

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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September 24, 2021

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HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 4

B E F O R E: Robert F. Holden
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Robert F. Holden
Brad S. Lander
Eric A. Ulrich
Paul Vallone
Kalman Yeger
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Robin Levine
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Information Technology and
Telecommunications

Wendy Dorf

Alan Leidner

Sean Ahearn

Zhi Keng He

Kathleen Collins

Terence Page

Daniel Schwarz

Carrie Magee

Clayton Banks

Jose Chapa

@

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Computer recording
3 started.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Recording to the cloud
5 all set.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Backup is rolling.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and
8 welcome to the remote hearing on the Committee on
9 Technology. Will council members and staff please
10 turn on their video at this time. Thank you. To
11 minimize disruptions, please place all cell phones
12 and electronics to vibrate. You may send your
13 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again,
14 that's testimony@council.nyc.gov. Chair Holden, we
15 are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Sergeant.
17 Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Council Member Robert
18 Holden, chair of the Committee on Technology, and I
19 want to welcome everyone to our hearing today. New
20 York City, everyone knows this, it never sits still.
21 We are a constantly evolving and changing. And when
22 we're at our best, New Yorkers are leading the way.
23 So emerging technologies allow the city to operate
24 more efficiently and provide the most vulnerable New
25 Yorkers access to resources they need. Technology

1 also can assist the public in holding the government
2 accountable. Today we're meeting to understand how
3 technology is being leveraged in our city agencies
4 and how emerging technologies will be incorporated
5 into the everyday lives of New Yorkers. To increase
6 the transparency, accountability, and capability of
7 our government and technology, the following bills
8 will be considered. Intro 1133, sponsored by Council
9 Member Rosenthal, will require the Department of
10 Information Technology and Telecommunications, DoITT,
11 to create a public online searchable database through
12 which all agencies must report on violations
13 returnable to the Office of Administrative Files and
14 [inaudible]. Ah, Intro 7158, sponsored by Council
15 Member Levin, would designate a chief geospatial
16 information officer within DoITT and require to
17 implement a special data inter-operability strategy
18 that would include the city's use of geospatial
19 information system. It's very important. Ah, Intro
20 2305, sponsored by me, would require the mayor to
21 designate a city agency to conduct a study to access,
22 I'm sorry, a study to assess and determine the
23 feasibility of a pilot program to establish a digital
24 identification program for the City of New York. And
25

1
2 Intro 2358, also sponsored by me, would require DoITT
3 to create a single mobile application that would
4 allow the public to access services provided, ah, by
5 different city agencies, which, again, and that's
6 important to, um, be able to communicate with
7 different city agencies and see what's available. So
8 instead of forcing our city's residents to hop from
9 web page to web page to find solutions to their
10 problems, having a single access point through which
11 New Yorkers could log in and access city services
12 would help to improve New Yorker's abilities to
13 contract, um, and request city services. Technology
14 and government has incredible potential to benefit
15 the public. Understanding your risk associated with
16 the use of technologies, such as privacy and
17 security, is essential to maximize the potential, ah,
18 benefits of technology in government. We look
19 forward to discussing the advantages, ah, and
20 concerns surrounding government and technology and
21 anticipate valuable, ah, testimonies from the
22 administration, ah, experts, and community advocates,
23 ah, ah, on these essential issues. Ah, I'd like to
24 recognize, ah, members of the committee who are
25 present. We have Council Member Yeger, ah, Council

1 Member Lander, is he is on? I don't see him yet.

2 Um, and I think that's about it. We're expecting

3 council members to come on, ah, soon. Ah, so I'll

4 now turn, I'll turn it over to my colleague from

5 Brooklyn, good friend, Council Member Steve Levin,

6 who will make a statement about his bill. Steve, are

7 you ready?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Yes, I am.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very

11 much, ah, Chair Holden. I want to, ah, um, the chair

12 and my, and my friend from Queens, ah, Chair Bob

13 Holden for, um, not only for conducting this hearing

14 but for, um, allowing this bill to be heard, and for

15 cosponsoring it. Ah, thank you, Chair. Um, um, this

16 bill, ah, ah, Intro 2158, ah, would create, as the

17 chair said, achieve geospatial information,

18 information officer, within the Department of

19 Information Technology and Telecommunications,

20 otherwise known as DoITT. A geographic information

21 system, otherwise known as GIS, is a system that

22 creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of

23 data. We currently use GIS to track data across our

24 city agencies for things like DOHMH's community

1 health survey, and this bill will help agencies
2 better share and integrate their data for efficient
3 emergency management responses. Ah, another way of
4 thinking about it, GIS is used for things like Google
5 maps or ways or any, any other, ah, um, weather.com
6 and looking at, ah, storms that are coming in. Any,
7 any type of, um, ah, geospatial mapping is using GIS
8 technology, and so it's a very important part of our,
9 ah, ah, ah, of our, of our lives. Um, I want to
10 thank, ah, the leadership of the GIS community.
11 Thanks to the leadership of the GIS community. Um,
12 we learned after 9/11 how important the need for
13 comprehensive citywide GIS leadership is. Um, lead
14 by two friends of, of mine, um, Wendy Dorf and Al
15 Leidner, the system made it possible for a
16 coordinated response by over 50 agencies citywide and
17 helped to lead the New York City Open Data Program
18 and recently the COVID-19 pandemic has shown more
19 than ever that we need integrated, transparent, and
20 timely data about our city. The urgent need for GIS
21 interoperability was continually reaffirmed during
22 this pandemic. Geospatial data was critical for the
23 Office of Emergency Management to assess where cases
24 were rising, where greater testing was needed, and
25

1 when the city should be investing its resources, all
2 in real time. Greater interoperability, we could
3 have better connected data from agencies like NYCHA
4 and Immigrant Affairs with health and emergency
5 services to ensure that vaccines and resources were
6 reaching the neighborhoods and communities most at
7 risk. And now, as we plan for a future with
8 increasing climate challenges, the need for
9 comprehensive data and data sharing is essential.
10 Geospatial data allows us to map storm water levels,
11 underground infrastructure capacity, and flood
12 pattern changers. And greater interoperability
13 between agencies allows us to better prepare our city
14 for disaster response to coordination and accuracy.
15 The flooding our city faced just weeks ago is a
16 wakeup call. We need to better connect geospatial
17 data and underground mapping with first responders.
18 Otherwise, we will continue to be too slow to protect
19 our communities. We need community-based solutions
20 for resiliency and that requires deepening our
21 investment in underground infrastructure that could
22 easily be translated with local environmental
23 responses. When it comes to disaster planning,
24 breaking down silos would, will be a matter of life
25

1 and death no doubt. Um, I, I want to thank,
2 acknowledge and thank the leadership of, ah, GISMO,
3 ah, who helped us work on this legislation, is on the
4 front lines of using underground infrastructure
5 mapping to help us build the sustainable future that
6 we need. Um, the climate crisis is here and GIS has
7 an, a critical role to play in, to play in New York
8 City's future. So, again, I want to thank, um, ah,
9 my friend and chair, Bob Holden, um, Borough
10 President Gale Brewer, Council Member Ben Kallos for
11 their support of this legislation. Um, and again I
12 just want to in particular thank, um, ah, Wendy Dorf
13 and Al Leidner, um, who have, um, talking with about
14 GIS issues, ah, goodness, for easily the past seven,
15 eight years at this point. Um, and, ah, ah, they've
16 really welcomed me into the GIS community and, and
17 helped show me, um, ah, just how vital these, ah, ah,
18 ah, this technology is and, and how impactful and
19 lifesaving it can be in our city. So, with that I'll
20 turn it back over to you, Chair. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council
23 Member Levin. And, by the way, I just want to say,
24 ah, echo what you just said about Alan and Wendy.
25 They're amazing, and, ah, I've been with on with

1
2 them, ah, ah, a few meetings, we had a few meetings
3 and certainly, ah, a few calls. So, um, they're,
4 they're so valuable for the City of New York,
5 especially now, and, um, so let's, lets, um, let's,
6 ah, hold one second. Ah, is Borough President
7 Brewer, is Gale Brewer on? Oh, there she is OK, now
8 I see her, she's waving. OK. All right. I'd, you
9 know, I'd like to introduce, ah, Borough President
10 Brewer. She will, um, talk about, um, a guess a bill
11 that you're, you're, you're behind? OK.

12 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: Yes. You want
13 me to wait, sir, until you've, ah, or do you want me
14 to go? Whatever you'd like.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, you can go, you
16 can go.

17 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: OK. So, ah, I
18 certainly want to thank you, Chair Holden and the
19 committee. I am Gale Brewer, the Manhattan Borough
20 President, and I co-sponsored, ah, 2158 2020. It is
21 to establish a chief geospatial information within
22 DoITT. We all know that's the Department of
23 Information Technology and Telecommunications, and I
24 did this with Council Member Steven Levin. And I
25 also want to thank your committee. You know, it has

1 very special meaning for me. Using geospatial
2 information systems, GIS, means improving and
3 standardizing the use of granular location data as
4 critical components of data [inaudible]. It can
5 create maps and visualize patterns of information
6 across New York City agency functions. I know later
7 on you'll hear from Alan Leidner, Al Leidner, as we
8 call him. I don't know that there's greater tech
9 GISUMB in the world. So he will have much more to
10 say than I do. He is my hero and I'm so honored that
11 he's speaking here today in support of this bill.
12 But this, ah, if enacted, this bill would allow the
13 city to overlay a variety of information from
14 different organizations based on common location. It
15 is a common data language that allows our information
16 to work together and improve our shared efforts. New
17 York City government, thanks to Al Leidner, I have to
18 say, has been the beneficiary of more than 35 years
19 of GIS use and GIS is a key component of 911, of 311,
20 meaning the database and everything of 59 Maiden
21 Lane, and hundreds of other applications used by city
22 agencies. GIS has assisted city responses to
23 disasters. I remember when Al Leidner even went to
24 New Orleans to help them with their GIS system.
25

1 Obviously, he helped and others on 9/11 and all of
2 hurricanes. Ensuring relief efforts were supported
3 by crucial location information and emergency
4 responders to avoid unnecessary harm. Over the
5 course of the pandemic, Johns Hopkins applied GIS
6 technology with city and state contact tracing
7 efforts across the country to help inform healthcare
8 officials of how quickly COVID was spreading and
9 where, and we now Johns Hopkins was the place, ah, of
10 information more than any other site. Development,
11 maintenance, and use of GIS requires the work of many
12 agencies alongside DoITT and requires clear
13 management and direction to be implemented properly.
14 Effective city services require close collaboration
15 and coordination between agencies in the shared
16 languages. I said earlier. And when I sponsored
17 Local Law 11 of 2012, as you know well, establishing
18 the Open Door Portal, our goal was to ensure
19 transparency and accountability between the
20 government and the public. But one of the greatest
21 impacts of open data over the last nine years has
22 been enhanced interagency operability. Agencies now
23 have access to helpful information in an instant, and
24 staff can approach each other with database increase.
25

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2 Advancing the common technological and data language
3 through GIS is a key step in approving [inaudible]
4 agencies. And this is particularly important to me
5 become something called GISMO, which is the, ah,
6 oversight agency of all the GIS folks in the City of
7 New York, if not around the country. I think I was
8 there with one of the first meetings, all thanks to
9 Al Leidner. So we do have a very special need and
10 understanding of GIS. This legislation, 2158, will
11 restore the necessary management structure to ensure
12 GIS continues to deliver billions of dollars' worth
13 of benefits to New Yorkers with a central direction
14 under the CGIO, meaning those that are interested in
15 a GIS information officer. Thank you very much, Mr.
16 Chair, and appreciate talking about something that
17 has a lot of meaning to me, and I hope will be
18 helpful in the future. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you so much,
20 Borough President Brewer. I just want to, um,
21 recognize that we've been joined by Council Member
22 Paul Vallone, and, ah, did, ah, Irene, is Council
23 Member Rosenthal available?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
25 Rosenthal, can you speak, can you hear us?

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 15
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yup,
3 absolutely. Thank you [inaudible].

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK, Helen, you want
5 your, yeah, can you talk about your bill? Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you.
7 Thank you so much. Um, I appreciate you, Council
8 Member Holden, for holding this hearing. I love the
9 bills that you're sponsoring and, um, I hope this
10 bill, ah, I appreciate your including this bill in
11 your, this package. Ah, thank you so much. I'm
12 gonna talk about my, 1133. Um, this is a
13 transparency bill that requires DoITT to maintain a
14 public online searchable database that houses updated
15 information on all OATH violations. So several
16 agencies issue violations which, um, then, ah, people
17 have to go through OATH to settle the situation. Um,
18 the Department of Buildings, Sanitation,
19 Environmental Protection, Consumer and Worker
20 Protection, Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as TLC
21 violations go through OATH. So the idea is to have a
22 portal that would be up to date and, um, allow anyone
23 to see the status of a violation. And while you can
24 go on open, the open data portal, ah, to get some of
25 this information, it's very challenging to navigate

1 and with 1133 I'm optimistic that we can work with
2 DoITT, um, with the existing portal and improve on it
3 to make the information accessible to the general
4 public with a more user-friendly interface. And let
5 me give you a specific, um, example. In our district
6 there are, um, unfortunately, building owners who
7 intentionally don't think, don't fix things for which
8 they're getting Department of Buildings violations.
9 For example, having a broken boiler or gas piping
10 system that means that for years tenants don't have
11 heat and hot water, and the building owner might get
12 violation after violation after violation for this.
13 They go to OATH and they say, oh, yes, after all
14 these years we've now replaced, ah, the boiler and
15 it's fixed, and yes, we have \$60,000 worth of
16 violations, but now we've repaired it and it costs,
17 ah, \$60,000 to fix the situation. And then the OATH
18 trial lawyer will say, um, the administrative judge
19 will say great, so we're gonna wipe out all of the
20 cost of your fines because you fixed this situation.
21 Well, what, if that is the case, what incentive there
22 for any building owner to actually fix something
23 quickly? The violations really have no meaning. And
24 what this bill intends to do is give transparency to
25

1
2 those situations and perhaps allow the tenants that
3 have had to live under a situation, um, where they've
4 had no heat or hot water, to give an opportunity for
5 those tenants to weight on the reality of their lives
6 because the, um, building owners are not really
7 heeding the violations, um, or what the Department of
8 Buildings seeks for the landlord to fix. I know that
9 sounds like a long story and it sounds like a
10 terrible situation. It happens over and over and
11 over again in our district and that's why we've
12 brought this, um, piece of legislation forward. It's
13 why I appreciate Chair Holden including this
14 legislation in this package of bill, and I want to
15 thank him and my district office staff and my
16 legislative staff for working so diligently with, um,
17 our offers, our office to get, ah, to help those New
18 Yorkers, um, who are trying to get justice, um, with
19 these violations. Thank you so much. I really
20 appreciate you. And I appreciate your hearing the
21 bill. Thank you so much, Chair Holden.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And, ah, thank you,
23 Council Member Rosenthal, for this bill because, ah,
24 I have a lot of experience with this where there's no
25 accountability, it's just the cost of doing business.

1
2 Some of these, ah, landlords, ah, and, and, and many,
3 many other fines that are levied, they pay the fine
4 and it doesn't get corrected. So this is...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Mmm.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...[inaudible] we can
7 add to transparency is important, ah, in this
8 district.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, really, so I
11 appreciate this bill. Again, thank you for this, um,
12 and I will now turn it over to the committee counsel,
13 Irene Bahosky, to go over some procedural items.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
15 Holden. I'm Irene Bahosky, the counsel to the
16 Committee on Technology, and I will be moderating
17 this hearing. Before we begin, I would like to
18 remind everyone that you will be on mute until you
19 are called on to testify. After you are called on
20 you will be unmuted by the host. Please listen for
21 your name to be called as I announce the panelists.
22 We will first be hearing testimony from the
23 administration, followed by testimony from members of
24 the public. During the hearing if council members
25 would like to ask questions please use the room, Zoom

1 raise hand function, and I will call on you. We will
2 be limiting council members' questions to five
3 minutes. This includes both questions and answers.
4 All public testimony will be also limited to five
5 minutes and after I call your name please wait a
6 brief moment for the Sergeant at Arm, Arms, to
7 announce that you might begin before starting your
8 testimony. I will now call representatives of the
9 administration to testify. We will be hearing
10 testimony today from the Department of Information
11 Technology and Telecommunication, Robin Levine. At
12 this time I will administer the affirmation. Please,
13 Ms. Levine, please raise your right hand. Thank you.
14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
15 nothing but the truth before the committee and to
16 respond honestly to council member questions?

18 ROBIN LEVINE: Yes.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
20 begin when you're ready.

21 ROBIN LEVINE: Great, thank you. Good
22 afternoon, Chair Holden, members of the City Council
23 Committee on Technology and Borough President Brewer.
24 My name is Robin Levine and I am the assistant
25 commissioner for external affairs and communications

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2 for the Department of Information Technology and
3 Telecommunications, also known as DoITT. Ah,
4 Commissioner Tisch is going to try to join the Q&A,
5 but she had a scheduling conflict so I'm here
6 delivering testimony. Ah, thank you so much for the
7 opportunity to discuss the legislation on the
8 committee's docket today. First, I will discuss
9 Intro 1133 by Council Member Rosenthal. This
10 legislation would require DoITT to create a database
11 to track HPD and OATH violations from issuance to
12 resolution and would also require quarterly reporting
13 on the progress of such database. It's my
14 understanding that much of the information this bill
15 calls for is already publically accessible through HPD
16 Online and the Open Data Portal, so this database may
17 duplicate what is currently already available. Next,
18 I will discuss Intro 2158, Council Member Levin's
19 legislation, submitted by request of Manhattan
20 Borough President Brewer. This bill would require
21 DoITT to appointment a chief GIS officer who would be
22 required to lead an annual interagency meeting of
23 citywide GIS personnel. DoITT would have the
24 responsibility to develop, maintain, and implement a
25 spatial data strategy and a strategic plan for the

1 use of GIS by agencies. This legislation would
2 solidify DoITT's leadership role in this area and
3 creates an avenue for useful cross-agency
4 coordination. In fact, DoITT plans to move forward
5 on a massive upgrade to the city's GIS system, NexGen
6 GIS. We will be working Esri, a leading company in
7 GIS capabilities. The first phase of work will be
8 updating GIS in 301 to allow for more precise mapping
9 of service requests. Particularly, there have been
10 issues with SRs, service requests, in parks and on
11 highways where there is not a precise street address.
12 The first phase of this upgrade will address that
13 problem. I want to thank the City Council and, and
14 in particular Chair Holden and Council Member Dromm,
15 for calling this issue to our attention. We also
16 have begun the process to hire a director of GIS at
17 DoITT. That person will oversee the implementation
18 of NexGen GIS. Commissioner Tisch plans for that
19 person to report directly to the Deputy Commissioner
20 of data and applications. As we are already in the
21 process of hiring an executive who will be
22 exclusively dedicated to NexGen GIS we are pleased
23 that the council recognizes its importance. However,
24 we would like to discuss changes to the bill's
25

1 language to best place this officer within DoITT's
2 organizational structure. Next, Chair Holden's bill,
3 Intro 2305, would require the administration to
4 conduct a study to assess and determine the
5 feasibility of a pilot program to establish a digital
6 identification program. This is an interesting idea
7 that we want to look more into. We'd like to hear
8 more about the program's goals and what the council
9 envisions with such a study so that we can better
10 assess the idea. Finally, Intro 2358, also sponsored
11 by Chair Holden, would require DoITT to create a
12 single mobile application capable of allowing members
13 of the public to access services provided by city
14 agency. This is certainly an ambitious, big-picture
15 proposal that has merit. But this is a top-to-bottom
16 overhaul of most digital city services as we know
17 them today. I would not be able to sit here and tell
18 you that this would be an easy or inexpensive
19 undertaken. This proposal would take a significant
20 investment in time, budget, and personnel across
21 nearly every city agency to accomplish. This would
22 not be DoITT's task alone and many other stakeholders
23 would also need to be part of the conversation. That
24 said, DoITT wants to continue to work with the
25

1 council as we have done in the past to up the and,
2 and improve the experience of 311 in the short term.
3 As Chair Holden and the council know since
4 Commissioner Tisch took the helm at DoITT we have
5 prioritized council feedback and used it to help
6 guide enhancements and upgrades to the 311 system,
7 including photo upload capabilities for more service
8 requests and allow non-account holders to receive
9 email alerts for service requests. If you have any
10 other improvements we can take up immediately, I'd be
11 happy to discuss those with the committee. Thank you
12 for the opportunity to testify. I will now take
13 council members' questions and, ah, as I said, I
14 think Commissioner Tisch will be here soon as well
15 too also if you have questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I, I see the
18 Commissioner is on. You want, Irene, you want to
19 give, ah, read the affirmation for the Commissioner?
20 Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Absolutely, Council
22 Member Holden. Commissioner Tisch.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Hi.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hello. Um, please
25 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the

1
2 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
3 before this committee and to respond honestly to
4 council member questions?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I do.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member
9 Holden, you might begin your questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes. Welcome,
11 Commissioner. I know you have a tight schedule and I
12 appreciate you stopping by again. Um, ah, I just
13 have a few questions and then we'll get into some of
14 the questions on the particular bills, but this is a
15 general question. Ah, can you, can you, do you have
16 any updates on Link NYC deal that, ah, you know, we
17 talked about and it's been, ah, you know, going
18 forward thanks to you and the cooperation with the
19 administration and everyone involved?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I sure do. Um, so
21 we've been working very closely with City Bridge, um,
22 to do an updated design of the new Link kiosks that
23 will support 5G. We hope to, um, have that design to
24 the Public Design Commission for their October
25 meeting, which is very ambitious. As part of that

1 process, as you know, it's an open process, so the
2 design, um, will be circulated to all City Council
3 members, community boards for feedback. And so I
4 expect really to have a design that you can lay your
5 eyes on that, that we're ready to submit, ah, for,
6 for the October hearing of the Public Design
7 Commission.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Great. So what's,
10 what's, what's your estimate on when we can realize
11 these new kiosks actually on the streets?

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So...

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And with the 5G?

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, um, that will
15 depend a lot on, one, whether this design gets
16 approved at the October meeting, and then, two, how
17 long they will take to manufacture. So I can't get
18 manufacturing estimates until I have an approved
19 design, so I want to see that approved design.
20 Nonetheless, Council Member, what we're doing,
21 because we want to, I'm sorry, Chair. What we, what
22 we're doing is, um, we are green lighting new
23 locations working with the borough president's office
24 and now based on your feedback we're revising that
25

1 process to also include all of, um, the, ah, council
2 members in, ah...

3
4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I guess 'cause we're
5 forgotten a lot, so [inaudible].

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No, no, [inaudible],
7 um, but we have green lighted, um, the installation
8 of approximately 50 new kiosks, all outside of, of
9 Manhattan. Um, and if the new design isn't ready for
10 the install, we'll install with the old and then can
11 look, ah, a retrofit process. But we really wanted
12 to take the opportunity to get this program up and
13 running again. I'm also really pleased to tell you
14 that City Bridge sent, ah, us, um, a check for 26
15 million dollars, which is what they owed us in their
16 back payment under the terms of the new franchise
17 agreement. So, so far, so good.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Great. Sort of a
19 general question. Um, right now where can the public
20 go if they have questions regarding New York City's
21 government's use of technology besides, you know,
22 filing a FOIA request? You know, so.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So, I'm, I'm not
24 sure, well, let me say this. Right now there are two
25 portals that I can think of where New Yorkers can go

1 to access, um, online services provided by the city.
2
3 And the two main ones that I'm thinking of are 311
4 and Access NYC. Now, when I say that, um, those are
5 cross-agency platforms, so you can go to those two
6 platforms, in the case of Access NYC you can see all
7 benefit programs offered by various city agencies,
8 and when you go to 311 you can see a lot of
9 different, ah, services offered by New York City.
10 Um, but, um, neither of them fill the void that I
11 think that this legislation is designed, um, to
12 close, which is a single unified platform where no
13 matter what the service is that can be delivered or
14 applied for online, a single platform that just
15 houses all of that cross agency.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right. So, you
17 know, and that's, that is, ah, a large task. But
18 does, like does DoITT or any city agency currently
19 have public forms, for instance, ah, on how
20 technology can be leveraged, ah, to improve
21 government efficiency. I mean, do we get that
22 feedback?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I think perhaps the
24 CTO's office has that. I'm not sure. But that would
25 be something that would be in their lane, and I

1
2 apologize that I don't know the answer to that
3 question off the top of my head, but we can circle
4 back with you on it.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. That, that's,
6 ah, that's good. Intro 1133, um, you know, it's a
7 local law to amend the New York City Charter in
8 relationship to the creation of a database to track
9 violations, as you know, ah, from the time it's
10 issued to the resolution, which I think is very
11 important. Does DoITT have the staff necessary to
12 carry this out now, if the legislation passes?

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So that piece of
14 legislation speaks to, I think it's focused on HPD.
15 And so the way, and HPD and the violations that they
16 write, um, generally, um, each individual agency
17 would publish that data. Um, some of it is available
18 on Open Data, but if you want more granular reporting
19 of it online that would be something that HPD could
20 do. DoITT could also do it. It's just not the model
21 that's been used historical. Um, and do we have the
22 staff to do it? As you know, our staffing numbers
23 are lower than they once, once were, but, you know,
24 anything is possible. It's all a, a question of, of

1
2 priority, and so if this was the big priority, sure,
3 we would have the staff to do it.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: All right. Does,
5 does the administration, administration support this
6 bill?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I can tell you that,
8 um, a lot of the data that is requested in this bill
9 is already available on HPD's website. To the extent
10 that there are data elements that are not available
11 or, today, or, um, if there's feedback that the user
12 interface for HPD Online isn't smooth enough,
13 certainly happy to take that back and work with you
14 and the council to get those data elements added and,
15 ah, ensure that the user experience is, is good.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Ah, I see, um,
17 Council Member Rosenthal has her hand up. I think
18 it's on this bill, so, um, I'll recognize Council
19 Member Rosenthal.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
22 much, ah, Council Member Holden. I appreciate it.
23 And, you know, ah, um, ah, Commissioner Tisch, ah,
24 it's always a pleasure to work with you know. I know
25 how hard you're working to keep the city, um, you

1 know, ah, connected and, and all of our, um, IT
2 functioning well. You know, I'm not sure that the
3 language in this bill exactly captured the need. So
4 I'm gonna, um, ask you about where I'd like to get
5 to...

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...if, if, even
9 if this bill didn't quite capture it and we don't
10 always need legislation to get things done. Um,
11 what, what I'm looking for is a tool that would
12 track, um, a violation, you know, by violation
13 number, ah, from soup to nuts, from the time it's
14 issued to the time that, ah, the violation is either
15 dismissed or paid. And it's to deal with the problem
16 that, um, these violations are issued, but for one
17 reason or another the, the, the property hearing in
18 the case that I usually think about, a property, you
19 know, ends up not, you know, that the violation or
20 the fees are waived, um, but really shouldn't be
21 waived. Um, and the system is set up in such a way
22 that the fees are waived and the violation fees are
23 waived, ah, fees and fines are waived without, you
24 know, the, the public or the person who made the
25 original call to get the violation issued without

1
2 them having any knowledge of what ends up happening
3 there. And so, one, we're looking for transparency
4 and, you know, I could imagine a report that, you
5 know, sort of, um, captures the information by, you
6 know, the number of, you know, a property owner, the
7 number, the number of fines versus what they actually
8 paid, the delta, from highest to lowest. Do you know
9 what I mean? Like that's how I would want to track
10 it so we could know who is it that's getting away
11 with this and why, and should it be fixed? Because
12 in our situation, the example that I gave before you
13 logged was the building owner who doesn't provide
14 heat and hot water for three years, keeps getting
15 issued violations, doesn't really do anything about
16 it, but finally maybe gets a boiler and repairs it
17 and then goes to a judge, an administrative trial
18 judge, and says yeah, you know, I've racked up
19 \$60,000 in fines but the cost of my new boiler was
20 \$60,000, and then the trial judge waives all the
21 fines. So...

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I, that...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah. That's
24 sort of what we're looking to get at.

25

1
2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So that, that
3 context is, is super helpful and you're right,
4 because I, I revealed HPD Online when we were
5 preparing for this, this hearing and that type of
6 information that, that you're looking for is not on
7 there. So question, the question, if the question is
8 like is that feasible the answer is sure. I mean,
9 that's not, that's not rocket science. Um, I think
10 the difference, um, or, or, ah, the, the complexity
11 here is that we're just marrying datasets potentially
12 housed by different agencies, so we would have to
13 take, we would have to get from OATH, that the data
14 you're talking about, meaning was the fine raised,
15 etcetera. So I don't want to sit here and say like
16 yes, absolutely, this is a home run slam dunk. But
17 this does seem quite achievable and, um, now that I
18 understand the, the purpose and the context, um, can
19 be more thoughtful about how to achieve it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. I
21 appreciate that and look forward to working with you
22 offline.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Great.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And, and that's why
25 I have a legislation to create a single act to, to

1 deal with a lot of these issues. So, ah, anyway,
2 um...

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Even better,
5 thank you, Chair Holden. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Um, just, um, I
7 just want to go over a couple of things with, um, a
8 couple of questions on, ah, Intro, ah, 2158, um,
9 which is obviously a local law to amend the New York
10 City Charter in relation to designating a geospatial
11 information officer. Did, did you try to hire
12 someone, ah, a while ago, a GIS officer?

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I did. Ah, this was
14 at the very beginning. We had a great candidate who
15 ended up backing out. This was at the very beginning
16 when I took over, like almost two years ago. Um,
17 then COVID happened. Um, we actually now, as I
18 think, um, Robin mentioned, are finally in the
19 process of hiring a chief GIS officer, which I'm
20 really excited about, um, and it's actually very well
21 timed because, um, we are about to embark on a
22 massive overhaul of the city's GIS system and, ah, to
23 bring it up to I think is modern standards, so NexGen
24 GIS, ah, and we're working a company called Esri,
25 which is really a leader in that space. Actually the

1
2 CEO of Esri was in my office today and we were just
3 talking about it. He was in from California. So,
4 um, we're gonna go full throttle on upgrading the
5 city's GIS systems, and I agree a hundred percent
6 that there should be a cheap GIS officer at the
7 agency. My quibble with the bill, and I feel like we
8 could probably handle this offline among staff if,
9 if, if it's OK with you, is the way that it's written
10 now is says, one, that that person has to be a deputy
11 commissioner, and then, two, it limits the number of
12 deputy commissioners that the agency, my agency, can
13 have to four or five. I have more deputy
14 commissioners than that now, just because the
15 portfolio of the agency is so large. So totally
16 agree with the spirit and intent of the legislation.
17 Just want to work on those two wording areas.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I want to bring in,
19 'cause it's his bill, I want to bring in, ah, Council
20 Member Levin to, I think he has some questions, ah,
21 on the bill.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure thing.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Chair,
24 um, and, ah, thank you, Commissioner, um, I, I
25 greatly appreciate, um, your remarks, and, um, in a

1 lot of ways it lines up with, um, what, um, we've
2 been talking about, and I think if you can stay on
3 for a few minutes after I, ah, answer your questions
4 you'll probably hear from Al Leidner, and I don't
5 know if Wendy Dorf is on, on the Zoom call as well,
6 but the folks that I've been working with for, for a
7 long time on this legislation, and it's, it, it, it's
8 clear to me that, you know, we're reading out of the
9 same playbook, so that's, that's very good. And I, I
10 just also want to acknowledge Gale Brewer who, um,
11 has been, ah, you know, kind of holding my hand
12 through, understanding, ah, um, GIS issues, ah, for
13 the last 12 years, so I just want to thank you for
14 that. Um, ah, and, ah, so, so I just want to be
15 clear that so, so you see the legislation as being,
16 um, ah, helpful towards your, um, aims, not
17 withstanding those two issues that you just
18 mentioned. The, the legislation could be useful, um,
19 in codifying, I think, ah, some of your, ah, ah
20 objectives that I think you're moving towards anyway.
21 Is that, is that true?

22
23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Absolutely. I think
24 that we both agree that there is so much that we can
25 do with GIS data to one, be more transparent, and

1
2 two, better serve New Yorkers generally. So right
3 now the, a lot of the GIS data in the city is silent.
4 So it lives inside an agency. But you can't map
5 different data sources on top of each other, and
6 being able to do that is incredibly powerful, and so
7 the whole point of this upgrade of the GIS system, or
8 the larger vision is to be able to allow interagency
9 sharing of GIS data and to be able to share much of
10 that with the public in a streamlined and modern and
11 easy to use way. The implications for open data of
12 this initiative are also massive, so I am fully
13 supportive of the spirit of this bill for sure. I
14 was delighted to see it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Wonderful. Um,
16 ah, do, have you spoken with OEM? Have they, ah,
17 are, have, have they weighed in at all with you on
18 the bill?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I have not
20 personally spoken to OEM, no, about this one. But I
21 don't, I don't see how creating a technology platform
22 for GIS could be controversial in 2021. I mean...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I would expect
24 that they would, that they would be supportive, is my
25 guess. I just want to make sure.

1
2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: [laughs] Especially
3 after what we've been through, you know, the past
4 year and a half with, with COVID data and apping,
5 like that really brought that to, brought the, the
6 power of, of GIS to the fore.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Oh, for sure, for
8 sure. I, I go to the city COVID map, ah, every week
9 to see what, what, um, what communities, what ZIP
10 codes are, are lagging behind in terms of vaccination
11 rates. I mean, it's, you know, just as a small
12 example. Um, have, when you mentioned, um, you know,
13 the need to have, um, you know, that, that, um,
14 interconnectivity with datasets, um, have you, um,
15 ah, were you able to see any limitations in the
16 city's response to COVID, or more recently in the
17 storm, ah, the, the, the, ah, Hurricane Ida or Henri
18 that, that, um, that were there limitations, um, to
19 the city's response because of that siloed nature of
20 data?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, I was not
22 deeply involved in the response to Ida, so I don't
23 want to speak to limitations. Um, but what I can
24 tell you is not controversial at all, that being able
25 to see data, real time datasets overlapped with each

1
2 other absolutely one hundred percent enhances
3 responses to anything. So before I came to do it for
4 the previous like decade-plus I worked at NYPD as
5 their, their CIL and I saw first hand how breaking
6 down silos between datasets and being able to view
7 different data, datasets together...

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...[inaudible] NYPD's
10 response to incidents, so I, I do think that there
11 are a lot of possibilities, um, to do, to have real
12 benefits for operational response by having these
13 enhanced GIS capabilities, which is why that's what
14 we're working on now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And Chair, just
16 last question, ah, briefly, and, just because it's,
17 it's, ah, timely. Um, this week it was announced
18 that Google is going to be, um, investing heavily in,
19 in new office space in New York City and they,
20 they've obviously been, um, um, you know, of any
21 company that I, private company that I could think
22 of, um, you know, the, the most ingrained in this
23 conversation and so I just wanted to see if, if
24 we've, if you've been able to have any, um, ah,
25 conversations with, with the team at Google and ways

1
2 in which they can be helpful in, in the, ah, NexGen
3 GIS?

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So we're gonna talk
5 with Google a lot and they've been an extraordinary
6 partner to us. I have not spoken to them directly on
7 GIS, but, um, I appreciate the heads-up tip and
8 definitely will make a point of speaking to Google
9 about GIS, especially as we're just embarking on this
10 now, because we want to build, ah, capability for the
11 future, not just for today, and want to make sure
12 that as we lay the foundation for it we get it right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I can, I just know
14 that a few years back, ah, Al and Wendy invited me to
15 a GISMO conference that was hosted by Google and, you
16 know, they were, um, ah, they, they really are
17 interested, I think, in taking a leadership role
18 [inaudible].

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Cool, thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Good. OK, thank
21 you, Commissioner.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thanks, bye-bye.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council
25 Member Levin. Ah, I just wanted, just to follow up

1
2 on the GIS, ah, Commissioner. Um, we could have
3 warned people that they're in a low-lying area or, or
4 could have been susceptible to obviously the
5 flooding. Ah, I have, um, an underpass that always
6 floods, but with this kind of rain it was under 15
7 feet of water and people were trapped, ah, in their
8 cars. We got, we, luckily the fire department got
9 them out, but we, with GIS we can predict, you know,
10 with a, with a hurricane coming or, or a tropical
11 storm we can predict in real time, you know, what
12 areas will get flooded, or at least, ah, are more
13 prone, and we can warn people. We didn't do that.
14 You know, we gave general areas. We, you know,
15 southeast Queens or whatever, you know, whatever, we
16 give general areas, but we could actually pinpoint
17 exact streets, right, with this.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, I mean, I,
19 again, I wasn't, I wasn't...

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I'm not blaming you.
21 I'm not saying you. I'm just saying...

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I'm not talking
23 about blame. I, I just, I'm not comfortable speaking
24 about the city's response when I wasn't involved in
25 it.

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2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, I'm talking
3 about the technology. I'm not talking about, um, I,
4 I'm just talking about the advantage of GIS
5 [inaudible].

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, certainly
7 there, certainly, um, one of the capabilities that
8 GIS gives you, or having GIS system gives you, is
9 exactly what, what you described. I just, I can't
10 speak to whether or not OEM had those capabilities,
11 what they warned on, etcetera. You know, they, they
12 do, OEM, I'm almost certain has that type of mapping
13 available to OEM. So what, what I'm talking about is
14 building a new citywide GIS system that other
15 agencies can use to share datasets, that being one of
16 them.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right, but that,
18 that's a bit invasive just to, for the lay person
19 who, you know, what benefit does this have and it
20 goes across not only in the pandemic, but it goes
21 across disasters and...

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Without a doubt.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And even storm
24 surges and things like that, that we could warn
25 people in real time and, um, ah, and really save

1
2 lives, I mean, that's what it's about and making, you
3 know, make, obviously we could even, they could even
4 pinpoint what, um, subway, you know, stations would
5 flood, ah, which, ah, you know, and warn people. We
6 saw people wading in four feet of water going down
7 the steps to get a train in the subway, um, and that
8 could be avoided in the future. So I'm just, I'm
9 just letting people know that there are tremendous
10 advantages to this and that's where the city should
11 invest in, ah, especially in light of what happened
12 in, in the last few years with storms and so forth,
13 and pandemics. Um, I, I think, ah, Council Member
14 Yeger has a question.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you very
17 much. Um, I, I'm not sure this is going to really
18 result in a question, but I do want to make the
19 record clear on a couple things. First of all, on
20 the, ah, Intro 2158, Commissioner, I, I share your
21 concern, um, ah, and it's the reason that I'm not
22 cosponsoring it. I honestly don't care who you hire
23 or who you don't hire, but what I don't like is, ah,
24 that the language changed from the current language
25 of that the commissioner may appoint four deputies to

1 shall appoint five deputies, and if you or a future
2 commissioner thinks that you can do the job with one
3 deputies that's fine, with one deputy that's fine by
4 me, too. So I'm not sure why a legislative body
5 thinks we ought to be telling commissioners how many
6 deputies, ah, he or she needs. It seems to me a
7 pretty dumb thing for us to do. So I'm not
8 supporting it for that reason, and, ah, I'm hopeful
9 that it doesn't pass unless the language changes.
10 Um, ah, whether or not you choose to have that kind
11 of position filled, I think that the council does
12 have the authority and, ah, to, to suggest, to tell
13 agencies what kind of work we believe they should do,
14 but not to tell you who to hire and who not to hire
15 and what kind of positions you should have. Um, ah,
16 on Intro 2358, I'm cosponsoring that, ah, Council
17 Member Holden's wise legislation. Um, you know, this
18 is, this is one of those things where I think we've
19 seen, ah, as the city's, you know, under, under Mayor
20 Bloomberg the city wisely created the 311 system. I
21 think, ah, from many respects the, you know, Mayor
22 Bloomberg saw that over time the city had gone from
23 a, a proactive, ah, municipality that went around
24 fixing the things that it's owned to a reactive, ah,

1 where it waited until it broke down, ah, and, and
2 chaos ensued, and so the mayor created the system,
3 wisely, ah, with the technology available then to
4 allow New Yorkers to report what they saw. Um, we're
5 now at the point where the city's actually, ah,
6 without question in my mind, taken a complete hands-
7 off, ah, ah, um, approach to its own infrastructure.
8 The city doesn't care what breaks, what doesn't
9 break. It's not interested in it. If a New Yorker
10 reports it, then maybe one day the city will get to
11 fixing it, or not. So creating a system where New
12 Yorkers can easily get into, ah, reporting without
13 having to go from one website to another website to
14 another website, which actually does happen, you
15 know, the 311 moves you around to different places,
16 ah, I think makes a lot of sense and the ability to
17 track what ultimately happens, um, is probably a good
18 idea. But I'm gonna leave the technological part of
19 that up to you because I don't know enough about it.
20 Um, ah, Intro 1133 is one of those times that, ah, I
21 guess different legislators come to the same
22 conclusion by taking different road. Ah, I agree
23 with the, with the language in the bill, but not for
24 the reasons that Council Member Rosenthal stated. I
25

1 don't know that I could find the time that I've ever
2 seen, um, a victim of aggressive summonsing walk into
3 OATH and say I fixed what I got the summonses for,
4 now please forgive me and OATH said sure, have a
5 great day. Um, I don't know that anybody's ever seen
6 that. So the example of the \$60,000 fine and the
7 boilers I'd love to know more about that. Um, but
8 what I did find last year was city, ah, sent an
9 alphabet soup, ah, litany of quota agents roaming
10 around the city to issue what the United States
11 Supreme Court ultimately held to be an
12 unconstitutional scheme of summonsing and in trying
13 to track down through OATH, ah, which different
14 agencies were issuing these summonses, a lot of that,
15 ah, I learned turned into the sheriff himself having
16 to go through an Excel spreadsheet of summonses, ah,
17 whereas the Department of Buildings we couldn't
18 figure it out because the Commissioner of Buildings
19 didn't bother docketing the summonses, um, and the
20 Commissioner of OATH really couldn't get a straight
21 number of how many summonses were charging, ah, the
22 victimized New Yorkers with this unconstitutional,
23 um, ah, scheme of summonsing. Ah, ultimately it's
24 all worked itself for the most part, but I think that
25

1
2 the idea of getting everything into one place where
3 people can actually see what happens from summonses
4 'til the end, not so much for the point that, um, my
5 colleague brought up, because I think that, ah, and I
6 do want to mention this, the idea that, ah, somebody
7 gets a summons for something being broken and they go
8 and fix it and that it's wrong for them to ask for
9 forgiveness for the penalty that had come about from
10 it being broken in the first place seems to me, ah,
11 to be the wrong approach. The idea about summonsing
12 in this city ought to be encourage people to fix
13 things, not to raise mo from the taxpayers of New
14 York. And what we found in, in the methods that we
15 have done our budgeting is that too often we no
16 longer, we rely less and less on tax revenue and more
17 and more on the punishing summonses that we issue to
18 New Yorkers. So putting that information all in one
19 place, again, as I said, is, um, perhaps, ah,
20 different, different, ah, methods of traveling to the
21 same destination. So, ah, I'm glad...

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: ...to know that you
24 believe that you can get that done relatively
25 quickly. Ah, it's not rocket science, as you said,

1 but, ah, I believe even if it were you could probably
2 get it done. So I'm not leaving you with any
3 questions other than to wish you a Chag Sameach, ah,
4 but I just wanted to, ah, ah, have some of those on
5 the record. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you. Chag
8 Sameach to you, too.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you,
10 Commissioner.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council
12 Member Yeger. I see Council Member Vallone has his
13 hands up.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you, Chair
16 Holden and to the council members. Good to see you,
17 Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good to see you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: So, I mean,
20 Chair Holden's been, been pushing these, ah,
21 conversations for modernizing and getting to the
22 point that we all seem to want to be, which is the
23 next generation, and you just said yourself, you
24 know, you're looking forward to the interagency
25 connection of all this and, you know, you've got, you

1
2 see the bills coming in different forms all kind of
3 leading us to that path, but like Chair Holden and
4 Council Member Rosenthal said, maybe we can do
5 without legislation. But what I'm not hearing from
6 you and maybe you can clarify is like a timeline. Do
7 you see this happening, this vision that you've been
8 talking about since we've having these hearings about
9 the next generation and that interagency, and it, it
10 sounds so tantalizing and it's what we want that
11 extra speed, and we want to be able, like Chair
12 Holden said, when it's emergencies get, you know, get
13 our constituents' information and not rely on these
14 ridiculous weather people that tell me at 7 o'clock
15 at night that the rain is coming tomorrow and we all
16 get flooded at 10 o'clock at night. So, you know,
17 there's gotta be a way that we can protect a little
18 bit better with the technology apps. I just wanted
19 to give you maybe another opportunity on your vision
20 of when that would happen.

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: And, and when do
23 you see that coming?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Absolutely. So I,
25 um, expect to get final budget approval and contract

1
2 in place, ah, in the next maybe two-three weeks,
3 which is fantastic. And then, ah, phase one is gonna
4 be fixing, um, 311, which is something important that
5 Chair Holden and, um, Chair Dromm brought to my
6 attention, which is in the 311 system if you're, if
7 you're not putting in a street address, you're
8 putting in like a park address, like a place in park
9 or on a highway the GIS system sometimes is
10 imprecise. So we're gonna fix that. That will be
11 fixed like, I would say, two months from when this
12 gets approved. But in terms of like the, the rip and
13 replace and build a new GIS system you can see that
14 in 2022. In calendar year 2022 the City of New York
15 will have certainly the foundations of a brand new
16 NexGen GIS system in place. And then what will
17 happen is over time, like as agencies add more layers
18 and maps, ah, and data to it, it just grows and grows
19 and becomes even more powerful. But the City of New
20 York will have a new NexGen GIS system in calendar
21 year 2022. Oh, I think you're on mute.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Sorry, one of
23 the guys was going back and forth. But, but that's
24 where the, like you just threw in at the end the
25 stuff that drives, I mean, whatever, whatever hearing

1
2 I'm on, when I hear the interagency layering and not
3 being in control of what that means always drove me
4 crazy, because it then becomes something out of your
5 hands because other agencies are putting layers on
6 top. Will you be in control of the growth of the
7 next generation so that as the layering and as it
8 evolves it will still go through DoITT? Or is it
9 going to grow into [inaudible] each agency is gonna
10 have?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So, so here's the
12 thing. I won't own the data, right? So each agency
13 has their own data. And what each agency will be
14 able to do is contribute data and, and layers and
15 maps to the citywide NexGen GIS system. And so
16 your...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Shouldn't it be
18 through, shouldn't that be through your, it seems
19 like there's that just, ah, open the door for a
20 little bit of confusion or, or how who's in control
21 of what. I would think that you as the commissioner
22 of the agency that should somehow be in charge of
23 that layering so that there's always a central
24 guiding agency over this. It just seems to be
25 [inaudible] two years from now we'll be having a

1 conversation, wait a minute, DOT just put, Parks just
2 put, but we didn't know they put it on and in fact it
3 just gets, seems to be a little bit, seems like
4 everything should be going through you.

5
6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I understand that
7 point.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I'm, I'm happy
9 that the next budget in the next couple we're going
10 to start seeing changes. But if you can, ah,
11 especially with the transition with the new council
12 coming in, I think this progress will be very helpful
13 as to where we are today, two weeks from now, and as
14 the vision of the next, the next crew comes in so we
15 don't have [inaudible]. But, thank you, Chair Holden
16 and thank you, Commissioner.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Council
18 Member Vallone. By the way, I just want to echo what
19 you just said about we get information, we're up
20 during the storm, during the, ah, the wee hours,
21 getting information from the City Council as to
22 what's happening. We get also, ah, from the city.
23 But it was actually after the fact.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Right.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, you know, people
3 were trapped, or people were cut off. So it needs to
4 be in real time. But we need actually something that
5 predicts, you know, that we can stay away from this
6 area, or, you know, before, hours before, days before
7 we know that a storm is coming, avoid this area. Or
8 if you're in this area get out. And, you know,
9 pinpoint, that's what I'm saying, so it's very
10 important to get in real time, or even predict, which
11 we'll hear about later on with some of the advocates
12 talking about this. But, um, that, that's essential.
13 We, we, we have to be able to, to get the information
14 and, and actually predict where the problem area is
15 going to be, whether it's in our streets or subways,
16 or during a pandemic and, and tracking it. So, um,
17 thank you, Council Member Vallone and, um, I saw the
18 little furry friend that you have, little Daisy? Is
19 that Daisy over there? OK. Daisy doesn't have a
20 question, so we'll move on. Um, I just want to, ah,
21 Commissioner, I want to talk about, um, the, the
22 bill, ah, my bill, 2358, ah, which would create a
23 centralized mobile application. I know you have some
24 concerns about that, massive project, a lot of money.

1 creating it, the, the big difficulty is just
2 organizing it, and I think it's also achievable,
3 but, um, will require an interagency effort.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah, you know, I
6 did speak to companies that have this, that, that
7 have done it for other cities and states, and, and
8 even countries around the world, so, I mean,
9 obviously New York City with all the agencies and all
10 the, you know, there's so much information but we
11 never, many people have trouble, you know, finding it
12 and getting it and, and coordinating it and receiving
13 the services. So anything we can do with technology
14 to make it easier, I think it should be looked at.
15 And, yes, a vendor would have to probably be called
16 in. But, um, I think it, it, where, you know, if we
17 can study some of the cities that are using it, have,
18 have an app like that, that could solve a lot of
19 problems. Ah, we should look into, you know, and,
20 and again, yeah, I don't know if DoITT can, you have,
21 you have a platform now, but, um, certainly looking
22 at how to make our lives easier in New York City
23 using technology, that's the, really the topic of
24 this hearing, ah, where it will make our, our lives
25 easier and safer with technology. So, um, ah, the,

1
2 yeah, there are risks that we talk about. Um, I
3 think Helen, you have, Helen Rosenthal, Council
4 Member Rosenthal has another question.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes. Thank
6 you so much, Chair Holden. Um, can you hear me all
7 right?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We can.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, OK, great.
10 Um, Chair Holden, I, I want to make sure I
11 understand, um, the intent of your bill and, and sort
12 of what the commissioner is saying, because I, I
13 think this is just such a great idea, it would be so
14 helpful to residents, are you suggesting that there
15 could be a way so someone could input, say, their
16 home address and learn, and sorry to be obsessed with
17 violations, but learn what each agency is doing at
18 that address? So in other words, we often see that
19 at a particular address, um, there are violations
20 being issued from DEP, DOH, um, HPD, and DOB, the
21 fire department, etcetera, but you can never see,
22 especially for DO, except for DOB and HPD, you can't
23 see whether or not these things are ever addressed,
24 whether or not an inspector goes out, or, um, whether
25 or not it gets fixed. Is that what you're both

1 talking about, having the capacity to look by address
2 to see what all agencies are doing?

3
4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: My understanding of
5 it, and what I was responding to was something a
6 little different, or a lot different. It was just
7 having a digital catalog of all the different, um,
8 agency websites you can go to...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...to get a requested
11 service.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Got it. All
13 right, never mind then [laughs], because I've been
14 talking about this idea with, ah, we have a task
15 force through the Department of Buildings where we
16 pull together all the agencies, DEP, DOH, and we've
17 noticed that DEP and DOH don't even, you can't even
18 look up anything by address to see what they're
19 doing. Um, so I don't want to hijack the
20 conversation, but another time I'd love to talk to
21 you about, talk with you about the feasibility of
22 that, or Council Member Holden will expand his
23 legislation to include that [laughs]. Thank you so
24 much.

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 57
2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Again, this is, you
3 know, the sky's the limit with technology.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah. You, you
6 could, um, you could do a lot of things with this.
7 You could pay property taxes. You could, um, pay a
8 speeding ticket. I mean, there's, there's, the, you
9 know, possibilities are endless.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Got it.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You know, it's one-
12 stop shopping, let's say. It's pulling, it's pulling
13 together so many agencies and so much information.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, I just want to
15 make sure I'm understanding. It's not rebuilding...

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, these are all
17 existing digital services [inaudible].

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Think, and think of
19 in consolidating them...

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yeah.

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: ...into one easy to
22 serve platform where you can find it, yeah. Cool.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But it's making it
24 easier for people, 'cause right now it's impossible
25 to find all this stuff. I mean, you have to really

1
2 spend hours and hours and days and still can't find
3 it. So that's all we're saying here is let's try to
4 design this where it's easier. But, you know, Helen,
5 the, the sky's the limit. Again, you, all the, you
6 know, I, I meet with a lot of companies that, that
7 say they're doing it now, and we could do it in New
8 York City.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah, that's
10 amazing.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So all I'm asking...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
13 Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: That's all I'm
15 asking for, all right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
17 much, yep.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Um, I see, are
19 there any further questions? Um, I guess we've gone
20 through most of it. So, ah, no other questions from
21 council members?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, I don't see any
23 more questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK. Well, thank
25 you, Commissioner. Thank you for all you do and, ah,

1 looking forward to obviously the, the GIS and, ah,
2 and improvements on 311, and I'm always in contact
3 with you about 311, 'cause I use it a lot. Every day
4 I use it, five, six times. I can't walk out,
5 outside, you know, exercise, without seeing things
6 that I have to report to 311 and, ah, anything we can
7 make, you know. By the way, let me just, I'll give
8 you feedback on the photograph. I don't know, um,
9 you know, you allowed a 311, you know, photographs
10 for let's say parking violations. That I've seen, I
11 don't why, but I'm seeing such a quicker response,
12 ah, almost immediately, ah, sometimes within an hour.
13 When you add a photograph, I told my constituents,
14 when you add a photograph, let's say somebody parked
15 at a hydrant or somebody parked in a crosswalk, it's,
16 we're getting quicker attention on it and, ah, so I
17 think that, that's definitely helped, and certainly,
18 ah, your groundbreaking text to 911 has been, has
19 been a, a lifesaver, um, for so many people. So I
20 just want to thank you on that one. I do thank you
21 because you did it on time, even during a pandemic,
22 so at the beginnings of the pandemic you did that.
23 So thanks, Commissioner, again, looking forward to
24
25

2 working with you on some of these bills and, ah, some
3 more bills in the future. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK, I'm gonna turn
6 it back to, ah, our counsel, committee counsel,
7 Irene.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. We
11 will now turn to public testimony. I will be calling
12 groups of panelists. When your name is called a
13 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant
14 at Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin after
15 setting a timer. We ask each panelist to limit their
16 testimony to five minutes. Council members will have
17 an opportunity to ask questions after each panelist
18 has completed testimony. I would like now to welcome
19 our first panelist to testify. We will be hearing
20 testimonies from Ms. Wendy Dorf and Alan Leidner from
21 Geospatial Information System and Mapping
22 Organization, Professor Sean Ahearn, and Mr. Zhi Keng
23 He from BetaNYC. Ms. Dorf?

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 WENDY DORF: Um, this has been an
3 incredible, ah, afternoon for me. I almost feel like
4 a preacher to the choir now because I've been an
5 advocate with Alan Leidner for an enhanced GIS, ah,
6 applications and, ah, and, ah, data sharing and
7 security issues for the mapping in the City of New
8 York. And, ah, it seems today that we have mass in
9 agreement on that issue. But I, I will, I would like
10 to anyway discuss my career with GIS and, ah, to say
11 that, ah, this is probably one of the best days I've
12 actually ever had in looking forward to the future of
13 this technology. Um, I am a director of GISMO. UM,
14 I began my career in city government 35 years ago.
15 I, I worked for 35 years, including six years as a
16 legislative analyst at the City Council Finance Unit,
17 and 21 years of service at DEP, where I directed
18 mapping of the city's water supply system and worked
19 on the development of New York City's base map. I
20 directed infrastructure mapping at the Emergency
21 Mapping and Data Center following the 9/11 attack.
22 Ah, since then I consulted for [inaudible] Graphics,
23 the GIS firm, Parson [inaudible] for [inaudible] and
24 a structure engineer firm, and currently I serve on
25 the board of directors of GISMO and president, and

1 I'm president of New York City, New York City
2 Geocast. I am engaged in an international project of
3 the Open Geospatial Consortium to develop a gain in
4 model for [inaudible] structures. While working at
5 New York City DEP in the mid 1980s I was tasked with
6 an effort to manage a project to digitize and create
7 a 6000-mile network of the city's water mains. The
8 budgetary justification for mapping the accurate
9 location of water mains was to coordinate planning
10 and operations, and also to facilitate design and
11 construction to reduce excess cost incurred by delays
12 in construction. Further the city was able to locate
13 a water main break rapidly. Property damage and
14 payments associated with damages could be reduced.
15 This could only be accomplished with a network map of
16 water mains made possible with the use of geospatial
17 information systems. The successful implementation
18 of the water map for operations at DEP convinced the
19 managers to fund a citywide sewer map layer. New
20 York City is one of the very few cities in the world
21 that has digital maps of its water and sewer systems.
22 I was in charge of underground infrastructure mapping
23 of the World Trade Center site and worked with DEP,
24 DDC, MTA, Port Authority, Con Edison, Empire City
25

1 Subway, etcetera. I collected maps of different
2 scales and media and supervised a team of GIS
3 technicians and engineers assigned to align and
4 layer, align and layer the maps for use by the
5 responders as they navigated the World Trade Center
6 site. It took several weeks to bring all of this
7 information together, but it enabled us to discover a
8 buried tank of freon gas threatened by underground
9 fires and enabled us to take measures to avoid the
10 release of phosgene, or mustard gas. Since 9/11 I
11 have been working on the development of an accurate,
12 integrated underground infrastructure map for first
13 responders. Since 9/11 we have canvassed colleagues,
14 interviewed city guys, executives, had presentation
15 to utility representatives, etcetera, all of whom
16 agreed that this initiative is critical for emergency
17 response and for development of New York, New Yorkers
18 as the premiere, premiere smart city. The project
19 had been stalled due to lack of funding. In the past
20 year, Alan Leidner and I joined a team at NYU CUSP to
21 compete for an NSX Civic Innovation Challenge Grant
22 to support community-based solutions to disaster
23 resilience. We interviewed more than 40
24 stakeholders, including city agency and utility
25

1 [inaudible] with city leaders. Two very different
2 communities were selected as pilot locations. The
3 stakeholders agreed to share infrastructure data to
4 develop security measures for storing the data. Our
5 team received the NSF award on September 21, this
6 week, 20 years after 9/11. The grant provides our
7 city with an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate
8 the value of utility data sharing in response to...

9
10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 WENDY DORF: ...anticipated potential
12 disasters from climate change. City leadership and
13 direction will be needed to ensure that the
14 demonstration project will provide guidance in
15 developing a resilience plan. Our efforts in
16 advancing the use of GIS for infrastructure has been
17 seriously impeded by lack of leadership, lack of
18 planning, and difficulties with coordination between
19 city infrastructure agencies and utilities. Yet
20 recent analysis has shown that city infrastructure
21 agencies and utilities could save billions of dollars
22 by having complete, accurate, and interoperable
23 infrastructure data available. Interoperable utility
24 data is also critical for disaster planning and, and
25 response. I support amendments to, ah, to city, to

1 [inaudible] DoITT of the City Charter as follows:

2 The appointment of a deputy commissioner who serves

3 as the city's chief geospatial information officer;

4 the establishment of a GIS steering committee

5 comprised of agency leaders and other experts; a

6 requirement that city, the city produce and keep up

7 to date a GIS strategic plan; a requirement that

8 spatial data connecting most of the city's open data

9 be standardized, interoperable, and easy to use; and

10 the establishment of an underground infrastructure

11 steering committee comprised of representatives from

12 city infrastructure agencies and private utilities;

13 provide the improvement of utility data so it can

14 quickly be accessed and used during routine

15 operations and emergencies. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you so much

17 for that. And, ah, OK, we, we're gonna, we're gonna

18 ask questions after we have all the panelists, ah, on

19 this group. OK, um, Irene, call the next, ah, OK.

20 [inaudible].

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I apologize, I was on

22 mute.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK.

24

25

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 66
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all, Ms.
3 Dorf, for your testimony. Now we will be calling on
4 Mr. Leidner to testify.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 ALAN LEIDNER: OK. Um, my deepest thanks
7 to the council for considering this legislation. I'd
8 like to recognize the efforts of IT Chairman Holden
9 and Council Member Steven Levin. By the way, I asked
10 Steve about, ah, digital twins. He's an expert on
11 it. And Ben Kallos. Borough President Gale Brewer
12 has also been a GIS advocate and supportive for the
13 past 30 years. He's been invaluable to us. I'd also
14 like to extend special thanks to Elizabeth Adams,
15 chief of staff to Council Member Levin. Um, a bit
16 about my background. I worked for New York City
17 government for 35 years and led the development of
18 the city's GIS base map with Wendy Dorf. In
19 subsequent years I served as the city's geospatial
20 information officer, or GIO, and directed the
21 emergency mapping and data center following 9/11. I
22 continue to work as a GIS consultant with NYU and
23 with the Open Tier Spatial Consortium. Um, I'd like
24 to just make a little remark about some of the
25 testimony that's gone on so far. Love the idea of

1
2 NexGen GIS. Ah, Commissioner Tisch, congratulations.
3 We love and we'll help in every way we possibly can.
4 But I would say that in terms of contemplating who
5 will lead the GIS effort, as an assistant
6 commissioner at DoITT and GIO of the city for five
7 years, I can tell ya, it's very difficult to get
8 things done when you're trying to deal with 50 other
9 city agencies from a position of being an assistant
10 commissioner. The deputy commissioner position puts
11 you in position to actually talk toe to toe with your
12 counterparts in other agencies. Um, and, ah, I would
13 also, um, mention that, um, that the problem with
14 city GIS right now is not that the layers can't be
15 overlaid, because we have the geo support system that
16 City Planning did and because we have the base map at
17 the Department of Environmental Protection, ah,
18 Finance, and DoITT manages, so that all the city
19 agencies have these tools. They create their data,
20 so that they fit on a common base map with common
21 location data. The real problem has been that we
22 can't get people from the different agencies to talk
23 to each other or to coordinate their activities, and
24 that's why we were pushing so hard for a GIO and for
25 a steering committee for GIS that meets multiple

1 times a year. You cannot do without that kind of
2 collaboration across city agencies into the private
3 sector and utilities, you know, without having that
4 kind of structure and that kind of [inaudible]. So
5 to go on from there, geospatial, ah, information
6 systems are based on the use of location information,
7 such as street name and address, latitude and
8 longitude, and elevation. Most people are familiar
9 with GIS through maps that they use over the
10 internet. Many think that GIS is just a pretty
11 picture. They do not recognize that GIS is a
12 combination of IT and the sciences of geography and
13 geology. They fail to understand that behind every
14 map there are layers upon layers of data
15 applications, algorithms, and analysis. So it's just
16 not a pretty picture only. But GIS is even more than
17 that. If all city agencies used the same
18 standardized location data, which New York City now
19 does, if they place their facilities and operating
20 information on the same base map, then all the data,
21 regardless of its source, regardless if Google owns
22 it or who stores it, all that data can be integrated
23 with the right telecommunications, you can, that's
24 known as federated data, you can bring it together in
25

1 a snap. So when you were talking, when Helen
2 Rosenthal, my council person, was talking about
3 bringing together all complaint information and
4 violations information, that can be done now, because
5 all that data is collected with, um, a geo support
6 system and on the base, ah, so that it is all
7 compatible. You just have to link the agencies. You
8 have to get the agencies to talk to each other. And
9 that's where we fail because we haven't had
10 leadership, frankly, over the last number of years.
11 Um, it's the GIS super power to break down those data
12 silos and it was never more in evidence than as Wendy
13 mentioned from 9/11, when we integrated hundreds and
14 hundreds of layers of data from 50 different
15 agencies, federal, state, local, utilities, all on
16 the base map, all using the geo support system. So
17 it's been done. It was done, you know, for 9/11 and
18 it's been done since then. We just have to perfect
19 it, ah, with a more advanced system and with
20 collaboration and leadership. I'd like to point out
21 maybe a couple of more instances where GIS has been
22 virtually...
23

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 ALAN LEIDNER: Oh, God. Well, let me
3 keep going, at least through these examples, which is
4 West Nile virus. Using the city's base map, building
5 layer and catch basin infrastructure, a team of
6 Hunter College and Department of Health experts built
7 the map that predicted where West Nile was likely to
8 infect humans based on dead bird locations and
9 mosquito traps, and showed the city where to take
10 action. This led to a sharp reduction in cases and
11 in deaths. COVID may be a failure because the city
12 was not prepared to rapidly capture location
13 information for those testing positive for COVID and
14 subsequently interactions with the health system.
15 The city has the capability of mapping to the address
16 points while keeping personal health information
17 secure. As a result, the city's efforts were not as
18 effective as they could have been. Sandy - New York
19 City OEM using GIS had established evacuation zones
20 along the coast in case of a major storm surge.
21 While this certainly safeguarded people, major
22 institutions did not pay attention. While Sandy's
23 10-foot surge was known about two days in advance,
24 the Con Ed substation at East 14th Street was knocked
25 out and the five-level basement of NYU Medical Center

1 was flooded, causing more than 1 billion dollars in
2 damages. Urban street flooding, our most recent case
3 - using GIS city agencies had developed, it exists
4 today, it's online, a street flooding map that showed
5 low-lying areas across the city using street building
6 elevation and sewer layers. Using hydraulic
7 modeling, they identified areas where flooding was
8 expected, um, ah, should there be a downpour that
9 exceeded 3.5 inches per hour. They had anticipated
10 this. The problem was that the information had not
11 been operationalized, put into alerts, um,
12 notifications and actions by city first responders.
13 Therefore, 11 people drowned in basement apartments
14 who were completely unaware of the danger, other than
15 receiving generic warnings about flooding. Um, I
16 suppose I can end there. I have the rest written. I
17 would end with this statement. If we follow through
18 with Commissioner Tisch's, ah, plan to, ah, advance
19 GIS in the city, we have an inside track on being
20 able to use breakthrough technologies like digital
21 twins, artificial intelligence, machine learning, big
22 data analytics, the internet of things, the evolution
23 of sensor technologies, underground infrastructure,
24 data integration, and advanced uses of mobile
25

1 devices, and that's just a few. GIS is [inaudible]
2 and every one of them and the data generated because
3 it's in, ah, New York City GIS, can be integrated.
4 So let's push this as hard as we can, as smart as we
5 can, for the benefit of the people who live in this
6 city. Thank you very much for listening.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you so much,
9 Al. I'm gonna have some questions, but let's go on
10 to the next panelist.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr.
12 Leidner, for your testimony. Now we will be calling
13 on Professor Ahern to testify.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 SEAN AHEARN: Well, good afternoon, Chair
16 Holden and Borough President Brewer. Um, this is a
17 really exciting, ah, development to meeting and it's
18 a pleasure to be here. Um, I, ah, am a professor at
19 Hunter College, director of the Center for Advanced
20 Research of Spatial Information, and I was actually
21 on New York City GIS steering committee in 1995, and
22 as was Al and Wendy. We sat around with 15 or 20
23 other agencies and we talked about creating the first
24 base map for New York City. And that contract came
25 out of DEP and my lab actually implemented it. And

1 we hired a photogrammetric firm and we did the
2 quality assurance and project management. And we
3 managed, our lab managed the update and maintenance
4 of the city for 2001-2004 before we turned it over to
5 DoITT. Um, I also worked on the management of the
6 conversion of the sewer maps, 150,000 as-built
7 diagrams into a seamless, logical, ah, sewer map
8 which Al alluded to, where we can now know what the
9 capacity of every catch basin is, so we can predict
10 where it's going to flood in the city. All of these
11 components add together to a whole. You know, we've
12 talked about data and data layers. Well, modeling is
13 the next step and that's precisely what Al referred
14 to when he said a model was created to look at where
15 the city was vulnerable. And when we talk about
16 technologies there's about 5 billion square feet in
17 New York City. We have the elevation of every square
18 foot in New York City using a technology called
19 Lidar. Now, when we got together in 1995 we had all
20 the agencies and we had them all sort of dial in.
21 What do you need? What can we produce that will meet
22 your needs? What's happening now in New York City,
23 and I'll just use this because it's the simplest,
24 clearest win, is you've got separate agencies
25

1 ordering citywide datasets like Lidar without any
2 stack and without any discussion with anybody else in
3 the city as to how those datasets can be used. It's
4 a huge waste. They're spending hundreds of thousands
5 of dollars a year, sometimes more, and they actually
6 don't know how other agencies could take advantage of
7 those datasets. So if we had that steering
8 committee, which is proposed by 2158, we should clear
9 all New York City acquisitions of data through that
10 committee, so that everybody weighs in and says, you
11 know what, if you could increase the resolution I can
12 get a better handle on flooding in that area, and
13 there's kinds of examples like that. So that's a
14 very easy one. Um, so I'm obviously very much in
15 favor of this, and in terms of the five deputies that
16 somebody brought up, we don't want a cowboy with all
17 hat and no cattle. You do need five deputies. This
18 is a complex system and it's difficult to manage. So
19 I'm totally in favor of that. Um, there was a
20 discussion about well, DoITT is going to be
21 centralized, but these agencies have the data. Well,
22 yes, that's the model. Agencies are stewards of
23 their own data. DoITT centralizes that data and
24 takes the most recent copy and integrates all of
25

1
2 those agency data layers, and they used for all kinds
3 of modeling. And separately, yeah, those agencies
4 can do some modeling, but when you bring them
5 together it becomes very powerful and then we can
6 begin to deploy some of the new technologies like
7 artificial intelligence, although beware of that, be
8 careful there, um, to create some city technologies,
9 where we can, you know, we can predict, we can
10 manage, we now have real-time capabilities, we have
11 sensor networks, so it's really a new dawn in terms
12 of the type of data that we have access to and the
13 technologies and way in which we can integrate it to
14 create models to help manage our city better. And,
15 um, I think that's all I'll say today. I appreciate
16 the time and I'm happy to answer any questions
17 afterwards.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, go ahead,
21 I'm sorry.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Professor,
23 for your testimony. Now we'll be calling on Zhi Keng
24 He to testify.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 ZHI KENG HE: Hello, I'm Zhi Keng He.
3 I'm glad to be here with my professors and top GIS
4 experts, ah, as I got my undergraduate, um, my
5 undergraduate at Hunter College, and I would like to
6 thank you and, ah, BP Brewer and council members to
7 allow me to testify today, and also introducing this
8 law. Um, so today I'm speaking on, um, behalf of
9 BetaNYC as their assistant director of, ah, the lab.
10 Um, we're a nonprofit organization working to improve
11 the lives of New Yorkers, um, through, ah, civic
12 tech, design, and data. Um, at BetaNYC we have a
13 fellowship program and host events to train our
14 students, the community boards, and the general
15 public to use open data. And as new datasets get
16 released, um, the amount of spatial data has also
17 increased, and linking records by place has always
18 been a top prior of, of community members to bring
19 [inaudible], um, um, delivery of services, and
20 maintenance of infrastructure. So we fully support
21 this bill to create the position of a geospatial
22 information officer, since its great importance, um,
23 of the government to know, um, not only where, um,
24 what our assets are, but also where our assets and
25 resources can be placed. Um, so I guess most of

1
2 these, ah, most of the points, um, I have written in
3 my testimony, um, have been like said. So I just
4 want to highlight some key points. So, ah, I, I just
5 want to make sure that, um, when this database is
6 created it's well managed and updated. Um, if the
7 dataset, if the datasets do get stale or they're not
8 accurate they're not useful. And the officer must
9 make sure these, um, datasets are updated and
10 maintained by their respective agencies. And I, I
11 think that this point has been already said, but
12 strategy is important, um, so the, the officer must,
13 ah, see and [inaudible] key datasets they deem, um,
14 important, and also make this, these datasets, um,
15 useful, um, and, ah, usable by the community members,
16 um, so maybe in sets of tools and maps, as mentioned
17 before, and, lastly, make sure that the information
18 come in this interagency portal that can be made
19 public, um, made, um, made to be, um, open data. So,
20 um, that's all I have to say, just to keep time on
21 [inaudible] thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, I, I must say
23 this is, ah, we just listened to four panelists with,
24 it's just such an impressive, ah, so impressive, ah,
25 the information was like, I, I'd say, I, I've been in

1 the council almost four years. This is the most, ah,
2 I think impressive panel that I've, I've, I've
3 listened to, and it's exciting to hear. But on the
4 same token it's very frustrating when I hear this
5 was, people were on the steering committees in '95
6 and we're still not doing, we're, we're not taking
7 advantage of the technology, and we're still not
8 learning lessons. So I, I'll put a question out for
9 the four panelists, whoever wants to take it first,
10 but, um, pulling all the agencies together is, is a
11 daunting task. I think we heard that a number of
12 times. Um, and, and I agree. Maybe we do need a
13 number of, ah, deputy commissioner, ah, deputy
14 commissioner and assistant commissioners, but we do
15 need, ah, possibly, though it is complicated, but it
16 hasn't been done yet and it, and, ah, you know, to
17 pull all these agencies together. Ah, sometimes you
18 have to wonder are we capable of doing it, um, with
19 the current structure, and, ah, knowing your
20 expertise I, I hope you will be involved in trying
21 to, with the next administration trying to pull it
22 together. But, um, what, is that the biggest hurdle,
23 just getting this, um, getting all the agencies on
24 board?
25

1 ALAN LEIDNER: I, I guess I can answer
2 that and, and, ah, say that, um, ah, it is a hurdle.
3 It's not overwhelming. When I was assistant
4 commissioner and the GIO all the GIS managers and all
5 the city agencies wanted to come around a table and
6 discuss. GIS is a very social technology. We all
7 also know that we need the data from other agencies
8 and we're always, constantly looking for ways to
9 collaborate and to work together. So that was a very
10 natural thing. It was only when, how shall I say it,
11 leadership started to step away from the idea of
12 collaboration in leadership. That was an actual
13 thing that happened over 10 years, I, I would say
14 over the last 10 years, ah, that everyone started to
15 lose connections to each other and there was less
16 collaboration and there was [inaudible] GISMO
17 basically took over our role of citywide coordination
18 on a number of, of major initiatives, like the
19 underground infrastructure, because as much as we
20 went to City Hall to say, please, work with us on
21 this and, and you lead this, there was a, a, they
22 declined. So this, hearing this today from
23 Commissioner Tisch is such a, a breath of fresh air.
24 We can do it. We just need the authority to do it.
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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

WENDY DORF: I, I'd like to, ah, make a few comments along those lines, too.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Absolutely.

WENDY DORF: Basically, ah, we, the, we all know each other. The entire community is very, ah, collaborative. Ah, Alan and I and Sean and a number of other people have probably spent the last 20 to 30 years work, ah, trying to, to get exactly what we are all supporting today. I mean, it's really a big day. Alan and I went around and we interviewed every agency in New York City under the auspices of the mayor's office. The DDC called us in. We got all the data and information in terms of what the agencies actually have and hold. But we still couldn't get them to play ball together. And so we, we keep trying and we, now we have an opportunity to work with NYU on a, a pilot project. Two areas of New York City just announced this, one of them is Sunset Park and one of them is east midtown, two very different communities, and what we're hoping is, you know, we could pile in all the information as we, as we study these two areas, ah, underground, ah, ah, and try to use the opportunity

1
2 to introduce new technologies, [inaudible]
3 technologies, and everything else that we can bring
4 to be. We have a year to do it. But we have the
5 team and we actually interviewed almost everybody in
6 New York City. Only one agency, which I'm not gonna
7 mention, didn't come to the table, but all the
8 utilities were there, community leaders, everyone
9 agreed to play in our back yard for this project and
10 we're very excited. It's gonna start November 15 and
11 basically, I mean, this is a city project. We, this
12 is the opportunity to use this project to, to
13 demonstrate how it can be done. Of course, I just
14 want to mention one more thing, that with
15 infrastructure security is a major issue and, um, ah,
16 we've also worked, ah, on some of the variable ways
17 of storing data, and most likely, at least with the
18 substructure the, the only way that we'll probably
19 get by, and it's a good reason in an age of terror,
20 is to have, ah, certain federated, everybody will be
21 together [inaudible] are using the same longitude,
22 latitude, base map, and everything else when needed
23 in an emergency, and everything will be standardized,
24 but the underground data cannot be hosted, I don't
25 think, in one place. As long as we're all in the

1
2 game together and using the same standards it can be
3 called in for whatever is needed. And that's my two
4 cents' worth. I thank you very much. I thank you,
5 Commissioner. I hope we have an opportunity to meet.
6 This is a very special day for the GIS community.
7 Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Wendy.
9 And, and I see we have Council Member Vallone with a
10 question for the panel.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you, Chair
13 Holden. I have never seen a panel with the
14 experience and the guidance, so thank you so much.
15 It seems like it went back to my dad and Speaker
16 Peter Vallone with we're trying to get this done. It
17 seems like has been going on for a little bit.

18 WENDY DORF: [inaudible].

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Which he would
20 have enjoyed, he would have enjoyed listening to your
21 testimony, although it would have been hard to get
22 him to commit to anything technological. I'm still
23 trying to help with emails...

24 WENDY DORF: [laughs]
25

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: ...and printing.

But, you know, one of the tools in our box, 'cause so much of this is wishing and hoping and we're so close and we're excited, but yet we're still. So I, I remember one of the first things I did, ah, when I was on the Aging Committee and I tried to give guidance in the world of guardianship and a lot of common, a lot of city agencies didn't know about it. So I called a special committee and task force of the agencies and the folks, just like yourself. And they came around the table and we revamped Article 81 in guardianship laws. And it seems like something to similar to me here, especially with the pilot programs that you already have up and running to get the agencies [inaudible] and get, ah, Chair Holden and the council members that will be post January, um, a chance to do this, to keep that momentum going. It might be something Chair Holden can do. And it's, it's kind of like it would be in the background. So whether the commissioner, or if it gets done, fine. We can put the task force and the committee to the side. But if it seems to be lagging, 'cause we've been hearing the same testimony for years, and you've been working on this for decades, it might be the

1 spark that keeps the ball rolling. So I just throw
2 that out there so, um, it's something like one of
3 those other tools that we could use, 'cause we can't
4 lose your, your information and guidance and
5 everything that you have been doing. So I just
6 wanted to thank each one of you - Sean, Wendy, Alan,
7 and all the folks who have testified [inaudible].

8
9 WENDY DORF: Thank you.

10 ALAN LEIDNER: You know, maybe I could
11 remark here. Ah, I know we can do this, because you
12 just have to look at 911 and, and, ah, real-time
13 crime and, ah, other NYPD and FDNY and OEM systems,
14 they all depend on GIS. They all have been built and
15 they're all effective. 911, how many lives does 911
16 save on a daily basis? Yet if you don't have
17 accurate mapping of where a complaint or distress
18 call comes from, you know, you don't want to dispatch
19 to a ZIP code. You want to dispatch to a building
20 footprint, to an address point. We can do that. We
21 are doing that. 911 does that magnificently.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Al, how much,
23 how much did we learn after 9/11 how we needed to
24 exchange and upgrade our communications on that and
25 so, so much we learned from one major event that we

2 upgraded immediately so that the communication system
3 between NYPD, FDNY, EMS wasn't all just up on one
4 channel. Um, so we're still growing [inaudible].

5 ALAN LEIDNER: Yes. Thank you, Chair
6 Holden.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Ah, Council Member
8 Levin, you have your hand up. Do you have a question
9 for this panel?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Yes, yes I do, yes
12 I do, Chair. Sorry, my, my 2-year-old is screaming
13 in the background here. But I just want to thank,
14 um, ah, again, especially Wendy and Al and Sean, um,
15 but in particular Wendy and Al who, I was just going
16 back through my old emails. I've been working with
17 them on this stuff since 2013. So I just want to
18 thank you, um, ah, both for, um, [inaudible] really
19 remarkable dedication, um, to, ah, helping...

20 WENDY DORF: [inaudible] as you know and
21 you, you help keeping [inaudible] forward. Thank you
22 very much. You and Elizabeth, really. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Wendy.
24 OK, that's all I wanted to say. Thanks.

25 ALAN LEIDNER: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Ah, I just, one
3 other question of the panel, because any city agency
4 should use this, ah, if anyone it's GIS is DDC. Now
5 you mentioned DDC before. Um, I've had some
6 nightmare stories about sewer projects were, were
7 doing, um, borer samples and please do it at the
8 right spot, and then discovered, um, a mess or
9 pollution or you name it, and the project was stopped
10 and millions of dollars had to be allocated
11 additional, they had to close up the street. So your
12 sewer projects were put on hold with the people with
13 millions of dollars wasted and people, you know,
14 inconvenienced to no end for years. Ah, I'm talking
15 several years where the street opened up and so forth
16 and so on. So can somebody speak to that why, you
17 know, is, is DDC using it?

18 WENDY DORF: [inaudible] No, DDC, no,
19 wait, DDC basically collects a lot of the data from
20 the infrastructure agencies and does the budgeting
21 and everything else. We interviewed many people
22 there. There are things I'm not gonna say in this
23 forum. But basically what we found was the rank and
24 file, once they realized that we weren't just
25 consultants there to tell them what to do gave us an

1 enormous amount of information. They're very
2 dedicated. They knew what all the problems were
3 about data sharing. I mean, we have information, I
4 joke around and say we could write a book better than
5 Robert Moses did, but we won't because we want to, we
6 don't want, we want to continue this and we don't
7 want to, you know, create any conflicts with any of
8 the agencies. But DDC, ah, they have the capacity,
9 um, I don't, you know, I don't, I don't know where
10 the problems are. I think they're actually between
11 the infrastructure agencies and they land at DDC.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, I'll just,
14 Wendy, you're very kind, but, um, I, when you
15 experience people that are allowed to dig up your
16 streets and don't know the history of that area, you
17 know, let's say the one I'm talking about in Middle
18 Village was a garbage dump and they didn't know that,
19 and DDC didn't even do that. I knew that because I
20 know the history of my community. And then they
21 discovered pollution in there, they discovered lead,
22 which I could have told them they probably would have
23 discovered that, and then stop the project. But
24 this, this is information that they could access very
25 easily. Um, and they didn't, and it cost millions,

1 and such an inconvenience to so many homeowners. So
2 I don't have that much patience [inaudible]...

4 WENDY DORF: [laughter]

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...pull punches, but
6 this, you know, GIS is so important that we get
7 moving and, ah, I'll be the next council, so, um, I'm
8 gonna move it forward, whether I'm on Technology or
9 not, but I will certainly, I think this is so
10 important, the topic, nothing is more important, I
11 think, you know, that, that we could do right now is
12 to get this moving and to get, you know, obviously we
13 heard the commissioner say, but it's so, so important
14 that we not only, you know, have the information but
15 that we use it. Um, and that's what, that's what I'm
16 most concerned [inaudible]...

17 WENDY DORF: And talk about the history.

18 Talk about the history.

19 ALAN LEIDNER: Let me just say, so we
20 worked with DDC for about a year. We had those
21 interviews that Wendy mentioned, and also we have the
22 trans, not the transcripts, but the note, detailed
23 notes from those meetings, which are available, you
24 know, and we wouldn't mind sharing them. Ah, we know
25 that there was a GI, a small GIS unit at DDC that was

1 building layers of information for just the reason
2 that you discussed. But we're also aware that about
3 the time we were discontinued from DDC that unit
4 seemed to be disbanded and we haven't heard about it
5 since.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: When was, when was
8 that, Alan?

9 ALAN LEIDNER: This was about two years
10 ago.

11 WENDY DORF: Right before COVID.

12 ALAN LEIDNER: Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: It was, so...

14 WENDY DORF: [inaudible] a few years ago.

15 ALAN LEIDNER: Now we were summarily
16 dismissed after doing those interviews and turning
17 them over, and with a whole game plan, and then the
18 GIS unit was, I guess it was sort of broken up. And
19 so therefore...

20 WENDY DORF: There was a gentleman, ah,
21 there was a gentleman there who we, sort of the
22 expert on history, that's what I thought you were
23 gonna talk about.

24 ALAN LEIDNER: Oh, oh, oh yeah...
25

2 WENDY DORF: [inaudible] ground and he
3 was like put in the corner, and he has information...

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You, you have to
5 know the history of the site before you do anything.

6 WENDY DORF: Absolutely.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And nobody, I mean,
8 you could have googled it, you know, and gotten
9 information on the site.

10 WENDY DORF: [laughs]

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You, it's mind-
12 boggling. I just was...

13 WENDY DORF: It is. You're absolutely
14 correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I, I had...

16 ALAN LEIDNER: I have a DVD...

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: ...[inaudible] only
18 two, because [inaudible] very recent about it
19 disbanding. We need to check on that.

20 ALAN LEIDNER: I have a DVD with about 50
21 layers of historical information about what's under
22 the street from this guy who was shoved into a corner
23 at DDC...

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: [inaudible]

25 WENDY DORF: Especially [inaudible]

2 ALAN LEIDNER: ...and they lost interest
3 in that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, again, we will
5 meet and [inaudible] we have to meet regularly, but
6 this, this is the thing, we have to follow through.
7 Thank you all. We have to move on to the next panel,
8 but we can go on forever.

9 WENDY DORF: Thank you, thank you so
10 much.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you so much.
12 Ah, again, unbelievable panel, ah, that we just, ah,
13 heard from and this, this, um, we have to revisit
14 quickly and, ah, you know, again, we could have used
15 it in the storm, but let, let's make sure we do this,
16 this time, folks. Thank you so much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all. I
18 would like now to welcome our next panel, and we will
19 be hearing from Kathleen Collins and Terence Page.
20 Ms. Collins?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Good, ah, afternoon.
23 I am, um, my name is Kathleen Collins and I'm white
24 woman wearing a blue, blue headphones. Ah, I have
25 brown short hair, and I'm wearing a sleeveless, ah,

1
2 aqua shot, and I am congenital quadruple amputee and
3 a native New Yorker. I would just like to, first
4 all, what I just did with, what you call an audio
5 description of myself and, ah, that's to help people
6 who are either low vision or blind, or who are
7 listening in on a Zoom meeting so they know who is
8 speaking and they can get a picture of the person in
9 their mind. Um, today I would Just Leadership like
10 to remind the New York City Council's Committee on
11 Technology that any technology you implement needs to
12 be accessible to all New Yorkers, including New
13 Yorkers with disabilities. Access means that any act
14 or website must be screen readable, provide closed
15 captioning, which I notice this Zoom meeting does not
16 provide, and I believe it is for free with the, ah,
17 if you have a Zoom paid access, which I believe the
18 city probably has a paid account, so you just have to
19 enable that and should be enabling that at every City
20 Council meeting where you are providing access
21 through Zoom. Um, so as I digress there, um, let's
22 get back to this. OK, provide screen, screen
23 readable, provide close captioning, and allow New
24 Yorkers to enlarge the print. Further, any app or
25 website should be simple to navigate, to use, and

1 should provide voice commands as an option. Also,
2 for people with manual dexterity disability.
3 Finally, the needs of New Yorkers that do not have
4 access to the internet must not be forgotten. Any
5 services and information provided through the
6 internet also must be available to New Yorkers who do
7 not have access to the internet in a variety, variety
8 of accessible formats, such as large print, Braille,
9 and through the use of audio so that people who may
10 not be able to see or be able to read Braille can
11 also, ah, hear the information and services that can
12 be provided. Um, also I noticed that a couple of
13 things that were said here during this meeting, one
14 was about that, ah, one of the last speakers, ah, if
15 I mispronounce your name, I'm sorry, Mr. Zing, ah,
16 Mr. He, but, ah, he pointed that datasets must be
17 usable and we need them to be usable by all the
18 population, also, ah, the person, I'm sorry, Chair
19 Holden, you pointed out the need for real-time
20 information for safety of our New Yorkers and that
21 real-time information needs to be accessible to
22 people with disabilities so they, too, are protected
23 from harm. Um, one other thing. I noticed that, ah,
24 they were talking about how the information that they
25

1 want to provide, I believe it was commissioner, that
2 stated about that they were going to provide the
3 information on data to, ah, the, ah, borough
4 presidents and to the, ah, community boards. But
5 how, and also to the City Council. But also how
6 about reaching out to disability organizations and
7 advocacy groups that represent, ah, people with
8 disabilities, such as my, I belong to a couple of
9 different groups. I belong, I'm a member of the
10 Greater New York Council of the Blind, um, I'm on the
11 board of Disabled in Action, and I am a co-
12 coordinator of Downstate New York Adapt. And I, too,
13 am an attorney. I work for the Port Authority for 30
14 years in litigation. So I know about, ah, a lot of
15 things. You can tap my brain and I'd be happy to
16 help out, and also I have, ah, an accounting
17 background, so I understand money, how it works. So,
18 um, we in the disabled community, you know, we, was
19 have people that are very tech savvy. We have people
20 that do, ah, programming. We have many different,
21 we, we have many backgrounds. So please reach out to
22 us. We are out there and we don't need to, you know,
23 reinvent the wheel. The wheel is there. You just
24
25

2 have to come to us to get the wheel. So please do,
3 and thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Kathy.
5 We're gonna bring some of your suggestions back to
6 the City Council. You made some very, very good
7 points and I thank you for that.

8 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Thank you, and just
9 one other thing, ah, just to take down, ah, email
10 address. It's, ah, dnyadapt@gmail.com.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: OK.

12 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Please reach out to
13 us.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Great.

15 KATHLEEN COLLINS: And we monitor that
16 email all the time, so.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, thank you
18 so much.

19 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for
21 your testimony. The next panelist is Terence Page.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Terence Page?

24 TERENCE PAGE: Hello. Hello, can you
25 hear me?

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 96
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can.

3 TERENCE PAGE: Yes. My name is Terence
4 Page. I am also, I am the president of the Greater
5 New York Council of the Blind and I am also a member
6 of Downstate New York. My partner and I work with
7 Kathleen Collins. And I'd like to echo everything
8 she just said. I don't want to take up much time,
9 but I want you to know that when you are reaching out
10 to various communities and the note she made a point
11 of that you should also make sure that when you're
12 using screen reader technology that it be accessible
13 to everyone. When you develop this program, make
14 sure that your blind and visually impaired workers
15 have the ability to use this software so they are not
16 locked, I'm sorry, locked out of the process and
17 unable to do their jobs. That's what I want to say.
18 Thank you and have a wonderful day. Again,
19 [inaudible] you can reach here, us, at our website,
20 greaternycouncilofthe blind, and thank you, and have
21 a wonderful day.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you, Terence,
24 ah, and Kathleen, we will have, we'll set up a
25 meeting, um, to, to go over, I mean, this is a very,

1 very important issue and, ah, like you said the
2 council should be the leaders on this and, um, so we
3 need your, we certainly need your, ah, your
4 testimony, um, and input. So thank you so much, both
5 Terence and Kathleen for this.
6

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think we should go
8 to our next panelists and our next panel will be
9 Daniel Schwarz, Kathleen Magee, Clayton Banks, and
10 Jose Chapa. Mr. Schwarz?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 DANIEL SCHWARZ: My name is Daniel Schwarz
13 and I am testifying on behalf of the New York Civil
14 Liberties Union. We thank the committee and the
15 council members for holding this hearing and for the
16 opportunity to provide testimony today. We have
17 significant concerns about the digital identification
18 program as laid out in Intro 2305, and opposed to the
19 legislation in its current form. While carefully
20 implemented and nuanced digital ID system may prove
21 worthwhile and beneficial, if done improperly it
22 could have far-reaching ramifications [inaudible]
23 injustice, erode privacy rights, and threaten our
24 civil rights and liberties. Intro 2305 risks the
25 latter by creating a pathway for new tracking

1 capabilities without setting the necessary guard
2 rails and oversight. As currently drafted, the mayor
3 designated city agencies could work in partnership
4 with a financial institution on a digital ID for the
5 [inaudible] report. Mandating a think tank vendor to
6 be the sole partner is problematic at best. To
7 succeed, the focus must be squarely on equity and
8 privacy, not a company's bottom line. Appropriate
9 partners will be experts in cryptography, silo
10 security, open source tech, immigrants' rights, civil
11 rights, and accessibility as just also highlighted
12 from Kathleen Collins and Terence Page. And most
13 importantly, representatives from the communities
14 most affected by such a program, especially those
15 receiving public assistance. Further, any digital
16 identification program must be entirely voluntary,
17 require [inaudible] consent, or for granular control
18 over one's data, and ensure strong privacy
19 protections, guaranteed both by legal and technical
20 safeguards. But the technology is not ready yet.
21 Open standards development is still in process and
22 the city should not fall for proprietary tech
23 developed behind closed doors, forcing cost and
24 vendor lock-ins as experienced in the past.
25

1 Transparent and auditable open standards are the only
2 meaningful path to ensure trust and security.

3 Unfortunately, through the pandemic opaque,
4 exploitive, and discretionary technologies were
5 deployed for digital ID verification. Twenty-one
6 states have procured a facial recognition tool for
7 unemployment insurance processing. The New York
8 Department of Labor is one of them, thereby creating
9 new barriers for people to receive their benefits by
10 requiring the provision of their biometric data to
11 third-party vendors and risking misidentification
12 through a technology that [inaudible] show to have
13 significantly higher error rates for women and people
14 of color. It is incumbent on the council to not
15 repeat these mistakes and ensure such technologies
16 have no place in our city. We urge the committee to
17 not rush the digital ID infrastructure prematurely.

18 If done wrong, it would enable new modes of
19 surveillance and lock people out from much-needed
20 city services. Any steps towards a digital ID system
21 must center equity and privacy protections from the
22 very beginning. And for this it matters who sits at
23 the table and what values undergird the endeavor.

24 Thank you very much.
25

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY 100
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much,
3 Mr. Schwarz, for your testimony. Now I will be
4 calling Ms. Magee to testify.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 CARRIE MAGEE: Good afternoon, council
7 members, Chair Holden. My name is Carrie Magee and I
8 am a legal fellow at the Surveillance Technology
9 Oversight Project. Thank you for allowing me to
10 testify today about Introduction 2305. To put it
11 simply, digital identification solves a problem we
12 don't have. New Yorkers already have to carry photo
13 ID in too many places throughout the city. Rather
14 than expanding the types of ID we have and the number
15 of places we must use it, the council should be
16 rolling back the need for photo ID in public life.
17 Already we have driver licenses, NYC ID, work IDs,
18 student IDs, and many more. Making ID digital will
19 only increase demand for it, until we are ID'd every
20 time we buy groceries, book a theater ticket, or
21 enter a store. These demands will inevitably fall on
22 BIPOC and undocumented New Yorkers, their ID tracked
23 by police, and even ICE. Whether online or locally
24 secured, New Yorkers simply do not need this kind of
25 digital ID. Thus, we urge the Committee on

1 Technology to not pass this Introduction. The draft
2 legislation fails to explain what type of ID it's
3 seeking to investigate. We read the bill as
4 contemplating two discrete use cases, each of which
5 is concerning for the reasons stated below. In the
6 first case, the city may generate a locally stored
7 digital credential, similar to what is used for many
8 sports and cultural events. Such an ID could be
9 presenting on, presented on a phone or smart device,
10 or in, for in-person verification. Alternatively,
11 the legislation could contemplate a remotely
12 verifiable credential that can be used via an
13 internet-enabled portal. These products pose
14 drastically different public policy and civil rights
15 consequences. Creating in-person digital
16 identification will pose significant privacy
17 problems. Iowa's transportation director has already
18 excitedly proclaimed how a digital license could be
19 bound to hunting and fishing licenses, weapons
20 permits, and tax returns. The consolidation of this
21 volume of information as something as immediately
22 personal and is frequently used as a driver's license
23 should scare you. The examples given are just the
24 beginning. Your license could eventually be tied to
25

1 recent purchases, to outcomes of parole-mandated drug
2 testing, to your attendance at a ball game, or on a
3 subway train, or anywhere. The points of personal
4 information that could be tied to this kind of
5 identification are limitless and the consequences
6 could be devastating. Furthermore, by unlocking
7 one's phone to display a digital ID New Yorkers would
8 put themselves at risk. Think of a typical traffic
9 stop where you are asked to provide your license.
10 What if you had a digital license, but you had to
11 unlock your phone to access it? Inherently the
12 system would demand that you unlock your phone and
13 hand it to the police officer. Think of everything
14 in your phone - your texts, your photos, your
15 contacts. Digital ID creates a real risk of exposing
16 New Yorkers to warrantless searches every time an
17 officer asks to see ID. Forgetting your turn signal
18 should not give officer access to your most intimate
19 files. If digital ID is used remotely it could
20 quickly become yet another online tracking tool. The
21 easier we make it for websites to ask for ID the more
22 they'll do it. This provides unprecedented ability
23 to connect our digital and real world identities.
24 That should terrify you. The ability to be anonymous

1 online would evaporate. It's easy to write this off
2 as something not necessary for regular people, but it
3 absolutely is. LGBTQ teenagers looking for resources
4 and information, adults who google medical symptoms
5 in search of whether they need a doctor, and
6 individuals who are already one job and looking for
7 another, those searches could all become tied to your
8 identity, your name, address, income, everything.
9 Digital identification is a slippery slope to never
10 being anonymous in any space ever again. This bill
11 fails to acknowledge the danger that this system it
12 wants to create would pose. New York City
13 surveillance always falls hardest on BIPOC New
14 Yorkers. Digital IDs will be no exception. BIPOC
15 New Yorkers systematically, are systematically
16 surveilled from NYPD surveillance of mosques to being
17 targeted in stop and frisk to the audio surveillance
18 that is Shot Spotter. Expanding digital
19 identification will, no matter your intent, evolve
20 into dossiers that New Yorkers are forced to compile
21 on themselves. Have you ever left your phone on the
22 seat of a bus, on the table at your favorite
23 restaurant? Have you attempted to start an app on
24 your phone, one that was just working, and suddenly
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1
2 it won't stop crashing. Technology fails sometimes
3 and as your phone becomes more closely tied to your
4 identity, losing it or breaking it, will be a
5 disaster. These systems undergirding the physical
6 phones are also not invulnerable to hacking or to
7 simple mistake, and for those foregoing reasons I
8 urge the City Council not to pass Introduction 2305
9 or create this new tracking tool. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much,
11 Ms. Magee. We will be hearing next from Clayton
12 Banks.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 CLAYTON BANKS: Thank you very much. Ah,
15 it's an honor to be here and, ah, great to see Chair
16 Holden and Irene and everyone else. Ah, I've been
17 inspired, particularly listening on the entire call
18 so far, ah, particularly around the conversation on
19 GIS, and I just wanted to add a couple of quick
20 things. So during this hearing and what I've heard,
21 you know, prior to the hearing, is a lot about the
22 use of data, um, and what I'm finding out it's, it's
23 the use of data from the variety of city agencies
24 that are, um, integrated, if you will, into and, and,
25 and talking a lot about the NexGen GIS platform. But

1 the thing, ah, Chair, is are we getting the voice of
2 the New Yorkers? I know I'm very pleased to have my
3 voice at this table. But I think it needs to go
4 further than that. It needs to be a participatory
5 strategy when we are looking at NexGen GIS platforms.
6 One of the reasons that we think about is when you
7 look at a community, particularly like Harlem and
8 some of the uptown spaces, Queens, etcetera, South
9 Bronx, um, you're looking at, if you don't have the
10 voice of the people there's a good, a good chance
11 that you can get bad data or bad, um, outcomes. A
12 good example, right, predictive mapping. While crime
13 stats are often biased, so you actually hurt a, a
14 community. So I'm just saying that it's important to
15 have, if you will, bottom-up community input in
16 mapping and data that will determine the service
17 levels. So participatory mapping is what I'm sharing
18 today. It will allow for communities to ask, for
19 example, how about more street trees here, or street
20 lights, or flood protections, or even charging
21 stations for the oncoming, ah, future of automobiles.
22 So all of this can be impacted by our communities and
23 having a participatory methodology as we look at this
24

1
2 NexGen GIS. Thank you, and I, ah, hope to, ah, to be
3 a part of the process as we go.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much,
5 Mr. Banks. And our next panelist will be Jose
6 Chapa.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 JOSE CHAPA: Hi, good afternoon. Thank
9 you for having this hearing. My name is Jose Chapa.
10 I'm the senior policy associate for the Immigrant
11 Defense Project. Um, thank you, committee Chair
12 Holden and to the members of the committee for
13 holding this hearing. The Immigrant Defense Project
14 is a New York-based nonprofit that works to secure
15 fairness and justice for all immigrants by focusing
16 on the rights of those caught at the intersection of
17 the criminal justice system and the immigration
18 system. IDP is concerned about the proposal to
19 address the feasibility for a digital ID program that
20 could be used to determine eligibility for public
21 benefits and access to city services, as well as to
22 provide financial services through a [inaudible]
23 company. A couple of years ago IDP, as a part of the
24 NYC Municipal ID Coalition raised a host of concerns,
25 including privacy, surveillance, and financial equity

1 about the proposal to add a digital ID functionality
2 to the IDNYC. Our coalition worked in 2014 with the
3 New York City Council and the administration for a
4 simple ID that would ensure equal access to services
5 and protections for all New Yorkers. We continue to
6 believe in the central principle of the coalition,
7 which was to protect the privacy and security of
8 cardholders and to provide a uniquely protected
9 state-issued ID card for those who are vulnerable as
10 they often face obstacles in acquiring one, namely
11 the homeless, formerly incarcerated people, gender
12 nonconforming people, youth, and undocumented
13 immigrants. Two years ago IDP spoke out against the
14 de Blasio administration's, ah, soliciting proposals
15 from financial firms to integrate multiple functions
16 [inaudible] IDNYC, which according to the
17 solicitation the chip would allow cardholders to load
18 funds onto their IDNYC cards, make payments to
19 private vendors, and enable integrations with public
20 and private partners, such as the DOT's planned
21 contact list fare payment system and the NYC health
22 hospital medical records. Digital ID programs have
23 been shown to raise significant issues around privacy
24 and control over collective data. These well-

1 documented issues include compulsory enrollment data
2 and privacy breaches, increasing police power, and
3 the elevation of corporate-based solutions over
4 community solutions. In the case of the previous
5 IDNYC proposal, our coalition pointed out in a letter
6 submitted originally to the mayor on September 12,
7 2019, and attached, ah, to the document I'm going to
8 submit, even if well intended, even if well intended,
9 connecting this technology and data to vulnerable New
10 Yorkers, identification cards would expose people to
11 serious risks, including [inaudible] experimentation
12 on its use by current or future administrations and
13 private vendors that far outweigh any potential
14 benefits. IDNYC financial technology, Thin Tech
15 partnership, would eliminate banking deserts. This
16 is false. Thin Tech companies are not banks. They
17 do not provide branches, or, and personnel that
18 customers can, ah, readily access. They do not have
19 legal obligations to reinvest in communities and they
20 are not subject to the [inaudible] uniform, federal
21 regulations, and consumer protections that govern
22 banks and credit unions. We continue to be concerned
23 about the infiltration of privacy and control over
24 data that would, that the city might collect. We're
25

1
2 also concerned that the legislation states that the
3 city agency would work in consultation with at least
4 one financial institution. One of our primary
5 concerns with the proposal to include a smart chip on
6 the IDNYC was that there no meaningful opportunities
7 for community or, and stakeholder engagement around
8 issues related to privacy, data security, or
9 financial equity. Speaking from a, the position of
10 an organization whose goal is to provide maximum
11 protection for immigrants during a time of increasing
12 hostility and the constantly growing engagement of
13 the tech industry and the surveillance [inaudible] it
14 is clear that the correct path is not to give
15 financial corporations more power and information on
16 us than they already have. If this legislation moves
17 forward, we encourage the City Council to include
18 community organizations that have been focused on
19 financial equity, surveillance, and privacy rights.
20 Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much
22 for your testimony. Chair Holden, do you have any
23 questions to the panel?

24 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, I just want
25 to, ah, I'll state something which is, um, you know,

1 we do care about privacy, and this is a purely
2 voluntary, ah, program so, you know, it still, the
3 bill has to, you know, we're still going to, um, take
4 input and, and I do take that seriously. Right now,
5 the poorest New Yorkers are forced to give up, ah,
6 their information, ah, birth certificates, Social
7 Security number, proof of employment, just to get
8 their benefits. So this, this kind of, the way we
9 envision it now, I mean, look, obviously it could
10 change, but this is a voluntary program. You, you
11 decide what information you can give, or you should
12 have on your digital ID, and that, that would lead,
13 you know, obviously, to actually protecting,
14 protecting the information you don't want out there.
15 So, but this could, we could work this out and, and
16 this could evolve, but we're trying to make it
17 easier, but right now the poorest New Yorkers have to
18 give up everything, all their information, just to
19 get basic benefits, so, um, we'll, you know, we're
20 gonna learn more. We want to have input and I'm, and
21 I'm listening and you're very good panelists and, um,
22 I think there's some very, very good suggestions
23 here, um, and, you know, the bill with the
24 feasibility study, we're just studying the
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2 feasibility obviously, um, of this and, you know,
3 it's just, ah, exploring information. And Clay, by
4 the way, I just want, I want to mention that's a
5 very, very important, ah, topic that you just
6 mentioned about community input. I was about that, I
7 was a member of a community board for 30 years. Ah,
8 also a civic association. We definitely wanted
9 input. And, ah, so that's, that's a very, very
10 important aspect, and I thank you for the that. Um,
11 but I want to thank the entire panel, ah, the last
12 panels, actually, ah, for that input. It's nice to
13 hear some concerns and, ah, I know the committee
14 counsel is very, ah, involved in the privacy aspect,
15 so she's gotta keep us on the straight and narrow,
16 and I, I want to, I just want to assure all the
17 panelists that talked about privacy that, ah, the
18 committee counsel for Technology, that's one of the,
19 her main, obviously, topic. So I just wanted, and,
20 and then I don't know if you want to speak to that, ,
21 ah, Irene, but we, we, you know, you, you keep us on
22 that, ah, you know, that topic all the time. So I
23 just wanted to say that. But thank you, panelists,
24 thank you so much.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I just want to say
3 thank you everyone for your testimony. It's very
4 important to us. And if we have inadvertently missed
5 anyone who has registered to testify today and has
6 yet to have been called, please use the raise, Zoom
7 raise hand function and I do not see any hands right
8 now, and I will turn it over to Chair Holden for any
9 closing remarks and to adjourn the hearing.

10 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So I just want to
11 thank everyone who gave, ah, testimony. I think this
12 is one of our best hearings that we've had. I think,
13 ah, everyone will agree, ah, that moving technology
14 forward in New York City, ah, can benefit us, make
15 our quality of life much better, and save lives. And
16 we've heard expert testimony today. I think every
17 panelist that, that spoke had a lot to offer and I
18 thank them for that. I thank everyone. I thank the
19 Committee on Technology and certainly Irene Bahosky,
20 and, ah, so many, Charles Kim and everyone, um, that,
21 that made this, ah, hearing possible and certainly
22 thank you, sergeants, thank you for all, ah, the work
23 you guys do. Have an excellent, excellent, restful
24 weekend. You guys earned it. This, this week has
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been a very busy week for everyone and it should be a nice weekend. Thanks so much. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Bye, everyone.

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 October 24, 2021