

KAREN ARGENTI BCEQ COMMENTS ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Karen Argenti, I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality. For the past 48-years, we are environmental advocate volunteers from the only county that has its own not for profit environmental organization, the Bronx.

You are trying to balance your checking account, but the roof is falling down.

Management by budget is the most effective and transparent method to running government. The Mayor makes the budget, you should judge did he do the right thing. See the report card on the back

First, if you know that facilities need capital investment every 10 years, then your question is **“Does this budget protect all park facilities in a state of good repair to meet the 4-year Capital Commitment Plan & 10-Year Capital Strategy.”** This is followed by **“Does the budget protect vehicles and equipment according to the manufacturer’s recommended schedule?”** Transparency is whether or not the public is involved. This hearing is an example of how, even with planning, the public input is minimal. The next question is **“Does the budget integrated the priorities of the Borough President, Council Member and Community Board?”**

Second, the staffing and operation to protect the capital investments work the same way. **“Does this budget provide adequate staff for Maintenance & Operation (M&O) in order to protect your infrastructure and equipment?”** If there are not enough staffing at all appropriate levels of programming missions, you should ask **“What will this do to our capital investments, and how much more will it cost to replace?”** Review job descriptions as well as the ratio of management and administration to field workers for adequacy.

Third, monitor the fiscal administration – not starting a new one, but staying on top to make sure the Mayor’s priorities remain stable. You are the monitors for the people. You can ask: **Are contracting decisions rational, in the best interest of the constituent, and save time and money? Are programs like Daylighting Tibbetts Brook inside the CSX right-of-way to the Harlem River on schedule or swept under the rug?**

Fourth, there are things the Parks Department can do, like **“Can the Commissioner approve “state-of-good-repair” projects?”** or **“Does the Agency have borough in-house professional construction team to handle every day repairs in the facilities?”** It may be more cost effective and efficient to adopt other management reforms. **Can they replicate NYS’s Design Build Program? Has the DEP funded Parks Green Infrastructure Program to enable Design-Build-Maintain?**

Finally, remove non-parks things: pre-project soil borings and testing; require all capital project contractors obtain a completion bond; remove restrictive procurement and ineffective contracting rules to decrease the time and cost of a capital projects; adding water mains and storm drains on parks property (DEP); pathway lighting (DOT); etc.

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