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HUDSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

RE:

REGULAR MEETING : TRANSCRIPT OF
OF THE :
HUDSON COUNTY BOARD OF : PROCEEDINGS
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS :
- - - - -

O P E N S E S S I O N
Hudson County
Administration Building,
Commissioners Chambers
567 Pavonia Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey
Thursday, April 24, 2025
4:30 p.m.

B E F O R E:

- ANTHONY ROMANO, Chairman
- YRAIDA APONTE-LIPSKI, Commissioner
- ROBERT BASELICE, Commissioner
- FANNY CEDEÑO, Commissioner
- ALBERT CIFELLI, Commissioner
- KENNETH KOPACZ, Commissioner
- WILLIAM O'DEA, Commissioner
- CARIDAD RODRIGUEZ, Commissioner
- JERRY WALKER, Commissioner

A L S O P R E S E N T:

- EDWARD J. FLORIO, ESQ., Board Counsel
- DONATO J. BATTISTA, Hudson County Counsel
- ABRAHAM ANTUN, County Administrator
- CAROL JEAN DOYLE, County Commissioner Clerk
- Reported by: Shari Cathey, CCR, RPR

1 THE CLERK: Commissioner Aponte-
2 Lipski. Commissioner Baselice.

3 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Here.

4 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

5 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Here.

6 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

7 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

9 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Here.

10 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

11 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Here.

14 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

15 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Here.

16 THE CLERK: And Chairman Romano.

17 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Here.

18 THE CLERK: Please stand for the
19 Pledge of Allegiance.

20 (Flag Salute.)

21 THE CLERK: Adequate notice of this
22 Regular Meeting has been provided as follows:

23 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Hold on a second.
24 We have a moment of silence for the Pope Francis.

25 (Moment of Silence.)

1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

2 THE CLERK: Adequate notice of this
3 Regular Meeting has been provided as follows:

4 Posting notice of Resolution No. 8-1-2025
5 on the County Commissioner's Bulletin Board, First
6 Floor, Administration Building Annex, Jersey City,
7 New Jersey.

8 Copies of the above mentioned resolution
9 have been sent to the County Clerk and the editors
10 of the Kearny Observer and the Star Ledger.

11 Mr. Chairman, Sheriff Schillari has
12 requested to speak.

13 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you, Sheriff.

14 THE CLERK: Is the Sheriff here?

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes. He's not
16 speaking? No. Okay. Continue.

17 THE CLERK: May I have a motion --

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yeah, the union is
19 speaking.

20 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: The president.

21 THE CLERK: The president of the
22 union, then? The president of the union.

23 MR. LISOJO: Thank you for the time.
24 Is the microphone on? Hello.

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Hello.

1 MR. LISOJO: So, I was just informed
2 that there's only certain things that I can speak
3 about, so I'm just going to speak, and if you cut me
4 off, you cut me off. We have a lot of issues going
5 on at the facility. There's a bunch of unfair labor
6 practices going on.

7 And the reality of it is that I've met
8 countless with the Administration to try to
9 address some of these issues, and nothing is being
10 addressed on that level to where my members are
11 being put at harm. And the reality of it is that
12 I'm asking the Public Safety Committee, I'm asking
13 the Commissioners to really, really take a look. I
14 put on your desk, some of your desks, the last
15 couple of agendas from the last couple of meetings
16 that I met with the Administration.

17 Like I said, right now, currently, we have
18 a large, a large gap in the amount of officers that
19 we need to what we have. So, like I said, when it's
20 all said and done, it's my members that are harm's
21 way. You know, including the civilian staff,
22 including the inmates. We have a lock-in daily, a
23 lot of lock-ins, a lot of inmates not coming out. So
24 I believe that's a real serious situation. I have
25 one of my brothers here. Nearly two and a half

1 years ago, he almost lost his life. He was in a
2 coma. He was assaulted on a federal tier.

3 MR. FLORIO: Mr. Chairman, I hate to
4 interrupt the speaker, but he started his
5 presentation by indicating that there are certain
6 unfair labor practices being alleged, and we may be
7 getting into very sensitive territory.

8 MR. LISOJO: Well, the things that
9 I'm talking about --

10 MR. FLORIO: I'm sorry, sir. I'm
11 sorry. I am to counsel the Board.

12 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: We may not want
13 to respond to what he has to say, but the last time
14 I checked, this is the United States of America. If
15 he wants to make a statement in public, why isn't he
16 allowed to make it?

17 MR. FLORIO: Chairman, Commissioner,
18 I'm only interjecting at this moment so as to urge
19 the Board not to engage in colloquy with the
20 speaker.

21 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I'll take back
22 what I said. I don't want anyone here to respond.
23 Obviously, I'll take my own legal counsel, but like
24 everyone else.

25 MR. LISOJO: Yeah, that's fine. I

1 wasn't expecting anybody to give me any answers
2 today or any clarity at this moment, but it's a
3 serious concern for myself. I have a large amount
4 of officers being disciplined. Again, like I said,
5 I have all factual things I can present. We have
6 unfair labor practices. Those things, I'm not
7 asking you guys to address the court. The PERC
8 system will address those issues.

9 But again, like I said, I got officers
10 being fired, suspended with hefty amount of days and
11 with no sort of consideration. We're short.
12 Currently, with all our OJIs, with our medical
13 leaves, our military leaves, our suspensions, our
14 terminations, our large amount of officers
15 continuing to leave daily. This week alone, we lost
16 three. And we don't have the officers to subvert in
17 the building and to maintain the safety and security
18 of the facility.

19 So what I'm asking you guys, and again,
20 I'll say this respectfully, I will be at every
21 Commission meeting moving forward until something
22 happens. Because regardless, at the end of the day,
23 when it's all said and done, I've been a corrections
24 officer for 23 years. And when I mean corrections,
25 I mean corrections inside of that facility.

1 Currently, I'm still within that facility.

2 So like I said, all I'm asking for is the
3 Public Safety Commission, the Commissioners, to
4 please look into this. Because my members are being
5 put in harm's way. Like I said, we have a large
6 amount of officers being disciplined. And things
7 that should maybe count for 15, 20-day suspensions,
8 I got guys doing 90 days. I got guys doing 180-day
9 suspensions.

10 I got officers being suspended for uses of
11 force that were sent to the Prosecutor's office and
12 kicked back. But they were still fired. We went to
13 a departmental hearing. This officer, she happens
14 to be here today. Her name is Ada Ortiz. She was
15 nearly a 17-year veteran. She has no use of force.
16 Yes, does she have a disciplinary history? I'm not
17 questioning that. But she had no use of force, and
18 she was fired for use of force.

19 So what I say to you is the prosecutor's
20 office took the case. They reviewed it in depth.
21 They kicked it back to the department. And we went
22 ahead and had a full hearing. And she was
23 terminated. It's on appeal now. But these are the
24 things that are happening. And like I said, at the
25 end of the day, I'm not asking for a miracle to

1 happen overnight. But again, when this Director
2 Scott first was introduced here over two years ago,
3 I welcomed her with open arms. Since then, it's
4 been nothing but issues and nothing but problems.

5 And again, I gave you guys a list of the
6 last couple months of the agenda of the issues that
7 we have and concerns. And they're not being
8 addressed. So I thank you guys for the time, for
9 allowing me to speak. I will be back in two weeks or
10 whenever the next Commissioner's meeting is until
11 something happens. I appreciate you guys. Thank
12 you very much. God bless you. And have a great
13 day.

14 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I have a couple
15 of questions.

16 MR. LISOJO: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Currently, how
18 often are there lockdowns?

19 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Oh, excuse me.

20 Before you do that, that would be up to the Director
21 to answer those questions.

22 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Well, I'd like
23 you to say that because what if the union president
24 has a different --

25 MR. LISOJO: Well, I don't mind.

1 I'm supposed to answer your question.

2 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: All right. I'll
3 ask a very simple question. Please don't interrupt
4 me. Please don't interrupt me when I ask a
5 question.

6 MR. LISOJO: Sure.

7 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: The number of
8 lockdowns that have occurred in the last six months
9 at that facility, how do they compare to how
10 frequently there were lockdowns four years ago?
11 You've been there 23 years.

12 MR. LISOJO: We're at a critical
13 state, even more than we were during the COVID
14 pandemic. So lockdowns? Quite often.

15 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Twice as often
16 as, say, let's go pre-pandemic.

17 MR. BATTISTA: Excuse me. Sir, we
18 have --

19 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: The Director
20 wasn't there before the pandemic.

21 MR. LISOJO: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I don't want to
23 have a long thing. It's a simple one question.

24 MR. LISOJO: Yes. Our lock-ins are
25 more than they've been in the past.

1 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: And so the other
2 question is, during the period of time that they
3 sent, I guess, the tactical group for training, were
4 there other additional lockdowns than weekend
5 lockdowns?

6 MR. LISOJO: Weekends, weekdays. We
7 have right now, currently, because of the shorter
8 staff, we have officers away in training,
9 specialized group, right?

10 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

11 MR. LISOJO: We have wings. So which
12 wings means that there's one correctional officer
13 working two units by himself. That's it. That's
14 it.

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: All right. Thank
16 you.

17 MR. LISOJO: Thank you. By the way,
18 the last thing, I'm sorry. The assaults on officers
19 have went up the highest that I've ever seen it. In
20 the last seven months, we've got two officers
21 burned. That's it. Their bodies. Their bodies. I
22 sent you that information.

23 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes. Thank you.

24 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman. Mr.
25 Chairman, please note that Commissioner Yraida

1 Aponte-Lipski just came on, yes.

2 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Okay. Continue.

3 THE CLERK: May I have a motion to
4 approve the minutes of the March caucus, March 25th
5 meeting, also the regular meeting of March 27th, and
6 the closed session of March 27th.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Commissioner Cedeño
8 and Rodriguez.

9 THE CLERK: Commissioner
10 Aponte-Lipski. You're muted.

11 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: You're muted,
12 Yraida. Okay.

13 THE CLERK: Commissioner Baselice.

14 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Yes.

15 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

16 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Yes.

17 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

18 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yes.

19 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

20 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Yes.

21 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

22 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

23 THE CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

25 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

1 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

2 THE CLERK: Chairman Romano.

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

4 THE CLERK: Commissioner

5 Aponte-Lipski. Next order of business is to turn
6 this over to the County Administrator.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Go ahead, Mr.
8 Administrator.

9 MR. ANTUN: Mr. Chairman, I have no
10 additional items.

11 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Okay. Continue,
12 Madam Clerk.

13 THE CLERK: According to the policy
14 set by the Board of County Commissioners, members of
15 the public are asked to limit their comments to five
16 minutes when discussing agenda items; three minutes
17 at the conclusion of the meeting for persons who
18 submitted a written request to discuss matters of
19 public interest.

20 At this time, the public may address the
21 Board on any item on the agenda only. Please keep
22 your comments limited to five minutes. Are there
23 any --

24 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Can you
25 hear me now?

1 THE CLERK: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Okay.

3 Yes, yes.

4 THE CLERK: Okay, thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Oh,
6 you're welcome.

7 THE CLERK: I'm confirming that
8 that's for the minutes, Commissioner?

9 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Yes.

10 THE CLERK: Okay. Thank you. Are
11 there any speakers on the agenda on the items only?

12 There being no speakers, may I have a
13 motion to approve all the items listed on the
14 consent agenda?

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Kopacz and Cedeño.

16 THE CLERK: Commissioner
17 Aponte-Lipski.

18 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Aye.

19 THE CLERK: Commissioner Baselice.

20 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Yes.

21 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

22 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Yes.

23 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

24 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yes.

25 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

1 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Yes.

2 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

3 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I'm going to
4 abstain on 5B. I'm going to -- yes. Oh, and I'm
5 going to abstain on -- I'm going to vote -- I'm
6 going to abstain on the 5B and I'm going to vote aye
7 on all.

8 THE CLERK: Thank you. Commissioner
9 Rodriguez.

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

11 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

12 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

13 THE CLERK: Chairman Romano.

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

15 THE CLERK: We have three ordinances
16 for a second reading. Ordinance A-1. It's an
17 ordinance amending Chapter 200, Article 8.11 of the
18 Administrative Code to establish a restricted
19 parking space on John F. Kennedy Boulevard, City of
20 Jersey City for Rose M. Davis.

21 This is the time fixed for the public
22 hearing on this ordinance, which was introduced at
23 the meeting of April 10, 2025, advertised as
24 required by law, together with the notice of hearing
25 for this time. It's been posted on the County

1 Commissioner's Bulletin Board and made available to
2 the general public.

3 Are there any speakers on this ordinance?
4 I'm seeing none. A motion to close the hearing?

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Motion by
6 Commissioner O'Dea. Seconded by Commissioner
7 Rodriguez.

8 THE CLERK: All in favor? Opposed?
9 (The Board votes unanimously to close
10 the Hearing.)

11 On the final adoption, Commissioner
12 Aponte-Lipski.

13 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Yes.

14 THE CLERK: Commissioner Baselice.

15 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Yes.

16 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

17 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Yes.

18 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

19 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yes.

20 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

21 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Yes.

22 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

23 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

24 THE CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

25 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

1 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

2 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

3 THE CLERK: Chairman Romano.

4 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

5 THE CLERK: The ordinance has been
6 adopted. Ordinance 2. It's amending Chapter 200,
7 Article 8.11, of the Administrative Code, to
8 establish a restricted parking space on Willow
9 Avenue, City of Hoboken, for Reina M. Ramirez.

10 This is the time fixed for the public
11 hearing of this ordinance, which was introduced at
12 the meeting of April 10, 2025, advertised as
13 required by law, together with the notice of hearing
14 for this time. It's been posted on the County
15 Commissioner's Bulletin Board and made available to
16 the general public.

17 Are there any speakers on this ordinance?
18 Seeing none, I'll ask for a motion to close the
19 hearing.

20 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Moved.

21 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Second, O'Dea.

22 THE CLERK: All in favor? Opposed?

23 (The Board votes unanimously to close
24 the Hearing.)

25 On the final adoption, Commissioner

1 Aponte-Lipski.

2 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Aye.

3 THE CLERK: Commissioner Baselice.

4 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Yes.

5 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

6 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Yes.

7 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

8 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yes.

9 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

10 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Yes.

11 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

12 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

13 THE CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

15 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

16 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

17 THE CLERK: Chairman Romano.

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

19 THE CLERK: Ordinance has been

20 adopted. Ordinance 3. It's amending Chapter 200,
21 Article 27 of the Administrative Code, to establish
22 traffic calming devices, delineators, on Passaic
23 Avenue in the Borough of East Newark.

24 This is the time fixed for the public
25 hearing of this ordinance, which was introduced at

1 the meeting of April 10, 2025, advertised as
2 required by law, together with the notice of hearing
3 for this time. It's been posted on the County
4 Commissioner's Bulletin Board and made available to
5 the general public. Are there any speakers on this
6 ordinance?

7 Seeing none, I'll ask for a motion to
8 close the hearing.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Cedeño and
10 Baselice.

11 THE CLERK: All in favor? Opposed?
12 (The Board votes unanimously to close
13 the Hearing.)

14 On the final adoption, Commissioner
15 Aponte-Lipski.

16 COMMISSIONER APONTE-LIPSKI: Aye.

17 THE CLERK: Commissioner Baselice.

18 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: Yes.

19 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cedeño.

20 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Yes.

21 THE CLERK: Commissioner Cifelli.

22 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yes.

23 THE CLERK: Commissioner Kopacz.

24 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Yes.

25 THE CLERK: Commissioner O'Dea.

1 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

2 THE CLERK: Commissioner Rodriguez.

3 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

4 THE CLERK: Commissioner Walker.

5 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

6 THE CLERK: Chairman Romano.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

8 The ordinance has been adopted. This
9 concludes the items of business on today's agenda.
10 Are there any comments from the Commissioners on the
11 business of the Board?

12 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Mr. Chairman,
13 first I want to thank everyone for supporting the
14 resolution concerning the heliport. Myself and the
15 head of the Journal Square Neighborhood Association,
16 Tom Zupa, were walking in the neighborhood literally
17 four blocks from here last weekend. I thought I was
18 watching a reenactment of the movie Apocalypse Now.
19 I've never seen helicopters riding so low.

20 We know the tragedy that occurred in the
21 Hudson River. God help us if one of those
22 helicopters goes down in the neighborhood, the
23 amount of loss of life that we may encounter.
24 Helicopters aren't usually taken by low-income
25 residents. So I think we need to make sure that if

1 it takes a little longer and they've got to fly a
2 little further and not go over where people live,
3 that has to happen. They can't make that happen.
4 They need to close it and only launch it from other
5 locations. I was surprised even when it was
6 approved. I had issues with it because of its
7 proximity just to Newark International Airport.

8 On the issue of the union president that
9 spoke earlier, I'm formally requesting that we
10 receive written weekly reports from a daily basis as
11 to what units, wings, areas within that facility are
12 locked. I have a severe concern that that facility
13 is currently overcrowded and substantively
14 understaffed. And I know that there's a lot of
15 overtime and mandatory overtime there. At some
16 point in time, you begin to run down those
17 individuals that are there. And in my conversations
18 with multiple COs, there's a severe morale problem
19 currently at that facility.

20 Along those same lines, I'd like a report
21 as to over the last year, how many individuals we
22 have sent to the academy to become COs. How many of
23 those individuals completed the academy? How many
24 of those individuals continue to remain in the
25 employment of the Department of Corrections?

1 Because my intel tells me that those numbers are
2 horrible. That the number of individuals that
3 complete aren't good. And those that do complete
4 can't wait to leave. That's a problem. And we need
5 to address that problem, not put our head in the
6 sand and make believe it doesn't exist.

7 Sometimes we all appreciate tough love.
8 Sometimes tough love is so tough, it has a reverse
9 impact. It has a long lasting impact on the people
10 that are affected by it. But I'm very, very much
11 concerned that facility, make no mistake about it,
12 is a business. It's a business. It's a
13 revenue-generating business. I'll show you when the
14 budget gets presented to us as to the amount of
15 revenue that facility generates versus the cost of
16 it.

17 If you continue to be short-sighted and
18 penny-wise in operating that facility, God forbid if
19 a disaster happens here. Because suddenly those who
20 are sending people here from other counties and on
21 the federal level will be pressured to stop doing
22 so. And suddenly your revenue won't be what your
23 revenue currently is. You need to invest in it, not
24 only in the capital side of it, and it's good to see
25 investment in the capital side of it, we need

1 investment in other capital buildings, but it's in
2 the people that work there.

3 You can't get officers to stay there. You
4 can't even get officers to take positions because
5 when you tell them they're shift, and you tell them
6 the mandatory overtime they want, they say, Oh,
7 okay, thank you. But I want those numbers. I want
8 to know how often we're creating potential
9 situations there by locking people down.

10 You lock people down, you create problems.

11 If, as was told, the assaults are up, those are the
12 results of it. Lock people in, they get more upset.
13 No one likes to be in a correctional facility to
14 begin with. Don't properly staff a facility, again,
15 more likelihood that when assaults occur, serious
16 injuries to correctional officers. These are all
17 very, very serious situations that need to be
18 addressed immediately.

19 It appears to me that the lines of
20 communication between the director and the union is
21 not where it should be, and it needs to improve.
22 When we have to have the presidents of unions coming
23 to speak at our meeting because they don't feel
24 conversations with the director and the executive
25 chain of command are being handled properly, that

1 itself is also a problem.

2 Finally, moving over to the Sheriffs. So
3 I found out that yesterday the Sheriff received a
4 response to something that was submitted two months
5 ago. Politics is politics in Hudson County, but
6 politics can't affect the safety of individuals.
7 Politics can't affect the safety of our courts.
8 We've got to put aside our political differences
9 when it comes to those kind of issues.

10 Like Corrections, the Sheriff's department
11 is understaffed. We're about to open a new
12 building. That new building's got more
13 requirements, not less requirements, for officers
14 and posts. The Sheriff attempted to be proactive,
15 not reactive. The lack of communication of the
16 current political situation can't cause that to
17 happen. We need to get more Sheriff officers into
18 an academy. We need to get them ready, not put them
19 in when the building opens.

20 On the same point in time, we have a
21 desperate issue related to parking. Sheriff
22 officers tell me about it. People that work for the
23 courts tell me about it. People that live in this
24 neighborhood tell me about it, and we have no answer
25 for it. Zero. I had the opportunity to meet with

1 the assignment judge today, and he was very honest
2 and frank. They say they talk about long-term
3 solutions, but when asked about the short-term
4 solutions, no one seems to have one. That's
5 unacceptable. That's totally unacceptable. Be
6 creative. Come up with a solution.

7 Having Sheriff officers parking my park,
8 yeah, I'll call it my park, because I've lived five
9 blocks away from it for 50 years of my life, and
10 I've represented the park for 27 years. When
11 officers have to park in the back of Lincoln Park
12 and get shuttled up here on a daily basis, something
13 is drastically, radically wrong with that situation.
14 Short term, figure out a way when you've got the new
15 building open, and you've got spaces in that
16 building and you have people moving from County
17 Plaza, allow those officers to park in those spaces,
18 and it's a much shorter shuttle from the County
19 Plaza area to here.

20 But let's be pragmatic and realistic. We
21 need to build another parking deck. That's reality,
22 folks. And someone who thinks you're going to get a
23 developer who's going to build your deck because the
24 City's going to let them put more stories above it,
25 you need to watch a few fairy tales. It's not going

1 to happen. We have the land. We have two options.
2 I'll put this on the record. We have two options
3 right now. You've got County Plaza. You've got the
4 ability to take a lot on the southern end towards
5 Montgomery Street, develop a parking deck. You want
6 to bring it in as part of a development with
7 residential above it? You should do that.

8 I know we created and I credit the County
9 Exec for creating his committee and task force on
10 affordable housing. There's an old joke that my
11 only critique of it is I wasn't on it because no
12 disrespect to the members, I have a lot more
13 experience in knowing how to develop affordable
14 housing than most of the members that sit on that
15 committee. But I don't want to have to tell you
16 that you have the ability to do that and that there
17 were discussions years ago potentially about it.

18 But you need to develop a parking deck
19 because we don't have enough parking. We don't have
20 enough parking for people that work there, and we
21 don't have enough parking for people that work here.
22 Your other option short term, and you should
23 seriously, seriously think about this, and I
24 mentioned this to Judge Katz, this addresses the
25 court, drive down Newark Avenue. Now when you get

1 below Tonnelle, those of you that live west of
2 Hudson County or in west of Hudson County, you're
3 going to see it used to be called Quarry Warehouse.
4 Now it's the Banner building. It's a gallery for
5 arts and things like that.

6 Next to that is a huge parking lot, a huge
7 parking lot that's never more than 50-percent
8 occupied. Short term, rent some spaces. Surface
9 lot, go negotiate and rent some spaces in that lot.
10 It's a seven or eight-minute walk, so it's two or
11 three-minute shuttle ride to address the parking
12 because the residents in this neighborhood don't
13 have any parking.

14 And you can see anytime you want to take a
15 walk with me, Mr. Administrator, I'll show you all
16 the cars illegally parked with people that work for
17 the government and have placards to show that they
18 work for the government. That's not fair to people
19 that live in the neighborhood, and it's certainly

20 not fair to businesses in the neighborhood. So
21 you've got to address the short-term parking need.
22 You've got to come up with a long-term parking
23 solution. I told you what I think my answers to
24 that are. I'm willing to work with you. You've got
25 to correct the shortage of manpower and womanpower

1 in both Sheriff's Department and the Correctional
2 Department. It's time to be pragmatic and realistic
3 and solve the solution.

4 And look, we may be in different sides
5 from time to time when it comes to the world of
6 politics, but when it comes to people and the safety
7 of people, we can never let that happen. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Mr. Chairman,
9 I'd like to follow up right now. Excuse me,
10 Commissioner, with those comments. Two areas that
11 need to be addressed. With respect to his comments
12 concerning the Sheriff's Office staffing, Bill, from
13 your comments and your intel with the Sheriff's
14 Office, am I correct in my understanding that
15 Sheriff Schillari has expressed the need for
16 additional staffing and training and recruitment,
17 but that his voice is not getting heard by the
18 Administration?

19 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes, and I think
20 he provided us two months ago a document for that.

21 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Yeah. I
22 assume that if he shows up here at the end of our
23 meeting, that's maybe one of the areas he would
24 address.

25 The next thing about the parking, I

1 couldn't agree with you more in two respects. One
2 is that there's two groups of individuals, I
3 believe, that are users of the Administration
4 Building, the Brennan Courthouse, as well as, in
5 hopefully a few short months, the new courthouse,
6 that are grossly underserved in parking.

7 One are some of our employees, who I don't
8 know at this point, other than the Prosecutor's
9 Office, other than people that work on the staff of
10 the Superior Court. I don't know how the parking
11 needs of other employees of ours are going to be
12 served by the new courthouse, or what arrangements
13 are made, and then the second group are attorneys
14 and litigants.

15 I've been a practicing attorney in this
16 County for over 40 years, and even before the rapid
17 development in the last 10 years of the area around
18 our courthouse, parking was always challenging.
19 Even before many of the private pay surface lots
20 were gobbled up in eminent domain, or developed now
21 for housing of high rises. Now it is impossible. I
22 get this all the time from my attorney colleagues.
23 It's impossible to park, and they have court
24 appearances. And not for anything, but people may
25 look cynically, Well, they're attorneys, that's

1 their problem.

2 No, that's not the answer. The attorneys
3 are an integral part of the court system. They need
4 to be served. Years ago, when Bergen County, in my
5 experience, when Bergen County was building their
6 parking deck, adjacent to the Justice Complex in
7 Hackensack, Bergen County had a system very similar
8 to what Bill outlined, with respect to remote
9 parking. Bill mentioned the Quarry Warehouse, and
10 then there was another area I think he talked about,
11 which was I think near County Plaza.

12 And in Bergen County, it's got to be 10
13 years ago or so, when they were constructing the
14 parking deck, it used to be simply, before the
15 parking deck, it was simply surface, and I think Ed
16 Florio will remember those days. And even as time
17 went on, even as big as that parking lot was, you
18 ran out of space. By 10 o'clock, visitors and
19 attorneys ran out of space. So what they did was,
20 they had a -- down on, I guess it's River Road, I
21 think, where it goes along the river by the
22 courthouse, they, the county, had some other surface
23 lots down there, and it was maybe half a mile from
24 the courthouse. They would shuttle you in buses,
25 visitors and attorneys, to the courthouse from

1 there.

2 I think in the short term, that's the kind
3 of solution that we may have to opt for, because
4 it's really intolerable right now. Between visitors
5 who come to do their County business in our
6 facilities, and attorneys who come there to
7 represent clients, I don't know what we're going to
8 do in the long term. I think there's got to be, as
9 Bill said, in the long term, something to do with
10 maybe a more permanent parking structure for those
11 classes of people. But in the short term, I think
12 we have to do something, and the sooner the better.
13 So I think, I totally agree with Bill on that.

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Okay. Thank you,
15 Al. Two quick comments. One, I support, also, a
16 lot of people talking about different reasons why
17 people are living in neighborhoods, but as a police
18 officer, I know that when some people see police
19 shields or license plates, they're going to do
20 damage and try to vandalize the vehicles. That's
21 something else that should be taken into
22 consideration, and we should have a secured parking
23 area for all our County employees. But again, it is
24 a priority, not to kick the ball down the road. We
25 need to sit and figure that out.

1 The second thing I just want to comment,
2 to my understanding, and everybody talks about it,
3 that the Corrections officers' salaries are
4 excellent in Hudson County. So with that being
5 said, I don't understand why there's a recruitment
6 issue. I know that we're trying to get that so
7 people should know that if they do have good
8 salaries in Corrections offices. So people, anyone
9 that wants to leave Corrections officers, please
10 consider applying because there is a salary with
11 benefits. Am I correct on that?

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, sir.

13 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

14 Continue, Madam.

15 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Go ahead.

17 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Could you just
18 answer this question? So could you provide us what
19 our salaries are versus Essex, Bergen, Passaic? You
20 know that off the top of your head?

21 MR, NESTOR: No.

22 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: No, you don't?
23 We're higher though, right? Because you said we
24 were.

25 MR, NESTOR: No, no. I said we have

1 good salaries.

2 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Because I'm not
3 sure that they are higher. I kind of think they
4 might not.

5 MR, NESTOR: They're higher in the
6 Sheriff's office.

7 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: What's the old
8 saying? Two rules don't make a man?

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We'll get those
10 numbers to the Commissioners. Go ahead, Bobby.

11 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: I feel
12 compelled to say something. I was Chief of Staff
13 for the Sheriff for 14 years.

14 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I thought it was
15 because you were a Prep graduate.

16 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: See, I'm all
17 Preps. But also, I've been doing parking for 20
18 years. I was part of the Sheriff's. The Sheriff's
19 officers -- historically the Sheriff's department
20 has people coming in the front door and going, Wait,
21 and go out the back. Why that is because lists
22 dictate and salaries are better out in these towns,
23 other towns anywhere in the state. They graduate
24 and they decide to go on to a better salary at a
25 better place.

1 When that happens, it takes nine months,
2 minimally, to get somebody back on staff. So if you
3 have a budget, and again, I'm not going to be
4 political. I'm going to be governmental. The
5 budget dictates how many people you can hire. When
6 that budget is not filled because people have left,
7 that money goes back into the County's coffers. It
8 does not stay with the Sheriff's budget unless they
9 fill those positions.

10 Historically, at the Sheriff's office,
11 it's been on demand. The Sheriff, all those years,
12 as well as I, I have been, I was the budget guy. So
13 when it came time to do the budget, we had to
14 account for people trying to -- they're on the list,
15 they just leave. They decide to leave after two
16 years, some decide to leave later on. Should the
17 Corrections, the Prosecutor, the Sheriff's all be at
18 a closer salary? Absolutely. Is that the case?
19 Absolutely not.

20 I fought hard when I was there to make
21 sure the Sheriff's office got their due. But at the
22 same time, it's not as simple as why the budget goes
23 to the budget. Budgets go up because there are
24 union contracts, and then people get raised, and
25 then there are a whole bunch of other things. As

1 you add officers, as you add posts, as things change
2 in the world, so does the law enforcement arena.
3 Not the Sheriff, just law enforcement in general.
4 So I just wanted to bring that up because it's
5 difficult to man all the posts when you have a lot
6 of people. And I'm the first one to say that at the
7 sheriff's office needs more manpower. They
8 absolutely need more manpower. If you don't have
9 the manpower, you can't do what you have to do. If
10 something happens, then we're accountable to them.

11 Second thing is parking. I know a little
12 bit about parking. With respect to bargaining, it's
13 a different day and age. I deal with it every day.
14 You can't create more streets, but you can create
15 more buildings. And when you do that, you need to
16 make sure there's enough parking. And there are
17 some places that have been blown up. So if we're
18 building to build a building, and they don't have
19 enough parking, they give a certain amount of money
20 in lieu of not having enough parking. That money
21 goes towards finding parking or properties where
22 they can make parking lots or parking decks.

23 Across the street for years, there's been
24 a parking lot, like in New York, top and bottom.
25 But I'm going to suggest that we have a subcommittee

1 meeting and discuss about parking. Our parking
2 needs, the residents' parking needs, and the
3 business parking needs. I'll be the chair of the
4 parking team. I'm interested in doing that. I'm
5 willing to do that. Listen, I'm not a popular guy
6 for the parking. It is what it is. And I'm not the
7 most popular guy these days either. But I'm willing
8 to work with anybody.

9 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Isn't that what
10 it is?

11 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: I try my
12 best.

13 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I know you'd be
14 less popular than me.

15 COMMISSIONER BASELICE: I know. I
16 try my best. If people aren't involved, whether it
17 be residents or the people that are in government,
18 businesses, they don't come together and build a
19 house. They're not going to live in a house.

20 They're not come together and build it. So that's
21 my two cents.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Madam Clerk.

23 THE CLERK: Are there any comments
24 from the Chief of Staff to the County Executive?

25 Mr. Chairman, before we open this up to

1 the public, I just want to read from the bylaws from
2 the Commissioners that was adopted. It's request to
3 address the Board on any subject matter not on the
4 agenda shall be submitted in writing to the Clerk of
5 the Board of the County Commissioners by e-mail or
6 regular mail by the latter, either the end of the
7 immediately preceding caucus meeting, or two, 5 p.m.
8 on the business day immediately preceding the
9 regular meeting of the Board, which request may be
10 granted by the Chairperson with the consent of the
11 Board.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: And they know what
13 that e-mail is, correct?

14 THE CLERK: Yes, they do know what my
15 e-mail address is.

16 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Could you give
17 me a copy of that? Because you know what? I'm
18 going to propose to amend that. I'm going to
19 propose an ordinance to amend that.

20 THE CLERK: Chairman, I'll make sure
21 you have a copy.

22 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I can call the
23 City Council up to 12 o'clock in the day of a City
24 Council meeting in Jersey City and go over the
25 agenda. Why can't anyone else call up? That was

1 put in for an archaic reason because everyone was
2 afraid, because we were on Zoom, that everyone in
3 the world would be able to speak. We're no longer
4 having people be able to speak in Zoom. They have
5 to physically come here. We should make it easier,
6 not harder, for them to do it. Yes, there'll be a
7 few people that will come and say things we may not
8 want to hear. That's what you get paid for. Go to
9 a city council meeting.

10 Anthony, you see, if you go to a City
11 Council meeting in Hoboken, there's still a couple
12 in Bayonne. Jersey City, you could have watched
13 what happened at the end of the Council Meeting last
14 night when an individual got arrested. But it comes
15 with the territory. We're not meant to make it
16 harder for people to speak. Just make it easier for
17 people to speak. They only have three minutes.
18 It's three minutes, come on.

19 THE CLERK: I'm just following --

20 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: No, I'm just
21 saying, I want to propose to amend that in ordinance
22 to get to the next meeting. And also, what do I
23 need to do to legally allow people to do it on Zoom,
24 to let people watch? I'm not asking to let everyone
25 be able to speak. I understand that would create

1 havoc. I wouldn't mind it, but just allow, because
2 we start a meeting at 4:30. It's early. It's
3 early. The meetings were six. It was six forever.
4 That early start is unfair to a lot of people. They
5 have to go home. At least if they can watch it and
6 listen to it, they have the right to do it. So tell
7 me what legally I need to do to do that. People ask
8 me today.

9 THE CLERK: We agree to do that.

10 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Well, let's do
11 it. It's not being done today.

12 THE CLERK: It's a technical issue
13 that's being worked out.

14 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Can we get a
15 confirmation from whoever handles that aspect that
16 for the next meeting, we'll be able to advertise and
17 promote, that you'll be able to watch the meeting
18 live or stream it?

19 THE CLERK: Commissioner, we'll get
20 that done.

21 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: It'll be done
22 for the next meeting? Please let me get that
23 language in, and if you don't want to get in
24 trouble, I'll write the change.

25 THE CLERK: Okay. I have legal staff

1 that helps me.

2 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: All right. I'll
3 give you what I think is fair.

4 THE CLERK: Okay. This is the time
5 for persons who've submitted a timely written
6 request to address the Board on any matter of public
7 interest. Please remember to limit your comments to
8 three minutes. The first speaker I have is Raymond
9 Mitchell.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's here.

11 THE CLERK: He's not here?

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's here. He's
13 here? He's here.

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Is he coming to the
15 mic?

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, he's
17 approaching.

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Is he coming?

19 MR. MITCHELL: So before I start, do
20 you have what I asked from last meeting?

21 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: No, no, no, no.

22 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: What do you
23 mean?

24 MR. MITCHELL: You've got to give me
25 the information first. Give me the information

1 first. Fannie? Any other information you've got?
2 All right, can you start it over? Can you start it
3 over? All right, so I'm waiting for the answers.
4 You got them? I'm not speaking. I want the
5 answers. That's what I'm here for. Fannie, you're
6 supposed to give me the answers on the letter.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Excuse me, they're
8 not directing it. Just speak.

9 MR. MITCHELL: Can you pass this to
10 them, please? Somebody? One each. Got some
11 homework here to do, guys, with the other
12 information that I gave you.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Oh, wow.
14 Okay.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Who's that? I'm
16 waiting for answers from the last meeting. What
17 happened to them? Okay. So Fannie, do you have the
18 information? Yes or no? Fannie, do you have the
19 information for Lilibeth? And what's the reason?

20 You said last week -- I mean, not two weeks ago.

21 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: Sir, I don't do
22 personnel. So you'll have to direct those questions
23 to personnel at City Hall.

24 MR. MITCHELL: But you said that you
25 would give me the information for this meeting.

1 COMMISSIONER CEDEÑO: This is my
2 response.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Can I have it
4 in writing, please? An affidavit also? This one?
5 You got my information on the emergency drill? I
6 gave you this much.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Okay. I gave you
8 phone numbers.

9 MR. MITCHELL: I got that, yes. I
10 appreciate that.

11 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: And I already told
12 you to speak.

13 MR. MITCHELL: But they said I --
14 Denise? Her name is Denise?

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: I gave you that
16 info with phone numbers.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Okay, is she here?

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: No. I have the
19 information.

20 MR. MITCHELL: They said they had
21 letters for emergency management.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: They didn't have
23 any part in that.

24 MR. MITCHELL: They had no part?

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: No, sir.

1 MR. MITCHELL: So that was from a
2 Hudson County reporter. So what do you mean they
3 had no -- acknowledgement of September 19, 2019?
4 Can I have that in writing?

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: You have to ask the
6 department head. If not, that would be Denise.
7 Denise? Ralph.

8 MR. MITCHELL: They said they have
9 the letter. That's why I'm here. I forwarded
10 something to the Commissioner. Mr. Fargo asked for
11 it in writing. I have an electronic -- I do have
12 a -- you have a printout? Oh, you do? You have a
13 printout? That's the written response?

14 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes, sir.

15 MR. MITCHELL: All right. All right,
16 so I'll be back in two weeks.

17 THE CLERK: The next speaker is Ed --
18 Edward Mitchell.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, he's not here.
20 Can I take his?

21 THE CLERK: No, I'm sorry.

22 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, guys.
23 Appreciate everything. We'll see you soon.

24 THE CLERK: The next speaker I have
25 is Lisojo, Benny Lisojo.

1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Benny, we just let
2 you speak.

3 THE CLERK: You just had your time.

4 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: You just had your
5 time. That was -- we gave you that courtesy.

6 MR. LISOJO: Okay. You can't -- you
7 can't tell me -- they called my name. I just came
8 in. No problem. But since I'm up here, real quick.
9 Hudson County Corrections makes \$124,000 in 16
10 years.

11 THE CLERK: Anthony Smith.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you for that
13 information.

14 THE CLERK: Anthony Smith.

15 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: He's in the
16 back. He's waiving his right to speak.

17 MR. SMITH: Take my time. I'm not
18 speaking.

19 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: He's not
20 speaking. He wanted to yield his time to another
21 member of the public.

22 THE CLERK: I'm sorry. We don't do
23 that. I'm sorry. T.K. Moore. T.K. Moore.

24 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: At the end, I'll
25 move to let you speak at the end.

1 MR. LISOJO: Thank you.

2 THE CLERK: D.K. Moore. Is D.K.
3 Moore here? D.K. Moore.

4 MR. MURPHY: Good evening. My name
5 is DePaul Murphy (ph). Can I get somebody to pass
6 these for me?

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Sure. Yes.

8 MR. MURPHY: The subject of matter is
9 about the corrections hiring process. I want to
10 discuss to you all about the difficulty I had trying
11 to get into Corrections. So, Hudson County
12 Correction Center has labeled me a gang member due
13 to old photos that was taken when I was about 16
14 years old. It was on one of my social media
15 platforms that I rarely use. I rarely do social
16 media like that. At the time, I was unaware of the
17 picture being up there for the public to see.

18 At that time, around that age, I didn't
19 have the right people around me. I was very
20 influenced by my community and what was going on
21 around me. I decided I wanted to try to be a
22 correctional officer, so I did the necessary process
23 to try to become a correctional officer. I waited,
24 waited, passed everything, and I was waiting to get
25 a letter to say when I would go to the academy.

1 When I received the letter, it said they denied my
2 letter due to the photos. Well, I didn't know what
3 it was due to, so I was trying to figure out when I
4 would be able to speak to somebody about the
5 situation and find out what was going on, why was my
6 application denied.

7 I received the letter around December in
8 2024. That was the first one. I finally reached
9 out to somebody. They let me get in contact with
10 somebody else to try to figure out what was going
11 on. I don't know what happened. I had to wait
12 months. I was told after the New Year's, I would be
13 able to get in contact with somebody. Somebody
14 would give me more information on what was going on
15 with my situation. By the time that happened, I got
16 another denial letter.

17 I just wanted to know, would it be
18 possible to find out what's the reason? Because I
19 have no criminal history, never been arrested. My
20 background is clean. I do community service here
21 and there. I try to stay on the straight and narrow
22 path. I have people in my family that are
23 detectives, and recently they just retired. My aunt
24 and uncle were both corrections officers at the
25 Huston County Corrections. They're the ones who

1 told me, you know, Look, if you want to do it, go
2 ahead, do it. You have no criminal background. So
3 I pursued it. I'm just trying to find out why I'm
4 not getting a chance to become a Corrections
5 officer.

6 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: We want to
7 answer that question. We're told that we need
8 officers. We're told that we should be an officer,
9 that it pays a good salary, and this gentleman comes
10 here, wants to be one, has family members that work,
11 has never had a criminal record, and I think he's
12 entitled to an explanation. That's what happened.
13 Because he's in a photo with people that, they even
14 did some wrong things.

15 MR. MURPHY: No, it was just, it was
16 a photo of just me, by myself.

17 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: Hold on. Hold
18 on. Hold on. Mr. Chairman, I don't want to get
19 into the facts of Mr. Moore, I think it is, of his
20 particular application or file. However, it's
21 striking to me that for the last month we have been
22 saturated by a situation where an individual who was
23 alleged to have been a gang member in New York but
24 lived in Maryland was, and was here with a
25 non-deport order, and yet he was unceremoniously

1 swept up and sent to El Salvador. The issue is not,
2 as I understand it, is not whether that particular
3 individual, the El Salvador situation, was in fact a
4 gang member or not. The situation was, was he given
5 due process?

6 Now due process doesn't necessarily mean a
7 jury trial, but it means a hearing. So my question
8 to our attorneys, or maybe the attorneys for the
9 administration, is when an individual applies for a
10 job such as a corrections officer, and he's denied,
11 and does he get a specific answer to the reasons why
12 he was denied? Such as, we have looked at certain
13 things that we believe to be in your past, and
14 that's not conducive, that's disqualifying for you
15 to be on our staff.

16 And if that's done, if he says, No, no,
17 that's all wrong, that's not me, or that picture was
18 taken when I was 14 years old, and now I'm 30 years
19 old, is there some process that we have in place or
20 should have in place to redress that issue? Or do
21 we just say to the people at review, no, they're
22 right, it's a closed case, move on, nothing to see
23 here, let's move on.

24 I'm not sure, but it strikes me that
25 there's somewhat an analogous situation, I don't

1 think purely on all floors, but it seems like it's
2 an analogous situation to what is a very, very
3 intense debate in this country over what's going on
4 with immigration on a national level. And the
5 phrase that it all comes down to is due process. So
6 does an individual like our speaker, does he have
7 any due process rights in the case that he's
8 summarily labeled disqualified? Can he challenge
9 that in some way? Can someone answer the question
10 first?

11 MR. BATTISTA: Commissioner, number
12 one, I will get you a report by the next meeting,
13 the next Commission meeting, as to the circumstances
14 surrounding Mr. Murphy. As to your question, I
15 would hesitate to answer it, because without knowing
16 all the underlying facts, I don't want to misspeak.

17 For instance, every day, individuals come
18 to the County and submit applications for jobs, and
19 for whatever reason, they're not considered. I
20 don't believe we're going to engage in due process,
21 so to speak, in that regard. But in fairness to the
22 speaker, I don't know the circumstances surrounding
23 why he was not considered for employment, but I will
24 let you answer that next meeting.

25 COMMISSIONER CIFELLI: I don't want

1 to get into this individual's specifics. I don't
2 think that's fair to him to do that in an open forum
3 like now. But I'm just answering this as a general
4 proposition. People or applicants that find
5 themselves in a situation where they have been DQ'd
6 because of some perceived fact in their background.
7 Do they not have a vehicle or a path to say, Well,
8 no, that's all wrong, that wasn't me, or I don't
9 know who told you that, but that's not me. Again, I
10 don't want to get into the weeds with this
11 particular individual's case.

12 I don't think it's fair to him or us to do
13 that at this point, but as a general proposition, is
14 there not some procedure, due process? That's what
15 it is. Again, it doesn't have to be a trial before
16 a judge, but is there some way that there is an
17 exchange of information, whether you call it an
18 appeal or what? I don't know. And as Bill said
19 before and the speaker said before, we have an

20 awful, awful need for COs. So if there's an
21 otherwise qualified candidate and DQ'd because of
22 something that he disputes.

23 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Al, if it's a civil
24 service position, then it's a strict procedure. I
25 don't know what it is here, but Jerry can go ahead.

1 COMMISSIONER WALKER: I spoke to the
2 gentleman on the phone here, and one of my concerns
3 is being from certain neighborhoods, you get
4 classified as that neighborhood, and that's not
5 right either. If you go back into my neighborhood
6 and the people that I surround myself with, my
7 friends that I grew up with, a lot of them going
8 through life got in trouble, but that don't
9 necessarily mean that this individual is a
10 troublemaker or anything like that.

11 So I would definitely strongly encourage
12 to look into this gentleman's background and figure
13 out what went wrong. I don't know why they gave you
14 a denial letter, but like I said, you could be
15 guilty by association sometimes, but if you didn't
16 do anything wrong, I don't see what's the problem.

17 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: How about maybe we
18 set up a meeting here with someone from the
19 Department of Corrections to explain to you --

20 MR. BATTISTA: Mr. Commissioner?

21 COMMISSIONER WALKER: Yes.

22 MR. BATTISTA: May I suggest, I'll
23 confer with the department and give you a report,
24 and after that report is given, if there's a need
25 for a meeting, we can discuss that.

1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: What I would say
3 is Mr. Murphy's situation could potentially be part
4 of a bigger problem. There may be 30 or 40 Mr.
5 Murphies that never figured out how to come and tell
6 us about what the practice is going on there and how
7 they are deciding who to let in and who not to let
8 in based potentially on what neighborhood they grew
9 up in and the fact that certain neighborhoods have a
10 propensity to have more problems.

11 So, I mean, I'm now requesting formally
12 that I want to know every individual since you've
13 gone from the regular test civil service system to
14 the great opening we're opening up to everyone. I
15 remember when they were here, Mr. Murphy bragging
16 about how they were going to offer opportunities to
17 individuals like you, only for you to have your
18 hopes raised and then dashed and destroyed.

19 So I want to know how many other
20 individuals by, if nothing else, where they live
21 that were denied access or taken off a list, and
22 they had no criminal record. Because this gentleman
23 has a document here that says No criminal record.

24 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you, sir.

25 MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

1 THE CLERK: My next speaker is Ada
2 Wideman.

3 MS. WIDEMAN: Good evening, everyone.
4 I would like to start off with something called the
5 local government ethics laws. Now, the last time I
6 was here, I came regarding the hazard pay. A bunch
7 of us have not received the hazard pay, even to this
8 day.

9 So I would like to state that public
10 office and employment are public trust. You guys
11 are entrusted to handle the finances of the County.
12 So when you receive that money, the hazard pay
13 money, you were supposed to apply it to all eligible
14 persons. But that did not happen in our case. We
15 did not, some of us did not receive any of that.
16 Which, whenever that public trust, that public
17 perceives a conflict between the private interest
18 and the public duties of a government officer, that
19 confidence is imperiled.

20 And right now, that's where we're at right
21 now. We felt that harm was done to us. A risk of
22 harm was done to us. A lot of us depended on that
23 money to better ourselves, better our families.
24 What we were told was, We don't have the money. We
25 don't have it. It would put the economy into a

1 whirlwind or something to that effect. And it is
2 not right. We came here, we provided a service, and
3 we should be paid for that through the hazard pay.

4 Now, to my understanding, the
5 Commissioners oversee the finances. The
6 Commissioners, let me get it correct. The
7 Commissioners have the power over the finances,
8 which means that you guys oversee it. When we were
9 getting checks, your names was on the checks. Not
10 individually, but Commissioners or Freeholders at
11 that time. So, I don't know whether or not Ms.
12 Fuller, if she's here.

13 DIRECTOR FULLER: I'm here.

14 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. Fine. Can
15 answer some of these questions. Because to my
16 knowledge, her duties are to initiate, to receive,
17 hear, review any complaints regarding any
18 violations. We've been standing here many times,
19 complaining about the violations. How can some get
20 paid? How can some get paid, and others are not?
21 So, Ms. Fuller's here, maybe she can answer that
22 question. Thank you.

23 THE CLERK: My next speaker is
24 Bridget Grimes.

25 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Thank you. At

1 the end of the speaker, before we ask Director
2 Fuller, she can answer that question.

3 MS. GRIMES: I'm Bridget Grimes, and
4 I give my three minutes to Ada Wideman.

5 THE CLERK: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
6 We can't do that. You're the one that requested the
7 time.

8 MS. WIDEMAN: Oh my God, we've done
9 this in the past. We've done it in the past. So,
10 wait.

11 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I agree. Yes.
12 Yes. We've done it in the past.

13 MS. WIDEMAN: Yes. My God. Jesus.
14 Thank you. Jesus Christ. Okay. To continue that,
15 like I said, Commissioners, you guys have the
16 authority over the finances, okay? Ms. Fuller is
17 the Director of the Finance.

18 We came here on many times regarding that.
19 We've gotten no answers. So, she's here now. Maybe
20 she could give us some answers. Because, to my
21 knowledge, she can, like I said, initiate, review
22 those complaints that we have regarding the hazard
23 pay. She can subpoena witnesses. She can provide
24 documents as to what happened. But you can't not
25 allow us to just sit here and just receive nothing

1 when our coworkers have received it.

2 So, I have a question. In regards to the
3 hazard pay, this County received a quarter of a
4 billion dollars between 2020 and 2021. Paid the
5 Local Union 1967. Paid the Local Union 1199. Paid
6 the Local Union 2306, 97 people. 2306 holds 500
7 employees. But 97 were only paid. We still have
8 not received an answer response from that. I see
9 Mr. Mazza here right now. Maybe he could elaborate
10 as to what's going on. Why were 97, you know, only
11 paid? That would have been successful. I'm done
12 with this.

13 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next speaker. The
14 next speaker.

15 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I'll provide the
16 answer.

17 MR. BATTISTA: The position of the
18 Administration is that the individuals who we
19 believe are entitled to it, under our interpretation
20 of the agreement, have received it. Obviously,
21 there's a disagreement. And the Administration is
22 willing to resolve that disagreement in accordance
23 with the provisions of the collective bargaining
24 agreement. Whether it be through arbitration or
25 otherwise.

1 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. Let me see if I
2 understand. I'm not hearing you.

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next speaker.

4 THE CLERK: Next speaker is Claribel
5 Morales. Claribel Morales.

6 MS. MORALES: Hello, my name is
7 Claribel Morales. I'd like to give my three minutes
8 to Ada. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: No. Enough.
10 Enough.

11 MS. WIDEMAN: Are you kidding me?

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Enough.

13 MS. WIDEMAN: Are you kidding me?
14 Why did you tell me? Why?

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We're supposed to
16 have people sign up. That means for them to speak.
17 It's not for ten people to sign up, Ada,

18 MS. WIDEMAN: Can we allow one more
19 and then that's it?

20 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: It would be
22 unfair to let you do ten.

23 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Can we allow
25 this last one?

1 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Oh, no. No.

2 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. Okay.

3 THE CLERK: I have another one.
4 Okay.

5 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Another speaker.
6 Another speaker. I have another one. Another
7 speaker is being called up. Go ahead.

8 THE CLERK: Claribel Morales. Okay.
9 Okay.

10 MS. WIDEMAN: No. No. I have another
11 one. I have another speaker being called up. So
12 I'm not going to speak on this behalf.

13 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Claribel will
14 speak now. Claribel, come on up. You can say
15 anything you want. You can just say I agree with
16 whatever.

17 MS. WIDEMAN: She did not feel
18 comfortable and she shouldn't be put on the spot.
19 If she has someone that's willing to speak on her
20 behalf. We're off the program now.

21 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next speaker to
22 call after Claribel Morales. Next speaker.

23 THE CLERK: Next one is Noah S.

24 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: And all I want
25 to say while the next speaker is coming up, before

1 you start to speak Ms. Noah, is, you know, the
2 failure to resolve this issue and dragging it
3 through whatever administrative processes that could
4 drag on for a long time is crushing morale of
5 individuals that are working with some of the most
6 needy people, neediest people within our County.
7 And people need to take that into consideration as
8 they try to figure out if there's a better way to
9 resolve the issue.

10 THE CLERK: Go ahead, sir.

11 MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you. My name is
12 Noah Schwartz. I'm here. We have a letter that's
13 being distributed. I'm here on behalf of the Knitty
14 Gritty J.C. Social Club. The Knitty Gritty J.C.
15 Social Club is a women-led, grassroots,
16 pro-democracy group in Jersey City. We organize
17 education and actions related to civic engagement,
18 advocacy, and community organizing. The group
19 includes about 400 participating members in Jersey
20 City and the surrounding areas of Hudson County.
21 Our Instagram account at Knitty Gritty J.C. has over
22 1,500 followers.

23 And I would, before I start reading the
24 letter, like to associate myself with the comments
25 of Commissioner O'Dea regarding confusion about

1 people speaking. Virtual access. I think it's
2 wonderful that Commissioners Rodriguez, Cifelli and
3 Aponte-Lipski were able to Zoom in. I think the
4 people who elected them should also be able to Zoom
5 into this meeting, especially since it's at 4:30 on
6 a Thursday, which is an incredibly inconvenient time
7 for many people.

8 Dear Hudson County Executive and
9 Commissioners, the residents of Hudson County will
10 be severely impacted by President Trump's
11 discriminatory, cruel, and unconstitutional agenda.
12 While certain groups, undocumented migrants,
13 transgender people, are now most vulnerable, we are
14 all under threat, along with our system of
15 democracy. We urge you to take immediate steps to
16 safeguard our residents and respectfully call on you
17 to take the following steps.

18 Number one, call out and stand up against
19 Trump's extremist agenda, demand transparency from
20 the federal government, and leverage local laws to
21 protect constituents' rights. By issuing
22 resolutions denouncing the administration's
23 misconduct, you can show that you support our
24 community and embrace democratic values. Do not
25 negotiate with extremist federal administration in

1 order to be seen as quote-unquote reasonable.

2 Number two, emphasize Hudson County's
3 support for the LGBTQ+, especially transgender
4 community. While we commend the County's recent
5 establishment of the LGBTQ+ advisory task force, the
6 administration's targeted attacks on transgender
7 individuals calls for an explicit statement that
8 Hudson County welcomes the LGBTQ+ community and is
9 dedicated to its safety, physical, and mental
10 health.

11 And can we speak in the order that we have
12 people on the agenda? Can we speak in the order
13 that we want to?

14 THE CLERK: The next speaker I have
15 is Upmanyu Patel.

16 MR. SCHWARTZ: Oh, okay. We'll be
17 back.

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Welcome, Upmanyu
19 Patel.

20 MS. WIDEMAN: Yes. O'Dea said I can
21 have one more.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Excuse me. The
23 questions are directed to myself and the question.

24 MS. WIDEMAN: I apologize.

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Mr. Patel, do you

1 wish to transfer your time? Do you wish to transfer
2 your time?

3 MR, PATEL: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: All right. This is
5 the last one that's transferring time. Last one.

6 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. Good evening
7 again. Mr. Patel has worked at the Hudson County
8 Department of Welfare for 14 years, I believe. In
9 2022, Mr. Patel took and passed the investigator's
10 test. In 2020, he took and passed the
11 investigator's test, but the test was waived. So
12 Mr. Patel did not have -- we all had the same score.

13 Now, on those type of tests, you are hired
14 according to your seniority. So I was on that same
15 test. I had the most seniority. I was hired as an
16 investigator. Other people who had seniority as
17 well, the most seniority was hired, except Mr.
18 Patel. It was Mr. Patel and another woman that was
19 passed over for the test, even though they had the
20 most seniority.

21 So I stand here before asking and
22 requesting, Mr. Mazza, since you're now the
23 director, that we may look into it, if at all
24 possible.

25 MR. BATTISTA: Mr. Mazza, this matter

1 is involving litigation, so please don't comment.

2 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. So, Mr. Patel, I
3 have a copy of the list. I also have a copy of the
4 Promotion upon Waiver Completion Competitive
5 Examination Civil Service. I have an article as
6 well from the union contract in regards to
7 promotions. I have a grievance letter in which he
8 placed a grievance towards, only to lose because the
9 union did not file it in an appropriate amount of
10 time. So, that's about it, guys.

11 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Can we, since
12 you're saying it's a litigation, can we, whatever,
13 after the next caucus, get the status of the
14 litigation?

15 MR. BATTISTA: I'll give you an
16 update on the litigation. What I can do is I can
17 share with the Clerk a memo, and if you feel we need
18 to go into closed session or committee meeting, you
19 know we're here to do that.

20 MS. WIDEMAN: Okay. I would like to
21 make you guys a copy.

22 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next speaker.

23 THE CLERK: The next speaker is Raj
24 Agrawal.

25 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Raj? Raj, what's

1 his last name?

2 THE CLERK: Agrawal. A-G-R-A-W-A-L.

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next speaker.

4 THE CLERK: Stephanie Campos.

5 MS. CAMPOS: Hi, everyone. My name
6 is Stephanie Campos, and I am representing Knitty
7 Gritty along with my fellow members. I am a Jersey
8 City resident. I am a college professor at Hudson
9 County Community College, and John Jay College of
10 Criminal Justice as well.

11 And I wanted to continue on the letter
12 that Noah started with item three. Undocumented
13 residents of Hudson County who contribute to the
14 local economy are afraid. Their families and
15 communities are also afraid. We need to assure
16 Hudson County residents that the County Sheriff's
17 Office does not enforce federal immigration laws or
18 work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE.
19 We want you to state this publicly. And we drafted
20 this letter a month or so ago, and the situation is
21 even more severe today. And undocumented
22 immigrants, the immigrant community in Hudson County
23 needs reassurance that they are as safe as possible.

24 Number four, better inform your
25 constituents about how the Trump administration

1 policies will affect them and how you will work to
2 minimize that impact. Your constituents need to
3 hear from you more frequently via in-person town
4 halls, newsletters, interviews, and other forms of
5 direct communication. I have lived in Jersey City
6 for over 14 years. This is my first time here. I
7 had to go to the web site. I know very little about
8 this body, and I'm glad to learn about it. But I
9 wish that there was more publicity, more outreach
10 about the important work that you do for citizens of
11 Hudson County. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you. Next
13 speaker.

14 THE CLERK: Next speaker is Nisha
15 Thompson.

16 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: There you are.

17 MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Thank you all.
18 Okay. I am also with the Knitty Gritty JC Group.
19 I'm a Jersey City resident. I live in McGinley

20 Square, and I'm going to continue the letter.
21 Numerous local nonprofit organizations are working
22 to maintain democratic government, support public
23 health programs facing budget shortfalls, prevent
24 undocumented individuals from being forcibly
25 separated from their families, and support

1 transgender youth from public attacks.

2 The Hudson County Board of Commissioners
3 should support these efforts by funding grassroots
4 programs, providing meeting spaces, and fostering
5 community dialogue via town halls. I would also
6 like to add that I do work with participatory
7 budgeting, and I feel that having more transparency
8 and more community involvement will help demystify
9 this body and help build trust, and also help solve
10 parking problems. So I would like to also ask that
11 you consider those types of measures, more
12 democratic direct or democratic activities as well.
13 And I am going to yield the rest of my time for the
14 rest of my group. So thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: All right. Thank
16 you. Next speaker.

17 THE CLERK: Next speaker is Yajaira
18 Garcia.

19 MS. GARCIA: My name is Yajaira
20 Garcia. I have some papers for you guys to hand
21 out. My name is Yajaira Garcia. I'm sure you guys
22 are tired of seeing me here because I've been
23 faithfully coming here for over a month. I'm a
24 County worker, and we're here fighting for our
25 hazard pay and for our work conditions, support,

1 labor practice at Hudson County Plaza.

2 I just want to start off by saying that as
3 election time is quickly approaching, I must ask
4 that you all how can we, the people, continue to
5 place our trust in the Board when our repeated
6 requests for assistance are met with negative
7 results and no meaningful actions. We come to you
8 because we believe in the power of our elected
9 officials to make a difference.

10 But when our concerns are continuously
11 overlooked, it leaves us questioning, are we simply
12 not important enough? This is not just about
13 politics. This is about leadership, responsibility,
14 and honoring voices of the very people who put you
15 in your places. I'll start off with some questions
16 that I asked the last time that I was here. I was
17 directed questions to the County Members, but this
18 is solely for you guys to answer for me.

19 As Commissioners, what are your fiduciary
20 duties to the employees of the County? Are you
21 upholding it by allowing unequal distribution of
22 federal or hazard pay funds? Are there legal
23 guidelines for federal funding regulations that were
24 bypassed when selecting who receives hazard pay?
25 Were eligibility criteria documented and made

1 transparent?

2 Does it not violate public trust or legal
3 standards to use COVID relief funds to reward
4 certain departments and not others who were equally
5 exposed at risk? Is the selected distribution of
6 hazard pay a form of workplace discrimination or
7 favoritism? Has this been reviewed for compliance
8 with state and federal labor laws? What legal
9 oversight exists over the Personnel department's
10 decision-making process? If that department fails
11 in its duty to distribute benefits fairly, who holds
12 them legally accountable?

13 Are public officials, as yourself,
14 protected from accountability when they're
15 mismanaging pandemic relief funds, or is there a
16 pathway to legal recourse? Why has no external
17 audit been done on how hazard pay was allocated?
18 Shouldn't that be a standard part of financial
19 transparency? What steps are in place to ensure
20 transparency and equity in future funding
21 distribution, and who oversees that those steps are
22 followed? Can you, as the Board, face liability for
23 failing to intervene or investigate an issue
24 affecting hundreds of employees, over 500, who were
25 denied compensation without clear justification?

1 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: So, my simple
2 answer is I support your position. As a Board, we
3 vote on budgets. We vote on resolutions that
4 allocate dollars. So, as a Board, we have the
5 ability to take certain actions, especially now as
6 we begin the budgetary process, potentially to
7 address this.

8 You know, in my opinion, the
9 Administration had an approach to hazard pay in
10 2020. They chose not to implement that approach.
11 Had they done that approach, we wouldn't even be
12 talking here today. But they chose not to do that.
13 Instead, they chose to let all the time go by, and
14 then in a new, different way, try to approach how to
15 deal with it. So, they've created the problem.
16 Now, they could say part of the problem was created
17 in some of their negotiations that started with
18 other unions, not the members that are here today.

19 But the reality is it's been created. Now
20 they need to figure out how to resolve it. And,
21 again, I'll say what I said before. Say you're
22 going to allow the go-through process of mediation,
23 all those things that are going to drag on for
24 months and months, well through the budget, in my
25 opinion, isn't the best way to address the issue.

1 But I only speak as one Member.

2 MS. GARCIA: And thank you for
3 responding to that. And I have a question. That's
4 it. We have been protesting for almost a month. I
5 have --

6 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: I am speaking.

7 MS. GARCIA: We have had no
8 resolution for almost a month. I am speaking. I
9 agree. And Commissioner Romano, Commissioner
10 Romano, you are insulting us as workers for the
11 County. We elected you.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: I understand that.

13 MS. GARCIA: But you at least can
14 acknowledge us. You're just dismissing me. This is
15 a month that we've been coming here to fight this
16 issue. But yet, you don't have a response for us.
17 Where's the response? You said you would have it.
18 We have not received a response. Mr. Romano, we
19 have not received a response. I'm here telling you
20 face to face. We have not received a response.
21 I would appreciate if you would have that at the
22 meeting.

23 MR. BATTISTA: So we're clear, the
24 speaker is a member of a collective bargaining
25 union. I'm not going to engage in a conversation

1 with her. It would be inappropriate. It would be
2 an unfair practice on my part. We will engage the
3 union, as we have in the past, on the issue, willing
4 to engage in the future. I cannot engage, with all
5 due respect to the Speaker, I cannot engage in a
6 dialogue with her in the public meeting.

7 MS. GARCIA: And with all respect to
8 him, this is the dialogue that he's having with the
9 union. He's not having the correct dialogue with
10 the union. Because if not, us workers would not be
11 here today. If the dialogue is being done
12 correctly, we would not be here.

13 You can tell me this, Mr. Romano. This is
14 the fourth time you've told me that. But I'm here
15 four times and you've said those exact words to me.
16 And I still haven't gotten a response yet. Very bad
17 treatment. We are pillars of the community. We
18 service needy people. You said it before. We are
19 pillars of this community.

20 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I agree. But
21 listen. Keep coming.

22 MS. GARCIA: And we're going to keep
23 coming.

24 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Changes that are
25 occurring in this country, change because people

1 didn't get -- wouldn't give up after they marched a
2 hundred times. Trust me. Keep coming. Go there
3 every day. I've driven by and watched you at
4 lunchtime. Keep doing it. It draws people's
5 attention. It draws attention to your issue, and it
6 puts pressure on people to resolve the problem.

7 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: And we're going to
8 get an update. We promise.

9 MS. GARCIA: I hope you guys to
10 oversee and implement these things. We're looking
11 upon you guys.

12 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Chair, can we
13 go into executive session next meeting? I don't
14 want to see a report. We want to discuss this in
15 person. I don't want a memo. We can go to
16 executive session.

17 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Next meeting, Mr.
18 Battista, we want an executive session. We want an
19 update on where we are with this union.

20 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Thank you,
21 Chair.

22 THE CLERK: My last speaker is Roger
23 Moss.

24 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: We propose
25 suggestions on how to solve it. Don't just go back

1 and tell me. We're totally looking at going through
2 mediation, arbitration.

3 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: We've heard that
4 stuff. We'll ask Director Fuller to be with us. Go
5 ahead. Go ahead, sir. Sorry for the delay.

6 MR. MOSS: That's okay. Good
7 evening. My name is Roger Moss. I'm here with the
8 Knitty Gritty group. You've heard a few of our
9 individuals already. There were six points on our
10 memo to you. I'm going to do the sixth point. So
11 those that came before are intended to be in order.

12 Accelerate, please, accelerate, and expand
13 the plans to build permanent, affordable,
14 not-for-profit, and social housing. Working people
15 who struggle to pay rent will be hit hardest by the
16 Trump administration's gutting of the federal
17 government. As the federal support for social
18 services dries up and undergoes privatization, we
19 must expand public goods and services as much as
20 possible at the local level. The County should
21 advocate for an increase in spending to build more
22 affordable housing and continue to support
23 homelessness diversion and eviction prevention
24 programs.

25 In summary, after all of these six points,

1 this is the summary from Knitty Gritty. In summary,
2 we urge you to pass legislation and policies that
3 protect the people of Hudson County from the cruel
4 and unconstitutional orders of the federal
5 government. We call on you to fight for us and to
6 do everything you can to prevent their lethal agenda
7 from moving forward. As soon as possible, we'd like
8 you to release your plans for getting us through
9 these troubled and uncertain times.

10 Now is the time to strategize about how we
11 can protect our most vulnerable community members
12 and build for the future by boosting affordable
13 housing, health care, education, and wages. In
14 return, we offer you our cooperation. We're happy
15 to disseminate information on your efforts to our
16 community and promote greater civic engagement and
17 participation. We hope you'll work with us for the
18 good of all. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Thank you.

20 MR. MOSS: And with time remaining, I
21 just want to pick up on point three a little bit
22 further. That's the one about immigration and those
23 people who are undocumented in our communities.
24 Undocumented, I just want to remind everyone who may
25 have heard this in the past but maybe not any time

1 very recently, getting documentation when you live
2 in Puebla, Mexico, is a matter of being born into
3 the right family, not being beaten up by the gangs,
4 by having some money to pay to get your birth
5 certificate from the government, and finally to get
6 here facing very uncertain future because the
7 immigration policies of the United States have never
8 been resolved in the last 50 years.

9 So we have very vulnerable people who came
10 here undocumented but they're providing services to
11 us that no American wants to do. Please be
12 merciful. Thank you.

13 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, I have no
14 other speakers.

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Jerry, go ahead.
16 Jerry, we have the floor.

17 COMMISSIONER WALKER: I just want to
18 say something. I'm just speaking to an immigrant
19 group. It's not just affordable housing we're
20 talking about now. We've got to start incorporating
21 low to moderate income because affordability is not
22 affordable in Jersey City anymore. I read an
23 article just recently about the AG's office that's
24 looking into how many developers that had unfair
25 practices in terms of the rates of the rents.

1 So we've got to start talking about that.
2 The base salary of affordability right now is
3 \$68,000. And I've got to tell you, none of these
4 people make \$68,000. So in saying that, just please
5 look into that and please implement low to moderate
6 income. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: So I'm going to
8 let the group finish their statement. So first of
9 all, I agree with you what was provided to me today.
10 I also think that if the County, and you've been
11 here, so you've listened to, and I've been pretty
12 critical of a lot of things here today. But I think
13 that if the Administration goes item by item, that
14 you'll find out that we, because I am part of the
15 County even while I'm critical of it, has a pretty
16 good record on a lot of these issues. In fact, on
17 most of these issues.

18 I think that on issues with affordable
19 housing, especially addressing issues of
20 homelessness, we were big leaders. When the City of
21 Jersey City opened up a warming center so
22 individuals wouldn't freeze to death during the
23 winter, you know how long it stayed open? Two
24 weeks. You know who picked up the ball and ran with
25 it? This County. You know how long that warming

1 center has been in existence? 12 years. And every
2 time it's cold, we make sure that that center gets
3 open.

4 And that center provides health services.
5 And that center provides services for individuals to
6 access TRA or find a way to get into a shelter. So
7 there are a lot of things here that I think the
8 Administration should go item by item and provide to
9 you where we are, what we've done, and sit down and
10 meet with you in a constructive manner so you can
11 share information out to the community.

12 But also in those areas where there can be
13 more done, because we can work together to come up
14 with ways to do more. Because I agree with you.
15 Unaffordable and not-for-profit housing, we're doing
16 some really good stuff with that, and we can do
17 more. We did a bond ordinance a meeting or two ago
18 that I sponsored related to tax-exempt financing for
19 the tax credits related to Bayfront to make the
20 economics of the Bayfront first phase work, which
21 is, I don't know if it's 40-percent of low-mod
22 income.

23 But we did something pretty creative. We
24 were one of the first places in the state to do it.
25 And I was proud that I worked with the

1 Administration to say, Yeah, that makes sense.
2 You're able to get a larger bang for the buck from
3 those credits by us doing tax-exempt bonding and
4 guaranteeing that with our risk to make sure that
5 that project gets done. If you heard me earlier,
6 we've got a site near County Plaza that we can build
7 affordable housing on. We can solve two problems.
8 We can build a parking deck, and we can build
9 probably a couple of hundred units of affordable
10 housing, and we can work with a local non-profit,
11 entity or agency to do that.

12 Personally, I saw somebody from the West
13 in the audience. I've been working personally with
14 West to get an 18-unit low-income site on MLK, which
15 will also house their classrooms and training
16 offices for the young people from that community
17 that they work with so ultimately they don't find
18 themselves in a gang, but instead may find
19 themselves in a correctional center, police
20 department, or a Sheriff's office.

21 So I would, you know, I could do a
22 resolution if they will at the next meeting
23 supporting these items because I think that's a
24 helpful message. But beyond that, I think that I'm
25 asking the County Exec and Chiefs of Staff and

1 Administrators and department directors to maybe set
2 up individual meetings with whoever. You may have
3 your own subgroups who's in charge of health
4 services, et cetera, et cetera. But on almost all
5 these items, we've got a good record.

6 The amount of dollars we came up with
7 including to things like rental assistance when
8 COVID hit, second to none. Second to none. Unlike
9 Jersey City that gave money back because they didn't
10 figure out how to spend it soon enough, we spent all
11 of our dollars and some.

12 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: And Bill, also we
13 have a wonderful relationship with the LGBTQ
14 community, especially with Hudson Pride.

15 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: We started
16 funding a program that continued to fund and expand
17 on those programs. And when Jersey City decided
18 they were going to do Right to Counsel, but they
19 weren't going to start it until January 2025, I
20 stood up, worked with the County, and we funded the
21 Waterfront Project immediately. So not a week goes
22 by that I'm not working with the Waterfront Project
23 and referring individuals there.

24 So I think one of your points is very
25 well-taken. If there's a couple of not-so-good

1 things you want to hide from people, you tend to
2 hide everything. But sometimes don't be afraid to
3 hide your flaws because that's how you will improve.
4 But show all the successes that you have. And I
5 think that at the end of the day, if you were here
6 today, nobody's been more critical today than I
7 have. But as I go through these items and gone
8 through issues during COVID and beyond, for the most
9 part, I think they can go item by item and really
10 stand up on all of them.

11 And one related to the Sheriff, I mean,
12 I'll have a conversation personally with the
13 Sheriff, but we should probably also have you
14 directly contact and speak to him also.

15 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: I would ask that
17 this young lady go ahead. I.

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Would explain a
19 thing here. Anthony Smith asked to transfer, and we
20 weren't going to allow it, but because we did it for
21 Ada, we're going to allow it. But then next week,
22 no more transfers. That's it. The County signed up
23 to speak. He's still in the audience. Go ahead.

24 MS. ORTIZ: Hi, my name is Ada Ortiz,
25 and I'm here to request a meeting with the Public

1 Safety Committee, along with Commissioner Bill
2 O'Dea, Walker and Yraida Aponte-Lipski to
3 investigate the problems at the jail, as well as my
4 wrongful termination use of force case. When they
5 have officers there with worse use of force still
6 working, I was never given a chance to explain my
7 case at my hearing.

8 The investigator that did the
9 investigation, and all his investigation on the oath
10 he had made, and I have it in writing, that I was
11 right. That I was right, and I have it in writing,
12 and I have it on video, and still I was terminated.
13 And still I was terminated. I had to take my case
14 to the AOL hearing. It's still pending, but I'm
15 coming to you, Walker, O'Dea, and what's his name
16 again? Yraida Aponte-Lipski?

17 COMMISSIONER O'DEA: Yes.

18 MS. ORTIZ: I'm requesting a meeting
19 to meet up with you guys to investigate my case. I
20 have all the evidence. They wrongfully terminated
21 me. I've been on the job for 17 years, never
22 stopped working overtime from day one to the last
23 day. I'm a single mom. I just bought a house. I
24 just bought a house in October. In November, they
25 suspended me. In February or May, they terminated

1 me. No unemployment, no money, no nothing. I've
2 been working with the County for 17 years.

3 This is my first use of force case for
4 spraying an inmate who was an active resister.
5 There's a video as well with that. For spraying an
6 inmate, this officer went worse, coming into the gym
7 with a weapon, leaving loaded gun in a public
8 bathroom, still working. But I spray an inmate who
9 was an active resister, and I get terminated. I
10 want this to be investigated with Mr. Walker, with
11 you, O'Dea, and with Yraida Aponte-Lipski. And
12 until this is not investigated by you guys, I will
13 not stop coming here. Or, before I do a lawsuit
14 with the County, I want this to be resolved as soon
15 as possible. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER KOPACZ: Motion to
17 adjourn.

18 CHAIRMAN ROMANO: Motion and a second
19 to adjourn.

20 THE CLERK: The meeting's adjourned.
21 (Whereupon the proceeding is then
22 concluded at 6:26 p.m.)
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, SHARI CATHEY, CCR, RPR, License No.
30XI00234700, and Notary Public of the State of New
Jersey, hereby certify that the proceedings herein
are from the notes taken by me of a Regular Meeting
of the Hudson County Board of County Commissioners,
held on Thursday, April 24, 2025; and that this is a
correct transcript of the same.



SHARI CATHEY, CCR, RPR
A NOTARY PUBLIC of the
State of New Jersey
I.D. No. 2283786
Commission Expires 2/4/27

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