## 2018 NYC CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

120 EAST 149TH STREET, 2ND FLOOR BRONX, NEW YORK, 10451

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\text { July 24, } 2018 \\
\text { 6:00 P.M. }
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A P P E A R A NCES:

COMMISSIONERS:

CESAR PERALES, Chair
KYLE BRAGG
MARCO CARRION
SHARON GREENBERGER
RACHEL GODSIL
MENDY MIROCZNIK
ANNETTA SEECHARRAN
JOHN SIEGAL
WENDY WEISER

MR. PERALES: Good evening. I'm calling this meeting to order. This meeting of the 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission.

This is the -- our second round of borough hearings. We are obviously in the Bronx. I traditionally begin --

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Mike a little closer. MR. PERALES: I -- this is better? Yes?

I like to begin these meetings by telling you my name is Cesar Perales and I am the chair of this Commission and I would like the members of my Commission to introduce themselves and I will begin on the right all the way down here with Marco.

MR. CARRION: All right. Good evening, everyone. My name is Marco Carrion. I'm current -- I currently serve as commissioner of the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit.

MS. SEECHARRAN: Good evening. My name is Annetta Seecharran and I'm the executive director of Chhaya Community Development Corporation. And it's nice to be home in the borough where I grew up.

MR. SIEGAL: Good evening. John Siegal. I'm a practicing lawyer and a mayoral designee to

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

the Civilian Complaint Review Board.
MS. GREENBERGER: Hi there. I'm Sharon Greenberger. I'm the president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York.

MR. PERALES: As I indicated my name is Cesar Perales. I was formally the secretary of State of New York. I previously served the positions of house deputy mayor of the City of New York. I am a former civil rights lawyer and I've litigated a number of cases against The City of New York on voting procedures.

MS. GODSIL: Good evening. My name is Rachel Godsil. I'm currently a professor at Rutgers Law School and the co-founder and director of research for the Perception Institute, an adsorption of social psychologists, law professors and others focus on the role that bias and other phenomena have to play in creating inequalities that we're obviously as a country striving to address.

I'm formally chair of the Red Guidelines Board and was an associate counsel of NYC Legal Defense Fund and a Previous Life. And it's an honor to be here. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Just some brief opening
remarks:
Regularly Mayor's of the City of New York appoint commissions to review the City Charter which is the City's constitution. It happens several years.

And Mayor De Blasio decided this year that he would appoint a Charter Commission with a particular interest in mind. He wanted this Commission to look at the City Charter and to look in ways in which it can be changed to make our city more democratic. He spoke specifically about his concerns about getting big money out of politics, making elections fairer. Certainly eliminating the idea there's existing corruption as a result of our current campaign finance rules or certainly the appearance of corruption.

But at the same time a Charter Revision Commission looks at the entire Charter and that's what we've done during our many hearings, having received many, many comments and having meetings amongst ourselves, in which we did not take testimony, but in which we discussed what we have heard. All of this has been done publicly.

Everything we do is -- this is being transmitted live. There's also a videotape that
is then put online so that we have been very transparent in our process, hope to continue to be transparent.

Just last week our staff issued a preliminary report. That report directed us or urged us to focus on some issues that we should begin the second time around of hearing public discussion we should begin to narrow our focus to narrow on certain issues that have come up during the first half of our work. They are campaign finance reform, the method of elections in New York City, a concept of civic engagement in our city, community boards, community board reform, and finally redistricting of the City Council and how that takes place.

With that in mind, we will invite anyone in the audience who wishes to speak. We will limit speakers to three minutes each. I will be the timekeeper I think because usually I'm the bad guy and tells you you've gone over your time. And with that, let us begin.

We're going to have I think panels of two people at a time but given the borough president of Manhattan has made a trip to the Bronx I think we'll let her start and then after that we will
ask the testifiers to come up two at a time. MS. BREWER: Thank you very much. I never leave Manhattan but it's an honor to be in the Bronx. I wasn't able to go last night so I'm here and I made it and I appreciate the opportunity so thank you Mr. Chair and the members.

I think -- I know your many interesting topics that you're considering but I'm going to focus more on the community boards which is one of the ones you just mentioned. I do have board expertise. I served on my community board and as a council member for 12 years and now as borough president $I$ interact with the community boards a great deal. So I am in favor of increasing community board diversity and ensuring that boards represent the populations and interest in each district. As borough president, I think we've done a great deal to address these issues and I'll talk more about such in my testimony.

But I want to make it very, very clear upfront that I oppose term limits for community board members. Community board members have a really important role in the land-use process in this city from understanding what can and cannot be built in their districts to meeting with nonprofit and for profit developers to negotiating with developers and ultimately crafting advisory opinions on each and every project that comes before the city.

Community board members must understand land use and all it entails in New York City and this is not an easy task. Members must know about zoning tax incentives, housing, finance, landmarking and much more. It's knowledge that takes full-time students and planners years to accept and community board members must learn it all as part-time volunteers and learning the zoning techniques and H3D program zoning have the battle. Figuring out how these technical rules and program apply to particular developments is complicated and time consuming. I believe strongly that it's only when community board members have masters all of the above can they meet developers on that of an equal footing.

Developers are not term limited. Lobbyists are not term limited and neither are the expensive lobbyists as I've indicated, land use lawyers are not term limited. In fact their price is increased as their experience does.

Only when community board members have masters on the complexity of land use can they sufficiently analyze applications, negotiate effectively and positively plan for their communities. The level of expertise needed increases when phased with entire neighborhood rezonings as we have seen in east Harlem and Inwood and my borough and many others. In short it is more than just constitutional memory that we need on community boards.

Let me be clear, we need people with developed expertise and land-use matters. Expertise that takes years to learn. Without this I guarantee you community boards will remain at a severe disadvantage when considering land-use applications. Negotiating to make projects better for the neighborhood and crafting resolutions. Now, I know and I believe strongly not everyone should be on boards forever.

I am proud that during the five years I've been borough president we have had a 60 percent turnover in board members. I don't know if that's true in all the boroughs but that is true in Manhattan. This is due to natural turnover obviously among members but sometimes because we
scrutinize attendance records we observe members and we are in constant touch with the board. This has led us to decline to reappoint board members with bad attendance. I call them and told them. I call those who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities and I call those who have delayed poor judgment regarding conflict of interest and I took them off.

It's important to know that we have been able to make changes because of an extensive outreach and recruitment process. It gives us a big and better pool of applicants to choose from. Elements of our outreach and recruitment could be codified since community boards cannot truly represent communities if people do not know they exist. So we have online applications. We've done social media we've distributed flyers all across the districts and as a result we have community and civic and labor and all these different organizations having their own sessions and then getting their people to apply. These steps have enabled us to increase applications for membership from 500 in 2017 to 1,047 in 2017. So we replace board members who are not adequately doing their job with those who better
represent their communities. It's a lot of work and in this way we have made Manhattan boards younger, diverse and reflective of their community.

At the same time we've reappointed those who have long-term expertise in land use and zoning. Some of them who took the laboring or the large community rezonings to heart. I do endorse a uniform application, some basic procedural standards. For example, each borough president's office should have in-person contact with applicants.

But I will caution against taking too much flexibility away from the borough presidents. I have heard that in certain years some borough presidents have had trouble finding sufficient applicants. In Manhattan we are inundated with applications and have combined the approaches of group and individual interviews for applicants. In addition to ensure that borough presidents are always striving to increase the diversity and representation of their boards. I would require that, one, the applications give applicancy options of disclosing demographic information. And two, that borough presidents be required on
annual basis to accomplish a demographic make up of each board alongside the demographics of each district. We do that already.

Finally, a few quick notes on training. They are vital. Trainings are vital in order for the community boards to be effective. My offer provides technical assistance to boards on land use issues on parliamentary procedure on all the issues regarding budgeting and resolution, writing and conflict of interest and using data and planning. We constantly add new workshops as needs arise.

I must also commend and recommend expansion of two successful technical assistance programs. The fund for the City of New York has years running urban planning fellows program in which recent planning graduates are trained in place in community board offices for a year. They are invaluable resources for boards bringing a level of expertise that is not always readily available.

And whether through this or other means, boards should be supported in bringing an urban planner to assist with their land-use work and the issue. The challenge of course is that these
graduate students leave after a year and the fact the boards need a more full-time land-use planner.

My office working with Beta NYC has also developed a tech fellows program in conjunction with CUNY's public service court program and also the fund for the City of New York and other funders. We train students in the use of open data, the bill that $I$ passed in City Council, to help communities and work closely with community boards to analyze issues, produce maps and develop applications and enable boards to function more effectively.

Resources to help boards in obtaining and working with the data they need are critical. I think it's important to require Do It to work with the boards in responding to those data needs which the boards believe are necessary to properly fulling their responsibilities. As Beta NYC recommends and their great staff, this could be aided by requiring do it to respond to the boards district needs statements insofar as they relate to technology and data.

MR. PERALES: (Inaudible.)
MS. BREWER: I'm summing up.

The additional funding boards received this year is a start. They're expected to do a lot with a little. And they do provide constituents services and we all know they need additional staff.

But my message is very clear that in order to be in response effectively with the land use and the zoning community they must be full-time in terms of the staff and they must have the kind of long-term expertise that $I$ described earlier. We cannot have term limits for community boards. Thank you very much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Let me say that I'm so glad that you're here because when we have heard from so many people about community boards. The model they often give is Manhattan --

MS. BREWER: Thank you.
MR. PERALES: -- and what happens in your county and so I'm very pleased. I'm also impressed by the amount of turnover. Sixty percent is a significant number. But the truth is we're trying to figure out what to put in the Charter that will make all of the borough presidents manage their community boards a little bit more like Manhattan does.

Let me -- I rather than just compliment you I've got a question: This issue of online applications and requirements for applicants to be interviewed no matter who, do you think your fellow borough presidents would find that an infringement of their authority?

MS. BREWER: I don't think so. I mean, the issue is it is time consuming. We started out with one process. Everything is online. I believe that the other borough presidents are doing the online application. The work is interviewing 1,047 people. And the way we did it is we did it in groups so it's not an individual 1, 047 .

First, we did it by the topic and then we did it by the community board. You can figure that out what makes sense for your borough. But you do need to interview those who apply.

I think people who apply they fill out a very lengthy application, the borough of Manhattan. It takes time but it's not rocket science and I think it gives a more diverse opportunity for the community to feel that they're included. What could be of assistance from the administration or others is doing the
demographics. That takes time. All of this data to gather it takes time so that would be something that perhaps some help would be needed. And there may be ways in the participatory budgeting now there's a lot of outreach done. There could be some piggy backing on other kinds of outreach efforts. But I do think you end up with a better community representation.

MR. CARRION: Thank you, Borough President, for your testimony.

So what struck me is something you've said which I thought about in relation to term limits is that you've heard that in some boroughs unlike in Manhattan there's not enough applicants to be on community boards so what do you think could be done to encourage communities to -- or members of communities to apply to be on community boards.

MS. BREWER: Well, obviously we've had some success for instance the unions and the story keepers represented by hospitality alliance and other organizations have done their own training so then those folks apply. We obviously do all of the, you know, flyers and the social media. I do think you have to feel like I have a chance so that has to be part of the buzz.

Otherwise, if I do all of this application and this outreach then I have a chance of, you know, getting on the community board so it has to be a little bit of that kind of hope and then I think also what we do with those who don't get on because I always feel terribly because there aren't that many vacancies. You know, it's 25 each year.

We work with the council members we take their recommendations but what we do then is we meet with nonprofits. We have like a meet and greet and we have all of the nonprofits of Manhattan meet with the individuals who didn't get on.

And hopefully lots of nonprofits, as Sharon probably knows, needs board members and so we try to get some board members that way. You have to keep in touch with those who don't get on and maybe hope the next year they do get on.

So it's a lot of work but I do think when you do that kind of outreach then people are more engaged. Maybe they'll show up for the board, they'll get their friends to show up, their community organizations to show up. It's a process. And eventually you have to have
long-term commitment to that process.
I hope that answers your question but it's work and I think we have done -- it's not easy sometimes because you have members who have been out for a long time and the neighborhood has changed. That's the complaint that I get from other boroughs.

I teach at hunter I send my students to the community boards. That's how I really find out what's going on and you know sometimes they'll say I was the youngest one by 40 years or sometimes they welcome me open arms so.

The other thing is that community boards have to be friendly. They have to be, you know, they have to make sure the community is welcomed and the community has to -- that's also part of it but my students tell me a lot. Ms. So thank you so much for your contributions on this subject and it's obviously one about which you're quite expert.

One of the questions that the staff suggested that we seek input with is with respect to the kind of technical support that would best provide the community boards with the technical expertise they require for the land use issues
they describe and also how do we craft that in a Charter proposal that doesn't eliminate their discretion of borough precedents to a greater degree but at the same time provides some union format across boroughs? Be very curious to hear --

MS. BREWER: I'll try. So obviously I was chair of the Technology Committee in the City Council and I passed the Open Data Bill. And it's my experience, particularly the land use, because that is the real planning function of the community boards is that you have to know what is existing in your neighborhood in order to be able to say to a developer, you know, we need senior housing, we need affordable housing for this demographic, etcetera.

We need open space, we need cultural and so on and that comes with data. You know better than I, data driven. So in the past, to be honest with you, the community boards had pieces of it but nothing that they could rely on. So we're trying, I would say to answer your question, we're doing a small bid but helping the community boards it takes funding to be able to know and use the open data portal because right now it's a hit and miss.

When the developer -- so how you -- that in other words, it would be within the Charter I assume to talk about the fact that this open data portal should have relevance in a real way to the community boards. And the second thing I would say is that this issue of planning. You know, maybe we don't have a planner for every single board but they do need more staff to be able to counter this planning on slot.

In Manhattan we've been doing it for a while. The fact of the matter is we've had more ULURP's in Manhattan in my five years than all the other five boroughs combined. The Inwood community, which is facing a rezoning now, never had a ULURP of any magnitude in terms of rezoning. So all five boroughs are going to find out what it's like to deal with this zoning situation.

So in terms of the way in which it fits into the Charter, I don't know that $I$ can be specific but I can say use of data, planning experts and finding a way that the use of -- figuring out how to use your planning staff in a way that focuses both on the rezoning and the aftermath of the
rezonings because you're going to have does this work in East Harlem -- rezoning passed now there's a whole committee with the community board to figure out are all the aspects of the rezoning being implemented? Rezoning doesn't end when the next amendment or the rezoning passes. It's a very long process.

MR. PERALES: Does anybody else have any questions?

MS. BREWER: Hi, John.
MR. SIEGAL: Hi, how are you? Thank you for coming and --

MS. BREWER: Thank you.
MR. SIEGAL: -- you make a forceful argument about term limits but I'm interested in your view on term limits or terms or requiring rotation of leadership positions and particularly committee chairs on community boards. I get the expertise needs to be retained but why do the same people need to have the committee chair on the same issue for decades.

MS. BREWER: I totally agree with you on that. In fact, in the borough of Manhattan we have had the bylaws redone leaving a little bit of wiggle room in diversity but generally trying to do a boiler plate because they had different kinds of term limits or no term limits. I'm a believer. I mean I think it can be discussed in term limits for chairs and term limits for committees. That's a very different discussion than something like -- like Ethel, who's been for a long time on Board 7 and who could tell you what happened in 1992 because guess what? So can the lobbyists, so can the land use, and so can the developer. And so if that expertise is not there then that developer is going to be able to do a lot more damage to the community.

I just was -- learned that, you know, there was just a meeting the other day in Harlem with many, many developers. No community board members. Everybody talking about what's in the pipeline and no community input, nobody from the area having any discussion. That's the kind of issue that needs to be countered, to be honest with you, in terms of the community.

The community boards are now listened to and I think much thanks to the CAU and others much more than ever because they are where the people come to present. And so that called advisory opinion particularly on land use issues is
listened to very, very carefully. It is talked about, discussed and evaluated all through the process. So that is an important advisory opinion.

MR. SIEGAL: Thank you.
MS. BREWER: Thank you very much.
MR. PERALES: Thank you for coming all the way from Manhattan.

MS. BREWER: It's so far.
(Laughter.)
MS. BREWER: Thank you.
MR. PERALES: We now have our actual first panel: Nunzio Del Greco, and Mark -- I'm not sure I can pronounce the last name Gjonaj.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Council Member Gjonaj.
MR. DEL GRECO: Good evening. Is that okay?
MR. PERALES: Yes. Mr. Del Greco, I'd like to do the councilman first, if that's possible.

MR. GJONAJ: Good evening. Is that okay?
MR. PERALES: Yes.
MR. GJONAJ: Good evening. I want to thank all of my fellow Bronxites who came out tonight to personally get involved in this critical issues that will change and shape our city. You've done your borough proud. And to the borough president of Manhattan I thank her for visiting this great borough but remind her that I visit her borough almost daily.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: (Inaudible. )
MR. GJONAJ: I also want to thank all of the commissioner members, especially the chair, Mr. Perales, who for his generosity of giving time and his expertise to serve for this great city.

The issues that this Commission will consider and weigh on will determine the future of how more than 8.5 million people live and interact with the government. So thank you, again, for agreeing to take the time away from your work, community, and family and friends to make sure that we give New Yorkers a voice in helping determine the City's future.

My first point to question the Charter Revision itself which is circumventing the Council's authority where the referendum's should be on issues that can be legislated -- shouldn't be on issues that can be legislated. And the issues that you had brought up earlier can all be legislated in The City of New York. Secondly I take the position of opposing of any term limits when it comes to community boards. I thank the generosity of those men and woman who truly understand the needs of their community and seek to empower them in the roles that they currently have.

I do however support term limits on any mayoral chair or Commissioners that are appointed by the mayor to two-year terms and must be approved by the City Council. Commissioners and chairs can be reappointed to a second-year term -- second two-year term by the mayor but they must go through the council hearing process again to reassess their tenure and agency objectives for the future.

Secondly, I would like to propose a small business Commission to oversee the current laws and policies that govern small businesses in New York City as well as future proposed laws and policies. This Commission would be independent and oversee the work of the CBS.

Thirdly, I would like to see this Commission consider a two percent annual tax increase cap on real estate taxes. Cap the real estate tax levy. And we know that the taxes, the tax rate is approved by Albany but we certainly have the
ability to cap the levy.
This year in this budget that was recently approved we saw $\$ 1.5$ billion increase in real estate taxes. Year over year for the next four years we have projections of $\$ 1$ billion increases in real estate taxes for all New Yorkers. We have the ability to cap the increases. And lastly, but not least I'd like to see the budget process for negotiation be less dense and give more authority to the City Council and a greater role in setting the term in the agencies spending limits.

And with that I'm open to any questions.
MR. PERALES: If you'll allow me to -- we accept courtesy to elected officials. I'm going to have the Commission ask him questions in case he's got to leave, with your permission?

I just want to comment. I don't have a question but the reason the Charter Revision Commissions generally look at issues that could be legislated is because they're often not legislated by City Council. In other words, while you may be within your authority you may not be able to put the votes to get something passed. For years mayors have appointed the

Charter commissions who have passed legislation of that kind.

But something else that $I$ think it's important for you to understand. We don't pass anything. We put it before the voters so that it really is I think a very democratic process. It may be different for members of the council to pass a piece of the legislation but by referendum we can put it before the voters and I think you'll agree democracy often works well when you got a question directly to the voters.

MR. GJONAJ: Chair, if I may and I completely agree with you, except that in this particular borough, which is about 1.4 million people. If you look at the attendance of tonight it is anything but transparent when we have involvement with lack of sufficient notice.

And you brought up another interesting point that mayors have had Charter -- charters throughout the years to address issues that may not come up in the form of legislation in the City Council. I can assure you that this City Council is a very aggressive and eager council willing to take on the challenges. But when the mayor appoints the entire Commission and it only

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

looks at predetermined set of issues that is not democracy.

The issues that are -- the issues that were mentioned from term limits, to community boards, to redistricting, campaign finance rules and so and so forth is just a small set of issues that truly impact New Yorkers day in and day out. And this looks like more of an individual assessment of the needs of New York. And not on behalf of eight and a half million residents.

MR. PERALES: I think it would be in-appropriate for me to engage you in a disagreement but let me just say that the mayor did not ask us to look at redistricting, nor did he ask us to look at community boards. These are things that have come up because of the people who come and testify or send us comments. I can assure you that I don't believe I contemplated all of these issues that have come up --

MR. GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair.
MR. PERALES: I'd like to turn it over to other members of the Commission.

Annetta.
MS. SEECHARRAN: I have a question.
Thank you, Council Member, for your
testimony.
I wanted to ask you regarding your recommendation to not put forth limits on community boards. It is an issue that the borough president talked about extensively in the last testimony and we've heard throughout the various hearings. And it's become, as you know, it's become sort of leading issue. I'm really curious because we've heard so many compelling arguments for term limits but I'd like for you to elaborate a little bit more about what you see or recommendations that you have that would ensure diversity of community boards in the Bronx.

MR. GJONAJ: Well, certainly I think we all understand the importance of community boards and their generosity of time as volunteers. The expertise that's needed to properly accept the responsibility of determining of what's in the best interest of the community from zoning issues and other needs of a community take time. And when you establish yourself as an expert in the many needs or the area that community boards interact with we have a shift as those members become chairs of their committees and so on and so forth. That expertise takes quite an amount of time for an individual to learn and get to be able to appreciate the impacts that they may have on their community.

So the term limit concerns are not such an issue for me when it's the expertise that is needed. I look to empower community board members and give them more authority on what's in the best interest of the community that they represent. They are the stake holders. They live there, work there, raise families there. It shouldn't be predetermined by an elected official what's in their best interest or any agency or department. They are on the ground they know what's best for that community and they do it as volunteers.

MR. PERALES: Anyone else with questions?
(No response.)
MR. PERALES: Hearing none, I want to thank you for your testimony.

MR. GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair.
MR. DEL GRECO: Good evening, Charter Revision Commissioner Chairman Cesar Perales and Commissioners. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

My name is Nunzio Del Greco. I am president

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

and chief executive officer of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce. For nearly 35 years I have been a public servant helping small businesses and professionals to be more successful. Founded in 1894 the Bronx Chamber of Commerce is the voice for businesses in Bronx county. And I believe we're the oldest chamber in The City of New York. Membership in the Bronx Chamber of Congress includes businesses ranging from large corporations, cultural institutions, universities and colleges, hospitals and medical centers, nonprofits and mid-sized to small companies. As the concept of community boards was introduced more than 50 years ago added to the City Charter in 1963 and proven to be an important vehicle for civic engagement in The City of New York, a small business Commission would provide a vital voice for the business community. As the organization representing small businesses in the Bronx, I strongly believe that a small business Commission should be established with the revision of the New York City Charter.

Legislation is often introduced and city -and agency decisions made that have highly
damaging and controversial effects on businesses. These events usually happen with little to no consultation from the business community with more than 6,000 laws in the books that regulate the functioning permitting, taxing, certification, licensing, fining, contracting, et cetera of small businesses. More needs to be done to give this important economic engine a voice.

A small business Commission made of actual small business people is the only way to bring the level of understanding and clarity to the effect of laws on small businesses. Similar to the concept of a community board a small business Commission made up of businessmen and women appointed by each council member, the mayor, the comptroller and public advocate would give businesses a voice and assure that the -- I'm sorry, consistency of businesses are finally represented.

Amazing accomplishments can be achieved working in partnership with elected officials, city agencies and the Bronx Chamber of Commerce. That concludes.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

Do I see a hand down there?
MS. GREENBERGER: So I'm just curious if you could expound a little bit on what that's -- what the scope of the Commission would be. What would 40s be? What would you see its primary function?

MR. DEL GRECO: Yeah, I think the Commission should be consulted prior to imposing a legislation. They should be in the loop and consulted.

MS. GREENBERGER: So it's an advisory --
MR. DEL GRECO: Yes.
MS. GREENBERGER: -- Commission? Okay.
MR. PERALES: Have you submitted written testimony?

MR. DEL GRECO: Yes.
MR. PERALES: Thank you because it's an interesting idea and something I think we have to consider.

MR. PERALES: Let me thank both of you for coming here. I really do appreciate it for taking the time.

MR. GJONAJ: Thank you. John Bonizio, Ken Miles.

MR. BONIZIO: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission. My name is John

Bonizio. I have the distinct pleasure serving as the chairman of the Business Development Committee of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce and also as the founder and chairman of the Westchester Square Business Improvement District up here in the Bronx.

I have submitted to speak on two issues but because our President Del Greco did such a great job bringing forth the business Commission I'm going to skip over that and run to number two.

This issue is the coordination of business improvements and the mobile vending industry. And particularly as that applies to the user rights that are granted to bids by local laws and by city contract.

The mobile vending industry, which has recently received a great deal of present support from select members of the New York City Council, represents a unique set of circumstances requiring attention from a significant cross section of agencies throughout the city. DCA, DOH, DOT and the NYPD all have somewhat of a say in the rules and regulations that govern mobile vending in the city. Unfortunately what appears to be overregulation actually results in a lack
of understanding between agencies and results in little to no actual oversight.

Exacerbating the problem is the illegal transferring of city issued permits which has resulted in usurious grain market that preys upon immigrant vendors. An area supported by the city's 75 improvement districts, this failure to regulate is especially egregious.

More than 93,000 businesses in bin districts pay hefty assessment fees of more than \$150 million per year to enhance city services and support the imaging cleanliness of their districts. Mobile vendors makes no such investment and often commit flagrant violations of the laws and rules of oversight agency. Often they monopolize parking spaces beyond allowable limits. Store perishable able items in non-climate containers. Operate with fraudulent licensing, block sidewalks and walkways, fail to meet sanitary codes, promote litter and plant themselves for days at a time without moving their units for nightly cleaning as is required by law. This problem is about to become worse as legislation introduced in the council to impact the green market seeks to increase City-issued
permits by a thousand more units, thousands of more units.

Legislation is needed to allow bid organizations to have a say in the type and number of mobile vendors who set up shops on the streets in bid districts. As legal entities legislated by local law bids are under contract with the City and actually have user rights granted by the City.

Quote, to undertake or permit commercial activities or other private uses of the streets or other parts of the district in which the city has any real property interest. That's from article two of the City Council's contracts with the bids. Having already been Granted these rights laws should be enacted and actually protect the City from breaching its contracts with the 75 bids.

Charter revisions that would grant such powers to the quasi agency bids will protect the City's interest and enable and organized coordination of vendor usage and a large portion of the City's commercial space.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.
Mr. Miles, we'll turn to you and then we'll
come back with questions.
MR. MILES: Thank you to the members of the Commission.

My name is Ken Miles and I'm a member of Community Board 9 in Manhattan West Harlem. Today I want to focus on two areas: Civic engagement and community boards.

Civic engagement: Is civic engagement in infrastructure a need for the City of New York? I would argue it is. Since we are in BX the birth place of hip hop it felt right to quote the rapper and actor Will Smith who said recently, "At this point I think what makes a great MC is the same thing that makes a great father, makes a great husband, makes a great politician, makes a great human being and it is your commitment to your evolution, your personal growth for the purpose of assisting others.

The Commission was encouraged to understand civic engagement beyond the ballot box through examples that include voting, running for office, activism, volunteerism, advocacy, community meeting attendance, membership on community boards and other civic organizations, etcetera.

By the committee's own admission there is no
comprehensive framework for coordinating the City's efforts on civic engagement. How do we design one? How might we look at spaces like the center for Education Equity Columbia University who just had a reinvigorating civic education conversation a few months ago as models?

Community board: Our neighborhoods are changing. As a millennial serving on the community board, few people seem equipped to address how the definition of community changes as affordability becomes the key marker for where people live.

How would the need for community boards shift? I don't know the answer but reducing information, asymmetry, empowering community voices and levelling the playing field should all be strategic priorities. Having just started my second term I believe transparency in the on-boarding process should also be helpful as someone who has hosted events to introduce younger community members to what the board does. I can say consistent application deadlines across boroughs would be helpful. Younger members are important as is ensuring NYCHA residents have a seat at the table.

I'm not in favor of the term limit conversation. I do believe a bigger conversation is preserving institutional memory. Technology can help shift that burden. Thanks to Manhattan borough president Gale Brewer and Beta NYC already has tools to track board attendance, improve accountability to governance, also monitor 311 data but there's more in that area. The Charter provision mandating the recording and live streaming of meetings specifically excludes community boards from its scope. Why? If live streaming is cost prohibitive how about logging audio records from meetings on a uniformed website that's searchable across community boards.

Another challenge expressed by my community board colleague Walter South who has developers coming in burdening neighborhood infrastructure and not making contributions back to the community. I, too, support getting rid of as-of-right development, looking at city models -- looking at other city models who have followed similar paths could help.

Last week, 24 hours before it started, I learned of a conference on Harlem's Investment \&

Development Boom. Just -- it was what Manhattan --

MR. PERALES: You could finish up.
MR. MILES: Sorry. Last week 24 hours before it started I learned of a conference on Harlem's investment in development boom. I learned it was happening on a Thursday morning, had a price tag of $\$ 99$ just to walk through the door. Certainly not the most successful meeting for community members to attend. I would argue that's by design.

I was greeted by a room of 200 people of whom I encountered roughly 30 black and brown faces and of those 10 were food service staff. During the conference which opened with an all white panel that included a guy from Million Dollar Listing it became abundantly clear that these developers talked about Harlem as though nobody had lived there since the 19th century. It was modern day Columbus-ing where the actual history and context was stripped from the conversation.

What I'm -- the more glaring reality -- and I'll just finish this point -- was that each of these development projects were happening in
silos. I asked who help set the master vision for what Harlem is going to become. Who has a master vision for Harlem? An honest answer from the bid representative was there was no unified voice bringing Harlem in those interests together.

The city lacks cohesive long-term planning, something indicated by the lack of transparency by the ULURP process and how it places out across community boards.

And I'll end on this note: What might land-use infrastructure development and environmental quality conversations look like under the umbrella of a long-term sustainability and equity?

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you. I've had a couple of Commission members arrive late after we had made our introductions. Can I ask them to introduce themselves? I've got two on my left.

MR. BRAGG: Good evening, I'm Kyle Bragg. I'm secretary treasurer of the 160,000 member service employees Union 32 BJ.

MR. MIROCZNIK: Good evening. My name is Mendy Mirocznik. I am the president of Cojo

Staten Island.
MS. WEISER: Hi. I'm Wendy Weiser I direct the democracy program at the Brennan Center For Justice and NYU's School of Law.

MR. PERALES: With that which of my Commission members has a question?

Well, I have a comment while somebody is figuring out if they have a question. I'm glad the councilmen is still here. You've indicated you would like legislation passed. My instinct frankly is that you're looking for what ought to be before the City Council and not necessarily imbedded in the City's constitution in the City Charter so that I don't know how else to comment except that you made a very persuasive argument.

I think there may be a need for legislation in this area. I'm certainly not an expert but certainly I'm glad the counsel man is here.

MR. GJONAJ: May I comment?
MR. PERALES: Yes.
MR. GJONAJ: Thank you. As you brought up before, okay, part of the reason why the Commission exists is because there are often issues that are not legislated, okay. And you know, New York has -- the fabric and strength of

New York City has been its immigrant business owners for over a century, more than that, okay. So it's not something where businesses are actually being given a voice by legislation. In large part because businesses don't vote, people vote, okay. So there's really no interest in that. But giving a voice to businesses, similar to the business Commission that Mr. Del Greco brought up, is something that can be put into a Charter revision and businesses and the important businesses of New York City and its commercial engine should be recognized in the City Charter. MR. PERALES: Point well made. MS. GREENBERGER: I have a question for Mr. Miles. We've heard a lot about the need to ensure the community board members have the tools that they're ready to make informed decisions. You're a new-ish community board member.

MR. MILES: Yeah.
MS. GREENBERGER: If you could tell us very quickly what are two or three things that would have helped you be a more effective board member? What kind of other areas would you have wanted to have receive technical assistance education on or ongoing support for? Very broadly just the
categories.
MR. MILES: Yeah, I definitely think land use is key. I also think that, you know, I think that if there's a way to kind of capture the knowledge in terms of across areas just like a sample pact that each community board can kind of aboard I think that would just be useful to get some kind of historical context on decision making and how it's been done.

I know some of the challenges are that, you know, board notes can be missing or just you've got a lot of history. A lot of the websites are currently not up to par so it's like good look finding whatever you need to find but curating kind of information so that newer members can have a sense across all areas what some major milestones have been across different committees. That way you can kind of inform going forward where major priorities for some of the longer serving or you know some of the longest impacted community members may be.

MS. GREENBERGER: That's great that's very helpful. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Anyone else?
(No response. )

MR. PERALES: Hearing none.
Let me thank both of you for your testimony.
MR. MILES: Thank you.
MR. PERALES: Yvonne O'Neil and Dr. James Fairbanks.

MS. O'NEIL: Good evening.
MR. PERALES: Good evening.
MS. O'NEIL: I wish to thank my borough president Mr. Ruben Diaz, Jr. and the Commissioners of the Charter Revision Commission for soliciting the input of the citizens of New York City in this process. This is what democracy looks like.

My name is Yvonne O'Neil. I am on the executive committee of the united nations NGO Commission under status of women and an elected member of the Diocesan Council of the Episcopal Diocesan of New York. But this evening I am here as secretary of the steering committee of New York City for CEDAW. CEDAW is a diverse coalition of over 200 organizations whose main date is to ensure that a women's bill of rights is explicitly included in the New York City Charter revision. We are appreciative of all that New York City has done to enshrine the
principles of nondiscrimination in its laws.
CEDAW provides a framework to define gender discrimination and to highlight the city's lead in recognizing and protecting human rights. Therefore, a CEDAW framework should be integrated into the New York City Charter to cement New York City's commitment to gender non-discrimination. CEDAW under the convention of elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is an international human rights treaty that defines gender discrimination by international consensus. While CEDAW is a 1970s document that not -that only recognizes gender as a binary of woman and men it has been amended through general recommendations to further include gender nonconforming people and should be understood in the same way that New York City law recognizes the diversity of gender. We also want to recognize intersectionality that other forms of discrimination also impact upon gender description.

While women comprised a greater half of the New York City population biases either assume we know women or even make women invisible. Women's issues are separated from general issues and are
relegated to the fringes of discussion. Women are then overlooked for merely giving a cursory examination in how issues of general import affect them. For women to fully and equally participate in society we must be seen and be heard. All issues are women's issues just as all issues are men's issues. However, we're not used to seeing women's involvement in all issues. We'd like the New York City Charter to mandate that all city programs, all city funding and all city employment continuously perform an assessment of impact on women and gender. Because we're not used to asking the questions of how women are effected we offer a framework or a list of questions that we would like the Commission to consider for the Charter revision to frame the assessment. This is where an effective bright space methodology comes into our recommendations. CEDAW provides the tools to guide us through an analysis of how city proposals funding and employment practices may inadvertently discriminate by gender. We wish to maintain New York City's leadership as a premier city in the United States as an international city and as the home of the

United Nations and to highlight further the importance of imbedding human rights into our most basic law the New York City Charter.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Your time's up but are you summing up?

MS. O'NEIL: I just have one --
MR. PERALES: Of course. Proceed.
MS. O'NEIL: The New York City for CEDAW coalition advocates that gender discrimination holds no place in New York City and the New York City Charter should mandate using assessments based upon CEDAW to ensure that gender description intentionally or unintentionally does not occur in New York City. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.
MR. FAIRBANKS: Good evening. Jim
Fairbanks. I must thank the hard working staff that you have because I was just walking up the street in my summer attire and they charmed me so here $I$ am to testify. I hope to read your report later and perhaps submit written comments.

First civic engagement. I believe that all city-funded programs ought to have an advisory board. Schools, we have parent associations. But if you have a funded youth center, an ACS
center a welfare center, a college that receive city funding you must have mandated and community advisory council. This is foundational. You can just begin to imagine the hundreds of new community engagement through these advisory councils.

One example, shelters belonged to -- when I worked for an elected official she demanded that every new shelter have a community advisory board so I joined seven of them. And I used to go reach out for people who really oppose this homeless shelter in their community to try to get them involved. If they got involved they would know that shelters need help, they need support of the community and they need all kinds of services. I can think of a couple of people who just changed their attitude because they, monthly, went into the shelter and saw what was needed and they cared.

The other thing is that I believe that Charter Revision Commission proposals should be based on widespread movements. I have good ideas, you have good ideas but when we put things on the Charter we've got to make sure that they're broad based amongst the residents of the

City of New York. One example is the 15 low-income neighborhoods that the city is now rezoning listen to the community then you would put on the Charter Revision Commission, however unrealistic it may seem to some, that permanent affordable housing must be based on the area median income of that neighborhood.

There has never been such organizing in The City of New York in decades around those 15 neighborhoods that are being rezoned that turn into gentrification. So we must have proposal based on mass movements that the residents care about and not just some of the good ideas that I may have as an individual.

Thank you very much.
MR. PERALES: Thank you both.
Let me just again make a comment and something I said earlier. Our function as a Commission is to try to identify a handful of ideas, issues, that we will put before the voters in November so that $I$ would hope -- as a result of our work as a result of hearing the folks like yourselves we come up with some good issues to put in the City Charter and hopefully the people of the City of New York will adopt them but it's
up to the voters hopefull3y. It's not up to us.
Are there questions by any members of our Commission?
(No response.)
MR. PERALES: Let me just say something else. Since the chair has to hold the microphone I get to do a lot of talking. These are very good ideas that you've both have proposed I can only say that we did not hear them early in proceedings but we will try to see if we can still engage and discuss those ideas even though you -- we've already identified five issues that we're focusing on. These are two very, very good ideas. Thank you both very, very much.

MR. FAIRBANKS: Thank you.
MS. WEISER: I did have one question if that's okay for Ms. O'Neil: Are there examples of any other municipalities or local jurisdictions that have adopted this gender assessment tool that you're recommending that we could look at?

MS. O'NEIL: Yes, as a matter of fact there is a movement throughout the United States for this city for CEDAW but the first city to implement it was San Francisco. And I think

Ms. Godsil might actually know Krishanti Demurrage who is at Rutgers and she was the person who actually worked very hard on that issue in San Francisco and she's an advisor to us here in New York. Berkley California has adopted it. San Jose California Pittsburgh, actually Miami-Dade County has adopted these principals of CEDAW so there is -- and a number of other cities that are actually looking at these issue right now.

MS. WEISER: And they're conducting the assessments as well within their agency?

MS. O'NEIL: Yes, they are conducting assessments. And we have been at this over three years here in New York City and we've actually met with Julissa Ferreras -- I don't know what she's doing now -- but she was in charge of the budget for the city. And we've met with her and we've discuss what the costing would be because in order to do this it takes about -- you have to include in the budget about ten to $\$ 0.25$ for each women in the community. So there is a cost.

MS. WEISER: Thank you very much.
MS. O'NEIL: Thank you.
MR. PERALES: Thank you both very much.

We've got two Michaels for the next panel: Michael Brady and Michael Beltzer.

MR. BELTZER: Good evening. My name is Michael Beltzer and I'm a former City Council candidate and community board member who served as the co-chair of the 1907, a subcommittee on Community Board 9 here in the Bronx. And I don't know if it counts but I got an A in my politics and government New York City class at CUNY Baruch so I think that might make me an expert. I don't know.

So I'd like to start by thanking the Commission for all your work and putting together this preliminary report and as I do with most public hearings I also like to thank the City Charter for allowing the people to have input here today. So I really appreciate the focus that you all have put in and I think the five areas are a good start for the Commission to tactical.

In terms of campaign finance, I am fully in support of lifting the cap on matching funds to allow 100 percent of the spending limit. I think a lot of what I'll be reiterating was in my 530 testimony to this Commission.

In terms of municipal elections $I$ believe that we can go further and opening municipal elections to permit residents. You know, these people they come here, they're on their way to citizenship, they pay taxes. They deserve at least at the municipal to get to vote for their representation. No taxation without representation.

For civic engagement I definitely agree that you all should be looking to see how we can make participatory budgeting across the board. I think it should be mandatory in every community district. I don't know if it has to necessarily lineup with the council member. I don't know what you all can look into in getting that done $I$ think it can really go into a nice meshing of community engagement and community boards.

As a community board member $I$ realize that a lot of the engagement was very peace meal, very dependent on who would be on the board at the moment what the chair looked like. What kind of resources they were able to get out of their local council members, assembly members. And it didn't really seem that there was enough of a standardized way of reaching out to the
community. I mean right now, kicking myself for not putting on my Facebook a tangent alliance meeting that they're having, a riders alliance meeting, about buses.

But in terms of community boards, I'm in full support of term limits. We had borough president and a council member come up here and say, hey, well, we need to not keep term limits because we need to keep this institutional knowledge going or people aren't prepared. They have to get to speed. But those are the two bodies of people who are putting the members on to the board so they should be doing everything that they can.

And I think Manhattan borough has done a great job of bringing more resources and into getting the trainings, but there's 50 slots in most of the community -- in all of the community boards. They're not all full. So if we're -these people are here and they're not up to speed and they've been there term limits isn't going to do anything to stop or change that. They need -we need more resources and I think this Commission looking at how we can do civic engagement and getting more resources for the
community board is a way.
And I just want to reiterate I am for term limits for community boards.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.
MR. BRADY: Good evening and thank you to the Commission for hosting this amazing event. Thank you to hosting community college for also being a gracious host.

My name is Michael Brady. I'm the executive director of the Third Avenue Business Improvement District which oversees the area just to our east. The Bronx is the oldest business improving district seeing about 200,000 pedestrians daily. New York City's second most busiest intersection second to Times Square.

Additionally, we oversee the Southern Boulevard Business Improvement District and the Port Morris Mount Haven Merchant Association.

In full disclosure, I was also the master planner under the New York State Department of State Brownfield Opportunity Area Program for the South Bronx Waterfront under the current chair's leadership. So thank you for that opportunity. It really got me to cut my teeth in land use.

Additionally, $I$ serve as the co-chair of the

New York City Industrial Development Council.
While the focus of my comments tonight are on small business $I$ will be remised if I didn't comment on community boards and their lasting impact on our city. I'm sure my written remarks are more articulate than my notes so please bear with me.

In terms of community boards and what needs to happen I think we need to man a robust training programs. We also need to give community boards the tools, the funds and the staff to ensure that land-use decisions preliminary procedure, liquor authority rulings and overall New York City cultural competency trainings are introduced. To this end I would recommend as has been often the case in Charter Commissions, a fully funded and mandatory urban planner paid for by the City in every community board in The City of New York.

Additionally on term limits, to my belief that community board committee chairs and general leadership -- general leadership positions should be on term limits for consecutive service.

Lastly, the boards should reflect the communities that they serve and that information
should be public and open on their websites and technology. It should be equally and equitably applied to all consistently to all community boards throughout the City of New York.

And the third obvious business improvement district is the only one of the 75 business improvement districts in The City of New York to have equity in our mission statement. It's something very near and dear to our heart and something that I'm sure all the Commissioners here are very attuned to.

On to small business: Unlike many of my peers here today, I believe that there should be a small business Commission established in The City of New York akin to those in San Francisco. If you're looking for best practices, Ms. Weiser, it's a very good thing.

Additionally, I think that we should be applying the equity lens not just to small business but to general city practices. Several municipalities such as Dallas and Santa Fe have applied to such a lens like agency like the EDC, SBS, DOT and several others.

The small business Commission would provide oversight to city legislation regulations and
agencies in New York City most notably the city's agency on small business services. I think that this Commission should -- got two more points promise. Should investigate land-use regulations that are suggested in the New York City Council retail diversity report as it would have a long-term impact in something that should be adopted by this Commission into the Charter.

And then lastly, just on the note from Mr. Bonizio in terms of mobile vending and its precedent in terms of a Charter suggestion, mobile vending is at the very heart of land-use issues. So just as we addressed ULURP, just as we addressed public space in our Charter revisions we so, too, should address the use of sidewalks and who has jurisdiction and who has enforcement power over that. That is beyond the scope of the existing council and any council before it and really should be addressed in the City Commission because it involves city owned property. That's it.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Thank you. As usual I'll have the first question. This idea of city wide, what I would call community participation and budgeting, you suggest that it
would fit in comfortably with community boards.
Do you have a sense as to whether or not the community board you serve on would enthusiastically play a role in managing that process?

MR. BRADY: I know from my time on the community board there was a lot of interest in participatory budgeting. We had one council member who had signed on Councilman Member Salamanca and we definitely did see a bunch of Community Board 9 members and public and people who come to the meetings attend.

Why I feel like it would be a nice match is the community boards already put forward district needs statement and other priorities that they want this funding to eventually go to so why not already have that conversation inside that same district where you already have theoretically 50 people that are from all parts of the district represent all different walks of life age diversity, all of that already should be represented in the community board so if this Commission is able to make revisions to the Charter that I think you want to make it would have great overlap.

MR. PERALES: And do you think that the community board would effectively engage the rest of the community on these discussions?

MR. BRADY: Right now the process to get on the community board is -- with, you know, a lot of different things such as political influence and, you know, who knows who. But I think if we make some best practices and standardize the procedure across the city on how you get on to the community board and minimal level of qualifications, you know, if we're having a borough president and council members complain and bring up that people aren't well versed in issues as they should be then why are these people still being put on community boards? I think that's what we should stop and take a recess on.

MR. PERALES: Rachel.
MS. GODSIL: So I'm curious about the different suggestions with respect to whether or not there should be a mandatory requirement of an urban planner for every single community board or should there be a pool of urban planners available to community boards as needed. So I'd be curious to hear from either of you of what
your perspective is on why that would be preferable to the other, given the suggestion that community boards may differ in their need and whether or not there should be a resource allocation to community boards that would be uniformed but how the community board spends that could differ depending upon their needs?

MR. BRADY: Just from my previous experience I had the privilege of serving on Community Board 1 here in the Bronx and not every community board deals with the ULURP process, not every community board deals with a multi-million dollar development being built in their neighborhood but every community board can benefit from a community urban planner. People need parks, people need roadways, people need to understand traffic patterns. And I think given the opportunity to apply those resources elsewhere would be an egregious mistake. I think giving opportunities to divert funding to other resources would not be wise. No one needs a bigger office. No one needs a more swanky place to go. People do need resources and community boards have to be humble enough to understand where they don't have it.

And just from my experience here in Community Board 1 we have a very experienced but graying community board that is very much entrenched and they would not be amendable to a young urban planning coming in and calling the shots so they will not hire that person. So I would think it would have to be a mandatory, yes, you need an urban planner. Here it is.

But understanding urban planning is a broad stroke and understanding that ULURP's don't take place all over the place but roads do.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Speak up.
MR. BRADY: But roads do. And just general planning for communities is needed. And also it really empowers I think the community boards to have someone on their side, you know, during a lot of these meetings if they're picking from a pull of planners unit those planners are going to come from DCP but by doing that you don't have an unbiased planner by your side so having an unbiased planner that represents your community's interest I think is paramount.

MR. BELTZER: And my view on whether each board needs a dedicated planner or not I think that comes in terms of what the board is facing
upcoming. If there's a lot of ULURP applications or if there's a huge rezoning coming in they definitely have a dedicated planner.

But in the remarks I gave on May 30th I believe that each community board should be tasked in coming up with the 197(a) plan under Section $197(a)$ with it in every ten years so maybe this can overlap with term limits maybe their tenures that each board would have to take it up but it would be on -- you can stagger it. So maybe the urban planner maybe have two per borough and there's two plans going at any time and they're moving the plan around the planning dates of when the plan should be finished so that planner can stay on with the community board throughout that process and then move when you start the next process with another community board.

MR. PERALES: Yes.
MS. WEISER: (Inaudible. ) Two questions one is multiple people have testified in favor of the standardized process for getting on community boards but I don't think nobody has testified as to what that process ought to look like. So I'm wondering if you might give some thoughts on that

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

for both of you. And then second question is just on the -- I have just follow-up question to you about the pooled urban planners. Is there any modification that would still mandate urban planners and provide that resource but that would have it as a shared resource that you would find acceptable as well so...

MR. BRADY: Second question first; is that all right?

MS. WEISER: Yeah.
MR. BRADY: So in terms of having pooled resources I think that it's achievable but I think just by virtual of community boards maintaining their dependance over their decision making process and being an advisory capacity to borough presidents in the city at large that whatever pool that is there needs to be unbiased as such and probably rotating. You know, we don't want -- I love Carl but we don't want a Carl coming out of the Bronx and being the Grand Poobah of planners. So I think that really has to be thought through in terms of taking a look at pooled assets and how to take a look at that.

To the first question in terms of a standardization I think that it should happen.

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

But I think that the approach in which that standardization is offered to our city is something that really needs to be drilled out upon. A lot of folks in NYCHA housing don't have access to the web so we're also going to allow housing connect or HPD mobile vehicles do that in neighbors where people can then apply for their community boards in a mobile car. I think that training really has to be thought out on that before we make any sweeping decision in terms of how we're going to make this amazing process with an online portal and everyone will have access to it because the fact is not everyone has access to it. We're still dealing with a lot of racial and income in equity in our city.

MR. BRADY: In terms of qualifications I think it would be different depending on, like, if you're talking about hiring of district managers I think that's also something that definitely there should be more rigorous standards around similar to any other city position educational background, things like that.

In terms of board members, I think it would be something that we'd have to go much more
broadly on what these qualifications would look like but I think the Manhattan borough president has started in terms of doing the interviews in a meeting format that people can at least there's some competencies that have to be shown in terms that you can sit through a meeting. If the meetings follow Robert's Rules of Order maybe you have to pass some kind of test to prove that you at least understand the basic tenants of Robert's Rules of Order.

I know some borough presidents make you attend at least one committee meeting, one general meeting. So these kind of qualifications could be put in and I don't think that they're necessarily going to keep a lot of people out if there's a robust avenue for people to be trained in these kind of competencies for the -- like the borough president said before, follow-up with people who didn't make it the first year because I'm someone who's gone out and gotten 16 and 17-year olds on the community board and a lot of time it's following up, hey, this is the kind of things you should be looking to put into your application. These are the kind of things that if you're going to show up to a meeting that you
should be asking about because my experience on the community board was a lot of people they had this title they came and they volunteered their time but what were they doing in their time?

A lot of the times nobody read anything before voting on it or were not aware of which agency had to deal with that that there was already public hearings on these issues. It's not fully their fault. There's not a lot of resources that go into it. But I think some base level of qualifications to show that, you know, you're not just giving your time but you also have the capacity to do this position because it is -- it's one of the lowest level positions in the government but it is a position within the government and it should be as such.

MR. PERALES: I think somebody else had a question?

MS. SEECHARRAN: Yeah. I had a question. So Michael on the left. You made an important point early on in your testimony about municipal elections and I wanted to probe a little bit further. I think that so we sort of touched on it then we focused the bulking of our discussion on community boards and that is, of course, you

## 2018 - CHARTER REVISION - 7/24/2018

know an important issue that we're considering. We have also heard other testimonies on this issue of non-citizen voting. I wonder if you could just speak a little bit more about that and specifically if you -- are you recommending all residents documented and undocumented folks be considered as well as anything else you wanted to add-on the subject?

MR. BELTZER: I think the standard that was set when -- for school boards are similar qualifications to be able to vote so I think that was permit residents were able, green card holders and above. So I feel like that would be a good start to -- the legibility for school boards elections as they used to be as a start for that.

MR. BRADY: I think Michael is a hundred percent correct on using that as a model and I would even go one step forward on the training model in terms of economy tendencies. I think the Charter Commission has a very real opportunity here to mandate cultural competencies in the training of not only community boards or all city agencies. As we seek to broaden our pool of voters, as we seek to broaden our
community boards I think it's very important that our community boards understand each other and the communities that they serve and that's something that's not reflected currently in the city process.

MR. PERALES: If there are no other questions let me thank this panel. You've been very instructive. Thank you very much.

We've got one last panel: Maritta Dunn, looks like Somalis Lopez.

MS. DUNN: Good evening.
MR. PERALES: Good evening.
MS. DUNN: Can you hear me? Am I loud?
MR. PERALES: Yes, no, we hear you very
well.
MS. DUNN: I really hadn't planned to speak but I guess I will.

I am the former chair of Community Board 9 in Manhattan. I was appointed to the board in 1993. At a time when everyone was told community boards were little a city hall and what ever came out of the community board was absolutely important to what happened at City Hall down the line.

Over the years, more and more I hear
over-advisory. Well, I can advise you all I want. You don't have to listen. So I mean, we need to kind of take another look, for me personally being there I had the privilege of getting an extended vote of one year over the normal line of time so that I would be there for the final planning for the West Harlem Piers which as some people would know really gorgeous now with Harlem Piers and park at the port of 125th Street and the Hudson River.

I left and I became part of the people who negotiated the Columbia Benefit Agreement so that they could put the three new campuses that they have spread all over West Harlem at the moment. So I kind of have some idea of what is going on. I say that because I wanted to once again say how important it is to have some sort of memory on a board. People there who can know what happened before.

A year and a half ago I returned to the board and I'm currently the chair of Economic Development in the West Harlem Piers, just in case anybody forgot how hard it was to work with me in the past, and now I'm back. But this is one of the reasons why I say it is very, very
important to have some institutional memory if you're going to have a successful board.

The other thing is as I'm thinking when I got on the board previous members would adopt a brand new member. They would literally a general board come up as, oh, you're new? Let me explain this to you, let me tell you this so you didn't have to come in there absolutely not understanding what was happening.

And that's all I want today say and thank you for the time. Thank you very, very much.

MR. PERALES: Well, thank you very much.
MS. LOPEZ: I have a statement that I prepared. Hello, my name is Somalis Lopez. Thank you so much for making this opportunity for the community to comment on community board reform.

As a former member of Bronx Community Board 7 I'm advocating in full support of not only term limits but professionalizing the community board member appointment process to remove politics out of the equation. Empowered community boards with onsite urban planning expertise so that they can take proactive ownership of their community's long-term planning goals an other measures to ensure community boards are truly representative of the people's will.

Community boards need to be elevated to policy making bodies whose proposals are backed by selection so that their planning efforts are given real teeth. Community boards need to be independent bodies that can offer a system of real checks and balances especially in light of the controversial developments and rezonings proposed as of late that were at odds with the will of the community.

Right now elected officials reel too much power over community board members to such an extent that many members often vote against their conscious as to what's best for their communities because they fear the threat of political retaliation that may lead to their removal as board members and that's something that's very real.

It's very often the case that serious and dedicated community board members cannot take certain political stances or support candidates for office that they believe in when the views of those candidates are at odds with the political elite. This is not right and I'm here to
denounce this undue undemocratic and oppressive influence in our community boards. What we need to do is have prospective community board members organize in their local communities and make the case directly to the neighborhoods as to why they should be selected to serve.

To keep the process equitable and transparent we need to move away from having people with close ties to partisan political parties to take over these boards. We don't need yes people that serve the political class. We need activists on these boards that have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advance the needs of our communities first.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.
MS. LOPEZ: Mm-hm.
MR. PERALES: I'm looking around to see if MS. DUNN: I just wanted to say one other thing. I really learned so much between the meeting I went to yesterday and coming here today and even listening to you because the community boards that I have been affiliated with in West Harlem and I think it's the board but I can't think about it at the moment -- leaves me. They
don't seem to have this particular problem so I'm very glad to know -- I'm very happy to be aware that this problem exists. Fortunately, I don't have that problem.

MS. LOPEZ: (Inaudible. )
MS. DUNN: Yes, because if I didn't know it existed --

MS. LOPEZ: (Inaudible. )
MS. DUNN: -- I wouldn't have -- yes, I'm happy to know. I didn't know before so now I know to pay more attention to what is happening in other boards that isn't happening in mine. That's all I want to say.

MR. PERALES: Annetta.
MS. SEECHARRAN: Thank you both for your testimony.

Ms. Lopez, is it? I wonder if you have a specific recommendation for how folks would get on to the community board if they're not appointed?

MS. LOPEZ: Well, I think I said it in my statement -- I think I mentioned it in my statement basically maybe give community board -perspective community board members the resources they need to make the case to the committee
directly. Maybe it could be running --
MS. SEECHARRAN: But who would be the individuals that select them? Would it be in the form of the election.

MS. LOPEZ: It would be the form of a nonpartisan election.

MS. SEECHARRAN: Okay.
MS. LOPEZ: And they would be given the resources so that they can make the case directly in the neighborhoods that are included in that community board because very often community boards have or five or six neighborhoods. Maybe it could be community -- prospective community board member from one neighborhood saying, I'm really passionate about this area, I have expertise, I would like to make the case to the people that live in the community for me to be able to serve them in, you know, my professional capacity and I would also argue that people who have professional planning expertise while you are a zoning lawyer or urban planner or you're in real estate or you know whatever expertise you have to select those people to serve on the community board, too, because it can help demystify the zoning and the development process
and empower current community board members to understand what's going on.

Because in my case, you know, I'm very active. I know a lot of people are active on community boards many often community board members make decisions and vote on things that they don't fully understand. They don't fully understanding the zoning process, the development process even how city planning works. So it's really important to give incoming community board members the tools that they need to understand the city processes and the importance of public hearings and the importance of showing up because this room right now it should be filled with people and it's not. We need to re-envision our outreach efforts to make sure that rooms like these and hearings like these are packed with people so that we can organize and, you know, we can pack these rooms up with people from the community that are going to fight for the interest of the people and I find that not very often be the case and it should be.

MR. PERALES: Anyone else?
You know I find myself in this weird situation in which one I want to engage -- I
don't want to use the word argue but let me suggest this possibility. Let's assume I completely agree with you about the need to have the community select people in the community board and you seem to be suggesting that there be elections. The problem is that your concern is, to use your term, the political eyelets are the problem. You don't think they will control those elections as well?

MS. LOPEZ: Well, I'm just brain storming so this is a suggestion that I'm like --

MR. PERALES: (Inaudible. )
MS. LOPEZ: Maybe we can work after this hearing together maybe we can flush that out a little bit but I think it's important to -listen, I don't have anything against any elected official. I respect a lot of the elected officials of our city but sometimes I have philosophical disagreements in terms of community engagement and bringing people into the conversation and empowering them with the tools so that they can understand and fight for their community and show up and right now I don't think that that's necessarily happening in the way that it should be.

MR. PERALES: I agree with that. And I'm just playing a devil's advocate because -MS. LOPEZ: Appreciate that.

MR. PERALES: We've heard people suggest that community board members ought to be elected and then at the same time they're very concerned about the influence of people involved in local politics so it seems to me that might not be the solution and that we ought to look -- we're very concerned here, members of this Commission, as to how we might figure out the best way of getting people appointed to community boards but we too are struggling, to use your term, brain storming, and trying to figure out if there's something we would put into the City Charter that would improve the situation.

Does anyone else have a comment? (No response.)

MS. LOPEZ: Thank you for having us.
MR. PERALES: I will entertain a motion to adjourn?
(Inaudible.)
MR. PERALES: I hear a motion on my left.
UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Second.
MR. PERALES: A second on my right.

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All those in favor?
(Array of ayes.)
MR. PERALES: The motion is passed.
(Whereupon, at 8:39 P.M., the above matter concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK ) COUNTY OF BRONX )
: SS.:

I, CECILIA NAVARRO, a Notary Public for and within the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the above is a correct transcription of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that $I$ am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 25th day of July 2018.
Cecilia Nanasso

CECILIA NAVARRO

| \$ | - 9:2 | ive [2]-76:4 | agree $[6]-20: 22,26: 10$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| \$0.25 [1] - 51:21 |  | ivists [1] - 73:12 | agreeing $[1]-23: 14$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \$ 150[1]-34: 11 \\ & \$ 00 \end{aligned}$ | 6 | tivities [1] - 35:11 | Agreement [1] - 70:12 |
|  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 6,000 [1] - 31:4 } \\ & 60[1]-8: 21 \\ & 6: 00[1]-1: 6 \end{aligned}$ |  |  |
| 1 |  | 34:2, 39:20 <br> actually [9] - 33:25, 35:8, <br> 35:16, 42:4, 51:1, 51:3, 51:6 | Albany [1] - 24:25 <br> all $[62]-2: 13,2: 15,4: 23$, |
| 1[3]-25:5, 61:10, 62:2 |  |  |  |
| 1,047 [3] - 9:23, 14:12, | 7 |  | $\begin{aligned} & 9: 19,11: 8,13: 4,13: 23,15: 1, \\ & 15: 22,16: 1,16: 12,19: 13, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & 1.4[1]-26: 14 \\ & 1.5[1]-25: 3 \\ & 10[1]-39: 14 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \hline 7_{[2]}-21: 7,71: 19 \\ & 75[3]-34: 7,35: 18,57: 6 \end{aligned}$ | add [2] - 11:11, 68:8 <br> add-on [1] - 68:8 <br> added [1] - 30:14 <br> addition [1]-10:20 <br> additional [2]-13:1, 13:4 <br> additionally [4] - 55:16, | 15:22, 16:1, 16:12, 19:13, <br> 19:17, 20:4, 22:2, 22:7, <br> 22:22, 23:5, 23:23, 25:6, |
| 100 [1] - 52:23 | 8 |  | 27:19, 28:14, 33:22, 37:16 |
| $\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{1 0 4 5 1}[1]^{104: 4} \\ & \mathbf{1 2 [ 1 ] - 6 : 1 3} \\ & \mathbf{1 2 0}[1]-1: 4 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 8.5[1]-23: 12 \\ & 8: 39[1]-79: 4 \end{aligned}$ | 55:25, 56:20, 57:18 address [5] - 3:20, 6:19, | 46:6, 46:8, 46:10, 46:11, <br> 47:22, 48:15, 52:13, 52:18, 53:10, 53:15, 54:18, 54:19, |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 125th [1] - 70:10 } \\ & \text { 149TH }[1]-1: 4 \end{aligned}$ | 9 |  | 57:3, 57:10, 59:19, 59:20, 59:21, 62:11, 64:9, 68:5, 68:24, 70:1, 70:14, 71:10, |
| 15 [2]-49:1, 49:9 16 [1] - 66:20 <br> 160,000 [1] - 40:22 <br> 17-year [1]-66:21 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 9 } 94]-36: 5,52: 7,59: 11, \\ & 69: 18 \\ & 93,000[1]-34: 9 \end{aligned}$ | 58:14, 58:19 <br> adequately $[1]$ - 9:25 <br> adjourn [1] - 78:21 <br> administration [1] - 14:25 | $\begin{aligned} & 68: 24,70: 1,70: 14,71: 10, \\ & 74: 13,79: 1 \\ & \text { alliance }[3]-15: 20,54: 2, \end{aligned}$ |
| $1894[1]-30: 5$ | A | admission [1] - 36:25 <br> adopt [2] - 49:25, 71:4 | 54:3 <br> allocation [1]-61:5 <br> allow [4]-25:14, 35:3, |
| 1963 [1] - 30:15 <br> 197(a [2] - 63:6, 63:7 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { ability }[2]-25: 1,25: 7 \\ & \text { able }[14]-6: 4,9: 10,18: 13, \end{aligned}$ | adopt [2] - 49:25, 71:4 adopted $[4]$ - 50:19, 51:5, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 52:23, 65:5 } \\ & \text { allowable }[1]-34: 16 \end{aligned}$ |
| 1970s [1] - 45:12 | 18:24, 19:9, 21:11, 25:24, | 51:7, 58:8 | allowable [1] - 34:16 |
| 1992 [1]-21:8 | 29:2, 31 . $1.12,75 \cdot 18$ | adsorption [1] - 3: <br> advance $[1]$ - 73.13 | almost $[1]-23: 3$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 1993 [1] }-69: 20 \\ & \text { 19th }[1]-39: 19 \end{aligned}$ | aboard [1] - 43:7 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { advance }[1]-73: \\ & \text { advise }[1]-70: 1 \end{aligned}$ | alongside $[1]-11: 2$ already $[9]-11: 3,35: 15$, |
|  | about [33] - 4:12, 6:20, 7:8, | advisor [1] - 51:4 <br> advisory [10] - 7:4, 21:24, | 38:6, 50:12, 59:14, 59:17, <br> 59:18,59:21, 67:8 |
| 2 | 20:15, 21:16, 22:2, 26:14, | 22:3, 32:10, 47:23, 48:3, <br> 48:5, 48:9, 64:15, 70:1 |  |
| 200[2]-39:12, 44:21 | 28:5, 28:11, 34:23, 38:12, |  | 59:18, 59:21, 67:8 also [25] - 4:25, 11:13, 12:4, |
| 200,000 [1] - 55:13 | 39:18, 42:15, 49:13, 51:20, | 48:5, 48:9, $64: 15,70,1$ advocacy $[1]$ - $36: 22$ | $12: 6,13: 19,16: 5,17: 16$ <br> 18:1, 23:5, 33:4, 37:19, 38:7, |
| $2017{ }_{[2]}-9: 23$ $2018[4]-1: 1,1: 6,2: 2$, | 51:21, 54:4, 55:13, 60:19, 64:3, 65:18, 67:1, 67:21, | advocate [2] - 31:17, 78:2 advocates [1] - 47:9 | 18:1, 23:5, 33:4, 37:19, 38:7, <br> 43:3, 45:18, 45:20, 52:15, |
| $\begin{aligned} & 2018[4]-1: 1,1: 6,2: 2 \\ & 80: 15 \end{aligned}$ | 68:4, 73:25, 75:15, 77:3, | advocates [1] - 47:9 advocating [1] - 71:19 | 55:7, 55:19, 56:10, 62:14, |
| $24[3]$ - 1:6, 38:24, 39:4 | 78:7 | Affairs [1] - 2:18 <br> affect [1] - 46:4 <br> affiliated [1] - 73:23 <br> affordability $[1]$ - 37:11 <br> affordable ${ }_{[2]}$ - 18:15, 49:6 | 65:5, 65:19, 67:12, 68:2, <br> 75:19 <br> always [3] - 10:21, 11:20, |
| 25 [1] - 16:7 | above [4]-7:19, 68:13, $79.488: 8$ |  |  |
| 25th $[1]$ - 80:15 | 79:4, 80:8 <br> absolutely $[2]$ - 69:22, 71:8 |  |  |
|  | undantly [1] - 39:17 |  | am [15]-2:10, 3:9, 6:15, <br> 8:20, 29:25, 40:25, 44:14, |
| 3 | accept [3] - 7:12, 25:15, 28:17 | affordable [2] - 18:15, 49:6 <br> after [4] - 5:25, 12:1, 40:18, <br> 77:13 |  |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 30[1] - 39:13 } \\ & \text { 30th [1] }-63: 4 \end{aligned}$ | acceptable [1] - 64:7 access [3] - 65:5, 65 | 77:13 aftermath [1] - 19:25 | 44:18, 47:20, 52:21, 55:2, 69:13, 69:18, 80:10, 80:12 |
| 311 [1] - $38: 8$ | access [ $[3]-65.5$, 65:13 | again [4]-23:14, 24:12, | amazing [3] - 31:21, 55:6, |
| $32[1]-40: 23$ | accomplish [1] - 11:1 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 49:17, 70:16 } \\ & \text { against }[5]-3: 10,10: 13, \end{aligned}$ | amended $[1]$ - 45:14 |
| 35 [1]-30:2 | accomplishments ${ }_{[1]}$ - | $\begin{gathered} 45: 9,72: 14,77: 16 \\ \text { age }[1]-59: 20 \end{gathered}$ | amended [1] - 45:14 amendment $[1]$ - 20:6 |
| 4 | $\text { ountability }[1]-38: 7$ |  | among [1] - 8:25 <br> amongst [2] - 4:21, 48:25 |
| $\begin{aligned} & 40[1]-17: 11 \\ & \mathbf{4 0 s}[1]-32: 5 \end{aligned}$ | achievable [1] - 64:12 <br> achieved [1] - 31:21 <br> across ${ }_{[10]}$ - $9: 18,18: 5$, | 33:21, 34:1, 58:1, 68:24 <br> agency [9]-24:13, 29:12, | amount [2]-13:20, 28:25 |
| 5 | 37:22, 38:14, 40:9, 43:5, 43:16, 43:17, 53:11, 60:9 | 30:25, 34:15, 35:20, 51:12, 57.22, 58.2, 67:7 | annetta ${ }^{[1]}$ - 27:23 <br> ANNETTA [1] - 1:18 <br> Annetta [2]-2:20, 74:14 |
| $50[3]-30: 14,54: 17,59: 18$ | ACS ${ }_{[1]}$ - 47:25 <br> action [1] - 80:11 | 57:22, 58:2, 67:7 <br> aggressive [1] - 26:23 <br> ago [3]-30:14, 37:6, 70:20 |  |



| 67:6, 70:19, 74:10 | 38:6, 38:17, 42:16, 42:18, | :12, | 57:14, 57:20, 57:24, 58:2 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| in [7]-2:6, 2:9, 2 | 42:22, 43:6, 43:11, | 66:2, 66:11, 66:18 | 33:2, 33 |
| 5:7, 5:8, 5:21, 48:4 | 48:9, 52:5, 53:11, 53:18 | boroughs [7] - 8:23, 15: | 5:10, 55:17 |
| ehalf $[1]-27: 9$ | 53:20, 54:13, 55:1, 56:1 | 17:7, 18:5, 19:14, 19:17, | sinesses [16] - 24:17 |
| being [11] - 4:24, 20:5, | 56:21, 59:3, 59:7, | 37 | :3, 30:6, 30:9, 30:20, 31:1, |
| 36:16, 42:4, 49:10, 55:8, | 60:2, 60:5, 60:10, 60:22, | 4 | 31:7, $31: 13$, $31 \cdot 18,31$ |
| 60:15, 61:13, 64:15, 64:20, $70: 4$ | 61:6, 61:10, 61:12, 61:14 <br> 62:3, 62:24, 62:25, 63:5, | 44:2, 49:16, 50:8, 50:1 <br> 51:25, 64:1, 74:15 | 34:9, 42:3, 42:5, 42:7, 42: |
| belief [1] - 56:20 | 63:9, 63:15 | Boulevard [1]-55:17 | [1] - 31 |
| believe [15] - $7: 17,8: 18$, | 66:21, 67:2, 69:19, 69: | 36:20 | 4:22, 5 |
| 12:18, 14:10, 27:18, 30:6, | 70:18, 70:21, 71:2, | Brady [2] - 52:2, 55 | 6:9, 6:21, 8:23, 8:25, |
| 30:20, 37:18, 38:2, 47:22, | 71:6, 71:16, 71:20 | RADY ${ }_{[9]}-55: 5,59$ | , $3.21,14$ |
| 48:20, 53:1, 57:13, 63:5, | 72:18, 72:21, 73:3, 73 | 60:4, 61:8 | 14:21, 15:7, 16:10, 16:20, |
| 72:23 | 74:19, 74:23, 74:24, 75:1 | 64:11, 65:16, 68:17 | 7:2, 17:17, 18:4, 18:21 |
| believer | 75:14, 75:24, 76:1, 76:5, | RAGG [2] - 1:15, 40 | 18:23, 19:9, 19:22, 20:15, |
| belonged [1] - 48:7 | 76:10, 77:5, 78:5 | Bragg [1] - 40:21 | 20:19, 20:25, 23:2, 24:11, |
| Beltzer [2] - 52: $2,52: 4$ | Board [10] - 3:1, 3:22, 2 | brain [2] - 77:10, 78:13 | 4:25, 25:8, 25:19, 26:3, |
| BELTZER [3] - 52:3, 62:23, | 36:5, 52:7, 59:11, 61:9, 62 | and [1] - 71 | 26:16, 26:24, 27:13, |
| 68:9 | 69:18, 71:18 | reaching [1] - 35:17 | 10, 33:7, 37:14, 38:8, |
| benefit [1] - 61:14 | boarding [1] - 37 | Brennan [1]-41:3 | 41:17, 42:7, 43:14, 44:18, |
| Benefit $[1]$ - 70:12 | boards [89] - 5:13, 6:10 | BREWER [12]-6:2, 12:25, | 25, |
| Berkley [1]-51:5 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 6:14, 6:17, 8:10, 8:14, 8:19, } \\ & \text { 9:14, 10:2, 10:22, 11:6, } 11: 7, \end{aligned}$ | 13:17, 14:7, 15:18, 18:7, | $50: 10,50: 24,51: 17,52: 8 \text {, }$ 54:5, 54:11, 54:17, 57:20, |
| 29:8, 29:12, 29:14, 57:16, | 11: | 22:9, 22:11 | :6, 6 |
| 60:8, 72:15, 78:11 | 12:12, 12:14, 12:17, 12:18, |  | 62:11, 62:13, 62:19, 63:4, |
| Beta [3]-12:4, 12:19, 38:5 | 12:22, 13:1, 13:11, 13:15, | brief [1] - 3:25 | 63:10, 63:23, 64:5, 64:12, |
| better [6]-2:8, 8:17, 9:12, | 13:24, 15:15, 15:17, 17:9, | bright[1] - 46:18 | 19, 65:1, 66:2, |
| 9:25, 15:8, 18:18 | 17:13, 17:24, 18:12, 18:20 | bring [2]-31:11, 60:13 | 10, 67:12, 67:15, 69:17, |
| between [2] - 34:1, 73:20 | 18:24, 19:6, 20:18, 21:21, 24:1, 27:4, 27:15, 28:4, | bringing [6] - 11:19, 11:23, | $70: 24,71: 20,73: 24,75.2$, $77: 1,77: 15,77: 18,78: 12$ |
| 58:17 | 28: |  | buzz [1] - 15:25 |
| bias [1] - 3:18 | 36:7 | broaden $[2]$ - $68: 24,68: 2$ | BX [1] - 36:10 |
| biases [1] - 45:23 | 38:15, 40:10, 53:17, 54: | broadly [2] - 42:25, 66:1 | by [41]-2:9, 12:21, 13:20, |
| bid [4] - 18:23, 35:3, 35:6, | 54:19, 55:3, 56:4, 56:8, | Bronx [18] - 2:5, 5:24, 6:4, | 14:15, 14:16, 15:20, 17:11, |
| 40:4 | 56:11, 56:24, 57:4, 59:1, | 28:13 | 24:8, 24:9, 24:11, 24:25, |
| bids [5] - 33:14, 35:7, | 61:5, 61:24, 62:15, 63:23 | 30:20, 31:23, 33:3, 33:6, | 5:22, 26:8, 29:11, 31:16, 33:14, 33:15, 34:6, 34:23, |
| 35:15, $35: 18,35: 20$ big, $21-4 \cdot 12,9.12$ | 64:13, 65:8, 67:25, 68:10 | 52:7, 55:12, 55:22, 61:10, | 35:1, 35:7, 35:9, |
| big [2] - 4:12, 9:12 <br> bigger [2] - 38:2, 61:22 | 68:15, 68:23, 69:1, 69:2, |  | 39:12, 40:8, |
| bill [2] - 12:9, 44:22 | 69:21, 71:22, 72:1, 72:3, | Bronxites [1]-22:22 | 5:11, 46:22, |
| Bill [1] - 18:9 | 72:6, 73:2, 73:10, 73:12, | brought [4]-23:23, 26:18, | 52:12, 56:18 |
| billion [2]-25:3, 25:5 | 78:12 | 41:21, 42:9 | \| 80:11 |
| bin [1] - 34:9 binary ${ }^{[1]}$ - 45:13 | bodies [3] - 54:12, 72:4, | brown [1] - 39:13 Brownfield [1] - 55: | bylaws [1] - 20:24 |
| birth [1] - 36:11 <br> bit $[8]-13: 25,16: 4,20: 24$, | boiler [1] - 21:1 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { budget }[4]-25: 2,25: 9, \\ & 51: 18,51: 21 \end{aligned}$ | C |
| 28:11, 32:3, 67:22, 68:4, | Bonizio [2] - 32:22, 33:1 | budgeting [5] -11:9, 15: | :9, 80 |
| 77:15 | BONIZIO [1] - 32:24 | 53:11, 58:25, 59:8 | alifornia [2] - 51:5, 51: |
| BJ [1] - 40:23 black $[1]-39: 13$ | books [1] - 31:4 | built $[2]-7: 1,61: 13$ | call [4] - 9:4, 9:5, 9:6, 58:20] |
| black [1] - 39.13 | Boom [1] - 39: | bulking [1] - 67:24 | called [1]-21:24 |
| Blasio $[1]-4: 6$ block $[1]$ - $34: 19$ | boom [1] - 39:6 | ch $[1]$ - 59:10 | calling [2]-2:1, 62:5 |
| block [1] - 34:19 blood [1] - 80:11 | ough [1] - 15:9 | [1] - 38:4 | came [3] - 22:22, 67:3, |
| blood [1] - 80:11 <br> board [92]-5:13, 6:11, | $: 4,2:$ | rdening $[1]$ - 38:18 | 69:21 |
| 6:12, 6:16, 6:23, 7:6, 7:12, |  | busiest [1] - 55:14 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { campalgn } \\ & 27: 5,52: 21 \end{aligned}$ |
| 7:18, 8:1, 8:22, 9:2, 9:3, |  | business [21]-24:16, | campuses [1] - 70:13 |
| 9:24, 11:2, 11:18, 14:16, | 14:17, 14:20, 18:3, 2 | 30:17, 30:18, 30:21, 31:3, | $\operatorname{can}[57]-4: 10,6: 25,7: 19,$ |
| 16:3, 16:16, 16:17, 16:22, | $22: 25,23: 1,23: 2,23: 3,$ | 31:10, 31:11, 31:14, 33:9, | 8:2, 14:16, 19:21, 19:22, |
| 19:9, 20:4, 21:15, 29:6, | 26:14, 28:5, 38:5, 44:8, 54:6, | 33:11, 42:1, 42:8, 55:12, | 21:3, 21:8, 21:9, 22:14, |

23:21, 23:22, 23:23, 24:10, 26:9, 26:22, 27:17, 31:21, 37:22, 38:4, 40:18, 42:9, 43:6, 43:11, 43:15, 43:18, 48:3, 48:16, 50:8, 50:10, 53:2, 53:10, 53:15, 53:16, 54:14, 54:24, 61:14, 63:8, 63:10, 63:15, 65:7, 66:4, 66:6, 69:13, 70:1, 70:18, 71:23, 72:7, 75:9, 75:24, 76:18, 76:19, 77:13, 77:14, 77:22
can't [1] - 73:24
candidate [1] - 52:5
candidates [2]-72:22, 72:24
cannot [4] - 6:25, 9:14,
13:11, 72:21
cap [5]-24:22, 24:23, 25:1,
25:7, 52:22
capacity [3] - 64:15, 67:13, 75:19
capture [1] - 43:4
car [1] - 65:8
card [1]-68:12
care [1] - 49:12
cared [1] - 48:19
carefully [1]-22:1
Carl [2]-64:19, 64:20
CARRION [3] - 1:16, 2:15, 15:9
Carrion [1] - 2:16
case [10]-25:16, 56:16,
70:23, 72:20, 73:5, 74:25,
75:9, 75:16, 76:3, 76:22
cases [1] - 3:10
categories [1]-43:1
CAU [1] - 21:22
caution [1] - 10:13
CBS [1] - 24:20
CECILIA [2] - 80:6, 80:18
CEDAW [11] - 44:20, 45:2,
45:5, 45:8, 45:12, 46:19,
47:8, 47:12, 50:24, 51:8
cement [1]-45:6
center [4]-37:4, 47:25, 48:1
Center [1]-41:3
centers [1]-30:11
century [2]-39:19, 42:2
CEO [1] - 3:3
certain [3]-5:9, 10:15, 72:22
certainly $[7]$ - 4:13, 4:16,
24:25, 28:14, 39:9, 41:17, 41:18
certification [1] - 31:6
certify ${ }_{[2]}$ - 80:7, 80:10
CESAR [1]-1:15
Cesar [3]-2:10, 3:6, 29:22

## cetera [1] - 31:7 <br> Chair [3]-1:15, 27:20,

 29:20chair $[14]-2: 10,3: 21,6: 6$, 18:8, 20:20, 23:6, 24:7, 26:12, 50:6, 52:6, 53:21, 55:25, 69:18, 70:21
chair's [1] - 55:22
Chairman [1]-29:22
chairman [3]-32:24, 33:2,
33:4
chairs [5]-20:18, 21:4,
24:10, 28:24, 56:21
challenge $[2]$ - 11:25, 38:16
challenges [2]-26:24,
43:10
chamber [1] - 30:7
Chamber [5] - 30:1, 30:5,
30:8, 31:23, $33: 3$
chance [2]-15:24, 16:2
change [2]-22:24, 54:22
changed $[3]-4: 10,17: 6$,
48:17
changes [2] - 9:10, 37:10
changing [1] - 37:8
charge [1] - 51:17
charmed [1] - 47:19
Charter [41]-2:3, 4:3, 4:7, 4:9, 4:17, 4:18, 13:23, 18:2, 19:3, 19:21, 23:18, 25:19, 26:1, 26:19, 29:21, 30:15, 30:23, 35:19, 38:9, 41:14, 42:10, 42:12, 44:10, 44:24, 45:6, 46:9, 46:16, 47:3, 47:11, 48:21, 48:24, 49:4, 49:24, 52:16, 56:16, 58:8, 58:11, 58:14, 59:24, 68:21, 78:15
CHARTER [1] - 1:1
charters [1] - 26:19
checks [1] - 72:8
Chhaya [1] - 2:21
chief $[1]$ - $30: 1$
choose [1] - 9:12
circumstances [1] - 33:19
circumventing $[1]-23: 19$
cities [1] - 51:8
citizen [1] - 68:3
citizens [1] - 44:11
citizenship [1] - 53:5
city [45] - 4:11, 5:13, 6:25, 7:5, 22:24, 23:9, 30:24, 31:23, 33:15, 33:21, 33:24, 34:4, 34:11, 35:12, 38:21, 38:22, 40:7, 46:10, 46:11, 46:20, 46:24, 46:25, 47:23, 48:2, 49:2, 50:24, 51:18, 56:5, 57:20, 57:25, 58:20, 58:24, 60:9, 64:16, 65:2, 65:15, 65:21, 68:24, 69:5,
$69: 21,76: 9,76: 12,77: 18$
$\quad$ City $[69]-2: 3,3: 8,3: 10$,
$4: 2,4: 3,4: 9,5: 12,5: 14,7: 7$, 11:15, 12:7, 12:9, 18:8, 23:24, 24:9, 24:18, 25:10, 25:22, 26:22, 30:7, 30:15, 30:17, 30:23, 33:18, 34:25, 35:8, 35:9, 35:14, 35:17, 36:9, 41:12, 41:13, 42:1, 42:11, 42:12, 44:12, 44:20, 44:23, 44:25, 45:6, 45:17, 45:23, 46:9, 47:3, 47:8, 47:10, 47:11, 47:14, 49:1, 49:9, 49:24, 49:25, 51:15, 52:4, 52:9, 52:15, 56:1, 56:14, 56:18, 56:19, 57:4, 57:7, 57:15, 58:1, 58:5, 58:20, 69:23, 78:15 city's [3] - 34:7, 45:3, 58:1
City's [9]-4:4, 23:17, $35: 21,35: 23,37: 2,41: 13$, 45:7, 46:23, 55:14
city-funded [1] - 47:23
City-issued [1] - 34:25
civic [13]-5:12, 9:19,
30:16, 36:6, 36:8, 36:20,
36:24, 37:2, 37:5, 47:22,
53:9, 54:24
civil ${ }_{[1]}-3: 9$
Civilian [1]-3:1
clarity [1]-31:12
class [2]-52:9, 73:11 cleaning [1] - 34:22 cleanliness [1] - 34:12
clear [4]-6:21, 8:11, 13:6, 39:17
climate [1] - 34:18
close [1] - 73:9
closely [1]-12:10
closer [1] - 2:7
co [3]-3:14, 52:6, 55:25
co-chair [2] - 52:6, 55:25
co-founder [1] - 3:14
coalition [2]-44:21, 47:9
codes [1] - 34:20
codified [1] - 9:14
cohesive [1] - 40:7
Cojo [1] - 40:25
colleague [1] - 38:17
COLLEGE [1] - 1:3
college [2] - 48:1, 55:7
colleges [1] - 30:11
Columbia [2] - 37:4, 70:12
Columbus [1] - 39:20
Columbus-ing [1] - 39:20
combined [2]-10:18,
19:14
come [15]-5:9, 6:1, 21:24, 26:21, 27:16, 27:17, 27:19, 36:1, 49:23, 53:4, 54:7,

59:12, 62:19, 71:6, 71:8
comes [5]-7:5, 18:18,
24:1, 46:18, 62:25
comfortably [1] - 59:1
coming [9]-20:12, 22:7,
32:20, 38:18, 62:5, 63:2, 63:6, 64:20, 73:21
commend [1]-11:13
comment [8]-25:18, 41:7,
41:14, 41:19, 49:17, 56:4,
71:16, 78:17
comments [4]-4:20,
27:17, 47:21, 56:2
Commerce [4]-30:2, 30:5,
31:23, 33:3
commercial [3] - 35:10,
35:23, 42:11
Commission [48] - 2:3,
2:11, 2:12, 4:7, 4:9, 4:18, 23:10, 24:16, 24:19, 24:21, 25:16, 26:25, 27:22, 30:17, 30:21, 31:10, 31:15, 32:4, 32:6, 32:12, 32:25, 33:9, 36:3, 36:19, 40:17, 41:6, 41:23, 42:8, 44:10, 44:16, 46:16, 48:21, 49:4, 49:19, 50:3, 52:13, 52:19, 52:25, 54:24, 55:6, 57:14, 57:24, 58:3, 58:8, 58:20, 59:23,
68:21, 78:10
COMMISSION [1] - 1:1
Commissioner [1] - 29:22
commissioner [2]-2:17, 23:6
Commissioners [5] - 24:7,
24:9, 29:23, 44:10, 57:10
COMMISSIONERS [1] 1:12
commissions [2] - 4:3,
26:1
Commissions [2]-25:20, 56:17
commit [1] - 34:14
commitment [4]-17:1,
36:16, 45:7, 73:13
Committee [2] - 18:8, 33:3
committee [8]-20:3,
20:17, 20:20, 44:15, 44:19,
56:21, 66:12, 74:25
committee's [1] - 36:25
committees [3]-21:5,
28:24, 43:17
communities [12]-8:4, 9:15, 10:1, 12:10, 15:16, 15:17, 56:25, 62:14, 69:3, 72:15, 73:4, 73:14
community [182] - 5:13,
6:10, 6:12, 6:14, 6:16, 6:22, 6:23, 7:6, 7:12, 7:18, 8:1, 8:9, 8:14, 9:14, 9:19, 10:4,


| ```deputy \([1]-3: 8\) describe [1] - 18:1 described [1] - 13:10 description [2] - 45:21, 47:13 deserve [1]-53:5 design [2]-37:3, 39:11 designee [1] - 2:25 determine [2]-23:11, 23:17 determining [1] - 28:18 develop [1] - 12:12 developed [2]-8:12, 12:5 developer [4]-18:14, 19:2, 21:10, 21:11 developers \([7]\) - 7:2, 7:3, 7:20, 7:21, 21:15, 38:17, 39:18 development [7] - 38:21, 39:6, 39:25, 40:12, 61:13, 75:25, 76:8 Development [5] - 2:21, 33:2, 39:1, 56:1, 70:22 developments [2]-7:16, 72:9 devil's [1] - 78:2 Diaz [1] - 44:9 did [11] - 4:21, 14:12, 14:13, 14:15, 14:16, 27:14, 33:8, 50:9, 50:16, 59:10 didn't [7] - 16:13, 53:24, 56:3, 66:19, 71:7, 74:6, 74:10 differ \([2]\) - 61:3, 61:7 different [9]-9:20, 21:1, 21:5, 26:7, 43:17, 59:20, 60:6, 60:20, 65:17 Diocesan [2] - 44:17, 44:18 direct [1]-41:2 directed [1] - 5:5 directly [4]-26:11, 73:5, 75:1, 75:9 director [3]-2:20, 3:15, 55:10 disadvantage \([1]-8: 15\) disagreement [1] - 27:13 disagreements [1] - 77:19 disclosing [1] - 10:24 disclosure [1] - 55:19 discretion [1] - 18:3 discriminate [1] - 46:22 discrimination [6] - 45:3, 45:7, 45:9, 45:11, 45:20, 47:9 discuss [2] - 50:11, 51:19 discussed [3] - 4:22, 21:3, 22:2 discussion [5] - 5:8, 21:5, 21:18, 46:1, 67:24 discussions [1] - 60:3``` | ```distinct [1] - 33:1 distributed [1] - 9:17 district [11] - 6:18, 11:3, 12:22, 35:12, 53:13, 55:13, 57:6, 59:14, 59:18, 59:19, 65:18 District [3] - 33:5, 55:11, 55:17 districts \([7]-7: 1,9: 18\), 34:7, 34:9, 34:13, 35:6, 57:7 diverse [3] - 10:3, 14:22, 44:20 diversity [7] - 6:16, 10:21, 20:25, 28:13, 45:18, 58:6, 59:21 divert [1] - 61:20 Do [1] - 12:16 do [46] - 4:24, 6:11, 9:15, 10:8, 11:3, 12:21, 13:2, 13:3, 14:4, 14:18, 15:7, 15:15, 15:22, 15:24, 16:1, 16:5, 16:10, 16:19, 16:20, 16:21, 18:1, 19:9, 20:19, 21:1, 21:12, 22:18, 24:6, 29:14, 32:1, 32:20, 37:2, 38:2, 50:7, 51:20, 52:14, 54:22, 54:24, 59:2, 60:1, 61:23, 62:11, 62:13, 65:6, 67:13, 73:3, 80:7 document [1] - 45:12 documented [1] - 68:6 does \([7]\) - 7:25, 13:25, 20:1, 20:8, 37:21, 47:13, 78:17 doesn't [2] - 18:2, 20:5 DOH [1] - 33:22 doing [10] - 9:25, 14:11, 14:25, 18:23, 19:11, 51:17, 54:13, 62:19, 66:3, 67:4 dollar [1] - 61:12 Dollar [1] - 39:17 don't [35] - 8:22, 14:7, 16:5, 16:18, 19:8, 19:21, 25:18, 26:4, 27:18, 37:14, 41:14, 42:5, 51:16, 52:7, 52:10, 53:13, 53:14, 61:25, 62:10, 62:19, 63:23, 64:19, 65:4, 66:14, 70:2, 73:10, 74:1, 74:3, 76:7, 77:1, 77:8, 77:16, 77:23 done \([14]-4: 19,4: 23,6: 19\), 9:17, 15:5, 15:16, 15:21, 17:3, 22:25, 31:8, 43:9, 44:25, 53:15, 54:15 door [1] - 39:9 DOT [2] - 33:22, 57:23 down [3] - 2:13, 32:1, 69:23 Dr [1] - 44:4 drilled [1] - 65:3 driven [1]-18:19 due [1] - 8:24``` | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Dunn }[1]-69: 9 \\ & \text { DUNN }[6]-69: 11,69: 13, \\ & 69: 16,73: 19,74: 6,74: 9 \\ & \text { during }[5]-4: 19,5: 9,8: 20, \\ & 39: 15,62: 16 \\ & \hline \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 46:21 } \\ & \text { empower }[3]-24: 4,29: 6 \text {, } \\ & 76: 1 \\ & \text { empowered }[1]-71: 22 \\ & \text { empowering }[2]-37: 15 \text {, } \\ & \text { 77:21 } \\ & \text { empowers }[1]-62: 15 \\ & \text { enable }[2]-12: 12,35: 21 \\ & \text { enabled }[1]-9: 22 \\ & \text { enacted }[1]-35: 16 \\ & \text { encountered }[1]-39: 13 \\ & \text { encourage }[1]-15: 16 \\ & \text { encouraged }[1]-36: 19 \\ & \text { end }[4]-15: 7,20: 5,40: 11, \\ & 56: 15 \\ & \text { endorse }[1]-10: 8 \\ & \text { enforcement }[1]-58: 17 \\ & \text { engage }[4]-27: 12,50: 11, \\ & 60: 2,76: 25 \\ & \text { engaged }[1]-16: 22 \\ & \text { engagement }[14]-5: 12, \\ & 30: 16,36: 7,36: 8,36: 20, \\ & 37: 2,47: 22,48: 5,53: 9, \\ & 53: 17,53: 19,54: 25,77: 20 \\ & \text { engine }[2]-31: 8,42: 12 \\ & \text { enhance }[1]-34: 11 \\ & \text { enough }[3]-15: 14,53: 24 \text {, } \\ & 61: 24 \\ & \text { enshrine }[1]-44: 25 \\ & \text { ensure }[7]-10: 20,28: 12 \text {, } \\ & 42: 16,44: 22,47: 12,56: 12 \text {, } \\ & 72: 1 \\ & \text { ensuring }[2]-6: 16,37: 24 \\ & \text { entails }[1]-7: 7 \\ & \text { entertain }[1]-78: 20 \\ & \text { enthusiastically }[1]-59: 4 \\ & \text { entire }[3]-4: 18,8: 6,26: 25 \\ & \text { entities }[1]-35: 6 \\ & \text { entrenched }[1]-62: 4 \\ & \text { environmental }[1]-40: 13 \\ & \text { envision }[1]-76: 15 \\ & \text { Episcopal }[1]-44: 17 \\ & \text { equal }[1]-7: 20 \\ & \text { equally }[2]-46: 4,57: 2 \\ & \text { equation }[1]-71: 22 \\ & \text { equipped }[1]-37: 9 \\ & \text { equitable }[1]-73: 7 \\ & \text { equitably }[1]-57: 2 \\ & \text { equity }[4]-40: 15,57: 8, \\ & 57: 19,65: 15 \\ & \text { Equity }[1]-37: 4 \\ & \text { especially }[3]-23: 6,34: 8 \text {, } \\ & 72: 8 \\ & \text { establish }[1]-28: 21 \\ & \text { established }[2]-30: 22, \\ & 57: 14 \\ & \text { estate }[5]-24: 23,25: 4, \\ & 25: 6,75: 22 \\ & \text { et }[1]-31: 6 \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |




| $\begin{aligned} & \text { historical }[1]-43: 8 \\ & \text { history }[2]-39: 21,43: 12 \\ & \text { hit }[1]-19: 1 \\ & \text { hm }[1]-73: 16 \\ & \text { hold }[1]-50: 6 \\ & \text { holders }[2]-29: 9,68: 13 \\ & \text { holds }[1]-47: 10 \\ & \text { home }[2]-2: 22,46: 25 \\ & \text { homeless }[1]-48: 12 \\ & \text { honest }[3]-18: 20,21: 19 \text {, } \\ & \text { 40:3 } \\ & \text { honor }[2]-3: 24,6: 3 \\ & \text { hop }[1]-36: 11 \\ & \text { hope }[6]-5: 2,16: 4,16: 19 \text {, } \\ & \text { 17:2, 47:20, 49:21 } \\ & \text { hopefull3y }[1]-50: 1 \\ & \text { hopefully }[2]-16: 15,49: 24 \\ & \text { hospitality }[1]-15: 20 \\ & \text { hospitals }[1]-30: 11 \\ & \text { host }[1]-55: 8 \\ & \text { hosted }[1]-37: 20 \\ & \text { hosting }[2]-55: 6,55: 7 \\ & \text { HosTos }[1]-1: 3 \\ & \text { hours }[2]-38: 24,39: 4 \\ & \text { house }[1]-3: 8 \\ & \text { housing }[6]-7: 9,18: 15 \text {, } \\ & \text { 49:6, } 65: 4,65: 6 \\ & \text { how }[30]-5: 15,7: 15,17: 9, \\ & 18: 1,19: 2,19: 23,20: 11, \\ & 23: 12,37: 2,37: 3,37: 10, \\ & 37: 13,38: 12,40: 9,41: 14, \\ & 43: 9,46: 3,46: 14,46: 20, \\ & 53: 10,54: 24,60: 9,61: 6, \\ & 64: 23,65: 11,70: 16,70: 23, \\ & 74: 18,76: 9,78: 11 \\ & \text { however }[3]-24: 6,46: 7, \\ & 49: 4 \\ & \text { HPD }[1]-65: 6 \\ & \text { Hudson }[1]-70: 10 \\ & \text { huge }[1]-63: 2 \\ & \text { human }[4]-36: 16,45: 4, \\ & 45: 10,47: 2 \\ & \text { humble }[1]-61: 24 \\ & \text { hundred }[1]-68: 17 \\ & \text { hundreds }[1]-48: 4 \\ & \text { hunter }[1]-17: 8 \\ & \text { husband }[1]-36: 15 \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | 14:1, 14:7, 14:9, 14:19, 14:22, 15:7, 15:12, 15:23, $15: 24,16: 1,16: 2,16: 4,16: 6$, 16:20, 17:2, 17:3, 17:6, 17:8, 17:9, 17:11, 18:7, 18:9, 18:19, 18:22, 19:3, 19:6, 19:21, 19:22, 20:18, 20:22, 21:3, 21:13, 21:22, 22:14, 22:21, 23:1, 23:2, 23:5, 23:24, 24:1, 24:6, 24:15, 24:21, 25:18, 26:3, 26:6, 26:9, 26:12, 26:22, 27:11, 27:17, 27:18, 27:24, 28:2, 28:14, 29:6, 29:18, 29:25, 30:2, 30:6, 30:20, 32:1, 32:6, 32:17, 32:20, 33:1, 33:7, 36:6, 36:10, 36:13, 37:14, 37:18, 37:22, 38:2, 38:20, 38:24, 39:5, 39:6, 39:10, 39:12, 39:13, 40:1, 40:18, 40:25, 41:2, 41:7, 41:14, 41:16, 41:19, 42:14, 43:2, 43:3, 43:7, 43:10, 44:8, 44:14, 44:18, 47:6, 47:17, 47:18, 47:20, 47:22, 48:7, 48:10, 48:16, 48:20, 48:22, 49:13, 49:18, 49:21, 50:7, 50:8, 50:16, 50:25, 51:16, 52:7, 52:8, 52:10, 52:14, 52:15, 52:17, 52:18, 52:21, 52:23, 53:1, 53:9, 53:11, 53:13, 53:14, 53:15, 53:18, 54:1, 54:15, 54:23, 55:2, 55:19, 55:25, 56:3, 56:9, 56:15, 57:13, 57:18, 58:2, 58:24, 59:13, 59:24, 60:7, 60:15, 61:9, 61:17, 61:19, 62:6, 62:15, 62:22, 62:24, 63:4, 63:23, 64:2, 64:12, 64:19, 64:21, 64:25, 65:1, 65:8, 65:16, 65:19, 65:24, 66:2, 66:11, 66:14, 67:10, 67:17, 67:19, 67:22, 67:23, 68:3, 68:9, 68:11, 68:13, 68:17, 68:18, 68:20, 69:1, 69:13, 69:16, 69:17, 69:18, 69:19, 69:25, 70:1, 70:2, 70:4, 70:6, 70:11, 70:15, 70:16, 70:20, 70:25, 71:3, 71:10, 71:13, 73:19, 73:20, 73:21, 73:23, 73:24, 74:3, 74:6, 74:9, 74:10, 74:13, 74:17, 74:21, 74:22, 75:15, 75:16, 75:19, 76:4, 76:21, 76:24, 76:25, 77:2, 77:15, 77:16, 77:17, 77:18, 77:23, 78:1, 78:20, 78:23, 80:1, 80:6, 80:10, 80:12, 80:14 I'd [6] - 22:17, 25:8, 27:21, 28:10, 52:12, 60:24 <br> I'll [6] - 6:20, 18:7, 39:24, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 40:11, 52:24, 58:23 } \\ & \text { I'm [55] - 2:1, 2:16, 2:20, } \\ & 2: 25,3: 2,3: 3,3: 13,3: 21, \\ & \text { 5:19, } 6: 4,6: 9,12: 25,13: 14, \\ & \text { 13:19, 20:15, 21:2, 22:13, } \\ & \text { 25:13, 25:15, 28:8, 31:18, } \\ & 32: 2,33: 9,36: 4,38: 1,39: 23, \\ & 40: 21,40: 22,41: 2,41: 8, \\ & 41: 17,41: 18,52: 4,54: 5, \\ & 55: 9,56: 5,57: 10,60: 19, \\ & 63: 24,66: 20,70: 21,70: 24, \\ & 71: 3,71: 19,72: 25,73: 17, \\ & 74: 1,74: 2,74: 9,75: 14,76: 3, \\ & 77: 10,77: 11,78: 1 \\ & \text { I've }[6]-3: 10,7: 23,8: 20, \\ & \text { 14:2, 40:16, 40:19, } \\ & \text { idea }[4]-4: 14,32: 17, \\ & 58: 23,70: 15 \\ & \text { ideas }[7]-48: 23,49: 13, \\ & 49: 20,50: 8,50: 11,50: 14 \\ & \text { identified }[1]-50: 12 \\ & \text { identify }[1]-49: 19 \\ & \text { if }[42]-8: 22,9: 15,16: 1, \\ & 21: 10,22: 18,25: 14,26: 12, \\ & \text { 26:15, 32:2, 38:11, 41:8, } \\ & 42: 20,43: 4,47: 25,48: 13, \\ & \text { 50:10, 50:16, 52:8, 53:13, } \\ & 54: 19,56: 3,57: 16,59: 22, \\ & 60: 7,60: 11,62: 17,63: 1, \\ & 63: 2,63: 25,65: 18,66: 6, \\ & 66: 15,66: 25,68: 3,68: 5, \\ & 69: 6,71: 1,73: 17,74: 6, \\ & 74: 17,74: 19,78: 14 \\ & \text { illegal }[1]-34: 3 \\ & \text { imagine }[1]-48: 4 \\ & \text { imaging }[1]-34: 12 \\ & \text { imbedded }[1]-41: 13 \\ & \text { imbedding }[1]-47: 2 \\ & \text { immigrant }[2]-34: 6,42: 1 \\ & \text { immer } \\ & \text { impact }[6]-27: 7,34: 24, \\ & 45: 20,46: 12,56: 5,58: 7 \\ & \text { impacted }[1]-43: 20 \\ & \text { impacts }[1]-29: 2 \\ & \text { implement }[1]-50: 25 \\ & \text { implemented }[1]-20: 5 \\ & \text { import }[1]-46: 3 \\ & \text { importance }[4]-28: 15, \\ & 47: 2,76: 12,76: 13 \\ & \text { important }[17]-6: 24,9: 9, \\ & 12: 16,22: 3,26: 4,30: 16, \\ & 31: 8,37: 24,42: 10,67: 20, \\ & 68: 1,69: 1,69: 23,70: 17, \\ & 71: 1,76: 10,77: 15 \\ & \text { imposing }[1]-32: 7 \\ & \text { impressed }[1]-13: 20 \\ & \text { improve }[2]-38: 7,78: 16 \\ & \text { Improvement }[3]-33: 5, \\ & 55: 10,55: 17 \\ & \text { improvement }[3]-34: 7, \\ & 57: 5,57: 7 \end{aligned}$ | improvements [1] - 33:12 <br> improving $[1]$ - 55:12 <br> in [271] - 2:5, 2:22, 3:18, <br> 4:8, 4:10, 4:21, 4:22, 5:2, <br> 5:11, 5:12, 5:16, 6:3, 6:15, 6:17, 6:20, 6:24, 7:1, 7:7, <br> 7:24, 8:6, 8:8, 8:22, 8:23, 8:24, 9:2, 9:23, 10:2, 10:6, 10:11, 10:15, 10:17, 10:20, 11:5, 11:16, 11:17, 11:23, 12:5, 12:8, 12:9, 12:14, 12:17, 13:6, 13:7, 13:9, 13:18, 13:23, 14:13, 15:4, 15:12, 15:13, 15:14, 16:18, 18:1, 18:8, 18:13, 18:19, 19:2, 19:5, 19:11, 19:13, 19:16, 19:20, 19:24, 20:2, 20:15, 20:23, 20:25, 21:3, 21:8, 21:14, 21:16, 21:20, 22:23, 23:16, 23:24, 24:4, 24:17, 25:2, 25:3, 25:6, 25:11, 25:16, 25:22, 26:13, 26:21, 27:7, 27:12, 28:5, 28:13, 28:18, 28:21, 29:7, 29:12, 30:4, 30:6, 30:7, 30:8, 30:15, 30:16, 30:20, 31:4, 31:22, 32:8, 33:6, 33:23, 33:24, 33:25, 34:1, 34:5, 34:9, 34:17, 34:24, 35:4, 35:6, 35:12, 36:5, 36:8, 36:10, 37:18, 38:1, 38:8, 38:18, 39:6, 39:25, 40:5, 41:13, 41:17, 42:4, 42:6, 42:12, 43:5, 44:12, 44:23, 45:1, 45:4, 45:16, 46:3, 46:5, 46:8, 46:24, 47:10, 47:14, 47:19, 48:12, 49:8, 49:9, 49:21, 49:24, 50:9, 51:4, 51:5, 51:15, 51:17, 51:20, 51:21, 51:22, 52:7, 52:8, 52:18, 52:21, 52:24, 53:1, 53:12, 53:15, 54:5, 54:17, 54:18, 55:19, 55:24, 56:8, 56:16, 56:18, 56:19, 57:7, 57:8, 57:14, 57:15, 58:1, 58:5, 58:7, 58:10, 58:11, 58:14, 58:19, 59:1, 59:4, 59:7, 59:22, 60:13, 61:3, 61:10, 61:13, 62:1, 62:5, 62:25, 63:2, 63:4, 63:6, 63:7, 63:21, 64:11, 64:16, 64:22, 64:24, 65:1, 65:4, 65:6, 65:8, 65:10, 65:15, 65:16, 65:24, 66:3, 66:5, 66:14, 66:17, 67:4, 67:14, 67:21, 68:20, 68:23, 69:4, 69:19, 70:22, 70:24, 71:8, 71:19, 72:8, 72:23, 73:2, 73:4, 73:23, 74:12, 74:21, 74:22, 75:3, 75:10, 75:17, 75:18, 75:21, 76:3, 76:24, 76:25, 77:4, |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |


| 77:19, 77:24, 78:7, 79:1, |
| :--- |
| 80:12 |
| IN $[1]-80: 14$ |
| in-appropriate $[1]-27: 12$ |
| in-person $[1]-10: 11$ |
| inadvertently $[1]-46: 22$ |
| inaudible $[7]-12: 24,23: 4$ |
| inal |

63:20, 74:5, 74:8, 77:12, 78:22
incentives [1] - 7:9
include [3] - 36:21, 45:15,
51:21
included [4]-14:24, 39:16,
44:23, 75:10
includes [1] - 30:9
income [3]-49:2, 49:7,
65:15
incoming [1] - 76:10
increase [5]-9:22, 10:21,
24:22, 25:3, 34:25
increased [1]-7:25
increases [3]-8:5, 25:6,
25:8
increasing $[1]$ - 6:15
independent [2]-24:19,
72:7
indicated [4]-3:5, 7:23,
40:8, 41:9
individual [5] - 10:19,
14:13, 27:8, 29:1, 49:14
individuals [2]-16:13, 75:3
Industrial [1] - 56:1
industry [2] - 33:12, 33:16
inequalities [1] - 3:19
influence [3] - 60:6, 73:2,
78:7
inform [1] - 43:18 information [4]-10:24,
37:15, 43:15, 56:25 informed [1] - 42:17 infrastructure $[3]$ - 36:9,
38:18, 40:12
infringement $[1]-14: 6$
ing [1] - 39:20
input $[4]$ - 17:22, 21:17,
44:11, 52:16
inside [1] - 59:17
insofar [1]-12:22
instance [1] - 15:19
instinct [1] - 41:10
Institute [1]-3:16
institutional [3] - 38:3,
54:9, 71:1
institutions [1] - 30:10
instructive [1] - 69:8
integrated $[1]$ - 45:5
intentionally [1] - 47:13 interact [3]-6:14, 23:13, 28:23
interest [13]-4:8, 6:17, 9:8, 11:10, 28:19, 29:8, 29:12, 35:13, 35:21, 42:6, 59:7, 62:22, 76:21
interested [2]-20:15, 80:12
interesting [3] - 6:8, 26:18, 32:17
interests [1] - 40:5
international [3] - 45:10,

## 45:11, 46:25

intersection [1] - 55:14
intersectionality [1] - 45:19
interview [1] - 14:18
interviewed [1] - 14:4
interviewing [1] - 14:12
interviews [2]-10:19, 66:3
into [15] - 19:20, 42:9, 45:6,
46:18, 47:2, 48:18, 49:11,
53:15, 53:16, 54:16, 58:8,
66:23, 67:10, 77:20, 78:15
introduce [3]-2:12, 37:20,
40:19
introduced [4]-30:14, 30:24, 34:24, 56:15
introductions [1] - 40:18
inundated [1] - 10:17
invaluable [1] - 11:19
investigate [1] - 58:4
Investment [1] - 38:25
investment [2]-34:14, 39:6
invisible [1] - 45:24
invite [1] - 5:16
involved [4]-22:23, 48:13, 78:7
involvement [2]-26:17, 46:8
involves [1] - 58:20
Inwood [2] - 8:7, 19:14
is [152]-2:4, 2:8, 2:10,
2:16, 2:19, 3:5, 3:12, 4:4,
$4: 24,5: 1,6: 10,7: 8,7: 16$, $7: 25,8: 8,8: 23,8: 24,11: 20$, 11:25, 13:2, 13:6, 13:16, $13: 21,13: 22,14: 8,14: 9$, 14:11, 14:13, 14:25, 15:11, $15: 13,16: 10,17: 13,17: 15$, 17:22, 18:11, 18:12, 19:7, 19:12, 19:15, 21:10, 21:11, 21:25, 22:1, 22:3, 22:16, 22:19, 23:19, 24:24, 25:21, 26:6, 26:14, 26:16, 26:23, 27:1, 27:6, 28:4, 29:5, 29:25, 30:5, 30:24, 31:11, 32:25, $33: 11,34: 3,34: 8,34: 22$, 34:23, 35:3, 36:4, 36:8, $36: 10,36: 13,36: 16,36: 25$, 37:24, 38:3, 38:12, 40:2, 40:24, 41:7, 41:9, 41:11,

41:18, 41:23, 42:9, 43:3, 44:12, 44:14, 44:20, 44:22, 44:23, 45:9, 45:12, 46:17, 48:3, 48:20, 49:1, 49:2, 49:19, 50:23, 51:2, 51:8, 51:22, 52:3, 55:1, 55:9, 55:12, 57:6, 58:12, 58:17, 59:13, 59:23, 60:5, 61:1, 62:3, 62:8, 62:9, 62:14, 62:22, 62:25, 63:21, 64:1, 64:3, 64:8, 64:17, 65:2, 65:13, 66:22, 67:14, 67:15, 67:25, 68:17, 70:15, 70:17, $70: 24,70: 25,71: 3,71: 14$, 72:25, 73:3, 74:11, 74:17, 77:6, 77:11, 79:3, 80:8
ish [1] - 42:18
Island [1] - 41:1
isn't [2] - 54:21, 74:12
issue [14]-11:25, 14:2,
14:8, 19:7, 20:21, 21:19,
28:4, 28:8, 29:5, 33:11, 51:4,
51:9, 68:1, 68:3
issued [3]-5:4, 34:4, 34:25
issues [37]-5:6, 5:9, 6:19, 11:8, 11:9, 12:11, 17:25, 21:25, 22:24, 23:10, 23:21, 23:22, 23:23, 25:20, 26:20, 27:1, 27:3, 27:6, 27:19, 28:19, 33:7, 41:24, 45:25, 46:3, 46:6, 46:7, 46:8, 49:20, 49:23, 50:12, 58:13, 60:14, 67:8
It [1] - 12:16
it $[106]-4: 4,4: 10,6: 5,6: 21$,
$7: 7,7: 12,8: 8,9: 11,12: 21$,
14:8, 14:12, 14:13, 14:15,
$14: 16,14: 21,14: 22,15: 2$,
$16: 3,17: 17,18: 21,18: 24$,
19:3, 19:11, 19:20, 21:3,
22:1, 24:1, 26:5, 26:6, 26:9, 26:16, 26:25, 27:11, 27:21, 28:4, 29:10, 29:14, 32:20, 36:10, 36:11, 36:16, 38:24, 39:1, 39:5, 39:7, 39:17, 39:20, 40:9, 45:14, 49:5, 50:25, 51:6, 51:20, 52:8, 53:12, 53:13, 53:16, 53:23, 55:24, 57:2, 58:6, 58:19, 58:20, 58:21, 58:25, 59:13, 59:24, 61:25, 62:7, 62:8, 62:14, 63:7, 63:10, 64:6, 64:25, 65:13, 65:14, 65:17, 65:24, 66:19, 67:6, 67:10, 67:13, 67:15, 67:16, 67:24, 70:17, 70:23, 70:25, 73:25, 74:6, 74:17, 74:21, 74:22, 75:1, 75:3, 75:5, 75:13, $75: 24,76: 14,76: 22,77: 25$, 78:8
it's [44]-2:22, 3:23, 6:3,
7:10, 7:18, 9:9, 10:1, 12:16,
14:13, 14:21, 16:7, 16:20,
$16: 24,17: 2,17: 3,17: 19$,
18:10, 19:1, 19:18, 20:7,
22:9, 26:3, 28:7, 28:8, 29:5,
32:10, 32:16, 42:3, 43:9,
43:13, 49:25, 50:1, 57:8,
57:17, 64:12, 66:22, 67:8,
67:14, 69:1, 72:20, 73:24,
76:9, 76:15, 77:15
items [1] - 34:17
its $[7]-32: 5,35: 17,38: 11$,
42:1, 42:11, 45:1, 58:10
itself [1] - 23:19
J J

James [1] - 44:4
jim [1] - 47:16
job [3] - 9:25, 33:9, 54:16
JOHN [1] - 1:18
John [4]-2:24, 20:10,
32:22, 32:25
joined [1] - 48:10
Jose [1] - 51:6
Jr [1] - 44:9
judgment [1] - 9:7
Julissa [1] - 51:16
July [2]-1:6, 80:15
jurisdiction [1] - 58:16
jurisdictions [1] - 50:19
just [46] - 3:25, 5:4, 6:11,
8:8, 14:1, 21:13, 21:14, 25:18, 27:6, 27:13, 32:2, 37:5, 37:17, 39:1, 39:8, 39:24, 42:25, 43:5, 43:7, 43:11, 46:6, 47:6, 47:18, 48:4, 48:17, 49:13, 49:17, 50:5, 55:2, 55:11, 57:19, 58:9, 58:13, 61:8, 62:1, 62:13, 64:2, 64:13, 67:12, 68:4, 70:22, 73:19, 77:10, 78:2
Justice [1] - 41:4

| K |
| :---: |
| keep $[5]-16: 18,54: 8,54: 9$, | 66:15, 73:7

keepers [1] - 15:20
Ken [2] - 32:22, 36:4
key [2] - 37:11, 43:3
kicking [1] - 54:1
kind $[20]-13: 9,16: 4$,
16:21, 17:23, 21:18, 26:2, 42:23, 43:4, 43:6, 43:8, 43:15, 43:18, 53:21, 66:8, 66:13, 66:17, 66:22, 66:24, 70:3, 70:15
kinds [3]-15:6, 21:2, 48:15


| , | membership [3] - 9:23 | modification [1] - 64: | 57:16, 74:17 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 49:14, 61:3, 72:17 | 30:8, 36:23 | [3] - 53:21, 70:14, | MS [57] - 2:19, 3:2, 3:17, |
| May [1] - 63:4 maybe [13]-16:19, 16:2 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { memory }[4]-8: 9,38: 3 \\ & 70: 17,71: 1 \end{aligned}$ | 73:25 <br> money [1] - 4:12 | $\begin{aligned} & 12: 25,13: 17,14: 7, \\ & 18,18: 7,20: 10,20: \end{aligned}$ |
| 19:8, 63:8, 63:11, 66:7 |  | money $11-4.12$ |  |
| 74:23, 75:1, 75:12, 77: |  | [1] - 34:1 | 27:24, 32:2, 32:10, 32 |
| 14 | Mendy [1] - 40:22 | monthly ${ }^{[1]}$ - 48:18 | 43 |
| Mayor [1] - 4:6 mayor [6] - 3:8 | MENDY $\left.{ }^{[1]}\right]$ 1:17 mentioned $[3]-6$ | months [1] - 37:6 | $\begin{aligned} & 44: 6,44: 8,47: 6,47: 8,5 \\ & 50: 22,51: 11,51: 13,51: \end{aligned}$ |
| 26:25, 27:13, 31:16 | - |  | 5:24, 60:19, 63:20, 64 |
| Mayor's [2] - 2:18, 4 | Merchant [1] - 55:18 | 14:22, 16:21, 19:9, 19:12, | 67:19, 69:11, 69:13, 69 |
| - 125 | merely ${ }_{\text {[1] }}$ - 46:2 | 21:23, 23:12, 25: | 71:13, 73:16, 73:19, 74:5, |
| mayors [2]-25:25, 26:19 | Shing [1] - 53:1 | 27:8, 28:11, 29:7, 30:4, | 74:6, 74:8, 74:9, 74:15, |
| MC [1] - 36:13 | ssage [1] - 13:6 | 30:14, 31:4, 31:7, 34:9, | 21, 75:2, 75:5, 75:7, |
| me [28]-8:11, 13:13, 14:1, | [2] - 51:16, 51:181 | 34:10, $35: 1,35: 2,38: 8$, | 77:10, 77:13, 78:3, 78:19 much [23]-6:2, 7:10, |
| 15:11, 17:12, 17:17, 25:14, 27:12, 27:13, 29:5, 32:19, | [11 | 39:23, 42:2, 42:22, 54:1 | much [23]-6:2, 7:10, $10: 13,13: 12,17: 18,21: 22$, |
| 44:2, 47:19, 49:17, 50:5, | y ${ }^{[1]}$ | 65:25, 68: | 22:6, 31:25, 49:15, 50:14, |
| 52:10, 55:24, 56:7, 69:7 | Miami-Dade [1] - 51 | 69:25, 74:11 | 51:23, 51:25, 55:4, 62:3 |
| 13, 70:3, 70:24, 71: | 52:2, | orning [1] - 3 | 5:25 |
| 71:7, 73:25, 75:17, 77:1, | 55:9, 67:20, 68:17 | Morris [1] - 55:18 | 71:15, 72:12, 73:15, 73: |
| 78:8 <br> meal [1] - 53:19 <br> mean [4]-14:7, 21:3, 54 | Michaels [1] - 52:1 microphone ${ }_{[1]}$ - 50 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { most }[6]-39: 9,47: 3,52: 1 \\ & 54: 18,55: 14,58: 1 \end{aligned}$ | multi-million [1]-61:12 <br> multiple [1] - 63:21 |
| 70:2 <br> means [1] - 11:22 <br> measures [1] - 71:25 <br> media [2]-9:17, 15:23 <br> median [1] - 49:7 <br> medical [1] - 30:11 <br> meet [5] - 7:20, 16:11, <br> 16:13, 34:20 <br> meeting [14]-2:2, 7:1, <br> 21:14, 36:23, 39:9, 54:3, <br> 54:4, 66:4, 66:6, 66:12, <br> 66:13, 66:25, 73:21 <br> meetings [7]-2:9, 4:20, <br> 38:10, 38:13, 59:12, 62:17, <br> 66:7 <br> member [16] - 6:13, 31:16, <br> 36:4, 40:22, 42:18, 42:22, <br> 44:17, 52:5, 53:14, 53:18, <br> 54:7, 59:9, 71:5, 71:18, <br> 71:21, 75:14 <br> Member [3]-22:15, 27:25, <br> 59:9 <br> members [55]-2:11, 6:7, 6:23, 7:6, 7:8, 7:12, 7:19, 8:1, 8:22, 8:25, 9:1, 9:4, 9:24, 15:16, 16:9, 16:16, 16:17, 17:4, 21:16, 23:6, 26:7, 27:22, 28:23, 29:7, 32:25, 33:18, 36:2, 37:21, 37:23, 39:10, 40:17, 41:6, 42:16, 43:15, 43:21, 50:2, 53:23, 54:12, 59:11, 60:12, 65:24, 71:4, 72:13, 72:14, 72:18, 72:21, 73:3, 74:24, 76:1, 76:6, 76:11, 78:5, 78:10 | mid [1] - 30.12- ${ }_{\text {mid }}$ | 79:3 $\text { Mount }[1]-55: 18$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { municipal }[4]-53: 1,53: 2, \\ & 53: 6,67: 21 \end{aligned}$ |
|  |  | 63:16, 73 | municipalities [2] - 50: |
|  |  | th [1] - 50:2 | 57:21 |
|  |  | vements [2] - 48:22 | must [13] - 7:6, 7:8, 7:12, |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | MR [101]-2:1, 2:8, 2:15, | 9:6, |
|  | 42:19, 43:2, 44:3 | 2:2 |  |
|  | [1]-43 | 13:18, 15:9, 20:8, 20:11 | \| 8:7, |
|  | [1]-37:8 | 22 | 17:17, 18:10, 19:1 |
|  |  | 5:14, 26:1 | 23:18, 29:25, 32:25, 36:4, |
|  |  | 20, 27:21, 28:14 |  |
|  | mind [2] - 4:8, 5: |  |  |
|  |  | 9, 32:32 | 54:2, 55:9, 55:24, 56:2, 56:5, |
|  |  | 24, 35:24, 36:2, 39:3 | 6, 56:20, 57:12, 59:6 |
|  | oczn | 39:4, 40:16, 40:21, 40:2 | 61:8, 62:1, 62:23, 67:1, |
|  | MIROCZNIK [2] - 1:17 | $\begin{aligned} & 5,41: 19,41: 20,41: 21 \\ & 13.42: 19.43: 2,43: 24 \end{aligned}$ | 76:3, 78:23, 78:25, 80:8, |
|  | $40: 2$ | 44:1, 44:3, 44:4, 44:7, 47:4 47:7, 47:15, 47:16, 49:16, | 80:14 <br> myself [2] - 54:1, 76:24 |
|  | $\begin{aligned} & 45: 1 \\ & 57: 8 \end{aligned}$ | 50:5, 50:15, 51:25, 52:3, <br> 55:4, 55:5, 58:22, 59:6, | N |
|  |  |  | $\mathrm{N}_{[1]}-1: 9$ |
|  | mm-hm [1] - 73:16 |  | $\text { name }[14]-2: 10,2: 16 \text {, }$ |
|  | 33.23,34.13, $3 \cdot 5 \cdot 588 \cdot 10$ | 69:6, 69:12, 69:14, 71:1 |  |
|  | $33: 23,34: 13,35: 5,58: 10$ $58: 12,65: 6,6: 8$ | 73:15, 73:17, 74:14, 76:23, |  |
|  | 58:12, 65:6, 65:8 model [3]-13:16, 68:18 | 77:12, 78:1, 78:4, 78:20, | narrow [2] - 5:8, |
|  |  |  | [1] - 44:15 |
|  | $8: 2$ | $3,42$ | [11-47 |
|  | 38:22 | 44:9, 58:10 | NAVARRO ${ }_{[2]}$ - 80.6, $80 \cdot 18$ |
|  | :20 |  | NAVARRO [2] - 80:6, 80:18 |


| ```near [1] - 57:9 nearly [1] - 30:2 necessarily [4] - 41:12, 53:13, 66:15, 77:24``` | $\begin{gathered} \text { nightly }[1]-34: 22 \\ \text { no }[20]-14: 4,21: 2,21: 15, \\ 21: 17,31: 2,34: 2,34: 13, \end{gathered}$ | NYCHA [2] - 37:24, 65:4 <br> NYPD [1] - 33:22 <br> NYU's [1] - 41:4 | 36:4, 36:9, 36:11, 36:18, 37:10, 38:1, 38:10, 38:20, 38:21, 38:25, 39:5, 39:8, |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| necessary ${ }_{[1]}-12: 18$ | $47: 10,50: 4,53: 7,61: 21$ | 0 | :14, 40:17, 40:22, 40:25 |
| $\begin{aligned} & 12: 15,13: 4,14: 18,18: 14, \\ & 18: 15,18: 17,19: 9,20: 20, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 80:12 } \\ & \text { No [1] - 29:1 } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { O'Neil [3] - 44:4, 44:14, } \\ & 50: 17 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 42:11, 42:23, 43:4, 43:5, } \\ & 43: 6,43: 8,43: 10, ~ 43: 12, \end{aligned}$ |
| 36:9, 37:13, 41:16, 42:15, | nobody [4]-21:17, 39:19, | O'NEIL [7] - 44:6, 44:8, 47:6, 47:8, 50:22, 51:13, | $43: 15,43: 18,43: 19,43: 20$ |
| 54:9, 54:22, 54:23, 56:9, | non [3] - 34:18, 45:7, 68:3 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 51:24 } \\ & \text { objectives }[1]-24: 13 \end{aligned}$ | 44:16, 44:17, 44:18, 44:19, |
| 56:10, 61:3, 61:15, 61:16, $61: 23,62: 8,70: 3,72: 3,72: 6$ | non-citizen [1] - 68:3 | observe [1] - 9:1 | 44:21, 44:22, 44:24, 45:1, $45 \cdot 8,45 \cdot 9,45 \cdot 13,45 \cdot 18$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 61:23, 62:8, 70:3, 72:3, 72:6, } \\ & 73: 2,73: 8,73: 10,73: 12, \end{aligned}$ | non-climate [1] - 34:18 | observe [1] - 9:1 <br> obtaining [1] - 12:14 | $\begin{aligned} & 45: 8,45: 9,45: 13,45: 18, \\ & 45: 19,45: 22,46: 1,46: 3, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{gathered} 74: 25,76: 11,76: 15,77: 3 \\ \text { needed }[8]-8: 5,15: 3, \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 45:7 } \\ & \text { nonconforming }[1]-45: 16 \end{aligned}$ | obvious [1] - 57:5 <br> obviously $[7]-2: 5,3: 19$, <br> 8:25, 15:18, 15:22, 17:19, | $\begin{aligned} & 46: 12,46: 13,46: 15,46: 20, \\ & 46: 2,47: 2,47: 7,48: 4, \\ & 48: 10,48: 15,48: 16,48: 25, \end{aligned}$ |
| 28:17, 29:6, 35:3, 48:19, $60: 24,62: 14$ | nondiscrimination [1] | 18:7 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 48:10, 48:15, 48:16, 48:25, } \\ & 49: 1,49: 7,49: 9,49: 13, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 60:24, 62:14 } \\ & \text { needs [20] - 11:12, 12:17, } \end{aligned}$ | 45:1 <br> none [2] - 29:18, 44:1 | occur [1] - 47:14 | $49: 19,49: 22,49: 25,50: 2,$ |
| 12:22, 16:16, 20:19, 21:19, | onpartisan [1] - 75:6 | odds [2] - 72:10, 72:24 OF [2] - 80:3, 80:4 | 50:7, 50:18, 50:22, 51:7, 51:8, 51:17, 52:6, 52:21, |
| $\begin{aligned} & 24: 3,27: 9,28: 20,28: 22, \\ & 31: 7,56: 8,59: 15,61: 7, \end{aligned}$ | nonprofit [1] - 7:2 | OF [2] - 80:3, 80:4 <br> of [409]-2:2, 2:4, 2:11, | $\begin{aligned} & 51: 8,51: 17,52: 6,52: 21, \\ & 52: 22,52: 23,52: 24,53: 1, \end{aligned}$ |
| 61:21, 61:22, 62:24, 64:17, | $16: 12,16: 15,30: 12$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 2:12, 2:17, 2:21, 3:3, 3:4, } \\ & 3: 6,3: 7,3: 8,3: 10,3: 11, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 53: 16,53: 19,53: 21,53: 22, \\ & 53: 24,53: 25,54: 5,54: 6, \end{aligned}$ |
| 65:3, 73:14 <br> negotiate [1] - 8:3 <br> negotiated [1] - 70:12 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { nor }[1]-27: 14 \\ & \text { normal }[1]-70: 6 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 3: 15,3: 16,3: 21,3: 22,4: 2, \\ & 4: 12,4: 15,4: 16,4: 23,5: 7, \end{aligned}$ | 54:12, 54:16, 54:18, 55:10, <br> 55:20, 55:25, 56:2, 56:8, |
| negotiating [2] - 7:3, 8:16 | 7:22, 7:24, 8:19, 9:15, 9:24, | $\begin{aligned} & 5: 10,5: 11,5: 12,5: 14,5: 22, \\ & 5: 24,6: 11,6: 15,7: 19,7: 20, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 56: 19,57: 4,57: 6,57: 7, \\ & 57: 12,57: 15,58: 10,58: 11, \end{aligned}$ |
| negotiation [1] - 25:9 <br> neighborhood [8]-8:6, | $\begin{aligned} & 11: 20,14: 13,14: 21,15: 14, \\ & 17: 3,21: 10,22: 13,25: 8, \end{aligned}$ | 8:2, 8:5, 9:8, 9:10, 9:12, | 58:12, 58:15, 58:18, 58:23, |
| 8:17, 17:5, 18:13, 38:18, | $25: 21,25: 24,26: 21,27:$ | 9:13, 10:1, 10:3, 10:7, 10:18, | 59:7, 59:10, 59:19, 59:20, |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 49:7, 61:13, 75:14 } \\ & \text { neighborhoods [6] - } 37: 7 \end{aligned}$ | 27:9, 27:14, 28:3, 29:4, 38:1, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 10:22, 10:24, 11:2, 11:10, } \\ & \text { 11:14, 11:15, 11:20, 11:25, } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 59: 21,60: 3,60: 6,60: 10, \\ & 60: 21,60: 23,60: 25,61: 9, \end{aligned}$ |
| 49:2, 49:10, 73:5, 75:10, | 41:24, 42:3, 43:13, 45:12, | $12: 7,12: 8,13: 9,13: 10$, $13: 20,13: 23,14: 2,14: 6$, | $\begin{aligned} & 62: 17,62: 18,62: 25,63: 1, \\ & 63: 14,63: 21,64: 1,64: 11, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 75:12 } \\ & \text { neighbors }[1]-65 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 46: 7,46: 13,47: 14,49: 13, \\ & 50: 1,50: 9,54: 2,54: 8,54: 1 \end{aligned}$ | 13:20, 13:23, 14:2, 14:6, <br> 14:20, 14:24, 15:1, 15:5, | 64:13, 64:20, 64:21, 64:22, |
| ther [1]-7:22 | 54:20, 57:19, 59:2, 59:16, | $\begin{aligned} & 15: 7,15: 16,15: 23,15: 25 \\ & 16: 1,16: 2,16: 4,16: 12 \end{aligned}$ | 64:24, 65:4, 65:10, 65:14, 65:16, 65:18, 65:24, 66:3, |
| never [3] - 6:2, 19:15, 49:8 <br> NEW [2] - 1:4, 80:3 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 60:21, 61:4, 61:10, 61:11, } \\ & 61: 21,62: 4,62: 6,62: 24, \end{aligned}$ | 16:15, 16:20, 16:21, 17:16, | 66:7, 66:8, 66:9, 66:10, |
| new [7] - 11:11, 42:18, | 65:13, 67:6, 67:9, 67:12, | 17:21, 17:23, 18:3, 18:8, | 66:13, 66:15, 66:17, 66:21, |
| 48:4, 48:9, 70:13, 71:5, 71:6 | 68:23, 69:4, 71:8, 71:19, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 18:11, 18:21, 19:7, 19:12, } \\ & \text { 19:16, 19:20, 19:22, 19:23, } \end{aligned}$ | 66:22, 66:24, 67:2, 67:5, 67:6, 67:9, 67:11, 67:14, |
| New[57] - 2:3, 3:4, 3:7, 3:9, | 72:25, 74:19, 76:15, 76:21, | $19: 25,20: 4,20: 16,20: 23$ | 67:23, 67:24, 67:25, 68:3, |
| $12: 7,23: 16,23: 24,24: 17,$ | notably [1] - 58: | 20:25, 21:2, 21:18, 21:20, | 68:20, 68:23, 68:25, 69:18, |
| 25:6, 27:7, 27:9, 30:7, 30:17, | Notary [1] - 80:6 | 22:22, 23:1, 23:5, 23:7, | 69:22, 70:3, 70:4, 70:5, 70:6, |
| 30:22, 33:18, 36:9, 41:25, | note [2] - 40:11, 58:9 | $\begin{aligned} & 23: 12,23: 24,23: 25,24: 2, \\ & 24: 3,24: 20,25: 5,26: 2,26: 7, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 70: 9,70: 11,70: 15,70: 17, \\ & 70: 21,70: 25,71: 18,71: 19, \end{aligned}$ |
| 42:1, 42:11, 44:11, 44:18, | notes [4]-11:4, 43:11, | 26:8, 26:15, 26:17, 26:21, | 71:22, 71:24, 72:2, 72:7, |
| 44:19, 44:23, 44:25, | 56 | 27:1, 27:6, 27:8, 27:9, 27:16, | 72:8, 72:10, 72:11, 72:16, |
| $47: 3,47: 8,47: 10,47: 14,$ | notice [1] - 26:17 | 27:19, 27:22, 28:8, 28:13, | 72:23, 73:14, 75:4, 75:5 |
| 49:1, 49:9, 49:25, 51:5 | November [1] - 49:21 | $\begin{aligned} & 28: 15,28: 16,28: 18,28: 19 \\ & 28: 20,28: 24,29: 1,29: 8 \end{aligned}$ | 76:4, 76:12, 76:13, 76:21, 77:17, 77:18, 77:19, 78:7, |
| $51: 15,52: 9,55: 14,55: 20,$ | now [19] - 6:13, 8:18, 15:5, | $\begin{aligned} & 28: 20,28: 24,29: 1,29: 8, \\ & 30: 1,30: 2,30: 5,30: 7,30: 8, \end{aligned}$ | 78:10, 78:11, 79:2, 80:7, |
| $56: 1,56: 14,56: 19,57: 4$, $57 \cdot 7,57 \cdot 15,58 \cdot 1,58: 5,80$ | 19:1, 19:15, 20:2, 21:21, | $30: 13,30: 17,30: 22,31: 7$ | $80: 8,80: 11,80: 12,80: 15$ |
| 57:7, 57:15, 58:1, 58:5, 80:7 new-ish [1] - 42:18 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 22:12, 49:2, 51:10, 51:17, } \\ & \text { 54:1, 60:4, 70:9, 70:24, } \end{aligned}$ | 31:10, 31:12, 31:13, 31:14, | off [1] - 9:8 |
| newer [1] - 43:15 | $72: 12,74: 10,76: 14,77: 23$ | $\begin{aligned} & 31: 15,31: 19,31: 23,32: 4, \\ & 32: 19,32: 25,33: 2,33: 3, \end{aligned}$ | offer [3] - 11:6, 46:14, 72:7 offered [1] - 65:2 |
| next [5] - 16:19, 20:6, 25:4, 52:1, 63:17 | number [5] - 3:10, 13:21, | 33:4, 33:11, 33:17, 33:18, | office [5] - 10:11, 12:4, |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { NGO [1] - 44:15 } \\ & \text { nice [3] - 2:22, 53:16, } 59: 13 \\ & \text { night }[1]-6: 4 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 33:10, 35:5, 51:8 } \\ & \text { Nunzio [2]-22:13, 29:25 } \\ & \text { NYC [5] - 1:1, 3:22, 12:4, } \\ & 12: 20,38: 5 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 33: 19,33: 21,33: 22,34: 1, \\ & 34: 4,34: 10,34: 12,34: 15, \\ & 35: 1,35: 5,35: 11,35: 12, \\ & 35: 14,35: 22,35: 23,36: 2, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} 36: 21,61: 22,72: 23 \\ \text { officer }[1]-30: 1 \\ \text { offices }[1]-11: 18 \end{gathered}$ |


| ```official [3]-29:11, 48:8, 77:17 officials [4] - 25:15, 31:22, 72:12, 77:18 often [13] - 13:16, 25:21, 26:10, 30:24, 34:14, 34:15, 41:23, 56:16, 72:14, 72:20, 75:11, 76:5, 76:22 oh [1]-71:6 okay [9]-22:16, 22:19, 32:12, 41:22, 41:24, 42:2, 42:6, 50:17, 75:7 oldest [2] - 30:7, 55:12 olds [1] - 66:21 on [138]-2:13, 3:11, 3:17, 5:6, 5:9, 6:10, 6:12, 7:4, 7:20, 8:1, 8:9, 8:19, 10:25, 11:4, 11:7, 11:8, 15:6, 15:15, \(15: 17,16: 3,16: 5,16: 14\), 16:18, 16:19, 17:10, 17:18, 18:18, 18:21, 19:10, 19:25, 20:16, 20:18, 20:20, 20:22, 21:7, 21:25, 23:11, 23:21, 23:22, 24:6, 24:22, 26:24, 27:9, 28:3, 28:24, 29:3, 29:7, 29:13, 31:1, 31:13, 32:3, 33:7, 35:5, 36:6, 36:23, 37:2, 37:8, 37:19, 38:13, 38:25, 39:5, 39:7, 40:11, 40:19, 42:24, 43:8, 44:14, 46:12, 48:22, 48:24, 49:4, 49:6, 49:12, 50:13, 51:3, 52:6, 52:22, 53:4, 53:20, 54:2, 54:12, 56:3, 56:4, 56:5, 56:20, 56:23, 57:1, 57:12, 58:2, 58:9, 59:3, 59:6, 59:9, 60:3, 60:4, 60:9, 60:15, 60:17, 61:1, 61:9, 62:16, 62:23, 63:4, 63:10, 63:15, 63:22, 63:25, 64:2, 65:9, 65:17, 66:1, 66:21, 67:1, 67:6, 67:8, 67:20, 67:21, 67:23, 67:25, 68:2, 68:8, 68:18, 68:19, 70:15, 70:17, 71:4, 71:16, 73:12, 74:19, 75:23, 76:2, 76:4, 76:6, 78:23, 78:25 on-boarding [1] - 37:19 once [1] - 70:16 one [26] - 6:10, 10:23, 14:9, 17:11, 17:19, 17:21, 37:3, 47:6, 48:7, 49:1, 50:16, 57:6, 59:8, 61:21, 61:22, 63:20, 66:12, 67:14, 68:19, 69:9, 70:5, 70:25, 73:19, 75:14, 76:25 ones [1] - 6:11 ongoing [1] - 42:25 online [6]-5:1, 9:16, 14:2, 14:9, 14:11, 65:12``` | ```only [9] - 7:18, 8:1, 26:25, 31:11, 45:13, 50:9, 57:6, 68:23, 71:19 onsite [1] - 71:23 Open [1] - 18:9 open \([7]-12: 8,17: 12\), 18:17, 18:25, 19:4, 25:13, 57:1 opened [1] - 39:15 opening [2]-3:25, 53:2 operate [1] - 34:18 opinion [2] - 21:25, 22:4 opinions [1] - 7:4 opportunities [1] - 61:20 opportunity \([7]\) - 6:6, 14:23, 29:23, 55:23, 61:18, 68:22, 71:15 Opportunity [1] - 55:21 oppose [2] - 6:22, 48:11 opposing [1] - 23:25 oppressive [1] - 73:1 options [1] - 10:24 or [46] - 4:16, 5:5, 10:7, 11:22, 14:25, 15:16, 17:11, 20:6, 20:16, 21:2, 24:7, 27:17, 28:11, 28:22, 29:12, 35:10, 35:11, 35:12, 42:21, 42:24, 43:11, 43:20, 45:24, 46:14, 47:13, 50:18, 54:10, 54:22, 59:2, 60:20, 60:22, 61:4, 62:24, 63:2, 65:6, 67:6, 68:23, 72:22, 75:12, 75:21, 75:22, 80:11 Order [2] - 66:7, 66:10 order [5]-2:2, 11:5, 13:6, 18:13, 51:20 organization [1] - 30:19 organizations [6] - 9:20, 15:21, 16:24, 35:4, 36:24, 44:21 organize [2] - 73:4, 76:18 organized [1] - 35:21 organizing \([1]\) - 49:8 other [34]-3:18, 11:22, 12:7, 14:10, 15:6, 15:21, 17:7, 17:13, 19:3, 19:14, 21:14, 25:22, 27:22, 28:20, 35:11, 35:12, 36:24, 38:22, 42:23, 45:19, 48:20, 50:18, 51:8, 59:15, 61:2, 61:20, 65:21, 68:2, 69:2, 69:6, 71:3, 71:25, 73:19, 74:12 others [6]-3:17, \(8: 8\), 14:25, 21:22, 36:18, 57:23 otherwise [1] - 16:1 ought [5] - 41:11, 47:23, 63:24, 78:5, 78:9 our [35] - 2:4, 4:11, 4:15, 4:19, 5:2, 5:4, 5:8, 5:10, 5:12, 9:13, 22:12, 22:24,``` | $\begin{aligned} & 33: 8,37: 7,40: 18,46: 18, \\ & 47: 2,49: 18,49: 22,50: 2, \\ & 55: 11,56: 5,57: 8,57: 9, \\ & 58: 14,65: 2,65: 15,67: 24, \\ & 68: 24,68: 25,69: 2,73: 2, \\ & 73: 14,76: 15,77: 18 \\ & \text { ourselves }[1]-4: 21 \\ & \text { out }[28]-4: 12,7: 15,13: 22, \\ & \text { 14:8, 14:17, 14:19, 17:5, } \\ & \text { 17:9, 19:18, 19:23, 20:4, } \\ & \text { 22:22, 27:7, 40:9, 41:8, } \\ & \text { 48:11, 53:22, 53:25, } 64: 20, \\ & 65: 3,65: 9,66: 15,66: 20, \\ & 69: 22,71: 21,77: 14,78: 11, \\ & 78: 14 \\ & \text { outcome }[1]-80: 12 \\ & \text { outreach }[7]-9: 11,9: 13, \\ & 15: 5,15: 7,16: 2,16: 21, \\ & 76: 16 \\ & \text { over }[16]-5: 20,25: 4, \\ & 27: 21,33: 10,42: 2,44: 21, \\ & 51: 14,58: 17,62: 11,64: 14, \\ & 69: 25,70: 1,70: 5,70: 14, \\ & 72: 13,73: 10 \\ & \text { over-advisory }[1]-70: 1 \\ & \text { overall }[1]-56: 14 \\ & \text { overlap }[2]-59: 25,63: 8 \\ & \text { overlooked }[1]-46: 2 \\ & \text { overregulation }[1]-33: 25 \\ & \text { oversee }[3]-24: 16,24: 20, \\ & 55: 16 \\ & \text { oversees }[1]-55: 11 \\ & \text { oversight }[3]-34: 2,34: 15, \\ & 57: 25 \\ & \text { own }[3]-9: 20,15: 21,36: 25 \\ & \text { owned }[1]-58: 20 \\ & \text { owners }[1]-42: 2 \\ & \text { ownership }[1]-71: 24 \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | ```participate [1] - 46:5 participation [1] - 58:25 participatory [3] - 15:4, 53:11, 59:8 particular [4]-4:8, 7:16, 26:14, 74:1 particularly [4] - 18:10, 20:17, 21:25, 33:13 parties [2] - 73:10, 80:11 partisan [1] - 73:9 partnership [1] - 31:22 parts [2]-35:12, 59:19 pass [3]-26:4, 26:8, 66:8 passed [7]-12:9, 18:9, 20:2, 25:25, 26:1, 41:10, 79:3 passes [1] - 20:6 passionate [1] - 75:15 past [2] - 18:19, 70:24 paths [1] - 38:23 patterns [1] - 61:17 pay [3] - 34:10, 53:5, 74:11 peace [1] - 53:19 pedestrians [1] - 55:13 peers [1]-57:13 people [60]-5:23, 8:11, 9:15, 9:21, 13:15, 14:12, 14:19, 16:21, 20:19, 21:23, 23:12, 26:15, 27:16, 31:11, 37:9, 37:12, 39:12, 42:5, 45:16, 48:11, 48:16, 49:24, 52:16, 53:4, 54:10, 54:12, 54:20, 59:11, 59:19, 60:13, 60:15, 61:15, 61:16, 61:23, 63:21, 65:7, 66:4, 66:15, 66:16, 66:19, 67:2, 70:8, 70:11, 70:18, 73:9, 73:11, 75:17, 75:19, 75:23, 76:4, 76:15, 76:18, 76:19, 76:21, 77:4, 77:20, 78:4, 78:7, 78:12 people's [1] - 72:2 per [2] - 34:11, 63:11 Perales [4]-2:10, 3:6, 23:7, 29:22 PERALES [59] - 1:15, 2:1, 2:8, 3:5, 3:25, 12:24, 13:13, 13:18, 20:8, 22:7, 22:12, 22:17, 22:20, 25:14, 27:11, 27:21, 29:16, 29:18, 31:25, 32:13, 32:16, 32:19, 35:24, 39:3, 40:16, 41:5, 41:20, 42:13, 43:24, 44:1, 44:4, 44:7, 47:4, 47:7, 47:15, 49:16, 50:5, 51:25, 55:4, 58:22, 60:1, 60:18, 63:19, 67:17, 69:6, 69:12, 69:14, 71:12, 73:15, 73:17, 74:14, 76:23, 77:12, 78:1, 78:4, 78:20, 78:23, 78:25, 79:3``` |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |


| percent [5] - 8:21, 13:21, | policies [2]-24:17, 24:19 | principals [1] - 51:7 | protecting [1] - 45:4 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 24:22, 52:23, 68:18 | policy [1] - 72:4 | principles [1] - 45:1 | oud [2]-8:20, 22:25 |
| Perception [1] - 3:15 | political [7] - 60:6, 72:16, | prior [1] - 32:7 | prove [1] - 66:8 |
| perform [1] - 46:11 | 72:22, 72:24, 73:9, 73:11, | priorities [3]-37:17, 43:19, | proven [1] - 30:15 |
| perhaps [2]-15:3, 47:21 | 77:7 | 59:15 | provide [5] - 13:3, 17:24, |
| perishable [1] - 34:17 | ian [1] - 36:15 | 35:1 | 30:18, 57:24, 64:5 |
| permanent [1] - 49:5 | politics [4]-4:13, 52:8, | privilege [2]-61:9, 70:4 | provides [4]-11:7, 18:4, |
| permission [1]-25:17 | 71:21, 78:8 | proactive [1] - 71:24 | $45: 2,46: 19$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { permit [3]-35:10, 53:3, } \\ & 68: 12 \end{aligned}$ | Poobah [1] - 64:21 <br> pool [4]-9:12, 60:23, | probably [2]-16:16, 64:18 <br> probe [1] - 67:22 | provision [1] - 38:9 <br> psychologists [1] - 3:16 |
| permits [2] - 34:4, 35:1 | $64: 17,68: 25$ | problem [7] - 34:3, 34:23, | Public [1] - 80:6 <br> PUBLIC ${ }_{[1]}$ - 1 :2 |
| person [3]-10:11, 51:3, | 64:23 | procedural [1] - 10:9 | public [10] - 5:7, 12:6, 30:3, |
| ```62:6 personal [1] - 36:17 personally [2] - 22:23, 70:4 perspective [2] - 61:1,``` | poor [1] - 9:7 | procedure [3] - 11:8, 56:13, | 31:17, 52:15, 57:1, 58:1 |
|  | population [1] - 45:23 <br> populations [1] - 6:17 <br> port [1]-70:9 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 60:9 } \\ & \text { procedures [1] - 3:11 } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { 59:11, } 67: 8,76: 12 \\ \text { publicly }[1]-4: 23 \end{gathered}$ $\text { pull }[1]-62: 18$ |
| 74:24 | Port [1] - 55:18 | proceedings [1] - 50:10 | purpose [1] - 36:18 |
| phased [1] - 8:5 <br> phenomena [1] - 3:18 | 65:1 | 9:11, 14:9, 16:25, 17:1, 20:7, | $26: 5,26: 9,28: 3,42: 9,48: 23$ |
|  | portion [1] - 35:22 | 22:3, 24:12, 25:9, 26:6, | 49:4, 49:20, 49:24, 52:18, |
| philosophical [1] - 77:19 picking [1]-62:17 | position [4]-23:25, 65:22, | 37:19, 40:9, 44:12, 59:5, | 59:14, 60:15, 66:14, 66:23, |
|  | 67:13, 67:15 | $60: 4,61: 11,63: 16,63: 17$ | $70: 13,78: 15$ |
| piece [1]-26:8 <br> pieces [1] - 18:20 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { positions [4] - 3:8, 20:17, } \\ & \text { 56:22, } 67: 14 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 63:22, 63:24, 64:15, 65:11, } \\ & \text { 69:5, 71:21, 73:7, 75:25, } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { putting [3] - 52:13, 54:2, } \\ & 54: 12 \end{aligned}$ |
| Piers [3] - 70:7, 70:9, 70:22 piggy ${ }^{[1]}$ - 15:6 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { positively [1] - 8:4 } \\ & \text { possibility [1] - 77:2 } \end{aligned}$ | 76:8, 76:9 processes [1] - 76:12 | $\mathbf{Q}$ |
| pipeline [1] - 21:17 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { power [2] - 58:17, 72:13 } \\ & \text { powers }[1]-35: 20 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { professional }{ }_{[2]}-75: 18 \text {, } \\ & 75: 20 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { qualifications }[6]-60: 11, \\ 65: 16,66: 1,66: 13,67: 11, \end{gathered}$ |
|  | practices [4]-46:21, 57:16, | professionalizing [1] - |  |
| $\begin{aligned} & 36: 11,47: 10,61: 22,62: 11 \\ & \text { places }[1]-40: 9 \\ & \text { plan }[4]-8: 4,63: 6,63: 13, \end{aligned}$ | $57: 20,60: 8$ $\text { practicing }[1]-2: 25$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 71:20 } \\ & \text { professionals [1] - 30:4 } \end{aligned}$ | quasi [1] - 35:20 <br> question [18]-14:2, 17:2, |
|  | precedent [1] - 58:11 | fessor [1] - 3:13 | 18:23, 23:18, 25:19, 26:11, |
| planner [15] - 11:24, 12:3, | precedents [1] - 18:3 <br> predetermined [2]-27:1 | profit [1] - 7:2 | 27:24, 41:6, 41:8, 42:14, |
| $19: 8,55: 20,56: 18,60: 22$, $61: 15,62: 8,62: 20,62: 21$, | 29:11 | Program [1]-55:21 | $\begin{aligned} & 50: 16,58: 23,64: 1,64: 2 \\ & 64: 8,64: 24,67: 18,67: 19 \end{aligned}$ |
| $62: 24,63: 3,63: 11,63: 15$ | preferable [1] - 61:2 <br> preliminary [3] - 5:5, 5 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { program }[6] \text { - 7:14, 7:16, } \\ & 11: 16,12: 5,12: 6,41: 3 \end{aligned}$ | questions [11]-17:21, |
| 75:21 planners [7] - 7:11, 60:23, | 56:13 | programs [4]-11:14, 46.10, 47.23,56.10 | $\begin{aligned} & 20: 9,25: 13,25: 16,29: 16, \\ & 36: 1,46: 13,46: 15,50: 2 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{gathered} \text { planners }[7]-7: 11,60: 23 \\ \text { 62:18, } 64: 3,64: 5,64: 21 \\ \text { planning [19] - 11:11, } \\ \text { 11:16, 11:17, 18:11, } 19: 7, \\ \text { 19:10, 19:22, 19:24, 40:7, } \\ 62: 5,62: 9,62: 14,63: 13, \end{gathered}$ | prepared [2]-54:10, 71:14 <br> present [2]-21:24, 33:17 <br> preserving [1] - 38:3 <br> President [2] - 15:9, 33:8 <br> president [15] - 3:3, 5:23, | prohibitive [1] - 38:12 <br> project [1] - 7:5 <br> projections [1]-25:5 <br> projects [2]-8:17, 39:25 <br> promise [1] - 58:4 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 63:20, } 69: 7 \\ & \text { quick }[1]-11: 4 \\ & \text { quickly }[1]-42: 21 \\ & \text { quite }[2]-17: 20,28: 25 \\ & \text { quote }[2]-35: 10,36: 11 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & 70: 7,71: 23,71: 25,72: 5, \\ & 75: 20,76: 9 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 6: 14,6: 18,8: 21,23: 1,28: 5, \\ & 29: 25,38: 5,40: 25,44: 9, \end{aligned}$ | promote [1] - 34:20 <br> pronounce [1]-22:14 | R |
| plans [1] - 63:12plant $[1]-34: 20$ | 54:7, 60:12, 66:2, 66:18 | roperly [2]-12:19, 28:17 | R [2] - 1:9, 80:1 |
|  | president's [1] - 10:10 | property [2] - 35:13, 58:21 | Rachel [2] - 3:13, 60:18 |
| plate $[1]-21: 1$play $[2]-3: 18,59: 4$ | presidents [9]-10:14, | proposal [2] - 18:2, 49:11 | RACHEL [1] - 1:17 |
|  | 10:16, 10:20, 10:25, 13:24, | proposals [3]-46:21, | racial [1] - 65:14 |
| playing [2] - 37:16, 78:2 <br> please [1] - 56:6 | $\begin{array}{r} \text { 14:5, 14:10, 64:16, 66:11 } \\ \text { previous [2] - 61:8, 71:4 } \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} 48: 21,72: 4 \\ \text { propose }[1] \end{gathered}$ | raise [1] - 29:10 <br> ranging $[1]-30: 9$ |
| pleased [1]-13:19 <br> pleasure [1]-33:1 | Previous [1] - 3:23 | proposed [3]-24:18, 50:8, | rapper [1] - 36:12 |
| pleasure [1] - 33:1 <br> point [6]-23:18, 26:18, | previously [1] - 3:7 preys [1] - $34: 5$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 72:10 } \\ & \text { prospective [2] - 73:3, } \end{aligned}$ | rate [1] - 24:24 <br> rather [1]-14:1 |
| 36:13, 39:24, 42:13, 67:21 <br> points [1] - 58:3 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { price }[2]-7: 25,39: 8 \\ & \text { primary }[1]-32: 5 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 75:13 } \\ & \text { protect [2] - 35:17, 35:20 } \end{aligned}$ | re [1] - 76:15 <br> re-envision [1] - 76:15 |




|  |  | 8:9, 8:13, 8:20, 8:23, 9:9, 10:15, 10:20, 10:23, 10:25, 11:3, 11:20, 11:25, 12:9, 13:6, 13:10, 13:13, 13:14, 13:23, 14:5, 14:10, 14:17, 14:23, 15:1, 15:2, 15:3, 15:13, 15:25, 16:4, 16:7, 16:17, 16:21, 17:1, 17:2, 17:6, 17:13, 17:21, 17:22, 17:23, 18:1, 18:2, 18:11, 18:12, 18:18, 18:21, 19:2, 19:4, 19:7, 19:21, 19:23, 19:24, 20:23, 21:10, 21:11, 21:13, 21:19, 21:24, 22:3, 22:16, 22:19, 22:24, 23:2, 23:10, 23:16, 23:21, 23:22, 23:23, 24:4, 24:7, 24:17, 24:24, 25:2, 25:13, 25:20, 26:2, 26:3, 26:5, 26:13, 26:19, 26:20, 26:22, 27:1, 27:3, 27:6, 27:13, 27:16, 27:18, 27:19, 28:4, 28:12, 28:22, 28:25, 29:2, 29:5, 29:8, 29:14, 30:21, 30:25, 31:4, 31:18, 31:24, 33:10, 33:13, 33:14, 33:23, 34:5, 35:19, 36:14, 36:21, 38:4, 38:8, 39:16, 39:17, 39:24, 41:5, 41:11, 41:14, 41:15, 41:24, 42:2, 42:7, 42:8, 42:9, 42:17, 42:21, 43:3, 43:4, 43:6, 43:7, 43:10, 43:15, 43:18, 44:22, 44:25, 45:10, 45:12, 45:13, 45:17, 45:19, 46:10, 46:15, 47:9, 47:12, 47:18, 47:22, 48:1, 48:8, 48:14, 48:20, 48:24, 49:2, 49:5, 49:7, 49:10, 49:12, 49:13, 49:20, 49:21, 50:8, 50:9, 50:12, 50:19, 50:20, 51:3, 51:9, 52:10, 52:18, 53:2, 53:9, 53:15, 53:18, 53:24, 54:3, 54:14, 54:22, 55:23, 56:12, 56:21, 56:25, 57:10, 57:13, 57:18, 58:2, 58:5, 58:7, 58:17, 58:25, 59:4, 59:15, 59:17, 59:19, 59:21, 59:24, 60:1, 60:13, 61:1, 61:3, 61:5, 61:6, 62:3, 62:6, 62:10, 62:19, 62:21, 62:25, 63:5, 63:9, 63:14, 63:16, 63:24, 63:25, 64:4, 64:5, 64:6, 64:8, 64:12, 64:16, 64:17, 64:21, 64:23, 64:25, 65:1, 65:3, 65:6, 65:8, 65:9, 65:19, 65:23, 65:25, 66:4, 66:5, 66:6, 66:8, 66:14, 66:24, 66:25, 67:7, 67:10, 67:11, 67:23, 67:25, 68:1, 68:4, 68:9, 68:11, 68:13, 68:16, 68:18, 69:1, 69:3, | 70:6, 70:12, 70:13, 70:16, 71:13, 71:23, 72:5, 72:7, 72:10, 72:14, 72:17, 72:20, 72:23, 73:11, 73:12, 73:23, 74:3, 74:4, 74:12, 75:3, 75:9, 75:10, 75:17, 75:19, 76:6, 76:11, 76:16, 76:18, 76:20, 76:21, 77:5, 77:6, 77:11, 77:14, 77:22, 77:24, 78:1, 78:3, 78:5, 78:8, 78:9, 78:15, 80:10, 80:12 <br> That [1]-80:8 <br> that's [26]-4:18, 8:23, <br> 17:6, 17:9, 17:16, 21:5, 21:18, 22:18, 28:17, 32:3, 35:13, 38:14, 39:11, 43:22, 50:17, 58:21, 60:16, 65:19, 69:3, 69:4, 71:10, 72:18, 74:13, 77:24 <br> the [682]-2:2, 2:4, 2:5, 2:10, 2:11, 2:13, 2:17, 2:20, 2:22, 3:1, 3:3, 3:6, 3:7, 3:8, 3:14, 3:15, 3:17, 3:21, 4:2, 4:3, 4:4, 4:9, 4:14, 4:16, 4:17, 4:18, 5:7, 5:10, 5:11, $5: 14,5: 17,5: 18,5: 19,5: 23$, 5:24, 6:1, 6:3, 6:5, 6:6, 6:10, 6:11, 6:14, 6:17, 6:24, 7:5, 7:13, 7:14, 7:19, 7:22, 8:2, 8:4, 8:17, 8:20, 8:23, 9:2, 9:18, 10:5, 10:7, 10:14, 10:18, 10:21, 10:23, 11:2, 11:6, 11:8, 11:15, 11:25, 12:1, 12:2, 12:7, 12:8, 12:9, 12:15, 12:17, 12:18, 12:21, 13:1, 13:7, 13:8, 13:9, 13:16, 13:20, 13:21, 13:23, 14:7, 14:10, 14:11, 14:12, 14:15, 14:16, 14:20, 14:23, 14:25, 15:4, 15:19, 15:23, 15:25, 16:3, 16:9, 16:12, 16:13, 16:19, 16:22, 17:5, 17:6, 17:8, 17:11, 17:13, 17:15, 17:16, 17:21, 17:23, 17:24, 17:25, 18:4, 18:8, 18:9, 18:10, 18:11, 18:19, 18:20, 18:23, 18:25, 19:2, 19:3, 19:4, 19:5, 19:6, 19:12, 19:14, 19:20, 19:21, 19:23, 19:25, 20:3, 20:4, 20:6, 20:18, 20:19, 20:20, 20:23, 20:24, 21:9, 21:10, 21:12, 21:14, 21:16, 21:17, 21:18, 21:20, 21:21, 21:22, 21:23, 22:2, 22:7, 22:14, 22:18, 22:25, 23:5, 23:6, 23:10, 23:11, 23:13, 23:14, 23:17, 23:18, 23:19, 23:20, 23:22, 23:25, 24:1, 24:3, 24:4, 24:8, 24:9, 24:11, 24:12, 24:14, 24:16, 24:20, 24:23, 24:24, |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |



| 65:9 <br> thoughts [1]-63:25 <br> thousand [1] - 35:1 <br> thousands [1]-35:1 <br> threat [1] - 72:16 <br> three $[4]-5: 18,42: 21$, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 26:20, 26:24, 27:4, 27:5, } \\ & \text { 27:12, 27:14, 27:15, 27:21, } \\ & \text { 28:2, 28:3, 28:10, 28:17, } \\ & \text { 29:1, 29:2, 29:6, 29:18, } \\ & \text { 29:23, 30:4, 30:12, 30:14, } \\ & 30: 15,31: 2,31: 7,31: 8, \end{aligned}$ | 74:25, 75:16, 75:17, 75:18, 75:23, 76:1, 76:10, 76:11, 76:15, 76:16, 76:20, 76:25, 77:1, 77:3, 77:5, 77:7, 77:15, 78:5, 78:8, 78:9, 78:10, 78:12, 78:13, 78:14, 78:20, | $\begin{aligned} & 40: 19,42: 21,50: 13,52: 1, \\ & 54: 11,58: 3,63: 11,63: 12, \\ & 63: 20 \\ & \text { two-year }[2]-24: 8,24: 11 \\ & \text { type }[1]-35: 4 \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 51:14, 70:13 <br> through ${ }_{10} 0$ | $\begin{aligned} & 31: 11,31: 12,31: 13,32: 7 \\ & 32: 17,33: 7,33: 10,33: 13 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 80:10, } 80: 11 \\ & \text { today }[5]-36: 6,52: 17, \end{aligned}$ | U |
| 24:12, 36:20, 39:8, 45: | 33:14, 33:25, 34:2, 34:7, | $57: 13,71: 10,73: 21$ | $\begin{aligned} & \hline \text { ultimately }[1]-7: 3 \\ & \text { ULURP }_{[5]}-19: 16,40: 9, \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { throughout }[6]-26: 20, \\ & 28: 6,33: 21,50: 23,57: 4, \\ & 63: 16 \end{aligned}$ | 34:25, 35:3, 35:4, 35:10, 35:20, 35:25, 36:2, 36:6, 36:11, 36:16, 36:19, 37:9, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 77:14 } \\ & \text { told }[2]-9: 5,69: 20 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 58:13, 61:11, } 63: 1 \\ & \text { ULURP's }[2]-19: 13,62: 10 \\ & \text { umbrella }[1]-40: 14 \end{aligned}$ |
| Thursday [1] - 39:7 ties [1] - 73:9 time [35]-4:17, 5:7, | 37:20, $37: 21,38: 4,38: 6$, 38:7, 38:19, 39:8, 39:10, 40:2, 40:19, 41:11, 41:14, | $\begin{aligned} & 56: 2 \\ & \text { too }[6]-10: 13,38: 20, \\ & 58: 15,72: 12,75: 24,78: 12 \end{aligned}$ | ```unable [1] - 9:5 unbiased [3] - 62:20, 62:21, 64:17``` |
| 5:23, 6:1, 7:11, 7:13, 7:17, | $\begin{aligned} & 42: 7,42: 8,42: 15,42: 17 \\ & 42: 23,43: 4,43: 7,43: 13 \end{aligned}$ | $\text { took }[2]-9: 8,10: 7$ | undemocratic [1] - 73:1 <br> under [7] - 35:7, 40:14, |
| 15:1, 15:2, 17:5, 18:4, 21:7, | $43: 14,44: 8,44: 22,44: 25$ <br> 45:2, 45:3, 45:6, 45:7, 45:15 | tools [6] - 38:6, 42:16, | $\begin{aligned} & 44: 16,45: 8,55: 20,55: 22 \text {, } \\ & 63: 6 \end{aligned}$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 23:8, 23:14, 28:16, 28:20, } \\ & \text { 29:1, 32:21, 34:21, 59:6, } \end{aligned}$ | $45: 18,46: 1,46: 4,46: 8,46: 9$ 46:13, 46:16, 46:17, 46:19, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 46:19, 56:11, 76:11, 77:21 } \\ & \text { topic [1] - } 14: 15 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 63:6 } \\ & \text { understand }[13]-7: 6,24: 3 \text {, } \\ & \text { 26:4, 28:15, } 36: 19,61: 16, \end{aligned}$ |
| 69:20, 70:6, 71:11, 78:6 | 46:23, 47:1, 47:12, 47:20, 47:23, 48:4, 48:7, 48:10, | totally [1]-20:22 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 61:24, 66:9, 69:2, 76:2, 76:7, } \\ & 76: 11,77: 22 \end{aligned}$ |
| time's [1] - 47:4 <br> timekeeper [1]-5:19 | 48:12, 48:24, 49:3, 49:5, | touch [2]-9:2, 16:18 <br> touched [1] - 67:23 | understanding $[7]-6: 25$, |
| times [1]-67:5 | $\begin{aligned} & 49: 19,49: 23,50: 1,50: 6, \\ & 50: 7,50: 10,50: 24,51: 4, \end{aligned}$ | ck [1] - 38:6 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 31:12, 34:1, 62:9, 62:10, } \\ & \text { 71:9, 76:8 } \end{aligned}$ |
| title [1] - 67:3 <br> to [456]-2:2, 2:9, 2:12, | $\begin{aligned} & 51: 20,51: 21,52: 12,52: 15, \\ & 52: 16,52: 19,52: 22,52: 25, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \operatorname{traffic}[1] \mathbf{t r a i n}_{[1]}-12: 17 \\ & \operatorname{tra}^{2} \end{aligned}$ | understood [1] - 45:16 undertake [1] - 35:10 |
| $2: 22,2: 25,3: 18,3: 20,3: 24,$ | $\begin{aligned} & 53: 3,53: 4,53: 6,53: 10, \\ & 53: 13,53: 22,53: 25,54: 8, \end{aligned}$ | trained [2]-11:17, 66:16 | undocumented [1] - 68:6 undue [1] - 73:1 |
| 5:17, $5: 18,5: 22,5: 24,6: 1$, $6 \cdot 3,4: 4.9,19,21.7$ | $\begin{aligned} & 54: 9,54: 11,54: 13,54: 20 \\ & 54: 21,54: 22,55: 2,55: 5, \end{aligned}$ | $56: 10,65: 9,68: 19,68: 23$ | unfortunately [1]-33:24 <br> unified [1] - 40:4 |
| $\begin{aligned} & 6: 3,6: 4,6: 9,6: 19,6: 21,7: 1, \\ & 7: 2,7: 11,7: 16,8: 13,8: 16, \end{aligned}$ | $55: 7,55: 11,55: 15,55: 24$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { trainings }[3]-11: 5,54: 17, \\ & 56: 15 \end{aligned}$ | uniform [1] - 10:9 |
| $\begin{aligned} & 8: 24,9: 3,9: 5,9: 9,9: 10, \\ & 9: 12, ~ 9: 21,9: 22,9: 23,10: \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 56: 9,56: 10,56: 12,56: 15 \\ & 56: 20,57: 3,57: 7,57: 9, \end{aligned}$ | transcription [1] - 80:8 | niformed [2] - 38:13, 61:6 <br> intentionally [1] - 47:13 |
| 10:20, 10:21, 11:1, 11:6, | 57:11, 57:12, 57:15, 57:19, 57:20, 57:22, 57:25, 59:2, | transferring [1] - 34:4 transmitted [1]-4:25 | union [1] - 18:4 |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 11:7, 11:24, 12:9, 12:11, } \\ & \text { 12:12, 12:14, 12:16, 12:17, } \end{aligned}$ | $59: 12,59: 16,59: 23,59: 24$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { transparency [2]-37:18, } \\ & 40: 8 \end{aligned}$ | Union [1] - 40:23 unions [1] - 15:19 |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 12:18, 12:21, 12:23, 13:2, } \\ & 13: 7,13: 22,14: 3,14: 18, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 60: 4,60: 9,60: 20,60: 24, \\ & 60: 25,61: 2,61: 5,61: 16, \end{aligned}$ | transparent [4]-5:2, 5:3, | unique [1] - 33:19 |
| $14: 23,15: 2,15: 12,15: 14,$ | $61: 18,61: 20,61: 23,61: 24$ 62:4, 62:7, 62:15, 62:18, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 26:16, } 73: 8 \\ & \text { treasurer [1] - 40:22 } \end{aligned}$ | Unit [1] - 2:18 |
| 15:16, 15:17, 15:24, 15:25, 16:3, 16:17, 16:23, 16:24, | 63:9, 63:24, 64:2, 64:15, | $\text { treaty }[1]-45: 10$ | United $[3]-46: 24,47: 1$, $50: 23$ |
| $\begin{aligned} & 16: 3,16: 17,16: 23,16: 24, \\ & 16: 25,17: 1,17: 8,17: 14, \end{aligned}$ | 64:17, 64:22, 64:23, 64:24, 65:2, 65:3, 65:5, 65:9, 65:11, | trip [1] - 5:24 <br> trouble [1] - 10:16 | united [1] - 44:15 |
| $\begin{aligned} & 17: 15,17: 16,17: 23,18: 3, \\ & 18: 5,18: 12,18: 13,18: 14, \end{aligned}$ | 65:12, 65:13, 65:21, 65:25, | true [2]-8:23 | units [3] - 34:22, 35:1, 35:2 <br> universities [1] - 30:10 |
| 18:19, 18:22, 18:24, 19:4, | 66:5, 66:8, 66:15, 66:16, 66:23, 66:25, 67:7, 67:11 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { truly }[4]-9: 14,24: 2,27: 7, \\ & 72: 1 \end{aligned}$ | University [1] - 37:4 |
| 19:5, 19:9, 19:17, 19:18, | 67:13, 67:22, 68:7, 68:11 | [13:22 | UNKNOWN [5] - 2:7, 22:15, |
| 20:20, 21:1, 21:11, 21:12, | 68:14, 68:15, 68:22, 68:24, 68:25, 69:16, 69:19, 69:23, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { try }[5]-16: 16,18: 7,48: 12, \\ & 49: 19,50: 10 \end{aligned}$ | 23:4, 62:12, 78:24 <br> unlike [2] - 15:13, 57:12 |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { 21:19, 21:21, 21:22, 21:24, } \\ & \text { 22:1, 22:18, 22:21, 22:23, } \end{aligned}$ | $70: 2,70: 3,70: 16,70: 17$ | $\text { trying }[4]-13: 22,18: 2$ | unrealistic [1] - 49:5 |
| $22: 25,23: 5,23: 8,23: 14,$ | $\begin{aligned} & 70: 20,70: 23,71: 1,71: 2 \\ & 71: 7,71: 8,71: 16,71: 21 \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 20:25, } 78: 14 \\ & \text { turn }[3]-27: 21,35: 25, \end{aligned}$ | $\text { up }[41]-2: 23,5: 9,6: 1 \text {, }$ |
| 23:15, 23:18, 24:1, 24:4, 24:8, 24:10, 24:13, 24:15, | $71$ |  | 11.1, 12.25, 15.7, 16.22, |
| 24:16, 24:21, 25:1, 25:7, | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 72:15, 72:17, 72:25, 73:3, } \\ & \text { 73:5, 73:6, 73:7, 73:8, 73:9, } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { turnover }[3]-8: 22,8: 24 \\ & 13: 20 \end{aligned}$ | 26:21, 27:16, 27:19, 31:15, |
| 25:8, 25:10, 25:13, 25:14, | 73:10, 73:13, 73:17, 73:19, |  | 33:6, 35:5, 39:3, 41:21, 42:9, |
|  | $\begin{aligned} & 73: 21,73: 22,74: 1,74: 2, \\ & 74: 10,74: 11,74: 13,74: 19, \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{aligned} & 11: 14,24: 8,24: 11,24: 22, \\ & 33: 7,33: 10,35: 14,36: 6 \end{aligned}$ | 43:13, 47:4, 47:5, 47:18, 49:23, 50:1, 54:7, 54:20, |

60:13, 62:12, 63:6, 63:10,
64:2, 66:18, 66:22, 66:25,
71:6, 76:13, 76:19, 77:23
upcoming [1] - 63:1
upfront $[1]$ - 6:22
upon [5] - 34:5, 45:20,
47:12, 61:7, 65:4
urban [14]-11:16, 11:23,
56:17, 60:22, 60:23, 61:15,
62:5, 62:8, 62:9, 63:11, 64:3, 64:4, 71:23, 75:21
urged [1] - 5:6
us [14]-5:5, 5:6, 5:21, 9:3,
9:11, 9:22, 27:14, 27:15, 27:17, 42:20, 46:20, 50:1, 51:4, 78:19
usage [1] - 35:22
use [30] - 6:24, 7:7, 7:23,
$8: 2,8: 12,8: 16,10: 6,11: 8$, 11:24, 12:2, 12:8, 13:7,
17:25, 18:10, 18:25, 19:22,
19:23, 19:24, 21:9, 21:25,
40:12, 43:3, 55:24, 56:12,
58:4, 58:12, 58:15, 77:1,
77:7, 78:13
used [4]-46:7, 46:13,
48:10, 68:15
useful [1] - 43:7
user [2] - 33:13, 35:8
uses [1] - 35:11
using [3] - 11:10, 47:11,
68:18
usual [1] - 58:23
usually $[2]-5: 19,31: 2$
usurious [1] - 34:5

| $\mathbf{V}$ V |
| :---: |
| vacancies [1]-16:7 |

vacancies [1] - 16:7
various [1] - 28:7
vehicle [1] - 30:16
vehicles [1]-65:6
vending $[5]$ - 33:12, 33:16,
33:24, 58:10, 58:12
vendor $[1]$ - 35:22
vendors [3]-34:6, 34:13, 35:5
versed [1] - 60:13
very [59]-5:1, 6:2, 6:21,
13:6, 13:12, 13:19, 14:20, 18:5, 20:7, 21:5, 22:1, 22:6, 26:6, 26:23, 31:25, 41:15, 42:20, 42:25, 43:22, 49:15, 50:7, 50:13, 50:14, 51:3, 51:23, 51:25, 53:19, 55:4, 57:9, 57:11, 57:17, 58:12, 62:2, 62:3, 68:21, 69:1, 69:8, 69:14, 70:25, 71:11, 71:12, 72:18, 72:20, 73:15, 74:2, 75:11, 76:3, 76:21, 78:6,

78:9
videotape $[1]$ - 4:25
view [2]-20:15, 62:23
views [1] - 72:23
violations [1] - 34:14
virtual [1] - 64:13
vision [2] - 40:1, 40:3
visit [1] - 23:3
visiting [1]-23:2
vital $[3]-11: 5,30: 18$
voice [8]-23:16, 30:5,
$30: 18,31: 9,31: 18,40: 5$, 42:4, 42:7
voices [1] - 37:16
volunteered [1] - 67:3
volunteerism [1] - 36:22 volunteers [3]-7:13, 28:16, 29:15
vote $[7]-42: 5,42: 6,53: 6$, 68:11, 70:5, 72:14, 76:6 voters [6] - 26:5, 26:9, 26:11, 49:20, 50:1, 68:25
votes [1] - 25:24
voting $[4]-3: 11,36: 21$, 67:6, 68:3

| W |
| :---: |
| walk [1] - 39:8 <br> walking [1] - 47:18 <br> walks [1] - 59:20 |

walkways [1] - 34:19
Walter [1]-38:17
want [17]-6:21, 22:21, 23:5, 25:18, 29:18, 36:6, 45:18, 55:2, 59:16, 59:24, 64:19, 70:2, 71:10, 74:13, 76:25, 77:1
wanted $[7]-4: 8,28: 2$, 42:23, 67:22, 68:7, 70:16, 73:19
was [36] - 3:6, 3:22, 17:11, 18:7, 21:13, 21:14, 25:2, 30:13, 36:19, 39:1, 39:7, 39:12, 39:20, 39:21, 39:24, 40:4, 47:18, 48:18, 50:25, 51:2, 51:17, 52:24, 53:19, 53:24, 55:19, 59:7, 67:2, 67:7, 68:9, 68:12, 69:19, 69:20, 69:22, 70:23, 71:9
wasn't [1]-6:4
Waterfront [1] - 55:22
way $[19]-2: 13,10: 2,14: 12$,
16:17, 19:5, 19:20, 19:23, 19:24, 22:8, 31:11, 43:4, 43:18, 45:17, 53:4, 53:25, 55:1, 77:24, 78:11, 80:12 ways [2]-4:10, 15:4 we [131]-2:5, 4:21, 4:22, 4:24, 5:1, 5:6, 5:8, 5:16,

5:17, 5:25, 8:6, 8:9, 8:11, 8:21, 8:25, 9:1, 9:2, 9:9, 9:16, 9:18, 9:24, 10:2, 10:17, 11:3, 11:11, 12:8, 13:4, 13:11, 13:14, 14:8, 14:12, 14:13, 14:15, 15:22, 16:5, 16:9, 16:10, 16:11, 16:12, 16:16, 17:3, 17:22, 18:1, 18:14, 18:15, 18:17, 19:8, 20:23, 22:12, 23:16, 24:24, 24:25, 25:3, 25:5, 25:7, 25:14, 26:4, 26:5, 26:9, 26:16, 28:14, 28:23, 32:17, 36:10, 37:2, 37:3, 40:18, 44:24, 45:18, 45:23, 46:5, 46:14, 46:15, 46:23, 47:24, 48:23, 49:11, 49:20, 49:23, 50:9, 50:10, 50:20, 51:14, 53:2, 53:10, 54:6, 54:8, 54:9, 54:23, 54:24, 55:16, 56:9, 56:10, 57:18, 58:13, 58:14, 58:15, 59:8, 59:10, 60:7, 60:16, 62:2, 64:18, 64:19, 65:10, 67:23, 67:24, 68:2, 68:24, 68:25, 69:14, 70:2, 73:2, 73:8, 73:10, 73:11, 76:15, 76:18, 77:13, 77:14, 78:9, 78:11, 78:12, 78:14
we'd [2]-46:9, 65:25
we'll [3] - 5:25, 35:25
we're [16]-3:19, 5:22, 13:22, 18:22, 18:23, 30:7, 46:7, 46:13, 50:13, 54:19, 60:11, 65:5, 65:11, 65:14, 68:1, 78:9
we've [19]-4:19, 6:19, 9:16, 9:17, 10:5, 15:18, 19:11, 19:12, 28:6, 28:9, 42:15, 48:24, 50:12, 51:15, 51:18, 51:19, 52:1, 69:9, 78:4
web [1] - 65:5
website [1]-38:14
websites [2]-43:12, 57:1
week [3]-5:4, 38:24, 39:4
weigh [1]-23:11
weird [1] - 76:24
Weiser [2]-41:2, 57:16
WEISER [7] - 1:19, 41:2, 50:16, 51:11, 51:23, 63:20, 64:10
welcome [1] - 17:12
welcomed [1]-17:15
welfare [1] - 48:1
well [17]-15:18, 24:18, 26:10, 28:14, 41:7, 42:13, 51:12, 54:8, 60:13, 64:7, 68:7, 69:15, 70:1, 71:12, 74:21, 77:9, 77:10
Wendy [1] - 41:2

WENDY $_{[1]}-1: 19$
went $\left.{ }^{2}\right]$ - 48:18, 73:21
were [9]-27:3, 39:14,
39:25, 53:22, 67:4, 67:6, 68:12, 69:21, 72:10
West [5]-36:5, 70:7, 70:14, 70:22, 73:23
Westchester [1]-33:5 what [54]-4:19, 4:22, 6:25, 13:18, 13:22, 14:17, 14:24, 15:11, 15:15, 16:5, 16:10, 18:12, 19:18, 21:8, 28:11, 32:3, 32:4, 32:5, 33:24, 36:13, 37:21, 39:1, 39:23, 40:2, 40:11, 41:11, 42:21, 42:23, 43:16, 44:12, 48:18, 51:16, 51:19, 52:24, 53:15, 53:21, 56:8, 58:24, 60:16, 60:25, 62:25, 63:24, 66:1, 67:4, 69:21, 69:23, 70:15, 70:18, 71:9, 73:2, 74:11 what's [8]-17:10, 21:16, 28:18, 29:7, 29:12, 29:14, 72:15, 76:2
whatever [3]-43:14, 64:17, 75:22
when [22] - 7:18, 8:1, 8:5, 8:15, 13:14, 16:20, 19:2, 20:6, 24:1, 26:10, 26:16, 26:24, 28:21, 29:5, 48:7, 48:23, 63:14, 63:16, 68:10, 69:20, 71:3, 72:23
where [11]-2:22, 21:23, 23:20, 37:11, 39:20, 42:3, 43:19, 46:17, 59:18, 61:25, 65:7
WHEREOF [1]-80:14 Whereupon [1] - 79:4 whether [5] - 11:22, 59:2, 60:20, 61:4, 62:23
which [23]-4:4, 4:10, 4:21, 4:22, 6:10, 11:16, 12:18, 15:12, 17:19, 19:15, 19:20, 23:19, 26:14, 33:16, 34:4, 35:12, 39:15, 41:5, 55:11, 65:1, 67:6, 70:8, 76:25
while $[7]-19: 12,25: 23$, 41:7, 45:12, 45:22, 56:2, 75:20
white [1]-39:16 who [46]-5:17, 9:5, 9:7, 9:24, 9:25, 10:5, 10:7, 14:4, 14:18, 14:19, 16:5, 16:13, 16:18, 17:4, 21:7, 22:22, 23:7, 24:2, 26:1, 27:17, 35:5, 36:12, 37:5, 37:20, 38:17, 38:22, 40:1, 40:2, 48:11, 48:16, 51:2, 51:3, 52:5, 53:20, 54:12, 58:16, 59:9, 59:12, 60:7, 66:19, 70:11,


