and case work services  
23 and meals. Now rather than look upon putting in  
24 our senior centers new equipment and everything  
25 else, seems to me that New York City has many gyms

1  
2 and Ys all over our city. Rather than making  
3 senior centers go through the expense of renting  
4 additional space, buying equipment, training  
5 staff, the city should negotiate discounts with  
6 private gyms and Ys, after all the hours of the  
7 day when gyms are at their slowest are exactly the  
8 hours in which the seniors would be most likely to  
9 use them. Providers are worried about the time  
10 and expense that will be required to document  
11 their wellness programs for DFTA. One of the  
12 evidence-based programs named in the RFP, for  
13 instance, cost thousands of dollars to implement.  
14 Providers are also worried that meals are given  
15 short shrift in this plan. Given the current  
16 economy, more and more seniors depend upon the  
17 nutritious home-cooked meals prepared at senior  
18 centers. Some providers are worried that their  
19 current spaces won't be big enough for all the new  
20 required programs. Centers in poorer  
21 neighborhoods are worried about fund-raising  
22 requirements. And other centers still have three  
23 or four years left on their contract, but they are  
24 being forced to bid again and if they don't win  
25 the contract, will still be liable for three or

1  
2 four years of rent. Bigger centers are worried  
3 that DFTA is only planning to fund 15 to 25 senior  
4 hubs, even though many centers than that would  
5 make excellent hubs. They fear that the RFP pits  
6 good programs against good programs. If there are  
7 three or four potential hubs in the area and only  
8 one is chosen, will the others have to downsize,  
9 which means if they're currently serving 125 meals  
10 will they now be forced to only serve 75 meals?  
11 Now you can say these fears are overblown, but  
12 what if they're not? We won't know until the new  
13 contracts have been awarded and then it will be  
14 too late. Personally, I tend to believe the  
15 senior providers. They have hands-on experience  
16 running centers, they can see where the pitfalls  
17 may lie, and when DFTA reorganized case  
18 management, it too sounded good, didn't it? At  
19 least to them. But the providers warned the  
20 problems and, sure enough, we have waiting list,  
21 delays, caseloads that have been doubled, and a  
22 host of other problems. One Brooklyn case  
23 management agency has found itself with a caseload  
24 nearly twice as big as expected. The agency bid  
25 on a contract to serve 700 seniors--guess what,

1  
2 ended up serving 1,300. DFTA has said  
3 essentially, too bad, you have to serve them and,  
4 sorry, but we don't have any more funding to share  
5 with you. Now DFTA has reorganized the delivery  
6 of Meals on Wheels and we'll soon find out how  
7 well that works. There may be a few kinks or  
8 there may be big problems, but we won't know until  
9 the new contract get going. And now before the  
10 case management issues are solved, before the  
11 Meals on Wheels issues appear and can be solved,  
12 this administration wants to reorganize yet  
13 another part of the senior system. You know what  
14 we're saying? Forget about it--slow down, slow  
15 down. Term limits have been lifted, we can all,  
16 those of us that choose, can run again, the clock  
17 is not running quite the same way as it did a few  
18 weeks ago. There has got to be an end to this  
19 process, all this change for change sake--all to  
20 satisfy the wishes of a central planning zealot.  
21 We're tired of change for change sakes and those  
22 city administrators who believe they know what's  
23 best for us. Senior citizen are the backbone of  
24 our city and they deserve the best we can give  
25 them, especially in times of economic crisis. So

1  
2 I thank you for holding this hearing, I'm  
3 confident you'll communicate our concerns and  
4 yours to the appropriate Deputy Mayor and to DFTA-  
5 -let me say it again, to the appropriate Deputy  
6 Mayor. With so many other pressing issues facing  
7 this city, surely reorganization can wait for  
8 another day. That is why I'm calling on DFTA to  
9 rescind this RFP and to work with the senior  
10 providers, the City Council, the Borough  
11 Presidents, together we'll make good things  
12 happen. But for now, come on, we've got so many  
13 other issues so many pressing issues this city,  
14 this can wait for another day. Thank you very,  
15 very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
17 thank you very much, the three of you, for your  
18 testimony, for your partnership, and for your  
19 support on this issue. Council Member Vacca?

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I too want to  
21 say thank you. I do want to say two things to  
22 Borough President Markowitz, I do have to say that  
23 this is beyond the Deputy Mayor level. We need  
24 the intervention of the Mayor, we have spoken to  
25 the Deputy Mayor and she has proceeded in this

1  
2 manner. Secondly, I do want to say that the  
3 remarks of Caryn Resnick before were inconsistent,  
4 because she did state they have no intention of  
5 closing senior centers and that is a careful  
6 wording of a statement, but then she further  
7 stated that if a center serves 75 meals or less,  
8 there is no provision for them in the RFP, so  
9 therefore those centers will be closed--that's how  
10 I interpret it. There's no provision for you in  
11 the RFP, you serve less than 75 meals, you will be  
12 closed. So I too join in thanking all three of  
13 you for your patience, but we have rough days  
14 ahead. I hope we are victorious and I hope that  
15 this is withdrawn.

16 [Pause]

17 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,  
18 Council Member. Thank you. And, again, thank you  
19 for your patience and for waiting as long as you  
20 did.

21 [Off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: We have  
23 representatives for--from how many boroughs you  
24 have--five, right. Two of our borough presidents  
25 were not able to be with us, although they were

1 here during the press conference earlier. Lee  
2 Covino is here representing Jim Molinaro, who is  
3 the Borough President of Staten Island and I know  
4 that my Borough President has a rep here, Megan  
5 Lynch. Are you here? [Pause] Megan? [Pause]  
6 No, okay. We have his testimony for the record.  
7 We also have--what I'd like to do is bring up the  
8 representatives of other elected officials up on  
9 this panel as well. We have Molly Bidoff  
10 [phonetic], who is representing an Assemblymember  
11 Deborah Glick, and we have representatives from  
12 New York City Comptroller William Thompson's  
13 office here as well, if you can all come up. You  
14 can go through a process of selecting who is going  
15 to testify first, before you begin identify  
16 yourself for the record so I don't have to  
17 interject it after you've started your testimony,  
18 and I am going to turn this over to Council Member  
19 Vacca momentarily. I've been sitting here far too  
20 long, I need a break.

22 [Pause]

23 [Off mic]

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can we begin  
25 with the Borough President of Staten Island

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representative, please?

LEE COVINO: Thank you. Before we begin, I would just like to say my name is Lee Covino, I'm the Agency Chief Contracting Officer for Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro and for the record I did work for the Department for the Aging from 1985 'til 1990, when I came to the borough of Staten Island. Following is the Borough President's statement. Honorable Chairpersons, distinguished committee members, community advocates, service providers, and senior citizens from around the city, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of Intro 821-A and in opposition to DFTA's modernization plan for our senior centers. Simply put, today's fiscal crisis dictates that this is not the time to incur new initiative costs for modernization, nor any other such noble effort which would result in a net reduction to the existing services for our seniors. Given the startup costs alone, modernization plan would, in my opinion, ultimately result in a loss of programming from present-day levels. Add to that the current drop in city, state, and federal revenues and resulting

1 budget cuts and you have a recipe for disaster in  
2 serving our older adults in this city. Earlier  
3 this year, I was advised of DFTA's abrupt de-  
4 funding of five Staten Island Borough President  
5 senior programs. I was also made aware of the  
6 Commissioner's intent to de-fund the remaining 11  
7 Staten Island Borough President senior programs  
8 effective June 30th, 2009. These changes were  
9 made known to me only recently in a letter  
10 received by my office on September 25th, 2008,  
11 after the first quarter of the fiscal year was  
12 almost completed. Among the five programs which  
13 are prohibited from receiving BP funds this year  
14 are: Sea View Adult Day Care program, which is a  
15 health and hospitals corporation, we're already  
16 underserved by that--and this is for dementia  
17 patients, no warning. Also Staten Island  
18 Interagency Council for Aging, another long-term  
19 advocacy program. It should be noted that when  
20 the BP funding was first allocated well over a  
21 decade ago, DFTA advocated for establishing these  
22 IACs in each of the five boroughs, but now has de-  
23 funded all of them via the discontinuance of  
24 Borough Presidents' funding in the five boroughs.  
25

1  
2 Richmond Senior Services Project Home--Project  
3 Share, a minor repair program, also de-funded  
4 effective July 1st this year. Alzheimer's  
5 Foundation of Staten Island, which gives respite  
6 care for the families once in a while, just for a  
7 couple hours, very small program, de-funded July  
8 1st of this year. Central Family Life Center, a  
9 senior recreation program established only last  
10 year in a minority-based neighborhood, de-funded  
11 effective July 1st. Again, neither my office nor  
12 any of these programs were advised of these  
13 changes prior to the beginning of the fiscal year  
14 July 1st. As a result, none of the programs were  
15 able to plan for the orderly transition of  
16 services for their respective frail elderly  
17 service recipients. Now the remaining 11 DFTA  
18 programs that will no longer receive BP funding  
19 effective June 30th are: Community Agencies for  
20 Senior Citizens; a couple which runs a few senior  
21 centers; a transportation program; a Molinaro--the  
22 Dialysis Center; and also case management; CSS-  
23 RSVP Serve, a volunteer program; CYO Senior Guild  
24 Luncheon program; JCC Kosher Nutrition Program;  
25 Richmond Home Needs Home Care; Staten Island Meals

1  
2 on Wheels; and Community Services Friendship  
3 Clubs, which runs a Saturday program, that would  
4 all be de-funded June 30th. Richmond University  
5 Hospital, which runs a couple of other senior  
6 centers, also de-funded June 30th. It should be  
7 noted here that the Borough President  
8 discretionary funds in different amounts for all  
9 five boroughs were negotiated by the five BPs  
10 during the Board of Estimate era. For Staten  
11 Island, this was done in consultation with local  
12 senior services advocates, who developed a series  
13 of service enhancements for home care, congregate  
14 and home delivered meals, transportation and a  
15 host of other services where the borough was short  
16 on funding. Some of these services and  
17 enhancements have been transferred by the Borough  
18 President to different providers over the years  
19 when RFPs were awarded by DFTA. To date, DFTA has  
20 made no indication whether these enhanced services  
21 will continue at current levels under the new  
22 senior plan, nor whether these important funding  
23 dollars will even remain within the borough. The  
24 annual plan recently presented by DFTA is devoid  
25 of any of these implications, both for Staten

1  
2 Island and programs citywide. In addition to the  
3 services above, city's Housing Authority budget  
4 shortfall poses a threat to seven senior centers  
5 on Staten Island. While DFTA's modernization is  
6 built in part on the \$7.5 million in cuts to the  
7 five Borough Presidents, as well as about 11  
8 million in cuts to the City Council's  
9 discretionary funds, the existing dynamics of  
10 reduced tax revenues are also jeopardizing crucial  
11 services. DFTA's modernization also shifts  
12 services away from the traditional senior center  
13 model and emphasizes soft services, such as health  
14 and wellness, art, and quote unquote creative  
15 aging activities, at the possible expense of funds  
16 to operate existing centers at current levels,  
17 including transportation, casework, and meals. At  
18 the very least, the public should be advised that  
19 potential senior center closings and Intro 821-A  
20 would ensure that due notice and perhaps a fair  
21 hearing would be given in advance of such an  
22 unfortunate action. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Yes?

24 Our next speaker?

25 MOLLY BIDOL: Yes, hi. My name is

1 Molly Bidol, I am here representing Assemblymember  
2 Deborah Glick and following is her testimony. So  
3 thank you for the opportunity to testify before  
4 you today regarding the Request for Proposals for  
5 Congregate Programs for Older Adults. I  
6 appreciate that with this RFP, the city is trying  
7 to answer the questions of how to serve a rapidly  
8 growing senior population with increasingly scarce  
9 funding. Certainly, it is crucial that city  
10 agencies periodically evaluate and update content  
11 and delivery of services in order to adequately  
12 respond to community needs. However, proposed  
13 changes must allow senior centers the flexibility  
14 to meet local needs and ensure that current  
15 seniors continue to benefit from high-quality  
16 services, while the system adjusts slowly to meet  
17 the needs of future seniors. In this RFP, DFTA's  
18 plan to regionalize senior centers does not  
19 respond to the needs of New York City seniors.  
20 While I understand that DFTA's rationale for  
21 creating regions of service delivery is to  
22 increase efficiency, senior citizens do not  
23 constitute a homogenous group and rigid system-  
24 wide changes will make it difficult for providers  
25

1  
2 to deliver high-quality care that meets the  
3 particular needs of the seniors they serve. It is  
4 essential that individual senior centers are given  
5 the authority and flexibility to tailor their  
6 services to the diverse needs of individual  
7 seniors and the communities in which they reside.  
8 Centralizing services in a few large senior  
9 centers, known as hubs, while bringing in laudable  
10 health-related services, will largely serve  
11 seniors who live nearby. Closing local  
12 neighborhood senior centers will deprive seniors  
13 of access, as they are unlikely to travel any  
14 greater distance to attend a senior center. Older  
15 New Yorkers are a diverse population and need to  
16 feel comfortable attending a senior center that  
17 meets their cultural needs. The closing of  
18 neighborhood senior centers will result in more  
19 isolation for seniors as they lose important  
20 relationships and resources. Seniors are growing  
21 poorer during this economic crisis and some senior  
22 centers are reporting an increase in the elderly  
23 turning to senior centers for meals to stretch  
24 their limited food budget. And we must remember  
25 when we speak of the elderly, that we are

1  
2 disproportionately speaking of women. For many  
3 societal reasons, these elderly women have fewer  
4 resources in old age. As I have previously  
5 expressed in letters to DFTA and testimony before  
6 the City Council, I have serious reservations  
7 about DFTA's modernization plan. DFTA states that  
8 its modernization plan is aimed at strengthening  
9 and improving services, but it is clear to me and  
10 many others that the main impetus behind this  
11 modernization is cost savings. I appreciate the  
12 need to do more with less in times of economic  
13 downturn, but the city must recognize that  
14 efficiencies in human services have a very direct  
15 affect on individual lives in a way that achieving  
16 efficiencies in the corporate sector often does  
17 not. The reorganizing of senior centers will  
18 undoubtedly have substantial negative effects on  
19 the seniors of New York City. A one-size-fits-all  
20 approach to seniors may not meet the needs of each  
21 particular New York City community. New models of  
22 senior centers should be tried on a demonstration  
23 basis first to see what seniors want and what  
24 works. I encourage DFTA to reform senior centers  
25 in a way that is cognizant of how New York City

1  
2 seniors live their lives in the neighborhoods  
3 they've resided in for years. And for all these  
4 reasons, I urge DFTA to not move forward with the  
5 senior center RFP.

6 [Pause]

7 GLENN VON NOSTITZ: Yes, my name is  
8 Glenn von Nostitz, I'm Director of the--

9 [Off mic]

10 [Pause]

11 GLENN VON NOSTITZ: Go, okay, start  
12 that again. My name is Glenn von Nostitz and I'm  
13 Director of the Office of Policy Management in  
14 Controller Thompson's office. Chairpersons Arroyo  
15 and Vacca and members of the committee, thank you  
16 for the opportunity to testify today. Controller  
17 Thompson fully supports Intro 821-A. Senior  
18 centers are a lifeline for many of our city's most  
19 vulnerable citizens. It is essential that all  
20 community stakeholders have adequate time to  
21 review any decision to close a center and to  
22 explore available options to avoid any service  
23 disruption to seniors. Indeed, the Controller  
24 recommends that the bill include requirements for  
25 DFTA to hold a public meeting prior to any final

1  
2 closure decision. Furthermore, if a center must  
3 be closed, DFTA should be required to create a  
4 transition plan that guarantees seniors' continued  
5 access to comparable supports and programming  
6 offered by the discontinued center.

7 Unfortunately, it appears that under the RFP,  
8 Intro 821-A will be needed sooner, rather than  
9 later. DFTA itself projects as many as 89 centers  
10 could be forced to close and, of course, that's on  
11 page four, 15 hubs, 225 neighborhood centers is  
12 their low-end estimate, that would be 89 centers  
13 closed is 329. First, reasons for the concern  
14 here is the RFP imposes costly requirements that  
15 will likely exhaust the available funding, leaving  
16 some current centers without funds to continue  
17 operating. While the Controller applauds DFTA's  
18 decision to embrace the concept of healthy aging,  
19 a survey of 61 centers throughout our city by our  
20 office revealed that most centers have a long way  
21 to go before the RFP's mandates can be fulfilled.  
22 For example, while 90% of centers provide blood  
23 pressure screening, many fewer screen for other  
24 age-related conditions, such as hearing loss, it  
25 was about one-third of the centers screen for

1  
2 that; diabetes, 31% of the centers; glaucoma,  
3 about 40% of the centers. Also, most centers have  
4 limited health education programs. In our survey,  
5 only one center offered education about depression  
6 and only three offered glaucoma education  
7 programs. Only half had programs on diabetes.  
8 Center directors told our office that they  
9 absolutely want to provide additional health  
10 promotion services, but they need help in  
11 identifying and recruiting providers to perform  
12 additional health screenings and, more urgently  
13 than anything, they need funding for these  
14 services. While the RFP alludes to assistance  
15 from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,  
16 there are no details of how this will be  
17 accomplished. It appears that providers will have  
18 to pay for many of the start-up ongoing expenses  
19 associated with these added health and welfare  
20 services out of their contract funds. For  
21 example, all centers will need to obtain increased  
22 health screening capacity and more expansive  
23 education programming. To help fulfill the daily  
24 requirement for three health and wellness related  
25 activities, senior hubs must purchase one of two

1 evidence-based health programs selected by DFTA.  
2 These programs are costly and involve additional  
3 expenses related to staff training. Providers  
4 will also need to cover any transportation or rent  
5 costs, meet specific space requirements, purchase  
6 DFTA-mandated performance performing software,  
7 and, in the case of senior hubs, provide a  
8 computer lab, to cite a few examples of  
9 potentially expensive directives. Consequently,  
10 senior advocates believe that proposers will need  
11 the full \$500,00 for the neighborhood centers and  
12 one million for senior hubs to satisfy these and  
13 other new requirements. If all centers propose at  
14 these maximum levels and the overall funding  
15 remains at the projected \$117 million, there'll be  
16 insufficient money to retain the current 329  
17 centers. Using DFTA's ranges for the projected  
18 number of neighborhood centers and senior hubs it  
19 expects to award, the available funding would  
20 cover between 209 and 239 centers at these funding  
21 levels. At the same time as new requirements are  
22 being imposed, the level of funding for senior  
23 centers next year cannot be reliably determined or  
24 assured. The RFP pegs available funding at \$117  
25

1 million, however, it has been well reported and  
2 discussed here today that the additional funds  
3 represent City Council and Borough President  
4 allocations for senior services that have been  
5 redirected from the original purpose. Controller  
6 is very concerned that upwards of \$20 million in  
7 funding for these contracts may not be available  
8 on a consistent basis. At \$500,000 per  
9 neighborhood center, this would represent up to 40  
10 centers whose ongoing funding may be vulnerable in  
11 the future. We must ask ourselves what the  
12 outcome could be if DFTA continues along its  
13 proposed plan for revamping senior centers. Given  
14 the complex proposal requirements, as well as  
15 actual changes to daily operations for successful  
16 bidders, some of which I described earlier, it is  
17 the smaller centers, those serving recent  
18 immigrants or other niche communities, that may  
19 face the greatest hurdles in competing  
20 successfully. These smaller centers are forced to  
21 close, what will become of the seniors who rely on  
22 them for meals, socialization, and assistance?  
23 Many of them, especially the oldest and frailest,  
24 will find it difficult to travel to a new center  
25

1  
2 that is farther away, if transportation is even  
3 available. Others who thrive on familiarity and  
4 routine, may find the new faces and new approach  
5 unwelcome and unappealing. By electing to impose  
6 a top-down, highly prescriptive approach to center  
7 modernization quote unquote, DFTA risks alienating  
8 and isolating seniors who depend heavily on their  
9 local centers. We have other unanswered questions  
10 which time does not permit me to cover today. For  
11 that reason, the Controller has laid out his  
12 concerns in greater detail in a letter to  
13 Commissioner Mendez. The Controller asks that if  
14 the concerns raised in this letter are not  
15 addressed thoroughly and in an adequate timeframe,  
16 the Department withdraw the RFP and reissue at a  
17 further date with all appropriate modifications.  
18 Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear  
19 here today.

20 [Pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I would like to  
22 see the survey you alluded to about--

23 GLENN VON NOSTITZ: Sure

24 [crosstalk]--

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --if you could

1

2 send me a copy--

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4

GLENN VON NOSTITZ: Sure, sure,  
yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --I appreciate,  
and Chair Arroyo as well, and I do think that your  
letter to Commissioner Mendez should go higher up.

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[Pause]

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CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Thank  
you. I was just going through the panels.  
There's quite a number of people signed up to  
testify, so at this point, what I'm going to do is  
use the clock and ask those of you who are  
accustomed to coming here, the drill about  
summarizing your testimony, provide a hardcopy for  
the record, and it will be entered into the record  
and we'll keep you to a three-minute clock and I'm  
going to try to interchange the panels, I want to  
hear from some seniors, although I have a feeling  
that many have left. But the first panel on the  
clock will be Bobbie Sackman, Council for Senior  
Center Services; Julia Schwartz Leeper, Riverdale  
Senior Services; Sandra Christian, Ridgewood  
Bushwick Senior Service--Services, please come up.  
If you have testimony, hand it to the sergeant at

1  
2 the table, he will distribute it to save us some  
3 time. And I'm going to have Chris switch with  
4 Council Member Vacca so he can work the clock..  
5 Okay. And as they're preparing, if we can have  
6 Crissy Liu, Kathy Fitzgibbons, Molly [pause]--I'm  
7 going to kill your name.

8 MALE VOICE: Krakowski.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Krakowski? And  
10 Elana...

11 MALE VOICE: Broitman.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Broitman?

13 MALE VOICE: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Prepare for the  
15 next panel. [Pause] Okay. You guys are experts  
16 at this, so you know the drill, you may begin.

17 BOBBIE SACKMAN: All right. My name  
18 is Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy with  
19 the Council of Senior Centers and Services. I  
20 guess briefly put, we showed up with 14,000  
21 letters today, we brought 5 or 600 seniors, we had  
22 half of City Council here, including all of you  
23 and the Speaker, so we don't understand why the  
24 Mayor's not withdrawing this RFP. I just want to  
25 say that CSCS commends City Council under the

1 leadership of Speaker Quinn for aggressively  
2 opposing the Department for the Aging's RFP.  
3 There has been thoughtful widespread concern about  
4 the senior center RFP and the timing of it. This  
5 is not about resistance to change, it is  
6 simplistic to say change is hard, this is about a  
7 deep concern that the city's plan is flawed and  
8 it's being put forward at the wrong time. It is--  
9 it does not reflect an understanding of how older  
10 New Yorkers live and it's being imposed on people,  
11 it's being forced down their throats. CSCS and  
12 its over 200 members support City Council's  
13 position and ask the Bloomberg Administration to  
14 withdraw the senior center RFP. Yesterday, Mr.  
15 Mayor and Betsy Gotbaum released the New York City  
16 feedback citywide customer service survey and  
17 among the highest ranked services that the city  
18 offers that met with customer satisfaction was  
19 senior centers, reporting a 92% customer  
20 satisfaction rate. So, like, what's the problem  
21 here? Coupled with budget cuts, this is a recipe  
22 for disaster, as we've heard today. We've  
23 attached to your copies of the testimony today  
24 seven pages of questions regarding the RFP, they

1  
2 were submitted to DFTA, we'll see if we hear back  
3 from them. The--my two colleagues with me will  
4 clearly be able to tell you today why the budget  
5 doesn't work on these RFPs. There's also new  
6 expenses being put into the budget that agencies  
7 have never had to pay for before, which is their  
8 own software, which is what they're going to have  
9 to use to report data to DFTA, they have to count  
10 vehicles as though they don't exist in their  
11 programs now, rent money at NYCHA and other sites,  
12 evidence-based programs, the Stanford model could  
13 cause up to 15,000, computers, and nutritionists.  
14 So where is that money going to come from? And  
15 then just finally, by excluding--by saying that  
16 you have to have rooms that hold 25 seniors, DFTA  
17 very pointedly, you know, made a decision that  
18 there were senior centers who were going to be  
19 excluded from this process. They overnight  
20 changed the physical requirements, the plan  
21 requirements of senior centers after 35 years--  
22 they could not have done that without knowing that  
23 there was senior centers who were left out. Thank  
24 you and thank you for all your work you've done on  
25 this.

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[Pause]

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SANDRA CHRISTIAN: Hi, my name is

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Sandra Christian and I am the Assistant Executive

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Director of Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens

6

Council. I'd like to thank Speaker Quinn and the

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Chairs Arroyo and Vacca for holding these

8

hearings. Ridgewood Bushwick currently runs--I'm

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going to talk mostly about the budget implications

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of the proposal--Ridgewood Bushwick currently runs

11

six senior centers, five of these are located in

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Brooklyn service region one. There are currently

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18 senior centers funded by DFTA in this area.

14

[Pause] The current allocation is \$5,620,000 or

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\$205,620,000 for these centers. If we assume that

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you have one hub in that area and the rest are

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neighborhood centers, it would cost 9.5 million

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and if everyone put in at 500K. DFTA has said

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both in the proposal and verbally that they expect

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people to come in at the original--their current

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annual amounts. That is not possible, if you're

22

having to include rent that you've never paid in

23

your proposal. One of my major concerns is,

24

number one, if you--they've said that they will

25

change allocations to cover these large budgets,

1  
2 that people will have to come into. What's the  
3 criteria? How do you determine who's going to get  
4 what after the hubs fall out of this proposal?  
5 Who gets the 500,000, who gets less than that,  
6 there's no criteria of judging that. Also that  
7 centers--the funds will move from community to  
8 community. The other issue I have is that if you  
9 are a senior center that's currently serving a  
10 large number of meals, and I mean over a hundred  
11 meals a day, and that's breakfast and lunch, that  
12 you're going to have to reduce meals in order to  
13 come in at \$500,000. I have attached a budget for  
14 you that will show you this. We have four senior  
15 centers that serve over--from 260 to 320 meals a  
16 day. They can't all apply for hubs and be hubs in  
17 one area. If we then go for neighborhood centers,  
18 when you look at the budget, if you're putting in  
19 the meals and the rent and the rent--one of the  
20 sites I gave you is a NYCHA site and I put the  
21 square footage in at \$14 a square foot, which we  
22 know is ludicrously low. With that, we would have  
23 to cut our whole breakfast program and 90 lunches  
24 of the 200 lunches that that center provides these  
25 days. So 120 breakfast and 90 lunches for that

1 center to come in and be a neighborhood hub, the  
2 staffing is minimal, we're talking about one full-  
3 time director, assistant director, a part-time  
4 clerk, and about 1.85 kitchen staff, and a  
5 custodian. Not a large staff and trying to come  
6 in under the 500,000. What this means across the  
7 board is senior centers who currently will not be  
8 hubs, they're going to have to reduce meals and,  
9 you know, ironically a year ago you had hearings  
10 about hunger in New York City and with seniors and  
11 in that, DFTA and the Council all agreed that  
12 breakfast was an essential part of a senior's life  
13 and their nutritional health. We're going to  
14 eliminate breakfast, it's not going to exist  
15 anymore in our senior centers. [Pause] DFTA has  
16 said that meals are incidental and that seniors  
17 want to come for computer classes and tai chi and  
18 yoga. All of our four centers that serve over 300  
19 people have a vast health promotion program, but  
20 our seniors come for the meal so they can be  
21 sustained to participate in those classes. We are  
22 going to decimate meals in the system and this RFP  
23 just doesn't work, the numbers don't work. And  
24 when you're going through, if you've going through  
25

1  
2 the case management transition, where a month ago  
3 we got 50 additional cases we didn't know about,  
4 six months after the transition, now you're  
5 looking at the Meals on Wheels RFP and we've  
6 already seen that the numbers in the Meals on  
7 Wheels RFP don't match current clients. We know  
8 that DFTA can't handle this kind of transition.  
9 So we thank the Council for looking at this and  
10 don't just look at centers closing, looking at  
11 meals being cut. Thank you.

12 [Pause]

13 JULIA SCHWARTZ LEEPER: Hello, good  
14 afternoon, late afternoon. I am Julia Schwartz  
15 Leeper, the Executive Director of Riverdale Senior  
16 Services. My agency is a small agency that  
17 currently holds three DFTA contracts--or maybe I  
18 shouldn't say that because as of December 31st,  
19 we're losing our Social Adult Day contract with 29  
20 days notice for a family--for 21 families who care  
21 for people with Alzheimer's and dementia. But not  
22 only does that loss of a contract preclude these  
23 families from getting services, it also places a  
24 burden on the entire agency. It is another piece  
25 of the agency, I can't rent out that space, even

1  
2 if I fire all the staff, I still have a loss--not  
3 to mention not providing services that are really  
4 needed. I've been working in the field of aging  
5 since 1984 and I came to Riverdale Senior Services  
6 three years ago with the commitment to modernize  
7 and to build on the wellness program that we have  
8 and when I tell people that my center is at risk  
9 for closing, they're shocked. I think we are a  
10 model program for wellness, we have an R.N., we  
11 have regular screenings, but in my area, in area  
12 two, there are 21 senior centers. It looks like  
13 there would be one hub in that area, which, first  
14 of all, is to call it a hub is ridiculous because  
15 people would not commute to wherever the hub is,  
16 people are not going to commute to it. So we  
17 would just be one large senior center and then 20  
18 small senior centers. There's a little over \$8  
19 million allocated to that area. If 20--even if  
20 there's only one hub and 20 small senior centers,  
21 that would be \$11 million. So senior centers are  
22 going to close and, at the very least, my center  
23 will either close or it will not be able to  
24 provide the quality of services that it now  
25 provides. I mean, the devil is really in the

1  
2 details of this proposal because a half a million  
3 is not a lot, it's not enough to keep a lot of  
4 centers open. This will work for some centers,  
5 but we have a very diverse city, and this RFP just  
6 does not work for a majority of the centers for  
7 very different reasons. There are centers that  
8 provide 360 meals a day, but do not have room to  
9 provide activities and then there's a center like  
10 mine that provides a whole host of wellness  
11 activities, but serves 120 meals. We don't fit  
12 this mold, one size does not fit all or one size  
13 plus a few extra large sizes. Even at \$1 million  
14 those hubs cannot provide the services they're  
15 asked to and to place the burden of developing  
16 these programs and tracking systems on an already  
17 overburdened staff is just unfair. There is no  
18 fat in our system, not in the senior center system  
19 or staff. Thank you so much for not forgetting  
20 about our seniors at this really difficult time.  
21 I thank both of you for your leadership, as well  
22 as the whole Council and Oliver Koppell, our  
23 Councilperson, for continuing to support us.  
24 Thank you.

25 [Pause]

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: No questions,  
3 just a great deal of appreciation for everything  
4 that you do. Crissy Liu, Kathy, Molly, and Elana.  
5 [Pause] And then after I'm going to bring up a  
6 panel in favor and you're not allowed to shoot  
7 them. Michael Adam, SAGE; Glen Michael Francis.

8 FEMALE VOICE: We're together.

9 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Rio? GRIOT  
11 Circle; Andrew Martin, DOROT; and Nancy Miller,  
12 Vision Services for the Blind. [Pause] Panel,  
13 before you--you guys know the drill. Welcome and  
14 thank you for waiting. Please proceed.

15 [Pause]

16 CRISSY LIU: Good afternoon,  
17 Chairpersons Arroyo and Vacca. Thank you for  
18 giving us the opportunity to testify on this  
19 important issue. My name is Crissy Liu and I am a  
20 Policy Analyst with United Neighborhood Houses. I  
21 am joined by Kathleen Fitzgibbons, Senior Policy  
22 Analyst from the Federation of Protestant Welfare  
23 Agencies. While we have been supportive of DFTA's  
24 efforts to reshape senior centers and working  
25 towards a model that incorporates health and

1  
2 wellness activities in a comprehensive way and  
3 increases resources for more essential services,  
4 we have grave concerns over the timing of the  
5 recently issued senior center RFP, and it is for  
6 this reason that we are testifying today. The  
7 recent issuance of the senior center RFP occurs at  
8 exactly the moment when the Mayor has proposed to  
9 eliminate or reduce funding for other DFTA  
10 services on which older adults rely, services such  
11 as social adult day care, intergenerational  
12 programs, caregiver support services, and elder  
13 abuse programs. Amounting to \$4 million in fiscal  
14 year 2009 and 6.6 million in the out years, the  
15 Mayor's November budget cut to DFTA comes on top  
16 of the already implemented state cuts and the 3%  
17 PEG reduction in city funding that senior centers  
18 have already taken this fiscal year. Moreover,  
19 these economic pressures, including the real and  
20 anticipated funding reductions, both from  
21 government and philanthropic sources, are a very  
22 real threat to nonprofit agencies and their  
23 ability to sustain the quality services that are  
24 so vitally important to this city's older adult  
25 population. The proposed changes to the way

1  
2 senior centers are operated and funded will layer  
3 yet another burden upon nonprofit agencies that  
4 are already reeling. My colleague will continue.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: You each get  
6 three minutes, let me just figure this out.

7 [Pause]

8 KATHY FITZGIBBONS: I'm Kathy  
9 Fitzgibbons from the Federation of Protestant  
10 Welfare Agencies. Along with the devastating  
11 economic climate, the aging services system has  
12 undergone major challenges and changes as two of  
13 the fundamental pillars of the system, the home  
14 delivered meals and case management programs, have  
15 already undergone or will soon begin operating  
16 under the modernization plan. Aging service  
17 providers do not deliver services in silos and  
18 many of them have been providing all three of  
19 DFTA's core services for decades. Many of the  
20 same nonprofit agencies, regardless of whether a  
21 past case management provider or a newly awarded  
22 home delivered meals provider, have been impacted  
23 by two, if not all three, of DFTA's RFPs.  
24 Providers are overwhelmed with the amount of  
25 restructuring that is happening simultaneously

1 while trying to plan for the impact of a sliding  
2 economy that includes staff layoffs and defunded  
3 programs. At the November 21st Finance and Aging  
4 Committee hearings, the City Council asked DFTA  
5 whether questions submitted at and prior to the  
6 bidders' conference would be addressed and DFTA  
7 responded in the affirmative. Our organizations,  
8 in partnership with UJA Federation and the Council  
9 of Senior Centers and Services and the Human  
10 Services Council, submitted seven pages of  
11 questions to DFTA one week prior to the bidders'  
12 conference. The questions were gathered as part  
13 of the senior center RFP technical assistance  
14 workshops that we organized with funding from  
15 United Way and the New York Community Trust. Yet  
16 after the December 2nd bidders' conference, there  
17 still remain a multitude of questions that need to  
18 be answered, most of which were not adequately  
19 addressed by DFTA. While we need the key  
20 questions submitted prior to and at the bidders'  
21 conference to be answered in a timely and accurate  
22 fashion, we remain concerned that even when DFTA  
23 provides answers, agencies will still be left with  
24 very, very limited time to complete their  
25

1  
2 proposals. The proposed senior center  
3 reorganization comes at the wrong time. Until the  
4 city's budget situation is stabilized and the size  
5 and scope of the current and future city and state  
6 cuts becomes known, the senior center RFP should  
7 be postponed. Thank you.

8 [Pause]

9 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Chairpersons

10 Arroyo and Vacca and Council Member Jackson, thank  
11 you for holding this hearing today and thank you  
12 to the Committee. My name is Molly Krakowski, I'm  
13 the Director of Legislative Affairs and the Joint  
14 Public Affairs Committee, JPAC, for Older Adults  
15 at the Jewish Association for Services for the  
16 Aged, JASA. I am here today to express JASA's  
17 concern over the DFTA RFP for the modernization of  
18 senior services in New York. Let me begin by  
19 saying that JASA supports DFTA's attempts to meet  
20 the growing needs of all older adults in the  
21 community and applauds the efforts at  
22 modernization and the widespread implementation of  
23 evidence-based practice. We also believe the  
24 creation of senior center hubs is a positive step  
25 in providing innovative services and exciting

1  
2 opportunities to older adults which are not  
3 currently available in the traditional senior  
4 centers. However, we feel very strongly that the  
5 senior center RFP should be temporarily postponed  
6 at this time. DFTA's current budget proposal  
7 includes the elimination of funding and cutbacks  
8 on services for the most vulnerable elders.

9 What's more, senior services have recently  
10 undergone two major initiatives revising case  
11 management delivery and Meals on Wheels delivery  
12 programs. New contracts have just gotten off the  
13 ground in the past six months and senior service  
14 agencies such as JASA are still adjusting to the  
15 new and added administrative details in the  
16 delivery system. The rush to implement another  
17 major initiative in the delivery of senior  
18 services puts enormous pressures on agencies like  
19 JASA, gives us little time to prepare a well-  
20 thought-out senior center RFP at the same time  
21 that we have to implement new contract  
22 responsibilities. Undoubtedly, because of the  
23 dire fiscal situation and the fact that seniors  
24 are now identifying senior centers as places to  
25 get very low cost meals, JASA has experienced a

1 surge in meal utilization on an average of 30%  
2 across the senior center program during October to  
3 November 2008 as compared to October to November  
4 2007. The increase in need demonstrates the  
5 importance of local, community-based senior  
6 centers and the basic services such as congregate  
7 meals which are deemphasized in the RFP. Moving  
8 ahead with the RFP at this time will cause  
9 significant upheaval in neighborhood-based  
10 services and disruptions in service continuity as  
11 centers are closed. [Pause] In the last month,  
12 DFTA has informed JASA that it will eliminate  
13 three crucial programs as of January 1st: JPAC,  
14 for which for the past 30 years has provided older  
15 adults with the knowledge and tools to be  
16 effective advocates on senior issues, benefits,  
17 and entitlements through presentations and  
18 training at senior centers and community-based  
19 groups throughout the city; Elder Abuse, which has  
20 a staff of attorneys and social workers trained to  
21 help people 60 plus who are victims of elder  
22 abuse; and city-based funding for caregiver  
23 support services. At a time in life when older  
24 adults are living on fixed incomes and are often  
25

1  
2 increasingly isolated, and when the population of  
3 older adults is booming, the City Council needs to  
4 support senior services more than ever, keeping  
5 older adults engaged physically and mentally, as  
6 well as emotionally and financially. JASA urges  
7 you to protect the vulnerable elderly who rely on  
8 important social services and assistance by  
9 maintaining the senior centers as they currently  
10 exist.

11 [Pause]

12 ELANA BROITMAN: Good evening, Chair  
13 Arroyo, Council Member Jackson. Thank you for  
14 holding this hearing. My comments that are  
15 submitted to you really mirror most of what my  
16 colleagues here said, so I'm certainly not going  
17 to go over them again, so I'll just summarize  
18 quickly. We have worked, we and the colleagues  
19 around the table, have worked for a number of  
20 months with the administration, we've given them  
21 analysis and thoughts, and I must say some things  
22 were addressed and we certainly see some positives  
23 behind modernization. The Council itself had  
24 taken the initiative, for example, with the  
25 Healthy Aging Initiative and in ensuring that

1  
2 there will be health and wellness programs in  
3 senior centers, we support that. We're pleased to  
4 see more funding, but the reason we oppose the RFP  
5 going forward today is that it presents a grave  
6 number of risks that simply don't need to be borne  
7 by the senior population, so we'd like to see it  
8 postponed until the following things could be  
9 addressed. First of all, until the Mayor can show  
10 that the funding that the Council and the Borough  
11 Presidents allocate for other senior services are  
12 not going to get rolled in to pay for senior  
13 centers--as chair Vacca said earlier, not robbing  
14 Peter to pay Paul. Number two, that some of the  
15 very major issues that were raised before and at  
16 the bidders' conference are addressed with enough  
17 time to be given for applicants to provide their  
18 applications. One that we have raised, and it's  
19 fairly fundamental, is whether or not capital--  
20 whether or not, the locations that are currently  
21 housing senior centers are actually going to be  
22 eligible despite ADA requirements in participating  
23 in something that Council Member Melissa Mark-  
24 Viverito raised earlier, and that's, as you can  
25 imagine, a fundamental issue. And the--our final

1  
2 thought is that the case management and Meals on  
3 Wheels programs really need to stand up and  
4 function well after all the changes that they've  
5 been put through before yet another major change  
6 is put forward. Thank you very much.

7 [Pause]

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Again, thank  
9 you all for being here. Thank you for your  
10 advocacy and all the work that you do around this  
11 issue and senior services and our city in general.  
12 Thank you for being here. The next panel, Michael  
13 Glen, Andrew, and Nancy--Nancy Miller. Okay. I  
14 know that you guys have been through this drill in  
15 the past as well, but I'll reiterate, please state  
16 your name for the record before you begin your  
17 testimony, you can select the order in which you  
18 will testify and, since you are in favor, I think  
19 I'll give you two minutes each. [Pause] I'm  
20 kidding, I'm kidding.

21 ANDREW MARTIN: Good afternoon, my  
22 name is [pause] Thank you. Good afternoon, my  
23 name is Andrew Martin and I'm here today on behalf  
24 of Vivian Fenster Ehrlich and DOROT, a New York  
25 City provider of services to over 10,000 frail,

1  
2 homebound elderly and those who care for them. We  
3 thank the members of the City Council and  
4 especially to Chair Arroyo for inviting our agency  
5 to testify on the issue of senior center closures.  
6 We are not here today to support the RFP, rather  
7 we are here to advocate on behalf of thousands of  
8 elderly New Yorkers who are no longer able to  
9 travel to these centers. Many of our senior New  
10 Yorkers want to remain active and engaged in their  
11 communities.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [Interposing] I  
13 apologize for my misrepresentation.

14 ANDREW MARTIN: All right. You  
15 should know by now. [Pause] Frail elders cannot  
16 and should not live on bread alone. Their daily  
17 or weekly greeting from a meal deliverer is meager  
18 nutrition for their minds and their spirits. For  
19 decades, New York has forgotten its aging citizens  
20 who experience multiple losses of vision, hearing,  
21 mobility, family, and friends, while growing older  
22 at home. According to the 2005 Census Bureau  
23 update, there are close to one million New Yorkers  
24 over the age of 65, a good portion of this number  
25 includes seniors over the age of 85. As you

1  
2 continue to review the RFP process with DFTA, it  
3 is our hope that you will include your  
4 modernization plans, programs that embrace New  
5 York's most invisible seniors--those who cannot  
6 travel to the centers. Specifically, we urge you  
7 to include friendly visiting and telephone  
8 conference programs in this RFP. Friendly  
9 visiting and its companion programs enlist  
10 volunteers who spend an hour or so each week  
11 visiting with a senior. In addition to providing  
12 much-needed companionship, these volunteers often  
13 act as our eyes and ears for senior service  
14 organizations, particularly when an elderly person  
15 experiences difficulty in his or her own home. In  
16 some cases, friendly visiting programs are the  
17 only line of defense for seniors who are at risk  
18 of becoming socially isolated. While it is  
19 important to engage the hearts of our homebound  
20 seniors, it is equally important to engage their  
21 minds. Telephone conference classes are ideal for  
22 the post-senior center population and for those  
23 who have limited access to centers. The only  
24 requirement is a telephone. These programs  
25 encourage meaningful relationships between seniors

1  
2 and the many volunteers who donate their time to  
3 facilitate classes at their own convenience from  
4 their homes or offices. Moreover, they promote  
5 social wellness through personal engagement and  
6 offer intellectual and creative opportunities;  
7 they prevent social isolation by serving homebound  
8 seniors unable to get to traditional senior  
9 centers and they bring seniors from different  
10 neighborhoods together to share interests, life  
11 experiences, and peer support. I do not need to  
12 remind you of the challenges facing our rapidly  
13 growing senior population. I do think we  
14 underestimate the power of these types of programs  
15 and the enormous benefit they bring to frail and  
16 homebound New Yorkers. Again, we thank the  
17 Council and Chair Arroyo for allowing us the  
18 opportunity to testify today. Thank you.

19 [Pause]

20 MICHAEL ADAMS: My name is Michael  
21 Adams and I am the Executive Director of Services  
22 and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and  
23 Transgender Elders, or SAGE. I want to start by  
24 thanking the City Council for holding this  
25 important hearing, I particularly want to thank

1  
2 Speaker Quinn, Council Members Arroyo and Vacca,  
3 as Chairs of the Council's Committee on Aging and  
4 the Subcommittee on Senior Centers and Council  
5 Member Jackson for your steadfast support for this  
6 city's LGBT seniors, SAGE's constituents could not  
7 ask for better friends than you. I'm testifying  
8 today to provide a perspective that has not been  
9 heard in the ongoing debate about the  
10 modernization efforts by DFTA and DFTA's RFP. The  
11 perspective I have to offer which focuses on the  
12 critical importance of addressing the needs of our  
13 city's marginalized LGBT elderly will perhaps be  
14 unpopular, but it's an important perspective that  
15 must be heard. Fact is that LGBT seniors are  
16 particularly vulnerable, they're especially at  
17 risk of social isolation and more often than not  
18 lack the social support that is so critical in the  
19 later years, that's partly due to discrimination  
20 and marginalization and it's partly to the  
21 invisibility. The city's senior centers do many  
22 wonderful things, SAGE strongly supports them and  
23 is proud to be a member in good standing of the  
24 Council of Senior Centers and Services, but one  
25 thing many senior centers do not do effectively is

1  
2 serve this city's LGBT seniors. By and large LGBT  
3 seniors do not find a welcome environment or  
4 supportive services. This is not the fault of  
5 senior centers, but instead reflects larger  
6 societal conditions and a failure of the aging  
7 field as a whole to recognize the needs, and even  
8 the existence, of LGBT seniors. Historically the  
9 situation has been made worse by the way in which  
10 New York City's core funding for senior programs  
11 has been allocated. Funding for senior centers  
12 and case management has not taken account of the  
13 special needs of extremely vulnerable populations  
14 like LGBT seniors. As a result, programs for LGBT  
15 seniors have been relegated to secondary funding  
16 screens like the care giving program and, while we  
17 all know how important those secondary programs  
18 are, we also know they are the first to be cut  
19 when budgets are being slashed, and that's exactly  
20 what is happening now. New York City's LGBT  
21 seniors need change and they need it now. We know  
22 that LGBT seniors often feel unwelcome in  
23 mainstream senior agencies. We know, for example,  
24 that many of our members will go to a senior  
25 center to eat because they have no other choice,

1  
2 but because of their fears, they leave immediately  
3 after or because there are no culturally competent  
4 services. We know about these problems, for this  
5 reason, the population that SAGE serves has little  
6 stake in the status quo and their needs will not  
7 be addressed until the status quo is changed.

8 That is why SAGE was encouraged by the congregate  
9 service's RFP issued by DFTA. We know these are  
10 difficult times for all senior agencies, but our  
11 constituents desperately need services and they  
12 can't keep waiting. This RFP, by emphasizing  
13 culturally competent services, diversity of  
14 program offerings, and loosening geographic  
15 boundaries, represented the first real chance that  
16 LGBT seniors have had to see their needs addressed  
17 in New York City's core service programs, and we  
18 know they're not alone, we know there are other  
19 populations with particular needs, including  
20 seniors with vision or hearing lost. Whatever the  
21 outcome of this debate, we implore you to ensure  
22 that the resolution addresses the critical needs  
23 of LGBT seniors and other especially vulnerable  
24 senior populations. We at SAGE are committed to  
25 working with the City Council, the Mayor's office,

1  
2 DFTA, and with senior centers across the city to  
3 do all that we can to ensure that the needs of all  
4 seniors are addressed, but the time to start  
5 serving our city's LGBT seniors is now, the time  
6 has really arrived. Thank you.

7 [Pause]

8 NANCY MILLER: Hello, my name is  
9 Nancy Miller, I'm the Executive Director of Vision  
10 Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. I  
11 started working with trying to include blind  
12 seniors into senior centers in 1975. I have  
13 actually visited and been to over a hundred senior  
14 centers in the 36 years that I've been working  
15 with visions. I can tell you that there are some  
16 terrific programs out there. I'd like to mention  
17 the first that I worked with, the Theodore Jackson  
18 Senior Center in Queens, it was then called Archer  
19 Avenue, and back in 1975, they tried and succeeded  
20 in including blind seniors into the program and  
21 Visions and JSPOA and Carol Hunt continue to be  
22 partners today, but that is a rare example. And  
23 as Michael was talking about, the LGBT community,  
24 seniors who are blind, seniors who are deaf,  
25 seniors who are seen as different, often are not

1  
2 welcomed in centers that exist today. And, again,  
3 I do not believe it's because of a problem with  
4 the center, I think it's a lack of understanding,  
5 a lack of training, and a lack of money to provide  
6 the adaptations that are needed to be inclusive.  
7 So my model, and the model that I've talked with  
8 DFTA about, is you need to have senior centers  
9 inclusive of all seniors who live in their  
10 community, but you also need to have examples of  
11 centers that are physically and socially  
12 accepting. How are senior centers going to learn  
13 and how are seniors going to be pushed to be more  
14 inclusive if they don't have examples of programs  
15 that work? In 2001, Visions created an inclusive  
16 program located in Manhattan, and I do beg to  
17 differ, seniors do travel. We are serving 300  
18 blind seniors who come from all five boroughs to  
19 the center in Manhattan because it is socially,  
20 physically accessible. Our computers talk, we  
21 have fitness and yoga and bowling, we have  
22 photography for blind people--believe it or not  
23 blind people take pictures and want to take  
24 pictures, but you wouldn't know, unless you've  
25 been trained and have the experience. We saw this

1  
2 modernization as an opportunity to begin to look  
3 at what are we doing really well because there's  
4 such strength in the senior center existence right  
5 now, but what are we not doing well. And I think  
6 the Controller's statement made the comment that  
7 many centers don't even know what the population  
8 of their centers are, they're not screening for  
9 some of the major age-related diseases, and until  
10 we do that, our centers are not going to be open.  
11 I absolutely do not believe that budget cuts at  
12 this time for senior services are going to be  
13 serving anybody well. And, although I do believe  
14 in the modernization process and I do believe that  
15 DFTA is trying to do the right thing, it could be  
16 delayed, it could be done in other ways, but it  
17 must be done because just continuing what we're  
18 doing now is excluding your parents, our  
19 relatives, seniors who are blind, who have given  
20 to this city their entire lives and yet they are  
21 not being served. Thank you.

22 [Pause]

23 GLEN FRANCIS: I am Glen Francis,  
24 the Executive Director of the GRIOT Circle in  
25 Brooklyn. We serve over 1,200 seniors at our

1 center. We have never received a DFTA contract.  
2  
3 Until this RFP came about, we didn't think there  
4 was a possibility for that to happen. If there  
5 weren't terrific private foundations who were  
6 interested in the work we are doing and see it as  
7 a national model, we would still be without the  
8 agency we have going now. I am--when I first  
9 heard about this RF and I read the proposal, I was  
10 quite interested because for the first time, GRIOT  
11 Circle could see itself being included in senior  
12 center programming through the Department for the  
13 Aging. It is quite amazing that there are all  
14 these flaws in this RFP that makes me pause, but  
15 it is the first time, it is the first attempt, and  
16 I can see it being delayed, but only delayed as  
17 long as it continued to include people of color  
18 and include organizations that are disenfranchised  
19 like GRIOT Circle, like SAGE. We have been  
20 fighting very hard, in fact, this is the second  
21 time around for us, I mean, we went in after the  
22 case management services and were basically blown  
23 out of the proposal, so it's about time. I have  
24 just over 1,200 members in my organization right  
25 now, I'm probably going to have double that in the

1  
2 next two years, and how do I continue to service  
3 those clients without having the kinds of services  
4 and the kinds of funding they need. You know  
5 inadequate space, because I'm working out of four  
6 rooms, four rooms actually serving 1,200 people,  
7 so just think about that and just think about how  
8 DFTA's--how this contract would have  
9 disenfranchised me, as well as included me. I  
10 would have had to have worked through several  
11 organizations, which we do now, we work with  
12 RAICES and we work with the YWC in Brooklyn [off  
13 mic] fitness and provide nutrition--nutritional  
14 meals for our members. So those collaborations  
15 work well, but still I couldn't be considered a  
16 hub there because I still don't have the capacity  
17 to be considered. So I thank you for raising  
18 attention to this RF, I thank you for allowing us  
19 to come here and to be at this table. For the  
20 first time, LGBT is at a hearing on aging in New  
21 York City and it's a good thing and thank you very  
22 much.

23 [Pause]

24 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: You--time--  
25 don't go, I have a question. I have not asked a

1  
2 question of the other panels, but as I hear your  
3 testimony, and I know that Andrew left, but I  
4 guess that we'll have to rely on the three of you.  
5 As much as you see this as an opportunity, given  
6 that there are so many unanswered questions, how  
7 confident are you that SAGE will--or the issues  
8 that you're bringing up, Michael, and the ones  
9 that Nancy is bringing up and are addressed and  
10 that there will be a true integration of the--for  
11 the populations that you're advocating for?

12 MICHAEL ADAMS: Well, I just, I  
13 mean, we, you know, we certainly don't know the  
14 results of the process if it move forward, but  
15 there are some from the perspective of LGBT  
16 seniors, there are actually some very good things  
17 in this RFP. I mean, for example, the RFP  
18 explicitly states that cultural competence in  
19 serving LGBT seniors is a priority, that's a  
20 really important step forward. It also does  
21 something else really important. Historically,  
22 the reason why organizations like SAGE and GRIOT  
23 Circle have not been able to participate in these  
24 programs is because the way the contracts were  
25 structured was that, in order to receive a

1 contract, you had to commit to serve every senior  
2 in a particular district, but we exist for a very  
3 different reason, we exist to serve seniors who  
4 aren't being served in--by other senior centers.  
5 The geographical restrictions in the new RFP have  
6 been relaxed tremendously. Also the mix of  
7 programming and the emphasis on a more diverse  
8 array of programming and health and wellness,  
9 that's the kind of programming we do because  
10 that's what's responsive to our constituents. So  
11 I'm not saying, I doubt anybody here is saying  
12 with the RFP is perfect, but in terms of the way  
13 it was written, it was written in a way that would  
14 finally encompass some aspect of the needs of our  
15 constituents. And so in that sense, it is a  
16 really important step forward for a population  
17 that has had nothing, really had just nothing, and  
18 the little that it's had, the little--the few  
19 pieces of funding we were able to obtain from DFTA  
20 are now being cut because we've been shunted off  
21 into the secondary funding program. So it's--if  
22 we had written it ourselves, we would have written  
23 it different, but is--I have to say, it is a  
24 substantial step forward from what we've seen out  
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of DFTA in the past.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Nancy?

NANCY MILLER: I also think one of the strengths, and there are many, many weaknesses and I don't want to defend the RFP, but one of its strengths is really pushing partnerships and linkages, and if we really want to be inclusive-- it's like saying, you know, if you're not going to be welcoming to people who speak a language other than English, just saying that you're open to everybody isn't going to make it happen--it goes beyond that. There has to be a real understanding effort from the community itself and to people who feel uncomfortable with people who are different. The process of this RFP was creating a communication, including us in the trainings, including us in the bidders' conference, we've had conversations with people that we wouldn't have had conversations with otherwise, and that's a very, very positive things--these linkage agreements. We need that to continue because, in fact, people who have shied away from--I can tell you, I mean, if you think that, you know, you call somebody and they never return your phone call, I

1  
2 call up and say I want to bring blind seniors to  
3 your center and nobody calls me back. All of a  
4 sudden, I have 329 best friends, they all want to  
5 know how can I bring people in to make my  
6 proposals stronger. That was a positive, but you  
7 don't hear people talking about it 'cause it gets  
8 lost in the negatives of what its occurred. We  
9 want to keep those positives and those  
10 conversations going on, and we want people to  
11 recognize, and they have, there is social  
12 inaccessibility. It's not enough to say our door  
13 is open. If you don't see anybody who looks like  
14 you; if when you walk through the door there's  
15 nothing that makes you feel welcome; if you feel  
16 that it's inaccessible because people won't sit  
17 next to you--I get stories from blind seniors who  
18 say I tried to go to the local center, and I felt  
19 like I had leprosy. Nobody wanted to sit next to  
20 me, they were afraid of me, they thought maybe it  
21 was catching--it's the same thing in the LGBT  
22 community, people don't understand. So DFTA did  
23 do something right, they did do something by  
24 bringing us together, we sat at tables with our  
25 competitors and talked about what are the strength

1  
2 in our senior services. That process I think we  
3 need to keep going.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And I think the  
5 message that I'd like to send is that, RFP  
6 notwithstanding, that that is or should have been  
7 something that ought to have been happening  
8 already. And I think the question that keeps  
9 coming up is, where were they under a rock, that  
10 they didn't have this incredible knowledge before  
11 the release of this RFP. We look forward to this  
12 ongoing conversation because I think you're  
13 absolutely right, it is absolutely required,  
14 because my concern, as much as you advocate for  
15 the inclusion of the communities or the  
16 populations that you're advocating for, that the  
17 traditional responses will be what's ultimately  
18 received at DFTA and that the populations that  
19 you're advocating for will continue to be left out  
20 of the conversation and that's unacceptable.

21 NANCY MILLER: Right, and just--

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. So--

23 NANCY MILLER: --one other point in  
24 the Older Americans Act, there is targeting to  
25 serve unserved or underserved seniors and yet if

1  
2 you look at the programs that are being cut by the  
3 budget, it's exactly the program that the Older  
4 Americans Act is saying we should be reaching out  
5 to. So, you know, we're not the gravy, we're the  
6 meat, so we're getting stuck with the budget cut  
7 and we're not included in the quote core services,  
8 and if you ask DFTA--one question I ask them all  
9 the time is, how many blind seniors are served in  
10 the centers and they say we don't know 'cause we  
11 don't ask.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Yeah, well,  
13 they don't know a lot of stuff at this point.

14 NANCY MILLER: Right.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Thank  
16 you all very much.

17 NANCY MILLER: Thank you.

18 MICHAEL ADAMS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: For your  
20 testimony, thank you for being here. Okay. The  
21 next panel, Linda Leest, Services Now for Adult  
22 Persons; Naomi Altman, Queens Community House;  
23 Carol J. Hunt, JSPOA, Jamaica Services Program for  
24 Older Adults. That's three and Judy Zangwill,  
25 Sunnyside Community Services. Are they all still

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here?

[Off mic]

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. And since you all look like veterans at this, you know the drill. You can choose who goes first and you may begin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

LINDA LEEST: Hello, I am Linda Leest, Executive Director of Services Now for Adult Persons in Queens, we call it SNAP. I will paraphrase. First of all, SNAP has seen an increase of at least 28 people more eating since August. So to add--to answer that, yes, there are other people, more people coming in. Also, I was part of many, I won't say all because it was 200 according to the Department for the Aging, but went to many of the things that they held and I have to tell you that afterwards colleagues and I looked at each other and questioned our sanity for going after the third time, because they came in with an agenda and they did their agenda and they let us not speak out and say what we wanted and nothing was changed from the beginning of the meeting to the end of the meeting and I was at

1  
2 least at 20 of them, so I just needed to tell you  
3 that. I also think, as others have told you, that  
4 we need to be sure that the other things that they  
5 have instituted are working well first. We still  
6 need to see what's going to happen with the home  
7 delivered meals; we need to know that that program  
8 is really working well and that elderly homebound  
9 are not falling through the cracks, which I  
10 believe they will be because in eastern Queens,  
11 the RFP called for 1,100 meals. And I know,  
12 clearly, there are at least 1,380 meals going out  
13 now, so something's going to happen somewhere so.  
14 Change is good, but it needs to happen in a  
15 planned, timely way. New York State is working so  
16 hard to come up with a program that they're  
17 calling New York Connects and they are doing it  
18 everywhere throughout the state, except New York  
19 City, we are the only area that is not doing it  
20 and what it is, is to establish in each community  
21 an entry-level place and so DFTA is pulling back  
22 and they're stopping that. And so the only people  
23 that will end up going to hubs are people that  
24 live near a hub, because those are the only people  
25 that will go. Mayor Bloomberg in his plan 2030

1  
2 clearly stated there will be 44% increase in  
3 elderly and we'll need more senior centers, those  
4 were his words, more senior centers. So it  
5 doesn't make sense to cut back now, we don't  
6 understand that at all. I want to tell you that I  
7 did a study in 1994, I studied over 400 people,  
8 elderly people, and it was proven that the old old  
9 are the ones that needed centers and they were the  
10 ones that benefited the most and you can not  
11 expect a cohort group of 40 years, from 60 to a  
12 hundred--'cause they're people over a hundred  
13 coming to us now--and just make a plan and think  
14 this is going to fit everybody. This RFP ignores  
15 the old old, it is talking about people going to  
16 the place to exercise and going for all kinds of  
17 things and I just wanted to say that,  
18 predominantly, people who are not the old old are  
19 very busy, they have an interest in health, but  
20 they go to Ys, they go to gyms, and to paraphrase  
21 Gloria Steinem, this is what 64 1/2 looks like and  
22 I'm not about to go to a center, not for  
23 recreation, socialization, or education. And so I  
24 think we need to bring it back to, it has a place  
25 and it's serving a good group of people, don't

1  
2 forget them and don't push them out for the other  
3 people who really don't need them yet. Thank you.  
4 And I also want to thank you so much, so much for  
5 taking this on, we appreciate you so much.

6 [Pause]

7 NAOMI ALTMAN: Okay. Good evening.  
8 And thank you for your patience today. My name is  
9 Naomi Altman, I'm Assistant Executive Director of  
10 the Queens Community House. I'll skip over my  
11 first paragraph. The RFP makes reference to what  
12 older adults want. Who are they? As reflected in  
13 the RFP, they foremost want a place to--where they  
14 can surf the web, attend a fitness class,  
15 participate in a book club, or just simply  
16 socialize with peers. There's no subtext or  
17 footnote to indicate who they spoke with to  
18 discern this. Oddly, many of the seniors we see,  
19 foremost want assistance with entitlements,  
20 landlord mediation, to have a document notarized  
21 or translated, or access to in-home assistance,  
22 help in caring for a chronically ill spouse,  
23 friend, partner or parent. Do they engage in  
24 activities? Absolutely. When they wish to attend  
25 one of our centers, they walk a couple of blocks

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2 or, if they're limited, they receive assistance  
3 with transportation. When they arrive, they see  
4 friends, attend a class, exercise, volunteer, and,  
5 yes, they have a nutritious lunch. On November  
6 21st, the Commissioner testified that funding  
7 stream cuts that had been announced were  
8 strategic. So here's the strategy: eliminate  
9 Social Adult Day Services, the people served by  
10 these programs are among the most vulnerable in  
11 our city. When asked how these individuals and  
12 their families will be served, he responded that  
13 they envision that they would be welcomed into  
14 these new senior centers to properly care for the  
15 needs for functional support for the frail and  
16 cognitively impaired participants. DFTA has up  
17 until now appropriately required staff to client  
18 ratios of one to five to one to three. Are the  
19 folks who are coming in to surf the web going to  
20 welcome these guys to dine? We just heard some  
21 folks talk about marginalization. According to  
22 the RFP, here's the accommodation: DFTA will give  
23 greater consideration to proposers who will  
24 provide these services, those with physical or  
25 mental impairments. There is no requirement for

1  
2 these services, only a single line of reference  
3 and can be offered only on--and they can only be  
4 offered only on specific days or at another site  
5 entirely, perhaps a nursing home. For the folks  
6 who silently shoulder the burden of keeping the  
7 impaired at home and in health, city support to  
8 caregivers services was cut 880,000. When taken  
9 in concert with the cut to social adult day, this  
10 is a double whammy to the folks who take the  
11 largest financial responsibility for this care.  
12 No mention is made with regard to supports for the  
13 families in the RFP. And to further complicate  
14 matters at a time when these same cuts will likely  
15 increase incidents of elder abuse, \$850,000 was  
16 cut for prevention programs. We work closely with  
17 such a program in Queens sponsored by JASA, they  
18 are consistent and professional and, as I  
19 understand it, handle 300 of the most difficult  
20 cases in Queens. Intergenerational programming  
21 was cut 504,000. Okay, our agency has an  
22 intergenerational contract. For \$70,000 a year,  
23 50 at-risk youth are or were engaged in the  
24 support of 90 community and 850 nursing home  
25 elders. This service does so much to reducing

1  
2 fear and ageism and increase awareness and sense  
3 of community, yet in the RFP under educational and  
4 recreational options, DFTA allows for  
5 intergenerational activities, again, no  
6 requirement to replace these services, only a nod.  
7 Missing from the list of strategic cuts are the  
8 budget--the borough president cuts. The SADS  
9 program at QCH has run since 1983 and is partially  
10 funded by DFTA, but significantly so by funds from  
11 the borough president. Another example of a  
12 program that will no longer be funded as of June  
13 30th, is the SAGE Queens program, the only program  
14 serving LGBT seniors in all of Queens. Here  
15 again, DFTA will give greater consideration to  
16 proposers who will provide services to the LGBT  
17 community, again, asked not required. I attended  
18 the bidders' conference on Tuesday, along with  
19 another 500 or so potential providers--

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Naomi.

21 NAOMI ALTMAN: --how much time was  
22 wasted there?

23 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Please wrap up.

24 NAOMI ALTMAN: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

1  
2 NAOMI ALTMAN: Okay. The way this  
3 all seems to come together is in the request that  
4 the price proposal is to be separately enveloped  
5 and accompanied by an electronic copy of the Excel  
6 budget package. First, this is a deviation from  
7 historical process, the price proposal was always  
8 a part of the bid. Well if you put no value on  
9 SADS, LGBT elderly, caregivers, intergenerational  
10 innovations, and you don't include it in your bid,  
11 it won't be held against you. In the senior  
12 center RFP, DFTA says they want to help folks stay  
13 healthy. How about helping the most vulnerable  
14 feel good? How about--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Naomi.

16 NAOMI ALTMAN: --strengthening  
17 communities--

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Please wrap up.

19 NAOMI ALTMAN: --helping families.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Please wrap up,  
21 thank you. Okay.

22 [Pause]

23 NAOMI ALTMAN: Thank you. And thank  
24 you for your patience.

25 [Pause]

1  
2 CAROL HUNT: My name is Carol Hunt  
3 and I'm the Executive Director of Jamaica Service  
4 Program for Older Adults. I have to say that I  
5 was reluctant to come here today, write yet  
6 another testimony, and appear because of this  
7 whole process and--but I do have to say that I'm  
8 very grateful I did come, and that I was impressed  
9 by all of the legislators and the Borough  
10 Presidents who took the time to testify and thank  
11 you all very, very much. The senior center RFP  
12 from the Department for Aging follows the same  
13 pattern of change that case management and home  
14 delivered meals. The change represents a shift  
15 away from small and medium-sized community-based  
16 organization in significant numbers to provide  
17 services through a service model that is  
18 regionally based. This means that direct services  
19 covers large geographical areas, thus rendering  
20 the community-based organizations relatively  
21 insignificant. These changes, no matter how cost  
22 efficient and more manageable in terms of handling  
23 resources, is not a good definition of social work  
24 in my opinion. The RFP does offer flexibility,  
25 however, the flexibility fails to recognize the

1  
2 need for social services to those most--to those  
3 who are most vulnerable in our society. For  
4 instance, transportation is not a core service,  
5 that is required, the RFP says it's optional.  
6 Well if any of us who work in the services know  
7 that transportation is the first level of service  
8 that's needed to keep a person connected and  
9 engaged. Operational costs are accepted in the  
10 budget only if you own your own vehicle. People  
11 will not be served. Case assistance is yet  
12 another service that is not mandated. This is not  
13 a service that is a one-shot phone call. As a  
14 person ages, navigating the Internet, dealing with  
15 multiple levels of service delivery systems, it  
16 becomes a hardship. Again, many older people will  
17 not be served. Meals are considered in the  
18 language of the proposal to be incidental, yet  
19 must be offered. There is no provision for  
20 staffing of a kitchen and the other necessary  
21 components of offering a meal. If it is  
22 incidental, why is it mandated? Mandated health  
23 and wellness programs are tied to performance  
24 measures for a current staff that is ill-prepared  
25 or trained. This mandate is forcing sites to

1  
2 become semi-health facilities--this is changing  
3 what a senior center is all about. Older adults  
4 do not want to be forced into health managed  
5 programs where they come to enjoy themselves.  
6 Recreational activities that serve so many of the  
7 socialization dimensions of the older adult  
8 programming is captured only as it's connected to  
9 a health and wellness activity, which is mandated.  
10 And [timer beeps]--oh, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: If you're real  
12 quick, I'll let you finish.

13 CAROL HUNT: Oh, all right.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: As long as you  
15 don't--

16 CAROL HUNT: I just wanted to say--

17 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Don't go on and  
18 on, okay.

19 CAROL HUNT: --my last word is about  
20 the 1 to 3% of the budget that each of us are  
21 asked to raise of the bottom line and this is  
22 difficult in good times. Aging is not something  
23 people run to, to give money to--aging programs  
24 and when you're in an outer borough like I am and  
25 Linda is, or like we all are, we all are, it is

1  
2 even more difficult, and there's nothing in the  
3 RFP that says what you raise can be put back into  
4 your budget. Right now, what we raise is taken  
5 off our bottom lines, that is not clarified at  
6 all. Thank you.

7 JUDY ZANGWILL: Hi, Judy Zangwill,  
8 Executive Director of Sunnyside Community  
9 Services. I appreciate the opportunity to speak  
10 with you. I too have a great many concerns I'm  
11 just going to quickly focus on two. The first is  
12 to echo something you've heard and will continue  
13 to hear about the timing of the current request  
14 for proposals. Like many other senior service  
15 provider's, Sunnyside Community Services is in a  
16 crisis mode right now, I would actually describe  
17 it as a state of shock. The extent of which is  
18 unprecedented in my 18 years as executive  
19 director. We are still struggling to serve a much  
20 larger number of clients than DFTA anticipated  
21 when we responded to DFTA's request for proposals  
22 for case management. We are struggling to  
23 restructure our Western Queens Caregivers network  
24 to address the loss of the city's portion of  
25 funding for this program. And because DFTA has

1  
2 eliminated funding for Social Adult Day Services,  
3 we are struggling to find alternative solutions  
4 for families of these participants in our program  
5 before we have to shut the door on this vitally  
6 needed program. These are concerns are enormous  
7 and, as you can imagine, are keeping managers and  
8 staff awake at night trying to figure out how we  
9 can protect and continue to serve our clients.  
10 Now we are struggling with DFTA's substantial  
11 shift in focus in its RFP for senior centers.  
12 Even when we agree with the health and wellness  
13 focus and the outreach to younger senior  
14 population, we recognize that there is much more  
15 involved in the planning and implementation of  
16 these changes, and greater potential for harmful  
17 consequences than DFTA recognizes, at least  
18 publicly. For example, marketing to an operating  
19 programs for a new and younger population,  
20 especially within the constraints of DFTA's  
21 prescribed number and type of daily activities, is  
22 very likely to pull time, resources, and attention  
23 away from our current, as Linda said, older old  
24 participants. And let's be realistic here,  
25 bringing not yet retired, as you also expressed

1  
2 Linda, or recently retired individuals who are not  
3 ready to consider themselves seniors into a center  
4 full of much older individuals will not be easy.  
5 These groups have very different needs and  
6 expectations, serving multiple age groups will  
7 require careful program design. The planning for  
8 these changes, which we do not dispute are  
9 potentially valuable, it takes time and energy  
10 that we simply do not have while we are engaged in  
11 crisis management. The second much broader issue,  
12 I want to address is the destructive impact of the  
13 demands DFTA is making on the senior services  
14 community. As you've heard today and will hear  
15 over and over again, community-based organizations  
16 have been working for decades to expand and  
17 integrate programs for older adults to provide a  
18 continuum of support for them as they age. DFTA  
19 has made a decision to defund small programs that  
20 it does not consider its core programs, instead of  
21 making across-the-board cuts to all programs. I  
22 understand the decision, but I strongly disagree  
23 with it. Although it has been challenging, we  
24 have absorbed budget cuts before. We can keep  
25 programs alive, if not thriving, until the economy

1  
2 improves. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that  
3 once the program is killed, it will take years, if  
4 not decades, to recreate it. DFTA actually is  
5 killing programs that DFTA itself has recognized  
6 will be increasingly needed by a growing senior  
7 population, such as adult day services for frail  
8 and cognitively impaired elderly. I don't have to  
9 tell you that they not only keep the participants  
10 out of more costly institutions, they also enable  
11 their caregivers to earn a living. I'll stop  
12 there.

13 LINDA LEEST: Could I please ask you  
14 something, just one fast thing?

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: We don't  
16 usually engage in a back and forth, but go ahead.

17 LINDA LEEST: Okay. Just quickly,  
18 since everyone here over the last 4 1/2 hours  
19 seems to feel so strongly, what else needs to be  
20 done, what else can we all do to see that it  
21 really does get stopped? What has to happen?

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Well I would  
23 prefer to have that conversation off the record,  
24 but certainly the work that you're doing in  
25 mobilizing and informing seniors throughout the

1  
2 city to voice their opinion. Call the Mayor's  
3 office, call the Deputy Mayor's office, call the  
4 Commissioner's office, write, e-mail. I think is  
5 certainly one of the things that is important, we  
6 need to hear from the city's seniors. We  
7 delivered, I believe it was 14,000 pieces of mail  
8 today and I'm sure they will keep coming and  
9 that's, you know, and we continue to have that  
10 conversation, certainly we will and continue to  
11 request that the RFP is withdrawn.

12 LINDA LEEST: Thank you. [Off mic]

13 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Thank  
14 you for being here. Our next panel, I hope  
15 they're still here, David Davis, who is himself a  
16 senior citizen, is David here? No. [Pause]  
17 Miriam Wenger, JASA West Side Senior Center; Reed  
18 Hansen, JASA West Side?

19 [Off mic]

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Come  
21 forward, please. Miriam is not here?

22 MALE VOICE: No [off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: No, okay. Kay  
24 Hansen, here? Please come forward. Shirley  
25 Keegan, Shirley? Is Shirley here? Okay. We'll

1  
2 keep going. [Pause] Erma, Irvina Ladimer?  
3 Riverdale Senior Center Services?

4 FEMALE VOICE: All of our senior--  
5 [Pause]

6 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Left, okay.  
7 William Bassett? Basist. [Pause] Joan Serrano?  
8 [Pause] Or Joane Serrano.

9 FEMALE VOICE: [Off mic]

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: She's here?

11 MALE VOICE: She is, yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay, good.  
13 And [pause] Abe--Alberta Payne.

14 [Off mic]

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Come forward,  
16 please.

17 [Off mic]

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. We have  
19 a full panel. In the event that you have not been  
20 here to do formal testimony of this nature, two  
21 things if you have written testimony to hand out  
22 for us to share with you, please give to the  
23 Sergeant, Nick is our Sergeant at Arms. [Pause]  
24 And as you begin your testimony, please identify  
25 yourself for the record so--clearly okay? And as

1

2 soon as Nick gets all he's--needs, I'll start the  
3 clock for the first.

4

REED HANSEN: Okay.

5

MALE VOICE: [Off mic] your name.

6

7 REED HANSEN: My name is Reed Hansen  
8 and I was--I'm just exhausted, I was ready to bail  
9 out after the Borough Presidents spoke. But, you  
10 know, I [crosstalk]--

11

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,

12

thank you for holding out.

13

14 REED HANSEN: Well thank you because  
15 Miriam Wenger who was to precede me is [off mic]  
16 from my senior center, she's a Holocaust survivor.  
17 She was the feisty lady in black, maybe you  
18 noticed her earlier down here. And she's an  
19 inspiration for us at JASA West Side Senior  
20 Center, 120 West 76th Street. And I want to say I  
21 am totally opposed to the closure of any  
22 neighborhood senior center, I think that would be  
23 a great mistake for this city of New York that I  
24 love so much, it's a city of neighborhoods, of  
25 diverse cultures. A former mayor used to always  
call it the Capital the World and the reason it is  
the Capital of the World is because of this

1  
2 diversity and ethnic neighborhoods, and that's why  
3 I retired here and I don't want to see that end.  
4 And I know that what's made me stay on is because  
5 I know that JASA West Side Senior Center at 120  
6 West 76th Street, is full of anxious people,  
7 because we don't know if we can meet the 75  
8 lunches served every single day and there's a lot-  
9 -believe me, there's a lot of anxiety there among  
10 those people. And I hope that there's a way that  
11 we can continue if we don't meet the 75 lunches a  
12 day--and by the way, I have to say that they are  
13 kosher lunches and I'm told that it's the only  
14 kosher lunch in Manhattan, there might be some out  
15 in Queens and Brooklyn and elsewhere, but--and I'm  
16 not even a Jew. It's brought up here of senior  
17 centers welcoming outsiders and I have been--I'm  
18 not even Jewish and a preponderance of the people  
19 at JASA West Side Senior Center are Jews, but not  
20 even in my own church have I been welcomed so  
21 warmly as I have there. I feel like they're my  
22 family, I really do after going there a year. So,  
23 you know, that's all I wanted to say, I just--for  
24 the people at JASA who are my extended family,  
25 please don't close us and don't close any

1

2 neighborhood senior center in this wonderful city  
3 of our.

4

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Reed, I--you  
5 love New York, but is that a Boston hat you're  
6 wearing?

7

REED HANSEN: No, Brooklyn  
8 [crosstalk]--

9

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Oh, okay. Just  
10 wanted to be sure, okay.

11

KAY HANSEN: I'm Kay Hansen, I also  
12 am a member of JASA and, as Miriam left, she said,  
13 speak for me and this is what she said, she said  
14 JASA is my home, please don't leave me homeless.  
15 And that's the subject of which I think is  
16 important in all of this is the community. There  
17 was an occasion not too many weeks past that  
18 around the table someone said well where's so-and-  
19 so, haven't seen her, that was Friday. Monday  
20 haven't seen her, so some of the members went over  
21 to her home, found that she had fallen on Thursday  
22 was lying there, had been for four days. And  
23 because someone missed her at JASA on Friday and  
24 then on a Monday, I think her life was spared.

25

MALE VOICE: Absolutely.

1  
2 KAY HANSEN: And that's what I mean  
3 by community, by people who care. I have met  
4 friends there, I'm in awe of some of these elderly  
5 people, and now I'm one of them, I'm all, you  
6 know, legitimately 68 years old and proud of it,  
7 but when I see these people in their 70s, their  
8 80s, and into their 90s, they're alert, they're  
9 wonderful conversationalists, I get a lot more  
10 than I give when I go to JASA. Please don't close  
11 the small centers.

12 [Pause]

13 JOAN SERRANO LAUFER: My name is  
14 Joan Serrano--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Turn on the  
16 mic. So that we can get it on the recording.

17 JOAN SERRANO LAUFER: The mic?

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Yeah.

19 JOAN SERRANO LAUFER: My name is  
20 Joan Serrano Laufer, I'm the Executive Director of  
21 Queensboro Council for Social Welfare, where I  
22 have been executive director for 20 years. Before  
23 that I ran a senior center in the Bronx, before  
24 that, while I was in social work school, I worked  
25 for community centers that ran senior centers. To

1  
2 say that this proposal would help get better  
3 services to our seniors is to rely on the wind.  
4 As we just heard, I said wow, having gone after  
5 them, the centers do good in ways that are not  
6 measured by this proposal. The proposal says  
7 meals aren't important, but then you have to go  
8 and do at least 75. Well sometimes small is  
9 better, as was mentioned by somebody else, we've  
10 learn that with the school system and maybe it's  
11 true with senior centers too. And I just know  
12 that in Southeast Queens where my office is,  
13 there's such turmoil over the case management  
14 system, there's such frightened people over the  
15 food programs. Don't change everything at once,  
16 don't change it now while we're all so worried  
17 about the economy, about people's jobs, about  
18 what's happening. It really is important that  
19 something that people know is friendly and safe be  
20 there for them. Now some of the things that were  
21 said by the panel in favor of the RFP were that  
22 people weren't connected to different groups, were  
23 that certain services weren't included. That's  
24 just what my agency has been doing for the last 20  
25 years, we've been--well longer than that, but I've

1  
2 been there doing it 20 years. One of the things  
3 DFTA funds us to do is to connect services, to  
4 connect people, so I work closely with the Queens  
5 Mental Health Council, I work closely with the  
6 Queens Interagency Council on Aging, I work  
7 closely with the Queens Health and Business  
8 Alliance, and we pull resources from all those  
9 programs into our senior centers. We have a  
10 Speakers Bureau where we get lawyers and doctors  
11 and other health providers into senior centers,  
12 and we're one of those services that have been  
13 just completely cut, although we are money that  
14 the City Council fought for and scrimped for and  
15 pushed into the budget. So I think the whole  
16 thing at DFTA has to be looked at as a package, we  
17 have to see that, yes, we want to serve more  
18 people, yes, we want to serve people better, but  
19 we can't do it, as was said, at the expense of  
20 what's working well. If it's not broke, don't fix  
21 it.

22 MALE VOICE: Right.

23 JOAN SERRANO LAUFER: And thank you  
24 so much, Councilwoman, for staying so long.

25 [Pause]

1  
2 ALBERTA R. PAYNE: First of all, I'd  
3 like to thank you [pause] and the Council for this  
4 opportunity to speak to you about closing our  
5 smaller centers. [Pause] Some of them have been  
6 a haven to get food, for socialization, to get  
7 some help with their health, and its most  
8 important--I didn't say my name, did I? [Pause]  
9 All right. My name is Alberta R. Payne and I just  
10 been [pause] selected by our resident of our--woo,  
11 okay, by the President of our Resident Association  
12 to be the advisory committee chairperson and for  
13 the senior center. Now I'm a senior I understand  
14 many things. The socialization, as I was saying,  
15 getting in touch with health [pause] criteria, how  
16 to take care of yourself, how to take care of your  
17 body, also we've learning skills, we're learning  
18 how to do--to work computers and also some of the  
19 guys who have skills, they come in and they teach  
20 each other and whatnot. So I'm just saying that  
21 we need to do better than we're doing and we don't  
22 want to have our centers closed. We're trying to  
23 better the situation, make it better, clean it up,  
24 and now they say they want to close us down. So  
25 where do those people go to eat, where do they go

1  
2 to socialize, where do they go to get help for  
3 benefits, for health. We have our [pause] you  
4 know, we have folks who do not even have medical  
5 care, so we have to try to help them to get  
6 medical care. We try to get them--some folks  
7 don't have clothes and whatnot, we do these  
8 things. Now I'm a member--my development, I'm in  
9 NYCHA and we've been having a lot of problems with  
10 that and we're trying to find ways to keep our  
11 center open. And now they talked about closing  
12 two of our centers nearby, senior centers nearby,  
13 so some of the people are not going to want to  
14 come because there's not a transportation  
15 available. So what do we do there? So they're  
16 there, we're here, and we're trying to get  
17 together so we can do better. [Pause] Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.  
19 Thank you. And thank you for waiting, you think  
20 I've been patient, I don't--I know that you have  
21 been here for many, many hours, so I want to thank  
22 you for your patience. I hope that my Council  
23 here did not change the order of my panels,  
24 because he took my slips away. Can I have a  
25 panel, please? [Pause] Yes. Thelma Thomas,

1

2

please come forward; Libby Frischer, Encore

3

Senior, Libby, are you here? Give me another one.

4

Linda Kanter? Linda? Give me another one.

5

Sandra Schulte? Oh, okay, give me three more.

6

Sister Margaret Rose. [Pause] Jim Fourait,

7

Circle of [pause] He's here?

8

MALE VOICE: No.

9

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: No, okay.

10

George Rivera?

11

[Off mic]

12

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Come forward,

13

please. Rick [pause] Bernan?

14

MALE VOICE: Brennan.

15

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Brennan? Rick

16

Brennan? I need two more. [Pause] Okay. Let me

17

finish the panel 'cause I'm trying to... Jerry.

18

[Pause] Greenwich House? I can't make out the

19

last name. Jerry, okay. Cynthia Zalisky? That's

20

this one, and Carol--Carolyn Stem, please come

21

forward. Okay, this will complete the next panel

22

and--

23

MALE VOICE: [Off mic]

24

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Oh, we have one

25

more, Kathy Andrade? Andrade? Hudson Guild?

1

2 [Pause] Kathy?

3 [Off mic]

4 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Canty.

5 MALE VOICE: Kathy.

6 FEMALE VOICE: Kathy.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Kathy. Okay.

8 We're going to let Kathy come forward. Nick, can  
9 we get another chair at the table for Kathy?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

12 This--is there anyone else here who wanted to  
13 testify who I did not call? And if you want to,  
14 you need to give Nick a little piece of paper that  
15 he's going to insist that you fill out, 'cause  
16 that's just procedure. I want to thank you all  
17 for waiting and being so patient. We very much  
18 want to hear everyone and everything that you have  
19 to say and sometimes these hearings do take a long  
20 time, but it does not lessen the value of the  
21 information or your word here today. So thank you  
22 for waiting and you identify yourself for the  
23 record when you begin your testimony. I'm going  
24 to clock you for three minutes, but please don't--  
25 you want disintegrate when the clock runs out.

1  
2 I'll give you some leeway if you're about to  
3 finish, okay? So you can choose the order. Come  
4 closer to the mic so that we can pick up your  
5 voice clearly and you may begin. [Pause] And  
6 state your name for the record, please.

7 [Pause]

8 MALE VOICE: Say again.

9 KATHY ANDRADE: Okay. My name is  
10 Kathy Andrade, I represent Hudson Guild of New  
11 York City. Thank you for the opportunity to speak  
12 on behalf of the center. I am a member of the  
13 center, Hudson Guild is in the heart of Chelsea,  
14 it has been established there for more than a  
15 hundred years. Dr. Elliott started the center  
16 long before there were housing for--and we are  
17 devastated by the information that you're planning  
18 to close some centers. That will be, if anything  
19 happens to our center, I don't know what will  
20 happen because the center covers the Chelsea area,  
21 Hudson Guild from 7th Industry [phonetic] to 28th  
22 Street and 9th Avenue and it's a big community.  
23 If you come to our center you will find there is  
24 so much life, there's so much community, there's  
25 so much participation from all the members. We

1  
2 have Jewish, we have Hispanics, we have Latin  
3 Americans, we have Chinese, we have Japanese. And  
4 I was really identifying with the person who spoke  
5 about the other languages because we're just going  
6 to start--we just started a new group of people  
7 who want [off mic] because the majority are  
8 Hispanics, we have about 13 Americans who want to  
9 learn Spanish and at lunchtime we share the  
10 tables, we move from table to table, so we can  
11 practice, you know, the daily saluto [phonetic]  
12 or, you know, greetings of have a good night. And  
13 there is so much community, if you go to our  
14 classrooms, you'll see the classrooms full of  
15 participants, where there's art, we have field  
16 trips, we do some workshops in coordination with  
17 some museums, we have trips. And you see most of  
18 those, although we may have relatives, some's  
19 children, but they don't live nearby and this is  
20 our family, this is our life. The center means so  
21 much to all of us and we are in shock to hear that  
22 someday maybe that center will disappear. So  
23 please, have a heart, do not close any centers in  
24 the city because this will mean death to many of  
25 those senior citizens who depends on this because

1  
2 the senior center is there life, is their second  
3 home and sometime maybe their primary home. I'd  
4 rather leave my presentation because we have so  
5 many others to go. And thank you once again for  
6 the opportunity to speak on behalf of Hudson  
7 Guild. God bless you all.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I just--Kathy,  
9 want to clarify for everyone here that the City  
10 Council does not intend to close centers, we don't  
11 support the closure of any center. We're here to  
12 talk about the plans that the Department for the  
13 Aging and the potential that it has as a result to  
14 close centers. So the City Council is not in any  
15 way planning, support, or wants to close any  
16 senior center in the city. Okay.

17 [Pause]

18 [Off mic]

19 FEMALE VOICE: It's on, it's on.

20 THELMA THOMAS: Yes, my name is  
21 Thelma Thomas, I'm from Lincoln Housing Center and  
22 we are not a large group, but we do everything for  
23 ourselves. The first thing our director he find  
24 every ways to help us, he help us smile, because  
25 he sent us to free dentist, anything that is

1  
2 possibly do for us. And it would be a big, big  
3 loss--we have a garden, we have fruits, we have  
4 everything. The only thing that we don't have his  
5 money, but we don't matter that, but to close a  
6 center that you can sit and talk, you sit and  
7 laugh, you sew, you crochet, you knit, you paint.  
8 Why close us? [Pause] Every time you call on us,  
9 we are there. We vote, you say vote, we'll vote,  
10 we do everything and the first people you pick on  
11 is the aging artists, the seniors. Why? [Pause]  
12 I don't understand it, the first I come to this  
13 place, I sit and I listen and, you know, I applaud  
14 you people to standing up for us because it's like  
15 we're a lost sheep, we don't have anybody. Nobody  
16 say anything but close the center, close the  
17 center. We used to get medical twice a month, now  
18 we only get it once. We--the only thing why our  
19 food don't sell a lot, the things that they bring  
20 to us is not so palatable--I may talk funny,  
21 because I'm from a [off mic] country. It not so  
22 palatable, you're going to give me ham, and then  
23 you put syrup on it. [Pause] You have blood  
24 pressure, you have sugar, you can't eat that. So  
25 you see, none of them come and say, so and so to

1  
2 us, or so-and-so. All we can hear is from the  
3 telephone and I thank Mrs. Quinn for calling us  
4 and invite us to this meeting because we wouldn't  
5 know what happening and our director is so upset  
6 to know that our center going to be closed. So  
7 please, help us, don't close.

8 [Pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thelma, I think  
10 you speak beautifully.

11 THELMA THOMAS: Thank you.

12 [Pause]

13 CYNTHIA ZALISKY: Madam Chairman,  
14 good evening. My name is Cynthia Zalisky, I'm the  
15 Executive Director of the Queens Jewish Community  
16 Council. We're the lead agency of 140 faith-based  
17 organizations in the borough of Queens that has  
18 successfully served the elderly population for the  
19 past 40 years. While initially established to  
20 serve the Jewish population, we are proud of the  
21 fact that our clients represent every ethnic group  
22 in the borough: Asians, South Asians, Hispanics,  
23 and African-Americans. QJCC has more than 10,000  
24 clients annually and anyone who comes to our door-  
25 -doors are served. We have a wide range of social

1  
2 services and supportive services for seniors and  
3 our--we have been cited by our wonderful Borough  
4 President Helen Marshall as being a--cited for our  
5 tremendous hard work, deep compassion, and  
6 incredible determination in serving our multi-  
7 ethnic borough. Mayor Bloomberg recently wrote of  
8 my agency, QJCC administers a wide variety of  
9 services, all of which share three common traits:  
10 efficiency, effectiveness and empathy. He went on  
11 to say QJCC is a shining example of humanity's  
12 ability to affect positive change. This vital  
13 organization represents New York City at its best.  
14 Madam Chairman, right now I'm a square peg that's  
15 being pushed into a round hole. DFTA has told me  
16 that since the bulk of my money that--for to live  
17 on is from the Borough President of Queens that I  
18 must be part of the RFP for senior centers or I  
19 will lose funding. The issue is that if I don't  
20 have that funding, we will close. We haven't got  
21 the means to stay in, this is so unfair. It's  
22 unfair to our clients, it's unfair to the borough.  
23 Without these funds, our agency is forced to cut  
24 valuable services to countless seniors and we'll  
25 have to close our doors. Our clients are caught

1  
2 in a situation that's not they're doing. By  
3 eliminating our ability to do our work, many  
4 seniors will fall between the cracks, they will be  
5 put in a waiting list compelled to go from agency  
6 to agency for their needs. Many cannot navigate  
7 the system and some, due to limited mobility, are  
8 unable to go from place to place. Queens Jewish  
9 Community Council is a community organization,  
10 situated where the seniors live, they know and  
11 trust us--trust for seniors is a very important  
12 factor. They--we treat them with dignity, the  
13 only thing many have going for them. The city  
14 needs to recognize that the service that  
15 organizations such as the Queens Jewish Community  
16 Council must continue. Why should we be penalized  
17 for being effective in the community? We are the  
18 ones who know our clients' faces and we are the  
19 ones that are culturally sensitive to their  
20 special needs. I implore you, Madam Chairman, to  
21 help us scrap this RFP. Thank you.

22 JORGE RIVERA: Madam Chairman, my  
23 name is Jorge Rivera [phonetic] and I am a senior  
24 who attend the Mosholu Montefiore Senior Center in  
25 the North Bronx almost every day since my

1  
2 retirement five years ago, now you know how old I  
3 am. It is my second home. I am also president of  
4 the advisory board, and I have three other  
5 individuals here with me. It is well-established  
6 that senior centers are most beneficial to all  
7 seniors, there is no argument about that, nobody  
8 argues about that. I understand that there are  
9 currently over 300 senior centers throughout the  
10 city, some of which are underutilized. And as a  
11 result, the city administration has announced a  
12 far-reaching modernization and restructuring plan  
13 to try and fix the problem. Particularly in this  
14 trying days. [Pause] And I think that is  
15 essentially a good thing--if it is not done in  
16 haste, but planned properly and accomplished  
17 gradually in full consultation with the parties  
18 affected, particularly Council Members, senior  
19 centers, and seniors themselves. Do not balance  
20 the budget on the--at the expense of seniors. It  
21 is said that senior centers are so underutilized  
22 that they offer little more than lunch and bingo,  
23 well not ours because we do more with less. I  
24 count over 27 different activities and programs  
25 taking place at our center every week besides

1  
2 lunch and bingo. And I suspect that almost all  
3 the other senior centers do much the same, perhaps  
4 they're just not been fully appreciated or  
5 adequately funded as they should be. Senior  
6 centers are indispensable to the well-being of  
7 mind and body of seniors. There's no such--  
8 there's no reason for anyone to feel lonely or  
9 isolated when there is such care and in friendly  
10 places called senior centers attending to their  
11 needs. So improve them, by all means, yes, but  
12 don't decrease their funding or ever shut them  
13 down. [Pause] Indiscriminately because my  
14 friends, you just may be creating more problem on  
15 the long run than you're solving in the short run  
16 and we will not forget it, because not all our  
17 seniors have short memories. In fact, most of us  
18 have quite long memories. That got in there.

19 [Pause]

20 CAROLYN STEM: Well, this esteemed  
21 panel here that I have the privilege of being with  
22 is the exact reason why I'm here testifying.  
23 These small little centers in New York are so  
24 symbolic of what New York is about.

25 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Please identify

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25

yourself.

CAROLYN STEM: And my name is Carolyn Stem, I am a student of the Joint Public Affairs Committee for Older Adults, IFSA, the advocacy training course. This JPAC training course is a part of JASA serving older adults in the New York area for many years. And thank you for allowing me to speak. It is quite, to me, unbelievable to trivialize the--into dollars and cents the importance of a seniors sentence--excuse me, a senior center and its closings. I was amazed at how polarizing growing old can be, and it is for many. With families gone or far away and unavailable, many have nothing or nobody to turn to accept to the goodness of caring neighbors and a caring city. New York has fostered many programs and established departments to try to adhere to caring for the elderly and especially the poor, but one area the city may not be aware of that is so crucial to is this sought after well-being is the senior center. Seniors love the centers, for many the existence of a senior center is like the nucleus of a family, a place to go to, to talk, to laugh, to get information, and for

1  
2 some, to receive meals. And in that context, the  
3 senior center can become an extremely important  
4 focal point for the aging population and a focal  
5 point for the city to reach out to that aging  
6 population. The baby boomers are aging right  
7 along, many of us have worked their entire lives,  
8 are sophisticated, quite educated, computer and  
9 world savvy, what an exciting place for them to  
10 bring their knowledge, their youthfulness, and  
11 their excitement. What a place for them to talk  
12 with others, to advise and befriend newfound  
13 friends. What a place for them to teach each  
14 other's skills or tell of adventures and what a  
15 place to hear concerts and entertainment and what  
16 a place and that's just it--what a place. Where?  
17 Where could that place be if these senior centers  
18 are not there or are closed, incapacitated, bare  
19 boned, or sub-standardized. Closed, shorter  
20 hours, no programs--where else could the older  
21 seniors mingle with the young seniors and forget a  
22 few hours that they are old or are getting old.  
23 [Pause] I won't finish on that.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: No, please, if  
25 it's not too much more.

1

CAROLYN STEM: It's no--

2

3

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Please finish,

4

yeah.

5

CAROLYN STEM: --it's--these senior

6

centers can produce something which in the long

7

run can truly help the city, they can produce

8

happiness, and a sense of belonging, both of which

9

take their toll as the aging process goes on.

10

What a simple fix for the city, senior centers

11

that serve the aging. It's--the benefits are

12

immeasurable to the healthcare of the seniors, to

13

caregivers that help--it helps caregivers ,I'm

14

sure it keeps many seniors from nursing homes,

15

which, as we know, is also an expense to the city.

16

These are vital--this is a vital thing for our

17

city and I hope that it will continue no matter

18

how small the little senior center is, it serves,

19

it is a family, it is a nucleus. [Pause] Thank

20

you.

21

MALE VOICE: Very nice.

22

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you all

23

for your testimony, thank you for being here,

24

thank you for waiting, and thank you all for your

25

patience. And it is now about three minutes after

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2

six and I adjourn this hearing.

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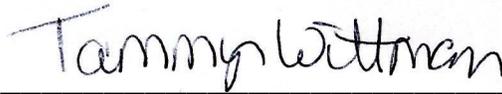
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Handwritten signature of Tammy Wittman in cursive script.Date December 17, 2008