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COMMITTEE ON AGING

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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September 18, 2019
Start: 10:11 a.m.
Recess: 12:05 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Margaret S. Chin,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Chaim M. Deutsch
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Mathieu Eugene
Deborah L. Rose
Mark Treyger
Paul A Vallone

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez
Commissioner at DFTA

Eileen Mullarkey
Assistant Commissioner for in-home services and
case management

Katelyn Andrews
Director of Public Policy at LiveON New York

Molly Krakowski
Senior Director of Government Affairs at JASA

Po-Ling Ng
Open Door Senior Center

J.T. Falcone
Policy Analyst and United Neighborhood Houses

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [GAVEL] Good morning. I am Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair of the Committee on Aging. Thank you all for joining us today for the Committee's oversight hearing on Protecting Seniors from the Extreme Heat and Cold.

This past summer was brutal, it was the hottest summer on record for our planet and July was the tenth hottest month ever recorded for our city.

Heat emergency pose a great risk for everyone, but especially our seniors. Seniors are more vulnerable to extreme high temperatures since their bodies are less able to regulate heat. Every year our city average 450 heat related emergency room visits, 150 heat related hospital admissions, and 13 heat strokes. Many of these hospital visitors are seniors.

With this reality, New York City operates 500 cooling centers, which are institutions and spaces that allow the public to come in for air conditioning during hot weather. The city has cooling centers as senior centers in public housing facility and public library for the public during heat emergencies.

These cooling centers are especially important to help protect our seniors during extreme hot

temperatures. However, it was recently reported that many cooling centers are unreasonably far from seniors. In fact, 30 percent of seniors live more than a half-mile from cooling centers and many seniors have difficulty finding cooling centers all together. This is unacceptable. Many seniors especially those who have mobility issues may feel discouraged from going to a cooling center because it's too far. And others may opt out of going all together because cooling centers are a headache to find.

According to the Department for the Aging, DFTA, the majority of their 249 center seniors act as cooling centers. I understand that DFTA senior centers represent less than half of all city cooling centers, but I wanted to stress that DFTA, as our city's aging department should be our seniors loudest advocates and thus DFTA is not off the hook.

I would like to know how DFTA is coordinating with other city agencies to get the word out about cooling centers to older adults. How DFTA is helping to keep these cooling centers running during the heat waves and what role is DFTA playing in getting seniors to the closest cooling center.

I also want to express my concern about seniors who live alone and maybe suffering during heat waves with no one to turn to. I want to know what the agency is doing to reach this vulnerable subsets of seniors to.

While the summer is coming to an end, winter is right around the corner. I'm also interested in learning how DFTA is preparing to help protect our city seniors during another possibly brutal cold season. We have heard reports from providers that many senior centers cooling, and heating system are in dire need of repairs.

In the Council's Fiscal 2020 Preliminary Budget Response, we call for fully funding capital needs across 255 senior centers and community centers in NYCHA's portfolio. We also call for a new expend funding stream of \$1 million to ensure rapid completion of emergency repairs to cooling and heating systems within NYCHA's development and elsewhere.

I look forward to hearing updates from DFTA about how much funding the agencies have used so far to help malfunctioning systems and where senior centers,

especially those at NYCHA are receiving vital repairs on their heating and cooling system.

Together with DFTA, the committee wants to make sure that our seniors are protected during this upcoming winter season and that we are ready to address heat waves again next summer. I would like to thank the committee staff for helping in organizing this hearing. Our Counsel Nuzhat Chowdhury; Policy Analyst Kalima Johnson; and Finance Analyst Daniel Kroop; and Finance Unit Head Dohini Sompura.

I would also like to thank my Legislative Director Myriam Guerra and I would like to thank the Council Members of the Committee that have joined us today. Council Member Diaz and Council Member Vallone.

I would like to now ask our Council to administer the oath to the panel.

COUNCIL CLERK: Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Welcome Commissioner again,
your second hearing?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Good morning. Good morning Chairwoman Chin and members of the Aging Committee. As you said, September is National Preparedness month. So, I thank you Madame Chair and the Committee Members and the City Council for convening this timely hearing that sheds light on how we are prepared to ensure older New Yorkers continue to access much needed services during weather related emergencies. Given the impact of climate change, we all undoubtable believe that weather conditions may become more frequent and more severe in the future.

Before I proceed with the cooling center testimony and detailing the steps taken and some of the lessons learned this past July and August, I ask that you allow me just a few seconds, the opportunity to provide an update on the air conditioning, installations, repairs and improvement at DFTA sites.

Thank you for your advocacy to the Mayor, DFTA received \$4 million in baseline funding to help with these much-needed repairs. Before I became Commissioner, there were approximately 34 sites that required air conditioning improvements. By late

1
2 spring, that number dramatically reduced to
3 approximately twelve or a dozen. And by July, all
4 had some work in progress. As of today, I am pleased
5 to report that only six remain in the final stages of
6 repair or procurement, or in some kind of procurement
7 process.

8 That being said, interim provisions including
9 portable and window air conditioning units were made
10 available if appropriate and when needed. As a
11 result of these improvements and repairs, we were
12 better prepared to face the heat waves that we
13 experienced this July and August which serves as a
14 great Segway to DFTA's emergency preparedness plan
15 which includes cooling centers.

16 For the past twelve years, DFTA, Department for
17 the Aging, has had a borough of emergency
18 preparedness responsible for developing DFTA's
19 emergency preparedness plan. An over-arching goal of
20 which is to provide older New Yorkers, DFTA staff and
21 the contracted service providers information
22 necessary to help ensure safety before, during and
23 after an emergency.

24 DFTA's emergency response plan consistent with
25 similar protocol set forth by sister agencies

1 including New York Police Department, the Fire
2 Department and others detailed procedures and
3 protocols to be employed by each DFTA borough. Our
4 Borough of Community Services, a long-term care in
5 our active aging borough.
6

7 During specific emergencies including heat, power
8 outages, coastal storms, transportation disruptions
9 and winter weather. It also includes a provide a
10 local emergency response plan for each contract
11 agency.

12 Before I go on, it is important to note the many
13 tools the city employs to provide information to the
14 public. Chief among them are Notify NYC and the NYC
15 Emergency Management, the NYCEM lead Advance Warning
16 System, the AWS.

17 During an emergency, agencies work with the
18 Mayor's Office to issue press releases, update social
19 media and provide information to 311 and send
20 messaging. Notify NYC, the city's free emergency
21 notification system has grown significantly since
22 launching in 2007 and now has 770,000 subscribers.
23 It has expanded to offer common notification in 13
24 languages, American sign language and audio formats.
25 There is a mobile application that has been seen by

more than 80,000 downloads. Notify NYC is advertised through a variety of outlets including bus shelters, social media, ready New York events, newsletters, elected official and other means.

Registration is free and open to anyone with information provided through landline phones, mobile phones, instant message or emails and again, through social media. Having access to a computer in order to register is no longer required. Registration is also available by calling 311 and residents who prefer to receive the information through their landlines, which we know is a choice for many seniors have that as an option.

The AWS is designed to alert organizations who work with people with disabilities and/or access and functional needs to various types of hazard and emergencies in New York City. Emergencies in New York City that may affect people's independence and their daily lives.

Participating organizations receive public preparedness and emergency information intended for use by individuals with disabilities or access or functional needs. These organizations then rely through this information via email, text or direct

call. And these organizations can do that through their clients as well as through other organizations.

As such, emergency information is ultimately provided to individuals through trusted preexisting conditions and specific to their needs. Often, that organization will play a role in that persons emergency plan, as they provide an essential service that enables their continued independence in the community.

During larger emergencies such as snowstorms or extreme heat, NYCEM the New York City's Emergency Management team also hosts conference calls with city agencies and large service providers to give them direct information and guidance to pass along to their clients.

Now, referring back to cover the course of the past twelve years, key functions of the Borough of Emergency Preparedness has been to raise awareness of possible in appending emergencies during weather related advisories, tips and guidance before, during and after serious weather conditions.

With respect to facing an emergency, a key focus has been on the provisions of alternate congregate food service, especially in the event of a center

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2 closure, as well as protocol for provisions for home
3 delivered meals, case management and home care
4 services. Briefly, I will just give you an overview.
5 In the event of a snow related emergency activations,
6 we advise senior centers to ask their seniors to stay
7 at home and to avoid walking in the streets. This is
8 fall prevention month, Fall Prevention is a key
9 signature project at the Department for the Aging.

10 In anticipation of inclement weather and center
11 closures, most center participants will receive an
12 emergency food package that contains food for three
13 days. For home delivered meals, when we have ample
14 lead time, extra food packages can be sent with the
15 last home delivered meals service. If we have less
16 lead time, as is often in the case of emergencies, we
17 can help ensure seniors receive extra emergency food
18 packages. Moreover, meal delivery drivers are asked
19 to report on the conditions of the homebound elderly.

20 During the summer, seniors are to be asked if
21 they need to be taken to a cooling center. During
22 the winter, drivers observe home conditions and alert
23 their agency of the safety and health concerns that
24 they may have. Additionally, case management
25

agencies make direct phone calls to access clients conditions and needs.

We had what we believe to be a solid emergency plan in place. The plan, however, was put to test during the sustained multiday extreme heat emergency of this past July and there were several emergencies this past July and August. On July 13th, the city experienced a localized blackout in Manhattan that had a significant impact on a senior center in the Theater District, Encore Neighborhood Senior Center. Initially, there was no disruption of service or food damage as power was restored quickly.

On July 16th, however, when the Center opened and was in full operation, several participants and staff fell sick. It was later discovered that they were exposed to carbon monoxide poisoning stemming from a damaged exhaust system caused by the outage. Participants and staff were immediately given medical attention. It's not in my testimony, but the staff of that Center, Jeremy and the Program Director Jose, were exceptional in their response and immediately contacted DFTA.

The Center was immediately closed, people were evacuated and given medical attention. DFTA and the

Center Director jointly engaged the Fire Department and the Department of Buildings to inspect the work and to reopen the premises. The outage impacted the integrity of a gas line. While the Center has since reopened, this program had to use a caterer to continue meal service for an extended period of time until Con Edison could approve and indicate that the line was fully operational.

Although this situation was unfortunate, it tested our emergency outage response capability, which prepared us for the outages in parts of Brooklyn later that week. Although none of the Brooklyn providers located within the outage zones were affected, we contacted each of them to ensure the emergency plans were in place.

Also, on July 16th, the Mayor declared a heat emergency for Friday, July 19th through Sunday, July 21st. Once the heat emergency was declared, New York City Emergency Management began the activation process for cooling centers throughout the city. There are over 580 cooling centers identified throughout the five boroughs of which 249 were DFTA congregate sites.

Upon activation of the heat plan, DFTA along with other cooling center partners, such as NYCHA, DYCD Salvation Army and the Public Library systems work to confirm the centers hours of operation. It was during this process when DFTA began calling its congregate sites to request that they extend hours beyond their regular service hours where possible and to prepare for activation through Sunday, July 21st.

While many centers were able to adjust their schedules, some centers had certain restrictions and limitations to opening beyond regular business hours. In theory, a cooling center should be available to operate beyond regular business hours if the emergency requires it to make sure that they are open and to help the public alleviate the hardship of excessive heat.

DFTA however, has no authority to mandate 249 senior centers and I don't like the word senior centers, congregate centers to operate beyond regular service hours. Serving as a cooling center outside of regular business hours is not a requirement under existing contract, it is strictly voluntary.

This process not only revealed that we needed to reclassify DFTA's cooling centers that were not able to provide services on extended hours, but it also revealed that the partnership between DFTA, the contractors and their commitment to serve older New Yorkers in an emergency. It is not as congruent as one would like to think or expect.

It took an enormous amount of staff time to engage and enroll a number of service providers to open beyond regular service hours. It was during this protracted engagement process that we were able to identify several impediments and varies to opening many cooling centers. Again, beyond extended hours for weekends and holidays.

I want to emphasize that the cooling centers on Friday during the day, the 249 centers, served about 23,000 individuals during those regular hours. I will give you the numbers for the extended hours at a

1
2 later point in the testimony. However, we realized
3 that there were religious observation limitations and
4 also leasing arrangements and occupancy arrangements,
5 which ultimately precluded or barred a number of
6 centers from opening.

7 As a result, 49 of the 249 cooling centers were
8 unable to open beyond extended hours and their days
9 of operations for weekend. We adjusted their
10 schedules on the cooling center finder accordingly.
11 It was encouraging that 100 contractors immediately
12 responded and said that they would be open for
13 extended hours on Friday and would open again
14 Saturdays and Sunday.

15 With that said, as we got closer to Friday as a
16 new Commissioner I was dismayed and concerned that
17 many providers had not responded to our calls or
18 emails. I then wrote a letter to all the contractors
19 asking that they reconsider and inform us of the
20 limitations that prevented them opening and that we
21 would work with them to mitigate some of those
22 impediments, such as staff overtime, limited staff,
23 refreshment costs.

24 In that same letter, I reminded them of their
25 professional obligations and commitment to the

quality of life of New York's older population.

After sending the letter, I also reached out to some of our umbrella organizations including LiveON New York and United Neighborhood Houses to assist us in our outreach efforts and to encourage the respective members to open during this extreme heat emergency; this was unprecedented. Both responded immediately and I want to personally thank Allison and Susan for their partnership.

It's worth noting that NYCEM also provided and was an incredible partner because they gave us staff supports through the community emergency response teams in cases for those centers where we had staff shortages, which prevented the center from opening. So, we were able to open some of them with that additional staff.

Moreover, NYCEM has graciously agreed to review and offer suggestions to our emergency plan provisions that we have made since the July incident. All that to say, that we are extremely grateful for all our partners including those service providers, contractors, that recognized the heat emergency of July 19th through July 21. Yet I was surprised and disappointed – I am sorry, I lost my place. Yet I

1 was surprised and disappointed by the service
2 providers who were reluctant to open and required a
3 call from me or our chief operating officer or senior
4 staff to get them to reconsider. This is not what I
5 expected as a new Commissioner from a network that so
6 often is vocal and effective when they perceive the
7 needs of older New Yorkers are not being met.

8 By Friday afternoon, the first day of the
9 excessive heat, we had activated 138 DFTA cooling
10 centers who agreed to extend hours. 114 were
11 activated for a Saturday and 101 for a Sunday.
12 Again, I want to reiterate that 249 were available
13 during regular working hours.

14 It was also gratifying to see how the cooling
15 center, DFTA cooling centers took charge. They were
16 well attended and very active. And I am going to do
17 an **animism here**. In East Harlem, I was invited to
18 join a karaoke group, which I declined to make sure
19 that they didn't leave it in a mass exodus. In the
20 Bronx, the seniors were watching a Medea family
21 moving which was quite fun, which we were also low to
22 interrupt just with our greetings.

23 Despite the initial challenges to get DFTA
24 cooling centers open, we were informed by NYCEM that
25

the DFTA cooling centers that offered extended hours and days of operation on the weekend house more than 50 percent of the New Yorkers seeking comfort during extended operational hours.

On Friday, again, beyond our regular working hours when we had I think it was 23,000 in attendance. On Friday for the extended hours, we had 3,093 individuals attending. On Saturday there were 4,688 who attended and on Sunday, 4,064 attended. The DFTA cooling centers as expected welcomed older New Yorkers but they also gave respite to New York City's families and children.

In closing, we are all well prepared that extreme weather can disproportionately impact vulnerable New Yorkers as the Chairwoman stated earlier including older adults far greater than other communities. This is why emergency preparedness and adaptability remain among DFTA's priorities. Emergencies by definition are unexpected and each vary in effectiveness, in intensity and severity. Lessons continue to be learned during each occurrence and plans are adjusted accordingly and because the current and future risk in light of our changing climate are significant.

Strategic adaptation to heat emergencies is a key priority for the Mayor. We look forward to our continued work with all of our partners including the City Council to review and adapt our protocols to adjust to this new normal.

Again, I thank you for your interest and partnership in addressing this ongoing concern.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Commissioner for your testimony and we also have been joined by other Committee Members, Council Member Ayala, Council Member Rose and Council Member Deutsch.

I am going to start off with a couple of questions and then I am going to pass it on to my colleagues. So, if you have a question, please let us know and thank you Commissioner for your comprehensive testimony. You have answered some of our questions and now, you gave us statistics about the centers with the cooling system being repaired and now it's only down to six.

How much of the total budget has been used?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't have that number because it's a work in progress, but I can get you that information.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, and then like, yeah, we want to know how much you are going to expect to use by January and also, we have heard from some providers that yeah, they have air conditioning but it's not that strong. Because you have seniors complaining that, you call this a cooling center. It's not that cool, so we also want to know like what is the — do all the centers know about the procedure? How they can apply for that money if they have issues with their cooling system or their HVAC system?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You know, everyone does know how every senior center — I don't like that word senior center. Every congregate site and every DFTA contractor knows exactly what the procedures are to inform us. We have a close partnership to inform us of when repairs are needed or when a replacement is needed.

With that being said, we know that the air conditioners and the repairs required vary and it's so dependent of, so there is no one answer to say this could be done in five weeks, two weeks or four days. And it's because of the type of repair that's needed, the kind of location that it's in, whether it's an expense or whether it is a capital need,

We have a team, a facilities team at DFTA that reviews each one of these situations to determine what will be required and then also reviews bids before we can actually commence a payment and installation.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't know that this would have been a normal protocol, I think July taught us. Both us and some of my other partners at cooling centers, that this was an extreme situation and that there were two factors that we needed to handle, but we had alternate means of cooling. So, it could have been putting in additional window units. It could have been having portable units, so

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2 that we try to mitigate the circumstances as much as
3 possible.

4 But the interesting piece, of course, I am going
5 off the top of here. The interesting piece was that
6 heat emergency because we were concerned about
7 outages, we needed to also moderate the kind of
8 temperature that we were using air conditioners at,
9 so that we wouldn't have a greater emergency on our
10 hands.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I remember, we all had to
12 like raise the temperature in the office.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, we all had to
14 endure 78 degrees.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: 78, the other thing that you
16 talked about in your testimony was reaching out to
17 the homebound seniors.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Have you gotten feedback from
20 the agency that provide meals on wheels, their
21 assessment on how many seniors that don't have air
22 conditioning units or need to be transported to a
23 cooling center. Did DFTA collect any of that
24 information?
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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We do not have that
3 information yet, but we do know — what I do know and
4 what I can say with certainty is that each case
5 management agency and home delivered meal provider
6 was asked to call the clients and participants. And
7 as a result, they were able to then provide whatever
8 was needed.

9 We have a provision within our case management
10 agencies who deal with homebound elderly that they
11 have additional funds to provide transportation,
12 should that be required or any of the needs that that
13 individual may have. If we could not for some reason
14 transport that individual, we then contact the family
15 and involve them in the emergency situation.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, is DFTA working with the
17 state? There's a state home energy assistant program
18 that some seniors are calling our office and asking,
19 well, I heard that — I read in the paper that you can
20 help us get an air-conditioned unit or some subsidies
21 to help pay electric bill. Does DFTA help promote
22 that program or is that —

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Eileen, do we have
24 anything on that?

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The heat program.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Eileen Mullarkey is our Assistant Commissioner for in-home services and case management.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, the Council will have to swear you in.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, so, she can provide the details that I cannot.

COUNCIL CLERK: Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, I do. The case management agencies do know about HEAP and that's something they would discuss with their clients and they also have as the Commissioner mentioned, some special supplemental funds and if a client needed an air-conditioner that they couldn't get through another source, they would help them purchase it.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, can you share with us, like, in terms of how much additional funding that they do get? Because relating to that is, I was surprised to hear from your testimony that some of the centers didn't cooperated.

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Everybody cooperated,
3 it's just that I was stunned, the amount of person
4 hours that it took to get people to that point and
5 LiveON and UNH were very supportive in making sure
6 that those numbers kept increasing.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But I think with that, my
8 concern is the resources that could available. So,
9 like in the next RFP for centers, we should really
10 think about having that as one of the either criteria
11 requirement or like, having funding provided, so that
12 centers can offer extended hours for emergencies and
13 other situations that might come up.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Councilwoman, you are
15 absolutely right. That was one of the lessons
16 learned because we saw that that was one of the
17 barriers.

18 So, in subsequent RFP's, which we will be issuing
19 to; one for home delivered meals and one for
20 congregate centers. We will put that provision that
21 if you are a designated cooling center, that there's
22 an agreement to provide extended hours and that we
23 will work with you in concert to make sure that we
24 can adopt and mitigate some of the concerns and
25 barriers.

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2 That would be great because a lot of the centers
3 probably could even open on the weekends, because
4 seniors also or older adults could definitely use the
5 activities or the meals or whatever and really need
6 to expand the services and it's a great opportunity
7 within the ORFP that we can explore that. I look
8 forward to working with you and the advocates on
9 that.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, so do we.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Diaz, I am
12 going to pass it onto you to ask your question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you Madame Chair.
14 Commissioner, good morning.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Good morning.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: You know, sometimes I am
17 afraid to ask questions because most of the time the
18 response that I get is, I'll get back to you and it
19 never happens. But I am going to take the chance
20 today and I am going to ask some questions.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, you know me, so, if
22 I say I am going to get back to you; you know I will.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Castle Hill Senior Center.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Huh?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Castle Hill Senior Center.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: The problem with the air-conditioning and the heating system have been for years and years and years. Every single year we call you, every single year we call NYCHA. What is the problem because all the response is oh, we are calling a contractor or a contractor will be there, but every year the seniors at Castle Hill Senior Center are suffering? When will that suffering end?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I can tell you that as I said earlier in my testimony, the repair of some of these system is quite complicated, because of the age of the system and also, maybe the location of the HVAC system. So, there are many factors that make it difficult and challenging to make those repairs.

I can tell you that Castle Hill is one of those centers that is being worked on right now and I can get you the details as to the status of it after this hearing and I will make sure that I give that to both the Chairwoman and you, so that you will have your answer.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Well, you know, as they used to say in the game of Throne —

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: What?

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: They used to say in the game of Throne, winter is coming.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, what are we going to do.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Winter is coming, it's a guaranteed thing.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: My last question. In May, the department reported that they are aware fifteen senior centers with malfunctioning air-conditioning and indicated, the department, that these would be restored by the end of the summer. Have these cases been resolved?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: All of them are in process as I said earlier. That there were six that we still are either in procurement or six that either in procurement or are in some state of repair.

So, the goal was of course, to have them all done by —

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: By the end of the summer; that's what you testified; the department testified.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I know exactly what I testified. I know exactly what I testified.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Well, the department testified that they would be resolved the end of the summer.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: But now you say it's a process.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's not what I am saying. I am saying that all but six were done and the six that are still remaining are either in a process of being repaired, are in some form of the completion process in some part of the completion process.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Is Castle Hill one of them?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, I can't answer that. I don't have that answer for you right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, by the end of the summer —

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: By the end of this summer —

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Are you foreseeing that these fifteen Senior Centers —

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, by the end of the summer, you are assuming that the summer has not ended. I assume, I can say that not knowing exactly

what the state of each one of the six are, I cannot affirm that that will happen, but I can say with certainty that most of them will.

I can get back to you with the state of each one of those and I can state at that time which ones will be completed by the end of the summer and which ones will not.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: So, you will get back to me on that?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I am going to assume the status of Castle Hill.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will get back to you on those two points.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: I will love you more if you do that.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am sure you will. I will make sure that I give that to you, and I will also give it to the Chair, so that it will be for the record.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you Commissioner.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You are more than welcome.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council Member.
Council Member Ayala.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good morning Commissioner.
So, I guess, it's just really a quick question. At
those sites that did not have a functioning HVAC or
AC unit was an alternative location identified?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, there were two
processes right. So, there was alternative sites and
we offered transportation. I have to say we offered
an extensive transportation plan that wasn't used
during the crisis of July and we also, if not an
alternative, we supplemented by adding additional
cooling functions.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: And the second is not so
much a question, but more of a I guess a suggestion,
because having done, I remember having to staff
cooling centers during the summer in my tenure at the
senior centers that I worked in and finding it to be
the most boring experience of my life, because nobody
would ever show up. And I think that the reason that
nobody showed up was because we could have done a
million things differently.

One, we could have outreached to the immediate
community beyond the senior center community which we

1
2 typically focus on. Right, but we forget that we
3 also have especially since most of the senior centers
4 are sited in NYCHA facilities that there should be
5 you know, an attempt to maybe flyer the buildings.
6 At least even if it's just the buildings of that
7 development, so that the seniors know that this is a
8 cooling center site that they can go to but then also
9 maybe in those cases, and I remember back then, DFTA
10 offered some level of reimbursement if there was some
11 sort of cost attributed to keeping the cooling center
12 open. Or maybe offering a meal, right, maybe a
13 dinner, a movie night.

14 So, some sort of activity that would incentivize
15 individuals and make them want to come. Because I
16 wouldn't want to come to a senior center either. I
17 was just sitting there you know, in air conditioning
18 bored to death. Maybe I am missing my [inaudible
19 1:02:35], or maybe you know, like, things are
20 happening.

21 And just finding creative ways to encourage
22 participation, so that we don't have staff just
23 sitting idle in cooling centers and no one is really
24 making use of that resource.

1
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I agree with you. One
3 of the protocols that we do have in place is we send
4 out a form, a letter, to each one of the cooling
5 centers and ask them to submit to us after the event,
6 the amount of staff over time. The cost related to
7 that and other related costs, so that we then
8 reimburse them for some of those expenses, number
9 one.

10 Number two, I can tell you Mitchell in particular
11 was hot and active that day. I went in there and
12 said is this 78 degrees, but it was active, and
13 participants were there, and it was beyond senior
14 centers, but you are absolutely right. I was pleased
15 to see how active the DFTA cooling sites –

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I think that's because I
17 think the Mitchell site is a good example of that
18 because there's a connection with the resident
19 association leadership, and so, what doesn't leave
20 the boundaries of the four walls of the senior center
21 via the director or the coordinator, leaves the
22 Resident Association Board that then ensures that the
23 rest of the development is also aware.

24 So, it's really nice right, because then you know
25 people use it if they know that's it's there. But

for the most part, I think there is just confusion about where is it? Can I go? Is it just for the members?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right and I think that's a messaging piece. Thank you for that because that was one of our lessons, that we needed to reinforce that the cooling center was there for beyond the older participants. And so, that was also a lesson that we learned during this process.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Rose, your question?

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Hi, how are you Commissioner?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: How are you.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Commissioner, are the cooling centers or heating centers open overnight? Do people sleep in these centers? No.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, no they are not open 24 hours.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: In cases of extreme weather, what happens to these seniors that you know, now need somewhere to stay because the temperature in

1
2 their home still hasn't either cooled down or in the
3 wintertime, they don't have heat. So, do we have any
4 centers that are available for over night stays?

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: None of the DFTA 249
6 facilities are open 24 hours. Those who agreed to
7 have extended hours, most of those were until about
8 eight o'clock in the evening.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Eight o'clock, and then you
10 provide transportation back to their homes. Well, I
11 am getting ahead of myself. You know, I am wondering
12 what's being done to address the cooling and heating
13 deserts in the city? You know, for example, there
14 are not some cooling or heating centers in some
15 communities, Staten Island is one of those areas
16 where there is a great bit of distance between
17 identified cooling centers and the whole communities.

18 So, what is done in that case? Is there a bus
19 provided? And even in some of these deserts, there
20 are no identified senior centers. So, there is
21 really no place for them to go. Is there any plan in
22 place to address these deserts where there are not
23 cooling centers available?

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I think you are
25 absolutely right. It's something that we've been

1
2 looking at with our partner, the New York City
3 Emergency Management Office.

4 We're looking at that - we have the 249 senior
5 centers, but we are looking at that in Staten Island.
6 We know that transportation is a challenge and an
7 issue. As a matter of fact, I was yesterday at JCC
8 and one of the first questions that came to me was
9 like, what are you going to be doing to give us
10 better transportation. But I would turn to my
11 colleagues at the New York City Emergency Management,
12 so that they can talk about how we're looking at
13 addressing some of those cooling center deserts.

14 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Good morning Council Member.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good morning.

16 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, as the Commissioner said,
17 we're going to be exploring on the off season how we
18 can increase the number of cooling centers in areas
19 of high vulnerability, high need with partners that
20 might not be known to us right now. We're going to
21 be exploring new partnerships and trying to address
22 that need.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: In cases like in Staten
24 Island, so where there are maybe not as many cooling
25 centers and do you ever have a situation where the

1 volume exceeds the capacity of the cooling centers?

2 And if so, what do you do? And that doesn't have to
3 just be Staten Island because you know, that probably
4 doesn't happen in Staten Island. But do you ever
5 have more volume than you have capacity?

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of all of the
7 challenges we encountered in July and August, that
8 was not one of them. The centers, as you well know
9 Councilwoman in Staten Island are pretty large
10 centers and so, we have not heard that at all.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do you have any I guess
12 clout with NYCHA to repair air-conditioning units in
13 their centers that -- is it prioritized? Do you
14 provide equipment? You know, in that instance where
15 you know, our NYCHA senior centers are deficient?

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's one of the
17 longstanding issues. I wouldn't say I have clout; I
18 have a great partnership with NYCHA and the Senior
19 Centers and thank you to the Council and to the
20 Mayor, we have the \$4 million to make those repairs,
21 which is one of the things that Councilman Diaz was
22 alluding to.

23 That work is in progress, so it is that strong
24 partnership that we have established. During this
25

1
2 heat emergency we all responded with a sense of
3 urgency which is where we provided the alternative
4 cooling units where the HVAC or the repair was still
5 to far out to address it.

6 So, it's that strong partnership with NYCHA and
7 the Department for the Aging that has been
8 strengthening and continues to grow, because they are
9 such a tenant, we are such an important tenant in
10 many of those NYCHA systems.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so, in an instance
12 where it's just not remediable, you know, within that
13 time - it can't be expedited, do you provide
14 transportation to other centers then?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Should transportation
16 be requested, yes. We do that and that was available
17 during this July and August, the two heat waves that
18 we experienced in July and August.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I guess the center
20 personal would have to do that? I mean, it seems to
21 be a no brainer that if the seniors are sitting in a
22 center without air, that you know, the next logical
23 step -

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, there's two
25 things that occur that is important to note. One, if

a cooling center is unable to service a cooling center because of a malfunction, it gets off the cooling center roster. Staff of the multiple agencies are in constant communication during the crisis, during the emergency and communicating.

You know, like, the situation has gotten dire, we can no longer serve and so, then we evacuate and move on. But then that center is then removed from the center calling list, so that people are not directed there erroneously.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And how are the seniors notified that that is now the course of action?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The seniors on the premise obviously will be relocated. The public at large will be notified through the 311.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: That it's no longer available.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, they have no doubt about a cooling center.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, does that answer your question?

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes, it does. I just like to -- I think that the public should know identified

1 sites that — it should be easier to access. Not all
2 of the seniors have access to the internet and that
3 it should be — maybe there should be something
4 ongoing, a list where people will know where these
5 cooling centers are in advance of a heat or cold
6 emergency.
7

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: There is two things
9 that I can say to that. One is I strongly embrace
10 your recommendation that we do a better job at
11 reminding each senior center to remind their
12 community that they are a designated cooling center
13 site. That is one thing that we will take up. The
14 other thing that I think is important to state, is
15 that NYCEM works very closely with each one of the
16 cooling centers and there's a visible signage that's
17 up not only during the summer months, but it's
18 visible.

19 So, it becomes — I all of a sudden notice them
20 right. It becomes noticeable what's a cooling
21 center, okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: But if I am not a person
23 who goes to that senior center, I won't know that.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I am saying that you
3 know, for the general public. And my last question
4 is, who inspects the heating and the cooling
5 operating plants prior to these weather emergencies?
6 Do we know in advance who is you know, prepared or
7 online? If there's an issue, can get it taken care
8 of before you know, that particular season?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, I am going to
10 answer and then I will turn it over to my colleague
11 at NYCEM.

12 What we do in advance as - obviously it depends
13 on how much lead time we have.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: No, see, that's my point.
15 I don't want there to have to be lead time. I want
16 to know what happens ongoing to ensure that
17 everything is up and ready.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Ongoing, each one of
19 the cooling centers is inspected.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Annually?

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Excuse me?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Annually or -

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, on a regular
24 basis and still designated as a cooling center. For
25 example, if Mitchell, which it wasn't that case. If

1 Mitchell's air conditioner went down, it would be
2 taken off the cooling center site. That was during
3 the year or whatever, until that situation was
4 remedied.

5
6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And someone would continue
7 to monitor that until it did and so, we would know
8 that it was either up by the time we needed it, or it
9 was still not.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, alright, thank you
12 Madame Chair. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Deutsch.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you. Good morning
15 Commissioner. So, firstly, my first questions are do
16 we know how many heat related incidents there are
17 fatalities during a heat wave when it comes to senior
18 citizens? And number two, is that does your office
19 work with a medical examiner to try to figure out to
20 see how many incidents there are in New York City in
21 regards to heat related incidents? And, I am just
22 going to go through my questions, because I only got
23 a few minutes.

24 And, also, I want to ask is that you know, as New
25 Yorkers when we have a crisis, we all get together

and we all join together, so I always offer my office as a cooling center or during the winter months if people need to stay warm.

You have probably over fifty city agencies, I am not sure the exact number. How do the city agencies open their doors? Whether it's Department of Aging, OEM, their personal offices and offer that as a cooling center?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, I will answer your first question. When — God, I am so sorry, I just had a senior moment. Can you repeat the first question.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Oh, sure. So, the first question is —

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Not a senior moment — bad girl.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Do we know a number of how many fatalities there are during the heat wave?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, that's why I went blank on it, because I don't like that question. But we don't know that yet. That is something that we would not look for, but we work with our partner agencies who work within the Department of Health and Mental Health.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, how can we figure
3 out to see if there are any fatalities and this we
4 know, when we sit at a hearing what we need to talk
5 about. About, do we need additional resources? Are
6 there zero fatalities? Are we doing a good enough
7 job and does the agency or OEM work with a medical
8 examiner just to get those figures? Because they
9 would certainly know if there are any heat related
10 fatalities.

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The Department for the
12 Aging – I am responding from our perspective. The
13 Department for the Aging does not use that
14 information or seek that information. We would then
15 rely on our sister agencies to do that and you may
16 want to answer how you collect that emergency related
17 data.

18 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Good morning Councilman.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Good morning.

20 EILEEN MULLARKEY: The Department of Health and
21 office of Chief Medical Examiner release that
22 information each summers information around November.
23 They need to do a little bit more examining and they
24 make sure that if there was deaths during the summer,
25 they try to really make sure that we're not

exacerbating factors that made it not a heat related death.

So, they come out with that data in November every year.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, every year, you get those numbers and what were the numbers for like let's say the summer of 2018?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: I don't have those numbers, but I can get them for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Okay great, okay, and also, I would also like to know for this past heat wave with all the power outages and everything going on.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, we can get that.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And that was my first part. And then the second part is that how are city agencies setting an example of others because since we can't get sometimes these congregate centers to open up; we can't force them to open up after hours.

So, how are city agencies opening their personal doors and asking their staff to volunteer their time if need be?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's a great question and I also wanted to make a point to the Councilwoman's

question earlier. Because we work with such a wide variety of partners, we do actually have coverage seven days a week. Not as high as we do during Monday through Friday business hours, but because we work with organizations like Department for Youth and Community Development. They actually operate their cooling centers until 11 p.m. at night.

So, between DFTA, which runs a little on the earlier side and then DYCD which runs on the later side, we do have coverage usually from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday and sometimes on the weekends.

During the extreme heat of this past summer of July, we did have some city agencies that opened their lobbies to allow people to come in for cooling. We did not find that those were very well utilized at all. We find and I think the Commissioner has really alluded to this in her testimony. We find that agencies and organizations that are already based in the community that offer wrap around services, that offer movies, or meals or activities, really have a much higher success rate at getting people to come in and be cool.

1
2 So, although we have had great success getting
3 our agency partners to open their doors during
4 extreme heat emergencies, we don't find that they're
5 as desirable to most people who are looking to get
6 cool as an existing program in the neighborhood.

7 But Council Member, to your point, we are always
8 appreciative when an elected official will open their
9 office and we're very happy to work with you if you
10 chose to open your office on those days, to make sure
11 that that message gets out to the community.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, can you send
13 me a list of those agencies that open the doors, and
14 do you know why they are not utilized?

15 EILEEN MULLARKEY: So, this was, and I want to be
16 clear that this was just in relation to this past,
17 this extreme heat, the July extreme heat, which was
18 one of the worst we've seen on record.

19 We had - I think DECAS opened their lobby, I
20 think OEM, NYCEM opened our lobbies.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: If you don't mind, if
22 you could send me the list.

23 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, absolutely, yes.
24
25

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And also, how many MTA buses working with the MTA and how many MTA buses served as a cooling center over those four days?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: We didn't use MTA buses for stand-alone cooling centers. We do use MTA buses when there's been some kind of vacate or a fire and people are outside of their homes and there is not a cooling center immediately nearby. We will use a bus while those people are out of their homes, but there not usually used as cooling centers day in and day out.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And why is that?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: MTA is very, very – they are one of our best partners. They're very happy to respond during an emergency but most of their fleet is taken up during the days by their routes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Great, okay, thank you.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: You're welcome, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. I wanted to follow up on your testimony Commissioner. Can we get a copy of the emergency plan that you provide to all the service providers?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely, we can do that. I just want you to know that right now, I have

1
2 it right here, if you want. I will give you a copy
3 of it. It's in draft form because of the experience
4 of July and August, we're making some revisions and
5 we're also asking our partner at NYCEM to take a look
6 at it to make sure that it is aligned with some of
7 the emergency procedures.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, yeah, Directory Conway.
9 With OEM, I know that we have a lot of the Surat team
10 and what I've heard from constituents in my district
11 is that OEM is like combining a lot of the Surat team
12 together and there were some - what I hear from
13 constituents that they really feel that you know,
14 they are located in specific neighborhoods and just
15 by lumping them all together, to them, it doesn't
16 really make sense or really help for them to really
17 be able to work in their own neighborhood that they
18 are very, very familiar with.

19 EILEEN MULLARKEY: I can't speak to the movement
20 of the teams around from different district to
21 different district, but I can say that when there is
22 a big emergency or citywide emergency, we will
23 actually Surat teams from other neighborhoods to
24 respond to the emergency. And that's completely
25 voluntary if they chose to respond.

But I can get more information about whether or not there's been any restructuring of the districts for Surat teams.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, in my district, the Tribeca serve and now, it's like all together with the Surat in the low east side, they are all sort of like combined together and they felt like well, there are local issues and local emergencies.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: I hear that, I will get more information on that for you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, that's good. The other thing is that on the testimony, you also talk about 770,000 people registered with the AWS, that Advanced Warning System. Are we working on getting more people signed up? Like, is every senior that goes through a center, Commissioner, are they all signed up?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I cannot answer that, but we will look and see the way that we do some other benefits and entitlements, we can look at that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And also, I am not even familiar, are they in multiple languages or people can sign up for different languages?

1
2 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, yes, Council Member and
3 for Advanced Warning System, the idea of Advanced
4 Warning unlike Notify NYC which goes directly to a
5 subscriber. Advanced Warning System is designed to
6 go to a service provider that provides services to
7 the elderly or people with access and functional
8 needs.

9 So that the provider can tailor that message and
10 get that message to the recipient in a way that makes
11 the most sense to them because they understand their
12 constituents.

13 So, not every senior would be getting AWS, but we
14 hope that every senior would be getting the message
15 through the senior center providers, through Meals on
16 Wheels through a homecare attendant, through their
17 doctors office, through any of their providers.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, the 770,000 are providers
19 and not individuals?

20 EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's correct. No, sorry,
21 the number you are quoting is Notify NYC.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, Notify NYC, okay.

23 EILEEN MULLARKEY: Notify NYC individuals, I'm
24 sorry.

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's individuals.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, so that is individuals.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so, yeah, so, definitely if we can work on getting more people to sign up, I think that would be great. And the thing is like, when do you issue the protocol – what's the protocol? Like okay, emergency is going to be happening for you to trigger the emergency plan.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Are you talking to me?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Like, you heard that the heat wave is coming and –

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I was going to say something glib, but I won't. We work in partnership with the New York City Emergency Management team and it's between when their offices declare it an emergency, of whatever the nature of the emergency is when we activate.

But in the interim, the contract agencies as well as our agencies keep sending advisories and tips and guidance on what to do during this whatever inclement weather it is, but the actual emergency is declared by the City and then we follow suit.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what kind of information does DFTA give out to the seniors about what to do, how to take care during an emergency situation? Like, during a heat wave what are the services that they can take advantage of? What should they do, drink more water, keep cool?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's all of the tips on wellness during an emergency, wear light clothes, stay hydrated, stay in a cool area. We also give information with the Department of Health.

Information on what are some of the symptoms of extreme heat exposure and some of the steps that you are supposed to take beyond that. So, that's the kind of information that we will provide.

Depending on the emergency, we usually issue some guidance if it's cold, the same thing frost bite, all of that kind of information. So, it's tips on wellness and then some tips on what are the symptoms and indications, so that then we can make provisions.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, Commissioner, do they get it like in a brochure or a flyer, or there's a packet of information that the senior can post it on their refrigerator to remind them? Like, how do they get

1
2 this information? Does the center distribute it in
3 different languages?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you for the
5 prompt and I was given a nod that we do have these
6 brochures and emergency preparedness tips that we
7 give out on a regular basis. Not through our
8 contractors, but we also have it whenever we table an
9 event.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think you send to our office
11 too.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you, you're all
13 better informed than I am.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We get some of them. Okay,
15 so, winter is around the corner.

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: As the Councilman said.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what is OEM and DFTA sort
18 of planning and preparing for this winter? I just
19 hope it's not going to be crazy cold, but who knows.

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, well, we have
21 our provisions in our plan. What we've done recently
22 since the July thing, is we've tested some of our --
23 we're testing our systems to make sure that our
24 communication systems are in place. That our
25 reporting systems are adequate. So, we're doing that

kind of review of our plan and we will be prepared for this winter. Hopefully, it's something that we can prepare for.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, we were joined by Council Member Eugene. He has to Chair the Human Rights Committee, so he's got to go back to Chair his Committee but thank you for stopping by.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And thank you for that age discrimination, new efforts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, we're looking forward to the joint hearing.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what about prepared for next summer? I know that you are updating emergency

—

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am so prepared for next summer. I am so prepared for next summer, because next summer could hopefully not be as bad as this summer. There were lots of lessons learned this summer; great lessons, improvements and we are well prepared.

And again, with the money and our vigilance on air conditioning, keeping air-conditioners in functioning order is a high priority for us given you

1
2 know, the experiences that we've had in the past two
3 years and again, I thank you for your advocacy in
4 getting that additional money for those repairs.

5 So, that is a work that never will end. It is a
6 work that will continue, it doesn't stop in July or
7 September.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, Commissioner, besides the
9 249 centers, we also have a lot of NORC programs and
10 then we have other centers that are funded by council
11 discretionary funding. So, are you also providing
12 those senior programs with the support that you are
13 giving to the DFTA funded senior centers?

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Anybody who's in our
15 system. NORC's are in our system, discretionary
16 grant programs are in our system. They are not
17 treated like red headed children. They are given the
18 information; however, they are not cooling centers
19 for a variety of reasons. It's usually because of
20 capacity and it's also probably because of - there's
21 just staffing needs, their own resources.

22 But they will and do have all of the information
23 that we will provide, and we will be much better at
24 ensuring that they get part, that they each have an
25

emergency preparedness plan which is not the current case.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, but also, I think you might want to think about reaching out to some of them because they might have the space. I mean, there are some NORC programs that are in -

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Some of them are in facilities, buildings that could.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and then the one that are the discretionary funding center. I mean, I visited some of them. They have a big space, so they are already going to be taking care of the seniors that goes there but they also could service a cooling center for the community close by.

So, we should reach out because it's still a volunteer service, but hopefully in our next RFP that you could put that in there.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, that makes absolute sense to look at them in response to what some of the - where those deserts may be, yes.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Rose, you have a follow up question?

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I just have one question. What is the criteria to be a cooling center?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's the ability to house individuals with a facility that has adequate air-conditioning.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I mean, are there certain other amenities? Do you they have to have a certain capacity? Do they have to have chairs?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Public restrooms.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: OCMF is better equipped to answer that.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: That's a very good question. Our main criteria is that they will open to the public, not just to their constituents, not just to their clients during a heat emergency when we declare a heat emergency and that they have adequate air-conditioning, public restrooms, water available and staff available as well and ideally that they have something else on offer as well but those are the baseline criteria.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, do they have to like have enough chairs?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, we would like it to be a comfortable welcoming place that someone could come

in and relax and not just an empty room. But our main thing is that they will open their doors to anyone and that they will provide a cool, safe space for someone.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And do they have to provide some kind of meal or snack?

EILEEN MULLARKEY: They do not, that's not one of the criteria. It's an added benefit definitely but water is something we do ask them to have provided, either from a water -

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, just sort of a passive space where at least they can have a chair.

EILEEN MULLARKEY: Yes, correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Alright, thank you, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I just have a final couple of questions. Commissioner, will you share the data on the cooling center attendance with us?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, sure, I have it and I could probably provide it to you as a sheet that you can enter it to the - So, on Friday, I can tell you during the emergencies okay.

On Friday, July 19th, during regular working hours, we had 21,209 people in attendance. During

1
2 extended hours, we had 3,093 people, for a total of
3 24,302 people in attendance at the DFTA cooling
4 centers. For Saturday the 20th, we had 4,688 in
5 attendance. For Sunday the 21st, we had 4,064 in
6 attendance. Again, for the August heat wave, on
7 August 16th, during regular business hours, we had
8 22,293 in attendance and then for the extended hours
9 that Friday, there was 1,801 for a total of 24,094.
10 I can give you this.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, if you can give us a
12 chart and it would be great if you could break it
13 down in terms of the senior centers that are cooling
14 centers.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: This is only senior
16 center information.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, you have the
18 total.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The total is 100,963.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, but I think we wanted to
21 also see in terms of the senior centers themselves,
22 what is each one that is a cooling center, their
23 attendance.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, broken down by 138
25 or something like that, is that what you want? Okay,

we can get that to you. That will take a little longer.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, that's fine, but it would be great for us to see in terms of where the most attendance and then maybe we can work with you on doing more outreach in the Council's district, if those centers are located in Council Member district, we can help.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Sure, right, but I can give you now what the total -

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And can you also give us a mid-year report on expense being pulled from the \$4 million?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And lastly, Commissioner, we're still waiting on the food budget analysis?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You haven't received the food budget analysis?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, so I know you have been working very hard to get the money out the door. I know we have conversations, but if you can share the detail with us?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of course, we will. I totally - I'm sorry about that. I thought you had

it, I thought – when you also met with OMB, but I will make sure you get that analysis, absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And you want the overall analysis. That's what we're looking for right? What was the formula and what was the premise that we did it on, absolutely. I am sorry that you do not have that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, because we want to make sure that we're going to advocate for more, right? Make sure because we need more senior centers, right Commissioner? So, we got to make sure they are well funded.

So, that's why were very happy that you're the Commissioner and we are very happy that we will be working closely together to make this happen.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We will continue to do so.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, so thank you for being here and thank you Director and thank you to all of your staff. So, we are going to call the public panel.

Okay, Po-Ling Ng, CPC Project Open Door Center; Molly Krakowski, JASA and Katelyn Andrews from LiveON

New York and J.T. Falcone from United Neighborhood Houses.

So, Commissioner, you're done.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm done, alright.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, you're welcome to stay and here what the advocates are saying, but I know you have a lot of work to do.

Oh, Commissioner, you got to help get the senior center in my district Independence Plaza, NORC -

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I knew you are going to ask that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I got some updates, but I need to have that center reopened asap.

KATELYN ANDREWS: So, I have been designated to start. My name is Katelyn Andrews, I am the Director of Public Policy at LiveON New York.

As many of you know, LiveON New York is an umbrella organization that represents more than 100 community-based organizations that provide services throughout the five boroughs. Including senior centers, home delivered meals and the gamut of

services that an older adult might need to thrive in their later years.

As the Commissioner mentioned and we discussed thoroughly, in the event of a heat wave or extreme winter weather, the city has designated a number of haven's to which an older adult can escape. Some of these are located in NYCHA community centers or senior centers throughout the five boroughs.

Many of LiveON New York's members operate these sites, providing heat or air-conditioning to some of New York's most vulnerable populations.

As noted, the community organizations are often asked to operate outside of their normal business hours, such as on weekends, their time off. In order to ensure that older New Yorkers without access to cold spaces are kept safe.

These organizations work hard daily to serve their respective communities and during bouts of extreme weather, their dedication does not waiver. LiveON New York would respectfully like to submit several recommendations to continue improving the way in which we protect older New Yorkers in the event of extreme weather.

1
2 First and foremost, we want to thank the
3 Administration and City Council for baselining plans
4 in the FY 2020 budget to continue to make repairs as
5 we know they will be crucial moving forward. We are
6 especially happy that these funds are baselined, so
7 we will see them moving forward and it's not one-time
8 funding which is always a challenge.

9 Unfortunately, however, LiveON New York is unsure
10 if the amount of funds that were allocated are
11 sufficient to meeting the demand or if this demand
12 will keep pace in the coming years and to what extent
13 capital needs come into play.

14 To this end, we recommend that the Department for
15 the Aging publicly report on projected infrastructure
16 related expenses and capital needs over the next ten
17 years. While this is some ways reflected in DFTA's
18 capital plan, more could be done to survey, outline,
19 articulate and prepare for expected needs.

20 For example, many and this is outside of my
21 written testimony. Many senior centers could
22 probably tell you that HVAC is just barely hanging on
23 and it's very likely that there is going to be a
24 crisis soon. I think that there could be some work
25 to be done to say in five years, we're going to need

1
2 to complete replace this one. It's at the end of its
3 expected useful life.

4 So, to the extent that we can do that, we'll be
5 able to create a list that is more consistent
6 throughout the summer where centers aren't falling
7 offline midway through the year.

8 Additionally, as was noted by the Commissioner,
9 climate change will only continue to produce these
10 bouts of extreme weather. So, we encourage continued
11 efforts by DFTA and the Mayor's Office of Emergency
12 Management and other agencies to coordinate
13 communication and support warming and cooling centers
14 as well as the older adults they seek to serve.

15 Finally, the agencies must consider and clearly
16 indicate in advance of emergency situations what
17 additional supports are reimbursable for
18 organizations acting as cooling centers. Especially
19 when they're acting outside of the normal course of
20 business hours.

21 For example, organizations must be clearly aware
22 of the following or reimbursable at the outset of the
23 cooling season, so they can prepare their staff to
24 understand that they might be asked to step up and be
25

a resource to their community on a weekend or an extended hour.

So, the senior center would need to know, are we able to purchase additional food? Can we serve lunch? Will that be reimbursed? Or will that have to come out of our own bottom line, as well as additional staff overtime. Is that certainly volunteer or is that something that will be able to be added as overtime. I know that the Department for the Aging did make efforts to have these discussions, but I think a clear understanding at the outset would be helpful.

So, in closing, we emphasize our appreciation to both the Administration and City Council for your interest in this issue and we look forward to working with you all moving forward.

MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Hi, my name is Molly Krakowski, I am the Senior Director of Government Affairs at JASA. Thank you, Council Member Chin and the Committee, for holding today's important hearing on protecting seniors from extreme heat and cold.

JASA is a nonprofit agency, we serve older adults throughout the greater New York area with a mission to sustain and enrich the lives of older New York's

aging population, so they can remain in the community with dignity and autonomy.

As we finish the summer and inch closer to the winter season, JASA holds contracts to 22 senior centers. We have five case management programs, 14 NORC programs throughout New York City, which puts us in a unique position to serve many of the neighborhoods and communities and over the years the Administration has turned to senior centers to provide the respite from the high summer heat. It's laudable action, too many older adults are vulnerable in heat waves.

In preparation for these challenging weather conditions there are often announcements that are shared by the New York City Department for the Aging through the media, stating that there will be senior centers open and people are encouraged to go to these sites rather than suffer the weather at home. And while many of JASA sites are open for extended hours on these special days, not all sites have the ability to provide this kind of emergency relief.

For example, a number of JASA senior centers are located in New York City Housing Authority facilities. Currently, two of JASA's NYCHA based

1
2 senior centers have HVAC problems that are being
3 evaluated and hopefully replaced. On extremely hot
4 days, JASA has used stationary air-conditioning units
5 and offered programs in smaller rooms when available,
6 in order to provide a safe environment to
7 participants.

8 JASA also has senior centers that are co-located.
9 One is co-located in a synagogue, which has
10 inadequate air-conditioning and cannot serve as a
11 cooling center. There is no funding to fix an
12 inadequate air-conditioning system in a place like a
13 synagogue.

14 JASA doesn't have control of the facilities and
15 for regular programming, JASA has similarly used an
16 alternate room with temporary air-conditioning or
17 fans.

18 Some centers and this is not in my testimony.
19 Some centers are also have contracts that require us
20 to vacate a location as soon as the programs end.
21 They may be co-located in a community center where
22 the afternoon programming is for youth. We can have
23 no late nights, no weekends.

24 There are other housing entities that participate
25 in a New York City program to reduce energy. An

energy safe program and as a result, they're asked to illuminate the usage of electricity on certain days. And so, this also ends up conflicting with the ability to provide a respite.

In terms of communication, when DFTA issues a warning and suggests that older adults attend and cooling center, many older adults assume that all senior centers are open. It would make sense to have DFTA confirm the status of the cooling at participating senior centers to ensure that the listing centers are still able to provide relief from the heat.

An annual survey is inadequate to verify real time situations and although I heard the Commissioner say that they are regularly checking that, I'm not sure that that's in fact the case with all centers.

Often the decision to activate a cooling center is made by DFTA with a very short notice to program. Early DFTA communication would be appreciated to enable coordination on after hour staffs and sites an improved alert system to agency administrators will ensure that programs are adequately staffed during extended hours.

1
2 And I will just say on that, that I know a number
3 of the senior centers were directly contacted by DFTA
4 as opposed to the agency being contacted to speak
5 with the centers. And so, it creates a line of
6 communication that can be complicated. Where a
7 senior center is feeling very pressured because of
8 where the call is coming from and it's not coming
9 through the agency, and that creates some tension.

10 Finally, utilization issues; it was JASA's
11 experience this summer that more individuals use the
12 cooling centers on the weekends than after hours on
13 the weekdays and we believe that this maybe related
14 to an interest in socializing with peers, rather than
15 heat alleviation. And this was something that was
16 anecdotal and we're going to be doing our own
17 survey's.

18 We suggest that DFTA prepare, distribute and
19 analyze the findings of a survey that they may create
20 that would help clarify the needs and preferences and
21 inform on expanded program planning.

22 Another issue worth exploring is whether clients
23 of case management programs would use cooling centers
24 if transportation or an escort were available. She
25 said that many did not use transportation, but I'm

not sure how it's been described to clients or to programs and agencies in terms of use of transportation dollars to transport the clients.

And I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Can we just ask you a question quickly?

So, you have a copy of DFTA's Emergency Plan or all the protocols and what to do during a heat wave?

MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: I don't but I imagine someone does and I'm going to find out when I get back to the office.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: I haven't personally seen it, but I imagine that we have —

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I assume that the provider should have it also because you run the centers.

MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Yes, and I know that the programs have plans in place, I just don't know who has a copy of and how it gets reviewed. So, I need to find that out.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And as you said, earlier notice, I mean, they definitely don't have to wait

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we'll look at the statistic that DFTA provides and then we'll share it with the advocates.

MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thanks.

PO-LING NG: Good morning our lovely and honorable Chair Margaret Chin and all the City Council Members.

My name is Po-Ling Ng, I am very happy you know, I come over here to share with you what is our needs. Open Door Senior Center has really opened our doors since 1972, 47 years already. I am only director over there until right now.

So, I really understand what the need is for our seniors, but the point is I would like to use this opportunity to thank you Department for the Aging and all the public offices that support our open door. We fought for twelve years since 1993 to 2005. Then we can move to our lovely facility on 68 Grand East Landmark Building for more police headquarter.

But the one thing we feel the power of our community. We feel power, we get the really lovely facility. But the Department for the Aging talked to me before we move in and he said that, Po-Ling Ng, I

1
2 only guarantee you provide a professional engineer
3 and to maintenance your building with the DDC only
4 five years.

5 But right now, it's fourteen years. Five years
6 is gone but you know, since the 1910 we don't have
7 anyone to take good care of our huge facility. So,
8 that's why you know, we are suffering. The
9 Department for the Aging don't give us the money.
10 When we are facing any problem, I call them, they
11 always say no money. They said that only five years,
12 I promise only five years.

13 But you know, if you want to keep the facility
14 good, me, is not the professional engineer. I really
15 want to be the super lady and take good care of
16 everything. But the point is, but I deny this
17 beautiful facility in the wintertime, provide a lot
18 of air-conditioning. You know, and summertime give
19 us a lot of heat.

20 But I just wonder the Department for the Aging
21 feel power over us and said that Po-Ling, you have
22 the very best senior center in the citywide, you're
23 utilization. But the one thing, no money, how could
24 I run the program well? We are always over
25 utilization but the right now, I just want to thank

1
2 you our lovely Margaret Chin. She listened to us and
3 give us some money.

4 So, not enough, only about some money. We need a
5 half a million dollars to fix the heater, the air-
6 conditioning and also our door is broken, our window
7 is broken, a lot of things are broken. So, that's
8 why I try very hard to get the bids. It doesn't
9 matter whether you give me money or not, I really
10 think I will get the bid first and let you know how
11 much money I need. So, the senior complain. They
12 said that Po-Ling we have a very lovely facility.
13 Unfortunately, the one thing you provide a lot of
14 different activity. The ping pong people, the
15 player, they say that it's so hot. How can we play
16 ping pong? Someone said that, I want to dance. Oh,
17 so hot, how could we dance?

18 They always complain. I really understand you
19 know, so that's why I thank you, the City Council,
20 Margaret Chin or the City Council person. I know you
21 are rich; we are poor.

22 Okay, I know you are really rich. You are
23 powerful. All of you are powerful person. I am
24 small potato.
25

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We allocate taxpayers dollars, but I want to make sure, I don't know if anybody from DFTA still here. Okay, I really would like you to set up an appointment and to visit Open Door, because we fought for the money to pay for repairs and DFTA, the Commissioner said, you know, there is a procedure. You can apply, so I want to make sure that you work with DFTA and apply and get the HVAC system and really start evaluating the repairs that's needed. So, that you continue to provide a really nice facility for the seniors.

Because we fought for the money every year, but we got to make sure the provider, the center applies to DFTA to get the repairs done.

So, before you leave Po-Ling make sure you reach out.

PO-LING NG: But also, and our lovely Committee Chair, sorry, I should talk more. But the one thing we not only care of our clients and our staff and all the little persons, but the one thing you understand how hard for the directors job.

We deal with the Fire Department, we deal with the building department, we deal with health department, mandate come over two weeks ago to our

1 center, they test our hot water. Hot water is not
2 hot because the system is broken. It's directors
3 job, yes. But so, that's why I said that please help
4 me talk to all of City Council persons. Give us
5 money to fix everything. So, I made everyone happy
6 because Open Door really opened our heart. Not only
7 Open Door, open our heart to capture all the little
8 person and the senior. I don't want to abuse our
9 seniors and also our staff. You know, cooling
10 center, they said that Po-Ling, you have a really
11 lovely facility. Do you belong to the cooling
12 center? I said, yes, I am so happy, we belong to a
13 cooling center but when the people come in, they said
14 that it's really hot. What do you mean? This is a
15 cooling center; cooling centers should be cool not
16 hot. We don't need the heat; we need the air-
17 conditioning.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, Po-Ling.

20 PO-LING NG: I respond to them, yeah, it's one
21 thing you know that. But also cooling centers should
22 open to the public, not only for our little person.
23 When the people come in, they said, could I stay? I
24 cannot deny them. So, that's why you know the one
25

1
2 thing, the key part, give me money. I can resolve
3 all the problems, okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, the money is with DFTA.

5 PO-LING NG: But right now, how can I resolve the
6 temperature problem. I just you know, used my fund-
7 raising money to buy some fans and some heaters. So,
8 that's not enough. I really want you to give me
9 almost a half a million dollars to fix everything. I
10 give you the place if you want. Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, you are going to have to
12 set up a meeting.

13 PO-LING NG: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, Po-Ling, thank you.
15 Please se up the meeting with DFTA really.

16 PO-LING NG: And also, the lovely City Council
17 too.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we've worked hard for
19 the maintenance money and we fought hard for the air
20 conditioning money. So, DFTA will have to meet with
21 you and work that out, okay.

22 PO-LING NG: And also, you could chat our
23 director from the Department for the Aging.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We will.
25

PO-LING NG: We are over utilization, everything including we belong to the cooling center, no air-conditioning, we are still over utilization.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, thank you.

PO-LING NG: I don't want to abuse them okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

J.T. FALCONE: Hello, thank you Chair Chin and the Committee for the Aging for the opportunity to testify and for your interest on this issue.

I am here representing United Neighborhood Houses, UNH. We are a policy and social change organization representing 42 settlement houses across New York State. We run 41 DFTA funded senior centers in New York City. Our members do and after the recent heat wave, we surveyed them to see what were the challenges, what worked well, what happened with the emergency roll out of extended senior center hours over the weekend and at night on the weekdays.

So, we learned that ultimately, the centers were well utilized, both by regular senior center members and new visitors from neighborhoods and beyond.

Programs appreciated the additional resources, like Gatorade, metro cards and offers to cover staff and

1
2 refreshments. I do think that our members would
3 agree with some of the anecdotal evidence that the
4 centers were primarily being used as a social
5 gathering space and that especially on the weekends,
6 that generated a lot of the attendance.

7 Our senior centers that were able to offer some
8 sort of programs who maybe had a little bit of extra
9 general operating that they could put towards doing
10 some additional activities. I think it vibes with
11 some of the questioning that happened earlier, that
12 offering activities, offering other things that might
13 incentivize attendance can also help to turn out the
14 neighborhood during the heat waves.

15 There were a few challenges that our members
16 reported. The biggest one being that given all of
17 the various agencies involved, we're talking about
18 DFTA, DYCD, working with Cornerstones, NYC Emergency
19 Management, New York City Housing Authority, DOHMH,
20 there is all sorts of different agencies that are
21 part of the mix and one big challenge that we got was
22 that the information coming from different agencies
23 wasn't always consistent.

24 So, there might be something that comes from DFTA
25 and I heard the Commissioner talking about the number

1
2 of person hours that they invested outreaching their
3 contractors and I think that part of the confusion
4 that we were hearing from our members was that the
5 information that they were getting during different
6 rounds of outreach didn't necessarily match what they
7 were hearing.

8 And so, our primary recommendation here, I'll
9 just jump right into it, is that it would be really
10 important for there to be a clearly identified staff
11 member at NYCEM who has the authority to sort of
12 speak on these issues. So, it's really important,
13 excited to hear about DFTA's updating their emergency
14 action plan. But in addition to that plan, at the
15 end of the day when the mercury starts rising and
16 we're seeing the heat coming on the news and in you
17 know, five, six, ten days out, would be weather
18 forecasting technologies we've got now in 2019, it's
19 great to have someone who the buck stops with them.

20 It makes sense for NYCEM to be at the center of
21 that. This would be a person that could coordinate
22 messaging, flow of information and they have to be
23 like I'm saying, in power with final say because when
24 there is not someone who's the final say on things,
25 the information can get very confusing very fast.

Another concern that we heard from our members, especially those who are in NYCHA, is that NYCA and DFTA, and DYCD are keeping separate lists. So, if a member reaches out to NYCHA to say, hey, my air-conditioner doesn't work. We need to be taken off the cooling center list, they might be removed from NYCHA's list, but they might not be removed from DFTA's.

So, making sure that there is a centralized list for anything that happens because as we know, with the aging infrastructure, especially in the NYCHA buildings but overall the aging infrastructure makes it very possible that especially when we're cranking up to max capacity here on the really hot days. The systems might go down and like you're saying an annual review isn't necessarily going to capture some of the last-minute interruptions to the air-conditioning that might come in or heating during the winter.

Like my co-panelists have said here, during the spring and fall, that person who would be the final say at NYCEM would be working to ensure that heating and cooling centers are prepared for when the weather emergencies happen later and making sure that there

1
2 is especially like Katelyn had mentioned, knowing
3 exactly what kind of expenses are going to be
4 reimbursable. So, the plans can be made, the
5 preparation, etc.

6 I also just want to thank the Council for your
7 advocacy on the HVAC money. That was really
8 critical. We've heard that DFTA has been able to use
9 this, excited to hear the Commissioner speaking in
10 her testimony about the fact that all but six were
11 ultimately addressed and that's way down from the
12 hearing last year where it was in the 30's that there
13 were HVAC issues.

14 With that said, we need to make sure that that
15 money keeps coming out. Like I'm saying, all of
16 these HVAC systems are old, old, old and things pop
17 up. Like Katelyn said, many are hanging on by a
18 thread. So, making sure that that money is available
19 for continued expenses because those are going to
20 keep popping up. Let's give some to Po-Ling.

21 And finally, I would be remiss not to take this
22 opportunity to address generally the needs of NYCHA
23 community centers across the city. I know we're here
24 to talk about cooling but generally, there's \$500
25 million in capital repair needs across the community

That would be really important as well, because these centers are providing really critical programs as you know and during emergencies, we're trying to tap them and make sure that folks have access to cooler or warm, depending on the season. And so, it's really important that they're at tip top condition.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Can you make sure
give us a copy of your testimony?

1
2 J.T. FALCONE: Yeah, sorry about that. I will be
3 following up with an electronic copy.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, one of the questions I
5 have that in terms of the NYCHA centers, because one
6 of the problems that I see you know, personally in my
7 district, is we allocate capital dollars to fix or to
8 repair and like the budget is so high. I mean, it's
9 just so ridiculous to fix up a room or a kitchen is
10 like a half a million dollars.

11 So, I think that we really have to look at how do
12 we address the real capital costs and if there is
13 somehow, we can get other city agencies to come in or
14 work with the sponsors, nonprofits, so that we don't
15 just have our hands tied. Because only NYCH can do
16 it and they do it at such great cost, it doesn't make
17 sense at all and it doesn't get done on a timely
18 manner.

19 But the main issue is that it just costs a lot of
20 money to get anything done.

21 J.T. FALCONE: 100 percent and we've heard that
22 concern raised from Council Members a number of
23 times. We've been actually working in coordination
24 with LiveON and Daycare Council as the Committee
25

Space Coalition addressing some of the different challenges in these NYCHA centers.

One of the big things that we've been working with NYCHA directly on, is creating an authorization process for the nonprofits or for their peer city agencies to run those repairs. So, we actually have a flow chart right now that would be NYCHA's internal deliberation to approve and then monitor the progress of a repair.

So, if say, you wanted to address a concern in one of your local community centers, you could allocate that funding directly to the nonprofit that occupies it, if they're up to the task or work with their contracting agency to perhaps be the overseer of that. The roll out, there's been all kinds of different arrangements that have been discussed as to what the agencies could be and actually it would be really interested in picking your brains on what would be most effective from where you sit.

But definitely something that we hear and something that NYCHA is actually really interested in working with us on. So, we should follow up and have a conversation about it.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we would appreciate that, because we do want to help with the capital repair, especially in the NYCHA centers. But we got to make sure it gets done and at a reasonable cost and right now, the cost is really too high. We wanted to help a center replace a stove. It started with a couple thousands and now, no, you got to fix the whole kitchen.

J.T. FALCONE: Well, and that's assuming that the kitchen itself was permitted, which for many kitchens it was not. So, now you get a contractor that says actually I can't legally attach this gas line. So, another conversation we can have when you're ready.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Well, thank you all for being here today and thank you for your testimony and we look forward to working with you and with DFTA of course, you know, we start the next budget. So, the advocacy starts and thank you to everyone for being here today.

The hearing is adjourned, thank you. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 1, 2018