

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 2019

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DECEMBER 10, 2018
Start: 6:00 P.M.
Recess: <INSERT END TIME>

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: GAIL BENJAMIN, CHAIR

COMMISSION MEMBERS: SAL ALBANESE
DR. LILLIAM BARRIOS-PAOLI
LISETTE CAMILO
JAMES CARAS
EDUARDO CORDERO, SR.
STEPHEN FIALA
PAULA GAVIN
LINDSAY GREENE
SATEESH NORI
CARL WEISBROD

2 SHARICE TORRES (SP?): Check, check,
3 check. Today is December 10, 2018. Today is a
4 Charter Revision being recorded by Sharice Torres
5 (SP?). (long silence).

6 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Good evening.
7 Happy holidays and welcome to tonight's public
8 meeting of the 2019 New York City Charter Revision
9 Commission. I am Gail Benjamin, the Chair of the
10 Commission and I am joined tonight by the following
11 Commission Members: Sal Albanese, Dr. Lilliam
12 Barrios-Paoli, Lisette Camilo, James Caras, Eduardo
13 Cordero Sr., Stephen Fiala, Paula Gavin, Lindsay
14 Greene, Sateesh Nori, and Carl Weisbrod. With these
15 Commissioners present we have a quorum. Tonight we
16 are ready to enter into the next phase of our work
17 for developing proposals for changes to the way our
18 Government is structured and operates. Our goal from
19 the beginning has been to look at the lessons of the
20 last 30 years since the extensive changes made by the
21 1989 Charter Revision Commission and voted in by the
22 public in order to inform our deliberations about how
23 best to set the City up for success and progress over
24 the next 30 years. Over the course of the last five
25 months, we have heard 19 hours of public testimony

2 over the course of five public hearings where New
3 Yorkers made their voices heard regarding what they
4 would like to see changed in the Charter. The
5 hearings generally lasted about three hours except
6 for Manhattan hearing which was in this room for
7 about seven hours. We have received over 300
8 specific proposals for changes to the Charter from
9 more than 150 New Yorkers who testified. We have
10 also undertaken an extensive engagement campaign on-
11 line, in the media and through in-person
12 presentations at a variety of community events
13 directly engaging approximately 600 New Yorkers in
14 conversations about the Charter. Tonight, the
15 Commission will adopt a set of criteria which we were
16 direct Staff to use in creating a curated list of
17 ideas which we will consider at the next phase of our
18 work. By focusing on changes that for example we can
19 legally make, that require a referendum to accomplish
20 and that focus on structural changes that advance
21 important values. We can begin the difficult but
22 necessary work of honing in on areas where we think
23 it makes the most sense to focus and where we think
24 we can make the biggest difference. We will then
25 return early next year to consider a set of focus

2 areas and proposals that have been refined based on
3 these criteria and begin a period of more in-depth
4 study including a set of focused hearings featuring
5 testimony from subject matter experts. With all that
6 in mind, we have a resolution before the Commission
7 that would instruct the Staff to consider the
8 following criteria in the course of its review and
9 evaluation of the ideas and proposals we have
10 received and to recommend to the Commission those
11 ideas and proposals for potential changes to the City
12 Charter which should be further studied. First,
13 focus on changes that would likely I just; nevermind,
14 let's start again. First, focus on changes that
15 likely would not be accomplished by Local Law without
16 a referendum. In other words, changes that would
17 likely require a Charter Commission or Referendum to
18 accomplish. Second, focus on changes that are not
19 precluded by Federal or State Law or Federal or State
20 Constitutions. Third, focus on ideas and proposals
21 that would A) improve Government effectiveness,
22 transparency, accountability or efficiency. B)
23 Encourage meaningful participation by New Yorkers or
24 C) Provide for balance between Local and Citywide
25 interests. Fourth, focus on ideas and proposals that

2 affect how policy decisions are made and by whom
3 rather than ideas and proposals that would involve
4 making particular policy decisions directly. Fifth,
5 focus on ideas and proposals that would not reverse
6 the decisions of the voters in recent referenda. I
7 would like to note that this evening is a public
8 meeting, not a public hearing. The public is welcome
9 to observe; however, tonight there will be no
10 testimony from the public. The Commission will hold
11 public hearings beginning in 2019 at which additional
12 public testimony and feedback will be welcomed. Uhm
13 you have all received copies of the proposal with the
14 five criteria. Is there a motion to vote on the
15 Resolution to so instruct the staff.

16 MALE: Motion.

17 FEMALE: Second.

18 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Any discussion?

19 David do you want to call the vote?

20 DAVID: Sure. Commissioner Albanese.

21 SAL ALBANESE: I would like to explain my
22 vote. Uhm first, let me, let me commend the Staff on
23 uhm putting together these focus buckets. I think
24 they are going to help us deliberate as we go through
25 this very complicated process. Just on focus one I

2 had some concerns about it which have been addressed
3 regarding the fact that if the Council could do
4 something by Local Law that we can't without the need
5 for a referendum we can't propose a uhm an item and I
6 was happy to see that we've, we've allowed for some
7 wiggle room. Specifically, I am concerned about
8 political reform. Political reform like public
9 finance and the campaigns, term limits or issues that
10 Legislatures are not likely to pass. That's just the
11 way that it is, not the City Council but if you look
12 across the country whenever you see what you see when
13 it comes to political reform has been done by
14 referendum. So even though technically we can do
15 things by Local Law, Legislatures can do it the fact
16 of the matter is that that's the nature of
17 Legislatures. When I served on one for 15 years is
18 that, they, they tend not to look favorably on
19 competition or opening up the process. That's just
20 the way it is and it's to about this Legislative
21 body. So, I will be voting yes with the caveat that
22 I believe that we can, there is some wiggle room to
23 introduce Legislation that might technically be
24 allowed by the Council without a referendum that we
25 can also consider issues that are likely not to be

2 passed by the City Council under, under bucket number
3 one so I vote yes.

4 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Thank you Sal.

5 DAVID: Commissioner Barrios-Paoli?

6 DR. LILLIAM BARRIOS-PAOLI: Yes.

7 DAVID: Commissioner Caras?

8 JAMES CARAS: Yes.

9 DAVID: Commissioner Camilo?

10 LISETTE CAMILO: Yes.

11 DAVID: Commissioner Corder?

12 EDUARDO CORDERO, SR: Yes.

13 DAVID: Commissioner Fiala?

14 STEPHEN FIALA: If I could uhm explain my
15 vote as well. I'm happy to vote yes. I just want to
16 associate my remarks with Commissioner Albanese in
17 thanking and commending the Staff for the excellent
18 work they did in sifting through and sorting out the
19 more than 300 specific proposals we have gotten uhm
20 in addition to taking into account the specific focus
21 areas of Commissioners. Uhm I am happy to support
22 this resolution because it certainly does give due
23 consideration to the areas of interest that I
24 expressed in my memorandum of October 1st and I thank
25

2 you Madam Chair for factoring that in and I thank the
3 Staff so I vote aye.

4 DAVID: Commissioner Gavin?

5 PAULA GAVIN: I vote yes.

6 DAVID: Commissioner Greene?

7 LINDSAY GREENE: Yes.

8 DAVID: Commissioner Nori?

9 SATEESH NORI: Yes.

10 DAVID: Commissioner Weisbrod?

11 CARL WEISBROD: Yes.

12 DAVID: And Chair Benjamin?

13 GAIL BENJAMIN: Yes.

14 DAVID: The motion has been adopted.

15 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Thank you so much
16 everyone. I would also take, like to take a moment
17 to commend all of the Commissioners who have read
18 through the voluminous materials, have offered
19 suggestions to improve them. Have been actively
20 involved in shaping these criteria and the work that
21 the Commission is doing. I know that I appreciate
22 the work you are all putting in and I know that the
23 Staff similarly appreciates the commitment that all
24 of you have made to the work that we are doing. So
25 thank you very much to the Commissioners also. Uhm.

2 I would also like to remind the public that they are
3 welcome to share additional ideas or proposals with
4 us although we would ask that you do so within the
5 next month so that we can include if you would like
6 to get them included in this review stage of honing
7 down, we really do need them by the end of this month
8 and I would urge you to which is not to say that we
9 won't accept it after that but if you really
10 seriously want to get your proposals considered
11 please give them to us as quickly as possible. Uhm
12 before we conclude I will entertain a motion to adopt
13 the minutes of the Commission meeting from September
14 27th at City Hall.

15 MALE: Motion.

16 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Is there a second?

17 FEMALE: Second.

18 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Any discussion?

19 David?

20 DAVID: All of those in favor say aye?

21 ALL: Aye.

22 DAVID: Any opposed? Abstentions?

23 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Motion carries.

24 Uhm Commissions while you are more than welcome to
25 take your written materials with you please remember

2 to leave the folders and your name cards behind so
3 that we can be environmentally sensitive and re-use
4 which we have here to fore. And no with the
5 business of today's meeting concluded may I have a
6 motion to adjourn?

7 MALE: I move.

8 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Is there a second?

9 FEMALE: Second.

10 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: Discussion?

11 DAVID: All of those in favor?

12 ALL: Aye.

13 DAVID: Any opposed? Abstentions?

14 Motion carries.

15 CHAIR GAIL BENJAMIN: This meeting is
16 adjourned, once again I hope everybody has a happy
17 and healthy December and we will see you again I hope
18 in January.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date DECEMBER 16, 2018