



NEW YORK CITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
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ZACH ISCOL
COMMISSIONER

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Paul Gosar
Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gosar,

Pursuant to the request for testimony regarding the use of Floyd Bennett Field by New York City agencies, we are happy to provide information regarding our posture during this unprecedented emergency.

Through preparedness, education, and response, New York City Emergency Management helps New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies. The agency is responsible for coordinating citywide emergency planning and response for all types and sizes of emergencies. Our agency is staffed by more than 250 dedicated professionals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, including individuals detailed from other City agencies. We work to identify the essential partners, personnel, and resources needed for effective response, including city, state, and federal government agencies as well as a broad array of partners in the private, non-profit, health care, and utility sectors. Emergency Managements' coordination efforts are a critical piece of a broader multiagency response to this national humanitarian crisis. We act as the central coordinator when it comes to emergency response, ensuring that resources are available for our partners, and serving New Yorkers in what can be their worst days with skill and compassion.

Since April 2022, New York City has been leading the country's response to the migrant emergency, providing critical support to over 200,000 individuals who have sought refuge and received assistance from our system. New York City is projected to spend more than \$4 billion on asylum seeker operations. With thousands of migrants and asylum seekers arriving each month, every day is an all-out sprint as our teams work diligently to open new sites, operate existing emergency shelters and respite centers, and find placements for new arrivals. We are a city shouldering the weight of a national crisis, which is stretching the limits of our physical space and resources. However, we

remain committed to upholding the values of compassion, efficiency, and accountability as we navigate this complex humanitarian crisis. The Adams Administration is proud to have engineered the first-in-the-nation Asylum Application Help Center, which opened last summer. Since its inception, we have opened three satellite sites while partnering with nonprofits, law firms, and the state and federal government. We have also provided health care, education, work training, jobs, legal support and much, much more. This is a story of New York City stepping up, and managing, and doing everything possible. For the last two years we have led with care and compassion, and we have not and will not lose sight of the extraordinary scale of this emergency. As it stands, currently the City is operating over 200 sites across all five boroughs, including 15 humanitarian relief centers, and we have helped submit over 50,000 applications for asylum, temporary protected status (TPS), and work authorization.

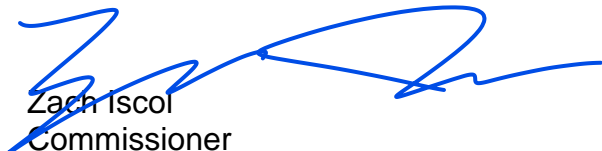
The City has been able to provide all new arrivals with shelter because of the flexibility we have had to open sites quickly. Some of those sites have not looked like traditional homeless shelters because emergency situations require creative solutions. We have sheltered people in gyms, already shuttered parochial schools, warehouses, NYPD facilities, commercial buildings, an airplane hangar, and closed or unused university buildings. In order to make these spaces safe and suitable for guests, we have had to repair elevators, rent shower trailers, contend with failing plumbing, and retrofit heating and cooling systems, and ensure accessibility issues for those with access and functional needs. After appealing to state and federal partners for additional support, including shelter space and sites, we were provided with approximately 30 acres of Floyd Bennett Field — less than 8 percent of the park's 387 acres. Most of the shelter is constructed on a portion of an unused runway and parking lot. The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services provided the necessary requirements for this type of configuration, and Floyd Bennett Field meets the specifications they laid out.

Opening Floyd Bennett Field was necessary, and in order to make it a safe place for families with children to reside, we have solved for hazards including high winds and flooding. We developed protocols for evacuation and built a pedestrian walkway to connect the base camp to a major thoroughfare. We meet weekly with the National Park Service to address issues as they arise. We spend an immense amount of time and resources to minimize our impact on the park and maximize safety of the guests.

It is important the federal government remains committed to helping states and local government combat the humanitarian crisis. When refugees from Europe arrived after World War II, from Vietnam in the 1970s, and from Cuba in the 1980s, the federal government ran large scale programs to provide immediate healthcare needs of new arrivals, screen out individuals posing security risks, and relocate people across the United States — where they went on to make massive contributions to American society and the economy. Without comprehensive immigration reform passed by Congress, this crisis has largely been left to cities and local jurisdictions to shoulder alone.

We cannot emphasize enough that this is a national crisis that demands a national response, namely meaningful action from Congress. This crisis has been, from the start, a true interagency effort, and we will continue to work with our partners to provide assistance and coordination. We are grateful for the support of those willing to work with us and that of the many elected officials who know that new immigrants have and will continue to enrich our communities.

Sincerely,



Zach Iscol
Commissioner
New York City Emergency Management

Appendix: Operational Information on the Base Camp at Floyd Bennett Field

Is the Floyd Bennett Field Humanitarian Center safe?

We put the health and safety of asylum seekers — and most importantly children seeking asylum — above all else. Floyd Bennet Field Humanitarian Center staff work around the clock to ensure guest wellbeing and that guests sleep in safe temperatures and receive three meals each day.

In keeping with our commitment to public safety of guests and workers at Floyd Bennett Field Humanitarian Center, NYCEM has established temporary relocation plans for the center in the event of an emergency. In the event of a relocation, our security and operations team at FBF ensures thorough accounting for all individuals, including searches, communication strategies, and tracking methods like scanning individuals to the temporary shelter upon arrival. NYCEM executives are well-trained in evacuation protocols and managing temporary shelters, including supervising contractors and providing clear instructions for safe evacuation processes. While the city retains operational responsibility for FBF under the lease agreement, we maintain open communication with federal and state partners regarding major city emergencies and basecamp concerns. General plans are always in place should we need to evacuate any shelter or site NYC Emergency Management builds or operates, enabling us to respond swiftly. Through our 24/7 Watch Command facility, we are always monitoring weather, hazards and other conditions throughout the city looking out for any potential problems affecting New York City, and asylum seeker sites in particular.

How much of Floyd Bennett Field does the base camp shelter take up?

The City's lease is for approximately 30 acres of Floyd Bennett Field, which comprises less than 10% of the park's total 387 acres. Much of the base camp is on top of a retired runway and hangar parking lot.

How do asylum seekers staying at the Floyd Bennett Field Humanitarian Center get to the city for school, work, or other services?

In order for migrants and asylum seekers to become self-sufficient, taxpaying members of American society, they need work permits. Though we can provide services like free transportation, it is on Congress to pass legislation that grants these individuals the legal status they need in order to start building a life outside of our humanitarian centers and support themselves and to provide the resources and authorities needed to expedite asylum and other immigration processing and procedures.

Are people still able to visit Floyd Bennett Field for recreational purposes?

Yes. Our base camp is clearly defined and bordered, leaving the other roughly 357 acres of the park available for public use.

What if you damage the parkland?

We will leave the park better off than we found it. As a condition of our lease of Floyd Bennett Field, we are making up to \$14.4 million in investments to improve the park. The projects include: rehabilitating the historic front entrance to the visitor center, repairing over 12,000 feet of roadways and runways, removing debris and invasive plants, renovating 12 RV and 30 regular camping sites, and developing a seven-acre outdoor education campus in partnership with Outward Bound Schools NYC.