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2018 NYC CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING

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PRATT INSTITUTE
144 West 14th Street
New York, New York 10011

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5

August 14, 2018
1:05 P.M.

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

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COMMISSIONERS:

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11 CESAR PERALES, CHAIR

12 CARLO SCISSURA, Secretary

13 WENDY WEISER

14 MATT GEWOLB

15 UNA CLARKE

16 KYLE BRAGG

17 MENDY MIROCZNIK

18 ANNETTA SEECHARRAN

19 JOHN SIEGAL

20 DALE HO

21 LARIAN ANGELO

22 SHARON GREENBERGER

23 MARCO CARRION

24

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1 MR. PERALES: Good afternoon. We will
2 commence. Commissioner Clark, we have a place
3 for you right here. My name is Cesar Perales. I
4 introduced myself at the beginning of each of the
5 public meetings. I have the honor of sharing the
6 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission.
7 As always, I will begin by asking the
8 commissioners to introduce themselves and I will
9 start on my left.

10 MS. GREENBERGER: Good afternoon. I am
11 Sharon Greenberger and I'm the President and CEO
12 of the YMCA of Greater New York.

13 MR. BRAGG: Good afternoon. I am Kyle
14 Bragg. I am secretary/treasurer of SEIU 32BJ
15 union across the east coast of 170,000 members.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. SIEGAL: Good afternoon, John Siegal. I
18 am an attorney in private practice in Manhattan.

19 MR. SCISSURA: Good afternoon, Carlo
20 Scissura. I'm the president and CEO of the New
21 York Building Congress.

22 MR. PERALES: Let me just tell them that I
23 was a former secretary of state and a former
24 deputy mayor of New York City, and like I said
25 before, my name is Cesar Perales.

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1 MS. WEISER: Hello. My name is Wendy Weiser
2 and I direct the Democracy Program at the Brennan
3 Center for Justice at NYU Law School.

4 MS. CLARKE: Good afternoon. I'm Una
5 Clarke. I am a former member of the New York
6 City Council and a trustee for the City
7 University of New York.

8 MR. CARRION: Good afternoon. My name is
9 Marco Carrion and I currently serve as
10 commissioner of the Mayor's community affairs
11 bureau.

12 MS. SEECHARRAN: Good afternoon. My name is
13 Annetta Seecharran and I am the executive
14 director of Chhaya Community Development
15 Corporation.

16 MS. ANGELO: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Larian Angelo. I am a long time budget person
18 for the City of New York and currently a senior
19 research fellow at the Institute for state of
20 local government.

21 MR. PERALES: The purpose of todays meeting
22 is to discuss the progress that we've made and to
23 vote on a resolution that's going to direct our
24 staff to prepare a legislation, a ballot language
25 and a final report that will reflect our work.

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1 The resolution has been sent to all of the
2 commissioners in advance of the meeting. I'm
3 sure they've all read it. The resolution has
4 been posted on the website so the public has
5 notice of it, and the resolution reflects
6 Extensive Public Engagement, Stake Holder
7 Meetings and research by our staff.

8 I will now ask our executive director Matt
9 Gewolb to give some background on the rationals
10 behind the proposals in the resolution. Matt?

11 MR. GEWOLB: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll
12 begin with the campaign finance proposal. This
13 Commission heard testimony that the City's
14 campaign finance system is successful and
15 considered to be a nationwide model.
16 Nonetheless, the Commission also heard from
17 members of the public and elected officials that
18 there remains a public perception that government
19 officials give improper favors to large campaign
20 donors. And that the existence of the largest
21 campaign contributions still permitted under our
22 Campaign Finance system, helps to feed that
23 perception of corruption. The Campaign Finance
24 proposal has described in today's proposed
25 resolution, attempts to address this perception

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1 of corruption by significantly lowering the
2 limits for campaign contributions to candidates
3 both for candidates who choose to participate in
4 the public finance program and those who do not.
5 At the same time, the proposed limits are
6 designed to be high enough to still enable
7 candidates to raise the funds they need to
8 communicate effectively with voters and run
9 competitive campaigns whether or not they
10 participate in the voluntary public financing
11 program.

12 The proposed new limits for participating
13 candidates are somewhat lower than for
14 nonparticipants. These participants are able to
15 supplement private contributions of public
16 matching funds. The Campaign Finance proposal on
17 today's resolution also serves anti-corruption
18 goals by strengthening the smaller matching-funds
19 formula and increasing the cap on public funds
20 available to participate in candidates. Increase
21 small dollar matching further enables
22 participating candidates to campaign without the
23 need to rely on the largest donors. At the same
24 time, strengthening the matching formula and
25 raising the public funds cap helps to maintain

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1 incentives for candidate participation and the
2 public financing program by maintaining a
3 reasonable yet appealing balance between the
4 benefits of participation and its burdens.

5 On Civic Engagement. On The topic of Civic
6 Engagement, we heard a strong interest in
7 creating a vehicle to ensuring the values of
8 civic participation in the Charter without
9 increasing bureaucracy. To do this, the
10 resolution calls for establishment of Civic
11 Engagement Commission to address concerns raised
12 by the public and many of you, the Commissioners,
13 we thought it was important to incorporate a mix
14 of Mayoral and non-Mayoral appointments on the
15 Commission.

16 The Commission will provide a landing pad
17 for several new and exciting initiatives that
18 were suggested in our public comment process,
19 such as participatory budgeting, increased
20 resources to community boards and greater
21 language assistance services. It will also allow
22 the public to better access the City's existing
23 Civic Engagement efforts and support and partner
24 with community-based organizations, institutions
25 and civic leaders in the public and private

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1 sectors in their civic work.

2 On Community Points. Throughout our public
3 engagement process, we got a strong interest in
4 making community boards more reflective of the
5 communities that they represent and more
6 effective in representing those communities. To
7 address these concerns, the resolution would
8 oppose a limit of four consecutive two-year terms
9 for community board members with staggered
10 implementation and the ability to be reappointed
11 after sitting out one two-year term. An
12 eight-year limit on community board members
13 provides parity with the term modes for many of
14 the City's elected officials and strikes an
15 appropriate balance between creating
16 opportunities for new membership and allowing
17 time for members to develop and share their
18 institutional knowledge. The resolution also
19 calls for uniformly an application process and
20 requires borough presidents to report an
21 informational -- a teacher recruitment and
22 selection which promote transparency without
23 disrupting the important role that borough
24 presidents play.

25 Finally, as I mentioned we think that Civic

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1 Engagement Commission can play a useful role in
2 providing needed resources to community boards.

3 On language access, we heard public
4 testimony at improving language access services
5 is vital to ensuring all New Yorkers can fully
6 participate in the City's civic life. To address
7 this issue, the resolution gives an affirmative
8 mandate to the Civic Engagement Commission to
9 provide language assistance services including
10 providing interpreters at poll sites. We think
11 the structure and overall mission of the Civic
12 Engagement Commission will make it well suited
13 for the role.

14 On Rank Choice Voting. Regarding Rank
15 Choice Voting, the Commission heard several
16 comments regarding the proposed benefits of
17 adopting Rank Choice Voting. We heard that it
18 would make elections more efficient avoiding us
19 having to a whole separate runoff election, build
20 consensus and make candidates more likely to
21 reach out to a broader set of voters. However,
22 as staff has been studying this issue, we learned
23 that Rank Choice Voting has not been adopted
24 uniformly. There are multiple models that will
25 need to be examined for the effect specific to

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1 New York City. Additionally, more follow up be
2 done regarding the jurisdictions that adopted
3 Rank Choice Voting and then repealed them. They
4 also recommend further study on where Rank Choice
5 Voting would have effects on minority communities
6 or vulnerable populations. For these reasons,
7 the resolution proposed directs the staff in the
8 final report to express the Commission's desire
9 to have a future Commission engage in a careful
10 study, additional study of Rank Choice Voting to
11 determine whether and how it should be
12 implemented in the City.

13 On the matter of Districting. We heard a
14 wide variety of comments suggesting the need to
15 reform the City's redistricting system and make
16 it more fair and independent. We received some
17 comments suggesting that the Commission adopt
18 reforms from California and other jurisdictions.
19 However, given New York City's unique size and
20 diversity, it is necessary to evaluate any
21 proposed reform or impact specific to the City.
22 It is also important to allow for sufficient time
23 for public input on any specific change to the
24 system including input from communities of color,
25 elected officials, political parties, former

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1 members of Districting Commissions, and other
2 experts. For these reasons, the proposed
3 resolution in front of you directs the staff in
4 the final report to express the Commissions
5 desire to have a future Commission pick up
6 districting reform.

7 Mr. Chair, I think you would now like me to
8 read the resolution?

9 MR. PERALES: Am I to read the resolution?

10 MR. GEWOLB: I am to read the resolution to
11 you and to the Commission members.

12 MR PERALES: Okay.

13 MR. GEWOLB: I'll take a sip of water and
14 move quickly.

15 MR. PERALES: The stenographer is working as
16 hard a possible. Her fingers are flying.

17 MR. GEWOLB: 2018 Charter Revision
18 Commission Resolution, August 14th, 2018.
19 Whereas, the 2018 New York City Charter Revision
20 Commission has conducted extensive public
21 outreach, including holding numerous public
22 hearings and events in all five boroughs of the
23 City; and

24 Whereas, the Commission has heard and
25 received written testimony from elected officials

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1 and members of the public at these hearings and
2 events, including from the representatives of
3 public interest and advocacy organizations, civic
4 and community organizations, political
5 organizations and private citizens; and

6 Whereas, in addition, the Commission has
7 encouraged public comment through a variety of
8 methods, and in multiple languages, including at
9 community based events, on its website and
10 through various forms of social media; and

11 Whereas, Commission staff has also solicited
12 comments and ideas from heads of City departments
13 and their personnel; and

14 Whereas, the Commission has reviewed the
15 entire Charter as part of this revision process;
16 and

17 Whereas, the staff prepared a preliminary
18 staff report recommending that the Commission
19 continue to study proposals related to Campaign
20 Finance reform, election reform civic engagement,
21 community boards and redistricting; and

22 Campaign Finance, Whereas, commenters
23 expressed serious concerns that large campaign
24 donations result in quid pro quo corruption, and
25 the appearance of such corruption, and proposed

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1 numerous ways that the City's Campaign Finance
2 system could be strengthened to combat such
3 corruption, as well as its appearance; and

4 Whereas, to address these concerns, many
5 commenters, including experts, election officials
6 and members of the public suggested reforms to
7 certain core elements of the Campaign Finance
8 system, including reducing contribution limits
9 and strengthening public financing through
10 adjustments to the matching formula and the cap
11 on public matching funds; and

12 Whereas, certain commenters also expressed
13 concern regarding the timing of the disbursement
14 of public matching funds under the current
15 system;

16 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New
17 York City Charter Revision Commission hereby
18 directs the staff to prepare a proposal or
19 portion of a proposal to be placed before the
20 voters at the general election to be held on
21 November 6, 2018, if adopted by the Commission,
22 consistent with the following: Decrease
23 contribution limits for candidates who choose to
24 participate in the public financing program to
25 2,000 dollars for citywide offices, 1,500 dollars

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1 for borough president offices and 1,000 dollars
2 for council member offices, per election cycle;
3 decrease contribution limits for
4 non-participating candidates to 3,500 dollars for
5 citywide offices, 2,500 dollars for borough
6 president offices and 1,500 dollars for council
7 member offices, per election cycle; change the
8 formula for determining public matching funds to
9 a ratio of 8 to 1 in public funds matched on the
10 first 250 dollars of eligible contributions for
11 citywide offices, and to a ratio of 8 to 1 in
12 public funds matched on the first 175 dollars of
13 eligible contributions for borough president and
14 council member offices; increase the cap on
15 public matching funds, per candidate and per
16 election, to 75 percent of the expenditure limit
17 for the relevant office; and make public funds
18 available to qualifying candidates earlier in the
19 election year;

20 Civic Engagement, Whereas, in its public
21 testimony, the public expressed a broad concern
22 about the state of civic engagement in the City;
23 and

24 Whereas, the City's current efforts to
25 promote engagement of its residents are many and

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1 varied, and public commenters expressed an
2 interest in creating a vehicle to coordinate and
3 enhance the City's current efforts and better
4 inform the public about opportunities for
5 engagement; and

6 Whereas, the Commission has determined that
7 establishment of a civic engagement commission
8 would enshrine the values of civic participation
9 into the Charter and provide opportunities for
10 new and innovative programs; and

11 Whereas, the Commission received compelling
12 testimony regarding the value of fostering civic
13 engagement through the establishment of a
14 citywide participatory budgeting program; and

15 Whereas, the Commission received compelling
16 testimony that providing residents with
17 information regarding the location of poll sites,
18 changes in poll site location, voter registration
19 and other forms of voter engagement and central
20 to promoting participation in civic life; and

21 Whereas, the Administration has established
22 the DemocracyNYC initiative for the purposes of
23 strengthening democracy, making voting more
24 accessible and breaking down barriers to civic
25 participation, which signals the City's

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1 commitment to take further governmental action in
2 this area; and

3 Whereas, the City desires to develop and
4 support new and existing programs and other
5 initiatives to encourage meaningful participation
6 in civic life;

7 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New
8 York City Charter Revision Commission hereby
9 directs that the staff prepare a proposal or
10 portion of a proposal to be placed before the
11 voters at the general election to be held on
12 November 6, 2018, if adopted by the Commission,
13 consistent with the following: Establish a Civic
14 Engagement Commission with an appointment
15 structure that includes Mayoral and non-Mayoral
16 appointments and other representation, which may
17 include the heads of relevant City agencies;
18 establish that the Civic Engagement Commission
19 shall set policies in furtherance of its mission
20 to promote civic participation and engagement by
21 residents of New York City; Provide that the
22 Civic Engagement Commission shall be responsible
23 for the following functions: Oversight and
24 implementation of a citywide participatory
25 budgeting program, subject to appropriation and

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1 consistent with other applicable laws and
2 procedures; providing technical assistance
3 services, including urban planning and other
4 resources to community boards, as set forth in
5 the Community Boards portion of this resolution;
6 coordinating existing civic engagement efforts by
7 City agencies; supporting and partnering with
8 community-based organizations, institutions and
9 civic leaders in the public and private sectors
10 in their civic engagement efforts, which may
11 include, among other things, leadership skills
12 development, stewardship of public spaces, youth
13 engagement, and targeted services to immigrant of
14 other vulnerable communities; taking actions to
15 encourage, promote, and facilitate voter
16 registration and voting, including, but not
17 limited to targeted outreach to groups who are
18 underrepresented among those registered and those
19 voting, including eligible voters who are limited
20 in English proficiency; and performing language
21 access functions as set forth in the Language
22 Access portion of this resolution;

23 Community Boards, Whereas, members of the
24 public, experts, and elected officials have
25 expressed a strong interest in making the City's

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1 community boards more reflective of the
2 communities they represent and more effective in
3 representing those communities; and

4 Whereas, many commenters expressed the view
5 that community boards, which serve an important
6 role in New York City's local democracy, would be
7 strengthened by enhanced diversity, and several
8 of such commenters have proposed imposition of
9 term limits as a means to achieve this goal; and

10 Whereas, many commenters expressed the view
11 that the appointment process for community boards
12 could be enhanced by steps to provide consistency
13 among the five boroughs; and

14 Whereas, the Commission heard compelling
15 testimony that there is a need for increased
16 technical assistance services, including urban
17 planning and other resources, to better enable
18 community boards to fulfill their Charter
19 mandate;

20 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New
21 York City Charter Revision Commission hereby
22 directs that the staff prepare a proposal or
23 portion of a proposal to be placed before the
24 voters at the general election to be held on
25 November 6, 2018, if adopted by the Commission,

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1 consistent with the following: Term Limits,
2 Provide a limit of four consecutive full two-year
3 terms for community board members, provided,
4 however, that for the purposes of staggered
5 implementation certain initial appointments may
6 include a limit of five two-year terms; establish
7 that the four-term limit would become effective
8 for appointments or reappointments beginning on
9 or after April 1, 2019; and establish that the
10 community board members who had previously served
11 for four consecutive terms are not barred from
12 reappointment after one full term out of office;

13 Appointment Process, Require all Borough
14 Presidents to publish an Annual Report
15 disclosing: The number of open community board
16 positions; information about current community
17 board members; the Borough President's
18 recruitment methods; the evaluation criteria
19 followed in the selection process and any
20 specific methods employed by such Borough
21 President; and set forth in the Charter uniform
22 categories of information that must be included
23 in all applications and require all Borough
24 Presidents to make an application for community
25 board member positions available online;

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1 Resources and Related Matters, Require the
2 Civic Engagement Commission to provide technical
3 assistance services, including urban planning and
4 other resources, including but not limited to
5 language assistance services, to community
6 boards; and require community boards, with
7 assistance from the Department of Information
8 Technology and Telecommunications, to maintain a
9 website;

10 Language Access, Whereas, approximately 23
11 percent of all New Yorkers are limited English
12 proficient, meaning that they have a limited
13 ability to read, speak and write in English; and

14 Whereas, as the City continues to grow its
15 efforts to fully engage its diverse and
16 multicultural communities, expanding language
17 access is crucial to building a more just and
18 equitable City, and these efforts are
19 particularly critical as they relate to voting;
20 and

21 Whereas, the Commission heard compelling
22 testimony that there is a greater need for
23 language assistance services related to voting
24 and voter registration;

25 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New

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1 York City Charter Revision Commission hereby
2 directs that the staff prepare a proposal or
3 portion of a proposal to be placed before the
4 voters at the general election to be held on
5 November 6, 2018, if adopted by the Commission,
6 consistent with the following: Require the Civic
7 Engagement Commission to consider the needs of
8 language communities in developing its programs
9 and services and seek to ensure that the
10 Commission's programs and services are accessible
11 to limited English proficient New Yorkers;
12 require the Civic Engagement Commission, in
13 coordination with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
14 Affairs, to develop a plan for providing voter
15 education, assistance and outreach services in
16 languages other than English to individuals who
17 are eligible or may become eligible to vote;
18 require the Civic Engagement Commission to
19 develop, in coordination with the Mayor's Office
20 of Immigrant Affairs, a plan to provide
21 interpreters at poll sites throughout the City,
22 which shall include but not limited to a
23 methodology for determining which languages and
24 poll sites shall be covered under such program,
25 including a requirement to periodically review

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1 and adapt such methodology as appropriate in
2 response to the needs of language communities;
3 require designation of an individual to
4 coordinate language access services provided by
5 the Civic Engagement Commission and a process to
6 monitor and timely respond to public complaints;
7 and require the Civic Engagement Commission to
8 track and report the provision of language
9 assistance services, including the number of
10 voters that utilized interpreters at poll sites;

11 Ranked Choice Voting, Whereas, the
12 Commission received public comments from experts,
13 elected officials, advocacy groups and members of
14 the public proposing that the City adopt ranked
15 choice voting in municipal elections; and

16 Whereas, many commenters suggested that the
17 adoption of ranked choice voting would have
18 potential benefits for the administration of
19 municipal elections, including broader voter
20 engagement and participation, reduction of
21 negative campaigning consensus building,
22 providing voters with more opportunities to
23 select preferences among candidates and the
24 administrative efficiency of eliminating the need
25 for separate run-off elections; and

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1 Whereas, based on available research, ranked
2 choice voting is not implemented uniformly among
3 the jurisdictions that have adopted it, with
4 variations ranging from the number of candidates
5 voters may rank to the composition of the ballot,
6 and some jurisdictions have abandoned the use of
7 ranked choice voting after its adoption; and

8 Whereas, based on available research, there
9 are significant open questions regarding the
10 impact that such a change would have on voters
11 and candidates, including questions regarding the
12 impacts on minority voters and vulnerable
13 populations; and

14 Whereas, based on available research there
15 are significant open questions regarding the
16 operational feasibility of implementing ranked
17 choice voting in a city on the scale of New York,
18 including questions regarding vote tabulation
19 timeframes and auditing procedures;

20 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New
21 York City Charter Revision Commission directs the
22 staff to carefully address this promising
23 approach to improving the administration of
24 municipal elections in the Commission's Final
25 Report with a recommendation that such a proposal

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1 be considered by a future Charter Revision
2 Commission or other legislative body;

3 The Districting Process, Whereas, the
4 Commission received many public comments
5 proposing that the Commission propose changes to
6 the districting process; and

7 Whereas, the Commission heard compelling
8 testimony that a fair and independent districting
9 process is critical to a well-functioning local
10 democracy; and

11 Whereas, several commenters expressed
12 concern that the districting process be amended
13 to ensure that due consideration be given to the
14 voting power of racial and ethnic minority
15 groups; and

16 Whereas, other commenters suggested changes
17 to the appointment process and other changes to
18 districting requirements designed to make the
19 districting Commission more independent; and

20 Whereas, the overall variety of the comments
21 submitted to the Commission has demonstrated that
22 there are many ways to approach redistricting
23 reform; and

24 Whereas, New York is unique in its size and
25 diversity, and any proposed reform that looks to

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1 the models of other jurisdictions must be
2 evaluated for impacts specific to New York City
3 and its local communities; and

4 Whereas, input from local communities,
5 including communities of color, elected
6 officials, political parties, former members of
7 districting commissioners, experts and other
8 important stakeholders is necessary to evaluate
9 any proposed reform to the City's districting
10 process;

11 Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED that the New
12 York City Charter Revision Commission directs the
13 staff to carefully address the variety of
14 redistricting reforms presented to the Commission
15 in the Commission's Final Report, with a
16 recommendation that redistricting reform be
17 considered by a future Charter Revision
18 Commission;

19 And be it further RESOLVED that the New York
20 City Charter Revision Commission directs the
21 staff to prepare a Final Report and ballot
22 questions and abstracts consistent with the
23 foregoing directives and with such further
24 amendments as may be deemed necessary and
25 appropriate by the Chair with notice to the

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1 Commissioners and provided further that such
2 Final Report and ballot questions and abstracts,
3 cumulatively reflecting the Commission's
4 proposals, shall be submitted to the Commission
5 for consideration of whether to place such
6 proposals before the voters at the general
7 election to be held on November 6, 2018.

8 MR. PERALES: Thank you. That was well
9 read. Speed reader. We may need some more speed
10 reading because I had a special request from our
11 vice chair, Rachel Godsil, who cannot be with us
12 for very important reasons, personal reasons, and
13 she asked that I read a statement into the
14 record. If you are not present, this is not a
15 vote. You cannot vote. I'm reading just the
16 sentiments that you wanted.

17 "It has, it continues to be an honor to
18 serve as vice chair of the New York City Charter
19 Revision. I deeply regret being unable to
20 participate in today's meeting and I appreciate
21 the opportunity to have my statement read." I'm
22 skipping much of it in which it deals with how
23 pleased she was by the process we undertook and
24 the time and care of our Commissioners. She
25 begins with the Civic Engagement specific

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1 proposal.

2 "Civic Engagement, broadly speaking, is an
3 issue that garnered a great deal of interest of
4 both the public hearings and from experts. We
5 all undeniably believe that the greater Civic
6 Engagement will serve our City. Question was how
7 to be constructive on this front, and I am
8 pleased that New Yorkers will have the
9 opportunity to vote to create a Civic Engagement
10 Commission. This innovative and streamlined
11 approach will marshal the City's Civic
12 Engagement efforts, to produce improved outcomes
13 and cut down on currently uncoordinated
14 activities. Of particular significance in my
15 view is the opportunity for all of the
16 communities to participate in community budgeting
17 for communities to have a chance to decide how to
18 spend capital dollars and hosting the needed
19 Community Board and Language Access Resources in
20 such an office, will ensure communities are we
21 able to access expert assistance. We also heard,
22 loud and clear, that New Yorkers fear that our
23 political system is afflicted by the corrupting
24 nature of money and politics. The distress
25 engendered by worry about money mattering more

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1 than people is why we must take bold steps in
2 reforming Campaign Finance. I think our proposal
3 will achieve the aim of creating incentives for
4 candidates to reach out widely and to know they
5 don't have to be dependent on a few. While a lot
6 of those will require a modest increase in
7 funding from the public, these dollars will serve
8 the critical function of allowing voters to have
9 greater faith in the system. Rank Choice Voting
10 and Districting Reforms emerged from the borough
11 hearings from New Yorkers. I believe this speaks
12 of the City's residents thirst for innovation.
13 Like many, I am intrigued by the potential Rank
14 Choice Voting, the potential Rank Choice Voting
15 is broadening voter engagement participation and
16 for reducing negative campaigning. Yet I'm sorry
17 to conclude that there are significant policy,
18 legal and operational issues that we as a body
19 had not had the opportunity and time to tackle.
20 I agree that the best course of action would be
21 to explore these open questions and
22 considerations in our Final Report so that a
23 future Charter Revision Commission can thoroughly
24 investigate and overcome these barriers to
25 implementing what could be a game changer in the

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1 way New Yorkers select their representatives.
2 Same concept holds for Districting Process. I
3 believe there's close to a unanimous agreement
4 among the commission members and the public that
5 the current districting process is not sufficient
6 to serve New York as well. The goal should be to
7 create a mechanism for districting that assures
8 the public that district lines are drawn fairly,
9 proportionally and reflective of the community.
10 Only when the districting process achieves these
11 goals, will the process have the public's trust.

12 I look forward to talking with everyone soon
13 and to a final vote on the ballot language
14 legislation and the final report."

15 So I apologize for all of the reading, but
16 this latter one was a special request by the vice
17 chair that has worked very hard on this
18 Commission.

19 I'll now, unlike what we've done in the
20 past, is wait for people to raise their hands,
21 we'll go down the line and see if everybody has
22 got something to say. Hope you'll be brief. One
23 of the reasons I would like brevity is that one
24 of our members, Kyle Bragg, must leave in just a
25 few minutes.

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1 How many minutes do you think you have,
2 Kyle?

3 MR. BRAGG: I have about another 20 minutes.

4 MR. PERALES: We'll see if we can go down --
5 we'll try -- we're not going to cut off anybody.

6 MS. ANGELO: I would like to commend the
7 work of the staff on attending meetings, hearings
8 from the public, synthesizing what they were
9 saying and presenting what I think are the very
10 good proposals to the Commission and hopefully
11 will be good proposals on the ballot. I agree
12 with the staff in that Rank Choice Voting,
13 although very interesting, is something the City
14 has no experience with and while the research
15 indicates it may reduce the negative campaigning
16 that goes on, it may encourage elected officials
17 to reach out beyond their traditional base.
18 There are other experts who said it may, in fact,
19 limit people's choices. So given the fact that
20 we don't have experience with it, I support the
21 staffs resolution to put this off and let another
22 Commission take the time that this Commission
23 does not have to study the issue.

24 MR. PERALES: Thank you, Larian. Annetta?

25 MS. SEECHARRAN: Yes. I will just quickly

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1 add my appreciation to the staff for their hard
2 work over the last several months and for really
3 performing an incredible Herculine task, as
4 Larian said, synthesizing such a wide array of
5 proposals and ideas that were put forth. I
6 personally feel very pleased with the process and
7 I'm very comfortable with what we are proposing
8 today. I do regret that we did not have enough
9 opportunity to really come up with a proposal
10 around the Districting Process as I feel very
11 strongly about that matter, as well as other
12 issues that didn't make it to the floor in
13 addition to the Rank Choice Voting.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. PERALES: Marco?

16 MR. CARRION: Thank you. I would like to
17 commend the staff as well. This has really been
18 a human effort to put this document together. So
19 I would like to agree with -- with that portion
20 that we could not dig deeper on the districting
21 because I think that that is something that
22 future Charter Commissions should look at, but I
23 think what we have come up with both on the
24 community board side using transparency to
25 attract more members and to increase resources to

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1 real vital entity is important and also on
2 Campaign Finance, answering the concerns that we
3 have heard regarding money in politics is really
4 fantastic work, so thank you.

5 MR. PERALES: Dale?

6 MR. HO: Thank you. I didn't have an
7 opportunity to introduce myself earlier, I walked
8 in a little late, I apologize. My name is Dale
9 Ho. I'm a lawyer at the American Civil Liberties
10 Union. It's been an honor to serve on this
11 Commission and I just wanted to thank Chairman
12 Perales, my fellow Commissioners and the staff
13 for all of their hard work in producing the
14 resolution for today. I know it wasn't easy
15 given the amount of time that we had. I think
16 the resolution includes some strong proposals for
17 increasing civic participation and increasing
18 government responsiveness. I am sure not
19 everyone will agree on the actual content of
20 resolutions that emerged in each of these areas,
21 but I'm hopeful that we can all agree that the
22 people of New York City deserve an opportunity to
23 the vote yes or no on those proposals.

24 I do want to add one other point and I just
25 want to make clear that this is not in any way

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1 criticism of the staff which worked really really
2 hard and my fellow commissioners who I know are
3 deeply invested in this City and in our
4 democracy. It's, I think, just a reflection of
5 our extremely truncated process because in
6 addition to the proposals that will -- in
7 addition to the language that will eventually
8 emerge from this resolution on these particular
9 areas, I think there are other matters on which
10 the people of New York City deserve an
11 opportunity to weigh in and I think it's
12 unfortunate that they won't be able to do so. We
13 heard a wide variety of concerns that were raised
14 in our community hearings. Everything from how
15 the Civilian Complaint Review Board is
16 constituted to whether or not the City should
17 adopt the Convention against the elimination of
18 discrimination against women and I just want to
19 thank the public for bringing these issues to our
20 attention.

21 There are two issues in particular that are
22 particularly germane to this Commission. I think
23 it's disappointing that we were unable to make
24 specific progress on those issues in the time
25 that we had to put forth specific language for

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1 voters to consider on. The first is in
2 redistricting. We heard repeated concerns at
3 hearings that members of the community think that
4 our current redistricting process is not
5 sufficiently independent, it's not sufficiently
6 fair, does not take into account the needs of
7 communities of color adequately. The challenge
8 for us was that I don't think we received
9 proposals with sufficient specificity in time to
10 get feedback from experts and stakeholders to
11 sufficiently consider those proposals and so for
12 example, we received one very, I think, a strong
13 proposal from Common Cause and the Brennan Center
14 for Justice, which I think would increase
15 transparency, increase the independence of the
16 redistricting process and establish heightened
17 protection for communities of color. I'm sorry
18 that there isn't more time for us to analyze that
19 proposal and get feedback from the -- from the
20 members of the community and stakeholders on it,
21 but I'm hopeful that that proposal will form the
22 basis for future conversations on redistricting
23 reforms. There is time for that. The next
24 election to take place under new districts won't
25 not be until 2023 and I'm very very hopeful we

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1 can get something done in the next five years.

2 The other area in which I am disappointed
3 that we don't have language to propose to New
4 York City voters on is Rank Choice Voting. I
5 heard during our hearings what sounded like a
6 widespread desire to adopt some form of Rank
7 Choice Voting for at least some of our elections
8 and I felt at least with respect to this issue
9 that we did have it, compared to say the
10 redistricting issue, time to hear testimony about
11 the practical effects of particular forms of Rank
12 Choice Voting, but again, the process was quite
13 truncated and I'm hopeful that we as a City
14 together will have opportunities to consider some
15 form of Rank Choice Voting in the future.

16 None of that is meant to take away from the
17 very serious proposals that will be on the ballot
18 in November to strengthen our Campaign Finance
19 system, create a Civic Engagement Commission, to
20 reform community boards and enhance language
21 access protections at the polls and, again, I am
22 very thankful for the staff for putting together
23 what I think is very strong work on those
24 positions.

25 MS. CLARKE: Thank you so very much. I

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1 would like to vehicle some of what my colleagues
2 have said. Me, having been a selected official
3 myself, and knowing what voters do on election
4 day, if you put too many proposals on the ballot,
5 they pick one and nothing else happens. And I
6 think that our choice, the staff was very
7 thorough in the work that they do and we are
8 proposing those that we think we can educate the
9 community about, especially on Civic Engagement,
10 so I would strongly support the work and the
11 proposals that we have for the election in
12 November. And while we ask other commissions who
13 will come after us to take a deep dive in some of
14 the issues that came before us that we did not
15 have enough time to even consider at this point.
16 I want to thank the chairman and all of my
17 colleagues who have worked as hard as they could
18 and for the staff in particular who kept us
19 abreast of all of the issues and all of the
20 information that came in that they saw online,
21 that they got in calls and that they got from
22 testimony. So I want to just thank all of our
23 community, the New Yorkers who made it their
24 choice to be at the hearings. To hear and know
25 that we are open and transparent and that we're

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1 going to be putting on the ballot those things
2 that are near and dear to New Yorkers based on
3 all the testimonies we heard.

4 MR. PERALES: Wendy Weiser.

5 MS. WEISER: Thank you very much. I am
6 going to be somewhat duplicative and repetitive in
7 what some of my colleagues said. I want to start
8 by thanking my colleagues and the chair for their
9 incredible service and commitment and work on
10 this and then I want to give a special thanks to
11 what I think was a really incredible and terrific
12 staff that was able to do a tremendous amount of
13 work, synthesis, analysis and present it to us
14 and to all of you in what is a remarkable short
15 period of time and it's remarkable at how much we
16 were able to accomplish in that time period. I
17 think that that is terrific that New Yorkers will
18 have the opportunity to vote on these proposals
19 that are designed to enhance and increase Civic
20 Engagement and improve our democracy, something I
21 care deeply about and that we all care deeply
22 about. I want to thank you, the people in this
23 room, and the other people who have come and
24 testified before this Commission. The work is
25 not finished here. And I'll just mention that

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1 the few other things I want to say about the work
2 left to do is the work of drafting these
3 proposals and along with some tweaks that may be
4 necessary to make it work, but I think that that
5 is the -- going to be important work to get this
6 before the voters and I want to thank the staff
7 in advance for that and I look forward to working
8 on those.

9 I do want to reiterate what some of my
10 colleagues mentioned. Some of the unfinished
11 business. I want to especially emphasize the
12 redistricting process and I want to thank the
13 staff for including in here a very strong
14 recommendation that this proposal be taken up by
15 a future Commission and I think there is strong
16 consensus and I am deeply persuaded that New York
17 would benefit by making the redistricting --
18 reforming the redistricting process, to make it
19 more independent and more responsive to
20 communities. I think that we're -- I'm
21 disappointed that we weren't able to finish that
22 job and I look forward to that being taken up at
23 the next time. I think this is deeply important
24 for New York and we have time to do that before
25 the next redistricting cycle and I strongly urge

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1 the City to do so in the next Commission to take
2 that on and I also want to say that I, too, was
3 disappointed that we were not able to get over
4 the finish line on Rank Choice Voting. I think
5 we did a lot of great work and I think that the
6 work that's going to be reflected in the final
7 report will be a helpful guide forward so that
8 the next Commission can finish what we weren't
9 able to finish this time around. But again, this
10 is a tremendous piece of work and hopefully a
11 great benefit to our City.

12 MR. PERALES: Given -- in the interest of
13 time, I will not make much of a statement except
14 to reenforce the comments made by my fellow
15 commissioners about this staff. They have done
16 yeoman's worth. It's been incredible. I know,
17 perhaps, more than any of you how diligent they
18 have been. So I thank them. I think what they
19 have produced today is extraordinary given the
20 amount of time and I, of course, enthusiastically
21 support it. But let me move on. Carlo?

22 MR. SCISSURA: Carlo, why don't we give the
23 staff a round of applause? I think they deserve
24 it. Good job everybody. First of all, thank you
25 to the chairman. You have done a great job. We

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1 came together rather quickly and we had a short
2 year of time to answer a lot of questions, but to
3 my fellow commissioners, it was great to get to
4 know you a little bit during this process and I
5 hope that we continue to work together to make
6 New York City an even better place.

7 I have a couple of concerns with the
8 resolution and I think my biggest concern,
9 without getting into, really specifics of each
10 proposal, because I think most of them are great
11 and I would support them, unfortunately, I will
12 have to vote no on the current resolution because
13 I believe that it is important that each
14 commissioner be given the opportunity to vote yes
15 or no on each specific proposal in the resolution
16 the way the voters will get the opportunity to
17 vote for that in November. So should that change
18 from now until the final meeting, I will be happy
19 to vote yes on most of the proposals, but given
20 that we are being asked to vote on one proposal
21 in its entirety and given that I have some
22 concerns on the Campaign Finance numbers,
23 although I agree that we should limit
24 contributions and make them lower and most of the
25 reasoning behind that proposal, I do have

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1 concerns with the dollar amounts and I do worry
2 of a bad economy coming up in the future and
3 adding additional burdens on New York City
4 taxpayers.

5 And then my second concern would be on the
6 office of Civic Engagement. I would like to see
7 that flushed out a little bit more because I
8 think it is a valuable idea and I great tool
9 moving forward, but I think it's important that
10 particularly for community boards, that they have
11 an understanding of they have to work with the
12 borough president's office, they work with CAU
13 and now we're giving them another layer of
14 bureaucracy that would be -- that is being given
15 to them, so I think if we can flush these things
16 out in the next week and I really stress again,
17 that I hope we have an opportunity to vote for
18 each question individually the way the voters
19 will. But having said that, I will say one thing
20 that I'm very excited about, is that this
21 Commission really has looked at community boards
22 and really focussed on doing some good for them
23 and I think that's important. Thank you.

24 MR. SIEGAL: Thank you. Rather than not
25 going into prior comments about the process and

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1 the staff, first, I want to say three specific
2 things. The first regarding you, Mr. Chairman,
3 who I had never met before this Commission and I
4 realized very early on that if I could learn from
5 you a fraction of the patience and the
6 graciousness that you have exhibited throughout
7 this process to the commissioners, to the staff,
8 to the public, if I could master a fraction of
9 that, I would be a much more effective person.
10 So I really appreciate that.

11 Secondly, Matt Gewolb, who I also didn't
12 know, has proved to be really an extraordinary
13 public lawyer in terms of intelligence, in terms
14 of process, in terms of sense of humor and irony
15 about all of the stuff that goes on around this
16 and I really appreciate that. And, thirdly, I
17 want to speak about Aaron Bloom, who I did know
18 because we were adversaries in the litigation,
19 but who really is a master of the very
20 complicated and intricate laws governing Campaign
21 Finance that we have been trying to navigate.

22 I, too, Carlo, have certain marginal
23 differences between the Campaign Finance proposal
24 we're going to vote on and what I would do if I
25 had -- but they're very marginal about the

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1 numbers about contribution limits and what
2 contributions we match. Overall, I think that we
3 are striking a very appropriate balance and
4 taking a very, very meaningful step toward the
5 further resolution of the New York City Campaign
6 Finance process and Campaign Finance system. We
7 are cutting contribution limits by more than
8 50 percent out of a desire to see both the
9 political community and the donor and business
10 community relieved of the reputational issues
11 that arise from the perception and sometimes the
12 reality of large campaign contributions. There
13 has been a perception of quid pro quo corruption
14 in New York City government for a long time.
15 There's a been a reality to it in certain
16 circumstances, too. The vast majority of elected
17 officials and candidates are honorable people.
18 The vast majority of donors are honorable people,
19 but they are besmirched by the occasional person
20 who shows up giving large amounts of
21 contributions, seeking the peddle influence,
22 seeking to establish themselves in ways that are
23 perceived as and are at times corrupting the New
24 York City government, and we are taking a
25 dramatic, large step in eliminating the potential

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1 and the occasional reality of corruption, and I
2 think that it's a very important step. At this
3 same time, we're doing so consistent with First
4 Amendment jurisprudence, even the First Amendment
5 jurisprudence of this right-wing Supreme Court
6 that is going to be in power for the next
7 generation and is going to further change the
8 laws in this area, but it's my view that we have
9 got it right and that this is a defensible and
10 appropriate step.

11 The third thing that I think is very
12 important to me having represented campaigns in
13 New York City for a long time and dealt with the
14 Campaign Finance board for a long time, is that
15 we are not taking any step that is going to
16 complicate their job or is going to reduce their
17 incredibly demonstrated track record for
18 administering this system, for sussing out and
19 preventing and in some cases referring for
20 prosecution people who have tried to cheat the
21 matching fund system, we are keeping it simple,
22 clear and accountable and that's a very, very
23 important thing and we all need to continue to
24 recognize the incredibly effective job that that
25 agency does, as a model, not only a model

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1 campaign finance organization, but really a model
2 of nonpartisan, non-political public
3 administration.

4 Just the last point, overlooked in all of
5 this is I think that we are going to recommend a
6 citywide system of participatory budgeting. I
7 think that's a very significant step. One of my
8 commissioners will say that I at one point
9 listened to testimony about all this civic
10 engagement stuff was a little bit cynical about
11 what it means. I do think that cynicism reflects
12 idealism. You can't be a cynic if you're not an
13 idealist. I think that participatory budgeting
14 involving communities at the community level in
15 deciding where capital funds go is very
16 important. I'm eager to see the final language
17 and I hope that the mayor and future mayors will
18 fully fund this and this will become an
19 institutionalized part of life in New York City.

20 MR. PERALES: Kyle, I know you have time
21 constraints. Kyle Bragg?

22 MR. BRAGG: I would like to begin with
23 thanking the chair and the secretary and co-chair
24 and my fellow commissioners for the incredible
25 work that they have done and the staff of this

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1 Charter Revision Commission for the incredible
2 work that they have done and preparing us to get
3 to this point. I'm very pleased with the process
4 in which we have gone through in this very short
5 period of time and that we were able to do the
6 hearings, take testimony and have all of this
7 information downloaded and processed for us into
8 a document which is this resolution, which I must
9 say that I -- I support strongly. And if I had
10 the time today, I would be able to remain,
11 unfortunately, because a conflict with my
12 position in my organization, I cannot, I would be
13 here to vote yes for it.

14 You have heard from my fellow commissioners
15 that there are many concerns. Yes, there are
16 concerns about some of the resolutions that may
17 -- made it to -- which will make it to the ballot
18 box, but the fact that some will not, doesn't
19 mean that they disappear or die here at this
20 Commission. I think we have done a lot of
21 important work to create a foundation going
22 forward for future commissions and allow for
23 these very important issues like the
24 redistricting and districting and Rank Choice
25 Voting to be continued and important discourse

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1 about how we advance our City's democracy.

2 I still remain confident that one, this City
3 will get to a point where they will address these
4 issues and to the betterment of our city, but I'm
5 concerned, too, about what the impacts of these
6 particular issues will have, both on communities
7 of color and the most vulnerable of the City. So
8 I would agree with the analysis of our staff in
9 this resolution that there's further work that
10 needs to be done in drilling down on these
11 issues.

12 MR. PERALES: Let me just interrupt you.
13 Kyle, I would like your vote. If we could get
14 Sharon to speak and then we could get your vote?

15 MR. BRAGG: Then I will cede so I can get my
16 vote in.

17 MR. PERALES: With permission, of course,
18 Sharon?

19 MS. GREENBERGER: I will be brief, but I do
20 have a point of clarification, a suggestion and
21 one concern.

22 So my point of clarification, and you don't
23 have to answer this right now. I just want to
24 understand on the term limits on community
25 boards, the establishment of a four-term, that

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1 term limit becomes effective, I want to
2 understand what that mean for folks who have
3 served then two or three terms. Does it become
4 immediate or is that an eight-year start for
5 that?

6 My suggestion really is about some of the
7 things we talked about things like how to explore
8 Rank Choice Voting and that is to collectively
9 not let up on how we continue to drive the State
10 on some of the issues that we were particularly
11 interested in, but recognized there were limits
12 to what we could do and so I need to say that
13 publicly. Even things like Rank Choice Voting,
14 if we want them to align with the State, then we
15 have to continue to push the State.

16 My concern which comes in the form of a
17 request has to do with our need to be careful
18 stewards of public resources, and I do feel like
19 we need to do some additional homework on
20 understanding what are the financial implications
21 on what is being proposed. Specifically I would
22 like to really understand what the dollars look
23 like in terms of the Civic Commission -- Civic
24 Engagement Commission and what some of the
25 financial implications are around some the

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1 Campaign Finance reform chances.

2 MR. PERALES: Mendy, we're going to take a
3 vote and then have you can speak if that's
4 possible and okay with you?

5 MR. MIROCZNIK: Yes.

6 MR. PERALES: Is there a motion? This is a
7 motion to have a vote on the resolution. All
8 those in favor?

9 (A chorus of yes.)

10 MR. PERALES: Then I will -- you do a count?

11 MR. GEWOLB: Yes. So all those in favor --

12 (A chorus of yes.)

13 MS. GREENBERGER: This is to vote on --

14 MR. PERALES: On the resolution.

15 MS. GREENBERGER: Or the language in the
16 resolution?

17 (Inaudible conversation.)

18 MR. PERALES: On the resolution. We would
19 accept the language and -- let's do that again.
20 All those in favor?

21 (A chorus of yes.)

22 MR. PERALES: All those opposed?

23 (One no.)

24 MR. PERALES: One opposed. Is there any
25 abstentions?

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1 (One abstention.)

2 MR. PERALES: Okay. Everyone is voting yay.
3 One nay and one abstention. Is that what the
4 record will reflect?

5 MR. GEWOLB: Yes.

6 MR. PERALES: Kyle, thank you very much.

7 MR. BRAGG: Again, my apologies and thank
8 you very much.

9 MR. PERALES: Mendy, your comments. I would
10 like to hear them.

11 MR. MIROCZNIK: First, I want to thank the
12 staff, all the work, Matt, Aaron, Josh, Christie,
13 did a wonderful job flushing the issues. I don't
14 want to be to repetitive. I think John did sum
15 it up the best way. We're tackling very serious
16 issues and sometimes proper change requires
17 further Commissions in the future to tackle the
18 questions raised over here, but the most
19 important thing I accredit the chairman was
20 taking on those issues. The courage to take on
21 the issues and have the dialogue. Our job is to
22 start the process and do as much as we can, so
23 thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to the
24 staff for helping me in the process, to be
25 educated on what we're facing in the City.

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1 MS. WEISER: I just wanted to add one thing
2 to one of the commissioners. There is particular
3 language in here that you would change. There is
4 a provision in here and that says that, you know,
5 as in the drafting process, the chair can accept
6 further tweaks with notice and that was something
7 I took notice of in voting to effectively address
8 those concerns that are included in the
9 resolution we voted favorably on. Thank you.

10 MR. PERALES: Thank you. That's helpful. I
11 would like to note for the record that there were
12 ten individuals who voted on behalf of this
13 resolution. There was one vote against it and
14 one vote abstention, 10:1:1 for the record.

15 Is there anyone else that has a comment?
16 That was easy. Let me thank all of you. You
17 have done a terrific job. This has not been easy
18 and as many of you had said, we were still unable
19 to reach consensus on a couple of things and I'm
20 sorry that we had a negative and an abstention,
21 but maybe over the next week or so, until we have
22 a final vote, we may get that it's unanimous
23 approval.

24 Thank you very much. I will entertain a
25 motion to adjourn.

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1 All those in favor? Opposed? We are
2 adjourned.

3 (Whereupon, at 2:00 P.M., the above matter
4 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

I, AMANDA TARTAGLIA, 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 15th day of August 2018.



AMANDA TARTAGLIA

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