

CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER SCOTT M. STRINGER

MARJORIE LANDA
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER FOR
AUDIT

BUREAU OF AUDIT

April 6, 2021

By Electronic Mail

Cecile Noel
Commissioner
New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence
100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: Final Letter Report on the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence's Compliance with Local Law 38 of 2019 Regarding Reporting on Domestic Violence (Audit #SZ20-114AL)

Dear Commissioner Noel:

This Final Letter Report concerns the New York City Comptroller's audit of the New York City (City) Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence's (ENDGBV's) compliance with Local Law 38 of 2019, which requires that ENDGBV: (1) report once a year on certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators, and factors to the Mayor and New York City Council; and (2) post a copy of the annual report on its website. The objective of this audit was to determine whether ENDGBV has complied with these requirements of Local Law 38.

Background

ENDGBV develops policies and programs, provides training and prevention education, conducts research and evaluations, and performs community outreach. According to ENDGBV, domestic violence is an umbrella term that encompasses both intimate partner violence and family violence.³ Gender-based violence is a general term used to capture any type of violence that is rooted in exploiting unequal power relationships between genders. Gender-based violence can impact anyone, and can include intimate partner violence, family violence, elder abuse, sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking. ENDGBV

¹ Local Law 38 of 2019 also requires the New York City Police Department to produce annual reports on domestic violence initiatives, indicators, and factors and post the report on its website beginning June 1, 2019 and annually thereafter

² Local Law 38 of 2019 is codified at Title 3, Chapter 1, Subchapter 7, "Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence," of the New York City Administrative Code.

³ Intimate Partner Violence is a pattern of coercive and abusive behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. Family Violence is any abusive behavior that occurs between members of a family or household who are not involved in a romantic relationship.

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collaborates with City agencies and community stakeholders in its attempt to ensure access to inclusive services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

ENDGBV also operates New York City's five Family Justice Centers (FJCs), which aim to provide vital social services and civil, legal, and criminal justice assistance for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence and their children. ENDGBV's FJCs are located throughout the City's five boroughs and are normally open Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.⁴ No appointment is needed to visit a FJC location, and the public can connect to the nearest location by calling 311. As part of the City's response to COVID-19, ENDGBV's FJCs have been temporarily closed since March 17, 2020, and their services and support for victims of domestic and gender-based violence is being provided remotely by telephone in the interim.

In Calendar Year 2018, ENDGBV's FJCs had 65,855 client visits. During that period, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) responded to 250,447 domestic incident reports including 111,330 that were intimate partner related and 83,662 that were family related. There were 30 intimate partner homicides and 25 family homicides during that same year. In Calendar Year 2019, the FJCs had 63,459 client visits. Over that same period, the NYPD responded to 245,366 domestic incident reports including 111,917 that were intimate partner related and 80,503 that were family related. Furthermore, during that period, 25 intimate partner homicides and 38 family homicides occurred in New York City.

Many individuals who are victims of or susceptible to domestic and gender-based violence in New York City rely on programs and services provided by ENDGBV for safety, information, and support. Accordingly, in 2019, New York City Council passed Local Law 38, amending the City's Administrative Code in relation to reporting on certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators, and factors. Pursuant to those amendments, Local Law 38 requires that starting June 1, 2019, and no later than January 31 annually thereafter, ENDGBV must submit to the Mayor and Speaker of the Council an annual report regarding certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators, and factors. Specifically, ENDGBV's annual report must include the following:

- The number of contracted legal service providers providing services in the FJCs, disaggregated by the primary area of legal practice and languages spoken by the contracted legal service providers for each FJC and in total for all FJCs;
- The number of contracted service providers providing non-legal services in the FJCs, disaggregated by type of service for each FJC and in total for all FJCs;
- The number of FJC clients, disaggregated by the total number of client visits, the total number of unique clients, and the number of clients accessing each service

⁴ The Bronx FJC is located at 198 East 161st Street, 2nd Floor. The Brooklyn FJC is located at 350 Jay Street, 15th Floor. The Manhattan FJC is located at 80 Centre Street, 5th Floor. The Queens FJC is located at 126-02 82nd Avenue. The Staten Island FJC is located at 126 Stuyvesant Place.

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type, for each FJC and in total for all FJCs, and

• A list of all FJC programs and services offered that pertain to economic empowerment, and a list of any new data or research reports published by the office.

Finally, the annual report must be posted on ENDGBV's website.

The objective of this audit was to determine whether ENDGBV is complying with Local Law 38 by submitting the required annual reports to the Mayor and City Council, with all of the required information, and by posting the annual reports on its website. In addition, we assessed ENDGBV's response to COVID-19 which impacted its services as stated in its 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors.

Findings and Recommendation

Our audit found that ENDGBV complied with Local Law 38 in the areas we tested. ENDGBV submitted its Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors for Calendar Years 2018, 2019, and 2020 by the required dates and posted each annual report on the Annual Reports and Fact Sheets page of its website.⁵ ENDGBV submitted its 2018 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by June 1, 2019; its 2019 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by January 31, 2020; and its 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by January 31, 2021. Each annual report reflects data from January 1 through December 31 of the respective year.

In addition, our audit found that each annual report contains the information required by Local Law 38. Specifically, the annual reports list and describe the total number of contracted legal service providers providing services in the FJCs, disaggregated by the primary area of legal practice and languages spoken by the contracted legal service providers. Each annual report also includes the total number of contracted service providers providing non-legal services in the FJCs, disaggregated by type of service for each FJC and in total for all FJCs. In addition, the annual reports provide the total number of FJC clients disaggregated by the total number of client visits, the total number of unique clients, and the number of clients accessing each service type, as well as a list, disaggregated by program or service type, of all FJC programs and services offered which pertain to economic empowerment, such as but not limited to those that promote short- and longterm financial planning or navigation of public benefits. Furthermore, the annual reports include the total number of outreach events, prevention education workshops, and trainings conducted by ENDGBV disaggregated by the event type. Moreover, the annual reports list new data or research reports published by ENDGBV disaggregated into the following four categories: (1) annual reports and fact sheets; (2) research reports; (3) data reports; and (4) other reports. All reports are posted on ENDGVB's website.

⁵ https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/press-resources/annual-reports-and-fact-sheets.page

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Furthermore, in addition to our testing of the requirements of Local Law 38, we also assessed ENDGBV's response to COVID-19 which currently impacts its services as stated in its 2020 *Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors.* Although the FJCs are temporarily closed in response to COVID-19, ENDGBV is still providing services and support for victims and survivors of domestic and gender-based violence by telephone. While COVID safety measures are still in effect, ENDGBV can be reached through the direct telephone number for each FJC, or by calling 311 to be connected to ENDGBV staff from the nearest FJC location, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Through its remote services, ENDGBV can assist or provide guidance to victims and survivors of domestic and gender-based violence with safety planning, mental health and counseling services, job training and education program referrals, and legal help, as well as applying for public benefits and connecting to trained law enforcement personnel.⁶

Additionally, ENDGBV's FJCs modified their programming to ensure that they are responding to the unique needs of survivors during this time. Specifically, to ensure that clients feel safe while isolating and otherwise complying with New York City and State COVID related restrictions, ENDGBV conducts ongoing safety planning and risk assessments with clients during every interaction and uses specific screening questions to evaluate the client's immediate environment and safety. Other forms of communication, such as email and text, can be used for individuals who may feel unsafe to speak over the phone. Furthermore, ENDGBV recently opened the Manhattan FJC for clients Citywide to be seen by appointment only, if they have immediate needs and express that they are not able to safely or effectively connect with the FJCs over the phone.

Moreover, to provide services remotely to survivors who may be isolated at home with abusive partners, ENDGBV and community-based service providers are using creative engagement approaches that are developed with the survivor and grounded in safety and designed to minimize risk. For clients that express concerns regarding abusive partners who are monitoring their phones and computers, ENDGBV refers them to a program that it runs in partnership with New York University's Cornell Tech. This program provides digital privacy checkups with survivors to ensure their devices are not compromised and are safe to use, especially during this time. ENDGBV will also be launching a new partnership with Norton Life Lock, which has recently donated 2,000 anti-spyware licenses for FJC clients to use on their mobile phones and devices.

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⁶ On evenings and weekends, the public can also use the NYC HOPE Resource Directory to find resources and support or call the City's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline for immediate safety planning, shelter assistance, and other resources.

⁷ Cornell Tech has adapted the program to a remote model and are continuing to connect with survivors to offer this important service. Cornell Tech is also offering webinars during this time for advocates to enhance their skills with regard to safety planning so that they can more effectively help survivors identify tech abuse.

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Additionally, ENDGBV has been working to ensure its responsiveness to follow-up needs of clients by offering a range of virtual follow-up services including ongoing financial literacy workshops, online yoga, and workshops for clients to learn new tools and techniques to help them destress and self-regulate during the COVID-19 health pandemic. ENDGBV has been working to raise awareness around gender-based violence and the services available including its collaboration with New York City Emergency Management to send out texts to individuals signed up for Notify NYC COVID-19 alerts and ENDGBV's "We Understand" social media campaign. Comparing April 2019 through September 2019, to April 2020 through September 2020, ENDGBV's interactions with new clients increased from 4,577 in 2019 to 6,179 in 2020 (35 percent). Also, ENDGBV has seen an increase in visits and new visitors to the City's website for domestic violence information and resources.

We found that in addition to utilizing its website to provide pertinent information regarding ENDGBV's programs, services, outreach materials, FJCs, and ways to contact the agency, ENDGBV also updated its website to include a Resources for Survivors During COVID-19 page which provides important information and direct links regarding several topics including personal safety, food assistance, cash assistance, housing, utilities, health, mental health, employment, finances, and legal help.

Moreover, ENDGBV released two Statement of Support letters regarding its response to COVID-19. The first letter, released on March 19, 2020 and titled "New York City is Here for Survivors During COVID-19," outlined its decision to temporarily close the FJCs and serve survivors by phone while adopting social distancing and working from home. The second letter, released on April 24, 2020 and titled "Working Together to Help Survivors," explained that as ENDGBV continues to comply with New York's "Stay At Home" directive, it is continuing to spread awareness through special events, public outreach, and engagement to ensure access to inclusive services for all survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. According to the 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors, ENDGBV conducted 919 outreach remote notifications to City agencies, elected officials, community organizations, medical facilities, and essential businesses to provide information on ENDGBV's remote gender-based violence services in 2020.

Our findings are outlined in the following two tables, the first entitled Compliance Summary and the second entitled Core Criteria.

COMPLIANCE SUMMARY		
Criteria	Compliance	Notes
ENDGBV must report once per year on certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators and factors.	Yes	ENDGBV reported on domestic violence indicators initiatives and factors for 2018, 2019, and 2020 as required. Each report reflects data for January 1 through December 31 of the respective year.
ENDGBV's reports on certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators and factors must be submitted to the Mayor and New York City Council beginning June 1, 2019 and by January 31 annually thereafter.	Yes	ENDGBV submitted its 2018 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by June 1, 2019; its 2019 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by January 31, 2020; and its 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors by January 31, 2021.
ENDGBV's reports on certain domestic violence initiatives, indicators and factors must be available on its website.	Yes	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors are available on the Annual Reports and Fact Sheets page of its website.

Based on our understanding of the Local Law 38 requirements, we outlined all the criteria necessary for ENDGBV to be in compliance. That criteria is summarized in the table below along with our findings regarding ENDGBV's compliance with it.

CORE CRITERIA			
Detailed Criteria	Compliance		
ENDGBV's Annual Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the number of contracted legal service providers providing services in the family justice centers, disaggregated by the primary area of legal practice and languages spoken by the contracted legal service providers, for each family justice center and in total for all family justice centers.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the number of contracted legal service providers that provided services at ENDGBV's (FJCs) from January 1 through December 31 of the respective year. As required by Local Law 38, this information is disaggregated by the primary area of legal practice and languages spoken by the contracted legal service providers, for each FJC and in total for all FJCs.		
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the number of contracted service providers providing non-legal services in the family justice centers, disaggregated by type of service, for each family justice center and in total for all family justice centers.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the number of contracted service providers that provided non-legal services in ENDGBV's FJCs from January 1 through December 31 of the respective year. As required by Local Law 38, this information is disaggregated by type of service, for each FJC and in total for all FJCs.		
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the number of family justice center clients, disaggregated by the total number of client visits, the total number of unique clients, and the number of clients accessing each service type, for each family justice center and in total for all family justice centers.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the number of FJC clients from January 1 through December 31 of the respective year. As required by Local Law 38, this information is disaggregated by the total number of client visits, the total number of unique clients, and the number of clients accessing each service type, for each FJC and in total.		
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include a list of all family justice center programs and services offered which pertain to economic empowerment, such as but not limited to those that promote short-and long-term financial planning or navigation of public benefits, disaggregated by type of program or service, for each family justice center and in total for all family justice centers.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes a list of economic empowerment programs and services available at each FJC, such as Housing Link and Steps for Success. As required by Local Law 38, this information is disaggregated by the type of program or service, for each FJC and in total for all FJCs.		

ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the total number of outreach events conducted by the office, disaggregated by type of event.	on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the total number of outreach events conducted by ENDGBV from January 1 through December 31 of the respective year. ENDGBV conducted 764 outreach events in 2018, 645 outreach events in 2019, and 919 outreach events in 2020. This data is disaggregated by the type of event whether community events, community meetings/trainings, presentations or other events. Moreover, in response to COVID-19, and as reported in its 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors, ENDGBV conducted 919 outreach remote notifications to City agencies, elected officials, community organizations, medical facilities, and essential businesses to provide information on ENDGBV's remote gender-based violence services.
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the total number of prevention education workshops conducted by the office for youth, staff administering or operating youth programming, or caregivers for youth.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the total number of prevention education workshops conducted by ENDGBV's Healthy Relationship Training Academy for youth, staff, and parents. ENDGBV conducted 725 workshops in 2018, 345 workshops in 2019, and 119 workshops in 2020.
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include the total number of trainings conducted by the office for city agency staff, non-profit staff, and community members.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes the total number of trainings conducted by ENDGBV for City agency staff, non-profit staff, and community members. The data is disaggregated by these three categories. ENDGBV conducted 321 training sessions in 2018, 220 training sessions in 2019, and 78 training sessions in 2020.
ENDGBV's Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors must include a list of any new data or research reports published by the office.	ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors includes a list of any new data or research reports published by ENDGBV during the respective year. The reports issued for the respective year are disaggregated into four

ENDGBV's 2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report

categories: annual reports and fact sheets, research

reports, data reports, and other reports.

We recommend that ENDGBV continue to maintain its compliance with Local Law 38 by ensuring it continues to include all the necessary information on its annual report, the reports are submitted to the Mayor and Speaker of the Council as required, and the reports are available on the ENDGBV website.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

The scope period for this audit was January 1, 2018 through February 4, 2021. Our methodology for this audit consisted of the following steps:

- We reviewed applicable laws, rules, policies, and procedures to determine our criteria in accordance with Local Law 38 of 2019.
- We reviewed ENDGBV's Local Law 38 2018 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors for June 1, 2019 to determine whether it included the information required.
- We reviewed ENDGBV's Local Law 38 2019 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors for January 31, 2020 to determine whether it included the information required.
- We reviewed ENDGBV's Local Law 38 2020 Annual Report on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors for January 31, 2021 to determine whether it included the information required.
- We analyzed ENDGBV's website to determine whether the *Annual Reports on Domestic Violence Initiatives, Indicators and Factors* were available.
- We interviewed key personnel at ENDGBV to determine whether the Local Law 38 reports on domestic violence initiatives, indicators and factors were submitted to the Speaker of the Council by June 1, 2019, January 31, 2020 and January 31, 2021
- We reviewed both ENDGBV and New York City Council's website on the required due date to determine whether the required reports were posted according to Local Law 38.
 - In addition, we performed the following steps to assess ENDGBV's response to COVID-19.

- We reviewed ENDGBV's website to determine whether it provided information or connections to ENDGBV's programs, services, and resources to individuals who are vulnerable to domestic or gender-based violence.
- We assessed ENDGBV's response to COVID-19 and its ability to continue to provide services to clients that are vulnerable to domestic or gender-based violence during COVID-19.
- We reviewed ENDGBV's *Statement of Support Letters* regarding its response to COVID-19 issued March 19, 2020 and April 24, 2020

In addition, we reviewed the following ENDGBV reports:

- ENDGBV Social Media Outreach, Paid Advertising, and the NYC HOPE Resource Directory during COVID-19 (Issued October 2020): An overview of NYC HOPE resource directory visit trends through ENDGBV's social media outreach and paid advertising initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Using Restorative Approaches To Address Intimate Partner Violence: A New York City Blueprint (Issued October 2020)
- *Intersection of Domestic Violence, Race/Ethnicity, and Sex* (Issued September 2020)
- New York City Family Justice Centers: Supporting Our Foreign-Born Clients (Issued August 2020): An overview of the foreign-born client population at the NYC Family Justice Centers between 2010-2019, and how ENDGBV tailor their community engagement and service provision.
- ENDGBV IN FOCUS: Survey Findings from the NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV) Training Team's Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Trainings with the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Employees, 2017-2019 (Issued June 2020). An analysis of the effectiveness of ENDGBV's intimate partner violence (IPV) trainings for New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) employees.
- Data Brief: Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide in New York City 2010-2018 (Issued March 2020): A follow-up to Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide in New York City (2010-2017) with new data about circumstances preceding intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents in the city and victim and perpetrator contact with City agencies.

The matters covered in this letter report were discussed with ENDGBV officials during and at the conclusion of the audit, and they agreed that a preliminary draft and an exit conference were not necessary. On March 10, 2021, we submitted a draft letter report to ENDGBV officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from ENDGBV on March 25, 2021. In its response, ENDGBV agreed with the audit's findings and recommendation, stating, "ENDGBV thanks the Office of the Comptroller for its findings that ENDGBV generally complies with Local Law 38 and is upholding its responsibilities to New

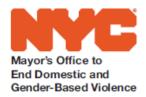
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Yorkers who are survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. ENDGBV will continue to maintain compliance with Local Law 38 so that we can continue to effectively ensure that we continue to provide annual reports to City Council and meet the needs of individuals who are survivors of domestic and gender-based violence who seek access to city services, resources, and benefits." The full text of ENDGBV's response is included as an addendum to this report.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Landa

c: Edward Hill, Assistant Commissioner, Research and Evaluation, ENDGBV Hannah Pennington, Esq., Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Training, ENDGBV Jeff Thamkittikasem, Director, Mayor's Office of Operations Brady Hamed, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Operations Florim Ardolli, Assistant Director, Mayor's Office of Operations



March 25, 2021

Cecile Noel

Commissioner cnoel@cityhall.nyc.gov

100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10038

+1 212 788 3242 tel +1 212 312 0851 fax

www.nyc.gov/endgbv

H. Marjorie Landa
Deputy Comptroller
Bureau of Audit
The City of New York Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341

Re: Draft Letter Report on the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence' Compliance with Local Law 38 of 2019 Regarding Reporting on Domestic Violence (Audit #SZ20-114AL)

Dear Deputy Landa,

This letter is to confirm receipt of the Final Draft Letter Audit Report that the Comptroller's Office shared with the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) on March 10, 2021 on the audit done to ensure ENDGBV's compliance with Local Law 38 of 2019, regarding reporting on domestic violence (Audit #SZ20-114AL).

ENDGBV thanks the Office of the Comptroller for its findings that ENDGBV generally complies with Local Law 38 and is upholding its responsibilities to New Yorkers who are survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

ENDGBV will continue to maintain compliance with Local Law 38 so that we can continue to effectively ensure that we continue to provide annual reports to City Council and meet the needs of individuals who are survivors of domestic and gender-based violence who seek access to city services, resources, and benefits.

Sincerely,

Cecile Noel Commissioner

C: Scott Stringer. Comptroller, Office of the Comptroller Jeff Thamkittikasem, Director, Mayor's Office of Operations Brady Hamed, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office of Operations Florim Ardolli, Assistant Director, Mayor's Office of Operation

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