



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

## **New York City Council Committee on Technology**

### **Oversight Hearing: A Local Law to Amend the New York City Charter, in Relation to Requiring that all Community Board Full Board Meetings be Webcast**

#### **Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair Manhattan Community Board 1**

**February 24, 2014  
250 Broadway, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor Committee Room, 1:00 P.M.**

Good afternoon, Chairman Vacca and members of the Committee on Technology. Thank you for convening this oversight hearing on Intro 28 to amend the New York City Charter in relation to requiring that all community board full board meetings be webcast.

The Executive Committee of Community Board 1 discussed at our meeting last week on February 19 this proposed amendment to the New York City Charter which would require that “each board shall record its public meetings and hearings in digital video format” and that “such meetings and hearings shall be webcast live, where practicable, and the recordings of such meetings and hearings shall be archived and made available to the public on the community board or city's website not more than seventy-two hours after adjournment of the meeting or hearing recorded.”

Our Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution which will come before our full board at our meeting tomorrow, on February 25, supporting the principles of transparency and accessibility to government data and proceedings that would be advanced by webcasting and archiving full board meetings on community board websites.

However, we expressed serious concerns that Intro 28 does not provide resources and funding to carry out these additional responsibilities and is unclear about what process or system will be put in place to webcast the meetings and archive them on a website.

We urge in our resolution that Intro 28 not be adopted unless it includes a clear requirement that the city provide the additional funding, resources and personnel needed to carry out these tasks.

Moreover, we called in our resolution for the webcasting and archiving of community board meetings and all associated tasks required by Intro 28 to be carried out by an external agency such as the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications so that the funding cannot be eliminated from community board budgets in the future while these new responsibilities continue to be required.

We know, Chairman Vacca, that as a former District Manager at Community Board 10 in the Bronx for 26 years, you are aware that community boards carry out a myriad of important responsibilities, including many that are mandated by the New York City Charter, and that the minimal amount of funding and resources we receive from the city has been threatened on an almost annual basis for many years.

We are therefore concerned about the possibility that if Intro 28 is adopted and no external entity is required to carry out the tasks associated with it, even if additional funding to implement it could be added to community board budgets, that funding could be thereafter eliminated in a subsequent year due to budget cuts. We therefore believe it is essential that an external agency be required to carry out the tasks or another reliable mechanism be put in place to prevent the video/webcast requirements from becoming unfunded obligations.

More generally, we believe that with a new administration and City Council leadership in place, consideration should be given to increasing funding for community boards so that we will have the funding and resources that we need to provide essential services to improve quality of life throughout the city.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. We strongly support the principles of transparency and accessibility to government proceedings and data that would be advanced by webcasting and archiving community board meetings and we hope that Intro 28 will be modified in the ways we have recommended.