

CRC Hearing

Moderated by Carlo Scissura

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

5:08 p.m.

New York City Department of Transportation

30-30 Thomson Avenue

Long Island City, NY 11101

Reported by: Thea Popko

JOB NO.: 6750887

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Joy Amanda, Speaker

Magalie Austin, Executive Deputy Commissioner, DDC

Kyle Bragg, Commissioner

Maria Danzilo, Speaker (by videoconference)

Rohan Defreitas, Crescent Consulting

Hazel Dukes, Vice Chair

Oneximo Feliz, Speaker (by videoconference)

Michael Gardner, Chief Business Diversity Officer for
New York City

Lorraine Grillo, Commissioner

Special Hagan, Speaker (by videoconference)

Robert Holden, Councilmember

Edward Kiernan, General Counsel

Christopher Lynch, Commissioner

Stephanie McGraw, Commissioner

Frank Morano, Speaker (by videoconference)

Samuel Padilla, General Contractor, City of New York

Edward Perry, Speaker

Maya Powell, Office Assistant, Councilman Nantasha

Williams' Office

Jackie Rowe-Adams, Commissioner

Diane Savino, Executive Director

Joi Schlapp, Speaker

1 A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

2 List of Attendees (Cont'd):

3 Stephanie, Speaker (by videoconference)

4 Claudine Thuilot, Speaker

5 Victor Trombettas, Speaker

6 Alex Vega, Speaker

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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2 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon,
3 everybody. I think we're going to get started. We're
4 going to get started. Good afternoon. Welcome,
5 welcome to our seventh public hearing of the New York
6 City Charter Commission and our second of three
7 hearings in the great Borough of Queens. We are
8 officially starting our second round of public
9 hearings, and we are looking forward to hearing from
10 New Yorkers.

11 On Monday we released the Commission's
12 preliminary report, which contains the staff
13 recommendations to the Commissioners based off of what
14 we heard during the first round of hearings, what we
15 saw in written testimony, and suggestion from elected
16 officials and leaders of City agencies.

17 So let me just say thank you again for
18 being here. I'm Carlo Scissura, and I'm honored to
19 chair the Revision Commission. We are joined by
20 several of our Commissioners: Kyle Bragg, Lorraine
21 Grillo, Jackie Rowe-Adams, and Christopher Lynch.

22 I'm just going to ask you all to say a
23 quick hello. Commissioner Bragg, would you like to
24 start?

25 MR. BRAGG: Thank you -- well, thank

1 you. I'm happy to be back in my Borough. It's my
2 home Borough of Queens. I look forward to hearing the
3 testimony from my fellow citizens of Queens. Thank
4 you.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Lorraine Grillo, we're
6 happy to be back in your home.

7 MS. GRILLO: That's right.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: How many years did you
9 spend here?

10 MS. GRILLO: Twenty-five years.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Twenty-five years.

12 MS. GRILLO: Twenty-five years in this
13 building, both agencies.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Just speak -- yeah.

15 MS. GRILLO: I'm sorry. Can you hear
16 me? Yeah.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Hold on a second.

18 MS. GRILLO: Okay? All right. I just
19 want to say it's great to be home, and I'm really
20 anxious to hear everybody's point of view and some
21 suggestions. And believe me when I tell you that we
22 are taking every suggestion seriously, and
23 hopefully -- I'm sorry. It's not working.

24 Anyway, great to be here. Let's
25 get started.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
2 Jackie Rowe-Adams.

3 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Hello, could
4 you -- yes, I think you all can hear me; right?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

6 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Okay. So good
7 evening, Queens. We're here in Harlem, Queens. I am
8 honored to sit here with you, because it gives me as a
9 Commission an opportunity to hear you share tonight
10 some of your concerns that's going on in our wonderful
11 City and in our communities, and give you a chance to
12 have a voice to be heard, and for the Commission to
13 hear what you have to say and some of your concerns.
14 And so I look forward to it. Thank you so very much.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
16 Commissioner Lynch.

17 MR. LYNCH: Good evening. Good
18 evening, Queens residents. Thank you for having us
19 here this evening. We're looking forward to your
20 testimony this evening, and hopefully we'll gain some
21 insightful information that will help us with the
22 Commission in bringing your ideas to the forefront.
23 Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
25 Commissioner McGraw.

1 MS. MCGRAW: Good evening, everyone.
2 Can you hear me?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

4 MS. MCGRAW: Happy to be here in
5 Queens. We are very happy to see that everyone is
6 here. My name is Stephanie McGraw. We're here to
7 hear your concerns and here to see what we can do to
8 make this City workable for every citizen here in New
9 York City, because it is one of the greatest cities in
10 the world. And that's why we're here, because we're
11 concerned about what you want to see in this City to
12 make it a better working place for all of us as a
13 whole. Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
15 And our vice chair, Dr. Hazel Dukes.

16 DR. DUKES: Good afternoon. I join
17 with my colleagues thanking all of you who are members
18 of the five boroughs to come out and let your voices
19 be heard. I will thank Mayor Adams again for --
20 whether it's short time or long time, for giving you
21 citizens of New York a chance to be heard.

22 There is known different parts in
23 government, and we recognize that. But once a mayor
24 is elected for this City of New York, any mayor, they
25 should have a right to appoint their appointees

1 without anyone else but him and his team going over
2 their background and seeing with it in their area, and
3 for service to be rendered.

4 I live in Harlem. I have a school
5 across the street from me. I'm concerned about the
6 garbage being spreaded [sic] all over my sidewalk, and
7 I call 3-1-1 just like you're supposed to do and make
8 a complaint.

9 The Mayor cannot do everything. We as
10 citizens want to make this City great, greater. We
11 have to work within the system. Thank you again for
12 this beautiful afternoon, you sitting inside and not
13 at the beach.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you,
15 Vice Chair.

16 We're going to talk about our
17 preliminary report and hear from our executive
18 director in just a moment. But we've been joined by
19 Councilmember Robert Holden. I know it's a busy time
20 of year, so I'm going to put you up before we get
21 moving.

22 MR. HOLDEN: Thank you. Can you hear
23 me? Is it on?

24 Thank you, by the way, for all that you
25 do, volunteering for this. It's the same faces,

1 actually, which I love seeing. But, again, thank you
2 for doing this, and good afternoon, and Chairman and
3 members of the Commission.

4 I'm Councilmember Robert Holden. I
5 represent the 30th Council District, which includes
6 Maspeth, Middle Village, parts of Glendale, Ridgewood,
7 Rego Park, Elmhurst, not too far from here.

8 I'm here because this Commission has
9 the power to address significant issues that New
10 Yorkers care about through their -- though their
11 voices are not always heard in City Hall.

12 I urge the Commission to consider
13 including the repeal of Sanctuary City laws on the
14 ballot. Let's get the voters to finally vote on this,
15 because we had been attacked on 9/11. We know that.
16 We have been. And why did we create ICE and
17 Department of Homeland Security? But, also, there's
18 also crime, and Sanctuary City laws protect criminals,
19 and I'll explain why.

20 The recent shooting of two NYPD
21 officers by a Venezuelan migrant is a stark reminder
22 of the consequences of our current Sanctuary City
23 policies. This tragic incident highlights concerns
24 that I've been raising for several years. Our City is
25 seeing illegal migrants, some of them living in

1 shelters, at our expense, receiving free services and
2 then committing crime. We can no longer afford to
3 import criminals, nor can we continue to protect them
4 from ICE. Again, why did we create ICE? It's so that
5 we can communicate. We're not doing that.

6 Ken Genalo, the field director for ICE,
7 New York City's office, has repeatedly highlighted the
8 detrimental impact of City policies that prevent local
9 authorities from cooperating with ICE. My colleagues
10 and I in the commonsense caucus have heard firsthand
11 the horror stories of criminals with detainers issued
12 against them who are shielded by laws preventing the
13 NYPD, Department of Corrections and Probations from
14 monitoring those detainers. Doesn't make any sense.
15 This cannot continue. We owe it to our residents and
16 our police officers to end this madness.

17 Thomas Decker, former Field office
18 director of ERO New York stated, I don't know what it
19 will take for representatives of New York City to see
20 that keeping their Sanctuary City policies are
21 dangerous to the residents of this great City, and in
22 some cases deadly. We've learned those lessons.
23 Their policies continue to shield criminal aliens,
24 allowing them to seek refuge in New York City
25 communities and allowing them to continue to break

1 laws of this country, which threaten the lives and
2 safety of our citizens.

3 At some point the lives and safety of
4 residents of New York City have to matter over the
5 agendas of the politicians. Considering how open
6 borders are -- how our borders are open now, it is
7 alarming that eight Isis-K terrorists were recently
8 caught planning attacks in major cities. And today
9 media reports reveal that DHS identified 400 migrants
10 smuggled into our country by Isis affiliates.

11 A recent report from the DHS Office of
12 Inspector General reveals that DHS is not doing enough
13 to screen and vet asylum-seekers, noncitizens at the
14 point of entry. Customs and border protection
15 personnel admitted to OIG that they often resort to
16 half-measures due to the traffic volume, staffing and
17 facility constraints, enforcement concerns and
18 significant cross-border events. So they're trying to
19 move traffic. They're not checking the cars, believe
20 it or not, and that's the report.

21 The report starkly concludes, DHS will
22 remain at risk of admitting dangerous persons to the
23 country or enabling asylum-seekers who may pose
24 significant threats to public safety and national
25 security to continue to reside in the US. I ask you

1 why. We cannot continue to import criminals or shield
2 them. Our City agencies must be able to work with
3 federal law enforcement and weed out national security
4 threats. We owe it to our residents, by the way.

5 And I would also -- to advocate for
6 some of the proposals mentioned in your preliminary
7 report from this week, I agree with the staff
8 recommendations to require a fiscal impact statement
9 whenever City Council legislation is passed that
10 creates an unfunded mandate. I think everybody would
11 agree. We have to do the finances. Unfortunately,
12 some elected officials in Albany and in the City do
13 not consider the bigger picture and advocate for
14 proposals, while well-intentioned, severely impact our
15 City budget.

16 I also agree with the staff's
17 recommendation about soliciting more community
18 feedback, specifically on legislation that impacts
19 public safety. Council committee hearings often
20 occur, as you know, during work hours, when much of
21 the public is occupied and cannot testify. Typically,
22 only people who -- the only people that show up are
23 the paid advocates who can attend these hearings,
24 stacking the deck against the public.

25 And I support the three recommendations

1 that would enhance the process of pertaining to public
2 safety, strengthen opportunities for input by members
3 of the public, and revise the City Charter -- revise
4 the Charter to better promote public safety.

5 The How Many Stops Act, which I voted
6 against, is just one public safety-related bill passed
7 over the years that puts the public in danger. The
8 Commission should also look at revising the Charter
9 concerning this.

10 Last but certainly not least, the
11 Commission should consider expanding the legal mandate
12 for the New York City Department of Sanitation to be
13 able to, one, clean all areas owned by the City;
14 right? Unbelievable they can't. They can't at this
15 point. Enforce sanitation laws in all areas of the
16 City.

17 Agencies like DOT and DCAS and parks
18 often do not maintain their own properties. So my
19 office is stuck between a rock and a hard place
20 sometimes. The office regularly reaches out to
21 Department of Sanitation to take care of these areas,
22 and we're told that technically they're not allowed to
23 maintain properties like overpasses and underpasses
24 and areas near parks. We have a DOT overpass that we
25 can't clean. DOT has to clean it, and that takes

1 forever. Why can't sanitation do it? Makes no sense.

2 Changing the Charter to give the
3 Department of Sanitation more authority is a great
4 idea, and I certainly endorse that. I think most
5 people with common sense would.

6 And I thank you for your time, and I
7 appreciate, again, your volunteer work, and you guys
8 are great. Thanks so much for listening. I
9 appreciate it.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We're happy
11 to be in your home Borough tonight.

12 MR. HOLDEN: We are, and a beautiful
13 building, too.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Do any of the
15 Commissioners have any comments or questions for the
16 councilman?

17 MR. BRAGG: Well, I do.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Kyle. And if I
19 could just ask, when you speak, go right up to the
20 mic, because we're having trouble hearing.

21 MR. BRAGG: Yeah, I noticed that.
22 Thank you.

23 Councilman, can you hear me?

24 MR. HOLDEN: It's hard to hear you.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, you've got

1 to flip the switch.

2 MR. BRAGG: Oh, there we go. Oh, there
3 we go.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: There we go. Yep, right
5 into the mic.

6 MR. BRAGG: Thank you for your
7 testimony, Councilman. I have one question on the
8 Sanctuary City. I assume that the testimony you're
9 looking for, the Charter Revision to put forth the
10 ballot initiative that repeals Sanctuary City. So --

11 MR. HOLDEN: Or, you know, again, at
12 least it could say and the people could vote. So
13 whatever they vote, we should listen.

14 MR. BRAGG: So I guess -- forgive my
15 ignorance. I'm not a politician nor a lawyer. But I
16 was asking -- what I would like to know is, is this
17 something that the City Council cannot legislate?

18 MR. HOLDEN: Well, again, the City
19 Council can legislate it, but they won't. So I think
20 let's put it to the people, because the
21 representatives, again -- and the advocates will come
22 out. During my testimony I said they hold the
23 hearings during the day when most people can't make
24 it --

25 MR. BRAGG: I see.

1 MR. HOLDEN: -- working people can't
2 make it.

3 MR. BRAGG: And have you submitted
4 anything to the Council to try to move them?

5 MR. HOLDEN: Well, we do have -- I do
6 have a bill to repeal those -- there's about four
7 Sanctuary City laws, and I attended one when Mayor
8 Bloomberg was signing it to not have ICE work with
9 NYPD. Right now there are two million people on the
10 terror watch list. You know that? Worldwide. Two
11 million. All right? I asked NYPD at a hearing, "Do
12 you know -- do you -- well, do you have, like, photo
13 recognition, and you can identify if somebody gets
14 over the border or gets arrested in New York City?"

15 They said, "We can't work with ICE."

16 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

17 MR. HOLDEN: You were here 9/11. You
18 know that they -- the reason why we created those
19 agencies is to communicate, where we cut them off.
20 That is insanity. And, again, we're going to get a
21 9/11. You know all the reports of 400 people that got
22 through that are on that watchlist, 400, that they
23 know of.

24 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

25 MR. HOLDEN: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

2 MR. HOLDEN: Thank you so much. Thank
3 you.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very
5 much.

6 Let me also thank DDC Commissioner Tom
7 Foley for hosting us today. I know he was here a few
8 minutes ago. We thank him for his service.

9 So before we turn it over to the
10 members of the public, we are going to briefly discuss
11 the preliminary report and hear from our executive
12 director, Diane Savino, and then vote on a resolution
13 to accept the report.

14 So let me just make a couple of points
15 very clear. The report that all the Commissioners
16 received a few days ago, and it's a preliminary
17 report, we discussed it on Monday. It basically
18 discusses the testimony that we have received from the
19 public, from elected officials, from leaders and
20 experts, and includes recommendations on proposals
21 that the staff believes we should pay particular
22 attention to moving forward.

23 The recommendations are based on
24 feedback from the public, City agencies, elected
25 officials, and testimony that we have heard, we have

1 read, we have seen.

2 I want to remind my fellow
3 Commissioners of something critical. The report is
4 not binding on us. It is staff recommendations. It
5 is preliminary. And the work doesn't stop tonight.
6 So you're still going to be busy for about another
7 month.

8 We will continue to solicit
9 testimony -- excuse me -- from the public and to
10 consider new proposals over the coming months. If we
11 vote to accept the report this evening, it does not
12 mean -- and let me be clear to the
13 Commissioners -- that the recommendations that are in
14 the report today are what will appear in the ballot.
15 Now, they may, but we acknowledge the report, and we
16 agree to take the recommendations under considerations
17 as we move forward. So it's really the start of the
18 next part of the process.

19 So with that, let me ask our executive
20 director, Diane Savino, to provide a brief summary of
21 the report.

22 Executive Director.

23 MS. SAVINO: Thank you. Good evening,
24 everyone. Good evening, Chair Scissura and the
25 Charter Revision Commission. And, again, we want to

1 thank DDC Commissioner Tom Foley for hosting us here
2 this evening.

3 So I want to do a brief discussion of
4 the preliminary report, which was released earlier
5 this week, shared with the members of the Commission
6 and the members of the public, kind of go over it and
7 summarize the proposals that have been presented by
8 the staff in consultation with senior leadership and
9 members of the Commission.

10 The proposals have been spread across
11 four sections. They are detailed, substantive, and
12 wide-ranging. The first two concern fiscal
13 responsibility and public safety, the two subjects
14 that the Mayor tasked this Commission to focus on.

15 The report also includes additional
16 ideas that the staff believes will benefit New Yorkers
17 and underscore the thoughtfulness by which the staff
18 reviewed the Charter. This includes establishing the
19 M/WBE office as a separate agency.

20 The report also recommends several
21 nuanced ideas to fix technical details that will make
22 the City work better.

23 The last section of the report covers
24 ideas raised during the hearings that staff thinks
25 future commissions should consider.

1 Before discussing the recommendations,
2 note that the preliminary staff report contains
3 broader recommendations to the Commission. It does
4 not -- thank you. It does not include the detailed
5 language for the Charter. These recommendations are
6 guidance for the Commission to review. They are not
7 binding on the Commission, and the Commission should
8 thoughtfully consider the staff recommendations.

9 So let's start with the first section,
10 which is covering fiscal responsibility. The
11 overarching goal of this section is to modify the
12 Charter to provide more accurate and transparent cost
13 information to New Yorkers about proposed legislation.
14 You heard Councilman Holden talk about challenges of
15 determining fiscal impact statements of legislation
16 that is proposed by the Council.

17 There are three main proposals that
18 have been put forward to enhance fiscal
19 responsibility. First, require fiscal impact
20 statements to be published earlier in the legislative
21 process. The City Council is required currently to
22 publish fiscal impact statements for legislation.
23 This is often done right before the legislation is
24 voted on without opportunity for members of the public
25 or the Council, the Council themselves to consider the

1 financial implications.

2 We are recommending that the Charter
3 include language requiring that legislation have
4 accurate fiscal impact summaries and that they are
5 shared with sufficient time for Councilmembers and the
6 public to consider.

7 The second recommendation is to update
8 revisions concerning capital planning. The City puts
9 out a ten-year capital strategy highlighting our
10 infrastructure investments. This strategy is not
11 mentioned in the Charter. The staff proposes
12 explicitly mentioning the ten-year capital strategy in
13 the Charter and sharing some of the considerations
14 that go into capital planning. This recommendation
15 was made by and is publicly supported by the
16 Comptroller.

17 Third, the staff suggests specific
18 modernization proposals for the budget process such as
19 changing Charter language that requires paper
20 documents.

21 The next section concerns public
22 safety. We've heard so much testimony regarding
23 public safety. As you are all aware, public safety
24 hearing had nearly 100 people attend virtually and in
25 person, with 35 people testifying. Here the staff is

1 recommending enhancing the deliberative process for
2 legislation pertaining to public safety.

3 Specifically, we are recommending a specified
4 additional limited timeframe for public review unique
5 for public safety bills. During this period there
6 will be at least one public hearing on the bill and
7 participation from all five boroughs. We believe this
8 recommendation nicely combines the need for critical
9 public review of public safety legislation while
10 ensuring that urgent legislation does not get held up.

11 The next area we're looking at M/WBEs.
12 This next staff recommendation concerns minority and
13 women-owned businesses. Specifically, the staff
14 recommendation is to explore establishing an agency
15 for minority and women-owned businesses. Currently,
16 there is no single department or agency that has
17 exclusive authority for rulemaking or primary
18 responsibility for outreach monitoring or reporting.
19 This will create a single touchpoint for M/WBEs and
20 further demonstrate commitment to supporting their
21 utilization.

22 In the area of government
23 modernization, the last section is modernizing the
24 Charter with several fairly nuanced Charter revisions
25 that just makes sense.

1 The first place is the authority to
2 issue film permits within the Office of Media and
3 Entertainment, which currently does not have it
4 explicitly according to Charter language, despite
5 fulfilling that responsibility.

6 The second involves removing the surety
7 bond requirement for elected officials and other
8 senior public officials. The Charter and
9 administrative code requires certain officials such as
10 the Comptroller, the Commissioner of Finance, and the
11 Corporation Counsel to take out a bond to protect
12 against financial malfeasance. This is from an
13 antiquated time when officials such as Mayor
14 Walker -- remember Jimmy Walker? -- could easily steal
15 public money. Obviously, times have changed. There
16 is no big buckets of money in City Hall that people
17 could make off with, so it's time to update that
18 outdated requirement. And it's even more nonsensical
19 because the City covers the cost of the bonds. We
20 propose removing this requirement for most officials.

21 The third involves transferring the
22 authority for waterfront permitting from the Small
23 Business Services to the Department of Buildings.
24 This is a recommendation from the Get Stuff Built
25 report to make building faster.

1 The fourth expands DSNY, the Sanitation
2 Department's authority to clean within the City.
3 Specifically, it allows Sanitation to clean any City-
4 owned property at the Mayor's authorization and
5 enables them to enforce illegal dumping and street
6 vending in more locations around the City. Again, we
7 heard Councilmember Holden talk about how silly it is
8 that DSNY cannot clean property in the City if it's
9 managed by DOT.

10 For example, the Charter does not have
11 clear authority to DSNY to clean no man's lands, areas
12 that past administrations put under the jurisdiction
13 of another City agency without dedicated cleanliness
14 resources, such as on/off ramps or center medians.
15 This will provide the Mayor greater flexibility to
16 keep our City clean.

17 The fifth recommendation involves
18 combining two duplicative boards into one.
19 Surprisingly, the Charter in separate chapters in the
20 past establishes both an Archival Review Board and an
21 Archives Reference and Research Advisory Board with
22 overlapping mandates. Because it is required by the
23 Charter, we must have separate meetings and minutes,
24 taking up staff time and resources. We propose
25 combining them into one body.

1 The last recommendation is to include a
2 Charter requirement that the City periodically collect
3 direct resident feedback on critical issues. This,
4 for example, could be done with a survey.

5 Thank you for your time and
6 consideration, and I'm happy to answer any questions
7 that anyone may have on this. But remember, this is
8 the preliminary report with recommendations. It is
9 not binding. It is a work in progress. We look
10 forward to the continuing hearings that we will yet
11 have and the testimony that we hope to get from
12 members of the public as we move forward to complete
13 our work and put forward questions on the ballot for
14 this November. Thank you.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Do any of the
16 Commissioners have any questions for the executive
17 director? No? Okay.

18 MS. SAVINO: Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Do any of the
20 Commissioners have any comments before I call for a
21 vote?

22 Yes, Vice Chair Dukes.

23 DR. DUKES: I would like to really
24 applaud the staff for our report that we received on
25 Monday night. I'm not reading, but I was listening

1 very carefully. I want to commend you for what we
2 have before us.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And I would
4 second that commendation to the staff, all of those
5 folks that are involved.

6 Having been on three charter
7 commissions now, I can tell you that while we're
8 taking a lot of time and going to meetings -- and I
9 spend a chunk of my day now speaking to this gentleman
10 at my left and the young lady to my right -- it pales
11 in comparison to the work that the team is doing, so
12 thank you very much.

13 So with that, let me recommend that the
14 Commission accept the report as prepared, and I would
15 move a resolution number four, a resolution of the
16 Charter Revision Commission to accept the preliminary
17 report and staff recommendations. Is there a second
18 to this?

19 MS. GRILLO: Second, second.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Lorraine Grillo, second.
21 Is there any discussion on the motion?
22 All in favor signify by saying "aye."

23 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Aye. Any opposed? Any
25 abstentions? Great.

1 I assume you have the numbers.

2 Thank you very much. Now we
3 will -- and I'm just going to add one thing. I've
4 asked the staff to look at Community Board
5 modifications based on some testimony we received, and
6 also to just focus a little bit more on some of the
7 fiscal issues. So I know that we will continue to do
8 that work.

9 Okay. So I'm going to skip all of my
10 remarks, because I think we get it, why we are here,
11 our seventh public meeting. We're looking at the
12 entire Charter. We will continue to travel the
13 Boroughs. We will be in Brooklyn tomorrow, and then
14 we'll take a couple of days off Fourth of July week,
15 and then back to work the week after and the week
16 after and the week after.

17 So we welcome members of the public to
18 comment in person and also on Zoom, which is something
19 exciting, to submit testimony, and we will take it
20 from there.

21 As I said, we will carefully consider
22 the staff recommendations. And if you have not read
23 it, please read the report. It is now on the
24 Commission's website.

25 We will be hosting additional meetings,

1 and on Monday, July 22nd, we will be back in Queens at
2 the Queens Public Library, Central Library in Jamaica.
3 We have other dates that have been announced. You can
4 check out our website, www.nyc.gov/charter, to see all
5 of the dates. And comments may be submitted in
6 writing to charterinfo@citycharter.nyc.gov between now
7 and July 12th.

8 So let me begin with Magalie Austin,
9 also known as Maggie, Executive Deputy Commissioner at
10 DDC.

11 MS. AUSTIN: Thank you so much, Chair
12 Scissura. I'm Magalie Austin. I am Executive Deputy
13 Commissioner here at DDC.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Just, Maggie, if you
15 can -- yeah. That's it.

16 MS. AUSTIN: That's good? Formerly I
17 served as senior advisor to the Mayor and ran the
18 Citywide M/WBE program. So as you can imagine, I'm
19 here to comment on the proposal to centralize certain
20 functions of the Mayor's Office of M/WBE, which I
21 certainly support.

22 I think, you know, when you look at the
23 M/WBE program, it's spread across three different
24 agencies, Mayor's Office of M/WBE, Small Business
25 Services, as well as MOCS, and they each have a role.

1 I think most importantly, we need to
 2 make sure that we can centralize the compliance
 3 aspect. I think that is the weak link of our program.
 4 We can award as many contracts to M/WBEs as possible.
 5 If we're not monitoring for compliance with those
 6 awards, there's no way that we're going to -- we're
 7 going to have the economic impact that we would have
 8 with a strong program. So I certainly support that,
 9 and I hope this is something that happens.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
 11 Maggie, you and I have spoken many, many times on
 12 this. I think for anyone who is working in that
 13 world, you see where there can be some sharpening of
 14 the pencil.

15 MS. AUSTIN: Oh, absolutely.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: So we're taking it
 17 seriously.

18 MS. AUSTIN: And part of the reason
 19 that Lorraine was successful at SCA is because she had
 20 all those tools.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Exactly.

22 Any comments or questions for
 23 Ms. Austin? Yes?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Chris has a
 25 question.

1 MR. LYNCH: good evening. I have a
2 question in regards to that.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Speak right
4 into -- yeah.

5 MR. LYNCH: When they were talking
6 about the three different agencies and talking about
7 compliance, three different agencies in compliance, so
8 would you say that there's a staffing issue, or what
9 is the actual problem?

10 MS. AUSTIN: Yeah. So there definitely
11 is a staffing issue. The -- I could attest to the
12 fact that the Mayor's Office of M/WBE is very lean for
13 the work that they do. And there's also a staffing
14 issue at the agency level.

15 I'm really lucky at DDC. We have a
16 thriving program, and we're fully staffed, thanks in
17 part to Lorraine Grillo. But many agencies don't have
18 the workforce to monitor the contracts that they're
19 awarded.

20 MR. LYNCH: So how would -- how would a
21 separate agency --

22 MS. AUSTIN: So centralizing the
23 compliance function means -- and I know we're
24 exploring this, but a tool. There are compliance
25 tools available to make sure that we can monitor

1 contracts city-wide and not at the agency level only.
2 Right now each agency is monitoring their contracts;
3 right?

4 MR. LYNCH: Right.

5 MS. AUSTIN: If we get a tool that
6 monitors compliance at the City that is available with
7 the Mayor's Office of M/WBE, I think it would be a
8 much more efficient process.

9 MR. LYNCH: All right. Kind of
10 like -- kind of string like streamlining the whole
11 process. Got it.

12 MS. AUSTIN: Correct.

13 MR. LYNCH: Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay. Thank
15 you.

16 Next is Michael Gardner, a Chief
17 Business Diversity Officer for New York City.

18 Michael, great to see you.

19 MR. GARDNER: Great seeing you also,
20 Mr. Chairman. And thank you for allowing me this
21 opportunity to speak about this very important
22 initiative in which Maggie just indicated, from
23 transforming an M/WBE office into an M/WBE agency,
24 which is, one, going to be more cost-effective.

25 Two, it's going to be centralized,

1 because as we currently speak, you have three
2 different operations and there's overlap, and there's
3 a lack of transparency and accountability. And so
4 creating an agency which will drive the M/WBE program
5 from a centralized focus will benefit the City of New
6 York.

7 Maggie indicated -- and I spent 14
8 years at the MTA as the MTA's first chief diversity
9 officer, 14 years in this very building at the SCA on
10 the 30.30 Thomson Avenue side with Member Grillo. And
11 there was a dedicated focus on funding, equipping,
12 staffing the M/WBE operation. And so the SCA and the
13 MTA have two of the -- two of the best programs in the
14 nation, because there was investment.

15 I will tell you that for the first time
16 in history of any mayor, Mayor Eric Adams has put his
17 money behind what he campaigned for. For example, he
18 is the first mayor of any mayor that had the ability
19 to go to Albany, work with our legislative leaders,
20 and get all of our M/WBE bills passed into state law,
21 one.

22 Second, transforming those bills from
23 bills to state law to M/WBE programming. What Maggie
24 just indicated is absolutely correct. There are
25 agencies who are enforcing their M/WBE goals by using

1 spreadsheets. The Mayor recently has allocated
2 \$5.3 million in creating an information technology
3 process and platform which will allow City Hall and
4 all of the agencies now to monitor not only the
5 contract awards that's been awarded to third-party
6 contractors, but now have the ability to monitor and
7 enforce those M/WBE goals almost in real time.

8 And so this platform, which was adopted
9 by the State of New York and by the State of New
10 Jersey and a lot of the complicated construction
11 organizations across the country is called B2G. We
12 will make that award next month, and it will take us
13 nine months to build out this platform. And now for
14 the first time in history, we will have the ability to
15 monitor contract awards, but most of all, monitor the
16 payments of those contracts. And where there are
17 deficiencies with our third-party contractors and
18 consultants, we have the ability to bring them in and
19 ask for an action plan.

20 And, also, taking -- borrowing a page
21 from the SCA and the MTA, we have the ability to pass
22 a state law which now is going to allow the City of
23 New York to create a centralized construction
24 mentoring program. And so that will give us the
25 ability and the tool of ten agencies under one

1 umbrella. We will have the ability to create a more
2 diverse qualified pool of contractors who will have
3 the ability to finish the City of New York's projects
4 safely, timely, and on budget.

5 And so I'll end by saying that
6 everything that Candidate Eric Adams indicated that he
7 was going to do with regard to the M/WBE program, he
8 has done, and even more. And I'm standing here before
9 you as the City of New York's first chief business
10 diversity officer. If I did not have confidence and
11 faith in the Mayor, I would've stayed at the MTA. But
12 I came to join him because I believe in what he's
13 doing.

14 And this is an indication of
15 transforming an office into an agency to give
16 transparency, accountability of driving the M/WBE
17 programs, and allowing the City of New York to award
18 their contracts in a cost-effective manner, because it
19 is taxpayers' money being spent, but in an inclusive
20 manner. And if there are any barriers to entry that
21 would prevent us from doing that, we now have the
22 ability by changing state laws and policies to ensure
23 that the City of New York has the ability to award
24 their contracts in an inclusive manner.

25 And we have some very long-standing

1 prominent businessmen who are going to testify. But
2 tomorrow in Brooklyn we will have some businesswomen.
3 And so this is an opportunity for you to hear from the
4 M/WBE committee. Thank you.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Michael, thank you very
6 much. I can tell you, putting on my work hat for a
7 moment, a lot of these reforms -- and really, Lorraine
8 at the SCA started it, to be quite honest, and
9 obviously you were there for it -- but the contractor
10 piece that you talked about is a serious game changer
11 for women and minority owned businesses, and it means
12 jobs, it means security, it means stability, it means
13 payments, and those are important things.

14 It's why I think -- our general counsel
15 and others have heard me say we have to figure out how
16 to pay folks quickly and with some stability, and
17 that's something I've asked also for us to look at,
18 but thank you.

19 Questions for Mr. Gardner?

20 Commissioner Adams.

21 I was going to say, don't sit down yet.

22 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Well, first, let me
23 say, it's always a pleasure, you know, seeing you and
24 hearing you speak about good stuff. And thank you for
25 your testimony. So as we heard earlier from your

1 colleague and some of the Commissioners was asked the
2 question, so the Commission, would it be -- what would
3 you like to see us do besides everything -- did
4 everything right? What are some of the major things
5 that we the Commission can help you with?

6 MR. GARDNER: Well, certainly, in your
7 daily duties and responsibilities in Health and,
8 Hospitals, as a Board member, you can continue working
9 with City Hall to ensure that contracts are awarded in
10 an inclusive manner.

11 And this Commission, we are hopeful and
12 we are going to advocate for the recommendation to
13 take the concept of M/WBE as an agency and put it on
14 the ballot in November. And so we can finally support
15 the vision of Mayor Adams in ensuring that the City of
16 New York has the opportunity to award contracts like
17 the SCA, like the MTA in an inclusive manner,
18 centralize the M/WBE focus, ensuring that it's going
19 to be more cost-effective, because we will eradicate
20 the overlap. And so, certainly, we will be looking
21 for your support and your recommendation.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

23 Commissioner Grillo.

24 MS. GRILLO: Thank you.

25 I didn't get an opportunity to thank

1 Maggie for all of the great work that she does under
2 these difficult circumstances, because it's not easy.
3 I know that for a fact.

4 And I just want to thank you, Michael,
5 for everything you've done along the way. You were
6 there when I got to SCA. We talked a great deal about
7 your program and how we could make it better. And I
8 think that you in your experience have a good handle
9 on how we were able to make payments in weeks rather
10 than months.

11 MR. GARDNER: Absolutely.

12 MS. GRILLO: And it really means a
13 great deal for the small businesses, for the M/WBE
14 businesses. So I think it can be done. I think with
15 the right people and those people who are committed to
16 this, and even using MTA and SCA as an example and a
17 process, we may have to change some rules, we may have
18 to change some laws to get it done, but I think it can
19 be. So thanks.

20 MR. GARDNER: Absolutely. And thank
21 you for support, because it was under your leadership
22 and previous presidential leadership at the SCA that
23 you figured out the calculus of how to build safely,
24 timely, on budget, and inclusive of the M/WBE goals.
25 And the investment that the SCA made into that

1 information tracking system has led to the state and
2 the City now adapting that same best practices. So
3 thank you for your outstanding leadership.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

5 Commissioner? Yeah.

6 MR. BRAGG: Thank you. Thank you,
7 Michael, for your testimony. I'm glad you clarified
8 for me, because I thought this was in addition to your
9 offices, so thanks for actually making an agency of
10 M/WBE, which then gives you the power to do the things
11 that you just testified to, which I think is actually
12 a good idea.

13 You know, you're doing a great job now
14 as M/WBE office, but sometimes you're hamstrung and
15 your hands are tied from being able to go to the depth
16 that is necessary to make sure that M/WBEs are getting
17 equitable and fair opportunity here in the City. So
18 thank you for clarifying that. And the agency then
19 would be staffed and budgeted so they can do the type
20 of work that you just testified to.

21 MR. GARDNER: Absolutely, in a
22 centralized manner.

23 MR. BRAGG: That's excellent. Thank
24 you.

25 MR. GARDNER: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner McGraw?

2 MS. MCGRAW: yeah. Thank you so much,
3 Michael, for your testimony, and thank you for all --

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Just speak -- yeah,
5 speak right into it.

6 MS. MCGRAW: -- and thank you for all
7 the great work that you do. I appreciate hearing you
8 in bringing this information to the forefront.

9 Can you just briefly clarify when you
10 say that there's three different agencies right now?
11 And what are those three different agencies, and how
12 will it work better if everything come under one
13 accord and one umbrella?

14 MR. GARDNER: Right. So there is an
15 office and two agencies, and the evolution of the
16 City's M/WBE program, a lot of those services resided
17 in SBS, which we refer to as the Small Business
18 Services. Under the Bloomberg Administration, the
19 M/WBE programs, they were housed there. Under the
20 previous administration, the de Blasio Administration,
21 he created the office of M/WBE. And then you had the
22 Mayor's Office of Contracts, which is MOCS.

23 MS. MCGRAW: Yes. I believe that
24 that --

25 MR. GARDNER: And so there's overlap of

1 the M/WBE program. From a Small Business Services
2 perspective, that's the agency that's responsible for
3 certifying businesses for the City of New York, and
4 then there's other supportive services that reside
5 under SBS. MOCS has the ability to create policy and
6 ensure that contracts that's being awarded before they
7 are awarded, ensuring that the M/WBE goals are going
8 to be achieved.

9 The office of M/WBE, now we are
10 building up. We are getting programming, and we're
11 focusing on enforcement. And so taking a lot of those
12 other services from those two agencies and creating an
13 agency for M/WBE will give us the ability once again
14 for transparency and accountability in a more cost-
15 effective and centralized manner, execute the City's
16 M/WBE programming, monitoring, enforcement, creating
17 creative innovative programs like the centralized
18 construction mentoring program. The \$1.5 million
19 discretionary bill that we got passed, making sure
20 that agencies are adhering to that.

21 And so once again, it would be
22 centralized and focused and more cost-effective and
23 eradicate the overlap.

24 MS. MCGRAW: Oh, we needed that like
25 yesterday. Thank you so much. Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

2 MS. MCGRAW: Really appreciate that.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Michael.

4 MR. GARDNER: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Maya Powell from
6 Councilmember Williams' Office.

7 MS. POWELL: Good evening, everyone.
8 My name is Maya Powell. I'm an office assistant at
9 Councilman Nantasha Williams' Office, and I'm reading
10 this letter on her behalf.

11 I'm seeking your help in improving the
12 written civil rights enforcement within the City of
13 Government through a Charter revision. The Equal
14 Employment Practices Commission is a vital defender of
15 the central civil rights, providing indispensable and
16 otherwise unavailable services to the people of New
17 York. However, this agency finds itself
18 professionally grappling with the limited resources.

19 I seek your assistance in addressing
20 the systemic issue that keeps the employees of New
21 York City from receiving adequate enforcement of the
22 human rights law. This small agency of less than a
23 dozen employees assists 143 other City entities in
24 ensuring equal employment opportunity within our
25 municipal workforce. The systemic nature of the

1 City's agencies underinvestment, regardless of who's
2 mayor, has caused me to ask this question to look into
3 pegging the operating budget of the EEPC to the
4 personnel budget of the City of New York.

5 By freeing this tiny agency from the
6 politics of budget negotiations, they can enjoy the
7 fiscal responsibility needed do its work for the
8 people of New York City.

9 Despite its significant
10 responsibilities to over 300,000 New York City
11 employees, EEPC is one of the smallest agencies in New
12 York City. It is also rarely spared from the worst
13 cuts of past budgets, including this one, while also
14 never receiving adequate investments from past
15 administrations in more fiscally solvent times.

16 This means today years of disinvestment
17 has had a significant impact on the EEPC's ability to
18 fulfill its Charter mandate and the requirements of
19 local law 13 related to the underutilization research
20 in reporting. This also impacts their abilities to
21 ensure that the City of New York identifies and acts
22 on disparities before they become costly lawsuits.

23 To effectively carry out this mission,
24 the EEPC needs more staff and funding for training to
25 ensure that the EEPC are experts in EEO

1 implementation. The current budget for the EEPC
2 stands at \$1.1 million in a City budget upward of 100
3 billion. As chair of the Civil and Human Rights
4 Committee, I find myself negotiating with the Mayor
5 for an additional \$800,000 to help this agency meet
6 the needs of the City. It's disheartening to note
7 that the EEPC's current budget is significantly less
8 than what it takes to remove just one inch of snow in
9 our City. In a metropolis with over 300,000
10 employees, the EEPC's role is critical in ensuring
11 that every employee has equal access to opportunities
12 and treatment.

13 Please do not hesitate to contact me at
14 718-776-3700, or our district e-mail at
15 district27@counsel.nyc.gov to discuss this further.
16 Thank you in advance for your consideration.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
18 Thank you.

19 Samuel Padilla?

20 MR. BRAGG: Chair? Can I just --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.
22 Did you have a question?

23 MR. BRAGG: I'd just like to ask if they
24 could send a copy of that testimony to us?

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Ma'am, can you -- we

1 have a copy. Okay.

2 Samuel Padilla.

3 MR. PADILLA: Can you hear me?

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we can.

5 MR. PADILLA: My name is Samuel

6 Padilla --

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Padilla.

8 MR. PADILLA: -- sometimes pronounced
9 Padilla. I am a general contractor for the City of
10 New York. I've been in --

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Speak right into the
12 mic, please.

13 MR. PADILLA: I am a general contractor
14 for the City of New York doing city and state work.
15 And I've been minority contractor for 30 years.

16 However, I've been a minority all my
17 life. All right? As a Puerto Rican, I came in as a
18 minority contractor under Mayor Dinkins when he
19 started the program. That's when I decided to leave
20 my management position at Con Edison, because I wasn't
21 getting promoted. And that created an opportunity for
22 me, which has led me to where I am now, and my job now
23 is keeping my people employed, in some cases 300
24 people employed. That's what I do, Union Shop
25 100 percent.

1 Now, the idea of having a mayoral
2 agency is something that really should be done and
3 must be done, because right now there are
4 approximately 30 or 40 individual City departments,
5 and then you have so many City agencies, each with
6 their own goals to do things. And navigating those
7 waters is very difficult for a contractor, because at
8 the end of the day, if we had a single source, a
9 single agency under a Commission with a staff that's
10 able to do these things and be a single point of
11 contact for the fact when we have a problem and we
12 have issues, that they can look at and address across
13 all perspectives.

14 For example, I know -- not an example,
15 but having an agency that centralizes accountability
16 for all of the agencies -- and I'm not talking one or
17 two. I'm talking 30 individual agencies that are
18 supposed to be compliant with the M/WBE goals are
19 doing it individually. And some really comply; some
20 don't comply.

21 The answering to someone that's
22 monitoring them and getting their data and evaluating
23 their performance is the way to get things done. It
24 benefits the minority community in a number of ways,
25 clearly. The M/WBE community adds diversity and

1 inclusion and pays taxes. We pay a lot of taxes, and
2 we deserve -- the minority, black, white, women, they
3 deserve the chance to prosper.

4 And we, me and you both, have to create
5 those opportunities, me hiring minority
6 subcontractors, and you creating opportunities for
7 those contractors to be able to excel, to be able to
8 create generational wealth. Because the only way
9 we're going to be economically equal is to have equal
10 opportunity, not a handout, equal opportunity. This
11 isn't a welfare state. A lot of the contractors that
12 we have that are minority contractors are extremely
13 hard workers and deserve this.

14 So now, someone points that this
15 mayoral agency would give us --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: We're going to ask you
17 to keep your comments brief.

18 MR. PADILLA: Okay. Centralizing
19 oversight and accountability, enhancing and
20 coordination and consistency throughout all agencies,
21 improving the efficiency of this entire -- all 34 of
22 them, focusing on advocacy and support, that will be
23 central with the Commissioner and staff.

24 Data collection and analysis, that was
25 brought up before, getting all the data and then

1 holding people accountable for their actions on what
2 they're doing or not doing. And then clearly
3 increasing the visibility and commitment of the City
4 of New York and all of you as Commissioners, saying
5 that you're committed to help us help you, because
6 that's what we do. We're helping you. In helping us
7 we increase our viability, we increase the economy,
8 and, more importantly, we create opportunities for our
9 children. All right?

10 And all of you are chartered [sic] with
11 that responsibility. Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

13 Rohan Defreitas.

14 Oh, question? I'm sorry. Go ahead.

15 MR. LYNCH: I just want to thank you
16 for your additional testimony on the agency. Once
17 again, just from reading and seeing that from 2021 you
18 had, like, a 50 percent increase up to \$6 million of
19 contracts that has been awarded. So I want to extend
20 kudos to Mayor Adams as well as to Mr. Gardner there.

21 So you clarified and cleared a lot of
22 questions that I had when I came in this evening in
23 regards to the agency. So my question is about
24 establishing a single agency for that. So I just want
25 to thank you for your testimony. That really

1 clarified those questions for me.

2 MR. PADILLA: Thank you so much, and I
3 want to thank you for your efforts --

4 MR. LYNCH: Thank you.

5 MR. PADILLA: -- to make this happen
6 for New Yorkers.

7 MR. LYNCH: You're welcome.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Followed by
9 Edward Perry after this.

10 MR. DEFREITAS: It's actually tough to
11 follow someone like Sam Padilla. He's one of my
12 mentors in this business.

13 Again, my name is Rohan Defreitas. I
14 represent a firm called Crescent Consulting. We are
15 minority owned by myself, being African-American, and
16 my business partner, Luis Segarra, who is also
17 Hispanic. So we're not just 100 percent minority
18 owned. We are actually 200 percent minority owned.

19 It's a pleasure tonight to be before
20 you, because I am excited to know that this Commission
21 has been assembled to look at the City Charter, to
22 visit the City Charter in many aspects, even though
23 I'm here tonight to talk about why it's so critical to
24 have a centralized M/WBE agency.

25 In my realm of what I do, I get to see

1 and get to interact and get to interface with the
2 contractors who are seeking the opportunities as well
3 as the end user that's looking for those contractors
4 to take advantage of the opportunities. And it could
5 be a direct agency contract, or it could be an
6 indirect agency contract with the City of New York.

7 And I must say I've got to give the
8 Mayor kudos for the fact that when he invited me to
9 meet with him when he was campaigning, and he asked me
10 about these various types of initiatives that he
11 wanted to implement, this was one of the initiatives
12 that he had mentioned to me. So I've got to give him
13 kudos in the fact that he's actually looking to
14 implement this type of centralized agency.

15 And like Mike mentioned earlier -- and,
16 you know, we kind of -- in the M/WBE community, we
17 kind of call him the Godfather of M/WBE, even though
18 he probably doesn't want to be --

19 THE CHAIRMAN: I just call him the
20 Godfather always.

21 MR. DEFREITAS: I just don't kiss his
22 ring. I don't kiss his ring.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: -- spiffy dresser --

24 MR. DEFREITAS: His ring is not
25 kissable by me. I don't do that.

1 However, look, a centralized agency
2 brings a lot to the City of New York for expediency's
3 sake, for efficiency's sake. It's going to allow for
4 you to run a more effective agency that can get a lot
5 more results, where other agencies could be leaning on
6 them to get more information, more contractors that
7 are doing well.

8 Because one of the questions that's
9 always raised to me is -- on the different projects
10 that I'm working on, "Well, can you tell me of a good
11 contractor that does this? Can you recommend another
12 contractor that does this?" The centralized agency
13 will have that type of data that they're maintaining
14 and that they're keeping so that it could be shared
15 across the board so that contractors have a lot more
16 opportunities to take advantage of when the
17 opportunities arise.

18 It would also allow for greater
19 innovation, innovation from the standpoint that Mike
20 mentioned. There's the mentor protege problems
21 programs. If you're running it on the one agency,
22 there's no need for every agency to have their own
23 mentor protege program, like it's currently being
24 discussed and being looked at right now.

25 Innovation in the sense that financial

1 and bonding and insurance support can be offered to
2 contractors through a centralized agency. Those are
3 things that we need to definitely consider by bringing
4 a centralized agency under one source.

5 Reporting and getting that
6 reports -- and as Mike mentioned earlier, the B2G
7 system that's being considered, I'm happy to hear
8 that, because presently on various of the projects
9 that I'm working on; i.e., the JFK International
10 Airport, \$19 billion project, we're using the B2G
11 system.

12 Why it's important? You start with
13 your utilization. Utilization gives you what you
14 think you're going to accomplish. But at the end of
15 the day, you could have the greatest and best
16 utilization plan that there is. If contractors are
17 not being paid and are verifying that they're being
18 paid, which they do through this particular system.
19 And at the end of the day you marry contract payments
20 with utilization, you're not hitting the goals.

21 Because in the beginning, projects look
22 like they're going to be accomplishing every goal
23 that's set. But if the -- at the end of the day the
24 results are not -- or the rubber is not hitting the
25 road from that standpoint, it's not what we want. And

1 having a centralized agency will enable us to be doing
2 and accomplishing those types of things.

3 So I urge you and I applaud you again
4 for looking at the Charter. There are other items in
5 that City Charter if you you're open to suggestions.
6 I think I can go online and write in my suggestions.
7 There are other things we need to look at.

8 And the last thing I will say before I
9 turn the mic over is let's not always lose focus that
10 minority businesses are good businesses, and minority
11 businesses we can lean on to encourage and stimulate
12 the economic growth of minorities who tend to work for
13 minority businesses. And the more minorities we have
14 working in the construction industry or any industry,
15 it allows for the growth of other minority businesses
16 to be created.

17 Because construction companies are
18 created -- Sam probably can attest to this, because
19 him and his brother probably created Padilla
20 Construction -- that's how it's created. So the more
21 employment we stimulate among young people in the
22 industry, the more businesses in the long run that we
23 will make in the future. I thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

25 Any questions or comments? Yes.

1 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: First, let me say
2 thank you so much for your testimony. Because it's an
3 education. And I must say, for years after knowing
4 Michael Gardner, but I also knew that he was with
5 Transit. And then when the Mayor came in and now gave
6 him that position, I learned so much about -- and
7 sometimes I don't even say the name right. But I've
8 learned so much, and not only for this Commission but
9 for the City and for the communities, because a lot of
10 people don't know.

11 So this is really good, and I'm just
12 glad to be a part of the Commission, Mr. Chair,
13 because I am getting an education along with so many
14 others. So thank you, Mayor Adams, for appointing and
15 putting this in motion, and so our community and our
16 City -- and this is the whole reason that we are here
17 as a Commissioner, to give the community and the City
18 a chance for their voices to be heard, so we can know
19 and they can know what's going on.

20 So thank you for the education. Thank
21 you so much, all of you.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

23 Okay. Edward Perry.

24 MR. PERRY: Well, thank you very much.

25 I'm here representing sort of a different -- I'm an

1 M/WBE contractor currently.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Please --

3 MR. PERRY: I'm an M/WBE contractor
4 currently in New York City. I used to be and still am
5 in for another two weeks Lorraine's SCA mentor
6 program. Also was in -- and still in Michael
7 Gardner's mentor program. And also Sam Padilla has a
8 mentor program specifically for me, and I'm in his
9 mentor program as well.

10 But what I want to do is just talk
11 about numbers and how the M/WBE program has been
12 successful for my business. So we started out, my
13 wife and I, in the basement of our house. We went
14 from our first year of government contracts of \$50,000
15 to within three years 8.3 million. Okay? We went
16 from four employees to about 120 employees between
17 here and Puerto Rico.

18 This is directly due to working for the
19 City. You can't do this outside of the City. So this
20 was the SCA and this was the MTA program that got us
21 there.

22 Currently, because of all of this,
23 we're doing a \$32 million affordable housing project
24 for HPA. So without these programs, without what, you
25 know, we're talking about here today, none of this is

1 possible for us.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I just want you
3 to speak right into the mic --

4 MR. PERRY: Sorry.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: -- your voice --

6 MR. PERRY: Oh, I'm sorry.

7 So without these programs, none of this
8 is possible for us.

9 One of the things that they're talking
10 about that's important is the payment structure.
11 Recently, we got a payment from MTA in about three
12 days. It's down to three days now. Okay? The MTA is
13 down to -- the SCA is down to one day. So by
14 centralizing, putting all of this together, that means
15 the City payments -- which we've had City contracts
16 can go 30 to 45 days, which is better -- can
17 potentially go down to, like, one week or so.

18 So the idea is that I guess what I'm
19 representing is that if everything is put together as
20 you all are looking to do, there's tremendous benefit,
21 tremendous wealth, and a sort of -- it helps out all
22 of the M/WBE businesses in a way that's almost
23 unimaginable. I know it was for us. Okay? Thank you
24 very much.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And I had

1 the opportunity to speak at one of your mentor
2 programs at the SCA --

3 MR. PERRY: Yes, yeah, I remember --

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

5 Questions.

6 MS. MCGRAW: Yes. Well, I don't know
7 if it's a question or a comment. I just wanted to say
8 thank you, because we get to hear what Michael Gardner
9 and the rest of the testimony, and what they're trying
10 to do is bring this to an agency under one umbrella.
11 But to hear your testimony, to hear that you went from
12 getting payment in three days and opposed to 45
13 days -- for a year.

14 MR. PERRY: Well, I mean I've had
15 payments outstanding for over a year right now.

16 MS. MCGRAW: Right, right.

17 MR. PERRY: Like, the most recent
18 payment we had, we had one from the SCA that comes by
19 check still. That's still one week, including the
20 mail. And one came from the MTA literally three days.
21 So we put in on a Monday. We got paid on Wednesday.

22 MS. MCGRAW: That's excellent. So we
23 need to hear more of this, and I think the City also
24 needs to hear more of this. Because we get to hear
25 the results of how it's working for you.

1 MR. PERRY: It's working, right.

2 MS. MCGRAW: And New Yorkers need to
3 hear that, too.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

5 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you so much.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Lorraine?

7 MS. GRILLO: If I may, just want to say
8 how proud I am of you, Edward.

9 MR. PERRY: Thank you.

10 MS. GRILLO: We know each other -- from
11 the earliest days --

12 MR. PERRY: Yes.

13 MS. GRILLO: -- just amazing to see you
14 growing.

15 MR. PERRY: Thank you. Lorraine saved
16 a bunch of contractors a few years ago --

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, she did.

18 MR. PERRY: -- actually, one of the
19 contractors. Some of you know the story. It's
20 amazing. Thank you very much.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
22 Victor Trombettas.

23 MR. TROMBETTAS: Esteemed Charter
24 Commission Members, thank you very much for this
25 opportunity. I will be well within the three-minute

1 limit.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

3 MR. TROMBETTAS: I am an immigrant and
4 grateful and proud naturalized citizen and Queens
5 resident for 54 years. I'm here to humbly beseech you
6 to put the issue of Sanctuary City before we the
7 people in a November referendum so we can decide if we
8 want our historic city to continue to stand in
9 defiance of the will of the people and in defiance of
10 the laws of our beloved nation.

11 Sadly --

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Speak right into the
13 mic.

14 MR. TROMBETTAS: You bet.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Maybe lift it up a
16 little bit, yeah.

17 MR. TROMBETTAS: Thank you.

18 Sadly and infuriatingly so, our leaders
19 have failed to ensure the life, liberty, and pursuit
20 of happiness of its own people, the people who elected
21 those leaders. In the face of this failure of our
22 representative leadership, we entreat you to put this
23 issue directly before us so that we can make our will
24 known.

25 I kindly remind you that our Mayor has

1 stated that this singular policy and issue will
2 destroy, destroy our City. I ask that you heed his
3 words and return to us the people the ability to fix
4 this.

5 I don't stand here as an immigrant
6 opposed to the changing hue of our people. I stand
7 here as a thankful naturalized citizen who believes in
8 this rare and precious experiment of individual
9 liberty and the power of the people and understands
10 how our nation is the singular and greatest experiment
11 in the annals of a violent, miserable, deadly, barely
12 survivable history of humankind.

13 I also believe in a controlled,
14 orderly, legal, documented approach to immigration,
15 which is as necessary as the decision that we all make
16 about who we let into our homes every day and to whom
17 we distribute our charity. It is a ridiculous
18 proposition that we must care for everyone who gets
19 themselves here. Even more outrageous is the fact that
20 we shield criminals from federal enforcement.

21 This incredible City is our home.
22 Please give us a chance to save it. Thank you for
23 your consideration.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

25 Joy Amanda.

1 MS. AMANDA: I can't see. Oh, my gosh.
2 All right. How are you doing tonight?

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good. How are you?

4 MS. AMANDA: Okay. So I'll see if I
5 can adjust -- I think this is really good; right?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that's better.

7 MS. AMANDA: And I over the years
8 learned to project my voice. I used to work in a
9 movie theater, 42nd Street AMC, so I had to manage,
10 like, crowds of millions.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Love it.

12 MS. AMANDA: So even if I didn't have
13 the mic, I would be able to project my voice.

14 So my name is Joy. I am from South
15 Jamaica, Queens. I've been in Queens for almost 40
16 years. And over the last four years, I became a
17 little more involved with politics, given the extreme
18 changes that happened over the last four years,
19 especially in the last three years when -- and I'm
20 sure most of you know -- a lot of the City workers
21 were terminated due to the unlawful mandates, and I
22 was one of them.

23 I was a DOE teacher for almost ten
24 years, and I was let go due to my choices, my body my
25 choice. But that's okay, because three years later I

1 was able to obtain my own employment, which now I'm
2 very happy with what I do.

3 But it pushed me to be involved with
4 local politics. I need to know what my public
5 servants are doing, because, based on article 4,
6 section 4 of the U.S. Constitution, it's my job to
7 oversee public servants, which, if a lot of you study
8 the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the New York
9 State Constitution, and this City Charter, it is up to
10 the people to be responsible and oversee what our
11 public servants are doing, whether it be the Mayor,
12 the comptroller, the public advocate, anyone it City
13 Council, our state assembly, congress, senate,
14 president, you name it. That's what we're supposed to
15 do.

16 So based on this resolution, which I
17 found out about this last week, and I -- excuse
18 me -- I made the adjustments with work, like
19 Councilman Holden was saying about the public or the
20 people not being able to come out because of work. I
21 made the adjustment. I went to work 5:30 in the
22 morning just so I can have time to be here this
23 evening, took two trains and a bus just to be here,
24 and I'm here.

25 And in that time I was able to read the

1 recommendations for what is being set forth by this
2 Commission, and two things stood out for me. And
3 while I was sitting there I read up on some more, and
4 I also look forward to maybe getting a paper copy.
5 I'd like to request it. I know I can download it off-
6 line and print it, but I don't have access to a
7 printer, and the library only allots you 40 pages a
8 day -- actually, 20 pages a day, and it's over 50-
9 something.

10 Two things that stand out for me:
11 public safety and surety bonds. I would like to know
12 on the record -- and let me just -- give me one
13 minute. So I would like to know on the record, in
14 this resolution or recommendation, what is your
15 definition of "public." That's question number one.

16 And number two is, do you understand or
17 know the purpose of the surety bond? And if you do,
18 do you know that the surety bond is the insurance for
19 the people when our public servants step out of line
20 and we want compensation for their -- how we
21 say -- mismanagement of funds based on the abuse of
22 their discretion.

23 Now, if we end up removing surety
24 bonds, which surety bonds have been in place more than
25 150 years, which, based on your information, has been

1 since 1872 -- surety bonds allow for the people to
2 hold our public servants accountable and render
3 compensation. So if that's removed because it is
4 antiquated, then that would mean a lot of what the
5 founding fathers put in place is antiquated, because
6 it's not modernized. Yes, we've become a modern
7 society. We've moved forward. We've progressed. But
8 there are things that are put in place that need to be
9 in place, because sometimes you shouldn't reinvent the
10 wheel. If it works, it works.

11 Now, if you do removed surety bonds,
12 which, surety bonds, they insure our comptroller, our
13 mayor, our public advocate, also corporation counsel,
14 which, in fact, based on evidence and public record
15 from the City Council meeting that I went to,
16 corporation counsel is the one that writes these laws
17 and puts into place what's going on. So I know the
18 Commission has been selected by the Mayor, Mayor
19 Adams. However, corporation counsel will be the one
20 that has final say. The group of lawyers that we know
21 are hired by the City to defend the public servants
22 that serve us, whether they're voted in, selected,
23 elected, however you want to choose the narrative. It
24 really doesn't matter to me.

25 So if it is removed, the removal of

1 surety bonds will in turn mean that all public
2 servants will be 100 percent compliant to their oath.
3 So the first order of business for any public servant
4 is they have to honor their oath. That is their first
5 and only job, which is to uphold the rights of the
6 people, the people of New York.

7 So if we're going to remove surety
8 bonds, which is a concern for me as the overseer of
9 government, which I am, we're then in turn saying that
10 all of our public servants will be 100 percent
11 compliant to their oath of office, which everyone
12 takes. I'm not sure if you all take that -- I know
13 you were selected to volunteer maybe to do this, and,
14 you know, thank you for wanting to be involved with
15 the local affairs of the community and the people.

16 Removing surety bonds will hurt the
17 people, because that takes away our insurance that we
18 have to get compensation when the City mismanages the
19 funds of the people, which, whether it's MTA, DOE, all
20 the agencies that take funds for the people, since we
21 are taxed, which we shouldn't be -- that's another
22 conversation -- that's the purse of the City. That's
23 the people's purse.

24 If a public official steps out of line
25 or a public servant steps out of line with their abuse

1 of discretion, then we can't have any recourse, which,
2 based on the Constitution, the First Amendment, and
3 the New York State Constitution we have the right to
4 redress grievances. The compensation comes from the
5 surety bonds.

6 So those are the two things that are of
7 great concern for me. Public safety should be in the
8 hands of the men and women of the people, which is in
9 the New York State Constitution, and it's up to us to
10 handle our public safety, which we know police are not
11 law enforcement or sheriffs, but just policy
12 enforcers, which is a problem for people of New York,
13 and surety bonds.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

15 MS. AMANDA: I yield.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: You could have this
17 copy.

18 MS. AMANDA: Oh, thank you so much.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: That's my copy, and I'm
20 giving it to you.

21 MS. AMANDA: Oh, I appreciate it.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: You're welcome.

23 MS. AMANDA: Can I get an autograph?

24 THE CHAIRMAN: No.

25 Alex Vega.

1 MS. AMANDA: I appreciate it. Thank
2 you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah. Questions.
4 Sorry.

5 Don't go too far.

6 MR. BRAGG: I have a -- question.

7 MS. AMANDA: Here I come. Sorry,
8 sorry, sorry. Hi.

9 MR. BRAGG: Thank you for testimony.

10 MS. AMANDA: Of course.

11 MR. BRAGG: I just wanted to ask, did
12 you bring any research about where any instances of
13 which surety bonds have been utilized?

14 MS. AMANDA: I don't have any evidence
15 for that. I know that -- and it's actually in your
16 documents that the public officers law, section 11,
17 says that all public officers are to obtain a surety
18 bond. Those surety bonds are to protect the people --

19 MR. BRAGG: I understand. Your
20 testimony is clear. I just want to know if you had
21 any instances in where it had to be actually utilized.

22 MS. AMANDA: Oh, instances. So -- hmm.

23 MR. BRAGG: If not, you could always
24 come back with that. But that's --

25 MS. AMANDA: I know there was an

1 instance outside of New York City. I don't have that
2 information with me. But I know there was an instance
3 outside of New York City where a bond was pulled. And
4 when that public servant stepped out of line and their
5 bond was pulled, that public servant stepped down.

6 MR. BRAGG: Because I was just trying
7 to figure out what the circumstances might have --

8 MS. AMANDA: Well, the circumstances
9 would be --

10 MR. BRAGG: -- as to the --

11 MS. AMANDA: -- whether they violate
12 their oath, whether they overstep their authority --

13 MR. BRAGG: I get it.

14 MS. AMANDA: -- you know, whatever
15 harms the people.

16 MR. BRAGG: Thank you. Thank you.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

18 MR. BRAGG: I'm also from South Queens,
19 so thank you.

20 MS. AMANDA: Any other questions?

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

22 Alex Vega.

23 MS. AMANDA: No -- that was good? All
24 right. Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

1 MR. VEGA: Hello? All right. Good
2 evening, everyone.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening.

4 MR. VEGA: So I wanted to sort of
5 repeat what Counsel Holden said and the gentleman who
6 was seated here before about sanctuary status, which
7 is something I would like to see everyone recommend to
8 get rid of.

9 Number one, because first of crime. We
10 can use examples like the Casino Park rape that
11 happened in Queens recently, the off-duty cop who had
12 his car stolen by illegal immigrants with machine guns
13 in Harlem. I think that was, like, a week or two ago.
14 And the rampant Roosevelt Avenue prostitution and the
15 selling of stolen items that you see there. Those are
16 just some examples.

17 Especially Casino Park, just that to me
18 personally is very important, because I go to that
19 park. I play basketball at that park. My wife, my
20 daughter, we all go together, you know, in the
21 playground. I go running there. My wife sometimes
22 takes my daughter running there. And so you can
23 imagine having a daughter and hearing that, you know,
24 we have illegal immigrants raping children, how I
25 would feel. I don't know if any of you have

1 daughters, right, but I'm pretty sure that's
2 concerning to you.

3 And so the fact that this Sanctuary
4 City thing, right, protects or limits NYPD from being
5 able to communicate with ICE is a problem. And so I
6 think, I assume that everyone is in agreement that if
7 someone is a criminal and they're illegally here that
8 they should be deported.

9 Continuing with that also, NYC citizens
10 did not vote, me specifically speaking for my tax
11 dollars or our tax dollars, to be used to house
12 illegal immigrants in hotels, be given free food, be
13 given free cell phones, free Wi-Fi, whatever else that
14 we all know has been in the news. We need to get rid
15 of it, because our tax dollars should go towards
16 improving the lives of New York City citizens, meaning
17 legalized citizens; right?

18 My parents came here with a visa. So
19 did my wife; right? And so that is important to me
20 and important to other members of the community, my
21 community. If you're not a legal citizen in the USA,
22 you should not receive our NYC tax dollars, speaking
23 specifically just to New York City.

24 Second part, we need to change the
25 Charter so that we're able to hold a recall vote for

1 all elected and appointed officials in New York City
2 government. I don't know if you guys remember when
3 there was a recall vote in California for Gov. Newsom.
4 That doesn't exist in NYC or in New York State. So
5 there's no -- what's the word? There's no
6 reason -- huh?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mechanism.

8 MR. VEGA: Mechanism, or there's just
9 no reason for, let's say the Mayor, a judge, or anyone
10 to hold their oath to do the right thing; right?
11 Because you can't be removed.

12 Where was I? So I was saying so that
13 means mayors, judges, NYC counsel, et cetera. When
14 elected officials like Mayor Adams -- I know some
15 people here support him. I don't -- the controller,
16 appointed officials like judges are incompetent,
17 negligent, or just plain bad at their jobs, we the
18 people should be able to get a 12 percent recall vote
19 to remove those people from their office.

20 Bills already exist for this, bills
21 A4748, so that's I think the assembly level. And then
22 there's also the bill S1437, and that is at the
23 senator level, if I'm not mistaken, that address this.

24 And so I and my other community members
25 have spoken. Like today I went to my assemblyman's

1 office, Steven Raga. I put the paperwork in and
2 everything. Other people will be going. We'll be
3 making the rounds with the senator to make this law
4 happen at the state level. And all of you, all of you
5 here should also push for this change to happen in the
6 Charter.

7 Do you have any questions?

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

9 Any questions?

10 MR. VEGA: Any questions?

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

12 MR. VEGA: All right. Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

14 Claudine Thuilot. Tell me your last
15 name?

16 MS. THUILOT: It's pronounced
17 "Tweeloe."

18 THE CHAIRMAN: "Twee-lou."

19 MS. THUILOT: "Tweeloe."

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Spell it.

21 MS. THUILOT: T-H-U-I-L-O-T, Thuilot.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thuilot. Okay. Thank
23 you.

24 MS. THUILOT: Okay. Hello. My name is
25 Claudine Thuilot.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Speak right into the
2 mic, loud.

3 MS. THUILOT: Okay. I would also like
4 to reiterate what Mr. Holden said earlier about the
5 referendum of the Sanctuary City law on the November
6 ballot.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Up a
8 little -- closer -- thank you. Perfect.

9 MS. THUILOT: Too many people have come
10 into our country and obviously our City that are not
11 vetted and are here illegally. Another 9/11 terror
12 attack will happen again, because we know terrorists
13 are here. Some terrorists -- some with terrorist ties
14 have already been apprehended, but many have not.

15 It's obviously that we cannot handle
16 the level of illegal migrants that have come into our
17 City. ICE cannot do its job. Crime is certainly a
18 major problem. Services for our own citizens have
19 been affected: schools, housing, hospitals, just to
20 name a few. We must have this referendum on the
21 ballot.

22 City Council representatives don't
23 always reflect what their constituents want,
24 especially as things change during their election
25 cycle. These last two years have proven that we are

1 overwhelmed. Many people are not happy with the way
2 our Sanctuary City has evolved in actuality and would
3 like to be heard in November.

4 I believe our Mayor Adams has even
5 expressed his disappointment over the influx of
6 migrants that have and will continue to come into the
7 City and overwhelm us, the status that at one point he
8 was a proponent of.

9 There really should be a referendum on
10 the November ballot and let the people of the City's
11 voices be heard. Thank you.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

13 Any questions or comments?

14 Okay. Joi Schlapp.

15 MS. SCHLAPP: Hi, good evening. I am
16 here today because I am in favor of the referendum
17 that Councilman Holden spoke about on Sanctuary City
18 status appearing on the November ballot.

19 It's only fair to let the people of
20 this City vote on this issue, because we the taxpayers
21 are the ones funding the Sanctuary City costs, which
22 are astronomical and come at a cost to our own
23 services and quality-of-life issues as taxpayers of
24 this City.

25 We have many of our own issues,

1 including the increasing crime, to overcome in this
2 City. Many of our own New Yorkers, our homeless, our
3 veterans, our children, and our elderly are in need of
4 housing, healthcare, and other services that are being
5 given away to illegal migrants as part of our
6 Sanctuary City status.

7 Our infrastructure is failing. Our
8 transportation system, our roads, our highways are
9 failing. Our schools are overcrowded and overburdened
10 right now from the influx of illegal migrants into our
11 communities. And the appeal of a Sanctuary City only
12 draws more and more to overwhelm our City.

13 The Mayor, who initially welcomed the
14 world, has now said we cannot sustain the influx, that
15 this will destroy our once-great City.

16 Aside from all these issues, sanctuary
17 cities pose a threat to the national security, not
18 only of our own City, but of our nation as a whole. A
19 nation with an open border and many millions of
20 improperly vetted individuals is a disaster waiting to
21 happen. The perks that our Sanctuary City offer
22 attract more and more people every day and potentially
23 ones who mean harm to us.

24 Also, there have been repeated warnings
25 from the head of the FBI, Christopher Wray, about

1 another impending terror attack on our soil because of
2 our open borders.

3 We must put the question of Sanctuary
4 City status to the people of this City, because our
5 elected officials have failed to protect us all from a
6 potential terror attack due to the partisan politics
7 in this City and our country.

8 We must never forget or ever leave
9 ourselves open again to what happened on 9/11. It
10 only took a handful of individuals to hijack four
11 planes and kill thousands of people in New York City.
12 New York City is probably the number one target for
13 terror attacks in the world. Wouldn't it be wise to
14 head off another attack before it devastates this
15 City? If we learn anything, let's all learn from the
16 history of 9/11 and protect our City.

17 And please consider giving the people
18 of this City the power to vote on whether we want to
19 be a Sanctuary City or not. It's only fair since we
20 ultimately bear the brunt of the decision that has
21 been made for us without our opinion, without us being
22 asked.

23 We must be able to abide by the laws of
24 our nation's legal immigration system as well. Thank
25 you for your consideration on this issue.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

2 Okay. We're going to move to Zoom now.

3 Frank Morano.

4 MR. MORANO: Thank you very much,
5 Commissioner -- first, let me begin. Can you hear me
6 okay? Can you guys hear me?

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

8 MR. MORANO: Okay. Let me begin with a
9 few thank yous, first for Chairman Scissura for
10 directing staff to look into the Community Boarding
11 issue that -- chose. In fact -- mentioned it the
12 other day, and I'm sure others as well, that -- the
13 testimony and suggestions from the public seriously.

14 And I know -- Community Board meeting
15 yesterday, and people were really excited about the
16 prospects of seeing some movement in terms of
17 reshaping the role of Community Boards in the City,
18 particularly given the work that the 2017 Commission
19 did -- or 2018 Commission, which a lot of folks view
20 as -- so thank you.

21 I also want to thank the staff for
22 putting together a terrific preliminary staff report
23 in terms of substance and in terms of the sheer number
24 of issues addressed. The fact that you were able to
25 put this together in such a short timeframe and so

1 thoroughly researched and footnoted I think is a
2 testament to what happens when you put Staten
3 Islanders in such key positions of influence and
4 record standings --

5 THE CHAIRMAN: And I would say a bound
6 beautiful copy as well.

7 MR. MORANO: No doubt about it -- a
8 bunch of credit Staten Islanders is about,
9 providing -- so the one thing that I want to reiterate
10 is what Executive Director Diane Savino, a tremendous
11 public servant for the last two decades, had said,
12 which is that while these are terrific, many of them,
13 they're just recommendations, and that ultimately the
14 ball -- you know, the buck stops with you. You were
15 selected, all of you, for this Commission for a
16 reason. The Mayor selected you because of your
17 judgment, because of your experience, because of your
18 ability to listen, because of your ability to think
19 analytically, because of the perspective that you are
20 bringing to this.

21 Now, I know Chairman Scissura has
22 alluded tonight and in previous Commission hearings
23 that this is his third commission. As an observer of
24 commissions and as a testifier and as somebody that
25 has followed the goings-on of Charter Revision

1 Commissions closely, this is my eighth commission.
2 And I can tell you, the one common denominator among
3 those commissions -- and that's commissions appointed
4 by four different mayors studying a wide variety of
5 different issues -- is that there's a tremendous
6 desire to defer to the staff. And it makes sense.
7 They put in the work, and the thinking is, well, who
8 am I to question the staff? You're the Commissioner.
9 So I don't think you should have any qualms about
10 questioning the staff.

11 Now, there's some tremendous work on
12 this, particularly on the budgetary front. And I
13 think it's certainly worthy of inclusion in terms of
14 your ultimate proposals in November.

15 The one issue that I have to take with
16 this report and the one aspect of this that I hope you
17 will not listen to them on, basically, at least at
18 this point, is the fact that there's not a single
19 proposal that has anything to do with electoral
20 reform. The recommendation of the staff is to keep
21 this for future -- the future commissions.

22 Now, the issue of nonpartisan election,
23 which is where most of my efforts in communicating
24 with you have been focused, that issue has been
25 studied by Charter Revision Commissions in 1998, 1999,

1 2001 2002, 2003, 2010, and 2019. And in 2019 that was
2 a two-year Commission.

3 And, additionally, the change that I'm
4 suggesting making, which is just emulate what we do in
5 special elections in this City, we had 30 years of a
6 track record to see how they had worked out in the
7 City.

8 So I really think if you don't put that
9 question on the ballot, the question to give us the
10 right to choose whether we want nonpartisan elections,
11 I really think it defies any sort of logic or
12 explanation. How much more studying do we need? We
13 have 20 years' worth of commissioned New Yorkers and
14 30 years' worth of seeing how it's worked in New York
15 City.

16 So I understand while some of you may
17 have policy preferences that don't include nonpartisan
18 elections, for whatever reason, those of us that are
19 independents in this City, those of us that have been
20 treated like second-class citizens, those of us that
21 are forced to pay the taxes to administer elections
22 that we can't even vote in, we deserve the right to
23 vote for ourselves whether we want a different
24 direction this City. Please put that on the ballot.

25 Now, if nonpartisan elections because

1 of the inclusion of ranked choice voting is something
2 that is too crazy to be put on the ballot this year, I
3 would appreciate it if you directed in your final
4 report what specifically you think needs more study.
5 Because the fact that I've heard commission after
6 commission say "This issue needs more study," "This
7 issue needs more study," even though not one of the
8 experts that I recommended that you call has so far
9 been called for a witness, and can answer any
10 questions you have on this, I really think the public
11 would appreciate -- I certainly would -- a little bit
12 of guidance asking what specifically you think needs
13 more studying.

14 But even if you disregard all that, my
15 proposal about giving candidates an option of not
16 filing petitions, of just using a filing fee, as is
17 done in many states and many municipalities around the
18 country, how can that need more study? It's not an
19 academic question. It's a question of values. Should
20 candidates be able to get on the ballot without going
21 through the onerous ballot access process?

22 So I appreciate the staff's work. They
23 did a great job. I would just hope that you would
24 include at least something related to electoral
25 reform, whether it's nonpartisan elections or filing

1 fees in lieu of -- conditioning -- give us something
2 that shows that the frustrated minority of voters in
3 this City are at least being heard. Thank you.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you.
5 Any questions or comments?

6 Okay. Stephanie.

7 STEPHANIE: Good evening.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening.

9 STEPHANIE: Can you hear me?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

11 STEPHANIE: Hello? Okay. I'm in
12 agreement with all the previous speakers who so
13 eloquently stated their stand on the Sanctuary City
14 referendum. I'm a born and raised Queens New Yorker.
15 I'm a product of the New York City Public School
16 System. I'm a graduate of CUNY and SUNY schools. I
17 speak tonight as the mother of three young girls.

18 I ask that the Sanctuary City
19 referendum appear on the November ballot so the voice
20 of New Yorkers is heard. I love the city I grew up
21 in, and I want that version of New York back.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

24 Maria Danzilo.

25 MS. DANZILO: Hi. Hi, good

1 evening -- can you hear me --

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

3 MS. DANZILO: All right. good evening
4 to the members of the Commission. I just want
5 to -- before I give my comments on what I want to talk
6 about tonight, I just want to say that I strongly
7 agree with the Mr. Morano's request to put nonpartisan
8 questions on the ballot. I think
9 it -- opinion -- voters in New York City, so I
10 strongly support that.

11 My name is Maria Danzilo -- director of
12 the -- of Public Safety Pro-Government Reform -- I
13 appeared last week -- for a public forum to discuss a
14 few different -- and I appreciate the Chair's
15 comments -- but today I'm going a different direction,
16 and I wants to testify on a different matter, which is
17 the need to acquire job qualifications for
18 certain -- City government.

19 We would like to request the Commission
20 to consider -- reform that would require the
21 comptroller in particular to have an advanced degree
22 in finance or a law degree and related experience as a
23 prerequisite -- the job as comptroller. New York City
24 has the tenth largest economy in the world, and, yet,
25 our chief financial officer, our comptroller, has no

1 financial background -- to hold their office. It's
2 unconscionable that we do not require comptroller to
3 have experience to hold a very important position.

4 Remember, the comptroller is
5 responsible for overseeing our public employee pension
6 system, and it's incredibly unfair for our valued
7 government workers that someone overseeing
8 their -- does not have a financial background to
9 ensure that their assets are properly protected.

10 The second -- tightening up of the
11 conflict of interest laws to make sure there's a
12 strong white line between the important job the
13 comptroller does, mainly overseeing the many contracts
14 in New York City, whereas the service providers -- and
15 his personal relationship and the personal
16 relationship with the members -- contract.

17 As part of this -- as part of
18 the -- requesting. The Charter should be amended to
19 ensure the comptroller has no say in who gets
20 appointed -- Conflict of Interest board -- this is
21 laughable. Comptrollers should have no say whatsoever
22 in who -- is overseeing whether he has a conflict of
23 interest in the tenth largest economy in the world.

24 We have many reasons for needing this,
25 and, first and most important is the fact that our

1 current comptroller, according to public reports,
2 shows abysmal performance -- value in his first year,
3 which has been reported to be the largest one-year
4 loss -- concerning the pension -- as for the conflicts
5 of interest issue, our current comptroller
6 is -- nonprofit New York, which is the largest -- for
7 not for profits in the City, nonprofits in the
8 country -- lobbyists, and, yet, Conflict of Interest
9 Board decided there is no conflict, even though it is
10 clearly a conflict, or at very -- has the appearance
11 of conflict of interest, I am aware. I ran
12 a -- policy -- this is a conflict of interest.

13 We need a comptroller who is going to
14 take this job -- there are billions and billions of
15 dollars that are flowing from New York City's
16 taxpayers which is not-for-profit.

17 One example is the enormous amount
18 of -- service providers pertaining to our homeless
19 population from the many large corporate entities for
20 this massive financial context. It's critical that
21 this money is managed to actually help the people who
22 need help in our City.

23 In -- budget of close to four --
24 dollars, which is almost double -- 2023 amount of 2.3
25 billion. We must have our finances managed by someone

1 who does not have a conflict of interest or the
2 appearance of a conflict of interest, that those who
3 are working with the City are properly managed and
4 held accountable to ensure that the people who need
5 our services and our help the most are receiving the
6 services they need in New York --

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
8 Special Hagan.

9 MS. HAGAN: Good evening, everyone.
10 Can you hear me?

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

12 MS. HAGAN: Yes. Thank you for having
13 me. I am the -- I was a former EEO officer at SBS
14 from 2004 to 2007, and it's disheartening to see that
15 the same problems persist for the M/WBE program as
16 they did then in 2004 to 2007.

17 The M/WBE program has been plagued by
18 persistent corruption and political posturing since
19 its inception in 1988. The program has had the same
20 bureaucratic leadership collecting very high salaries
21 that have been hamstrung by the law and by pandering
22 under various mayoral administrations.

23 With that said, substantive change
24 requires that the status quo be confronted. For the
25 past 36 years, the governing executive board -- the

1 City Charter have lacked any substantive enforcement
2 mechanisms. Specifically, there are no penalties for
3 contractors and/or commissioners who fail to adhere to
4 the mandates of the program. And the commissioners
5 report to the mayor, so sometimes the commissioners
6 are actually hamstrung by the mayor, and I have seen
7 that as well.

8 So with that said, I recommend the
9 following amendments to the Charter. Commissioner to
10 each agency should receive performance evaluations,
11 and amongst other things rate for their adherence to
12 M/WBE goals. And if they fail to comply, they should
13 be fired.

14 Second, better monitoring of the
15 program. There are tons of M/WBE participants that
16 were fronted by people of color and/or women so that
17 they could get into the program, and the fact was
18 discovered through investigation it was taking place.
19 These businesses and any iteration or associations
20 with these businesses should be banned for life from
21 doing business with the City.

22 And then lastly, the enforcement of
23 these various changes really needs to be consistent
24 and evenhanded. It was my experience and observation
25 over the years -- I'm still an employment

1 discrimination attorney all these years later -- that
2 basically there is just a lot of politics involved
3 with enforcement of these various provisions. If this
4 contractor is in favor of a mayor, they didn't get the
5 penalty. If they weren't, then the penalties were
6 brought down.

7 So those are my issues with the current
8 administration of the program. It's nice that it's
9 being centralized, but centralization without any real
10 enforcement really means much -- nothing. Thank you.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
12 Onex.

13 MR. FELIZ: Yes, hi. Can you guys hear
14 me?

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Could you just
16 tell us your name?

17 MR. FELIZ: Yes, it's Oneximo Feliz.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Just spell it for me?

19 MR. FELIZ: Sure. It's O-N-E-X-I-M-O,
20 and the last name is Feliz, F-E-L-I-Z --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

22 MR. FELIZ: -- like Feliz Navidad.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

24 MR. FELIZ: First of all, I would like
25 to thank you guys for taking the opportunity to hear

1 us, you know, the City people, and I'm going to keep
2 this simple and sweet.

3 The reason I'm here is just to testify
4 in regards to the Sanctuary City. Following everybody
5 else, I would like to see this on the ballot for this
6 coming November. I think as New Yorkers, we should
7 be -- we should have a voice in deciding if we want to
8 keep this or not. I think it's time for -- to put an
9 end to this circumstance going on in the City of New
10 York.

11 And, also, it will be -- and I wanted
12 to say my second thing was that following
13 Mrs. Danzilo, I think the comptroller that we have or
14 any comptroller that we have in the future must have
15 some financial background before he's being -- you
16 know, money. You wouldn't give your cash to a person
17 on the corner of the street. You want to give it to
18 somebody who has some financial acumen.

19 And that's it. Thank you.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

21 Do we have any additional members of
22 the public here who would like to testify?

23 Do we have any additional members on
24 Zoom who would like to testify?

25 Okay. Commissioners, final comments

1 before we close for the evening? And I know we'll be
2 back at it tomorrow night in my home borough.

3 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: No.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: No? Okay.

5 MR. LYNCH: Once again, I just want to
6 thank everyone for coming out to share their thoughts
7 and the processes to this Board. We're going to take
8 everything into consideration, and we do appreciate
9 you taking time out of your busy schedule to share
10 with us this evening.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

12 And, again, thank you to --

13 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Yes, thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: -- DDC for hosting us.
15 Thank you for everyone's testimony.

16 Yes, ma'am?

17 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: I just want to say
18 again thank you to all of you for coming out. But
19 it's very important for us to continue to spread the
20 word in your community, in your district. Come out to
21 these hearings. Very important. Because we -- just
22 like tonight, I said, "Oh, I got an education
23 from" -- will you help me?

24 MR. LYNCH: MBWE.

25 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: M -- I'm sorry --

1 THE CHAIRMAN: M/WBE.

2 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: M/WBE.

3 MR. LYNCH: M/WBE.

4 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: M/WBE. I got an
5 education. And a lot of people don't know about
6 M/WBE.

7 So tell people to come out to these
8 hearings. It's very important. And, again, thank you
9 very much.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

11 We'll see you in Brooklyn. Motion to
12 adjourn.

13 MR. BRAGG: I'll motion.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Motion. All in favor?
15 Aye.

16 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Have a good evening.
18 Thank you.

19 (Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
20 6:53 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, THEA POPKO, 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.

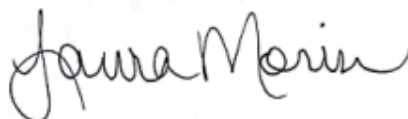


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LAURA MORIN

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