

Initial Public Meeting
of the Charter Revision Commission

Moderated by Patrick Gaspard

Thursday, June 4, 2026

5:00 p.m.

Landmarks Preservation Commission Hearing Room
253 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Reported by: Abigail Rodriguez

JOB NO: 8244219

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Patrick Gaspard, Chair

Emma Wolfe, Vice Chair

Susan Kang, Secretary

Kathryn Wylde, Commissioner

Barika Williams, Commissioner

Marc Shaw, Commissioner

Marco Carrion, Commissioner

Henry Garrido, Commissioner

Kapil Longani, Commissioner

Ruth Messinger, Commissioner

Theodore Moore, Commissioner

Ana Oliveira, Commissioner

Carlina Rivera, Commissioner

Esther Rosario, Commissioner

Dawn Pinnock, Commissioner

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. GASPARD: This is Patrick Gaspard,
3 and it's my honor to serve as the chair of the
4 commission on government efficiency, particularly
5 since it gives me an occasion to partner with
6 extraordinary leaders who are so committed to this
7 city that they are volunteering their invaluable
8 service.

9 I -- I come to this chair as somebody
10 who's engaged in national policy making and in New
11 York-based enterprises as well. I've been a former
12 diplomat. I'm a lifelong New Yorker. I've been
13 privileged to serve the working people in this town as
14 the executive vice president of Local 1199SEIU
15 Healthcare.

16 I have been a leader in philanthropy as
17 the president of the Open Society Foundations. I've
18 served in political campaigns in New York, first for
19 David Dinkins' historic run. There's someone named
20 Ruth Messinger who I have served under as well. I've
21 been a -- a chief of staff in the New York City
22 Council and an aide to the mayor of New York.

23 I've been privileged to serve as a
24 senior member of the -- the White House as the
25 Director of Political Affairs for President Barack

1 Obama. And I served my nation overseas as the US
2 Ambassador to South Africa.

3 I say all of that as a way of
4 reflecting on this current assignment, which I find to
5 be the most essential one of my -- of my adult life,
6 because at the end of the day, I'm a New York
7 nationalist. I care about this town more than just
8 about anything else.

9 I have been in every corner of the
10 world, and I'm confident to say that this is the
11 greatest city in this great nation.

12 And one of the things that makes it
13 great is its ability to absorb talent from as far away
14 as possible, to integrate that talent into the fabric
15 of the city, and -- and to give each generation of New
16 Yorkers the space to make it new, to make this city
17 their own.

18 In essence, we are called together as
19 part of this charter commission to make it new, to
20 help shape and define a new era in this town; where
21 New Yorkers who are struggling under the -- the
22 scourge of -- of an affordability crisis can be in a
23 city that's livable, and one where they can build
24 community.

25 And help steady agencies that can make

1 pluralistic governance durable in this town. So I'm
2 really excited to be able to serve on this commission
3 with all of you.

4 And I know that you are incredibly
5 clear that, while this is a commission on government
6 efficiency, that efficiency is not the end goal here;
7 right? It's not the end goal. It's a hugely
8 important thing that efficiency is in the service of
9 affordable housing, affordable childcare.

10 It's in the service of fast transit
11 that works well to bring everyone to the center of the
12 economy. And efficiency is, at the end of the day, in
13 the service of helping us to create a government for a
14 city that will be the leading urban center in this
15 21st century. So I -- I know that we all know exactly
16 what the mission is.

17 I want to welcome our friends who are
18 joining us in this room and on the livestream. Over
19 the course of this meeting, you will learn about the
20 hearings that we will have in every single borough in
21 New York.

22 We're going to invite you to
23 participate in those hearings. We want your ideas.
24 We want your critique of the current bureaucracy, and
25 we want you to join us in affirmative vision for our

1 collective future.

2 Joining me in this task in this
3 enterprise are 14 other commissioners. They are my
4 friend and vice chair, Emma Wolfe; our secretary,
5 Susan Kang; Marco Carrion; Henry Garrido; Kapil
6 Longani; Ruth Messinger; Theodore Moore; Ana Oliveira;
7 Dawn Pinnock; Carlina Rivera; Esther Rosario; Marc
8 Shaw; Barika Williams; and Kathryn Wylde.

9 As I said, we are committed to hearing
10 from New Yorkers across the city, and we are also
11 going to invite in testimony from the general public,
12 from our elected officials, from issue experts and
13 subject expertise. And each of those hearings will,
14 of course, also be live streamed and recorded.

15 The very first public hearing will be
16 on Tuesday, June 9th, and the remainder will be held
17 on June 10th, 11th, the 22nd, the 23rd, the 30th, July
18 1st, July 6th, the 8th, and July 13th. Additionally,
19 New Yorkers are invited to submit their public comment
20 at newyorkcity.gov/charter.

21 I'd like to note that our mayor has
22 extended an invitation to the San Antonio Spurs'
23 center, Victor Wembanyama, to join us for the first
24 public hearing instead of being at Madison Square
25 Garden next week, and we hope that he will heed that

1 invitation.

2 We will take into account all of the
3 comments and testimony that we receive prior to
4 fashioning the proposals for the charter amendments
5 that will be placed on the ballot this November for
6 New York City voters. I am eternally grateful for
7 Mayor Mamdani for trusting me to be the chair of this
8 commission.

9 And now, I'd like to be able to turn to
10 my vice chair, Emma Wolfe, who is a veteran of this
11 work, and somebody who I've just grown to rely on for
12 a number of decades now.

13 Emma is chief of staff to the president
14 of New York University, before which, she spent two
15 decades working in city and state government and on a
16 local state and federal political and advocacy
17 campaigns. Emma was previously vice chair for
18 government and community relations at Dartmouth.

19 Prior to that inaugural role, she was
20 the first senior advisor to the president in external
21 relations and leadership development at Barnard
22 College. And during Bill de Blasio's New York City
23 mayoral administration, Emma served as director of
24 intergovernmental affairs, chief of staff, deputy
25 mayor for the administration.

1 And some of us knew her as the chief
2 fly catcher in the administration as well.

3 So Emma, over to you.

4 MS. WOLFE: Excellent. Thank you so
5 much. It's just an honor to be sitting next to the
6 chair here who -- he -- he did say that we've had the
7 pleasure of working together. It's -- it's --
8 honestly, it's my honor. It's always an honor to get
9 to work with Patrick.

10 But when I got the call, as I'm sure so
11 many of my fellow commissioners did, to sit on this
12 commission -- well, first, I was very excited, as all
13 of us government nerds are -- public service nerds are
14 about the idea of a charter revision commission.
15 These things are so meaningful.

16 And -- and then when I heard about the
17 remit to move bureaucracy to make government, you
18 know, work for so many hardworking New Yorkers, it
19 really, honestly -- you know, Patrick said, honor of
20 his -- one of the honors of his lifetime. I -- I
21 totally understand that and agree with that sentiment.

22 When I was in government, I never got
23 much of a chance, other than perhaps occasionally
24 muttering or catching some flack, to really reflect on
25 the challenges of the bureaucracy, and how to sort of

1 think about it at its most challenging roots.

2 And that's what we get to do here over
3 these coming months, again, on behalf of New Yorkers.
4 So I am excited. I really look forward to digging in.
5 I want to thank Mayor Mamdani and the administration
6 for giving me this opportunity. Thank you.

7 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Vice
8 Chair Wolfe. We'll now give each member of this
9 commission two minutes to introduce themselves and to
10 give New Yorkers a sense of the charge that brings
11 them to this -- to this table.

12 We'll start with Susan Kang, who will
13 serve as our secretary. Susan is an associate
14 professor of political science at John Jay College of
15 Criminal Justice. She currently serves as editor of
16 research journal of Global Constitutionalism, and is
17 the former co-chair of the Labor Project, an American
18 political science-related group.

19 She is a member of the Executive
20 Council of the Professional Staff Congress at CUNY.

21 MS. KANG: Thank you, everyone. It's
22 my pleasure and honor to be here serving with so many,
23 like, respected and experienced leaders in public
24 service here in New York City. I want to say that I
25 come with curiosity and humility.

1 I always tell my students that
2 professors are not here because we are experts; we're
3 here because we're always learning. And so I'm here
4 to learn from everyone in the five boroughs who wants
5 to come and talk to us about charter reform.

6 And, in addition, it's always been easy
7 for me to write about politics from an academic
8 perspective, but it's also very exciting for me now,
9 to be part of this really important commission. So
10 thanks so much. I'm -- I'm very honored to be here.

11 MR. GASPARD: Thank you, Susan.

12 I think I'll go in alphabetical order
13 from Carrion to -- to Wylde. Marco Carrion is the
14 president of the Consortium for Worker Education and
15 former Commissioner of Community Affairs for New York
16 City.

17 Prior to joining the consortium,
18 Carrion served as executive director of El Puente, a
19 human rights organization operating in New York City
20 and Puerto Rico. Carrion has also worked as political
21 director for CLC, representing 1.5 million members
22 across 300 local unions as chief of staff for state
23 Senator Gustavo Rivera and served in senior roles for
24 two governors.

25 Marco?

1 MR. CARRION: Thank you, Chair Gaspard.
2 It's my -- you know, as a born and bred New Yorker,
3 it's really my honor and privilege to serve the city
4 and its amazing people.

5 You know, I've spent the better part of
6 my career seeking to empower communities, individuals,
7 workers, and so much of that has been a fight against
8 bureaucracy and the barriers that bureaucracy creates.

9 So I really -- I guess, my call is that
10 everyone who hears my voice, to please attend these
11 hearings because we are here to listen. And I am
12 ready for all the concerns to resurface, so that we
13 can do the people's work. Thank you.

14 MR. GASPARD: Thank you, Marco.

15 My brother, Henry Garrido, is the
16 executive director of District Council 37. Henry is
17 an international vice president of the American
18 Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees,
19 co-chair of the Municipal Labor Committee.

20 A trustee of the City's New York -- New
21 York's Workforce Investment Board, and advisory board
22 member of the New York City Independent Budget Office,
23 and serves on the board of New York City Retirement
24 Systems.

25 Henry?

1 MR. GARRIDO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
2 Good afternoon, everyone. I am a troublemaker by
3 profession and proud of it, and have served so
4 for -- this June, it will be 30 years. And I'm
5 honored to be here representing labor as one of the
6 members, because labor is so important to the City of
7 New York, and sometimes people forget it.

8 From September 11 to the pandemic to so
9 many different incidents that workers have risen,
10 right, to save the city, to assist the city, to do, in
11 many instances, sometimes pay the ultimate sacrifice
12 for New Yorkers. I want to be here as one of its
13 representatives.

14 I will say that one of my pet peeve is
15 that private sector never had a monopoly on
16 efficiency. I think that's a myth, and I think,
17 sometimes, we can't get out of our own way to get
18 things done. So I am honored to be here to help get
19 out of our own way. Thank you.

20 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Henry.

21 Kapil Longani has extensive experience
22 in federal, state, and local government and
23 governance. He serves as a commissioner on the New
24 York City Commission on Human Rights and on Boards of
25 Good Shepherd Services, the Coalition for Asian

1 American Children and Families and the National
2 Endowment for Financial Education.

3 His career also includes serving as
4 chief council to the mayor of New York City and senior
5 council to Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings for the
6 Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the US
7 House of Representatives.

8 Kapil?

9 MR. LONGANI: Thank you, Chair Gaspard.

10 What a privilege and honor it is to
11 work with these luminaries. I really feel humbled to
12 be here today. I'm incredibly grateful to the mayor
13 of New York City for appointing me, and really
14 grateful for the opportunity to work with all of you.
15 And I look forward enormously hearing from New Yorkers
16 all across our great city.

17 I was born into a family of public
18 servants, and they instilled in me -- oh -- I'm
19 usually very, very loud, so -- as you know, Emma. I
20 don't usually need a microphone.

21 I was born into a family of public
22 servants who really instilled in me a deep respect for
23 public service, and the belief that government can
24 make tremendously positive impacts upon people. And
25 that's what's driven my career throughout my life.

1 I've been really lucky to work for
2 extraordinary public servants, like the late, great
3 Elijah Cummings to bring clean drinking water to
4 Flint, the late, great Archbishop Desmond Tutu to
5 implement the post-apartheid -- first post-apartheid
6 constitution in South Africa.

7 And right here in New York City, where
8 I served as chief council to Mayor de Blasio and a
9 senior advisor to the First Racial Justice Commission,
10 where we worked on this charter to ensure that it
11 enshrined the values of -- of equity and diversity
12 that our city cherishes.

13 I agreed to be on this commission
14 because I believe in the mayor's charge. I will
15 listen carefully to the communities all across this
16 city and focus, as the Chair said, on reforms and
17 efficiencies that produce tangible benefits for all
18 New Yorkers.

19 Again, I'm -- I'm really grateful for
20 this opportunity, and I very much look forward to
21 working with you, Chair, and Vice Chair, and the rest
22 of my wonderful colleagues.

23 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so very much,
24 Kapil.

25 Ruth Messinger: Ruth is a longtime

1 civic leader, Jewish social justice activist for
2 Manhattan Borough President and my lifetime boss.
3 Ruth served as a city council member, representing
4 Manhattan's West Side, and was a Democratic party
5 candidate in 1997. And, you know, I hope that
6 perhaps, the next mayor will finally be a woman.

7 Messinger is now part-time faculty at
8 the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; a
9 consultant and teacher for Elluminate, a program for
10 social justice entrepreneurs; an immigration advocate
11 and activist; and the co-chair of the Board of the
12 Interfaith Center for New York.

13 Ruth?

14 MS. MESSINGER: Thank you, Patrick. It
15 is a privilege to be back in a formal working
16 relationship with you. I would say, by way of the
17 production, I have a long history. I'm very old.

18 But I considered it a privilege of my
19 life to serve for 20 years in New York City government
20 as an elected official under three different mayors,
21 and actually prove that it's possible to get things
22 done, which is one of the reasons I'm on this
23 commission.

24 I have stayed involved, as Patrick
25 suggested to you, as a global human rights worker, as

1 a active political citizen, and now, working on
2 immigrants and immigration. You will hear that theme
3 from me many, many times. We have 500,000 new New
4 Yorkers whom we are serving madly, who are the
5 workforce of our future.

6 I have lots of ideas for -- for this
7 commission and for change, based on my experience,
8 that I want to call out, since I loved that Henry
9 called out labor. I want to call out two -- I want to
10 say two things.

11 One is, I have found over and over
12 again that there's extraordinary work being done by
13 not-for-profit organizations. Some under contract to
14 the city, some wishing they were under contract to the
15 city, some never wanting to be under contract to the
16 city, but making a huge difference at the ground level
17 in every borough of the city and every area of work.

18 And I want us to find ways with this
19 commission to make their voices more regularly heard
20 and apply to -- to social change. And I also want to
21 say -- and I think it's probably a reason that I was
22 made -- appointed to this commission.

23 That in the charter revision commission
24 of 1988, '89, I was part of a group. Thank you, DC37.
25 Thank you, some activists. We actually brought brand

1 new ideas to a very distinguished commission that had
2 not thought about the things that we were advocating.

3 They listened to us. They worked with
4 us. And we were a part of a public labor activist
5 group that made significant change in the structure of
6 city government, so I know it can be done from all
7 sides.

8 And given what Henry said in
9 introducing himself, I would just quote one of my many
10 mentors, besides Patrick Gaspard. I wear a bracelet
11 from John Lewis that says, "Make trouble."

12 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Ruth,
13 for that -- that clarifying advocacy.

14 Theodore Moore: Theodore is the
15 executive director of ALIGN, setting the
16 organization's strategic vision for worker power and
17 climate justice. And he brings close to 20 years of
18 movement and political advocacy experience to the
19 position.

20 He most recently served as New York
21 Immigration Coalition's Vice President of Policy &
22 Programs. Previously, he was a senior policy analyst
23 for New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-
24 Viverito with the Working Families Party, and was
25 among the original staff of ALIGN in 2012.

1 Moore serves on several boards,
2 including Riders Alliance, New Yorkers United for
3 Child Care, and PowerSwitch Action.

4 Theo?

5 MR. MOORE: Thank you. I feel humbled
6 just to be in the presence of the rest of the
7 commissioners. Thank you to Chair Gaspard. Don't
8 like having to go after Ruth Messinger, whose resume
9 is as long as Wemby's arms.

10 But I do have to say, as a born and
11 raised New Yorker, Knicks in 4, obviously. I'm truly
12 honored to -- to serve on this commission. Mostly
13 because working both in and around government, I
14 understand how the bureaucracy itself can be an
15 impediment to us really serving New Yorkers the best
16 we can.

17 You know, being at a nonprofit who has
18 received, you know, city funds, understanding how
19 there are limitations to when you receive those funds
20 and how you best serve the -- the New Yorkers that
21 you're trying to reach.

22 I look forward to listening to as many
23 New Yorkers as possible during this process, learning
24 about how we can improve things around the city, and
25 then, hopefully, coming up with initiatives that

1 actually improves the lives of as many people as
2 possible. Thank you.

3 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Theo.

4 Ana Oliveira is president and CEO of
5 the New York Women's Foundation. She has worked in
6 health and human services for two decades, including
7 as the executive director of Gay Men's Health Crisis,
8 and leading innovative community-based programs at
9 Samaritan Village, the Osborne Association, Kings
10 County, and Lincoln Hospitals.

11 Ana has also served as a member of the
12 New York City HIV Planning Council in the New York
13 City Commission on AIDS, chair of the New York City
14 Commission for LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth and
15 co-chair of Mayor Bloomberg's Young Men's Initiative.

16 Ana?

17 MS. OLIVEIRA: Thank you so much, Chair
18 Gaspard, and thank you so much. I want thank Mayor
19 Mamdani for creating this opportunity for me.

20 I come from the civil society from --
21 as Ruth was talking about, we are a very locally based
22 funder that works in the principle that problems and
23 solutions live in the same place. And that what we
24 need to do is be able to identify the engineers of
25 those solutions.

1 So in that spirit, I hope to bring some
2 of the voices of the -- including my incredible
3 commissioner here who leads one of the organizations
4 that we have the honor to partner with.

5 I hope to bring more of the closeness
6 between what actually occurs throughout the
7 neighborhoods and communities of New York that so
8 often don't experience themselves having a voice in
9 government.

10 And that, so often, as Ruth said,
11 having incredible solutions and incredible
12 opportunities that, I think, in a very smart
13 perspectives around how government could work better,
14 could accelerate the city further for all of us.

15 Personally, as an immigrant, as a
16 Latina, New York City has been an incredible welcoming
17 home and it has shown me, as has been said before, the
18 power of our, you know, inclusion, diversity, and as
19 you said, leveraging opportunity and talents, you
20 know, on a win-win formula. So thank you so much.

21 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Ana.

22 Dawn Pinnock: Dawn is the president
23 and CEO of the Center for Urban Community Services,
24 one of New York City's leading social service
25 organizations.

1 Prior to joining, Dawn served as
2 commissioner of the New York City Department of
3 Citywide Administrative Services and has over three
4 decades of experience working to modernize government
5 operations across New York City.

6 Dawn also serves on the New York City
7 Public Schools' Pathways Industry Commission, and as a
8 board trustee for Metropolitan College of New York.

9 And all of you look way too young to
10 have done all the things that are -- that are listed.

11 MS. PINNOCK: Thank you so much, Chair
12 Gaspard.

13 First, I want to say that I'm here
14 because I love the city. Similar to some of the
15 commission members, I'm a New Yorker through and
16 through. If you've ever heard me talk, I talk fast.
17 I walk fast. I have walk rage.

18 And so -- but as someone who is a
19 native New Yorker and a proud product of the public
20 school system, I knew I would not be in this room if
21 it had not been for New Yorkers who saw something in
22 me and poured into me professionally and -- and
23 personally.

24 And so over the span of my city career,
25 I had the awesome privilege of seeing the magic that

1 happens when you get brilliant minds in a room, where
2 you can take all the barriers out of the way and just,
3 you know, move towards efficiency. I had the pleasure
4 of doing that with DC37 with community hiring, where
5 we were able to hire people in record time.

6 We also had some really great wins
7 post-COVID because we were just trying to bring the
8 city back. And so having the opportunity to lend my
9 experience, my expertise, and also to hear directly
10 from New Yorkers about how we can make this city even
11 greater, I'm all in. So thank you so much for the
12 opportunity.

13 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much. That
14 walk rage can power the world.

15 Carlina Rivera has not yet arrived at
16 the hearing, and I'm not entirely sure she'll be here
17 by the time we conclude introduction. So for the
18 public record, I will give a sense of her -- her
19 accomplishments and her commitment.

20 She is a former New York City elected
21 official and current president and CEO of the New York
22 State Association for Affordable Housing, where she
23 leads the largest statewide coalition of affordable
24 housing stakeholders in the country to drive faster
25 development and long-term preservation across each of

1 the five boroughs.

2 As a New York City Council member, she
3 helps secure millions of dollars in funding for
4 housing preservation and production over her eight
5 years in office. She's also served as an officer of
6 Manhattan Community Board 3, and as legislative
7 director for Council Member Rosie Mendez.

8 Esther Rosario is executive director of
9 Climate Jobs New York, a coalition of labor unions
10 leading the fight for an equitable, resilient, and
11 unionized clean energy economy. Ms. Rosario also
12 serves as the policy director for the Building and
13 Construction Trades Council of Greater New York.

14 Prior to joining it, she served as
15 chief of staff for New York State Senate Labor Chair,
16 where she helped lead successful campaigns to raise
17 the minimum wage, expand access to childcare,
18 strengthen prevailing wage standards in -- in
19 renewable energy work, and advance critical worker
20 protections statewide.

21 Esther?

22 MS. ROSARIO: Well said. Well, I am
23 deeply humbled to be here. Honestly, I was a fly on
24 the wall at a commission -- I feel like we're a task
25 force, not too long ago, printing out these things;

1 where I met our fearless labor leader over there,
2 Henry Garrido, and was so inspired by -- I'm sorry.
3 I'm -- I also did not follow directions.

4 Where making good trouble was a part of
5 what I learned and have been deeply inspired by all of
6 the work that you all have done. As a macro social
7 worker, this is honestly a macro social worker's
8 dream, to be a part of making sure government works
9 for people and is meeting folks where they are.

10 And I'm excited to be a part of making
11 sure efficiency doesn't mean we're cutting corners on
12 making sure the impacts are -- are felt, and we're
13 hearing from -- from people across the boroughs. So
14 again, deeply humbled and honored to be here. Thank
15 you so much.

16 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much,
17 Esther.

18 Marc Shaw is a longtime New York State
19 and City Government official who has served as New
20 York City first deputy mayor and deputy mayor for
21 operations to Mayor Bloomberg, New York City budget
22 director, New York City finance commissioner, and
23 finance director for the New York City Council.

24 He is currently chair of the advisory
25 board and senior advisor at CUNY Institute for State

1 and Local Governance. Marc has served as a senior
2 advisor to the governor on MTA finances, executive
3 director and chief operating officer for the MTA from
4 1996 to 2001. And earlier in his career, served on
5 the New York State Senate Finance Committee.

6 Marc, I hope you won't mind me taking a
7 little bit of editorial license to say that one of the
8 things that I love about the city is the fact that you
9 and I have often -- because I'm such a ruthless
10 partisan, you and I have often worked in -- for
11 elected officials who serve all of New York, but who
12 have been in contest against one another.

13 And yet, we have worked feverishly for
14 the same outcomes and dignity for all New Yorkers.
15 And that makes me really, extraordinarily proud.

16 So Marc?

17 MR. SHAW: Yeah. So -- so thank you
18 for that introduction. So I -- I won't repeat my
19 resume because you just did. You know, to -- to me,
20 I -- I came first to New York City government from
21 Albany in 1988, and that was when the Supreme Court
22 ruled on the Board of Estimate on one man, one vote.

23 And I was working for the City Council,
24 which was a backboarder at the time to the Board of
25 Estimate. And the Charter Commission that was then

1 created blew away the Board of Estimate and made the
2 City Council a real player.

3 It was an incredibly exciting time
4 for -- for me, and it's where I first learned city
5 government from. You know, I -- I then served in a
6 bunch of roles for the mayor and the governor after
7 that.

8 But, you know, at the end of the day,
9 I'm just a government staff with a lot experience and,
10 you know, my job often was to solve the issues that
11 troublemakers like Henry would bring to us. And, you
12 know, with -- with that as a background, I'm looking
13 forward to helping draft charter changes that make
14 this government better than it ever was.

15 MR. GASPARD: Thank you, Marc.

16 Barika Williams is a New York City
17 housing expert and executive director of the
18 Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development,
19 where her work focuses on advancing equitable
20 community development strategies that empower
21 marginalized communities.

22 Prior to joining ANHD, she served as
23 assistant secretary of housing for the State of New
24 York under Governor Andrew Cuomo. She worked in real
25 estate development in Washington, DC, and published at

1 the Urban Institute.

2 She served on the inaugural US Treasury
3 Advisory Committee on Racial Equity, and has presented
4 nationally and internationally on neighborhood and
5 economic justice.

6 Barika, thank you so much for that
7 essential service, and the floor is yours.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Chair
9 Gaspard, and thank you to the fellow commissioners.
10 It is an honor to be here. I also want to thank the
11 mayor.

12 And while we're shouting out sports
13 teams, I also want to extend an open invitation to the
14 Gunners, the mayor's other team that's not New York,
15 the Arsenal team. They are more than welcome to join
16 any commission hearing. I'm sure we would love to
17 have them -- I -- the jersey -- Thierry Henry as well.
18 He may not play anymore, but he can come too.

19 MR. GASPARD: Priorities.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. Right. So -- no,
21 I'm just very honored to be here on the commission and
22 grateful for this opportunity to be a part of this
23 process that will really help shape government
24 services and the future of New York City.

25 As Chair Gaspard mentioned, my

1 professional experience ranges nonprofit leadership,
2 government, private sector, and academia at different
3 points in time.

4 But I think there's all questions
5 around, how do we make public systems -- systems
6 actually work better for the people who rely on them,
7 for the communities whose voices often aren't heard,
8 and for the neighborhoods that often go unseen,
9 unnoticed, and unfortunately unserved.

10 So for me, government effectiveness is
11 not an abstract concept. I think what we're -- a lot
12 of us are really talking about and thinking about is,
13 how do you not have a tenant have to sit for months
14 without getting heat?

15 How do you not have somebody not have
16 to go through five different offices and not be able
17 to sit and do forms in triplicate in order to get
18 services as a parent; right?

19 And I think importantly, as -- as Henry
20 mentioned, how do we think about the nonprofit
21 organizations and labor organizations that deliver
22 critical services throughout the city, often without
23 payment up front?

24 And who are being incredibly effective
25 operating in arrears and -- and without funds,

1 sometimes for years at a time, and continue to say,
2 "I'm going to serve the student walking into my door.
3 I'm going to help somebody with financial service.
4 I'm going to provide literacy service," knowing that
5 they won't necessarily be able to be there and
6 provide -- be able to bring back in that money for a
7 period of time.

8 I am really looking forward, I think,
9 importantly, to listening, which many other folks have
10 said. And to echo what other commissioners have said,
11 I really do want to encourage all of those out there.

12 Whether you're a nonprofit, whether
13 you're a civil servant, whether you're a -- if you're
14 a government employee. If you're like, "I've been
15 writing down ideas in a notebook for a couple years,"
16 that this is the moment to bring them forward.

17 Because I think this set of people is
18 really here to think about strengthening the process
19 and hear how we seriously can consider and engage them
20 to make them work for New York.

21 And I hope to approach this with
22 curiosity and rigor and a little bit of enjoyment and
23 joy, which I always appreciate the Chair's already
24 included, to figure out how government could work
25 better for all New Yorkers.

1 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much,
2 Barika. You give me confidence that we're going to
3 manage to ask the exact right questions in this
4 commission.

5 My friend, Kathryn Wylde, is a cheat
6 code. She's an urban policy expert and widely
7 recognized New York civic and business leader. She
8 recently stepped down after 25 years as president and
9 CEO of -- of the Partnership for New York City -- some
10 of us thought she should be president for life -- the
11 city's preeminent business organization.

12 She serves on the boards of the New
13 York City Economic Development Corporation, the New
14 York State New York City Regional Economic Development
15 Council, the Fund for Public Schools, the Manhattan
16 Institute, Invest Puerto Rico, and the Partnership
17 Fund for New York City.

18 I'll just say that Kathy always makes
19 me feel that there is nothing wrong with New York that
20 can't be solved by all that's right in New York if we
21 look for effective partnership.

22 Kathy?

23 MS. WYLDE: Agree with that. So I
24 just -- I want to thank the mayor for taking on the
25 issue of government efficiency and responsiveness

1 because it is -- if we can't fix some of the
2 bureaucratic hurdles that we face, the time that it
3 takes to get things done, what the cost of those
4 delays are, we cannot solve the affordability crisis.

5 It's in the weeds. It's tough. I'm
6 delighted to be part of a group that I think
7 understands the -- the details. This is not --
8 there's no philosophical fix to this set of issues.
9 This is really a grinding exercise. We have a
10 relatively short period of time in which to do it.

11 But I think the fact that, early in
12 this administration, they're making this a high
13 profile issue. We'll only be able to get started on
14 some measures that are required to address the
15 efficiency in government issues and the affordability
16 issues associated with it.

17 But I think it's very important to get
18 this early start, and then we have a broad based group
19 that can hopefully listen to the communities across
20 the city, take advantage of what we all know and what
21 we hear, and then turn that into some strong
22 recommendations for November to begin the process.

23 We're not going to finish it, but to
24 begin the process of making New York City work more
25 effectively for all of our residents, workers,

1 employers, et cetera.

2 MR. GASPARD: To that, I say, "Amen."
3 Thank you so much, Kathy.

4 Council Member Rivera, before you
5 arrived, I read your professional biography and your
6 inspiring accomplishments into the public record. But
7 I'd love to give you an opportunity to just speak to
8 why this commission compels your participation.

9 MS. RIVERA: Hi, everyone. Thank you
10 so much for the introduction. One of the biggest
11 barriers to smart and sustainable services and
12 infrastructure is the amount of time, uncertainty, and
13 bureaucracy involved in getting initiatives approved
14 and financed.

15 This is true for anything from building
16 affordable homes to bike lanes, everyone's favorite
17 topic, projects that often face years of delays. This
18 is tied to overlapping agency reviews, redundancies,
19 and things like inspections, environmental approvals,
20 procurement rules, inconsistent processes.

21 I know that our government service --
22 servants work hard, but there is just so much there to
23 unpack. And I'm glad to be a part of this committed
24 group of people that I respect, who we are going to
25 follow through in this commitment to public

1 excellence.

2 New Yorkers will be clear in the issues
3 and challenges that they encounter on a day-to-day
4 basis, and I know that the talent and expertise in
5 this commission is open -- is open to listening, and
6 also we're ready to deliver.

7 So thank you so much for the
8 opportunity to speak. And I'm really honored and
9 privileged to be a part of a group that wants to
10 deliver smarter, and wants to be transparent and
11 engaged with the community. Thank you.

12 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so very much,
13 Council Member.

14 I now would like to move to the -- the
15 formal business part of -- of this meeting. In order
16 to activate the agency of this commission, there are
17 some formal steps that we will have to take. And I'd
18 like to walk you through them right now. There are
19 three -- please.

20 MS. MESSINGER: Before you do that, can
21 I just say, for 14 people who all talk faster than the
22 speed of light, I would just like to commend the sign
23 language interpreters who are incredible. I've never
24 seen anybody work so fast.

25 MR. GASPARD: I think that the sign

1 language interpreters are modeling efficiency in here,
2 getting us through this. Thank you.

3 I would -- I would like to ask that
4 this commission consider three resolutions that will,
5 if adopted, assist us in our work. The first
6 resolution will appoint Ann Cheng as the commission's
7 executive director.

8 Ann most recently served as director of
9 Strategic Initiatives in New York State Governor's
10 Office, where she successfully led coordinated
11 legislative and communications efforts to secure key
12 policy wins in the 2026 state budget.

13 Previously, she served as chief of
14 staff for the CUNY Office of Budget and Finance. And
15 prior to that, held multiple senior roles in New York
16 City government.

17 Ann receives a Hayes Innovation Award
18 for co-founding the nation-leading New York City
19 Asylum Application Help Center. She led the capital
20 process reform task force to several legislative
21 victories, and she served as deputy chief of staff and
22 staff secretary to Mayor de Blasio during the COVID-19
23 crisis.

24 This resolution grants Ann the
25 authority to maintain a staff, and work on behalf of

1 the commission with other city agencies and elected
2 officials across the city to accomplish our goals.

3 The second resolution establishes an
4 order of succession to the chair and designates vice
5 president -- sorry. Vice Chair Emma Wolfe to act in
6 my place, if I am unable to execute the duties of this
7 office.

8 The third resolution is adopted under
9 the New York State Open Meetings Law, and will allow
10 commissioners to participate in public meetings by
11 video conference, if they are unable to attend
12 meetings in person.

13 We will consider these three
14 resolutions jointly. And I'd like to move that the
15 charter revision commission adopt resolutions one,
16 two, and three, as presented today.

17 MS. WOLFE: Is there a second?

18 MR. LONGANI: Second.

19 MS. WOLFE: The motion on the floor is
20 to adopt resolutions one, two, and three as presented.
21 Is there any discussion on the motion?

22 Henry?

23 MR. GARRIDO: I have a question
24 regarding resolution number three in regards to
25 voting, not just participating, voting when

1 participating via teleconferences. Is that
2 permissible for the sake of, you know, establishing
3 both a quorum, but also on the matters that are put
4 before the commission?

5 MS. CHENG: Yeah. So I'm happy to --
6 to jump in on this, and my colleagues in the law
7 department should feel free to correct me. My
8 understanding is that you may attend and participate
9 virtually.

10 For meetings where we are making
11 decisions that are, you know, decision-making votes,
12 we need an in-person quorum. So for public hearings,
13 those are not decision-making votes. But like today's
14 meeting, for example, is a decision-making vote, and
15 we need an in-person quorum.

16 MR. GASPARD: Point of clarification on
17 that, Ann. If we -- if we have an in-person quorum,
18 but a commissioner is not able to attend in-person,
19 and they're on video -- but we have a quorum
20 established in the room, will their vote be recorded
21 and count?

22 MS. CHENG: I would turn to my
23 colleagues in law. That is a great question.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

25 MS. WOLFE: Yes.

1 MS. CHENG: Yes. Thank you, Ed.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

3 MS. WOLFE: Okay. Any other questions
4 while we're discussing -- okay. All those in favor
5 say, "Aye."

6 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

7 MS. WOLFE: Any opposed?

8 [No audible response.]

9 Any abstentions?

10 [No audible response.]

11 The resolutions have passed. Thank
12 you.

13 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much.

14 Ann, I'd like to give you the
15 opportunity to make a few formal brief remarks, and we
16 can see that, even in advance of the vote, you were
17 already hard at work.

18 MS. CHENG: Thank you so much, Chair
19 and Vice Chair, and thank you to all of the
20 commissioners. I've worked in city and state
21 government across a number of administrations, and I'm
22 really thrilled to be the executive director of this
23 commission on government efficiency.

24 I want to thank the mayor and the
25 commissioners for your faith in me. And I also wanted

1 to thank the amazing city hall team who has been hard
2 at work supporting this commission already.

3 We ask city agencies to do some of the
4 most complex tasks facing New Yorkers: To take care
5 of our children all day; to build water tunnels and
6 bring us clean drinking water; to shovel huge
7 quantities of snow immediately following a snowstorm,
8 so that we can get where we want to go as fast as we
9 want to go.

10 So much of what we ask city workers to
11 do is so hard, and that part's not surprising. I
12 think none of those things is supposed to be easy.

13 What has always struck me working in
14 government, whether it was the CUNY Budget Office or
15 the governor's office or working in the city during
16 COVID, was not that what should be hard was hard, but
17 that what should be easy was also hard.

18 Taking care of young children is really
19 hard. I have three kids. You can find me any weekend
20 day, and I will testify it is really hard. But like
21 getting that kid's name to appear on your roster or
22 getting that kid a copy of the textbook they need or
23 the OMNY card, like, that shouldn't be hard.

24 Digging a water tunnel seems incredibly
25 hard, but getting the approvals you need to initiate

1 the construction process, that should be easy.
2 Shoveling a ton of snow really fast, that's really
3 hard, but purchasing a new snow plow should be easy.

4 You know, my -- my middle kid this
5 morning asked me, like, what this commission is all
6 about. And I was struggling to explain this to a
7 6-year-old, and I said, "I just want my friends to be
8 able to do their jobs."

9 So I'm thrilled to have the chance to
10 revise the charter and to try to make things that
11 should be easy a little bit easier, so that we can try
12 to do the hard things really well. Thank you.

13 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so very much,
14 Ann. We are all looking forward to relying on you.
15 We're going to make the -- the easy things easy, and
16 we're going to make a little bit of history here as
17 well.

18 For the remainder of our time today, we
19 will receive two short presentations from the
20 Conflicts of Interest Board and from the Law
21 Department. As Ruth Messinger taught me a long time
22 ago, integrity and transparency are key to everything
23 that you do in the public interest and on the public
24 dime. It is certainly key for this Charter Revision
25 Commission.

1 To that end, we are fortunate to have
2 Alex Kipp of the Conflict of Interest Board as the
3 first presenter to the commission to speak to our --
4 to our obligations as commissioners.

5 MR. KIPP: Hi, everybody.

6 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Hi.

7 MR. KIPP: Thank you for having me, and
8 thank you for your service. I have to say, I am a big
9 fan of charter revision in general. It was a charter
10 revision commission in '86 to '88 that established the
11 Conflict of Interest Board where I work, and also made
12 training and education one of the four pillars of the
13 board's work, which gave me a job opportunity; right?

14 And then it was 2010 Charter Revision
15 Commission that made training mandatory for all
16 300,000 public servants, which gave me job security,
17 so -- and I run a team now that does this for
18 everybody.

19 We're going to do a very short training
20 today for you all. It's going to be basically two
21 parts. I'm going to talk just a little tiny bit about
22 what the Conflict of Interest Board does, to refresh
23 your memory mostly.

24 And then we'll talk just a tiny little
25 bit about how you intersect, potentially, with the

1 law, because the law treats you a little bit
2 differently than it does other kinds of public
3 servants. And after 20 minutes, I will be done.
4 Sound good?

5 MS. CHENG: Good.

6 MR. KIPP: Okay. Here we go. So the
7 Conflict of Interest Board has these four functions.
8 I direct the training unit. The second unit is the
9 annual disclosure unit. We are the people that the
10 policy makers file the forms with.

11 The good news is twofold here, the
12 filing period has ended, so you don't have to file
13 this year. If you do have to file, it'll be in 2027
14 for this year's activities and financial interest.

15 Also, it's the short form, not the long
16 form. So those of you who have been in government
17 before, you know it's that 30-page form that takes
18 forever to fill out the first time you do it
19 electronically. This is a much shorter form in a
20 Google Doc that you can do fairly easily. So good
21 news there.

22 Now, let's go on to the other two
23 units. It was always thought, and we know this from
24 the notes of the Charter Revision Commission from '86
25 to '88, that this primary work of the Conflict of

1 Interest Board was going to be in prevention.

2 This is a law that is not an anti-
3 corruption law. It's a law for everybody, because
4 everybody in -- in New York City government has
5 private interests.

6 And we have so many amazing people who
7 work in city government who are authors and teachers
8 and professors and have private practices and are
9 consultants and do other kinds of -- and may sit on
10 the boards of not-for-profits.

11 And this law says, "Yay. Do all those
12 amazing things for the City of New York. Let's just
13 follow the guardrails that keep those" -- when you
14 encounter those rare moments in life where there's a
15 potential for overlap between your public duties and
16 your private interests, these guardrails keep those
17 things separate.

18 So most of this is about advice.
19 That's the third unit. When the law -- when they
20 wrote the law, the Charter Revision Commission wanted
21 there to be no barriers to entry on getting this
22 advice, very frictionless, to use a kind of
23 economic -- you know, behavioral economics parlance.

24 But what does that mean for us? It
25 means that the advice is always free. That's good.

1 Because I think if people paid to talk to us, we'd be
2 very lonely; right? But also it's -- it's
3 confidential, and that's probably the interesting one
4 because not every jurisdiction in America is like
5 that.

6 Some places, every advice request is
7 part of the public record, and that's not true for us;
8 right? So all -- when you request advice, we will
9 give you confidential answers to your questions. We
10 cannot reveal the answer we give you. We cannot
11 reveal the question you ask, and we can't even confirm
12 or deny that you asked us for advice.

13 So you've got a safe place to talk to
14 us about anything that you're proposing to do, and
15 that's the caveat there; right? The confidentiality
16 is on the proposed future activities; right? If I do
17 a bunch of bad stuff that breaks laws, and I ask for
18 advice, that's not advice. That's a confession;
19 right?

20 "Hey, I broke a bunch of laws, can I
21 get a" -- you know, that's going to be an enforcement
22 case; right? So we -- we don't want that. We want
23 everything to happen before.

24 Now, the last unit is the enforcement
25 unit. I won't go into a lot about that, but the

1 consideration was made in '86 to '88. We wanted -- as
2 opposed to the Board of Ethics from '59 to '89, which
3 had no enforcement, we want this conflict of interest
4 board to have an enforcement unit, and they're
5 involved in the prosecutions.

6 We see anywhere from 50 to a 100 cases
7 a year. That's all I'll say about that. We've never
8 had an enforcement case against a Charter Revision
9 Commission member, so let's use our time more
10 productively.

11 Okay. So what are we going to do now?
12 We're going to talk about how the law works. And
13 there are two very important cruxes here that we need
14 to go over. One of the goals of the Charter Revision
15 Commission way back when was to have a very simple
16 law, a very short law.

17 It's only about 16 pages, and, pretty
18 much, it covers everybody exactly the same. That was
19 intentional. You -- you want consistent enforcement,
20 consistent advice, so let's make a short law.
21 Everybody knows what it means.

22 Now, there are two ways in which that
23 is not true, and they apply to people in this room.
24 The first one is the difference between part-timers
25 and full-timers. And the other one is the additional

1 restrictions you face as being people who have
2 substantial policy discretion.

3 And for some of you who've been in
4 these kinds of roles before -- so this shouldn't be a
5 surprise, but I'll just review both those things. So
6 let's first look at the part-time versus full-time.

7 Full-time public servants, like me,
8 basically have a restriction that says that I can't
9 have a position with any company or entity or private
10 entity that has any business dealings with any part of
11 city government. Not just my agency, but any city
12 agency. That's not true for you.

13 The only kind of prohibited outside
14 interest for a commissioner here would be if you have
15 a position with a firm that does business with this
16 agency, which -- and if you -- and so what happens on
17 a practical basis?

18 Any kind of -- you say you got a school
19 teacher, and they want to teach at NYU, they need a
20 waiver from the conflict of interest board because
21 it's a violation of the letter of the law, but not the
22 spirit of the law.

23 And so they -- they get this waiver to
24 teach as an adjunct. You would only need a waiver if
25 you wanted to work for a firm or had a position with a

1 firm that did business directly with this agency. I'm
2 not sure that that waiver would be supported, but
3 you'd have to apply.

4 Now, question: Does making public
5 testimony before this commission constitute business
6 dealings? No, it does not. No, it does not. I'm
7 talking about contracts, grants, things like that.

8 So the only time a member of this
9 commission would need a waiver, which you probably
10 wouldn't apply for anyway, is if you worked for a
11 place that did business directly with this agency.

12 Part two, very similar. Has to do with
13 paid compensated representations before city agency.
14 I'm the full-timer. I can't make a paid
15 representation before any other city agency, unless I
16 receive a waiver from the Conflict of Interest Board,
17 and agency had approval first, then the waiver.

18 That's not true for you either. The
19 only time you'd need a waiver is if you wanted to
20 represent a private firm before this board then -- or
21 this commission, then you would need a waiver. And
22 again, query as to whether that waiver would be
23 granted.

24 Now, obviously, there are many
25 organizations that are going to be making testimony

1 to -- public testimony to this commission, and there's
2 no violation for someone to sit on this commission and
3 listen to their own firm's testimony. I'll go into
4 that in a little bit more detail in a -- in a second.
5 Now, that's the part-time, full-time thing.

6 So a lot of people need waivers.
7 You're probably not going to need a waiver. Even if
8 you had a position with a -- from another part of the
9 city government, you wouldn't need a waiver to do
10 that.

11 Now, one thing we reminded everybody on
12 this -- I know it's very obvious -- is that when
13 people have their outside positions -- for you, that's
14 the full-time life that you have.

15 But we tell this to anybody working an
16 outside position, if they have any position in city
17 government, is, you don't use any amount of city time
18 or resources in furtherance of your outside interests.
19 And I know that's an obvious point.

20 I -- I'm not expecting anybody here to
21 try to do bitcoin mining with the computers at the
22 CRC; right? That would be crazy. But -- but I've
23 seen that case; right? There was a DOE employee who
24 tried to do bitcoin mining with DOE computers or DOE
25 servers. Yeah.

1 I don't think you'd get away with that
2 now, right, because the computer's too intensive. But
3 this was like ten years ago; right? So I -- I know
4 you wouldn't do that. But I would caution everybody,
5 there -- there have been high level people who have
6 stepped on the wrong side of this.

7 The former chair of the Civil Service
8 Commission back in the Bloomberg years was an
9 attorney. He had a private law practice, and he
10 devoted some amount of resources in furtherance of his
11 private law practice that -- that were civil service
12 commission resources, and it ended up being a \$15,000
13 case.

14 So I have seen it on basically every
15 level of city government, so just the caution is out
16 there.

17 Okay. Now, part two. Part two is
18 about substantial policy discretion. Now, a lot of
19 this has to do with political activities. So let's do
20 the stuff where we're all the same, irrespective
21 whether you're a policymaker or you're rank and file,
22 here's what's the same.

23 We all may not solicit donations to any
24 kind of partisan electioneering campaign to get
25 someone elected or reelected from anybody that we have

1 power over. You know, what I would say to a normal
2 public servant is like, "Hey, if you're a person who
3 deals with vendors a lot, you don't ask the vendor for
4 a political donation." Obviously; right?

5 The other one is, as commission
6 members, the staff that you have here are considered
7 your subordinates, and therefore, you can't make any
8 kind of solicitation to a subordinate. You can't ask
9 them to go to a rally. You can't ask them for a vote.
10 You can't ask them for a donation. You can't ask
11 them. It's a violation.

12 That's a change from -- the old ethics
13 law up to '89 said, "The superior can't coerce the
14 subordinate," and they changed that language, so the
15 superior can't even ask the subordinate.

16 Because guess what? When the
17 superior -- when your boss asks, "How would you like
18 to" -- is that really what they're doing; right? No;
19 right? They're saying, "Do it." So that's the view
20 of the law.

21 Now, substantial policy makers,
22 substantial policy makers, this is the -- now, we get
23 into this sort of the level two stuff. There are
24 other restrictions that only apply to you that are
25 about fundraising for local races.

1 That's the first one. And what it
2 means is that if I have policy -- I'm a substantial
3 policy discretion person, I am not allowed to ask
4 anyone in the world to donate their money to anybody
5 running for a local office. So anybody running for
6 council, mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough
7 president. I cannot ask other people.

8 I've got a friend living in China right
9 now. I haven't seen him in ten years. I can't ask
10 him to donate to somebody running for one of these
11 local races, and I also -- now, can I contribute my
12 own money? Yes, absolutely, I can, but I can't ask
13 anybody else to contribute their money to a local
14 race.

15 And the other kind of person I cannot
16 raise money for is a current city elected official
17 who's running for any other elected office. And this
18 happens a lot because there's term limits.

19 So, for example, down where I lived for
20 many years, Major Owens was my congress member, and he
21 retired. And Yvette Clark ran for his seat. She was
22 a sitting city council member. We couldn't have
23 raised money for her because she was a current city
24 official running for another office.

25 Just so I don't sound like somebody's

1 grandpa, we could do a more contemporary reference,
2 which would be Ritchie Torres; right? Ritchie Torres
3 did the same thing. He was a sitting city council
4 member who ran for that federal office, which you
5 want.

6 Now, the other thing -- and now, we're
7 really like, "Wow. This is so specific" -- is people
8 who are policy makers may not hold high level
9 positions in the parties, in the county party, the
10 county executive, things like that.

11 And you might be like, "Wow. Where
12 does that come from?" Well, it comes out of a charter
13 reform from '86 to '88; right? We might all -- we
14 all -- probably, we're all familiar with the scandal
15 in the mid-80s involving the Queens borough president,
16 Donald Manes. It was crazy; right?

17 You should read City for Sale, if you
18 haven't. Such a great read. It's all about this time
19 where -- you know, you got Stanley Friedman, the --
20 the Bronx Democratic Party leader. You got the
21 Parking Violations Bureau. You got bags of cash going
22 back and forth in restaurants.

23 And -- and the after action report
24 was -- was -- okay. Manes was the Queens borough
25 president. This is pre-charter reform; right? So

1 that's a -- that's a position with a lot of juice.
2 He's -- he's a very powerful person, and he was also
3 head of the Queens Democratic Party.

4 And the after action on that was,
5 should such a high level powerful person also be very
6 high level in the parties, because aren't you
7 structurally inviting some seepage of the agenda of
8 the party into the operations of government?

9 And so we've had that restriction for
10 35 years, that you can't be a high level person and
11 also be high level in the county parties, county
12 executive, things like that.

13 If you -- if you do get invited to be
14 active in any way in the parties, it would probably
15 be -- and it's not going to be just, you know, being a
16 dues paying member -- get some advice from us talking
17 about efficiency. Our advice is efficient. You will
18 get it the day you call for the advice on the phone.
19 We'll email you a copy of what we say.

20 I mean, unless you ask us a really
21 complicated question, and then we maybe have to go to
22 our board. But we will be very efficient because we
23 know advice delaying is advice denied.

24 Okay. Last topic. Okay. This has to
25 do with the -- the entities that you are affiliated

1 with on the outside; right? I just heard all of the
2 resumes, all of the amazing ways that you are helping
3 this city be better and better and better. Let's talk
4 about this.

5 So I've got an -- my own employer wants
6 to come before this charter revision commission and
7 make public testimony. And the question is, do I have
8 to leave the room? Do I have to recuse? And the
9 answer is no.

10 The way we should think about this is
11 that do -- being at this public meeting, listening to
12 the testimony, voting, all of that stuff, is an
13 essential function of what you were selected to do on
14 this committee, so you can do it.

15 The advice from the board has been,
16 please comport yourself as a Charter Revision
17 Commission member always; right? We don't want, like,
18 you know, oh, I'm -- I'm dancing in the dance
19 competition and mom is the judge; right?

20 It's got -- it's a little bit of,
21 like -- so I'm never -- I just -- I'm comporting
22 myself like what I do with every other person who
23 gives public testimony; right? That's the idea.

24 Now, then -- so there's no conflict.

25 Now, then the question comes up that, all right, well

1 there's a lot of proposals that have come before this
2 commission. There's a lot of interesting ideas. We
3 need to find out more things from the stakeholders.

4 We're going to talk to the regulators.
5 We're going to talk to the regulees. We're going to
6 talk to the organization that is -- employs me. And
7 what's -- how's that going to look? This is going to
8 be a meeting that's not part of the public meeting.

9 So the Charter Revision Commission is
10 going to send out staffers, maybe commissioners, to
11 meet with these parties and get the context, get the
12 facts, get the opinions. How does this work? How
13 would you like it to work? These kinds of things.

14 That meeting, if I am employed by the
15 organization that's going to be at that non-public
16 meeting, I should not be at that meeting. I should
17 not represent my employer at that meeting, and I
18 should not represent the Charter Revision Commission
19 at that meeting.

20 And that I would call maybe the -- the
21 less essential function, and therefore, that's the one
22 that demands the recusal.

23 Third question I could imagine coming
24 up -- because I've seen it before -- is my firm would
25 like to donate time, resources, other kinds of things,

1 so that I, the commissioner, have more work products
2 for my work here.

3 So reports, surveys, research, other
4 kinds of things that -- and -- and is that allowed for
5 that donation to happen from my firm to the
6 commission? And the answer is yes, the benefit
7 there -- we're down solely to the Charter Revision
8 Commission, so it's fine to accept that donation.

9 The one caveat that I've seen is, to
10 the extent that there is any non-FOILable
11 information -- I don't know -- things mentioned in
12 executive session, things that are confidential or
13 whatever, that information can't be shared with my
14 firm because they're not the Charter Revision
15 Commission.

16 It's probably not going to come up that
17 much, but if it did, you just have to separate that
18 out.

19 That's it. That's all I have to say.
20 I think my colleague, Ed -- I gave him, like, a one,
21 two-page handout. It's got all of our contact
22 information. It's got the telephone. You call us
23 nine to five. It's got the website. There's a button
24 that says "Get legal advice."

25 It's got our address. You could write

1 us a letter if you -- I mean, that's weird today, but
2 you could do that.

3 And with that, I think I've probably
4 talked enough, and I'll let my friends from the law
5 department take over, unless there's any questions?

6 MR. GASPARD: Alex, we -- we don't
7 really have time for -- for questions in this session.
8 I saw Henry's hand go up. And I'm always going to
9 allow Henry to -- to make an intervention, but it's
10 going to be exceedingly brief in how he -- in the
11 question and in your response.

12 MR. KIPP: Thank you. Yep.

13 MR. GARRIDO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
14 Since we are talking about efficiency, the Conflict of
15 Interest Board form that you mentioned, in the long
16 doc, only allows you to click one commission or
17 entity, and then you have to physically add each one
18 after the other, which seems terribly inefficient.

19 MR. KIPP: Okay.

20 MR. GARRIDO: Could you amend the form
21 so that we, as commissioners, can actually click more
22 than one? Since we all serve in multiple boards.
23 Thank you.

24 MR. KIPP: Yes -- okay. I have a magic
25 wand here. I'll get that right going for you because

1 that's -- that's -- you know what? I will see the
2 annual disclosure director tomorrow, and I will talk
3 with this valuable feedback that I got, to see how the
4 form could be amended.

5 I think the good news is because the
6 short form is something that is easily controllable,
7 probably making it more user friendly is not that hard
8 to do. But I will -- I'll discuss with her the
9 option. So thank you for bringing that to my
10 attention. And with that, I'm done. Yeah.

11 MR. GASPARD: Excellent.

12 MR. KIPP: Thanks, everybody.

13 MR. GASPARD: Alex, thank you for all
14 of the insights in that presentation, and thank you
15 for the passion that you bring to the subject. I
16 really hope that we get to take you on the road show
17 with us.

18 MR. KIPP: Oh, thank you.

19 MR. GASPARD: I'd like to invite Ben
20 Miller and Joe Beck of the New York City Law
21 Department to present on the function and role of the
22 city charter, as well as the work of some prior
23 Charter Revision Commissions.

24 MR. BECK: Thank you, Chair, and
25 members of the commission. My name is Joe Beck, and

1 I'm part of the legal counsel division of the New York
2 City Law Department. My division and I look forward
3 to continuing to work with you all about all of the
4 issues that may come up, and other questions you may
5 have in the future, as they relate to the charter and
6 the legal aspects of what you all are doing.

7 Our presentation today is focused on a
8 very brief overview of the New York City charter and
9 the process to amend it. This isn't meant to be
10 comprehensive, and -- sure, please. Oh, thank you.

11 So this isn't meant to be
12 comprehensive, and I'll try to run through these
13 slides fairly quickly. I'm sure you'll have many
14 questions as you continue in your work, so please feel
15 free to send us questions later through Ann. And
16 we'll answer those as best we can.

17 I'll handle the first part of this
18 presentation, speak about the charter and its history,
19 and then pass this off to my colleague, Ben Miller,
20 who will then speak about the work of the commission
21 and how the charter can be amended.

22 So what is the New York City charter?
23 It can be -- it can be thought of as the city's
24 version of the federal constitution of sorts. It sets
25 out the structure, powers, and responsibilities of New

1 York City's government.

2 And it's intended to be a short form
3 document that broadly defines the authority and
4 responsibilities of city agencies and elected
5 officials and the basic processes of government.

6 It isn't supposed to contain detailed
7 provisions about agency programs or different
8 requirements. And because those more detailed
9 provisions are usually saved for the administrative
10 code of the city or in the rules of the city,
11 promulgated by various different agencies.

12 But there are some exceptions. For
13 example, chapter 79 at the end of the charter relates
14 to the Office of Community Hiring, and that contains a
15 high level of detail. But again, that's typically
16 saved for the administrative code and the rules.

17 So it's also important to understand
18 the broader legal context, where in the charter fits.
19 So local governments across the country get their
20 legal authorities from the states where they're
21 located.

22 And in New York state, this legal
23 framework for municipalities is set by the state's
24 constitution and various state laws. So some of these
25 key state laws that define local authority are the

1 municipal home rule law, the general city law, and the
2 general municipal law.

3 The municipal home rule law is
4 particularly relevant to you all because it provides
5 the broad authority to determine the city structure
6 and the process for doing so, such as creating the
7 Charter Revision Commission.

8 It's also important to understand the
9 history of the New York City Charter to better
10 understand it shaped into what it looks like today.
11 So local charters have existed, and they date back to
12 colonial times. But the first charter of the city as
13 we know it was adopted in 1897.

14 So it was enacted by the state
15 legislator to govern Greater New York, which at the
16 time included the city's Brooklyn and New York, as
17 well as some surrounding municipalities. And that
18 charter was very long and had lots of material that
19 was later moved to the city's administrative code.

20 In 1901, the state added extensive
21 amendments, and it was -- but that charter was still a
22 lot longer and more detailed than what it looks like
23 in today's modern charter.

24 The first short form charter that
25 resembles what we have today was implemented by a 1936

1 Charter Revision Commission, which was appointed by
2 Mayor La Guardia. It was much shorter and really did
3 focus on the fundamental structure of city government.

4 And for the first time, these detailed
5 provisions were codified in the city's administrative
6 code, which was adopted shortly after the approval of
7 the 1936 charter. Then there were many further
8 commissions for the subsequent -- in the subsequent
9 decades.

10 But the most recent commission to
11 propose questions on the ballot was appointed by Mayor
12 Adams in December 2024, with those proposals being
13 most of them approved by voters during the November
14 2025 general election. So I -- as -- as I think
15 you're beginning to see, this charter, it does serve
16 almost like the city's constitution.

17 And now, I'll briefly discuss just
18 what's actually in the charter. So the first few
19 chapters cover the various elected officials, except
20 for the district attorney, but the mayor, city
21 council, borough presidents, and the controller.

22 These chapters generally set forth how
23 the officials are elected, terms of office, powers and
24 duties of the office, conditions for removal, and the
25 staff and/or deputies to be hired or appointed. As

1 you may know, and are wondering about, the Board of
2 Estimate on the slide there.

3 There used to be a Board of Estimate in
4 the city whose powers were covered by chapter three of
5 the charter. However, this chapter was repealed in
6 1989, and the Board of Estimate was abolished. So
7 there is no more chapter three of the charter.

8 Then the -- the -- all good. The --
9 the next chapter's not on the -- on the slide there.
10 I think it's a bit frozen. Okay. There we go. Just
11 6 through 15, chapter 6 through 15, relate to
12 processes about budgeting, spending, and city
13 property.

14 And then the remainder of the
15 charter -- the remainder of the charter mostly
16 consists of chapters about different agencies,
17 offices, and departments. It's -- it's not on the
18 slide, but I can -- it looks like it's a little
19 frozen. Okay. There we go.

20 There are over 40 chapters that each
21 cover a different agency or office. These chapters,
22 generally speaking, are about the different powers and
23 duties of the agencies and their commissioners
24 covering topics like appointments, rule-making
25 authority, subpoena power, and enforcement authority.

1 And then finally, just to briefly --
2 just to briefly mention, other chapters kind of
3 scattered throughout the charter set forth processes
4 or requirements applicable to city officials and
5 agencies. Chapter 45 is about the city administrative
6 procedure act, which governs rule making.

7 And then chapter 68 governs the
8 conflicts of interest, which Alex just discussed. So
9 while we won't cover all these chapters today, I just
10 wanted to briefly mention them, to give you a sense
11 about what topics are covered in the charter and the
12 ideas you may hear and think about in the coming
13 weeks.

14 So now, I will turn this presentation
15 over to Ben, who will discuss the process for amending
16 the charter.

17 MR. MILLER: All right. Thank -- thank
18 you, Joe. I'm going to keep us moving here. So as
19 Joe mentioned, the -- the charter, in a sense, can be
20 analogized to the federal and state constitution in
21 that it sets forth the -- the broad principles and --
22 and organization of government.

23 And while the details are set forth in
24 the ad code, which is a little more like the United
25 States Code. But one way in which they are different

1 is that -- is the ease and the -- and the frequency
2 with the -- which the charter is amended.

3 While it's fairly cumbersome and --
4 to -- to amend the federal or state constitution, the
5 charter can be amended fairly easily. So there are,
6 essentially, four ways to amend the charter, including
7 by a regular local law passed by the city council
8 and -- and signed by the mayor. The -- the charter
9 can be admitted that way.

10 It can also be admitted by a local law
11 that, depending on the subject matter or because of
12 the subject matter being -- that the law is covering,
13 must -- can only take effect upon voter approval at a
14 referendum.

15 The charter can be amended by state
16 law. It can also be amended on petition, which --
17 with approval by the voters, or it can be amended by a
18 charter revision commission that proposes amendments
19 to the charter and are amended by -- excuse me, and
20 approved by the voters. And that -- that's you.

21 So how is the commission established?
22 A commission is established pursuant to state law,
23 specifically section 36 of the municipal home rule law
24 that provides the authority for the mayor to establish
25 a commission, such a commission has between 9 and 15

1 members, and the mayor designates the chair and the
2 vice chair and secretary from the members.

3 All members of the commission must be
4 city residents, and the commissioners may hold public
5 office or employment. And I mention that because, for
6 many other boards and commissions, the opposite rule
7 applies. And -- and on those boards and commissions,
8 you -- you cannot otherwise hold public office or
9 employment. But that -- that's not true for you.

10 Commissions are not permanent. You
11 essentially have two chances to put proposals on the
12 ballot. So I think everyone's expectation is that
13 this commission will put proposals on the ballots
14 for -- for voters to vote on this -- this November.

15 But if, for whatever reason, you did
16 not do that, you would continue to exist for -- for
17 another year. And -- and you could put proposals on
18 the ballot in 2027.

19 The day after that election, though,
20 regardless of whether -- in that scenario, whether you
21 put a proposal on the ballot or not -- the ballot or
22 not, you will -- your terms will expire, and the
23 commission will -- will dissolve. Of course, the
24 mayor could always reconstitute the commission and
25 reappoint the same members --

1 MR. GASPARD: Can I ask you just to go
2 back -- back a slide and to -- and to clarify a point
3 for the public? On the third bullet down, "The mayor
4 selects the chair, vice chair, secretary of the
5 commission." But that should read in full, "From
6 amongst the -- the appointees"; right?

7 Because that suggests that perhaps the
8 mayor only selects those three, and that there are
9 other elected officials or other bodies of the city
10 that help to constitute the membership of the
11 commission. Can you clarify?

12 MR. MILLER: Yes. Apologies that
13 that's not clear. The -- the mayor selects all
14 members of the commission -- of commission established
15 pursuant to section 34, subdivision 4 there. The
16 mayor chooses all the commissioners, and -- and then
17 from among the members, as you said, he -- he selects
18 the -- the chair, vice chair, and secretary.

19 MR. GASPARD: Thank you.

20 MR. MILLER: So powers of a commission.
21 A commission may hire employees and consultants. It
22 may also take testimony and conduct hearings. A
23 commission may propose amendments to the charter that
24 could -- amendments that require a referendum that may
25 only take effect upon approval of the voters.

1 Or a commission can also propose
2 amendments that could be enacted by regular local law.
3 You're not limited to only those things that could be
4 done by referendum.

5 A commission may propose a broad set of
6 amendments that, essentially, overhauls and provides
7 an entire -- entirely new charter. Or you can -- you
8 can focus only on certain topics or areas, and that
9 latter approach is the more common. The last time we
10 had a full overhaul in a new charter was in 1989.

11 And you can present -- the commission
12 can present amendments to voters as a -- as one
13 question, as multiple questions, or as alternative
14 options. So either A or B.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Can I ask a
16 clarification on the third bullet -- on the -- yeah,
17 the second -- third bullet down.

18 So proposing charter amendments that
19 are adopted through regular local law; is it that we
20 put forward a recommendation, and then potentially a
21 lawmaker picks it up? Or does it automatically get
22 introduced by the charter commission as an introduced
23 bill?

24 MR. MILLER: Sorry. No. Any
25 amendments you propose to the charter would -- would

1 only take effect upon approval by the voters. What
2 that bullet is meant to suggest -- or say, and sorry
3 again for -- if it's unclear. That there are certain
4 things that may only be done by being approved by
5 voters. You are not limited to only those things.

6 You, as the commission, can do anything
7 within the city's local legislative party -- power,
8 including things that the city council could do by a
9 regular local law. The opposite is not true for the
10 city council.

11 They can do things -- they can do
12 anything by local law, but those things that are --
13 that must -- that -- that can only be done by
14 referendum need to be submitted to a referendum.

15 Okay. So limits on the powers of a
16 commission. A commission may only propose amendments
17 that are within the city's local legislative powers.
18 What this essentially means is that a commission
19 may -- may not propose amendments to the charter that
20 would be inconsistent with state law.

21 And a commission may not propose
22 amendments that intrude on subject matters that are
23 exclusively within the jurisdiction of the federal
24 government or the state government, a concept known as
25 "preemption".

1 MS. MESSINGER: Can I ask a question
2 about that?

3 MR. MILLER: Yes.

4 MS. MESSINGER: I understand it; it's
5 very clear, but I assume that since we're protected by
6 rights of free speech, we could have a report that
7 suggested that other powers -- the things that we
8 don't have power over, that we could suggest that
9 other groups might want to undertake them?

10 MR. MILLER: I -- I think so.
11 You're -- I think you have pretty broad discretion
12 over what you put in the report. And so I think
13 you -- you could do that.

14 So the responsibilities of a
15 commission: A commission must hold public hearings.
16 A commission must also review the entire charter.
17 Now, that -- that may sound daunting, but -- but it
18 doesn't mean you have to change the entire charter.

19 So if a commission decides to leave a
20 part of the charter unchanged, which again, is -- is a
21 pretty common approach, then the report just explains
22 why you left some parts unchanged.

23 And a commission has filed its
24 proposals with the city clerk in time for them to be
25 submitted to the Board of Elections, to -- to be voted

1 on in November. This, essentially, means that the --
2 that the commission needs to file its proposals by the
3 end of July, which is not much time.

4 Okay. We're going to wrap --

5 MR. GARRIDO: Just a point of
6 clarification regarding the powers that you mentioned
7 before on the issue of preemption. If, for instance,
8 this commission looks into, say, procurement reform,
9 as an example, and there are purviews within the
10 procurement policy board, it -- would it be -- which
11 would supersede the other?

12 Like, if the commission takes amendment
13 to that, would the board be able to, like, overrule or
14 overturn or amend those recommendations by the voters;
15 right? Obviously, they -- they have the ultimate say
16 so, but does it work the other way around?

17 MR. MILLER: I would say in all -- you
18 know, it's -- I think yours would -- you would take
19 precedence.

20 The -- the charter revision commission
21 and the -- and the changes that you make to the
22 charter and -- and approve and are codified in the
23 charter upon approval by the voters, I think that
24 would take -- I -- that would take precedence over
25 anything the PPB would want to do to -- to change

1 those rules later.

2 I -- I think it will be helpful to
3 understand maybe some more concrete details of what
4 you have in mind, but I feel pretty confident in
5 saying that -- that this would not be -- that there
6 wouldn't be something that the PPB -- be able to
7 undo --

8 MR. GASPARD: I can't imagine that
9 Henry will have no ideas whatsoever on procurements.

10 MR. MILLER: Okay. So just quickly to
11 mention a few recent notable commissions. So the 1989
12 commission was mentioned earlier. This is the last
13 time that -- that there was a whole overhaul of the
14 charter. And that was the result of a United States
15 Supreme Court decision finding the Board of Estimate
16 that its voting structure was -- was unconstitutional.

17 Because the Board of Estimate had such
18 a key role in many city processes, that required
19 rethinking many important city processes, and so the
20 need for a new charter.

21 2010, charter made some changes. A big
22 one was to restore a two-term limit for elected
23 officials that had been -- had been, you know,
24 repealed or -- or undone by regular local law only a
25 few years before that.

1 And then in 2019, we implemented
2 ranked-choice voting. The most recent commission, as
3 Joe mentioned earlier, was the 2025 Charter Revision
4 Commission appointed by Mayor Adams in December 2024.

5 They -- now, that commission proposed a
6 few proposals related to -- mostly related to public
7 review of public projects, especially housing and --
8 and, in particular, affordable housing. They also
9 proposed moving to even year elections for general and
10 primary elections, but that was voted -- excuse me,
11 was rejected by voters.

12 Okay. And so that -- that actually
13 concludes our presentation. And thank you all
14 for -- for giving -- for letting us present to you.
15 And if you have any questions, we're -- we are
16 available and -- and excited to -- to work with you.

17 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so very much.
18 I -- I know, commission members, that this is a lot of
19 material to absorb at once. The -- our presenters
20 will share all of this material with all of you.

21 And I suspect that, as we move through
22 public hearings, there are questions that will come up
23 around not just the substance of what we're trying to
24 advance, but also the legitimacy of the process, and
25 we want to make sure that everyone here is equipped to

1 answer those questions.

2 This concludes the formal agenda for
3 this meeting. We look forward to hearing from New
4 Yorkers across all five boroughs as this process
5 unfolds. The first hearing, again, will be on June 9,
6 5 p.m., at New York Law School. And at this time, I'd
7 like to entertain a motion to adjourn our meeting --

8 MS. WOLFE: Any discussion on the
9 motion?

10 [No audible response.]

11 All in favor?

12 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

13 MS. WOLFE: Any opposed?

14 [No audible response.]

15 No abstentions?

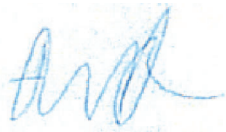
16 [No audible response.]

17 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. We're
18 official.

19 (Whereupon, at 6:29 p.m., the
20 proceeding was concluded.)
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

I, ABAGAIL RODRIGUEZ, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.



ABAGAIL RODRIGUEZ

Notary Public in and for the
State of New York

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, KYMBER KINCAID-FELSKE, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "KyMBER Kincaid-felske", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

KYMBER KINCAID-FELSKE

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