2018 NYC CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING

St. Francis College
180 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201

July 25, 2018
6:00 P.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S:

COMMISSIONERS:

CESAR PERALES, Chair  DEB ARCHER
DALE HO  CARLO SCISSURA
MENDY MIROCNZNIK  KYLE BRAGG
JOHN SIEGAL  WENDY WEISER
MR. PERALES: Good evening. I think it's time we began. My name is Cesar Perales, and I have the honor of chairing this Charter Revision Commission that -- for 2018 which was empaneled at the request of the Mayor of New York. As is our custom, I will ask the commissioners that are already here to introduce themselves. I think I'll start with Debra Archer.

MS. ARCHER: Everyone, my name is Debra Archer. I'm a law professor at NYU law school.

MR. HO: Good evening. My name is Dale Ho and I'm an attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union.

MR. PERALES: As I indicated, I'm the Chair, but in terms of my background and qualifications, I was most recently Secretary of State of New York, and I, in a prior life, served as Deputy Mayor of the City of New York, and I've also been a civil rights lawyer.

MS. SCISSION: Good evening, everybody. First of all, welcome to Brooklyn. I think a few of us make our home here, so, I'm Carlo Scissura; I currently serve as the president of the New York Building Congress. Prior to that, I ran the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce; and before that, I
was chief of staff to Borough President Marty Markowitz. Proud to live in Brooklyn; proud to have served on a community board. Shout out to my district manager of the board I live in, Community Board 10 in Bay Ridge/Dyker Heights. Thanks for being here.

MR. MIROCNZNIK: Good evening. My name is Mendy Mirocznik. I'm the president of Staten Island's COJO. Pleasure to be here.

MR. PERALES: Just some opening remarks, they will be brief, but just in case you have not been following what's been happening with the Charter Commission, we've had a number of community meetings. We're now on our second round of what we call the borough hearings.

We've received literally hundreds of comments not just, you know, thrown over the fence, but through email and in writing. And we very recently, just last week, the staff issued a preliminary report; and as a result of that preliminary report, we have begun to narrow the issues. And while we continue to listen to everyone who comes before us, we have a particular interest at this point insofar as particular issues. Let me tell you what they
are.

One is campaign finance reform. The second is the conduct of elections in New York City. The third is civic engagement and how we might encourage more civic engagement. The fourth is community board reform; and the last is redistricting of the City council.

Now some ground rules: We will, at some point, begin to call panels of four individuals; each individual will be limited to three minutes; and we will commence with our one and only elected official; City councilman Brad Lander.

MR. LANDER: Chair Perales and Secretary Scissura and members of the Charter Commission, thank you so much for the opportunity to appear before you again tonight and for your real service to our city in this process.

I had the honor to appear before you at your prior Brooklyn hearing at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and at the issue hearing on civic participation. I want to congratulate you on the preliminary report, which I really think does a great job synthesizing the feedback that you've gotten and shaping good questions for the people of the city to consider as we move forward.
I've got longer written testimony, which I invite you to take a look at. I'll just try to hit the highlights in the three minutes, if I can, on five issues that overlap a lot with your five.

First, on the NY -- possibility of an NYC Office of Civic Engagement, which is discussed in the civic engagement section of the report, I really think it is an exciting idea. I'm submitting feedback from about 200 people who have -- are also excited about the idea and have given some ideas for what they would like to see such an office do.

From the conversations I've had with NYC Service, I went to a meeting at Voter Assistance Advisory Commission, NYC Votes, with a lot of great nonprofits, a few take-aways. This is a really game-changing potential idea, but we don't want to reinvent the wheel or just create some new standalone agency separate from the other things that exist.

What I think we want is something that brings together existing initiatives like NYC Votes, the CFB, NYC Service, New York City Support For Community Boards, some other things I
outline in the testimony, bring them under one umbrella and then add some exciting new opportunities, like a new participatory budgeting citywide effort and other ways of strengthening and supporting civic engagement overseen by one nonpartisan board with multiple appointors with a leader that we might call the chief democracy officer or the commissioner of the Office of Civic Engagement, however you like, with some real metrics and mission for strengthening in civic engagement, of course, increasing voter participation and turnout and registration, but also many other forms and metrics of different kinds of civic participation.

And that that work has to be done in real partnership with not-for-profit and civic and business partners, preferably in some kind of structured advisory board that are helping network and support across all those different domains of engagement, and I really think there's great potential to do that together. I'll offer some more structural ideas in follow-up communication.

And second, I think it goes hand in hand with an effort to establish participatory
budgeting as a Charter mandated citywide activity
something like 1 percent of the capital budget
with some dedicated staff who can support that
across the city in all boroughs. There's just
something very concrete and creative about the
opportunity that people have to do that that is a
door opener to civic participation in a really
strong way.

So I will stop there, just to stay I do
offer in the written testimony support around
instant run-off voting, support around the
campaign finance reform changes with a few very
specific thoughts on what that means from the
point of view of someone participating in the
system for transition and timing.

And I want to end by saying I do, as I said
earlier, support your proposal to look at
redistricting in a different way. While I don't
think the counsel has abused it's authority, it
is not the time in American history for elected
officials to be choosing their voters, and I
support the idea that you have for making some
changes to the districting process. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. I think you will
ultimately be pleased with what comes out of this
Commission. We've been very persuaded by your testimony on a number of these subjects. The one that -- well, this is personal.

I don't like creating additional bureaucracies, additional departments, and I struggle with a new Office of Civic Engagement. We have a nonpartisan office Campaign Finance Board. I'm wondering whether or not that's a model, whether or not we can use them. What is your thought about that?

MR. LANDER: So I really agree with this and going to the meeting of the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee which is related to the CFB but not the same and sitting with NYC Service, which then sits in a totally different place; that's a mayoral agency in the mayor's office of operations. I think the first thing we're trying to do is, like, bring those folks together. If you've been in a civic service year or working in a volunteer project with NYC Service, the likelihood that you could be part of that family with NYC Votes and on a pathway of civic engagement, so this is first about bringing some things together where there's synergy as well as about growing and piloting.
Now, the structure I suggest in this testimony would be to have a new advisory board, because I do think getting something that the appointors to which could be the mayor, the City council, the borough presidents, the public advocate that would be -- that would hire the director or the -- you know, the chief democracy officer, makes a lot of sense.

The thought I had is we still need the CFB to be able to adjudicate; like that's got a regulatory function different from this civic engagement function, so my thought there is have the executive director of the Campaign Finance Board also be on the board of this entity, house them together in one organization or one place so they can achieve those synergies together we're building.

I'm open to a model where you just have one board. The thing that's now the Campaign Finance Board grows into this broader civic engagement board, but you do need a place where the cases are going, the regulatory function can get served, so I offer this just slightly different structural model, but it is very aligned with your idea that the point here is not creating
some new thing over here; it's bringing these things together in one -- under one roof.

MR. PERALES: Any questions from -- Carlo?

MR. SCISSURA: Yeah.

Brad, how are you? So two things I think that really have interested me not just from this process but over the years, and I think we've spoken about it over the years; one is the solidifying of participatory budgeting and, just briefly, I'd love to hear how you can envision that being written into a Charter, and would it affect every -- every elected official that has capital and/or discretionary, or would it just be for the council, et cetera; and then I'd love just quickly your thoughts on instant run-off, because that seems to be something that people are intrigued about.

MR. LANDER: Super. Thank you so much, Carlo.

So we have some models now around the world. Madrid and Paris both do citywide participatory budgeting. In Paris, it's 5 percent of their capital budget, which would for -- in New York City standards be the equivalent of about half a billion dollars per year, so the 1 percent we
propose is actually, you know, well less than
what Paris is doing. So there are some models.

What I think is putting this together with
the Office of Civic Engagement, the Charter would
say the city will determine, you know, at least 1
percent of its capital budget through a
participatory budgeting process implemented by
this Office of Civic Engagement so you don't have
to work out every single detail in a Charter
language; now you've got an assigned set of
people. You want some features put in, but you
don't have to go into every detail.

The way they do it in Paris and Madrid, a
chunk of the money -- so 1 percent of the city
capital budget would be $190 million, which is --
the council is at about $50 million that we're
doing, so that's more but it's not massively
more, and it would go -- it wouldn't matter
whether for the first purpose council members --
like right now council members choose to
participate or not. This would be a citywide
process, some of the money would be for big
citywide initiatives.

So let's say you would use 25 percent of the
money for citywide projects and people could
brainstorm them; 75 percent of the money, something like that, would go for neighborhood initiatives. I guess I would say let's use council districts since the council initiated the process and might add some money on top, but you need some neighborhood -- community boards would also be a perfectly good way to do this, and I don't have a really strong feeling there, but it's got -- and then staff out of that office support people in coming up with the ideas, developing them into projects to figuring out what goes on the ballot and opening it up to a vote.

I -- that might mean that as it becomes really institutionalized, citywide, it happens in this new office and kind of grows from the place we've incubated it into the council to a place where it could really be resourced and institutionalized for the long-term, or it might mean that council members would say, well, I'd like to add, as we're doing now, you know, a million dollars of my -- the capital that I have to allocate into the process and we'll partner together with that office so that we can --

MR. SCISSURA: So let me interrupt. I'm
So under your proposal, the city would have this mandate but the individual council members would not?

MR. LANDER: The way I propose it, yes. It would be a citywide mandate. The Charter would say 1 percent of the capital budget to be allocated on a fair basis across the city. And then that would get implemented on a citywide scale.

You need local organizing to come up with the projects and help people develop them, and whether that was -- that, I would hope, would be done in partnership with the council members, but even in those districts where our council member wanted to be a really engaged partner in participatory budgeting, they and their staff would be helping without reaching; helping with idea generation, but even in those districts where right now you have New Yorkers who don't get to participate in the process because their council member doesn't choose to, they would still be part of this process.

MR. SCISSLURA: A fair councilman would still have the opportunity not to participate.
MR. LANDER: Correct. I mean, if it happened like it is now where council members also have on the order of $5 million to allocate, if a council member chose to add a chunk of that money into the process, they would be a partner and it would be above and beyond the base that every district got; and if a council member chose not to do that, they would allocate it but still their district would be participating in the

citywide process.

MR. SCISSURA: So you wouldn't disagree that as part of this language, we should be saying that every council member and every borough president should spend X portion of their allocation on participatory.

MR. LANDER: I'm not opposed to that. It seemed to me cleaner to say 1 percent of the city capital budget would go to a citywide participatory budgeting program because the allocations that come to council members and borough presidents are not in the Charter itself, so then you would have to write something in about whether they're getting the money, so I'm not closed to it, but maybe it was just for sim plicity, the idea of a citywide program with a
direct allocation.

And on instant run-off voting, very briefly, because I know you've got a lot of people signed up who want to testify, and I know there's been real interesting back and forth about it and some commissioners, I think, are excited about it and others have questions. I've talked to colleagues in the City council in some cities across the country, in San Francisco, in Minneapolis, to folks in Maine, and everyone that I have talked to in a system that has it is positive about it. I haven't talked to one person in a place where they have it who doesn't feel it has been implemented in a pretty successful way.

Obviously, 58 percent of the voters in Maine voted to affirm it even though most of their elected officials said they didn't want to, so that says to me the voters like it. And I guess I might encourage you to even think about if you guys aren't 100 percent sure, you guys get the great opportunity that we don't have in the council to put things before the voters.

So I could see letting the voters decide on whether they want to try instant run-off voting and if a major of the voters this November vote
for it, that's a good sign that they want to do it. I'm convinced it can be made to work successfully in a way that everybody can understand and rank and that achieves all the goals that we've talked about for it. So I remain very positive about it.

MR. PERALES: Dale?

MR. HO: Just one quick question. I know your proposal on the City council was to establish IRV for citywide offices, but are you advocating limiting it to just those citywide offices or for -- also for City council?

MR. LANDER: Well, one place at City council that I think would be especially good is the special elections which are now one-time nonpartisan, no run-off, no general. So there's just like a list of seven people, and right now we've had elections where people get -- like win with 18 or 19 percent of the vote. So one place I think would be great to do it, and those would be such easy elections to administer it in because they're -- so for council special nonpartisans, I think it makes a lot of sense.

For council primaries, I think it's a good idea. Whether it's like a lot of change all at
once and therefore it makes sense to try the
pilot of the citywides, but I think it would have
been good in my -- I think it would have been
good -- I think it would be good in council
primaries and I think there's actually a couple
of -- anyway, yes I would be supportive of it
in -- across the board but I appreciate the
responsibility you guys have to figure out you
know --

MR. PERALES: You used the word pilot, and
something occurred to me because we've had a
number of people come forward and say that there
are people who vote through absentee ballot who
don't get a chance to vote the second time in the
run-off and that it would be easier if those
people with absentee ballots, particularly people
in the armed forces were are serving outside our
country, if we began there. Do you have any
thoughts about doing that?

MR. LANDER: Well, I certainly agree that
like the current system totally disenfranchises
overseas voters and folks serving from voting in
a run-off because we can't get them a ballot in
two weeks, and so I completely agree with that.

I guess I think that is the only thing --
doesn't feel to me like a real test of instant run-off voting to -- so I would hope to see something more than that that puts it on the ballot that the vast majority of voters see, whether that starts in the three citywide primaries or in council specials or in some election; that type.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

MR. LANDER: Thank you again for your service.

MR. PERALES: First panel is Alex Camarda, Matthew Fairly, Alicia Boyd and, looks like, Sandy Rickburn or Reiburn.

MR. FAIRLY: Do you want us all up here?

MR. PERALES: Yes, if you can squeeze in.

I think we'll start with the person on my left; the person on the right-hand side.

MS. REIBURN: I'm Sandy Reiburn. I'm THE president of Preserve Our Brooklyn Neighborhoods. Thank you all. Thank you Chair Perales.

Elected representatives must give communities a fighting chance against overdevelopment, but shamefully we've been sidelined. ULURP is the ploy that keeps on giving, allowing borough presidents to plant
community planners onto community boards would be the worst thing you could do. This is tantamount to giving the foxes the key to the henhouse.

The borough president is already amply represented in the ULURP process as is the community board. What is missing is the public. Powerful mega-developers such as the REBNY mafia use their formidable wealth and incestuous connections within city government and the department of city planning to game the system. Projects are informally ratified by the department of city planning prior to the communities' awareness of them.

Projects that portend harm to whole communities get a wink and a nod even before ULURP formal applications are made public via communicate boards. Lobbyist campaign fundraisers and political bundlers arrange self-serving outcomes years ahead. The ULURP process pays lip service to public transparency but, in fact, does nothing to engage grassroots input with any credible deference. It's developers with access who get back-door decisions, the cozying up to City council members, the borough president, the department of
city planning and that purveyor of New York City
gentrification and displacement 101, forgive me,
the mayor, speaks to a failed open process.

Here in the wild west of downtown Brooklyn,
there's a questionable behind-the-scenes
thumbs-on-the-scale community board buddy system.
Here's where business improvement district
entities bids comprised of developer interests
call the shots and too often tip the scales for
self-serving goals leaving residents of the
community to barely fend for themselves.

Why is it that we need to FOIL impending
development plans? Why? It begs the question
what is the department of city planning hiding?
The moment that plans for a rezoning
pre-application are submitted is the moment that
the public should have the right to know what
up-zonings are afoot, but we are kept uninformed.

What is the department of city planning
hiding? ULURP, as so called public engagement is
disingenuous. We get two or three minutes to
make our case after the fact when most folks are
at work and can't show up to the department of
city planning or City council hearings, but real
estate developers have already bought all the
time they need via their lobbyist to target our
elected representatives and complicit agencies
well before a neighborhood even gets wind of it.
Rethinking ULURP, rethinking public engagement
for each community's (inaudible) is long and
shamefully over due. The Charter Revision
Commission need to address this. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Mr. Fairly?

MR. FAIRLY: Thank you. My name is Matt
Fairly. I'm a resident here in Brooklyn. I was
formally law chairman of the Kings County
Republican party until they lost their damn mind.

I want to first thank you for not taking
people in the order by which they showed up with
special interests like you did last time and
allowing people to have a more democratic process
here. I appreciate that. But I'm here to speak
against the idea of an Office of Civic
Engagement.

I think it's a fundamentally anti-democratic
idea in which as described by my councilman
Mr. Lander sounds vaguely Orwellian. The idea of
a chief Democratic officer might as well call it
the ministry of love. As he describes it, a
chief Democratic officer which will be picking
and choosing and finding the relationships
between various civic organizations would be a
government official telling the people how to
engage civically, and that is not what should
happen. The government doesn't tell the people
how to engage. The people need to come forward
and engage on their own and tell the government
what they want.

The problem we have here and is somewhat
engaged in the preliminary report that you have
here is that the people in this city do not feel
like their voice is being heard. And a lot of
the things that you're permitting here are very
good. Putting forward more participatory
budgeting would be very good. I was a budget
delegate for Mr. Lander for two years. The
problems with participatory budgeting is that it
is not absolute. We cannot have a part of the
city where some people get to make the choices of
how the budgeting works and others don't. We
need to either have it all or nothing. Either
everyone in the city gets to participate in this
or nobody should.

We should not have some people getting more
democracy than others. But what needs to happen and the frustration that I found in the participatory budgeting system is that more often than not, after putting together your budgetary ideas, submitting them and soliciting them to the people, the various bureaucracies in the City of New York will then come back and tell you no, you can't do that. If participatory budgeting is going to work here, it has to be an absolute process. It has to be a process where if the people decide that this is where the money is going to go, the Department of Transportation can't say no, we don't want to pave that road this year; no, we don't want to update that school this year from the Department of Education.

The will of the people has to be heard, and participatory budgeting has to be a hundred percent or nothing. What I think really needs to happen is that we need to reform the community boards. We need to make them elected by popular -- by -- we need to make them elected, and we need to give them real power so that people have a way of actually talking to government officials and participating in a government official in a
way that a lower level City council level that
people can get involved and people can feel their
voices are heard and people can be part of the
process without having to try and round up the
better part of 150,000 constituents which is the
minimum level of constituency the City of New
York currently offers. So I support what you're
doing in that regard and I'd like to see that go
on further. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Mr. Camarda?

MR. CAMARDA: Good evening, commissioners.

My name is Alex Camarda. I'm the senior advisor
for Reinvent Albany. I wanted to comment on our
testimony tonight on the campaign finance
recommendations in the final report, in
particular, some of the specifics that were
raised.

On the issue of increasing the public match
cap, we previously supported that in our
testimony. We'd like to see it raised higher
than 65 percent. We've heard 75 percent talked
about; that is something that we would support.
We think that's important because, as we pointed
out in previous testimony, council primary races
in 2017, 30 percent of those candidates actually hit the public funds cap.

We think it's really important given the emphasis by the Commission on increasing public funds to distribute the public funds payment earlier in the election year. It's currently six weeks before a primary. That's far too late for candidates that are relying heavily on public funds. We think that should be moved significantly earlier in the year. There are multiple ways to do this. We're not prescriptive but will put forth three options that we think the Commission should consider.

The first is there's already an existing early payment that is distributed to candidates in June who participate in the system. We think that could be increased dramatically. Currently the numbers are very low for the June early payment.

We think that funds could be distributed when a candidate qualifies for the public matching program in the election year and when their opponent registers a candidate committee.

Third option would be to distribute funds in an election year when a candidate raises or
spends a quarter for the office they seek and their opponent registers a candidate committee, again, in the election year. We think that all of those could be options for providing public funds earlier.

On the public match ratio, the Commission is considering increasing the current 6-to-1 match. We said we supported that previously but only for smaller donations. We really don't want to see even in the current system large contributions be matched at a 6-to-1 ratio. We understand the CFB has concerns with the administration. We think the Commission should look at providing a higher match for contributions for, say, $500 rather than $175 to ease some of the administrative concerns the CFB has.

On contribution limits, we supported previously cutting those in half. We think the government has a compelling interest in lowering contribution limits to address corruption or the perception of corruption, and we think that's well within the city's bounds to do so.

Lastly, I just want to thank you for your service to the Commission. We think you've done a really good job making the Commission's
hearing available to the public and engaging
those who are testifying, and we think you're
poised to do very meaningful work on campaign
finance, and we hope you do so in addition to
other issues like instant run-off voting and
redistricting.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Alicia Boyd.

MS. BOYD: The first time I came to this
Commission -- rather, the first time this
Commission came to Brooklyn it was noted by the
Commissioners that the City Charter is New York
City's constitution. The Commissioners then
proceeded to pick and choose, ignore and even
outright discourage residents from speaking by
selecting who will speak, in what order, on what
topic. It was a great way to show how the
Democratic process was going to be displayed, and
the Commission has veered from that position this
time, and I do thank you for that.

Now, there are questions about, one, setting
term limits for community board members to
encourage diversity; two, putting a city planner
in every community despite the fact that all
community activists continue to say that the
ULURP process is a rubber-stamping process without any serious community engagement, and no one is advocating for a city planner in our communities except for the politicians who are in bed with developers and three, the training of community board members.

So let's see how the last one has been going. There is already a rule on the City Charter books for the community board members to be trained in the conflict of interest laws and for them to sign a document that they have gotten that training. So how does this panel -- can this panel please tell me how did CB 9 in Brooklyn wind up with a real estate lobbyist running our community board for two years and getting paid over $200,000 during that time? How is it the community boards have stated that they have never gotten a conflict of interest training nor have they ever signed a document pertaining to such training? How is it that I personally FOILed for these training sessions and documents, et cetera, and no one has them? Not the conflict of interest board, not the borough president or CB 9.

Now you want to propose a little bit more
requirements, but who will be responsible for the training? Keeping the records? Will the board members be mandated to attend? Will the public be allowed to have access to these documents and be notified and attend these trainings?

It is clear that the City Charter is being ignored in my community board, which is proven by the eleven lawsuits that have been filed and a few more to come, including one regarding the conflict of interest violations that I mentioned that is now on appeal.

I would like to yield my last few moments to the panel requesting that they answer my question. What provisions are you going to put in place to ensure that the constitution of New York, as you so put it, is adhered to by community board members?

I'm waiting for an answer, please.

MR. PERALES: You've used your time. You want us to respond?

MS. BOYD: Yes.

MR. PERALES: Well, let me just try to explain to you our role. I mean, we don't supervise or oversee how the city is carrying out the Charter. Our role is to listen to you and...
hear suggestions about what we ought to change in
the City Charter. So I, for example, have
absolutely no role overseeing the City Charter.

MS. BOYD: And yet, you can create rules
about how a community board adheres to the City
Charter can you not? Can you not put in a
mandate that all community boards must have the
training and that if they do not have the
training that they cannot be on the community
board?

Mr. Bragg is saying no. Why not, Mr. Bragg?

MR. BRAGG: I think the Chair just answered
you.

MS. BOYD: You cannot put that in a City
Charter. You cannot take a mandated requirement
that the community boards receive training?

MR. BRAGG: Ms. Boyd, I would respond, but I
think the Chair just answered that question.

MR. PERALES: I think you said, Miss Boyd,
that it was already in the City Charter, if I'm
understanding your comment.

MS. BOYD: Right. I'm already talking about
one piece of legislation that's already in the
City Charter. Do you have a lead agency? You
can put into the City Charter that a lead agency
is responsible for making sure that community boards are trained, making sure this they sit there and adhere to the requirements, keeping a record, notifying the community. You can do that. You can assign a lead agency that would be responsible for that.

MR. PERALES: As I understand it, the borough president is, in essence, the lady agency.

MS. BOYD: But it's not in the City Charter. The president does not have to provide training to the community boards, and you are now suggesting another set of training, right? Yes. That is say part of your suggestions.

MR. BRAGG: Miss Boyd, I just asked you a question. You were asking about the powers and authority of this Commission, and what I think the Chair had indicated to you and I'm reiterating is that we do not have that power. That's not what we're --

MS. BOYD: So you do not have the power to assign the lead agency to be responsible for the training of community board is?

MR. BRAGG: No, we don't. Not as this Commission, no. Okay.

MR. BRAGG: We can make and come up with recommendations that will hopefully reach a ballot initiative for the voters to decide on.

MS. BOYD: So there's something that prevents you from designating a lead agency to conduct the training of community boards? What is that? What particular law are you referring to that prevents you from doing that or making that recommendation, especially because you're considering making the recommendation that they get training. Who's supposed to do the training if you're going to sit there and decide that they're going to have training?

MR. PERALES: I think we will take that under advisement, your suggestion that we put into the Charter the name of the city official.

MS. BOYD: Or lead agency or city official.

MR. PERALES: Or lead agency that would be responsible. We'll certainly consider that.

MS. BOYD: Yes. Thank you. Is that possible Mr. Bragg?

MR. BRAGG: Again, the way you pose the question was whether or not this Commission has
the authority to implement. We do not.

We put forward recommendations for the
citizenry to vote. And so if you are asking
whether we have the power to implement, no, we do
not.

MS. BOYD: I didn't say you had the power.
I said the power to recommend.

MR. BRAGG: That's the way it was posed, the
question was posed.

MS. BOYD: Well, we're asking you to
recommend that an agency be responsible.

MR. BRAGG: That's fine. I think the Chair
responded, so...

MS. BOYD: Okay.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MR. FAIRLY: For the record, are there any
members of the Commission that are not present
tonight? Because I think the record should
reflect who isn't here from the Commission. I
think the people here should have a right to know
which members of the Commission did not show up
to hear their testimony.

MR. PERALES: Well, I suppose we could give
you that, but we do have a quorum. A quorum is a
majority of the Commission members, and they are
MR. FAIRLY: I didn't ask that question. I want to know which Commission members are not here? We all came out and took time out of our day. The job of this Commission is to listen to the people, and if we can take the time out of our night to be here, I'd like to know which people in the Commission couldn't take the time out of their night to be here to listen to the public, which is their main job. So I think the people here have the right to know which people didn't show up.

MR. PERALES: We will -- I will have staff give you the names of the Commission members that are not here.

MR. FAIRLY: I'm not asking for you to give me the names. I want it read out here for the public recording so that when it is out in the public, I'd like people to know who wasn't here, because I was here the last time, and there were a heck of a lot more of you on the dais the last time. So who's not here? Let the people know who's not here.

MR. PERALES: I don't know off the top of my head. I mean, I haven't --
MR. FAIRLY: Are you the chairman, sir? You don't know who are the members of your Commission?

MR. PERALES: I know who the members of my Commission are.

MS. BOYD: So then you should know.

MR. FAIRLY: Can you not tell us who's not here?

MR. SCISSURA: I think we've heard your testimony. There's about 35 people waiting to present. Thank you.

MR. FAIRLY: And now you know why no one likes to -- no one trusts anyone in power here, because they don't like to hide and they don't like to give out information. Thank you.

MR. SIEGAL: So do we have questions for the panel?

MR. PERALES: Let's move on. Josephine Beckman --

MR. SIEGAL: Could I ask a question of Mr. Camarda? I had a question about his testimony.

MR. PERALES: Yes.

MR. SIEGAL: Well, so, Alex, two questions I wanted to ask for clarification.
Your suggestion to raise the earlier matching funds payment, my understanding of that is it's really triggered by qualifying for the ballot and filing your petitions and, I guess, there's a concern that if the city made earlier payments to people who then didn't qualify for the ballot and have to go claw back the money or something. Have you thought about that and how do you deal with that?

MR. CAMARDA: So what we recommended, two of the three items we recommended were actually untethering the public funds payment from the finalization of the ballot. I mean, we think that's one of the issues. I mean, because the ballot's finalized I think this year on August 8th or 9th, candidates receive the money so much later, so I think we need a different criterion for giving out the public funds. Because there's an existing early funds payment, we felt that that might be a lever to do so, but we also proposed looking at candidates' spending and raising of money and also whether they just meet the qualifications for the program in general.

I think you'd have to look at the data that
the CFB has that shows when those different
metrics are met, how many of those candidates
then get on the ballot. I would think that particularly for raising and spending a lot of money, that if you set a high threshold, most of those candidates are going to get on the ballot and you would not have to claw back money in many instance. That was the thinking.

MR. SIEGAL: Second question, I wasn't sure what you were saying. You were saying that you think maybe the -- how much money is matched, I think you mentioned 500 would be matched.

Were you saying that contributions above that amount, that the first 500 or the first 250 would not be matched? Or are you saying that you match up to whatever that threshold is?

MR. CAMARDA: Right now the first $175 of any contribution is matched. We would -- we were suggesting that the first $175 of any contribution up to $500, for example, be matched. Rather than the highest level.

MR. SIEGAL: So are you suggesting that contributions over $500, the first $175 would not be matched.

MR. CAMARDA: That's right.
MR. SIEGAL: Why?

MR. CAMARDA: We don't think I mean, look, we've put out the $500 threshold --

MR. SIEGAL: That's sort of discriminating between different people's money.

MR. CAMARDA: Right. The idea being that large contributions, for example, right now under the city system, a contribution of $5,1000 to a citywide official that's actually matched the first $175; it's 6-to-1. That's $1,050.

MR. SIEGAL: Right.

MR. CAMARDA: I'm not sure why taxpayers are subsidizing a contribution of that size given the -- one of the purposes of the program is to incentivize raising money from small donors.

So the idea is that you provide matching funds for smaller contributions. If not $175, some other number that's relatively small. I think most of the public doesn't realize that these larger contributions are also receiving a 6-to-1 match on $175.

MR. SIEGAL: Yeah. I think this staff should look at the legality of that, because that does not sound either equitable or consistent with the sustained rationales the courts have
embraced for campaign finance reform. And it
seems says to me the city saying we're going to
match your contribution but not your contribution
is an odd form of discrimination that doesn't
feel right to me.

MR. CAMARDA: I mean, I know in Montgomery
County, Maryland, which just recently put in a
public matching system, that they had higher
match levels for smaller contributions. They did
match every contribution up to the maximum, which
was much lower than the city's, but the -- you
know, first $50 increment, for example, was
matched at a higher level than the second $50
increment, so I can't speak to the constitutional
-- the caselaw on that, but because we had seen
it in other places, we thought that was
permissible.

MR. SIEGAL: Thank you.

MR. CAMARDA: Thanks again.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. I'm about to bring
on the next panel. It's Doris Cruz, Felix
Figueroa, Rachel Bloom and Josephine Beckman.

I did not want to be argumentative with an
earlier panel, but the reality is that the names
of the Commission members who are here tonight
and those that are absent are on our website and
available to anyone who is interested.

MR. BRAGG: I just wanted to make a note
that as a secretary/treasurer of SEIU 32BJ, I
will not be engaging in the questioning during
this particular testimony because I have one of
my members as a panelist.

MR. PERALES: Sure. I understand.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Since that member is on the
extreme left, we'll start with him and work our
way across. So we'll begin you with, sir.

MR. FIGUEROA: Good evening. Good evening,
Commissioner. My name is Felix Figueroa. I am a
Long Island City resident, community Local 32BJ
member. In recent report, I understand that the
Commissioner has recommended that it staff
continue to study the question of whether or not
certain members to members communication should
be counted as a contribution to candidates.

Given that I am here today again, I urge
that the Charter will be revised that members to
members communications are not counted as a
contribution in order to perform civic
engagement. When I was here in May, I shared my
story each year, got involved in election work through the union. I also work closely with City council member Jimmy Van Bramer. I think he stands up for our community, and I like that. (Inaudible) campaign finance laws to member to members communication to make it hard for me to get other members active to support Jimmy and any other candidates.

I want to see changes to the Charter that will make sure unions member to members communication is not counted as a contribution. That would help me better talk with the members I know and to get more of them active to help improve our city.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

MS. CRUZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and fellow commissioners. My name is Doris Cruz, and I am the Chair of Community Board 10 in Brooklyn which represents Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Fort Hamilton. I will be addressing the community board reforms discussed. And it is important to review the workings of government on a regular basis. One of the recommendations to improve the selection process for board members and to conduct greater outreach have great merit and
deserve further consideration.

An improvement in the screening process for board members also deserves further consideration. Many applicants do not understand that community -- the commitments they make in becoming a community board member. Members of Community Board 10 serve on two committees, which means that they need to attend three meetings per month. That is a substantial time commitment, especially for people who are also engaged in other civic activities.

Community Board 10 is one of the few boards that have term limits for officers. Officers may serve three consecutive one-year terms. This results in a very dynamic board. New leadership creates new energies and opens up opportunity for growth and diversity of opinions. It forces development of new leaders within the board. Community Board 10 has a healthy board turnover. District manager Beckman will discuss that and our attendance records.

Many committees require dedication and expertise. Most particularly on -- in Community Board 10 those committees would be zoning and land use, traffic and transportation, police and
To reduce the institutional memory by instituting term limits would hamper the effectiveness of those committees. The need to regularly educate new members on historical issues as well as procedures and various terms or lingo specific to a committee would put a burden on board members and on the staff of the district office.

Community Board 10 was instrumental in bringing attention to the issues related to hookah bars. It took many years, I think I've been told at least five, from the introduction of the issue at a committee level to the passage of legislation. Having members who are familiar with that process from beginning to end was especially important in the recent information session we had conducted for hookah bar owners with the Department of Consumer Affairs at our office.

Community Board 10 has an active zoning committee and worked for close to a decade to update the Bay Ridge special district zoning and to rezone Dyker Heights. Without continuous service by board members, that would not have
been possible. Community Board 10 is fortunate
to have a lot of park land, and it is diverse
park land and needs knowledgeable members to
address that ongoing -- those ongoing issues. If
we are lucky to see a park project inception to
completion, it takes probably five years often
longer.

MR. PERALES: Please sum up.

MS. CRUZ: The members of the City council
and county and borough presidents are responsible
for appointing and reappointing members. They
currently have the ability to make changes to
create more diverse boards. We know they reduce
attendance but -- they review attendance records
but they also come to our meetings and can see
the level of participation by various members and
that should be included. I ask you to weigh
these issues in your considerations.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. BECKMAN: Thank you. So my name is
Josephine Beckman, and I am district manager of
Community Board 10. I'm here to also provide
some comments on the preliminary staff report as
it relates to community boards. I support the
Commission's effort to strive to improve
diversity on community boards; however, I also have concerns that term limits may not achieve this goal.

Serving as a member of a community board requires a commitment of time, dedication and involvement to fulfill the board's Charter-mandated responsibilities. Brooklyn Community Board 10 typically has a turnover of anywhere between three and nine members per year. I would like to share the following CB 10 board data over the last 15 years. There are currently only nine members that have served on CB 10 for over fifteen years. Twenty-three of those board members have served less than six years, which is almost half of CB 10. Since May of 2004, there have been 75 new board member appointments filling those 41 slots, so we have had significant turnover in appointments.

My chair discussed a time commitment of our very active board which is not often realized by applicants and the newer board members, so our top three board members in seniority hold the best attendance. In the last two years, we've had 16 vacancies for board members or 32 percent of the board has turned over.
The challenges that come with acclimating new board members to procedures and knowledge of current issues is a process that requires encouragement from both district office staff and community board members.

This summer, in response to requests for informational guides, we have created an orientation booklet for new board members. We have found the best way to familiarize new board members is via mentorship and leadership from senior board members who take this responsibility very seriously. We have been fortunate at CB 10 to have many very involved board members who deeply care about this issue and provide expertise; architects, attorneys, educators, et cetera.

My chair mentioned the length of time it often takes to see a project to completion. I will add that institutional knowledge is important but leadership is essential. I fear that instituting term limits will negatively impact the Charter-mandated work of the board and may not necessarily bolster diversity.

Reflecting on our data, many realize the time commitment was too great and stepped down
within their first terms. These are new board members. We've had several meetings over the last few years at which we didn't have a quorum. It is my hope that before moving forward, the Commission considers this testimony about the potential negative effects of term limits on a volunteer body performing a vital Charter mandate.

I also ask you to consider the importance of committed board members as well as acknowledge the need for leadership and mentorship as provided by senior community board members. I also ask that you look at communicate board attendance statistics as a board that has had a high turnover and recommend that data from other boards be reviewed before moving forward.

And then, just briefly, I would also like to lend my support to additional resources as it relates to urban planning. Our community board has used the City of New York's Planning Fellowship Program, CPFP, which provides second-year graduate students in urban planning. Because of that grant money, we've had three successful planning reports that have assisted the district office in the work of the board.
MR. PERALES: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Miss Bloom?

MS. BLOOM: Good evening. Thank you, Chairman Perales and the members of the Commission. It's nice to be here again tonight. I've spoken to -- I've spoken before the Commission several times at this point, and I'm going to focus my comments tonight first on ranked-choice voting and then if I can on community boards. Regarding.

Ranked-choice voting -- I'm not sure if I introduced myself. I'm Rachel Bloom. I'm the director of public policy and programs at Citizens Union, a good government group here in New York City.

So we have been long supporters of ranked-choice voting. New York city has horrible, horrible voter turnout even in our most high profile elections, and then when you look at the turnout in a primary and then if you look at the turnout in a run-off, it gets smaller and smaller and smaller and especially with closed elections, we have the smallest percentage of people choosing who, you know, and many things,
whoever wins the Democratic primary ends up
winning the election who are getting to
participate in our primaries.

Today I just want to talk to you a little
bit about how we think ranked-choice voting
should be structured in New York City and why.
So we support ranked-choice voting. I know in
your preliminary report, you talked about it for
citywides. We advocate that you have it for
citywides, for borough-wide and for council
races. We also support that you have
ranked-choice voting for both primary elections
and general elections.

First of all, we think that the benefits of
ranked-choice voting are consistent across all
elections. If you're going to have it for one,
if you think it's worthwhile for one, why isn't
it worthwhile for all.

The second is that we think it will be
easier to have one consistent form of voting on
the ballot rather than two. So as we've
discussed before, if there's going to be
ranked-choice voting, one of the very important
components of it is going to be a public
education campaign and so creating one cohesive
ballot rather than a ballot that has one type of
voting for one election and different type of
voting for a different election, we advocate for
ranked-choice voting across the entire ballot.

We recommend that the Commission support and
propose the ranked-choice voting system where all
candidates remain in play and the lowest
vote-getters are distributed until -- and the
next lowest and so on until one candidate gets
majority. Now, when we were talking about what
is a majority, what would be the threshold for
winning with ranked-choice voting, currently it's
40 percent for citywide offices. We believe that
it should be 50 percent threshold for victory, as
it makes sense to adhere to a majority vote and
that way also more people get to feel like their
voices are heard and their votes are counted in
whoever we declare the winner.

Finally, when we were thinking about how
ranked-choice voting should be structured in New
York, we thought to ourselves how many candidates
should voters be allowed to rank? Some cities
allow, you know, as many candidates (inaudible)
and others recommend -- oh, I'm sorry.

So we support -- we propose that you support
a ranked-choice voting system where the number of candidates that can be ranked is tied to the physical limit of the machines as decided by the manufacturers. We look forward to talking more about ranked-choice voting, and I think it's the change that New York needs to see.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Anyone have any comments?

One question I am constantly asked, and I'll ask Miss Bloom, the idea of ranked-choice voting has been around for many, many years. Why do so few jurisdictions use it?

MS. BLOOM: I actually don't think that so few jurisdictions are using it. I think the numbers are growing, and I don't know them offhand; I wish I had them in front of me but, you know, more and more municipalities and in some cases states are just adopting it and it's becoming more and more popular and, particularly, you know, there's very little power, I think, that New York's -- you know so much of how we vote has to be decided at the state level and we've been advocating for decades, literally, with absolutely no reforms, no changes.

This is something that you -- we have the
power to do in New York City, so you know, this is one of the sole reforms where more people can actually feel like they're getting their voices heard and so we urge you to adopt it. And I will share that information with your staff about how many states and cities are adopting it these days.

MR. PERALES: Great. Thank you.
MS. BLOOM: Thank you.
MR. PERALES: Without further questioning, we thank the panel.

The next panel, I think this is Jackson Fischer-Ward, Sandra Rothbard, Lucy Koteen and Savannah Brown. We'll start with the gentleman on my left.

MR. FISCHER-WARD: Good evening. My name is Jackson Fischer-Ward. I'm here representing the office of assembly member Harvey Epstein. Mr. Epstein is the assembly member from the 74th District; that includes the neighborhoods of the lower east side, the East Village, Stuy Town, Peter Cooper Village, Murray Hill, Tudor City and the United Nations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commission tonight.
So at the beginning of 2018, Mayor de Blasio unveiled a ten-point plan aimed at strengthening democracy here in New York City. The first point in the mayor's plan dubbed Democracy NYC was a program to appoint this Charter Revision Commission, which I am pleased to know is making great progress towards achieving its goals set forth earlier this year.

To further strengthen the health of our local democracy, we should look towards the creation of an office of civic engagement, as proposed by council member Brad Lander, which could play a valuable role in advising mayoral agencies, elected city officials and elected state officials that represent New York City residents on how to implement policies to increase resident participation.

Such an office could coordinate nonpartisan election day get-out-the-vote canvassing efforts to increase turnout. It could facilitate candidate training sessions tailored towards increasing the number of candidates for minority groups that have historically been underrepresented in the electoral process, and it could bolster existing outreach efforts to enroll
New Yorkers in vital programs like scree and dream.

The office should be open to the public and have a physical storefront presence in each borough to accommodate visitors who are seeking information about how to get involved in civic affairs. These borough-based satellite offices could also serve as vote centers where New Yorkers could cast their ballots on Election Day or in the future during a period of early voting.

Finally, an office of civic engagement should be significantly invested in bringing about the state level changes that are necessary to reduce the current barriers that are participation that New Yorkers face and make voting more convenient. The office might organize lobby days or other outreach to win a more pro-voter system.

This would include advocating for automatic voter registration, Election Day registration preregistration for 16- and 17-year olds and early voting. I look forward to the outcomes of this Commission's work, which I hope will improve our city embarrassingly low level of civic participation across many avenues. Thank you.
MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. ROTHBARD: Good evening. My name is Sandra Rothbard, and I am honored to represent my community and actually this community in my third term as a member of Brooklyn Community Board 2. The length of my membership to this board has only just surpassed the years I spent receiving rejection letters to becoming a member of this board, and so I support the recommendation that community boards have term limits.

We need to hear multiple voices. We need to have representation of the entire community and thus, I also support the plan for a different appointment process to community boards. We need to make sure the boards are diverse and that members don't lose their position because they have a difference of opinion with an elected official.

The issue of institutional knowledge has come up by staggering member appointments which we already do. I believe this can help with supporting and conserving our institutional knowledge. Give district offices the resources that they need. If we have the institutional knowledge at the staff and office level, then it
is helpful and will allow us to actually have
term limits and to turn over some of our members.
But in order to have good staff at the district
level, we need to not only provide them with
physical resources but we also need to make sure
they are paid well. They are overworked and
underpaid and we expect a whole lot from them.

I also support the consideration to provide
more resources to the board members themselves.
I personally am a certified urban planner, and I
support the suggestion to have urban planners
available to community boards. Community Board 2
already accesses planners for the Department of
City Planning in the borough office in Brooklyn,
and it's been very valuable to have somebody that
is independent in a planning group that is
independent from elected officials is incredibly
valuable and would help our community boards
greatly.

And finally, if civic engagement is truly a
goal and important for this Commission, then our
advisory role as community boards should really
be taken seriously. Again, we're aware that we
are advisory, but it seems as if most of our
recommendations, whether major or minor, are
simply ignored. So I ask that we be given
appropriate power, advisory power, but given the
right tools necessary to come to the appropriate
recommendations for our community. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. KOTEEN: Before I begin, could the
people who came in late introduce themselves? If
not now, at some point?

MR. PERALES: Of course.

MS. WEISER: Good evening and thank you for
coming. I'm Wendy Weiser. I direct the
democracy program at the Brennan Center for
Justice at NYU law school.

MR. SIEGAL: Good evening. John Siegal. I
apologize for being late. I'm a practicing
lawyer in Manhattan and a mayoral designated
civilian complaint review board, and a double
apology because I'm going to have to leave early,
and I mean no disrespect, but I just have to be
somewhere in a little bit.

MR. BRAGG: And good evening. I'm Kyle
Bragg. I'm secretary/treasurer of SEIU 32BJ as a
160,000 member service employees union, and I'm
also a member of Community Board 13 in Queens.

MS. KOTEEN: Thank you for that.
MR. BRAGG: Yes.

MS. KOTEEN: Hi. My name is Lucy Koteen, and I'm a member of several community organizations as well as political clubs; CBID, Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats, and Civically Fort Greene Association, Preserve Our Brooklyn Neighborhoods, Citizens For Responsible Neighborhood Development, Friends of Fort Greene Park, and Human Scale NYC. And I just wanted to support the very valuable comments that you received from Lynn Elsworth of Human CL LIC, and I thought it worth rereading the problem that she identified and said, Anyone who has studied the database of donors to our mayor's election campaign knows that big real estate rules the campaign finance game in our city. The large sums that they give dominate the database, especially when you include the funds from real estate's directly linked families, lawyers, lobbyists and allied industries in engineering architecture and construction. The law enables this rather than prevents it.

And one other sentence that she wrote, New York -- in New York, the upside is that we would have gotten big money and in New York that means
big real estate money mostly out of the campaign finance system where at present they rule with an iron fist.

And I think probably most of the people in this room would agree that a big problem is the power the real estate and the real industry under REBNY has in controlling our elected officials and having access to our elected officials, not only the developers and their lobbyists who spend millions of dollars -- who are paid millions of dollars by the developers to have access and that the people don't have the access, obviously, because we don't have the millions of dollars to hire lobbyists, unfortunately.

So there's so many issues under the developers having so much power. I just wanted to mention I sort of have a laundry list; I did not organize this so well, but I just wanted to mention the issue of air rights, that there's such a thing that exists, is problematic that developers can buy our air. They buy our air. They also take away our sunshine.

I don't know if it's in the purview of the Commission, but I would love to see the possibility of air rights being bought and sold
removed as a possibility, because it's just -- it's crazy. As we know, pay-to-play really rules this city and, you know, that's part of this problem of the developers having so much power. They pay, they contribute not only to campaigns but also to these not-for-profits that, for instance, the mayor or the borough president set up and there's no transparency. We should be able to see every dollar that is contributed in any way to any elected official, right?

MR. PERALES: I think your time is up.

MS. ROTHBARD: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. But one other thing: Any lobbyist appointments and meetings that are made should be publicly disclosed. Lobbyists meeting with our officials should not be hidden, so...

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. ROTHBARD: I have a lot of other things to say but...

MR. PERALES: Miss Brown?

MS. BROWN: Good evening. My name is Savannah Brown, and I'm the assistant executive director at Black Women's Blueprint. We're an organization that's based in Brooklyn, New York that advocates for black women who are survivors
of rape and sexual violence. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this process amidst other New Yorkers and within the borough of Brooklyn for the Charter Revision Commission. We seek to ensure that all aspects of the Charter review take into consideration diversity with specific regard to gender and sexuality with an eye to end discrimination against woman and girls.

Since 2010, Black Women's Blueprint has worked from our Crown Heights headquarters to secure the political, social and economic equality of all black women and girls and gender nonconforming people in New York City and around the nation. Black Women's Blueprint has a demonstrated track record of working closely in coalition especially with the United Nations' initiatives to push policy agendas that seek to eradicate sexual violence in underresourced and often forgotten communities.

As a part of our flagship initiative, the Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, black women survivors of sexual violence testified in New York City at the historic Riverside Church in April of 2016 to
combat sexual violence in black communities.

We support using and adding each of the subject areas -- to each of the subject areas a gender lens based on CEDAW, the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Woman. Black Women's Blueprint knows that we are a city not only in need of strong gender equity revisions that are robust and coherent and grounded in critical analysis but also in our sexuality and attends to the multitude of identities that make up who we are and how we move through the world.

The sixteen core articles of CEDAW, the Convention on Ending Discrimination Against Woman provide a replicable yet consistent template for indicators through which city agencies can activate the proposed action plan and analyze on racial and gender equity with ease using a human rights framework. We are counting down the days to the expiration of VAWA, which is not likely to be reauthorized in the end of September. With the recent federal administration's threats to make vital cuts to anti-rape, anti-battery and anti-stalking services guaranteed by the Violence Against Woman Act, we are running out of places...
to turn for safety and justice.

New York City must be on the front lines of protecting the rights of most marginalized residents, and that includes black women and girls in particular. A core component of this goal is ensuring not only access to equal opportunity but also equal outcomes. This reflects the human rights understanding of nondiscrimination.

We urge that you apply gender lens and intersexual analysis in all areas. We expect a gender analysis to happen across every single city department. This means that we know our -- what our officials are doing right to protect women's rights and also what they've been doing wrong. We expect the establishment of over seeing oversight body focused on overseeing and implementing the gender analysis and gender equity initiatives.

We seek to see this across the board in the following areas: That New York City human rights initiative act on behalf of black women; that black woman acquire the full realization of their rights in New York City; that black women be supported and resourced in the aftermath of
violence and that outcomes based projects be used
to increase their civic engagement base building
and voter empowerment. Thank you so much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Let me just make a comment before I ask
my other commissioners if they have questions.

We are very, very concerned about the
appearance of corruption as well as corruption.
We are seriously trying to address the issue of
campaign financing and seeing if we can basically
get to the point that we can reduce the influence
of money. That is something that we can do
within the City Charter.

Are there members of the Commission with
questions?

MS. ARCHER: I have one. My question is
for Ms. Rothbard. You mentioned that you wanted
a different appointment process. Can you talk
about what would be highlights of what you would
like to see in an appointment process or things
that you've identified that are problematic in
the current appointment process.

MS. ROTHBURD: Sure. So I know one
recommendation is to come out for direct
elections. It's something I'm still figuring out
myself. I think the current situation doesn't work because we just have the same folks sort of controlling everything. And I've seen it in our community board; I've seen people lose their positions after only being a full member of a board for one or two terms because a particular elected official did not agree with a decision that they made. And if we're supposed to be truly independent bodies, then that just doesn't work.

MR. PERALES: But you're not -- well, let me just say that the issue of elected community boards has come up in a number of instances, but at the same time, we get people telling us that would be perhaps counterproductive because it's the political establishment that would control those kinds of elections. They have the troops, the sorters as they say, and they would probably get even more of their friends on the board.

MS. ROTHBURD: I completely agree; although at that point, maybe more people would actually know what, you know, community boards are or that community boards even exist. I think very few people in the city know that. I agree it's not a perfect solution; I just know that what we have
now is not working.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Anyone else?

Thank you very, very much.

This looks like Barbara Zahler-Gringer, Marcel Negret, Paula Siegel and Carol Melman.

MR. PERALES: Josh, this mic seems to be stuck there. Do you see where the mic hits the table?

JOSH: Better?

MR. PERALES: Much better.

MS. ZAHLER-GRINGER: Yeah, I think so.

MR. PERALES: Perfect. Thanks.

MS. ZAHLER-GRINGER: Good evening.

MR. PERALES: Good evening.

MS. ZAHLER-GRINGER: I'm Barbara Zahler-Gringer. In the 1970s as a law student, I worked with the Charter Revision Commission that was active at that time, so I know that your work is challenging and how important it is.

I'm also a member of Community Board 2 here in Brooklyn and I'm chair of the parks committee. I thought this meeting tonight was only about community boards, so I have two issues that are important to me.

One is that a community board should be
given more authority and community board members should be term limited and especially those who serve in leadership positions should be term limited as well. To speak about the authority, it frequently is frustrating to serve on a community board and see developer after developer gain approval from the city for overly large buildings they want to erect when community opposition and that of the community board are strong.

It makes little sense to me to create community boards pay for the staffing of district offices and the district offices provide a great service to members of the community and then render board's virtually powerless. Look around Brooklyn Heights and see every building that has been built here against opposition from the community. Right now we have 80 Flatbush pending where the developers of that building have met with over 100 different groups and still they have not changed that building. We don't need a 74-story building here, and yet we all know we're going to get it.

As to term limits, I find that I serve on a community board that is very diverse in every
respect, and I think that the borough president here works to ensure that. So I don't think we need term limits to foster diversity. I do think we need them to keep the boards fresh and to give more people a chance to serve. I think term limits are also important for leadership positions, because on my board, the same people keep running unopposed and getting reelected making it impossible for others to have a chance to serve in those positions. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MR. NEGRET: Hello. My name is Marcel Negret. I'm a project manager at the Municipal Arts Society of New York. We submitted comments earlier this week regarding civic engagement and community boards, so today I'll be focusing on the districting process and land use.

The current districting process does not provide sufficient independence from political interests and MAS agrees with proposals that would take appointments to the districting Commission out of the direct control of elected officials, prohibit former elected officials from serving on the Commission and remove the ability of the City council to veto the districting
Commission's plan.

Moreover, the population is growing and by the 2020 Census, the city will be home to nearly 9 million New Yorkers, and the existing 51 council districts will be representing close to 180,000 people each. As a reference, Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia each have council districts with approximately 55,000 people. That's like less than a third.

MAS supports the idea of having council districts roughly match the population of state assembly districts, for example, which represent currently approximately 120,000 people each. Under this scenario, the city would have about 70 council districts. This would provide the benefit of having a local government that is closer to the people that it's representing.

Although the city's current population deviation of less than 10 percent satisfies the requirements of both the 14th Amendment and the current City Charter, MAS believes that such a percentage is too high for the diverse city like New York City.

We support the idea of decreasing the maximum population deviation between districts to
5 percent. MAS is also concerned about the potential negative effects of population under count in the 2020 Census and we agree that the City Charter should mandate that all relevant city agencies promote and facilitate robust outreach and engagement around upcoming census.

Finally, regarding land use, we were disappointed to find that land use was an area deferred for future consideration and not comprehensively addressed by this Commission; nonetheless, we offered testimony on this important topic.

The current land use processes do not adequately facilitate community input prioritizing short-term concerns over long-term community planning. MAS believes that the city should shift from a focus on application-based decision making toward a community land base used planning process.

Each community must accept its fair share of necessary development without evading its role in meeting the municipalities fundamental social, physical and economic needs. To effect such a change, the city has to trust that the citizenry given greater responsibility can raise to these
two featured challenges.

Finally -- there's more in detail on the written comments, but given the time, MAS is opposed to the streamlining of the land use process by amending this Charter CPC, City Planning Commission, to make final determinations on all administrative land use permits such as certifications, authorizations and special permits.

MAS is also deeply concerned that this idea would remove the role of the City council from the CPC special permit process. MAS is also opposed to unnecessary changes to landmark destination procedures that would involve the CPC. Even more distressing is the idea of reorganizing landmark preservation Commission as a division of the department of city planning. We ask that the landmark destination process should remain entirely within the scope of an independent LPC. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. MALMAN: I'm Carol Malman, and I seem to be one of the two concerned citizens who is not a member of the community board and not representing an organization; although, I have
been active in -- participatory person in citizen
action for decades. I am most concerned with --
as a member, a long-term member of the Legal
Women Voters, Civil Liberties union and other
public interest organizations in participation in
voting. So nobody here has mentioned early
voting. To the extent that the Commission has
any power to do that --

MR. PERALES: We don't.

MS. MALMAN: You don't. Okay. This is a
problem. I've heard many comments already here
that I know are not under your purview, so I
don't want to add to that.

MR. PERALES: It's state law that determines
that.

MS. MALMAN: So much of what the city does
is determined in Albany, and maybe that needs to
be changed, but I do want to strengthen public
financing in government and increase the cap on
public financing. I'm also interested in
participation in the budgeting system. I have
taken part in that.

I'm concerned that there's not enough
information given to the public before the
participation begins about what is possible.
What are the projects that can be implemented? There's not much point in participating and choosing projects that can't be implemented. That just frustrates people after they've participated. So it is important that the limits that -- be increased and that the information be given really helps people choose projects that can be implemented. Then they won't feel frustrated in their participation and might participate again. The opportunities to participate should also be increased.

So I look forward to your doing what you can to strengthen the participation in a government of citizens. I'm not so sure a new bureaucracy is required, but I think that seems to make for more expenses on administration and not much on the actual implementation of participation.

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

MS. SIEGEL: Can I ask a picky question before I begin?

MR. PERALES: Sure.

MS. SIEGEL: Do we still have quorum?

MR. PERALES: Yes.

MS. SIEGEL: Majority of 15?
MR. PERALES: Yes. That's eight.

MR. SCISSURA: Somebody left.

MS. SIEGEL: But there's only seven of you. So what does that -- where are we? What do we do now?

MR. SCISSURA: We're not voting on anything.

MR. PERALES: We're not voting on anything. We don't need quorum.

MS. SIEGEL: Okay. I don't actually know the answer to this question, but something changed. So the last time you said -- you lost one.

MR. SCISSURA: You need a quorum if you're voting on someone.

(Inaudible audience members.)

MR. PERALES: I didn't raise it as an issue, sir. Why are you being argumentative? I merely indicated that most of the board was here.

MR. SCISSURA: So why don't you go on with your testimony.

(Inaudible audience members.)

MR. PERALES: It's not relevant if we're listening to information. We're just taking information. We're not taking an action tonight.

MS. SIEGEL: Great. That's great. That's a
good answer.

MS. MALMAN: I do have a question. Is this recorded?

MR. PERALES: Yes. Yes.

MS. MALMAN: So the others can listen if they wish?

MR. PERALES: They do. They're required to do that.

MS. SIEGEL: Sorry. That was a rough start. I'm going to focus on my testimony, but I just -- I do feel like it was important. The question of quorum came up earlier and now the number of commissioners has changed.

My name is Paula Siegel. I'm glad to be back with you guys in Brooklyn where I live and where I've lived for the last 20 years. I am senior staff attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods Practice at the Community Development Project. We saw each other last year at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. My colleague was at the issue forum on land use that you organized last month, and we're really glad to see that land use has gotten some attention from this Commission, and as the staff report rightfully notes the land use issues that the city is facing
require a thorough review and a major public
conversation about the future of the city's built
environment.

   We do think it's reasonable that this
Commission accept the staff's recommendation to
defer further consideration of land use
especially of the ULURP process to future
commissions. But land use in New York isn't
solely determined by the uniform land use review
process. That process is the process that kicks
in when major changes to the underlying roles
that govern the use of land in the city are
proposed, and those proposals are usually made by
developers.

   There's also a quiet system, a machinery,
that operates without major changes, without
exceptions, that actually works to disenfranchise
communities, to destabilize our neighbors and to
displace our institutions. So even without
digging into ULURP, which is a really important
conversation about who needs to be involved when
changes to the underlying rules are made, there
are five things that we can address with small,
simple changes to the Charter this November, and
you have them in front of you, but I'll go
through them.

So the first one seems like a no-brainer to me and I think a lot of folks here, but we must require that the city track and enforce all of the deed restrictions and remainder interests that it holds for the public benefit. The city doesn't have staff to enforce these restrictions now. But the department of citywide administrative services does have staff to respond to requests from property owners to lift those restrictions. Given that the permanence of the permanent Affordable Housing Program of this administration and the massive public investment in that program is actually all premised on this thing that they're calling a remainder interest in properties that the city is going to be financing affordable units in.

We need some infrastructure, a tracking mechanism and enforcement mechanism and staff to actually use it. I invite you to Google DCAS and deed restriction. What you will get is a form that you can fill out that says I would like to lift this restriction on my property and someone will call you.

MR. PERALES: Ms. Siegel, you've had several
of them and your time has expired. Is there
somewhere if you're just listing them quickly?

MS. SIEGEL: You have them in front of you.
It's on a brown letterhead, but I'm going to list
them really fast. So the other four -- I wanted
to go through that one because it's really
important.

The other four, prohibit the City from
selling liens on properties owned by charity
organizations; prohibit lien sales on
privately-owned vacant buildings and lots with
arrears and instead direct those to the existing
third-party transfer program to create a pipeline
of affordable housing that is actually housing
that is already in our neighborhoods where people
live, right? That is something we can do now --

MR. SCISSLURA: Just list them.

MS. SIEGEL: Great.

We can create a financial for incentive for
warehousing residential and commercial units, and
we can add public Housing Authority land to the
list of land use actions to which ULURP applies
which, literally, involves adding four words to
the City Charter and you have it in number 5.
It's a change to section 187C.
MR. PERALES: Thank you very, very much.

MS. SIEGEL: Okay.

MR. PERALES: Any questions for this panel?
No. Thank you very, very much.

Looks like Shelly Hagan, Felix Figueroa, Ken Morasky and Howard Katzman.

MS. HAGAN: Good evening. My name is Shelly Hagan. I belong to Fulton Area Coming Together.

MR. PERALES: Hold on one minute.

MS. HAGAN: Sorry.

MR. PERALES: Let me bring Erin Hyland up if the fourth member of this panel is not here.
Okay. You may proceed.

MS. HAGAN: Sorry.

MR. PERALES: My apologies.

MS. HAGAN: Good evening. My name is Shelly Hagan. I belong to Fulton Area Coming Together and Preserve Our Brooklyn Neighborhoods. When I got here this evening, I asked who is sponsoring the Charter Revision. The people at the sign-in said the mayor. That's interesting, because I got no notice from him, no notice from my City council member, the borough president, public advocate or comptroller. I heard about it from the Municipal Arts Society. This empty hall on a
matter of such consequence and need is no accident. The mayor didn't want anyone here. He'll be able to say I held a Charter Revision Town Hall and no one came. People are happy with the way things are; otherwise, the town hall would have been full. This event tonight looks and feels like another exercise in government making fun of the people. If any of the few people here think their words will matter, let's hope they're right.

The issue I bring up tonight is that of business improvement districts. The legislation for bids is badly obsolete. The first bid was established in 1984 when New York City was trying to recover from near bankruptcy. The New York City of 35 years ago bears but a distant resemblance to the New York City of today. The physical city and the agencies of government, the laws and regulations have changed and changed and changed; the bid legislation remains exactly what it was in 1983.

Legislation conceived to help the city get back on its financial feet now functions to imprison struggling stores, forcing them to pay the bid for services they don't want or need. If
a store refuses to pay the bid tax, the city
shuts him down.

I urge this city -- the Charter Commission
please to look at this old legislation again.
The legislation of 1983 gives the store owners no
escape; just two choices: Pay up or be shut
down. Sounds like extortion. The city calls it
business improvement.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Ms. Hyland?

MS. HYLAND: I'm Erin Hyland. I'm on the
district committee for the District 39
participatory budgeting project under Councilman
Lander's office, so I'm here to speak specific to
the participatory budgeting program and the
recommendation that it be expanded and made
required for everyone in the city.

MR. PERALES: Bring it up closer.

MS. HIGHLAND: Sorry. Better?

MR. PERALES: Yeah.

MS. HIGHLAND: The idea that participatory
budgeting become a citywide program that everyone
in the city gets to participate in and it's not
optional and that it be expanded further to both
capital and expense projects. Our districts is
one of the few that has been allowed to have
expense projects and we found it to be
particularly a crude vehicle for communities to
find programs that don't always hit the capital
threshold.

In terms of thinking about where it would
sit, we, I thin, will suggest that it become
outside of the councilman and independent where
the volunteers are encouraged to take leadership.

I think best practices amongst many of the
district committees finds that where the
volunteers get to lead and be more active, you
get better results because it's -- a lot of it is
staff working with us but mainly volunteers
committing to doing the outreach awareness
building and all of that part.

So the idea that for this cycle, the kind of
steering committee or citizen committee is being
a little bit scaled back is a bit of concern, and
so we'd like to see that that be more empowered
in the recommendations going forward. And I
think that would also adjust many of the other
comments people have had about awareness and
working with the agencies so that if projects are
nominated and do get suggested, you have more
vehicles and potentially ability to get the
agencies to go forward so that that kind of --
the disappointment that happens sometimes within
the procurement rules could go away.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very much.

MR. MORASKY: Hi. My name is Ken Morasky.

I'm a resident in Brooklyn and thank you for
letting us speak tonight.

I'm here to talk about community board term
limits. Living in New York, I think one of the
most valuable things I've come to realize about
the city is community boards are a very good
local government process, and it helps community
members really have a voice and participate in
decisionmaking even if it's advisory.

And just to think about how many people live
in New York City, over 8 million people and soon
to be 9 million from what someone else had said
earlier, and that you have 59 community boards
with up to 50 members, it's only in 2,900 people.
That's not a lot; that's a very small ratio. And
so I really support term limits because I think
that's going to be one method to help to bring in
more people and help with the turnover.

I agree with some of the other comments that
were said earlier, but one of the things I wanted
to ask you is just what some of the methods would
to be help bring more diversity to the community
boards and I think thinking about outreach and
going word out about what community boards are,
I don't think a lot of people do know what they
are.

New York is a very vibrant city these days,
and people are coming and going and some people
don't even know, like, to register to vote. And
so I think it's important to the get the word out
and think about how the process of applying to a
community board is approached. Standardizing the
application process I think is a good step;
removing it from the hands of the borough
president and the council members is a good step
as well.

Think about where, you know, people who are
good community members could become part of the
board. You know 16 year olds can be on the
community boards, so local high schools I think
are a good place to look for, you know, students
that could be involved. Community shareholders,
there's many organizations in communities all
over the city who are invested in their
communities.

Maybe they can propose people to be on community boards. So there's definitely resources or sources of pools of people out there that if we just reach out to the communities, and I was going to say bids, but that might not be a good one.

So it's something to consider, is really opening up the pool, the community boards to more people. Maybe think about dividing up into more community boards there can be, a higher threshold of how many community boards there can be. That can also widen the pool as well. So thank you for your time.

MR. PERALES: Thank you for your suggestions. Thank you very much. Yes, sir?

MR. KATZMAN: Good evening. My name is Howard Katzman, and I'm part of the New York City for CEDAW initiative. I came here in consideration of a citizen's initiative to be part of the New York City Charter Revision. I came with a group to describe an initiative to incorporate gender nondiscrimination into the New York City Charter. It is an initiative that incorporates objective means of identifying the
discrimination and a way to resolve the
discrimination it discovers. It consciously
makes an effort to include the public in these
actions.

This initiative has been developed by taking
over four years, building a coalition and
listening to the ideas of the public and
government leaders. In fact, some of the
commissioners must have heard about this
initiative as some members of your organization
are members of the coalition.

When we held a daytime news conference on
the steps of City Hall over 200 people
participated. Over 100 organizations were
represented. The diversity. The diversity of
gender; women; men; LGBTQ; gender nonconforming;
the diversity of age; the diversity of ethnicity;
the diversity of race and on and on.

Last night I came to the hearing in the
Bronx, and I was shocked at the pitiable turnout
that did not seem to bother anyone. It seemed
like most of the people there were members of the
community board. Here in Brooklyn, I'm glad we
have a few more, but not enough to really do
this, and again, the representation is community
board members, not civic organizations and community members.

So the other part was that last night, there was a lot of talk about community boards and how they're chosen, and it seems if they're chosen by government, just seems that by elected officials just seems incestuous and not answering the community. You mentioned that the -- electing them was problematic based on size and everything else.

As an alternative, what if it was done by petition? If people who wanted to do it had to go into the community, talk to members of the community, give them an idea of what it is the community board would do in order to get signatures, it would be an interesting interaction. Anyway, thank you very much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you. Any questions from the Commission members?

MR. BRAGG: I have one, than you.

MR. PERALES: Yes, go ahead.

MR. BRAGG: Sorry, the third panelist, you had mentioned in regards to community boards of -- first recommendation I've heard about engaging younger citizens in that process, like
16-year-olds maybe, high school sophomores or juniors, which I thought was pretty interesting. I've heard recommendations about participatory budgeting and having that age limit lowered to have people involved in that process, and you know, having, you know a defined structure throughout the city, but that was the first time I heard someone talk about lowering the age for community boards. I thought that was interesting. Could you just elaborate on this a little bit more.

MR. MORASKY: No, no, no, I -- it's already at 16.

MR. BRAGG: Oh, I thought you were saying that you were lowering it.

MR. MORASKY: No, sorry if that wasn't clear.

MR. BRAGG: Okay. Thank you for answering that, and everyone else who answered.

MR. PERALES: Thank you very, very much.

Sheila Katzman, Karen Peterson Yoving -- Young, I'm sorry; Karen Atlas; Sandy Balboza. You may begin.

MS. PETERSON: Hi. I've lived in Bed Stuy in Brooklyn since --
MR. PERALES: Your name is? Your name?

MS. PETERSON-YOUNG: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Karen Peterson-Young, and, like I said, I've lived in Bed Stuy since 2011, a couple of other neighborhoods before that in Brooklyn. I care about a lot of issues, but what's most important to me is getting the right people elected so that you can actually do something about those issues.

Now is our chance and now is a really important time for us to keep people energized about voting in politics. A lot of people have some into the game you know, if you will, recently. We want to keep them there by giving them a system that's more likely to deliver elected officials who actually represent them, and IRV and ranked-choice voting is that system.

In New York City, we often have six or seven candidates running for an office in the primary and that maybe sounds good, lots of choices, anyone can run, but in the system we have, it actually is not a good thing, because it means that people can win an election with a very small percentage of the voters.

I want to describe just such a crowded primary that went down last month in the 19th
Congressional District in the Hudson valley. Ira Glass in This American Life did a great show about this race, radio show on the race and candidate Jeff Beals. I would recommend that you all go listen to it.

So Mr. Beals, who is a Bernie supporter, high school teacher, first-time candidate, he had worked earlier at the state department and he went to Iraq where we worked on the transitional government and the Iraqi Constitution. His colleagues there voted him most likely to write a dissent cable. That's where you stand up and say, hey, something's wrong. So he is a person who is honest, principled, just the kind of guy that we need in government. Donors discouraged him from saying that he was for single payor, he thought the economy was rigged, but he kept saying these things.

Another candidate, Antonio Delgado, had been an attorney for Akin Gump, which is one of the top lobbying firms on Capitol Hill. Delgado got the support of the DCCC, naturally. Long story short, Delgado won this primary with 22 percent of the vote. That means 78 percent of the voters voted for someone else and, yet, there he is
winning the primary. Or as one of the other candidates said, also referencing the low turnout, congratulations on having gained at the price of $2 million the support of four percent of registered democrats. That's not an election. So if there had been IRV, he couldn't have done that, because in IRV, the candidate can't win unless they get a majority of the voters. And that is simple and people would have been more motivated to vote because they would know that only majority can win.

MR. PERALES: Your time is up.

MS. PETERSON-YOUNG: Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. KATZMAN: Good evening. My name is Sheila Katzman. I'm a retiree of the United Nations. I am president of the International Association For Women In Radio & Television USA, and I'm here on behalf of the New York City FORCEDAW Act Steering Committee; that's C-E-D-A-W, Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a coalition of over 300 organizations in the New York City area.

We're here because we want the CEDAW framework to be included in the City Charter.
Let me provide some more information on who we really are. CEDAW is an international treaty that defines various types of discrimination against girls and women and establishes guidelines governments can follow to end this discrimination. To date, 189 countries have ratified CEDAW while 99 have signed. Since the United States has only signed by President Carter in 1980, the treaty has no binding effect on its laws and policies.

Given the reality, the Cities for CEDAW group arose in an attempt to propel CEDAW compliance nationwide at the local levels. So far, nine cities have adopted the CEDAW framework and over 25 cities have passed solutions with passage to full ordinance.

CEDAW's core objective is to propel governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against all women and girls. The goal is to, one, investigate within city agencies, to identify city laws and policies where discrimination against girls and women can be found; two, work the public and -- work public and government to perform community, work with the public, sorry, and government to perform
community need assessments and, three, create a concrete plan of implementations and accountability to improve practices.

Like previously stated, CEDAW provides a comprehensive framework for governments to examine their policies and practices in relation to women and girls and to rectify discrimination based on gender. This would be first -- this will be the first comprehensive review of the Charter since 1989, and New York City has the potential to integrate CEDAW framework into the new Charter.

CEDAW is the framework most helpful for the City Charter given the state of the city on issues ever gender. Including the New York City for CEDAW major work in the city's Charter is the best way for the New York City to -- for New York City to demonstrate the commitment to eliminating discrimination against girls and women.

MR. PERALES: Please sum up.

MS. KATZMAN: I'm wrapping up.

And actively take steps towards preventing discrimination as one of the most progressive cities in the world and host of the United Nations. It is time for New York City to take a
public -- take public and -- a public and
leadership stance on this.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

MS. KATZMAN: Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Miss Atlas?

MS. ATLAS: Hi. Good evening. I'm Karen Atlas, and I want to express my appreciation of the Commission but also of my neighbors who are here still this late into the evening and all of the great points that have been made so far.

Basically, I want to talk about civic engagement and I -- in two ways, and my headline for what I want to talk about is how can we be more imaginative about our community engagement and how do we build that into the structures that support in the city.

So number one is participatory budgeting. I've been very involved in it; I'm on my district committee; I'm on the citywide committee, and I'm very excited about the model where residents are in a leadership position working with the city and working with nonprofits, and I think that the structures that promote that are really important.

I believe that an independent Office of
Civic Engagement can be very helpful with that. I think that PB should be expanded, more money should be put in it; it should be capital and expense and really importantly, it shouldn't just happen; it should have the organizing support so that it isn't just the usual suspects but really there's organizing involved so that everyone is encouraged to participate, and that takes work, that doesn't just happen.

I want to speak for the independent civic engagement office. I am totally not interested in more bureaucracy, but I don't see it necessarily as being that. I see it being a facilitative body rather than one that dictates from above. I think that it -- by being independent, it could help really be proactive about bringing all of the incredible civic participation happening around this city.

I direct a group called Arts and Democracy. We grew out of a couple of national civic engagement initiatives, and there is -- what I want to speak for is when you develop -- when we start designing this office or this collaborative to really think about all of the creative and cultural arts forms of civic engagement around
the city. And just to give a few of them, after
Hurricane Sandy, there was incredible civic
engagement both with the city but also from the
grassroots.

We led at the Park Slope Armory, we had over
100 volunteers supporting the evacuees there, and
this was the cultural community. There's youth
media initiatives that really engender the
leadership of young people, and there's theatre
the oppress that has legislative theatre. These
are just a couple of examples. I want to name
them because sitting here and testifying is one
form of being engaged. A lot of people are
involved in other ways that are more inclusive to
them, and I hope we can support them as part of
this office. Thank you very much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Sandy Balboza.

MS. BALBOZA: Hi. Good evening. I'm Sandy
Balboza, a 48-year resident and property owner of
321 Atlantic Avenue in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn, and
I'm active in my community. I want to focus on
land use issues. The Department of City Planning
does zoning without planning. They aggressively
upzone areas of interest to developers. City
Planning works with developers and public private partnerships to override existing zoning regulations that protect neighborhoods in order to favor these special interest groups. New York City must have a comprehensive long-term planning strategy that includes community-based planning in order to address a growing population while sustaining a healthy and vibrant city; therefore, community boards should have more power.

I know there was some issues about community boards, but I'm talking about land use policies. And more resources to hire full-time -- a full-time planner with expertise in zoning and community-based planning. Community boards are only advisory even though they represent the voice of the community, and sometimes they do get political and, you know, it doesn't work 100 percent, but it's what we have.

Public/private partnerships are too powerful and should be eliminated. The Empire State Development Corporation which is the state, the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Education Construction Fund, just three to mention, promote developer-driven projects. The community is left out of the planning process
when these partnerships partner with developers.

Selling public land -- oh, that's my next point. The city should stop selling public land to for-profit developers. Any housing built on public land should be built by not-for-profit developers and be 100 percent affordable for low and middle income seniors and the homeless population who struggle to live here now. And that's it. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Very well. Thank you very much.

Any questions from the panel?

Well, thank you very, very much for your testimony.

The next panel is Daniel Fisch, Simon Weiser, Debra Siton and Yvonne O'Neil.

MR. PERALES: David Cohen? This is a Local 32BJ again.

MR. BRAGG: Oh, okay. As I stated earlier, I will refrain from questioning this panel because of 32BJ staff are testifying. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: You may begin.

MR. WEISER: Thank you for being here today.

I'm the first vice-chair of Community Board 1.

It took me years of hard work that my colleagues
voted me -- just voted me to become the first vice-chair of Community Board 1, and I'm here today to express the issue that was raised here, the Commission's idea of term limits.

I think it takes a lot of years of hard work for members to understand the fabric of the community, what they represent, and I've spoken to other members of the community board through other members here today that I don't think it's healthy, that issue of term limits, because this is -- once you get to know the community, who you represent, then if you have term limits, it takes years and years of this knowledge to understand issues, of transportation, of ULURP issues.

I myself, I'm on the transportation committee and I'm on ULURP committee plus I have to attend office. I just became the first vice-chair. It's a lot of commitment. I give away hours of work, and I feel that just changing the process, like somebody mentioned before, young people, they don't know what a commitment this is. I feel that all the testimony we heard before, most of them was from regular board members. People are in the managing position or chairs, they understand that term limits, in my
view, won't work for -- won't be very health for community boards. Thank you very much.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Go ahead.

MR. COHEN: Good evening Chairman Perales and Commission. Thank you for another opportunity to testify today. I'm testifying on behalf of Allison -- sorry. I'm testifying on behalf of Allison Hirsch, 32BJ vice-president, political director of SEIU 32BJ. My name is David Cohen. I've got 2 minutes and 52 seconds.

As you know, SEIU 32BJ is made up of 163,000 men and women who make their living in property services throughout 11 states and Washington D C. Our 85,000 members in New York keep our residential buildings, schools, offices and stadiums and airports safe and clean.

I'd like to begin the testimony tonight by thanking the Commission for compiling and publishing your preliminary findings report. We understand that on the recommendation to change the treatment of one core issue for your membership and our leadership, campaign coordinated member-to-member communications, you've heard our arguments in support as well as
the support of other membership-based labor and community organizations, including 1199 SEIU, including Make the Road Action Fund and you've heard the arguments against the recommendations and have concluded that the question requires further examination and study.

To this end, I am here today to reiterate and underscore our argument. The Charter should be revised to clarify that the expenses for creating, producing and disseminating communications within the labor or membership organization are not deemed to be in-kind contributions to candidates in municipal elections. As you know -- I'm just going to move up a little bit. As you know, member-to-member communication is an essential feature of how unions work on everything from bargaining issues to political electoral work. Our members are the best messengers to share information with other members.

The current interpretation of the NYC Campaign Finance Board and the Campaign Finance Action the CCFA, treats membership communication when coordinated with a candidate as if it was communication with the general public. I'm going
to not make the time limit.

    This severely limits our ability to communicate with members about our electoral work and it undermines participation and mobilization of our members, including Felix Figueroa, who you heard from before; including Salul Hernandez, who testified in Queens at the first meeting; including Steven Yearwood, who testified at Botanic Gardens at the Brooklyn meeting, as well as, you know, our 85,000 members across the city.

    Before the CFB deemed coordinated membership to be in-kind contributions, Local 32BJ ran a strong volunteer program recruiting members to participate in door-knocking and other electoral activities. These members were excited to see candidates and meet them.

    In the 2017 elections and other municipal elections, they can't meet the candidates. It's confusing, and it doesn't make sense and it's a really hard conversation to have with members. I'm going to wrap up.

    So to this end, we're recommending that the Charter should be revised to clarify that the expense for creating, producing, disseminating communications within a labor or membership
organization are not deemed to be in-kind
contribution to candidates in municipal
elections.

I've attached and I'll submit in writing
testimony that provides a deeper examination of
these issues to aid in your committed continued
study.

MR. PERALES: Please --

MR. COHEN: Thank you. And we support the
civic participation initiatives of the Charter
Revision Commission, and that will be submitted
in our written testimony as well.

MR. PERALES: Well, thank you very much.

MS. SITON: Good evening. My name is Debra
Sitton. I'm a member -- I mean I live in
Community Board 2. I have a background in
engineering and project management, architecture.
You can't hear me?

I have background in engineering and project
management. I worked with MTA as a design
consultant with a former company CTE Engineers;
it was like one of the best little companies in
the world that got bought out, but a lot of the
things that are happening in New York City, I
assume they're probably illegal, because the
ULURP -- the ULURP -- the EISes or the
Environmental Impact Statements always precede
the ULURPs, and they determine if a building
should be or should not be built due do
infrastructure. And where I live, I'm sure they
did not accommodate the EIS, because the
infrastructure is -- I mean the buildings are
just too heavy to use the infrastructure that's
in place.

And when I go outside now, I smell waste
which is, you know, not good for children, it's
not good for anybody. But I think that a lot of
the things that are happening here in New York
City -- I've lived in other places all over the
country, and developers have destroyed most of
the rest of the country but New York State was
like a virgin market where they were not able to
come in and destroy it, but now it just seems
like they're given an open checkbook; they can
break laws; they can do whatever they want to
build these buildings, and they're blocking
sunlight. There are people selling their homes
because they have no more sunlight. And then I
have a friend who lives in a penthouse suite and
she has too much sunlight; she has to block the
sun out.

So again, I just -- you know, I don't know what you guys can do about development. The bids are destroying the community. I came here because I was sick of the big box stores, but my bicycle shops -- I've had two bicycle shops close up on me, and they told me the bids did nothing to help them. They were giving them money and they did nothing, and they lost -- you know, they lost their businesses.

Another thing, the participatory budgeting, with participatory budgeting, why do you need a City council? I mean, because they're not doing their jobs. If you need the taxpayer to come in and tell you how to spend your money, that means that these City council representatives are unqualified to represent the people, you know, that vote for them or don't vote for them or whatever.

And I guess my last thing is, you know, with the giving away of school properties to developers, you know, that's a no-no, too. Like, why are they giving school properties to developers when those properties belong to the kids that are going to grow up here? You know,
they should not be giving away -- the School
Construction Authority should do what they're
supposed to do. And I've interviewed with them
-- I've interviewed with so many city agencies
who just talk to me for three hours but they
never hire me, but the School Construction
Authority is responsible for maintaining the
schools and making sure there's computers,
infrastructure, you know, got the HVAC
or whatever whatever.

MR. PERALES: Please sum up.

MS. SITON: That's my...

MR. PERALES: Well, thank you. Right on
time. Thanks a lot.

MS. O'NEILL: Good evening.

MR. PERALES: Nice to see you again.

MS. O'NEILL: Yes. My name is Yvonne
O'Neill, and it's good to be here to have the
opportunity again to address this esteemed
Charter Revision Commission as I did last evening
in the Bronx. As secretary of the steering
committee of NYC For CEDAW, I officially
represent the Episcopal Diocese of New York. In
the Diocese, I'm a member of the Diocesan
council. I am on the task force against human
trafficking and the task force on domestic violence. I recently chaired a Diocesan petition to the 17th General Commission Episcopal Church was held this month in Austin, but my biggest claim to fame is that I am a verger at the cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The Episcopal Diocese of New York covers a large territory, but it includes the boroughs of Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island; and Brooklyn and Queens are part of Diocese of Long Island.

At its 70th general convention in Phoenix, the Episcopal church passed a resolution where it adopted or endorsed CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman, and that resolution deplored the continued failure of the United States Congress to ratify the simple statement of the humanity of women. Among its many actions on CEDAW, in December of 2001, the Episcopal church joined about 60 other signors to an open letter to the U.S. Senate asking for ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman, CEDAW. The letter stated, quote, We urge you to work to ensure immediate ratification of CEDAW, end.
To this day, the United States remains one of only six countries out of 196 nations that has not ratified this treaty. This is why the Episcopal Diocese of New York is pleased to join the efforts of New York City For CEDAW to get a women’s Bill of Rights passed on CEDAW principals passed in New York City. We must reaffirm the rights of all our citizens for a just and equal society.

We believe that now is the time for the city to incorporate the principals of CEDAW in the Charter Revision. This will be a win-win for every woman, every man, every girl, every boy, and New York City will, indeed, be the beloved community that the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of, and I quote Dr. King. He said, the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the heart of men, using the terminology of that day. Thank you.

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

Any questions from the Commission members?

Hearing none, let me thank the panel. Thank you very much.

We've got one more panel. Xiu Wen Chong (phonetic), James Green, and Lashman Ellis.


MR. PERALES: Lashawn Ellis.

MR. SCISSURA: What's your name?

(inaudible.)

MR. PERALES: Yes, I did call your name.

Why don't you sit over there?

You may begin.

MS. CHONG: Hi. My name is Xiu Wen Chong. I'm a co-founder of the group Concerned Citizens For Community Based Planning, and I'm also a public member of the land use committee on Community Board 9 which covers Crown Heights and parts of Flatbush.

I do not support the recommendations to give boards more resources to appoint dedicated urban planners, because in my experience, boards and communities don't lack access to planning expertise right now. The problem is that community plans and views that don't fit in with
the prevailing planning orthodoxy are being squashed. For example, at my community board, there are two neighborhood groups that have already hired independent planners. The borough president's land use director has likewise presented several times over last couple of years at our community board, and I believe that the Department of City Planning has a planner who is dedicated to our board and probably a couple of adjacent boards, which is fine.

Community boards hiring their own planners has also not helped our communities. In the past, our board hired a planning intern, but his work and conclusions were only discussed with a few board members until we threatened to FOIL for this report; and therefore, the report did not reflect most resident's desires and intentions for land use.

Likewise, at an adjacent community board which hired a planning intern from a non-profit foundation, the intern produced a great survey but then told board members at a land use meeting that the political powers that be had forced her to change her conclusions.

As a community member and board member, I
want to hear from a variety of different planners and other advocates, whether they work for community groups or elected officials. Our communities are not homogenous and neither are the views or backgrounds of urban planners.

What is discouraging to me as somebody who has put a lot of time into civic engagement and my community board is when I see broad coalitions in other communities from Chinatown to Staten Island who have poured time and money into independent land use plans only to see them blocked from even entering the ULURP process when the Department of City Planning refuses to certify them. I would like to see the Charter revised to make it clear that other branches of government besides the executive branch can enable certification in community plans when it is clear that they enjoy broad support.

Finally, I would like to urge this Commission or at least our elected officials to prioritize land use issues. Our community district has seen over 2500 new market rate units be permitted over the last five years. That could be 7,000 new residents plus thousands more in the adjacent community districts. A
deliberate policy of allowing overdevelopment
through inappropriate zoning means drastic
demographic change, and that will affect local
elections far more than any tweaks to campaign
finance, voting rules, census counts, citizen
drives, et cetera. Thank you.

MR. PERALES: Thank you.

Lashawn?

MS. ELLIS: Hi there. Good evening. Hello
Cesar.

I am going to talk about term limits and
that -- the city planner appointing them to the
community boards. I'm not sure how I feel about
term limits. I think that there -- it's
something that needs to be looked at because you
have people who are on the board for twenty plus
years, and that seems to be a little too long.
Then you also -- two years on a community board
is not enough time, so I think more things need
to be looked at instead of just thinking about
term limits.

I think one of the things that should be
talked about is board expectation policies so
that people know what's expected of them when
they join a community board. Legal expectations
and standards, those things should be looked at closely and, if people are not following those expectations, they need to be asked to leave.

Attendance is also a thing. I know there are a lot of people on our community board, their names are announced, and I've never seen their faces, and those people need to be held accountable and asked to leave because they should attend the meetings.

Members should know that they are at the community board or part of members of the community board to look after their community's best interest. Members should also be educated about the conflict of interest law. They should be educated on the City Charter. They should also know about open meetings law and know about parliamentary procedure and how to follow those rules.

Records should be kept. They should know how to keep records, both financial and meeting minutes. At the end of the two-year term, because I know there is a staggering, you know, people can be elected or appointed in a staggering two-year term. Fellow members should be able to look back at the records and see what
contributions each member has made over the time
they have been on the board and whether or not
they should continue.

I think that the system -- there are many
way to strengthen the system and, to me, term
limits in just a very narrow way of looking at
how to deal with community board membership.

The idea of a city planner in every
community board simply to me is like having foxes
guarding a henhouse. That's not necessary. CB 9
already knows what this would be like every board
would have a Richard Bearak telling them what
they should do to protect themselves from minor
as-of-right development that's taking place in
their community. When all of his suggestions
will just bring us irreversible doom and
absolutely no affordable housing tied to the
laughable MIH program that was voted down by a
majority of the city's community boards, hence
our advisory role. The real estate industry
hobnobbing with our politicians and our cultural
institutions is enough. Also having a real
estate lobbyist as the Chair of the CB 9 is also
enough. We don't need anymore foxes in the
henhouse.
MR. PERALES: Your time is up, but if you have to finish up, go ahead.

MS. ELLIS: No, that's it.

MR. PERALES: Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Green?

MR. GREEN: Yes. My name is James Green. I work narrowly. I aim to attend these kind of meetings with a group I'm affiliated with, Citizens Defending Libraries. We most recently go to these main library trustees meetings where they have an executive session, I suppose, where they get most of their final business taking place there. I would go along with one or two of the other advocates who have been up here and saying that if I were not associated with the Citizens Defending Libraries and with another person that often comes to these sort of community board functions, Victoria Cambranese, I wouldn't have known about this at all to attend, but I came, basically, to see possibly familiar faces.

I wrote my thoughts down. I had imagined they would be read up by -- you know, read as a question for various of you ladies and gentlemen, but anyway, I'm a-- I guess you can call me a
news junkie. I go to the library or to a social club every day; I get on the computer, I could sit there for hours and write down notes. And just today, a particular online journal slate.com, the author writes that cash or paper money is like a miracle, but in these type of situations, I guess where you have the developers going in due to the rezoning that takes place in the, I guess, upscale the businesses and so forth, they encourage the retailer to no longer accept cash and only take the consumer's plastic, which, to my mind, is an instrument of incurring debt.

And so the consumer taps his card or his smartphone and then another app, it's called miles, in exchange for your agreement to be constantly tracked, supposedly you'll get frequent discounts and deals. And to my way of seeing it, it's almost like a step or a few steps to remote control in your life in Trump America, and it just doesn't seem like smart, you know.

I guess I ended my thought that I wrote down that I wish that these type of gentrification activities could sort of at least sound as though they're smart, but it doesn't leave that
impression to me anymore. It's some kind of out
and out onslaught, and it only favors -- I don't
know. I'm surviving. You know, people that I
like are surviving, but who knows how long that
it can go on, I guess, in you might say a
warmhearted or friendly manner as much as you
can, you know. So I guess that's pretty much
what I was hoping to get in there.

MR. PERALES: Well, thank you very much. I
appreciate it just as your time is up. Do any
of the Commission members have questions?

Hearing none, we thank the panel for your
testimony. Much appreciated.

Do I hear a motion to adjourn?

MR. HO: Adjourn.

MR. PERALES: Is it seconded?

MR. BRAGG: Second.

MR. PERALES: All those in favor.

MULTIVOICE: Aye.

MR. PERALES: Anyone opposed?

Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, at 8:33 P.M., the above matter
concluded.)

°°°°
CERTIFICATE

STATE OF NEW YORK  )
COUNTY OF SUFFOLK  )

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

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

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

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 26th day of July 2018.

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