

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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February 24, 2021
Start: 11:25 a.m.
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Diana Ayala
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Vanessa L. Gibson
Mark Gjonaj
Farah N. Louis
Carlos Menchaca
Helen K. Rosenthal
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Mark Treyger
Jimmy Van Bramer
Kevin Riley
Inez D. Barron
Adrienne E. Adams

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

Linda James

Lisa Kenner

Mary McGee

Miguel Acevedo

Maria Forbes

Crystal Glover

David Barrere
Chief of Housing Bureau
New York Police Department

Gerald Nelson
Vice President for Public Safety
New York City Housing Authority

Marcos Soler
Acting Director
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Michael Clarke
Managing Attorney
Legislative Affairs Unit
New York Police Department

Steven Lovci
Executive Vice President for Capital
Projects
New York City Housing Authority

Beverly McFarland

Carmen Quinones

Maia Cole

Andre Ward

Judith Smith

Wendy Lorenzetti Olivo

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1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: PC recording
3 has started.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS LEONARDO: Cloud is
5 rolling.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Thank you.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS PEREZ: Backup, backup
8 is rolling.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Thank you,
10 and you may start with your opening statement,
11 Sergeant Biando.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS BIANDO: Good morning,
13 and welcome to today's remote New York City Council
14 hearing on the Committee of Public Housing. At this
15 time would all panelists please turn on their video
16 for verification purposes. Once again, would all
17 panelists please turn on their videos for
18 verification purposes, and to minimize disruptions
19 please place electronic devices on vibrant or silent
20 mode. If you wish to submit testimony you may do so
21 at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
22 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you, Chair Ampry-
23 Samuel. We are ready to begin.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: First,
25 apologies for the delays, everyone. This is a first

1
2 for me. I'm usually right on time. So let's just
3 get started. [gavel] Good morning. I'm now calling
4 this Public Housing Committee hearing on public
5 safety at NYCHA to order. I am Council Member Alicka
6 Ampry-Samuel and I chair the Public Housing
7 Committee. I am joined this morning by Public
8 Advocate Jumaane Williams, Council Member Ayala,
9 Council Member R. Diaz, Sr., Council Member Gjonaj,
10 Council Member Louis, and Council Member Rosenthal,
11 thank you for being here, who chairs the Subcommittee
12 on Capital Budget and Finance. And if I have missed
13 anyone, forgive me, and I'll make sure to recognize
14 you after. The purpose of today's hearing is to
15 discuss safety and security in NYCHA. These are
16 issues that have plagued NYCHA for a long time, but
17 given how serious it is it should be approached with
18 urgency. One month ago a man was arrested in
19 connection to a series of murders at Woodson Houses,
20 which is a senior housing development. His most
21 recent victim, Ms. Caballero, was 78 years old.
22 Nearly two ago this committee conducted a hearing on
23 virtually the same topic, prompted by chillingly
24 similar circumstances, the murder of 83-year-old Ms.
25 Jacolia James, is not just a very, and not just the

1 same NYCHA complex, but the very same building, and
2 that was four years after 82-year-old Ms. Myrtle
3 McKenney was found murdered in the same building. As
4 a result of the city, as a result the city allocated
5 capital specifically for safety measures that we
6 still question today. In this hearing, I expect an
7 update on what exactly has been done at Woodson
8 between then and now, why was another senior killed
9 in the same exact NYCHA complex when we already
10 discussed security deficiencies there. Were security
11 cameras installed? And were other safety
12 improvements made? I want to be clear today that we
13 want to know what happened at Woodson. But we also
14 want to know what is happening across NYCHA's
15 portfolio. The murders at Woodson are horrific, but
16 unsafe conditions are not unique. The purpose of
17 having dedicated senior buildings is to increase
18 comfort for the aging adults in our community. An
19 unsolved murder should have been of utmost
20 importance, yet it was allowed to multiply and become
21 a serial occurrence. There has been an increase in
22 violent crime across NYCHA developments during the
23 pandemic. And I don't want to recount every single
24 instance for you to get the picture. There's been an
25

1
2 increase in crime across New York City in general.
3 But just looking at NYCHA's numbers in Brooklyn
4 alone, murders were up 92.7%. Shootings were up
5 84.4%. And shooting victims were up 90.7%. I say it
6 time and time again. The priority has to be the
7 safety and well-being of residents. If we are not
8 putting their needs first then NYCHA is failing. The
9 administration is failing. And everybody involved is
10 failing. We are not here to simply point fingers and
11 call it a day. And, most importantly, this is not,
12 and this will not be a gotcha moment or an a-ha
13 moment. I can assure you that I am not trying to
14 expose a brand-new scandal in NYCHA. That has been
15 done many times over. Please don't throw facts and
16 figures that paint a picture that things are going
17 well because they are safety concerns. Because
18 people are dead. Today I just want to get to the
19 bottom of the why and discuss real concrete
20 solutions. We want to know about areas for
21 improvement, where safety and security measures have
22 fallen short, and what is needed to fix those
23 problems, including how the City Council can think
24 about allocating much-needed funds to make those
25 improvements along with our colleagues in the state

1
2 government and what we seen coming in from the
3 federal government. I look forward to hearing from
4 NYCHA residents so we can get a clearer understanding
5 of their safety priorities and concerns and hear from
6 NYPD, NYCHA, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
7 on their efforts to prevent and reduce crime,
8 especially violent crime, across the NYCHA
9 developments. So with that being said, I want to
10 kick things off by hearing first from the residents
11 themselves. But before we do that I want to turn it
12 over to our public advocate, Jumaane Williams, who I
13 think is still on the line. And then we'll hear from
14 committee counsel, Audrey Sun, to go over some
15 housekeeping matters for today's hearing. So thank
16 you and is the public advocate still here? OK, I
17 know our public advocate said he was between
18 meetings, and so doesn't look like he's available
19 right now. So, Audrey Sun.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks very much.
21 Ah, I am Audrey Sun, counsel to the City Council's
22 Committee on Public Housing. Before we begin I want
23 to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you
24 are called on to testify. Ah, we will begin, as the
25 chair said, with a panel of NYCHA residents. Please

1
2 listen for your name to be called. When it your turn
3 I will call your name and you will be unmuted. So we
4 will now hear from the opening panel. First we will
5 hear from Linda James, followed by Lisa Kenner.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 LINDA JAMES: Hi. Um, my name is Linda
8 James and I am the daughter of Jacolia James. Um, my
9 mother was a, my grandmother was a resident first and
10 then my mom was a resident who was murdered on April
11 30, ah, 2019. I, my mom moved into the building when
12 my grandmother, who was aging, would often leave the
13 building. My mom wanted to be able to know that she
14 was safe. So she moved into take care of her. So
15 whenever she got missing my mom would know 'cause my
16 mom was living in the building. And then when my
17 grandmother passed my mom was able to stay in the
18 apartment, um, because she herself was a senior. Ah,
19 my question is when we build senior residences
20 specific for seniors are we taking those precautions
21 to keep those seniors safe? Now we know that it is
22 not your job to, to provide their health matters.
23 But when you building a senior citizen housing there
24 are certain circumstances that we need to be aware
25 of, right? So as they age Alzheimer's sets in, they

1 can leave the building, and no one would know. The
2 day my mom was murdered, the day my mom was murdered,
3 I spent the entire night from 12:45 until 6 o'clock
4 in the morning trying to prevent another senior
5 citizen from leaving that building because there were
6 no cameras and a, and a murder had just occurred.
7 And I was afraid that he was still out there and she
8 was trying to leave. Now, I know that she had some
9 type of mental illness because she was using the
10 hallway as a public bathroom. And she wasn't able to
11 communicate comprehensively. So I know that there
12 was an issue there. But I spent an entire night
13 wanting to make sure she didn't leave, because if she
14 felt there was no way for her family to even know
15 what time she even left the building if something to
16 happened to her.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Please, Ms.
20 James, continue. Apologies for that.

21 LINDA JAMES: So, you know, I'm, I'm
22 wondering what cautions, what precautions do we take
23 specifically when we, when we deem a residence a
24 senior citizen complex to protect them, to keep them
25 safe? Security that doesn't ask for an ID when you

1 go into a building, you can say I'm Barack Obama and
2 go upstairs to apartment 5-G when you're actually,
3 and say you're going to 5-G when you're actually
4 going to 5-D, and no one knows because you're just
5 signing in a book if the security is there. You're
6 signing in a book. You're not, you're not presenting
7 ID. They don't double check where you're going. And
8 sometimes they just let you go in a building without
9 stopping you because it's not in their purview to
10 protect you. So we leave our senior citizens like
11 sheep surrounded by wolves. And my question is what
12 do we do? What, what do we, what mandates are there
13 for keeping these seniors safe once we designate a
14 building as a senior residence?
15

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
17 much, Ms. James. Thank you so much. And at the end
18 of the resident testimony we will hear from the
19 administration and NYCHA, NYPD, and, um, we're
20 looking to get answers to those questions. Thank
21 you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks very much. We
23 will now hear from Lisa Kenner, followed by Mary
24 McGee.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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3 LISA KENNER: Good morning. My name is
4 Lisa Kenner and I was born and raised at Van Dyke
5 Houses. I'm also the resident association president
6 here. I am testifying concerning the dangerous
7 conditions of the development that affect the
8 residents' quality of life, health, and safety.
9 First of all, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
10 brought in the Mayor's Action Plan at 15 housing
11 developments throughout New York City housing, which
12 was supposed to work with the resident association,
13 not against. Instead of dividing residents, it was
14 supposed to help bring more unity in the community.
15 Yes, we received new bright lights, new front doors,
16 and intercoms was installed. However, the lights are
17 brighter but the intercoms are still not working in
18 some buildings, going over five years. I have heard
19 numerous excuses from NYCHA safety and security
20 department to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice,
21 which is the Mayor's Action Plan. However, July 1,
22 2020, 143 men moved into the old Helping Hands on
23 Powers Street. And I have gone to numerous meetings
24 concerned that the unsafe condition is still
25 everybody's dragging their feet. This is why the

1 lobby windows or the front door glass are getting
2 vandalized, because the intercoms are not working.
3 And people want to get in the building. However,
4 with the new building, Van Dyke 3, it's almost
5 completed, I have set down with Trinity Finance from
6 day one. They are decent human beings. However,
7 during these meetings I asked them would they wash
8 the windows of the resident that lived at 429 and 393
9 Dumont Avenue after they complete 405 Dumont
10 Avenue...
11 Avenue...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 LISA KENNER: ...due to the overwhelming
14 dirt and dust that has landed on these residents'
15 windows. They agreed to get them washed. However,
16 as I was told by NYCHA Development Department
17 recently that it can't be done as per NYCHA Capital.
18 No, I don't understand why NYCHA is not going to pay
19 for it. Therefore, this is a safe and health
20 condition to every resident who lives and breathes in
21 these two buildings. When they open up their window
22 the dust and the dirt fill their apartment and some
23 of them suffer from numerous illness. However, we
24 deserve respect. Yes, I know we are in a pandemic
25 and our families' safety and health matters. So

1
2 under the 964 and 964 regulation, 96417, before any
3 agency comes into our development they have to have
4 some respect. You just can't come in there and think
5 you just gonna take over. It's about showing
6 respect. So I thank you, Council Member, for hearing
7 me, and I'm not gonna stop until those people
8 windows get washed up and that new building get up
9 there because that's a health hazard. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
11 now hear from Mary McGee, followed by Beverly
12 McFarland.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 MARY MCGEE: Hi, good morning. Thank you
15 for having this meeting. I think this is a very
16 important and sensitive subject. On March 21 at
17 12:48 p.m. 2020 my daughter was coming into elevator.
18 When she got on my floor a man grabbed her and
19 covered her mouth and dragged her into stairs. Thank
20 God she's a fighter. She was able to scream. I
21 heard her myself and one neighbor, one neighbor came
22 out. He dragged her from the 13th floor to the 12th
23 floor. I saw my daughter fighting for her life. I
24 grabbed the man. My neighbor grabbed his other side.
25 This man was so strong he dragged us down two flights

1 of stairs to the 10th floor, where I finally got a
2 hold of him, and I just started punching him and
3 punching him and punching him until he got loose, but
4 I ended up with all his top layer clothes, his
5 backpack with all his personal information, and his
6 lunch. This is in the afternoon. And it's just
7 insane that NYCHA has not once, Social Services never
8 reached out to me or my daughter. NYCHA has done
9 nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing to help me, but
10 give me false hopes on, on things. But the people
11 that should have contacted me have not to this day
12 contacted me or my daughter to see how we're doing.
13 I know that incident happened to my daughter, but
14 it's so traumatic to me because I relive it. I'm
15 still in the same apartment. I'm still going outside
16 to throw out my garbage with a weapon in my hand
17 because we have so many homeless people in our
18 buildings that the other day, two days ago, I came
19 out the elevator and this homeless man came out the
20 stairs and I'm like I just...

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 MARY MCGEE: ...I just jumped back and he
24 ran in the elevator. And our buildings, we never had
25 this issue the way we are having it now. Our

1 buildings' lobbies are not locked. The majority are
2 unlocked. I don't understand why. I put in ticket
3 after ticket. Um, I know other residents have done
4 the same, but nothing is being done to keep us safe.
5 Two days ago a teenage boy was beaten up and dragged
6 in our development at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We
7 shouldn't be living in fear. We, we have the rights
8 to quality of life and safety. NYCHA needs to do
9 more for its residents. I don't care how much
10 funding you say you don't have. But we as residents
11 paid our rents and we have rights. You need to do
12 more. You need to ensure that our doors are fixed.
13 What, what's the sense of having a lobby door if it's
14 unlocked? What is the sense of me paying rent when I
15 don't feel safe? I don't come out after dark. If
16 it's dark, and even though these incidents happened
17 in the daytime, but I don't even, I don't even want
18 to know what happens once it gets dark outside. I've
19 reached out to my elected officials for help. Um,
20 none of have helped me. None, none, none. I reached
21 outside of my district and I guess that person was
22 told not to help me either. They referred me back to
23 my elected official. If residents don't have the
24 security of being able to turn to their politicians,
25

1
2 the people that are supposed to advocate on their
3 behalfts then where do they turn? Who can they go to?
4 NYCHA needs to be held responsible for what happened.
5 Look at that, that mother in, in Harlem where her
6 son, all they did was give her a panic button and
7 they still killed her. My heart breaks for that
8 family. My heart breaks for every family that is a
9 victim of crime or has lost somebody. And I just
10 hope this panel and this meeting is gonna make that
11 change and that difference and let NYCHA residents
12 know they matter. I thank you for your time and
13 appreciate you all.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
15 we'll hear from Beverly McFarland, followed by Miguel
16 Acevedo.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Excuse me,
19 Ms. Beverly. Ah, you are unmuted but we don't have
20 any audio coming out.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Ms. McFarland,
22 did you join with your computer audio? OK, let me
23 just jump in there real quick, um, and recognize that
24 we have also been joined by Council Member Salamanca,
25 Council Member Menchaca, Council Member Riley,

1
2 Council Member Barron, as well as Council Member
3 Adams. And thank you so much, Council Member Adams,
4 for joining us, as you're the chair of the Public
5 Safety Committee, so I really appreciate that. Oh,
6 and Council Member Gibson.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, thank you. Ah,
8 Ms. McFarland, we'll return you once we're able to
9 sort out the, ah, audio issue. Ah, in the meantime
10 we'll hear from Miguel Acevedo, followed by Maria
11 Forbes.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 MIGUEL ACEVEDO: Hi, everyone. I'm
14 Miguel Acevedo, TA president, Robert Fulton Houses.
15 I have never seen so many homeless people living in
16 public housing developments. We met with the captain
17 of PSA 40 today and the biggest issue that every
18 single TA president had with the homeless population
19 was literally living in our developments. Just
20 yesterday I received a Ring video from one of my
21 residents showing a homeless person making every
22 attempt to get into the apartments. He was turning
23 all the doorknobs. Just like Mary just said earlier,
24 it's a situation that has to be rectified because
25 before somebody dies in one of these buildings it's

1
2 gonna be too late. You know, they come in and it's
3 like they live there. The police are removing them,
4 but you arrest them on Monday or remove them. On
5 Tuesday they're back. They're so comfortable in
6 these developments, and I understand because they
7 feel secure, for some reason, in our development.
8 But it's still, it's a real bad safety issue that has
9 to be addressed right away. There's no way that we
10 can continue to hear that it's a mental health issue
11 and the police department, as they do their job to
12 remove these individuals, but then they're back in
13 the street. There's got to be something done. I
14 don't want to wait till one of my residents gets
15 killed by these homeless individuals. They are there
16 every single day. And I would please and appreciate
17 that something gets done today, not sometime next
18 week when I lose a resident. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we
20 will hear from Maria Forbes, followed by Crystal
21 Glover.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 MARIA FORBES: Hello, how are you? Maria
24 Forbes of Clay Avenue Tenants Association. Um,
25 Claremont consolidated, just one moment, they're

1 gonna get that background noise out the area for me.
2
3 But Claremont Consolidated consists of seven tenant
4 association presidents, 750 units. Um, we're not a
5 conventional development. We stand like individual
6 private buildings and our concern with security,
7 correct me if I'm right or wrong, is that from the
8 beginning of the pandemic, and even before, you know,
9 security has been a great issue to all of us, that
10 the mass, I had to contact the Commissioner Shea the
11 very beginning mass began mandatory. Even to have
12 cameras in my center distributing food became of
13 great concern and fear because why, some people were
14 robbing, mugging, whatever was going on, and you see
15 how crime has just taken its toll on us, that that's
16 not really being addressed with NCOs. Like we can't
17 get regular vertical patrol for, for this particular
18 development, and I'll say that because they're
19 covering 28 walk-ups and then another conventional
20 development north of us. No, south of us. So how
21 can just the two assigned NCOs cover such a great
22 area and then go back and do whatever patrolling that
23 they have to do to the high-rise areas? But I want
24 to say that my commanding officer has worked with us
25 very well. I have another building that falls under

1
2 the PSA and I just was with the, um, chief Monday
3 night at an event and I just want to say that 1162
4 Washington Avenue is a great concern of us because
5 that building is a elevated building, 90 units...

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 MARIA FORBES: ...with, with four
8 different stair halls. So I said to the PSA, I said
9 you need to send in at least a team of six officers
10 to that building alone because of the seven different
11 exits to that building. But this mass and no police
12 coverage, it's like we lost everything from
13 sanitation to repairs to everything on top of police
14 coverage, and that's very important to us as public
15 housing residents, that we get that issue addressed
16 in having more police coverage to these developments.
17 Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, thank you. We
19 will now hear from Crystal Glover, and then we will
20 return to, ah, Beverly McFarland.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 CRYSTAL GLOVER: Good day to the Committee
23 on Public Housing. Thank you for having this hearing
24 on public safety and NYCHA. There are 397
25 developments in New York. So when I get an

1 invitation to these hearings I come. My name is
2 Crystal Glover and I'm a resident at Washington
3 Houses, a former TA president. Many residents watch
4 this program, so when I get an invitation to come, I
5 come so that if I, if I can say something that a
6 resident can hear and it can help them to grow, this
7 is about growth. We come to these, these meetings
8 and things still say the same, these, ah, public
9 hearings. No disrespect to anyone in this committee,
10 but nothing changes. But thankfully people do watch
11 the City Council channel, so hopefully they'll hear
12 something today. Um, public safety at NYCHA is not
13 just a matter of drug sales, robberies, and rape.
14 But it's also a matter of health safety. Coronavirus
15 has devastated our country. Cigarette smoking is a
16 major problem here. I want to first say contrary to
17 what people may think, NYCHA families are sweet,
18 decent, wholesome people. Residents have been
19 smoking cigarettes in public housing for over 60
20 years. Some smoke them because they enjoy smoking.
21 Others are just addicted. Now, with NYCHA's smoke-
22 free policy smokers feel they are being singled out
23 and picked on. Nobody companies about the reefer

1 smoke, they say. But did you know that some of the
2 same chemicals in reefer is in cigarettes? So why...

3
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 CRYSTAL GLOVER: ...why wasn't reefer put
6 in the smoke-free policy? Good question. Reefer is
7 not legal. It's still illegal in New York State.
8 But back to cigarettes. Residents are told smoking
9 cigarettes 25 feet outside of the building. This
10 does not mean outside of your window. Because the
11 air just pushes it back into the building. Now do
12 you think residents are going to dress their families
13 to go outside every time they want to smoke a
14 cigarette? Even a single person may not take the
15 time out to do that. Then it's the issue of
16 residents' guests. Guests don't pay rent in our
17 building. They visit it. So they smoke, their
18 smoking is an invasion of residents' privacy. I
19 don't want to believe that cigarette smokers don't
20 care about their neighbors. So what should we do?
21 Think about this. Some neighbors have illnesses,
22 like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and respiratory
23 illnesses. They should not be inhaling smoke.
24 Children, nobody should be breathing this second-hand
25 and third-hand smoke. The third-hand smoke is the

1 ash. So what are residents supposed to do? They can
2 choose to sit there, get sick and die, or they can
3 call the centralized call center, 718-707-7771, and
4 put in a ticket. This is the only system NYCHA have
5 to address this issue. So you call and tell them
6 that Betty Lou in 7-B is smoking you out of house and
7 home. You know where the smoke is coming from,
8 especially if you've been living there long enough.
9 You don't have to approach your neighbor. The
10 property manager has to keep record of these
11 complaints, which is good for you because that is
12 proof that you have been complaining and you're not
13 satisfied. Because of the, we are breathing in stale
14 air that's contaminated with a little bit of
15 everything. This is just food for thought. The
16 smoke-free policy is a public safety issue, because
17 if a resident gets fed up and approaches a resident
18 about their smoking, the neighbor can get made and
19 come out shooting. I was told by the director of the
20 NYCHA smoke-free policy that HUD did not put enough
21 money into the policy to secure the elimination of
22 smoking in NYCHA buildings altogether. He said NYCHA
23 put the policy out there and I quote, left them in
24 the dark. Even brief exposure to second-hand smoke
25

1
2 can damage the lining of blood vessels and cause your
3 blood platelets to become stickier. This changes,
4 these changes can cause a deadly heart attack.
5 NYCHA, the smoke-free policy, I will not sit back and
6 die from the [inaudible] chemicals of cigarette
7 smoke. Any resident that wants to work with me can
8 contact me at gcrystal, that's with a C, rystal, 2234
9 at gmail.com. This is a question that I want to put
10 forth in the event that none of y'all are gonna ask
11 me a question. And the question is have I contacted
12 NYCHA about the smoke-free policy. I've spoken with
13 the director for the smoke-free policy. I was even
14 on the panel back in 2017 because I had been
15 complaining about the smoke and they told me they
16 were putting a panel together and I got on the panel.
17 They have had eight liaisons to work 397
18 developments. Um, and I just wanted to say just
19 thank you. Um, Community Affairs, if you want to
20 work with us, I don't know, with 390-something
21 developments, um, I don't understand why there's so
22 few, um, resident leaders here. Um, I know I'm one
23 of the best and I can't do it all. I mean, that's
24 just a little something, something. But when Victor
25 Bott, I'm gonna say this one last thing. When Victor

1
2 Bott invites me, 'cause I'm his mailing list for his
3 organization, when he invites me I come out and I
4 participate. I don't know if my resident association
5 knows about these meetings. I don't know if
6 Manhattan South, um, which is supposedly the largest
7 district, um, if they even know about it. But I
8 thank you Ampry-Samuels for allowing me to speak.
9 Um, I also want to say hi Andrea Ward, I watch your
10 program with the [inaudible] Society. You do very
11 good work. To Linda James I am so sorry that this
12 had to happen to your mother. And the police
13 department y'all have to work with us. Management is
14 asleep. Somebody is sleeping at the wheel, and guess
15 what. We're all on welfare because anytime you're
16 getting, the difference is you're getting good money
17 and the welfare recipients are getting pennies.
18 You're not doing your jobs. You're not getting paid
19 to do nothing. I remember calling the police in one
20 time. Last thing. I remember calling the police in
21 when the youth took over our stoop, we couldn't even
22 get in our building with the candles and the
23 Hennessey bottles and they, ah, and they up and up
24 their dead, ah, ah, brother who was shot in the
25 brains. And I called the police in. And guess what

1
2 the cop told me. He said the politicians gave the OK
3 and not management. And on that note I'm out. Thank
4 you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
6 now hear from Beverly McFarland, and after that we
7 will hear from the administration.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Yeah, I still
10 don't hear you, Beverly.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, apologies, Ms.
12 McFarland. We'll hear from the administration and
13 after we've received their testimony we'll return to
14 you to receive your testimony.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: One second.
16 Um, did the public advocate join us?

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, no. I just
18 received word from his staff that, ah, he had to, um,
19 move to a different meeting and is not able to join.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, I wanted
21 to just double check. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: But he will be
23 submitting his testimony, his written testimony, for
24 the record.

25 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 29
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, we
3 will now turn to testimony from the administration.
4 A brief reminder to council members to please use the
5 Zoom raise hand function if you would like to ask any
6 questions. And I will call on you in turn. Ah,
7 after the administration we will hear from the
8 remaining members of the public. I will now
9 administer the oath to the administration, which is
10 represented by Marcos Soler from the Mayor's Office
11 of Criminal Justice, Chief David Barrere, and Michael
12 Clarke from NYPD, and Chief Gerald Nelson and Steven
13 Lovci from NYCHA. After I say the oath, please wait
14 for me to call your name and respond one by one.
15 Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell
16 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
17 before this committee and to respond honestly to
18 council member questions? Marcos Soler?

19 MARCOS SOLER: Yes, I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief David Barrere?

21 CHIEF BARRERE: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Michael Clarke?

23 MICHAEL CLARKE: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Gerald Nelson?

25 CHIEF NELSON: I do.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Steven Lovci.

3 STEVEN LOVCI: I do.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
5 begin when ready.

6 CHIEF BARRERE: Good morning, Chair
7 Ampry-Samuel, Public Advocate Williams, and members
8 of the committee. I'm David Barrere, chief of
9 Housing Bureau of the New York City Police
10 Department. I'm joined today by Gerald Nelson, vice
11 president for Public Safety from the New York City
12 Housing Authority, Marcos Soler, acting director of
13 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and Michael
14 Clarke, managing attorney of the NYPD's Legislative
15 Affairs Unit. On behalf of Commissioner Dermot Shea,
16 I wish to thank the council for the opportunity to
17 discuss these important issues. The core of the
18 NYPD's mission is to ensure that each and every
19 resident in each and every neighborhood in our city
20 to be able to walk out of their front door without
21 having to fear for their safety. The 400,000
22 residents of New York City public housing
23 developments are no less deserving of this freedom
24 from fear and the department has been committed to
25 providing the highest level of service to these

1 residential communities. NYPD has never waived
2 from this commitment, even during the unprecedented
3 challenges that the past 12 months have imposed on
4 our city and on the NYPD. This has been a
5 challenging year, facing [inaudible] crisis, the
6 crisis that every New Yorker has been helping each
7 other through. It is this spirit of community and
8 collaboration that inspires us at the NYPD to
9 continue to strive to do better. Departments', and
10 specifically the Housing Bureau's, commitment to
11 neighborhood policing in housing has reaped enormous
12 benefits. Not just in solving crimes, but also in
13 reinforcing our overall commitment to the betterment
14 of quality of life of NYCHA residents. Our partners
15 at Cure Violence are working with us in our
16 developments. Violence [inaudible] have deep inroads
17 in their communities and groups such as 696
18 [inaudible] Queensbridge have been instrumental in
19 changing individual and community attitudes and norms
20 about gun violence. The NYPD is also funding a 4
21 million dollar basketball court initiative in
22 partnership with NYCHA. It's through a build or
23 refurbish green-style basketball courts capable of
24 being converted to soccer fields in over a dozen
25

1 locations from about 60 sites that we've already
2 surveyed. Work is scheduled to begin this spring
3 with the goal that all construction will be completed
4 by the fall with many ready for use much sooner than
5 that. Unfortunately, even while our city is beset by
6 historic challenges, we've also experienced a
7 saddening rise in shootings and homicides.
8 [inaudible] each of these tragedies personally and
9 even one shooting is one too many with me. NYCHA
10 residents have not been spared from the citywide
11 uptick. The proportion of on-development shooting
12 has stayed consistent for the last 19 years,
13 including last year. As soon as we saw the increase
14 in shootings the Housing and Patrol Services Bureau
15 redoubled our efforts to stem the tide. It is
16 exactly these types of scenarios which the precision
17 policing model is designed for, allowing us to
18 quickly redeploy personnel and resources to the
19 afflicted areas and enabling our detective squads to
20 more effectively investigate and arrest those
21 relatively small number of individuals who account
22 for the majority of the city's violent crime. And
23 all doing this while maintaining the downward trend
24 of summonses issued and other low-level enforcement
25

1
2 to historic low levels. Our partnership with NYCHA
3 is the most important facet in our combined efforts
4 to keep every resident in public housing safe. I and
5 my staff maintain ongoing daily communications with
6 Chief Nelson and other NYCHA executives, as did each
7 of my predecessors in the role of chief of housing.
8 I personally did walk through the developments with
9 my partner at NYCHA, general manager Vito
10 Mustacuiolo. My commanders as well partner with
11 local NYCHA managers to problem solve at the
12 development level. This collaboration is key not
13 only to focused, effective policing. It is the
14 backbone of neighborhood policing around
15 developments. Each PSA is fully staffed with their
16 complement of neighborhood coordination officers who
17 continue these collaborative efforts with the NYCHA
18 staff and of course our residents. Our public
19 housing residents are often the backbone of the
20 neighborhoods where they reside. And just like they
21 are there for each other, we in the NYPD are there
22 for them forever and whenever need. And I'd be happy
23 to answer any questions Madam Chair or any other
24 member of the council have.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
3 much, Chief Barrere. I really appreciate your
4 testimony today. And just to be clear to everyone,
5 um, the only testimony that would be read this
6 morning, well, this afternoon, is from Chief Barrere,
7 but everyone, the administration and NYCHA, are all
8 prepared to answer questions now. And we have been
9 joined by Council Member Van Bramer as well. So with
10 that, can you provide us an update on the number of
11 shootings, murders, and major crimes that occurred at
12 NYCHA in 2019 and 2020? And how many shootings,
13 murders, and major crimes occurred at MAP sites in
14 2019 and 2020? And with that question, it's also
15 about, you know, just comparing the crimes at MAP
16 sites and the crimes at non-MAP sites for the same
17 timeframe, 2019 and 2020.

18 CHIEF BARRERE: OK, so, Madam Chair,
19 thank you for the question. Last year, um, the
20 Housing Authority, um, experienced a slight uptick in
21 overall, ah, index crimes in seven major crime
22 categories of murder, rape, robbery, felony, small
23 [inaudible], burglary, grand larceny, and grand
24 larceny auto. Um, that was primarily being driven by
25 shooting incidents, as you pointed out in your

1 opening statement. Last year we saw that that crime
2 was primarily driven by our shooting incidents. We
3 are up, sadly, 105% in shooting incidents, where last
4 year we had a total of 318 shooting incidents within
5 Housing Authority campuses. Um, when we look, ah,
6 what in fact was driving those shooting incidents
7 last year, about two-thirds of them, 66% of those,
8 were being driven by gang violence. Um, sadly
9 enough, it was, ah, primarily shootings that were
10 occurring in, in the, ah, in the evening hours for
11 the most part. When we look, um, at our individual
12 boroughs, um, all of our boroughs in New York City
13 experienced increases, ah, in shooting incidents.
14 Um, when we look at our MAP developments, when we
15 look at our MAP developments for 2020, um, we saw a
16 4%, ah, increase in crime, ah, last year in our
17 overall MAP developments, where in 2019 we saw a 4%
18 decrease. However, I want to, um, just point out,
19 Madam Chair, that since the beginning of the MAP
20 program, which I'm a big, ah, fan of, um, we've seen,
21 ah, significant reductions. We've seen a total of,
22 um, 8% reduction, ah, in 2015, to 9% reduction in,
23 ah, 2017, and so overall about a 3% overall reduction
24 in our MAP developments, which kind of bucks the
25

1
2 overall trend that we saw, um, during the same time
3 period, ah, in, in the other housing developments. I
4 know you've got a lot of questions. I hope I, have I
5 answered them all?

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [laughs] That
7 was, um, very helpful. You mentioned that 66, 66%,
8 um, drive-by gang violence, um, increase by gang
9 violence. Um, just from your expertise and what
10 you've been able to analyze, um, what's the cause of
11 the gang violence that you saw, um, during 2020?

12 And, um, did social media at all play a role in the
13 spike, and did you see any like issues with social
14 media?

15 CHIEF BARRERE: Yeah, thank you, Madam
16 Chair. Um, in terms of our gang violence it was,
17 that's the, let me start by saying about two-thirds
18 of them I can tell you are gang-related shootings.
19 What, in my expert opinion, it's [inaudible]. Um,
20 the, the way we identify a gang, and a lot of times
21 it's, they self-identify as gang [inaudible]. They,
22 they will tell us they're gang members. You
23 mentioned social media. Um, we see on social media a
24 lot of times they're identified by what they're
25 posting, what they're proud to post, they're, you

1 know, whether it's gang signs or self-identification,
2 once again, um, with being a gang member. What was
3 very unique, and I don't have to tell any members of
4 the distinguished council, um, was clearly COVID.
5 You know, COVID, let's start right there. Um, you
6 know, other places in New York City shut down, but,
7 you know, you know, our transit system was shutting
8 down four hours a night. You know our commercial,
9 ah, districts were shut down. Um, you know, our
10 stadiums, theaters, restaurants. The public housing,
11 um, we, we did not shut down, quite the opposite.
12 Um, our residents were all at home, many of them
13 working from home, um, and it was very difficult,
14 very difficult for the, the residents in public
15 housing and, um, you know, our Cornerstone program,
16 for instance, this summer. Our Cornerstone, whoever
17 name it, it wasn't me, just an incredible name. We
18 have 120 sites citywide, um, that allow, um, they're
19 safe areas, community centers for our children to be
20 able to hang out from early in the morning to late at
21 night and we have police officers covering. Those
22 sites were closed. Kids need a place to hang out. I
23 think, you know, I was a kid, a long time ago. When
24 I was a kid we hung out and, um, it was, this, you

1 know, we, we put a, you know, all, all youth, but
2 especially in public housing the youth, you know,
3 that Cornerstone, um, was taken away in summer. Um,
4 the community centers, we, the basketball courts were
5 closed. Our playgrounds were closed, um, [inaudible]
6 centers, and, um, coupled with the, you know, the
7 immediate shutdown of our court systems. And I'm not
8 here to point the finger at anybody because, um, you
9 know, when you look at it, that was a difficult
10 decision to be made and I can argue that it would be
11 highly irresponsible to bring a grand jury together
12 and have 46 members, especially of our vulnerable
13 populations, sitting in a tight courtroom where law
14 mandates that a grand jury has to be done in person.
15 So with this, um, we, we had several cases of, um,
16 where we had long-term cases, conspiracy cases that
17 we were working against our gang members, not only
18 with our local federal, ah, with our local partners
19 in, in our five counties, but also with our federal
20 partners, our federal prosecutors. And they really
21 came to a halt because in several months, um, we had
22 no grand jury sitting and were unable to move forward
23 with prosecutions. Now, interestingly enough, ah,
24 Madam Chair, you mentioned social media, and I wish I

1
2 had the social media in front of me, but we had gang
3 members actually communicating with each other saying
4 that the courts are closed, the police can't do
5 anything. So it almost gave them, um, a, ah, I don't
6 want to say a, you know, I felt that they, they
7 believed that they could act with impunity. And, um,
8 I, I also think that when children, um, listen to
9 gang recruitment at a much younger age than we've
10 seen, ah, prior, very young age. And that coupled
11 with not being able to provide our children with
12 places that they normally, the safe spaces, if you
13 will, in public housing, um, that they, that they was
14 able to go to, I think, you know, coupled with
15 everything, I think that, that added to, um, our gang
16 violence, and...

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Just, you
18 know, just to interject there, can you give us the
19 average age? What's the age range that you're
20 talking about here?

21 CHIEF BARRERE: I don't have, you know, I
22 don't have the statistics, but I'm gonna just say
23 right off the bat they're recruiting kids younger
24 than 12 years old now. I mean, as shocking as that
25 sounds, um, they're, you know, in high school, I

1
2 don't want, I'm an optimist, so I never want to say
3 it's too late. But we, we have to get to these
4 children at a much younger age, you know, and, and,
5 um, our youth strategy right now, um, we just this
6 year, we're really excited about it, citywide we've
7 rolled out our youth coordination officers, um, which
8 we call our YCOs. And they're really, our YCOs now
9 are working with our neighborhood coordination
10 officers and our YCOs, um, they're just like our
11 NCOs, are assigned to the same geographical areas, so
12 the same developments, and their job is really to
13 deal with, um, all children under the age of 18 who
14 live within the developments. And not only when they
15 come into negative contact with the police, but
16 children who may have gone missing, um, children who
17 are not going to school, following up with parents,
18 working with the neighborhood coordination officers
19 in conjunction to try to make sure that we're, we're
20 getting to these youth at these very young ages,
21 mentoring. Um, ah, you know, I mentioned in my
22 opening statement the 4 million dollars that, um,
23 that we're putting into New York City basketball
24 courts. I'm really excited about that because, um,
25 that 4 million dollars, and I want to thank

1 Commissioner Chauncy Parker, um, here at the NYPD.
2 That was forfeiture money that was earmarked for the
3 Housing Bureau. Normally we would spend that money
4 on overtime for police officers or equipment, cars,
5 things of that, ah, nature. This year we're taking a
6 different approach to it 'cause through, um, to
7 support our YCOs we're on the ground right now with
8 our, with our children. Um, we're building these
9 really, they're, Madam Chair, they are beautiful
10 basketball courts, high-end basketball courts,
11 anywhere from \$250,000 to \$300,000, um, each. And,
12 you know, they can convert it to soccer, easily
13 convert it to soccer fields also, which is pretty
14 wild. And, um, now we're giving them another safe
15 space that for the last year I'm gonna argue our
16 children didn't have. Our children, and this is, I
17 get it. This is a statewide and nationwide crisis
18 and, and, um, but, you know, right now I think my
19 [inaudible] is, you know, the children in public
20 housing, um, really had nowhere to go. They didn't
21 have as many options as, as people that live in a
22 less urban environment.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
25 much, Chief Barrere, for that information about the

1 YCOs and the money that's being spent. Um, and so
2 that will be helpful for us with later questions.
3 Um, I want to go next to questions about is there an
4 increase in crime at sites with stalled scaffolding,
5 with installed scaffolding, and please provide us
6 with an update on the removal of nonessential
7 scaffolding, um, and sidewalk sheds.

8 CHIEF BARRERE: You're directing that,
9 that's not directed at me, Madam Chair, is it?
10 Sidewalk sheds?
11

12 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: No, this is
13 directed at, um, this will be directed at NYCHA.

14 CHIEF BARRERE: [inaudible].

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And if you
16 want to chime in around scaffolding and crime that's,
17 that's OK.

18 CHIEF BARRERE: [inaudible].

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: But I'm sure
20 Steve or someone will be able to answer this
21 question. And just for my colleagues, um, out in
22 there so, because I know that my colleagues have some
23 specific questions that are also on my list of
24 questioning, but I'll allow my colleagues to, to go
25 first. So, sidewalk sheds, scaffolding, crime.

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: Um, thank you, Madam
3 Chair. This is Steven Lovci with Capital Projects
4 Division. Um, I, I don't have the statistics on
5 crime, ah, regarding, ah, crime at sidewalk sheds.
6 Um, as we talk about capital projects, particularly
7 the sidewalk sheds or the safety sheds for
8 construction projects, um, we're constantly removing
9 sheds, um, and, um, you know, as we have continued to
10 move the estimated number of sidewalk sheds to date
11 right now is 213,624 linear sheds and as we move
12 projects, ah, in the capital portfolio that number
13 drops in the, ah, the capital projects. Um,
14 unfortunately, as we have discussed and with many
15 council members, the Local Law 11, or the Façade
16 Program, that, those sheds tend to continue to rise.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. I think
18 it would be helpful to, um, get a sense of where the,
19 the sheds are and where the scaffoldings are, um,
20 located, and then compare that to the, um, crime data
21 and crime stats in that same area, because of course
22 we hear complaints from residents that those
23 scaffolds, um, increase the, the, um, the, you know,
24 issues with visibility and riding issues and, um,
25 there could be a direct, um, correlation to crime in

1 that immediate area, um, under the sheds, right? And
2 so because that's something that I know I constantly
3 hear complaints from constituents and residents, it'd
4 just seem like something that we would be tracking.

5
6 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: And I
7 am, we're doing the same as we, as I go out and visit
8 with tenant leaders as well as residents, um, as we
9 know that there is a lot of capital happening in our
10 developments. Um, the capital is good and the safety
11 protection, ah, as you said, provides areas in which,
12 ah, feel uncomfortable to the residents. I know that
13 we work regularly with our contractors, ah, to make
14 sure that they are well lit and we try to keep as
15 much visibility as possible, obviously complying with
16 the DOB codes associated to that, um, which do put
17 limitations on, ah, where we put them, ah, the
18 netting that we have to put in there, the, the color
19 of the netting, the color of the, of the sheds, and
20 so, but again we're constantly working in ways in
21 which we can decrease that. We did work with the
22 Department of Buildings, ah, on a, on a pattern in
23 which we use fencing more than we use sheds and that
24 allowed us to have more transparency and openness.
25 Um, but, again, we definitely recognize that these

1
2 sheds create a scenario in which residents are
3 definitely uncomfortable and it creates a possibility
4 for, ah, for, um, criminal activity to happen.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

6 And I know, um, Chief Nelson, you remember that I'm
7 sure quite well from your days, um, in the community.
8 Um, but also Chief Barrere, I think when you are
9 doing your, your walks and tours with, with Vito
10 Mustaciuolo it would be helpful to kind of, you know,
11 have a lens, um, when you're doing those, those walks
12 to look at the scaffolding, you know, with the actual
13 lens of safety and security, because this is a, an
14 ongoing concern and complaint, and it's great to be
15 able to have conversations with DOB about placement,
16 um, and, you know, just policy, but when we're
17 talking about safety and security it's good to have
18 input, um, from NYPD and the residents during those
19 walks because the same way the residents will point
20 out where cameras should be located I think, um, the
21 residents are well capable and, and should be able to
22 walk around with PD and NYCHA to discuss, you know,
23 safety and security as it relates to the scaffolding
24 and sidewalk sheds. Chief Nelson?

1
2 CHIEF NELSON: If I may, ah, the shedding
3 as it pertains to the cameras, you're right, the
4 residents are very helpful, um, whenever there is new
5 shedding put up because the closed circuit TV units
6 are under my purview, we would have to send somebody
7 out to make sure that the cameras are not actually
8 being blocked. We have the NYPD that sometime a NCO
9 may call my [inaudible] and say your new shedding,
10 you have issues with a, we have a camera risk. So
11 we'll send a team out to try to make the adjustment
12 so those cameras will not be blocked in the event.
13 The sheddings are a big thing. We all take new tours
14 in a development where there's a lot of shedding.
15 Those are some of the major complaints.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, thank you.
17 Um, Audrey, I'm going to end my questioning there,
18 um, so that my colleagues are, are able to jump in
19 and then I'll go back to [inaudible].

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you.
21 Ah, I'll, I'll now call on council members in order
22 to ask questions. Um, we will begin with Council
23 Member Ayala, followed by Council Member Barron.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you. Um, I
3 mean, I don't even know where to begin, quite
4 frankly. Um, I have, you know, since last year, and
5 I know we had this conversation the last time that we
6 had a similar hearing about the conditions in the
7 developments in my district. Ah, Council Member, ah,
8 Samuel and I are kind of like twin sister districts
9 in that we have the, the, the most public housing of
10 most of the members on this body. And so we, we're
11 seeing a lot of things that maybe some of our
12 colleagues are not. And it's really frustrating for
13 me as an elected official to continue to see these
14 things happening and not be able to provide the
15 relief that is necessary, and I think that that's for
16 a million different types of reasons. Um, I have had
17 seniors that have been robbed in their own homes in
18 senior buildings. I have had multiple shootings in
19 the last couple of months in lobbies at Mott Haven,
20 ah, Millbrook, Mitchell. Um, I have in East Harlem
21 alone, this is a, this is just, this is a, like I'm
22 gathering these, I'm collecting this, this is a
23 collection of shootings. These are people that have
24 been shot in my district since July. I have over 50,
25 this is just one PSA. I have two. This PSA happens

1
2 to send me receipts. So I have those receipts. But
3 these are human lives. These are people,
4 grandmothers, children, husbands, wives, that did
5 absolutely nothing in some cases, that were shot in
6 their own buildings, in their own communities. And
7 so I would like to know independent of activating
8 public spaces, which I am huge proponent of, and
9 independently of opening up community centers, what
10 is NYCHA doing to address the public safety issues at
11 their developments? Because it does not appear to me
12 that NYCHA even acknowledges that there's a public
13 safety crisis happening within their own buildings.
14 We have seen cameras that not functional. We have
15 poor lighting, if lighting at all. These issues are
16 never addressed in a timely manner. We have doors
17 that are broken consistently. So I really would love
18 for NYCHA, and I know what the PSAs are doing and I
19 know what the, what the police precincts are doing
20 and I appreciate that. But in a lot of these cases
21 we cannot police our way out of these issues. There
22 are things that we can do proactively to avoid a lot
23 of these circumstances from happening. So I have two
24 questions. One, again, what is NYCHA doing to
25 address the public safety issues at their

1
2 developments, and two, how quickly is NYCHA
3 addressing, um, the broken cameras and the lighting
4 issues, um, at those developments, and actually I'll
5 add a third question, because I would love to know
6 what type of relationship NYCHA has with residents
7 once a shooting has occurred. I had a, a, a, an
8 older lady who had two sons that were shot on the
9 same day, one fatal, one critical. She had to live
10 next door to her son's shooters' family for months
11 before she was transferred out of that apartment.
12 That is very traumatic and it is dangerous for both
13 families. And in neither case did NYCHA intervene
14 until we forced that on them. So I would love to
15 hear what, ah, NYCHA's responses to these questions
16 are.

17 CHIEF NELSON: Um, thank you for your
18 question, ma'am, and your concerns are our concerns,
19 too, as with anything with, ah, the safety and the
20 security of our residents. As you are aware, with
21 your help, ah, there is a grant that's coming from
22 HUD where we're looking to improve the lighting, ah,
23 at, ah, Jefferson Houses and different houses within
24 your development. Ah, I know it's not enough. We
25 need all the help that we can get. I'd like to thank

1
2 all the electeds where, ah, participating gave us
3 funding for cameras and things of that nature. Ah,
4 Jefferson, Johnson, I can remember patrolling it as a
5 housing cop and it was somewhere better back in the
6 day, but that's centuries ago. I realize that we
7 have issues there. We're working to try and correct
8 those issues. Your other question is, ah, about the
9 incident with someone who had to leave [inaudible] to
10 a, um, I would say a perpetrator, for lack of a
11 better word. Ah, that should not have happened. We
12 have our own [inaudible] assigned right to NYCHA in
13 the event for if something happens, we need an
14 emergency transfer, um, I don't know all your details
15 for that particular one, but some of that stuff comes
16 through me. I am not the one who handles it, but I
17 participate and work closely with the NYPD and they
18 bring to my attention that they have a victim of a
19 crime.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 CHIEF NELSON: For a witness...

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Go ahead.

23 CHIEF NELSON: Or a witness of a crime
24 that we need to find adequate, ah, housing for. We
25 have a unit that looks at that, ah, carefully and we

1 try to make the move as quick as possible. It should
2 not take, I think you said a couple of, four weeks or
3 a month. It should not. If it's something of that
4 nature we should move as, as quick as possible. I
5 think that answered two. Ah, what was the other
6 question, ma'am?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: So we had, we've
9 had incidents where we have had shootings and when
10 the police department or the family members are
11 asking for the footage to be retrieved there is no
12 footage because the cameras that we're hoping to fund
13 are non-operational. So who is keeping track of
14 whether or not the cameras are actually working? Are
15 they maintained? How often? And when they break how
16 quickly does it take, how, how long does it take
17 before somebody actually comes in and, and repairs
18 not only the cameras, but the lighting and the doors?

19 CHIEF NELSON: That also falls under me.
20 We have a closed circuit TV unit that's, ah, are
21 responsible for maintaining. Ah, once Capital
22 installs the cameras we call the NYPD [inaudible]
23 restores the cameras. It's then turned over to me.
24 As well you know, we have something like 219
25 developments that have cameras there. Some are

1 newer, like anything else. And like I said earlier,
2 well I didn't say earlier, but I spoke about this
3 with my partners that technology is that such we
4 install the latest new greatest today. Two months
5 from now it's down. Our cameras are, ah, our cameras
6 should be checked every day by the management. If
7 there's an issue they're supposed to let us know. We
8 have to generate a document each day for all the
9 cameras that are triple [inaudible], excuse me, all
10 the cameras that out of order. Ah, our unit within
11 the closed circuit TV, we have some electricians and
12 people who job is to, um, monitor, not monitor, check
13 and reinstall and fix all of this, shedding, move the
14 cameras, they should respond and try making an
15 attempt to fix it. Sometime it works, sometime it
16 happens. Our portfolio, we have cameras that could
17 be 15 years old, we have some cameras two to three
18 years old. We have some cameras, ah, systems that,
19 ah, I would venture to say if the contract for
20 maintenance is over. I thank you once again for
21 those of you who have given us, ah, cameras out of
22 your budget. But also we need to have strong, um,
23 extended warranties to fix whenever they go out. But
24 that falls under the closed circuit TV unit to fix
25

1
2 those cameras that are broke or to bring, ah, or to
3 try and replace same. Does that answer...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I, I think, yes
5 and no. I mean, I just, I would love to see NYCHA be
6 a little bit more proactive in their interactions
7 with the council because if you're having issues, if
8 cameras need to be upgraded, we're not finding out
9 from NYCHA, we're finding out from residents, we're
10 finding out from victims, we're finding out from the
11 NYPD. Ah, you know, quite frankly, my experiences
12 with NYCHA have been very, you know, ah, negative in
13 terms of the public safety issues. You know, I, I
14 bring them up, you know, we try to, you know,
15 incorporate programs where we're activating public
16 spaces at some of the NYCHA developments and some of
17 them we have Cornerstones and some of them we don't.
18 Um, you know, many of them still need, ah, community
19 centers, and it would be really nice to have NYCHA
20 advocating for these things as opposed to having to
21 wait until somebody gets shot or murdered for us to
22 have to force it upon the administration or anyone
23 else, ah, for that matter. I think it's insulting to
24 the people that live there and quite frankly you are
25 the landlord. The NYPD is not the landlord. And

1
2 this is the problem that we continue to use the NYPD
3 for the, you know, the, the solution to all of our
4 problems, and a lot of these problems can be
5 remediated without the use of the NYPD, um, at all,
6 right? We, we can advocate for these services
7 [inaudible]. I'm running out of time and I know that
8 my colleagues have questions, but I plan to put some,
9 you know, a multiagency public safety plan together,
10 ah, for East Harlem and the South Bronx for this
11 summer and I hope that NYCHA can participate in that,
12 in that planning process.

13 CHIEF NELSON: Before you leave,
14 absolutely, ma'am, I will be more than happy to
15 participate in that. We appreciate our partners at
16 City Council members, ah, at the City Council. I'm
17 looking forward to working with you on this issue.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I just have
20 some, ah, a follow-up to, um, Council Member Ayala's
21 question, um, Chief Nelson.

22 CHIEF NELSON: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: You mentioned
24 that the cameras should be checked daily and if there
25 are issues there's a document that drafted and

1
2 they're to report this information. So who is
3 checking the cameras daily and how are they checking
4 them?

5 CHIEF NELSON: The, each, ah, the cameras
6 that are assigned to a development, the manager
7 should have access to those cameras. Someone should
8 be checking that daily to see, to make sure the
9 cameras are working. In addition to that, if new
10 shedding was put that manager should be the first
11 person, or whoever is in charge of monitoring the
12 cameras, it's under the manager, whoever should
13 designate to do that should be checking to see
14 whether that, that camera [inaudible] the shedding
15 has been blocked. And each day there is a report
16 generated, ah, that's sent to my shop, letting us
17 know from my closed circuit TV which cameras are
18 down. Also, the NYPD with the VIPR bases that
19 covers, ah, 28 developments, ah, 24/7 with, ah,
20 police coverages, we receive, excuse me, we receive a
21 report from them on which cameras are down.

22 CHIEF BARRERE: So, so Madam Chair, the,
23 the VIPR cameras that Chief Nelson is referring to,
24 we have 3114 of those VIPR cameras. They are
25 monitored, um, within the PSAs and they're checked,

1
2 not daily, they're basically checked hourly and we
3 would get that report of any malfunctioning out to,
4 um, NYCHA and to Chief Nelson for, for repair.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So there's a
6 expectation of a daily check for all cameras, there's
7 an expectation, by the property manager, not, I mean,
8 not by, um, I'm not talking about NYPD, but just by
9 NYCHA.

10 CHIEF NELSON: Yes ma'am.

11 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. And then
12 once you receive that report there's, there's some
13 type of work order or something generated if there
14 are issues, right?

15 CHIEF NELSON: I would say so. Something
16 is generated. Once we receive the report, once we
17 receive the report that there's a camera down, it
18 goes to the closed circuit TV, it's our unit, it's up
19 to them to see if it's fixable or it might be an old
20 camera, whatever the case might be, to investigate
21 and see what the problem is.

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And then what
23 happens then?

24 CHIEF NELSON: If it's fixable my
25 electricians or those who work in the camera unit

1
2 will go there and make the fix, make the fix, make
3 the correction, fix the, ah, broken camera. If the
4 camera is beyond repair, then we're back to square
5 one where we're trying to, ah, ah, replace that
6 camera and if it's too old then we're, ah, we would
7 have to try and replace it or get funding to update,
8 ah, the cameras.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, OK. Do
10 you have a number of how many cameras at this very
11 moment are not working, compared to how many, how
12 many cameras you have, and how many of those are not
13 working?

14 CHIEF NELSON: Close to 18,000 cameras, I
15 can't, I'm sorry, ma'am, I don't have the exact
16 number of the ones that are down. But I'll be
17 gladly, ah, be happy to forward that to the council,
18 ma'am.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, I just, I
20 have some other questions related to that, but I'll
21 [inaudible] I know that. Council Member Barron is
22 next, so I'll end there.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear
24 questions from Council Member Barron, followed by
25 Council Member Rosenthal.

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I
3
4 want to thank the chair for holding this very, very
5 critical, ah, topic hearing and I want to thank the
6 panel for their participation and presentation. Ah,
7 I also want to commend the chair for having those
8 most directly impacted by the situation precede the
9 city presentation so that the city can hear directly
10 what it is that the residents are encountering. They
11 may hear it from time to time but certainly hearing
12 that, hearing those issues in a formal City Council
13 hearing has another impact, ah, to presenting the
14 issues that we're facing. It also gives an
15 opportunity to personalize the horrors and the
16 atrocities that they have been subjected to, ah,
17 whether they be one time occurrence or whether they
18 be an ongoing situation. So we appreciate all of
19 those who came and shared their story with us. I
20 particularly want to talk about Carter G. Woodson
21 Houses which is in my district and we've had
22 meetings, ah, Zoom meetings with NYCHA, with NYPD,
23 and in fact with some of those persons who were
24 impacted by the deaths, at least four that we know
25 of, attributed to an individual by the deaths of

1 residents in Carter G. Woodson Houses, an issue that
2 have been of grave concern and addressed by myself,
3 as well as Assembly Member Charles Barron, Assembly
4 Member Latrice Walker, Council Member Alicka Ampry-
5 Samuel, and Senator Persaud. All of us have
6 expressed our concern and moving past that concern
7 coming to a resolution of addressing the situation of
8 security. I believe Ms. James, I didn't hear all of
9 her testimony, but I believe she talked about even a
10 simple direct system of having people validate who
11 they are in order to gain entry into a building,
12 particularly we're talking about a senior building.
13 And moving beyond that daily kind of procedure,
14 protocol, that can be readily implemented, we also
15 have issues with the contract that has been extended,
16 particularly at Carter G. Woodson Houses. I don't
17 know if it's a contract with a same developer, I
18 mean, the same provider, in other, in other, ah,
19 institutions and [inaudible] around the city or not,
20 but this particular one, ah, there's an issue with
21 that. Ultimately, or the bigger issue, or the big
22 challenge that we're looking at are cameras. So the
23 Assembly people as well as the council people have
24 stepped up to do what the city via NYCHA has not
25

1 done. I see that as your responsibility and I
2 certainly know that the state and the city have
3 underfunded NYCHA. That's without question. That's
4 been a pattern that they have underfunded and
5 disinvested any kind of finances. Well, for people
6 who are so excited about the new administration, and
7 they should be, here's an opportunity, and of course
8 this is not within your purview, but here's an
9 opportunity for this new administration to step up
10 and provide money for addressing the issues that
11 exist and support what's going on that needs to be
12 corrected in NYCHA. But my direct question to you is
13 where are we? The last meeting that we had, the last
14 press event that we had, it was said that, oh, NYCHA
15 expected that by the summer they would start. We
16 have not gotten any updates of any timetable. What
17 we were told is oh it has to go to the comptroller
18 and perhaps he has someone listening to this so that
19 he can be able to respond to that issue as well.
20 Where are we in this timetable? What are the next
21 steps? When we will see operational cameras
22 functioning particularly at Carter G. Woodson Houses.
23 Those are my direct questions. Can you hear me?
24 Anybody heard me? NYCHA, have you heard me?
25

1
2 CHIEF NELSON: I heard you. I'm waiting
3 for my partner to answer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: OK. He's going
5 to answer that one.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Um, I
8 was just unmuted. Thank you, Council Member Barron.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: OK.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Um, so
11 you are correct. As we've been engaging with
12 development staff, ah, and as well as the TA and
13 Office of Safety and Security, ah, there is a project
14 at Woodson that was funded from the city, and the
15 project has gotten approval from OMB so we have
16 gotten the CP. The project was funded. The design
17 was completed. The CP is completed. Um, it now
18 moving over to the comptroller's office, as you have
19 mentioned, that is correct. And, ah, we're hoping
20 that construction can start as long as we get, um, a
21 contract registration in May of 2021, or in the
22 spring.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What is keeping
24 this contract from being registered, because I heard
25 this at least six weeks ago. What is keeping the

1 contract from being, are we, are you saying to me
2 that the comptroller's office is not doing what they
3 should be doing in a timely fashion?
4

5 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: We're
6 working with our partners, as I mentioned. This just
7 came back from the OMB CP. There's a procurement
8 process by which, ah, the FMS system, or the
9 financial system, the documents then have to go into
10 that system and over to OMB for a CP approval. They
11 come back through the FMS system and, and added their
12 documents and that goes over to the comptroller. Um,
13 we work with the comptroller's office regularly.
14 They have been very, very helpful for, with us all
15 through the pandemic as staff have not been in
16 office, um, and I will say we've really gotten a lot
17 of support from OMB and the comptroller and the DOI
18 who does all of the [inaudible] processes. We are,
19 and we're really pushing these projects along. Um,
20 and, and that's, it's, it's a process but it's going
21 and, and the fact is that the design is done and we
22 are, we're getting this over to the comptroller to
23 get the approval. Ah, we, we hope that we, you know,
24 based on comptroller registration we hope that early
25 spring that we can [inaudible] construction.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Let
3 me get some particulars because I'm hearing now that
4 you just sent it. I'm interpreting what you're
5 saying now is that it has just recently been sent.
6 When did you send the, the, ah, project over to OMB?
7 What's the date that it was sent to the comptroller's
8 office? Because I was led to believe it was already
9 there and just waiting to be processed. So when did
10 you send it to the comptroller?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: So, um,
12 I'm opening up the document...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

14 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: ...within
15 the system to tell you when it was, when we received
16 it back from OMB.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: OK.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: And that
19 was February 4, 2021, is when the approval from OMB
20 is. Ah, then that gets put into the FMS system and
21 sent over to us.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: OK.

23 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: That
24 package then has to be pulled together for what the
25 comptroller needs. Um, it is my understanding that

1 that has not gone over to the comptroller. We've
2 already, we've already flagged them to let them know
3 that the package is going. Um, but it is in that
4 process of all of those documents being uploaded into
5 their system.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: OK, so I'm glad
8 you clarified.

9 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI:
10 [inaudible].

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Say again?

12 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: I'm
13 sorry. Um, and I will, I can verify, but I know that
14 our team has been, ah, communicating regularly with
15 the TA, ah, and we'll make sure that we're regularly
16 communicating with you as well to let you know about
17 the progress and, and the schedule associated to
18 that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Ah, that's fine,
20 because the TA has not indicated to me that they have
21 received any update as to what the timeline is, so,
22 ah, I'm glad that you're saying that and I will and I
23 will check with the TA to confirm that that is in
24 fact the case, and so now my question to you is when
25 do you anticipate pulling together all the pieces and

1
2 whatever, whatever, and putting it into the system,
3 when do you anticipate that it will be at the
4 comptroller's office for his office to take what
5 needs to be done?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Um,
7 based on the schedule that's supposed to happen this
8 money, so they're pulling it together...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, by the end of
10 the week, 'cause this month is over.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: No, I
12 know. I know. It's all, it's all into the finance
13 system, which is putting it into the, the system. I
14 hate using the word system, it sounds bureaucratic.
15 But, but once we get that CP back they just upload
16 the documents and the drawings and, and the, and the
17 FMS and the OMB approvals, and then that gets moved
18 over. And, again, ah, we've been working with the
19 comptroller. This process used to be paperwork where
20 we had to print it all out and the comptroller has
21 been really gracious to get this, ah, system up into
22 an electronic system, which is, is again every single
23 day that we can speed up our capital projects
24 division, it doesn't matter if it's having dialogue
25 with our other partners or the DOB or the comptroller

1
2 or OMB or anybody. We can just one day, if we get
3 one more day or two days or three days and we can get
4 that schedule better we're doing that, and that's the
5 goal. Um, we have regular conversations with both
6 OMB, comptroller, DOB, so that way these projects can
7 move faster.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Ah, I thank you
9 for your testimony and on Monday I'll be calling the
10 comptroller to find out, ah, when he expects to
11 finalize what it is that he needs to do for this
12 project to move forward. Ah, Madam Chair, I thank
13 you for extending the time to have this issue, ah,
14 better clarified. And I want to thank all of those
15 who gave testimony about their own situations in
16 NYCHA. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I just have a
18 follow-up question, um, related to Woodson. Um,
19 because we heard from residents who said that they
20 knew that the person, um, that killed, um, the
21 seniors, they knew and they actually reached out to
22 detectives about their concerns, ah, related to this
23 particular gentleman. And so I just have a question.
24 Um, what is the coordination between the district
25 attorney's office, um, PSA, NYCHA, local precinct

1
2 detectives, and the residents, um, when a violent
3 crime occurs. Like what is the coordinated effort
4 between just speaking to residents if something like
5 that happens?

6 CHIEF BARRERE: Madam Chair, with your
7 permission, um, I would just like to start with my
8 condolences with Ms. James' moving testimony. Um,
9 again, my condolences and, ah, in terms of the
10 coordination, ah, in the last [inaudible], ah, I was
11 notified. I remember when I got that phone call.
12 It's a police chief's worst nightmare, ah, when you
13 have a serial killer, as you pointed out in your
14 opening, Madam Chair. And one of your elderly, um,
15 residents had been murdered, the third one. And, ah,
16 the communication was I responded to the scene, um,
17 after the crime scene was processed, starting with
18 your chief of housing, chief, meeting with the chief
19 of detectives, Chief Rodney Harrison, on the scene,
20 ah, and we [inaudible] by the homicide detective who
21 worked for Chief Harrison. Ah, the PSA commander,
22 usual manner, Inspector [inaudible], and as soon as
23 that meeting concluded I was personally on the phone
24 in a conference call with Ms. Johnson, the tenant
25 association president. And I remember, you know,

1 speaking to her, briefing her on what exactly was
2 going on, my commitment that I was going to put in
3 addition to everything that we had done, I was going
4 to put an additional two police officers inside of
5 that building, and that I, [inaudible] unfortunately
6 COVID, um, she was, Ms. Johnson is awesome and she
7 was working to get us, um, a, a conference call,
8 which she thought was better than a video conference,
9 because many of the elderly don't have the technology
10 to, to deal with, and they're isolated, it's
11 terrible. I was willing any time they wanted to do
12 it. I would have went to them as safely as we could
13 do it, but the communication, um, was there with Ms.
14 Johnson and with it our tenant association right
15 away. In terms of NYCHA, NYCHA gives a recap for me
16 every 12 hours on everything that happens. So Chief
17 Nelson and Vito Mustaciuolo get everything from a
18 missing child to a murder every 12 hours from, um,
19 the Housing Bureau. In this case it was a phone call
20 directly to Chief Nelson, and I spoke to Vito
21 Mustaciuolo that, um, that morning, the morning after
22 the murder and, um, and, you know, and so the
23 coordination is there. In terms of the residential
24 communication, after the second murder, um, and it's
25

1
2 horrible to say the second murder, ah, the resident
3 association, ah, I bring this up because the, the,
4 the tenant association and the residents of Woodson
5 are amazing. More than 50 members attended the
6 meeting just prior to COVID, um, with the inspector,
7 um, Inspector Griffith, and the case detective who
8 was assigned to this case, and they, with our crime
9 prevention specialists, with the inspector, and with
10 the detective they all really had an open dialogue on
11 what, what they should do to protect themselves, um,
12 what, you know, safety tips, everything that that
13 case detective could tell them regarding that case.
14 And what I found most striking about this meeting was
15 that the tenants of Woodson, elderly, 62 years and
16 older, wanted to form a, a floor captain. They
17 wanted every floor here, it's a, 393 is 25 floors,
18 and they wanted a floor captain and a co-floor
19 captain on every single floor in the development.
20 They wanted the police department's help and they
21 wanted to be our eyes and ears, so meaning that they
22 were able to take care of the residents, I, I believe
23 the older residents they couldn't, and believe it or
24 not we had nine floors covered in that 24 volunteers,
25 who they created this, the tenants of that building,

1
2 just amazing, our elderly, protecting each other,
3 working with us. So, so, Madam Chair, the
4 communication is there. Ah, you know, and this, the
5 last case, I've been with you, I've been just over
6 one year now as the housing chief. It's been an
7 incredibly challenging year. On this case, it
8 started with me, meaning, ah, my worst nightmare
9 getting a phone call like that. You know, I've
10 probably had one or two, you know, up there with this
11 type of a phone call that you get, and that was with
12 a 13-year-old on a basketball court [inaudible]. So,
13 um, you know, I remember where I was when I got the
14 phone call.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll
17 now take questions from Council Member Rosenthal.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Perfect.

20 Thanks so much. This is a sobering conversation, um,
21 Chair Ampry-Samuel. You are a fearless, um, a
22 fearless leader for the council on this topic and I
23 really want you to know how much I appreciate you,
24 um, getting texts from my tenant leaders appreciating
25 you, um, during this hearing, so, so a lot of

1
2 people's eyes are on you and, and thanking you for
3 your, um, oversight on NYCHA. It's, it's very
4 powerful. The first question I have from a tenant
5 leader, um, is the tenant leader at the, ah, NYCHA
6 Brownstones. I don't know if you're familiar with
7 those in my district. Um, to NYCHA, I'm looking to
8 see in hopes that some heads will nod up and down.
9 All right. Um, thank you. They have cameras.
10 They've not been activated. The tenant leader is
11 being told that, ah, the TA leader will have pay
12 \$5000 a year to pay the contractor to monitor the
13 cameras. So two questions. One is why would the TA
14 be responsible for paying a contract, and secondly
15 why aren't the cameras, ah, up and going, activated?

16 CHIEF NELSON: I can start. Thank you
17 for that question, um, ma'am. Um, I'm [inaudible]
18 capital end, I'll speak on the security end. Ah,
19 that's an excellent question and one of which I have
20 no answer for. I don't understand where the \$5000,
21 ah, fee would come in. Ah, is it something that they
22 installed privately? If it was something that
23 installed by NYCHA or the city or, or yourself I
24 don't see where the residents would have a fee,
25

1 ma'am. I would have to, I would have to look into
2 that before I give a definitive answer.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Do you have on
4 your computer just the way someone else was able to
5 look up right away, do you have on your, ah, screen,
6 can you look up whether or not...

7 CHIEF NELSON: No, ma'am.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...you're
9 showing that the Brownstones have cameras...

10 CHIEF NELSON: No, ma'am, but as we speak
11 I'm typing up right now to see if somebody can look
12 that up. I don't have that at my screen. I'm at
13 home...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: If you could
15 just look up whether or not NYCHA, ah...

16 CHIEF NELSON: Brownstones by Devil's.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...has
18 [inaudible] by anyone, the Brownstones.

19 CHIEF NELSON: OK, ma'am.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And I'm gonna
21 wait for a minute while you do that.

22 CHIEF NELSON: Can we continue? It's
23 going to take a while.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: My second
3 question is for the, um, I'm sorry?

4 CHIEF NELSON: You can continue, because
5 this might take just a little while, OK?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, it's a
7 very just one question, does somebody have on a,
8 whether or not the Brownstones have cameras? Um, is
9 it in your system? And then my next question is for
10 the procurement, um, professional sort of picks,
11 picks up on, ah, Council Member Barron's questions.
12 Um, first of all, ah, I don't understand why you'd be
13 grateful to the comptroller for accepting paperwork,
14 ah, via, ah, the internet. I'm shocked to hear the
15 that comptroller's system wasn't connected to NYCHA
16 via the internet for such a long time. When did they
17 start to accept paperwork digitally?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: So thank
19 you very much for that. Um, we've been working with,
20 with the comptroller's office, because NYCHA is not a
21 mayoral agency, um, our processes are...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I, I
23 understand that...

24 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: ...are a
25 little bit different.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...you've never
3 been a mayoral agency....

4 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Correct.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I'm just
6 wondering exactly, just a date, or give me a year.
7 Was it 2020?

8 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: So just
9 this year, actually.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [inaudible].

11 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: We've...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Let me have
13 one.

14 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: We've
15 been working...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK. In 2021
17 the comptroller's office who for the last hundred
18 years has worked with NYCHA, a non-mayoral agency,
19 but yet the comptroller is responsible for approving
20 contracts still. They in 2021 now have a computer
21 connection with you. Just wanting to clarify, yes,
22 no.

23 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yes.
24
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK. And is
3 that because or are you now connected by a PASSport?
4 Or do you know what PASSPort is?

5 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yep.
6 No. We, we recognize PASSPort. Um, again, as you
7 also stated, we're not part of that program...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: According...

9 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: ...and so
10 we...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...to MOCS
12 where we had a hearing a couple of, of months ago,
13 NYCHA was being folded into the PASSPort system. So
14 are you being folded in or not?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Um, it
16 is my understanding we use these items, but because
17 we are not a mayoral agency we actually go through
18 HPD, um, to pass our documents through to OMB. Um,
19 and as you said, yes, the, up until the pandemic we
20 were not on an electronic system with the
21 comptroller. We had to print out the documents,
22 bring them over to the offices...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I mean, that
24 is appalling.

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 76
2 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yeah, I
3 know, and...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: If anyone
5 [inaudible] if you are not liked freaked out by that
6 you should be. So just want to make that clear that
7 that is appalling for the hundreds of thousands of
8 people who live in NYCHA that the comptroller would,
9 you know, intentionally slow things down by not
10 having an electronic, ah, system is, is just like
11 maddening. So I'm sorry, I just had to vent for one
12 quick second. And, and where you are on PASSPort,
13 yes, no, getting integrated.

14 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: So...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Or is it...

16 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: I also
17 just want to finish....

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...[inaudible]
19 is getting integrated so to the extent that HPD is
20 you are. Is that the answer?

21 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: I, I
22 just want to clarify, so, again, we've been working
23 with the comptroller on this. They have been working
24 on a computer system for those, ah, those, those
25 firms...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [inaudible]
3 those seven short years.

4 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: ...and I,
5 I'm sorry, those, those...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right. Let's
7 just move on 'cause it's really not worth it. Um,
8 back to, so it sounds like you're moving towards
9 PASSport, right? Yes?

10 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Well,
11 parts, for example, a lot of our contractors are able
12 to sign in and do the PASSPorts and, and that. But
13 we'll still not be able to...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So do the
15 PASSPort...

16 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: ...fully
17 be part of the FMS...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...[inaudible]
19 do you know do the PASSPorts, all it is, is the
20 management system. It's not...

21 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: It's not like
23 mythical or hard, right? And I assume you're the
24 procurement guy, so.

1 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: It, it
2 has a lot to do with the different types of funding
3 that Capital gets versus the city mayoral agencies.
4 We have state, federal grants and city's...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Please,
6 please, please. Ah, this stuff is just not hard, and
7 using words that other people might not be, you know,
8 familiar with, ah, like FMS and, you know, network,
9 CPs. None of this is hard. So that's your job is to
10 do this, right?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yep.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Ah, I just
13 want to ask about the RAD program to NYCHA. Um, a
14 couple of my developments went into RAD over the last
15 few months and I've been talking with the PSA
16 officers who have gotten no direction about whether
17 or not they're supposed to continue verticals. Um,
18 do you, do you have a guiding philosophy on that?

19 CHIEF BARRERE: Council Member, let me,
20 let me take in terms of the radicals. Um, the fact
21 that it appears an officer, um, is saying that, right
22 now...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Sorry. Let me
24 start over again. What is your policy when a NYCHA
25

1 building goes into RAD with the relationship between
2 the PSA officers and the set of buildings now that
3 they're in RAD?
4

5 CHIEF NELSON: As of right now nothing
6 has changed. The Housing Bureau will continue to
7 police it until, um, that decision...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK. So FYI
9 one of my smartest, best, PSA officers who you have
10 lauded as an agency and I have lauded and the NYCHA
11 leaders have lauded has no idea because has not been
12 told whether or not to do verticals. So let's not do
13 any blaming. What I'm asking you to do is fix it and
14 be out, as freaked out as I am and try to fix it, OK?

15 CHIEF NELSON: Yes, ma'am. The buck
16 stops right here. I'll fix it today.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK. And then
18 lastly, and I appreciate your forbearance, Chair
19 Ampry-Samuel, I really do. But on this camera
20 maintenance stuff, every rosy picture, everything
21 that you all are describing as protocol does not
22 happen, is a fiction in my district, is a fiction in
23 my district. So I have scaffolding up in one of my
24 larger complexes. I visited with a PSA officer and
25 someone from NYCHA three years after the security

1 cameras were installed. Number one, the, them
2 [inaudible] at NYCHA wasn't even present. They don't
3 know anything about the cameras. So, no, they had
4 never checked them. Um, the PD, ah, it was the first
5 time they actually were in the room to see that
6 cameras existed for crimes that had existed and so
7 now they knew they could go back and get film except
8 for the fact that none of the videos worked because
9 the cameras had all been blocked by trees, by the
10 scaffolding, so I really, everything you just said
11 about how the cameras are supposed to work, I hear
12 what you're saying and it is so far away from the
13 experience that we have had as to make we wonder,
14 like my residents do, do the cameras mean anything in
15 terms of keeping themselves safe? Every time I have
16 worked with a property manager to say do you check
17 the feed every day, do you know how to check the
18 feed, do you know if the cameras are working, pointed
19 in the right direction, the answer is routinely no.
20 Routinely no. So I am shocked to hear that you get
21 regular reports on the functioning of the cameras. I
22 am shocked to hear that if that is true you don't
23 know what the number is today that are functioning or
24 not, something the council member asks. So I mean,
25

1
2 are you, you know, if you're responsible for the
3 cameras shouldn't you know like how many were working
4 yesterday? How many were working last week? Did, do
5 you have a sense of scale? It's, is it 10% that's
6 not functioning every day? Is it 20? 50? 80? Do
7 you have a sense of scale?

8 CHIEF NELSON: I can answer your
9 question, ma'am. Um, I'm almost positive, um,
10 excellent question, ma'am. I'm almost positive that
11 the tour that you took was at Amsterdam Houses. That
12 might not be the same. We could talk about.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, no, it is.

14 CHIEF NELSON: But I was, I was, I was
15 with you on that tour...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

17 CHIEF NELSON: ...with the, with the
18 officer...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

20 CHIEF NELSON: ...and the officer, and the
21 office was pointing out where he wanted the cameras
22 to be pointing...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That's right,
24 and who started that meeting? Oh, right, the council
25 member. And where, did he even know that he had had

1 the ability, the ability to say to NYCHA this is
2 where I want the cameras pointed? No. He did not.
3 So my apologies for not remembering you were there.
4 But what I remember from that meeting is that it was
5 a learning experience for everyone. And yes, I set
6 up that meeting. That meeting was set up at my
7 request. So I'm sorry, what were you gonna say about
8 it? And...

10 CHIEF NELSON: I don't...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...[inaudible]
12 percentage of cameras are out on any given day? Does
13 anyone know?

14 CHIEF NELSON: The Brownstone...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Does anyone
16 [inaudible]?

17 CHIEF NELSON: The Brownstone cameras
18 that, ah, at that location were not installed by
19 Capital. Um, we received, ah, the current number
20 that's out of, of cameras are 139. So I hope that
21 answers the question that you asked about how many
22 cameras...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That is an
24 average number? Is that high? Is that low? What
25 percentage of the total is that?

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 83
2 CHIEF NELSON: I would have to do the
3 math now, ma'am. I don't have that answer. I looked
4 up your...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: It's, is 150 a
6 big number? What was it last week? 300? 50? Was
7 150 last week?

8 CHIEF NELSON: I can't, I could not
9 answer that question, ma'am.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: But you're
11 saying you get this information every morning. Maybe
12 I misheard you.

13 CHIEF NELSON: No, no. I said that there
14 is a report generated that is sent to my unit, the
15 closed circuit TV unit, that receives a report of the
16 cameras and they also generate a report that's sent
17 out to let those know which cameras are out.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right. But
19 you, you hear my questions. I mean, it's pretty
20 insane. You should know, I mean, you know, for the
21 purposes, I mean, everyone knows what I'm saying, so
22 I'm not gonna repeat it. Let me just say this. Ah,
23 five years ago I, um, toured the closed circuit, the
24 office at NYCHA central where the officers are
25 looking at the closed circuit cameras. They were

1
2 taking down the information with paper and pen that
3 they saw. The information then went to another unit
4 that converted those handwritten notes into something
5 that, um, sorry, something digital and then the next
6 day that digital report was sent to the person who
7 in charge of that unit. That was something that I
8 mentioned to City Hall five years ago. Has that been
9 corrected or, or is it still guys with penalties and
10 pencils and paper writing down what they're seeing?

11 CHIEF NELSON: I cannot answer that
12 question, ma'am. But we will be happy, I personally
13 will be happy to...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [inaudible]

15 CHIEF NELSON: ...review and, and discuss
16 this issue with you further.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Who is it that
18 oversees that room of people who are writing down
19 information from the camera?

20 CHIEF NELSON: One of my supervisors that
21 works in that, ah, particular building, the
22 particular center that you toured.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Have you ever
24 asked him about this?

2 CHIEF NELSON: No, ma'am. Out of the 18,
3 um, we have currently 130 cameras that are out, out
4 of 18,000 cameras, on our NYCHA portfolio.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That you know
6 about.

7 CHIEF NELSON: That's actually a fact,
8 ma'am, yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Well, it can't
10 be a fact if you don't have people looking at the
11 monitors. And I know for a fact that the property
12 managers in my district do not look or nor do they
13 know how to look at their cameras. So, honestly, be,
14 I mean, just really. Ah, that you know of there are
15 130. It was 150 two minutes ago, but it's 130.

16 CHIEF NELSON: I never said 150 ma'am. I
17 said...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK, my bad.
19 130.

20 CHIEF NELSON: I said 139 right from the
21 beginning.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: 139.

23 CHIEF NELSON: You said was 150 before.
24 I said that I don't know, ma'am.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: OK, my bad.

2 CHIEF NELSON: I gave you a number.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: 139.

4 CHIEF NELSON: Like I said, I am, I am
5 happy to meet you to discuss these issues...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You don't need
7 to meet with me. I think you meet with your tenant
8 leaders, your property managers. I think you need to
9 get out on the road and do some investigative work
10 yourself. Um, but that's not for me to say, um, just
11 sort of sharing experiences with you from my
12 community and, and I just want you to know that I'm
13 heartbroken. I'm just heartbroken for my...

14 CHIEF NELSON: OK, ma'am.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...um, for my
16 NYCHA residents. Thank you, again, Chair Ampry-
17 Samuel.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, um, I
19 appreciate that line of questioning, um, Council
20 Member Rosenthal. And I will say the, um, that's one
21 of the reasons why I asked the question specifically,
22 um, who's going out there, um, and if that was the
23 intent and the expectation that it's the property
24 managers that are checking on this daily and, and is
25 it a daily report, and I ask that question because I

1 know that the meetings that I have with my residents
2 and our property managers, um, they're inundated with
3 issues related to mold and elevators and trash
4 pickups and everything else, and especially COVID
5 right now. There are so many other things that are,
6 that, um, safety and security obviously should be a
7 priority, but it's not something that I, um, get a
8 lot of reports about from the property management
9 staff. It's usually maintenance issues related to,
10 again, trash and mold and different things. And so I
11 was kind of shocked when you said that they're doing,
12 um, this daily check every day because that's just
13 not my experience when it comes to, um, um,
14 information that we receive from the property
15 management staff, so [inaudible].

17 CHIEF NELSON: If I, if I may, ma'am.
18 It's under their purview and when I say property
19 manager I guess I misspoke. I shouldn't say
20 property, property manager. I should say his or her
21 designee, because it's in the manager's office, all
22 the superintendents' office, someone is supposed to
23 be checking that, those cameras, ah, at least some
24 time during the day, once a day, to make sure that
25 all are together, make sure there's no vandalism on

1
2 the cameras themselves, and making sure that they're
3 operable. So when I said management, I'm sorry, ah,
4 someone from the manager's office or the
5 superintendent's should be, ah, looking at that,
6 ma'am. Sorry.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Um-hmm.

8 That's, that's, that's helpful with clarification,
9 but still inefficient, like as a follow-up that is
10 still something that is, um, intriguing for me
11 because, again, the calls that we get and the
12 complaints that, that we get and receive, um, are
13 related to everything else outside of checking the
14 cameras and, um, that's just shocking, so I would
15 think that I would have more information related to
16 cameras and security if this is something that
17 they're looking at and doing every single day and
18 reporting on every single day. Um, OK. Um, I'll
19 stop there. Audrey?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now
21 take questions from Council Member Adams.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you very
24 much and, um, Chair Ampry-Samuel, you are doing an
25 amazing job with this hearing, um, however helpless

1
2 I'm feeling right now over the subject matter. But
3 thank you so much, especially for allowing the
4 residents to speak. Um, I think that it is
5 absolutely our responsibility to hear the voices of
6 the people, particularly when it comes to NYCHA, ah,
7 and their situations, because they are not heard
8 often enough. They are not amplified often enough.
9 So thank you for letting the residents speak. Ah,
10 Chief Barrere, I must say Queens South is not the
11 same without you.

12 CHIEF BARRERE: [inaudible].

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Um, you know, I'm,
14 I'm, ah, I have to stick on the camera issue because
15 I'm baffled, um, I'm just baffled and, and Council
16 Member Ayala started, I believe she started the
17 conversation about an hour or so ago, um, with regard
18 to the camera situation just everything that we're
19 getting now in peeling this onion back. You know, I
20 represent District 28, where South Jamaica Houses and
21 Baisely Houses are, and one of the most prevalent
22 complaint, aside from voluminous maintenance issues,
23 has to do with security and cameras and lighting, and
24 quite frankly, ah, Chief Nelson, I'm not sure that
25 we've, ah, met, ah, before but, um, but the responses

1
2 are just so disheartening, ah, in hearing that, ah,
3 Council Member Ayala I believe asked you about
4 lighting and you said that you are quote looking to
5 get a grant for lighting. That's unacceptable. The
6 residents need help. Um, there is a tremendous
7 quality of life issue that persists. Um, we've been
8 talking about cameras now for I, I daresay, 45
9 minutes at least, and for me going around in circles
10 about the issue of cameras have to be the most
11 observing thing as one who has funded, um, lighting
12 and cameras actually for my NYCHA buildings. Ah, do
13 you know what the typical turnaround time is for
14 repair once, once your unit is made aware of a camera
15 outage?

16 CHIEF NELSON: Ah, thank you for that
17 question, ma'am. The issue for Jamaica Houses, ah,
18 that's a VIPR base and I would venture to say, my
19 God, when I was, ah, a full inspector or a captain,
20 that's when they put in, they were, ah, first put in
21 place. So we're talking like the mid '90s. I have
22 no idea whether they were updated or not since that
23 time. Um, the turnaround time on camera, on cameras
24 being fixed largely depends on what the issue is for
25 that particular camera. I'm not sure, I have to look

1
2 up and see what Baisley has, but the cameras that are
3 at Jamaica Houses are one of the first VIPR bases
4 that we did, ah, when the housing police were still
5 there. So if those are same original cameras, ma'am,
6 we might have an issue where those cameras are down.
7 Now when I mentioned before about a HUD grant, I was
8 just bringing to the attention that I was really
9 thanking that particular City Council member, because
10 I understand that she is very vocal and, and, and
11 instrumental and for us pushing for that grant. The
12 monies that we have for cameras, ah, access doors,
13 ah, are not funding that NYCHA has. I think you know
14 exactly what NYCHA is going through, and that's why
15 we really depend on our electeds, like yourself, and
16 other City Council members or borough presidents, or
17 the, the state, ah, state or the governor or Cyclist
18 Vance or whoever to help us out, ah, not to take
19 money from...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I'm well aware,
21 yeah, I'm, I'm well aware, well aware...

22 CHIEF NELSON: OK, so when you say...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...[inaudible]
24 funding that, that comes in [inaudible] that we must
25 provide, that we want to provide.

2 CHIEF NELSON: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: [inaudible] we'd
4 be [inaudible].

5 CHIEF NELSON: So it's, it's not a thing
6 that we're not, ah, putting in because we have the
7 money to do so. We have so many issues. Safety and
8 security is utmost important for NYCHA, absolutely.
9 It's in the forefront. But we just don't have the
10 funding to spend like NYCHA would love to spend, and
11 that's why we depend on people like yourself, ma'am.
12 I can get answers on you for Baisely. But I can just
13 surmise that if Jamaica Houses still has the same
14 [inaudible] they had from before, I can see maybe
15 there would be some issues with cameras over that
16 particular location.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah.

18 CHIEF NELSON: But we don't monitor that.
19 That would be the NYPD, and maybe somebody from their
20 tower or [inaudible] can speak more...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: OK.

22 CHIEF NELSON: ...at length about, ah,
23 Jamaica Houses.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: David, do you have
25 anything on that?

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 93
2 CHIEF BARRERE: Yeah, I don't know, I
3 don't know if they've updated...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 CHIEF BARRERE: ...[inaudible]. I, I
6 have, ah, 260 cameras in South Jamaica and 10 in
7 Baisley. They're monitored 24/7 by police officers.
8 We have seven police officers. We have decentralized
9 all the VIPR units, which used to be, you know, all
10 of them. And now right within PSA 9, and we have a
11 satellite, ah, in PSA 9 for Queens North.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah.

13 CHIEF BARRERE: Ah, they're monitored by
14 police officers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: OK. OK, um, well,
16 you know, again, we've got a long way to go, um, you
17 know, with, with all of this, and as one of the
18 residents said, you know, with a lot of these
19 discussions and conversations it really seems like a
20 lot of times unfortunately we're spinning our wheels,
21 um, and, ah, I personally feel helpless, um, often
22 when it comes to wanting to do my very best for my
23 constituents, um, in the developments. But I'm gonna
24 keep on working on it and battering it away because
25 that's what we do and that's what we have to do. So

1 thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you for the
2 time.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,
5 Councilwoman Adams. Um, has NYCHA conducted, so
6 after the security, um, questions we are definitely
7 gonna move right into MAP. Um, has NYCHA conducted a
8 security assessment of their campuses? You know,
9 like VIPR cameras are here and, you know, this is,
10 you know, cameras that are not part of the, you know,
11 what PSA is monitoring and, um, you know, this is
12 where we need, you know, like new doors and here,
13 cameras here that are 10 years old and now we have to
14 get new cameras. So has there been a overall
15 security assessment?

16 CHIEF NELSON: Yes, ma'am. Ah, thank you
17 for that question. Yes, ah, we do assessment of all
18 of our portfolio, all of the buildings, all of the
19 developments, we're [inaudible] NYCHA. As well you
20 know, we have close to 300, ah, developments and
21 probably close to 2500, ah, buildings. So we're
22 unable to do all 2500 within a year. So we do it
23 biannually. Over, ah, a year's time we like to cover
24 at least half of our portfolio. We are down for the
25 COVID period, like everyone else, because we just

1
2 couldn't get out, get our teams out to do the
3 assessments. The assessment are things that we, we,
4 um, we look at elevator, ah, elevator machine rooms,
5 you know, that's an area where people, homeless, can
6 go up and stay, rooftops, stairwell entrances,
7 interior, exterior lightings, ah, doors, um, um,
8 maintenance areas, storage rooms, ah, cameras. We do
9 a complete assessment of all of those locations.
10 And, again, bear in mind that one development can
11 take three, three days, or one day. If you go to a
12 campus like, um, Wagner or Queensbridge that
13 assessment can take several days to be done. And in
14 conjunction with my team that does the assessment we
15 have, we have our partners from the management staff
16 to help us go out, help my crew teams go out and do
17 the assessments. Once the assessment is done the
18 document is prepared. We send it, ah, to the
19 management and also the borough level to show them
20 what, what deficiencies that we have found, and so
21 this way, ah, necessary corrections, if possible,
22 can, can be taken care of. Now it can be as simple
23 as a doorknob missing from the roof landing door to a
24 serious as the roof landing door off the hinges, or
25 the front door or rear door is not working properly,

1 or the storage area doesn't seem to be secured
2 enough, because we've had a recent burglary there.
3 So we do do assessments, ma'am.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, that's
5 good to know. Um, so I just want to run through
6 these questions real quick to...

7 CHIEF NELSON: Sure, ma'am.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...have the,
9 um, you know, as part of the, the hearing itself and
10 on the record. How many active security enhancement
11 projects are there within the NYCHA portfolio right
12 now? And I'm looking for the number of projects to
13 install CCTV cameras, the number of projects to
14 install layered access control, and the number of
15 projects to install temporary or permanent lighting
16 enhancements. And so, you know, we just asked a
17 question about the security assessment and since you
18 have all that information, um, you know, just want to
19 kind of get into just detail as to the active
20 security enhancement projects currently within your
21 portfolio. And Steven is trying to..

22 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Thank
23 you very much. Um, I can speak to that. Ah, there
24 are, it's roughly around, um, 50 million, ah, worth
25

1 of security projects. That's 25 CCTV programs, 10
2 layered access control, and 9 lighting enhancements,
3 and that's happening at around 40, um, sorry, 36
4 developments.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Please say it
7 one more time. Say it one more time.

8 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: So
9 there's about, ah, about 50.9, ah, \$50,944,209, to be
10 exact, at, at around 36 developments, where we're
11 installing 25 CCTV unit projects, 10 layered access
12 control projects, and nine, ah, lighting
13 enhancements.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And how many
15 developments have no security features at all? Like
16 right now at this very moment there are no security
17 features.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: I'll
19 hand that over...

20 CHIEF NELSON: I'll answer that. Thank
21 you for that question. All of our developments have
22 locked doors, have lighting, have, ah, ah, lighting
23 in the walkways. So we all, all of our facilities
24 [inaudible] in our portfolio have some sort of
25 security mechanism. But they may not have enhanced,

1 like the new LED lighting or the new, um, new camera
2 banks. But all, we have no open, no place where the
3 doors are nonexistent and the lights are nonexistent.
4 We all have, they all have security, ah, enhancements
5 now.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Um, Steven,
8 going back to the 50 million, ah, worth of security
9 projects, does that include the, um, grant that came
10 from HUD or what, or is this, um, DASNY money or a
11 combination of all? Can you break that down?

12 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: Yep.
13 Um, so the majority of that is City Council funding.
14 There are, I think, is one project in there that is a
15 SAM grant, which is a state grant from the Assembly
16 Member. Ah, that does not include the new HUD grant,
17 which, um, we're very fortunate to get and, again,
18 um, I think the, the HUD grant is an example where
19 we're looking at many, many different ways in which
20 to leverage funding. We just recently got a grant
21 from LNDC actually and it was for, ah, 12 million
22 dollars, where we were able to put in LED lighting
23 upgrades based on the MAP, ah, details and designs,
24 and those are all completed now, um, all done in the
25 lower Manhattan areas. And so I think the grant

1 illustrates, you know, it's never enough, right?
2 You, you need additional funding. The city has been
3 generous enough to outspend the federal government at
4 this point in time almost more than 3:1 and we really
5 do appreciate this administration and the council and
6 the borough presidents' support. Um, ah, but that
7 said we're also always reaching out and trying to
8 find new funding. I think, um, NYPD indicated that
9 we just got a new grant for the basketball courts and
10 I know that that's not CCTV, but it was an ability
11 for us to releverage, um, how we can get funds and to
12 bring that in, and we're going to be doing, you know,
13 15 of those courts and we're very fortunate to have
14 that, those funds to do that. But, um, that does
15 not, to answer your questions, that does not, those
16 do not include the grant because we haven't, we've,
17 we've received in terms of the agreement of the
18 grant, but we haven't received the funding for the
19 grant.
20

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. Thank you
22 for that. Thank you. Um, I know we are two hours in
23 to this, this oversight hearing right now, and we are
24 just getting to, um, MAP. And I, and I just want to,
25 just be clear that this conversation that we've had

1
2 so far, um, I think the next conversation that we're
3 gonna have with, ah, MOCJ around MAP will allow us to
4 see, you know, some, you know, possible solutions
5 with the pilot program and so, um, with that I want
6 to, um, with that I'm going to go into our MAP
7 conversation. But I want to preface that with saying
8 why are we having such increasing crime in public
9 housing when investments were made by the city and in
10 particular we have having increasing crime in
11 developments that are adjacent to MAP sites. And as
12 an example of what I'm saying Woodson Houses is
13 directly across the street from Van Dyke Houses, and
14 Van Dyke Houses is a MAP site. And so, um, I would
15 like to during this conversation, you know, keep that
16 as a, a backdrop of the conversation itself, um, and
17 put it into context because it'll be great to hear
18 all the amazing work that you're doing, um, but there
19 are also some concerns around, you know,
20 NeighborhoodStat and the conversations that you have
21 during NeighborhoodStat, which includes all of the
22 like community members and so if we are investing in
23 the MAP developments and sites but we're seeing
24 seniors murdered directly across the street from a
25 MAP site that raises concern for me. And so instead

1
2 of me interjecting when you're saying something, just
3 remember that that's in the back of my head. And so,
4 um, I just wanted to put that out there so we can
5 have, again, a real honest and productive
6 conversation. So how has COVID-19 affected MAP and
7 other crimes of prevention programs in NYCHA and what
8 agencies are involved in that? So we can start
9 there.

10 MARCO SOLER: Yes, thank you so much for
11 the opportunity to talk about MAP. Ah, I want to
12 start with framing the issue. As you know, for many
13 years the administration has spent, has invested
14 substantial amounts of money that has not, obviously,
15 as you indicated, prevented us from addressing the
16 problems of violence that we are experience in MAP,
17 in NYCHA, citywide, and also nationwide in terms of,
18 of murders, particular in gun violence. So we are
19 absolutely concerned about that. We see some
20 improvements there. We are not, never happy with the
21 current situation and we are trying to address it.
22 Particularly COVID had a very dramatic impact on our
23 program. It allowed us to run some of the key
24 elements of MAP. So MAP is not just about
25 infrastructure development, it's not about program

1
2 lights, it's not about infrastructure, it's not only
3 about access cameras layers or CCTV. The key element
4 of MAP is to be responsive to the concerns of the
5 citizens and to make sure that citizens are actually
6 the creators of public safety and we are not so
7 reliant on the police. So that was certainly one of
8 the elements that was the most impacted, our ability
9 to connect. So MAP was operating, was connecting
10 with the citizens. But we know certainly in two
11 areas that we have already mentioned and we saw areas
12 in which it was difficult to address the problems of
13 gun violence. Certainly in order to address the
14 problem of gun violence you needed cooperation and
15 the participation of the city [inaudible]. We need
16 people to come forward as a, certainly a, to testify,
17 etcetera. We, as, ah, NYCHA has indicated we have
18 seen some inability to move certain people as quickly
19 as in the past. We know quite often the shooter and
20 the victims are neighbors. That creates a lot of
21 problems. So certainly we want to, that is an area
22 where we have seen hamper our ability, our ability to
23 connect people, and our ability to move folks to
24 other areas. The second thing where we saw, ah, and
25 we are trying to address, and think the mayor has

1 addressed this and the administration is, we started
2 obviously with MAP as, you indicated at the same
3 time, in the, through the Office of Neighborhood
4 Safety. We also run our Cure Violence Prevention
5 Program. And what we are trying to do is to make
6 sure then there is greater levels of communication
7 between those two programs. Now they are [inaudible]
8 created on the, the leadership of Eric Cumberbatch
9 and the [inaudible] director from the Office of
10 Neighborhood Safety. And what we expect is to have a
11 full approach, citywide approach, that coordinates
12 the work that MAP is doing, which is, as I said
13 before, is not sufficient we think, the results of
14 [inaudible] is not sufficient, but also the amounts
15 of, eh, good work than the Cure Violence, eh, folks
16 have been doing. That's why the mayor, obviously,
17 eh, provided [inaudible] the funding for Cure
18 Violence and it's also launching this joint force to
19 end gun violence. It's going to be the central
20 focus. So although MAP, ah, itself is not assigned
21 to end violence, because obviously that is where the
22 police [inaudible], you know, to address issues of
23 enforcement is the police, is a non-enforcement
24 approach to violence and we are most dedicated to
25

1 figure out new ways to, to do it in this year. We
2 see some, honestly I would say we've seen as some
3 signs some things are restoring, at least in our MAP
4 sites. There are two indicators I can you, if you
5 have a moment, is when we see, for instance, murders
6 are down right now in, in MAP, eh, shootings are
7 even, and the second we track very quick, eh, in all
8 the developments and the 50 sites, we track the
9 number of weeks in which we don't have a shooting,
10 and we have, during the, last year, during the summer
11 and the fall that's, those numbers were terrible.
12 Right now we have at least seven, eight sites that
13 haven't seen a shooting since October or November. I
14 can, so we are trying to figure out ways to look at
15 what we are doing in those sites in cooperation with
16 multiple agencies to figure out how to expand if we
17 have [inaudible]. I'm sorry, to the additional sites
18 [inaudible].
19 [inaudible].

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, you just
21 [inaudible] the MAP [inaudible]. Where has MAP
22 struggled? Like where have you struggled, and then
23 compare that to where have you been able to succeed,
24 um, so that, you know, and, and, and put that in the
25 backdrop of as you are planning to expand or be able

1
2 to use the lessons learned, um, from this model
3 program to, you know, other developments. So, you
4 know, just, what are some...

5 MARCO SOLER: I can tell, I, I can tell
6 you where we are, we think. We are struggling right
7 now and also where we are seeing some, eh, signs of
8 improvements. So, for instance, I would say
9 certainly St. Nichols, Van Dyke, Waukner,
10 [inaudible], Patterson, Queensbridge, and Red Hook.
11 They're all areas where we have had shootings in the
12 last, eh, 15 weeks. Those are our areas that we
13 monitoring very, very closely to identify what are
14 the patterns that are driving there. As the chief
15 explained, are they gang-related [inaudible], eh,
16 measures are not working as effectively as
17 [inaudible], it's an issue of the ability and the
18 need to provide, eh, to help the victims and provide
19 greater victims' assistance. We see, however, other
20 areas where we are identifying, eh, improvements,
21 whether it is in Brownsville, or instance. We
22 haven't seen a shooting for 27 weeks [inaudible]
23 Boulevard [inaudible] weeks, eh, Stapleton, 33 weeks.
24 Um, and then one particular site is 49 weeks. So we
25 see some areas where we think that some of the things

1
2 that we are doing, they are, probably are going to be
3 applicable to it. But, again, I want to emphasize
4 the purpose of MAP is not just, it's not to prevent
5 crime, but to address root causes that are driving
6 crime. We are not a crime prevention strategy in
7 the, in the sense, in an enforcement sense. We are
8 addressing those kind of things that we think
9 ultimately are leading to, eh, greater levels of
10 crime. So we need to connect people. As I said, we
11 need to be responsive. We need to make sure that
12 people see government as a partner in this process.
13 Those are the kind of things that MAP needs to do.
14 We need to do greater levels of outreach. We need to
15 do more work, obviously, in community centers. We
16 need to do more work certainly in outreach to youth,
17 and outreach to domestic violence, eh, victims,
18 etcetera, in order to have a much more fuller,
19 robust, eh, strategy that improves those particular
20 sites.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So I have a
22 question related to that. Um, how long has MAP been
23 in existence?

24 MARCO SOLER: MAP has been in existence
25 since, eh, the summer of 2014.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: 2000, the
3 summer of 2014.

4 MARCO SOLER: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Right, and so
6 let's take out 2020, we'll just move 2020. So that
7 would be five years [inaudible], five years, right?
8 So that would be five years of working with
9 community, working with crisis management system,
10 cure violence organizations, working with young
11 people, residents, resident leaders, working with
12 NYPD who research, analyze crime data, prevention,
13 everything. So all of these folks at the table over
14 the course of five years, at what point, um, can you
15 say that it's a, um, you know, a program that should
16 be, ah, escalated or expanded to other developments?
17 I mean, can you, can you say that you have been able
18 to reach a point by, you know, either studies and
19 think tanks and lessons learned, um, and this is what
20 we need to do to, to prevent crime and really address
21 crime in NYCHA developments and campuses, um, because
22 I think you have like some amazing people at the
23 table, so I'm just trying to figure out where's the,
24 still that why, like [inaudible] why we're still
25 seeing crime?

1
2 MARCO SOLER: So if I may, I will address
3 that, eh, [inaudible] requesting communicators which
4 I think might be relevant for this conversation. So
5 what we have done is we, ah, if through an
6 independent evaluation we have looked at MAP sites to
7 talk about what is the level of collective efficiency
8 that we see in those areas, what is the level of
9 cohesion, partnership with government, etcetera, and
10 what we see, for instance, in every MAP, eh,
11 developments through the surveys that we have
12 conducted is that brings people closer to government
13 and to create these strong neighborhoods. That is
14 what five years of MAP has done. So for instance,
15 summer youth employment in MAP sites compared to non-
16 map sites is a 30% greater acknowledgement of the
17 Summer Youth Employment Program is, not just as a
18 strategy in order to be, eh, to improve obviously the
19 lives of folks [inaudible] summer. We know that the
20 Summer Youth Employment Program reduces mortality,
21 reduces crime, reduces incarceration, reduces murder
22 rates in the, in the long term. So connecting people
23 to something as important as the summer youth program
24 is, is a big difference, 10 points higher than
25 comparable sites. The same thing with athletic

1 leagues, the same thing with Shape Up New York.
2 Every program that we evaluated on the ability of, of
3 MAP to connect to people, we saw the MAP sites have
4 performed better than similar situated, eh, NYCHA
5 sites. So that is on our goal, again, to connect
6 people to services, to connect people to government,
7 to create a strong [inaudible]. Eh, there is a very
8 powerful indicator, in my opinion, which is, eh, and
9 some folks are catching on this, on the ability, for
10 instance, on how willing you are to help your
11 neighbor, and what we see is that one of the big
12 differentiators of crime in the city is whether in
13 the neighborhoods where we see that people are more
14 willing to help their neighbors and to have the sense
15 of a strong community are more, eh, handle much
16 better the increasing amount of violence and, and,
17 um, other areas of crime than we have seen. So we
18 certainly, that's we strive to and aspire in MAP and
19 I think that's the way to do it. The second thing
20 is, as I said to you before, we have also done, eh,
21 thorough statistical analysis, not just in our
22 office, with outside partners from John Jay College,
23 etcetera, who have conducted evaluations and over
24 long term they have seen that, again, MAP has
25

1 outperformed other sites. I think the chief referred
2 also to some of those gains how, over time. Yes, I
3 acknowledge and I will admit 2020 has been, as I
4 said, difficult [inaudible], etcetera. So I, I am
5 not in a position, obviously, to say whether or not
6 should [inaudible], this is obviously, eh, for other
7 folks to make those decisions. But I want to stress
8 that we, from our perspective, what we see is we have
9 the indicators and the goals and the targets that we
10 have set I think we are [inaudible] with the programs
11 that we are facing, of course, and we also think that
12 as a model, this neighbor, for instance, a key
13 ingredient aspect of our work, which is neighborhood
14 is that bringing together multiple precedents with
15 city agencies to be responsive. It's a model that we
16 see now being adopted in many other cities around the
17 country, because the idea that you will [inaudible]
18 city residents, eh, in a place and as city agencies
19 like ours to be responsive to what the citizens what,
20 not just what the city agencies want, I think is
21 crucial. It's the future. It's the way in which
22 could produce safety.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So since you
25 mentioned NeighborhoodStat, and, and just for the

1
2 record NeighborhoodStat groups, um, consist of
3 residents, community-based organizations, city
4 agencies. They meet quarterly to identify emerging
5 issues, ensure resident voices are heard, develop
6 solutions, and track how effectively MAP programs and
7 initiatives are resulting in crime reduction, right?

8 MARCO SOLER: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, um, what
10 type of information is collected during the, the
11 NeighborhoodStat meetings and how does MAP analyze
12 that data that is collected?

13 MARCO SOLER: So let me first address,
14 eh, NeighborhoodStat is not just a MOCJ initiative,
15 as I said it's, we bring, there are a number of
16 agencies in addition to NYCHA and the police
17 department, there are members from Parks, Education,
18 the Department of Youth, DOP, the Office to End, eh,
19 Gun Violence, sorry, to end domestic violence, and
20 others who are partners in this process as needed,
21 right? And they are run through and often in
22 coordination with the Center for Court Innovation.
23 Eh, the kind of information that our, we are looking
24 to connect is, eh, in those neighborhoods it's not
25 just the traditional data which we have, obviously,

1 on, you know, eh, whether or not, eh, you know, what
2 crimes are up and down. We are trying to connect the
3 kind of information that you were asking NYCHA, is
4 our we picking up the garbage and why do you think
5 that is an impact on creating corners that are not
6 working efficiently and where people are congregating
7 to, in order to do crime. Are we, eh, do we have
8 cameras that work or not? Do we have, are lights too
9 strong, too problematic? We invested, as you know,
10 eh, in those infrastructure that I mentioned, those
11 200 million dollars and the administration, we
12 [inaudible] wanted to invest in those, we want to
13 hear what citizens and residents think of that. They
14 often tell us, do you know, we think the lights are
15 too bright, not too bright, within the brights, eh,
16 are a problem. Sometimes what they will tells is as
17 you have said. Sometimes there is a displacement
18 effect. Eh, you have crime in one area and you have
19 good lights in some area, you displace crime to other
20 areas. How are we addressing that displacement of
21 crime? And, and certainly some of the concerns they
22 may have certainly with our partners, particularly
23 law enforcement, and Chief Barrere knows very well
24 about this, you know, [inaudible] us to are we doing
25

1 verticals when we are not doing verticals. Are we
2 safe in the summer, would, eh, are, do we have
3 enough, eh, stability. So that's a kind of
4 information. I'm certainly happy to provide more
5 information about the program to your office if
6 needed. I know you know very well about the program,
7 particularly the council members. But, eh, the
8 executive director for MAP can certainly reach and
9 provide additional information about what happens in
10 those meetings and what is the, all the different
11 kind of indicators that we collect. One of the
12 things that finally I would say is we are trying to
13 create internally, and we have been working in, with
14 partners in academia for a bit to create a strong
15 sentiment meter of what the community perceives.
16 This kind of surveys can very openly tell us what
17 people think and how that connects, as I said to you
18 before, with perceptions of crime. So, for instance,
19 we want to know whether people are aware of social
20 support. We want to know whether they perceive the
21 government to be competent. We want to know whether
22 they perceive levels of social cohesion, their
23 willingness to engage in, with government, and some
24 sort of perception of things the government is acting
25

1
2 in an efficient way. These are all things that we do
3 during those NeighborhoodStats and, again, some
4 evaluations have indicated, for instance, that crime
5 has declined and is correlated with more positive
6 perceptions than residents have about their
7 capacities, their abilities, the community
8 conditions, and their ability to, to have a
9 government that is responsive to those needs. MAP is
10 all about that, and NeighborhoodStat meetings are all
11 about bringing, making the resident the centerpiece
12 of government action.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Were you able
14 to meet at all during the pandemic?

15 MARCO SOLER: Pardon me?

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Were you able
17 to meet at all during the pandemic?

18 MARCO SOLER: Eh, my understanding that
19 we have been much more limited in that. I will
20 confirm. I don't want to provide, ah, I, I believe
21 we did a, as you know, a summit, but I am not sure
22 whether or not we were able to meet regularly during
23 the pandemic. I'll get the answer to your question
24 and I'll ask the question right away and I'll provide
25 your answer.

1
2 CHIEF BARRERE: Dr. Soler, we did have a
3 NeighborhoodStat, so we are a participating agency,
4 so the one, there was one, ah, conducted just
5 recently. I'm going to say within the last month,
6 sir, so.

7 MARCO SOLER: Sorry. I, I am being
8 confirmed that yes, we were able to meet during the
9 pandemic, my team has confirmed that.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, OK, OK.

11 MARCO SOLER: The meetings were virtual
12 and we all know that in a virtual meeting, as, as
13 this hearing, you know, that's, you know, does not
14 connect people in the same way and we, and the
15 program which is about connecting people certainly we
16 would prefer not to have virtual meetings. But, eh,
17 virtual meetings are still better than no meetings.
18 We provided also the residents with the technology to
19 participate, which as you know is essential. One of
20 the elements here is, is that we just need to make
21 sure that people, eh, can participating and approach
22 government and oftentimes that's a big problem, and
23 we don't, we do not have the tools to make sure that
24 residents get us all the feedback, and the pandemic
25 has just exacerbated, eh, the problem.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Um, so going
3 back to the question that I alluded to, ah, when I
4 started the MAP discussion, um, critics of MAP would
5 argue that crime can occur in a development across
6 the street from a MAP site and not get the same
7 attention, money, or resources. Um, have the
8 NeighborhoodStat groups identified this as an
9 emerging issue and would they be able to use any
10 resources for MAP to address that particular problem?
11 So my question is like has this come up during an
12 actually NeighborhoodStat meeting in conversation and
13 during the pandemic, you know, where the, you know,
14 were there issues that came up around this is what we
15 should be doing around like gang violence and the
16 increase in shooting, because there are so many young
17 people that, you know, attend those meetings, in
18 particular Brownsville Houses and, and Van Dyke.

19 MARCO SOLER: So, ah, what I can tell you
20 is one thing for sure. This is an issue that we are
21 aware of. This issue of the displacement of crime,
22 as was mentioned before, is not something new. I,
23 my, we are certainly concerned about that,
24 particularly, as you said, particularly with regards
25 to connection to the youth, which is why I stated

1 before my view is that we need a greater level of
2 integration between the work that we do in those
3 neighborhoods and, eh, sorry, the MAP sites with the
4 work that we do and see in the sites. As, as you
5 know, we have right now 15 sites, eh, in MAP. We
6 have 29 sites in CMS and what we see often is they
7 are connected. So they are not, MAP isn't one place,
8 but Woodson has actually a CMS group working there.
9 So how to figure out better ways to integrate.
10 That's a challenge for us. We want to do better.
11 This is why we have, we have organized this around
12 the Office of Neighborhood Safety. We know that's an
13 area where we can do better, eh, and try to have
14 greater, eh, greater levels of synergy between our
15 teams and figure out better ways, again, without
16 losing the specificity of the two different offices,
17 the MAP office and the Office to Prevent Gun
18 Violence, ways to listen better to what the concerns
19 are of, of the neighborhoods, and ultimately to bring
20 that to the attention of the police department, eh,
21 which is the one partner who can help us in some
22 instances when that happens, eh, to increase
23 enforcement, etcetera. I think that is absolutely
24 important. We can, you know, eh, we can never
25

1
2 exclude the need. We are concerned, obviously, about
3 over-enforcement, but we are equally concerned about
4 dynamics of under-enforcement that ultimately, eh,
5 [inaudible] big programs in a particular community.

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Have you seen
7 a drop at all in youth participation?

8 MARCO SOLER: Eh, I, I will, I think that
9 some of the numbers that I saw indicate yes, some,
10 eh, a drop in youth participate, I saw, for instance,
11 in the numbers in, so it's not fully, but for
12 instance in the numbers regarding the participation
13 in the summer youth employment, eh, the numbers were,
14 I believe, higher. I will confirm the exact number.
15 Ah, I believe, however, in other areas we might have
16 seen some decrease in youth. So, eh, for instance
17 specifically, eh, MAP achieved the highest number of
18 summer youth employment placement levels of all NYCHA
19 developments. Eh, we have, eh, more than 23 summer
20 youth employment applicants, more than 14,000
21 enrollees, eh, during the summer of 2020. Eh, we saw
22 about, that, that was for the entire program. We saw
23 about 1832 youth enroll in the program. I will
24 confirm whether or not that was a decrease with
25 regards to the previous year. But certainly we have,

1 that's an area where we know, again, we [inaudible],
2 eh, juvenile work and try to figure out ways to
3 increase. Eh, we, eh, there are some limitations.
4 There are less employment opportunities, as you know.
5 There are less opportunities for connection, and I
6 will provide to your office a much more robust
7 answer, not just about the summer youth employment,
8 but also across other strategies, for instance our
9 work with the Police Athletic League and the
10 partnership that we do there, right, where we have
11 seen fewer, where we also see, for instance, I will
12 try to get you with regards to the community centers.
13 As you know, we fund the expansion of hours of
14 community, eh, community centers, etcetera. I, I
15 will get you the numbers and what were the number of
16 people who were able to attend and not to attend to
17 community centers.
18

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So a question.

20 How much do you think is the gap right now on the
21 amount of funding we need to have the necessary crime
22 prevention programs and all of the correct
23 surveillance strategies we need to be more effective
24 in reducing crime in NYCHA? Is there a number that
25 you can put to it based on what you've been seeing?

1
2 MARCO SOLER: I'm sorry, I, I cannot put
3 a number for you. What I can tell you is what I
4 mentioned before, eh, I think, the, the
5 administration announcement of the joint task, ah,
6 the joint force to end gun violence and the doubling
7 certainly of the CMS work site is a continuing
8 commitment of the administration to fight and to deal
9 directly with the issue of, eh, gun violence as the
10 top priority along obviously fighting COVID. So I do
11 not have, I want to see obviously how those programs
12 work before telling you I see a gap. What I can tell
13 you is, eh, and this is very, again, beginning of the
14 year, what I can tell you is that some of the
15 dynamics that we start to see in New York City are
16 very different than what we saw last year and
17 certainly very different from what we saw or we have
18 seen national, nationwide, and so my expectations is
19 that I will be able, we will be able to give you a
20 much greater, you know, much accurate assessment of
21 your question once we see how these programs that we
22 are launching work and certainly how, you know, the
23 dynamics that we are seeing on the ground right now,
24 including the fact that for instance gun enforcement
25 has increased by almost 100% in the last, eh, six

1 months. Ultimately it results in how we need to
2 adjust our strategies. But I, unfortunately I cannot
3 come up right now with a number. But I can promise
4 and I will connect with your office and follow up
5 with you to try to better address your question.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. That
8 would be helpful because as we are going through the
9 budget process now and, you know, of course I'm not
10 talking about capital, just looking at, um, operation
11 [inaudible], um, and being to, to fund, um,
12 programmatic initiatives it would be really good to
13 know what it is that we are, um, fighting for and
14 advocating for, you know, so...

15 MARCO SOLER: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: ...[inaudible]
17 talk about the question of expansion without knowing,
18 you know, what it is, um, happening [inaudible] now
19 and what's the need now.

20 MARCO SOLER: And I, I understand fully,
21 and what I meant is I don't want to give here a
22 number, then if, I want this to be a well-thought
23 process. I hope you understand that...

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I appreciate
25 that.

2 MARCO SOLER: ...[inaudible] process.

3 And, ah, not to come up with a number in which later
4 I will have to say I apologize, eh, I misspoke.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK.

6 MARCO SOLER: So [inaudible] commitment
7 is to follow up with your office to make sure that we
8 give you that number.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, I
10 appreciate that. Um, and just tracking time, I'm
11 just gonna, um, blow through the rest of our
12 questions.

13 MARCO SOLER: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Um, 'cause I
15 know we have other residents that chimed in late and,
16 ah, would like to testify. Um, so are all NYCHA
17 developments currently staffed with, with a security
18 guard, senior development buildings, or other
19 development buildings that are not [inaudible].

20 CHIEF NELSON: The only, thank you for
21 that question, ma'am. The only, ah, developments
22 that are staffed with security guards are the senior
23 citizens and we have 38 senior citizen developments
24 and nine senior citizen, ah, buildings that are
25 dedicated to that. We have a population of 67,000-

1 plus, um, seniors and we provide security for a
2 eight-hour period, ah, normally during a busy time or
3 a time that was designated by the residents and the
4 management when they need, they think that a security
5 guard is needed.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So what would
8 that be? Like can you give us, so each development
9 has a different [inaudible]?

10 CHIEF NELSON: Yes, we've, ah, I've,
11 normally it's like a late tour. It could be 8 to 4
12 in the morning or 12 to 8 in the morning, but I had a
13 development, a senior citizens building, forget the
14 name, but it's some place in Bed-Sty, where they said
15 they have a lot of activity during the day and they
16 would like their security guard changed, ah, to work,
17 ah, I think a 9 to 5 or a 10 to 6, and I granted
18 that.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And how many
20 security guards per building?

21 CHIEF NELSON: Only one per building.

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, um, so one
23 security guard per building, ah, for an eight-hour
24 shift. So, um, when they have to leave who, who
25 steps in?

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CHIEF NELSON: No one replaces them. They're only there for that eight-hour period and we try to make a determination when is the best, what is the best eight-hour period during the 24 hours that they would be there, ma'am. Ah, and there's no replacement, except for, you know, at Woodson, you know, unfortunately since that tragic and our heart goes out, ah, we provide it 24/7.

CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So because of that tragedy and, um, seeing the increase in crime across the city is there a plan at all to increase, um, security to 24 hours at all senior buildings?

CHIEF NELSON: Um, I don't, excellent question ma'am. But I know I wouldn't have the budget for that. Our budget that we have right now would not cover for, ah, 24/7 on security guards at all those, ah, those buildings, ma'am.

CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And are the security guards connected at all, um, with NYPD in any sense? Are, do they have access to the cameras? Is there a monitor at the desk in any of the buildings so that they can monitor the cameras while they are, um?

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2 CHIEF NELSON: That's an excellent
3 question. I would have to get back to you because
4 each senior citizen development is somewhat
5 different, especially those that stand alone within a
6 development. I'm not sure. Some of, most of them
7 were just in the lobbies so when someone comes in
8 they sign them in. If there's an issue they're the
9 first one to dial 911. They check in with our
10 security base at, ah, at NYCHA, ah, on different
11 issues. So I don't want to say that they're not
12 monitoring the cameras. I would have to look at that
13 and get back to you on that, ma'am.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, all right.
15 Um, and I, I can say that I was, um, someone sent me
16 a video of security in one our NYCHA developments,
17 one of our senior buildings, and the security
18 guaranteed was asleep and they had to, you know, like
19 shock him and he was startled and, and woke up.

20 CHIEF NELSON: When we get calls like, we
21 get calls like that, ma'am. It happens. We get
22 calls like that, immediately we notify our contractor
23 that we no longer want the services of this
24 particular individual and we have it, we have them
25 removed.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. All
3 right. And so I just have a few more questions. Um,
4 and this is for the record. I need to ask them. Um,
5 we touched on it, but we want to take in a concrete
6 answer. Um, what percentage of NYCHA buildings have
7 doors that lock on the main entrances of the
8 buildings?

9 CHIEF NELSON: I, I think I answered
10 that, ma'am. All of our, ah, buildings, ah, have
11 locks on them. Um, it's not like it's an open campus
12 that you can just walk in without, ah, using a
13 doorway to come in.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, and so of
15 all the doors that have a lock, how many of them, um,
16 have a broken lock right now?

17 CHIEF NELSON: I, we have 5600, ah, work
18 orders out right now for doors. But that sounds like
19 a lot, but it can be, it can be for a missing
20 doorknob, a broken pane, a door that's ajar and won't
21 close properly. It doesn't, that doesn't necessarily
22 mean that all those doors are actually not
23 functioning. That's the, that's the amount of work
24 orders that we have at this time, ma'am.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, and what
3 can be done to reduce incidences of, um, lock
4 vandalism and individual residents forcing doors
5 open, as well as the FDNY, and I know that Steven
6 [laughs].

7 CHIEF NELSON: Well, the FDNY, I'll, ah,
8 thank you for that question. I'll tackle that one
9 first. Ah, especially for our key fobs, because
10 those are the doors that cost the most money,
11 whenever key fobs are, are done, ah, ah, the late
12 access is done and we issue key fobs to, ah, all of
13 our residents that live there. Also, the local
14 precinct and NCOs, and also the Fire Department. We
15 have to maintain and make sure that everyone is using
16 it properly. Unfortunately, sometimes in the Fire
17 Department when there's, ah, overturn in, in
18 personnel at a firehouse, ah, you the know the
19 firemen, if there's an emergency, they're going to
20 take the door. Ah, I've had several meetings up in
21 the Polo Grounds on that with a battalion chief,
22 myself, ah, um, ah, to discuss it and the condition
23 is corrected until it happens again a little while
24 later. Ah, as far as the, ah, doors being jimmied,
25 the doors being [inaudible] takes over the magnetic,

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2 ah, the doors having stones put in so you can't shut
3 them properly, that's something that we have to work
4 very closely with our resident heads, our resident
5 [inaudible], for the residents within NYCHA to take
6 ownership and realize that the doors should be shut
7 behind them and not jimmed so that the doors will be
8 left open. Um, we see a lot of that. I can tell you
9 times that me and [inaudible] or me and Vito have the
10 tours and the first thing we're doing in a building
11 is ripping the tape off the magnets so the door will
12 stay open. And by the time we come back downstairs
13 the door is jimmed again. That's an issue that
14 we'll have to work closely with our residents to take
15 ownership within their developments for these type of
16 things to stop, this type of behavior to stop.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Madam?

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: One second,
19 I'm speaking, before you go from your, your script.
20 So, um, I have a development, RD Brown, um, where
21 their lock has been broken for a year. And we've
22 been going back and forth about this for a year. and
23 the battle has been there's only one lock vendor, um,
24 who was not able to cut keys, and NYCHA knows all
25 about this, and because of that the residents don't

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2 have keys and there's a struggle with the door being
3 closed and then the door being opened because no one
4 has keys, and there's a battle of the blame between
5 the intercom vendor and Verizon because there's a
6 problem with the door lock itself and the key and
7 then the intercom also not working in the senior
8 development, and this has been a battle for the past
9 year and I know my office, you know, we've, we've
10 just [inaudible]. I know Council Member Adams talked
11 about feeling helpless. We've, this has just been
12 ridiculous.

13 CHIEF NELSON: I, I would defer to my
14 partner, um, my partner in that, Steve, because he
15 has some issues that pertains specifically to doors
16 and trying to reinstalling.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Yeah, yeah.

18 CHIEF NELSON: Steve, if you may, please.

19 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT LOVCI: And, ah,
20 thank you very much, Chief Nelson. Um, Madam Chair,
21 thank you. I will be very brief on this 'cause I, I
22 know I'm long-winded, um, and we can, we can brief
23 the, the group on this, ah, outside of this. But,
24 um, you know, back in 2019 we had this exact same
25 conversation and touring the, the developments,

1 speaking with our leaders, ah, speaking with the
2 residents, um, we recognize, and I think everyone can
3 recognize this, the doors are outdated. The design
4 standards of those are back in the late 1990s, early
5 2000s. They're heavy, they're expensive, and they're
6 even more expensive to repair. And so we've created,
7 um, a pilot program which we've been working with the
8 C copious who generously nominated a number of
9 residents to be part of a resident group that we
10 started from the very, very beginning and inception
11 of this program and we're moving it through. This
12 summer we're going to be installing the pilot program
13 at three developments and this is about creating a
14 new entry standard that's easily replaceable due to
15 the standard parts being available and easy to
16 purchase. And so that way if a lock breaks you don't
17 have to worry about the two or three vendors that,
18 that can do this. A frame breaks or another piece of
19 the hardware breaks we can go out and get those parts
20 and they can be accessible and, and less expensive to
21 install. We recognize there is going to be
22 vandalism. We recognize that they're going to get
23 damaged. But we want to make sure that there's an
24 industry standard there that we don't have to go out
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2 to one or two manufacturers to get this. Um, and
3 then the cool part to this is it's not one-size-fits-
4 all. We recognizes that there are different and have
5 different needs. A senior building, it might be a
6 low rise, only has a handful of individuals of going
7 and out that door. The door is seeing less usage
8 than a family building that might be a high rise,
9 lots of usage of people going in and out. Getting
10 back to the intercom and the layered access control,
11 um, Greg and I have been out there and we've been
12 looking at this and one, one of the, ah, examples
13 that we're going to have built out is the ability to
14 get away from the hard-line wiring, that argument
15 between the, ah, the telephone company and the
16 intercom company, as you've said, that we get stuck
17 in the middle of. And so maybe we can do wireless.
18 It's, it's already in the system that we have. Um,
19 not only does it do wireless, but then you can
20 actually see the person on your phone. So when
21 you're buzzed in that intercom, ah, you can identify
22 that person and say, yes, I know who that delivery
23 person is or that friend or that acquaintance. They
24 can come in, or no, I don't who this person is and
25 I'm not going to allow them or buzz them in. I think

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2 that's going to slow down or, or, you know, the fact
3 is, it's gonna stop putting the tape on the locks
4 and, and hopefully, um, making the, the entrances
5 more secure. So, anyway, we've put the funding
6 together for that and really that comes out of the
7 conversations with this committee and, um, this
8 summer we're gonna be installing the three. Ah, we
9 have the stakeholder engagement as well as the
10 resident group that is going to be participating and
11 we would love to have as many council members out
12 there to look at the, the door, and, ah, the doors
13 and the intercoms and layered access to make sure
14 that, that we're doing what, what's best for the
15 residents, um, what's best for the taxpayers, and,
16 and really creating a new, secure system.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you, I
18 appreciate that, um, especially with making sure that
19 you are working directly with, um, the resident
20 leaders in order to come up with the best way
21 forward. So I, I, um, that's, that's helpful and
22 that's a helpful, um, solution. Um, so I, I'm
23 [inaudible] my questions. I think that it is,
24 everyone, for my questions, and I want to make sure
25 that there are no longer, we're, we're going to go

1
2 back to you, Ms. McFarland [laughs]. I know you're
3 ready. Um, I want to make sure there are no other
4 questions from my colleagues. That's it for me,
5 Audrey, with my, um, questions for the administration
6 at this time.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you so much, Chair, I
9 appreciate it, thanks.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thanks so much
11 everyone. Um, I'm sure you're going to stay longer
12 and to listen to the residents and the, ah, public.
13 But I, I do, um, thank you for your testimony and I
14 do look forward to, um, to working [inaudible] with
15 you to make sure that, um, our developments are safe.
16 And, um, Chief Barrere, I look forward to walking
17 through NYCHA with you as well.

18 MARCO SOLER: Thank you so much.

19 CHIEF BARRERE: Thank you, madam.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And Audrey,
21 can you just give me one minute.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I'll be right
24 back.

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING 134
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you again for
3 your patience. In the meantime, just so that members
4 of the public who are, ah, planning to testify are
5 prepared. We will first hear from Beverly McFarland,
6 followed by Carmen Quinones.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK, I'm back.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, we will now
9 receive testimony from Beverly McFarland, followed by
10 Carmen Quinones.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 BEVERLY MCFARLAND: Am I unmuted? Do you
13 hear me now?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we can hear you.

15 BEVERLY MCFARLAND: OK. Um, good
16 afternoon. Thank you, um, Madam Chair. And I also
17 would like to thank Diana Ayala for, um, giving, ah,
18 our resident leaders the information about today's
19 meeting. We had no knowledge of today's meeting, so
20 I thank her for giving us the information and a
21 couple [inaudible] also. Um, and I'm the resident
22 association, well, a resident council president for
23 Taft Houses, um, East Harlem. And in, we are under
24 the Local 11 scaffolding, um, and since then we have
25 had an uptick in crime, um, in the last two months

1
2 actually. We had one in the same building, same
3 apartment. Um, we had two homicides in that same
4 apartment, um, the apartment is still open, um, from
5 drug-relating, um, incidents. We have shootings
6 between my development and King Towers, and we have
7 shootings on in Taft. We had, ah, ah, the latest is
8 a molestation of an 8-year-old and, um, is a uptick
9 in homelessness in all the buildings and graffiti. I
10 don't know if it's, um, gang-related graffiti, but it
11 just seems like a real uptick in the graffiti. So,
12 um, I heard y'all talk about the MAP program. Ah,
13 and we are gonna be affected, we in Taft. So the MAP
14 program is giving lighting to Johnson and Jefferson,
15 which is right directly across the street from one
16 block, one block, oh, away from Johnson. So when
17 they get their lighting I believe we gonna have
18 issues over here. Um, and then King is right next to
19 us. So we have a five-block radius of housing
20 development here...

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 BEVERLY MCFARLAND: ...in East Harlem that
23 will be affected. Um, so I believe that we do need
24 the lighting, lighting, and the, the scaffolding is,
25 um, blocking the, the cameras, ah, and we just, we

1 here at Taft, I don't know. We don't have anything
2 for anything for any, any safety and security. This
3 is the first I'm even hearing that NYCHA have a
4 safety and security department that we can speak to,
5 because no one reached out to me as a resident leader
6 in terms of, um, all the things that are happening in
7 Taft. So if I'm not calling my council members, ah,
8 we, you know, like our voices are not heard. And we
9 try to sit with the resident management, um, and it
10 just seems like it's falling on deaf ears. I have to
11 reach out to PSA 5 in order for them to forward these
12 police reports to Housing in order to get some of
13 these things done, because NYCHA is saying that they
14 can't obtain the, um, the reports, and, and then, ah,
15 PSA 5 is saying they can't give the reports. So
16 where, where, what are we left to do? Um, so we want
17 to make sure, this is quality of life issues that's
18 going on and it's affecting all the developments, you
19 know? We have so many, um, ah, and here in, in Taft
20 I have nine buildings, over 1500 residents, we don't
21 have a basketball court or we don't have a community
22 center. So where are our children to go? What are
23 our childrens gonna do? And everything is so
24 territorial. Um, my children from Taft can't go to
25

1 King. They can't go to Johnson, because everything
2 is so territorial. But we have nothing here, and I
3 have expressed to the leadership in NYCHA and, and
4 this have fell on deaf ears. I have reached out to,
5 um, you know, Diana Ayala have been doing the best
6 she can, but she can't build, ah, a basketball court
7 and the community center. Robert Rodriguez, I, I
8 reach to all my city, um, council presidents, I mean
9 my city officials, local officials, and to no avail.
10 So we are really in desperate need here in Taft
11 Houses for any, you know, I just want someone to
12 advise moving forward what are we to do as NYCHA
13 residents? These doors don't, the, the, the doors
14 are not locked. We don't have, it's the same thing
15 everyone else was saying. I don't want to repeat
16 myself. But we are really in desperate need here at
17 Taft, Senator Robert E. Taft Houses. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
20 much, Ms. McFarland. Um, I appreciate that note.
21 Before I ask a question I'll wait. I know Ms.
22 Quinones is on, too, so.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll
24 next hear from Carmen Quinones, followed by...

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 CARMEN QUINONES: First of all, good
3 afternoon. Ah, I've been here all morning. I've
4 heard everything. Ah, Alicka Samuels, you know you
5 rock. Um, ah, there's, there's, there's a few issues
6 that I really want to touch on, um, and it's that
7 scaffolding. That scaffolding here in Douglas
8 Houses, I'm telling you, we look like we're in a, ah,
9 we look like we in jail. Ah, the lighting is kind of
10 poor. Ah, we also have our, ah, our cameras are
11 being hidden. Um, I've asked for them to be removed,
12 to no avail. Ah, Chief, ah, Chief, ah, I have not
13 had the honor of meeting you, um, but, um, I would
14 love for you to come towards Douglas. You haven't
15 been here yet. Ah, this is for, ah, Chief Nelson.
16 Um, I am working closely with the 24th Precinct and
17 our PSA. I even got them, made sure that they all
18 have keys to every building. Ah, they also helped me
19 out, ah, they volunteer. They bring in, ah, our
20 explorers, ah, 'cause I give out food on, on
21 Thursday. Um, the first, the second Thursday and the
22 fourth Thursday we give out 8500 pounds of food. Um,
23 and our precinct is very involved with it. We still
24 have, though, broken doors. And, again, I, I, you
25 know, they fix the doors. Our [inaudible] is the, is

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2 the people that come in the buildings, it's the
3 residents, they, they, they, they just vandalize
4 these doors. If we can get somehow to get them to
5 stop breaking these doors, because that money could
6 be used for something else. So I want to, you know,
7 I want to, the same way I company, I know, I know a
8 lot of what it is. But my biggest thing is the
9 homeless numbers.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 CARMEN QUINONES: The homelessness, ah,
12 is really rumping ragged, ah, running ragged,
13 especially in our development. We are and, and,
14 again, a lot of the mental illness, we have tenants
15 with mental illness that have a neighbor right down
16 the hall and the son, you could tell he's not right
17 in the head. And he stands out there, waits for
18 people to come out, um, you know, and he harasses
19 them. And we have a lot of them in these buildings.
20 Um, and I, I, I've complained to the management, and
21 this was so much management can do, 'cause they are
22 residents. We need to bring back the moderation
23 committee, where we used to, um, we used to actually
24 really, you know, see who was coming in our
25 buildings, and even welcomed them into our buildings.

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2 But tenants need to be screened when they come in
3 here. These people with mental illness need help.
4 They need help. And, ah, the people that live here
5 are scared of them. So it's almost like a Catch-22.
6 You're putting us in, in danger when you, um, you
7 know, rent to these, now I'm not saying they don't
8 deserve to live anywhere, but there's got to be some
9 special, ah, ah, places where we can put, ah, people
10 with that type of mental illness, that all they do is
11 hang out in the street. This is crazy. You know, a
12 lot of our seniors are scared to come out, and this
13 is happening in all the buildings because we have at
14 least one in every building that suffers from mental
15 illness and stalks people. That has to be addressed.
16 Um, as a tenant association president, I'm the
17 president of Douglas Houses, um, we do our part but
18 something has to give. And as far as, Chief, you
19 talked about, ah, monitoring the, the, the cameras.
20 That's a lie. Manhattan, let me tell you something.
21 The management does not watch these cameras at all.
22 At all. Um, I believe that, ah, our precinct, the
23 24th Precinct, which I love, and my PSA [inaudible] I
24 love them, too, 'cause they always here. But we have
25 to do a lot more. This scaffolding is dangerous. It

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2 has to go down. Nobody's doing anything with this
3 scaffolding. Nothing. And they're telling it's
4 supposed to be up to '22. But they're not doing
5 anything with it. They're just making money. That's
6 all that's happening with this scaffolding. People
7 making money. And our people are getting hurt. And,
8 and, and this is, this is horrible. Something has to
9 give. Chief, I await for you to give me a call. My
10 number is 347-499-0025. I would love for you to call
11 me. I want you to tour with me, ah, please. Um,
12 and, um, anybody else that can come. To David, ah,
13 from NYPD, you're the chief for housing. I would
14 love you to come down, too, 'cause in order for us to
15 get this together we got to work together. And I
16 work very hard, very hard, with my precinct, with my
17 PSA, and with my management. And I've got a good
18 team. But something else has to give. So I just
19 wanted to make that clear. I want to applaud all of
20 you guys for having this, ah, safety meeting. Um, I
21 really appreciate it. I've been on all night, all
22 day, and I will continue to be on. I'm not gonna be
23 repetitious, but we definitely have to do more, um,
24 because that doesn't only put us at risk, it does put
25 our police officers at risk when you don't, when they

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2 come in a building and they don't know what to expect
3 from someone with mental illness. So we have to work
4 either on getting some, ah, houseless here, in every
5 development. So we have to work either on getting
6 some, ah, houseless here and every development. We
7 need counselors. We need everything. So let's work
8 on that, because if we can clean up the inside, the
9 outside will be a lot better. Thank you for your
10 time.

11 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
12 much, Ms. Carmen, and I really hope that, um,
13 everyone was able to hear, um, everything that was
14 stated by Ms. Quinones and Ms. McFarland, and in
15 particular, um, the homeless situation that we did
16 not touch in detail, um, during this hearing. Um, as
17 well as, um, ah, discussions around resident watch
18 and the team from engagement that, or, or safety and
19 security within NYCHA that go out and actually speak
20 to the residents. I would hope that you have a
21 direct conversation with Ms. McFarland, um, from Taft
22 Houses. Um, I was a little shocked when she said
23 there has been no meeting at all, um, with her. So
24 let's make sure that that happens. Thank you so
25

1 much, um, and I think that's, that concludes the
2 testimony from our residents, correct, Audrey?

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Right, I believe so,
4 although we do have a few more members of the public.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. I just
6 wanted to make sure that there were no other
7 residents that were not able to fiscal year.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, I don't currently
9 see them on.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, on the Zoom
12 meeting, but we will do an open call at the end in
13 case we've missed anyone. Um, so next we will hear
14 from Maia Cole, followed by Andre Ward.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 MAIA COLE: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Maia Cole and I'm a [inaudible] fellow with the Civil
18 Justice Practice of Brooklyn Defender Services. I
19 want to Committee on Public Housing and Chair Ampry-
20 Samuel for the opportunity to testify today. The
21 focus of this hearing is on public safety and I urge
22 the council to think broadly about what public safety
23 means. It must include investment in communities
24 rather than investment in policing. Evidence shows
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1
2 that NYCHA residents and their communities are not
3 made safer by an increased police presence. Kids in
4 particular are stopped and harassed almost daily by
5 the police. But when they are victims of violence
6 the police do not protect them. One of our clients,
7 Ms. R., is a lifelong resident of a MAP development.
8 Recently she has seen more police at her development.
9 They frequently antagonize her young son and his
10 friends and bring them to the precinct for
11 questioning. Ms. R. feels that she and her son are
12 less safe precisely because there are more police.
13 Poor lighting, ever-present scaffolding, and a
14 persistent rat problem also make Ms. R. feel unsafe
15 in her home. As part of the harassment by law
16 enforcement that NYCHA face, police officers
17 regularly question residents, ah, residents' right to
18 be in their own buildings, to hang with their
19 friends, and to visit their families. They do this
20 with a trespass list. Anyone with a felony drug sale
21 arrest on NYCHA property is put on this list and can
22 be arrested for being on NYCHA grounds, even if
23 they're a resident. NYCHA also aggressively pursues
24 termination of tenancy proceedings against residents
25 who allegedly engage in nondesirable behavior. Once

1
2 NYCHA learns about an arrest on its property they
3 rush forward with a termination proceeding, often
4 based on minor infractions for criminal charges that
5 are ultimately dropped. NYCHA must invest in its
6 communities to prominent its residents safety and
7 well-being. This includes improving the physical
8 structure of NYCHA developments, maintaining
9 publically run community centers at NYCHA, and
10 revitalizing youth employment programs. NYCHA should
11 invest in alternatives to policing and
12 criminalization so that tenancy terminations are at
13 their absolute last resort. And finally, NYCHA
14 should expand its family reentry program so that more
15 people coming out of incarceration can be reunited
16 within...

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MAIA COLE: Thank you for considering
19 these issues.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
21 now hear from Andre Ward, followed by Judith Smith.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 ANDRE WARD: Yes, good afternoon, um,
24 Chair Ampry-Samuels. We thank you for convening this
25 and for all of the city council members that have

1
2 joined this, um, committee meeting and hearing. I
3 really appreciate that. Um, my name is Andre Ward
4 and I'm the associate vice president for the David
5 Rothenberg Center for Public Policy of the Fortune
6 Society. Fortune has been around over 53 years, um,
7 as organization that supports successful reentry from
8 incarceration and promotes alternatives to
9 incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of our
10 communities, and we do this by believing in the power
11 of people to change, building lives of those, um, who
12 have been impacted by the criminal legal system, and
13 we ultimately are involved in changing minds through
14 education and advocacy to promote the creation of
15 fair, humane, and truly rehabilitative correction
16 system. And, you know, before I go on, I just want
17 to really acknowledge those, um, folk who spoke
18 before us as tenants whose family members' lives have
19 been taken, um, and ultimately have been harmed in
20 some way. I really want to acknowledge that. And I
21 know that, you know, the committee's focus here today
22 is to talk about public safety within the New York
23 City Housing Association developments, including the
24 progress of the Mayor's Action Plan, um, for which
25 many have spoken about already, and the plan,

1 obviously, and the plan obviously includes focusing
2 on [inaudible] crime in 15 public housing
3 developments, um, etcetera. You know, I'm a former
4 incarcerated black man who spent at least 19 years of
5 my life living in New York City public housing,
6 specifically in the East New York section of Brooklyn
7 in the Louis H. Pink Houses, where my mom resided for
8 over 32 years, and also had been robbed there. So I
9 understand as someone who has been involved in
10 harming, but also being, having a family member who
11 is impacted by people's actions in NYCHA, and I'm
12 very, very aware of those things. However, you know,
13 because of the pandemic, because of the MAP
14 initiatives, right, we know that a lot of things is
15 happening and we cannot use the increased violence
16 that's occurring as a rationale for keeping NYCHA's
17 permanent exclusion regulations in place. You know,
18 there's folks from academia, experts,
19 criminologists...

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 ANDRE WARD: ...who talked about, you
23 know, the idea of the increase of crime due to COVID-
24 19, and that's something that we really, really have
25 to address. In other words, it appears that the MAP

1 has been not doing a really effective job and
2 therefore, like the council, I'm really urging the
3 council, and we're urging the council that NYCHA not
4 use the temporary surge in violence in housing as a
5 reason to support the continued use of exclusion of
6 tenants because of their criminal record. But NYCHA
7 currently mandates a blanket denial for admissions to
8 anyone with misdemeanors, etcetera, as someone who
9 spoke about me [inaudible]. And so it makes it very
10 difficult for people to access housing. In fact,
11 while permanent exclusion jeopardizes the housing
12 stability of family members whose loved ones visit
13 with them, or stay with them illegal, legally, it
14 often does not keep such people, obviously, um, a
15 visit from actually happening. And so there's a need
16 to really work on those things. It was mentioned
17 about the pilot program, um, the family reunion
18 program that I know, ah, Madam Chair, you're familiar
19 with. And, you know, it's designed to support people
20 with those housing initiatives and to make sure that
21 people aren't permanently excluded, but given the
22 opportunity to reunite with their families. But not
23 only is permanent exclusion unjust, it may even be
24 dangerous. The lack of housing affects the ability
25

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2 of the former incarcerated to essentially take on
3 almost any other essential reentry task, such as
4 employment, a drug rehabilitation, rising, raising
5 their potential rates of recidivism in the process.
6 And so, you know, this idea making people, making
7 sure people aren't excluded by NYCHA is really,
8 really important and the pandemic has to end, MAP
9 needs to do its job, and permanent exclusion must,
10 must also be removed. It's only at that point that
11 we can truly and effectively analyze the data on
12 violence in public housing that the city provides.
13 Thank you so much, Madam Chair and others, for
14 listening to what I just shared.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
16 much, Mr. Ward, and I really do appreciate the work
17 that you do and your advocacy. I really do
18 appreciate it.

19 ANDRE WARD: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
21 now hear testimony from Judith Smith, followed by
22 Wendy Lorenzetti Olivo.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ah, Ms. Smith, I
25 believe you're still muted.

1
2 JUDITH SMITH: Good afternoon, Chair,
3 and members of the committee. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify regarding public safety in
5 NYCHA. My name is Judith Smith. I am a resident of
6 Douglas Houses. I am also a member of We Act for
7 Environmental Justice and Healthy Homes working
8 group, and together we are fighting for healthy
9 housing in NYCHA. I am testifying today in support
10 of increasing efforts to address the public safety
11 conditions in NYCHA. Building maintenance to improve
12 health issues like mold, lead, clean water is key.
13 However, building maintenance is also key to
14 improving public safety in NYCHA. In my experience,
15 the intercoms are constantly being broken. The
16 entrance door is not locked as needed. Not all NYCHA
17 buildings have cameras, and the ones that do they are
18 not monitored. Um, and, um, from my experience, over
19 15 years ago, I was mugged and almost raped in my
20 building because of the, the locks, the entrance door
21 not working. And that was over 15 years ago, and the
22 same situation is still here, it hasn't changed. By
23 ensuring the safety and accountability within the
24 residential environment, there will be more
25 opportunity for NYCHA and NYPD to positively

1 influence interaction between them and the resident.
2 Therefore, home environments would be safer,
3 preventing and reducing the healthy effects of
4 chronic stress in preserving environmental health.

5
6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 JUDITH SMITH: It is important act fast
8 to address the public crisis in NYCHA because we
9 public housing residents deserve to live safe and,
10 and, in healthy homes. NYCHA is an asset to our
11 city. Our population amounts to 600,000 people.
12 That is larger than, um, some cities around the
13 world. For too long we have pushed aside, NYCHA has
14 pushed aside our health and well-being. They have
15 ignored, um, our health and well-being, has, and our
16 health and well-being has been ignored. And, now
17 with the additional crisis of COVID we are dealing
18 with even greater social, economic, and political
19 impact. The environment and systematic mismanagement
20 and neglect that has led NYCHA to despair must be, be
21 brought up to justice and addressed now. And, um,
22 what I would like to say is I keep hearing about
23 NYCHA needing more money. Um, I remember, maybe back
24 in 2005, there was a hearing in Washington about not
25 giving NYCHA more money because of the mismanagement

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2 of what they had. So I don't understand this call
3 for more money and they're not, we don't even know
4 how they're spending what they have. I can tell you
5 as a resident there is a lot of waste of money, OK.
6 So I believe that NYCHA needs to be audit, their
7 books opened to find out how this money is being
8 spent, how they are handling what they have before we
9 advocate for more money. Because this is not money
10 that's growing off a tree. Every time you advocate
11 for more money my taxes go up. So this is taxpayers'
12 money you're talking about, and I think they should
13 be made accountable for how they are using this
14 money. It's a lot of waste with the contractors, the
15 scaffolding, a lot of mismanagement going on. And
16 that needs to be addressed also. And I thank you for
17 your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
19 much, Ms. Smith. I really do appreciate your
20 testimony, and I do apologize, um, ah, you were
21 listed under your organization of We Act, and so we
22 didn't realize that you were a resident. So, but
23 thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now
25 receive testimony from Wendy Lorenzetti Olivo.

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 WENDY LORENZETTI OLIVO: Good afternoon,
3 Madam Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you
4 for the opportunity to testify regarding public
5 safety in NYCHA. My name is Wendy Lorenzetti Olivo
6 and I'm a bilingual community organizer at We Act for
7 Environmental Justice and organize with NYCHA
8 residents to work in our Healthy Homes working group.
9 I'm here to discuss important public safety
10 considerations for residents in their developments.
11 I have worked with the NYCHA residents for almost a
12 decade, more closely in the past three years with the
13 residents in the Polo Grounds, Angle Houses, and
14 Harlem River Houses. In my experience, there was
15 little to no public safety. The doors were
16 constantly broken and were left so that anyone could
17 walk into any building. Stairways and common areas
18 have also been areas of concern as far as public
19 safety. In working with residents at We Act they
20 have stated that they believe that all NYCHA
21 buildings should have a security unit with adequate
22 resources, including fully functioning surveillance
23 devices to maintain security for residents, including
24 intercoms and cameras. We want residents to feel
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2 safer and be safer, understanding that preventing or
3 reducing the health effects of chronic stress will
4 contribute to an improvement of quality of life for
5 residents. With existing issues like lead, mold, and
6 other indoor environmental health problems, residents
7 should not have to deal with feeling and being unsafe
8 in and around their own homes. Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
11 much, ah, thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This
13 concludes the public testimony. If we have
14 inadvertently forgotten to call on someone to
15 testify, ah, please use the Zoom raise hand function
16 now and we will try to hear from you now. Ah, seeing
17 that there is, ah, nobody that has yet to testify, I
18 will now turn it over to Chair Ampry-Samuel to close
19 the hearing.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,
21 everyone. Um, thank you to everyone who came out and
22 testified today. I really do appreciate your stories
23 and your willingness to share, and I really do hope
24 that NYPD and NYCHA and MOCJ all heard the concerns
25 of our residents and will continue to work to make

1
2 sure that, um, our families who deserve a decent and,
3 and, and healthy and safe home receive just that. I
4 want to just say I appreciate everyone for staying
5 on. Um, I appreciate you, Chief, ah, Nelson. I
6 appreciate you, Chief Barrere, um, and MOCJ. I, I, I
7 really do. And I hope that this is a sign that we
8 will make sure that we are working together, um, to
9 provide the, the security and safety measures that
10 every single resident need. Um, I want to also
11 thank, um, our Public Housing Committee. Thank you
12 so much, Audrey, for everything. Thank you, Ricky.
13 Um, thank you, Jose. Um, thank you, Sarah. Um,
14 thank you everyone else. I want to just, um, thank
15 my staff for their help as well. Um, and with that
16 this will conclude today's hearing on public safety
17 at NYCHA.

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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 April 29, 2021