

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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March 3, 2020  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: JOSEPH C. BORELLI  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Justin L. Brannan  
Fernando Cabrera  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
Alana A. Maisel

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

Dan Nigro, Fire Commissioner

Laura Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner

John Sudnik, Chief Department

Steve Rush, Fire Department Budget

Assistant Commissioner Nafeesah Noonan with  
Equipment and Retention

Bruce Jacobs, Coalition of the Rockaways and  
Southeast Queens

2 (sound check) (pause)

3 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Good morning  
4 everyone. Happy Super Tuesday. My name is Joseph  
5 Borelli. I'm the chair of the Fire and Emergency  
6 Management Committee. Today we'll review the Fire  
7 Department and not New York City Emergency  
8 Management's Fiscal 2021 Budgets and relevant  
9 sections of the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report  
10 for FY 2020 to understand how they address the needs  
11 of all New Yorkers. The Fire Department's Fiscal  
12 2021 Preliminary Budget totals \$2.1 billion with  
13 17,582 positions. The budget includes minimal  
14 changes of the four point, a \$42.7 million in Fiscal  
15 2020, and at \$3.6 million in Fiscal 21. Of this  
16 amount, new needs totals \$3.5 million in Fiscal 2020  
17 and \$2.6 million in the out years to support 36 new  
18 positions. Most notably funding adds 16 new  
19 positions for the Fire Prevention Unit for fire  
20 inspectors and trainers and nine positions for EMS to  
21 support the city's Criminal Justice Reform Efforts  
22 for Discovery. The Fire Department's Fiscal 2020 to  
23 2024 Capital Commitment Plan totals \$977 million and  
24 supports 297 unique products. While the adopted  
25 Fiscal 2020 Budget did add new funding of \$38.1

2 million for FY 2020 and \$48.3 million for FY 2021 to  
3 dozens of projects it remains a concern of this  
4 committee that many other budget and programmatic  
5 priorities raised last year have not been addressed.  
6 Hudson Yard, which opened almost a year ago is still  
7 without a firehouse stretching the resources of the  
8 neighborhood firehouses and EMS stations. Staten  
9 Island does not have a third EMS station and building  
10 one is not at the top of the Department's list of  
11 priorities. The diversity of the department still  
12 lags behind other uniform agencies and the makeup of  
13 the city as a whole. EMS workers notably earn far  
14 less than other first responders while also handling  
15 an increasingly larger volume call. While overtime  
16 has Attempted to be right sized, we have to address  
17 increasing overtime spending. Lastly, we have to  
18 assess the need for additional fire and EMS resources  
19 throughout the city to decrease rising response time,  
20 and continue to look at how best to improve EMS  
21 operations through expenses and capital budgets. The  
22 committee held oversight hearings on various topics  
23 last year: EMS attrition, the posting of hurricane  
24 evacuation zone in the multiple units, the city's  
25 next generation 911 system, and we recently held an

2 oversight hearing on innovative and technological  
3 advances to improve FDNY/EMS emergency response  
4 times. As the city experiences substantial increases  
5 in call volumes for medical emergencies from one year  
6 to the next, the Department has added additional EMS  
7 positions for Fiscal 2021, but has not addressed the  
8 capital needs to adequately support the growing  
9 demands for EMS services. I am interested to see how  
10 the budget also addresses those needs because  
11 increase in call volume for medical emergencies and  
12 the growth of Hudson Yards neighborhood has brought  
13 different challenges, and I want to make sure our  
14 communities are adequately served and our  
15 firefighters and EMS staff have the resources to meet  
16 and adapt to the growing demand and changes. The  
17 committee would like to know what the department  
18 plans to do to address these deficiencies as well as  
19 an update on the department's Recruiting Plan, a  
20 funding increase for Emergency Medical Technicians,  
21 adding a new EMS station on Staten Island, and the  
22 new needs that were adopted—added at adoption in the  
23 Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Budget. I would ask our  
24 committee—I will thank our committee staff for their  
25 hard work. Finance Analyst Jack Carney. He's the

2 handsome chap next to me; Unit Head Eisha Wright. I  
3 think she's somewhere. Josh Kingsley this old fellow  
4 next to me; Policy Analyst Will Hungas, and my Chief  
5 of Staff Frank Nasha. I'd like to welcome and thank  
6 Commissioner Nigro as we always do and our  
7 firefighters, EMTs, Paramedics and the Department's  
8 civilian staff for the work that they do. I'm  
9 looking forward to hearing from the commissioner, and  
10 Josh, if you will swear them in.

11 JOSH KINGSLEY: Do you affirm to tell the  
12 truth, the whole truth and nothing the truth in your  
13 testimony before this committee, and to answer  
14 Council Member questions honestly? (off mic/pause)

15 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I do.

16 JOSH KINGSLEY: Please state your name  
17 for the record, and then go ahead. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Dan Nigro, Fire  
19 Commissioner.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Laura  
21 Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner.

22 CHIEF SUDNIK: John Sudnik, Chief  
23 Department.

24 STEVE RUSH: Steve Rush, Fire Department  
25 Budget.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: Nafeesah  
3 Noonan with Equipment and Retention, Assistant  
4 Commissioner.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you guys all  
6 of you and please, you know—(pause)

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Okay, good morning  
8 Chair Borelli. Thank you for the opportunity to  
9 speak with you today about the Preliminary Budget for  
10 Fiscal Year 2021 for the Fire Department. As you've  
11 heard, I'm joined this morning by Laura Kavanagh,  
12 John Sudnik, Steve Rusk and Nafeesah Noonan. I'm  
13 pleased to report that fire deaths in the city of New  
14 York in 2019 were down 25%. There were a total of 66  
15 civilian fire deaths last year, and while even a  
16 single death is one too many, we are encouraged b  
17 this reduction. This outstanding achievement is the  
18 result of the brave service of FDNY members working  
19 together to remove those trapped by fire providing  
20 unrivaled emergency medical care, thoroughly  
21 investigating fires, educating the public and  
22 inspecting buildings and areas of public assembly  
23 throughout the city to ensure the safety of the  
24 people whom we serve. In New York City we have now  
25 experienced a trend of 14 consecutive years with

2 fewer than 100 fire deaths. We continue to build on  
3 that success. At the Fire Department an incident is  
4 designated as a serious fire when it escalates to  
5 the point of requiring a full all-hands assignment or  
6 higher consisting of a dozen fire units that respond,  
7 conduct search and rescue operations, and extinguish  
8 the fire. We experience 3% fewer serious fires in  
9 2019 than we did in 2018 and overall we've seen a  
10 reduction in serious fires of 24% over the last five  
11 years. Fewer serious fires than in the past years is  
12 obviously a positive development. However, the  
13 number of calls that we received for medical  
14 emergency are trending in the opposition direction.  
15 In 2019, the Fire Department received approximately  
16 564,000 calls for life threatening medical  
17 emergencies. Approximately 968,000 calls for non-  
18 life threatening medical incidents. This totaled  
19 nearly 1,532,000 medical calls represents that  
20 highest number that the department has ever received.  
21 Remarkably, this is the fifth year in a row that we  
22 have broken a new record for medical call volume.  
23 Our members are as busy as they have ever been. With  
24 our emergency incident count as high as it is, it's  
25 more important than ever that we leverage additional

2 tools to help keep the city safe. One way that we  
3 accomplish this is through our expanded outreach to  
4 members of the community. The more we're able to  
5 educate our neighbors before they find themselves in  
6 times of trouble, the less likely they are to  
7 experience emergencies and the safer they will be  
8 when they do. The Fire Department's Community  
9 Affairs Unit conducts fire safety education  
10 demonstrations and CPR instruction seminars in  
11 communities throughout the five boroughs. By  
12 partnering with community groups, elected officials,  
13 schools, senior centers, and our fellow city agencies  
14 in 2019, the Fire Safety Education Unit coordinated  
15 or participated in more than 7,500 education events  
16 reaching nearly 600,000 New Yorkers. When a  
17 neighborhoods experiences a fatal fire members of the  
18 Fire Safety Education Unit respond to provide  
19 educational information to residents and sign them up  
20 for smoke alarm installations. We are also in the  
21 midst of a several years long smoke alarm  
22 distribution installation campaign with our partners  
23 in the American Red Cross. We meet New Yorkers at a  
24 variety of community events, and sign them up for  
25 installations, and we conduct targeted door-to-door

2 campaigns in neighborhoods where the need is the  
3 greatest. Between May 2015 and December of 2019 we  
4 visited 35,000 homes, installed 100,000 alarms and  
5 distributed another 90,000. One popular facet of our  
6 outreach is our Summer Block Parties where we  
7 distribute fire safety information, train attendees  
8 in CPR and sign up residents for fire alarm  
9 installation. In 2019, nearly 6,000 people attended  
10 a Fire Department block party. We also distributed  
11 more than 62,000 alarm batteries and we gave fire  
12 safety presentations to more than 316,000 students at  
13 New York City schools. The unit provided CPR  
14 training to more than 18,000 high school students,  
15 and nearly 28,000 trainees in total. We partnered  
16 with the Department of the Aging to conduct fire  
17 safety workshops geared toward seniors at 87  
18 locations. We worked with the Department of Youth  
19 and Community Development resulting in over 2,500 K  
20 through 5 students from the Beacon After School  
21 Programs attending an open house at their local  
22 Firehouse. This is the second year that we've done  
23 the program with DYCD, and we like that not only did  
24 the students learn about fire safety, but it gives  
25 them a small sense of what it might be like to pursue

2 a career in the Fire Department. We conducted fire  
3 safety trainings for clergy members preparing them to  
4 serve as ambassadors to spread fire safety talking  
5 points to their communities and fire safety education  
6 teams and American Red Cross partners visited houses  
7 of worship to sign up congregants for fire alarm  
8 installations. We similarly worked with the  
9 Administration of Child Services training 2,300  
10 frontline child welfare staff so that they know to  
11 keep an eye out for potential fire hazards in the  
12 home and refer the families they are working with for  
13 spoke alarm installation at no charge to the family.  
14 The FDNY also had a very successful year in advancing  
15 another of our priorities, the department's  
16 commitment to cultivating and sustaining a work  
17 environment that embraces diversity, equity, and  
18 inclusion. The Bureau of Diversity Inclusion was  
19 incredibly active in 2019, engineering a wide variety  
20 of inward and outward facing programming and  
21 training. We hosted several community engagement  
22 events. A small sampling of those events included  
23 and event honoring FDNY women during Women's History  
24 Month; the department's first Holocaust Remembrance  
25 Day event; an Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

2 celebration; Hanukkah celebrations, a Six Principles  
3 of Non-Violence talk in honor of Reverend Dr. Martin  
4 Luther King, Jr.; two Black History Month events at  
5 headquarters; our Third Annual Women-to-Women Summit;  
6 our Fourth Annual LGBTQ Pride Celebration; and  
7 celebrating a variety of Hispanic and Latinx cultural  
8 initiatives. Our members also took part in a number  
9 of parades including the World Pride Parade, the  
10 Veterans Day Parade, Celebrate Israel Day Parade, the  
11 Philippine Independence Day Parade, the Puerto Rican  
12 Day Parade, the Lunar New Year Parade and a large  
13 number of other parades celebrating the diversity of  
14 our great city. The Bureau of Diversity and  
15 Inclusion was also responsible for a large number of  
16 internal initiatives in 2019. We distribute on a  
17 quarterly basis two internal publications devoted to  
18 diversity and inclusion best practices, and we rolled  
19 out a full multi-media campaign highlighting  
20 messaging and tips on contributing to an inclusive  
21 culture using posters, screen savers, kiosk displays,  
22 videos and brochures. The Diversity Inclusion Unit  
23 worked with the FDNY EEO Office to train uniform  
24 members and civilians in unconscious bias, LGBTQ  
25 discrimination, sexual harassment, EEO issues,

2 emotional intelligence, religious diversity as well  
3 as conducting individual meetings of firehouses to  
4 discuss diversity and inclusion. We also continued  
5 educational meetings with the department's 40  
6 firefighter EMS and civilian affiliated organizations  
7 to better support diversity and inclusion objectives  
8 and to foster a more positive work environment. As  
9 we state in our diversity and inclusion vision, the  
10 excellence of the New York City Fire Department is  
11 enhanced by the ability to recruit, hire, retain and  
12 promote highly skilled, talented and motivated  
13 members from diverse backgrounds As I have testified  
14 to the Council previously, the department put a great  
15 deal of resources into our Firefighter Recruitment  
16 Campaign for the most recent open competitive exam.  
17 The campaign was very successful in recruiting a  
18 diverse pool of candidates. Fifty-six percent of  
19 test takers were non-white and 9% were female. We  
20 know that there is still much more work to do, but  
21 our progress is encouraging. In 2019, we began to  
22 see the fruits of that labor. In September we  
23 graduated the first full class of probationary  
24 firefighters from the current civil service list.  
25 The composition of the class represented a growing

2 diversity of our department including 37% individuals  
3 identifying as people of color; 12% black graduates;  
4 20% Latin graduates and 5% Asian graduates, and 120  
5 veterans. Among this outstanding group of graduates  
6 were 16 women, the second largest group of women in a  
7 probationary firefighter class in FDNY history. I  
8 can now proudly say that for the first time more than  
9 100 women serve as firefighters and fire officers in  
10 that department and that number will only continue to  
11 grow. We have many classes from this list to go, and  
12 we anticipate that our department will continue  
13 growing more diverse with each class. I am  
14 passionate about recruiting new members to join the  
15 department because it is such an incredible honor to  
16 serve the people and the communities of New York.  
17 I'd be happy to take your questions at this time.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and just  
19 a point for the record we're joined by Council Member  
20 Justin Brannan, and also there was a last minute  
21 change for this committee hearing. The Office of  
22 Emergency Management will not be testifying today.  
23 The Commissioner and her staff were involved with  
24 important meetings regarding the Coronavirus COVID  
25 19. So, we will be rescheduling them to a later

2 date. So stay tuned. Commissioner, thank you very  
3 much. So, just the question we start off with every  
4 year: Were there any new needs that the department  
5 requested from OMB, but were not granted?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, I'll start by  
7 saying over the past six years I think this  
8 administration and the Council have been very good to  
9 the Fire Department and the Fire Department has—has  
10 done very well. I think this year has been very  
11 tight for all agencies in the city. As we know with  
12 the budget the department had no big asks that were  
13 not fulfilled. We've got a few smaller ones of  
14 staffing and either in the technical fields or in  
15 fire prevention. We're still working with OMB on  
16 some of those so we're hopeful, but I don't think any  
17 of our critical needs were not met either in previous  
18 budgets or in this one.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Are there any self-  
20 funded meaning the budget coming entirely from the  
21 Department Pilot Programs or any programs that you  
22 feel need additional need despite the Mayor's budget  
23 targets?

24 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well I think the  
25 department is always looking as piloting various

2 things and as they become—as they leave the pilot  
3 stage and we've—we've come to the conclusion with  
4 some of them that they would benefit the department,  
5 we will certainly put in subsequent requests for  
6 those things.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: As part of the FY-  
8 2020 PEG Program there was a hiring freeze involving  
9 54 positions. Was the Department able to achieve the  
10 PEG? Was it—was it handled?

11 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: The 54 position  
12 target has been met. We launched through the  
13 Administrative and support positions. Those are  
14 positions that were vacant, and we're subsequently  
15 eliminated.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, just as you  
17 share the breakdown, almost administrative?

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: That's correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And was there any  
20 staffing or operational problems as a result?

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Obviously there's  
22 always challenges, but we always have your full head  
23 count, but the department has had vacancies in these  
24 areas for quite some time. So, we're—we're dealing  
25 with the issues. There might be a little bit more of

2 them so in the overtime area, but in general they  
3 would address the needs from the different bureaus.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the November  
5 and the Preliminary Financial plans added funding and  
6 head count to the Fire Prevention Office which  
7 equaling \$1.1 million, and this this for 16 new  
8 inspector and trainer positions, and seven new  
9 sprinkler and standpipe inspector positions. Can you  
10 go into some detail why those are needed, and what  
11 specifically we hope to accomplish by adding those?  
12 I think it's a good thing. I want to say I think it  
13 is.

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: We certainly fought  
15 a lot. (sic) So there's three areas I believe in  
16 fire prevention where we added positions. The  
17 training area is one area in particular which we are  
18 very--pushing with OMB and OMB agreed to it is because  
19 we're training larger classes, and we need to have a  
20 larger training academy for fire prevention, which is  
21 rather small. So that was a--that was very helpful to  
22 us. Sprinkler standpipe those are inspections that  
23 are conducted every five years. They witness test  
24 with plumbing--plumbers on--on site, and our  
25 inspectors. However, there is a backlog in those

2 areas. So, by having additional sprinkler standpipe  
3 inspectors available we can reduce and get that  
4 backlog under control, and the last area is one of  
5 the areas that always gains the most attention.  
6 That's the Fire Alarm Unit. There's a lot of  
7 pressures from the construction and real estate  
8 industries for us to do those plan reviews and those  
9 inspections and so we've added staff there as well  
10 for inspections.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I-I did a  
12 polling of these states, Criminal Justice Reform  
13 involving bail reforms. So, can you just go into  
14 what the \$540,000 in 2020 and the new \$617,000 is  
15 needed in that line years to comply with that law?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: My-many of the  
17 agencies that are involved in violations issuance in  
18 particular summonses, these are more serious  
19 violations that will be adjudicated in Criminal  
20 Court. The Fire Department has an enforcement unit  
21 under the legal provision that works with the Law  
22 Department on these cases. Now, the new law requires  
23 certain expedited turnaround with information to  
24 defendants. Otherwise, cases are dismissed. So  
25 within the-the legal division we added additional

2 staff to handle that workload. We also initially  
3 added in—we—we thought we would we added in computer  
4 titles to do the programming associated with that,  
5 but we found an alternative option that we are  
6 putting in place, which—with a requirements contract  
7 vendor that the city uses to do the scanning of all  
8 the records, to digitize them so they could be  
9 available for both the lawyers to review and then the  
10 Law Department to review subsequently. So, this is  
11 about getting the information to the Law Department  
12 more expeditiously.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What was the turn-  
14 what was the turnaround time for discovery now with  
15 the department's Legal Department--

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I will--

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: --was it  
18 chronically delayed or anything?

19 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: No, I think the new  
20 law requires an expedited turnaround. So, we didn't  
21 have the resources to address the expedited  
22 turnaround.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: If the department  
24 has choice would it rather the \$617,000 in fire alarm  
25

2 inspectors or, you know, gofers to go find the  
3 discovery documents?

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, obviously the  
5 new law requires us to do that. Otherwise cases that  
6 we are in a sense prosecuting for its Fire Code  
7 violations would be dismissed, and we think that's a  
8 serious issue for us.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yeah, you're right.  
10 You're right with that. Is this funding sufficient  
11 or is this sort of the baseline for now we'll see how  
12 it goes, and we might have to add to it if we still  
13 can't comply?

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: We may need to add  
15 to the area in fire prevention. We're having  
16 discussions with OMB on that right now, but those  
17 are, you know, as of now we are working together with  
18 the Legal Division and Fire Prevention to address the  
19 needs of the Law Department.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: He DFY 2020 Mayor's  
21 Management Report the goal was to respond to medical  
22 emergencies lowering the response time. They current  
23 Preliminary MMR and I think we have the on-screen.  
24 We're a multi-media committee now. Isn't that  
25 fantastic. Three critical indicators of the FDNY

2 related to responding to the se emergencies have  
3 increased since FY 2017 including the FY 2020 four  
4 month reporting period. Can you just go over the  
5 reasons for this increase and what the department is  
6 doing?

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think there's two  
8 basic reasons for it. As I testified, the number of  
9 calls we receive has continued to grow in FY15 to  
10 FY20, and the city has become more and more  
11 congested, more and more difficult to get around for  
12 our units but I do think the—the bottom line as far  
13 as the department response time is—is an important  
14 measure. The mission of the department, of course,  
15 is to save lives and save property. Serious fires  
16 are down, fire deaths are down. The people of our  
17 city are treated—have the best possible EMTs and  
18 paramedics, the best of any-any place in our country,  
19 and anyone that calls. Why do so many people call?  
20 People ask me why in New York do more people call 911  
21 for medical help than anywhere else? Perhaps because  
22 they know that they will get good treatment here that  
23 they know that people will arrive and treat them with  
24 respect and treat them with the best possible  
25 outcome. So, I think the despite the difficulty in

2 us getting around, despite the increase in calls has  
3 been able to meet and exceed really the public's  
4 expectation.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I think you're-  
6 you're 100% right to tout the increasing rates of  
7 survivability, and I think you're right to credit  
8 the--the folks that are on the ground that are  
9 providing the service, but--but you know, frankly,  
10 when the response time is lower, we--we also tap those  
11 as--as good metrics to measure our success, and when  
12 they go up, I think we should also acknowledge them.  
13 Do you think that adding to the department's fleet  
14 diversity of vehicles could possibly address some of  
15 the response times in certain unique neighborhoods or  
16 buildings or areas?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think there are  
18 (coughs) places where that works. You know, I--I can  
19 --we have an ASAP Vehicle you know, in Times Square--

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Successfully  
21 because you've been--

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yes. We've used it  
23 in Hudson Yards. We used it around Rockefeller  
24 Center during the tree lighting season. There are  
25 places I think for those types of approaches to both

2 medical calls and other types of emergency calls and  
3 the department has used it. We did place rapid  
4 response fire vehicles at the Judson Yards location  
5 when they opened last year. Found there to be really  
6 no-no call for it, but there are places where that  
7 can be used also and where the department  
8 successfully uses alternate type vehicles to meet the  
9 needs So, growing that is certainly in our future.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you think, you  
11 know despite my best efforts as a car enthusiast, and  
12 I know people hate me for that, but we seem to be  
13 pedestrianizing more and more public space in New  
14 York City. Do you think this need for sort of  
15 smaller more the shift to your vehicles just expands  
16 over time given the direction of the city?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Again, I think there  
18 are specific locations that that may work. I don't  
19 think as a-the work horse, so to speak, of our-either  
20 our fire and EMS system will ever be something of  
21 that nature, but locations of Penn Station, Grand  
22 Central Station those types of places-places where we  
23 use them in Central Park say or the beaches in the  
24 summer where we use alternate vehicles, yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Have you ever rode  
3 a Segway.

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I have never ridden  
5 a Segway .

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Neither have I. I  
7 think we should—I think we should maybe do our first  
8 test together.

9 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Maybe we should. I'm  
10 like you. I'm a car enthusiast and—but I'm willing to  
11 try it.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Good. I just want  
13 to ask you a question about COVID 19. Are operators  
14 have they received any instruction or first  
15 responders have they received any instruction on  
16 symptoms and screening for potential COVID 19?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Certainly. For the  
18 past month we've been using a protocol where people  
19 calling for medical help are asked simple questions,  
20 cough fever, travel. This is something we've used  
21 before in other medical crises that is—gives our  
22 folks an alert that if they are—if people are  
23 reporting these things our units going into the scene  
24 will know in advance. We have been, you know our MTs  
25 and paramedics have been treating people with

2 infectious conditions for decades, have more  
3 experience that anybody in the—probably in the world  
4 in successfully doing that. So, I think we're—we  
5 have alerted them. We will do more of that. We will  
6 continue to do it probably on a daily basis while  
7 this crisis continues in our city and in our country.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, Switching gears  
9 to Hudson Yards for a second, it's now open, and at  
10 last year's hearing you had stated that they  
11 department didn't anticipate a serious uptick in  
12 calls, but—but perhaps in fire calls, but some degree  
13 of emergency and medical call increases. So, what  
14 was the case of the units that are the responding  
15 units to Hudson Yards? Was there and increase of  
16 what were the statistics?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There was really no  
18 increase in fire and emergency calls, a very minimal  
19 increase. Nothing that would put us in serious  
20 jeopardy, and a slight increase in medical calls, but  
21 nothing. Any increase, of course, taxes our ability,  
22 but not seriously.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is—is the need for  
24 a firehouse and EMS station or both still a desire of  
25 the department, or is this something that was

2 somewhat overblown, and perhaps it didn't need to  
3 actually occur?

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we're still  
5 evaluating some additional form of fire protection in  
6 the future, and we're looking at locations for a  
7 station I think. Do we have—for expansion in the  
8 West Side of Manhattan. There in conjunction with  
9 DCAS we've been looking primarily first for some need  
10 really to rescue one and any firehouse there because  
11 that facility is under-sized, and we are also looking  
12 at potentially another EMS station, but these are  
13 very preliminary and, as you know, real estate in  
14 that particular area of the city is quite a  
15 challenging aspect of trying to locate space.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Since Hudson Yards  
17 has a tax abatement is there any leverage that you're  
18 aware of that the city could use to perhaps have an  
19 easier time getting space?

20 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think perhaps that  
21 ship has sailed certainly in the east portion of  
22 Hudson Yards, which is completed.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I agree with you.  
24 Staten Island's EMS station, however had the FDNY re-  
25 assessed the need for a third EMS station as of now?

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I don't think at  
3 the--at the present time the department has requested  
4 an additional station on Staten Island.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you think it's a  
6 need or is on a priority list? Maybe not the top one  
7 or--?

8 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well I know right  
9 now Staten Island I believe has our best response  
10 time of any borough for EMS. I think if we continue  
11 to monitor it and if we see that there is a need, as  
12 we saw with the Squad Company a need for a Squad  
13 Company on Staten Island, the department will request  
14 that, but at the present time we have no plans to  
15 request the additional station on Staten Island.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: In FY 18 one-third  
17 of the department's ambulance tours were privately  
18 run, and I believe that percentage has decreased.  
19 What is the current market share of voluntary versus  
20 FDNY units?

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Do you know?  
22 Roughly 60/40.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, so it's  
24 slightly, slightly less than--

25 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yeah.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Slightly more  
3 actually.

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well the department  
5 will increase. As we catch up with staffing we can  
6 increase the number of municipal tours.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Have any private  
8 ambulance tours been taken over in the past year, and  
9 do we anticipate this future year any tours being  
10 taken over?

11 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Private ambulance  
12 have the voluntaries taken over any of our municipal  
13 tours?

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: No, no vice versa.  
15 Has the city taken over any voluntary tours?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There's--there's one  
17 tour in the works, you know, for Manhattan that we  
18 will be absorbing.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The Preliminary MMR  
20 indicates the last three years the percentage of  
21 cardiac arrest patients revived has increased from  
22 13% to 35%, which is certainly a fantastic number.  
23 What does the department attribute that to and is it  
24 luck or is it a change of tactics or good work?

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think it's better  
3 capture of data. Like I really—I wouldn't think that  
4 it's luck or skill. I think we're—just did a better  
5 job of capturing it.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The, um, the FY2020  
7 Budget includes \$43 million over two fiscal years for  
8 flight car expansion. The expansion was to extend  
9 throughout all of the Bronx with 27 total flight  
10 cars. Can you just tell us what the status of the  
11 program of that is, and are there 27 flight cars.

12 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There not yet 27  
13 flight cars. What we did now there are flight cars  
14 and PRU, which are—do a similar task non-transporting  
15 paramedic vehicles. Flight cars are staffed by an  
16 officer and a paramedic in PRUs are staffed by two  
17 paramedics. I believe currently in service we have  
18 certainly less than-- How many flight cars? Ten  
19 flight cars, and three PRUs. There are a total of 13.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the goal to  
21 expand it outside of the Bronx as well at some point?

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think once we get  
23 it fully implemented in the Bronx and can evaluate  
24 how it worked, we can see if that's—if it's worth  
25 expanding.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I understand  
3 EMS will—is going to change the number of divisions  
4 from 6 o 9. What is the rationale behind that and  
5 what is the goal?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, that's being  
7 evaluated right now based on the need for, you know,  
8 increase in supervision and the number. It's a  
9 thousand—in this Administration we've added a  
10 thousand in headcount in EMS over the past six years  
11 and we've not added divisions. So, we're evaluating  
12 the need because each division is now supervising  
13 many more units.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The big issue with  
15 obviously if you want EMS's pay parity and the  
16 Council has been fairly clear not just this  
17 committee, but other council committees and the  
18 organization of a body calling fro pay parity. What  
19 is the department doing to increase EMS members'  
20 wages and does the department support the rising  
21 wages of EMS workers?

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, first of all,  
23 I'd like to thank the Council for appreciating the  
24 value of our EMS people, and for that we are  
25 grateful. The department—negotiations have just

2 begun now between the EMS units and the city. As you  
3 know, the department doesn't have the ability to  
4 unilaterally do that. That would be quite dangerous  
5 in the city. I think all of the commissioners that  
6 value our workers so much would want our people at  
7 the very top of the pyramid. In our case it would be  
8 justified, of course, but certainly I wish negotiate—  
9 hope the negotiations go well, and we'll not be  
10 disappointed if our EMS unions are able to secure a  
11 contract that recognizes the work that they do.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, I—we are all  
13 aware that every EMT has met certain certifications  
14 and qualifications, but as a general rule of thumb is  
15 experienced better, that experience leads to better  
16 outcomes.

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I don't know if  
18 we've ever measured that. I think every—every person  
19 that comes out of our academy from day one, and that  
20 goes for the prior academy also, is ready to do their  
21 job. I think a good measure of that is we have our  
22 end of the month—every—every month. Last month I met  
23 with four young men. Among them the senior person  
24 had less than three years, and this was a group  
25 recognized for doing exemplary work in EMS. So, of

2 course experience is a factor. Many of the people  
3 that commit to EMS have been EMTs before, before they  
4 entered the department, everyone other than our  
5 trainees have EMT certification. So, while  
6 experience is a valuable factor, I think we can be--  
7 safely assume that the folks that are on our  
8 ambulances know what they're doing and will treat the  
9 patients that they come in contact with aggressively  
10 and successfully.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: A fifth year EMT  
12 makes about \$50,000. IF they're promoted to a first  
13 year firefighter their base salary becomes \$44,000.  
14 Do they--do they lose the increase and take the lower  
15 pay?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: That's a question  
18 we had in the committee we didn't know the answer to.  
19 I mean more--really didn't know the answer. Just  
20 briefly about the--the collection rate from  
21 individuals in city care. Last year since the  
22 announcement of NYC Care we spoke about the  
23 uncertainty around the program and collections from  
24 uninsured. It's been rolled out in the Bronx and the

2 program has more than 1,300 enrollees. So, what is  
3 the collection rate from individuals with NYC Care?

4 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Are you talking  
5 about transports that the EMS does for ambulances?

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: So, historically the  
8 ambulance collection rate for those who either we  
9 cannot identify insurance for or do not, in fact,  
10 have insurance is around 20% of our payer mix. The  
11 other 80% either through government sponsored  
12 insurance or private insurance, we collected probably  
13 close to 95%.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Can you just stay  
15 with EMS just one more second. Can you just talk  
16 about the EMS evaluates performance and how we track  
17 patient outcomes? You know, we had that cardiac  
18 number, but what other metrics exist there to track  
19 the performance of EMTs and ambulances?

20 FEMALE SPEAKER: The Office of Medical  
21 Affairs has a significant oversight over EMS and they  
22 do quality assurance on a regular basis.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But statistically  
24 is the outcome of EMTs improving or failing in more  
25 cases?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAUGH: Can you  
3 repeat that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, if we are  
5 tracking the outcomes and keeping statistics on the  
6 outcomes is the rate of good outcomes growing and the  
7 rate of bad outcomes decreasing?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER KAVANAUGH: I think  
9 it's remained fairly consistent. We would have to  
10 look at the statistics of the doctors, but I believe  
11 it's remained consistent over time.

12 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: So, just turning to  
13 capital what are the department's biggest capital  
14 projects and what are the department's biggest  
15 capital challenges?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think like all  
17 other agencies the challenges in capital is securing  
18 enough commitment funding, and also the length of the  
19 process to bring a project to fruition. Some of the  
20 big projects that we are funded for is the large  
21 project to convert all of our conduit underneath the  
22 surface of the street to fiber optics, which will  
23 greatly improve the dispatching time and allow for a  
24 lot of improvements in the firehouse and EMS  
25 stations. We also have a large project just

2 underway, which is a several part project Right now  
3 the funding is available for Fort Totten upgrade of  
4 the infrastructure out there to \$50 million project  
5 that's mainly for the EMS Academy. We obviously in  
6 just a—we opened a new Rescue 2 quarters. We're  
7 working on new quarters for Engine 268 and EMS  
8 Station 17 and then there are some technology  
9 projects for Channel 16. It's expansion for the  
10 radio system, and a new—and our flyers project that  
11 will help automate the Billion Inspection Program.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And what other  
13 capital projects are on the horizon in the agency's  
14 long-term needs that—that you've assessed?

15 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: The largest areas  
16 are, you know, always going to be in the construction  
17 area of multi-component work for firehouses and EMS  
18 stations, and the second is just as important, the  
19 technology area as we—as the Department of Public  
20 Safety as we move into more secure networks and  
21 things of that nature, and going to private networks  
22 and all of that expansion will require additional  
23 capital funds. We're in discussions with OMB on that  
24 right now.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, when  
3 firefighters are exposed to carcinogens and are stuck  
4 to their equipment and gear, what is the department's  
5 policy and procedure for washing their bunker gear?

6 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, currently the  
7 department or we just—we were cleaning gear once a  
8 year. I think we're up to twice a year, which is the  
9 NFPA standard for cleaning bunker gear for  
10 firefighters.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: As a rule of thumb  
12 they're getting carcinogens off of clothes is  
13 probably a good thing.

14 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: What's that?

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Getting carcinogens  
16 off of clothing would probably be a good thing in  
17 general.

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I would think that  
19 that's a good thing.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the frequency  
21 of washing the gear would be beneficial to the  
22 members.

23 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Which is why we've  
24 increased it from once a year to twice a year. Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Has the department  
3 explored perhaps a pilot program of outfitting  
4 certain houses with their own washing machines and is  
5 there a capital commitment or an estimate of the cost  
6 for that program?

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we're  
8 certainly looking at it. We're not committed to  
9 doing that to putting machines in every firehouse,  
10 but it's something that's being reviewed as a-right  
11 now we have an outside vendor do that. Whether we'd  
12 want to switch to do it in each individual firehouse  
13 has not been evaluated fully. NO.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What is the cost of  
15 the-the vendor services per year roughly?

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I do have the  
17 number. Off hand I'd have to get it. I could find  
18 it for you. Give me, give me a moment.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: If it's possible,  
20 could you get back to the committee with the cost of  
21 the operation to clean the bunker gear as well as a  
22 cost of implementing and installing washing machines,  
23 you know, a pilot program however you would think  
24 optimal whether it be in one house per division or  
25 battalion or whether it would be on battalion or

2 something overall. We would just be interested in  
3 knowing the cost of that and perhaps pushing it  
4 through.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER NOONAN: Yeah the  
6 pilot programs we're looking at three options. One  
7 is increasing the contract with the vendor. The other  
8 is locating washers and dryers at Randall's Island  
9 and the other is doing in a firehouse. So, we'll get  
10 you the costs on those three and then Operations will  
11 decide which one we're going to pilot first.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, thank you.  
13 SO, in your testimony Commissioner you mentioned the  
14 diversity of the most recent class and the numbers  
15 were an improvement over the past. Do we have any  
16 estimate of why that was the case? Is there  
17 something that was done differently, and can we  
18 continue to duplicate it or-or increase?

19 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Well, you know, we  
20 have Commissioner Noonan here. About how it  
21 happened, the department put a tremendous amount of  
22 effort into recruiting before the last test. So more  
23 than half of the folks that took that test identified  
24 as people of color. So what we have now going  
25 forward, what we anticipate in each and every class

2 they should be similar to what this--the last class  
3 that graduated in which 37% I think is what I--what I  
4 stated identified that way. So each class will--we  
5 just about in the last few years doubled the  
6 percentage of people of color in the department.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So you--

8 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Continuing along  
9 that line because of the recruitment of those  
10 candidates who took and passed the test, and will be  
11 hired in subsequent classes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And--and you  
13 mentioned the department in its official capacity  
14 attends meetings with the department's different  
15 ethnic and religious groups, and you know, we  
16 certainly support all of that. We're wondering, you  
17 know, what--what actually happens at the meetings? Is  
18 it--are there round tables? Is there a lot of  
19 feedback from these organizations and is that  
20 feedback then turned into recruitment policy?

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think the various  
22 formats at the--at the CDIO's meetings with affiliated  
23 organizations is that what you're talking about?

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Some of them we  
3 bring in people at presentations on best practices.  
4 There is some round table discussions as to requests  
5 from folks in various organizations affiliated with  
6 the department, but it's a--it's a chance for people  
7 to meet with this great variety. I said there's 40  
8 different affiliated organizations within the  
9 department to meet, to get to know them and it's made  
10 the department more accessible, more inclusive. It  
11 adds a great educational value to those that attend,  
12 and we will continue to do it on a monthly basis  
13 that formalized the meeting.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And just a final  
15 topic before I turn it over to Council Member  
16 Brannan, what is the department doing to decrease  
17 both uniform and civilian overtime spending?

18 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Steve.

19 STEVE RUSH: I think I've been testifying  
20 before the Council for many, many years and over time  
21 it's obviously always a large challenge for the  
22 agency. We seeing a slight reduction in this year's  
23 projected overtime namely on the fire side because as  
24 we continue to hire up, obviously having more full-  
25 time staff reduces overtime. With respect to EMS,

2 given the challenges of staffing right now, overtime  
3 is high. We expect as staffing increases that will  
4 go down as well. So we are taking additional steps  
5 on monitoring overtime, and that's being headed up by  
6 the Chief of the Department, and we're seeing  
7 reductions in some of the major areas of overtime  
8 spending or in the Administrative and support areas  
9 that has occurred in the last 12 months.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. Yes we  
11 would. Um, that is all the questions I have. I will  
12 turn it over to Council Member Brannon for questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNON: Thank you,  
14 Chair. Commissioner, it's great again to hear you  
15 support the fight for EMS pay parity. I know if you  
16 could snap your fingers and make it happen I am  
17 confident that you would. Has there been any talk  
18 about increasing staffing and funding for the EMS  
19 Academy?

20 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Yeah we have and  
21 we're in the process now of increasing capacity so  
22 that our EMS classes can move from a 180 maximum to  
23 240 and that's all based on some of the capital  
24 improvements being made, staffing increases in  
25 training, and expansion into another building

2 actually, which is going forward. So, it definitely  
3 gives us a capacity to hire more and to graduate  
4 folks at a higher level.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNON: Is there—I mean  
6 is there an ask for additional funding for this for  
7 this EMS Academy this year?

8 JOHN SUDNIK: I think we--

9 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There is. I'm going  
10 to ask. That's being evaluated by OMB at present.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNON: Okay and then  
12 another issue for me that you—it's important just  
13 because I hear it all the time from—from men and  
14 women on the job is about the Fifth Firefighters.  
15 There's still internal talk about permanently putting  
16 back the fifth—the fifth man.

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Not that I'm aware  
18 of. I know the union had negotiated 20 additional—25  
19 firefighter units. The UFA is not yet in  
20 negotiations with their next—for their next contract.  
21 I don't know what their plans are if they're planning  
22 to seek additional staffing, but we'll see. I think  
23 they're potentially waiting for an outcome of the PDA  
24 here. They have yet to sit down and negotiate DFA.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNON: Okay, thank you.  
3 Thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. We have  
5 been joined by Council Member Maisel, and Council  
6 Member Cabrera, and Council Member Cabrear has a  
7 question.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so  
9 much Mr. Chair. Welcome Commissioner and to all the  
10 staff. Can you—I just have one kind of a big  
11 question here. What is the policy with FDNY and Con  
12 Edison—Con Ed regarding manhole fires and false  
13 alarms? Does the FDNY have information on any  
14 financial agreements between—with Con Ed specifically  
15 to recoup costs associated with responses to manhole  
16 fires particularly regarding false alarms?

17 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: No. I am not aware  
18 that there's a manhole fire false alarm issue, and  
19 the department does especially in the winter or in  
20 periods of excessive heat respond to manhole fires,  
21 but I don't think we get too many false alarms for  
22 manhole fires

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Do commercial  
24 buildings get charged for false alarms?

2 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: There's automatic  
3 alarms. If you have an excessive number of automatic  
4 false alarms on your automatic alarm system there is  
5 a charge. There is a fine. Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Do you know how  
7 much that is when you receive it?

8 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Fines are set by the  
9 ECB as part of OATH, and they may vary on them, but  
10 there's also a period where you can get back into  
11 compliance. So, we do give you opportunity to  
12 correct. It's usually the systems have maintenance  
13 issues.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay. Thank you  
15 so much. Mr. Chair, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Council  
17 Member Maisel any questions?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: [off mic] No.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: At this time we  
20 have no—oh, I'm being overruled. How long will it  
21 take to implement the flight car expansion?

22 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I'll have to get  
23 back to you on that. I—I don't know. It's, um—  
24 (pause) So he's saying possibly the end of Fiscal  
25 Year 21.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And then finally on  
3 overtime can you provide the committee a breakdown of  
4 funding by sources, city versus non-city  
5 specifically? If you don't have that now, would you  
6 be able to provide the committee with that?

7 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: I think we can, yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: Right now the  
10 expected spending in overtime the total approximately  
11 \$337 million of which we're projecting \$13 million  
12 which would be to—generally homeland security  
13 funding.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Checks  
15 are here

16 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: And \$750,000 is the  
17 cost of the cleaning of the—the second cleaning of  
18 the bunker here.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, thank you  
20 very much.

21 COMMISSIONER NIGRO: The last two months.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: We'll see if Jack  
23 has any more questions. He's been here six months.  
24 He's already our boss, you know. Do you, do you?

2 JACK: Thanks, you guys. I appreciate it.  
3 (pause)

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the next panel  
5 will be Vincent Variale and Oran Barvalle and the  
6 writing is sloppy. Please excuse me. Bryce Jacob.  
7 (background comments/pause) Bryce, I'm not going to  
8 lie. The two gentlemen next to you are frequent  
9 guests of this committee. You are not. So, you will  
10 go first. (background comment) Thank. You.

11 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you so much.  
12 (laughter)

13 BRUCE JACOBS: Good morning. My name is  
14 Bruce Jacobs, Coalition of the Rockaways and  
15 Southeast Queens, a fighter for the Rockaways and  
16 Southeast Queens, U.S. Navy Veteran, 9/11 first  
17 responder and Medical and religious freedom. I have  
18 one thing with this budget that I don't like. First  
19 of all, there's restrictions on people doing their  
20 job because I'm all for the Fire Department getting  
21 their jobs, getting their jobs done. My cousin and I  
22 worked with the Fire Department with the Transit  
23 Authority for over 30 years. To put a restriction on  
24 overtime when can't even get people that could do  
25 this job because this job of Fire Department is not

2 the like, you know, a job, regular job. You have to  
3 want to do it. Now, you have also in this budget  
4 that you're breaking down—I know it's not you guys  
5 are going to go politically correct and everything.  
6 You know, I represent the Red Firms of City Housing  
7 and all also. Thee idea that you're trying to give  
8 jobs by the thought of what a person is. Unless  
9 you're really qualified, you can't cut down the  
10 qualifications just to get your paper trio on, you  
11 know, hiring. The Fire Department a fireman, EMS I'm  
12 all for it. EMS should get a first crack at getting  
13 promoted 'cause they're already in the Fire  
14 Department, but, you know, the—the other kind of  
15 hiring you're talking about spending with the cutting  
16 down on the full-time materials and uniform and all  
17 that, you really can't do that with the—with the Fire  
18 Department. In a city like this, which we're already  
19 in big problems where we can't walk the streets  
20 safely because of special rules that, you know, was  
21 adopted in Albany, we don't need to have our heroes  
22 restricted on making over—on making money. They work  
23 hard for their money, and they deserve every penny  
24 that they get because not everybody could run into a  
25 fire and even if you want the job you have to go

2 through heavy qualifications for that, and it's a job  
3 that is necessary because if you don't—if you don't  
4 have these things how are you going to learn—want to  
5 go into a firefight. It's like, you know, firearm,  
6 you know, even the EMS those jobs you got to be  
7 heroes. Now on the—on the idea of spending where I  
8 see a cost they're going to get fringe benefits to  
9 take that kind of job. The only reason that you  
10 would be a firefighter or even an EMS is for the  
11 benefits. If you're going to put the benefits down  
12 as a budget—I really don't see how that should be  
13 part of a budget because that's—how you going to get  
14 qualified guys and guy who even want the job if you  
15 don't want to give them good benefits. Now it says  
16 overtime uniform. Okay, on that part of the budget  
17 yeah maybe they should give more for the civilian  
18 overtime because, you know, there's no—I see that the  
19 civilians don't get nothing. The civilians are also  
20 here with us. You know, they're working in that  
21 department. They deserve a break. Now with the  
22 fifth—fifth firefighter yeah, they should, you know,  
23 they—it's good to have a fifth firefighter. However,  
24 if you could get more safety for them in any other  
25 ways, that's another—no, that's a questionable thing

2 to think about because, you know, modern times, but  
3 the safety of our firefighters is the most important  
4 thing. The EMS, like I said, they should get first  
5 crack. I don't know their hiring is working, but  
6 when you have things down on a budget that's breaking  
7 down by race, by groups, by all that, no you can't do  
8 that. Yes, they should hire all different people  
9 equally on the same thing. There's no such a thing  
10 as given a job if people are not qualified. In this  
11 budget there should be more money given for education  
12 for education to help people to be more qualified to  
13 do these things because people have to be trained not  
14 just a 9-week or the 6-month whatever it is, you  
15 know, going through the school at the Fire  
16 Department. Once again, like I said these guys  
17 should get whatever they deserve with all the money  
18 and put up budget. Yes, it should be watched because,  
19 you know, I see the civilian overtime is no good.  
20 You're putting the fringe benefits as a benefit,  
21 additional gross pay. You know, it's stuff like that  
22 okay, you know, you could look at it, but you can't  
23 really then, and now you have the response, the  
24 response time with the merging of the EMS. The EMS is  
25 the real heroes. They're not even looked upon as

2 nothing. You know, a lot of people don't—they  
3 disregard them, but if it wasn't for EMS we wouldn't  
4 be—you know, emergencies we'd be in trouble. The EMS  
5 response time is beautiful. You really can't get  
6 better than that. If they're complaining about that,  
7 there is really no possible way that you could get  
8 better. They're doing the best job they possibly  
9 could do and—and in the—in the New York City—and the  
10 last comment I'm going to say—has to stop caring  
11 about violations and all this stuff when you got guys  
12 walking the streets with no bill that you can't walk  
13 up your street safely and nobody could get arrested  
14 while we're sitting here the law abiding citizens  
15 with our life in danger and our office can't even do  
16 nothing. So, how are our firefighters going to  
17 continue? Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'll just add one  
19 thing. The violations that the Commissioner and his  
20 staff were talking about were typically for  
21 intentional arsons. That's the discovery. So, I  
22 don't want people burning down the buildings. Next we  
23 will hear from WORKS (sic)

24 LOREN: Good morning, Chairman Borelli  
25 and good morning committee chair people. The

2 proposed additions to the 2020 FDNY EMS Budget are to  
3 be applauded. The capital investments to the  
4 infrastructure is long overdue. The realignment of  
5 the divisions will make daily operations more  
6 manageable. Adding positions at EMD Emergency  
7 Medical Dispatch Equality assurance will improve  
8 triage of 911 requests for our citizens. However,  
9 all these do not address the reality of the  
10 situations we are facing. The EMS providers handle  
11 82% of the call volume or just 14-14% of the Fire  
12 Department's budget while fire suppression handles  
13 18% of the call volume with 70% of the budget. It is  
14 imperative that the budget allocation be aligned with  
15 the overall needs of the 911 response system. At a  
16 recent management meeting, one of our chiefs  
17 admitted that there was only one fully staffed EMS  
18 station in the entire system. The three other major  
19 issues facing the EMS system are an unfunded head  
20 count, the inability to be paying those providers  
21 already trained, and pay scales incompatible with  
22 other services in the overall 911 system. Increasing  
23 the ability of the Academy to train larger numbers of  
24 new employees is essentially super floss as nearly  
25 80% of them will leave for better paying jobs on

2 average within four years. Most of them leave.  
3 Other five-year first responders are paid \$85,000 a  
4 year. A five-year EMT is paid \$49,000. This  
5 disparity is the reason the department is unable to  
6 retain personnel in the titles performing the bulk of  
7 the responses by the FDNY. Unless the pay scale  
8 issues are urgently addressed, hiring, training and  
9 equipment and hordes of people is nothing more than  
10 throwing good money after bad in the hope that  
11 spending even more money in the same manner on these  
12 problematic issues, and the presumably futile hope of  
13 fixing it. That's my testimony. I will add—I just  
14 want to add a few comments once he is done with his.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Sure. I—I have a  
16 question for both of you as well. Vinny.

17 VINNY: Thank. I don't have a statement.  
18 I just want to—I've got a couple of things that were  
19 mentioned in the report, and both that were stated.  
20 The first thing I want to bring up is the expansion  
21 of the four-time EMS Academy. I think it's great  
22 that they allocate for \$50 million to expand the  
23 Academy to hire more members of the—for staffing, but  
24 certainly the staffing. However, to add more  
25 staffing without addressing the retention problems is

1 just making—it's turning the Academy into a mill  
2 churning out people who are not going to stay here. We  
3 need to address the retention problem by increasing  
4 salaries and giving people a career here. That's  
5 what saves lives. I've heard the Commissioner about  
6 the—give a brief mention about the experience and how  
7 it would be good and had no knowledge of whether or  
8 not it would provide a bigger difference because our  
9 members that are here today save lives, and that's  
10 true. They do. They work hard. They save lives,  
11 but we have seen the research. This isn't just  
12 something I'm making up. It—it's—it demonstrates  
13 that there is a correlation between experience and—  
14 and positive patient outcomes. To spend over \$50  
15 million just to create a mill to churn out more new  
16 recruits, that's something the Academy is never going  
17 to be able to produce, experience. You need people  
18 on this job with more than five years on the job,  
19 more than three years on the job who have the  
20 experience to provide that positive patient outcome  
21 and to save lives and we need to start investing in  
22 EMS as a life saving resource that it is, and that's  
23 something that I think needs to be stated to OMB to  
24 the Mayor's Office. They need to start admitting  
25

2 that, and start addressing that problem. The other  
3 issue I want to bring up is fly cars. There is two  
4 separate models being introduced. Well barely one,  
5 but one is the fly car, which is a supervisor an a  
6 paramedic, and the other one is the PRU, which stands  
7 for Paramedic Response Unit. That's two paramedics.  
8 I believe there's only three of those units currently  
9 working. I think that's the model we need to go  
10 with. I think the fly car when there is one  
11 supervisor and one paramedic is a flawed model. We  
12 have seen it. It's been in operation over three  
13 years. I don't know how much more evidence they need  
14 to tell them that it's not working. It's increased  
15 response times in the Bronx and it's dangerous  
16 because by increasing response times people aren't  
17 getting the necessary emergency medical services they  
18 need. The supervisors, the lieutenants who were on  
19 those fly cars can't do their job as an officer.  
20 Their-their workload has tripled, and they're not  
21 able to supervise and—and they're being held  
22 accountable to do that-that job. So, let's look at  
23 this for a minute. We are grossly underpaid, grossly  
24 understaffed, triple our workload and we expect  
25 positive results. Does that many any sense

2 whatsoever? It makes no sense, and the sad part  
3 about this this isn't a corporation that's going to  
4 fail and go bankrupt. This is people's lives we're  
5 talking about. People are going to die. People's  
6 lives are already in danger because of it. If they  
7 want pursue the PRU Model, they should do so, but the  
8 Fly Car model needs to end. They need to let  
9 officers be officers and let them supervise. Thank  
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do each of your  
12 respective unions support the change of Division  
13 Number from 6 to 9?

14 VINNY: I believe it was originally five  
15 and the intention is to increase divisions. I  
16 haven't seen one change so far, but I don't really  
17 see a value in that. If anything what they need to  
18 do is increase the amount of EMS stations and  
19 decompress some of the stations we have and increase  
20 the amount of stations because we're already  
21 overflowing. We have some stations that have---that  
22 they're crammed in like sardines. I really don't see  
23 a major value or difference in creating more  
24 divisions. I mean it couldn't hurt but for me it

2 wouldn't be a number one priority that would make a  
3 real difference.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Loren, do you want  
5 to add to that? Do you want to say anything else.

6 LOREN: I just want to add a few things  
7 to what Vinny said because he's 100% right, and  
8 experience does matter. What you read in the  
9 textbook is different than what you see in real life.  
10 If it's your first time seeing somebody having a  
11 stroke or a heart attack, you're not going to know it  
12 until you experience it a few times, and your—your  
13 reaction each time will be quicker to recognize it.  
14 So, when they tell you it doesn't make a difference  
15 it's—it's blatantly false, and lives are at risk  
16 without having this knowledge and experience. As far  
17 as having more divisions, it's not going to improve  
18 response times. It's not going to improve any of our  
19 issues that we have. It will give more promotional  
20 opportunities maybe, but that's about that it. As  
21 far as Vinny saying we need more stations, he's  
22 right. I mean we addressed the Lockers issues here  
23 last year. So their—their resolve was we'll cut them  
24 in half. Our members now have half lockers. So more  
25 people can lockers. The Staten Island question that

2 you asked about another station. Yes, we need  
3 another station in Staten Island. It takes the unit  
4 sometimes 15 to 20 minute to get to their response  
5 area. It's one of the biggest boroughs to get from  
6 one end to the other, it's not—even if you like some  
7 time it can take you 20 or 30 minutes. So, I don't  
8 understand how they're saying that it's not needed.  
9 You also questioned if we've given any--taken any  
10 units, and they mentioned and they mentioned that  
11 they took over a unit in Manhattan North. That's  
12 incorrect. They pulled Manhattan-Presbyterian pulled  
13 out a paramedic unit out of the system in Washington  
14 Heights. They don't have the manpower so what they  
15 did was they took a Midtown ALS Unit and moved them  
16 up to Washington Heights. So now Manhattan, Midtown  
17 has one less paramedic unit, and this is what they do  
18 all the time. They shuffle people around. We are  
19 not increasing our headcounts. They said they added  
20 a thousand people. We lost 12, 1,300 people. They  
21 just replaced them. We're still at a shortfall. So,  
22 by expanding our academy it's putting on a band-aid  
23 on an artery that's bleeding. That's not fixing it.  
24 Youi can make our academy handle a thousand people.  
25 Those thousand people would leave just as quick as

2 the current people are leaving. It's not-it's not  
3 fixing the issue that we have. How is OMB not seeing  
4 all this wasted money? It's beyond comprehension.  
5 We're training thousands of people. We're putting  
6 hundreds of trainees in our academy to train these  
7 people and they're still not staying. In our last  
8 class as they're training three of them were called  
9 into NYPD Academy. They packed up their stuff and  
10 they—and they walked out. While in training anything  
11 that comes their way they're leaving. The overtime.  
12 We have a 40% overtime cap that as negotiated.  
13 Because it's so high they increased it to 50% earlier  
14 this month in February I believe. If you have any  
15 questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: No, thank you. We  
17 have been joined by Council Member Deutsch, and if  
18 there are any further questions or anyone would like  
19 to testify now is your chance to flail your arms or  
20 something. If not, the committee is [gavel]  
21 adjourned.

22 LOREN Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Oh, I'm  
24 sorry. Hold on. I take it back. I'd say—I think you

2 can do that. (background comments) I have to start  
3 again?

4 MALE SPEAKER: (off mic) I don't want to  
5 do that. I'll slip in here.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yes, Are we clear  
7 or--Yes, oh yes. Sorry. I called that. Thank you and  
8 Josephina whenever you would like to start you may  
9 begin.

10 JOSEPHINA: Good morning. Josephina  
11 Santabu (sp?) from Latinas Against FDNY cuts. I  
12 wasn't going to speak until I noticed that UFA and  
13 UFOA have no representation here to represent the  
14 firefighters who are the people being discussed. For  
15 example, if you're going to have washing machines to  
16 remover carcinogens from bunker gear, once a year is  
17 stunning. Twice a year is better but who is going to  
18 be handling carcinogen material? Is it going to be  
19 one person or each person is going to be putting  
20 their product into a washer and dryer and where is  
21 the water, the rinse water going to go and where is  
22 the ventilation of the dryer going to go into the  
23 neighborhood compared a facility of a vendor which  
24 might be specialized. So those are issues that I  
25 sincerely wish the unions either (1) had been

2 present to address besides the point of view of the  
3 Department. That's my comment for the day.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and it  
5 is lovely to see you as always, and now I officially  
6 [gavel] adjourn.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 16, 2020