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4	1000 V	LYN BOTANIC GARDEN Washington Avenue
5	Brook	yn New York 11225
6		MAY 7, 2018
7		6:11 P.M.
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9	APPEARANCES:	
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12	COMMISSIONERS:	
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14		
15	CESAR PERALES, Chair	LIRAN ANGELO
16	DEBORAH ARCHER	KYLE BRAGG
17	MARCO CARRION	UNA CLARKE
18	ANGELA FERNANDEZ	RACHEL GODSIL
19	SHARON GREENBERGER	DALE HO
20	MENDY MIROCZNIK	CARLO SCISSURA
21	ANNETTA SEECHARRAN	JOHN SIEGAL
22	WENDY WEISER	
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1	MR. PERALES: Good evening. My name is
2	Cesar Perales and I have the honor of chairing
3	the New York City Charter Revision Commission of
4	2018. And I am pleased to call this meeting here
5	at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. We are holding
6	hearings in each of the five boroughs. This is
7	the fourth. We will have one more hearing later
8	this week in Manhattan at the public library, the
9	Central Library, on Fifth Avenue. We normally
10	call on one or more of the commissioners to
11	welcome us. We have host commissioners,
12	obviously, from every borough. But this evening
13	we've got a lot of them from the County of Kings,
14	so and I, too, will confess that I live in a
15	place called Park Slope.
16	Are there any other commissioners who are
17	willing to indicate that they are from Brooklyn
18	and want to say a word or two.
19	MS. CLARKE: I am a Brooklynite.
20	MR. PERALES: All right.
21	MR. MIROCZNIK: Brooklyn, as well.
22	MS. GREENBERGER: I am, too.
23	MR. PERALES: Another Brooklyn. Who is it.
24	MR. SPEAKER: Sharon.
25	MR. PERALES: One. Sharon is Brooklyn. My

God. As well. Half the panel is home. So we are home and we want to express our appreciation for those of you who have taken a time to be here with us this evening.

Let me explain for a moment what the Charter Revision Commission is. The New York City Charter is, in essence, the constitution of the City of New York. It contains the basic rules of how we govern ourselves. And every few years a mayor decides that there is something in particular about the City Charter that he'd like to see amended, improved, made better so that the governance of the City of New York is better and it's done more easily and in a more transparent way to the citizens of our city.

Our role as commissioners is to review the entire City charter, as well as the particular thing that motivated this mayor to call a charter of Revision Commission. And his particular interest is in democracy. In making our election system more democratic. Making it easier for people to run. Making it easier for people to vote. And so we have been hearing from throughout the City, comments about making our city more democratic, making elections better.

1	So that's been the theme. And I'm hoping we
2	will hear comments on those particular themes
3	that motivated the mayor to call this commission
4	together. But we will listen to comments on
5	anything else that has to do with the City
6	Charter. Remember, we are here to talk about the
7	City Charter, not about all of the issues that
8	may be of concern to you.

The way it works is that the Commission will, as a result of these hearings, as a result of our deliberations, as a result of hearing from experts, we will write a report and recommend a few things that have come out of these discussions. We will recommend that they be put on the ballot in November so that the citizens of our city will decide whether or not they want to amend the charter in that particular fashion.

I think you've all gone into voting booths and seen referenda. Some of which is very long. Some of which you don't bother to read. But you're asked to vote yea or nay, yes or no. Well, as a result of these hearings, we're going to have referendum -- referenda being the plural -- on the November ballot.

For the record, we have followed all of the

L	legally required notice requirements. We've
2	posted public notices in newspapers, and in the
3	City record. We've sent e-mails out to thousands
1	of New Yorkers. And we have our own website,
5	which we use. We've got Facebook and Twitter.
5	So that we are trying to be as transparent as
7	possible.

This meeting is being live-streamed to people who want to watch this from their homes or from their offices. We also have language interpreters available. There is the deaf interpreter. I won't go through the rest of our schedule, but I do want to tell you that I'm going to try to get people up here in panels three at a time on subjects that they may have in common that they want to speak about. I will limit each speaker to three minutes. And we, members of the Commission, will have an opportunity, if we so desire, to ask for clarification of something that may have been said by one of the -- one or more of the speakers.

With that, I think we are ready to proceed.

We're going to have -- I'm sorry. I didn't allow
the commissioners to introduce themselves. You

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1	don't know who you're testifying before. It's a
2	very distinguished group.
3	Let's start on the extreme right.
4	MR. CARRION: Thank you. Good evening. My
5	name is Marco Carrion. I currently serve as
6	commissioner for the mayor's office of community
7	affairs.
8	MS. GREENBERGER: Good evening. I'm Sharon
9	Greenberger. I'm the president of the YMCA of
10	Greater New York and a proud Brooklyn resident.
11	MS. WEISER: Hello. My name is Wendy
12	Weiser. I direct the democracy program at the
13	Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.
14	And also delighted to be in my home borough.
15	MS. CLARKE: My name is Una Clarke. I'm a
16	former member of the New York City Council and
17	I'm pleased to be serving on this commission.
18	Let me welcome all of you to this hearing
19	and hope that you will testify and give us a real
20	crystal clear mission for which we can now
21	endeavor. So welcome again. I'm a Brooklynite
22	to the core.
23	MR. MIROCZNIK: Good evening. Mendy
24	Mirocznik. I am the president of Staten Island

COJO. I'm also a board member of Brooklyn's

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1	Bridge Multicultural Project of Flatbush Avenue.
2	I have to confess I was born in Brooklyn and I
3	lived there for a good decade before I got
4	married move to Staten Island.
5	MR. SCISSURA: First of all, welcome to
6	Brooklyn. It's obviously a great place to live.
7	I'm one of the few natives. Although I think I
8	have some friends here who are also natives of
9	Brooklyn. I currently serve as the president of
10	the New York Building Congress. But my last two
11	jobs were all about Brooklyn. I was the former
12	president of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce.
13	And before that, chief of staff to Borough
14	President Marty Markowitz. And we know Brooklyn
15	is cool, it's great. But I always like to say
16	it's the people that made Brooklyn cool and
17	great. So it's an honor to be with you all.
18	MR. PERALES: My name is Cesar Perales, as I
19	indicated. I have the honor of serving as the
20	chair. I, too, am a Brooklynite. I live in Park
21	Slope.
22	In terms of my professional career, I was a
23	former secretary of state of New York. I also
24	served as deputy mayor of the City of New York.
25	I filled a number of jobs in government. But I

1	also spent a significant part of my life as a
2	civil rights lawyer.
3	MS. SEECHARRAN: Good evening. My name is
4	Annetta Seecharran. And I am a very proud Queens
5	resident. I know I'm a minority here. And I am
6	the executive director of Chaya Community
7	Development Corporation.
8	MS. ANGELO: Good evening. I'm Liran
9	Angelo. I went to Brooklyn College, but I don't
10	live in Brooklyn currently. I worked in city
11	government for many years and I'm right now a
12	researcher at CUNY's Institute for State And
13	Local Governance.
14	MR. PERALES: Matt is not a member of the
15	Commission. He doesn't get to introduce himself.
16	But he's the executive director of the
17	Commission.
18	We're going to start with a four-person
19	panel. We're getting an awful lot of people who
20	want to speak, so I'm going to be pretty strict
21	about the three-minute rule.
22	The first panel will include someone from
23	Represent New York, RJ DeMelo. The director of
24	public policy at the Citizens Union. Is it
25	Pachel Bloom? Was it Rachel Bloom?

1	MS. SPEAKER: Rachel.
2	MR. PERALES: Rachel.
3	Megan Ahern from NYPIRG. And Jeremy Gruber
4	from Open Primaries. Susan Lerner from A Common
5	Cause.
6	Is that four or five?
7	MS. SPEAKER: That's five.
8	MR. PERALES: What? That's five.
9	Susan, do you mind waiting for the next one?
10	You'll get more attention.
11	MS. LERNER: I don't mind at all.
12	MR. PERALES: All right. Who goes first?
13	MR. GRUBER: Dear members of the New York
14	City Charter Revision Commission, thank you for
15	the opportunity to testify before you this
16	evening. My name is Jeremy Gruber. I'm the SVP
17	of Open Primaries, a national nonprofit
18	organization dedicated to more open and inclusive
19	elections. I'm also a longtime resident of Park
20	Slope, like the Chair, just down the block.
21	In 2016, New York became the poster child
22	for electoral dysfunction around the country for
23	one reason and one reason only; closed primaries.
24	New York City alone shuts out close to one
25	million registered independent voters every

1	primary election. That's over a quarter of all
2	registered voters in the City. Simply because
3	they declined to join one of our two major
4	political parties. One million registered
5	voters. That's more registered voters than
6	members of the republican conservative working
7	families and independent parties combined.
8	Indeed, that's more registered voters than exists
9	in several small states in this country. Almost
10	as many voters are shut out of voting in closed
11	primary elections in New York City than actually
12	voted in the last general election for mayor.
13	New York City is experiencing the same voter
14	flight from party identification that is gripping
15	the rest of the country. And the reality is that
16	independent voters are now the second largest
17	body of voters in this city. Our election system
18	has simply not kept up with this reality. One
19	million New Yorkers shut out of city elections is
20	simply unsustainable. Who are these voters?
21	They are a cross-section of New Yorkers from all
22	boroughs and all walks of life. 37 percent of
23	young voters in this city, 33 percent of Asian
24	voters, 20 percent of Latino voters, and 18
25	percent of African-American voters are shut out

1	of voting in elections in New York City because
2	of our system of closed partisan primaries.
3	Primary elections in the City of New York are
4	held in public facilities manned by public poll
5	workers, administered by the City and paid for by
6	all of us, the taxpayers. But only some of us
7	are granted the right to participate. Primary
8	elections are often the most meaningful elections
9	in this City. That's because the democratic
10	primary often determines the general election
11	winner. And the party organization which, to a
12	lesser extent, special interest coalitions, that
13	can influence low turnout democratic primaries,
14	dictate the outcome.

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But with an open nonpartisan primary, all candidates are on the same ballot and all voters can participate. A wider variety of candidates are encouraged to run, having a greater likelihood of prevailing in open primaries than in the existing closed system. Every New York City voter benefits from a healthier, more inclusive political system that encourages competition. That is how most cities in this country work. Today more than 80 percent of American cities have nonpartisan elections for

1	local office. These include major cities, like
2	Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Detroit, Dallas,
3	San Francisco and Houston. The time for change
4	has come. Instead of lagging behind the rest of
5	the nation, New York City needs to do what it
6	normally does best, lead. It's really a simple
7	proposition. If we want to turn around the
8	alarming drop in New York City voter turnout,
9	encourage increased voter participation in our
10	local elections, and attract more good
11	MR. PERALES: Mr. Gruber
12	MR. GRUBER: candidates to run for local
13	office, we need to learn a lesson from the rest
14	of the country. Nonpartisan elections would
15	enfranchise a million New York City voters and
16	work to accomplish these goals. I hope the
17	Commission will take a serious look
18	MR. PERALES: Thank thank you very much.
19	MR. GRUBER: at nonpartisan elections.
20	Thank you.
21	MR. PERALES: I'm going to ask the
22	commissioners to let us hear from the entire
23	panel and then we'll make notes about questions
24	we may have.
25	MS. AHEARN: Good evening. My name is Megan

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Ahern. I'm the program director for the New York
Public Interest Research Group, or NYPIRG. We've
provided testimony at the Staten Island hearing
on voter empowerment changes. So we're going to
focus tonight's testimony very briefly on
campaign finance revisions to the Charter.

NYPIRG believes the City's campaign finance program is the most important piece of anti-corruption legislation enacted by the city in many, many years. It's central to all city efforts to deliver fair and honest municipal government. The 1988 law has made great contribution to New York over 30 years. The six to one public matching funds, large commitment to voter education through the debate requirement and widely respected voter guide. And high-level transparency through the enormous data it discloses on campaign contributions and spending. In fact, it's a model for the state, that the state -- if this is a state charter revision, that we would be testifying to, to follow the New York City version -- the New York City model. All of these improvements were hard-fought and hard-won. With extraordinary effort put into analysis, studies, papers and hearings through

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the 88 commission process. And followed by 30 years of supportive case law. Any proposals to replace the current structure of the campaign finance program face a high bar. We're a strong supporter of the current program and its matching fund framework. And, of course, any law can be improved. For example Council Member Ben Kalos has made recommendations to increase the percentage of public funds received by candidates. NYPIRG suggests that the Commission review and report on the impact that lowering contribution limits would have on campaigns. And should review these plans and others to make the current City's campaign finance law even stronger. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. BLOOM: Good evening, Chair Perales and distinguished members of the New York City
Charter Revision Commission. My name is Rachel
Bloom and I am the director of public policy and programs at Citizens Union. We thank you for holding this and other public hearings and giving Citizens Union the opportunity to publicly share our recommendations with you.

We believe that this commission must not
simply revise but undertake some bold and broad
electoral reforms. This process and the
recommendations that come out of it must
strengthen the integrity of and transparency of
government institutions so that public confidence
is greater and New Yorkers are able to better
participate in governmental decision-making. My
testimony is far longer than my allotted time, so
I urge you to take a look at the longer
testimony, which we have submitted when we
checked in.

Our first recommendation is to institute rank choice voting. Citizens Union urges the Commission to consider instant-runoff voting for New York City Elections. Instant-runoff voting allows voters to rank their preferences for candidates, rather than only voting for one candidate. New York City election law provides that unless a candidate running in a citywide primary receives 40 percent of the vote, a runoff election is required. This is held at great expense to New Yorkers. In 2013 the runoff for the public advocate race cost New Yorkers more than 13 million dollars, which is greater than a

four-year budget for the public advocate's office.

In addition, in a city marked by terrible chart voter turnout in even high profile elections, run-off elections have abysmal voter participation. Leading to a tiny percentage of voters selecting citywide candidates. The voters who vote in turn out -- the voters who turn out in runoff elections tend to be older, richer and whiter, and not representative of New York City as a whole. Instant-runoff voting leads to more diverse candidates by gender and race, where it has been implemented. And this city -- this diversity is greatly needed in the New York City Council, where we have a mere 11 female council members out of 51. It is not reflective at all of the city it serves.

Now I'm just going to do a top-level listing of our other recommendations. Our second recommendation is to institute a top two elections system. Making the first primary election open to all eligible voters. Our third recommendation is to increase ballot access by reducing petitioning signature requirements.

This will make -- this will -- in the spirit of

increasing opportunities to participate in
elections as a candidate. We want to make it
easier for people to become candidates and get on
the ballot. We want to see improved laws
regulating elected officials' non-profits. In
2016 Local Law 181 brought non-profits that are
affiliated with elected officials under certain
campaign finance regulations. But more needs to
be done. We believe we need to be enacting true
independent New York City council redistricting
so that we have an independent council drawing
districts at the city level. We believe we
should transfer lobbying reporting and
enforcement to the campaign finance Board so that
the people who have oversight and enforcement are
not people that the City Council can have
control over.

And finally, we urge you to protect the strengths of the campaign finance Board.

Established in 1988, through a referendum by the people of New York, the campaign finance Board has revolutionized the way elections are run in New York City, helped to bring about a much more diverse range of candidates, and has served as a model for campaign finance for cities nationwide.

We urge the Commission to consider the myriad strengths of the campaign finance Board when recommending reforms.

4 Thank you very much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MR. DEMELO: Good evening, Chair Perales and members of the Charter Revision Commission. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you this evening. And thanks for everybody for coming out. This is very important, so it's great to see you turn out.

My name is RJ DeMelo. I'm a New York City resident of four years now. So thanks for welcoming me in with open arms. And I'm a volunteer member of Represent New York. We're a nonpartisan anti-corruption organization. And here we're focusing on campaign finance reform. The thing is I'm actually not here to talk to you about Represent New York, even myself. I'm actually here on behalf of my parents and so many countless other people just like them. For my dad, an Army veteran that grew up in public housing, the oldest of nine, with an absent father, he made a life for himself despite only obtaining his GED. For my mother, one of the

1	hardest-working people I know. She's had at
2	least two jobs at a time, usually more than that,
3	since she turned 16 years old. Raising a family
4	of five, they made it work financially. But only
5	by just enough. And so my question is, why
6	should their voice matter less than anybody
7	else's? The fact of the matter is with our
8	fiscal situation over the years, there was just
9	no extra money lying around to donate tenant
10	candidate. The thing about New York City is that
11	yes, the system is better than many places. That
12	certainly does not mean we should settle for good
13	enough or just better than someplace else. Now,
14	the public matching system in the city allows for
15	people of similar circumstance to my parents have
16	a louder voice. Yet a candidate can only raise
17	up to 55 percent of their campaign funds from
18	public monies. Therefore, there is still a
19	reliance on large donations for many candidates.
20	Those large donations become a priority and they
21	have influence. Which leads me back to my
22	earlier question. Why should that person that
23	can afford to donate \$1,000 potentially have
24	their opinion matter more than that of my
25	hard-working parents? Now, there are many

1	solutions, potentially, to this issue. Raising
2	the cap on publicly matched funds could be a
3	start. Doing so could allow candidates to focus
4	less on large donations to fill that 45 percent
5	gap now under the current system. And more on
6	the struggling mother of two in their district
7	that deserves just as much attention. So all
8	that I ask is you consider my parents and the
9	numerous others like them to ensure that their
10	voice is heard when contemplating campaign
11	finance reform. Everyone deserves a fair and
12	equal voice. And now given that opportunity of
13	raising someone's voice who is less fortunate can
14	help ensure that their opinions and needs do not
15	fade off into night, behind those who can afford
16	to raise their own.
17	Thank you very much for your time.
18	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
19	Kyle, you didn't get to introduce yourself?
20	MR. BRAGG: Thank you. Good evening. I'm
21	Kyle Bragg. I'm secretary treasurer of SEIU
22	32BJ. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: And Dale.

MR. HO: Good evening. Thank you everyone
for coming out tonight. My name is Dale Ho. And

1	I am the director of the ACLU Voting Rights
2	Project.
3	MR. PERALES: I usually start the
4	questioning, but I won't today. I want to give
5	my fellow commissioners an opportunity to get the
6	ball rolling.
7	Who's got a question?
8	MS. ANGELO: Thank you all very much for
9	your testimony.
10	Ms. Bloom, can you first of all, I missed
11	your proposal between redistricting of council
12	districts and protecting the campaign finance
13	Board. What was that?
14	MS. BLOOM: Oh. I'm sorry. That was
15	transfer lobbying reporting and enforcement to
16	the campaign finance Board. Currently the city
17	clerk has responsibility for lobbying oversight
18	and enforcement. And when that position is held
19	by someone appointed by the city council, the
20	very entity in which the lobbying of elected
21	officials occur. We believe that a conflict of
22	interest arises.
23	MS. ANGELO: Now a second question.
24	Can you can you give a little more detail
25	on your second proposal on the primary system,

Τ	where the first one is open and the second part
2	of the primary is not?
3	MS. BLOOM: You mean instant-runoff voting?
4	MS. ANGELO: Yeah no, no.
5	MS. BLOOM: Or you mean top two
6	MS. ANGELO: Top two. Yeah.
7	MS. BLOOM: Top two election system is much
8	like Jeremy was talking about. Which is that
9	people can run and it makes the first primary
10	election open to all eligible voters, regardless
11	of their party status. So that every registered
12	voter can participate. In New York City, where
13	so many election decisions are decided in the
14	democratic party by the democratic primary,
15	1.3 million voters registered voters in New
16	York City are effectively cut out of. When, in
17	most cases, is the most determinative election in
18	a cycle.
19	MS. ANGELO: And so what's the top two?
20	MS. BLOOM: Top two is that everyone
21	there's a primary, anyone can vote, regardless of
22	party. And the top two vote-getters run in the
23	general election. And those two people, whether
24	it's two members of the democratic party, two
25	members of the republican party.

1	MS. ANGELO: Gotcha.
2	MS. BLOOM: The Rent Is Too Damn High and
3	the Working Families Party, whatever it may be.
4	And the you're allowed to you know, the way
5	it's set up, you can still you can have two
6	people from same party running. People have
7	party affiliations and you're able to have those
8	two parties listed when you vote.
9	Am I missing anything?
10	MR. SPEAKER: And as I mentioned in my
11	testimony, that's the norm in 80 percent of
12	American cities.
13	MS. ANGELO: Can I just ask one would
14	that not I'm sorry. But in a city that's
15	so that's predominantly democratic, could that
16	not result in never having a republican making it
17	in the top two? So that every general election
18	would have two democrats?
19	MR. SPEAKER: But the point is to make sure
20	that the election in a nonpartisan election,
21	the election is run in similar to general
22	elections is run by the City. It's not run
23	it's not run on behalf of the parties. All
24	candidates are on the same ballot. And the top
25	vote-getters go on to the general election So

1	there might be some cases where, certainly in
2	particular elections an individual from a
3	particular party might not make the ballot. But
4	it also ensures that the candidates that have the
5	widest range of support in the community make it
6	onto the ballot. And it ensures that every
7	voter, regardless of their political party or
8	independent status, is allowed to participate.
9	MS. SEECHARRAN: So I wanted to ask a
10	question of the speaker from NYPIRG.
11	I'm sorry I didn't catch your full name.
12	You so you talked about campaign finance
13	reform. But do you have a specific I didn't
14	hear a specific recommendation.
15	MS. AHEARN: No. Besides, if there is going
16	to be robust changes to the current system, that
17	it be more than you know, that there be more
18	public process than these public hearings. That
19	there be robust conversation with groups that
20	have worked with us on this. And people in the
21	community beyond these slew of hearings in the
22	past few weeks.
23	MR. PERALES: I don't want to be well,
24	I'm playing the devil's advocate here.
25	You do know that that nonpartisan elections

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1	was put before the voters of the City of New
2	York?
3	MR. SPEAKER: Yep.
4	MS. SPEAKER: Mm-hmm.
5	MR. PERALES: You know that?
6	And you know the result?
7	MR. SPEAKER: Well, I yes. And I also
8	know that that happened before the revolution
9	election in 2016, when the vast majority of New
LO	Yorkers stood up and said they wanted an open
11	primary, according to recent polling. So I
L2	think
L3	MR. PERALES: I'm sorry. I'm listening.
L4	MR. SPEAKER: I think the I think the
L5	understanding has changed about nonpartisan
L6	elections in the City. I think the number of
L7	independent voters has risen dramatically since
L8	that conversation. And I think the opportunity
L9	to have that conversation again in the current
20	political climate is incredibly relevant.
21	MR. PERALES: For those of you in the
22	audience who don't understand.
23	Nonpartisan elections was put before the
24	voters by a prior charter commission. And it was
25	overwhelmingly rejected.

So the argument being made here is that people's opinions may have changed.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe they changed dramatically. I think those hearings were prior to 2016. I think the public attitudes towards open primaries has changed dramatically. I think the people deserve an opportunity, with all the recent political developments that have happened, to revisit this issue. And I really encourage this commission to do that.

MS. SPEAKER: I would just add that, you know, New York State has the longest timeframe for when someone can change their party of any state in the nation by far. You have to register often the year before the primary that you want to vote in in order to be able to participate. Which many people discovered when they wanted to vote in the presidential primary in 2016. And they just could not participate. And so when we talk about this -- this feeling, like there might be a different vote outcome this time, a lot of that stems from that. And, you know, the 100,000 plus people that were erroneously removed from the rolls. And so, you know, as someone who has been lobbying on this party request change in

1	Albany, it you know, neither party really
2	wants to make that change. So we're trying to
3	make it more we're trying to make it so that
4	more people can participate in New York City.
5	MR. SPEAKER: Again, the numbers are pretty
6	stark One million voters aren't can't

stark. One million voters aren't -- can't participate. I think that, by itself, deserves an examination.

MS. CLARKE: I just wanted to ask a little bit about voter registration and voter participation.

In many communities, including my own, it takes a lot of educating for people to even want to register, never mind voting. If we're looking at the City to make it more diversified, make sure that everybody who has something at stake in the City are able to vote, how would you do that? Because the more things change, the more they remain the same. And the aim of keeping things the way they are, just twisting to somebody else's thought and idea, sometimes sound good. But when you put it on the ballot, it doesn't work.

So tell me how would you ensure fairness that every community in the City of New York

1	would	be	educa	ated	enough	to	understand	what	all
2	these	cha	anges	are	about?				

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MR. SPEAKER: Well, I happen to put a lot of trust in the voters. I think the voters understand what it means to vote. I think part of the reason that we need to revisit voting rules in the City of New York is because we're not just facing an issue where voters are not participating because of simple administrative I think we're facing a serious challenge to meaningful elections in this City. I think many voters aren't voting because they don't find those elections to be meaningful. Not because -- simply because of administrative access. So I believe that nonpartisan elections would immediately enfranchise a million voters in this City, but they would also produce a political climate that is more robust, more inclusive and would allow a much broader conversation and a much broader candidates to come to the floor. So I think this is a question not just of inclusiveness, but a question of changing the political climate in this City for the voters for the good. And I think that's what nonpartisan elections would begin to accomplish.

1	MS. SPEAKER: I would just add that New York
2	doesn't have so much of a voter registration
3	problem, as we have a voter turnout problem. And
4	there are a myriad of reasons why our voter
5	turnout is low, from noncompetitive elections,
6	which perhaps the top two election system would
7	change. People not being able to vote in the
8	primary, which are determinative for so many
9	elections in this City. And, you know, there has
10	been so much effort at the state level to change
11	things that would make voting easier, to have
12	early voting, same-day registration. And there's
13	a lot of people working on that. I'm one of
14	them. But that's a whole you know, we've been
15	working on that for decades and we're still not
16	quite there. And so what we could whenever we
17	have to opportunity to in New York City, that can
18	make it, you know, a top two election system or
19	instant-runoff voting then you know,
20	instant-runoff voting allows so that people get
21	to feel like one of their candidates was chosen.
22	They'll feel like they have more of a say. Or
23	with top two elections, maybe there's an
24	opportunity for people in districts where, you
25	know, to have two people talking about the needs

1	of their community, rather than someone who's
2	only going to get five percent of the vote.
3	Which is what happens in City council races. So
4	I think we have to look at what we can do in New
5	York City. Because our voter turnout is one of
6	the worst in country. And it's not a matter of
7	registration. It's a matter of turnout. And
8	what we can do at the city level, versus the
9	state.
10	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you very
11	much.
12	Are there any other commissioners that have
13	questions? No? I think we'll move on.
14	And rest assured, this your testimony has
15	been very important. You're talking about the
16	things that we're concerned with. We're going to
17	be making some determinations.
18	So thank you again.
19	MS. SPEAKER: Thank you.
20	MR. PERALES: On the next panel yes. The
21	next panel. Susan Lerner, Common Cause New York.
22	Mariana Alexander, New Kings Democrats. Looks
23	like Amina Fofana, but it's not clear, from
24	Integrate New York City. And Paula Segal, The
25	Community Development Project.

1	MS. LERNER: Hi. I'm Susan Lerner. I'm the
2	executive director of Common Cause New York. I
3	do have written testimony, which I'll leave
4	behind. But I want to summarize the highlights
5	of our suggestions of areas which we believe the
6	Commission should be looking into.

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First we'd like the Commission to consider institutionalizing participatory budgeting on a much broader basis here in New York City. Common Cause is one of the founding members of the Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee. think it's been very successful at the county level, but very limited. And we think that there are models around the world for a much more expansive participatory budgeting system which should be considered here in New York. campaign finance, our preference is to get as close to a full public financing system as we can under the current US Supreme Court laws. the matching fund system is certainly of long-standing and well admired in a model, it certainly can be improved. And we are, I think, very much aware of its limitations over the last several election cycles, with scandals and corruption problems. I think the impact of

1	philanthropic and advocacy organization sponsored
2	by elected officials and those close to them are
3	an area which, as Citizens Union pointed out,
4	needs further expansion so that the goal of
5	lessening corruption would be more successfully
6	taken on. We also believe that we strongly
7	support lifting the cap on the matching fund
8	system so that, indeed, a person could run only
9	with small dollar matches. And we think that
10	we're supportive of efforts to make compliance
11	with the City's campaign finance laws less
12	onerous. Right now it works to penalize the less
13	sophisticated candidates. And we think that
14	consideration should be given to designing a
15	system of sampling to be used in post-election
16	audits to substantially cut down on the time to
17	conclusion of those audits. For ethics
18	oversight, we suggest changing the manner in
19	which the conflicts of interest board is
20	appointed so that it is not solely appointed by
21	the mayor. There is a history of a deference to
22	executive waivers that we think is not fair to
23	the City as a whole. And we note the explosion
24	of consultants who claim that they are not
25	lobbyists provides a problem for which there has

1	currently not been any regulatory solution. And
2	we think that that is an area for the Commission
3	to look at. On election reform, we're troubled
4	by the idea by the uncertainty as to how far
5	we can change the election system here in the
6	City, as opposed to at the state level. We are
7	strong supporters of rank-choice voting in New
8	York City because of the large number of
9	candidates who run on the primary. We are also
10	supportive of civic engagement efforts. And we
11	want to be sure that the City consolidates its
12	civic engagement efforts. And we don't have a
13	chief democracy officer, an Office of Civic
14	Engagement, and a voter administer a voter
15	assistance administration commission, which is
16	duplicative. So we hope that there would be some
17	thought given to how to unify and strengthen the
18	City's civic engagement efforts. Of which there
19	are many ongoing, but uncoordinated.
	_, ,

Thank you.

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MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. ALEXANDER: Good evening. My name is

Mariana Alexander. I'm the vice president of

policy for the New Kings Democrats, NKD. NKD is

a political reform club founded in 2008,

1	committed to bringing transparency,
2	accountability and inclusionary democracy to the
3	Kings County Democratic Party and New York City
4	by extension. I'm excited to be here, as the
5	stated purpose of this Charter Revision
6	Commission aligns closely with the work we've
7	been doing for the last ten years.

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I'm here to advocate for changes to the city charter, to strengthen voting rights and reduce the influence of money and special interests in politics. NKD membership has formally adopted the following policy platforms as to how these ends can be achieved. To strengthen voting rights, amendments to the Charter should be made to simplify voter registration. Registration should be automatic for all eligible voters and available through any contact with the City. In addition, voters should be informed when registering that only voters who are registered with a political party are allowed to participate in that party's primary elections. Primaries are often decisive in New York elections. enrollment should be available for political parties, assuming there was no prior registration in a party. And voters should be allowed to

1	correct registration errors at the polls. NKD
2	supports the expansion of enfranchment to young
3	voters, non-citizens, and those with a criminal
4	record. Young voters form habits that last a
5	lifetime and are intellectually capable of making
6	informed voting decisions. Citizenship should
7	not be a barrier to political representation.
8	And all verified residents, including
9	non-citizens, should be allowed to vote. The
10	right to vote should not be provided should be
11	provided, regardless of criminal status.
12	Especially since laws that restrict voting access
13	based on criminal record status, overwhelmingly
14	affect people of color and the poor. NKD
15	supports full voting rights for those convicted
16	of a felony, those awaiting trial, and those
17	currently serving a sentence. Re-registration
18	should not be required. Lastly, we support
19	reforms to enable anyone to vote in a primary if
20	they were will be eligible by the time of the
21	general election.
22	In terms of reducing the influence of money
23	and special interests in politics, NKD advocates
24	that contribution limits should be dramatically
25	reduced and should limit contributions, including

1	those from candidates themselves. Entities that
2	do business with the City should be subject to
3	lower contribution limits. And the City should
4	find a way to limit contributions to party funds,
5	also known as housekeeping accounts, which often
6	go to fund campaign activities. Lobbyists should
7	be subject to stricter disclosure requirements
8	and regulation. And any consultant performing a
9	role similar to a lobbyist should be subject to
10	the same rules. Campaign finance regulations
11	should be accessible and not a barrier to those
12	unfamiliar with the law. And there should be
13	robust resources available to candidates on the
14	procedural and legal requirements of running for
15	office. And these resources should be made
16	available in multiple languages. I realize that
17	some not some of these policy goals are not
18	within the jurisdiction of the city's charter.
19	However, I thought it would be useful to
20	delineate them here tonight.
21	Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
22	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
23	MS. FOFANA: Good afternoon. I hope you
24	guys had a lovely day. My name is Amina Fofana.
25	I'm a part of the youth led organization called

1	Integrate NYC. We focus on integrating schools
2	in New York City and around the country because
3	we have a deeply segregated public school system.
4	We have a five-point platform which was generated
5	by youth of across the U.S. and also in New
6	York City, which consists of integration policies
7	that will ensure that everybody gets a fair and
8	just equitable education, no matter who you are
9	or the color of your skin. So I'm here to
10	testify on behalf of the Office of Civic
11	Engagement. Well, to for the implementation
12	of the Office of Civic Engagement. At Integrate
13	NYC we stand for real representation of young
14	people and in decision-making at local city and
15	state levels. I believe that we should have this
16	Office of Civic Engagement so youth can be able
17	to voice their opinions and have, you know, a
18	part in the decisions that are being made. The
19	essence of having the Office of Civic Engagement
20	would give youth opportunities to share their
21	experiences, opinions, on the decisions. And it
22	is important that we activists and community
23	organizers have a voice and are included
24	included in the processes of positive
25	affirmations of our society. We also stand for

1	real democracy where coalition of group groups
2	work together to make change. Having this office
3	would encourage and ensure that community,
4	including youth leaders, can be connected to one
5	another to better achieve the change we dream of.
6	We stand with the call for the Office of Civic
7	Engagement and expect to have meaningful student
8	representation.
9	MR. PERALES: Well, thank you very much.
10	Very good.
11	MS. SIEGEL: Hi. My name is Paula Siegel.
12	I am a senior staff attorney in the Equitable
13	Neighborhoods Practice of the Community
14	Development Project. I did bring copies of my
15	testimony and it's a bit of a list. I don't know
16	if you did you guys get them? No. Okay.
17	They're at the front somewhere. You'll need
18	them. So so we work with local coalitions to
19	foster responsible equitable development and help
20	make sure that people of color, immigrants and
21	other low-income residents who have built our
22	city are not pushed out in the name of progress.
23	We work together with our clients to ensure that
24	residents and historically under-resourced areas

have stable housing they can afford, places where

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they can connect and organize, jobs to make a good living, and other opportunities that allow people to thrive. We're extremely excited to collaborate with this Commission on a thorough review of the city charter, which is long overdue in the land-use context, where we work.

We encourage the Commission to examine the following areas closely. These are all portions of the Charter, which is why you'll need the list. And we're happy to provide more background or expertise in any of them. I'm going to try to hit as many as I can in the next two minutes.

But there is a list. It's bulleted.

The first set focuses on ensuring that more land that's public land is subject to approval through the City's existing uniform land-use review procedure. At the moment the New York City Housing Authority is either selling or leasing parcels of land. And the city charter does not require a public review of that process. That's something that you can change. And you can change immediately.

There are also certain areas that have been described as blighted by planners of generations past that are allowed -- in which public land is

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allowed to be disposed of to private developers with no public review at all. The program has the curious name of the Urban Development Action Area Program. But what it means -- what it really is is an exception to the uniform land-use review procedure that we all have learned and understand. That exception should be eliminated. Because what it allows is a back door for the disposition of public assets.

We're also looking for some improvements to you ULURP itself. We're looking for unification of the process of public land dispositions, a limit on how long after a city council approval ULURP -- of a land-use action, that action can actually be done before a new approval is needed. Right now that's infinity. And we're still seeing this administration utilize approvals from 2004 and 2006, as though nothing has changed on the ground. We're also looking for timelines and transparency in the -- in what happens before ULURP in the design of land use applications. Some of our other recommendations target oversay in disposition of public land and directing public land to non-profits and community land trusts instead of private developers, reforming

1	the tax lien process to protect charity
2	properties, and to leverage vacant properties for
3	the preservation and creation of new affordable
4	housing I'm sorry. And the creation and
5	the enshrinement of a right to housing in the
6	city charter. Right now the city is subject to
7	state law, which provides a right to shelter, and
8	creates a shelter industrial complex. Where we
9	really need is a right to housing for all New
10	Yorkers. There's more. I gave you a list.
11	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you very
12	much.
13	Does anybody have a question, any of the
14	commissioners?
15	MS. CLARKE: I really don't have a question.
16	I just want to commend the two young persons who
17	have come as next generation with their ideas.
18	And I think that we ought to we ought to take
19	their testimony very seriously. And I am
20	particularly concerned about education, Brown
21	versus Board of Education is a long time. And
22	I'm glad that you brought that up, and that we
23	should be able to look at that. Because our
24	schools should be a reflection in every classroom
25	of what the City looks like. And if I can commit

1	myself if I can commit myself as an educator
2	to be a companion at that, I would love to do
3	that.
4	MS. GREENBERGER: I have a question for
5	Susan Lerner, actually, about the COIB
6	composition and a recommendation to change that.
7	What would be your recommendation?
8	MS. LERNER: It sounds that the
9	recommendation would be to have it be a mixed
LO	application so that it is not solely the mayor
L1	who appoints with approval of the council, but
L2	that there would be an appointment by the council
L3	and by the mayor so that you have more diversity.
L4	And that no one appointing authority would have
L5	the leading voice in the body.
L6	MS. GREENBERGER: Okay. Thank you.
L7	MS. ANGELO: Can you speak a little bit
L8	further on the tax lien process and charities.
L9	MS. SIEGEL: And charities? Yeah.
20	Absolutely.
21	So the New York State Constitution is very
22	clear. Charity properties are in tight I'm
23	sorry. Charities that own properties are
24	entitled to local property tax exemptions from
25	the moment that they acquire the property until

1	they don't own it anymore. The term of art is
2	from the date of deed. In 2012, the Bloomberg
3	administration, which is still haunting us,
4	invented an annual renewal requirement for
5	charities to renew their property tax exemption.
6	Many of our charity properties are owned by
7	legacy organizations that have owned them since
8	the civil rights movement in the 1960s and didn't
9	get the memo that now they're supposed to go
10	online once a year, type in a password that they
11	got in the mail, and assure the Department of
12	Finance that the church is still a charity, or
13	that the community center is still running a
14	headstart program. Absent that annual renewal
15	requirement, the Department of Finance has been
16	removing the property tax exemption and then
17	starting to send bills, which then often don't
18	though organizations don't open because they've
19	never gotten a tax bill before. Or they go to
20	somebody who's passed away because there's been
21	no reason for a charity organization to keep its
22	address up to date with the Department of
23	Finance, with whom they have no dealings. It
24	goes into arrears. And in the summer, as is
25	about to happen in about three weeks, the

Τ	Department of Finance compiles the tax lien sale
2	book and includes those charity arrears in the
3	book. That's the that's the big overview.
4	There's a lot more detail.
5	MS. ANGELO: Do you know how many charities
6	have lost their tax-free status?
7	MS. SIEGEL: I would not put it that way.
8	Under the state law, they have the status. It
9	has gone nowhere. It's the City that's making an
10	error. And it's an administrative error that's
11	leading to liens being placed on properties that
12	are then purchased by a hedge fund backed trust
13	that then initiates collection action. I've
14	represented a few organizations in the
15	foreclosure proceedings that follow. As of this
16	morning, there were 120 organizations with water
17	debt and 176 heading to the 2018 tax lien sale.
18	The Department of Finance should be updating with
19	a ten-day list soon. This is not a small number.
20	MS. ANGELO: Okay. But the but the water
21	issue is a separate issue, the water bill issue?
22	MS. SIEGEL: The water bill issue is a
23	separate issue. But until the Bloomberg
24	administration the arrears were real, but it
25	was the City who would do the collection. Now it

1	all gets bundled and sold to the tax lien trust.
2	Which then initiates collection, adds interests
3	and fees and starts foreclosure. And I can I
4	could introduce you to some clients of mine,
5	churches and community centers that we've gotten
6	out of that process. And it's hairy. Because
7	those foreclosure cases get decided on default.
8	Which means no one ever needs to appear.
9	MS. ANGELO: And is the charity liable for
10	the taxes or
11	MS. SIEGEL: So I have we have despite
12	the process that I have just described, actually,
13	the City ends up owing these organizations money.
14	So if we can catch them before the foreclosure
15	happens and the auction happens, and then a
16	private investor ends up owning their church or
17	their community garden, they apply for a refund
18	and they get a check from DOF. I could show you
19	some lovely checks for, you know, \$30,000.
20	Numbers like this. Where the organizations have
21	come up with money to try to protect their
22	properties that they never owed. You can keep
23	asking. I got a lot I got stories.
24	MR. PERALES: I just noticed that we have
25	been joined by Angela Fernandez.

1	Angela, introduce yourself.
2	MS. FERNANDEZ: Hello. Good evening. My
3	name is Angela Fernandez and I am the executive
4	director of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for
5	Immigrant Rights. And I am also mayoral designee
6	for the Civilian Compliment Review Board.
7	MR. PERALES: I have a brief straightforward
8	question to both Ms. Lerner and Ms. Alexander.
9	You both referenced campaign contribution
LO	limits. Do you have a number in mind? Can you
L1	help us.
L2	MS. SPEAKER: Well, I think in any case we
13	shouldn't be looking at any campaign contribution
L4	limits that are higher than the federal limit,
L5	which is \$2,700. And I for the mayor, for
L6	citywide offices. And I would hope that we would
L7	have lower limits for council members.
18	MS. SPEAKER: I personal agree with
L9	MR. PERALES: You like that number?
20	MS. SPEAKER: Yeah.
21	MR. PERALES: All right. 2,700. I'll write
22	that down.
23	Anyone else have a comment, question?
24	With that, let me thank you all.
25	MS. SPEAKER: Thank you.

1	MS. SPEAKER: Thank you so much.
2	MR. PERALES: The next panel, someone will
3	be representing Borough President Adams. I think
4	it's Stephan Ringle. From Fair Vote, Tim Hayes.
5	It looks like Stewart Bilberg or Belberg.
6	AUDIENCE MEMBER: Balberg.
7	MR. PERALES: And Christine Parker-Bay.
8	Who is going to start?
9	MS. PARKER: Okay. They said I can go
10	first, even though I'm in the middle.
11	Good evening everyone. And thank you for
12	taking the time out to revise the city charter,
13	which is really way overdue. So I'm really
14	excited to be here.
15	I agree with everything that everyone said
16	in the last panel. And I can go on and on. But
17	my biggest question would really be about the
18	civic engagement aspect. And let me introduce
19	myself. I'm Christine Parker. I ran for city
20	council, all-around community advocate. I've run
21	a museum. Mother of 2.2 children. And very well
22	committed to voter engagement here in Brooklyn
23	because I feel that there's a sense of
24	suppression around lack of knowledge. And I'm
25	not sure you can change that. But I do believe

1	that in terms of civic engagement, that there
2	needs to be something around education. And if
3	we are going to have continue to have such
4	abysmal numbers in terms of voter turnout, we
5	actually do need a community democracy officer
6	that, to me, is not appointed by the mayor.
7	There are a number of folks here that I know who
8	are on the panel. And again, thank you for doing
9	this. My concern would be that we have more
10	civic engagement and that we do, in fact, have
11	someone who is or an area or an agency around
12	civic engagement, as well as also having that in
13	our public school system. Which is what I'm sure
14	you're not able to change. But I've got so many
15	questions, so much to say in a very little time.
16	So I'm just going to leave it there. But another
17	thing that concerns me is that with so much
18	mayoral influence, how objective will this body
19	be around the changes that are really necessary
20	not only around voting, but certainly around
21	land-use issues? Thank you.
22	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
23	MR. HAYES: Hello. My name is Tim Hayes.
24	I'm with an organization called Fair Vote. Thank
25	you very much for having me today. I'll try to

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2	Fair Vote has been recognized as one of the
3	leaders in electoral reform nationally for more
4	than 25 years. And with that, I would like to
5	encourage everyone to take a close look and
6	consider rank-choice voting for the city of New
7	York. Some people refer to it as instant-runoff
8	voting. I think studies have shown that it can
9	save the City instant-runoffs can save the
10	City of New York as much as twenty million
11	dollars over a four-year election cycle. And it
12	has been proven around the country. Cities that
13	have adopted it, like Minneapolis, Memphis, the
14	State of Maine. They've shown that it makes
15	elections more civil, kinder, nicer. Because
16	people, if they can't be if candidates can't
17	be your first choice, they reach out beyond their
18	base because they want to be your second choice
19	or third choice. So it brings civility, it saves
20	money. And it it has more New Yorkers
21	involved because there's no need for a second
22	runoff election. Thank you.
23	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
24	MR. BALBERG: All right. Good evening. I'm

Stuart Balberg. As a matter of disclosure, I

know Una Clarke, for many years when from when
I was on the school board. And I also recognize
Mr. Scissura, who was Marty Markowitz's he was
a school board number. And I wish I knew
Mr. Perales, because he's an inspiration.

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I'm a republican district leader. I'm here as a member of the Republican State Committee for New York. We have 20 of us in Brooklyn. I found the position of the district leader very inspiring and very useful. For example, Letitia James called me a switch-hitter because not only do I involve myself with republicans, but I also try to influence my friends and people in my community. Which is one community. I try to influence people regardless of what party they're That influence in their party for the good. And that involves a lot of time going over party lines and what's now a divided populous. that's what you do. You don't need a government to push it, to play around with it. Because every time the government -- the more things change -- like you said, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The more the government mixes in over here, the more things -they -- the more they remain, there's more --

1	it's like the government stifles the ability to
2	have free and open debate. And to call this open
3	primary is not only an oxymoron, but it's it's
4	Orwellian in the structure. It's like the Help
5	America To Vote Act, which makes it unfair
6	because you can't use the machine ballots, which
7	you can't cheat. New York resisted it because
8	you resist because New Yorkers resist things
9	when they're crooked. Not like we follow the
10	crowd and they don't do it. And the No Child
11	Left Behind Act was another one with poison
12	pills. And then to be bipartisan, the Patriot
13	Act also carries that same kind of a taste to it.
14	And basically the agenda going on today is that
15	you're allowed to speak local only if you're act
16	global. If you can't act global, they don't let
17	you speak local. Where does it stop? First they
18	got rid of the neighborhood action boards. Then
19	they got rid of the school boards. Which was the
20	only thing that let local people have a say in
21	the school. Then the next thing they got out of
22	the precinct councils, community boards, and
23	everything else. And just have a small group of
24	people globally that run this whole thing.
25	That's a pessimistic view on the voters. And

1	what I wanted to say, when we had the charter
2	to try to do the Charter Revision Commission
3	not the Charter they tried to the
4	Constitutional Convention. I opposed it. Well,
5	every district leader that I knew, democrat and
6	republicans, opposed such a thing. And many of
7	the legislators opposed it. And for good reason.
8	Because the main item that would've ran through
9	was the so-called open primary. Everything else
10	would have been killed. And the open primary,
11	which would have had a white spray and a wide
12	spread. And Bloomberg would have ran this
13	through everybody's who everybody I
14	supported Bloomberg. Yeah. I supported Una
15	Clarke and but everybody would have they
16	would have got if Bloomberg would have gotten
17	rid of another thing, either the school board, he
18	would have gotten rid of the primary elections,
19	district leaders, board of Elections, bipartisan
20	Board of Elections and everything else.
21	MR. PERALES: Your time is up, sir.
22	MR. BALBERG: Yeah. Thank you.
23	And anyway, if you do put this thing in
24	there, I'm going to have no choice. If you open
25	it up, I'm going to vote for Cuomo. Because

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1	compared to	that de Blasio,	Cuomo is a saint.
2	Thank you.	And that's not	saying much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MR. RINGLE: Hey. My name is Stephan
Ringle. I'm the communications director for
Borough President Eric Adams. Good evening,
members of the Charter Revision Commission.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on
issues of importance to be considered before the
Commission. And, of course, welcome to Brooklyn.

The borough president applauds this commission for its focus on the need to revisit and reform our campaign finance rules and laws, as well as the way we conduct our elections. I'm here on his behalf to highlight just two of the many issues that he believes this Commission should be considering.

Instant-runoff voting and the need for 100 percent publicly funded campaigns. Recently in partnership with Fair Vote and his colleagues in government, Borough President Adams called on this Commission to implement instant-runoff voting. He supports instant-runoff voting because it enhances the voice of the people, while saving taxpayers money. We have a golden

1	opportunity to implement electoral reforms that
2	enhance engagement in our democracy.
3	Particularly in communities who have historically
4	faced under-representation. The system is
5	currently used in local elections at 11 cities
6	across the United States. New York City must
7	catch up to this trend as a way to enhance
8	democracy and protect taxpayer dollars.
9	Another way to protect our taxpayer dollars
10	is for this Commission to reform our current
11	public financing system. Which is often regarded

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as one of the best public/private campaign finance (inaudible) in the country. While this may be true, it certainly does not mean that it has been a truly effective enough system to eliminate the barriers to entry for those interested in serving their fellow New Yorkers in elected office. In his 1907 State of the Union address, President Theodore Roosevelt called for a federal public financing system. In one paragraph he touched on the role of corporations in elections, the presence of corruption, limits on contributions, the time politicians must spend soliciting money, and the role that public financing could have in helping to alleviate

1	those challenges. It took over 60 years for a
2	federal public financing regime to be put into
3	place. And that system is all but useless today
4	because 100 million dollars is not enough to run
5	a viable presidential campaign in the era of
6	citizens united. New York City's public
7	financing system still injects too much private
8	money into our politics and shuts out the voices
9	of those who have the least among us. Citywide
10	candidates are much less likely to go door to
11	door in East New York, one of the poorest census
12	tracts in the United States, looking for
13	donations and connecting with residents than they
14	are to be in five-star restaurants on the Upper
15	East Side. Imagine if residents at Gowanus
16	Houses had as equal an opportunity to bend the
17	ear of candidates as those living in Gramercy
18	Park. Do we really think NYCHA would still have
19	a heating crisis? This charter revision must
20	take a fresh look at our public financing system
21	and see where we can learn from other cities that
22	either have fully taken out or severely limited
23	the role of private donations in public
24	fundraising. For example, in November 2015
25	voters in Seattle, Washington passed the citizens

1	led initiative known as Honest Election Seattle.
2	Which enacted several campaign finance reform
3	that changed the ways campaigns are typically
4	financed for Seattle municipal candidates. In
5	Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, and
6	Minnesota full public funding systems attempt to
7	remove money from the system as determining
8	defend factor in elections for governor,
9	lieutenant governor, and state legislative
10	offices. I have a full testimony to this effect
11	on behalf of the borough president that I urge
12	the Commission to consider on his behalf.
13	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you very
14	much. Don't leave. Don't leave. Again, I will
15	play the devil's advocate, because we often hear
16	comments about public financing and whether or
17	not we can have a totally financed election.
18	My question would be, do you mean anybody
19	could raise their hand and say, I want to run for
20	mayor, and the taxpayers would pay for the
21	campaign?
22	MR. RINGLE: One of the proposals that the
23	borough president is particular fond of is the
24	second one that I had just briefly mentioned, the
25	full public funding system. It does require a

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1	candidate for office, whether state or local, to
2	collect a certain number of small donations.
3	After requiring a minimum of this and again,
4	this is utilized in states such Arizona,
5	Connecticut, Hawaii
6	MR. PERALES: No one has 100 percent public
7	financing.
8	MR. RINGLE: It gets us closer to that goal.
9	And I think with the existing as the
10	representative from Common Cause had said, there
11	are currently limitations on the federal system
12	that prevent us from getting all of the way
13	there. But there are systems that we can put in
14	place that get us closer to that 100 percent and
15	get us closer to that goal of getting candidates
16	in communities where voters that have typically
17	not had a voice due to fundraising challenges,
18	can have a hand.
19	MR. PERALES: Who else has got a question?
20	MS. CLARKE: I just wanted to make a
21	comment. One of the witnesses talked about the
22	mayor appointing nobody ever considered me a
23	rubber stamp for anything. And I think that each
24	of us here as commissioners who have come not
25	only as volunteers, but we've come because we

have the interest of our city at heart. And so I

just want -- I just want the witnesses to know

that, although we are appointed by the mayor,

each of us is an independent agent, if you want

to say more than that. Those who know me in this

room as an elected official, they know that

nobody can buy me. I came poor, I stay poor, and

I'm proud.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. PARKER: Well, I didn't mean it in that way. What I was -- what I was saying is that -- because I know -- and you've done amazing work in the community -- is that you also sit on the commission where there is going to be an overview of the electoral process. You also have a daughter who's running in a congressional race and that would -- in terms of conflict of interest, I would look at that. I know that you are your own person. But I also do know that you are a proud mother and an avid supporter of someone who is running for office.

MR. BRAGG: So If you don't mind, I will just jump in.

I was actually -- Commission Clarke has taken a lot of my thunder because that's what I

1	wanted to speak to. Is that, we are a volunteer
2	commission. And every one of these
3	commissioners, these honorable commissioners, are
4	here to serve the interest of the residents of
5	these neighborhoods and communities in this great
6	city. That's who influence us and how we move
7	the charge of this Commission, is what the
8	residents of this great city needs to happen to
9	have government better government interaction,
10	better interaction with the bureaucracy of this
11	city and to make this city more inclusive city
12	for everyone. So that's what influences us. Not
13	any particular political entity or person.
14	MR. BRAGG: And then, I wanted to ask you a
15	question. I was a little confused.
16	What is a .2 child?
17	MS. PARKER: 2.2.
18	MR. BRAGG: I just didn't know what that
19	was. Thank you.
20	MS. PARKER: Neither one of my children
21	really believe that they're just one individual.
22	MR. BRAGG: Okay. All right. Thank you.
23	Thank you.
24	MS. PARKER: Thank you.
25	MR. PERALES: Let me thank the panel. Thank

1	you very much.
2	MR. RINGLE: Thank you.
3	MR. PERALES: We will extend the courtesy to
4	an elected official. We have been joined by
5	Councilman Brad Lander.
6	I'd like him to come forward and present
7	testimony.
8	MR. LANDER: Thank you. And I have copies
9	of the written testimony, so I can give it if you
LO	don't mind. Thank you.
L1	MR. PERALES: But I will keep you to three
L2	minutes.
L3	MR. LANDER: Chair Perales, thank you.
L 4	Thank you very much for the opportunity to
L5	testify. It's wonderful to see such a good
L6	turnout here. And thanks very much to all the
L7	members of this Commission for your service. And
L8	I have testimony that is longer than three
19	minutes, so I will not read it. But you will
20	each you will each get a copy.
21	First I want to thank you for your service.
22	Obviously, this is a really critical moment.
23	There are a lot of reasons to be anxious about
24	our democracy. In Washington DC, it's at risk
25	from corruption at the very highest levels. In

Albany, the LLC loophole and a range of other things give voters just a challenge, feeling confident their government works for them. And even here in New York City, we have some real challenges when only 15 percent of people came out to vote in the primary election that decided who the elected officials would be that would govern. So you've got some real big challenges. And I'm glad you're listening and I hope you take some bold efforts to really do something significant about them. There are some real signs of encouragement, as well.

I have never seen more young people engaged in our democracy. I was out in Washington Square Park with thousands of them recently. And at their walkouts, on issues from gun control, to police reform, to school integration. They are engaged deeply, asking to be more involved in shaping what happens in our city. And this is a really good moment to confront those challenges and try to build on that set of opportunities.

I'll also note that just a couple of weeks
ago -- we haven't announced the total numbers
yet, but tens of thousands of people came out to
vote in participatory budgeting. In my district

they voted to fund new iPads for kids with autism, and self-defense classes for Muslim women, and a new media lab in a women's shelter, and a study of endangered bats in Prospect Park. So people are -- they want to be engaged. They want to have a hand in shaping the real critical decisions of our time. And when we do engage them, it's possible, even at this moment of such serious tribalism and division, for people to show up with their best selves, work together across lines of difference, and try to solve problems together and really improve this common trust we have in this city. So it's an important opportunity.

I'm going to just speak briefly about three issues. But I think you're hearing about a whole range, and I'm looking forward to seeing what you -- what you come up with.

The first I know you've heard a lot about.

And that is indeed getting big money even further out of our politics. Our campaign finance system is strong, but it is not strong enough. \$5,100 contributions get noticed more. Surprise. I think everybody knows it. And so reducing that contribution limit -- I don't know. Cut it in

half. At least down below the federal limit. It will help further push out moneyed interests folks who are more likely to show up wanting something. Obviously, if you do that, you have to both increase and extend public matching funds. And I think both are important. And I want to make a case for this. You know, whether that's going to a match of ten to one on 175, or going back to matching up to 250. You're going to have to find some formula. Eight to one, ten to one on one of those. But extending is actually even more important. And I want to talk about that for just one minute.

Right now a candidate can only receive up to 55 percent of the total of their spending limit in public matching funds. So when you've done the raising of small dollar contributions that trigger that 55 percent, after that your incentives are to raise in the largest amounts you can. That's just the reality. Elected officials are rational, they're going to take the incentives. And so when you reach the limit of your public matching funds, your incentive is to go raise in larger dollar amounts. You could change that. If you just made it possible for

people to keep getting matching funds up to their spending limit, then every time they have to decide what additional contribution to go seek, instead of thinking it'd be easier for me to go get it at 5,100, or 2,950, or 2,750, or 2,500, wherever you leave it, they could think, I could get that next contribution matched and I could go seek to do a party of people that could give me 25 or 50 or a hundred dollars. There's no reason to have an arbitrary limit. And wherever you leave it, it means when you get to the end of it, people are still going to have the incentive to raise big dollar.

Another possible advantage of extending the match so that you could continue to receive it up to your spending limit is that, in those cases where the spending limit gets increased because a candidate is facing a wealthy independent spender or someone who isn't participating in the system, or a big independent expenditure against them and their limit gets increased, it might be that allowing them to keep receiving matching funds, if you could always just receive them up to the applicable -- applicable campaign finance limit, would survive a challenge to the Arizona Federal

1	Elections case and strengthen our city by
2	enabling candidates to participate in matching
3	funds, even when they're competing against a
4	wealthy outside spender. I don't want to dig too
5	down into the legal wormholes. You've got some
6	experts in your Commission. But both increasing
7	and extending the match could really make a big
8	difference in getting big money out of politics
9	if you also decrease the contribution limit. So
10	I think that's a valuable thing to do. I know
11	you've heard a lot about instant-runoff voting,
12	so I'm not going to go too much into it. I have
13	some more information in my testimony. But it
14	really does just seem like a win-win-win. We
15	save money, we stop having these runoffs, which
16	are the lowest turnout elections, two weeks
17	later. They're difficult to administer. We get
18	candidates who would have incentives to campaign
19	in every community and not write off communities
20	where they think one candidate is likely to get
21	most of the votes. It would increase
22	participation. It would save money. All the
23	evidence says people become able to do it quite
24	quickly. We spoke to some folks in Minneapolis,
25	where they shifted to instant-runoff for

1	MR. PERALES: Who is "we?"
2	MR. LANDER: My office. My policy director
3	and some folks that we're working with.
4	And they said that the transition was
5	smooth. We have some data in here about how
6	well you know, very high percentages of people
7	may be able to cite this statistic because I
8	found it fairly significant. You know, in the
9	first election after they they implemented
10	instant-runoff voting, a 31 percent increase in
11	voter turnout. 92 percent of voters found
12	instant-runoff voting easy to use, including 86
13	percent of voters 65 and older. 93 percent of
14	voters felt candidates spent more time on issues
15	than criticizing opponents. We have the same
16	voting technology, the same machines as they have
17	in Minneapolis. So the system they have there,
18	the software already exists to implement it here.
19	There's plenty of time. But especially if you
20	put it on the ballot this year. If we miss this
21	opportunity, we're going to be later in the
22	election cycle and the odds of getting it ready
23	by 2021 are slimmer. I'd urge you so I should
24	have mentioned. I'm the sponsor of the bill in
25	the City Council to bring rank choice voting or

instant-runoff voting to New York City. But it requires a referendum. And your ballot proposals would bump anything else that would go on the ballot this year. So the only way it gets on the ballot early in the cycle is if you guys put it there. So I promise not to move my legislation if you guys will take it seriously, hold a drill-down session, a meeting of experts where you could really take a good hard look at it, and consider developing a ballot proposal for the election in November.

The final issue that I want to talk about goes a little bit bigger. Because while you're looking at campaign finance and elections, I also think there's so many other forms of civic participation and we want to do more to lift them up. You've got some folks who have great expertise on your panel in civic participation of young people, of workers, of a whole range of folks. We've -- I've proposed the creation of a New York City Office of Civic Engagement that would build from NYC Votes and the mayor's idea of a chief democracy officer. But really reach out in much bigger and broader ways to offer new forms of service. Let's give many more people

1	the opportunity for one year of a position in
2	civic engagement, where they could get ready to
3	go to school and reach out. Let's do a lot more
4	to kind of train and develop community board
5	members and really lift them up. Let's expand
6	participatory budgeting. I support the proposals
7	that are to be made to take some chunk of dollars
8	and make that happen. It's incredible when you
9	see people start to develop proposals themselves,
10	come up with ideas, reach out to their neighbors.
11	We could put all of that together in an
12	independent nonpartisan commission, modeled on
13	the campaign finance Board, or the Voter
14	Assistance Commission that would represent a
15	diverse set of stakeholders. So it wouldn't just
16	be any individual elected official's point of
17	view, but really include a broader set of outside
18	stakeholders, as well. Civic engagement isn't
19	just a thing of government. It's out in our
20	communities, in our neighborhoods, in our
21	nonprofit organizations, our youth organizations,
22	our unions. We could use this moment to really
23	lift up and elevate that work in a way that
24	builds on what has been suggested so far, but
25	could truly empower people to engage in shaping

1	their communities. Which is really what
2	democracy is supposed to be about, so.
3	MR. PERALES: Thank you very, very much.
4	MR. LANDER: Thank you very much.
5	MR. PERALES: I'm hoping that you've got
6	enough meat in what you're distributing about the
7	New York City Office of Civic Engagement so it
8	will help as we think about that issue. So I'm
9	asking your help, if you've got real specifics
10	that we might include in our referendum, it will
11	be very, very helpful.
12	MR. LANDER: That's great.
13	So in addition to my testimony, we have a
14	little handout on the New York City Office of
15	Civic Engagement.
16	MR. PERALES: I think that's we have it.
17	MR. LANDER: And we did one meeting with
18	about 25 stakeholders from different
19	organizations throughout the City on this this
20	idea a few months ago. And I know if that's
21	another area you would like to to drill down
22	and explore furtherer, that there's some real
23	the experts in this work are the ones toiling
24	away in our neighborhoods and our communities and

our workplaces. And they have a lot of great

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l ide	as for	what	that	would	look	like.

2 MR. PERALES: I agree.

Now, let me ask you something. I'll use the prerogative of the Chair to ask you a question of which you had no notice, but it's of interest to us.

We've heard people talk about the creation of an independent redistricting commission. The current system is not as independent as it might be.

As a member of the council, as an elected official, what do you think about these people over which you would have absolutely no control drawing the lines in your district?

MR. LANDER: Well, if you're asking me as an individual, would I like to draw the lines of my own direct? Of course. Any elected official would love to. If you're asking me is it good for democracy when elected officials get to draw their own districts? Of course it's not a good idea. So I, you know -- there's the challenges that you're familiar with with figuring out who appoints the independent commission, how the process works. But yes, broadly speaking, at the state level and the city level, I think it is

1	better to have a truly independent body draw the
2	lines as objectively as possible and not place it
3	in the hand of the people who represent those
4	districts.
5	MR. PERALES: So you would welcome our
6	looking into a way of creating an independent
7	commission?
8	MR. LANDER: I think it would be the right
9	thing to do.
LO	MR. PERALES: I would like to ask the other
11	commissioners if they've got their questions.
L2	MS. WEISER: This is just a follow-up
L3	question on the Office of Civic Engagement, which
L4	might be in the testimony which I just received,
L5	so I haven't read.
L6	I couldn't tell if you were recommending
L7	that it be merged with the Voter Assistance
L8	Advisory Commission and sort of that function be
L9	contained in one single entity, or whether there
20	be two different bodies with slightly different
21	but maybe overlapping missions, so.
22	MR. LANDER: I think it would be a good idea
23	to merge it with the Voter Assistance Advisory
24	Commission. Whether it makes sense to leave it
25	under the CFB I think a harder question. The CFB

1	Board, they have a very particular regulatory job
2	to do and they take it very seriously. This goal
3	of sort of sparking participation, it's related.
4	So I think there's some you know, some
5	questions to ask here, I guess. I think probably
6	voter engagement and broader forms of civic
7	participation do make sense to link together.
8	MS. WEISER: Thank you. That answers my
9	question.
LO	MR. SCISSURA: Hello, Councilman. How are
11	you?
12	So I have a quick question.
L3	Obviously, the idea of the instant-runoff is
L4	something that intrigues me a lot. As someone
L5	who has worked on runoff campaigns, I know how
L6	almost impossible it is. But we've also heard
L7	testimony from some other people at various
18	hearings about, you know, we'll call it
L9	nonpartisan elections. They call it other things
20	now, but that's at its core what it is.
21	If as we start looking at expert
22	testimony, how do you feel about combining the
23	two, of a two-tier and an instant-runoff all as
24	one? I'm just curious to get your thoughts on
25	that

1	MR. LANDER: So I continue to support having
2	a party primary and then a general election. I
3	think the parties continue to serve a valuable
4	function in communicating to voters that there's,
5	you know, a abroad set of shared values, that
6	it's a good function for getting people to be
7	able to move and think about issues in a way, as
8	opposed to just individual candidates. I think
9	when you go down to individual candidates, it's
10	much harder for voters to like really understand,
11	you know, what people's positions are, who they
12	are. Obviously, individuals look to distinguish
13	themselves with in-party primaries. But I think
14	they really serve a valuable role. And I
15	think I certainly understand why people think,
16	oh, the parties this or that. But I think they
17	serve a valuable function. Not just in defining
18	for voters who candidates are, but creating a
19	system through which people try to build a shared
20	sense of politics. A little more like a team
21	than I guess I prefer team sports to
22	individual sports as maybe one way to think about
23	is. So I think here the proposal would be and
24	I guess in the legislation that I propose, you do
25	instant-runoff voting in the primaries for the

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three city-wide offices, where you have to get
that 40 percent so you wouldn't to have the
runoffs. That's where you save save money. I
would propose doing them also in the special
elections that we have for council or other
offices. Those are nonpartisan already. And I
would leave them that way. But there's only one
cycle. And in those elections, you really have a
risk that someone could win, you know, if you've
got seven, eight, nine candidates with just like
17, 18 percent of the vote. And instant-runoff
makes it that you'd know you had someone who
really had majoritarian support.

MS. CLARKE: I did want to ask a question about the participatory budget and how would that work if we were to consider it as a broad stroke. How would it work?

MR. LANDER: It's a great question. I think though -- so I saw some folks in the audience from the Participatory Budgeting Project who have done this all around the country. And indeed, participatory budgeting exists all around the world. The way we do it right now, it's just in the hands of an individual city council member. And if they wish to take a piece of the capital

1	money or in my district we even put a little
2	piece of expense funding up. But in places where
3	it's citywide, a modest percentage of the city's
4	capital budget is set aside. You know, it's
5	we've got a big capital budget. It even could be
6	a small percentage. And then you you have to
7	choose. You could do it still organized by
8	council district, or by community board, or by
9	borough. And people get to participate to
10	suggest project ideas. And then you have an
11	election. Then it's for everyone in the city to
12	be able to participate on which of the projects
13	that they would like to see their capital dollars
14	go for. Now, you would not want to do this with
15	all the money because there are plenty of kinds
16	of infrastructure, like keeping our water supply
17	clean that that wouldn't get chosen. But
18	you'd be amazed when you open this idea up what
19	kinds of creativity and I've seen a real
20	balance between people saying very practical
21	projects. The winning projects in my district
22	the first two years were decrepit school
23	bathrooms. Which was not especially creative,
24	but people were like, "These bathrooms. We
25	should have already fixed them up." And

1	participatory budgeting served as like a ringing
2	of a bell to say, this is an issue that's not
3	getting enough attention from our government and
4	we ought to do something about it. In year
5	three, folks said, "We're tired of funding school
6	bathrooms." And we organized a big campaign that
7	got the Department of Education to put a hundred
8	million dollars into fixing up decrepit school
9	bathrooms all around the city. But sometimes
10	people do really creative projects. Like if you
11	get a chance to check out the Park Slope library
12	children's reading garden, it was a piece of
13	grass most people never even noticed was there.
14	But because the Library Friends Group felt
15	empowered to propose an idea, they created this
16	magnificent new public space that only cost in
17	that case about 250,000 dollars. It was a fairly
18	modest project by capital standards. And it's
19	full of kids, you know, reading and playing every
20	day. So just that little bit of capital dollars
21	spread citywide, with an opportunity for people
22	to engage, it's so tangible. Democracy sometimes
23	is about these candidates or values. Like
24	"what's a project in my neighborhood that's
25	needed" is a great way for people to get

1	involved. And because you just see directly,
2	like the projects that got the most votes get the
3	funding, I find it really helps restore people's
4	faith in a democratic practice because of how
5	how concrete it is.
6	MS. CLARKE: Thank you. Thank you.
7	MR. PERALES: We got a question.
8	MS. SEECHARRAN: So good evening. Thank
9	you for your testimony.
10	So just to be clear, are you suggesting that
11	all council members be required or are you
12	suggesting that the amount that council members
13	are given
14	MR. LANDER: I think what we could do as a
15	matter of, you know, a ballot proposal would be
16	to do it citywide, as a citywide function that
17	wouldn't necessarily run through the council
18	members. You might still use council districts
19	as the geography, although you could also use
20	community boards, and some projects might be
21	borough wide. But if we took a little percent of
22	the capital budget I haven't done the math, so
23	I don't know what you know, what it would be.
24	But if you took if we said we're going to take
25	a little percentage of our capital budget and run

1	a participatory budgeting, I think then you'd
2	want it run by the by the executive probably,
3	by the city government. I mean, I'd love to have
4	the council participate in some way. But if you
5	want to run it evenly across the entire city,
6	you'd pick a geography and you'd let people work
7	in that geography to come up with with ballot
8	proposals. So this is another way where we'd be
9	really happy to drill down and go into deeper.
10	If you're serious about the possibility of a
11	ballot proposal here, we could certainly bring
12	some some of our experience. We're near we
13	just finished year seven. So we've we've gone
14	quite a few rounds. And there's some real
15	expertise in the city.
16	MR. PERALES: Mr. Councilman, I want to
17	thank you for taking the time.
18	MR. LANDER: I thank you for giving me this
19	much time. And I I really this is I
20	mean, I guess you probably you guys probably
21	did introductions. Obviously, we've got a
22	wonderful turnout of people who cared enough
23	about their democracy to come out. I have the
24	good fortune of knowing a lot of these volunteer
25	Charter Review Commission commissioners. And it

1	really is like an all-star set of people who care
2	about strengthening our democracy and our
3	participation. So I really, Mr. Chair and to the
4	whole Commission, want to appreciate the work
5	that you guys do.
6	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
7	The next panel, Juan Restrepo, Hector
8	Robertson, Fred Baptiste, and Brian Solomon
9	Huertas.
LO	Can I have your I'm just trying to figure
11	out who is not here.
L2	What's that?
L3	AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hector Robinson.
L4	MR. PERALES: He's not here. All right.
L5	Okay.
L6	Whenever one of you is ready to start.
L7	MR. RESTREPO: I was called first, so I'll
L8	go first. Good evening, Commissioners, and thank
L9	you for the inflection on my name. Thank you for
20	hosting me and everyone else speaking
21	passionately tonight. My name is Juan Restrepo.
22	I am a New York City native, born and raised in
23	Astoria, Queens. I come to you today to discuss
24	implementing term limits for community board
25	members in our city charter and why this is

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1	important	to	the	democratic	health	of	our
2	neighborho	oods	5.				

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I work as a community organizer for Transportation Alternatives. We are a New York City based nonprofit organization. But I am representing just myself in my experiences. My work is exclusive to the borough of Queens and I organize street safety advocates to make their streets safer. Through my work, I attend community board meetings regularly. Many of the projects I work on go through a community board system at some stage or another. Usually when they are presented by the Department of Transportation for suggestions, or approval, or rejection from the board. Community boards are an improvement to the times of Robert Moses because they have diversified policy conversations --

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Boo.

MR. RESTREPO: You clapped before. Let me finish. Let me finish.

-- and community's bigger role in approving city policy. But there is a darker side to the system. Community boards are their own political entity. Without term limits, their ability to

1 represent constituents goes down.

2 Community board reform. Community board members are some of the most civically engaged 3 neighbors and deserve a lot of respect for the time they give their community. But there have 5 been clear examples in the history of the system 6 where members overstayed their position as a 7 representative of the community. Here's an 8 9 example. I am all too familiar of Ann Pfoser Darby served on Queens Community Board 4 for 30 10 11 In that time, she was a part of a 12 generational shift that saw Corona shift from 13 being primarily white to 90 percent Latino and Asian. As the neighborhood changed, membership 14 15 on the community board continues to not reflect 16 those demographics. And as a member of community 17 board, Pfoser's transportation committee resisted 18 safety improvements to 111th Street, which is 19 adjacent to Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. And 20 was only one of three members on this 21 subcommittee. Her stance on the proposal, as 22 quoted by the New York Times, was -- and this 23 relates to the bike lanes that were part of the 24 proposal. "The bike lanes in the proposal are 25 made specifically for the people who come into

1	the country illegally." She also she also
2	surmised in that article that "discussions about
3	the safety proposal were not necessary because
4	those who came into the country illegally would
5	be removed by ICE and nobody would use the lanes
6	afterwards."

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Boo.

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AUDIENCE MEMBER: KKK go away.

MR. RESTREPO: These comments from Ann Pfoser Darby did not represent her community. But they were the expressed opinion of a member of that community board. The distinction is important because our city makes many of its policy decisions off the recommendations of a community board. And is only one of many long-standing board members in our system who has represented their board for too long and lost grasp of what the community needs. Community board term limits would provide equity and fairness of representation at the neighborhood level. Many community boards at this moment are represented by white older home and car owning residents, both at the leadership and membership level. So --

25 MR. PERALES: You've run out of time,

1	Mr. Restrepo.
2	MR. RESTREPO: when there are a few
3	exceptions. When this happens, we're losing the
4	perspectives and needs of our most vulnerable
5	residents in the policy-making process, other
6	races, people rent and transit riders. Without
7	term limits, there is no means for debt for
8	leadership and membership to naturally turn over.
9	A healthy democratic process needs that.
LO	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.
11	MR. RESTREPO: Thank you.
12	MR. HUERTAS: Hello, Commissioners. My name
13	is Brian Solomon Huertas. I grew up in Flushing,
14	Queens, but I've been a Brooklyn resident for
L5	about four or five years now. I have a new young
16	daughter that is growing up in the neighborhood.
L7	I'm going to say things that might be a little
18	bit radical. Just bear with me.
L9	Making the city more democratic, a way to do
20	that is nonpartisan municipal elections. Voting
21	rights are civil rights. And keeping a large
22	amount of voters from meaningfully participating
23	is infringing on their civil rights. As an
24	independent, my vote doesn't mean much in New
25	York City. I'm excluded from voting in

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1	primaries, even though they're paid for with my
2	public tax dollars. Well, a portion is mine.
3	Those primaries, especially the democratic party
4	primary, are the decision-making elections in
5	this city. And yet turnout has been alarmingly
6	low and it's getting worse, as you know. Keeping
7	more than a million voters out of elections they
8	are paying for leaves them with no meaningful way
9	to exercise the levers of influence that elected
10	officials respond to. When only ten percent of
11	voters are effectively picking our elected
12	officials, the elected officials only have to
13	talk to ten percent of the voters. So I've been
14	a political activist and organizer since I was
15	19. I vote every year and have worked on the
16	streets to engage New Yorkers in conversation
17	around issues of civic participation. I'm an
18	idealist, someone who believes we should never
19	stop striving for a more perfect union. And I'm
20	actually optimistic that we can do that through
21	intelligent public policy and rigorous grassroots
22	organizing. The science writer, Malcolm
23	Gladwell, said it takes 10,000 hours to become an
24	expert in something. And I can tell you, through
25	over ten years of conversation on the streets

1	with New Yorkers, that the number one barrier to
2	their participating is that they know most of the
3	time their vote doesn't matter in getting a
4	candidate elected. And once their elected
5	officials are in office, they have almost no
6	incentive to be responsive to the constitute
7	to their constituents. Unless they're that ten
8	percent of the voters that voted in the primary.
9	So we can do something about this. We can expand
10	the franchise so that all voters vote in
11	primaries for candidates they believe in,
12	regardless of whatever party they're in. The top
13	two vote-getters square off in the general
14	election. Nonpartisan elections incentivizes
15	coalition building, that allows people of color,
16	independence and insurgent candidates a chance to
17	be competitive. And it forces candidates to get
18	out and actually talk to more of their voters if
19	they want to make it to November. And it makes
20	my vote, and the votes of millions of
21	independents, finally matter in this city. The
22	public the political parties are private
23	organizations. If they've been given this
24	mandate of running our election process, having
25	nonpartisan municipal elections takes that away

1	from them, where a party endorsement is no
2	guarantee that a candidate will be on the
3	November ballot. They have to earn it by going
4	out and talking to the voters.
5	MR. PERALES: You have run out of time.
6	MR. HUERTAS: I ask the Commission to
7	strongly consider this reform.
8	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you very
9	much.
10	MR. BAPTISTE: Good evening, Commissioners.
11	My name is Fred Baptiste. I'm a 20-year resident
12	of this neighborhood. Lifelong Brooklynite, with
13	3.3 kids because they, too, also think they are
14	more than one. I am very heartened and I
15	think my remarks probably will be a little bit
16	shorter because I think a lot of people have
17	said, probably better than I would have, in terms
18	of this is a real opportunity to strengthen our
19	democracy, to strengthen our participation.
20	Today what I would like to speak to is a very,
21	very, I guess, obvious way of doing that is in
22	terms of strengthening the role of the community
23	boards. I think that what we need to do is we
24	need to empower community boards to be more than
25	just advisory. I think we need to encourage

1	participation in community boards. I think there
2	are a number of proposals that could be done in
3	terms of that. But I think this charter revision
4	represents an opportunity to do exactly that. I
5	think we need to make sure that community boards
6	move from the position of being rubber stamps or
7	voices crying out in the distance for change, to
8	an opportunity where people can come and directly
9	affect their neighborhoods, their blocks, their
10	communities, their schools, participatory
11	budgeting, and any other number of items that are
12	there, as well. I think we see that our process
13	works when it's people have an opportunity to
14	take ownership, to be directly invested in it, to
15	actually make changes happen in their own
16	neighborhoods and communities. And I strongly
17	recommend that this commission recommend that
18	we review the charter to do so and strengthen
19	community boards and encourage participation.
20	Thank you.
21	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

22 MR. SCISSURA: Can I?

23 MR. PERALES: Yes.

MR. SCISSURA: Good evening. Thank you. So 24 this is directed to you about community board 25

1	term limits. So I served on a community board
2	for a little over a decade, Community Board 11 in
3	Brooklyn. And then, when I was chief of staff to
4	the borough president, oversaw the appointment
5	process. And, you know, I'm not going to share
6	my opinion on term limits. But I am going to say
7	that and I know there are many members of
8	community boards in the room who are also leaders
9	in their community boards. I can tell you, as
10	someone who oversaw the appointment process, it
11	is not as easy as you think to get people that
12	want to serve on community boards. And there are
13	vacancies on various community boards because it
14	is difficult. And then it's not only difficult
15	to get them there, it's then difficult to get
16	people to come to meetings, to have quorums. So
17	while I get what you're saying, and as someone
18	who actually believes in term limits in general
19	for elected officials, I understand what you're
20	saying. But there does have to be a little
21	thought process that goes into it because it's
22	much more challenging than it seems.
23	MR. RESTREPO: Can I respond to that?
24	MR. SCISSURA: Yeah.

MR. RESTREPO: It's been -- thank you. It's

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1	been from my experience that a lot of people
2	discover community boards. Oftentimes it works
3	under the periphery of what we would see as being
4	part of the city government. You kind of have to
5	discover, oh, parks, transportation, zoning. Oh,
6	the community board handles that. I would think
7	it's just like the big elected guy. And when
8	people go to community board meetings, I think a
9	lot of times they come with the intention of
10	being a bigger part of their community. And
11	oftentimes are disappointed when they see the
12	community is represented by a group of
13	stakeholders who aren't what they would have
14	expected as being the community. It the way a
15	community board looks oftentimes is not even
16	close to representative of what the community is.
17	Which is why council member Richie Torres has
18	proposed legislation to make it known, the
19	statistics of what demographics, what what
20	salary ranges, etc, etc, the members of the
21	community board have. When we don't have that
22	information, the information's not flowing freely
23	and you just go to this meeting and you are
24	and you see what the community board is,
25	oftentimes that's what keeps people away from

1	wanting to be part of that process.
2	MR. PERALES: All right. I mean
3	MR. RESTREPO: So
4	MR. PERALES: We have another question.
5	MS. WEISER: My one question and this
6	might be for Mr. Baptiste, is that right? You
7	recommend strengthening the role of community
8	boards. I understand your recommendation. But I
9	wanted to know, for you, what concrete
10	recommendations do you have for strengthening?
11	Or is it just more of a request that the the
12	commission will get other recommendations?
13	MR. BAPTISTE: Absolutely, Commissioner. I
14	think one idea that I had just written down was
15	with regards to even the ULURP process. I think
16	that with regards to the community, especially
17	when it comes to zoning, the people who live in
18	the neighborhood are the experts. But I think
19	sometimes some of the frustration that happens in
20	the process, and it speaks to some of the points
21	that were raised before, where if you think it's
22	going to be an advisory process, where no matter
23	how hard I work, no matter how much I give you,
24	how much knowledge I transfer, at the end of the
25	day, thank you very much, and it's move on to the

1	next step. I think that's part of what dissuades
2	people from doing that. However and I think
3	that, really, there's some real things and real
4	concrete items that come out of these meetings.
5	I know from the community board, which I am
6	one I'm sorry I didn't disclose that before.
7	But I'm also on a community board. And I think
8	that I've seen some really talented people, and
9	we've tapped into some real great resources in
10	the community that I think often get overlooked.
11	And I think we should really be making that the
12	first step, in terms of tapping into those
13	resources, because they live there, too, and they
14	have that vested interest. And you know what?
15	If it's something where it's like no, this is a
16	concrete discussion, where you actually have the
17	power to negotiate with those people who are
18	going to be doing things, I think it changes the
19	entire dynamic. So definitely the ULURP
20	committee. Absolutely, I think empowering
21	community boards may be an option with
22	participatory budgeting. Where that goes through
23	there, as well. It brings people into the
24	process. And I think when you bring people in
25	and they see they can make a change, it gets

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1	infectious and you can do a lot of other things,
2	as well.
3	MR. PERALES: Commissioner Fernandez.
4	MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you. This is a
5	question around the nonpartisan voting, which
6	which I don't know if maybe the staff that is
7	working with the commission would have the
8	answer, and maybe yourself also may have the
9	answer.
10	When did it start where, if you are not
11	registered with the democratic party or the
12	republican you cannot vote in primary elections?
13	Do you know where what the genesis of that is?
14	MR. HUERTAS: Well, the rules are different
15	throughout the country. Some
16	MS. FERNANDEZ: I meant for here, for New
17	York City.
18	MR. HUERTAS: I'm uncertain as to the answer
19	for that. But I do know that it keeps a large
20	amount of voters from participating. My
21	conversation with New York City voters, a lot of
22	them said the only reason they are democrats at
23	all is to vote in the democratic party primary.
24	They don't identify with the party. They don't

really -- they don't vote straight down the party

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1	line in November. A lot of them vote for minor
2	party candidates. But they know so the only
3	meaningful election for, in practical terms, is
4	the democratic party primary. So that's where
5	they go to participate. If you want to make a
6	more principled stand, like I do, you have to
7	give that up.
8	MS. FERNANDEZ: Right.
9	MR. HUERTAS: And it's a shame.
10	MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you. I just got a nod
11	from one of the staff. That's something that we
12	can look into, which I think will help inform
13	that part of conversation. So thank you.
14	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much. And
15	thank the panel.
16	The next panel of Waldobar Stewart, Stephan
17	Yearwood or Tearwood, Lutchi Gayot, Susan Chung.
18	Nice to see you, Senator.
19	Who will start?
20	MR. YEARWOOD: Good evening, Commission
21	Chair Perales and Commission members. My name is
22	Stephen Yearwood. I am a member of SEIU 32BJ.
23	I've been a member for over 20 years. And I'm
24	also an MPO, that's member political organizer,
25	and very active in the union in the political

1	arena. You know, thank you for holding tonight's
2	hearing. On behalf of myself and my fellow
3	members of SEIU 32BJ, we applaud your efforts to
4	ensure the voices of all New Yorkers are heard
5	and to strengthen our city's democracy. Our
6	union is 163,000 members strong. Including
7	85,000 members here in New York City. We are
8	security officers, commercial cleaners, airport
9	workers, and residential building workers, like
10	myself. We hail from 60 countries and speak
11	dozens of language languages. But we are
12	proudly united in our fight to ensure all people,
13	regardless of color of the skin, their
14	immigration status, or their income, can live
15	safe and healthy lives with dignity and respect.
16	As a member of the leader of 32BJ, I take
17	every opportunity to forward further my
18	understanding of the democratic process and the
19	policies that can make a difference to working
20	families. I am passionate about talking to my
21	union brothers and sisters about what's at stake
22	when we vote and how we can win progress by
23	standing together. Which we really work hard
24	together to make some changes in this state.
25	Through the cut the union, members understand

1	what they have in common and have a vehicle for
2	civic engagement that they might not otherwise
3	have access to. In order to get the best results
4	of working for working families, it is
5	important that we're heard at every level of
6	government. Unfortunately, New York City's
7	campaign finance laws makes it harder for union
8	members to communicate with one another about
9	candidates in a city election to champion their
10	cause. Unlike federal law, the expense of
11	organizing members to canvass and talk to their
12	fellow members is counted as a campaign
13	contribution if the candidate has been briefed by
14	the union and is present to talk to members
15	beforehand. This is a shame. The law
16	discourages union from engaging members face to
17	face on political issues, and instead
18	incentivizes them to contribute directly to
19	candidates or buy media ads. By restricting
20	restricting our abilities to hear from a
21	candidate and to talk to one another about why we
22	support them, I believe we are reducing one of
23	the most effective means of engaging working
24	people in the political process. And I urge the
25	Commission to revise this part of the law so that

1	the labor members organization can communicate
2	freely with the members, even if the
3	communication are coordinated with candidates.
4	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.
5	MR. GAYOT: Good evening, Panel. How are
6	you today. My name is Lutchi Gayot. And I am a
7	native of this district. My family's been in
8	this district for 50-plus years. And I am a
9	congressional candidate. I'm running as a
LO	republican in this district and I am really here
L1	iust to tell vou about my story. I'm a small

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1	right around certain precincts if you didn't like
2	the voters that happen to live in that precinct.
3	Next, I'm sitting in front of a board that has my
4	opponent's mother as one of the members. Which,
5	to me, seems like it is a conflict of interest.
6	MR. PERALES: Let me just because this
7	was raised before. We have nothing to do with
8	federal elections.
9	MR. GAYOT: Oh.
10	MR. PERALES: This is the City Charter we're
11	talking about.
12	MR. GAYOT: No. Fully understood. But
13	these these issues still apply. These issues
14	still apply and I'd like to be able to voice
15	MR. PERALES: Sure. Go ahead.
16	MR. GAYOT: what I wanted to say. Thank
17	you. And Una, I have a lot of respect for you.
18	My parents voted for you many of times. It's
19	just simple the process and the way that the
20	rules are set. They're set for the people who
21	are empowered to stay empowered. And this is
22	really why I'm here and why I'm trying to say
23	what I am trying to say here.
24	And lastly, a lot of people came up here and
25	had a lot to say about the process. And some of

1	it a lot of it, I would agree with. And I
2	really hope that you really take a look at the
3	conflict of interest. And when it comes to the
4	voting for this actual process and Una, I
5	would ask, if it's possible, for you to abstain
6	from voting because you have a daughter that
7	is that is in office currently. So that is,
8	in a sense, a conflict of interest.
9	MR. PERALES: Let me just explain this. The
10	point that I'm making, if, for example, we're
11	dealing with the last panel talked about
12	community boards and their role. It's got
13	nothing to do with her, or her daughter, or
14	anything else. So that's the reason I tried to
15	make the point that this is nothing to do with
16	your election
17	MR. GAYOT: It it doesn't. But this
18	board is in charge of the process and
19	MR. PERALES: What process? I'm sorry. And
20	I didn't mean to interrupt you. I'm just trying
21	to clarify it so that everyone will understand.
22	MS. CLARKE: Mr. Chair.
23	I am the product of a charter revision. In
24	1989, we advocated to make sure that we could
25	deepen the democracy so that immigrants,

1	especially black immigrants from the Caribbean,
2	would be able to find themselves in a position
3	where somebody could run. There were five people
4	who wanted to run. And at the last minute, they
5	said, "We're not going to run." And Dr. Waldobar
6	Stewart, who is sitting next to you, who did the
7	research at Medgar Evers College, they all
8	stepped out and said, "Una, since you're so
9	smart, why don't you run?" I run and I won by 38
10	votes. So don't think anything was handed to me.
11	Nothing was handed to me. And my daughter being
12	in congress, just said that we deepen the
13	democracy. You never ask the Kennedys why their
14	sons, daughter and grandchildren can run for
15	office and mine can't.
16	MR. GAYOT: That's not the point that I'm
17	trying to make. The point the point that I'm
18	trying to make is that we have a system that's
19	designed and built to keep one side in power.
20	And the voice of the people aren't heard.
21	That's that's the point that I'm trying to
22	make.
23	MR. PERALES: It's a point well taken.
24	Who speaks next?
25	MS. CHUNG: My name is Sue Ann Chung

1	MR. SCISSURA: Just move the mike closer.
2	MS. VOICE: Yes, please. Thank you.
3	MS. CHUNG: My name is Sue Ann Chung. And I
4	belong to a group a citizen called Concerned
5	Citizens For Community-Based Planning. We're
6	based in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, which is
7	close to this neighborhood. And we work on
8	land-use issues, including historic preservation
9	and zoning. And I'd like to suggest that the
10	Commission think about changing the system by
11	which landmarks commissioners are appointed.
12	Currently all 11 are appointed by the mayor.
13	Seven of them need to have a certain professional
14	background, which is I agree with. But I'd
15	like to suggest that the remaining four be
16	popular be chosen by popular election. I am
17	lucky enough to live in a historic district. I
18	imagine that some of the commissioners are, as
19	well. And before that, I lived in a landmarked
20	and rent stabilized apartment building in
21	Manhattan for several years. So I'm sure that
22	you all know that preservation isn't just about
23	old buildings and dead architects. It's much
24	more than that. It's about preserving
25	communities. And if that's the case, then I

1	think that the landmarks process and the
2	Landmarks Commission, since it plays such an
3	important role in deciding what gets preserved,
4	needs to reflect the great diversity of our city
5	And I have every confidence that the electoral
6	process is the best way to do that.
7	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
8	Don't leave. We may have questions.
9	Senator?
10	MR. SPEAKER: I have a few things that
11	brother me. But in five minutes, I can't cover
12	all
13	MR. PERALES: You're only getting three
14	minutes, so you really
15	MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Okay. I'll start with
16	the most important one. The idea of allowing
17	independent persons who have not had the the
18	chutzpa to organize their own political
19	organization to interfere with someone else who
20	organized their own political party and sought
21	their own voters, educated their own voters, and
22	worked towards their community is dangerous.
23	It means and that at some point, given
24	the new electronic age, what was done to the
25	United States by Russia could happen

1	electronically through use of the independent
2	voter to overcome parties that the people do not
3	like. And I am saying this, having organized my
4	own political party. It's a lot of work. But I
5	did. And that's how I got my start in politics.
5	And, incidentally, I recruited independent voters
7	to vote for my political party.

Item number two -- stop me when you feel like. Item number two, the planning boards need to be energized. The planning boards are supposed to be part of the political process. And right now, they are not. It doesn't mean that the planning boards should be in the business of running for office. But they should be creating what we call master plans for land use in their planning board district.

If you understand the concept of a master plan, it doesn't allow you for corruption because in that kind of process, the entire planning board community is involved in the decision-making process. And if the local people get accustomed to making meaningful decisions in the planning board, they will also decide, "You know something. I need to either join the democratic party, or the republican party, or the

1	conservative party, or start my own party."
2	MR. PERALES: You did suggest that I stop
3	you when your time had run out.
4	MR. SPEAKER: Yes.
5	MR. PERALES: So I do want to thank all of
6	you. I want to thank the panel for don't
7	leave. We may have questions here.
8	You must have answered all of our questions
9	already.
LO	Thank you very much.
L1	The next panel will include Josh Lerner,
L2	Tracy Jackson, Reginald Sweeney, Haseem Mohammed.
L3	All right. I think we're about to start. I
L4	think you have to decide who goes first.
L5	MS. JACKSON: Hello. Thank you for this
L6	opportunity to testify in support of Council
L7	Member Lander's proposal to establish a
L8	nonpartisan New York City Office of Civic
19	Engagement. My name is Tracy Jackson and I'm
20	here as a resident of City Council District 39.
21	My own engagement includes serving on the Board
22	of Heights and Hills, which provides services to
23	older adults in Brooklyn. And as a member of
24	Brooklyn Community Board 6's Youth Human Services
25	and Education Committee. Many of us in the

1	social services know well how critical it is for
2	all people to have a seat at the table when
3	policies and budgets are created and prioritized.
4	An Office of Civic Engagement would be a great
5	step toward strengthening participation in our
6	democracy. And most critically, in opening the
7	process up to people who have historically been
8	excluded by those who hold power. Increasing
9	voter participation is important, for sure. And
10	so is promoting greater access to resources by
11	larger numbers of people all across the city.
12	During my involvement in Community Board 6, it's
13	been discouraging to see how few people come to
14	or even know about public meetings. It's even
15	more disappointing that there hasn't been robust
16	outreach by leadership to try to recruit a
17	broader range of people to join the board and its
18	committees and we need to change that. My hope
19	is that a citywide Office of Civic Engagement
20	would create meaningful opportunities for
21	individuals and communities. Particularly those
22	who have been marginalized to connect to
23	resources and to be supported in their efforts to
24	engage with government officials and institutions
25	and to even run for office themselves. It is

1	inspiring to see a proposal that encourages skill
2	development and pathways for leadership and seeks
3	to facilitate substantial community-building
4	activity and dynamic civic participation by all
5	New Yorkers.
6	Finally, if an Office of Civic Engagement is
7	established, it is essential that the formation
8	of the office, the development of its plans, and
9	its leadership and staff be inclusive and
10	reflective of the great breadth of diversity we
11	are so fortunate to share in New York City.
12	Thank you.
13	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
14	MR. SWEENEY: Good evening everyone. My
15	name is Reginald Sweeney. And I was a candidate
16	for city council. So I'd like to just thank
17	everyone, the comments I mean, I just changed
18	my entire testimony with all you geniuses from

I got into a city council race thinking that I can win with this \$5,000. And, you know, I would expect to hear that. And I did pretty well. I did 5.8 percent of the votes. But what I noticed, because Mr. Lander has sent this

New York and Brooklyn. But let's get really down

to the real nitty gritty.

1	e-mail last night and I try to type up
2	everything. But what I want to show you
3	gentlemen and ladies and gentlemen. These are
4	the mailings. A city council race turned out to
5	be a little less than a million dollars in my
6	district. I have about a hundred different
7	mailings. And all of the mailings came from
8	different special interest groups in packs. So
9	with that being said, for someone like myself
10	and I have to really say on the record, that the
11	Board of Elections, campaign finance, and all of
12	the people that I came across, they it works,
13	ladies and gentlemen. There was a vote count. I
14	was involved with the process. The whole nine
15	yards. But the biggest problem is the groups
16	that are funding and the ads and the mailing.
17	Some of the mailings, when it when you have to
18	identify who's paid for, needs to be the font
19	needs to be bigger. Some seniors and people need
20	to understand who's really doing this mailing.
21	With the campaign finance, if you had category
22	mandated for the money that needs to be spent, I
23	think we can eliminate a lot of this mailing. I
24	mean, this is a lot of stuff. And if you're an
25	independent small guy, just trying to get or

1	woman trying to get into this process, it's very
2	difficult. I think the charters should be
3	changed when you get knocked off the ballot,
4	who I think a candidate and the candidate
5	should be the one that makes that challenge
6	instead of somebody out of the blue from the
7	district and they just come and they challenge
8	your petitions and some crazy thing that happens
9	and you made a small mistake, you get knocked
10	off. But the money is the problem. I know for a
11	fact that you can run a decent city council
12	campaign with less than 50 to 60,000 dollars
13	because the vote counts. When you got special
14	job for New York, small business services and
15	if you do see a candidate because one of the
16	candidates had 25 mailings done by himself. And
17	I've never seen I was I'm a little upset
18	that I left my mailing. I did everything. I did
19	that palm cards. I created it all. And it
20	didn't take much. That book that they give you
21	at the Board of Election works. So if you look
22	at campaign finance and you cut out, as many
23	others said, who can contribute, break it down to
24	the point where the big money is not there.
25	Because if I give you \$5,000 and I live in New

1	York City, I'm going to be looking for something.
2	And it usually if you've track who funds the
3	campaign, who help put in that money, you'll see
4	that the favors come down the line.
5	And one last point. Because I know some
6	other people ran over. When you have six to one,
7	whatever contribution that you get from a
8	constituent from your district should be matched.
9	You should have more debates, public debates that
10	give other voters the opportunity to see the
11	candidate. You can be a candidate that just made
12	the ballot, worked on the petitions, did it all,
13	and made it. And then, when it comes down to the
14	debates, if somebody wants to vote for you and
15	it's a public video type type of debate,
16	that's going to stir and help a lot of people
17	understand who they're running for. And I'm
18	Mr. Lander invited me. But I definitely disagree
19	but one and he's hopefully we could stay a
20	friend or something. It doesn't matter what
21	party you run for. It matters of the candidate.
22	And I believe in the city charter and MWBEs.
23	Please, look at that small business aspect. And
24	I yield that.
25	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

1	MR. SWEENEY: But I have a lot more to say
2	and I appreciate all of you guys.
3	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
4	MR. SWEENEY: And Una, you have done a lot
5	for a lot of folks. And that's all I got to say.
6	MS. CLARKE: Thank you.
7	MR. LERNER: Good evening. And thank you to
8	the Commission for sticking around so late. I
9	know it's a long evening, so I appreciate
10	everyone who's very attentive to discussion
11	still.
12	So my name is Josh Lerner and I direct a
13	national nonprofit called the Participatory
14	Budgeting Project. The project I had mentioned
15	before. So we support cities across the country
16	and the world in setting up and building
17	participatory budgeting processes. Including
18	partnering with New York City Council in the
19	process here. And now with the mayor's office,
20	as well, on the new expansions of participatory
21	budgeting in schools across the city. It's all
22	high schools. And I really I applaud the
23	efforts and the proposals to improve the
24	electoral process. I mainly want to talk with
25	you a bit about civic engagement, though, and

1	what we can do beyond elections. Trust in
2	democracy is at an all-time low. And we're not
3	going to rebuild trust by focusing just on one or
4	two days a year. You don't just ask people to
5	come out and vote once or twice and expect them
6	to suddenly trust government. If you want to
7	build a better relationship with your kids or
8	your parents and you call them twice a year and
9	expect that to do the trick, you're going to be
0	disappointed. I think that we expect more, as
1	well, as residents. And we're seeing a lot of
2	excitement across the country and in New York,
.3	people who want to get engaged in other ways.
4	And so I just encourage you to include proposals
5	that go beyond electoral reform, as important as
6	that is, and take advantage of this as an
.7	opportunity to be bold.
8	The two things I want to advocate for in
9	particular, one is the Office of Civic

Engagement. Partly, you can see how hard this work is. Imagine if you had an office of experts living in civic engagements that could work with you to engage people who are not in this room, and coming up breath and building agreement around proposals for the charter revision. Ιt

would make your work easier and better, and more
likely to get passed, probably, in November. So
this can be a resource for you. We can do better
than three minutes at the mic. Even though I'm
speaking here now, this is not the best way to
have engagement.

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The second thing is -- the second thing is that this is an opportunity to expand participatory budgeting. As Brad mentions, around the world this is usually done in the citywide level. And so this is an opportunity to take the initial program that we started here in the council level and make this across the city. And so I think that you could put on the ballot a measure to have a set percent of the budget be decided by the people because it's our money. And that that would actually work much better than the current process, which is divided up into many different council districts. So there's other recommendations. I'm glad to talk more and bring together other folks who can help advise and how to set that up. I think it's a big opportunity to think big and to enable people to participate in government beyond elections every day and ways that work for them.

1 Thank you. 2 MR. PERALES: Thank you. 3 Any questions? None. Let me thank all of you. 4 The next panel is Janine Nichols, Matthew 5 6 Fairley, Zarena -- looks like Frederick, and John 7 Flatow. Mr. Flatow, I've already called your name. 8 9 You should be sitting there. 10 MR. FLATOW: I was surprised --11 MR. PERALES: That I called you? 12 MR. FLATOW: -- by the call. Yeah, Mr. Chair. 13 14 MR. PERALES: One more. 15 How about Marlon Donnelly. You can take the fourth chair. Oh. Is it Marlene? 16 17 MS. DONNELLY: Marlene. 18 MR. PERALES: Oh. Look at that. It's your 19 handwriting, Marlene. There's a chair right 20 here. 21 MR. SCISSURA: There's a chair right here. MR. PERALES: There's a chair right here on 22 23 this side of the -- right there. MR. SPEAKER: Oh. We can all (inaudible). 24 25 MR. PERALES: All right. Do you have an

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1 order	in	which	you	would	like	to	proceed?
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Why don't you start with the extreme left

here.

Yes. Hi my name is Janine MS. NICHOLS: Nichols and I am a resident of this neighborhood. I'm part of my block association, the Sullivan Ludlum Stoddard Neighborhood Association. And I am an activist confronting gentrification issues with the movement to protect the people and the Flower Lovers Advocating For Communities, or FLAC. I came here to talk about an idea I keep hearing being promoted about the Department of City Planning embedding a representative of DCP in all community boards as a paid position. have been predicting this for some time. Our infamous Community Board 9 here was very, very tumultuous. And -- and I've been predicting that our success in holding off a rezoning of our neighborhood would lead to an attempt to close the loophole that DCP requires a formal request from a community board in order to start one of their studies. The conclusions of which are foregone. So our community board -- our community residents, I believe, overwhelmingly oppose a rezoning. But they're disengaged from

the process and they are upset by what they see
if and when they do come to our community board.
Our Land Use Committee is dismissive of laws and
process. And we have spent countless hours and
our own money taking them to court, trying to get
them to adhere to the city charter, to the open
meetings law, to their own bylaws. We believe
that if this community board followed procedure,
it would result in an accurate representation of
how the neighborhood feels. But that's not what
happens. Where, as I heard someone talk about
term limits, and there are certainly people on
the community board who have been there, as far
as I can tell, from time immemorial. There also
seem to be other people on the board who are
there for the express position of just advancing
this rezoning and then getting out. This is a
targeted neighborhood. And at this point we have
seen East New York, Chinatown, Harlem, the Lower
East Side, people encouraged to give up hours
countless hours for visioning sessions and
planning committees and to try and imagine a rich
future for their neighborhood only to see the
results of their plan summarily dismissed by the
Department of City Planning when the day comes.

1	The Winston Von Engle, who is our chairman
2	of the director, I guess, of TCP in Brooklyn,
3	recently told people in Bushwick, who had just
4	finished their own neighborhood plan that he
5	doesn't care about people. He cares about
6	buildings and characters. So these are my
7	concerns.
8	MR. SCISSURA: Thank you.
9	Sir.
10	MR. FAIRLEY: Thank you very much. And
11	thank you all for being here to take these to
12	take ideas from the community.
13	My name is Matt Fairley. I live in
14	Community Board 6. I'm one of Mr I'm
15	sorry Councilman Lander's constituents. And
16	I'm glad that he was willing to send out a nice
17	e-mail and be so good about getting everyone here
18	and be so forward about transparency. Although I
19	wish, if he was really serious about
20	transparency, he would have sent it to us more
21	than 24 hours in advance. I'd also like to
22	object to how this meeting has been run, in that
23	I noted that the people who signed up with actual
24	organizations to their name were given primacy of
25	place. This is a public hearing. And the fact

that people came here with a -- with NYPIRG or came here as -- on behalf of organization, were given the fact -- the chance to speak first, when the room was still full, while this whole table was still full, only increases the space of alienation that voters in this city feel. That people who are connected will be given primacy of place. So I have to object to how this meeting has been run. And I think in the future it should not matter whether or not you're here with a group. You should be given a chance to speak, no matter what. My voice is just as important as everyone else's in this room.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. Thank you.

MR. FAIRLEY: I would like to say that I am leery of the idea of a director of civic engagement. I do not like the idea of a government official or anyone involved with the government deciding what civic engagement means in this city. It is such an underdeveloped idea, that I'm afraid that if put into the wrong hands, we could have a director somewhere in this city deciding what it means to be a civically engaged citizen. And so I find that to be very, very troubling. But what I really came here to talk

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about is the number 64. And that is the number
of elected officials that exist in the City of
New York. In a city of 8.5 million, the fact
that we only have 64 elected officials is crazy.
51 City Council members, five borough presidents,
five district attorneys, the comptroller, the
public advocate, and the mayor. That is all.

If we want to talk about how to get people more engaged with their community, we need to increase the number of people that are elected. We need to increase the number of people that are in the city council so that city council members don't have more constituents than members of the New York State Assembly. Because that is what is happening right now. If we want to find a way so that money can be taken out of politics so that people can actually win by knocking on doors, by getting forward and going down to the constituents, so that insurgent candidates can actually have a chance to run, we need to make it so that less votes are needed and so that the people that are representing and being part of this community are actually much closer to the people that are represented him. By increasing the number of city council members, we can do

1	that. The other way to do that is to decrease
2	the amount of time that a city council member
3	served from four years to two years. Our
4	assemblymen our assembly members, our state
5	senators, our congress people, they have to face
6	their votes every two years. And a city council
7	person should, too. City council people should
8	have to come before the voters every once in a
9	while. And the last thing I'd like to say is I
10	think that everyone here who has been concerned
11	with community boards, we should make community
12	boards elected by proportional representation.
13	This way they are actually representatives of the
14	people and that they are reflective of the people
15	and can have real powers that way. Thank you.
16	MR. SCISSURA: Thank you.
17	Sir.
18	MR. FLATOW: Distinguished Commission I,
19	too, will have to talk fast. Three minutes and
20	21 recommendations.
21	Review please review the composition of
22	various boards and commissions. There was a
23	Supreme Court case a few decades ago that wiped
24	out the New York City Board of Estimate and the
25	at-large city council system because they were

1 structurally not representing the voters and the 2 people of New York City. And one of the key constituencies being screwed was Brooklyn. 3 Because Brooklyn has the largest population. there should never be a configuration where the 5 borough of Brooklyn and the borough of Queens has 6 the same number of votes on a policymaking body 7 as Staten Island, which has one-sixth the 8 population of Brooklyn and Queens.

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A more extended request for a more extended public hearing process here, we're now in round one. After round two, come back to the voters with a draft of the proposals that are being percolated by this commission. And then have one more set of hearings. So that everybody has the opportunity to comment one more time before this commission then structures that referendum that will go on a ballot. And give the Board of Elections and the voters and the organizers and advocates time to -- to stake out their positions and for the public to be educated.

Advice and consent power for the full city council on city council appointments and with respect to appointments by their mayor.

Grant permanent residents of New York City

1	the right to vote in municipal elections. This
2	right to vote existed for hundreds of years. And
3	the last time it was used was for school board
4	elections in the City of New York. Request that
5	you seriously consider that.

Coterminality. That's kind of a -- for some it might be an esoteric term. It means that all of these agency districts should have coordinated boundaries. As a CUNY professor, I do research. And recently I do a lot of mapping. And when you compile over -- start overlaying all of these boundaries for city agencies, it now looks like a bowl of spaghetti. So Commissioners, take at least charge someone to take a look -- a second look at coterminality.

I never met this gentleman before to my right. But increase the number of city council districts from 51 to 59. That's how many community boards we have right now. I -- I listened to the Queens hearing, where the Asian-American community complained about not being able to achieve their fair share of representation, okay. There are a million people -- one million Asian-Americans in New York City now. The smaller those districts are, the

	2018 CHARTER REVISION - 5/7/18 - BROOKLYN
1	greater the likelihood that you'll be able to
Τ.	greater the likelihood that you if be able to
2	capture a neighborhood and communities of
3	interest so they can elect the candidates of
4	their choice.
5	MR. SCISSURA: Thank you, sir. You went a
6	little bit over, but that's okay.
7	Do you have a copy of that for us?
8	MR. FLATOW: Yes, you have
9	MR. SCISSURA: Perfect. That's all we need.
10	Ma'am.
11	MS. DONNELLY: My name is Marlene Donnelly.
12	I have been an active community activist
13	citizen for quite some time. I am one of the
14	activists who actually brought us the Gowanus
15	Canal Superfund cleanup to the Brooklyn. The
16	Gowanus Canal Superfund cleanup was the first
17	time that a community has actually overstepped

18 the authoritarian power that our mayor does have 19 to bring -- to make something happen in this city 20 since Westway. The -- the mayor fought us tooth 21 and nail against that whole process. But Barack 22 Obama's EPA followed the federal law and we got a 23 Super -- we're getting a Superfund cleanup. 24 Contaminants are being removed from our community for now. I -- I thank you for your volunteer 25

1	work here, but my community members who are not
2	on the community board volunteer attending
3	meetings for the past eight years once a month,
4	12 months out of the year, plus committee
5	meetings on a volunteer basis because we want
6	those contaminants out of our community. The
7	authority the problem with our charter is
8	it it institutes the authoritarian government
9	that we live under. The reason we don't have
10	participatory democracy in this city is because
11	of our charter. If you want to know why people
12	aren't voting, it's because of the way the
13	charter is organized. Community people who
14	want to be active in the community are have
15	their voice locked out of every step of the way.
16	Brad Lander also didn't tell you about the city
17	council hearing where they were planning that
18	just took place affecting the Gowanus Canal,
19	where they passed a 1.2 billion dollar project
20	that has gone through with no questioning. That
21	everyone here is going to pay for and nobody even
22	knows about. There is no participation. There
23	is no there is no transparency going on. It's
24	an authoritarian system. Every agency works at
25	the behest of the mayor. He does his will and

1	there is no agency that that functions with
2	any kind of autonomy based on what they're
3	charged to do. My my recommendation I came to
4	talk about, I've heard many people in the
5	fellow citizens speak about is that we don't have
6	representative government and we need a charter
7	that institutes real representative government.
8	And that will begin by having our community
9	boards as elected officials. We need to expand a
10	lap a participation with with the
11	collective voice of the community. We sit here
12	with a my community board, I think all
13	community boards. I am represented one out of a
14	160,000 people. That's what my voice is. He
15	can't possibly our my councilman, Landers,
16	can't possibly figure out what is the collective
17	voice of a 160,000 people. You go up to Albany,
18	where the whole city of Albany is 90,000.
19	Their their first chair of elected government
20	is one in 5,000. It's difficult enough to figure
21	out what 5,000 people's collective voices. Here
22	it doesn't happen at all and nobody even bothers
23	to try. We need to institute local government.
24	Everybody keeps talking about campaign finance
25	and looking at all these other states. You

1	should all be looking at the one state that has
2	the highest participation in voting of all the
3	other states. That's up in Massachusetts. And
4	it's because they function with local real town
5	government, where everybody gets to vote on
6	community planning at every town meeting.
7	Everybody gets to vote on what they what you
8	pay for projects. Everybody gets to vote on what
9	you tax themselves. That's why they that
10	state repeatedly has the highest level of
11	participation. Not Minneapolis. Nowhere else.
12	We got to look at how we bring democracy to the
13	city. And the charter needs to be rewritten to
14	dismantle the authoritarian system that we do
15	live under.
16	MR. SCISSURA: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you.
17	Any questions from the Commissioners?
18	Dale?
19	MR. HO: Just a few questions for
20	Dr. Flatow.
21	Dr. Flatow, you suggested increasing the
22	number of city council districts from 51 to 59.
23	And I'm just wondering where the number 59 comes
24	from.

MR. FLATOW: Why, I'm starting with the

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1	current number of community boards for the City.
2	But I think that's a logical place to go.
3	Understanding that those 59 community boards are
4	not all coequal in population. But you already
5	have a set a major set of natural boundaries
6	out there for communities and neighborhoods. And
7	so raising the number from where it is now would
8	increase the likelihood of getting a more diverse
9	council from those constituencies that are not
10	yet on that board.
11	MR. HO: I guess that was a part of my
12	question. Because the community boards aren't
13	equal equal in terms of population.
14	MR. FLATOW: Right. I'm not suggesting
15	it's an overlay
16	MR. HO: With the 59 districts, it wouldn't
17	overlap. Shouldn't the number be in your
18	opinion, do you think the number should be even
19	higher optimally? Or what do you think?
20	MR. FLATOW: No. No. Because what we're
21	also looking at is expense. It costs money.
22	Every time you create a district, you got another
23	council member, another salary, another staff
24	body. So I think there's a I think a small
25	increase. I think the council is almost there,

1	in terms of inclusion and diversity. But adding
2	a few more slots would allow us to further
3	balance out our constituents.
4	MR. HO: Another question about the City
5	council districts.
6	One issue that I don't see or one
7	recommendation I don't see that you've listed
8	here is one that we've talked at a few meetings.
9	And that's the idea of an independent
10	redistricting commission. Is there a reason
11	you've omitted it from your list of
12	recommendations?
13	MR. FLATOW: Priority. I know that there
14	are other groups that are going to raise that
15	issue. I have served I served on a quasi
16	independent city council redistricting
17	commission. They're not bipartisan. There are
18	no elected officials. I also served on the state
19	one, where two thirds of the commissioners are
20	state legislators, okay? At least in New York
21	City, there are 15 civilians. And the charter
22	currently specifies that they have to come from a
23	diversity of political affiliations and it has
24	some other criteria in there. So I think the

our current body that has done the growing of

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1	city council districts is almost there. The last
2	round, there were no voting rights lawsuits
3	against the plan that the last council came out.
4	MR. PERALES: Now that if I might or
5	you're still on?
6	MR. HO: I just have one last question.
7	MR. PERALES: Go ahead. And then I'll
8	follow up.
9	MR. HO: Your question your
10	recommendation here about granting New York City
11	permanent residents the right to vote in
12	municipal elections, you mean to is your
13	recommendation limited to legal permanent
14	residents or Green Card holders?
15	MR. FLATOW: Legal permanent residents.
16	That's my recommendation.
17	MR. HO: You think do you have a reason
18	why you wouldn't extend, in your opinion, the
19	right to vote in municipal elections beyond legal
20	permanent residents to other noncitizens?
21	MR. FLATOW: How who's going to define a
22	permanent resident? The federal government
23	already has that purview. So I think the easiest
24	way to proceed with that category is whoever is
25	a, quote, "documented legal resident" according

1	to the federal government, should have the right
2	to vote in municipal elections. That would be my
3	approach. I think it's a clean approach. And
4	notice, I repeated "municipal" in a lot of
5	places. What I'm suggesting is a lot of these
6	issues we've heard coming from a lot of the good
7	government groups, this isn't the venue that
8	can that can resolve the problem. A lot of
9	this is coming out of Albany. So I would rather
10	take a shot at revising the city charter and
11	specify some good that can be generated at the
12	municipal level so we don't get into this
13	jurisdictional battle. Where we can't tell
14	the City of New York, as it's been made pretty
15	clear, can't tell the State of New York what to
16	do and darn sure can't tell what the federal
17	government what to do. So why don't we carve out
18	what is within our municipal jurisdiction.
19	Municipal elections. That may be challenged, but
20	I think you're standing on much stronger ground
21	defending the extension of voting rights for
22	municipal elections only. You do not have the
23	authority to extend that right to state elections
24	or federal elections.

MR. SPEAKER: If I may also respond.

1	Just to disagree with you, respectfully. I
2	don't think this panel should ever take cost into
3	effect or into account to determine how much
4	democracy New York should have. The fact that we
5	should have more councilmen, we shouldn't be
6	sitting here saying, oh, it's too expensive. If
7	it gives us more representation, gives us more
8	transparency, we shouldn't have to worry about
9	the cost. Especially when you consider that it's
10	probably maybe one percent of the multiple
11	billions of dollars that this city spends every
12	year. We can spare a couple million dollars to
13	make this more democratic and make this more
14	transparent.
15	MR. SPEAKER: Agreed.
16	MS. DONNELLY: And I do I do think we
17	deserve equal representation in city council, as
18	the people who live in the City of Albany. As I
19	understand, New York has a lot has a lot more
20	money than the City of Albany. And if they can
21	afford city council representation, one in 5,000,
22	I think we can afford it, also.
23	MR. PERALES: Let me just follow up with
24	Mr. Flatow about because I know he has been

drawing district lines for a long time.

25

1	You said that you worked with the
2	districting commission of New York City.
3	MR. FLATOW: I was a commissioner.
4	MR. PERALES: You were one?
5	MR. FLATOW: Yes.
6	MR. PERALES: Now, who appointed you?
7	MR. FLATOW: The city council.
8	MR. PERALES: You're making my point for me.
9	Should we not have a commission that is not
LO	directly appointed by political party and by
L1	elected officials who are dependent on those
L2	lines?
L3	MR. FLATOW: You could move to that model.
L4	California has that model.
L5	MR. PERALES: Exactly. Do you like that
L6	model? I'm asking you your opinion, sir.
L7	MR. FLATOW: I I provided some advice to
L8	California.
L9	MR. PERALES: Which means that you like
20	that you like the idea?
21	MR. FLATOW: Full disclosure.
22	Excuse me?
23	MR. PERALES: Does that mean that you
24	support the idea of the California model?
25	MR. FLATOW: Ideally, yes. But I can I

1	can live with some tweaking. I don't think
2	that's the biggest issue right now.
3	MR. PERALES: I appreciate your opinion.
4	MR. FLATOW: I think the city body that we
5	have is a lot better than the state body.
6	MR. PERALES: I agree. But we're here to
7	deal with the city and we're trying to make
8	things better and improve things. And so, it's
9	something that we think of. And need to think
10	of, I think.
11	MR. FLATOW: You can go all out. Throw the
12	dice roll the dice. Let the voters decide.
13	That's why I have a list of 21 up here.
14	MS. SPEAKER: If I may, I just want to
15	this is this is completely, you know, off
16	it's not off topic. But it's not what I came
17	here to speak about. But in listening to all
18	this talk about the elections, I have to say that
19	I went to Washington to march with our teenagers
20	after the Parkland shootings. And I left when
21	I left there, I had this idea that we should
22	we should be restricting voting age to the most
23	idealistic years of our lives.
24	MR. FLATOW: Number 11.

MS. SPEAKER: We would have gun control. We

25

1	would have free college. We would have universal
2	healthcare. We would have a lot of things
3	because they're not already thinking about their
4	taxes and their houses and their
5	MR. PERALES: Unless the Commissioners have
6	more questions, let me thank the Panel
7	MR. FLATOW: Can I mention one more one
8	more item that I think is very, very important.
9	The United States Supreme Court, not in a
10	case called Shelby County, Alabama versus Holder
11	wiped out or put a big hole in the U.S. Voting
12	Rights Act that required the City of New York to
13	submit all voting procedures, all redistricting
14	plans to the U.S. Justice Department before they
15	could be imposed on the voters of the City of New
16	York.
17	MR. PERALES: We know that. And that's one
18	of the reasons why I'm so interested in a better
19	way
20	MR. FLATOW: Well, let me get to my punch
21	line.
22	MR. PERALES: You'll get to your punch line,
23	but you got you got to let me say
24	MR. FLATOW: I know. This is the former
25	general counsel and founder of the Puerto Rican

1	Legal Defense and Education Fund, in case you
2	folks didn't know. This gentleman right here.
3	MR. PERALES: Therefore
4	MR. FLATOW: I outed you.
5	MR. PERALES: The since there's no longer
6	a review of the city council redistricting
7	MR. FLATOW: Right.
8	MR. PERALES: that's what raises the
9	questions and what has motivated me to ask you
10	about the ideal way to address redistricting in
11	New York City.
12	MR. FLATOW: So whatever body is going to
13	draw lines, that's one body. We need another
14	mechanism to replace what was wiped out by the
15	Supreme Court.
16	MR. PERALES: Or draw or a better body to
17	draw the lines, ideally.
18	MR. FLATOW: Both. Because we already have
19	the bodies to draw the lines. And we had an
20	oversight body called the U.S. Justice
21	Department. The City of New York no longer has
22	to go
23	MR. PERALES: We we'll
24	MR. FLATOW: get permanent from anybody
25	to do whatever it wants to do. And I think

- 1 that's a dangerous place for democracy in New
- 2 York City.
- MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you, John.
- 4 Thank you very much.
- 5 MS. SPEAKER: Thank you, John.
- 6 MR. PERALES: Carrie Tan, Karen -- I think
- 7 it says Flemming, Lashawn Ellis. Is this Teresa
- 8 Westershorn?
- 9 MS. BOYD: Excuse me. I have been here
- 10 since 6:00. I put my name down --
- MR. PERALES: They're all here.
- MS. BOYD: -- before anybody of you was
- here. And I've been sitting here waiting. But
- 14 you know something? My name just -- just does
- not appear. I wonder why. I wonder why.
- 16 MR. SCISSURA: What's your name?
- MS. BOYD: My name is Alicia Boyd. I've
- 18 been here before you got here.
- 19 MR. PERALES: Alicia Boyd.
- MS. BOYD: Thank you. Yes. My goodness.
- MR. PERALES: We'll get -- it's a long list,
- 22 ma'am.
- MS. BOYD: I mean, really.
- MR. PERALES: Whoever is ready to begin can
- 25 begin.

1	MS. BOYD: I would like to begin.
2	My name is Alicia Boyd. And I am the member
3	of MTOPP, the Movement To Protect The People,
4	that exists in this community, CB 9.
5	In 1989 the City Charter Commission formed
6	and looked at community boards who were
7	conducting themselves like private clubs. The
8	commission declared sunshine on committees and
9	sunshine on their documents. Requiring community
10	boards to adhere to the open meetings law and
11	allow residents to speak at every open meeting.
12	11 lawsuits have been filed within this
13	community, both in the state and federal courts
14	since 2014. Ranging from CB 9's failure to
15	comply with the Freedom Of Information Law,
16	denial of freedom of speech, denying us to be on
17	committees, not being notified about meetings,
18	not giving us minutes and voting records, being
19	surrounded by police, board members calling
20	residents cunts and hos and bitches. CB 9
21	engaging in rezoning applications with private
22	entities. Borough President Eric Adam violating
23	the city charter by placing more board members in
24	his lawful quota. The arrest of residents. And
25	unqualified board members trying to be hired as

1	district managers. A chairman of a board being a
2	real estate lobbyist. And the fabrication of a
3	vote and list of recommendations on a ULURP
4	application. Seven out of 12 of those lawsuits
5	have been upheld, one was dismissed, one
6	withdrawn, and two are on appeal. That's our
7	community board.

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Despite these lawsuits, nothing has changed at our community board. And let me just repeat, it's CB 9, Brooklyn. Currently we still have the real estate lobbyist, who has been there for two years. We have board member engaging in conflict of interest, where they -- where -- for example, we have a Mr. Michael Liburd, who is the board member of the Brooklyn Public Library. He brings his committee -- his Brooklyn Public Library to his committee, which is the Landers committee. He requests that they get permission to change the uniform land-use review process. And he does it without declaring his conflict of interest. He chairs the board. He votes -- takes an illegal vote without quorum, and he passes it on to the CB 9. CB 9 approves the application. the past three years we have been denied the right to have a district manager. The city

1	charter states that we are supposed to have a
2	district manage. Three years, no district
3	manager. Why? Because CB 9 wants to sit there
4	and hire a member of their board that's
5	unqualified. The first lawsuit, the judge agreed
6	with us and said that they violated all of their
7	bylaws and threw out the results. Now we are
8	again looking at another possible district
9	manager. This one has a personal relationship
10	with the Chair. And, on top of that, is also on
11	the board. The board demanded the resumes from
12	this community committee. And the committee told
13	the board, "No. We're not giving you the
14	resumes. We're not giving you the voting
15	records, we're not giving you anything." And
16	this was supporting my borough hall
17	MR. PERALES: The time has lapsed.
18	MS. BOYD: This community board is
19	absolutely a shame. You have a city charter.
20	And this community board does not obey the city
21	charter. We have filed complaints with every
22	known agencies. We have petitions, we have
23	protests, and nothing has happened. So now you
24	come before us talking about another city charter
25	reform, when our community board is uncapable of

1	even understanding what the city charter means
2	and is uncapable of following the city charter.
3	So what recommendations will you have, that
4	will then help us understand and enforce the city
5	charter on our community board, because our
6	community board has no concept that a city
7	charter exists.
8	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you very
9	much.
LO	MS. BOYD: Did I wake them up.
11	MS. FLEMMING: I believe they're awake.
L2	Okay.
L3	My name is Karen Flemming. I have been in
L4	this community, same Community Board 9, for
L5	50-some odd years. I won't tell you exactly how
L6	many. And I have suffered through the purgatory
L7	of an infective institution. The same one that
L8	she's talking about. But I want to broaden where
L9	I'm coming from a little bit. I remember the
20	institution of community boards when they first
21	put them into play. I said, "Well, this is a
22	good thing." Now, a community board, from my
23	thinking, should be as grass rootsy as it could
24	get. I should be able to walk into my community
25	board and be home. That's not what we have. And

1	it's not only here that that does not exist.
2	Because I get around the town and there are a lot
3	of similar problems from institution to
4	institution. Part of the problem is how
5	community board members are appointed. Because
6	they're appointed by the half of them are
7	appointed by the borough presidents. Now I'm
8	speaking. Now, the problem with that is if you
9	have a borough president who is inclusive and
10	tries to get as many different ideas and creative
11	and constructive people into and I would
12	mention Gail Brewer, because I've seen her
13	interview with people. She's somebody that I
14	know well in the political space. And I've seen
15	what she can do with it. So therefore, it's
16	possible to do. But the rules are not allowing
17	us to get there. Because when I go to a
18	community board in Bay Ridge, I should be able to
19	adhere to the just about the same regulations
20	as what I have on Community Board 9 or Community
21	Board 17, or the one in the Bronx. Because the
22	way that the charter was written is so loose, you
23	can go over there and you don't even recognize
24	yourself being in a community board. You're
25	saying, what is this how they act over here?

1	Is this what they do? I don't understand. You
2	can't do but we have we have to set enough
3	rules if we're going to have community boards,
4	we have to set enough rules so that I can go to
5	any community board and be able to operate as a
6	citizen because, even though I may be in this
7	district, I'm still a citizen of the city and a
8	citizen of of the borough as a whole. So I
9	would recommend that we make the rules for the
10	community boards so that they are somewhat
11	equivalent. You got to give each neighborhood a
12	little room. Because Gowanus is not Bay Ridge
13	and Coney Island is not I understand that.
14	But right now, they're not in force. Plus, the
15	city agencies that should be helping and
16	assisting the people as we complain about an
17	institution of this kind are not doing they're
18	not doing their job. We we call, we send
19	e-mails. Nobody even bothers to respond. This
20	happens to us all the time. Now, as far as I'm
21	concerned, my thing is I believe the community
22	board members should be elected. Or at least
23	half of them in the process that we need
24	elections.

MR. PERALES: That's a good point.

1	MS. FLEMMING: So that those people can, you
2	know
3	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much. I
4	appreciate it.
5	MS. FLEMMING: get a chance to be where
6	we're supposed to be.
7	MR. PERALES: Next.
8	MS. SPEAKER: Good evening. I first want to
9	address Cesar. Because I came in and I was like,
LO	I know that face. I know that face. I never
L1	forget a face. And I went to school with your
L2	stepson Jaime Hicky Mendoza. So I just want to
L3	say welcome to this side of the park.
L4	MR. PERALES: And how do you know Jaime?
L5	MS. SPEAKER: Jaime? We went to Brooklyn
L6	Friends together.
L7	MR. PERALES: Oh.
L8	MS. SPEAKER: So, I want to I don't I
L9	mean, everyone has said pretty much what I have
20	said, or what I'm going to say here tonight. I
21	am a member of MTOPP. I'm a member of FLAC. I'm
22	a member of this community. Albeit a younger
23	member of this community. I want to first
24	address what was said earlier about being a
25	volunteer commission. And yes, you are. And our

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Community Board 9 uses that all the time, to say they are volunteering and they are doing wonderful work in the community and how dare we question them. And I just want to say that just because you volunteer does not mean that -- and it's not to you, Una or Kyle. But I just want to address the fact that being a volunteer does not mean that you do not do certain things that may not be the opinion or in the best interest of a community. So that -- that can't be used as an excuse. Because as we have stated, we have a real estate lobbyist on our board. We have someone who continues to push rezoning in our faces, even though the community has been vocal and clear that we are not interested in a -- in a rezoning here. So I just wanted to make that point.

One of the things that I would like to see changed in the city charter is for community boards to -- to have -- to not have members appointed by the borough president. That has proved to be a big issue for us in Community Board 9. We have a lot of people who seem to be very tight with the borough president and they -- that is a conflict of interest.

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The other thing is a lot of people have

2	mentioned the limits, having term limits. And
3	again, that is in the city charter. There was
4	supposed to be there's supposed to be a
5	two-year term limit, and you come up for review,
6	and reelection is supposed to happen, I believe,
7	in April. And that doesn't happen. So again, if
8	we have the city carter that we have right now,
9	one, how do we adhere to it and use it as a
10	living document. And going forward, how do we
11	revise it to make it better. So I think those
12	are things to consider. How do we really use
13	this document as it is and in terms of revising
14	it. So how do we do that.
15	Someone mentioned I believe it was Carlo
16	mentioned, you know, it's hard to find people who
17	want to be on community boards. And, you know,
18	it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be. We're all
19	members of this community. We should all know
20	that this thing exists. I had no idea growing up
21	in middle school elementary school, middle
22	school, high school, that community boards
23	existed. This is a problem. In our educational
24	facilities, this should be something that
25	students know about. That's a huge, huge

1	deficit. And that needs to happen. And I,
2	myself, asked to be on the ULURP committee. And
3	I was on the ULURP committee because it's very
4	I'm very passionate about maintaining communities
5	the way they are. Things will change. Things
6	always change. But people should not feel like
7	they are left behind. And I was kicked off.
8	MR. PERALES: Well, we're running out of
9	time.
10	MS. SPEAKER: Thank you.
11	MR. PERALES: But I do appreciate your
12	comments.
13	MS. TAN: Hi. My name is Carrie Tan and I
14	am I don't live in CB 9, so I will be the one
15	person that has nothing really to contribute on
16	that topic. But CB 8 stands with you.
17	So I I'm here basically because I, like
18	many people, apparently, received the e-mail from
19	Brad Lander's office, even though I'm not
20	actually a resident in his district anymore. But
21	I have stayed on his mailing list for the last
22	five years of living in Maury Cumbo's district
23	because I seem to get all my news from him
24	instead.
25	MS. SPEAKER: But not from Maury Cumbo.

1	MS. TAN: Yeah. So this is I mean, I
2	didn't come here to plug Brad Lander. But I am
3	appreciative of finding about this. And I
4	consider myself a reasonably informed person.
5	But I actually had not realized that the city
6	charter was up for review by two different
7	bodies. So
8	MR. PERALES: This is the only body that is
9	changing.
10	MS. TAN: Right. So I I wanted
11	to come here and just voice my concerns as just a
12	member of the community. I'm not here
13	representing any organization. I'm an educator,
14	Prospect Heights resident. And the things
15	there have been a lot of great ideas here, but
16	the ones that I am particularly passionate about,
17	I would say, are campaign finance contribution
18	limits. I think that's a great idea. We do have
19	one of the best matching program donor matched
20	programs in the country and I'm really proud of
21	that. But it definitely could be better. And
22	I'd also agree with raising the cap on the number
23	of donations that could be matched, you know, in
24	this post citizens united era of small down
25	small donor empowerment is super important. I

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1	also wanted to raise the profile of voter
2	enfranchisement, rather than disenfranchisement.
3	I do I personally believe that everybody who
4	is a New York City resident should be able to
5	vote, regardless of their documentation status
6	and regardless of whether or not they have been
7	convicted of a crime. I think New York is made
8	strong stronger by its diversity, its
9	immigrant communities, and we should embrace
10	that. And then finally, I just want to say more
11	generally that I again, I have been voting in
12	New York City for almost 11 years now and I
13	participate in every election. And it has been a
14	pain in the butt every single time. We really
15	need to look at like what is going on with our
16	local Board of Elections because it's it's
17	kind of a disaster. The first six years that I
18	lived here, I was on the rolls twice. I tried
19	every election to get them to fix it. They
20	didn't. My polling place was moved this year and
21	they didn't tell anyone. And then, when I went
22	to the new place, they had no idea what I was
23	talking about. I mean, the list goes on and on.
24	And I know I'm not the only one. So while we're
25	talking about making our city more democratic, we

- also need to talk about how to make it easier for people to vote.
- 3 MR. PERALES: That's a good point. Thank
- 4 you.
- 5 I'd like to ask he commission members
- 6 whether they have questions of this panel.
- 7 MS. SEECHARRAN: I have a question.
- I was wondering if you -- so you had some
- 9 strong opinions about community board and making
- 10 them, I guess, more democratic. Are you
- 11 suggesting that they are elected? You were
- saying that you -- you don't think that they
- should be -- so I was wondering if you agree --
- MS. SPEAKER: Yes.
- MS. SEECHARRAN: No. I was wondering if you
- 16 agree --
- 17 MS. SPEAKER: Yes.
- MS. SEECHARRAN: Yes. With her. Okay.
- 19 Okay.
- 20 So that is your recommendation, that they be
- 21 elected.
- MS. SPEAKER: That they be elected. Yes.
- MR. PERALES: There are no other questions.
- Let me thank the panel.
- Thank you very much.

1 Simone, looks like Harris. Jeannette Lloyd 2 Lewis, Jacob Goldstein and Mark Freelander. 3 Your name, sir? MR. FREELANDER: I'm Mark Freeland. 4 MR. PERALES: You are? Your name? 5 MS. HARRIS: It's Simone Harris. 6 7 MR. PERALES: Yes. Harry White? 8 9 Noel Nathan or Nathois. 10 That will make three. Constance Lesold? 11 12 There's one left. 13 Oh. Only one left. 14 Leslie Clarke. MR. SCISSURA: We need one more chair. 15 16 MR. PERALES: Mr. Clarke? 17 All right. As Mr. Clarke joins us, we will 18 begin with the person on the left. Thank you. 19 My left. 20 MS. HARRIS: I came to this meeting --21 MR. PERALES: You have to use that -- the 22 mic. You have to get real close. 23 MS. HARRIS: My name is Simone Harris. I 24 was invited to the meeting. I came, not really 25 knowing anything about the meeting. So it's

- like, I hope my mission is at the right place.
- 2 Because I'm really -- I really want to address
- 3 housing fraud. And --
- 4 MR. PERALES: Housing fraud?
- 5 MS. HARRIS: Housing fraud in Brooklyn.
- 6 Yes.
- 7 MR. PERALES: That's not something in the
- 8 city charter.
- 9 MS. HARRIS: Okay. So as I said, I came to
- 10 the meeting not knowing the full extent of
- 11 what --
- MR. PERALES: Well, we appreciate your
- coming.
- 14 MS. HARRIS: -- it was about. Yes.
- MR. PERALES: Thank you.
- Mr. Freeland.
- MR. FREELAND: Can you restart?
- MR. PERALES: Yes.
- 19 MR. FREELAND: I -- I thank the Commission
- 20 for --
- 21 MR. SCISSURA: Get closer.
- MR. FREELAND: Okay. I want to thank the
- 23 Commission for the opportunity to address them on
- instant-runoffs.
- 25 My name is Mark Freeland. I was born in

1	Queens and moved to Brooklyn by way of San
2	Francisco. So I am familiar with instant-runoff.
3	I was there when they implemented it. And it
4	does work. You've already heard the major points
5	in favor of it. Brett Lander spoke about it,
6	Fair Vote, other people. And they are right
7	that you know, obviously, it saves money
8	because you have fewer elections and it
9	encourages more participation because the people
10	who finally decide are the ones who vote on the
11	first election, which is usually the greatest
12	participation.

But I'd like to urge the Commission to expand its perspective a little bit. What -- instant-runoffs allow you the opportunity to build a fairer election system. The election system that we have -- and as far as I know is one being proposed -- is still a runoff of two candidates. And that's there for pragmatic reasons. Before computers, when you voted by machines or voted by paper, you could not have multiple elections. You could not say, we'll take the top five winners and have the top five vote-getters have a runoff. And then, if necessary, we'll have another runoff and so on

1	and so on. So what what happens is you have a
2	second round, where you have the two top
3	vote-getters who are very often polarized in
4	figures, and you eliminated the consensus
5	candidate or candidates. There are very many
6	different algorithms that you can use. You know,
7	obviously, in the amount of time and at this late
8	hour, I'm not going to explain any of them to
9	you, nor are you experts on them, and you
10	shouldn't be. But I want to urge you to consult
11	with experts. This has been something that's
12	been studied for over 200 years. There are a
13	number of ways of doing it. It's very easy to be
14	done by computer. The people do not have to say
15	anything other than what you're already
16	suggesting. Rank the voting. It's just how you
17	look at that. And there are ways to extract
18	candidates that are better, that most people
19	like, rather than getting the candidate that only
20	40 percent like. Thank you.
21	MR. PERALES: Thank you. Just out of
22	curiosity, where would we find where these
23	alternative methods of counting the vote.
24	MR. FREELAND: I'm almost hesitant to say
25	Google it, but

1	MR. PERALES: Seriously, Google.
2	MR. FREELAND: There you know, I have a
3	very nice book called Chaotic Elections. It was
4	put out by the American
5	MR. PERALES: What was it?
6	MR. FREELAND: Chaotic Elections by the
7	American Math Society. It was put out after the
8	2000 election, talking about all the different
9	calculations. And and it's very readable.
LO	It's at the undergraduate level.
L1	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
L2	MR. FREELAND: Okay.
L3	MR. NOEL: Hello. My name is Natu Noel.
L4	The pronunciation was kind of firm, but it did
L5	not turn out well.
L6	MR. PERALES: I can hardly hear. You got to
L7	put that up
L8	MR. NOEL: The name is Natu Noel.
L9	MR. PERALES: All right.
20	MR. NOEL: First I would like to thank you
21	all for taking the time to come here today on a
22	Monday evening to have this commission. And I
23	want to thank you all for coming out to help us
24	out.
25	So one of my recommend recommendations is

1	on the city charter, Title 662, merely for city
2	planning. Where I'm not sure if you guys are
3	from the south Flatbush area, where there is a
4	heavy what is a heavy new construction and
5	development movement moving into the area. And
6	there are basically buildings new buildings on
7	the area that that many people in the
8	community does not agree with.

And despite the fact that certain community boards have fight against it and stand against it, many of the projects that they have still moved on. So -- and by my -- by my understanding, it's -- it's because that there's a top to bottom outreach to city planning for New York City. And I recommend that that we have a down of approach, where the community board and the community itself submit their recommendation to -- to -- to the Department of City Planning on to -- as to what they want in the community instead of City Planning giving to us what we want in our community -- where they think that the people should build up hotels and things like that in our community.

MR. PERALES: All right. Thank you very much.

1	Ma'am.
2	MS. LESOLD: My name is Constance Lesold.
3	Don't let the southern accent fool you. I lived
4	across the street for 50 years and I've lived in
5	various parts of Brooklyn from Bay Ridge to
6	Bed-Stuy.
7	MR. PERALES: So where did you pick up that
8	accent?
9	MS. LESOLD: In North Carolina.
10	MR. PERALES: Okay.
11	MS. LESOLD: Durham.
12	I'm mainly here today, to be honest, because
13	of the location you have chosen to hold this
14	hearing in. I really find it hard to believe
15	that you choose this location. It shows some
16	grave sensitivity on the part of this Commission
17	that you chose the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, where
18	there is no longer any free day at all in
19	Brooklyn. Which still has a huge poor community
20	and a huge immigrant community which needs the
21	beauty, the education, the comforts of the
22	Botanic Garden. The only free time now is 8:00
23	to 12:00 on Friday mornings. For a whole
24	century, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden was free.
25	Until the '90s. And when the fees were put on in

1	the '90s, one of the Caribbean councilmen from
2	this area held a press conference in front of the
3	Botanic Gardens and said that this would be the
4	first generation of Caribbean children who did
5	not have a free Botanic Garden. This was very
6	important and meaningful to me at the time
7	because my husband was an immigrant from Nazi
8	Germany. He came as a five-year-old. My
9	father-in-law called this place his synagogue.
10	And the family used the comforts of the garden to
11	wait, even after the war was over, to find out
12	which of their relatives were alive and which
13	were dead in the concentration camps. This
14	cannot continue. As somehow, into the city
15	charter, if it's going to make any sense at all,
16	the city charter has to address how the city
17	deals with its cultural and public institutions.
18	Especially those that deal with open space.
19	Which is so scarce in this community. I served
20	on Community Board 8 for many years as chairman
21	of transportation and parks and worked hard on
22	all of those issues.
23	I think that there are good things about
24	having an elected community board. And there are
25	dangers in having an only elected. I I don't

1	have a strong opinion on that. However, I do
2	think that the issue of the borough president
3	having most of the power in the appointments is
4	not working. I have to, in all fairness, say
5	that when I served on the community board, Howard
6	Golden never told me how to vote on anything. I
7	didn't agree with him on everything. He never
8	told me everything. And so, you know
9	MR. PERALES: We get the message. Thank you
10	very much.
11	MS. LESOLD: I would like to say, though, it
12	is within the Board of Elections, there are
13	problems. When I lived in Bay Ridge, I was being
14	forced to to vote under the pictures of Robert
15	E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Finally the
16	minister took those pictures down. That's
17	MR. PERALES: The Board of Election is a
18	state agency. We have absolutely no interest
19	MS. LESOLD: I suppose it's a state thing,
20	too, that you can't change your party. You have
21	to wait six months to change your party. Which
22	interferes
23	MR. PERALES: We can I mean, there are
24	lots of things that we're not happy with that
25	that are within the purview of the State Board of

1	Elections. There are some things that we can do
2	here with the city charter. But
3	MS. LESOLD: Well, thank you for for
4	listening. And I would say that community boards
5	can be very valuable. But only if they are
6	independent community boards. And if the people
7	who serve on them are independent.
8	MR. PERALES: Thank you very much for your
9	testimony.
10	Are there any questions from Commission
11	members?
12	Hearing none, again, my thanks to all of
13	you.
14	Is there a motion to adjourn, Dale?
15	MR. HO: Motion to adjourn.
16	MR. MIROCZNIK: Second.
17	MR. PERALES: Second. All those in favor?
18	THE BOARD: Aye.
19	MR. PERALES: Those opposed?
20	The motion is passed.
21	(Whereupon, at 9:21 P.M., the above matter
22	concluded.)
23	
24	0 0 0
25	

1	CERTIFICATE
2	
3	STATE OF NEW YORK)
4	: SS.: COUNTY OF NASSAU)
5	
6	I, KEVIN HAGHNAZARI, a Notary Public for and
7	within the State of New York, do hereby certify:
8	That the above is a correct transcription of my
9	stenographic notes.
10	I further certify that I am not related to any
11	of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and
12	that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this
13	matter.
14	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
15	this 8th day of May 2018.
16	
17	Mein Hastruci
18	KEVIN HAGHNAZARI
19	
20	
21	
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24	
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