

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 2019

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September 24, 2018
Start: 6:01 p.m.
Recess: 8:03 p.m.

HELD AT: CUNY COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND
2800 Victory Boulevard
Staten Island, NY 10314

B E F O R E: GAIL BENJAMIN
Chairperson

COMMISSIONERS: Sal Albanese
Dr. Lilliam Barrios-Paoli
Lisette Camilo
James Caras
Eduardo Cordero, Sr.
Stephen Fiala
Paula Gavin
Lindsay Greene
Allison Hirsh
Rev. Clinton Miller
Sateesh Nori
Dr. Merryl Tish
James Vacca
Carl Weisbrod

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Wayne Rosenfeld, Member of Community Board 3, Staten Island

Maria Esposito Appearing for: Minority Leader Steve Matteo & Borough President James Oddo

Ann McDermott, New Yorkers for Human Scale City

Frank Morano Appearing for: Council Member Joe Borelli and for himself

Igor Baborski, Activist, and & Immigrant New Yorker

Debi Rose, New York City Councilwoman, Representing the Progressive Caucus

Diane Signorelli, Animal and Child Advocate

David Eisenbach, History Teacher, Columbia University

James Wright, Member of DC37 & Member of DC37 Political Activist Committee

Valardia Ward

Gloria Esteppa (sic)

Ivan Garcia, Make the Road New York

Mary Bourne, Housing Dignity Coalition Member

Janine Materna, Attorney Pending Bar Admission and
President, Pleasant Plains/Princess Bay/Richmond
Valley Civic Association

Margarita La Morte, Animal Activist

Deidre Carroll, Animal Activist

Celeste Cosodiero, Attorney

P.J. Parker,

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Hello. Now it is.
3 Good evening and welcome to today's hearing of the
4 Charter Revision Commission of the City of New York
5 established pursuant to Local Law 91 of [off mic]
6 2016. I am Gail Benjamin and I'm honored to lead this
7 committee. It is my pleasure to call the meeting to
8 order. I'd like recognize that we are joined by on
9 my left Commissioner Weisbrod, Commissioner Nori,
10 Commissioner Camilo, Commissioner Gavin, myself and
11 my Counsel David Seitzer to my right, Commissioner
12 Fiala, Commissioner Cordero, Commissioner Albanese
13 and Commissioner Caras. Wait. With those present we
14 have a quorum. This is the fourth public hearing in
15 our ongoing effort to engage the public in the
16 generation of ideas in which the city—about ways in
17 which the City Charter can help the city to work
18 better. The Commission was established by
19 legislation adopted by the City Council and has
20 appointments from each of the borough presidents, the
21 Public Advocate, the Comptroller the City Council and
22 the Mayor. We, the 15 of us represent a cross-
23 section of New Yorkers. We live throughout the five
24 boroughs of New York City. We work in diverse
25 fields. We are of different backgrounds and ages,

2 but what we share is a love of our city and desire to
3 help shape our city streets and to meaningfully
4 participate in changing the document that will
5 provide the basis for that task. Given that you're
6 here today, I know that you are already aware of the
7 Charter and how we live our everyday lives. The city
8 provides the manner in which controls public money
9 and provides goods and services to residents
10 throughout the city. It defines the responsibilities
11 of government officials as well as our city agencies
12 and provides the framework for the use and
13 development in the city. We're all here tonight to
14 propose ideas that can strengthen the compact between
15 citizens and their government, ideas that can provide
16 a transition from the city of 1989 to the City of
17 2050. These ideas may balance the rights and
18 responsibilities of our agencies or our government
19 officials may streamline our budget or may redefine
20 how the city uses its land or purchases its goods and
21 services. We welcome all of your ideas, and thank
22 you for sharing them. If you wish to testify today,
23 please fill a speaker's slip. They look like this,
24 and submit to the staff. Please make your points
25 clearly and succinctly as we want to understand the

2 issues you raise. We're happy to accept any written
3 testimony you may have either today or over the
4 course of the coming weeks and months. Our web
5 address and Twitter feed is on the pamphlets which
6 are located throughout the room. All testimony in
7 whatever form you choose to submit it will be
8 included in the record and made available to the
9 Commissioners, to the staff and to the public. We
10 will also hold Twitter and telephone town halls in
11 the coming month to provide more opportunities to
12 hear from you. We hope to gather a robust set of
13 proposals, and will be conducting additional hearings
14 in the spring to present the results of our research
15 and analysis and receive further feedback. By
16 December of 2019, we will share with you a set of
17 proposed provisions to the Charter, which will be put
18 before all of you on the ballot of November 2019.
19 Again, we thank you for being here, and taking part
20 in this momentous task. As our first order of
21 business, I will entertain a motion to adopt the
22 minutes of the Commission's September 20th public
23 hearing, which have been previously provided to the
24 Commissioners and are available in draft form on the

2 Commission's website. [background comments] Is
3 there any discussion? No. All those in favor.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Aye.

5 COMMISSIONERS: [in unison] Aye.

6 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: All those opposed?

7 The motion carries. We will now start our testimony
8 from the public on proposals for revisions to the City
9 Charter. We will limit testimony to three minutes
10 per individual, and you'll be able to see how you're
11 doing on time on that clock, countdown clock located
12 to my left. We will limit the testimony to three
13 minutes in order to ensure that we can hear from
14 everybody who wishes to speak. After you testify,
15 members of the Commission may have questions for you
16 to follow up on your ideas or your proposal. For the
17 first panel, I'm going to call three people at a time
18 and I call Wayne Rosenfeld, Maria Esposito and Ann
19 McDermott. [background noise/pause] Mr. Rosenfeld.

20 WAYNE ROSENFELD: Good evening. Thank
21 you for allowing me to speak. I wrote it down to—so
22 I'd be able to speak coherently. My name is Wayne
23 Rosenfeld, and I am speaking for myself tonight, but
24 in the interest of transparency, I am a board member
25 of Community Board 3 here on Staten Island. My

2 opinions tonight are my own, and are not necessarily
3 the opinions of my board. The proposed Civic
4 Engagement Commission while well intentioned will
5 take ultimate control of land use issues away from
6 the communities themselves. This new action by
7 virtue of this new process will take the local voice
8 away from the people. Also, by term limiting land
9 use members on the local community board will in the
10 end siphon off any tribal knowledge that is already
11 there. What will eventually be left behind will
12 people making decisions for a community that has no
13 stake in it. It is up to the local community board
14 to educate its own members on the process, rules and
15 community needs. From this education and experience,
16 a land use board member can then make informed
17 decisions. For me personally, I now have nearly six
18 year on a land use board, and feel that I am prepared
19 to make the appropriate decision that would be right
20 for my community. I ask the Commission to consider
21 strongly not to take the local voice out of the
22 community. Thank you for listening.

23 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr.
24 Rosenfeld. Are there any questions? Mr. Fiala.

2 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Thank you, Madam
3 Chair. Mr. Rosenfeld, thank you for your service.
4 It's my home community board, by the way.

5 WAYNE ROSENFELD: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER FIALA: So I appreciate your
7 volunteering your time for the betterment of our
8 community. With respect to the term limit issue,
9 obviously, that's out of our hand as you know because
10 a commission sitting previously has placed that on
11 the ballot. So, the voters will decide in November--

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER FIALA --with the
14 disposition of that. What I wanted to know going
15 forward is are there any elements in the existing
16 Charter language that you think we should look at
17 with respect enhancing and empowering community
18 boards? Anything that in the existing charter that
19 you feel is deficient, and since you're six years has
20 involved land use issues, I would be most interested
21 to hear as to whether or not there's any deficiency
22 in the existing Charter language that prevents the
23 community board from exercising its advisory role to
24 the greatest extent that it can.

2 WAYNE ROSENFELD: Alright, first off, I
3 do not have the wording in front of me of the
4 existing charter. So, I cannot speak to the exact
5 wording—I do—I have been looking into the proposed
6 civic engagement component if that's enacted, and
7 it's from my understand that it will be the
8 commission derived from city appointments as well as
9 local and the Land Use would not—the Land Use
10 Personnel will not be able to have a full opinion
11 because it first will go around us and then come to
12 us last minute. Just to give an overall opinion, it
13 will no longer be—right now we give more than an
14 opinion. We give—basically what I'm trying to say is
15 right now we give an element of settlement, what we
16 feel is right. Okay, eventually the way this new
17 charter will say is that we'll just be able to give
18 you our opinion in writing, and it be able to
19 sit.(sic) And that's it, and you will—will have no
20 say in it, and right we have a semi-say on certain
21 levels, and I think that local personnel should be
22 able to still be involved in the process, and we
23 won't be able to be involved in the process if we're
24 (a) Term limited, which I understand is out of your
25 purview, but (b) if this Commission takes effect we

2 won't be able to have that final say because we won't
3 be able to pick who is going to be on it for the most
4 part. Other people will pick who make our decisions,
5 and ultimately, people from outside of our community
6 could be those stakeholder, not us.

7 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you. One
9 quick moment. We are joined I see by Reverend Miller
10 and I would like to ask Reverend Miller if you would
11 like to vote in the affirmative on adopting the
12 minutes from the September 20th meeting of the
13 Commission

14 COMMISSIONER MILLER: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
16 much, and thank you, Mr. Rosenfeld. Ms. Esposito.

17 MARIA ESPOSITO: Good evening everyone.

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Hello.

19 MARIA ESPOSITO: Thank you for the
20 opportunity to testify at this evening hearing. This
21 statement will be read on behalf of Minority Leader
22 Steve Matteo and Borough President James Oddo and
23 represent their joint thoughts on a good government
24 issue that should be a part of the deliberations of
25 this commission. Eight years ago as part of the

2 infamous Term Limits Charter Revision Commission we
3 led the local control movement. This battle cry was
4 soon adopted by the Staten Island Advance and we
5 fought together to show why purely local decisions
6 should be made by local officials, and not
7 bureaucratic in Manhattan. Unfortunately, as the
8 experience demonstrated and history has proven, that
9 commission was formed for the sole purpose of
10 returning the Term Limits Law back to what it was
11 before the City Council and Mayor legislatively
12 changed it. There was no interest in doing the hard
13 work of truly reforming the City Charter to improve
14 the delivery of services in the boroughs. With that
15 said, admittedly, some of our proposals may have been
16 hard for an executive to stomach. For example, we
17 proposed giving local borough presidents the power to
18 play some formal role in the choosing of agency
19 borough commissioners. While that may be a good
20 government for residents of historically neglected
21 communities like Staten Island, we understand that
22 executives will never willingly accede the power to
23 pick their own team. With that said, we were ready,
24 willing and able to have that discussion, and to talk
25 about different ways we can accomplish greater local

2 control without taking power from the Mayor. Those
3 in charge of the Commission did not want to have that
4 discussion and it was unfortunate. Our proposal
5 before the 2018 version of the commission is more
6 modest, but no less important and if implemented
7 could help us achieve more local control without
8 diminishing the power of the executives. Simply
9 stated, we believe the agencies themselves should be
10 restructured to empower the borough commissioners
11 more on the issues purely affecting his or her
12 borough. We have some good borough commissioners who
13 know Staten Island much better than any Manhattan
14 bureaucrat ever would, could or care to. They attend
15 our community board meetings weekly, get stopped by
16 Staten Island in the Stop and Shop who complain to
17 them about various issues and meet and speak with
18 elected officials daily. They drive our streets to
19 and from work, walk the pavements while shopping and
20 frequent our parks. Their finger is on the
21 proverbial pulse of our community. We should work to
22 implement a mechanism to empower them on matters of
23 purely local concern. To use an example from within
24 the Department of Transportation, the borough
25 commissioner and his local team know better than any

2 one else in DOT leadership what roads are in most
3 need of wear and tear. While the Mayor has the right
4 as the Chief Executive to set policies for the
5 Administration, local borough commissioners should
6 have the ability to implement that policy in their
7 boroughs based on the experiences [bell] within their
8 communities. Agencies should be restructured in such
9 a way that chain of command within the agency is
10 clear and that one individual on local levels not
11 only responsible and accountable, but specifically
12 empowered within the agency. We thank you for the
13 opportunity to offer our thoughts.

14 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Do you have
15 additional ideas there? I'm interested in that--

16 MARIA ESPOSITO: You know, just that is
17 prepared.

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Are there
19 any questions? Commissioner Gavin.

20 COMMISSIONER GAVIN: Are there any--thank
21 you very much for being here. Are there any
22 functions that you think need borough commissioners
23 that do not have them today?

24 MARIA ESPOSITO: At this time I'm not at
25 the ability to answer that question. This was

2 written on behalf of the borough president and the
3 Councilman. So, I don't want to answer on their
4 behalf.

5 COMMISSIONER GAVIN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you. I
7 would also like to add that Commissioner Lindsay
8 Greene has joined us. Commissioner Greene, would you
9 like to vote on the adoption of the minutes from
10 September 20th?

11 COMMISSIONER GREENE: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
13 much. Sal, did you have a question?

14 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Yeah, will
15 Borough President Oddo and the Council Member Matteo
16 submit a proposal with more specifics around-around
17 your--

18 MARIA ESPOSITO: [interposing] Again, I
19 can't answer that question. I'm here to submit the
20 testimony today in writing. I will give it to you,
21 but I will get that information back to them, and see
22 if they can put something together in writing.

23 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: I think it will
24 be helpful.

25 MARIA ESPOSITO: Absolutely.

2 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: I like the idea,
3 but it would be helpful to provide some specifics and
4 give some examples of how local input can make a real
5 difference given real Staten Island example specifics
6 about transportation, parks and what have you.

7 MARIA ESPOSITO: Correct. Absolutely--

8 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [interposing] It
9 will be helpful.

10 MARIA ESPOSITO: --and I will pass it
11 onto them. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Commissioner Fiala
13 has another comment.

14 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Ms. Esposito, thank
15 you for your attendance. It's always nice to see you
16 and I appreciate the Borough President and the
17 Minority Leader's position. I share it. I'm
18 embarrassed that I was part of that Commission in
19 this sense. We weren't able to deliver on borough
20 empowerment. I want to assure those public officials
21 and those present here that many of us still believe
22 that this is an issue worthy of a time. I went back
23 and pulled literally my notebook from then, and just
24 calculated Madam Chair updating the map because it's
25 been eight years. But, you know, it's 120 years we've

2 been living with this city, right? Since we
3 consolidated, and interestingly enough we've had
4 about every 25 or 30 years there's and ebb and flow.
5 Centralization, decentralization, centralization,
6 decentralization. I just want you to take back to
7 the principals that you're here representing that,
8 you know, I am certainly, and I won't speak for any
9 of my colleagues, but I think this is an issue that
10 we hope to look at in a manner that past commissions
11 have not been able to because it doesn't get much
12 more complex than the distribution of the municipal
13 power, right. Power is finite. In order to make you
14 more powerful in the municipal corporation, you've
15 got to take it from somebody else within that box,
16 and that's where we've always found ourselves
17 reaching that brick wall. Oh, I agree you should
18 have the power. Oh, but I don't agree that you
19 should take it from me. So, I've got a number of
20 ideas and, you know, the Chair I can attest we're
21 trying very hard to wrestle with meeting the needs of
22 as many constituencies as we possible can, but this
23 one I know is near and dear. I'm a Staten Islander.
24 I have spent 30 years on this issue. I've testified
25 in your place, and I've sat here three times. So, I

2 share the frustration of us not having in the past
3 being able to get to a point where we can get to
4 meaningful reform. Maybe this year or over the
5 course of this and next year we'll be able to achieve
6 some of those measures and I hope a few more, but
7 thank you for bringing that topic to the table
8 because it is a theme that ultimately is addressed in
9 just about every borough in some form or fashion. So,
10 thank you.

11 MARIA ESPOSITO: Well, thank you very
12 much for addressing it and I will bring that
13 information back to the borough president and the
14 councilman.

15 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Ms.
16 Esposito. Ms. McDermott.

17 ANN MCDERMOTT: Hi everybody.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Hello.

19 ANN MCDERMOTT: My name is Ann McDermott.
20 I was born in Park Slope. I live in Bay Ridge and
21 now I reside on t he Upper East Side of Manhattan.
22 My brother lives here, which is why I'm in Staten
23 Island. I'm 59 years old, and I've spent my whole
24 life in New York City. I'm also a member of the New
25 York City-of New York City New Yorkers for Human

2 Scale City, a group representing over 100 groups
3 across the city working towards a more livable city
4 and I'm here to talk about campaign finance reform,
5 which I believe is at crisis-crisis level in our city
6 and is really destroying the fabric of our city. New
7 York City's Campaign Finance Act was a great
8 innovation at the time it was passed in 1988, and
9 many sections of it are still in good shape
10 especially those pertaining to the creation of the
11 Campaign Finance Board, but the world has changed
12 since the act's original passage. Many loopholes
13 have been—have since been discovered. New fundraising
14 tactics have surfaced, but other cities have found
15 better systems such as Seattle's Democracy Vouchers.
16 The purpose of tinkering with the Act would be to
17 eliminate obvious loopholes, tighten up rules that
18 have become subject to abuse, open up campaigning to
19 non-corporate and non-machine candidates, and
20 democratize the political process with lower
21 thresholds for access to public funds. The key point
22 of the reform is this: Middle-class citizens cannot
23 afford to participate in the campaign finance system.
24 For them, the current maximum donation of \$4,950 or
25 even the oft discussed lower maximum of \$1,000 still

2 politics as a game for the upper middle-class. The
3 maximum donations need to be dramatically reduced so
4 as to ensure that the middle-class dominates the
5 donor pool, and I have five recommendations. The
6 proposed revisions to the act are: (1) dramatically
7 lower, simplify, standardize the maximum contribution
8 limits so that the broader space of middle class is
9 the group that candidates have to seek out—seek out
10 in order to finance their campaigns, not wealth,
11 upper middle-class New Yorkers or Silicon Valley
12 millionaires who I know personally contributed to
13 Bill de Blasio's campaign because I did an analysis
14 of his donors. Thank you for the Tech Hub on 14th
15 Street. Eliminate multiple—(2) Eliminate multiple
16 loopholes, such as the ones that allows developers
17 and lobbyists to evade the doing business with the
18 city donation limits through poor definitions of
19 ULURP, and the one that allows city agencies to
20 invent their own rules on what constitutes doing
21 business with the city, and to define an entire real
22 estate donor class as free to go around doing
23 business with the city with no limits. [bell] (3)
24 Lower—oh. Lower—can I finish?

25 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Yeah, just—

2 ANN MCDERMOTT: Okay, lower thresholds
3 for signatures and matching funds to make it easier
4 for non-machine candidates to run on a more level
5 playing field. (4) Increase the matching ratio of 6
6 to 1 to 12 to 1 or more to compensate the lower
7 donations. (5) Set up limits of spending to reduce
8 the real and perceived wasted resource—resources
9 during campaigns. While these fixes would greatly
10 improve our city Campaign Finance Act, there are more
11 satisfying improvements to be made to 100% public
12 financing such as the Democracy Vouchers Program in
13 Seattle, and since the Seattle program is in beta—is
14 still in beta testing, a product approach is—
15 implements the changes suggested above. They are a
16 good second alternative and have the advantage of
17 being easily implemented through City Council
18 legislation. This—they would not actually require
19 Charter reform.

20 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
21 much, Ms. McDermott. May I ask you a question?

22 ANN MCDERMOTT: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Are you suggesting
24 that—right now, as you know Campaign Finance is
25

2 voluntary. You can opt in or not as you choose when
3 you're--

4 ANN MCDERMOTT: Uh-hm.

5 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Are you suggesting
6 that it should be mandatory to be part of Campaign
7 Financing or just that for those who opt in there
8 should be a different set of matching rules and a
9 different set of campaign Finance?

10 ANN MCDERMOTT: Well right now, it just--
11 it just needs to be blown up and changed because the
12 real estate industry basically controls this town and
13 you cannot walk down a street in Manhattan without
14 seen an orange and yellow thing that you have to walk
15 around because they basically are tearing down--they
16 are tearing down Midtown. They're tearing down
17 Downtown and Staten Island, too. They're all over
18 the place, and I'm not against development. I'm not
19 against the real estate industry per se, but I am
20 seeing the city that I've been born and raised in
21 basically leveled recreated as glass towers. It's
22 turning into Dubai on the Hudson.

23 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Right but in terms
24 of whether the system--the campaign finance system
25 should still continue to be an opt in--

2 MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] It has to
3 be.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: --are you saying
5 you think it should not--that the person who is
6 running should not have a choice about whether to opt
7 in or out of the system?

8 ANN MCDERMOTT: I think it should be a
9 level playing field, and everybody should do it the
10 same way, but you shouldn't be able to have your
11 friends come and--and give you money that--like in the
12 UK, in the UK everybody gets six weeks to campaign.
13 They get a certain amount of money and that's what
14 they get to spend. I think the fact whoever wants to
15 can just continue giving, giving, giving to
16 candidates and it's--and it's not equitably
17 distributed is not the way to go.

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: And in terms of
19 lowering the number of signatures required to
20 qualify, do you have a suggestion or do you just
21 think that it should be a lower number or a lower
22 distribution. I--are you suggesting that you should
23 have to--you should not have to get signatures from as
24 many EDs or just that the total number should be low.

2 ANN MCDERMOTT: I haven't really thought
3 that point through to be hones with you, but just the
4 number should be a little bit lower than it is now
5 because it makes it really hard and you have to have--
6 you have a lot of people go out and--

7 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: [interposing]
8 Collect.

9 ANN MCDERMOTT: --and stay with you to
10 get the signatures on the corners and whatever.

11 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, thank you
12 very much. Questions? Council-Commissioner Miller.

13 COMMISSIONER MILLER: Thank you, Ms.
14 McDermott. You had five proposals, can you repeat
15 the fourth one, please?

16 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: The fourth one.

17 ANN MCDERMOTT: Increase that matching
18 ratio of 6 to 1 to 13 to 1 or more to compensate for
19 the lower maximum donations. In other words, the
20 maximum donation goes from \$49.50 to \$1,000. So,
21 that will be lower. So, in other words the amount--
22 the total amount of money that people would be
23 getting would be less. So, increase--increase that
24 fund--the city matched funding.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Right. You are
3 aware that under the proposal that's currently before
4 you for November that match would be increased from
5 16 to 1 to 8 to 1?

6 ANN MCDERMOTT: Oh, no, I was never aware
7 of that. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay.

9 ANN MCDERMOTT: Thank you for educating
10 me.

11 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Sal.

12 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Thank you for
13 your testimony. Do you think we need to spend \$10
14 million to run--

15 ANN MCDERMOTT: [interposing] for City
16 Council?

17 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: --citywide?

18 ANN MCDERMOTT: No.

19 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: That's--we--we will
20 almost get there pretty soon for City Council, but do
21 you--do you think it's necessary to spend all that
22 money or could we do it for \$5 million?

23 ANN MCDERMOTT: I think the numbers right
24 now are just--they're just off the charts. That money
25 should go to the--maybe to the education. You know,

2 help teachers increase the teacher's pay. That's a
3 whole other topic. I could go off on that.

4 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Have you done an
5 analysis of where most of the contributions to
6 citywide candidates come from by zip code?

7 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Yes, I have done
8 that analysis. I downloaded the Excel spreadsheet
9 for Bill de Blasio and 67% of his donations came from
10 real estate, and a lot of those real estate people
11 were people out of New York City. They were people
12 who live in Silicon Valley.

13 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: What about in New
14 York City proper, do we know how many contributions
15 are done? Do those come from some other poorer areas
16 of the city from some of the working class areas of
17 the city versus some of the rich-

18 ANN MCDERMOTT: [interposing] It was
19 pretty low.

20 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE:--richest?

21 ANN MCDERMOTT: It was pretty low. It
22 was, and then most of his donations were, you know,
23 between \$1,000 and \$4,900.

24 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Well, you know,
25 besides de Blasio, all the citywide candidates, do

2 we—do we have an idea of what zip codes are the major
3 donors and are people in working class communities or
4 poor communities are they--

5 ANN MCDERMOTT: When I down—when I
6 downloaded the spreadsheet there was 67,000 records.
7 I haven't don't that kind of analysis, but certainly
8 it could re—I'm computers. I'm in technology. That's
9 what I do for a living. It could be rejiggered to
10 figure out which—which zip codes give the most money
11 without doubt. Yeah.

12 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: That would be
13 great if we can get that information.

14 ANN MCDERMOTT: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, thank you
17 and thank you very much for your testimony.

18 ANN MCDERMOTT: [interposing] Thank you
19 for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: We appreciate it.
21 The next speakers will be Frank Morano, and then his
22 cousin Frank Morano, Alice De Valle, and Igor
23 Debushkin is what—I'm sorry if I'm mispronouncing it.
24 He is from the Russian-American Council of Staten
25 Island.

2 FRANK MORANO: Good evening

3 Commissioners. I appreciate the opportunity to come
4 before you tonight. I'm actually not here along with
5 my cousin even though the Chairman of Community Board
6 3 is also named Frank Morano. Although he's no
7 relation, he has been a stalwart advocate of some of
8 the issues that I'm going to be talking today. I'm
9 actually here in two capacities. First, representing
10 Council Member Joe Borelli who can't be here today,
11 and then I have a couple of thoughts just as a-as a
12 private citizen. In terms of representing Councilman
13 Borelli's remarks, we agree with everything that
14 Maria Esposito said remark-remark on behalf of
15 borough President Oddo and Councilman Matteo with
16 respect to enhanced local control, greater
17 decentralization and allow borough presidents to have
18 a role in borough commissioners. The Councilman
19 wanted to focus on two primary issues, including
20 decentralization and one other, but the three-the two
21 most important things that he asked me to stress
22 today were that among his proudest moments in public
23 life is beginning as an intern in former City
24 Councilman Steve Fiala's office, and he wanted to
25 give special recognition as well to Sal Albanese one

2 of his constituents, and he hopes even if you ignore
3 all his recommendations, you'll at least consider
4 voting for him for re-election. That being said, in
5 addition to the role of the Borough Commissioners, I-
6 I think the--the aspect of local control because
7 everything you say, Commissioner Fiala is, of course,
8 correct that control is finite. If you take it away
9 from someone, you have to give it to someone else,
10 but I think when we talk about local control, we're
11 not talking about giving five borough presidents or
12 51 members of the City Council the ability to make
13 policy. We simply want to allow Staten Islanders
14 greater administrative control over policies that are
15 already being implemented, and there are number of
16 aspects beyond the borough commissioners that can be
17 done to do that. The 311 system, for instance, could
18 easily be decentralized to a greater extent. There
19 are a number of complaints that when people call 311
20 the operators are not familiar with local issues.
21 Ideally, a 311 call should go to within the borough
22 that the complaint is being made. The councilman can
23 tell you, and I've been with him when this has
24 occurred about we'll meet, and the angry constituent
25 who is upset that we haven't addressed their repeated

2 calls for a pothole or a stop sign or their street to
3 be paved or any other number of issues, only to find
4 they never called Joe Borelli's office. They called
5 311. There are some issues that are—that are handled
6 by the Council member's office, which is why perhaps
7 you may also consider having those calls be, or at
8 least a summary of those calls be shared with the
9 local council member as well. Also, there's been a
10 lot of focus on your commission and the previous, the
11 Mayor's Commission on the role of community boards.
12 Currently, as you know the borough president gets to
13 a point all of the members of the community board
14 half of which are recommended by the local council
15 member. We would suggest that rather than the
16 Council Members' role be advisory, it should be
17 binding. Allow the local Council members who know
18 their communities best to have a binding appointment
19 to the community board not simply—not simply just an
20 advisory appointment to the community board. I've
21 spelled out a number of other proposals in our
22 written testimony, and I'm happy to answer questions
23 on any of them, but beyond decentralization, the one
24 aspect that the Council member wanted to stress was
25 the role of matching funds system in New York.

2 Currently 6 to 1. If New York—if New Yorkers vote to
3 make it more generous, it will be 8 to 1. Having
4 served in both the State Assembly, and the City
5 Council, Councilman Borelli is in a unique position
6 to see some of his colleagues in both legislative
7 bodies having been arrested. In the Assembly there
8 is no matching funds. In the City Council it—there
9 are. It has done nothing to reduce corruption. The
10 only thing it has done is to be a boon industry to
11 election attorney, political operatives and campaign
12 consultants. It has—at the end of the day, if
13 dishonest people are going to seek to exploit the
14 system for their own personal gain, they're going to
15 do it whether there's matching funds or not. So, we
16 would urge the Commission to hold a hearing to
17 explore alternatives to the 6 to 1 or 8 to 1 Matching
18 Funds Program. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
20 much. Now, would you like to speak on your own
21 behalf?

22 FRANK MORANO: Sure, I—I—yes,
23 Commissioner, if it's okay.

24 COMMISSIONER WEISBROD: [interposing]
25 Madam Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Oh, do you want to
3 wait until he's speaking on his own behalf or do you
4 want to ask your question now?

5 COMMISSIONER WEISBROD: I'd just as soon
6 as my question now since he raised it.

7 FRANK MORANO: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER WEISBROD: Is it your
9 experience or Council Member Borelli's experience
10 that the borough presidents—or borough presidents
11 reject the advice of Council Members with respect to
12 appointments to community boards? Does that happen—

13 FRANK MORANO: [interposing] It-it-it-

14 COMMISSIONER WEISBROD: --rarely,
15 frequently, ever?

16 FRANK MORANO: It has—it has happened on
17 multiple occasions. The areas where there are the
18 greatest conflict is when certain borough presidents
19 try to implement policies that the local Council
20 member may not be on board with respect to community
21 board. The previous Manhattan Borough President
22 Scott Stringer and the previous Staten Island Borough
23 President Jim Molinaro, for instance, they instituted
24 a policy prohibiting executive members of political
25 parties from serving community boards, and staff

2 members of elected officials from serving on
3 community boards. Now, in a place like Staten
4 Island, which has a population a fraction of the size
5 of Manhattan, that essentially penalizes citizens
6 that are the most civically engaged, know the most
7 about the local communities and the local Council
8 members were powerless to do anything about it. So,
9 even though the local Council members were
10 recommending folks that were on the Executive
11 Committee of political parties, the former borough
12 president would not appoint them. So, it has
13 happened. I don't know the precise number of times
14 that it has occurred, but it has occurred, yes. Thank
15 you.

16 COMMISSIONER WEISBROD: Okay, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, now Mr.
18 Morano, on your own behalf.

19 FRANK MORANO: I wanted to speak briefly
20 about the need for non-partisan elections, and my
21 hope as to why you should put on the ballot next year
22 and what form it should go on the ballot in. In New
23 York City currently, there are 51 members of the City
24 Council. In 47 of those districts I can tell you
25 with certitude what political party the Council

2 Member will be 4 years, 5 years, 20 years, 30 years
3 from now there is a one-party district in about 46
4 districts that is Democrat, and there's a one-party
5 district in one, maybe two districts that is
6 Republican. In those districts that makes the
7 totality of what's an important election the primary
8 election. That means if you're not a Democrat in 46
9 districts or if you're not a Republican in one or two
10 districts, you have no meaningful say at all in who
11 the Council member is. It's an absolute ludicrous
12 system, and when I've raised it before the, the
13 response that I get from people is a shrug and say
14 well, you should be a Democrat if you live in a
15 democratic area. Well, you should be a Republican if
16 you live in a Republican area. To say that to
17 someone whose values and whose beliefs are so at odds
18 with the ideology of either party is beyond
19 insulting. Now, you take into account the fact that
20 independents in this city, people that aren't
21 enrolled in any party are taxpayers, and they're
22 paying for those primary elections that they have no
23 way to participate in, it makes absolutely no sense.
24 So, I would encourage the Commission to look at non-
25 partisan elections for everything because we already

2 have non-partisan elections. We have a lot of good
3 council members including Joe Borelli, Eric Ulrich,
4 formerly Christine Quinn, Councilman Matteo, Eugene,
5 a lot of good council members that were elected in
6 non-partisan elections. Those Council Members are
7 just as qualified as everyone else, and I don't
8 really understand the opposition to them. I don't
9 really think it's a realistic fear that in a district
10 that always elects Democrats or always elects
11 Republicans, somehow a Republican is going to sneak
12 in and fool everyone into voting for them.

13 Currently, there is no ideological litmus test that
14 comes with registering in a political party.

15 Certainly Dov Hikind or Sam Cataldo, they're a
16 registered democrat just as much as Alexandria Ocasio
17 Cortez or Charles Barron, but the—there is a gulf a
18 mile wide between their ideologies. To call them
19 both Democrats gives no meaningful hint to the voter
20 as to their ideology. Now, if you do choose to put
21 on the ballot, I would hope that rather than what the
22 Commission did in 2003, the former Charter Revision
23 Commission, that you not use a top 2 approach because
24 all that does is exclude minority voices. We've seen
25 it in California. We've seen it in France, we've

2 seen it in Louisiana. I would encourage you instead
3 if you do explore non-partisan elections to utilize
4 something like instant runoff voting or single
5 transferable vote where voters would rank their
6 choices and get to vote on everybody. Thank you.

7 [bell]

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr.
9 Morano. Are there any questions of Mr. Morano? Mr.
10 Fiala and then Mr. Albanese.

11 COMMISSIONER FIALA: So, Mr. Morano,
12 let's—first two questions. The first is in your
13 capacity here representing Councilman Borelli, I—I
14 threw out 120 years ago we became a city, right, we
15 consolidate. As soon as we consolidated, Aldermen
16 from Brooklyn were furious that Manhattan seemed to
17 be running anything, and the Aldermen from Brooklyn
18 said the outer boroughs aren't getting the service
19 deliveries they deserve. So, 1898 we become the City
20 of New York. In 1901, the State Legislature already
21 amends the Charter because early on we weren't
22 getting services in the outer boroughs. There was a
23 time when Borough Presidents ran executive agencies
24 in their boroughs, particularly streets construction
25 and whatnot. That happened in 1901 through state

2 legislative action. You get to 1936 and the pendulum
3 swings in the other way and they're thrown off the
4 Board or Alderman and they wind up having some of
5 their power usurped and taken away, and then we go
6 down the road, another road and we wind up in '89-
7 1989, which is what got us here today. I'm
8 particularly interested in following up with the
9 Councilman's office on the 311 issue. Because 311
10 was an innovative idea leveraging technology trying
11 to bring the concerns of eight million people at that
12 time into City Hall, but it did take out of the
13 equation borough presidents once again in an area
14 where they had their ear to the ground and
15 constituent services was for all of them a central
16 piece of what they do. If the borough-if-if the
17 Councilman and your office could provide some ideas
18 on how we could created a better nexus between the
19 City Council offices and the 311 system--I'd be
20 asking the same thing of the borough presidents, by
21 the way--we might be able to find those tweaks here
22 and there where we could empower, you know, borough
23 presidents and City Council members without
24 substantially crossing the line where a mayor or a
25 City Council or an institution says oh, no, no,

2 you're taking power away. I think we could make
3 modest changes that could have a pretty powerful
4 punch there. So, on the 311 issues, if you could ask
5 Councilman Borelli to provide some details on that, I
6 would love to be able to push for that. I brought my
7 notebook from 2010 because it's—it's like a cheat
8 sheet. You know, you don't—you what--

9 FRANK MORANO: [interposing] You know
10 what's coming. Sure

11 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Non-partisan
12 elections, let me ask you. Here are—he's an argument
13 that was offered, and at that time, we didn't get far
14 with non-partisan elections. The 2003 Commission
15 pretty much took care of that, and the voters, 70% of
16 New York voters that showed up on election day say
17 said no, it's a non-partisan election, right. That
18 was in 2003, but we're in 2018. Yet, I have found
19 that arguments pretty much stay the same. So, here's
20 an argument that I'd like you to offer your personal
21 thoughts on: Isn't the party [bell] system that
22 filtering process, the best means to advance worthy
23 candidates for these reasons: The electorate will
24 never be able to deeply study enough every candidate
25 who runs for office particularly down ballot

2 candidates, and that parties provide a necessary
3 filter, a proxy, a surrogate, if you will, that
4 offers cues on a candidate's position and ideology.
5 That's an argument against non-partisan elections.
6 What would you come back with?

7 FRANK MORANO: Well, so there are two
8 different aspects to what you just brought. The
9 first in terms of whether parties are the best filter
10 to boil down this, you know, Chinese menu worth of
11 candidates down to one or two that the voters could
12 focus on, I think has not held water. If you look at
13 the cities in this country that have non-partisan
14 elections, they haven't found in those cities that
15 they're unable to focus on electing a candidate and
16 just gone into a voting booth and been bowled over
17 with confusion. They know who they want to vote for.
18 Many of them make the decision before they even get
19 there. Now, in terms of the role the parties play,
20 parties play an incredibly important role in vetting
21 candidates, in communicating to the public why
22 they're qualified or unqualified. In terms of
23 communicating what these folks are all about, and
24 they should continue to play that role. There's
25 nothing that stops the Richmond County Republican

2 Party [bell] the Democratic Party of the Reform Party
3 from endorsing a certain candidate. You can be the
4 Democratic endorsed candidate just as easily in a
5 non-partisan system as you could in a Republican
6 system—a partisan system. The only thing it does is
7 allow voters to participate in a meaningful way at
8 every stage of the process, something they have
9 currently denied. Now, in terms of in non-partisan
10 elections would we be deluged with a California
11 recall election style of candidates, 135 candidates
12 running for everything. Joe Borelli was elected in
13 an non-partisan election. You know how many
14 candidates ran in that election, one. He ran
15 unopposed. His predecessor, your successor Vinny
16 Ignizio was elected in the non-partisan election. Do
17 you know how many candidates ran in that election?
18 Two. Voters in both of those races, probably would
19 have enjoyed a few more choices. The—the reason
20 there aren't more choices and more voices
21 participating in the political debate has nothing to
22 do with whether the elections are partisan or non-
23 partisan. There are structural problems in politics,
24 which we can talk about and look at alternatives to.
25 One of them, I think is people are just sick of

2 partisanship. They're sick of needing to change
3 their parties 13 months in advance in order to vote
4 for a candidate that they might like. They're sick
5 of needing to make sure that the local party leader
6 that has crossed the right T on their petition
7 signature. There are too many obstacles to
8 participation. There--there are not too few, and just
9 the last thing you said about whether the voters get
10 a beneficial cue from folks. You see--we saw in
11 Staten Island we were represented by John Marke for a
12 half century. He was endorsed by Republican,
13 Democrat and Conservative Party. I'm not sure what
14 meaningful cue that gave to the voters about where he
15 stood on issues. We see this frequently in all sorts
16 of judicial and legislative races, candidates
17 endorsed by both major political parties. I would
18 argue that there is almost no value in seeing someone
19 on the ballot with any political party. We see
20 conservative parties--

21 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: [interposing]

22 Thank you.

23 FRANK MORANO: --endorsing Democratic
24 candidates even though they're very similar --very
25 dissimilar ideology in many instances.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr.
3 Morano. Sal, one quick question.

4 FRANK MORANO: And a quick answer. I
5 promise.

6 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Yeah, kind of
7 quick. The—I wonder if you read the article in the
8 New York Times about a year ago written by McGurney
9 about California since they implemented non-partisan
10 elections, and—and he made the point in the article
11 that the governors in that state had improved since
12 non-partisan elections went into effect. I was
13 wondering your opinion of the article, if you read
14 it?

15 FRANK MORANO: I did read the article at
16 the time. I don't recall all the details. I
17 wouldn't argue that maybe a better elected official
18 has emerged from time to time in California, but
19 we've also seen--

20 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [interposing] I'm
21 talking about the governance. Forget about the
22 individuals.

23 FRANK MORANO: Well, so I—ultimately I
24 think in—in systems that have elected officials,
25 that's what determines effective governance or not.

2 But, so, I—I don't live in California. I don't pay
3 taxes there. I don't vote there, but I can look at
4 numbers, and what we have seen in California is voter
5 participation decline since they implement this top
6 two approach, and if you think about it, it makes
7 sense. If I'm a Republican that lives in a
8 Democratic district. Why would I care if it's a
9 Democrat running against a Democrat in a
10 Congressional race or as is the case in California
11 this year for U.S. Senate, a U.S. Senate Race? I
12 mean why would you have any incentive to even show up
13 forgetting about the fact that if you live in a
14 competitive district and you're a member of a
15 minority party like the Green Party or the
16 Libertarian Party, you really don't care which one of
17 these guys gets elected. In the Governor's race in
18 California, we saw both candidates trying to game the
19 system. One of the Democratic challengers actually
20 getting a shadow group to run ads for a Republican
21 just so that Republican would make the runoff. I
22 mean it makes no sense. Why not let everybody vote
23 for everybody?

24 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Well, just a
25 final point. I know we're pressed for time. One of

2 the things that has come out of non-partisan
3 elections is that it forces candidates, whether
4 they're Democrats or Republicans not to focus on the
5 extreme left or the extreme right with their party.
6 Ideology wise, it forces them to-to-to talk to the
7 mainstream, the constituents that the average voter
8 in those states rather than a narrow block a narrow
9 block of voters, which makes—makes it a little bit
10 more reasonable in terms of governance if you're
11 governing in that way. One of the problems that we
12 see is that we have extreme partisanship on both
13 sides of the aisle, and—and California according to
14 McGurney's article, that has been reduced
15 dramatically where Republicans and Democrats have to
16 appeal to a broad base of voters.

17 FRANK MORANO: Well, you know, we have
18 seen in New York City in races that have been
19 partisan and non-partisan we haven't necessarily seen
20 that enough for my taste. So, here in Staten Island
21 for instance I believe Council Member Rose is here.
22 She ran in the non-partisan election in the winter of
23 2009, lost that election and then ran in a partisan
24 election in the fall of 2009, that same year. The
25 leading candidates in both of those cases, Ken

2 Mitchell and Debi Rose, they treated almost both
3 races as if they were a Democratic Primary because in
4 essence they were. In a Democratic district, it's
5 the Democrat that's going to win and they're going to
6 appeal the Democratic voters. So, I would certain
7 welcome what has happened in California as a positive
8 step because people could actually participate in
9 elections that they're paying for, but I think
10 instant runoff voting or single rank choice voting,
11 whatever you want to call it, is a far better
12 alternative than competition.

13 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: So, you would
15 like to see it vote non-partisan and regular?

16 FRANK MORANO: Yes, please.

17 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
18 much. Alice Dovali.

19 ALICE DOVALI: Good evening. Thank you,
20 ladies and gentlemen for letting me—giving me the
21 opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Alice
22 Dovali. I'm a born and raised New Yorker born in
23 Brooklyn, New York, have been a resident of Staten
24 Island here for about six years now. My concerns I'm
25 addressing tonight specifically the problems

2 regarding the Department of Health and how it relates
3 to the ACCs of New York City, and the boroughs, but
4 I've spoken on a wide range of topics with our
5 Council people here in Richmond County.

6 Specifically, last year with one of my fellow
7 advocates here Diane Signorelli we attended a town
8 hall meeting with Mayor de Blasio. My specific
9 concerns at that time were addressing in my community
10 in Duncan Hills, the problem we were having regarding
11 the deer population, and how it pertains to incidents
12 regarding accidents to the pedestrians, and me being
13 a survivor of an accident a hit and run and
14 surviving, three years ago, I took very seriously,
15 but tonight I'm concentrating specifically regarding
16 the—as I said, the Department of Health. I represent
17 a small group of animal advocates that are very
18 passion a bit—passionate about the shelter animals in
19 the New York City shelter system. So, let me talk
20 about that tonight, okay? The Department of Health I
21 feel needs to be released as soon as possible and
22 replaced by an independent animal welfare agency.

23 There are a wide range of issues of the many failings
24 of the New York City government for animal welfare as
25 it pertains to the Department of Health, and there

2 are too many for me to address tonight, but I-I
3 wanted to address the specific ones that are of my
4 immediate concern. And, some of the reasons I'm
5 going to address tonight are first the deplorable
6 conditions of the shelters. Okay, the healthy dogs
7 are being cross-contaminated in the ACC in New York
8 City and Brooklyn, the sick dogs being cross-
9 contaminated with healthy dogs that have very bad
10 strains of kennel cough, which is quickly turning in
11 pneumonia, place a very heavy financial burden on
12 both the rescues that are trying to rescue these
13 animals to adoptable families, and also the public.
14 I'm going to talk a little bit about Scott Stringer
15 because I attended one of his meetings, Council
16 meetings. We had talked about this. He-we put
17 pressure, the animal advocates have been putting
18 pressure on him to do another audit. Scott Stringer
19 did an audit in 2015 addressing—he did a scathing
20 audit of the conditions, the deplorable conditions
21 there, and that was three years ago. So, from what I
22 understand, he's—we—we just got notification that
23 he's actually going to conduct another audit. But
24 this is what I'd like to talk about tonight regarding
25 [bell] I know it's—I-I eat up the time here.

2 Basically, as I said, the dogs are being cross-
3 contaminated. They're given expired medications to
4 animals there. They're treating animals with expired
5 medication. Dogs that are being brought in with
6 treatable ailments are left to languish in pain and
7 misery instead of being treated by a vet. This is
8 unconscionable, and totally unacceptable. Okay, the
9 Department of Health consistently shows no regard for
10 animals in its care. The Department of Health we
11 feel never had an interest in the care for the
12 animals in the New York City ACC Shelter system.
13 This is the time now for form. Okay. [coughs] This
14 is not—this is not hearsay. We have what we call an
15 at-risk list. Us advocates watch every night the
16 dogs that are put on the Tot Be Destroyed list. It's
17 called and At-Risk List, and the proof, as I said, is
18 in this. This is not hearsay. All of this has been
19 documented by Scott Stringer in the Audit of 2015.
20 As a matter of fact, one of my fellow advocates just
21 went yesterday to the Brooklyn ACC and did a video
22 tape of what a mess it is in there. It's filthy.
23 The conditions are horrific. The dog crates are left
24 with feces and urine not even being cleaned. Water
25 bowls, water bowls have feces inside. This has all

2 be videotaped. This has been videotaped by concerned
3 advocates. My final comment here is we are
4 considered the greatest city in the world. We really
5 are and yet we're looked upon by other countries in
6 total disgrace. My other half lives in Rome, Italy.
7 He came here. He just left last night. I cry. I
8 show him what I do every night, which is cross-post
9 and try to help the rescues to get animals adopted
10 out. He sits there and he just shakes his head. He
11 said, Why? Why, Alice? Why is New York City like
12 this? They have money to fix this problem. Why
13 don't they do it? Again, we need the Department of
14 Health released. They were an agency. I'm going to
15 stress this again: I spoke with Scott Stringer's
16 office. I speak to Brian Shapiro of the Human
17 Society. The Department of Health was never set up
18 as an agency to oversee animals. They were set up
19 for humans. Now, it's time for us to put, as I said,
20 we need to get—let me get back to my original paper—
21 we need to get an agency in there, an independent
22 agency that is concerned about the animals here in
23 New York.

24 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Ms.
25 Dovali.

2 ALICE DOVALI: Thank you, and just so you
3 can see, I took a couple of pictures with me of just
4 some animals, okay, that were perfectly healthy, came
5 into the shelter as healthy, and then people go into
6 get them, and they bring sick dogs—sick dogs and cats
7 out, and then they get stuck with a hefty bill.
8 This is very unfair. Let's change now. Let's be a
9 leader. Let's show Austin, Texas implemented a no-
10 kill shelter. They did it successfully. We can
11 follow their model. We shouldn't follow. We should
12 be a leader.

13 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Ms.
14 Dovali.

15 ALICE DOVALI: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Any questions?
17 [applause] [background comments] Thank you. Igor
18 Bab—can you tell me your last name, please?

19 IGOR BABORSKI: Igor Baborski.

20 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: What's that?

21 IGOR BABORSKI: Baborski:

22 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Barborski.

23 IGOR BABORSKI: Igor Baborski.

24 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, got it.

2 IGOR BABORSKI: Okay, so I'm also with
3 who is speaking like Mr. Morana. [laughs] I was
4 reading--

5 MALE SPEAKER: He's a tough act to
6 follow.

7 IGOR BABORSKI: --just this morning.

8 FRANK MORANO: [off mic] A better way.

9 IGOR BABORSKI: Invisible. [laughs]
10 Okay. I am Igor Baborski and I am an activist, and I
11 am an immigrant New Yorker, and I am speaking on
12 behalf of several organizations and groups who are
13 organizing and advocating for at least 700,000
14 immigrant New Yorkers from 15 former Soviet Union
15 countries. This number is from an interview
16 yesterday according to Brooklyn Borough President Mr.
17 Adams. I am here to support and expand on the
18 proposal made at previous hearing. That means it's
19 not new for you. Amendment Section 18, Chapter 1 of
20 the Charter by the Police and the bureaucratic office
21 of Immigrant Affairs with the representative
22 Commission of immigrant community leaders under the
23 Mayor. Our city is currently 37% foreign born. Our
24 immigrants need to have a voice in city government at
25 least on immigrant affairs. This concerns immigrants

2 of every ethnicity and race, black, white, Hispanic,
3 Asian and others. The current Office of Immigrant
4 Affairs doesn't provide them representation for real
5 economic opportunities, and it is not responsive to
6 what is happening within and among communities.

7 Immigrants, organizers and leaders are excluded from
8 participation in government. It is bad for our city.

9 Many of them poses important information that city
10 government needs. In other sites such as San

11 Francisco, Portland and others, governments have
12 already set up such representation-representative

13 commissions. San Francisco has an Immigrant Rights
14 Commission, which by law must ensure that more than

15 half of its members are immigrants, and must hold an
16 public hearing. In Portland, the new Portland Policy

17 Commission must by law provide representation from a
18 reasonable broad sector from the refugees and

19 immigrants community. With a similar immigrant
20 council in the state of Massachusetts, and in

21 Nashville and in Houston. Their arrangement and

22 clearly more democratic and more representative than
23 the current Office of Immigrant Affairs in New York.

24 We were here to make-show what our city can promote
25 this best practice. Members of such commission

2 should be appointed from the candidates submitted by
3 the immigrant left not-for-profit organizations. Its
4 composition should be approximately proportional to
5 the size of major immigrant communities in the city,
6 but no less than one for any community of 20,000
7 people or more as determined by the U.S. Census-
8 Census. I'm sorry. To be fair, different to-to to
9 Margaril (sic) who has prepared this commission this
10 must be a salaried public in place because very often
11 our community leaders [bell] and some even quality
12 large communities like ours are forced to do their
13 work for many years on the volunteer wages, like
14 myself. Our organization was organized in the year
15 2003, and we never get anyone-anyone grant. As a
16 result, some communities end with nothing to pay
17 their organize-organizers and other case stuff while
18 other much smaller communities are getting hundreds
19 of thousands of dollars from city and private funds.
20 The decision that we proposed will respectfully this
21 glaring inequity. And they should have local offices
22 in every borough, government by their own immigrant
23 leadership councils. Thank you for your attention.
24 It is an honor for me and our organizations to be

2 part of this important, remarkable, open and
3 democratic discussion.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
5 much Mr. Bebushkin—I've gotten it wrong again.

6 IGOR BABORSKI: Yes, okay. Forget it.

7 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Any questions?

8 IGOR BABORSKI: No questions.

9 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
10 much all three of you.

11 IGOR BABORSKI: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, and now we
13 are joined by the Councilwoman from the North Shore,
14 Councilwoman Debi Rose. Please come up. Diane
15 Signorelli and David Eisenbach. Are they here?
16 [pause] Councilwoman Rose, the floor is yours for the
17 next three minutes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Thank
19 you and it's good to see all of you. I'm really
20 excited about this commission and its work and the
21 work that you are going to do. I'm here as a
22 representative of the Progressive Caucus. So, good
23 evening Chair Benjamin and members of the Charter
24 Revision Commission. My name is Council Member Debi
25 Rose and I represent the Northern part of Staten

2 Island, and a member of the City Council's
3 Progressive Caucus, and I will be testifying on
4 their behalf. In this testimony I will be focused on
5 the city's land use powers and process.
6 Specifically, on why the city needs a comprehensive
7 plan with a real fair share analysis, an independent
8 City Planning Commission, and a better more
9 transparent and accountable way to engage
10 communities. This issue is a priority for the 22
11 members of our caucus who represent districts across
12 the five boroughs in New York City. Opposition to
13 recent rezonings have made it clear New Yorkers are
14 unhappy about the city's current land use process.
15 The current system frustrates community members,
16 grassroots organizers, elected officials and planners
17 alike. This is because the city's approach to
18 planning is basically reactive. Without a larger
19 citywide plan in place, we react to private
20 developments, natural disasters, school seats,
21 homelessness and other important infrastructure needs
22 randomly. As an elected official from Staten Island,
23 I can tell you from my experience the status quo of
24 ad hoc planning is just not working. Communities
25 like mine have born the brunt of lack of fair share

2 in our city planning. We need a larger vision, one
3 based on our short and long-term needs. We need a
4 larger vision based on equity, a vision in which low-
5 income communities do not have to solely bear the
6 brunt of the city's every housing or infrastructure
7 need. We need to envision a land use process where
8 communities are empowered, and the equitable
9 distribution of city resources, facilities and new
10 development is prioritized. As the first step, I
11 will share five guiding principles that reflect the
12 Caucus' values, and will drive the development of our
13 recommendations that we will share with you in the
14 future. Equity and fairness: To ensure that all
15 communities are doing their fair share, and they have
16 access to affordable housing services and amenities
17 and healthy environment, proactive and responsive
18 plans that account for the housing needs of this
19 growing city as well as existing conditions and
20 infrastructure needs. Inclusive Engagement: To
21 ensure all New Yorkers have a voice in land use
22 decisions regardless of language, age, income,
23 ability, gender, religion, race and ethnicity and
24 resiliency and sustainability that guard against
25 [bell] the future impacts of natural disasters and

2 climate change, transparency and accountability—I'll
3 wrap up.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: --and to ensure
6 that New Yorkers understand how and why decisions are
7 made, and now to participate in how these decisions
8 affect them? Recommendations are guided by these
9 principles. The Progressive Caucus is working with
10 our community partners to develop specific
11 recommendations to create a comprehensive planning
12 framework that includes a fair share analysis. Make
13 the Progressive Caucus independent and create a long-
14 term planning office, empower communities to engage
15 in decisions before, during and after land use
16 processes through community board reform and changing
17 the way the city interacts. It supports and
18 implements community plans and land use decision. Our
19 current system does not provide an avenue in which to
20 have honest conversations about our city's needs.
21 Much of it is done out of the public eye, and with
22 the outcome revealed and often negotiated just
23 moments before a final vote. This method is not
24 working. We need to engage in proactive planning
25 that is not guided by the latest real estate

2 speculation, but by data, local input and commitment
3 to right past inequities and projected long terms-
4 long-term impact.

5 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you,
6 Councilwoman.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: I know that the
9 Progressive Caucus it will be sending more materials
10 to us--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: --as you further
13 develop your ideas and your requests. So, we'll be
14 looking forward to hearing more from you as we go
15 down this path.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes, you will hear
17 from the Progressive Caucus on numerous occasions
18 because the plan--we are--are now developing the plan
19 out, fleshing it out so that we can give you a
20 comprehensive plan about what we think your
21 comprehensive plan should be.

22 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: [laughs] Thank
23 you very much.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Are there any
3 questions? Thank you, Councilwoman.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Diane.

6 DIANE SIGNORELLI: Hi. My name is Diane
7 Signorelli. I'm from New Brighton originally. I'd
8 just like to go over a little bit about how Animal
9 Care and Control-Staten Island is being run. I-I
10 would think as someone like me who has been German
11 Shepherd dog for 40 years I should not have an issue
12 going to the local shelter. I was going to Puerto
13 and my nails were still wet, and because as Alice
14 Dovali was telling you, people like us we're
15 advocates. So, we're always checking out animals.
16 Everybody knew I was looking for a German Shepherd
17 dog. I was looking for rescue, something to make my-
18 my service dog. Well, one of the girls said, "Diane,
19 an 8-month-old dog is there. Hurry up." My nails
20 were still wet from-from the salon. I ran there.
21 This woman-and everybody knows I tell the truth-I'm
22 telling you, her eyes were pupil dilated black, and I
23 was looking at this woman. I just, you know, worry
24 whatever her condition was and I said I just want
25 this dog. I'm going to Puerto Rico. I'll take it.

2 I'll give you cash, and check or whatever you want.
3 I'll take it to my vet and neuter it if the dog is
4 deemed healthy enough, I'll get it spayed, and then
5 I'll get my money back because that was the deal they
6 were making. It was like 200 something dollars, and
7 then they would refund you the money once you got the
8 dog spayed. Simple, you would think. No. This poor
9 dog lavished and died suffering for six weeks, and I
10 felt its soul. I went there. I called up every
11 elected official because everybody knows I know
12 everyone. I cried my eyes out. The rain that was
13 coming outside that day. They let the dog suffer and
14 die. Send it to a German Shepherd rescue, but it had
15 mange, and it had kennel cough, and the condition, as
16 it says here, because I went to get the dog April
17 2015 before I went to Puerto Rico. All the advocates
18 were telling me, Diane, don't worry. The dog will be
19 safe. There's a rescue that's going to take the dog.
20 As German shepherd dog rescue told me Monday the
21 25th. Juno was another German Shepherd they took
22 that was their New Hope rescue. Juno so far is doing
23 well. Bella is deathly ill with pneumonia and is on
24 two antibiotics IV fluids. I spoke to the vet awhile
25 ago. Her temp is down to 102.7 down from 105. There

2 were culturing the drainage, snot from her—her
3 nostrils and hope to get to the bottom of this. Her
4 immune system is so suppressed she just cannot fight
5 off the infection or the mange mites. We're giving
6 her every chance we can. So, she has a long way to
7 go before we can either release her from veterinary
8 care or prayers. This dog I was like a campaign. I
9 ran animal—I ran Paws Across America. [bell] I did
10 Staten Island. I'm the one who did the protest at
11 Animal Care and Control with the 123 Precinct. I did
12 everything in power. Then they had another dog
13 Tesla, a German shepherd. So, I says well let me—let
14 me get this dog. Department of Health put a hold on
15 the dog and sent it back to the rescue that they sent
16 the sick dog that I wanted to save. There's no
17 reason why animals should have to suffer like this.
18 Well, to make it go quicker than that, I ended up
19 going to 110th Street in Harlem June 21, 2015 with my
20 friend Alice Dovali, and I found a three-month-old
21 Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy that I adopted and that's
22 my service dog. So, never, ever stop a woman from
23 trying to adopt a dog, Animal Care and Control,
24 because we will get a dog, and—and that's what God
25 does. He is sending us here to adopt these animals.

2 Now, I spoke to the Mayor and the Mayor knows about
3 the work that I've done, and because I have eight
4 years under my belt that I'd like to forget about
5 what has been going on here in Staten Island, I would
6 like the keys to Animal Care and Control now because
7 I think it's time I start to play with the puppies
8 and the kitties because I have enough of what I've
9 been going through for eight years, and I think it's
10 time and I think Sal Albanese knows a little bit
11 about my story. So, can someone help me, and please
12 tell the Mayor I gave him the proposal. My team is
13 ready and it's always the same people that you all
14 meet. So, all the same rescuers. We want our voice
15 heard. We don't want any more to do with Animal Care
16 and Control because they are disgusting what they
17 have been going—what they have been putting us
18 through, but what they've been putting the animals
19 through. Nothing has changed since 2015. I'm the
20 advocate that helped Helmetta Regional Animal
21 Shelter. The reformers shut that place down in 2014,
22 and then I had to face this in 2015, and you all know
23 my integrity of how I shut down Saint Christopher
24 Otilie in 2001 for abusing autistic disabled
25 children. I'm the whistle blower, and it's time that

2 we all start helping people like me that are the
3 advocates. Please help us.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
5 much, Ms. Signorelli.

6 DIANE SIGNORELLI: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Questions? Thank
8 you very much. David.

9 DAVID EISENBACH: Yes. My name is David
10 Eisenbach. I teach history at Columbia, and last
11 year I ran for Public Advocate in the Democratic
12 Primary against Tish James. I raised \$59,000 but I
13 got 92,000 votes and from my experience the CFE does
14 not work to encourage non-politicians to get involved
15 in the Democratic process at all. If you want to
16 improve things, you've to lower the thresholds.
17 Alright, so right now you have to raise \$125,000 from
18 500 New Yorkers in order to get matching funds for
19 the Public Advocate's race. That should come down to
20 about 200 and about \$75,000 to make it an entry level
21 point for somebody to run who is not a politician.
22 Also, you should require every single candidate who
23 is officially on the ballot to be in a debate. You
24 should not have a circumstance where television
25 stations--where Spectrum can dictated who gets to

2 debate the Mayor, the Public Advocate based on how
3 much money they've raised. Alright, that's not what
4 a healthy democracy does. Alright, now there have
5 been discussions, and this is also in the Mayor's
6 proposal to lower the contribution limits. Well,
7 here's the problem with that. So, I had a 174
8 contributions. Okay. Half of my total came from
9 eight people, the people who gave over \$1,000. I had
10 a friend from high school, a thousand bucks. My
11 wife, myself, my sister, my brother-in-law, my
12 mother, my father and my Uncle Mike all maxed out.
13 The campaign could not have happened without the
14 people I love maxing out in their contributions of
15 \$4,700. So, it's kind of counterintuitive, because
16 of the way it is right now, unless you have ties in
17 with the real estate or you've got a lot of rich
18 friends, which I do not have as an academic, the
19 system right now is not working for somebody who
20 wants to do the right thing, wants to get involved,
21 wants to do good by the city. And I'll be happy to
22 answer any of your questions from my experience as
23 somebody who has tried to participate.

24 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Thank you
25 very much, Mr. Eisenbach. First question: Would you

2 require everyone to be in the Campaign Finance system
3 or are you just saying for those people who opt in,
4 you would require, these lower amounts to be matched
5 and they would be required to participate in in
6 candidate debate?

7 DAVID EISENBACH: Yes, I think everybody
8 who is on the ballot--

9 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Option.

10 DAVID EISENBACH: --right and everybody
11 who gets the petitions, you know, filed and--and
12 everybody is on the ballot should be required to
13 debate, right. You shouldn't have it an optional
14 thing for a mayor or a public advocate to just decide
15 whether they're going to debate or not and you
16 shouldn't definitely have to have it so that New Your
17 One decides who gets to debate based on how much
18 money they raised, right? So, everybody who's on the
19 ballot should be forced to engage in a debate, and
20 then secondly, if you lower the thresholds, that will
21 allow a lot more opportunity for first time
22 candidates to actually be able to compete. The
23 Mayor's proposal to increase the ratio of money that
24 you get from 6 to 1 to 8 to 8 will actually hurt
25 candidates like me especially if you don't lower

2 those thresholds, okay. It would be great if you
3 lowered the threshold and then you lowered the amount
4 of the matching funds. That if you want to just
5 balance it out so that it's the same amount of money,
6 but if you lower those thresholds and then instead of
7 it being a 6 to 1 match, it's a 4 to 1 match, that
8 certainly would be mana from heaven for first time
9 candidate.

10 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you. Are
11 there any other questions? Thank you very much.

12 DAVID EISENBACH: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: We really
14 appreciate your coming. [background comments]
15 [laughter] James Wright, Gabriella Valardi Ward and
16 Gloria Visica. [pause] Mr. Wright. [pause]

17 JAMES WRIGHT: Good afternoon. I'm a
18 member of DC37, and I'm part of the Political
19 Activist Committee of that union. I'm here to
20 advocate for the Elected Civilian Review Board
21 because the Civilian Complaint Review Board does not
22 represent the community. Its members are appointed
23 by those in power, the Mayor, the Police, the
24 Commissioner, and the City Council. There is no
25 community representation on this board or

2 accountability to the people in the community. This
3 is why we need an Elected Civilian Review Board made
4 up of community people, everyday working people from
5 the neighborhood, parents, students, seniors, LGBT,
6 and the people of color especially. The people on
7 the board would be elected civilians from the
8 community and accountable to the community. In
9 brief, this is what we that are involved in this
10 endeavor feel. If there are any questions, I'll take
11 them.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Are there any
13 questions of Mr. Wright? Thank you, Mr. Wright. We
14 have heard about this in each of the boroughs we've
15 been to. We appreciate your testimony.

16 JAMES WRIGHT: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr.
18 Wright. We have heard about this in each of the
19 boroughs we've been to. We appreciate your
20 testimony.

21 JAMES WRIGHT: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Ms. Valardi Ward.

23 VALARDI WARD: Yes. Ladies and gentlemen,
24 thank you for the opportunity to address you, and I'd
25 like to continue on the wonderful testimony of our

2 Council Member Debi Rose about land use, and in this
3 case I'd like to talk about as-of-right. I'd like to
4 bring up the issue and of tighter restrictions on
5 development in wetlands, forests and waterfront
6 areas. These projects may comply with all applicable
7 zoning regulations, and don't require any discretion
8 or action or special permits, but I do believe that
9 as-of-right development needs very serious
10 reconsideration especially in light of—especially
11 since it doesn't need site review, it's not required
12 to have a site review even in wetlands, even in
13 forests, even in coastal areas, site review is not
14 required. In this age of climate change that's
15 crazy. Sea level rise, storm surge, flooding,
16 coastal areas cannot be subject to lack of review.
17 Staten Island has lost much of its wetland, and many
18 of the areas that lost wetland were flooded, and we
19 all know what happened in Hurricane Sandy. Twenty-
20 four people died, and—and homes were destroyed, and I
21 know many of them who went to the mobile home park.
22 On the northwest corner of Staten Island, you have
23 Goethals Bridge. After they lost their homes and all
24 their money on the south shore, they went to a mobile
25 home park, and now the mobile home park is—is in

2 danger. It's so close to Arthur Kill and with sea
3 level rise, it's going to be flooded. Department of
4 City Planning has issued a Flood Risk Map, and it's
5 an interactive map so you can see on that map, you
6 can see the different levels of it, the street names,
7 et cetera, and you can also see on it the years, and
8 it's projected in the year 2020, which is little more
9 than a year away, you can see that the mobile home
10 park is completely covered with water. You can see
11 that water is penetrating into the mobile, into the
12 condominium communities of City West and Rego-Rego
13 Walk. You can see that it's penetrating into the
14 homes of the people on Lisk Avenue and Avago (sic)
15 Place. So, to not review any of this, to not review
16 site plans, to not review-to approve a project
17 without any consideration of climate change is also
18 extremely damaging, extremely destructive. The whole
19 island is vulnerable, but especially the north shore,
20 the north shore--[bell] It--alright and the
21 northwest shore, the--the wetlands that we have left
22 on the northwest corner of Staten Island are at risk,
23 and we cannot continue to approve projects without
24 considering climate change. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
3 much, Ms. Ward. Are there any questions? Thank you
4 very much. Ms. Estepa.

5 GLORIA ESTEPPA: Hello, I'm Gloria
6 Estepa (sic) and I live next to land that was called
7 Mount Manresa right near the Verrazano Bridge. There
8 are many ancient trees there. It's probably one of
9 the oldest forests left standing in New York City and
10 it was all destroyed by a developer, and many people
11 had wanted to live in that area because of the
12 beautiful forest, the fact that were near a highway,
13 but yet there was a buffer zone for all the species
14 to live, and that the beautiful trees would—would be
15 a part of our public health system, but we keep
16 seeing this constantly being destroyed by development
17 and by this as-of-right concept that the default
18 button is always for the developer. It's not for the
19 community. It's not for public health. It's not for
20 animals and species, and it's certainly not for the
21 planet when everything is being destroyed all the
22 time. So, we came here to talk this as-of-right, and
23 Gabrielle and I are part of several environmental
24 organizations on the North Shore, and the North Shore
25 has a lot of environmental justice communities of

2 color. And strangely, in the special districts,
3 there are no special districts on the northwest or
4 the northeast shores to protect land, to protect the
5 population. You have public health problems. You
6 have many toxic sites. Children have asthma, people
7 have poor health outcomes. These are communities of
8 color. Why is nothing ever protected? Gabriel was
9 talking about South Ave. the development. They want
10 to take down thousands of trees to put a BJ's there.
11 What about the community? What about the children
12 who live there and the elderly? How are they going
13 to breathe? What will happen in flooding and the
14 same in the neighborhood where I live on the East
15 Shore, the Northeast. Why were those trees never
16 protected? Why is there not a law to protect them,
17 and we have in touch with someone named Beryl
18 Thurman. She's part of the North Shore Waterfront
19 Conservancy, and she was saying that—suggest that
20 there be an abolishment of as-of-right development.
21 We must protect the privately owned properties such
22 as Mount Manresa that may contain a mature forest or
23 a wetland such as where is Gabriella is living on
24 South Avenue in order to combat climate change,
25 flooding, noise, quality of life for all. How can we

2 restrict the development of environmentally sensitive
3 areas such as Mount Manresa and the ancient forest?
4 Can we create a city fund to buy endangered wetlands
5 and woodlands and forests? If not, why not. What
6 kind of a planet have we created? What are we
7 leaving as our legacy? I studied all these issues as
8 a student here at the College of Staten Island, Urban
9 Anthropology, environmental sociology. I studied
10 them for years because I was raised in New Jersey,
11 and the zoning there allowed properties to have
12 trees, and developers couldn't just destroy
13 neighborhoods. [bell] They knew it was about how
14 children are being raised. Everything
15 interconnected. It's not too late to make some
16 changes that might improve our environment.
17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
19 much, Ms. Steppa—Ms. Steepa. Are there any
20 questions?

21 GLORIA ESTEPPA: Would anyone like to
22 comment about the as-of-right? Is it something that
23 you're all discussing, and it's part of the charter
24 review?

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: It is certainly
3 something that we've heard in each of the boroughs
4 we've been to. It's been part of the land use
5 discussion that we're having, but we are in the
6 information gathering, research and analysis phase,
7 not in the we've reached conclusions or decisions.

8 GLORIA ESTEPPA: I'm happy to hear that at
9 least you're asking questions about these very urgent
10 issues, which affect all New Yorkers.

11 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: We are. Thank
12 you very much. We take this seriously. Thank you
13 very much. The next speakers are Roy Fishman, Mary
14 Bourne, and Ivan Garcia. Okay. Mister—who am I
15 missing? Mary Bourne, Roy Fishman--

16 IVAN GARCIA: Roy Fishman.

17 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Then Janine
18 Materna. Is she here?

19 JANINE MATERNA: [off mic] I'm here.

20 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Thanks.
21 [pause] Mr. Fishman.

22 IVAN GARCIA: He's not here.

23 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Oh. Okay, Ivan.

24 IVAN GARCIA: I'm first? Alright, good
25 evening. Thank you. My name is Ivan Garcia. I

2 currently work for Make the Road New York, and the
3 project that I'm currently work on is the North Shore
4 Rezoning, and there are some concerns that I heard
5 from community members. We recently had a town hall
6 along with Deacon Bourne here. We're part of a
7 coalition called the Housing Big Media (sic)
8 Coalition, and in that town hall there were concerns
9 what the city is targeting manufacturing zones for
10 development—I mean for housing, and then they wanted
11 to know why the Drasco (sic) came out in 2016, but
12 then again there hasn't been anything that has
13 happened, and now they're hearing a certification is
14 happening soon. So, they're asking why there's no
15 clear pre-ULURP timeline. We know what happens once
16 the certification happens. Everybody knows that it's
17 going to the community board and the borough
18 president and, you know, so on, but they don't know
19 what happens before that, which leads me to the next
20 point. They also said that there was no real
21 community outreach by the city between that time.
22 So, they came out with the drafts in 2016, and now
23 they're hearing about a certification happening this
24 year. So, it's been two years and they said the city
25 really hasn't done much to come out to them, which

2 leaves the burden on coalitions like ours to talk to
3 the community about what's happening with the
4 rezoning. And then the last one would be to reopen
5 Mandatory Inclusionary Housing to capture more, and
6 require all developments to have affordable housing
7 because currently it doesn't serve the neediest New
8 Yorkers. That's all.

9 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Thank you,
10 Mr. Garcia. Are there any questions? Thank you.

11 IVAN GARCIA: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Ms. Bourne.

13 MARY BOURNE: Yes, good evening everyone.
14 Along with Ivan I am a member of the Housing Dignity
15 Coalition. I am Deacon at my church, and the
16 coalition is comprise of faith based members. We
17 have pastors. We have pastors, we have deacons, and
18 what we did was meet with a lot of our memberships.
19 We've met with people in the community, and
20 discussing the proposed rezoning on Bay Street. We
21 received a lot of concerns from the membership and
22 from the community that these--these--the system that
23 has been set up to do this rezoning is not inclusive
24 and it does not really include the entire community.
25 As Mr. Garcia mentioned, there's not enough outreach.

2 I'm concerned that these rezonings will increase
3 displacement. When we met with some of the families
4 they expressed a fear of being displaced, and also
5 some expressed the fact that the rents are getting s
6 high. One family said that we've combined our family
7 group, too, and there's one to two generations living
8 in the household because of the fact that they can't
9 afford to. You know, as the rents are going up, but
10 with the rezoning that's going on now, you know, and
11 there's no plan for really deep affordability for the
12 new proposed buildings that are going up. So, what
13 we're concerned is that why is there is no plan for a
14 deeper affordability. That's one of the plans, but
15 also another question that they asked were what kind
16 of protections are going to be in place with-for
17 tenants that are being harassed, tenants that are
18 getting rent increases for just no reasons because of
19 the fact landlords are really trying to jump in on
20 this bandwagon. You know, if they're going to—we
21 already have URB, and they're charging \$3,000 for a
22 2-bedroom apartment, and \$1,900 for a one-bedroom.
23 So, landlords are looking at this as a way to say,
24 listen, we can get in on this. If the man across the
25 street is charging \$3,000 for a 2-bedroom, why can't

2 I? So, we need protections in place. We need a
3 better system to be more inclusive and most
4 importantly, we feel that public land should be not-
5 should not be given to private developers for a
6 [applause] for-profit use. You know, we need public
7 land, the decisions on what happens with public land
8 to be in the community hands. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
10 much, Ms. Bourne. [applause] Are there questions?

11 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: I have one.

12 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Sal.

13 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [background
14 comments] Thank you for your testimony, and you've
15 hit on one of the most important issues facing the
16 city: How do we make the city affordable for all New
17 Yorkers, and it's—and it's not getting better. Do
18 you have a specific proposal that you can submit to
19 us that would mitigate some of these issues?

20 MARY BOURNE: Yes, we do and if we can
21 send them to you, we've discussed it at these
22 meetings some of the proposals, the type of deeper
23 affordability, and the type of protections that
24 should be available, and that can be made available
25 to the community, and the way to communicate to the

2 community that all of these things are available. You
3 know, especially with this faith based organization.
4 We can do it through the churches, which you can
5 really reach out to a majority of the community.

6 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Please get them
7 to us.

8 MARY BOURNE: Okay, thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you, Mr.
11 Bourne. Miss Materna.

12 JANINE MATERNA: Yes. Hello. My name is
13 Janine Materna. I'm an attorney pending bar admission
14 as well as the President Pleasant Plains/Princess
15 Bay/Richmond Valley Civic Association one of the
16 largest on the South Shore of Staten Island. I'd
17 like to thank the Charter Revision Commission for the
18 opportunity to offer my thoughts about city
19 government. A special hello to County Clerk Fiala,
20 and Mr. Albanese who have the utmost respect for.
21 I'm very happy to see that you're on this Commission.
22 Two issues that I would like to address this evening
23 are (1) The need to give more local authority and
24 control to borough-borough officials-excuse me-to
25 make decisions that affect individual boroughs and

2 (2) the selection and employment of community board
3 members. As many of you know, Staten Island is a
4 very different place. We are very much a small town
5 within the greatest city in the World. However, with
6 that small town feeling also comes a set of
7 challenges that are quite different from the rest of
8 the city. Many times decisions are made for us that
9 just don't make sense for us here in Staten Island.
10 So my request that—that more decisions regarding our
11 borough be made by our local elected officials who
12 know our day-to-day challenges, and not by the
13 decision makers in Manhattan who may mean well, but
14 may not necessarily know the challenges we face here
15 in Staten Island. My sentiment on this issue is very
16 similar to what Councilman Borelli's representative
17 indicated earlier on his testimony. On local issues,
18 for example, when to close schools because of
19 inclement weather, where to put speed bumps or when
20 streets should be paved. Our Staten Island elected
21 officials know better, and should be able to make
22 those decisions and not those in Manhattan who are
23 unfamiliar with the challenges that we face. The
24 second issue I'd like to also address is the
25 selection, appointment and term limits of the

2 community board. As an active member of my
3 community, I do believe that the current appointment
4 and selection process is flawed. I believe that this
5 charter should amended to standardize the application
6 process including requiring a uniform application,
7 time up--timeline as well as interviews for all
8 applicants. More importantly, I believe that the
9 selection of the community board members should be
10 made by an independent screening panel, and not
11 solely based on the recommendations of the borough
12 president and Council--Council person. Furthermore, I
13 do believe that term limits should be imposed on our
14 community board members. Don't get me wrong. I have
15 the utmost respect for our community board members
16 here in Staten Island who are members of the
17 community who dedicate an enormous amount of time,
18 sacrifice, hard work and dedication to make our
19 community a better place. However, there does come a
20 point where there is a need for fresh ideas. So,
21 with that said, I believe that term limits should be
22 imposed for our community board members as a method
23 to increase diversity here in Staten Island. I thank
24 you very much for this opportunity.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
3 much.

4 JANINE MATERNA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Questions? I
6 actually have one for you. Are you suggesting that a
7 particular term, one term, two terms? What is your
8 idea of what--?

9 JANINE MATERNA: [interposing] For the
10 community boards? I would say maybe two to three
11 terms max. I think there--there comes a point where
12 somebody needs to understanding how--how it works and
13 how it functions, and there might be a learning curve
14 associated with that, but I don't believe that it
15 should be an endless no term limits because people
16 get too complacent and it prevents new and fresh
17 ideas, and it prevents diversity in our community.

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: As you may know,
19 that's on the ballot. That will be on your ballot in
20 November.

21 JANINE MATERNA: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Although I will
23 say just as one plug there are some communities where
24 they cannot get people, enough people to serve--

25 JANINE MATERNA: [interposing] Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: --and that's why
3 the same people are serving because others have not--

4 JANINE MATERNA: [interposing] Right, and
5 with that, I believe that maybe the borough president
6 should maybe carry out our heavily recruitment
7 process throughout the community. Many people don't
8 know that the community board exists and what it is,
9 and I think that a way of doing that is getting our
10 youth involved, whether it be at CSI, Wagner, St.
11 John's, local high schools, getting them involved at
12 a very young age maybe through the PTAs. Making sure
13 that people are aware what the community board is,
14 what they are capable of doing, and how it can help
15 our community. So, I would say it's just a better
16 recruitment process for them.

17 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, Sal.

19 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: On the Chair's
20 point that--I mean that point, she reiterated what we
21 heard in I believe Queens or even the Bronx about--
22 tremendous, but I think your point is well taken.
23 Are we doing enough outreach--

24 JANINE MATERNA: [interposing] No.

2 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: --to people in
3 communities--

4 JANINE MATERNA: [interposing] Yeah.

5 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: --that--that I
6 mean that I tend to agree with you.

7 JANINE MATERNA: I thank you sir.

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay, thank you
9 very much. The next and last panel that I have is
10 Deirdre Carroll, Margarito La Morte, and Celeste
11 Casodiero. [background comments, pause] Ms. Carroll.

12 DEIRDRE CARROLL: Well, we thought we--
13 we're kind of a tag team. You get kind of a two for
14 one deal today.

15 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Okay. Ms. Carroll
16 and Ms. Lemont--La Morte.

17 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yeah, I guess.
18 Thank you. So thank you all for the opportunity to
19 speak in front of you. This is our first of its
20 kind. So, we're very excited to be here with you and
21 to talk about animal activism. So, we are animal
22 lovers. You've heard today animal lovers are here in
23 effect. So, it's certainly a hot button topic in our
24 community. So, I'm a business owner also a concerned
25 citizen as Deirdre Carroll is. We've been friends

2 for a long time. We've adopted pets together.
3 Together I think we've adopted maybe 20 pets together
4 in our lifetime.

5 DEIRDRE CARROLL: Yes.

6 MARGARITA LA MORTE: So, clearly we—we
7 love animals, and we're very concerned about what's
8 happening with the ACC and the Department of Health.
9 As the saying goes. As the saying goes, the Internet
10 was created basically so we could watch cat and dog
11 games, right. That's what they say, and so while
12 this is funny, there's actually a compelling reason
13 why people want to watch these videos. Companion
14 animals like cats and dogs make us feel better.
15 There is a lot of evidence to suggest that animals
16 lower blood pressure, they reduce anxiety and stress,
17 they provide emotional support for children and
18 animals and in adults. When you weight the benefits
19 of what companion animals do for us, it's clear that
20 we have a duty and responsibility to protect and care
21 for them. And right now, New York is failing the or
22 rather the organization that New York hires, the ACC
23 is failing them. So, let's take a look at some
24 numbers, if you will. According to the ACC's 2017, a
25 similar report, which basically reports on the agency

2 activity, the ACC took in about 23,500 animals in
3 2017. Of these, they transferred out 11,700 to
4 community shelters. So, why did they do that?

5 Because community shelters know that if they don't
6 step up, these animals will absolutely be killed and
7 destroyed. So, now community shelters find
8 themselves in a position of rescuing animals not from
9 the streets as they should, but from New York's own
10 approved agency. So, the eight bullet continues with
11 so, ACC returns about 2,000 animals back to their
12 owners. So, that's wonderful, and that's what they
13 should be doing. So, when you look at what's left,
14 the ACC has less than 10,000 animals to adopt out.
15 So, to put it into perspective, you all know New York
16 City has about 8.5 million residents. So, when you
17 look at that, the idea that we couldn't find loving
18 homes for 10,000 animals out of a pool of 8.5 million
19 people, seems absolutely ludicrous and unrealistic to
20 think that that couldn't happen. And yet, do you
21 know how many of those 10,000 they killed in 2017?
22 4,796 roughly half of the animals that were under
23 their care that were adoptable, healthy animals that
24 could have gotten loving homes got killed. Fifty
25 percent of the animals that come into the ACC

2 facilities that aren't transferred or given back to
3 their owners are killed. [bell] It's a grim
4 statistic. I'm sorry. Can I have a few more
5 minutes?

6 MARGARITA LA MORTE: This is like the
7 Oscars.

8 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Sure.

9 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Just like the
10 Oscars. Oh, this isn't. Okay. So Dierdra was actually
11 a volunteer at the ACC, and I'm going to turn it over
12 to her to kind of discuss the process.

13 DEIRDRE CARROLL: Right. So thank you. I
14 am a lifetime animal owner, and I was—I have adopted
15 pets from the ACC and I have also been a volunteer at
16 the ACC, and it was a few years ago, but often—and
17 I've also been back many times to—to potentially
18 adopt several times. So, I've been there. When I
19 was volunteering there, there were many times that
20 the cages were—in Staten Island were empty. Now, they
21 can't all be filled all the time because they have to
22 take every pet that comes in, but in the adoptable
23 area okay, there are often cages empty when Manhattan
24 and Brooklyn were overcrowded. So, instead of
25 transporting pets to Staten Island for—so they could

2 be up for adoption, those pets that were in Manhattan
3 and Brooklyn were euthanized. In addition to that,
4 when—when pets would get sick, as was testified
5 earlier, they—they—they get very sick, and a simple
6 case of kennel cough, which is treatable, okay is
7 treatable, can be resolved, but instead I've
8 witnessed perfectly healthy dogs that all—but being
9 at the ACC, we've got kennel cough, and then were put
10 down. And they were, you know, young adoptable dogs.
11 Okay, so this is, you know a problem that's not new.
12 This—the audit in 2015, the one before that that was
13 done by New York City is not—was even worse. Okay,
14 they—they didn't meet their, you know, if a pet comes
15 in, it's supposed to be 48 hours if a stray comes in
16 before they euthanize them. They weren't following
17 those rules. Okay, so they don't follow their own
18 rules, and in addition to that, they also if there—
19 they have to be a maximum capacity before they
20 euthanize cats and dogs. They—if they're there for a
21 couple of weeks, and the woman who was here earlier
22 who testified she does the—she has the list of all
23 the dogs that are on the kill list. They euthanize
24 them even though there is still more room available.
25 So, there are empty cages, but yet they're still

2 euthanizing, you know, pets that are available—that—
3 that are adoptable. So, thank you.

4 MARGARITA LA MORTE: [off mic] So, in
5 summary, New York just needs to do better when it
6 comes to our animals. [on mic] We can be successful
7 with the right structure and oversight. So, right
8 now, Animal Care is under the umbrella of the DOH, as
9 you all know. So, this is presumably set up in this
10 way because the focus is on public safety and not
11 necessarily on the welfare of the animal, but there's
12 been a huge shift in the way that people view their
13 relationships with their pets. They're now a very
14 critical and important part of the family structure
15 in the United States. [bell] So the agency that
16 ensures our food supply is safe shouldn't be
17 overseeing animal welfare. Companion animals are not
18 food, and they should not be lumped in this group.
19 It's time for New York City to make a shift in their
20 thinking and in their policies on this. So, by
21 taking the first step towards creating a dedicated
22 animal welfare department with the resources to do
23 the job right, and effectively oversee and manage any
24 chosen third-party organization, we can be a proud
25 city that values all life and takes care of its

2 people and its animals with respect and dignity.

3 Thank you so much for hearing us out.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you very
5 much for—both of you. Commissioner Fiala has a
6 question.

7 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Well, Ms. Carroll
8 and Ms. La Morte, thank you. You're a great tag team
9 [laughter] and I have to tell you there's an emerging
10 theme as we go around the city, and this is one of
11 them, but you both together provided some evidentiary
12 claims that I hadn't heard before. With respect to
13 the statistics or the numbers that you cited, you
14 referenced a report--

15 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Who—who issued that
17 report?

18 MARGARITA LA MORTE: So, the ACC issues
19 an annual report. It's called their—A Similar Report.

20 COMMISSIONER FIALA: [interposing] So,
21 it's Animal Care and Control? These are their
22 numbers?

23 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Right.

24 COMMISSIONER FIALA: And are those
25 numbers from your experience are they fairly

2 consistent from year to year that if you wanted to
3 say over a five-yea period roughly 50% of those--those
4 animals that wind up in the--in the facility wind up
5 being--

6 MARGARITA LA MORTE: [interposing]

7 They're doing better--

8 COMMISSIONER FIALA: They're doing
9 better?

10 MARGARITA LA MORTE: --and I thin they're
11 doing better because there is so much effort and
12 focus as to women that you heard before. There's so
13 much advocacy that is happening now that I think it's
14 forcing the ACC to do better. The ACC is now putting
15 out the kill list at 6:00 every night so that
16 shelters can look at it, and before it used to be
17 that by 6:00 or 9:00 a.m. they would put the animal
18 to death. Now, they're waiting 'til noon. So, it
19 allows those groups to come in at least and, you
20 know, and scramble, and get those animals out of the
21 ACC and it allows them some time. So, they have put
22 some of those measures into place, but when you look
23 at those numbers, they--they will have you believe
24 that euthanasia rate is based on the 20--the 23,500
25 animals, but that's just not reality. The reality is

2 they transfer out, they give back, and what's left is
3 what's euthanized.

4 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Well, you've been
5 very effective at illuminating that for me. A final
6 question. You know, not everything, as a matter of
7 fact, most things that in my view, and I only speak
8 for myself, most things that come before a body like
9 this aren't charter related or ripe at that
10 particular moment or appropriate for a charter. A
11 charter is essentially a constitution for the city,
12 right. I'm just curious. Are there any legislative
13 fixes that have been or are being looked at now where
14 this could be—you know, the results could be achieve
15 through legislative avenues as opposed to in effect s
16 constitution or a charter? Any—anything on the
17 legislative front?

18 MARGARITA LA MORTE: I don't have the
19 answer to that question. I don't.

20 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Okay, no that's
21 right. I didn't me to put you on the spot, but thank
22 you. It was very, very illuminating for me.

23 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Thank you. Thank
24 you very much.

25 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Ms. Casodiero.

2 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [interposing]

3 Just that—I just have a quick question.

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

5 Sal.

6 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: I assume you both
7 endorse a no-kill policy.

8 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yes. Absolutely, but
9 when you look at the no-kill policy, we are not—I am
10 not a die hard advocate of no euthanasia. I think
11 that when it's appropriate--

12 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [interposing] Yes

13 MARGARITA LA MORTE: --an animal is sick,
14 we certainly need to put them out of their suffering.
15 We do that with human beings.

16 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Common sense,
17 common sense.

18 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yeah, it just has to
19 be a common sense approach, but it can't be 50% of
20 adopt—5,000 adoptable animals get put to sleep—you
21 know, get killed when that could be changed with, you
22 know, 8.5 million citizens in the city of New York.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: One—one last
25 question for both of you.

2 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Oh, certainly.

3 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: The ACC is at the
4 end of the process. Do you think it should be more
5 difficult for people to be able to adopt an animal to
6 start with because some of these animals--and we've
7 seen them--are animals that people have purchased or
8 adopted, and let go. Should we have more stringent
9 standards up front so that people understand that an
10 animal is not a toy? That--

11 DEIRDRE CARROLL: Well, you know in
12 Chicago they have a shelter that when--when people
13 adopt, they have to either--they have to--they get--they
14 get a credit back when they--they take their--their dog
15 to dog training. So, there are ways that you can,
16 you know, you can put in place that people have to,
17 you know, learn--acknowledge to be more responsible.
18 So that--that is, you know, some--some of the ways, and
19 like for example, the dog has to be spayed or
20 neutered. So, that's something else, but you can
21 absolutely have orientation classes or, you know,
22 home visits, you know, such as the--the rescue
23 agencies do.

24 MARGARITA LA MORTE: I work--I work with
25 SICAW, Staten Island Council for Animal Welfare, and

2 they are very rigorous about doing home visits, and I
3 think that is definitely one of the keys. I think
4 that with the ACC they are so concerned about getting
5 their numbers up for adoption that they will
6 basically just adopt anyone that walks through the
7 door, and that's not the answer either, and I think
8 the problem with that is because fundamentally they
9 are being managed and overseen by the Department of
10 Health. Unfortunately, those goals just don't align,
11 you know, with what those two agencies should be
12 doing. So, I think with the right oversight and
13 management, those goals and those processes just
14 become much better.

15 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Just one more
16 question. If we spend—if we endorse spending animal
17 welfare out of the Department of Health and creating
18 a separate agency, would mandatory spaying and
19 neutering also be part of that? It could be part of
20 that? Should it be part of that?

21 MARGARITA LA MORTE: It should be. It
22 should be or rescue agencies, and the ACC itself
23 currently do require mandatory spaying and neutering.

24 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: Citywide?
25

2 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yes. The statistic
3 just so you know, in case you want to know is that
4 one pregnant female and her litter in the course of
5 seven years can produce 300-370,000 cats-

6 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: [interposing]
7 Wow.

8 MARGARITA LA MORTE: --in seven years.
9 So, if we take the approach of spaying and neutering
10 ahead of time, even releasing--so the big has is--sort
11 of the topic now is trap, neuter, release. A lot of
12 people don't agree with that because they feel like
13 if a cat is friendly it should be, you know, adopted.
14 I feel a little differently. I feel like some
15 animals just should be put back to where they were.
16 There are community cats, but spaying and neutering
17 certainly over the course of seven years helps save
18 370,000 lives just from one, you know, initial cat.

19 COMMISSIONER ALBANESE: There would be
20 less stray animals out there, you know.

21 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Yes, yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Any other
23 questions? Thank you.

24 MARGARITA LA MORTE: Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Ms. Casodiero.

3 Lear hear you.

4 CELESTE CASODIERO: Thank you. I have
5 never seen these women before in my life, but I am
6 here for the same exact reason. I'm asking you to
7 take animal welfare out of the Department of Health.
8 If there was an easier way to do this, if we could
9 just talk to the Department of Health or the
10 committee in front of it, we would have done that.
11 This won't even get on the ballot until 2019. We
12 wouldn't be here unless we were out of all other
13 options. So, I have never been to a New York City
14 hearing before, but I am here today because of what
15 is happening in these shelters is unconscionable, and
16 I have to live with myself. One of the most common
17 reasons animals are surrendered into ACC is because
18 of housing issues. And so with human foster care,
19 the federal government has recently changed its
20 policies to prioritize intervention, which is keeping
21 children in their home, and so the most common reason
22 cited for surrendering an animal to ACC is that the
23 landlords are not allowing them. As it is, this is
24 one of one of my specialties. I'm an attorney, and I
25 volunteer for a tenant union. I used to work at a

2 non-profit, but now I do private practice, and so a
3 lot of the cases I see are keeping renters in their
4 housing with their pets, and I pray for cases like
5 these because they are some of the easiest. So, to
6 see something so easily addressable be the number one
7 reason that they're getting these animals, and they
8 haven't done anything about it. They know that's why
9 the animals are coming. They don't have an attorney
10 on staff. They're not letting us volunteer. They
11 don't want to stop these animals from in. So, the
12 idea that any company would get a 34-year contract is
13 insane. My ideal solution would be splitting up the
14 contracts. Many of these dogs are already de facto
15 handled by private rescues making ACC the fattest
16 middle man you could possible imagine. They get
17 money from the city to collect these dogs,
18 immediately label them unadoptable, and send them to
19 private rescues for pennies on the dollar or kill
20 them. The only animals the ACC is adopting out
21 directly are Yorkies, basically the small animals.
22 In my opinion, the city needs to keep multiple
23 separate shelters competing. For instance, you can
24 have two rescues taking in animals include in Queens,
25 and study and compare the results with markers like

2 how many animals were kept in their homes. How many
3 got sick in the shelter, how many are being returned
4 and adopted, how many are being put down, and whoever
5 does better, keep them and bring in another rescue.
6 The next year take out the ones that are doing bad.
7 We're already done that. We're handing these animals
8 to like hundreds of different rescues, but we are
9 just doing it in the worst most expensive way you can
10 possibly imagine, and by giving ACC an exclusive
11 contract we have created a shelter that is too big to
12 fail, but desperately needs to.

13 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you. Are
14 there any questions? Thank you, ladies, and the last
15 slip I have is P.J. Parker. [background noise/pause]

16 P.J. PARKER: [off mic] Hi.

17 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Hello.

18 P.J. PARKER: I should have been up here
19 at this table with these three women because I'm here
20 for the same reason, and I'm here for the same reason
21 primarily because a year ago I heard Sal Albanese
22 talk very, very strongly about the separation of the
23 Department of Health with the ACC, and for basically
24 simple reasons the Department of Health is not a
25 fully vested organization in the welfare of animals.

2 It is concerned with human health. It is not their
3 priority to care for animals. The—the creating of a
4 new agency run by people who are of, by, for,
5 experienced and have background perhaps in medical
6 and the wide—the plethora of modalities that are used
7 for animal welfare needs to be under one umbrella,
8 needs to be under one roof. I co-publish a new site
9 and a monthly newspaper, in fact, on Township, New
10 Jersey. I am a native New Yorker. So, my heart is
11 always going to be in New York and as such, in
12 Somerset County we have a shelter, we have a local
13 shelter. The Franklin Township Animal Shelter, which
14 is 99.9% no-kill. There is a law in place that if a
15 serious or fatal injury is incurred by an animal then
16 a kill policy does exist, but other than that, this
17 is shelter, and they are run by the Second Chance for
18 Animals Organization that on the 4th of July where
19 the animal shelter is contained within the municipal
20 structure, and there were fireworks, every volunteer
21 in this shelter takes an animal home so these animals
22 don't have to hear fireworks and be upset. This is a
23 shelter that has spent several thousand dollars in
24 putting television monitors in for the pussy cats to
25 see kitty videos so that they are relaxed and happy

2 animals. They have televisions for the dogs who are
3 able to view other dogs playing and having a good
4 time. They're walked three & four times a day. They
5 are constantly outreaching to the community for
6 charitable organizations to donate supplies. The
7 Animal Control Officer runs the shelter. She will
8 stop day or night and pick up an injured squirrel and
9 nurse that squirrel back to health. This is an
10 example of a shelter who truly defines the name of
11 shelter Austin, Texas is another huge model that I
12 think New York City as the greatest city in the world
13 if we don't have the resources here in New York to
14 emulate something like that for the welfare of
15 innocents who are in our control, in our care, in our
16 hearts and at our mercy, then we should be royally
17 ashamed of ourselves, and that I have the animal
18 shelter in my back yard [bell] who I support, who I
19 sponsor, who I help to fund raise with. If one cad
20 do it, there's no excuse for others to not be able to
21 follow those kinds of models. So, I implore all of
22 you to think of an innocent little dog who's standing
23 before you right now, and looking at every one of you
24 in the face, and you look at that dog, and that dog
25 is not going to know that it was you who made a

2 difference in that life, but everyone of you will.

3 Thank you for listening. [applause]

4 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Thank you. Are
5 there any questions? Is there anyone else from the
6 public who wishes to testify, but whose name has not
7 been called? Hearing one, I would like to thank
8 everyone for attending, and sharing your thoughts and
9 ideas, and I encourage you to continue to do so
10 throughout this process particularly the people,
11 Deborah Rose among, who said that they would forward
12 things to us later on, and has indignity with further
13 ideas and further working out of idea that they've
14 presented today. Remember to visit our website at
15 charter2019.nyc. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook
16 at charter2019.nyc. Our next hearing will be on
17 Thursday, September 27th at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall in
18 Manhattan. Commissioners, while you are more than
19 welcome to take your written materials with you,
20 please remember to leave your folders and name cards
21 behind so that way you may use them again for the
22 next hearing. I will now entertain a motion that the
23 meeting be adjourned.

24 COMMISSIONERS: [in unison] So moved.

25 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Second?

2 COMMISSIONER FIALA: Second.

3 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Discussion? All
4 those in favor, aye.

5 COMMISSIONERS: [in unison] Aye.

6 CHAIRPERSON BENJAMIN: Opposed? The
7 motion carries. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you
8 all so very much.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 13, 2018