

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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February 16, 2011

Start: 10:30am

Recess: N/A

HELD AT: Committee Room
250 Broadway - 16th Fl.

B E F O R E:
JOEL RIVERA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Inez E. Dickens
Erik Martin Dilan
Lewis A. Fidler
Vincent J. Gentile
Robert Jackson
Albert Vann
Karen Koslowitz
James S. Oddo
Christine C. Quinn
Darlene Mealy

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

Elisa Velazquez
Candidate for Appointment
Lobbying Commission

Robert Nolan
Candidate for Appointment
Health and Hospitals Corporation Board of Directors

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Joel Rivera. I'm the Chair of the Rules, Privileges and Elections Committee. Before we begin, let me introduce the members who are here with us today. To my left, we have Council Member Darlene Mealy, Council Member Lew Fidler, Council Member Leroy Comrie, Council Member Robert Jackson. To my right we have Council Member Inez Dickens, Council Member Jimmy Vacca, Council Member Karen Koslowitz and Council Member Al Vann, and walking in, we have Council Member Erik Dilan. We're also joined by Chuck Davis and by Lamon Bland [phonetic] from the Committee.

Today we have before us two candidates for review. They are Elisa Velazquez; she is being considered for joint appointment by the Mayor and the Council as a member of the Lobbying Commission. If appointed, Ms. Velazquez will serve an undefined term. And we also are joined by a good friend, someone who I've known from a number of years, Robert Nolan, a resident of the Bronx, is a candidate for the designation and subsequent appointment by the Mayor to the

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2 Health and Hospitals Corporation board of
3 directors. If designated and appointed, Mr. Nolan
4 will replace Dr. Marcia Brown and serve the
5 remainder of a five-year term that will expire on
6 March 20, 2012.

7 First let me briefly explain the
8 functions of the Lobbying Commission. The New
9 York City Administrative Code Section 3-212E
10 provides for the establishment of a lobbying
11 commission. The commission consists of five
12 members jointly appointed by the Mayor and the
13 Council. Also, the Mayor and the Council jointly
14 designate a chair from among the commission
15 members.

16 The commission members and the
17 chair are appointed to undefined terms and serve
18 without compensation. The commission serves as an
19 advisory body to review and evaluate the
20 activities and performance of the New York City
21 clerk in implementing the provisions of the City's
22 lobbying laws. Within six months of the
23 appointment of the commission members, the
24 commission shall report to the Mayor and the
25 Council on the review and evaluation of the city

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2 clerk's activities and performance. The
3 commission's reports shall include any
4 administrative and legislative recommendations on
5 strengthening the administration and enforcement
6 of the city's lobbying laws, as well as whether
7 the dollar threshold for the filing of a statement
8 of registration should be raised. We will begin
9 with Ms. Velazquez. Will you please raise your
10 right hand and be sworn in?

11 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ms. Velazquez, do
12 you swear or affirm that the statements that
13 you're about to make are truthful to the best of
14 your knowledge?

15 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: I do.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Do you have an
18 opening statement?

19 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Okay. I do.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Perfect. If
22 you have an opening statement you may share it
23 now—

24 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: [Interposing]
25 Yes, I did. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman

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2 Rivera and members of the Committee on Rules,
3 Privileges and Elections. My name is Elisa
4 Velazquez, and I come before you today as the
5 fifth and final member-nominee to serve on the New
6 York City Lobbying Commission. The other nominees
7 including Commission Chair Herb Berman were
8 approved by this Committee and appointed by the
9 full City Council last month. I want to thank
10 both the Council and the Mayor for considering my
11 appointment to this important commission. I look
12 forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with
13 both Chairman Berman and fellow commission members
14 to gather information and data from all the
15 stakeholders that will help guide this city, this
16 City Council, and the administration in making the
17 lobbying laws and rules more meaningful and
18 effective.

19 Currently, I'm the general counsel
20 in the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, which
21 has afforded me the opportunity to work with all
22 the city agencies, the City Council, other
23 government entities and practically every possible
24 sector that does business with the City. In that
25 role as general counsel, I oversee the VENDEX unit

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2 which is tasked with processing thousands of
3 disclosure forms per year from prospective and
4 current city vendors. In addition, I work closely
5 with our non-for-profit business partners in the
6 areas of compliance and governance. I also work
7 closely with our Doing Business Accountability
8 Program, another unit within MOCS that collects
9 data from those that are required to file under
10 the campaign finance laws.

11 I believe that my experience at
12 MOCS will enable me to ask the right questions,
13 synthesize information and understand the impact
14 the City's lobbying laws and rules have on the
15 different constituencies that they affect. I
16 believe that my experience with implementing a
17 city-wide database will help me understand any of
18 the technological challenges that are faced by
19 both the filers and the City Clerk's Office, which
20 maintains the database. Further, I believe the
21 skill set that I have gained in my tenure at MOCS
22 will be complemented by the work that I did as the
23 in-house legislative counsel for the New York
24 State Trial Lawyer's Association and also as
25 deputy counsel to former public advocate Mark

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2 Green. In both of those roles, I had the
3 opportunity to do lobbying here at the City
4 Council and with the New York State Legislature.
5 And it is my hope that my experience in working
6 for entities both that have done or that do
7 lobbying and for entities that get lobbied will be
8 both helpful to my fellow commission members and
9 useful to the whole process that we are going to
10 be embarking upon.

11 So with that, I am happy to answer
12 any questions that any of the council members
13 might have or any of the committee members might
14 have and once again, I thank you all for the
15 opportunity to serve both the City Council and the
16 Mayor and the City in this important and exciting
17 capacity. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very
19 much. Next I will briefly describe the functions
20 of the Health and Hospitals Corporations. The
21 Health and Hospital Corporation is a public
22 benefit corporation charged with the duty of
23 providing high-quality, dignified and
24 comprehensive healthcare and treatment to the
25 public, especially to those who cannot afford such

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2 services. HHC's board of directors consists of 16
3 members who administer HHC. Included within the
4 board's membership in addition to the five ex-
5 officio members are ten appointees of the Mayor,
6 five of whom are designated by the Council for
7 consideration by the Mayor. The term of the
8 office for directors is five years, with a vacancy
9 filled under the terms of the original
10 appointment. Directors are not compensated, but
11 are reimbursed for actual expenses. Welcome, Mr.
12 Nolan. Will you please raise your right hand and
13 be sworn in?

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Mr. Nolan, do you
15 swear or affirm that your statements will be
16 truthful to the best of your knowledge?

17 ROBERT NOLAN: [off mic].

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

19 JOEL RIVERA: Do you have an
20 opening statement?

21 ROBERT NOLAN: I'd like to make an
22 opening statement. I have not prepared something
23 for the Committee, but just take a minute to first
24 of all, thank the Committee for allowing me to
25 come here this morning and be heard. I was

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2 scheduled to attend your meeting two weeks ago,
3 but due to the early morning ice storm, we were
4 not able to get out of our house. We could not
5 open up our screen door or go down the stairs, so
6 I want to thank the Committee for allowing me to
7 come two weeks later. My name is Robert Nolan. I
8 retired from government service in the Office of
9 the Bronx Borough President a little more than two
10 years ago. I retired as the budget director under
11 both Borough President Carrion, and prior to that,
12 Borough President Ferrer. In that capacity as
13 budget director, primarily I was responsible for
14 the capital budget and we made very heavy
15 recommendations to spend capital money on
16 hospitals in the Bronx. And that decision was
17 made because we called together the executive
18 directors of the hospitals after reading the
19 Department of Health survey, done since the early
20 2000s, which showed how unhealthy the Bronx was—
21 with high rates of cancer, with high rates of
22 asthma and diabetes and so on. And basically our
23 message to the executive directors to the
24 hospitals was tell us what capital projects we can
25 fund for you. What equipment can we purchase? And

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2 working with members with the Bronx delegation who
3 was seated here, both your chair, Council Member
4 Rivera, Council Member Vacca, other members of the
5 delegation who chose to participate, we were able-
6 -in fact in one year to buy the newest, most
7 modern digital mammography equipment for every
8 Bronx municipal hospital, for Lincoln, Jacobi,
9 which then put it in North Central Bronx, and for
10 other smaller—we even did a deal with Bronx
11 Lebanon Hospital, a private hospital, where they
12 put up a certain percentage of the money. So my
13 background has been in the capital budget to a
14 certain degree in the expense budget, but I am a
15 person who is dedicated to New York City,
16 dedicated to its hospital system. I live two
17 blocks away from Jacobi Hospital. I've been an
18 user, as well as my wife who has been a user of
19 the facilities at Jacobi Hospital. And they are
20 really among the best facilities of any hospital
21 in the City of New York. With that, I thank the
22 Committee for considering my recommendation by the
23 Bronx delegation for a seat on the Health and
24 Hospitals Corporation.

25 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very

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2 much. At this point in time, I'm going to
3 recommend an aye vote for both individuals to
4 their respective boards. I think that--on a
5 personal note, I think that Robert Nolan has shown
6 exemplary service to the City of New York for his
7 number of years in government, but also not only
8 that after retiring from government, he is still
9 been actively involved in civic participation.
10 Just last week we were actually at a - - Community
11 meeting and he is--has taken the role of briefing
12 all the elected officials on neighborhood concerns
13 and issues, so someone who has dedicated his life
14 to public service even after retirement. So the
15 Chair recommends an aye vote and I'm sure Elisa
16 Velazquez will do a phenomenal job on the Lobbying
17 Commission, making sure she--

18 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: [Interposing]

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: --implements
21 the code to its standards, so the Chair recommends
22 an aye vote.

23 WILLIAM MARTIN: William Martin,
24 Committee Clerk, roll call vote in the Committee
25 on Rules. Council Member Rivera?

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I vote aye.

3 WILLIAM MARTIN: Comrie?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I vote aye.

5 Thank you and congratulations.

6 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

7 WILLIAM MARTIN: Dilan?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DILAN: I vote aye
9 on both.

10 WILLIAM MARTIN: Fidler?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Aye.

12 WILLIAM MARTIN: Jackson?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Aye on
14 all.

15 WILLIAM MARTIN: Vann?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:
17 Congratulations.

18 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN:
20 Congratulations, I vote aye.

21 WILLIAM MARTIN: Dickens?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: [off mic]

23 WILLIAM MARTIN: Vacca?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: I first
25 would like to congratulate you, Ms. Velazquez.

2 I'm very honored to vote for you.

3 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: I also want
5 to echo the remarks of the Chair regarding Bob
6 Nolan and I really indicate that when it comes to
7 the Bronx, the Nolan family is legendary. Bob's
8 father was a Supreme Court judge and going back to
9 the 1960s, I've known the Nolan family. And Bob,
10 Chairman Joel Rivera was correct that even in your
11 retirement, you continue to serve. Bob's wife is
12 also a fixture at Community Board 11. So there's
13 not a community organization in the Bronx that I
14 think has not worked with you and has not
15 benefited from your expertise, knowledge, energy
16 and commitment. So I'm very honored to vote aye
17 on both of you and I wish you all the best.

18 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

19 WILLIAM MARTIN: Crowley?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Aye.

21 WILLIAM MARTIN: Koslowitz?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ:

23 Congratulations and aye on all.

24 WILLIAM MARTIN: By vote of ten in
25 the affirmative, zero in the negative and no

2 abstentions, items have been adopted. Members
3 please sign the Committee reports.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA:

5 Congratulations. We're going to leave the vote
6 open for the Speaker to come down and vote.

7 ELISA VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

8 ROBERT NOLAN: Thank you very much.

9 WILLIAM MARTIN: Council Member

10 Oddo?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ODDO: Yes.

12 WILLIAM MARTIN: The vote is now

13 11.

14 [pause]

15 WILLIAM MARTIN: Council Member

16 Gentile?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Aye on

18 all.

19 WILLIAM MARTIN: The vote is now 12

20 in the affirmative.

21 [pause]

22 WILLIAM MARTIN: Speaker Quinn?

23 SPEAKER QUINN: Aye on all.

24 WILLIAM MARTIN: Final vote in the

25 Committee on Rules is 13 in the affirmative, 0 in

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the negative and no abstentions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. Thank
you very much. This meeting is adjourned.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature Kimberley Uhlig

Date February 28, 2011