

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

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HELD AT: Remote Hearing (Virtual Room 2)

B E F O R E: Costa G. Constantinides
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Darma V Diaz
James F. Gennaro
Stephen T. Levin
Carlos Menchaca
Eric A. Ulrich

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

Vincent Sapienza
Commissioner of
Environmental Protection

Michael DeLoach
Deputy Commissioner of
Public Affairs and
Communications

Karen Imas
Senior Director of
Waterfront Alliance

Sonal Jessel
Director of Policy for
Environmental Justice

Noah Chesnin
Associate Director for
The Wildlife Conservation
Society New York Cityscape
Program

Robert Cooney
New York Resident

Ruth
New York Resident

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Recording to the PC has begun.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRADLEY: Recording to the cloud is up.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Back up is rolling.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRADLEY: Thank you. Sergeant Blondo you may begin with the opening.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS KOTOWSKI: Good morning and welcome to today's remote New York City Council hearing of the Committee on Environmental Protection. At this time would council staff please turn on their video. Please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit testimony you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. That is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right, fantastic. Thank you so much. Uh, good morning everyone. I am Costa Constantinides, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection. Today this committee will address the Mayor's Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget for the Department of Environmental Protection. Uh, the department proposed fiscal 2022 expense budget totals 1.38 billion

dollars and proposed Capital Commitment Plan totals 12.7 billion over five years. The Committee looks forward to hearing more about, uh, the agencies capital investment strategies citywide, the savings, and other adjustments proposed in the preliminary plan, uh, the agency performance metrics. Uh, Commissioner Vincent Sapienza of the Department of Environmental Protection will be providing testimony today. I look forward to hearing from you, Commissioner, and everyone else who is testifying as far as public testimony. Uh, before I turn it over to the Committee Council, I just want to thank, uh, everyone who was involved in getting this hearing started. Our Committee Council, Samara Swanston, Nadia Johnston, and Ricky Chala our Policy Analyst, Jonathon Seltzer (SP?) our Financial Analyst, my Council, Nicholas Rosowski. I want to thank my co... uh, also my Committee Members for being and I'll recognize them as they come and lastly, I will put this in the record once again, I firmly believe we need the Department of Sustainability in the city of New York. To have this committee hearing and not have the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and not have the Mayor's Office of Resiliency and Recovery come before

my committee or the Resiliency Committee and open their books and talk about the fact that we need to implement renewable Rikers Island. We need to implement local 197. We need to implement five more resiliency plans and not have a budget hearing because they were mayoralty are, are just part of the problem in the city of New York. We need to create a Department of Sustainability to be more transparent at least while we work on these issues. So, with that, uh, this is not, uh, the Commissioner's fault. He's not... but I look forward to hearing from the Commissioner and having our Committee Council, uh, uh, go over some procedural items and swear in the witnesses. Thank you.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you. I'm Samara Swanston, Council to the Environmental Protection Committee of the New York City Council. Before we begin, I want to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you are called on to testify when you, when you will be unmuted by the host. I will be calling on panelists to testify. Please be aware that there could be a delay in muting and unmuting. So, please be patient. Please listen for your name to be called. I will be periodically announcing who the

next panelist will be. We will begin with the testimony from the administration, which will be followed by the testimony from members of the public. During the hearing if Council Members would like to ask a question, please use the ZOOM raise hand function and I will call on you in order. We will be limiting Council Member questions to five minutes including responses. I will call on our when it's your turn to speak. Thank you, and I would now like to hand it off to Council... un, to Chair Constantinides.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, thank you Samara. Uh, I am looking to see if any of my colleagues... I see that Council Member Rosenthal is here, but she's not a member of the committee. So, it's great to have Council Member Rosenthal here with us. Thank you, Council Member Rosenthal, for being here. Uh, with that, I'll turn it over to, uh, uh, Commissioner Sapienza and, and, Samara, if you can do the, uh, the swearing in of the witnesses.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you. Thank you, Costa. I will now deliver the oath to the administration and I will call on you each individually to record your answers to be followed by

your testimony. Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing, but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to council member questions? Chia, got, uh, Sapienza.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: I do.

SAMARA SWANSTON: And, uh, Michael, uh, tier, tier, Mike, Michael DeLoach.

MICHAEL DELOACH: I do Samara.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you. I'll now turn it over to... Uh, you may begin when ready.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Commissioner, it's all yours.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Thank you, good morning everyone. Uh, Chair Constantinides, members of the Committee on Environmental Protection. I am Vincent Sapienza, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection or DEP.

I'm here today to speak about the FY22 preliminary budget and the FY21 preliminary Mayor's Management Report. I'd just briefly highlight some pandemic-related issues the DEP continues to manage.

Just first, on our operational challenges DEP has felt the impact of the pandemic and we've made significant operational adjustments over the last 12 months. Our focus had been to ensure that all critical services are interrupted. Our dedicated staff, the majority of whom work outdoors in all weather, continue to provide one billion gallons per day of high quality drinking water, to manage wastewater and storm water, and to reduce air noise and hazardous materials pollution. They deserve our gratitude for their perseverance and for the frequent double-shifts, nights, weekends, uh, that they've worked to cover for their ill and quarantined colleagues.

I'd like to note that some of the operational challenges spurred opportunities for improvement and I'll speak about that shortly. Uh, regarding COVID-19-related fiscal challenges, uh, water revenues for FY21 to date have decreased by about seven percent, uh, compared to FY20. One reason is that the commercial water consumption has declined, uh, which reduces the amount billed.

Another reason is delinquent accounts or accounts that have been, uh, unpaid for more than 30

days. On December 31st, 2020 there were 16,000 more delinquent accounts than there were December 31st, 2019. Much of the increase in delinquencies is from class... tax class 2 and 4, multifamily properties, uh, which is probably indicative of rent collection challenges. I want to be clear that DEP continues to offer payment assistance programs to all rate payers who qualify and we offer payment plans to anyone in need. I encourage any account holder who is struggling to contact our Bureau of Customer Service who can work with you to develop manageable payment plans, uh, to minimize interest and penalties.

Though DEP is not currently at risk of running an FY21 deficit, due to prudent planning last April, the continuing revenue shortfall has real impacts. Most of our operating costs are fixed, such as for chemicals, residual disposal, and labor and expenses related to property taxes that we pay to upstate municipalities for city-owned reservoirs and surrounding lands continues to grow now at a 167 million dollars. So, FY21 budget modifications primarily had to come from our Capital Program. We deferred about 1.2 billion dollars in FY20 capital

work and we have since resequenced other projects in our 10 year plan.

I want to highlight DEPs significant capital obligations for unfunded federal and state environmental mandates including the Gowanus Canal Superfund, the Filtration Avoidance Program, Hillview Reservoir Upgrade, nitrogen removal, and citywide combined sewer overflow or CSR reductions.

We have reached out to the EPA and New York State DEC to ask for temporary relief on certain regulatory milestones for these massive overlapping projects. Those conversations are ongoing. Without relief, though, some plans capital work for maintaining a state of good repair at our drinking water reservoirs, wastewater treatment plants, and for new water mains and storm sewers may be delayed.

I want to also mention that other municipalities face these same pressures in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and Baltimore all recently raised their annual water billing rates between 6.7 percent and 9 percent to meet these obligations. Portland, Oregon is doing five consecutive 7.4 percent rate increases to meet EPA mandates.

Uh, now, just a bit on COVID-19-related achievements. Some of the challenges created by the pandemic hastened improvements to our public services and we began to do many interactions virtually and with superb staff in the Bureau of Information and Technology worked nonstop to develop online tools to support many functions while our borough offices were closed to the public.

Our IT Bureau also configured laptops so that some of our support staff could perform functions like procurement and vendor payments via teleworking.

As the City Council is aware, DEP worked with DOHMH and several experts to establish a Corona virus wastewater testing program last spring. Since last summer we have been testing wastewater from each of our 14 plants every week to quantify viral fragments. The testing program give DOHMH an additional piece of information for identifying potential outbreaks around the city.

DEP also aided other city agencies during the peak of the pandemic when disinfectant was hard to find. Our lab staff produced more than 17,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, which was distributed to

other agencies, to the visiting nurse service, and to the public in city parks last springs. Other DEP employees volunteered at command centers and to make calls to identify critical PPE needs around the city.

I'd like to highlight just a few non-COVID-related achievements. There were fewer water main breaks in FY20 than in any year on record. We have long had one of the most reliable water main systems in the country and we now average just five breaks for every hundred miles of water main while the national average for large cities is 25 breaks per hundred miles. We built 3,000 rain gardens in calendar year 2020, which is a record number of installations and we address air quality and noise complaints faster than in the past in part because we now have staff scheduled on evening and night shifts to respond to these complaints.

So, looking forward despite the challenges from COVID-19 our commitment to our mission has not wavered. We continue to provide critical services to protect public environmental health in the city. I am proud of the work that all of our staff has done to continue to serve New Yorkers throughout the pandemic. We look forward to

our future endeavors including assessing Rikers Island as a potential site for future essentialized wastewater resource recovery facilities.

I congratulate the Council and Chair Constantinides in particular for re-envisioning the vast potential of Rikers for all New Yorkers.

Thank for the opportunity to testify today and I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Commissioner, it's always great to see you, uh, and I'm glad that you're staying safe first and foremost.

uh, I want to recognize Council Member Darma Diaz is here from Brooklyn. Council Member Carlos Menchaca is here from Brooklyn as well. I recognize Council Member Rosenthal and I think those are all of the ones that's here so far.

Uh, so, I'll begin with, uh, sort of picking up something on your testimony. Uh, you talked a little bit about potential shortfalls. Have we evaluated the stimulus package that looks like it's going to pass, hopefully? Uh, will it benefit DEP. I know it's going to benefit the city of New York. I've heard lots of things, but are there things

in that stimulus package that'll help meet those shortfalls or are we still going to be left, uh, with a, with a gap?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Mr. Chair, we haven't yet evaluated, uh, what's in the, uh, the package. Uh, we, we've heard some good things about infrastructure money, but don't know if there's anything specific, uh, for, for water and sewer needs in the city.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, so, we just don't know yet whether that those dollars... And you talked to the state. I know the state is proposing to continue, uh, EPF funding at 300 million. Uh, I know funding is marked for solid waste programs and rec... and rec... Uh, parks and recreation, climate mitigation. Uh, has DEP gotten any of that money in the past?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Well, we haven't; although, some of it may be available. We, we have looked at it in the past and, uh, it just... It didn't make sense for us at the time, but you know, we'll reconsider that as well as other state money that, that's, that's available.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, great.

Man, look if we're eligible and we can... and, you know, we send more money to Albany than Albany sends back to us. So, frankly there, there's no, uh... We should be looking for ways to get funding the state because the state too often is more, uh, more than eager to take money out of New York City and leave us with shortfalls. Uh, so, I hope that we will evaluate these dollars.

Uh, looking at, uh, Hillview Reser... Reservoir cover. Uh, I know the Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan includes 50 million to cover the east and west basin of a 90-acre Hill... uh, Hillview reservoir pursuant to a consent decree with the Federal Government and New York City. Un, since the reservoir is downstream where it receives treatment as on open storage facility the finish water in the reservoir is subject to recontamination. The cover is there to keep that from happening. Uh, what's the timeline to build out, uh, for this consent, consent decree? Will 50 million dollars cover the entire project or only part of it, uh, and until this is in operation are we taking active measures to control

wildlife in and around the reservoir, uh, to make sure that its still not being recontaminated?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Mr. Chair, all great questions. Uh, just as a little bit of background, several years ago EPA required all municipalities in the nation to cover what they call finish water reservoirs and the Hillview reservoir, which has been in service in this city for almost a century, uh, is, is our fish water reservoir. Uh, it's a large facility and covering it is going to take a lot of time and a lot of money. That 50 million dollars is, uh, just really for a preliminary, uh, design and, and looking at some of the, uh, ways to do it, but its, its going to be a multibillion dollar project and it's going to take time to do. In the meantime, to, to protect the reservoir we've done a bunch of things. Uh, for many years now we've had what we call bird wire, uh, strung across the 90 acres of reservoir to ensure that birds can't land in it. Uh, it's a well-protected facility, uh, but, but moving forward we have to comply with the EPA requirement and we're actively doing so.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, this 50 million is just for design and, and for getting things started. It's going to need several billion dollars to get this done?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Do we know how many years that will take and, and so, how do we do... how that's going to work?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Yeah, we, we've worked with the EPA and there a number of things beside covered Hillview that we need to do, uh, including some work on, on the mechanical facilities, the chemical facilities. We're doing that, uh, during this decade, uh, and then we have milestones, uh, thereafter, uh, that we've agreed to with the EPA to build a cover, but it's, it's a long-term project.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, we go into, uh, a subject that's always, uh... We talk about every year, uh, the water rate. Uh, do we, uh... I know for fiscal 2020 there were many projects we talked about that were, uh, displaced because of COVID-19 restrictions and, and the realities of the COVID-19

world and now they're sort of being pushed into this, this, uh, this coming fiscal year and beyond this five-year Capital Plan. Uh, do we see... How is that going to affect our capital needs, the dollars that we have to lay out? Uh, do we, do we... Is the mayor requesting a rental payment this year? We know that the previous years they have not asked for a rental payment. We had ended the practices of rental payments. I went out to Brooklyn and stood with everyone to make that announcement, but I know last year during the pandemic there was a request for a rental payment. Uh, do we foresee the Mayor asking for rental payment this year as well?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: All right, so, I'll just... I'll start with, uh, capital projects. Uh, so, you're, you're right, Mr. Chair. In FY20, uh, we, we committed less than half of the projects, uh, that we registered. It was done intentionally to, to preserve cash, uh, but those projects are, are, are now getting, uh, registered this year including, uh, city water till number three, the last two shafts. So, we're happy to get a shovel in the ground there. Uh, on the water rate, typically in April or May the New York City Water Board meets to go through the

financials of the needs to, uh, address issues for, for both DEPs funding for operations and maintenance and the, the Water Finance Authorities needs, uh, for, for bonding. Uh, we don't know what the rate is yet, uh, but, but there likely will be a rate increase to meet, uh, the obligations that are there.

Uh, regarding the, uh, rental payment, the, the... Under the lease agreement, uh, between, uh, the Water Board and the city, and this goes back to state law in the 1980s, the city is allowed to request a rental payment, uh, from the board. Uh, the Mayor for, forgo... forgoed that, uh, rental payment in fiscal 17, 18, and 19. Uh, the city did take a partial rental payment in fiscal 20, uh, late in the fiscal year, uh, due to, due to the pandemic and took another partial payment this year, in fiscal 21. The, the city's preliminary budget for fiscal 22 does not call for a rental payment. Uh, so, uh, we, we're not looking at that at this point, uh, but, but again, the, the city has the right under the lease agreement to take one.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, you know, just because you can do a thing doesn't mean you should do a thing. Uh, so, I hope that we're not

going to get back into that practice of, uh, taking money out of our water... from our water and sewer rate payments out DEP and then having to give that to the General Fund. It's... That's not what the money is there for. Uh, you know, we, we definitely have a really challenging budget time. I will not diminish that in any way, shape, or form, but I hope that we're not going to, you know, balance the books, uh, based on water rates again because DEP needs every dollar it can get frankly, uh, and no, you can't comment.

Uh, so, let's, let's next go on capital commitments. Uh, looking at Flushing Bay and, and Flushing Creek long-term control plans that were approved by DEP, uh, in March of 2017. Currently water appropriated preliminary capital commitments for the 10-year capital plan for that project.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Yeah, so, part of, uh... All, all of our, what we call, combined sewer overflow long-term control plans, uh, one of them for Flushing Bay is to build a, a massive under the ground storage tunnel that would store there the storm water runoff from the street that, otherwise, would have gone, uh, untreated into Flushing Bay and

Creek. Store that in the tunnel until the rain is over and then that wastewater would be pumped to a wastewater treatment plant for treatment. Uh, we've been working with DEC on a number of plans. Not just for Flushing Bay, but other water bodies, uh, and trying to sequence when the work will be done. Obviously, it's, it's many billions of dollars to have this work, uh, initiated and, and, and completed, uh, and Flushing Bay, the tunnel there happens to be particularly complex. There's a lot of engineering challenges and siting challenges, uh, but that... We're, We're, you know, beginning with the, the design on that and that work is going to move forward, but it, but it is a long... what we call a long-term project.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And how does the potential for renewable Rikers fit into that? I mean, in other words, I guess, begin the feasibility studies for the wastewater treatment capture amongst other things on the, on the island. Uh, how the use of envision... Uh, number one, what is the cost estimate for this study? Uh, you know, how do we arrive at that number and so, what do you see as the potential... Uh, what current wastewater treatment

facilities could potentially move or, you know, monies we would not have to spend, otherwise, by moving, uh, a wastewater treatment plant onto the island?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Yeah, so, so, just, uh, you know, a little bit of an overview. There are four wastewater treatment plants that the city operates, uh, that are right along the East River. Uh, two in Queens, one in the Bronx, and, I guess, one technically in Manhattan. It's the Wards Island Plant, but, uh, three of those plants were built in the 1930s and one around 1950. Uh, so, you know, they're getting up there in age and Rikers pre... potential presents a great opportunity to, uh, consolidate those, those four aging plants in, into one new location and, uh, so, we currently have a study. Uh, it should be underway shortly. It's been a three million dollar study to determine whether, uh, you know, its feasible to locate, uh, wastewater facilities on Rikers Island, uh, and have the water from the mainland essentially pumped there and treated there, uh, and, and that would potentially open up, uh, the, the sites, a couple hundred acres of land, where the four current plants are located

for, for another public benefit or a better public benefit, uh, than, than wastewater treatment. Uh, so, you know, we certainly want to look at that as, as an opportunity, but it does tie into some of the combined sewer overflow long-term control plans and where we site things and, and, and how, uh, wastewater and storm water is handled.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, just again, it would be Bowery Bay, College Point, Wards Island, and Hunts point as well, right?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: That's right. Uh, College Point Plant at Tallman Island, uh, is potentially a, a move as well, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And Hunts Point, even though we're making the (UNIDENTIFIED) still its, its, its... There's potential to close at some point as well, right, or at least, uh, some of them?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: That's right. I mean and any potential plant at Rikers Island would, would take more than a decade. So, there are investments that currently still need to be made at those facilities.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I know my co... my, my colleague, Council Member Salamanca, will be very excited to hear about that. So, I'm going to make sure I flag that for him.

Uh, and then lastly, before I turn this over to any questions from colleagues. Catch basins, uh, I know we have a law that... Uh, you know, to clean every year. I think that was... You know, it's (UNIDENTIFIED) of every two years. Uh, last year, uh, in, in the, four months of the fiscal 21, there we clean about 10,000, which was about 5,000 less. Uh, talk to me a little bit about how we're doing on the cleaning of catch basins and, and maintenance of catch basins during COVID and, and what do we think, in this fiscal year, we'll be able to meet the mandate of getting, uh, catch basins cleaner because without the additional street sweeping... I know we were... Uh, they, they were talking about only having the street sweeping once a week. Uh, they are even more... The streets are even dirtier and I've seen, I've seen catch basins that are really... and streets that are really quite dirty, uh, and I just don't want all of those... all of that stuff becoming

floatable in our water bodies. So, how are we doing on, on cleaning up our catch basins and our streets?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: You know, catch basin cleaning is one of the most important things that DEP does, again, to keep floatables out of our waterways, to, uh, you know, keep the streets from, from flooding during rain. So, uh, we've put a lot of effort into it and as you, as you mentioned, during the past few years under the local law we, we were doing annual inspection of all 148,000 catch basins in the city and cleaning as necessary. Uh, going forward we've identified, I guess, areas where more frequent attention is required and those are mostly on commercial avenues and boulevards. Uh, some of the residential blocks we, we've looked at and in over a three-year period didn't require any cleaning. They're just, you know, on low-traffic streets. Uh, this, this past year we've seen, I guess just because of, of COVID, less foot traffic on, on many streets and there's been a little bit less debris, uh, but, but moving forward, again, we're going to continue doing those inspections, uh, where they're required and, and cleaning as necessary.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yeah, but I've seen streets just not under repair and catch basins sort of like bore the brunt of that. So, I hope that we're, we're... Even though we're seeing less foot traffic we're seeing more litter. Uh, so, I'm hoping that we will sort of revisit some of these corridors.

Uh, I'll give... I saw that Council Member Levin from Brooklyn, another member of our committee, is here today. Thank you, Council Member Levin, for being here. Do any of my colleagues have any questions at this time? I, I don't want to hog all of the question time. Samara, do we have... Does anyone have their hand up or anybody interested in having questions before I go on?

SAMARA SWANSTON: Uh, I don't see any raised hands.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, all right. Uh, so, I'm going to ask... Uh, Commissioner, I'm going to ask two more questions and then I'm going to let you go if, if my colleagues have no questions.

Uh, I know you touched on city water tunnel number three. Uh, we talked about we're

getting shovel into the ground at last two shafts.

Uh, will you give me an update on, uh, operationally what our, our capital commitment is there? What's our plan for... What's our new timeline for, for getting those things done? Uh, uh, what, what are we looking at with the water tunnel long-term?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Yeah, so, uh, the third city water tunnel, uh, which the, the tunnel itself, uh, has, has, has been completed and, and we have two more shafts to bring water from that seven-hundred foot deep tunnel to the surface. Uh, we, we... And this is really the last piece before the, the tunnel is fully, uh, online, which is great because it helps us then, uh, do maintenance work on, on city water tunnel number one, which has been in service continually now for a hundred years. Uh, so, we really want to get this work done, but, uh, the last two shafts, we intended to register the contract, uh, towards the end of fiscal 20, but because of, uh, COVID we wanted to preserve that cash and we just registered it, I guess, in November of 2020. So, in fiscal 21, uh, and, and work is starting there. So, the, the, the work under this, I guess, it's about a 330 million dollar contract is to dig

these two deep shafts 700 feet deep, uh, in 2024 then we'll then fit out, uh, the mechanical piping to, to have the water distributed, but, uh, we're, we're looking for mid 2020s to have, uh, this all fully completed.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, uh, and then lastly, on COVID-19 impacts and operations. First, I want to, I want to reiterate, uh, from your statement. I want to thank every worker from DEP, uh, for all of their great work during the pandemic. Uh, I know how difficult, uh, this has been for the city as a whole, uh, but I know that the men and women DEP have (UNIDENTIFIED) forth every day and, and done a great job. So, I really want to commend them and commend you for all of the great work that your department's done during this really challenging time and I hope that, uh, everyone in DEP family is safe and healthy. Uh, so, thank you for that.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: I appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, And I just want to...

SAMARA SWANSTON: Council Member Levin has his hand up.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: All right, great. I'm going to ask this question on, on operations and then I'll, and then I'll pass it over to Council Member Levin. Thank you, Samara. Uh, have we seen more fatberg or, or blockages? Basically, I know everyone is cooking at home. Uh, are we seeing more blockages or is there the same amount of fatbergs, uh, since the, the pandemic has begun? Uh, I know that we passed, uh, local law 19, uh, uh, uh... Well, I don't know what number, but Intro to 1966A around testing. I wanted to get an update on, uh, you know, how the testing program is going, uh, how do we see, uh, if any additional testing needed, uh, and, and how frequent is the testing occurring and at how many sites?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Okay, just, just on fatbergs. Uh, I'm, I'm going to say we haven't seen any increase. The last date I looked at, Mr. Chair, which was about a month ago, it looked like we hadn't seen any. Now, that's not to say that its not at a very high level and we, we've done a lot of public outreach, uh, particularly about flushable wipes. Uh, we had the Fatberg-free NYC Program, uh, but, you know, we're, we're still doing a lot of, a

lot of cleaning of, of our sewers. We're getting a lot of material in our wastewater treatment plants that needs to be removed. So, that's still, uh, at quite a high level. And what was the second question about? Number of so many...

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Around the, around the testing. Around the, uh, the testing for COVID in our water. Uh, how is it going? What... You know, how much additional... Are we doing additional testing? Where is... Is the testing at all sites and so on?

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Yeah, so, we're testing at all 14 plants of, of our wastewater treatment plants. It's twice a week now. We've been doing that since the summer. We've been getting a lot of really good information. I mean what we're finding essentially matches up with what DOHMH is finding through, uh, the traditional means that, that, that they test. People who, who come in for tests. Uh, what we're excited about or looking forward to is continue the sewage testing, uh, as the, the rate of infection comes down because, uh, we think as, as folks get the vaccine and we're seeing fewer people either coming for testing or, or, or getting sick,

uh, that the sewage testing will really help us identify any hot spots that may pop up, uh, and I think that's when this information will be particularly valuable.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I look forward to seeing that data. Uh, with that, I'm now going to pass it over to Council Member Levin because I see he has his hand up. Thank you, Council Member Levin, for being here. It's all yours.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thanks Chair. Uh, uh, Commissioner, nice to see you. I, I, uh, I really didn't want to, uh, pass up the opportunity being this is my last, uh, preliminary budget hearing, uh, with DEP. I didn't want to pass up the opportunity to ask about, uh, Newtown Creek and the, uh, the, uh, the Nature Walk and, uh, uh, and the status of, of monitoring at Newtown Creek, which is our treatment facility. The status and also the, the status of the, uh, uh, National Grid Project as well.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Okay, sounds good. All right, uh, so, just... I'll start with the Nature Walk. So, uh, yeah, Newtown Creek went through a significant capital upgrade, uh, just, just

in, in the past several years, uh, and done of the things that the community said they wanted to see as part of the upgrade was waterfront access. So, uh, we put, uh, a first phase of the Nature Walk in service several years ago, but continue to build that out, uh, so that local residents or anyone can access to the, the, the Newtown Creek waterbody, uh, behind the back of the plant and I was there, uh, I'm going to say probably in December. Phase three, the last phase of the, the, uh, Nature Walk was underway. So, I, I'm guessing, you know, sometime later this year, uh, it'll, it'll be open to the public.

Uh, uh, Mike... I have Michael DeLoach on from, uh, Public Affairs. Michael, do you have any additional information on the Nature Walk?

MICHAEL DELOACH: Uh, yeah, they're just finishing the punch list now. So, we're looking to, I think, open it in the coming weeks and we wanted to do, you know, something celebratory in the early summer, uh, you know, pandemic willing.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Okay, and then, uh, just on, on monitoring, uh, the Newtown Creek waterbody. So, we continually take samples, uh, and, you know, we, we know that it's challenged from

combined sewer overflows during wet weather and we, we have long-term control plans to, to do upgrades there. So, that, that work is, uh, is continuing, uh, and... What was the other question, Council Member? There was a third.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: The biogas.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: The biogas. OKAY, so, uh, just on that we... As everything everybody, uh, knows when they, when they drive by the plant or on the Long Island Expressway, we have these, uh, egg-shaped digesters that breakdown the organic material in sewage. They produce a lot of methane gas just as a byproduct. More gas than the, the treatment plant could use on its own for its own facilities. So, uh, we've been working with National Grid to take that excess gas and feed it into the local utility pipeline to, uh, provide gas to, to local residents. So, that work is underway. We think sometime, uh, within the next few months we should have all of that work done and, and, as Michael said, we'll have a ribbon cutting for that one at some point as well.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council Member Levin, do you have any more questions?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS Blondo: He's on mute, sir.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Oh, okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I, I just wanted to add that, that would be great to see a, uh, an opening of National Grid, the Biogas Project, because it's been delayed for, for quite a while and I think that, uh, uh, you know, members of the community are asking me about, you know, what the, what the status is on it and, and the latest. So, uh, I, I would, uh, appreciate any updates you're able to give.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Sure, and, and we did have some delays, uh, uh, both related to, to DEP issues and National Grid issues, but I think we've, we've resolved them over the winter. So, we're, we're in better shape now.

MICHAEL DELOACH: And you, you and Council Member Reynoso had given us a letter outlining a bunch of questions about this. The response is coming through this week. So, we'll, we'll have everybody updated.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Awesome, okay. Thanks so much. Thanks guys.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you, Council Member Levin. Appreciate it as always, my friend. Uh, so, Commissioner, I don't, I don't see any other hands. So, I'll begin by saying, uh, you know, this is my last preliminary budget hearing with you. Uh, I want to thank you for all of your partnership over the years. So, uh, thank you for all of the work that you've that done for DEP and, and continue to do as now Commissioner for, for quite some time. So, I look forward to our continued partnership moving forward

Uh, and I just want to remind the public that it looks like things are moving a little bit more quickly today. Uh, so, if you are a member of the public and your watching this hearing, if you're interested in testifying, uh, please sign up because it looks like the public portion of our testimony will be earlier today. Uh, so, please, uh, if you're interested in testifying... If you're a member of the public and you plan on testifying, uh, now is the time to register and now is the time to get a on a docket, uh, because it looks like we're going to end a little bit earlier based on, uh, the case of the hearing right now.

Uh, so, with that, Commissioner and, and Michael as well, thank you both for your friendship and partnership and I look forward to working with you guys, uh, as we move forward with this budget. I appreciate your answers today and, uh, right now I'll, I'll, I'll end your testimony.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT SAPIENZA: Thanks, same here, Mr. Chair. Appreciate it.

MICHAEL DELOACH: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: So, Samara, I guess if we could, uh, call the next witnesses?

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you, Chair. Uh, we'll now turn to the public testimony.

I'd like to remind everyone that, unlike our typical council hearings, we'll be calling individuals one-by-one to testify.

Council Members who have questions for a particular panelist should use the raised hand function in ZOOM.

For panelists, once your name is called a member of our staff will unmute you and the sergeant-at-arms will give you the go ahead to begin setting the timer. Please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may begin before starting your testimony.

I'd now like to welcome Bob Cooley who is going to testify, uh, who will be followed by Karen Imas. Bob.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

SAMARA SWANSTON: You have to unmute yourself, Bob.

BOB COONEY: Okay, good day, Chairman Constantinides and Council Members. My name is Robert Cooney. I'm testifying in support of backup power for the Croton Water Plant in the Bronx. Most of the plants water needs to be pumped, but the plant has no backup power. We were told the plant was built underground in the Bronx park in face of strong community op... opposition. The plant replaced two old pumping stations that had backup power. Just before the DEP discovered the site in mid-1998 a report shows that all seven sites under consideration had backup power. The selected site was the closest that the, uh, DEP could get to the Jerome Park Reservoir where the underground plumbing comes together. The DEP left out backup power to reduce their footprint in the park and obtain site approval. So, after spending 3.7 billion dollars on the plant the city's water supply is at risk in an emergency. Most of New

York City's water come from the Catskill and Delaware systems; however, the Cat-Del water system is vulnerable at several locations where the systems come together. The Croton system is entirely separate and most of the water needs to be pumped. It is the city's backup water system. The Croton Plan uses gravity to send of its water through low-lying areas in Manhattan and the Bronx. Most of the water, however, needs to be pumped to reach Riverdale, Washington Heights, Morningside Heights, most of Midtown, and Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. New York City is the only American city that has been attacked by foreign, foreign operators since Pearl Harbor. It happened twice. Next time could be a huge blast that will also knock out power. The lack of power... of back up power for this plant could destroy thousands of lives and considerable property. From 2010 to 2018 A... AECOM, the consulting engineer for the Municipal Water Finance Authority, stated in their yearly report New York City DEP is revealing the energy demand from standby power for the Croton Water Plant to increase dependability in case of a major power outage. The administrative code should be changed to require backup power for this plant.

Temporary power should be in place ASAP until it can be made permanent. It should be in place before the Delaware aqueduct is taken out of service next year. This was detailed in a letter sent to this committee on January 21st, 2021. Thank you.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you, Bob. I'll now call on Karen Imas, of Water Alliance, to testify whose testimony will be followed by Sonal Jessel of WE ACT. Karen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

KAREN IMAS: Hello, do you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Yes, we do, Karen.

KAREN IMAS: Great. Uh, so, uh, thi... This is a public testimony part. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, yes.

KAREN IMAS: Okay, uh, sorry, apologies. I had a little tech glitch there. Uh, so, thank you for, thank you for, uh, inviting us and thank you for holding this hearing. Uh, I wanted to A, introduce Waterfront Alliance. As you know, we're a non-profit advocacy organization focused on, uh, resilient and revitalized waterfronts, uh, and we are here today to come in on a couple of issues related to the FY22

budget. Uh, as you know, one of the, uh... We, we've seen a lot of successes with, uh, I think, climate change legislation over the last several years in the council, uh, much to the leadership of Council Member Constantinides and other council members from, you know, Renewable Rikers to Green Building legislation. Uh, I think an important, uh, piece of our, our climate change successes also have to do environmental education, uh, initiative and I wanted to speak for a moment to a Greener NYC, uh, which is an initiative that funds, uh, the advocacy and environmental education organizations that are working to really bring, uh, uh, green jobs training, conservation knowledge, STEM awareness, uh, and really understanding some of the, uh, both really science-based issues, but also future climate issues that are going to affect our communities. I'm bringing this to a public school student, uh, and other, uh, young people across the city. Uh, we, uh, recently lead coalition of, uh, 20 plus organizations who have, uh, benefitted from a Greener NYC who have engaged with tens of thousands of students across the city to really advocate for the continued funding, uh, of this initiative and, and to reinstate it to

pre-pandemic funding levels. This is an incredibly important, uh, funding source for our organization, uh, uh, and, and really to think about, uh, how we prepare the city for a future of, of climate change. It's not only about, uh, the, the great policy victories that we've seen, but it's preparing a future work force. It is about climate activism. About climate engagement, and about encouraging our youth to think about, uh, think about issues and career pathways related to ecology and conservation, planting trees, uh, marine biology, things of that nature that, uh, sometimes in our, our, our concrete jungle we don't think about, but are so incredibly important. So, uh, uh, I think, uh, the Greener NYC Initiative is such an important thing that this counsel has been doing and we, we encourage its continued, uh, uh, continued success.

The other thing I wanted to mention is, uh, the Mayor's Office of Resiliency. Uh, as you know, the Mayor's office of Resiliency has really been very central to a lot of the important resiliency initiatives the city has undertaken post Sandy including developing climate resiliency design guidelines. The funding of this office is attached

to, uh, federal funding for, uh, uh, post Sandy and that federal funding, uh, uh, (UNIDENTIFIED) in FY2022 and so, the continued, uh, uh, success of this office... The continued, uh... Uh, continuing its work. The institutional knowledge of its staff is, is essential and, uh, we are, we are advocating for the city budget to look at how to allow MOR to continue doing its work post 2022, which is going to be essential, uh, for, for continuing to prepare this city, uh, for, for really planning for 520 miles of coastal resilience. So, I'm definitely advocating for keeping MOR an important piece of our city budget moving forward. Uh, thank you so much for your time today and, and to all of the council members work, uh, to continue to put, uh, environmental issues front and center in the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you, Karen, and I agree with you and I, I'm... you know, I was frustrated to find out how we found out relating to this funding, that it was running out. Uh, I absolutely agree with you that we need to prioritize this in our budget and if the Federal Government does not provide additional funds we have to, to make this part of our budget, uh, and frankly the Department of

Sustainability and Resiliency that can implement all of these great initiatives that is more transparent than our mayoralty. Uh, uh, so, I agree with you across the board and as far as protecting Greener NYC. Uh, it's an amazing initiative. Uh, you know, last year was a very tough budget year. I know this is something we're going to be fighting for in this year's budget. So, thank you for testifying today.

KAREN IMAS: Thank you so much.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you, Karen. Uh, and now, I'd like to welcome Sonal Jessel of WE ACT to testify. Sonal.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

SONAL JESSEL: Thank you, uh, Samara. Hi, uh, Chair Constantinides. Nice to see you and, uh, thank you everyone else for, for giving me the time to testify. So, uh, my name is Sonal Jessel. I'm the Director of Policy at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. Over the past 32 years WE ACT has been combating environmental racism in Northern Manhattan. I myself have a Master in Public Health from Columbia University. Uh, I'm here concerned about the communities we serve in Northern Manhattan, which is heavily Black, African-American, Latino, low-income,

hard-hit by the COVID pandemic. I'm testifying today mostly as a member of the Climate Works for All Coalition, outlining the budget items we believe are vital for a just transition to the city. Uh, so, Climate Works for All Coalition has developed an equitable recovery, uh, to move forward with this crisis creating a 100,000 jobs for black and brown communities and moving us towards climate solutions. Uh, however, we know the solutions outlined in our report are geared toward the long-term recovery of the city and we're still in the middle of a crisis. So, we're advocating for the following 2011 budget items. The, the first couple are par... are particularly a priority to this committee, but I'm going to outline all of them for your, uh, information and knowledge. So, we are asking for 80 million dollars in retrofitting public schools to meet local and 97 standards. The funding would go towards schools that are currently emitting above the 2030, 2034 standards. An annual investment of 80 million would bring a large portion of high emitting schools to compliance by 2035. That would be, uh, a big impact. We're also asking for an investment of 100 million in solar on schools. Funding would go

towards solar installations on public schools. An annual investment of 50 million would also... Would allow us to meet our goals... our solar goals by 2025. The other things we are asking for as well throughout many committees here, uh, this year is investing 17 million in public waste management. Uh four million of that would go to DSNY to hire staff for their Commercial Waste Zone Program. Uh, 13 million would go towards doubling the impact of current Community Compost Day, Food Scrap Dropoff Programs, uh, and adding more local scale processing sites and compensating staff, ongoing support for the social school composting, beginning government building composting, piloting and studying organic collection, collection and recycling in multifamily buildings. Uh, so, that would, that would go pretty far. We're also asking for three million for clean, clean transportation expansion. This includes funding towards electric school buses through the city's new school buses at the school bus company that they now have, uh, NYC (UNIDENTIFIED), uh, and so, the total investment we're asking for is 200 million towards these existing programs to move us towards the climate goals. I'll also add... Like we asked

specifically... One thing that we're really interested in seeing is the Get Cool NYC Program happen again. I know that's really up in the air at this point, but, uh, if it is something that we can be doing again this year to continue to get people, our, our older adults ACs that would be great. If not at least money for repairing ACs for people that have them. We're hearing a lot of reports about broken ACs and malfunctioning ones. So, even just money for making sure that folks ACs that already exist are working, uh, would be really great. We're also interested in money for a Cooling Center Programs. Specifically, uh, we also know the Mayor set aside 284 million for East Harlem Waterfront, which we're really excited about. So, however we can, you know, get these all going and, and get these in the budget would be, would be great. So, thank you very much.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Thank you, Sonal. And finally, we'd like to get welcome testimony Noah Chesnin who is with the Wildlife Conservation Society. Noah, would you please, uh...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

SAMARA SWANSTON: OKAY.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

NOAH CHESNIN: Thank you.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Noah.

NOAH CHESNIN: Thank you. Thank you, Chair Constantinides and members of the Environmental Protection Committee. My name is Noah Chesnin and I'm the Associate Director for the Wildlife Conservation Society New York Cityscape Program, which is based at the New York Aquarium. The Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS, includes the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and the Queens Zoo and we work to save wildlife in wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. WCS is a member of the Cultural Institutions Group and like many cultural organizations despite temporary closures of the park to the public due to the pandemic, uh, we've still, uh, continued to, uh, work through... Uh, advance our mission and serve the public in harnessing the power of WCS' Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 countries, uh, and throughout our five parks we've been working to deliver quality virtual programming to New Yorkers, uh, throughout the pandemic. I'm here today to, to

ask that as the Council determines its budget priorities for FY2022 we act that the cultural budget be held harmless and maintained at FY21 level as we await information on COVID federal relief that maybe may be made available, uh, to city and state and with regard to the city's environmental funding, we are also very strongly supportive and in particular we want to highlight the, uh, the Greener, the Greener NYC funding. Uh, this initiative is critical to support community-lead conservation efforts across the city. Uh, WCS' New York Aquarium's conservation work aligns with the city's environmental funding priorities and New York City is a city of islands at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean and we're, we're fortunate to have an ecological treasure-trove of sea turtles, whales, sharks, and a diverse array of other species and the New York Aquarium works to connect New Yorkers with our ocean backyard and work collaboratively to advance marine conservation solutions to protect marine wildlife, support, and empower local communities. I just wanted to highlight a couple of examples that align with the city's funding and especially the Greener NYC funding.

So, we do field research in citizen science, uh, monitoring, uh, whether its on whales or fishes, sharks, uh, and we design these opportunities to build in student and community member participation to build stem skills and, and create a pathway for jobs.

We work actively in Coney Island Creek, which is an important community and ecological asset and with community partners we're to weave together marine conservation, environmental justice, and social equity to advance ecological restoration of the creek and community resilience to climate change.

With regard to offshore wind and climate change, uh, we, we offer praise for the ambitious and necessary city climate (UNIDENTIFIED).

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time expired.

NOAH CHESNIN: Uh, and we, we think that there's an important opportunity here to think about stem ecological monitoring jobs, uh, as ways... for pathways for hiring people across the city. So, with that, I just want to say thank you. We appreciate the work that the city and the council is doing to advance the environmental budget. We ask that you hold harmless the FY21, uh, funding for... Or FY22

funding for the city's cultural budget as well as the environmental funding and in particular the Greener NYC. Thank you very much.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Costa...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Yeah, you are muted.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Council Member Ulrich, do you have any question for, for this witness? Uh, I want to recognize the (UNIDENTIFIED) Council Member Ulrich from Queens.

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Oh, thank, thank you, Chair. No, no questions at this time, but, uh, thank you and, uh, keep up the great work.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you, thank you, Council Member Ulrich.

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, Samara, are there any other witnesses, which need to be heard at this time?

SAMARA SWANSTON: Uh, at the, at the present time, uh, I don't see any other witnesses who have registered to testify. I'd like to ask is there anyone who has registered to testify, but who's name I have not called? Uh, seeing none, I will turn it

over now to Chair Constantinides for any closing remarks.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Uh, again, I, I want to thank DEP, Uh, especially Sapienza, uh, Michael DeLoach, uh, and the great DEP staff for all of their great work and, and for testifying here today. I want to thank all of the witnesses that took time out of their schedules to be heard. Uh, I want to thank, uh, Samara Swanston, our Legislative Counsel. Our, uh, Policy Analysts, Ricky Chala and, uh, Nadia Johnston. Our Financial Analyst, Jonathon Seltzer. Uh, my Legislative Council and Legislative Director, Nicholas Rosowski. Uh, I want to thank all of the member of he committee, uh, who were here today and, uh, you know, this is our last... This is my last preliminary budget hearing, uh, as a Council Member. Uh, it's been, uh, a... You know, we still have a number of hearings left to go, uh, but it's my last preliminary budget hearing. So, I am grateful to Speaker Johnson for this opportunity to continue to be Chair and for all of the great work that we've done together. Uh, thank you, Speaker Johnson and I look forward to fighting for the environment in this year's budget. Uh...

SAMARA SWANSTON: Costa, it looks like we might have an additional witness. Uh...

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Oh, okay. Well, then my closing statement really wasn't a closing statement then.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Okay, uh, it turns, it turns out that there was an additional witness and, uh, they had... She had not... Either she had not received the link, uh, but...

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: No Problem.

SAMARA SWANSTON: If, if we can wait a minute more.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: No, no problem. No problem at all.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: No problem at all.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Oh, here she's, she's coming now. I don't see he.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: If it's Ruth, she's just on. She needs to be unmuted.

RUTH: Yes, I'm here. I just unmuted myself.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BLONDO: Time starts now.

RUTH: All right, so, my testimony regards the Queens Library. I remembered I moved in Nigeria in 2007 and moving in I didn't know how to use a computer. The only place I learned how to use was at the Queens Library on Guy R. Brewer and that was how I learned. You know, I would go there every day. On my off days from work I would spend an hour. If I need to print anything I would ask the attendant if he could assist me to save. I couldn't even save on flash drive and that was how learned all of those things before I actually, you know, went to college and got my own computer. That was how I learned how learned how to use the computer. So, I think this service is important to the community. If we shut it down, I don't know what's going to happen to the community. When you see all of the kids coming around. You see the teenagers coming in and you see the older folks coming in to ask for assistance. Asking people to help them. People come there. They want to learn how to use the computer. They have all of the services that they render to people. I remember even learning how to, how to, you know, do my resume. It was the library that, you know, that assisted in doing that. So, I think shutting down the

library is unfair to the community and I will ask the City Council to please look into this for the sake of the community because we really need this service. I... It was very advantages to me. I still go to the library as a matter of fact to print. You know, of course, now we can't go because of the pandemic. So, I just want to appeal to everyone, the City Counsel, to please look into this because the community really needs this. My husband has a library card. You know, we... So, I think we need this service.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you for your testimony. I, I really feel we have to protect library funding. Uh, this committee is, uh, something that... We have no, uh, uh, purview over the library, but as a Councilmember, as a parent, and as a community member I am absolutely engaged on, uh, library funding and will refer this to Council Member Van Bramer as he is the Chair of the Cultural Libraries Committee. Thank you for testifying today.

RUTH: I appreciate it. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you.

SAMARA SWANSTON: Now, Costa, there really are no additional witnesses.

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Okay, well, I've given my closing statement already. So, I, I will not, uh, uh, a third, a second time, so... Uh, but thank you everyone. Uh, thank you for the Sergeant-At-Ar... I didn't have chance to thank the Sergeant-At-Arms, uh, for all of their great work, uh, and, uh, the, uh, all of the staff, uh, the technical staff that makes sure the committees are able to happen. Uh, you know, that these ZOOMs and, and these committee hearings on and so, thank you to all of the staff including our Sergeant-At-Arms for making all of this great work happen and again, thank you Samara and Nadia, Ricky, and Jon for all of your great work and I look forward to, uh, continuing to move forward on this very critical budget protecting our environment. Uh, so, with that, uh, I will... and Nicholas Rosowski, my, my Counsel as well. Uh, so, with that, I will gavel this preliminary budget hearing, uh, of the Environmental Protection Committee closed.

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 21, 2021